

REASONS FOR PARTING WITH SIN NO. 1278

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 13, 1876,
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*“Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord:
though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”
Isaiah 1:18.*

IT is the great joy of our heart that we do not labor in vain nor spend our strength for nothing. God is calling out from the congregations which gather here a people unto Himself who shall show forth His praise. Our heart is filled with adoring joy while we find company after company coming forward and saying, “We have found the Lord, because the Lord, in mercy, has found us.” Unto the name of the Ever Merciful be praise forever and ever because His hand is stretched out, still, and the Spirit of the living God is not restrained among us! Still there is a bass to this music—there are some, and these not a few, who remain unblest where others are saved—this plot of ground is rained upon and another is not rained upon! The sun shines and hearts, like wax, are melted, but other hearts, like clay, are hardened.

This last and saddest of results has happened to some for whom we hoped better things. The almost persuaded have, in fact, been our peculiar trial. Some of you, my Hearers, have remained under the sound of the Gospel now for years, not without *impression*, but without *conversion*. The arrows of conviction have wounded your feelings, but they have not slain your sins. Ah, how many have disappointed their best friends in this respect! They have manifested the most hopeful appearance at times. Their tears have glittered like the dewdrops of the summer's morning but, alas, their goodness has been like the morning cloud and the early dew in another respect, for they have vanished away and they are as dry and graceless as ever they were.

Nor is this all. They are even worse than they were before, for they have added to their sin—they have increased their responsibility, they have diminished the sensitiveness of their conscience—and the probabilities are daily increasing that they will perish in their sin! How terrible that they should go from the invitation of the Gospel to the condemnation of the Judgment Seat—and that after having looked God's minister of mercy in the face! They will have to confront the Greater Minister of Justice, from whose face they will entreat the rocks and hills to hide them. Oh that these would come to their senses and reason with themselves! Then would they listen to the call of the text which invites them to talk with their Lord and receive His Grace.

Among these persons there are some who, in their hearts, venture to lay the blame of their present condition upon God. They do not exactly say so, but they mean it. They would tremble to make the accusation in set terms. They would even think it blasphemy to do so! But this is the real intent of their thoughts. They complain that they cannot find peace with God, though they claim that they have used all means within their power and have been really earnest and prayerful. They go to hear the Gospel and *love* to hear it. They would be very sorry if they were not able to enter the place where their favorite minister preaches, for he affords them much delight and even when he rebukes them, they admire his boldness.

But though they have heard the Gospel and have heard it continuously, and claim to have heard it with good intent, yet no happy result has come to them. They have heard and their souls do not live! They remain as they were, dead in trespasses and sin. It is not *their* fault, so they say, and we know, therefore, whose fault it must be! They have even prayed for *salvation* and have not found it. Their chambers can bear witness that sometimes they have bowed the knee in earnest supplication and have cried to God—and this not once or twice, but many times—and yet they still remain in their sins as undecided, unregenerate and unforgiven as ever.

“Surely,” say they, “this is a strange thing, that hearing the Gospel has not blessed us and that crying unto God has not brought us an answer of peace! What can be the cause?” It is obvious that something hinders. What can it be? The promises of God cannot fail! Why, then, are these seekers left in the dark? Some of these people are not anxious to know too much and they will not be pleased when I state the true reason for their continuing without hope. They impute it to the Sovereignty of God, or to some withholding of Infinite Love. They put the reason into some doctrinal shape or other and quote a text or two so as to look orthodox, but their meaning comes to this—it is *God’s* fault that they are unsaved! It is certainly none of *theirs*.

I wish that this bold way of stating their secret thought may convince them of the falsehood of it. At any rate, to such I speak! Listen to me, O you who declare that you would gladly be saved but cannot be! O you who say that you have been in earnest about salvation but God has not been moved by your entreaties! He bids you come near and reason with Him and end this quibbling! Come, now, and settle this matter and end the dispute! It is not *God* who shuts you out of mercy! He declares, on the contrary, that as far as He is concerned, He is a God ready to be gracious. And though your sins are as scarlet they shall be white as snow, though they are red like crimson they shall be as wool!

He will not admit your insinuations against His Grace. In the plainest possible terms He denies your imputations. He declares that the hindrance lies on *your* side and not on His. And He invites you to reason with Him about it, that the truth may be clear to you. Come, now, and argue with Him, for I would speak on God’s behalf and press His Word upon you. Oh, that this morning, while the argument goes on, your reason might be taught right reason and your conscience might be quickened to

give assent to the Truth of God which, in God's name, I will declare to you! Oh that so by the Spirit's power, being subdued by the persuasion and reasoning which we would gladly use this morning, you may yield yourselves unto God, for thus He says to you, "If you are willing and obedient you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel you shall be devoured by the sword, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it."

It is most certain that the real reason why men who have an earnest desire to be saved and have sincere religiousness of a certain sort do not find peace is this—they are in love with sin! Whether some *one* sin is secretly indulged, or many sins are unrepented of and unforsaken, they provoke the Lord with their trespasses and then hope to pacify Him with their prayers. Therefore it is altogether vain for them to tread God's courts! In vain they pray and in vain they attend religious ceremonies with the view of finding peace—for they have hidden the accursed thing in the midst of the camp—they are harboring a traitor and until this accursed thing is destroyed and this traitor is driven out they cannot be acceptable to God!

To all such, the Word of God says, "What have you to do with peace while your offenses are so many?" O, ungodly man, your heart can never rest in God while it goes forth after its idols! As long as you and your sins are at peace, God and your soul must be at war! Until you are ready to be divorced from sin you can never be married to Christ. God will give salvation and the pardon of sin, and give them freely to the very chief of sinners, but the sinner must confess and forsake his sin! The Lord graciously says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

But He also says, "There is no peace, says my God, unto the wicked," and His Word solemnly declares that, "God shall wound the head of His enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goes on in his trespasses." About this matter we will talk this morning, as the Lord shall help us, and may His Holy Spirit bless us.

I. "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord." Let us have this matter out and hear what is to be urged in favor of God's demands. IT IS A REASONABLE THING THAT SIN SHOULD BE RENOUNCED. As soon as I make that statement, every conscience here agrees with it. It is most reasonable that if the rebel is pardoned, he should ground his arms and cease to be a rebel. Look at the demand, for a minute, and it will strike you as being founded in right. It is most reasonable that we should renounce sin—that our heart should loathe it, first, *because it is most inconsistent to suppose that pardon can be given while we continue in sin.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters, suppose God were to say to the ungodly man, "You may continue in your sin, and I will forgive you. You may go on in your rebellion and I will never punish you for it"? What would this be but granting license to sin and offering a premium to iniquity? How could the Judge of all the earth thus wink at iniquity? Would not the angels

cease to sing, "Holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth," if the Lord could act in this manner? Where would His justice be? Where His righteousness?

This were to make him—I speak with reverence—an accomplice in man's sin, a Justifier of transgression in the present and a promoter of iniquity in the future! Where would moral government be if the Lord bestowed His pardons upon those who persevere in transgression? Shall men fondle their sins and yet be in a state of Grace? Then might every adulterer and every thief say, "What does it matter? I am forgiven! I will defile myself and rob my neighbor, yet more and more." Only fancy what the effect would be upon our country if a proclamation were issued that from now on all manner of offenses against the law would be immediately forgiven and men might continue still to perpetrate them! We should hasten to emigrate from such a pandemonium!

The wicked might approve of such a relaxation of the bonds of law, but it would be an awful curse to the righteous. If the Judge of all the earth could possibly forgive sin while men continue to indulge in it, I do not see how the world could be inhabited. It would become a den of beasts, wild and without restraint, raging against all goodness and even against themselves. The very pillars of society would be moved if sin could be, at the same time, indulged by the sinner and pardoned by the Lord. And what would be the effect upon the sinner, himself, if such could be the case? Say to a man—you are not to be punished for your sin and you may live in it. What worse turn could you do him?

Why, Sir, this would, in some respects, be a new curse to him! Here is a bleeding wound in my arm. The surgeon says he will allow it to bleed, but he will remove my sense of faintness and pain. He will leave the mortal injury, but take away its attendant inconveniences so that I may bleed to death and not know it? I would decline to have it so! No, let me bear the pain, if that will the more persuade me to seek the binding up of my wound! We do not want to be delivered from the punishment of sin so much as from the sin, itself, for sin bears its punishment in our hearts.

Suppose there were no Hell, no Lake of Fire into which the ungodly shall be cast? Yet let the wicked live together and indulge envy, revenge and malice and you will soon see that these passions would create Hell! Turn men down together and let them be selfish, ambitious, angry, lustful, jealous and envious—take away all the restraints of moral government and let their passions be indulged without a single hindrance. Oh, what a scene it would be! Imagine a den of wild beasts let loose upon one another—that would be a scene of peace and beauty compared with what this world would be if sin were patronized by a promise of pardon to the impenitent!

Each man, also, would be hateful to himself. As long as he had sin within him it would be impossible for him to rest, his seething passions would boil against each other. Man is so constituted that sin means an unhealthy and unhappy condition. The machinery will not work easily unless it acts accurately. It is at once its glory and its burden that it is so. O mighty God, Your wisdom makes You append suffering to sin. It is well

that we should feel it if we put our finger into the fire. It were a pity to take away the pain from the burning lest a man should sit by the fire and lose limb after limb and not be aware of it. In the same manner, also, it is most meet that the unhappiness caused by sin should give us warning of the mischief it is doing to us.

We do not ask God to separate the suffering from the sin, (let them stand as they are), but we need to be severed from the sin and then the suffering will go as a matter of course. It is unreasonable, man, it is unreasonable that you should expect that God will allow you to remain impenitent and yet give you the kiss of forgiving love! It would be neither honorable to God, nor good to your fellow men, nor really beneficial to yourself. Is it not reasonable, too, that we should part with sin, because *sin is so grievous to God?* I never know how to express my feelings when I read this first chapter of the Prophet Isaiah.

I have felt a heartbreaking sympathy with God when I have read those words, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me." It is so very sweet to us to have our children love us in return for our kindness to them. They are to us a very great joy and comfort and we are very glad and thankful to God for their dutiful affection. But many a man has been ready to tear his hair when the boy that he rocked on his knee has treated him with wanton insult. With what sorrow and anguish has many a mother had to remember an ungrateful daughter? Such iron enters into the soul. Such draughts of gall embitter the inmost heart of life. And here is the good Lord, like David of old, crying, "O Israel, My son, My son!"

To let us see how He regards sin, He describes Himself as calling the universe to witness to the ingratitude which has assailed Him. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider!" There is another plaintive expression in one of the Prophets, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate," as though the Creator turned Pleader to His own creatures, and said, "Do not follow after that which so provokes Me, and is so detestable to Me." It is for our sakes that He is so grieved. We vex the Holy Spirit every time we go into sin, for He loves us much and cannot bear to see us so dreadfully hurting ourselves.

Now, Sinner, is it not most reasonable that if you would find peace with God you should cease from that which provokes Him? Are you to go on vexing Him and yet expect Him to bless you? How would it be in your own case if you were a father? Would it not seem right and reasonable that the evil habit which vexed and broke your heart from day to day should be given up by your child? Would you not expect *him* to say, "My Father, I did not know I was grieving you so much as this. But now I know it, I turn from my folly: teach me how I may please you and do that which is right in your sight."

A third reason why sin should be given up may also be found in the chapter before us, for I am strictly following the connection of the text.

Should it not be given up because of *the mischief it has already done to man*? Look at yourself, unconverted man or woman, what happiness have your transgressions brought you? What peace has the love of sin produced in your spirit? What are you now? Why, according to your own confession, you are dissatisfied and ill at ease! Sometimes thoughts of death haunt you and make you so wretched that you hardly know how to live. The dread of Hell comes over you and you have often wished you had never been born. You know it is so. You are well described in the chapter before us—"The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint."

What has made you so sick and sorry? What but your wrongdoing? If you could prove that some good had come to yourself through sin, even then you ought to give it up, for God's sake, since it grieves Him. But no good has ever come of it. Ills of every sort are its only offspring. Look, Prodigal, look at your rags and see what your harlots and your companions have done for you! Look at what the citizens of the far-off country have done for you—sent you into the fields to feed swine! In your degradation and your filthiness, ask yourself, is there not a cause? What has deprived you of the comforts of a father's house? What has made you ready to eat the husks to stop your craving hunger?

If you were wise you would hate the sin which has served you so badly. You would long to shake it off as Paul shook the viper into the fire, and cry to God, "Deliver me from it, O Lord, by Your Son, Jesus Christ, for it is evil, only evil, and that continually, therefore cleanse me, O Lord!" Remember also, my Friend, *that unless sin is repented of and forsaken, no act of yours, nor ceremony of religion, nor hearing, nor praying can possibly save you*. Do you see what these Jews did? They brought expensive offerings. They said, "We will be very generous to the cause of God" and, therefore, they brought bullocks and rams and goats by the hundreds.

And what does God say of it? "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? says the Lord. I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has required this at your hand, to tread My courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting." If their hearts had been right He would have accepted the smallest offering—a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons would have been acceptable to Him—but as long as they lived in uncleanness, their sacrifices were vain oblations and their sweet smelling incense was an abomination unto Him.

"Ah," you have said, "I have given to the cause of God and yet I have had no peace." Does God accept what is given by one who practices dishonesty, or lives in pride, or revels in vice? "Ah," you say, "but I have always attended the means of Grace." Yes, but suppose you go from the Tabernacle to the gin palace—will your coming here be acceptable with God? Suppose you go home to practice unholy living or continue in malice against your brother—can the Lord regard you? Suppose you go away

from the assembly of the saints to find equally congenial company in the society of sinners? Then I say to you, in God's name, who has required this at your hands, that you should tread His courts?

Does He need courtiers to surround His Throne whose garments stink of the dens of Belial? Does He need your hymns, O you who have been singing lascivious songs? Do you think He will endure it that men should rise from the bed of uncleanness and draw near to His altars? It is scandalous to decency! It is insulting to the infinite majesty of Heaven! And yet how many there are who are secretly doing this! Let the consciences of those who hear the Gospel and yet live in known sin attest the truth of my words!

Does not reason itself teach them that God must be angered rather than pleased by the worship of those who live in sin? I heard to my deep sorrow, the other day, of one who will walk several miles to hear me preach, and yet in the place where he lives he is known to be a drunk! He glories in his admiration of the preacher and yet lives scandalously! O Sir, do you think the preacher gains by the admiration of such as you are? How much less can God be pleased with the adoration of men who live in open sin? Their worship is a dishonor to His blessed name! He calls your attendance at public worship the treading of His courts! It is nothing more than a mere trampling upon holy things and if you *dream* that there is anything acceptable in such conduct you are grievously mistaken!

If you come here that you may repent of your sins and forsake them, come and welcome! But if you imagine that coming up to the worship of God will procure the condoning of your offenses, you dote on a falsehood! Be not so deluded by Satan, but cast away this lie from your right hand. "Well," said one, "but there must be *something* in prayer." Hear, then, from the Lord's own mouth what there is in prayer while you continue in sin. "When you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you: yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." Though I cannot say of you that your hands are full of blood, yet if they are full of *any* sin which you love in your heart, your sacrifice will be an *abomination* unto God.

Do you dare to bow the knee, and say, "O God, forgive me my sin, though I mean to continue in it"? How dare you offer such an impudent petition to the majesty of Heaven! Is God to give you a dispensation—a permit to sin with impunity? Is He such an One as you are, that He should answer such a wicked prayer? "O God," you practically say, "give me a sense of peace with You and let me still be unholy." God will not hear such a request! I speak with reverence to His blessed name. God's holy Nature forbids that He should ever listen to such a blasphemous prayer! Alter it, and say, "Lord, help me to give up my sin. Lord, Help me to deal righteously with my neighbors. Help me to love my fellow men and, at the same time, grant me forgiveness for the past for Jesus' sake."

If this is your heart-felt language, the heavenly Father meets you freely and says, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." But if you reply to that gracious Word, "I am willing to accept the

pardon, but am resolved to keep the sin,” His reply to you will be, “Ah, I will ease Me of My adversaries, and avenge Me of My enemies.” If you refuse and rebel, there is no mercy for you, but the sword shall devour you, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it!

II. Thus have I reasoned upon one point. Let me now go further and declare that IT IS MOST REASONABLE THAT MAN SHOULD SEEK PURITY OF HEART. You ask for pardon and forgiveness—and in return God says to you, “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes, cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow.” Is there not reason in this command? You practically say, “Lord, enter into amity and peace with me.” The Lord replies, “There is no peace to the wicked: only as you become renewed in nature can there be any peace between us.”

Do you dare to ask God to commune with you while you are a lover of sin? Can two walk together except they are agreed? What communion has Christ with Belial, what fellowship has light with darkness? You cannot have amity with God till the evil of your doings is put away from before His eyes and this He will enable you to do. Do you refuse the work of His Grace? Do you decline to be purged from every false way? Then you also decline friendship with God! You ask the Lord to make you His child. When you pray, you call Him, “Our Father, which are in Heaven,” but do you not see that it is unreasonable to expect to be enrolled in His family and yet remain the servant of Satan?

What would the world say? “If this is one of God’s children, what a Father He must be who has such a family!” As it is, the faults and imperfections of the Lord’s children often cause men to blaspheme His name. But at any rate, His *children* desire to be clean from sin and He has not a child in the world that is in love with evil! This is one of the marks of His children—that they hate iniquity and that sin is a plague and burden to them. John says, “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whoever does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother.”

Shall the drunk, the liar, the oppressor, the revengeful, the pitiless, the greedy, the dishonest be called the sons of God? Shall fornicators and persons of unclean lives be called His children? True, He takes such into His household, by His mighty Grace, but He washes, cleanses and sanctifies them, making them new creatures in Christ Jesus. He receives them while they are sick with sin, but it is in order to their *healing* and if that healing is refused, they cannot become His children at all. You have asked to be a disciple of Christ in your prayers. I ask you again, how is it reasonable that you should be recognized as a disciple of Christ if you will not imitate His Character and if you do not desire to obey His commands?

This man a disciple of Christ? And yet he remains an habitual drunk, or carries on a dishonest trade, or lives in unchastity? Can he really be a Christian? Every hallowed name forbids it! Such a man is a servant of the devil, not of Jesus! You are the servant of whom you obey—there is no mistake about that matter. He that does sin is the servant of sin. If you

yield yourselves unto evil, then you are the servants of evil and the wrath of God abides upon you! Often, too, you pray the Lord to take you to Heaven when you die and yet you intend to remain in your sins. Why this folly? Are you devoid of thought? What? Carry your sins into Heaven? Carry Hell into Heaven?

Man, woman, have you any reason left in you to expect God to have it so? Shall even His own courts, where His Glory blazes forth with ineffable splendor, be defiled with that which His soul abhors? Shall His enemies be admitted to insult Him to His face in His own palace? It cannot be! Holiness will never allow such an intrusion! Heaven's portals are guarded by Omnipotence and cannot be invaded by His enemies—

***“Those holy gates forever bar
Pollution, sin, and shame;
None can obtain admission there
But followers of the Lamb.”***

Now, my Hearer, let us reason together, in God's name, while the Word of the Lord shows you what it is you must be willing to become as the result of salvation. Look at the portrait drawn by Isaiah—it pictures the truly pardoned man's life towards his fellow man. It sets him forth in those lovely colors in which the Spirit of God has adorned him. Read the 16th and 17th verses. The pardoned man has, by Grace, been washed and made clean. His life is pure, upright and commendable. He has put away the evil of his doings from before God's eyes, that is to say, he not only shuns open sin before the eyes of man, but he hates that, also, which is only seen by the eyes of God. He desires to be cleansed from secret faults and to be pure within.

He has also, by Grace, been led to cease to do evil. He breaks off his sins by righteousness and flees from unholy habits. At the same time he learns to do well—he is not *perfect* yet, he is a scholar and he is learning—but with all his heart he studies to be practically holy and by Divine teaching he is instructed in righteousness. He seeks judgment and desires to deal faithfully with all, to be honest and upright and to walk in all integrity, true to the word he speaks, even when it is to his own loss. He counts his simple word to be as binding as another man's oath and scorns to profit by a falsehood. Nor is this all, the Grace of God teaches him to love his neighbor as himself and, therefore, he relieves the poor and oppressed and is the generous friend of the fatherless and the widow. In almsgiving and deeds of Christian love he abounds.

Here is the portrait. Do you admire it? Do you wish to be made like it? God's Grace is willing to make you this! Are you willing that it should operate upon you? If, on the other hand, your hard heart cries out, “No, I want pardon and peace, but I do not wish to be renewed in heart,” then the reply is—there is no peace for you. You are not to be saved by, or for, your good works, but God's salvation brings these to those in whom it works. God will not separate sanctification from justification, nor free remission from regeneration. Pardon must be followed by purity and Grace by the Graces. If any man will be forgiven his sin, he must also be re-

newed in nature and submit to be molded into the blessed likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you been made willing that such should be your case?

III. IF THE SINNER REMAINS IMPENITENT IT IS MOST UNREASONABLE FOR HIM TO LAY THE BLAME OF HIS NOT BEING FORGIVEN UPON THE CHARACTER OF GOD, FOR GOD IS READY TO FORGIVE. Those who impute an unforgiving spirit to the Lord, lie, and know not the truth. God gives the master argument to confute that slander by saying—“Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

He is both willing and able to forgive! He is prepared to remove the ingrained sins of our nature. Scarlet dye was fixed in the very wool of the fabric before it was made up and so is sin inwrought into our being. We were sinners by nature before we were sinners by practice—but this deep-seated stain of our nature He is able to remove, so as to make us white as snow! Though your sins should be double-dyed as crimson was, though you should have sinned again and again and again, multiplying your transgressions, yet He is able to cleanse you!

And though you should have continued long in sin, as the scarlet cloth lies long in the dye, and though your sins should be glaring and startling as scarlet and crimson colors are, yes, though they should be imperial sins, as though you had put on a royal robe to defy the Sovereignty of God, yet even *these* shall be forgiven perfectly by His Grace! Not only shall some of the more glaring color be taken out of our character, but the scarlet shall be white as snow and the crimson, red as it was, shall be as wool! And all this by the free, unmerited Grace of God! There is perfect pardon to be had by the most vile transgressor—immediate and irreversible pardon is freely given according to God’s infinite mercy and abounding Grace to the very chief of sinners!

He waits to bestow mercy on the sons of men and, therefore, if you do not have it, it is not because God is hard to appease. He delights in mercy! To the ends of the earth He proclaims, “Let us reason together, though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”

IV. Here is the last point upon which we will argue. IT IS A REASONABLE THING THAT GOD SHOULD DEMAND, WITH THIS PARDON, OBEDIENCE TO HIS COMMAND. And what is that command? It is, “If you are willing and obedient you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel the sword shall devour you.” Great Lord, it seems most strange that men should be unwilling to be saved from their sins and unwilling to follow the direction of perfect love! Yet, so perverse is human nature, that till Your Grace makes men willing, they will never lay hold upon Your abounding mercy and transcendent forgiveness, but prefer to abide in their sins.

Sinner, here is the great question—“are you willing?” Willing for what? I am willing to be saved from Hell.” Ah, who is not? What criminal is not willing to be saved from prison or the gallows? Are you willing to be saved from *yourself*, to be saved from *loving the sin* which now enthralls you? To

be saved from finding pleasure in the unholiness which now enchants you? To be saved from the indulgence of evil passions which tyrannize over you? To be saved, in a word, from SIN? Are you willing?

Some say that they are, but when it comes to the test and a sweet sin comes before them, like a painted Jezebel, they are bewitched by it. They fall into its arms and let Jesus go. Are you willing to give up *any* sin, for Christ, and *every* sin for Christ? The Lord demands this of you. Oh, may He also grant it to you, turning your heart of stone into a heart of flesh! May you be made truly willing to be saved from sin in God's way, that is, by simply believing in Jesus, believing in Jesus, not that you may merely get rid of the past, but be delivered from the present dominion of evil. *If you are willing*—that is the point.

His people shall be willing in the day of His power and if you are *not* willing, and live and die unwilling, you are none of His. Then it is added, "If you are obedient." Whenever the Lord saves a soul, He will make that soul obedient, for Jesus Christ will not take into His army soldiers who mutiny against His commands. "If you are willing and obedient." Obedient to what? Obedient to all Gospel precepts. "Repent"—let sin be hateful to you! "Repent and be converted"—that is, turn round to seek after other things and better things than you sought before. Are you willing to obey His command to love one another as Christ also has loved you? Are you willing to be obedient to the command, "Cease to do evil, learn to do well"?

"Oh," one says, "I am willing enough to be obedient, but where is the strength to come from?" Ah, my blessed Lord does not ask you to find the strength—for that you may look to Him! If you are willing, He will grant you the power. No, in making you willing, He has already begun the work! If, this morning, He has made you truly willing to give up sin, His blessed Spirit will never leave you till sin is overcome! Jesus is able to cleanse you from the power of sin as well as from the guilt of it. The point is this—has He *made you willing* to be made holy? Are you, at this present moment, willing to be washed and cleansed?

Do not answer this question till you have looked at it and marked the self-denial it will cost you. After doing so I fear that honesty will compel some of you to say, "I am not prepared to undergo the change which is here proposed." You know, my Hearer, that sin in some attractive form is very sweet to you, and while it is so there can be no hope of pardon for you. You think, perhaps, that I spoke sharply just now? The Lord knows I desire to speak in all gentleness of spirit, but I must be faithful to your souls and, by God's help, I will be. As I look round I am not so utterly ignorant of you all as not to know that there are some here who love to hear me preach and yet they love their sins. They know their characters are disgraceful and yet they pretend to believe that they are going to Heaven because they have a notional faith in Jesus.

Now, Sirs, when you wake up in the Day of Judgment and find yourselves deceived, you will be forced to admit that I have not deceived you. I have never preached to you that you may live in sin if you only believe in Jesus! I have never preached that you shall be saved without being puri-

fied in heart! No, the salvation which this pulpit has proclaimed is not salvation *in* sin but Salvation *from* sin, not a license to evil but a deliverance from evil! The two-edged sword of our Gospel divides between men and sin—and slays all the hopes of the impenitent and disobedient. “Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatever a man sows that shall he also reap.” “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord” and this holiness is His *gift* to you!

Deliverance from sin is not a work of the flesh, but a work of Grace! It does not spring from legal bondage, but from the gracious work of the blessed Spirit. But you must have it, you must have it! And if you will not have holiness, neither shall you have Heaven! There shall be no blotting out of sin unless there is a ransom from the dominion of sin. May God grant you Grace to be honest with yourself and honest with your God who, again, invites you to reason with Him and entreats you not to be so unreasonable as to continue in sin and, yet, expect forgiveness! He invites you to cast out that evil which is as much your enemy as it is His.

He points to this stumbling block which lies at your door and bids you will to have it removed. He begs you to come to your senses and awake from your dreams. Your past sin He is fully prepared to obliterate forever, but it is your love of sin which lies in the way. O that you would, from your heart, give it up and follow after better things! May He help you, now, to say, “O Lord, I desire to be made pure and holy. Give me strength, I pray you, to overcome temptation and walk in the way of Your commandments. I want to be holy, even as You are holy. To will is present with me. Give me also power to do that which I would. O Lord, I would renounce my old sins, my constitutional sins, my once beloved sins. I do not ask to be tolerated in any one of them, but would be delivered from every false way, for Jesus’ sake. Help me, O Lord.”

Your heavenly Father stands ready to help you, *prepared* to help you. Though you are as yet a great way off, He comes to meet you and opens His arms to embrace you. For the sake of the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus, He has passed an act of amnesty and oblivion for all the past! And He will rule over you for the future with the gentle scepter of His holy love. “If you are willing and obedient”—are you, indeed, so? May God grant you a subdued will and a submissive mind, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 1.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—176, 459, 489.**

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SCARLET SINNERS PARDONED AND PURIFIED

NO. 2354

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, APRIL 1, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 29, 1888,**

***“Come, now, and let us reason together, says the LORD: though
your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”
Isaiah 1:18.***

THERE is a quarrel between man and his Maker. It is a sad thing that the creature should have fallen out with his Creator. It is a pitiful business that those who are dependent upon the bounty of God should have rebelled against the hand that has fed them, yet it is so. Man has turned aside from the way of God's Commandments—he will not submit to Jehovah's sway.

Under such circumstances, it is an amazing instance of Divine Compassion that God should be willing to hold a conference with man. Of course the first person to ask for such a conference ought to have been the offending party. It is *man* who has offended, it is man who will have to suffer the consequence of his offenses. But, instead of man seeking God, and pleading with bitter tears, “Lord, pitifully hear me; graciously listen to me and forgive me!” It is God who comes seeking man—the offended One is first in the effort to make up the quarrel! It is He who says, “Come, now, and let us reason together.” He proposes to confer with man about the question in dispute. Admire much the freeness of God's mercy, that, after you have transgressed against Him and provoked Him again and again, He still hesitates to hurl the thunderbolts of His Justice at you! Instead, thereof, He invites you to talk with Him as to the cause of your quarrel, to reason with Him about your war against your Maker.

Surely, dear Friends, it would be a great joy to a man to hear that God invites him to a conference! He would take heart of hope from that fact. He would say, “If God had meant to destroy me, He would not have said, ‘Come, now, and let us reason together.’” When the One who possesses all power and who could, in a single moment, crush those who have sinned against Him, yet says, “Come, let us talk this matter over,” it must mean that He is moved by love and mercy. It must mean that there is yet hope for the guilty—an opportunity of man, the enemy—being reconciled to his offended God!

I think it will be wisdom on our part, sinful creatures that we are, to accept the conference that God proposes. Anyhow, we cannot lose anything by it. If the Lord says, “Come, now, and let us reason together,” He

must have some design of love in it. Therefore, let us come and return to our God, and reason with Him. I would invite any man here who is at all desirous to be right with God, to begin to think about his God and about his own ways. Surely, it is high time with some of you that you should turn to Him whom you have so long provoked! There is His Book, for instance—do you read it? Does not the dust upon it witness against you? You do not think it worth while to know what God has revealed in His Word! You treat your Maker and your Friend as if His letters were not worth even an hour's reading! You leave them utterly neglected. Is this as it should be? If you want to get right with God, should not the first step be to obey that command, "Thus says the Lord of Hosts, consider your ways"? And should not the next step be obedience to that other word, "Acquaint, now, yourself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto you"? I cannot see how it can be wise for a man to neglect his God and to despise what his Maker has to say to him. It must be wise for us to confer with the Lord about this matter. If, after the conference, we should come to a decision contrary to what is to be desired, yet we shall at least have given a fair consideration to the subject. Let us listen, then, to the gentle yet powerful voice of God, which says to us, "Come, now, and let us reason together, says the Lord."

You all know what the quarrel is about, for you heard the chapter read. You love sin—and God *cannot* and will not bless you until you have parted with it. The greatest blessing that God can give you is to part you and your sins. The salvation which we so freely proclaim is not, as some suppose, salvation at the last for those who continue in sin—it is *deliverance from sin*. The salvation which we continually preach, as the work of the Free Grace of God, is salvation from the reigning power, the raging lust of sin. Free pardon for all past offenses is presented to everyone who believes in Jesus, but the grand aim is to set you free from the love of evil and from taking any delight in sin.

Now, *evil is evil*—that which is evil towards God is also evil towards yourself. It cannot work your happiness to do what is wrong. You may think it will, but God's judgment is clearer than yours, and His Laws may be viewed as plain directions as to how you can be happy. When He forbids you anything, it is simply a warning against that which is dangerous to your soul. He has denied us no pleasure which can be called a real pleasure. He has given to us everything that is truly good for our immortal spirits and, if we follow in the way that He maps out, it shall be not only for our eternal profit, but also for our present enjoyment.

In effect, God says to us, "If you would meet with Me, you must be rid of sin, and I am prepared to help you, no, I am prepared to rid you of sin. If you desire to be free from it, My Holy Spirit has put that desire within your heart. And if you yield yourself up to Him, He will rid you of sin altogether, root and branch." So here begins the conference. The man enters into debate with God. I will suppose that he does so, tonight, and that his first declaration to God is, "*My sins are as glaring as scarlet.*" "Well," replies the Lord, "I will take you on your own ground—I will admit that your sins are as scarlet; but I will so remove them that you shall be

as white as snow.” The man, next, says, “But if all my old sins were forgiven, yet *my tendency to sin is deeply ingrained*. I would sin again as I have sinned before. If I start anew with a clean book, I shall run into debt again as I did at the first.” The Lord meets that statement, also, and He says, “Though the evil tendencies of your nature are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. I will get the stain out, I will restore the fabric to its original cleanliness, I will make the long-dyed crimson wool to be as pure as when it first grew upon the sheep’s back.”

So God meets man in two ways—He meets him, first, by the perfect pardon of sin and next, by a clean deliverance from the power of sin. Of those two things I am going to talk, tonight, pretty plainly.

I. And, first, I will suppose that I have before me someone who says, “MY SINS ARE AS GLARING AS SCARLET. How can I ever be the friend of God as my sins are so prominent? Some people’s sins are of a drab color—you might not notice them. Other people’s sins are a sort of whitey-brown—you would scarcely perceive them. But *my* sins are scarlet—that is a color that is at once observed. There is a strikingness about my sin. Nobody could miss it, the eyes are attracted and detained by it. My sins are as glaring as scarlet.” Now, what sort of sins are those that may be called scarlet?

I say, first, that they are *the filthier vices*. You do not expect me to go into a description of them. At times, the ear of the public has been astounded by revelations of the vice in this great city. It was done once till we were all sick and we are glad that it has not been done again. I pray God that it may not be. But the sin, itself, is a thousand times filthier than the exposure of it, and yet there are some hypocrites in the world who say, “What a disgusting paper!” while they, themselves, are guilty of the very vice which is laid bare there! It is the *sin* that is disgusting, not the account of it, although I admit that the recital of it is harrowing and painful. If you have been guilty of those sins of the body which destroy, not only yourself, but another, also—if, in the days of your youth, or in the riper years of your manhood or womanhood, you have polluted yourself by such vices—these are scarlet sins, such as will dog a man in his dying moments, and howl at him as he passes into the mystery of another world.

I pray God that everyone here who has been guilty of such sins, may listen to this text—and we need not deceive ourselves about this matter—there are plenty in our streets, there are plenty in our places of worship who are thought to be very good and respectable people, who, nevertheless indulge in gross vice! The Lord have mercy upon them! It is even to such that the text says, tonight, “Come, now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” The fornicator, the adulterer, the whoremonger and such like—these have committed sins that are of a scarlet hue. I say no more about this point, but I mean that such sinners as these are invited to come to God and seek His mercy, for He will make them white as snow!

There is another set of sins which are scarlet and these are the *universally condemned sins*—those sins which are offenses against the State

and against the well-being and social order of the community, such as dishonesty, theft, embezzlement in all its forms, knavery, cheating, lying. Oh, dear Sirs, there are some who talk of white lies, but there are no lies that are white—they are scarlet—and they will sink a man to Hell if they are not confessed and forgiven! Every right-minded man is ready to condemn such sins as pride and over-bearing, such sins as ingratitude to parents and treachery to friends, such sins as breaking solemn covenants and sacred engagements where one ought to have been firmly held by them—all these are scarlet sins. Some of the forms of transgression, which I shall not describe in detail, are condemned by all civilized society and, therefore, they may certainly be called scarlet sins. If I speak to any here present who have been guilty of such sins, let each man wear the cap that fits him, but let him also hear this gracious Word of God, “Come, now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet,” and that point is admitted, “they shall be as white as snow.”

There is another set of sins that I would put down as scarlet because they are *the louder defiances of God*. Some men dare to contradict Scripture, to express their disbelief in it, no, to contradict God, Himself, even to express their disbelief in His existence and, disbelieving in God, they dare to laugh at His Providence, to judge His Words and to utter criticisms and sarcasms about the acts of the Most High! Now, these are scarlet sins. Let me once know that anything is of God, and I bow my head in deepest reverence. “No but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have you made me thus?” But there are plenty, nowadays, who seem to enter into the lists against Jehovah and begin to ask Him why He acts as He does, as if *they* were the very God of God and the Judge of the Most High! Now, these are committing scarlet sins, yet the Lord says, even to such sinners, that He will make them as white as snow and, in many cases, He has already done so.

I felt great joy, yesterday, when I received a letter from one who is now an earnest servant of God, but who recalled the time, (over 30 years ago, I think it was), when he was a secularist and a very bold denouncer of all religion. At that period, I was but a very young man in preaching and he showed special spite against me. He put my portrait in his window, with certain exceedingly biting and cutting remarks appended to it. But it happened that he came to London and he must needs go to hear the man who was the object of his ridicule—and that day, in the Surrey Music Hall, God met with him! I have scarcely heard of him since then, till yesterday, when I found that he was still walking in the faith, earnestly endeavoring to serve God with all his might so as to make amends, as far as lies in his power, for the evil he had done in years gone by! Glory be to God—He can bring in those who have gone furthest in rebellion against Him—and make them to be the very noblest defenders of the faith!

I remember that John Bunyan said, in his day, that he had great hope for the next generation, and he gave a very curious reason for that hope. He said that there was no age in which there were so many blasphemers

and blackguards as were then living and he reckoned that if God saved them, they would make the finest saints in the world and he, therefore, hoped that the next generation would be far ahead of any that ever had been before because that generation was so far behind in morality than any that had preceded it! God often takes the raw material of a great sinner and transforms him, by His Grace, into a great saint! Such a man loves much because he has had much forgiven. Scarlet sinners, then, are those God-defiers who will not have Him to reign over them—and who tell Him so to His face! These are they who, when they come to Christ, shall find that He will make them as white as snow.

Scarlet sins, again, may consist in *long-continued dissipations*. I do not like drawing these terrible pictures, but I cannot help it if I am to be faithful. There are some men who, having the means, will go into sins from which the poor are happily preserved—drink and debauchery—followed up month after month and year after year. Sin is persevered in as though the men were resolved to be ruined, going over hedge and ditch to Hell, stopped, perhaps, for a moment, by an earnest address, but shaking off all good impressions with an awful determination to go on to their eternal destruction! We know some such who do not *occasionally* fall into sin, but who *continue* in it, whose life becomes, as far as they can make it, a series of rebellions against everything that is pure, true and right! Do I address any such young man or any such woman tonight? If so, you are a scarlet sinner and I commend to you this gracious text, “Come, now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”

This scarlet glaringness is also seen in *repeated transgressions*. When a man sins once and then abandons the sin, one does not think so much of it as of those who, having sinned once, sin again, and again, and again, and again, and again. Oh, that poor moth, it comes into my study and flies at my lamp! It has burnt its wings and it falls down. I endeavor to catch it, to put it away, but before I can reach it, up it flies again at the lamp! It has burnt itself worse, this time, it is in anguish with those scorched wings, but the moment that it can summon enough strength, it flies up again! And there are some people just like that, singed and burnt by their own iniquity, yet returning to it as the dog returns to his vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mud. Now, a sinner cannot act like that without coloring his sin to a very high degree of scarlet and making it most offensive to God. Yet, if it is so with any of you, the Lord still bids you come to Him and He will make you white as snow!

Once more, I think that the scarlet hue will be discovered in *any act of sin which is distinctly deliberate*. There are sins into which men are hurried by strong passions in a moment and these are grievous enough, but when a man will take a week, a month, or even longer to concoct some evil scheme, arranging all the details, laying traps, setting snares, spinning webs to effect an evil purpose, this is a scarlet sin! When the element of *deliberation* enters into sin, it becomes a crime of malice aforethought for which it is hard to find mercy. Yet I venture to say that if

anyone here has been guilty of such a sin and it comes to his mind, just now, I would urge him to confess it and come to the Lord for forgiveness, for He says, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." This is the top and bottom of the whole matter. O you scarlet Sinners, the greatness of your guilt need not keep you back from God! O you who have transgressed beyond all bearing and past all bounds, you may yet be forgiven! God is able to blot all your sin out in a moment, so that there shall be nothing in His Book against you and the scarlet shall become as white as snow!

Do you want to know how this can be done? It is through the great atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His Son, who, on Calvary's mountain, bore the wrath of God in our place that God might be able, with justice, to forgive the sins of all men who trust in Christ's Atonement. Understand, then, that is the method of making scarlet sinners as white as snow! The bleeding Savior and He, alone, performs this miracle of mercy! This is true—and if you will come and seek your God, confessing your sin and accepting the great Sacrifice of Christ—your scarlet sin shall cease to be and you shall become as white as snow!

Oh, this is the best news that ever tongue had to tell! But when I get home, tonight, I shall lie abusing myself to think that I did not tell it better! I never tell out the story of Free Grace and dying love to my heart's content—the thought comes to me, afterwards, "Why did you not put it better? Why did you let those people come and go, and not speak more to their hearts?" Ah, dear Friends, I would do so if I knew how! But I have scarcely begun to learn to preach, yet, as I want to! Still, I do tell this old, old story to you great sinners, you crimson sinners—if you trust Jesus, your sins shall not damn you! If you come to Christ, your sins shall be all put away forever! It is your unbelief, your staying away from God, your continuance in sin that will destroy you—but not the greatness of your guilt—for the Lord is willing to blot out your sins like a cloud, and to do it *now*, if you will only trust His dear Son!

II. But I must not forget that there is a second difficulty. The man of whom I first spoke, also says, "ANY TENDENCY TO SIN IS DEEPLY INGRAINED."

He says, "If all my scarlet sins were forgiven, yet I am afraid I would not be all right, even then." Why not? "Because," he says, "I feel impulses within me towards evil which, I think, are stronger than in anybody else." Well, Friend, I will take you on your own ground. I believe that there are some persons who have a greater *hereditary tendency to some sins* than others have. It is unquestionably true that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation. Anybody who studies human nature cannot help discovering that the child of the drunk has a greater tendency to drink than the child of the sober man. And children born as the result of lust are more inclined to that vice than others who are the offspring of virtuous, godly people. It is no doubt so, but what I have to say to you is that if you have sprung from an ancestry of drunks, if right straight up you cannot find a good man in all your

pedigree, still, though your sins are red like crimson, they shall be as wool!

God knows how to effect this transformation by the working of the Holy Spirit. Is that a new word to you? Well, then, let me remind you that the Holy Spirit is the third glorious Person of the blessed Trinity in Unity. And the Holy Spirit can come and remove from you the taint of heredity so that you shall be able to overcome this special tendency of yours—and you shall be preserved from those sins which run in your blood, which are in your constitution through your birth. God can help you! He that made the watch can mend it. He that made *you*, can set you right, again! You are still within the reach of Divine Omnipotence, whoever your father or your mother may have been! I take you on your own ground, not discussing the question with you for a moment.

“Oh!” says another, “I would not mind about hereditary tendencies, but my difficulty is that I have been *habitually committing sin*.” And oh, I admit, my dear Brothers and Sisters, that it is an awful thing to get caught in the meshes of an evil habit! When you first sin, or after you have sinned a few times, it is like a cobweb all around you and you cannot easily get clear of it. That cobweb soon comes to be a net and it is not easy to cut your way out of it and, after a time, the cords become bands of iron and steel—and what are you to do, then? How can you break loose from such chains? The habitual drunk—how shall he tear himself away from the cup that is ruining him? The man who has fallen into vicious habits, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” If so, then he that is accustomed to do evil may learn to do well. But the Holy Spirit will help you to break off every sinful habit at once. I have known Him do it with many. I have especially noticed this—that swearers, and it is somewhat curious to note this fact, men who had for years never spoken without an oath—when they have been converted, from that moment they have never been tempted to utter an oath during the rest of life, such clean riddance can the Holy Spirit make of that habit! Some other sins cleave to a man and make their presence felt, at times, but when the Holy Spirit comes in, He drives out these old habits and forms new ones. “The expulsive power of a new affection” is very great—and when the Spirit of God puts the love of Christ into the soul in the place of the love of sin—that new affection drives out the old habits and the man is set free, even, from sins in which he has long indulged!

You know that scarlet and crimson are colors very hard to get out of any fabric. Neither the dew, nor the rain, nor any ordinary processes of bleaching will get out the scarlet. I have heard that certain old rags cannot be used for anything except making red blotting paper because you cannot get out the color which the material takes in—and as to anything crimson, you might destroy the fabric before you could possibly extract the dye. But God knows how, without destroying the fabric, to take out 50 years of crimson habits and not leave a stain behind! He can make you perfectly pure and clean! He can make you a new man—your flesh shall be as the flesh of a little child—I mean that your whole conduct will prove that you have been born again!

I heard a third person say, "But, my dear Sir, the trouble with me is that I have such *feeble mental resistance to evil*. I am so weak, such a poor fool." Well, you are not much of a fool if you know you are! The biggest fools are those who never know that they *are* fools. Still, there are people of this kind. I will try to describe you. You really are not altogether a bad sort of fellow and when you are convinced that a thing is wrong, you feel very sorry, and you say to yourself, "I will give that up." But there is a certain individual who has a kind of key that fits you and whenever he comes this way, he winds you up just as he likes. I do not know who the individual is. Perhaps it is a, "she," not a, "he," but, whoever it is, he or she can turn you any way. You are such a silly sort of person that if two or three people come round you and try to get you to do what is wrong, you cannot say, "No," to them. You have not learned that little word yet! Your mother did not teach it to you and your schoolmaster did not teach it to you and, I am afraid that I cannot teach you to say, "No," either.

It is a very difficult word for some people to utter. They say, "N-n-n," and it ends in—"Yes." The power to say, "No," is a mighty power, and it is an awful thing when a man has fallen into ways of sin, when he is weak and irresolute, and somebody twists him whichever way he pleases. Now, dear Friend, if you will come and reason with God, and yield yourself to the power of the Holy Spirit, as I pray you may, He will put a backbone into you. He will make you resolute and firm. I have known some young men who at first quite pained me with their lack of resolution, but who, by the Grace of God, have become almost doggedly obstinate. Oh, what grand old Puritans some men have made who once had no will of their own! We want the Lord, nowadays, to make a lot of people with backbones—very few of that kind have appeared, lately, but He can make them, by His Grace. Oh, you molluscous young fellow, you who have no more strength in you than a snail out of its shell, God's Grace can make a real man of you and you shall know the Truth of God—and the Truth shall make you free, and you shall be able to stand up and say, "No," and you will even—

***"Dare to be a Daniel!
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!
Dare to make it known!"***

God will help you to do even *that* if you yield yourself to Him.

Still, perhaps I have not quite hit the nail on the head with all of you. Some are *entangled by their circumstances*. A man says, "You do not know me, Sir, or else you would not think that the Grace of God could save *me*. In my trade, my business, my position in life, I am dreadfully entangled. I do not know how I am to get out of it. I am in such a position that I must earn my bread. You know, Sir, we must live." I never was very clear about that statement, but this person says, "We must live and I am in such a predicament that I do not know what to do. I know I ought not to be in such a position, but I cannot get free from it." No, my Friend, but God's Grace *can* deliver you. Oh, I have seen, in this House of Prayer, some glorious instances that I hardly dare to tell! I know one

whom the Lord saved who was engaged in a business which I could not but regard as altogether destructive to the souls of men and women! He said that he could not see how to get out of it, yet he *did* get out of it! He suffered bravely and, at this moment I can say that he is in a much better position than he was in, then. And if he had kept on with the other business, I believe he would have been ruined body and soul and that he would also have ruined thousands of others. There is nothing like making up your mind that you are coming right straight out from everything that is wrong, let it cost whatever it may! "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? "The ship is going down, and if your little boat is tied to it, you will go down, too." Up with the axe and cut the rope! When God, by His Grace, helps you to act thus, as He can and will, the entanglement of your circumstances will be over! I do not know the particular case to which I am alluding just now. I often speak of things which God knows more about than I do, and somebody is here to whom this is a message from Him. Come out, come out, at all costs! Flee from Sodom, leave everything, look not behind you, stay not in all the plain, escape to the mountain, lest you are consumed!

I think that I hear another say, "But I am a man of such *strong passions*." Yes, there are wild beasts about in the form of men and, every now and then, we come across a man with a terrible temper. He means well, dear Soul. He is always very sorry after he has had an outburst. Sometimes he says, "Well, I boil over, you know, Sir, but it is all over in a minute." Yes, but if you scald somebody, the effect of that scalding will not be all over in a minute. "Ah," said a certain Scotch lord to his servant, "You see, Sandy, I am never in a bad temper but what I am soon right again." "Yes!" said the servant, "and you are never right, again, but you are soon in another bad temper!" Well, that is an evil thing which has to be conquered. You cannot carry such a temper as that into Heaven. What would they do with you, *there*, with such fiery passions? They must be gotten rid of and I do not know of any surgical operation that can do it—you will have to be *born again*—that is the only real cure!

Then there are some other individuals who appear to be going on all right for months when an awful wind seems to blow through their souls and off they go into drinking, or into some other dreadful sin—and they say that it is all owing to their strong passions. Well, you cannot take those passions to Heaven, can you? You will have to get rid of them if you are ever to enter there! And I know of no remedy for this evil but being born again. Remember this text, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

"Do you believe in the doctrine of *original sin*?" asks one. Yes, I do! It is about the only original thing some people have and they have a large quantity of that. Yes, yes, it is so, alas! There is in us all the tendency to sin, the bias towards evil, and though I have been drawing distinctions, I must come back to this point—

***"Like sheep we went astray,
And broke the fold of God,***

***Each wandering in a different way,
But all the downward road.***

Now, there is no help against original sin but Almighty Grace, and there is no way of having Almighty Grace except through the free gift of God! This He may give as He pleases, for He has a right to bestow it or to withhold it, but He promises to give it to all who come humbly confessing their sin and casting themselves, by faith, upon Jesus Christ, His Son.

Thus, you see, I have shown you that the guilt of sin can be put away by the blood of Jesus, and the power of sin can be subdued by the Holy Spirit. Every provision is made for the salvation of the man who desires to be saved. Come then, and hear how God has met your difficulties—“Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” God bless you all, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
*Isaiah 1:1-20.***

May we be instructed of the Holy Spirit while we read this Inspired Scripture!

Verse 1. *The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw*—Prophets were called *seers*—they *saw* what they were called to say and every true preacher of Christ must first be a seer of Christ. He must see, that is, realize for himself, and then he must tell others what he has seen. This Book is about “the vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw”

1, 2. *Concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the LORD has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me.* It is an appeal of God to inanimate creation to bear witness to the ingratitude that He had received, as if it were of no longer any use to speak to men. The appeal is stated very solemnly and impressively, “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken. I have nourished and brought up children,” cared for them, loved them, fed them, “and they have rebelled against Me.” The ingratitude of a child is something shocking—and the ingratitude of man to God is of that character.

3. *The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.* Men are more brutish than the beasts that perish! The *lower animals*, as men contemptuously call them, acknowledge the hand that feeds them, but men receive the bounty of God through long years and yet live as if there were no God at all—they feel no gratitude to Him whatever. Israel was God’s peculiar people, highly favored and greatly indulged—and this made it all the worse for the Lord to be able to contrast them and the brute creation. “The ox knows his owner and the ass his master’s crib, but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.”

4. *Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.*

Thus the Prophet spoke to the people of his day and we may say much the same to the people of our own time. The professing Church of God has gone away backward, forsaken the Doctrines of the Truth of God and turned aside from the purity of its life. God have mercy upon the world when the Church, itself, becomes thus defiled!

5. *Why should you be stricken any more?* What is the use of chastisement to such people? It is supposed that punishment is always healthy and that we grow the better for it, but God says, “Why should you be stricken any more?”

5, 6. *You will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot, even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.* The nation had been so beaten that it was covered all over with bruises and sores. It seemed to be of no use to afflict Israel any more—and there are some persons in the world who have been chastened in every conceivable way and yet they are none the better. There are graves in the cemetery where those they love lie asleep. The house that was their joy has long ago been sold and they have not a roof to call their own. They have seen themselves at death’s door by fever and by other diseases and yet all that God’s rod has done for them has come to nothing. The old Roman lictors carried an axe bound up in a bundle of rods and, when the rods had been tried, and had failed, then came the axe. And if the milder forms of chastisement do not bring men to repentance, sooner or later will come the axe of destruction! Thus the Prophet says it was with sinful Israel—

7, 8. *Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.* The land had been so harried and worried by invaders that it was little better than a poor shanty—the nation was comparable to a poor hut which the Arabs put up in the vineyard to sleep in—“As a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.”

9. *Except the LORD of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.* And this is true of London as well as of Jerusalem! If there had not been a remnant of godly ones still left, “we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.”

10, 11. *Hear the Word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the Law of our God, you people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? says the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.* These people were a very religious people, although a very wicked people. It is a strange thing when nations have become demoralized and injustice reigns supreme at the same time—ritualism and outward pomp and external religion come to the front. This is a wretched business, to give God the husks when the kernel has long ago gone. What cares the Lord for “burnt offerings of rams,

and the fat of fed beasts...the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats,” when men have left off doing that which is right in His sight? The Lord may well say to those who bring offerings to Him under such circumstances, “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me?”

12. *When you come to appear before Me, who has required this at your hands, to tread My courts? “Who invited you to come to My courts?” asks God. “Who asked you to pretend to worship Me, when you are living in sin and your hearts are not reconciled to Me?”*

13. *Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto Me. The new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn meeting.* If you are hypocrites. If your hearts are not right with God you may multiply your Church attendance and your Chapel attendance and your sacraments, but all these are only a provoking of God to anger! There is nothing in it all that He could possibly accept—He cannot endure it! He says, “I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn meeting.”

14, 15. *Your new moons and your appointed feasts My Soul hates: they are a trouble unto Me, I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you: yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.* This is plain speaking, but God never sends velvet-tongued men as His messengers. They who are called to testify for God speak out boldly—and faithfully denounce the sins of the day in which they live. Blessed be God for Isaiah and for men like he! When men are committing crimes, when they are oppressing the poor, when they are living in the daily practice of injustice, when they indulge in secret drunkenness, when their whole life is a lie, they may do what they will, but God will not hear their prayers! While we keep sin in our hearts, it is in vain for us to stretch out our hands unto God. He is a holy God and He seeks holy hearts and holy lives—nothing short of these can be acceptable to Him.

16, 17. *Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.* This is what God asks for—“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this—To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world”

18-20. *Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land: but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it.* May the Holy Spirit make us willing and obedient that we may “eat the good of the land.” And may none of us be found refusing God’s gracious invitation and rebelling against His authority—lest we perish in our sins!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—555, 567, 591.

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INVITATION TO A CONFERENCE NO. 2816

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 17, 1877.

*“Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”
Isaiah 1:18.*

THE persons to whom this gracious invitation was addressed were in a terrible condition—they could not well have been in a worse plight. They had provoked God above measure by their many sins. He had severely chastened them, yet they had not repented of their iniquities. They would not be either drawn from them or driven from them. Now the Lord seems to say that something else must be done—such a state of things must not be allowed to last any longer.

I am addressing myself to all the unconverted people who are in this congregation and to all who have not yet believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. I have to say that your condition is a very sad one and a very sinful one. You are standing out against the God of Love, refusing to submit to Him whose service is perfect freedom and joy. You are utterly wrong in your relationship to God. You are either living in complete forgetfulness of Him, or you are living consciously in antagonism to Him in unrepented sin and, therefore, unpardoned. This state of things cannot be allowed to continue—you have yourself felt that it must not. There have been many times when you have been by yourself, when you have felt that you must not remain in this sinful condition. You have even breathed a prayer to God asking that you may not continue as you now are, yet you have not had resolution enough to turn from your evil ways.

The first temptation that has crossed your path has drawn you back into the ways of sin and you still remain just as sinful as ever. Some of you are getting old and it is a long time since you received your first religious impressions. Possibly they have been repeated again and again, yet they have all come to nothing and now you are in danger of death at any moment. If you were to die in your present condition, your everlasting state would be fixed and you know it would be a state of the utmost misery and woe! You tremble at the very thought of being launched into it, yet you may be so even while I am addressing you—before the very next word that I shall speak shall have reached the ears of others of my hearers! It may never reach your ears, for they may be closed in the silence of

death. You know this, but do you always mean to go on in this way until you die? I know that is not your intention—you have, within your hearts, a secret expectation that, sooner or later, a change will come to you.

Why should it not come now? I would not like, even for a single moment, to be slung by a slender rope over the yawning mouth of a deep pit. I would not care to be, even for five minutes, in an upper room of a burning house. I would not like, even for a few seconds, to have a dose of poison in my system, although I might hope that there would be time enough to swallow an antidote and so save my life. Yet your position is more perilous than any of these conditions would be! Surely, you have indulged long enough in hesitancy, delay, questioning and promise-breaking, have you not? The Lord seems to me to say to you, “Come now, let us end this state of things. ‘Come now, and let us reason together.’ Let us talk over the matter and settle it, one way or the other, so that, if your present condition is one that is worth continuing in, you may continue in it with some justifiable arguments to back you up. But if it can be clearly proved to you that something better is to be had and *ought* to be had by you, then perhaps our reasoning together may be the means of leading you to a better condition than that in which you are just now.” May God the Holy Spirit help me to speak upon this important theme so as to reach your hearts! If it shall be so, He shall have all the glory!

Some texts need to be preached upon very often because they contain such vital Truths of God, Truths of the very highest importance which it is not easy to get into our hearers’ minds and hearts. The carpenter is not blamed because he strikes a nail many times on the head, nor because he strikes the same nail with the same hammer, for he has to drive it into the wood, somehow or other, and to clinch it on the other side. So, if one stroke is not sufficient, he must not leave his work incomplete, but must strike the nail again and again until it is driven home. We shall do well to act in the same way. If we have preached from these words before and, I daresay some of us have done so many times—[Brother Spurgeon preached the following sermons on Isaiah 1:18—*No. 366, Vol. 7—THE SILVER TRUMPET; No. 1278, Vol. 22—REASONS FOR PARTING WITH SIN and No. 2354, Vol. 40—SCARLET SINNERS PARDONED AND PURIFIED.—Read/download them, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.—and we feel quite justified in doing so again.*

Our first division is to be *an invitation to a conference with God*. “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord.” Secondly, we have *a example of the reasoning on God’s part*. “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Then, thirdly, I shall endeavor to show you that *this example of the reasoning, on God’s part, is an abstract of the whole argument*, a summary of all the real reasoning that there can ever be between the holy God and guilty sinners.

I. First, then, here IS AN INVITATION TO A CONFERENCE WITH GOD. “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord.”

The first observation I have to make upon this point is that sinful men and women—the great mass of mankind—do not care to reason with God. I am, on the whole, pleased when I find men reasoning about spiri-

tual matters, even although they argue in a foolish fashion. I mean when they raise the objections and arguments with which skeptics and infidels are usually tolerably familiar. There is a great deal more of hopefulness about people in that condition than about those who will not think at all on religious subjects!

A husband and wife had parted and had been separated for years. He, on several occasions, entreated her to meet him and talk over their differences with a view to reconciliation. She steadily declined an interview and would not enter upon the subject of their alienation. Are you surprised when we add that the fault from the beginning lay with *her*? You cannot doubt that the sin of their continued separation was hers alone. The parable is easy to be interpreted.

The great masses of men seem to want a form of religion that does not require them to think. The people described in this chapter were quite willing to bring their rams, their bullocks, their incense and their oblations—for all that could be done without any effect being produced in their hearts and lives. And there are, at the present day, plenty of persons who will pay for masses, who will attend fine ceremonies and who are very pleased to see the place of worship turned, at one time, into a theater, at another time, into a conservatory, and at a third time into a costumier's shop. They have no objection to all such external observances, for there is nothing to give them any trouble or pain. They just open their mouth, shut their eyes and take in whatever "the priest" is pleased to give them! Many people like that style of religion. They want to avoid the trouble of thinking about sin, righteousness and judgment to come. In fact, they do not want to be bothered about the whole matter. As they get their solicitor to attend to their legal business, so they would prefer to have their priest, their clergyman, their minister, to see to their spiritual business for them. As to reasoning with God and having the matter out with Him, that is not at all according to their ideas. A great many folk want somebody else to do their thinking for them—they put it out, as they do with their washing—so that somebody else may do it in their place.

But, dear Friends, this will not do! Of all things in the world, *true religion demands most serious thought.* It is a thing which has to do with our mind, heart and spirit. Even under the old Law, the command to Israel was, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." It was a matter for the heart and soul even under that old, dim, preparatory dispensation—how much more is it so under the dispensation of the Gospel whose very first commandment is, "Believe," which does not mean a blind shutting of the eyes, but the exercise of the most serious thought of which the mind of man is capable!

"Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord." This invitation to a conference with God is, next, *a most reasonable thing.* I know that there is, in certain quarters, an idea that all religion is fanaticism, that you have to believe in something or other, whether it is true, or reasona-

ble, or not—and then go ahead without thinking anything more about the matter. It is not so, Beloved. To me, the religion of Jesus Christ is as much the subject of cool, calculating, common sense as anything that I have to do with. I know many Christians who are gifted with calm, collected minds, and clear, argumentative powers, and I am certain, from my conversations with them, that they have reasoned out the truth of the things which are most surely believed by them. They have proven, to their own satisfaction, that the Word of God is a Divine Revelation to men. They have argued the matter out and they are fully convinced of the soundness of their conclusions. And being so convinced, they have ascertained what this Revelation from God demanded of them and, finding what it was, they judged that it was an act of true wisdom on their part to accept God's way of salvation. That way of salvation has commended itself to their judgment as far as they have been able to understand it. They have not pretended to comprehend it altogether, but what they have understood of it has seemed to them to afford such a solid foothold for their spirit that having reasoned the matter out, in solemn earnestness—before the living God—they have become convinced that they must believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior!

Beloved Friends, we are not afraid to set publicly before you the Gospel which we desire you to believe! The Romish Church locked away the Bible from the people—the priests did not want to have a thinking people, people who would search the Scriptures for themselves. But we earnestly exhort you to study the Word of God for yourselves! Become familiar with its words and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as to their meaning. Judge of our preaching by its agreement with the teaching of this Book—never accept anything we say simply because we say it, but bring it all to the Law and to the Testimony, for if we speak not according to this Word, it is because of the lack of the Light of God in us.

It is most gracious on the Lord's part to invite you to a conference with Him. How condescending it is for the Most High to be willing for you to reason with Him! He seems to say to you, "Come, My Friend, you and I are not agreed. There is something or other in your mind that keeps you from yielding to My love. I mean you no hurt. 'Come now,' keep nothing back from Me. Come and tell Me all about the matter." How graciously the Lord stoops down to us in saying, "Come now, and let us reason together"! "Us." It is His voice that shakes the earth with tempests, the voice of the mighty God, the Creator and Judge of All who speaks to us, worms of the dust, utterly insignificant compared with Him, and says, "Come now, and let us reason together.' Tell Me what is your difficulty. I will lay aside My Glory and will come down and talk familiarly with you that we may have this question settled."

See, dear Friends, what a proof this is of God's loving kindness and graciousness that He invites us to reason with Him! If He had not meant good to us, He would have had no reasoning with us. He would simply have said, "These people have sinned against Me—let them die. I have already sent My Son to them and they have rejected Him. They have disre-

garded My Sabbaths and despised My holy Word—why should I reason with them? They have Moses and the Prophets—let them hear them. Their fathers and mothers have reasoned with them and their minister has done the same. Now I will punish them as they deserve.” But, no, the Lord still says to you, “‘Come now, come now.’ All the reasoning of other people has failed. Perhaps the argument has not been put fairly before you. ‘Come now, and let us reason together.’ Speak out the bitterest thought that is in your mind. Let the very wormwood and gall of your enmity against Me come out, but, ‘let us reason together, says the Lord.’” He must mean well to you, dear Friends, or He would never have spoken such words as these. He could not have thought of them in anger. Designs of love must be within His heart when He says, “Come now, and let us reason together.”

I think that there is also great tenderness in my text in the use of the word, “*now*.” “Come *now*, and let us reason together, says the Lord.” God would not have you live another moment as you now are. “As I live, says the Lord God”—and He lifts His hand to Heaven and swears by Himself, as He can swear by none greater—“I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die?” The Lord has no delight in having you continue to be His enemy! It gives Him no pleasure to see your hardness of heart, or to see the consequences of that hardness of heart in the awful peril that you are running every minute that you live in sin, so He says to you, “There is the whole universe for Me to govern, yet I am willing to have a conference with you. ‘Come now,’ this very hour. Come now, do not put it off till tomorrow. I am always at leisure to reason with a sinner—whenever there is a soul that is anxious to seek Me, I am always ready to seek that soul and to welcome it to My heart.” “Come now,” says the Lord. Then, let it be now with you! God appoints this present time for His conference with us—let it be our time, too. “To-day if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.” “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

II. Now let us turn, in the second place, to AN EXAMPLE OF THE REASONING ON GOD’S PART.

We will suppose that the sinner is willing to confer with God about this all-important matter and that he goes at once to his main argument. “My Lord,” he says, “I would be reconciled to You if I could, but, alas, sin lies at the door and I am no ordinary sinner! I have broken Your commands a thousand times. I have done what I ought not to have done and I have left undone the things that I ought to have done—and there is no health in me.” Now observe the method of reasoning on God’s part.

First, *the one main ground of difference is honestly mentioned.* The Lord does not deny the truth of what the sinner has confessed, but He says to him, “Though your sins are as scarlet, I meet you on that ground. You need not try to diminish the extent of your sin, or seek to make it appear to be less than it really is. No, whatever you say it is, it is

all that and probably far more. Your deepest sense of your sinfulness does not come up to the truth concerning your real condition. Certainly, you do not exaggerate in the least. Your sins are scarlet and crimson. It seems as though you have put on the imperial robe of sin and made yourself a monarch of the realm of evil.” That is how a man’s guilt appears before the searching eyes of God.

Now see how the Lord deals with this sad and difficult case. *He Himself removes the ground of difference between Himself and the sinner.* He says, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” He does not, in our text, say how this great change shall be worked. It suffices here to give us an assurance that it shall be so. Well, then, what is the inference from that assurance? Why, Sinner, surely it is that there is nothing now to keep you away from God because your sin, which was like a great stone that had been rolled between you and your God, has been rolled right away by God! He has removed every stain, spot, speck and trace of sin by the precious blood of Jesus which cleanses all to whom it is applied. Why do you stand back, then? Surely, you cannot continue to stay in the background. If your sin is pardoned, you will rush into your Savior’s arms—the reasoning will be ended and your heart melting with repentance! And God’s Grace pouring itself over you in a flood of holy joy, there will be no longer any ground of difference between you and your God, for you and He will be truly one!

Now let us look a little more closely at this example of reasoning on God’s part. I have pointed out to you the grand outline, now let us consider the argument in detail. This will show you that *the Lord will remove the offense perfectly*—“scarlet” and “crimson” are to become “as snow” and “as wool.”

I suppose that the text implies that the sinner might say, “Lord, there is the guilt of my sin—how can I ever get rid of that? I have been guilty of transgression all my life—how can that guilt be put away? I know of nothing that can remove it. Though I should give enough of the blood of bullocks and rams to make a river, my guilt could never be washed away by it.” I remember how I asked this question of God many and many a time and I could not, for a long while, exercise any hope of salvation because the mountain of my guilt seemed to separate me from the thrice-holy God. Our text shows us that the Lord meets the difficulty, not by denying the sinner’s guilt, but by removing it! He says to the guilty one, “No doubt you are as bad as you say you are, but I will make all this guilt of yours to vanish away. It shall be cast behind My back into the depths of the sea and shall be found no more forever. The scarlet shall be as snow, the crimson shall be as wool.”

Then the awakened conscience brings forward another difficulty and says, “But, Lord, my sin must be punished.” I cannot make out how it is that some people seem to think that the punishment of sin is an arbitrary act on the part of God. I remember well when God burnt this Truth into my soul as with a hot iron, that sin necessitated punishment, that if

I walked contrary to God, if I was out of gear with Him, I must suffer, just as certainly as I should do if I were to thrust my arm amidst the wheels of a powerful engine when they were revolving at a tremendous rate. If I were to do that, I am certain to suffer, just as, in continuing to sin, I am resisting the moral Law of God and its ponderous wheels must crush me. I remember when I used to say to myself, when I was quite a lad, "If God does not punish me for my sin, He ought to do so." That thought used to come to me again and again. I felt that God was just and that He knew that I did not wish Him to be anything but just, for even my imperfect knowledge of God included my recognition that He was a just and holy God. If I could have been certain of salvation by any method in which God would have ceased to be just, I could not have accepted it on those terms—I would have felt that it was derogatory to the dignity of the Most High and that it was contrary to the universal laws of right.

But this was the question that puzzled me—"How can I be saved, since I have sinned and sin must be punished?" You see, in our text, the blessed answer which the Lord Himself gives, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." That is to say, the Lord means, "You shall have no sin to be punished, for I will so effectually remove it that there shall be none left upon you. I will be as sternly just to you as a righteous and holy God must be, yet I shall not smite you, for I see nothing in you, or upon you, which I ought to smite." O wondrous miracle of mercy and Grace!

Then the sinner further objects, "But, Lord, if You do thus pardon me at once and take all my guilt and fear of punishment away, yet, alas, there are habits of evil which I have acquired, but which I cannot conquer. I would oh, that I could be perfectly free from sin, but, Lord, how can I be? I find always within me a tendency towards that which is evil—and though I now hate the evil, yet I find the law of sin in my members warring against that better law which your Holy Spirit has implanted within me. O God, how can I ever be reconciled to You, for how can I kill these deadly serpents that are coiled up in my heart?" To this piteous lament, the Lord graciously replies, "Yes, poor Soul, your nature is all that you say. It is a nature that has been lying soaking in the crimson lye till there is no getting the stain out by any human instrumentality. This evil thing called sin is engrained in your very being, but I can take it out and I will take it out. I will conquer every propensity to sin—yes, and so utterly conquer it that the day shall come when you shall have no tendency to sin whatever, but shall be altogether delivered from it and dwell with Me in spotless and eternal perfection." Oh, how sweetly does the Lord, by promising to do all this, take away from the sinner the great barrier that stood between him and his God! Thus, the guilt, the penalty and the power of sin shall all be removed.

Now give me your most earnest attention, for two or three minutes, while I remind you that although it is not in our text, yet, in other parts of God's Word the Lord has been pleased to tell us how He works this

great change. I like you to understand, as far as you can, how it is worked, though, mark you, many have been saved who have not understood very clearly how their salvation was accomplished. They have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. They have not comprehended as much as it is well that you should comprehend, but yet, simply trusting in Jesus, believing that the promise of Grace was true, they have proved it true to them.

But listen. God has told us how He can put our guilt away. Most of you know “the old, old story,” yet, perhaps, as I tell it once again, God the Holy Spirit may enable some people to understand it who have never understood it before. I know that there are some of us who heard the Gospel preached very plainly for many years, yet we did not understand it till, one day, when the familiar story was being told to us yet again, in much the same language as before, God the Holy Spirit let the Light of God into our dark minds and we saw Jesus as our own dear Savior and rejoiced in Him with unspeakable and glorious joy!

Now, this is how God puts away our scarlet and crimson sins. His Son, His only-begotten and well-beloved Son came down from Heaven, took upon Himself our nature and became a Man. And being found in fashion as a Man, He stood as the Substitute for all who should ever believe in Him, so that God regarded Him as the Representative of all those for whom He stood as Surety—and laid upon *Him* all their sin. And when it was laid upon Him, it was no longer upon them, since it could not be in two places at the same time. So the sin of Christ’s people was removed from them and put upon Him, according as it is written in the Old Testament, “The Lord has laid on Him (“caused to meet upon Him”) the iniquity of us all.” And in the New Testament, “For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

The sin being, by imputation, laid upon Christ, God the Father proceeded to deal with Christ on account of that sin as though He had been the actual sinner. He was brought up, charged, condemned and put to death—and He died deserted of His Father, crying, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” And that agonizing death of His—God tells us that it is so, therefore we may well believe it—has vindicated the justice of God, magnified the Law and made it honorable. And now God, for Christ’s sake, can—no, more, He *does* blot out the sin of all His people and make it cease to be, seeing that it is a rule of His never to punish the same offense twice. So, if Christ was punished for my sin, I can never be punished for it. For, as Toplady truly sings—

***“Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at My bleeding Surety’s hand,
And then again at mine.”***

If you, my Friend, whoever you are, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, I am able to assure you, beyond all doubt, that He bore your sin, carried your sorrow and discharged your debt and that, therefore, you are forever clear! Do you not see how reasonable all this is? Perhaps you raise a difficulty and ask, “But why should Christ stand in my place? Where is

the justice of punishing the Innocent, and letting the guilty go free?" Ah, that is a wonder of distinguishing Grace that we cannot comprehend! When the angels fell, they fell one by one, each one sinned and rebelled as an individual, but when you and I fell, it was in our representative head, Adam the first. Therefore it became possible, since we originally fell in one Adam, that we could be raised on the same principle through another Adam and, lo, Jesus Christ, the Second Adam in whose loins lay all His elect ones, even as the whole human race lay in the loins of the first Adam, has come and, instead of all who are in Him, suffering, He has suffered in their place upon a strictly righteous principle. At any rate, you need not question the rightness of the principle—if God approves of it, if it satisfies Him, it may very well suffice for you! If the system of salvation by substitution meets the claims of eternal justice, it should certainly content you. O poor Soul, trust in the blood of Jesus and your sins shall all vanish through His substitutionary Sacrifice!

Listen again. Something was said, just now, about evil habits that were to be put away. How is that to be done? The moment you believes in Jesus—at that very instant the Holy Spirit entirely changes your nature! There is then born in your soul, a new principle—the spirit, something far superior to the natural soul—a spirit which understands and has to do with spiritual things. This is what our Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." And this new spirit within you is the Spirit of Christ! It is a living and eternal principle which will follow after holiness and which cannot sin because it is born of God. Do you not see, then, how your old habits will be broken? You will be a new man and you will be able to say with the Apostle, "We are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God." This is what God will do with you—your scarlet and crimson sins shall vanish because you are born-again—made "a new creature in Christ Jesus."

I do not know whether I am putting this matter plain enough for all of you to understand it, but I know that there was a time when I was very anxious about my soul, when I would have been very thankful to have heard such plain talk as this rather than a fine sermon that would have been of no service to me in my sad condition. And I say to you, young man, you who are troubled because of your sin, that if you believe in Christ Jesus, His atoning Sacrifice will take all your guilt away and the Holy Spirit will come and dwell within you—and so enable you to conquer every sinful propensity, and your life shall, from this time forward, become "holiness unto the Lord." "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord." And is not this grand reasoning when your greatest difficulties are thus swept away by His almighty Grace?

III. I must, however, finish by briefly showing you that THIS EXAMPLE OF REASONING IS AN ABSTRACT OF THE WHOLE ARGUMENT.

I do not know the particular condition of everybody now present, but I do know that all possible cases are covered by the Divine invitation given in this one verse of Scripture.

Possibly, somebody says, "I do not need to be saved." My dear Sir, I am not speaking about such a case as yours, for you refuse to reason—there is no sense or reason in you. "But," says another, "I do not intend to yield to the Gospel." That is another case in which there is no reasoning and no reason. You simply say, "I do not want to have anything to do with Christ." Well, if so, you have only yourself to blame for your fatal decision! Your destruction, when it comes upon you, will rest upon you alone and, amidst the flames of Hell, as you bite your tongue in anguish, you will not be able to charge your ruin upon God, or upon the preacher who is now addressing you. You put the Gospel of Jesus Christ away from you, counting yourself unworthy of it—and if you continue to do so, there remains nothing for you but to perish forever and ever!

But there are some people of another kind and these have various difficulties in coming to Christ. One says, "I have been too great a sinner." That difficulty is fully met here—"Though your sins are as scarlet." Granted that they are scarlet, "they shall be as white as snow." "But I have sinned so long." Very well, that case is also included here—"though they are red like crimson." These two colors, scarlet and crimson, are often made to lie a long time and soak till the very warp and woof of the cloth has taken the dye. Well, you are like that, but, though it is so with you, God will make you "as snow" and "as wool"!

"Oh, but I have sinned against a great deal more Light than most people have!" No doubt that is true. I do not deny it and that certainly increases your guilt, but my text covers your case—"though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." "Ah, Sir, but I have resisted the Holy Spirit," says another. Granted, but, "though your sins are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

"I fear," says yet another, "that the Holy Spirit has left me, for I have so sorely grieved Him." Read the verse following our text—"If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land." Now, if you are willing to be saved and willing to be obedient to that Divine command, "Believe and live," the Holy Spirit has not left you! As long as you have any feeling whatever, you have not committed the sin which is unto death, for, if you had committed *that* sin, you would have been utterly unmoved and careless—and no thought of Divine things would come across your mind again.

Oh, you may tell me what you like about yourselves, but my text meets your case! You may be a harlot, Sister—give me your hand, just as you are, and listen to these words of God, Himself, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." If there were a murderer here, red-handed from his crime, his sin would, evidently, be scarlet and crimson, yet, my Brother, yes, even your hand would I take and I would say to you, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." If you believe in Jesus Christ, that is, if you trust Him with your soul, if you will accept God's way of salvation, which is ceasing to try to save yourself

and yielding yourself to be saved by Jesus only, you shall be saved here and now!”

I cannot get out to you all that this text keeps on saying to me. It is singing in my soul! I can hear the music of it even if you cannot. I only wish that you might do so. Sometimes, when I am preaching, I feel like a butcher at the block—cutting off large roasts of meat for others and getting nothing himself. But just now I am feeding on the text myself—I only wish I could make every soul here feel hungry after it, for it is yours as much as it is mine—as you, too, are a sinner against God. Perhaps I am addressing someone who says, “I do not see any need to reason with God.” Friend, let your condition of mind startle and alarm you! A man who is not right with his God may be sure that there is something wrong with his soul. And if this grandest of all possessions—the possession of God Himself—does not seem to you to be pre-eminently desirable, it is because your eyes are blinded and your heart is dead to the things of God and you are in “the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” It is because you are of the earth, earthy, that you find your pleasure in the things that you can see, feel, taste, and hear. It is because you are carnally minded and have never been renewed in spirit, that you are thus content with what will do you no good!

Do you know what will become of you if you continue as you are? You are born of the flesh and that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and flesh will go to corruption one of these days—and that is what you will go to, to corruption, the worm that never dies and the fire that shall never be quenched! There is only one way to keep in check the hurtful, horrible corruption that grows out of carnal mindedness. “You must be born-again.” “You *must* be born-again.” There are some things that may be or may not be, but you “*must* be born-again,” for, unless you are born-again, if you could go to Heaven, it would not be Heaven to you! And if God gave Himself to you, you could not enjoy Him. You must be born-again! Oh, let that, “*must*,” impress itself upon your mind and heart—and rest not, O dear Hearer, until you are born-again! This is the work of the Spirit of God upon you and, side by side with it runs that other text, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” May you be enabled by the Spirit to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! Then you will be born-again—no longer will you be under condemnation, but, as a spiritual man you will delight in spiritual things—and, chiefly, you will delight in God and He will make my text true to you, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Pray David’s prayer and you will receive a gracious answer from the Lord even as the Psalmist did, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

I have done with my text for this time, yet I have half a mind to linger a minute and say, “Come now, if you have not reasoned with God, let *me* try to reason with you. Let us reason together. Come, my dear Friend, can any good result from your continuing as you now are? You uncon-

verted men and women and especially you unconverted old people, can any good come of your remaining strangers to Christ?"

Let me put another question. Could any hurt come of your being the friends of Christ? Can you imagine any real loss that you could sustain by being saved? I would not tell a lie, even for God, Himself, and He would never wish me to do so, but this Truth of God I declare to you now—ever since I have believed in Jesus, the joy, rest and peace I have experienced are altogether indescribable! One thing ought to convince you of the blessings of true religion and that is that you never met a Christian yet—you never saw a dying Christian, setting up in his bed, leaning on the pillow, with his children round him, and saying, "My dear boys and girls, beware of the Christian religion! Beware of confidence in Christ! It is all a delusion." There has never, since the foundation of our blessed faith, been one who, in the valley of the shadow of death, has said, "I have discovered all this to be a fiction and I wish to warn everyone else against it."

On the contrary, they have unanimously said, either with shouts of triumph or with quiet words of peaceful trust, "Blessed be the name of the Lord! This is joy, indeed, to be found in Christ Jesus, now that I am about to depart to be forever with Him!" Let practical evidence convince you, dear people, and if there is anything real and precious about all this of which I have been speaking—as there certainly is—if it is anything worth having, it is worth having now! If it is ever a good thing to be saved, it is well to be saved at once! If it is ever worthwhile to be rid of sin, it is worthwhile to be rid of sin before that clock ticks again! If it is ever worthwhile for you to have joy in God, it is worthwhile for you to have it before your eyes have again closed in slumber!

The Lord grant that you may find it right speedily, for His name's sake! Amen.

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

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

THE SILVER TRUMPET

NO. 366

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 24, 1861,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“Come now and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”
Isaiah 1:18.***

THE chiefs of sinners are objects of the choicest mercy. Christ is a great Savior to meet the great transgressions of great rebels. The vast machinery of redemption was never undertaken for a mean or little purpose. There must be a great end in so great a plan, carried out at so great an expense, guaranteed with such great promises and intended to bring such great glory to God.

The plan of salvation has in it all the *wisdom* of God. The purchase of salvation has in it the fullness of the *grace* of God. The application of salvation is an exhibition of the exceeding greatness of the *power* of God. And all these three attributes in their greatness could not have conspired together for any but a great and marvelous purpose. At the very outset of our discourse this morning, I think we might draw a safe conclusion that Christ contemplated saving great sinners with a great salvation. To make the whole affair great there must be a great sinner—to be as it were the raw material upon whom the great wisdom, the great grace and the great power may be exerted to make him into a great saint. I think both saints and sinners have a very confined and limited idea of the goodness of God. We measure Him by our own standing. Oh that we knew the meaning of that text, where God says, “I will not execute the fierceness of My anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim. For I am God and not man” (Hosea 11:9.)

He acts in everything, not as a king gives to a king, or as some right royal heart acts towards the needy, but as a God. There is none who can come near to Him. As He is surpassing in His glory so that mortal eyes cannot behold it, so He is excelling in His love and grace, so that mortal comprehension can never grasp, comprehend, or fathom the infinity of His mercy. Keeping mercy with thousands, showing pity to multitudes—who is a God like He, passing by transgression, iniquity and sin?

My text shall at once introduce itself. It is a great text, indeed—specially meant for sinners of the deepest dye. I pray that the energy and power of the Spirit may open now the door of all our hearts that God’s mercy may enter in. Four things we will attempt to do this morning. First, we will remark that the text is addressed to *sinners of the deepest dye*. Secondly, it contains in it *an invitation to reason of the most prevailing power*. Thirdly, *it promises pardons of the fullest force*. And, fourthly, *it presents to us a time of the most solemn significance*.

I. First, then, our text is addressed to SINNERS OF THE DEEPEST DYE. Some of my Brethren are greatly scandalized by the general invitations which I am in the habit of giving to sinners, as sinners. Some of them go the length of asserting that there are no universal invitations in the Word of God. Their assertion, however, its not so forcible an argument as a *fact* and we have one here. Here is most plainly an invitation addressed to sinners who had not even the qualification of sensibility. They did not feel their need of a Savior. They had been scourged and flogged till the whole body was a mass of sores and yet they would not turn to the hand that smote them, but went on sinning still.

A more accurate description of careless, worthless, ungodly, abandoned souls never was given anywhere. We have in the context one of the most graphic descriptions of human nature in its utterly lost and godless estate. There is not a single gleam of light in the midst of the thick darkness. The man is bad—bad—bad from the beginning to the end. No, he is all worst and the worst is come to in worst. There is not a ray of promise in their nature, not a glimmer of anything good in the description of the persons to whom this text is addressed.

I call your attention, again, to the chapter which I have read. In the first verse you will perceive that the text was addressed to *senseless* sinners—so senseless that God Himself would not address them in exhortation but called upon the heavens and the earth to hear no complaint. He spoke to the firmament, to the stars, to the sun and to the moon and He bade them hear. Men had grown so deaf to God's admonitions, so utterly dead to His appeals that He refuses to address them any more in notes of warning. "Hear, O heavens and give ear O earth!" What a fine poetical setting forth of the thought—that God appealed to dead inanimate creatures, for man had become more brutish than the stones of the field. And yet to such is the invitation given, "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord."

You will readily see in the next place, that the text is given to *ungrateful* sinners. "I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me." Oh, how many of us come under this description! God was good to us in our early childhood. We were dandled on the knees of piety. We were laid to sleep on the couch of holiness. God provided for our wants. We were not born slaves, or in a tottering shed, but the dawn of our days was the rising of His merciful care. But how have we sinned in childhood and since we have come to manhood how have we violated all the admonitions of His love, done despite even to the blood of Christ and to the Spirit of God.

We have forgotten His mercies. We have kicked against the pricks. We have made the blessings of His Providence the assistants to our sin and the gifts of His grace the excuses for our iniquities. Oh, we may many of us stand here coldly and plead that we have been ungrateful to a good, a patient and a bountiful God. And yet to such is the text addressed, "Come now, let us reason together."

By reading in the third verse, you will perceive, again, that the text is addressed to men who are *worse than beasts*. We often slander the brute

creation. We speak of a man being as drunk as a beast. I do not know that beasts are ever drunk. Sometimes when a man has gone into very low vice, we say he has committed a very beastly sin. I question whether the word is at all accurate. How do beasts sin? Do they not bow their necks and wear the yoke of man, who is as a God to them? Do they quarrel with the Law in which God has said, "I have given you dominion over the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea"?

If we were half as obedient to God as the beasts are to man, there were very little sin in us. But men must feel in their consciences that they have been worse than the brutes. They have not served God as an ox has served the master. They have not recognized Him even so much as the stupid ass has recognized its crib. None of us would keep a horse for twenty years if it never worked but only sought to injure us. And yet there are men here whom God has kept these forty and fifty years, put the breath into their nostrils, the bread into their mouths and the clothes upon their backs and they have done nothing but curse Him, speak ill of His service and do despite to His Laws. He is indeed a long-suffering God when He speaks to such as these and says, "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord."

One may be astonished that there is such a text as this in the Bible, but the astonishment is far greater when you see to whom it is addressed—to men who are beneath the level of the brute creation. Oh, my dear Friends, you who fear God, never think there are any men too bad to be saved! Go to the reprobates, to the harlots, to the drunkards, to the abandoned. If God invites men who are worse than the ox and the ass, you may go and invite them, too, in the hope that the invitation shall be accepted and they may be saved. How many there are who have gone from the dunghills of sin up to the Throne of God and how few, on the other hand, have ever come out of the Pharisee's chair to mount up to the starry skies.

Look again at the chapter before us and the description of those to whom this text is addressed will become yet more full and clear. It appears from the 14th verse that they were a people *laden with iniquity*. When a man is loaded and pressed down, he can make no headway whatever. These people were loaded with such a weight of iniquity that they could not stir. Their sin had become a part of their *nature*. Like ingrained colors the sin could not be got out. If they sought to go to Christ, their sin was like a chain on their feet. If they had some thoughts of goodness, the old habits of vice soon slew those infants in the very birth.

They were laden with iniquity. They could say, "How can I be better? How can I be different? Sin has become a hamper and clog to me and I cannot move. I cannot escape from it." Yet even God says, "Come now, let us reason together." It is a dreadful thing when sin becomes not only nature, but a second nature—when the use of sin breeds the habit of sin and the man gets entangled in the meshes of an iron net from which he has no power to escape. Yet, to him, even to him, bond-slave of many lusts—chained hand and foot and straightly shut up against the power of

God—even to him is the Word of the Gospel sent. “Let us reason together, says the Lord.”

Furthermore, they were a people not only loaded with sin themselves, but they were teachers in transgressions, “Children that are corrupters.” As old Charnock says, “They corrupted one another by their society and example, as rotten apples putrefy the sound ones that lie near them.” Why, I know some men who, wherever they go, carry plagues and death about them. I have noticed that in almost every village and in every knot of society in a large town or city there is some one man who seems to be the incarnate devil of the parish. He is a man who teaches the young to drink, to swear, to commit licentiousness. He is a man whom Satan seems to have looked out to take care of his black flock in that particular district—who is a kind of shepherd with a crook in his hand, to lead the young into dangerous pastures and make them lie down beside the poisonous streams.

Yet, even to such an one and there may be such an one here—a wicked old wretch who has taken his degrees in Satan’s college, has become a Master of Belial, a prince and chief of sinners, a Goliath amongst the Philistines—yet, to such a man is this word sent today. Your hands are bloody with the souls of the young, you have kept a hell-house. You have grit up public entertainments which have debauched and depraved the young. You have gold in your pocket today which you have earned by the blood of souls. You have the fool’s pence and the drunkard’s shillings which have really come into your hands from the hearts of poor women. You have heard the cries of the starving children and you have tempted their husbands to take the drink and ruined their bodies and their souls.

You have kept a place where the entertainment was so low, so groveling, that you awoke the slumbering passions of evil in the minds of either young or old and so you shall sink to Hell with the blood of others on your head as well as your own damnation—not with one millstone about your neck but with many. “Carried away,” as John Bunyan put it, “not by one devil, but by seven devils who shall drag you down amidst the curses of the multitude whom you have deceived.”

Ah, and you, Sir, infidel lecturer, who stand up and defy the Deity, knowing in your own soul that you tremble at Him and are awfully afraid. Even to you, the worst of the worst, the vilest of the vile, twice dead, plucked up by the roots, rotten, putrid, corrupt, even to you does God speak today, “come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

Can I go any further than this? Methinks not. Still we must read the chapter through. The blessed text we have on hand is addressed to men upon whom all manner of gifts had been lost and thrown away. It is a great aggravation of our sin when we sin under the rod. If a child disobeys its parent the moment it has been punished, it is disobedience, indeed. But oh, how some here have been chastised and how little have they been profited by it. Will you, Sir, allow me to remind you of the cholera and how you escaped from the jaws of death? Do you recollect that fever and how

you were laid very low and you said then, "Please God in His mercy ever to raise me up, I will be a different man"? And you *were* a different man, for you were worse than you were before and far more hardened.

Oh, there are some of you who have, perhaps, escaped from shipwreck or from fire, plucked from between the very teeth of the dragon. Some of you have met with accidents of the most serious kind one upon another—you have a bone that is scarce set even yet—an old fracture which should jolt your memory and remind you of the goodness and mercy of God—but all this has been lost. Ah, Sir, take heed, take heed. God's justice is like the axe of the Romans. It is bound up in a bundle of rods and when the rods are worn out, then is the axe to be used. Take care—if the rod does not bring you to repentance the axe shall bring you to damnation.

If you will leap over hedge and ditch to be damned, you will come to the end of this awful steeple-chase—sooner than you think and you will find it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But to you, even to you, though years of sorrow have been lost upon you—to you this day is the message of the Gospel sent—"Come now and let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as white as snow, though they are red like crimson they shall be as wool."

Furthermore, I think that in giving this description, I shall be better preaching the Gospel than during the other parts of the sermon. Let me assure you that the invitation of the text is sent to men who appeared to have been *totally depraved from the sole of the foot even to the head*. There was no soundness in them—there could not be found a single spot where there was not either a bleeding gash, or a blue bruise, or a swelling ulcer deep beneath the skin. They were all "wounds and bruises and putrefying sores."

Are you such in your own esteem today? Are you a sinner so vile that you wonder how you dared to come where God's people meet? Do you feel as if your wounds are so corrupt and noisome that you marvel how a godly man can stand by your side, or how your pious mother can mention your name in prayer, as she still does? Have you gone so far in sin that you cannot go any further? Have you become as damnable as a man can be in this mortal life? Yet to you, vilest, most lost, most depraved, is the word of this salvation today sent, "Come now, let us reason together."

To crown all, this message was once sent to the very worst of men, for it was sent to some whom God calls "Sodom and Gomorrah." How awful were the crimes of Sodom—we would not mention it, how dreadful was the lust of Gomorrah! The ear of modesty could not hear, even if the shameless tongue could dare to speak—"Their sin went up to Heaven." It was corrupt upon the earth. It was a stench to Heaven itself. And yet to such is the invitation of the Gospel this day sent—"Hear, oh you rulers of Sodom and you inhabitants of Gomorrah! Come now and let us reason together."

They were men whose very religion was hateful to God. Men whose Psalms and songs and burnt offerings were as sins before the Most High. They had made their holy things unholy and their good things vile. Their gold was dross and their wine mixed with water. Their very holiness was

unacceptable to God. Yes, and how many there are of this sort to be found in our streets who, when they sing a hymn in chapel or church, may well wonder how God bears with their impudence in daring to sing. Who, when they stand up to pray, might fear that they should drop down dead for their hypocrisy for they never pray at home.

You have multitudes who would go now and then to church, who would keep up superstitious ceremonies and are afraid lest their children should die without being sprinkled and yet not afraid of dying and being lost themselves. Superstitions they will attend to, but the real religion of God they are careless of. Next Good Friday, what a many will go to church who never go on the Sabbath. Good Friday is an ordinance of *man* and man will attend to that. But the Divine Sabbath they will neglect.

There are many too, among the Papists, who would not eat meat on a Friday but they would steal the meat on a Thursday—there are persons who would not venture for a moment to go against the rubrics of their particular prayer book, but they will violate the Laws of God and think nothing of doing everything which God commands them *not* to do and leaving undone everything which He commands them to do.

Yet to such, to such men whose religion is a lie, whose profession is a pretense, whose very seeking after holiness is but a subterfuge to hunt after gain—even to such is the Gospel sent—“Come now and let us reason together.”

I have a big net this morning—O that we might all be caught in its meshes! There is not one of us today who can be exempt from this invitation. Not even that poor soul yonder who shivers in his shoes because he fears that he has committed the unpardonable sin —

***“None are excluded hence, but those
Who do themselves exclude;
Welcome the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude.”***

“Repent and be baptized every one of you,” said Peter. As John Bunyan put it one man might have stood in the crowd and said, “But I helped to hound Him to the Cross!” “Repent and be baptized every one of you.” “But I drove the nails into His hands!” says one. “Every one of you,” says Peter. “But I pierced His side!” said another. “Every one of you,” said Peter. “And I put my tongue into my cheek and stared at His nakedness and said, ‘If He is the Son of God, let Him come down from the Cross!’” “Every one of you,” said Peter. “Repent and be baptized every one of you.”

I do feel so grieved at many of our Calvinistic brethren—they know nothing about Calvinism I am sorry to say—for never was any man more caricatured by his professed followers than John Calvin. Many of them are afraid to preach from Peter’s text, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you.” When I do it, they say, “He is unsound.” Well, if I am unsound on this point, I have all the Puritans with me—the whole of them almost without a single exception.

John Bunyan first and foremost preaches to Jerusalem sinners and Charnock, you know, has written a book, “The Chief of Sinners, Objects of the Choicest Mercy.” But I do not care for that. I know the Lord has blessed my appeals to all sorts of sinners and none shall stop me in giving

free invitations as long as I find them in this Book. And I do cry with Peter this morning to this vast assembly, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus. For the promise is unto you and to your children, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call."

I have thus directed the letter and tried to find out the persons to whom the invitation is sent.

II. Secondly, the text presents us with REASONING OF THE MOST PREVALENT POWER.

O that God would reason with you this morning! And that you that are unconverted would be willing to reason with Him! My poor lips cannot reason with you as God can. I can but humbly and feebly be the representative of the Lord Jesus for a moment to poor trembling souls. "Come now and let us reason together." You say, "I am too great a sinner to be saved." I reply to you this—*What passage in God's Word forbids you to seek for mercy?* Here is the Book, turn it over from beginning to end and see if you can find any passage in it which says, "Such-and-such a man may not knock at the mercy gate and may not seek a Savior."

You know there are many verses which say in spirit, "Whosoever will, let him come." Why, this is a *wooing* Book. It is always inviting you. It cries to you. No, it does more. I hope that by God's grace it will compel you to come. I cannot find any passage that is a door to shut you out, but hundreds that invite you to come. Still you say, "I know I am too vile to be saved." *Has the Lord ever refused you?* Have you been to Him and sought His grace through Christ and has He said to you, "Get you gone, you are too vile"? Why then, will you limit the Holy One of Israel before you have tried Him?

Or have you prayed, have you? He has not promised to answer you consciously the first time. God always hears a sinner's prayer but He does not always let the sinner know that He has heard it. Mercy comes quickly but a sense of mercy may be some time delayed. Oh, Soul. I do assure you there was never yet a sinner that sought God and God refused him if he sought *through Christ*. I would ask you yet again—Are there any, you think, *of the damned in Hell who came there because Christ's blood could not save them?* Ask them.

Why Sirs, if any of them could say in Hell, "It was God's fault that I came here," it would take the sting out of their torment. There is not a soul in Hell that ever repented of sin. There is not a soul there that ever sought mercy through Christ and if you could perish seeking a Savior, you would be the first—but that can never be. Well, Soul, since there is no text which denies you—*come!* Since the Lord has never yet refused you—COME! Since none have been lost for want of power in Him to save—COME! COME, I pray you!

But if these reasons do not suffice you because you will put yourself out of the pale of hope and say, "I am not worthy, I am not worthy," let me suggest a few thoughts to you. Why was it that our Lord and Master, when He came into the world, chose to be born of sinful women? It is remarkable that those women whose names are mentioned as the ancestors of Christ, are perhaps, with one exception, of the vilest character. There is

Tamer, who commits incest with her father-in-law. There is Rahab the harlot. There is Bathsheba the adulteress. And yet Christ sprung out of their loins. Why this black stream to mingle in with the current from which Christ should come? Why, Soul, surely it was to show you that He was a Savior for *sinner*s. Surely if He had not meant to lay hold on the vilest of the vile this never would have occurred.

But look again—what did Jesus do when He was here on earth? Where was He taken to when a child? Why to Egypt, where they worshipped leeks and garlic and onions and such like trash, that it might be said, “Out of Egypt have I called My Son.” Where did He begin to preach? Why by the coast where the people that sat in darkness saw a great light. What was His general society? He was once in the house of a Pharisee, but how often was He the friend of publicans and sinners? And of those that followed Him, what a strange sort they were. Pick out anyone you please and there is little to be said about his previous character. These are the fishermen from the lake of Galilee, rough and uncouth. There is Peter who denies Him. There is Magdalene, out of whom was cast seven devils. There is that other woman who had been a sinner.

Who was the man whom He converted after He had gone to Heaven? There is only one case in the Bible where a man was converted *personally* by Christ after He had ascended—and that is the bloody *Saul of Tarsus* who was exceedingly mad against God’s people and was going to Damascus that he might hunt after the disciples. The chief of sinners hears the cry—“Saul, Saul, why persecute you Me?” What did Jesus do when He was dying? Did He not save a *thief*—a vile thief—one of the scum and parings of the world? And did He not say, “Today shall you be with Me in Paradise”? Ah, Souls, my Master always went where He was most wanted—among the chief of sinners.

And you know His preaching. It was a preaching that was meant for the worst of men. Look at that parable of the feast, “Go you into the highways and hedges.” Go and catch the hedge birds—the men that are looking after the linen drying on the hedges. Go after those who have not where to lay their heads—those that are filthy, ragged and something worse—go and tell *them* to come in. Not the princes’ sons, nor the great nor the good—but bring here the blind, the halt and the lame and whomsoever you shall meet and bid them to the wedding.

Why? He came to give light to the dark, to give bliss to the miserable, to give life to the dead, to give salvation to the lost. Now what have you to say to this? Methinks such reasoning should bring you to this conclusion—

***“I’ll to the gracious king approach,
Whose scepter mercy gives,
Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives.
I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try,
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die.
But if I die with mercy sought,
When I the king have tried,***

***That were to die, delightful thought,
As sinner never died."***

But I have not done my reasoning yet—for there may still be some desponding soul who says—“Yes, God may do great wonders, but I should be the greatest wonder of all.” Look here, Sinner. One of God’s ends in salvation is to honor Himself—“that it may be unto the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign, which shall not be cut off.” How does a physician get a great name? Not by curing pin-scratches. Or by setting to rights little cuts upon men’s fingers. Any old woman can do that. It is by bad diseases, by things that are reckoned to be incurable and then, as soon as the man has cured what was given up by others, he is sure to advertise in the newspapers his splendid success. “So-and-So was turned out of all the hospitals and had taken all manner of medicine—at last I healed him.”

Why, my dear Friend, if you are such-an-one spiritually, you are the most fitted to be the means, in God’s hand, of honoring His grace. See what great engineers will do! When a man makes a railway across a good, hard, gravelly soil where all is perfect, you say, “Why any person can do that.” But when Stephenson constructed the railway across Chatmoss, a moss which sucked in any quantity of materials that was put there and all was lost, yet, when the railway was at last formed across that bog, everybody said—“What a marvel!”

Then look at the great wonders of Mr. Brunei. He always liked to undertake impossibilities and carry them out. Things which staggered everyone’s conception, he would attempt and perform. We might find fault, perhaps, with the expense, but in this case, we have a God whose bank has no bottom, who has an unlimited treasury and He loves to take hold on those black impossibilities and go to work with them and show both to men and angels what wonders He can do. Ah, poor Sinner! If you are the vilest of the vile, methinks you would show forth God’s grace the better.

I cannot help quoting John Bunyan again. In his “Jerusalem Sinner Saved,” he says—“There are some of us who are God’s people whose love is getting very low and whose zeal is flagging and we are not the men we should be. Oh, but,” he adds, “if the Lord would but convert some of these jail-birds. If he would but call by His grace some of those whoremongers and adulterers and thieves and drunkards, what spirit they would put into the Christian church! What new life would be poured into us, for they are always the most earnest men when converted. And so,” says he, “I pray that some of these big sinners may get saved, that the Church may have a new increase of zeal and love from men who love much because much has been forgiven.”

If I cannot persuade, if I cannot reason with you, for my lips are poor, poor, things as substitute for God’s own voice—yet let me quote His own Words and those Words are a solemn oath. Now when a man takes an oath you do not think of doubting him, I hope. Now God puts His hand upon His own self-existence and He says, “As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live.” He does not wish your damnation. It is not His pleasure that you should be lost. He gets glory, it is true, to His justice, but He gets no satisfaction to His love if you perish.

As a father would sooner kiss his child than use the rod, so would the Lord sooner see you at His feet in prayer than under His feet in destruction. He is a loving God. He is not hard to be dealt with. Since Christ became the substitute for men, God has showed to us that He has a heart of compassion. Come back, Prodigal, come back. My Father sends me to you. Come back, I pray you. He will not reject you. Oh, Spirit of the living God, melt the heart that will not move. For sure the love of God and the riches of His grace might melt the adamant and make the solid granite move.

“Turn you, turn you, why will you die, O house of Israel? Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him turn unto God and He will have mercy upon him and to our God for He will abundantly pardon.” I leave, then, the reasoning—only adding this, as an old Divine once said and his saying was the means of the conversion of one at least—“He that believes has set to his seal that God is true. He that believes not makes God a liar.” Says he, “Sinner, which will you do today, will you believe and so set to your seal that He is true, or will you disbelieve and go on doubting and so making God a liar?” Oh, do not this evil thing, but believe in Jesus and you shall be saved.

III. I must now briefly turn to my third point. The words of this blessed text contain a PROMISE OF PARDON OF THE FULLEST FORCE.

“Though your sins be as *scarlet* they shall be as white as snow. And though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Now these colors are selected because of their exceeding brilliance. Scarlet and crimson are colors which at once attract the eye. There are some colors which a man might wear and pass unmolested, but when a man is clothed in bright colors, he can be perceived at a far greater distance.

Now some sins are striking, glaring sins. You cannot help seeing them. And the sinner himself is compelled to confess them. But the Hebrew word most of you know conveys the idea of doubly dyed—what we call ingrained colors—when the wool has lain so long in the dye that it cannot be got out, though you wash or wear it as long as you please—you must destroy the fabric before you can destroy the color. Many sins are of this class. Our own natural depravity, in fact, is just like this—it is ingrained. As well might the Ethiopian wash himself white, or the leopard take away his spots—sinners who have learned to do evil, learn to do it well.

Yet here is the promise of full pardon for glaring and for ingrained lusts. And note how the pardon is put—“they shall be as snow”—pure white virgin snow. But snow soon loses its whiteness and therefore it is compared to the whiteness of the wool washed and prepared by the busy housewife for her fair white linen. You shall be so cleansed that not the shadow of a spot, nor the sign of a sin, shall be left upon you! When a man believes in Christ, he is in that moment, in God’s sight, as though he had never sinned in all his life! No, I will go further—he is that day in a better position than though he had never sinned, for if he had never sinned, he would have had the perfect righteousness of *man*—but by believing, he is made the righteousness of *God* in Christ.

We had once a cloak that is taken away—when we believe, Christ gives us a robe. But it is an infinitely better one. We lost but a common garment—but He arrays us royally. Strangely indeed is that man clothed who believes in Jesus. Yon thief who is hanging on the Cross is black as Hell—he believes and he is as white as Heaven’s own purity. Faith takes away all sin through the precious blood of Jesus. When a man has once gone down into that sacred laver which is filled with Jesus’ blood, there “is no spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,” left upon him. His sin has ceased to be. His iniquity is covered. His transgressions have been carried into the wilderness and are gone.

This is the most wonderful thing about the Gospel. This does not take away part of our sin, but the whole of it. It does not remove it partially, but entirely—not for a little time, but forever. “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” And though today you should have committed every crime in the world, yet the moment you believe in Jesus you are saved—the Spirit of God shall dwell in you to keep you from sin in the future—and the blood of Christ shall plead for you that sin shall never be laid to your charges.

Some years ago there was a man who had committed murder. He had been, indeed, a most dreadful character. But through the teaching of a minister of Christ, he was converted to God. He had one anxiety, namely, that having believed in Jesus, he might be baptized before he suffered the sentence of the Law. It could not be effected according to the law of the country in which he then lived, except he be baptized in chains. And so he was baptized in chains. But what did it matter? He was baptized in *joy*. He knew that He who can save to the uttermost, could save even him and though in chains, he was free—though guilty before man, pardoned in the sight of God—though punished by human law. Saved from the Curse by the precious blood of Jesus. And of course, do not misunderstand me, he was *not* saved by the baptism—he was saved by the blood.

There is no knowing how long God’s arm is, these is no telling how precious Christ’s blood is—until you have felt the power of it yourself. And then you will wonder as long as you live, even through eternity and you will be astonished to think that the blood of Christ could save such a wretch as you are and make you the monument of His mercy.

IV. I now come to notice, in the last place, the **TIME** which is mentioned in the text, which is of the **MOST SOLEMN SIGNIFICANCE**.

“Come *now* and let us reason together says the Lord.” “Come *now*.” You have sinned long enough. Why should you harden your hearts by longer delay? Come *now*, no season can be better. If you tardy till you’re better, you will never come at all. Come *now*. You may never have another warning. The heart may never be so tender as it is today. Come *now*. No other eyes may ever weep over you. No other heart may ever agonize for your salvation.

Come **NOW, NOW, NOW**—for tomorrow you may never know in this world—Death may have sealed your fate and the once filthy may remain filthy still. Come *now*. For tomorrow your heart may become harder than stone and God may give you up. Come *now*. It is God’s time. Tomorrow is

the devil's time. "Today if you will hear His voice harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, when your fathers tempted Me and proved Me in the wilderness and saw My works." Come *now*. Why delay to be happy?

Would you put off your wedding day? Will you postpone the hour when you are pardoned and delivered? Come *now*. The heart of Jehovah yearns for you. The eye of your Father sees you afar off and He runs to meet you. Come *now*. The Church is praying for you. These are revival times—ministers are more in earnest. God's people are more anxious. Come *now*—

***"Lest sighted once, the season lost
Should never return again."***

Come *now*. Mortal man, mortal man, so near your end—thus says the Lord, "Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live. And because I will do this, consider your ways." Come *now*. Oh, that I had power to send home this invitation! But it must be left in the Master's hands. Yet, if an anxious heart could do it, how would I plead with you! Sinner, is Hell so pleasant that you must endure it? Is Heaven a trifle that you must lose it? What? Is the wrath of God which abides on you no reason why you should labor to escape?

What? Is not a perfect pardon worth the having? Is the precious blood of Christ worthless? Is it nothing to you that the Savior should die? Man, are you a fool? Are you mad? If you must play the fool go and sport with your gold and silver, but not with your soul! Dress yourself like a madman, wear a mask, paint your cheeks, walk in shame and make a mockery of yourself, if you must play the fool—but why cast your soul into Hell for a joke? Why lose your eternal interests for a little ease? Be wise, Man.

Oh, Spirit of God, make this sinner wise! We may preach, but it is Yours to apply. Lord apply it! Come forth great Spirit. Come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live. In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, oh, Spirit of God come forth! By the voice which once bade the winds cease from roaring and the waves lie still, come Spirit of the living God! In the name of Jesus who was crucified, Sinners, believe and live! I preach not now in my own name, or in my own strength, but in the name of Him who gave Himself for sinners on the Cross.

"Repent and be baptized every one of you." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved"—

***"But if your ears refuse
The language of His grace
And hearts grow hard like stubborn Jews,
That unbelieving race.
The Lord in vengeance dressed
Shall lift His hand and swear
'You that despise My promised rest,
Shall have no portion there.'"***

Let me dismiss you with the words of blessing. May the grace of our Lord Jesus, the love of the Father and the fellowship of the Spirit, be with all who believe in Christ now and forever. Amen and Amen.

THE INFALLIBILITY OF SCRIPTURE

NO. 2013

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MARCH 11, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“The mouth of the Lord has spoken it.”
Isaiah 1:20.*

WHAT Isaiah said was therefore spoken by Jehovah. It was audibly the utterance of a man. But, really, it was the utterance of the Lord Himself. The lips which delivered the words were those of Isaiah but yet it was the very Truth of God that, “The mouth of the Lord has spoken it.” All Scripture, being inspired of the Spirit, is spoken by the mouth of God. How ever this sacred Book may be treated nowadays, it was not treated contemptuously, nor negligently, nor questioningly by the Lord Jesus Christ, our Master and Lord. It is noteworthy how He revered the written Word. The Spirit of God rested upon Him personally, without measure and He could speak out of His own mind the Revelation of God and yet He continually quoted the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms.

And always He treated the Sacred Writings with intense reverence, strongly in contrast with the irreverence of “modern thought.” I am sure, Brethren, we cannot be wrong in imitating the example of our Divine Lord in our reverence for that Scripture which cannot be broken. I say, if He, the Anointed of the Spirit and able to speak Himself as God's mouth, quoted the Sacred Writings and used the holy Book in His teachings, how much more should we. We who have no spirit of prophecy resting upon us and are not able to speak new revelations must come back to the Law and to the Testimony and value every single Word which “The mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

The like valuation of the Word of the Lord is seen in our Lord's Apostles. They treated the ancient Scriptures as supreme in authority and supported their statements with passages from Holy Writ. The utmost degree of deference and homage is paid to the Old Testament by the writers of the New. We never find an Apostle raising a question about the degree of inspiration in this book or that. No disciple of Jesus questions the authority of the books of Moses, or of the Prophets. If you want to cavil or suspect, you find no sympathy in the teaching of Jesus, or anyone of His Apostles. The New Testament writers sit reverently down before the Old Testament and receive God's Words as such, without any question whatever.

You and I belong to a school which will continue to do the same—let others adopt what behavior they please. As for us and for our house, this priceless Book shall remain the standard of our faith and the ground of our hope so long as we live. Others may choose what gods they will and follow what authorities they prefer. But, as for us, the glorious Jehovah is

our God and we believe concerning each doctrine of the entire Bible, that “The mouth of the Lord has spoken it.”

I. Coming closely, then, to our text, “The mouth of the Lord has spoken it,” our first head shall be—THIS IS OUR WARRANT FOR TEACHING SCRIPTURAL TRUTH. We preach because, “The mouth of the Lord has spoken it.” It would not be worth our while to speak what Isaiah had spoken, if in it there were nothing more than Isaiah’s thoughts—neither should we care to meditate hour after hour upon the writings of Paul, if there were nothing more than Paul in them. We feel no imperative call to expound and to enforce what has been spoken by *men*. But, since “The mouth of the Lord has spoken it, “it is woe unto us if we preach not the Gospel! We come to you with, “Thus says the Lord,” and we should have no justifiable motive for preaching our lives away, if we have not this message.

The true preacher, the man whom God has commissioned, delivers his message with awe and trembling because, “The mouth of the Lord has spoken it.” He bears the burden of the Lord and bows under it. Ours is no trifling theme but one which moves our whole soul. They called George Fox a Quaker, because when he spoke he would quake exceedingly through the force of the Truth of God which he so thoroughly apprehended. Perhaps if you and I had a clearer sight and a closer grip of God’s Word, and felt more of its majesty, we should quake also. Martin Luther, who never feared the face of man, yet declared that when he stood up to preach he often felt his knees knock together under a sense of his great responsibility.

Woe unto us if we dare to speak the Word of the Lord with less than our whole heart and soul and strength! Woe unto us if we handle the Word as if it were an occasion for display! If it were our own word, we might be studious of the graces of oratory. But if it is God’s Word, we cannot afford to think of ourselves—we are bound to speak it, “not with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of no effect.” If we reverence the Word, it will not occur to us that we can improve upon it by our own skill in language. Oh, it were far better to break stones on the road than to be a preacher, unless one had God’s Holy Spirit to sustain him—our charge is solemn and our burden is heavy.

The heart and soul of the man who speaks for God will know no ease, for he hears in his ears that warning admonition—“If the watchman warn them not they shall perish. But their blood will I require at the watchman’s hands.” If we were commissioned to repeat the language of a king we should be bound to do it decorously lest the king suffer damage. But if we rehearse the Revelation of God, a profound awe should take hold upon us and a godly fear lest we mar the message of God in the telling of it. No work is so important or honorable as the proclamation of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus—and for that very reason it is weighted with a responsibility so solemn that none may venture upon it lightly, nor proceed in it without an overwhelming sense of his need of great Divine Grace to perform his office aright.

We live under intense pressure, who preach a Gospel, of which we can assuredly say, "The mouth of the Lord has spoken it." We live rather in eternity than in time—we speak to you as though we saw the Great White Throne and the Divine Judge before whom we must give an account of not only what we say but how we say it.

Dear Brethren, because the mouth of the Lord has spoken the Truth of God, we therefore endeavor to preach it with absolute fidelity. We repeat the Word as a child repeats his lesson. It is not ours to correct the Divine Revelation but simply to echo it. I do not take it to be my office to bring you new and original thoughts of my own. But rather to say, "The Word which you hear is not mine but the Father's which sent me." Believing that, "The mouth of the Lord has spoken it," it is my duty to repeat it to you as correctly as I can after having heard it and felt it in my own soul. It is not mine to amend or adapt the Gospel. What? Shall we attempt to improve upon what God has revealed? The Infinitely Wise—is He to be corrected by creatures of a day?

Is the infallible Revelation of the infallible Jehovah to be shaped, moderated and toned down to the fashions and fancies of the hour? God forgive us if we have ever altered His Word unwittingly—wittingly we have not done so, nor will we, by His grace. His children sit at His feet and receive His Words and then they rise up in the power of His Spirit to publish far and near the Word which the Lord has given. "He that has My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully," is the Lord's injunction to us. If we could abide with the Father according to our measure, after the manner of the Lord Jesus and then come forth from communion with Him to tell what He has taught us in His Word, we should be accepted of the Lord as preachers and accepted also of His living people far more than if we were to dive into the profound depths of science, or rise to the loftiest flights of rhetoric.

What is the chaff to the wheat! What are man's discoveries to the teachings of the Lord! "The mouth of the Lord has spoken it." Therefore, O man of God, add not to His Words lest He add to you the plagues which are written in His Book and take not from them, lest He take your name out of the Book of Life!

Again, dear Friends, as, "The mouth of the Lord has spoken it," we speak the Divine Truth with courage and full assurance. Modesty is a virtue. But hesitancy when we are speaking for the Lord is a great fault. If an ambassador sent by a great king to represent his majesty at a foreign court should forget his office and only think of himself, he might be so humble as to lower the dignity of his prince, so timid as to betray his country's honor. He is bound to remember not so much what he is in himself but whom he represents. Therefore he must speak boldly and with the dignity which beseems his office and the court he represents. It was the custom with certain Oriental despots to require ambassadors of foreign powers to lie in the dust before them.

Some Europeans, for the sake of trade interests, submitted to the degrading ceremony. But when it was demanded of the representative of England, he scorned thus to lower his country. God forbid that he who

speaks for God should dishonor the King of kings by a pliant subservience. We preach not the Gospel by your leave. We do not ask tolerance, nor court applause. We preach Christ Crucified and we speak boldly as we ought to speak—because it is God’s Word and not our own. We are accused of dogmatism. But we are bound to dogmatize when we repeat that which the mouth of the Lord has spoken. We cannot use “ifs” for we are dealing with God’s “shalls” and “wills.” If He says it is so, it is so. And there is the end of it. Controversy ceases when Jehovah speaks.

Those who fling aside our Master’s authority may very well reject our testimony—we are content they should do so. But if we speak that which the mouth of the Lord has spoken, those who hear His Word and refuse it, do so at their own peril. The wrong is done not to the ambassador but to the King. Not to *our* mouth but to the mouth of God, from whom the Truth has proceeded.

We are urged to be charitable. We are charitable. But it is with our own money. We have no right to give away what is put into our trust and is not at our disposal. When we have to do with the Truth of God we are stewards and must deal with our Lord’s treasury, not on the lines of charity to human opinions but by the rule of fidelity to the God of Truth. We are bold to declare with full assurance that which the Lord reveals. That memorable Word of the Lord to Jeremiah is needed by the servants of the Lord in these days—“You therefore gird up your loins and arise and speak unto them all that I command you: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound you before them. For, behold, I have made you this day a fortified city and an iron pillar and bronze walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against you. But they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you.”

When we speak for the Lord against error, we do not soften our tones. But we speak thunderbolts. When we come across false science, we do not lower our flag—we give place by subjection—no, not for an hour. One Word of God is worth more than libraries of human lore. “It is written,” is the great gun which silences all the batteries of man’s thought. They should speak courageously who speak in the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel.

I will also add under this head, that because, “The mouth of the Lord has spoken it,” therefore we feel bound to speak His Word with diligence—as often as ever we can and with perseverance—as long as ever we live. Surely it would be a blessed thing to die in the pulpit—spending one’s last breath in acting as the Lord’s mouth. Dumb Sabbaths are fierce trials to true preachers. Remember how John Newton, when he was quite unfit to preach and even wandered a bit by reason of his infirmities and age, yet persisted in preaching. And when they dissuaded him, he answered with warmth, “What? Shall the old African blasphemer leave off preaching Jesus Christ while there is breath in his body?”

So they helped the old man into the pulpit again, that he might once more speak of free grace and dying love. If we had common themes to

speak about, we might leave the pulpit as a weary pleader quits the forum. But as, “The mouth of the Lord has spoken it,” we feel His Word to be as fire in our bones and we grow more weary with refraining than with testifying. O my Brethren, the Word of the Lord is so precious that we must in the morning sow this blessed Seed and in the evening we must not withhold our hands. It is a Living Seed and the Seed of Life and therefore we must diligently scatter it. Brethren, if we get a right apprehension concerning Gospel Truth—that, “The mouth of the Lord has spoken it”—it will move us to proclaim with great ardor and seal.

We shall not drone the Gospel to a slumbering handful. Many of you are not preachers but you are teachers of the young, or in some other way you try to publish the Word of the Lord—do it, I pray you, with much fervor of Spirit. Enthusiasm should be conspicuous in every servant of the Lord. Let those who hear you know that you are all there—that you are not merely speaking from the lips outwardly—but that from the depths of your soul your very heart is welling up with a good matter when you speak of things which you have made, touching the King.

The everlasting Gospel is worth preaching even if one stood on a burning pyre and addressed the crowd from a pulpit of flames. The Truths of God revealed in Scripture are worth living for and dying for. I count myself thrice happy to bear reproach for the sake of the old faith. It is an honor of which I feel myself to be unworthy. And yet most truly can I use the words of our hymn—

***“Shall I, to soothe the unholy throng,
Soften Your Truths and smooth my tongue?
To gain earth’s gilded toys, or flee
The Cross endured, my God, by You?
The love of Christ does me constrain
To seek the wandering souls of men;
With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,
To snatch them from the fiery wave.
My life, my blood I here present,
If for Your Truth they may be spent—
Fulfill Your sovereign counsel, Lord!
Your will be done, Your name adored!”***

I cannot speak out my whole heart upon this theme which is so dear to me but I would stir you all up to be instant in season and out of season in telling out the Gospel message. Specially repeat such a word as this—“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” And this—“Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Proclaim boldly, proclaim in every place, proclaim to every creature, “For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.” How can you keep back the heavenly news? “The mouth of the Lord has spoken it”—shall not your mouth rejoice to repeat it?

Whisper it in the ear of the sick. Shout it in the corner of the streets. Write it on your stationery. Send it forth from the press—but everywhere let this be your great motive and warrant—preach the Gospel because, “The mouth of the Lord has spoken it.” Let nothing be silent that has a voice when the Lord has given the Word by His own dear Son—

***“Float, float, you winds His story,
And you, you waters, roll,
Till like a sea of glory
It spreads from pole to pole.”***

II. Let us now row in another direction for a moment or two. In the second place, “The mouth of the Lord has spoken it.” THIS IS THE CLAIM OF GOD’S WORD UPON YOUR ATTENTION.

Every Word which God has given us in this Book claims our attention because of the infinite majesty of Him that spoke it. I see before me a Parliament of kings and princes, sages and senators. I hear one after another of the gifted Chrysostoms pour forth eloquence like the “Golden-mouthed.” They speak and they speak well. Suddenly, there is a solemn hush. What a stillness! Who is now to speak? They are silent because God the Lord is about to lift up His voice. Is it not right that they should be so? Does He not say, “Keep silence before Me, O islands”? What voice is like His voice? “The voice of the Lord is powerful.

The voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars—yes, the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness. The Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. See that you refuse not Him that speaks. O my Hearer, let it not be said of you that you went though this life, God speaking to you in His Book and you refusing to hear! It matters very little whether you listen to me or not. But it matters a very great deal whether you listen to God or not. It is He that made you. In His hands is your breath. And if He speaks, I implore you, open your ears and be not rebellious. There is an infinite majesty about every line of Scripture, but especially about that part of Scripture in which the Lord reveals Himself and His glorious plan of saving Grace in the Person of His dear Son Jesus Christ. The Cross of Christ has a great claim upon you. Hear what Jesus preaches from the tree. He says, “Incline your ear and come unto Me: hear and your soul shall live.”

God’s claim to be heard lies, also, in the condescension which has led Him to speak to us. It was something for God to have made the world and bid us look at the work of His hands. Creation is a picture-book for children. But for God to speak in the language of mortal men is still more marvelous, if you think about it. I wonder that God spoke by the Prophets. But I admire still more that He should have written down His Word in black and white, in unmistakable language which can be translated into all tongues, so that we may all see and read for ourselves what God the Lord has spoken to us. And what, indeed, He continues to speak.

For what He has spoken He still speaks to us, as freshly as if He spoke it for the first time. O glorious Jehovah, Do You speak to mortal man? Can there be any that neglect to hear You? If You are so full of loving kindness and tenderness that You will stoop out of Heaven to converse with Your sinful creatures, none but those who are more brutal than the ox and the ass will turn a deaf ear to You!

God’s Word has a claim, then, upon your attention because of its majesty and its condescension. But, further, it should win your ear because of its intrinsic importance. “The mouth of the Lord has spoken it”—then it is no trifle. God never speaks vanity. No line of His writing treats of the

frivolous themes of a day. That which may be forgotten in an hour is for mortal man and not for the eternal God. When the Lord speaks, His speech is God-like and its themes are worthy of one whose dwelling is infinity and eternity. God does not play with you, Man—will you trifle with Him? Will you treat Him as if He were altogether such a one as yourself? God is in earnest when He speaks to you—will you not in earnest listen?

He speaks to you of great things which have to do with your soul and its destiny. “It is not a vain thing for you. Because it is your life.” Your eternal existence, your happiness or your misery, hang on your treatment of that which the mouth of the Lord has spoken. Concerning eternal realities He speaks to you. I pray you, be not so unwise as to turn away your ear. Act not as if the Lord and His Truth were nothing to you. Treat not the Word of the Lord as a secondary thing, which might wait your leisure and receive attention when no other work was before you—put all else aside—and hearken to your God.

Depend upon it—if “The mouth of the Lord has spoken it,” there is an urgent, pressing necessity. God breaks not silence to say that which might as well have remained unsaid—His voice indicates great urgency. Today, if you will hear His voice, hear it. For He demands immediate attention. God does not speak without abundant reason. And, O my Hearer, if He speaks to you by His Word, I beseech you, believe that there must be overwhelming cause for it! I know what Satan says—he tells you that you can do very well without listening to God’s Word. I know what your carnal heart whispers—it says, “Listen to the voice of business and of pleasure. But listen not to God.” But, oh, if the Holy Spirit shall teach your reason to be reasonable and put your mind in mind of true wisdom, you will acknowledge that the first thing you have to do is to heed your Maker!

You can hear the voices of others another time. But your ear must hear God first since He is first, and that which He speaks must be of first importance. Without delay do you make haste to keep His Commandments. Without reserve answer to His call and say, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.” When I stand in this pulpit to preach the Gospel, I never feel that I may calmly invite you to attend to a subject which is one among many and may very properly be let alone for a time should your minds be already occupied. No. You may be dead before I again speak with you and so I beg for immediate attention. I do not fear that I may be taking you off from other important business by entreating you to attend to that which the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

No business has any importance in it compared with this—this is the master theme of all. It is your soul, your own soul, your ever-existing soul which is concerned, and it is your God that is speaking to you. Do hear Him, I beseech you. I am not asking a favor of you when I request you to hear the Word of the Lord—it is a *debt* to your Maker which you are bound to pay. Yes, it is, moreover, kindness to your own self. Even from a selfish point of view I urge you to hear what the mouth of the Lord has spoken, for in His Word lies salvation. Hearken diligently to what your Maker, your Savior, your best Friend, has to say to you—“Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation,” but “incline your ear and come unto Me—

hear and your soul shall live.” “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”

Thus I have handled my text in two ways—it is warrant and motive for the preacher. It is a demand upon the attention of the hearer.

III. And now, thirdly, THIS GIVES TO GOD’S WORD A VERY SPECIAL CHARACTER. When we open this sacred Book and say of that which is here recorded, “The mouth of the Lord has spoken it,” then it gives to the teaching a special character.

In the Word of God the teaching has unique dignity. This Book is inspired as no other book is inspired and it is time that all Christians avowed this conviction. I do not know whether you have read Mr. Smiles’ life of our late friend, George Moore. But in it we read that at a certain dinner party, a learned man remarked that it would not be easy to find a person of intelligence who believed in the inspiration of the Bible. In an instant George Moore’s voice was heard across the table, saying boldly, “I do, for one.”

Nothing more was said. My dear Friend had a strong way of speaking, as I well remember. For we have upon occasions vied with each other in shouting when we were together at his Cumberland home. I think I can hear his emphatic way of putting it—“I do, for one.” Let us not be backward to take the old-fashioned and unpopular side and say outright, “I do, for one.” Where are we if our Bibles are gone? Where are we if we are taught to distrust them? If we are left in doubt as to which part is inspired and which is not, we are as badly off as if we had no Bible at all. I hold no *theory* of inspiration. I accept the inspiration of the Scriptures as a *fact*.

Those who thus view the Scriptures need not be ashamed of their company. For some of the best and most learned of men have been of the same mind. Locke, the great philosopher, spent the last fourteen years of his life in the study of the Bible and when asked what was the shortest way for a young gentleman to understand the Christian religion, he bade him read the Bible, remarking—“Therein are contained the words of eternal life. It has God for its Author, salvation for its end and Truth, without any admixture of error, for its matter.” There are those on the side of God’s Word whom you need not be ashamed of in the matter of intelligence and learning.

And if it were not so, it should not discourage you when you remember that the Lord has hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes. We believe with the Apostle that, “the foolishness of God is wiser than men.” It is better to believe what comes out of God’s mouth and be called a fool than to believe what comes out of the mouth of philosophers and be, therefore, esteemed a wise man. There is also about that which the mouth of the Lord has spoken an absolute certainty. What man has said is unsubstantial—even when true, is like grasping fog—there is nothing of it. But with God’s Word you have something to grip, something to have and to hold. This is substance and reality.

But of human opinions we may say, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” Though Heaven and earth should pass away, yet not one jot or tittle of what God has spoken shall fail. We know that and feel at rest. God cannot

be mistaken. God cannot lie. These are postulates which no one can dispute. If “The mouth of God has spoken it,” this is the Judge that ends the strife where wit and reason fail. And henceforth we question no more.

Again—if, “The mouth of the Lord has spoken it,” we have in this utterance the special character of immutable fixedness. Once spoken by God, not only is it so now but it always must be so. The Lord of Hosts has spoken and who shall disannul it? The rock of God’s Word does not shift, like the quicksand of modern scientific theology. One said to his minister, “My dear Sir, surely you ought to adjust your beliefs to the progress of science.” “Yes,” said he, “but I have not had time to do it today, for I have not yet read the morning papers.” One would have need to read the morning papers and take in every new edition to know where scientific theology now stands. For it is always chopping and changing. The only thing that is certain about the false science of this age is that it will be soon disproved. Theories, vaunted today, will be scrapped tomorrow.

The great scientists live by killing those who went before them. They know nothing for certain except that their predecessors were wrong. Even in one short life we have seen system after system—the mushrooms, or rather the toadstools, of thought—rise and perish. We cannot adapt our religious belief to that which is more changeful than the moon. Try it who will—as for me, if “The mouth of the Lord has spoken it,” it is the Truth of God to me in this year of Divine Grace, 1888. And if I stand among you a gray-headed old man, Lord willing, somewhere in 1908, you will find me making no advance upon the Divine ultimatum. If “The mouth of the Lord has spoken it,” we behold in His Revelation a Gospel which is without variableness, revealing “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.”

Brothers and Sisters, we hope to be together forever before the eternal Throne where bow the blazing Seraphim and even then we shall not be ashamed to avow that same Truth of God which this day we feed upon from the hand of our God—

***“For He’s the Lord, supremely good,
His mercy is forever sure;
His Truth, which always firmly stood,
To endless ages shall endure.”***

Here let me add that there is something unique about God’s Word because of the almighty power which attends it. “Where the word of a king is, there is power.” Where the Word of a God is, there is omnipotence. If we dealt more largely in God’s own Word as, “The mouth of the Lord has spoken it,” we should see far greater results from our preaching. It is God’s Word, not our comment on God’s Word, that saves souls. Souls are slain by the sword—not by the scabbard—nor by the tassels which adorn the hilt of it.

If God’s Word is brought forward in its native simplicity, no one can stand against it. The adversaries of God must fail before the Word as chaff perishes in the fire. Oh, for wisdom to keep closer and closer to that which the mouth of the Lord has spoken! I will say no more on this point, although the theme is a very large and tempting one—especially if I were to

dwell upon the depth, the height, the adaptation, the insight and the self-proving power of that which, "The mouth of the Lord has spoken."

IV. Fourthly and very briefly, THIS MAKES GOD'S WORD A GROUND OF GREAT ALARM TO MANY. Shall I read you the whole verse? "But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." Every threat that God has spoken, because He has spoken it, has a tremendous dread about it. Whether God threatens a man or a nation, or the whole class of the ungodly, if they are wise they will feel a trembling take hold upon them, because, "The mouth of the Lord has spoken it."

God has never yet spoken a threat that has fallen to the ground. When He told Pharaoh what He would do, He did it. The plagues came thick and heavy upon him. When the Lord at any time sent His Prophets to denounce judgments on the nations, He carried out those judgments. Ask travelers concerning Babylon and Nineveh and Edom and Moab and Bashan. And they will tell you of the heaps of ruins which prove how the Lord carried out His warnings to the letter. One of the most awful things recorded in history is the siege of Jerusalem. You have read it, I do not doubt, in Josephus, or elsewhere. It makes one's blood run cold to think of it. Yet it was all foretold by the Prophets and their prophecies were fulfilled to the bitter end.

You talk about God as being "love," and, if you mean by this that He is not severe in the punishment of sin, I ask you what you make of the destruction of Jerusalem? Remember that the Jews were His chosen nation and that the city of Jerusalem was the place where His temple had been glorified with His Presence. Brethren, if you roam from Edom to Zion and from Zion to Sidon and from Sidon to Moab, you will find, amid ruined cities, the tokens that God's Words of judgment are sure. Depend on it, then, that when Jesus says, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment," it will be so. When He says, "If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins," it will be so.

The Lord never plays at frightening men. His Word is not an exaggeration to scare men with imaginary bugbears. There is emphatic Truth in what the Lord says. He has always carried out His threats to the letter and to the moment. And, depend upon it, He will continue to do so, "For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it."

It is of no avail to sit down and draw inferences from the nature of God and to argue, "God is Love and therefore He will not execute the sentence upon the impenitent." He knows what He will do better than you can infer—He has not left us to inferences for He has spoken pointedly and plainly. He says, "He that believes not shall be damned," and it will be so, "For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." Infer what you like from His nature. But if you draw an inference contrary to what He has spoken, you have inferred a lie and you will find it so.

"Alas," says one, "I shudder at the severity of the Divine sentence." Do you? It is well! I can heartily sympathize with you. What must he be that does not tremble when he sees the great Jehovah taking vengeance upon iniquity! The terrors of the Lord might well turn steel to wax. Let us re-

member that the gauge of the Truth of God is not our pleasure nor our terror. It is not my shuddering which can disprove what the mouth of the Lord has spoken. It may even be a proof of its truth. Did not all the Prophets tremble at manifestations of God? Remember how one of them cried. "When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice; rottenness entered into my bones."

One of the last of the anointed Seers fell at the Lord's feet as dead. Yet all the shrinking of their nature was not used by them as an argument for doubt. O my unconverted and unbelieving Hearers, do remember that if you refuse Christ and rush upon the keen edge of Jehovah's sword, your unbelief of eternal judgment will not alter it, nor save you from it. I know why you do not believe in the terrible threats. It is because you want to be easy in your sins. A certain skeptical writer, when in prison, was visited by a Christian man who wished him well but he refused to hear a word about religion.

Seeing a Bible in the hand of his visitor, he made this remark, "You do not expect me to believe in that Book, do you? Why, if that Book is true, I am lost forever." Just so. Therein lies the reason for half the infidelity in the world and all the infidelity in our congregations. How can you believe that which condemns you? Ah, my Friends, if you would believe it to be true and act accordingly you would also find in that which the mouth of the Lord has spoken a way of escape from the wrath to come! For the Book is far more full of hope than of dread. This inspired volume flows with the milk of mercy and the honey of Divine Grace. It is not a Doomsday Book of wrath but a Testament of Grace.

Yet, if you do not believe its loving warnings, nor regard its just sentences, they are true all the same. If you dare its thunders, if you trample on its promises and even if you burn it in your rage, the holy Book still stands unaltered and unalterable. "The mouth of the Lord has spoken it." Therefore, I pray you, treat the sacred Scriptures with respect and remember that, "These are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. And that believing you might have life through His name."

V. And so I must finish, for time fails, when I notice, in the fifth place, that THIS MAKES THE WORD OF THE LORD THE REASON AND REST OF OUR FAITH. "The mouth of the Lord has spoken it," is the foundation of our confidence. There is forgiveness. For God has said it. Look, Friend, you are saying, "I cannot believe that my sins can be washed away, I feel so unworthy." Yes but, "The mouth of the Lord has spoken it." Believe over the head of your unworthiness. "Ah," says one, "I feel so weak I can neither think, nor pray, nor anything else, as I should." Is it not written, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly"? "The mouth of the Lord has spoken it." Therefore, over the head of your inability still believe it, for it must be so.

I think I hear some child of God saying, "God has said, 'I will never leave you, nor forsake you,' but I am in great trouble. All the circumstances of my life seem to contradict the promise"—yet, "The mouth of the Lord has spoken it," and the promise must stand. "Trust in the Lord and

do good. So shall you dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed.” Believe God in the teeth of circumstances. If you cannot see a way of escape or a means of help, yet still believe in the unseen God and in the Truth of His Presence—“For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.”

I think I have come to this pass with myself, at any rate for the time present, that when circumstances deny the promise, I believe it none the less. When friends forsake me and foes belie me and my own spirit goes down below zero and I am depressed almost to despair, I am resolved to hang to the bare Word of the Lord and prove it to be in itself an all-sufficient stay and support. I will believe God against all the devils in Hell, God against Ahithophel and Judas and Demas and all the rest of the turncoats. Yes, and God against my own evil heart. His purpose shall stand, “For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.” Away, you that contradict it—ours is a well-grounded confidence, “For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.”

By-and-by we shall come to die. The death-sweat shall gather on our brow and perhaps our tongue will scarcely serve us. Oh that then, like the grand old German Emperor, we may say, “My eyes have seen Your salvation,” and, “He has helped me with His name.” When we pass through the rivers He will be with us, the floods shall not overflow us—“For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.” When we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we shall fear no evil, for He will be with us—His rod and His staff shall comfort us—“The mouth of the Lord has spoken it.” Ah, what will it be to break loose from these bonds and rise into the glory? We shall soon see the King in His beauty and be ourselves glorified in His glory. For “the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.” “He that believes has everlasting life.” Therefore a glad eternity is ours.

Brethren, we have not followed cunningly devised fables. We are not “wanton boys that swim on floats,” which will soon burst under us. But we are resting on firm ground. We abide where Heaven and earth are resting—where the whole universe depends—where even eternal things have their foundation—we rest on God Himself. If God shall fail us, we gloriously fail with the whole universe. But there is no fear. Therefore let us trust and not be afraid. His promise must stand—“The mouth of the Lord has spoken it.” O Lord, it is enough! Glory be to Your name, through Christ Jesus! Amen.

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TO THE THOUGHTLESS

NO. 1059

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 7, 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“The ox knows his owner, and the donkey his master’s crib:
but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.”
Isaiah 1:3.***

IT IS clear from this chapter that the Lord views the sin of mankind with intense regret. We are obliged to speak of Him after the manner of men and in doing so we are clearly authorized to say that He does not look upon human sin merely with the eye of a judge who condemns it, but with the eye of a friend who, while He censures the offender, deeply laments that there should be such faults to condemn. “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me,” is not merely an exclamation of surprise or an accusation of injured justice, but it contains a note of grief, as though the Most High represented Himself to us as mourning like an ill-treated parent and deploring that after having dealt so well with His offspring they had made Him so base a return.

God is grieved that man should sin. That thought should encourage everyone who is conscious of having offended God to come back to Him. If you lament your transgression, the Lord laments it, too. Here is a point of sympathy. He will not meet you upon rigid terms and say to you, “By your own choice you have sinned, and now what remains to you but to bear the penalty?” No, He will rejoice when you return, even as He has sorrowed that you departed from Him! Let that thought of love be the keynote of our discourse this morning. The point immediately in hand is the inconsiderateness of mankind towards God.

Israel in this case is not so much a type of Believers as a *representative* of sinners in general. The accusation will lie against all ungodly men—they do not know, they will not consider. The greatest difficulty in the world is to make men think! I mean think about *spiritual* things, think about their souls, think about their God. You can bring them to any other point but this. They will listen to holy words, but they will not lay them to heart. They will go through a round of ceremonial performances—but to worship in spirit the God who is a Spirit is far from them! Thoughtfully and carefully to consider their way is what they will never do until the Spirit of the living God comes upon them and teaches them true wisdom.

I shall this morning speak about this inconsiderateness of men, first, as a serious fault. And then as attended in many cases with most solemn aggravations. I shall next try, if I can, to find out the secret causes of this fault and then we shall close with mingled expostulation and invitation.

I. We have to speak of A SERIOUS FAULT, common, yes, universal. “Israel does not know, My people do not consider.” Men are most inconsiderate towards God. One would pardon them if they forgot many minor

things and neglected many inferior persons—but to be inconsiderate to their *Creator*, to their *Preserver*, to Him in whose hands their everlasting destiny is placed—this is a strange folly as well as a great sin. Whoever a courtier may neglect he is sure to consider his king. Men, when they start their sons in business, will bid them mind the main chance and attend to the principal point—and especially take care that they stand well with such a man who has the power to help or to ruin them.

Men, as a general rule, are far too ready to seek the assistance of those who are in power, and this makes it the more strange that the all-powerful God who lifts up and casts down should be altogether forgotten, or where remembered should still be dishonored by mankind. If it were only because He is so great and therefore we are so dependent upon Him, one would have thought that a rational man would have acquainted himself with God and been at peace! But when we reflect that God is supremely good, kind, tender and gracious, as well as great, the marvel of man's thoughtlessness is much increased.

Every good man desires to be on good terms with the good. Unusual goodness wins admiration and an invitation to associate with the eminently excellent is generally accepted with pleasure. Yet in the case of the thrice holy God whose name is Love, it is not so. All attractions are in the Character of God and yet man shuns his Maker. If God were a demon, man could hardly be more cold towards Him. Why is this? Why should I neglect One who is superlatively glorious, who has done me no evil, but has bestowed upon me boundless good? If I reflect upon the way in which He provides for me day after day. If I remember how He spares me, notwithstanding the provocations of my sin. If I consider how He still entreats me to be at peace with Him, I may well hear Him ask me the question, "For which of these good things do you neglect Me, and on account of which of these benefits do you forget Me?"

Strange freak of the madness of sin, that it should make a man forgetful of the everywhere-present God and unmindful of the Being whose bounties are constant and countless as the moments of the day! Oh, grief upon grief, Israel does not consider her God! Then, again, man is inconsiderate towards himself in reference to his best interests. Alas, that in a matter of the greatest possible importance, involving his all, man fails to use his thoughtful reason! Most men trifle with their past history. They do not sit down and look it in the face and mark, with repenting eyes, what sins they have committed.

They are often wantonly thoughtless with regard to the present—they waste life as though it had no relation to eternity—as though time were only meant for pastime, or for earthly task work. Neither its mercies nor its judgments, nor its obligations nor its sins will they worthily think upon! But like men in a thick darkness they travel onward unobservant of the solemnities which surround them. The future, too, is equally unthought upon—the bright or the terrible future—the Heaven eternal or the Hell unending. 'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis amazing that immortal man should press on towards unspeakable misery with closed eyes, unconcerned of the wrath to come!

He will not weigh his soul in the balances of the Truth of God and learn what its end will be. A thousand voices call to him and bid him pause and think awhile, but he lashes, still, the steeds of life and like another Phaeton drives on, madly on, towards his own destruction! Man is inconsiderate towards himself. When we ask men to attend to matters which do not concern them, we are not astonished if they plead that they have little time and no thought to spare. If I were, this morning, to address you, my dear Hearers, upon a matter which affected the interests of the dwellers in the Dog Star, or had some relation to the inhabitants of the moon, I should not marvel if you were to say, "Go to those whom it may concern and talk to them, but, as for us, the matter is so remote that we take no interest in it."

But how shall we account for it that man will not know about *himself* and will not consider about his own soul? Any trifle will attract him but he will not consider his own immortality or meditate upon the joy or the misery which must be his portion. I state the fact in far too cold a manner and you also hear it with mournful indifference! This must surely be because we have heard it so often and the fact is so universal. Yet, it is in very truth a miracle of human depravity—what if I say *insanity*—that man should be unmindful of his immortal soul!

Here we must add that thoughtless man is inconsiderate of the claims of justice and of gratitude, and this makes him appear base as well as foolish. I have known men who have said, "Let the heavens fall, but let justice be done," and they have scorned, in their dealings with their fellow men, to take any unrighteous advantage, even though it were as little as the turning of a hair. I believe there are such present. I have known some also, who, if they were called ungrateful, would indignantly spurn the charge. They would count themselves to be utterly loathsome if they did not return good to those who have done them good. They feel that the obligations of gratitude cannot be disputed, nor do they wish to avoid them.

And yet it may be these very same persons have been throughout life unjust towards *God* and ungrateful towards Him to whom they owe their being and all that makes it endurable. Think of it! God created you—ought He not to be the object of your worship? Besides creating you, He has preserved you in being—ought He not have some service in return for this? You have been indulged, perhaps, with a smooth pathway. You are not, today, among the poorest of the poor. You have not been deprived of the use of your limbs. You have your reasoning faculties—you have not been struck down with a stroke of paralysis—you are still able to mingle with men and go about your business. And for all this ought not God to be thanked?

His service is a delight to those who are in it—ought you not to render service to Him? His Law is the most just Law that can be conceived. It contains the essence of all honest Law, yet you have not observed His commands nor loved Him with all your heart and strength. Is this right? You discharge right willingly the obligations due to *man*—but will you rob *God*? You would think it shameful to be dishonest to your fellow creature, but will you be a robber to your God? Will you withhold the honor and glory which you ought to render to Him?

You will observe that the text says, "Israel does not know." Now, Israel is a name of nobility. It signifies a prince. And there are some here whose position in society, whose condition among their fellow men should oblige them to the service of God. That motto is true "noblesse oblige"—nobility has its obligations—and where the Lord elevates a man into a position of wealth and influence, he ought to feel that he is under peculiar bonds to serve the Lord.

I speak also to those who are the sons of pious parents. I address myself to those who have been trained in the fear of God—you have been nourished and brought up with the children of God, you have often been looked upon as belonging to them—surely you ought not to have been unmindful of your gracious Benefactor! To you more is given and therefore of you more is required. Does it not disgrace you, as a man of godly lineage, to be no better than the sons of Belial in the matter of earnest consideration? You should, at this moment, feel a deep regret that up to this present moment you have been false to your pedigree and traitorous to your God. Man is forgetful of what is due to his position and his ancestry.

One sad point about this inconsiderateness is that man lives without consideration upon a matter where nothing *but* consideration will avail. Nothing can stand in lieu of thoughtfulness in *religion*. There are some who say, "Well, I cannot think about it, but I will pay a man to do it for me. I will find a priest and give him so much money that he may see to my soul, just as my doctor attends to my body." This is an invention of a rebellious heart to quiet a conscience, but it is both idle and wicked. The Lord demands personal love of the heart and He will be content with nothing less.

"But I go up to the House of God regularly. I sit with God's people. I give of my substance." Just so, but God demands your *heart* and if the heart is not given—if you do not love Him with all your soul, mind and strength—you have done nothing whatever in religion! In vain your Baptism! In vain your coming to the sacramental table! True religion is not a bodily exercise, nor a manual performance. The soul, the mind, the heart—with all its intents and faculties—must think of God and yield submission to Him! Otherwise, though all the ceremonies ordained of God Himself were rightly performed upon you, yet would they yield you not one particle of Divine Grace! Religion is a *spiritual* business and if man lives and dies refusing to consider it, he has put away from him altogether all hope of being saved, for Grace comes not into us by mechanical process, but the Holy Spirit works upon the mind and soul.

This inconsideration, also, it should be remarked, occurs upon a subject where, by the testimony of tens of thousands, consideration would be abundantly remunerative and would yield the happiest results. We should not marvel at men if they would not think upon topics which made them *unhappy*—it would not seem strange if subjects, known to deprive men of joy and gladness—were avoided by wise men. But although there are some who have suffered frightful depression of spirits in connection with true religion, yet its general and ultimate fruit has ever been peace and joy through believing in Christ Jesus—and even the exceptions could be easily accounted for.

In some melancholy spirits their godliness is too shallow to make them happy. They breathe so little of the heavenly air that they are distressed for need of more. In others the sorrows occasioned by gracious reflection is but a preliminary and passing stage of Grace—there must be a plowing before there can be a harvest—there must be medicine for the disease before health returns. In some, the newly-awakened are just in the stage of plowing and the condition of drinking bitter medicine. This will soon be over and the results will be most admirable.

A great cloud of witnesses, among whom we joyfully take our place, bears testimony to the fact that the ways of the Lord are ways of pleasantness. Our deepest joy lies in knowing our God and considering Him. God in Christ Jesus is to us an unfailing fountain of peace, joy, content and blessedness. O that *you* would hearken unto the Lord, for then would your peace be as a river and your righteousness as the waves of the sea! Thus says the Lord, “O that My people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in My ways! I should soon have subdued their energies and turned My hand against their adversaries. I should have fed them, also, with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied them.”

Down here below, godliness has the promise of the life that now is and after death its weight of glory is unspeakable! O that you thoughtless ones knew the joy which you are losing and were aroused from apathy!

II. Thus have I spoken upon the serious fault. Let us note next, AGGRAVATIONS WHICH ATTEND IT in many cases. And remember, first, that some of these careless persons have had their attention earnestly directed to the topics which they still neglect. Observe in this passage that these people had been summoned by God to consider. The heavens and the earth were called to bear witness that they had been nourished and brought up by the good Father. And in the fourth verse they are rebuked—they are earnestly scolded because they continue to be so unmindful of their God.

Now, if a person should, for awhile, forget an important thing, we should not be surprised, for the memory is not perfect. But when attention is called to it again and again. When consideration is requested kindly, tenderly, earnestly, and when, because the warning is neglected, that attention is *demand*ed with authority and possibly with a degree of sharpness, one feels that a man who is still unmindful is altogether without excuse and must be negligent on purpose and with determined design.

Some of you now present have thought of everything except your souls and your God, and though this morning I would, even with tears, beg you to give an hour before the sun goes down to serious reflection upon spiritual matters, the probabilities are that you will do no such thing. Here is the aggravation of your folly—that you have again, and again, and again been reminded of this weighty business—and all in vain. When you were running on in childish waywardness, parents plucked you by the sleeve and said, “Consider your ways.” They exhorted you, when you were rejoicing in your youth, to look forward to the day when for all this God would bring you into judgment.

Since then, if you have been a sermon-hearer, you have often been called earnestly and urgently by men who spoke with all sincerity, to amend your ways and turn unto the Most High. Yes, and God's voice has come to you in the very midst of your business. When you have had a quiet interval and have been sitting down awhile, a voice, silent, but not unheard, has said to you, "Will you never think? Will you plunge into eternity without consideration? Will you never open your eyes and look about you till you are in Hell?"

Your conscience, by fits and starts, has troubled you. The Bible in your house, which you have not read, has yet, from the very fact of its being there, upbraided you. And the mere presence of godly men has been a rebuke to you. When you have recollected how family prayer used to be offered in your father's house when you were a child, and how it is neglected in your own house, the *neglect* has rebuked you. Can you deny this? And can you doubt this, also, that he who is often reprov'd and hardens his neck, deserves that he shall be suddenly destroyed—and that without remedy?

The Prophet then mentions the second aggravation, namely, that in addition to being called and admonished, these people had been *chastened*. They had been chastised, indeed, so often and so severely that the Lord wearied of it! He saw no use in striking them any more. Their whole body was covered with bruises, they had been so sorely beaten. The nation as a nation had been so invaded and trodden down by its enemies that it was utterly desolate, and the Lord says, "Why should you be stricken any more? You will revolt more and more."

Of course I cannot tell what has been the history of all of you, but I may be addressing someone this morning whose life of late has been a series of sorrows. You have plunged from one calamity to another. You have sailed over every known sea of affliction. You know what sickness means—there are in your body the scars of old diseases. You have known what perils mean on the waters and perils on land. Perhaps you have been brought down from competence to poverty. Perhaps you have been deserted, too, by those who should have comforted you—you know almost all the pangs which wring the human heart with anguish.

Don't you know that all these are sent to wean you from the world? Will you still cling to it? All these are calls from Heaven, like the voice of hunger in the prodigal when he could not fill his belly with the husks and therefore said, "I will arise and go to my father." Will you never say the same? How shall God afflict you, now? Is your wife dead? Would you like to lose your child? Is one child gone? Shall death take away the other? Shall the last darling be taken from you?

What stroke would touch your hard heart? Must the Lord strike again and again, and again and again before you will hear Him? If He is resolved to save you, depend upon it, He will not spare you! He will bring you, somehow or other, to Himself if He means to bless you. Be you not as the horse and the mule which have no understanding—whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle—but yield now to the afflictions you have already suffered, or else you will certainly enhance your guilt by despising the chastening of the Lord!

It was an additional piece of guilt that these people were, all the while that they would not consider, very zealous in an outward religion. They would not serve God in His own way, but they were very diligent in a way of their own. As you read the chapter you will notice how attentive they were to burnt offerings, new moons and feast days—and yet they would not consider. Certain individuals will become out-and-out Ritualists and yet will not think upon the Lord. They will go the whole hog with Popery and yet they will not turn unto the Most High and confess their sins and seek mercy at His hand, or yield their souls to His Truth. Strange, but yet it is so.

There are persons here who seldom miss a service and even come to Prayer Meetings, and yet are not a bit the better for it. They are men of bad lives and yet they love the preacher—yes, and would stand up for him if any spoke against him—and yet they are still evil, regardless of that preacher's warnings, and what is worse, they are careless concerning God and the world to come. They live, and I fear they will die, without Christ and without hope! O Sirs, how can I reason with you? Your inconsistency is so glaring. You stand up today and sing the praises of God, yet tomorrow you will blaspheme Him! What? Will you shut your eyes when we are praying and pretend to join with us when you know that tomorrow you will act wantonly or do unjustly?

How can you habitually sit with the people of God, yes, and in some measure feel at home with them, and yet afterwards keep company with the children of darkness and find yourselves at home at the bar of the alehouse, on the settle of the gin palace, or in the theater, or in other places where blasphemy is on all sides to be heard and iniquity on all sides to be seen? Will a man mock God and insult Him to His face? I beseech you, yes, I *implore* you to think of this, for it greatly aggravates your thoughtlessness that you still continue in the midst of the people of God. To be in a man's house and not to think of him—to sing a man's praises and not respect him—to mix up with that man's children and yet not care about him, why, surely this would be most provoking! Shall such conduct be shown towards the Most High?

Yet, further, I need you to notice that there was an aggravation to Israel's forgetfulness of God because she was most earnestly and affectionately invited to turn to God by gracious promises. Let me read you that Word of God, "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

A man might say, "Why should I think of God? He is my enemy. Why should I meditate upon my sinfulness, for it cannot be forgiven. And why should I think of righteousness when I know I can never attain to it?" O Man, you know better! You know that God is Love! You know that there is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared. You know that a change of heart is possible and the Spirit of God can make a new man of you. If the case were hopeless I should not wonder if you refused to enter into such dreadful contemplations—but when the brightness of Jehovah's Grace invites you—how can you turn your back upon Him and still continue unmindful of Him?

As a last aggravation, carefully note that these very people had ability enough to consider other things, for we find that they considered how to get bribes, and were very sharp and shrewd in following after rewards—yet they did not know and did not consider their God! Oh, how quick are some men in the ways of evil, and yet if you talk to them about *religion*, they say it is mysterious and beyond their power of apprehension. Those same persons will discuss with you the knottiest points of politics, or unravel the mysteries of science—and yet they pretend they cannot understand the simplicities of Revelation!

“I am a poor man,” says one, “I am a poor man and you cannot expect me to know much.” Yet, if anybody were to meet that same “poor man” in the street and tell him he was a fool, he would be indignant at such an accusation and would zealously prove that he was not inferior in common sense. “I cannot,” says one, “vex my brain about such things as these.” Yet that very man wears his brain far more in pursuit of wealth or pleasure. Oh, if men were idiots, then were they exempt from blame! If they were physically blind they would be excused from seeing, but when men have eyes they are to be blamed if they will not see! If a man has an understanding and can exercise it well upon minor matters, how shall we apologize for his neglect of his God?

I can invent no excuse for them, though I would gladly be their advocate. I can only beseech them to repent of this, their wickedness, and no longer have it said of them that they will not know, that they will not consider.

III. We shall now investigate some of THE SECRET CAUSES of human indifference to topics so important. In the case of many thoughtless persons we must lay the blame to the sheer frivolity of their nature. Some individuals appear to have a brain case which was never properly filled. Like butterflies, they flit from flower to flower but gather no honey.

Look at the life of many in the West End who pass all their existence in dressing and undressing, distributing bits of cardboard, riding in carriages, bowing and scraping and eating and drinking. These notable do-nothings remind me of a set of butterflies flitting about a field of poppies. Nor are the poorer districts clear of such beings. Note the many fellows who go loafing from public-house to public-house, lolling and dawdling about from morning till night as if they had nothing whatever to live for but to talk and booze.

I hope that is not the case with any of *you*. If so, let me remind you that you may live in jest but you will have to die in earnest. You may waste this life in frivolity, but you will have to spend the next in eternal damnation! The moth may play, but the candle burns it and then it suffers in earnest. You will come to be earnest enough when you wake up and find yourself condemned of God. Oh, if you are a fool, or have been a fool up to this moment, may God sober you and make you wise to number your days!

I have no doubt that in every case, however, the bottom reason is opposition to God Himself. You do not think of God because you do not like Him. Nothing will persuade you to consider because you do not love the subject to be considered. If you are called to consider a topic which is

pleasurable to you, you very readily turn to it—but in this case, for 50 or 60 years or more you have shunned this subject—though it has been forced upon you in all sorts of ways. You have either huffed it off in bad temper, or smiled it off in pleasantry! And when it has come upon the cool of the evening when you have been alone, you have called it “having the blues,” and have gone off into company to get rid of it. The real reason is that you have no love to your God.

Now this argues a base mind. It is disgraceful that you should not love one so infinitely good, noble, generous and just. His Character engrosses the admiration of all honorable spirits and would commend itself to you if you were not bad at heart. Consider how depraved you must be not to love the Perfect One. Upon some minds the tendency to delay operates fearfully. Probably if I went round this place I should not find a single person who intends always to remain indifferent towards God and the world to come. Nobody here intends to be lost! I do not suppose that any one of you has chosen to make his bed in Hell! You have all good intentions and you mean one of these days to carry them out.

Ah, and out of those who are now shut up in Hell, there are very few, if any, who resolved to be there! The most of them meant one day to seek the Lord, but Death came and found them still sleeping, as I fear he will find many of you! Do you know that you are in the presence of Death now? He spreads his wing, even now, over your head—out of this vast company some of us must soon feel his dart! One of our city missionaries was witness to a dreadful scene, when in a poor house he found persons playing cards, using for a table a coffin covered with a white cloth—the coffin containing the father of the family!

This was a mournful instance of hardness of heart, but in some aspects all triflers with religion are in much the same condition, for their souls are in jeopardy of eternal wrath and yet they persevere in their merriment! They enjoy their frivolities while God’s sword is furbished and bathed in Heaven and must before long strike them to destruction! If they could see where they are, and what they are, they would no more be able to enjoy themselves than a man would sit down and feast beneath a gallows tree, or laugh with his neck bared and fixed beneath the knife of the guillotine! O that men were wise and that they would consider this! Put not off reflection, for death is near, and it is this putting off and putting off which is Satan’s most potent engine of destruction.

Some make an excuse for themselves for not considering eternity because they are such eminently *practical* men. They are living for the realities of the nature of hard cash and they will not be induced to indulge in fancies and notions. For my part I feel great sympathy with them in their downright practicality. I, too, am a matter-of-fact man without speculation or fancy in me. “What I need is facts.” I only wish that those who profess to be practical were more truly so, for a practical man always takes more care of his body than of his coat, certainly—then should he not take more care of his *soul* than of the body which is but the garment of it?

If he were truly practical he would do that. A practical man will be sure to consider matters in due proportion. He will not give all his mind to a cricket match and neglect his business. And yet how often your practical

man still more greatly errs—he devotes all his time to money making—and not a minute to the salvation of his soul and its preparation for eternity! Is this practical? Why, Sir, Bedlam itself is guilty of no worse madness than that! There is not in all yon wards a single maniac who commits a more manifest act of insanity than a man who spends all his force upon this fleeting life and lets the eternal future go by the board!

I have no doubt with a great many their reason for not thinking about soul matters is prejudice. They are prejudiced because some Christian professor has not lived up to his profession, or they have heard something which is said to be the doctrine of the Gospel which they cannot approve of. Now, if this morning I stood here and said, “Attend to me! Give your souls up to my guidance! Be led by *me*,” I should admire you for saying, “We shall do no such thing!” But I disclaim all idea of wishing to be a priest to any one of you. My teaching is always, “There is God’s Bible, read it and judge for yourselves.” You have brains, use your brains!

My judgment was never meant to excuse you from using your own. If any man asks you to let him put a ring in your nose that he may lead you as a farmer does a bull, away with him! What can he be but an impostor? We say search for yourselves! Come to God’s Book, to God’s own revealed Truth! Come to Jesus Christ and find salvation in Him. Surely you ought not to be prejudiced against a faith which speaks after this fashion!

In most cases men do not like to trouble themselves and they have an uncomfortable suspicion that if they were to look too narrowly into their affairs they would find things far from healthy. They are like the bankrupt before the court the other day who did not keep books. Not he! He did not know how his affairs stood, and, moreover, he did not need to know! He did not like his books, for his books did not like him! He was going to the bad and he therefore tried to forget it.

They say of the silly ostrich, that when she hides her head in the sand and does not see her pursuers, she thinks she is safe—that is the policy of many men. They spread their sails and get up the steam and go with double speed straight ahead. What? Not look at the chart? No, they do not need to know whether there are rocks or breakers ahead. Arrest that captain! Put him in irons and find a sane man to take charge of the vessel! O for Grace to arrest that folly which is the captain of your boat and put sound sense in command, or else a spiritual shipwreck is certain.

IV. I am going to conclude with a few words of EXPOSTULATION. Few, I say, for if the few words I have spoken do not reach men’s hearts by God’s Spirit, I know that a great many words cannot. My dear Hearers, is not your inconsiderateness very unjustifiable? Can you excuse it in any way? Perhaps you think you will never die. Well, go to the cemetery and you will soon change your mind. Our sires and grandsires died—how, then, should *we* expect to live?

Do you hope to live to an extreme old age? I have heard of one who often boasted that he expected to be quoted at par in the life market, but he fell thirty per cent short of the hundred. Have you imbibed the idea that God will make a difference in dealing with *you* from what He does with other people? If so, get that out of your head, too, for He has not one rule for one, and another for another! If you die without Christ, you will die

without hope! And if you have never repented of sin, God is no respecter of persons—there will be the same punishment for you as for other impenitents.

Are you so mad as to hope that, after all, there will be no future? Then I can understand your thoughtlessness! Are you like a certain poor rambler who calls himself a philosopher, and lately said, “the only immortality is that when the body is disintegrated its ammonia, carbonic acid and lime serve to enrich the soil and to nourish plants which feed other generations of men”? Here the ox and the donkey of my text are outdone in stupidity! The man confesses that he is no better than a beast and has no soul! As it would be useless to argue with a compound of ammonia and lime, he must not wonder if we hold no further debate with him.

Now, my Hearer, if you are such an ox or donkey as that, your thoughtlessness is accounted for! But if you are not so far gone I am at a loss to make your conduct consistent. Do you think you will be able to brawl it out with God in the end? You are as wax and He is the fire! You are stubble and He is the flame! How can you hope to fight it out with Him? There are stranger things in this world than my philosophy has dreamed of, but I cannot invent an excuse for you, nor do I think you can, yourself, devise a justification! Let me ask you, again, if you do not think that many a man’s good opinion of himself would collapse if he were to *consider*—his opinion of himself would fall to zero if he would but *think*?

Yon spendthrift who squanders his gold so freely, scattering with a fork what his miserly father gathered with a rake—could he go on as he did if he did not stupefy himself into thoughtlessness? Do you think money-grubbers who toil and slave, and starve to amass wealth—would think it worth their while to do so if they really thought about it? For is the result worth the trouble? Merely to have people say, “he died worth a plum”? Perhaps you have not chick nor child to leave it to and the stranger who will inherit it, every time he drinks his wine, will jest about the old fellow who fretted and steered to provide for a stranger’s son.

When men think they are so good that they will go to Heaven by their *works*, would not that bladder burst if they pricked it with a little *thought*? It looks very fine. Look at it, “I have always been a stanch Dissenter, or an orthodox Churchman, and I have done my duty.” Is not that boast like a beautiful bubble which a boy blows from his pipe with a little soap? What charming colors! It is beautiful as a rainbow! But if we touch it with a little meditation it is dissolved! The same may be said of nominal religion—if a man thinks God will take him to Heaven because he calls himself a Christian, and has taken the sacrament, and paid his pew rent, and sat with God’s people—he must surely have but a scanty brain! If he would exercise what little mind he has, he would see that his hopes do not hold water. Do you want to be deceived? Do any of you really want to mislead yourselves? If so, shut your eyes and dream yourselves into destruction! But if in earnest and you would be *right* now, and right at last, then awake at once! How is it that you will not know and that you will not consider? May the Holy Spirit save you from this desperate state!

Let us just consider for half a minute one or two things. If a man will resolutely and prayerfully turn these things over in his mind, God may

help him to come right. If I consider awhile, I see that I have not lived as I ought to have lived. I have often done wrong. That is quite clear to me and it is equally clear that the Ruler of the world ought to punish sin. The letting off of certain atrocious murderers of late, and the easy way in which certain criminals have escaped makes us all demand a little more vigorous dispensation of justice, or else we shall have our land made a pandemonium.

Even thus, if God did not punish sin, He would not be a wise and efficient moral Governor for the world. Then if God must punish sin, He must punish *me* and I must expect to suffer. But when I turn to this Book I find He has devised a way by which to save me. He has laid sin upon *Christ* that so I may escape! If I am puzzled to see how the sin of one could be laid upon another, I find in the Word of Truth that Christ Jesus is One with His people and it is right enough that He should take their sin and suffer in their place. I find that Christ actually did take the sins of all those who trust Him and really suffered in their place. That seems to me to be a glorious Truth of God!

It meets the case of justice and leaves a door for mercy. How can I avail myself of what Christ has done? I find in the Word that I am commanded to *trust* Him. Trust Him! That does not seem to be a harsh demand! He is true, He is great, He is God. I will trust Him! God help me to trust Him. I learn that whoever trusts Him is saved. That is a glorious Truth! I am now saved and pardoned for I believe in Jesus. Will not some of you turn these things over in your minds? I pray God the Holy Spirit to lead you to do so!

I believe it is often the way of salvation to men to be made to hearken diligently to the Gospel and to consider and meditate upon it. And with that view I have preached to you this morning, hoping that the Word may incline you towards Him and bring you to consider Him, that you may now enter into His salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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*“The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.”
Isaiah 2:11.*

IN the eternal past the Lord alone was exalted. When He dwelt alone before the earth was and when He commenced the mighty works of His Creation—and the universe sprang into being at the fiat of His unhindered will—He alone was exalted. He made multitudes of creatures. Perhaps we have no idea how many of them there were and in what varied forms intelligent beings were created, but the Lord alone was exalted. Every angel adored Him—every creature knew its Lord. It was an ill day when there broke out a rival spirit and when evil began to set up its throne in opposition to the God of Good. The leader of the angels—the light bearer—sought to erect a rival throne. “How are you fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning.” Then, by and by, in process of time, upon this world God’s Glory was dimmed. Here, too, another spoke and was believed and God was doubted. Another claimed man’s love and gained it and God was disobeyed. No longer on earth was the Lord alone exalted as He had been in the quiet glades of Eden when our first parents worshipped none but God and counted it the very cream and flower of their being that they might serve the Most High who had made them what they were.

Now look where we may, in this poor, fallen world, the Lord alone is not exalted. There are many lords and gods—spiritual wickedness and principalities of evil—which set themselves up in opposition to the great King of kings and Lord of lords. Yet as surely as Jehovah lives, He will win the victory in this conflict! Ere the drama of the world’s history shall come to a close, it shall be known throughout the entire universe that the Lord, He is God—and the Lord alone shall be exalted.

It is a part of the work of Grace—no, it is the main objective of the work of Grace, and it is an objective, also, of the work of Providence to promote this great end—that the Lord alone shall be exalted. For your comfort and for your instruction, then, notice first the occasions when my text has been true. I shall take the text out of its connection, not, I hope, unduly, and show that on a large scale there are several days in which the Lord alone has been exalted. And then we will come back to a little quiet meditation and look into our own experience to see whether there have not been days with us when the Lord alone has been exalted.

I. Come then, first, and notice WHEN THE LORD ALONE HAS BEEN EXALTED ON A LARGE SCALE.

The Lord alone has been exalted among men whenever He has been pleased to reveal Himself in the plenitude of His power. The Revelations under the Law of God were mainly Revelations girt with terror. Under the Old Testament dispensation you find God coming out of His place to terribly shake the earth. When He bows the Heavens and comes down, the mountains flow at His Presence. The Lord alone was exalted in those days when He vindicated His Justice and displayed His Power against His enemies. Remember the flood when, after so many years of warning, the ark being prepared for the salvation of the believing few, God was pleased to draw up the floodgates of Heaven and to bid the cataracts of earth leap upward instead of downward until over all the face of the world there was nothing but one mighty all-devouring wave! When in majestic silence the ark floated over the bosom of the world which had become the grave of Jehovah's creatures—then the Lord alone was exalted in that day!

And when men had multiplied again upon the face of the earth and His people had gone down into Egypt, you know well the story, how proud Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" Then Moses came and with many strokes of his mystic rod he afflicted the fields of Zoan, he turned their waters into blood and slew their fish. He spoke and the flies came—and the frogs and the locusts without number—yes, the Lord smote all the first-born of Egypt, the chief of all their strength, and in that night, when a cry went up from every Egyptian household and the people of Israel were led forth like sheep by the hands of Moses and Aaron, the Lord alone was exalted! Then the nations knew that Jehovah worked His will among the sons of men!

Nor was that all. When in their desperation, the Egyptians pursued the Israelites into the very depths of the sea, the Lord turned and looked upon them and troubled the host of Pharaoh and took off their chariot wheels so that they could not be driven—then the sea returned in the fullness of its strength and the depths covered them until there was not one of them left! Then Miriam's song, "Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously," was but an exposition of our text, "The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." Time would fail me to tell of all His mighty works, nor is there any need for me to recapitulate the records of the book of the wars of the Lord, "for the Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His name"—and when He comes forth to battle, then the Lord alone is exalted in that day!

May we never live to see a pestilence sweep through this land! But should such a visitation of God come upon us, then will our houses of prayer be thronged and men will begin to cry unto the Most High! May we never hear the noise of war in our streets! If such a calamity should befall us and the Lord takes the sword of war out of the scabbard, men will begin to learn righteousness! May He be pleased to have mercy upon us and lead us by gentle means to glorify His name. Were He to come in judgment, then would the spirit of atheism and of idolatry which now, with brazen faces, dare confront the Gospel of Christ, betake themselves to the darkness in which they were begotten! When the Lord comes forth in terror then is He alone exalted!

Let us change the theme now and see, too, how *wherever God comes forth in His great mercy, His name alone is exalted*. The day when the infant Church of Christ gathered in an upper room and sat there, all its members being of one heart and of one soul, and the Lord revealed His Grace by the baptism of the Holy Spirit—when the sound of the rushing mighty wind was heard, when the tongues of fire sat on the disciples—when they began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance and thousands were added to the Church, that was a day when the Lord alone was exalted! Was there any whisper on that day of honor to be given to Peter, or to John, or to James in the Church of God? Do you think there was any trace of the spirit that could say, “I am of Cephas,” and, “I am of John”? Ah, no! The name of the Lord was very precious to His people that day. They gave glory to the Lord both in the Temple and in their own houses, eating their bread with gladness of heart. Only let the Lord show Himself in great blessing, then He alone is exalted! Behold, His enemies fly before Him because of His Divine Grace!

Well, Brothers and Sisters, it will be even so, by-and-by, “in that day” of which we were reading just now with so much delight—when “the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be exalted on the top of the mountains and all nations shall flow unto it.” There is to come a day when Christ shall be known and loved of every land! When the dwellers in the wilderness shall bow before Him and His enemies shall lick the dust. I am not going into any details or prophetic descriptions of the millennium, but we do expect a day when the Gospel shall win its way over this whole globe and the poor world, instead of being swathed in mist and fog, shall come out of the cloud of her unbelief and out of the darkness of her sin, and shine like her sister stars at the feet of her great Creator! In that day the Lord alone shall be exalted! You will hear no more of the name of Pope, or Patriarch, or a great religious leader receiving the chief honor. No great name set in the front of a section of the church shall be shouted in that day—the Lord alone shall be exalted!

So again it will be when yet farther on in human history the end shall come—when you and I and all born of woman shall stand before the dread tribunal of the Last Great Day—then shall the Lord alone be exalted! There shall be no pomp of kings before that Great White Throne. There shall be no glare of riches there before the prince of the kings of the earth. Honor and fame that were so feverishly sought and so highly prized by the sons of men shall then melt away like the fat of rams. Kings and their serfs, princes and their subjects shall stand together. There shall be no idol gods in that day, nor shall men receive homage of their fellows, but while the earth shall be reeling to its doom and the Heavens themselves dissolving, the Lord alone shall be exalted! Jehovah’s great and glorious name shall fill all ears and His majesty shall impress all hearts. May we be found in Christ in that great day! The Lord grant it for His mercy’s sake!

II. Now, in the second place, I am going to talk to you on humbler topics, endeavoring to bring our subject down to our own experience and to see **WHEN THE LORD ALONE HAS BEEN EXALTED ON A SMALLER SCALE**. When it is written, the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day, we

may understand that what is true on a great scale is equally true on a little scale in God's Kingdom. He works according to rule, so that if you split up some great crystal of His Providence into as small fragments as you please, each fragments shall be found to be crystallized in the same form. So, if in the grand events of history God is to be exalted, you will also find that in the little world of your own experience—in the history which is only recorded in your own pocket-book—in the story of your own life—that God is also exalted! Brothers and Sisters, many of you already know, and I pray that others here who as yet do not know it may be brought to know it, that there have been red-letter days in your life when the Lord alone has been exalted!

One of the earliest of these blessed days was *when you first had a sense of sin*. Ah, I had no thought how black I was until that day! I had never dreamed how corrupt my heart was, how vile my nature, how desperate my condition, how near the borders of Hell I stood till then. There came at last that day in which the Light of God shone into my soul and I saw the evil of my state, the danger of my condition and the horrible rottenness of my whole nature even to the very core! Do you remember such a day in your experience, beloved Brethren? I know you do! Oh, what a withering day it was. Your flesh is grass and do you not remember when the grass withered and when the flower thereof faded away because the Spirit of the Lord was blowing upon it? Surely the people are grass. Do you recollect when you perceived in your heart a new rendering of that old passage, "And we all do fade as a leaf and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away"? When you found your righteousness to be only a fading leaf and the strength of your passions to be like the wind that took you right away and carried you—you knew not where? You seemed to be like a sear leaf blown away in a tempest of sin!

Before that, you had thought yourself to be very fine—very few were more respectable or honorable than you. If you had not many glittering virtues, yet you felt you had no degrading vices! There was much about you that others might imitate and if people did not respect you, you felt very angry—you felt they ought to pay great deference to such a one as you were. But you did not feel like this on that day—not on that day! No. In that day you threw your idols to the moles and to the bats. You wanted to forget that you ever thought you were righteous. You felt ashamed of even your most precious golden idol—your self-righteousness. You wanted to disown it and you were afraid somebody should remind you that you ever worshipped it! It seemed such a horrible thing that you should ever have talked about acceptance before God by your good works. Good works? The very thought seemed a sarcasm on God, an irony of the devil! Good works indeed! Your prayers, your tears, your church attendance, your chapel attendance all seemed like so much dung! You understood Paul's strong language that day—your own righteousness was as offensive to you as his was to him. You put all your old hopes away with abhorrence. Oh, I know what happened to you—the Lord alone was exalted that day!

If anybody had preached a sermon that day about the dignity of human nature, you would have been inclined, like Jenny Geddes, to

throw a stool at his head. If anybody had talked that day of the great things man is capable of, and of virtue that still remains in him after the slight mischief of the Fall, you would have felt indignant at such an infamous lie, for God had stripped you bare of all your glory! In that day you felt yourself to be cast in a ditch and your own clothes abhorred you. But, oh, if anyone had preached of the splendor of the great God that day, of the Infinite Majesty of His holiness and of His justice, you would in silence have bowed your head and shed tears of contrition which would have been the best form of adoration from your penitent heart! If they had begun to preach the amazing mercy and the love of God in Christ, your heart would have leaped to hear the very sound of it, for there are no two things that ever so sweetly met together as an empty sinner and a full Christ! When a soul sees itself, it then has the eyes with which to see Jesus! He that can see his own deformities, shall not be long before he sees the Lord's unspeakable perfections! In that day of self-humbling, cutting away and casting down, I know the Lord alone was exalted in your soul!

Well, then there came another day in your experience which is very sweet to remember—the day *when you saw Jesus hanging on the Cross*—when you put your trust in Him and knew that He had taken away your iniquity and blotted out your sin. Oh, I remember that day—it was my best marriage day and birthday, too—the day when I knew that sin was gone and gone forever! How bright the Cross shone that day! How bright were the eyes of Jesus and how fair His wounds! Ah, the Lord alone was exalted that day! Had anybody preached to me of the power of sacraments and the magic of priests, I would have had abhorred them in my inmost soul and I would have spoken my horror of the thought of giving the glory of the Lord to another! When the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses from all sin, where is he that *dares* ask me to let him wash me and to let him put away my sin for me? The blood, the blood of Jesus has taken all our guilt away, once and forever—and woe be unto the man that dares to stand up and put himself side by side with the All-Cleansing Christ! That was how we felt. The Lord alone was exalted in that day.

We feel just the same today. I am sure if people knew the power of the blood of Christ they could never become slaves to the superstitions of men. If they felt the force of being justified by faith in Jesus Christ, they would be like Martin Luther when he sprang from his knees on Pilate's staircase, never to go another step in the weary round of man-made ordinances! What have we to do with these beggarly things when Christ our Lord has set us free and saved us forever from the wrath to come? A sight of Your Cross, O Jesus, makes the priests topple down like Dagon before the ark—and the sacraments that once were trusted in to be despised if placed side by side with You! You alone are exalted in that day!

Since then we have had some other very happy days. The life of a Christian has many illuminated letters in it. Our roll is not written within and without with lamentation. We have high days and holidays and there are times of nearness to Christ which I hardly dare to describe here. I

could venture to talk of them to two or three choice friends that know the secret of the Lord, but these things are not for all ears. These are days when we realize the meaning of the Song of Songs and bless God that ever the book of Canticles was written, otherwise there would have been in the Bible no expression for our ardent love to Christ. On such days we say with rapture, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." "Your love is better than wine." "He brought me to the banqueting house and His banner over me was love." "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love." "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand does embrace me." "I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my love, till He pleases." Read Rutherford's letters if you know the secret beforehand—if not, they will be an enigma to you, even as the Song of Solomon must always be. This much we may say, *when Christ draws us near to Him*, "The Lord alone is exalted in that day." When He wraps us in His crimson vest and shows us all His name and says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you. I have engraved you on the palms of My hands," O Brothers and Sisters, "the Lord alone is exalted in that day!" Then self has gone. We cry, "I am black but comely" and the blackness strikes us as much as the comeliness that Christ has put upon us. We sink into nothing at His feet. These manifestation of His glorious love makes us cry like Job, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You, therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." The Lord alone is exalted in that day!

Well, you know, Brothers and Sisters, that after some of those high flights when we have been on the top of the Mount of Transfiguration, we get exalted above measure and then we have to be humbled. It is a wretched confession to make, but God's people know how true it is. We wander from the Lord and for a while He leaves us to ourselves when we exalt ourselves. But *when we return from our wandering*, then the Lord alone is exalted in that day. You know how, perhaps, there have been weeks of estrangement between you and your Lord—He has been jealous of your heart and you have been cold to Him—you have gone, perhaps, into the world with too worldly a spirit and the sweetness of His Word has departed from you and His voice is no longer heard in your soul. Then you begin to cry, "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation and uphold me with Your free Spirit." You know what it is to cry—

***"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!
But now I find an aching void
The world can never fill.
Return, O holy Dove! Return,
Sweet messengers of rest!
I hate the sins that made You mourn
And drove You from my breast."***

Ah, when you get your prayer answered, then the Lord alone is exalted in that day!

Do you know what it is to go creeping to the Mercy Seat where once you used to go so boldly? To go there with many tears and with much shame when you used to go with a radiant face—and yet to find your

Jesus waiting there? Do you know what it is to turn to the grand old Book that once you used to read with sacred glee and look there for a sinner's promise such as might suit a broken heart? And do you not recall how many times you found it come home with just the old power till the bones which had been broken began to sing again, and your heart once more was joyous in the Presence of your Lord? Ah, then I know your own beauty has been turned to ashes and all your comeliness has disappeared, for when the Lord restores a soul, that soul also restores the Lord to His proper place—and the Lord alone is exalted in that day.

But at this rate my time will all be gone before I am half through my story! Let me therefore hasten to say, dear Brothers and Sisters, that the Lord is exalted *when a Church begins to sigh and cry for the Lord's Presence*. I hope that the power of the Lord is not forsaking us in any measure here, but it is my fret, my jealousy lest He should in any wise depart from us—lest the spirit of prayer should go from us—lest love to souls should leave us and there should not be abundant conversions in the School and in the ministry and everywhere around our borders. Should such a time of dearth ever come to us, it will be a grand thing when we as a Church can get together and begin to groan and cry for the Lord to return in power! When a church feels it *must* get a blessing—I hope we are feeling it now—in proportion as that desire grows into an agony, the Lord alone will be exalted in that day! The preacher will feel—indeed he does feel every day more and more—his own unworthiness and inability for such a work. Every other worker will, in proportion as the desire for God's Glory shall increase, feel himself to be less and less and still less and less in his own esteem. Oh, when we once come to wish for souls, nobody cares about being important, nobody wishes to be in the front—everybody wants to be there if he can serve God, but he does not want any place of honor, or court any badge of distinction by which he shall be known! A church in agony for souls wants only to see men converted—she does not care how or by whom the work is done as long as the people are brought to Christ! Then is the Lord alone exalted!

When the blessing comes—and it is a notable day when it comes—when the Word of God is with power and men are stricken down and begin to cry for mercy—when the inquirers are many and the converts are multiplied and God blesses each Brother and each Sister with success in soul-winning—oh, then at such times the Lord alone is exalted! I believe that whenever God sends prosperity to the Church and any of the members of the Church begin to ascribe the success to themselves, the blessing is almost sure to go. God will not bless proud workers. If you are going to have a part of the fish for yourself, you may cast the net where you like, but you shall take nothing. But when you are fishing for your Master, He will fill your net to the fullest!

I often think—and therein am I glad in days of sorrow—that when God means to bless any of us, He generally lowers us into the very dust. *When we are willing to be nothing*, then the Lord alone is exalted in that day. If you that are cooks were about to serve a dinner, you would not use a dish, I am sure, until first of all you had cleaned it. You would first wipe it right out, then you would set it on the shelf—and when you

needed a goodly dish with which to serve up goodly meat, you would reach down for the empty dish that you had well wiped, would you not? Some of us do not get quite wiped out of our last success and so we have no more. We still retain a flavor of our last self-congratulation and so the Master will not use us. When He puts us in hot water, makes us see our filth and then wipes us right out and we, perhaps, are inclined to say, "Lord, I am now good-for-nothing," we shall be more likely to be of some service to Him! Perhaps He will put us on the shelf for a while. He can easily do that with some of us—a little twinge of pain and sickness—and we are useless! We seem to say, "Lord, what am I but an empty, cracked dish?" Ah, but then He comes and takes us down and uses us—and that is worth waiting for! I always expect a greater blessing when there is greater soul-humbling among us. Would not you be glad to be humbled, dear Brother, if God would use you more as a consequence? Today I saw, as I went home, some old crocks and broken bricks and pieces of all sorts of earthenware put by the side of the road because the road is going to be widened, and I thought to myself, "If the Lord would only use me as an old broken crock to help to make a roadway for Him to ride through London, so that He might be glorified, I would be glad to be thus honored." Do you not feel so too? Well, perhaps He will take you at your word one of these days! Brother, if God humbles you in order to use you, you may not like it as much as you think you will, but still, that is how we should demean ourselves. We should be willing to be anything, or to be nothing, according to His will.

When Christians feel they must somehow live to the glory of God, I know there is a blessing coming—yes, that the blessing has come, for then the Lord alone is exalted! When the man of God says, "I must not live any longer for saving money or simply to bring up my children respectably, or to get a subsistence for myself," then the Lord is exalted. And when Christians feel that they cannot live for a party or for a section of the Church, but that they must live for God and Christ, and for the pure Word of the Gospel and that everything else must go overboard except that which is for the glory of God, then we may be sure that the Lord has come among us and that He is working mightily! Behold, these are the signs! When He has insulted all pride, dimmed all human glory and magnified Himself, then indeed we have times of refreshing from His Presence and the Lord alone is exalted in that day!

Now I have almost done. But I want you to notice that there is a day coming—it will come very soon to some of our venerable friends around me. It will come very soon—perhaps quite soon to some of us in middle life who are still in health—the day *when we shall be called to go upstairs* because the Master has a message for us. When we read the message, it will say, "The time has come for you to gather up your feet in your bed and to meet your father's God." O Brothers and Sisters, the Lord alone will be exalted in that day if we are, indeed, His people! I fancy I see the dying minister when they bring his sermons up to him. Can he glory in them? He says, "I bless God that He enabled me to preach His Truth. 'Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this Grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,' but I cannot glory in these." If you shall bring up to him the number of

his converts and shall tell him of the churches that he built up and the places that he has evangelized, I will tell you what he will say, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Take the best saint among us and put him on the borders of Emmanuel's land and let him hear the bells of Heaven ring out the never-ending Sabbath—listen whether he will talk about himself or about the little Church to which he belongs as if it were the whole Church of God! Oh no, no, no, a thousand times no! On the borders of Emmanuel's land all the glory is to the Lord alone! Redeeming blood, electing love, effectual calling, persevering Grace—all these will be sung about, but there will be no songs about ourselves or anything else but God when we come there! Mother, are you making an idol of that baby? You will not be able to do that when you come near your departing hour. Christian man, are you making an idol of anything you have in this world? It will be utterly abolished then! Anything wherein you are trusting and finding comfort will fail you then! The Lord alone will then be your stay and your song! The Lord alone! If you feel the bottom as you wade into the river, you will feel that it is good. But, by-and-by, you will be where there is no bottom—the river will be a river to swim in and then will you need to know that underneath you are the everlasting arms! If you are sure of this, you will take that mighty plunge as when a swimmer stretches out his hands to swim—and you will be in Heaven in a moment!

And, Beloved, *when we get into Glory*, the Lord alone will be exalted there! What a difference will come over us in the matter of those little things wherein we glory now. Petty trifles sometimes lift us up very high. Oh, how loftily we carry our heads sometimes, poor fools that we are, because of this thing in which we are superior to some fellow worm, or that thing in which we have not erred as some other man has done! But oh, up there, up there, up there, all harps will be for Jesus! All the vials shall be full of odors for Jesus! Harps and tongues, voices and strings, all for the Three-One God! All for the Lord alone! Free Grace begins to teach us here that God alone must be exalted—and when we have learned that lesson, well then, Glory will come in to cap the whole and make us feel that it were absurd even to imagine that any person or anything could share the glory with the Infinite Majesty of God!

There, now, I have done. Only I would ask you this. Is there one here that will not give God all the glory? If so, dear Brother, you *cannot* be saved. Salvation may almost hinge upon this question—Are you willing to be saved so that the Lord alone shall be exalted in your salvation? Are you willing no more to trust in your good works, your prayers, your tears, your feelings or anything else of your own, but to come and trust in the finished work of Jesus and give yourself up absolutely and entirely to be His? Are you willing to be His servant, His property forever, that henceforth your only glory may be in His dear name, your only boasting in His Cross? If so, He accepts you and He will save you! But if you must have the glory, then you shall not have the salvation! Where, then, will *your* glory be? He that glories in himself shall perish, but he that will glory only in the Lord shall live forever! God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 2.**

1, 2. *The word that Isaiah, the son of Amos, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.* What grand hopes are kindled in our bosoms by words like these! The Church has always been as a city set on a hill that cannot be hid, but still she has not been known in all parts of the world and she has never been known with that universal eminence which attaches to the things of this world—the things of pomp and show. But the day shall come when she shall be the highest of the high! Her mountain shall be established “on the tops of the mountains”—when she shall be best known of all the known and shall become what she was always meant to be—the metropolis of the whole world, the center to which all kindreds shall flow! Not the Jews alone shall then possess the oracles of God, but all nations shall flow unto it!

3. *And many people shall go and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.* In these happy days which have, in a measure, begun, but which in their fullness have not yet dawned upon us, the Spirit of the Lord will work in the hearts of multitudes of men a desire after God. They will be willing to worship Him—they will say, “Let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah.” They will be anxious to learn what He would teach. This shall be the reason why they go—“He will teach us of His ways.” They shall not only wish to learn, but be quick to practice—“and we will walk in His paths.” Sometimes we have to complain of the masses of mankind forsaking the worship of God altogether. And too often those that come together come with some inferior motive—not that they may be taught of God. And even some that are, in a manner, taught, are slow to obey. The Lord teaches them by His ministers but they do not walk in His paths. Blessed days when all this shall be reversed and the multitudes shall flock to the Church and to the Christ!

4. *And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.* They shall not save their weapons for future use, or believe in the theory that the best way to preserve peace is to be prepared for war—but they shall beat their swords into plowshares and turn their spears into pruning hooks. The spirit which created war shall be conquered. “Why are there wars and fighting among you? Come they not because of your lusts?” When lust and envy and hatred shall be dethroned and the Spirit of Christ shall be dominant over the world, then shall they learn war no more—

**“O happy day!
O long-expected day begin!”**

Let each one of us labor mightily according as the Spirit works in us to bring about a consummation so devoutly to be wished.

5. *O house of Jacob, come you, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.* The Jew shall come. Long rejecting the Messiah, yet shall he, with the Gentile, walk in the light of Jehovah. Now the theme changes. We are led to see why it is that a happy state of things does not exist at this moment, and did not exist in the land of Judah. Sin—sin is the cause of the mischief—idolatry—the setting up of something in the place of God!

6. *Therefore You have forsaken Your people, the house of Jacob, because they are filled with ways from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines and they are pleased with the children of foreigners.* The nations then had their soothsayers and fortunetellers. The people of God ought not to have so degraded themselves, but they did and, therefore, they provoked Him—and they sought out foreigners and entered into league with them, whereas the Lord had bidden them be a people separate unto Himself. It always goes ill with those who profess to be God's people when they forget their separated character and join with the world.

7, 8. *Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures. Their land is also full of horses neither is there any end of their chariots: their land also is full of idols.* How these things generally go together! If a nation prospers and gets wealthy, it is so apt to seek external worship of a gaudy kind for itself. It must then have its ritualism and its idols, for if men have their gold and have their chariots, the simple worship of the unseen God seems to be beneath the dignity of their taste!

8, 9. *They worship the work of their own hands that which their own fingers have made: And the people bow down, and each man humbles himself: therefore forgive them not.* Mark the indignant spirit of the Prophet, as if he had been an Elijah, or had the mind of a John Knox of later days. It seemed as if he could not ask God to forgive such a stupendous folly as the setting up of visible objects of worship, and the turning away from the true invisible God. O idolatry, what an accursed sin you are! And how rampant are you in this land at this day!

10-12. *Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, for fear of the LORD and for the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the LORD of Hosts shall be upon everyone that is proud and lofty, and upon everyone that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: Whatever God does or does not do, there is one role of His procedure from which He never deviates, namely, to cast down the proud and those who boast from their high places. He condescends to the humble and He has a tender eye to the contrite, but wherever man, the creature, dares to think himself great, God will bare His arm to overthrow him, or puff at him—for a puff will do it—and he shall pass away.*

13-16. *And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon*

every fenced wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish and upon all pleasant pictures. No matter what it is that man sets up, however good or great, if he dares to bring it into competition with God, God's hand is against him and He will break it in pieces! Whenever God comes out of His secret place, this is always the end of it. He came against Babylon and against Nineveh. Yes, ask the traveler who has wonderingly descended into those vast mounds, "Where are those mighty monarchies now?" Where is the power of Sennacherib and where the might of Nebuchadnezzar? They have gone. The dust is their sole monument. Turn, in later days to the great power of Rome and as one walks through Rome, that vast mausoleum of an empire—where one treads at every step upon an empire's dust—what do you think but that God has broken the iron kingdom and made what seemed to be an omnipotent power to pass away from off the face of the earth? Woe unto all that is great and all that is high and all that exalts itself above God! Whether a temporal power, or a spiritual, it shall pass away like a dream of the night, or a vision of the air, for the Lord IS—and all else is *nothing*.

17-20. *And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols He shall utterly abolish. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of His Majesty, when He arises to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made, each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats.* The worshipper of idols shall be ashamed of them. The precious metal shall not save them—the work of art for which so many plead—"It is true the thing is defiling and idolatrous," say some, "but look at the skill, the taste, the handicraft, the precious metal!" When God makes bare His arm, they shall fling even gold and silver to the moles and to the bats!

21, 22. *To go into the clefts of the rock, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of His Majesty when He arises to shake terribly the earth. Sever yourself from such a man, whose breath is in his nostrils for of what account is he?"* What a rebuke this is to kingcraft and especially to priestcraft. "For of what account is he?" You may lay what hands you will on him, you may gird him with what robes you please and you may pour upon him your anointing oil and your sacred chrisms—but what is he, after all, but a man whose breath is in his nostrils? Sever yourself from such a man, "*for of what account is he?"*

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

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

MAN HUMBLLED, GOD EXALTED

NO. 3369

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 28, 1913.

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*“And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the
haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord
alone shall be exalted in that day.”
Isaiah 2:17.*

THIS is the case when God visits a nation with *terrible judgments*. When the Jews were led away captive into Babylon, the great men of the land were bound in chains and treated as common slaves. And as they marched across the weary wilderness, the iron entered into their souls. Then was the loftiness of their spirit bowed down and the haughtiness of the king and the princes, who laughed at the Prophet, was laid low.

So also when God is pleased to send *famine* upon a land, then again man has to humble himself. It is not easy to say, “I am my own. Who is Lord over me?” when the barn is empty and when the wine vats no longer burst with new wine. Famine is a wondrous leveler—and when the king of Samaria went through his straitened cities—where women had eaten their own children in the straitness of the siege, I think there was none brought so low as the king—none so humbled as the highest and none so base as the haughtiest!

It is so, too, when *pestilence* comes. With equal foot, it kicks at the door both of the palace and of the cottage. Then the prince must mourn because his first-born dies—and majesty must sit in weeds when desolation is in the palace.

God has wondrous ways of making men feel that they are but dust, but when nothing else can serve His turn He will sweep whole dynasties away, as men remove an anthill when it has become a nuisance. Yes, He will shake mighty nations, and make “eternal cities,” as they were called, only to stand as the memorials and the wrecks of greatness! The Lord, in all the works of Providence hitherto, if you analyze the pages of history, you will find has been constantly bringing down high looks and making the haughtiness of man to be humbled. Indeed, this seems to be God’s great work! And if any man should say to me, “What is God doing?” I

would answer, “He is lifting up the lowly and he is casting down the proud! He seems always to be engaged in this, as though it were His natural work and He delighted in it—the taking down of those nests that were built among the stars—and the stooping in the almightiness of His love to pick up the beggar from the mire and set him among the princes, even among the princes of His people.”

What is thus constantly being done in His Providence will be continued to be done until the haughtiness of man shall be completely driven away—until in this world there shall be no place for any majesty, but the majesty of the King of kings—until beneath the cape of Heaven there shall be but one name before which men shall bow, one Throne which alone shall be august in men’s minds and only one name by which all the families of the earth shall be named! “In that day,” when all the earth shall be filled with His Glory, as the waters cover the sea, it shall be said, “He has thrown down the high looks of man and the Lord, alone, is exalted!”

But I want to come to something more distinctly personal to ourselves. This text is certainly true, though in so applying it we may seem to be wresting it from its original setting and connection, it is certainly true in *the economy of Grace*. Man in all matters of religion and in all his dealings with God, is proud, but it is amazing how apparently humble men will be when they worship false gods. They will cut themselves with knives and roll themselves in the mire. We have known some votaries to kneel before the representation of the Virgin Mary and lick the very pavement with their tongues by way of penance—and perform the most degrading rites in honor of their false gods. Man seems to be humble enough in his dealings with a false deity, but as soon as ever he comes to deal with the true God, the first things that have to be got out of him are his pride, his high looks, his haughtiness~ Oh, strange is it that before the Majesty of Heaven a worm of the dust should think himself great, and that in the blaze of the infinite purity of the thrice-holy God a mass of corruption like man should fancy himself to be good! But so it is! One of the greatest works of Grace in the heart is to humble our pride.

Going now into this subject with as much brevity as possible, we shall observe, in the first place, that—

I. THE PLAN OF SALVATION, ITSELF, AIMS AT THE BOWING DOWN OF THE LOFTINESS OF MAN AND AT THE EXALTATION OF GOD.

This is very apparent to us at once when we remember that *there is no plan of salvation at all for man except as a sinner*. The plan of salvation necessarily considers man as needing salvation and as being lost. Its very first promise is forgiveness, which implies sin. It begins to talk with man of pardon and justification, which implies guilt and a lack of righ-

teousness. If there is anybody here that is not a sinner, there is nothing in the Bible for him! As old Wilcox well observes, “Christ can save everybody except the self-righteous.” He came into the world to save sinners, but not the righteous. He is the Physician for any form of disease, except that form of disease which consists in not being diseased. “The whole,” says He, “have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.” If you are a sinner, there is some relation between you and Christ. But if you proudly say in your heart, “I am better than other men. I am not as the thief, or the harlot. I need not wash in the fountain which they need so much, for I am clean.” I tell you, man or woman, there is no Christ for you, no pardon for you, no justification for you, no Heaven for you! Your self-righteousness, like an iron bar across the gates of Paradise, shuts you out forever! Your good works can do for you what your sins need not do—they may ruin your soul forever by making you too proud to come to Christ. The plan of salvation appeals to men as sinners! It comes to them on no other terms but as sinners—and thus it is evidently meant to bring down man’s high looks.

Moreover, it not only treats men as sinners, but *as dead sinners*. There is not a complimentary word to human nature within the covers of the Bible. It says, “You has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins”—and this was said of New Testament saints who had warm praise from the Apostle Paul! They had been originally dead. If you want an image of human nature, you will find it in the rottenness of Lazarus when he had been dead four days! The Gospel comes to give life to the dead! It comes to deal out everlasting life to those who have lost it and could never have obtained it except as a gift from Heaven. Now, is not this humbling to the high looks of men? What? Must it be so—that I must see, “Death,” written upon all my hopes, upon all my doings, upon all my willings? Must all these be written down as being dead things? It must be so. And if you do not know this, you do not know vital godliness as yet, for the Grace of God deals with you in your natural estate as being lost and utterly ruined and undone!

Another humbling point in the plan of salvation is that *it distinctly informs the sinner that the way of salvation is in no sense or manner in himself, but is altogether in Another*. It tells him that if he is saved, his salvation is entirely the work of Him who, though He was God, yet condescended to become Man that He might lift manhood up into companionship with Godhead! It says the sinner, when he prostrates himself upon his knees, “Your prayers are well enough, but they avail not with the Eternal Father to put away sin. Blood! Blood! Blood must flow, not tears alone!” It tells the sinner that all his merits and his good works cannot obtain salvation for him. It bids him look to Christ and mark the crimson

currents as they spring from those matchless wounds, that mouth of mercy, those gates of Paradise, those fountains of immortality, those sources of all our richest treasure and abiding peace! It tells the sinner that the head that once was crowned with thorns must be crowned with the glory of His salvation, if he is saved at all, and that the Man who was despised and spat upon when here below must be honored and adored above by him as his Savior, and his only Savior, or there is no salvation for him! This, too, has a tendency to bring down the high looks and to lower the haughtiness of man.

Perhaps, however, there is nothing in the Gospel which grates more upon some men's pride, touching, as it were, the very marrow of their bones, than the Doctrine, not only that man is a sinner, and a dead sinner, and is saved by the work of Another, but that *the very will to be saved is determined not so much by himself as by God*. I do not know a text that makes a sinner grind his teeth more than this one—"So then, it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." You remember that amazing expression of the Savior's, "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." "You have a will. You are responsible. You are free agents, but that will of yours, you have so wickedly set against Me that you will not come unto Me that you may live! You refuse Me—you will not accept My Grace—you will sooner starve than come to the feast of mercy." Many a man has turned on his heel and said, "I will not hear this any longer," and then we are reminded of those who left the Master because of certain Truths of God which He taught, and we say, "Will you also go away?" Oh, you who have had your haughtiness brought down, I believe you will be swept out of that idea and will acknowledge that you never came to Christ of your own free will, but only of Sovereign Grace. You do not deny it, for you are always conscious of it, that unless your will had been moved by Sovereign Grace, and constrained by the blessed interposition of the Divine Spirit, you were as obstinate as the heifer unaccustomed to the yoke, kicked against the pricks and would not come to Christ that you might have life! Now, this part of the plan of salvation tends to bring down high looks.

There is another point which I must notice and which is not always understood, but it is a mighty bringer-down of high looks, viz., the understanding of this—that our *depraved nature is not in the plan of salvation supposed to be either improved or improvable*. Are you startled at such an assertion? Well, if you have read the Word of God, you will have found plenty of warrant for it. All that God Himself can do for your depraved nature as it now stands is to kill it and let it be buried when dead! The ordinance of Baptism is intended to set forth this very Truth of God—that you must be dead and buried to the old life, and the new and

true life that you are henceforth to live does not spring out of the ashes of the old, like the phoenix out of the ashes of the departed one, but is an emanation of the Holy Spirit! “Created anew in Christ Jesus.” It is not that the carnal man is ever reconciled to God, for it is plainly declared that it is “enmity against God,” and cannot be reconciled! The carnal mind cannot even understand spiritual truth! The carnal mind knows not the things which are of God, for they are spiritual and must be spiritually discerned. The process by which a man is practically saved is this—a new nature is put into us! That new and incorruptible nature immediately begins to contend with the old Adam, “the body,” as Paul calls it, “of sin and death.” This causes a conflict, a conflict which is constantly maintained, and which at certain times is extremely intense and makes the subject of it to cry out, “Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Or, “From this body of death, this death which has taken such a tangible form as to be to me a realizing tangible thing—a very body of death—who will get me rid of it?” He does not ask that it may be improved, but that he may be delivered from it! He does not ask that it may be changed, but that a new nature may come in and trample it down and rise superior to it!

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, how humbling this is! To think that all Christ found in me when He met with me was so utterly good-for-nothing that all He could do with it was to bury it—and all the life that I had when Christ met with me was in His sight such death that He had to quicken me with an entirely new life—and to make the old life die daily! Happy, happy day when it is completely dead and gone and the new life, delivered from the bondage of corruption, shall rise into Glory! Now, this is a humbling Doctrine. I am, however, persuaded that it is both a Doctrine declared in God’s Word and a Doctrine verified by human experience, so far as that experience is Christian experience. All this is intended by our gracious God to bring down the high looks of man and to humble the haughty and the proud.

But now, in the next place, while the plan of salvation aims at this—

II. THE FIRST WORK OF SALVATION ALSO SECURES IT TO A VERY LARGE EXTENT.

When the Grace of God comes into a man, it comes with an axe in its hand. It does not come at first to build up, but to pull down. I think we should beware of being too suddenly filled with strong confidence and assurance. I do not say beware of too suddenly believing in Christ! That is a blessed thing and is a sinner’s present business. When the Holy Spirit gives faith—joy and peace come immediately. But I believe that, as a general rule, God strips before He clothes, and when He means to build a house for His own indwelling, He does what every wise architect does—

He first digs out the deep foundations. An early work of Grace in the soul is *conviction of sin*. We who speak to hundreds and thousands of souls—for we speak without exaggeration when we say we have seen thousands of souls under conviction of sin—we observe this, that conviction of sin is a wondrous puller-down. When a man begins to feel his sin lying heavy upon his heart, when his iniquity is continually before him, as David puts it in the 51st Psalm, then his high looks are gone. Have you ever seen a rich man in the anguish of conviction? You would not know him from a beggar then! His purse-pride has gone! All his wealth gives him but little comfort. “My sin! My sin! My sin!” he says. “Would to God I were as poor as the paupers in the workhouse, if I were but rid of my sin! What is my wealth while I have my sin?”

Have you ever seen the man of knowledge, the man who knows everything, the sharp, quick, critical man, who takes everybody up and thinks he can set all the world right—have you ever seen him under a sense of sin? He feels himself to be a fool at once, and would sit down on a form with the infant class in a school if there he might learn of a Savior, being content to give up all his wisdom and to be a babe in Christ! And have you ever observed the man who was naturally of a high and haughty disposition, who reared up among his fellows—have you ever seen how he acts when God’s hand is on him? Why, he would hide himself anywhere—and he envies even the meanest and most obscure of the children of God! Once get a sight of sin, and those things which now prop us up will all give way and we shall be beggars in the face of all the world when once we see how exceedingly sinful a thing our sin is! Some of us have passed through this season of deep penitential humbling before the Lord and we can bear our witness that when the Lord casts us down, there is nothing that can lift us up but the hand of the Lord Himself! For when we did try to rise, our wings melted like the wax wings of Icarus and we fell to the ground broken in pieces.

But if conviction humbles, let me say that *conversion humbles* a great deal more! It is thought, perhaps, by you that as soon as you find pardon you will not be so humble as you were. Distrust the pardon that does not humble you! Be persuaded that the forgiveness which does not make you lie low in the dust is no forgiveness at all, but a mere fancy of your infatuated heart! When the Lord pardons a sinner, that sinner feels that he could sink and go out of sight. As soon as Peter’s boat began to fill, it began to sink—and as soon as our boat gets full of mercy it begins to sink! Peter, too, said, “Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man.” And so we feel as if the abundance of God’s mercy taught us more than ever a sense of sin. I do not think that a sense of sin is such a heart-breaking thing as a sense of mercy, for sometimes a sense of sin is attended with a

despair which steels the soul and makes the mind hardened against God. A criminal may know himself to be guilty, very guilty, but yet if he feels sure that there is no mercy for him, he is like a hunted stag at bay which turns upon its oppressors and fights for dear life. But when a man is conscious of guilt, and then receives a free pardon from his offended God, then he knows not what to do! He is broken in heart, first with his unworthiness, and next with the mercy of God! God compares His Word in one place to a hammer, and in another place to a fire. Now, why are the two put together? Why, because there are some rocks, which, after a line of fire has been made across them, will crack readily in a fissure as soon as the hammer is used! Now, the hammer of conviction, when it comes upon the cold heart, frozen with despair, may break that heart, but oh, when the fire of God's love comes and the hammer, too, then surely the rock gives way and our stubborn will flies into pieces before the Lord, broken by His fire—

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

Some say they do not believe this point. If there is anyone of you who has passed through conviction of sin without soul-humbling, I pray God to show you that such a conviction of sin as you have had is not the work of His Spirit! If you have not been led to see this, then, whatever you may have seen of the corruption of your own heart, you have not seen yourself aright. And, on the other hand, if, in coming to Christ, you have been able to keep anything with which to feed your pride, anything in which you can glory, anything of which you can say, “This is mine. This is not Christ's. This came from my own good nature and excellent disposition and not from the Most High”—then you have need to go to Christ again, for you have never yet been to Him aright! All that our unregenerate nature spins must be unraveled. All the pottery that unregenerate nature burns in her kiln shall be broken as with a rod of iron! But that which comes from Christ is grounded, bottomed, and stayed upon the rock of Eternal Mercy! That shall stand, and only that! Oh, this is indeed the way in which God, in the hearts of His people, brings down the loftiness of man, lays low his haughtiness and makes the Lord, alone, to be exalted! Thirdly—

III. THIS SAME WORK IS CARRIED ON IN THE AFTER-WORKS OF GRACE.

I cannot single out all these—it would take too long for this evening—but let us just pick out four of the works of Grace in a Christian in his advance in the spiritual life.

The first is *his growth in Grace*. I am sure that as the Christian grows in Grace, he grows in humility. Or, at any rate, if there is a growth which

is not accompanied by a deeper sense of unworthiness and feebleness than existed before, then it is a supposed growth, not a real one! The farmer is very glad when he sees his root plants growing upwards for a time. He likes to see the green leaf, but he will shake his head to the boy who is pleased with the green leaf only. "Oh," he says, "I want to see it grow downwards as well as upwards—I want the root—that is the most precious thing." If it does not grow in the root, in the underground part, it is but of little value to him. It is well for the Christian, when he has plenty of humility and when he can spread out the very roots of his life and draw up nourishment from the precious Word of God. We must grow in humility! It was remarked by an excellent Divine that growing souls think themselves nothing, but that grown saints think themselves *less* than nothing, and I suppose that when they are fully grown they fail to find language in which to express their sense of insignificance! The Apostle Paul, I suppose, committed an error in grammar when he said, "Less than the least of all saints." It may be bad grammar, but it is precious truth! Everyone who has come to such knowledge as the Apostle—and I am afraid there are not many of us who have grown to that!—can truly say that he is "less than the least of all saints." As the Lord then enables us to grow in Grace, Brothers and Sisters, our proud looks will come down and God will be exalted!

In the next place, if *the Lord Jesus Christ shall favor us with communion with Himself*, it will have the same result. You have sometimes, in happy moments, been with the Savior on the Mount. We scarcely like to speak of these things here, but we have had times when, before we were aware, our souls made us like the chariots of Amminadib. But no chariot of Amminadib could have set forth our rapture! We have had such fellowship with Jesus that, though these eyes have never seen Him, yet we have been conscious of His Presence, joyful and sure that He was near! He has kissed us with the kisses of His lips—His love has been better than wine. Now, no man ever came out of the place of communion proud. If there is one thing that always goes with it, it is a prostration of spirit in the Presence of the precious Savior! See Jesus and be proud? Impossible! Lean your head upon that bosom and be exalted? Impossible! You will feel, when you have seen the Lord, that henceforth you must blush to think that you are so little like He and love Him so little. This is another way in which God brings down our high looks—it is a very blessed way of doing it—may He use it more and more!

A third way of bringing down our high looks *is really to make His children practically active*. It is thought by some that activity and usefulness have in them a strong tendency to lift us up in pride. I suppose they have, but I believe that idleness has far more—that nobody is so proud of

his strength as the man who has never tried it and that very likely some of those gentlemen who are so apt to pray for the workers lest they should be exalted, and who sit down and do nothing themselves—are much the prouder people of the two! Let me say to you, Brothers and Sisters, that of all the temptations that the workers have, they are not so often tempted to pride as they are to some other things. Take the preacher, for instance, who has to preach twice a day and be the pastor of a multitude of souls. Well, he succeeds upon some one occasion, but he has no time to cradle himself upon that because the trumpet sounds for another battle—and he has to feel that he needs fresh strength! He cannot lift up the banner, for he has to sharpen his sword again! When nightfall comes, he has still some work to do for his Master and the first ray of the morning's light sees him still busy. He has no time to congratulate himself upon what he has performed! He is compelled to—

***“Forget the steps already trod,
And onward press his way.”***

I should prescribe to any Christian here tonight, who feels tempted to pride, to attempt some great work for Christ that is a little above his present strength! And when he has done—to let him try something a little above even that! And if he can do that, to go still further! If you always have something on hand more than you can do, and which puts a strain upon your faith and upon your earnestness, I believe it will be one of the best cures for pride and one of the best things, through God the Holy Spirit's power, to make you see your own insufficiency and to bring your haughtiness down.

Well, dear Brothers and Sisters, so base are we naturally that the fourth way of bringing us down is the most common one—not by communion with Christ, nor by activity, so much *as by affliction*. Must it always be that? Must it always be that? They are bad children who always need the rod, but there are some Christians who seem as if they never would obey without it! “Be you not as the horse and the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle lest they come near unto you.” Oh, what hard mouths we have and with what a sharp bit of affliction are we driven—and how we champ that bit, sometimes, and would gladly get it out of our mouths! And if we could do so, we would dash on to our own destruction! The only way that God has to keep us right is to give us, every now and then, a touch with His whip. Blessed be God for it! It is hard to bear, but oh, how profitable it is! Blessed be God for slander! It cuts us to the quick, but oh, how beaded with blessings has it been to us! Blessed be God for depression of spirit! We have groaned under it, some of us, till our life has become a burden to us—but if we had not been so depressed when alone, we would never

have been able to bear the prosperity which God has given us abroad! We thank His blessed name, for by all these means, in some way or other, the loftiness of man shall be brought down, the haughtiness of man shall be made low and the Lord alone shall be exalted!

Let us look forward to the works of Grace which are yet incomplete, but which are soon to be completed. Let us anticipate the day when the Spirit of God shall complete His great work—when the old nature in us shall be utterly conquered and when the new nature, born of God—shall reign in its greatest vitality and fullest development!

Then shall we be, before the Eternal Throne, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness and decked with the jewels of our perfected salvation! Then, indeed, shall every haughty look be gone and every proud thought be banished! And in that day the Lord alone shall be exalted! Then shall our one song be, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be the Glory. Unto Him who loved us and loosed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God, unto Him be glory forever and ever." I shall not detain you much longer, but we ought not to leave this subject without mentioning yet another Truth of God that our text suggests.—

IV. THE EFFECT OF THE WORKS OF GRACE WHICH GOD DOES IN HIS CHURCH AT LARGE IS TO BRING DOWN THE LOFTINESS OF MAN.

Dear Friends, we believe, and some of us believe it very firmly, that God is going to visit our Churches with a revival. We have seen indications of the coming blessing. In connection with this one Church, and it is but an instance of several others, the very presence of this multitude on a Thursday evening is, to some of us, one of the most hopeful signs that there is a spirit of inquiry growing! And on Monday evenings I see the greater part of this area filled with people who come only to pray. I am not conscious of having stirred you up particularly of late, but I have seen a very marked change over the whole face of things. Why, for the last two or three months, our friends who keep the gates outside, although we have always had as many as we could by any process hold, yet find themselves now compelled to shut the gates in the face of hundreds and even of thousands—although before we scarcely knew where to put those who came within the walls, yet there were not so many sent away! The mass who come here has become perfectly astounding to us all. We can hardly realize it. We think it is a good sign if they are willing to hear—and when they will come and even tread upon one another in their desire to hear the Gospel! But a better sign than that is that last Tuesday week, that day of fasting and of prayer, left an impression on the ministers present which they can never forget. And last Tuesday, when we met in our association, the ministers present all said, "Why

cannot we have such a day of fasting and prayer?" Ah, indeed, why not? We all agreed that there should be such a day. Then when the delegates and representatives of most of the Baptist Churches in London came, they said, "Cannot we come?" Well, we had not thought of that. "Oh," they said, "you cannot keep us out! We should like to consecrate a whole day to fasting and prayer." "Yes," we replied, "we are right glad to find your hearts so warmed to it." Some asked if all the deacons and elders of Baptist churches could not come, and they were told, "Yes, certainly." And I believe that on Monday, the 5th of November, you will find us by hundreds met together to spend the day, from ten until six, in humiliation and prayer to God for a blessing!

This came so spontaneously, without any plan or proposal, everybody desiring it, that I took it at once as being a token for good! I am glad that the good old Puritan preaching and fasting has come back to our Churches. There are certain demons that afflict mankind, that will not go forth without prayer and fasting, and when many are not only willing, but eager to spend a day entirely for this, it is a good sign! God never sets us praying and longing without meaning to bless us, only here is the point—as sure as ever God blesses us, He will be sure to take us down. We are mistaken if we think He is going to bless us for our own exaltation! If any of you want a blessing for your own self-glorification, you will be wonderfully mistaken! If I, as your pastor, should ask for the conversion of sinners that I might be able to say, "Oh, there are so many added to the Church in a year," I shall not get it, or if it should come, there will come with it some stinging rebuke that will make the soul cry out to God! You must mind that God is in it and then we shall have the blessing! And the only thing that will hinder it is our getting any sinister motive, or any idea that we can exalt *ourselves*! I say, Brothers and Sisters, that if we seek God's blessing for the mere extension of our denomination, we shall seek it from a wrong motive. We must seek it for God's Glory and for that only, for the Lord will bring down our high looks as well as the high looks of other people! And the more He loves us, the more will He be sure to do this, for what He will not tolerate in sinners, He will not bear in His saints. What I cannot put up with in strangers, I will never endure in my own friends, and so will the Lord chasten His people if they are proud and haughty. Let us then wait and expect to receive a blessing, but let us also expect to be humbled by it. Lastly—

V. WHERE DEEDS OF MERCY DO NOT PROVE THE TRUTH OF THIS, DEEDS OF JUSTICE WILL CONFIRM IT.

I will say but a few sentences, but let them be caught by your ears and seized by your hearts. In this house tonight there are some of you who are not reconciled to God by the death of His Son. You have never hum-

bled yourselves and taken the Lord's Christ to be your only hope. Now, mark this—if you will not come down by Grace, you must and shall come down by judgment! You will be humbled, Sinner, if not to penitence, then to remorse! If not to hopeful conversion, to hopeless despair! Every high look shall be brought down in the day when He shall sit upon the Great White Throne and call the quick and the dead to judgment. “Rocks, hide us! Mountains, fall upon us! Hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne!” Who said that? Why, the very man who once said, “Lord, I thank You that I am not as other men are.” Yes, Sirs, and the very man who once said, “Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?” He it is who now cries, “Hide me, hide me from the accusing face.” Behold, you despisers, wonder and perish! If you will not be humbled at the Cross, you shall be humbled at the Throne of Judgment! If mercy wins you not, judgment shall subdue you! If you will not bend, you shall break! He who will not melt in the fires of love shall be consumed in the furnace of wrath! Oh, my Hearer, what a dread alternative is this! “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little! Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him!”

There is a wonderful power in humiliation. Ahab humbled himself and though it was not with a saving humility, yet the curse did not fall upon him as it would have done. Even in a natural humiliation there may be some withdrawal of temporal chastisement, but if the Lord shall give you true brokenness of heart, remember it is written, “A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.” There is not one word in the Bible against a humble soul. There is not one curse against a sinner who feels his need and comes empty-handed! Come, poor needy one, poor helpless one, you ruined sinner, without any hope of yourself, you bankrupt sinner, come—

***“Tis perfect poverty alone,
That sets our soul at large.
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge.”***

When we have done with self and with all self's hopes, projects and plans—and trust only in the finished work of Jesus—then may we rejoice, for we are saved and saved eternally!

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

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

A VISION OF THE LATTER DAY GLORIES

NO. 249

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 24, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“And it shall come to pas in the last days that the mountain
of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top
of the mountains and shall be exalted
above the hills and all nations shall flow unto it.”
Isaiah 2:2, & Micah 4:1.***

THE Prophets of God were anciently called Seers, for they had a supernatural sight which could pierce through the gloom of the future and behold the things which are not seen as yet, but which God has ordained for the last times. They frequently described what they saw with spiritual eyes after the form or fashion of something which could be seen by the eye of nature. The vision was so substantial that they could picture it in words, so that we also may behold in open vision, the glorious things which they beheld after a supernatural sort.

Let us imagine Isaiah as he stood upon Mount Zion. He looked about him and there were “the mountains that are round about Jerusalem” far out vying it in height, but yielding to Zion in glory. Dearer to his soul than even the snowcapped glories of Lebanon which glittered afar off was that little hill of Zion, for there upon its summit stood the temple, the shrine of the living God—the place of His delight, the home of song, the house of sacrifice, the great gathering place where the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord—to serve Jehovah, the God of Abraham. Standing at the gate of that glorious temple which had been piled by the matchless art of Solomon, he looked into the future and he saw with tearful eye, the structure burned with fire. He beheld it cast down and the plow driven over its foundations. He saw the people carried away into Babylon and the nation cast off for a season.

Looking once more through the glass he beheld the temple rising from its ashes, with glory outwardly diminished, but really increased. He saw on till he beheld Messiah Himself in the form of a little babe carried into the second temple. He saw Him there and he rejoiced. But before he had time for gladness his eye glanced onward to the Cross. He saw Messiah nailed to the tree. He beheld his back plowed and mangled with the whip. “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows,” said the Prophet

and he paused awhile to bemoan the bleeding Prince of the House of David. His eye was now doomed to a long and bitter weeping, for he saw the invading hosts of the Romans setting up the standard of desolation in the city. He saw the holy city burned with fire and utterly destroyed. His spirit was almost melted in him.

But once more he flew through time with eagle wings and scanned futurity with eagle eyes. He soared aloft in imagination and began to sing of the last days—the end of dispensations and of time. He saw Messiah once again on earth. He saw that little hill of Zion rising to the clouds—reaching to Heaven itself. He beheld the New Jerusalem descending from above, God dwelling among men and all the nations flowing to the tabernacle of the Most High God, where they paid Him holy worship.

We shall not, today, look through all the dim vista of Zion's tribulations. We will leave the avenue of troubles and of trials through which the Church has passed and is to pass and we will come, by faith, to the last days. And may God help us while we indulge in a glorious vision of that which is to be before long, when "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills. And all nations shall flow unto it."

The Prophet saw two things in the vision. He saw the mountain exalted and he beheld the nations flowing to it. Now will you use your imagination for a moment? For there is a picture here which I can scarcely compare to anything, except one of Martin's magnificent paintings, in which he throws together such masses of light and shade that the imagination is left at liberty to stretch her wings and fly to the utmost height. In the present instance, you will not be able to outstrip the reality, however high you may endeavor to soar. For that which is in our text will certainly be greater than that which the preacher can utter, or that which you may be able to conceive.

Transport yourselves for a moment to the foot of Mount Zion. As you stand there, you observe that it is but a very little hill. Bashan is far loftier and Carmel and Sharon outvie it. As for Lebanon, Zion is but a little hill-ock compared with it. If you think for a moment of the Alps, or of the loftier Andes, or of the yet mightier Himalayas, this mount Zion seems to be a very little hill, a mere molehill—insignificant, despicable and obscure. Stand there for a moment, until the Spirit of God touches your eyes and you shall see this hill begin to grow. Up it mounts, with the temple on its summit, till it outreaches Tabor. Onward it grows, till Carmel, with its perpetual green, is left behind and Salmon, with its everlasting snow sinks before it. Onward still it grows, till the snowy peaks of Lebanon are eclipsed. Still onward mounts the hill, drawing with its mighty roots other mountains and hills into its fabric. And onward it rises, till piercing the

clouds it reaches above the Alps. And onwards still, till the Himalayas seem to be sucked into its heart and the greatest mountains of the earth appear to be but as the roots that strike out from the side of the eternal hill. And there it rises till you can scarcely see the top, as infinitely above all the higher mountains of the world as they are above the valleys.

Have you caught the idea and do you see there afar off upon the lofty top, not everlasting snows, but a pure crystal tableland, crowned with a gorgeous city, the metropolis of God, the royal palace of Jesus the King? The sun is eclipsed by the light which shines from the top of this mountain. The moon ceases from her brightness, for there is now no night—but this one hill, lifted up on high, illuminates the atmosphere and the nations of them that are saved are walking in the light thereof. The hill of Zion has now outsoared all others and all the mountains and hills of the earth are become as nothing before her. This is the magnificent picture of the text. I do not know that in all the compass of poetry there is an idea so massive and stupendous as this—a mountain heaving, expanding, swelling, growing—till all the high hills become absorbed and that which was but a little rising ground before, becomes a hill the top whereof reaches to the seventh heavens.

Now we have here a picture of what the Church is to be. Of old, the Church was like Mount Zion, a very little hill. What saw the nations of the earth when they looked upon it?—a humble man with twelve disciples. But that little hill grew and some thousands were baptized in the name of Christ. It grew again and became mighty. The stone cut out of the mountain without hands began to break in pieces kingdoms and now at this day the hill of Zion stands a lofty hill. But still, compared with the colossal systems of idolatry, she is but small. The Hindu and the Chinese turn to our religion and say, “It is an infant of yesterday. Ours is the religion of ages.”

The Easterns compare Christianity to some noxious atmosphere that creeps along the fenny lowlands. Their systems, they imagine, to be like the Alps, outsoaring the heavens in height. Ah, but we reply to this, “Your mountain crumbles and your hill dissolves. Our hill of Zion has been growing, and strange to say, it has life within its bowels. And grow on it shall, grow on it must—till all the systems of idolatry shall become less than nothing before it—till false gods being cast down, mighty systems of idolatry being overthrown—this mountain shall rise above them all. And on and on and on, shall this Christian religion grow, until converting into its mass all the deluded followers of the heresies and idolatries of man, the hill shall reach to Heaven and God in Christ shall be All in All.” Such is the destiny of our Church, she is to be an all-conquering Church, rising above every competitor.

We may more fully explain this in two or three ways. The Church will be like a high mountain, for she will be pre-eminently conspicuous. I believe that at this period the thoughts of men are more engaged upon the religion of Christ than upon any other. It is true and there are few that will deny it, that every other system is growing old—gray hairs are scattered here and there, although the followers of these religions know it. As for Mahomet, has he not become now effete with gray old age? And the saber once so sharp to slay the unbeliever, has it not been blunted with time and retired into its scabbard? As for the old idolatries, the religion of Confucius, or of Buddha—where are their missionaries—where are the old activities that made minor idolatries bow before them? They are now content to be confined within their own limit, they feel that their hour is come that they can grow no further, for their strong man is declining into old age.

But the Christian religion has become more conspicuous now than ever it was. In every part of the world all people are thinking of it. The very gates of Japan—once fast closed—are now open to it and soon shall the trumpet voice of the Gospel be heard there and the name of Jesus, the Son of the Highest, shall there be proclaimed by the lips of His chosen servants. The hill is already growing and mark you, it is to grow higher yet. It is to be so conspicuous that in every hamlet of the world the name of Christ shall be known and feared. There shall not be a Bedouin in his tent, there shall not be a Hottentot in his kraal, there shall not be a Laplander in the midst of his eternal snow, or an African in that great continent of thirst, that shall not have heard of Christ! Rising higher and higher and higher, from north to south, from east to west, this mountain shall be beheld. Not like the star of the north which cannot be seen in the south, nor like the “cross” of the south which must give way before the “bear” of the north—this mountain, strange to say it, contrary to nature—shall be visible from every land.

Far-off islands of the sea shall behold it and they that are near shall worship at the foot thereof. It shall be pre-eminently conspicuous in clear, cloudless radiance gladdening the people of the earth. This I think is one meaning of the text, when the Prophet declares, “the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains. and shall be exalted above the hills.”

This, however, is but a small part of the meaning. He means that the Church of Christ shall become awful and venerable in her grandeur. It has never been my privilege to be able to leave this country for any time, to stand at the foot of the loftier mountain of Europe—but even the little hills of Scotland, where half way up the mist is slumbering, struck me with some degree of awe. These are some of God’s old works, high and

lofty, talking to the stars, lifting up their heads above the clouds as though they were ambassadors from earth ordained to speak to God in silence far aloft. But poets tell us—and travelers who have but little poetry say the same—that standing at the foot of some of the stupendous mountains of Europe and of Asia, the soul is subdued with the grandeur of the scene.

There, upon the father of mountains, lie the eternal snows glittering in the sunlight and the spirit wonders to see such mighty things as these. Such massive ramparts garrisoned with storms. We seem to be but as insects crawling at their base, while they appear to stand like cherubim before the Throne of God, sometimes covering their face with clouds of mist, or at other times lifting up their white heads and singing their silent and eternal hymn before the Throne of the Most High. There is something awfully grand in a mountain, but how much more so in such a mountain as is described in our text, which is to be exalted above all hills and above all the highest mountains of the earth?

The Church is to be awful in her grandeur. Ah, now she is despised. The Infidel barks at her, it is all he can do. The followers of old superstitions as yet pay her but little veneration. The religion of Christ, albeit that it has to us all the veneration of eternity about it—"For His goings forth were of old, even from everlasting"—yet to men who know Him not, Christianity seems to be but a young upstart, audaciously contending with hoary-headed systems of religion. Yes, but the day shall come when men shall bow before the name of Christ, when the Cross shall command universal homage, when the name of Jesus shall stay the wandering Arab and make him prostrate his knee at the hour of prayer, when the voice of the minister of Christ shall be as mighty as that of a king, when the bishops of Christ's Church shall be as princes in our midst and when the sons and daughters of Zion shall be every man of them a prince and every daughter a queen. The hour comes, yes, and now draws near, when the mountain of the Lord's house in her awful grandeur shall be established on the top of the mountains.

There is yet, however, a deeper and larger meaning. It is just this—that the day is coming when the Church of God shall have absolute supremacy. The Church of Christ now has to fight for her existence. She has many foes and mighty ones too, who would snatch the chaplet from her brow, blunt her sword and stain her banners in the dust. But the day shall come when all her enemies shall die. There shall not be a dog to move his tongue against her. She shall be so mighty that there shall be nothing left to compete with her. As for Rome, you shall seek but find it not. It shall be hurled like a millstone in the flood. As for Mohamed's lustful superstition, they shall ask for it, but the imposter shall not be found.

As for false gods, talk to the bittern and the owl, to the mole and to the bat and they shall tell you where they shall be discovered. The Church of Christ at that time shall not have kings of the earth to bind her and to control her, as if she were but a puny thing, nor shall she have them to persecute her and lift up their iron arm to crush her. But she, then, shall be the queen and empress of all nations.

She shall reign over all kings. They shall bow down and lick the dust of her feet. Her golden sandals shall tread upon their necks. She, with her scepter, with her rod of iron, shall break empires in pieces like earthen vessels. She shall say, "Overturn! Overturn! Overturn! Until He come, whose right it is. And I will give it to HIM." The destiny of the Church is universal monarchy. What Alexander fought for, what Caesar died to obtain, what Napoleon wasted all his life to achieve, Christ shall have—the universal monarchy of the broad acres of the earth. "The sea is His and He made it and His hands formed the dry land." The whole earth shall come and worship and bow down and kneel before the Lord our Maker. For every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

You have now, I think, the meaning of the text—the Church growing and rising up till she becomes conspicuous, venerable and supreme. And now let me pause here a moment, to ask how this is to be done.

How is this to be done? I reply there are three things which will ensure the growth of the Church. The first is the individual exertion of every Christian. I do not think that all the exertions of the Church of Christ will ever be able to reach the climax of our text. I think we shall see something more than natural agency, even though employed by the Spirit, before the Church of Christ shall be exalted to that supremacy of which I have spoken. But, nevertheless, this is to contribute to it. In the olden times, when men raised mounds to the memory of departed kings, it was usual to put a heap of stones over the tomb and every passerby threw another stone. In course of age those mounds grew into small hills. Now the Church of Christ in the present day is growing something in that way. Each Christian converted to Christ throws his stone. We each do our measure. By the grace of God let us each make sure of one stone being deposited there and strive to add another by laboring to be the instruments of bringing someone else to Christ. In this way the Church will grow. And as year after year rolls on, each Christian serving his Master, the Church will increase. And it shall come to pass in the last times, that even by the efforts of Christ's people, owned by God the Holy Spirit, this mountain shall be highly exalted in the midst of the hills.

This, although all that we can do, is not, I think, all that we have to expect. We can do no more, but we may expect more. Besides, the Church of

Christ differs from all other mountains in this—that she has within her a living influence. The ancients fabled that under Mount Etna Vulcan was buried. Some great giant, they thought, lay there entombed. And when he rolled over and over, the earth began to tremble and the mountains shook and fire poured forth. We believe not the fable, but the Church of God, verily, is like this living mountain. Christ seems to be buried within her. And when He moves Himself His Church rises with Him. Once He was prostrate in the garden. Then Zion was but a little hill. Then He rose and day-by-day as He is lifted up His Church rises with Him.

And in the day when He shall stand on Mount Zion, then shall His Church be elevated to her utmost height. The fact is, that the Church, though a mountain, is a volcano—not one that spouts fire, but that has fire within her. And this inward fire of the living Truth of God and living grace, makes her bulge out, expands her side and lifts her crest. And onwards she must tower, for the Truth of God is mighty and it must prevail—grace is mighty and must conquer—Christ is mighty and He must be King of kings. Thus you see that there is something more than the individual exertions of the Church. There is a something within her that must make her expand and grow, till she overtops the highest mountains,

But mark you, the great hope of the Church, although it is reckoned madness by some to say it, is the second advent of Christ. When He shall come, then shall the mountain of the Lord's house be exalted above the hills. We know not when Jesus may come. All the prophets of modern times have only been prophets from the fact that they have made profit by their speculations. But with the solitary exception of that pun upon the word, I believe they have not the slightest claim upon your credit. Not even men who are doctors of divinity, who can spoil an abundance of paper with their prophesies of second Adventism—"Of that day and that hour knows no man, no, not the angels of God." Christ may come this morning. While I am addressing you Christ may suddenly appear in the clouds of Heaven. He may not come for many a weary age. But come He must. In the last days He must appear. And when Christ shall come He will make short work of that which is so long a labor to His Church.

His appearance will immediately convert the Jews. They have looked for Messiah a king. There He is, in more than regal splendor. They shall see Him. They shall believe on Him. He will then tell them that He is the Messiah whom their fathers crucified. Then will they look on Him whom they have pierced and they will mourn for their sin and gathering round their great Messiah in glorious march they shall enter and be settled in their own land. They shall once more become a great and mighty nation, no, a Jew shall become a very prince among men, firstborn in the Church of God. Then shall the fullness of the Gentiles be converted and all kindreds

and people shall serve the Son of David. Mark, the Church is to rise first and when the Church has risen to eminence and greatness, the nations will flow unto her. Her rising will not be owing to the nations, but to the advent of Christ and after she has become great, conspicuous and supreme, then will the nations flow to her.

I am looking for the advent of Christ—it is this that cheers me in the battle of life—the battle and cause of Christ. I look for Christ to come, somewhat as John Bunyan described the battle of Captain Credence with Diabolus. The inhabitants of the town of Mansoul fought hard to protect their city from the Prince of Darkness and at last a pitch battle was fought outside the walls. The captains and the brave men of arms fought all day till their swords were knitted to their hands with blood. Many and many a weary hour did they seek to drive back the Diabolians. The battle seemed to waver in the balance, sometimes victory was on the side of faith and now and then, triumph seemed to hover over the crest of the Prince of Hell. But just as the sun was setting, trumpets were heard in the distance, Prince Emmanuel was coming, with trumpets sounding and with banners flying and while the men of Mansoul passed onwards sword in hand, Emmanuel attacked their foes in the rear. Getting the enemy between them two, they went on, driving their enemies at the swords point, till at last, trampling over their dead bodies, they met and hand to hand the victorious Church saluted its victorious Lord.

Even so must it be. We must fight on daily and hourly. And when we think the battle is almost decided against us, we shall hear the trump of the archangel and the voice of God and He shall come, the Prince of the kings of the earth. At His name, with terror they shall melt and like snow driven before the wind from the bare side of Salmon shall they fly away. And we, the Church militant, trampling over them, shall salute our Lord, shouting, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigns.” Thus then, have I explained the first part of the text.

II. The second part of the text we have to consider, is this sentence—“AND ALL NATIONS SHALL FLOW UNTO IT.” Here is a figure, perhaps not so sublime, but quite as beautiful as the first. Still endeavor to retain in your minds the picture of this stupendous mountain, reaching above the clouds, seen by all mankind, in either hemisphere, a wonder of nature which could not be accomplished by the ordinary rules of art, but which Divine wisdom will be able to perform. Well, wonder of wonders, you see all the nations of the earth converging to this great mountain, as to a common center. Once in the year all the people of Israel were desirous to go to the little hill of Zion. And now, once and for all, you see, not Israel, but all the nations of the earth coming to this great hill of Zion, to worship the Most High God.

The white sails are on the Atlantic and the ships are dying before the wind, even as the bird flits through the sky. What do they bear? What is their noble cargo? Lo, they come from far, bringing the sons and daughters of Zion from the ends of the earth. See there the camels, the great caravan passing over the pathless desert? What are these and what is their costly freight? Lo, they are bringing the daughters of God and the sons of Zion up to the Most High God, to worship Him. From all parts of the earth you see them coming—from the freezing cold and from the burning heat, from the far-off islands of the sea and from the barren sands they come. They come, all converging towards the great center of their high and holy worship. This we are not to understand of course, literally, but as a figure of the great spiritual fact that all the souls of men shall tend to Christ and to union with His Church.

Again, I beg you carefully to observe the figure. It does not say they shall come *to it*, but they shall “flow unto it.” Understand the metaphor. It implies first their number. Now our Churches are increased, converts drop into the Churches—drop after drop the pool is filled. But in those days they shall flow into it. Now it is but the pouring out of water from the bucket. Then it shall be as the rolling of the cataract from the hillside, it shall flow into it. Now our converts, however numerous, are comparatively few, but then a nation shall be born in a day. The people shall renounce their gods all at once. Whole nations shall all of a sudden, by an irresistible impulse, flow into the Church—not one by one—but in one vast mass. The power of God shall be seen in bringing whole nations into the Church of God. You have seen the river flowing onward to the sea, with its banks all swollen, bearing its enormous contribution to the boundless ocean. So shall it be in the last days. Each nation shall be like a river, rolling towards the foot of this great mountain, the Church of the living God. Happy, happy, happy day, when India and China with their teeming myriads and all the nations of the earth, with their multitude of tongues, shall flow into the mountain of God!

But the text conveys the idea not only of numbers, but of—(I know the exact word, but then I do not like to use it, for fear some should not know the meaning of it, it means that the nations of the earth shall come willingly to it)—spontaneously. That was the word I wanted to use. But why should we use big words, when we might find little ones? They are to come willingly to Christ. Not to be driven, not to be pumped up, not to be forced to it, but to be brought up by the Word of the Lord, to pay Him willing homage. They are to flow to it. Just as the river naturally flows downhill by no other force than that which is its nature, so shall the grace of God be so mightily given to the sons of men, that no acts of parliament, no State Churches, no armies will be used to make a forced conversion.

“The nations shall flow unto it.” Of themselves, made willing in the day of God’s power, they shall flow to it. Whenever the Church of God is increased by unwilling converts it loses strength. Whenever men join the Church because of oppression, which would drive them to make a profession of religion, they do not *flow*, the Church is weakened and not strengthened. But in those days the converts shall be voluntarily won—shall come in willingly by Divine Grace. They shall flow unto it.

But yet again, this represents the power of the work of conversion. They “shall flow unto it.” Imagine an idiot endeavoring to stop the river Thames. He gets for himself a boat and there he stands, endeavoring to push back the stream. He objects to it flowing towards the sea and with his hands he tries to put it back. Would you not soon hear laughter along the banks? Ah, Fool, to attempt to stop the stream! Now, the word “flow,” here conveys just the idea. “The nations shall flow unto it.” The Secularist may rise up and say, “Oh, why be converted to this fanatical religion? Look to the things of time.” The false priests may rouse themselves with all their anger to defy Christ and endeavor to keep their slaves. But all their attempts to stop conversion will be like an idiot seeking to drive back a mighty stream with his puny hands. “All nations shall flow unto it.” What an idea it is!

Oh, take your stand today, like Prophets of the Lord and look into the future! Today the Church appears like the dry bed of a torrent. Here I stand and I see a little water flowing in a secret and thread-like stream, among the stones. So little is it that I can scarcely detect it, but I take the glass of prophecy, I look far onward and I see a rolling mass of water, such as is sometimes seen in the rapid rivers of Africa. And there it is, coming with thundering sound. Wait for a few more years and that torrent, like Kishon’s mighty river, sweeping all before it, shall fill this dry bed and swell on and on and on, with tumultuous waves of joy, till it meets the ocean of Christ’s universal reign and loses itself in God! Here you see, then, you have more than your imagination can grasp. This stupendous mountain and all the nations of the earth—vast numbers with immense force—spontaneously coming up to the house of the living God.

Now, I shall close by a practical address, very brief and I trust very earnest. Is it not a great subject for praise that the nations of the earth may flow to the hill of God and to His house? If I were to tell you that all the nations of Europe were climbing the sides of the Alps, you would ask me, “And what benefit do they gain thereby? They must pass over the slippery fields of ice and they may lose their lives in the midst of the bottomless chasms that are overhung by the mighty precipices. They may suddenly be overwhelmed and buried in the all-destroying avalanche and should they reach the summit they must fall down exhausted. What is there that men should covet in those barren heights? Rarefied air and cold would

soon destroy them, should they attempt to exist there.” Ah, but it is not so with God’s hill. There shall be no snow upon its summit, but the warmth and light of Jehovah’s love. There shall be no chasms in its side wherein souls may be destroyed, for there shall be a way and a highway, (the unclean shall not pass over it) a way so easy that the wayfaring man shall not err therein.

The mountains of which we read in Scripture were some of them such that if they were accessible no one would desire to climb them. There were bounds set round about Sinai, but had there been no bounds who would have wished to ascend it—a mountain that burned with fire and upon which there was a sound as of a trumpet waxing exceeding loud and long? No, Brethren, we are not come to a mountain like Sinai with its supernatural thunders. We are not come to a hill bare and barren and bleak and difficult to climb, like the mountains of earth. But the hill of God, though it is a high hill, is a hill up which on hands and knees the humble penitent may readily ascend. You are come to a mountain which is not forbidden to you. There are no bounds set about it to keep you off, but you are freely bid and freely invited to come to it. And the God who invited you will give you grace to come. If He has given you the will to come, He will give you grace to climb the sides of the hill till you shall reach its upper glories and stand on its summit transported with delight.

While I am talking about the nations that will flow to Christ, might we not weep to think that there are so many in this congregation that are not flowing to Christ but are going *from* Him? Ah, Soul. What are the splendors of the Millennium to you, if you are His enemy? For when He tramples His foes in His hot displeasure, your blood shall stain His garments, even as the garments of the wine pressers are stained with the blood of the grape. Tremble, Sinner, for the advent of Christ must be your destruction though it shall be the Church’s joy and comfort. You say, “Come quickly.” Know you not that to you the day of the Lord is darkness and not light, for that day burns as an oven and they that are proud and do wickedly shall be as stubble and the fire shall consume them with burning heat?

Oh, you people that today hear the words of Jesus! You are now this day invited to come to the mountain of His Church, on which stands His Cross and His throne. You weary, heavy laden, sin-destroyed sin-ruined souls—you that know and feel your need of Jesus—you that weep because of sin—you are bid to come now to Christ’s Cross—to look to Him who shed His blood for the ungodly and looking to Him, you shall find peace and rest.

When He comes with rainbow wreath and robes of storm, you shall be able to see Him, not with alarm and terror, but with joy and gladness, for

you shall say, “Here He is, the Man who died for me has come to claim me. He who bought me has come to receive me. My Judge is my Redeemer and I will rejoice in Him.” Oh, turn, you English heathens—turn unto God! You inhabitants of London, some of you as vile as the inhabitants of Sodom, turn, turn to God! O Lord Jesus! By Your Grace turn everyone of us to Yourself! Bring in Your elect. Let Your redeemed rejoice in You. And then let the fullness of the nations flow unto You and Yours shall be the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

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MAN, WHOSE BREATH IS IN HIS NOSTRILS NO. 1984

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

***“Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils:
for of what account is he?”
Isaiah 2:22.***

MAN, especially since the Fall, is a very unspiritual creature. His disposition is animal. He is made up, as the old writers used to say, of soul and soil. Alas, the soil terribly soils his soul! “My soul cleaves to the dust” might be the confession of every man in one sense or another. We bear the image of the first Adam, who was of the earth, earthy—and earthy enough are we.

One consequence of the prevailing materialism of our corrupt nature is our craving for something tangible, audible, visible, as the object of our confidence. We need something which can be touched, heard, seen, or felt—we cannot be content with that which appeals only to the soul or the spirit. It seems as if man is so unspiritual that he cannot believe in a spiritual God and yet, any other than a spiritual God is an absurdity! Man cannot see God, therefore he will not trust in Him. He cannot hear His voice, therefore he will not attend to the movement of the Holy Spirit upon his soul. Humanity is carnal, sold under sin, infected with idolatry—and this fact remains true, in a measure, even of the regenerate. Their old nature is not other than it was, save that it is held in check by the new nature. So long as sin remains in us—and this will be so long as we are in this body—our tendency will be to be weary of God, who is a Spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. We seek after something to worship, something to love, something to rely upon which is so near akin to the coarser part of our nature that we may commune with it through the senses. It is sad that it should be so, but it has always been so throughout the history of man—and sad traces of it are to be seen, even, in the history of God’s own Church.

Man is by nature an idolater. Under the most favorable circumstances he flies to his idols, even as the dog seeks after carrion, or the vulture hastens to its prey. The Lord’s people, Israel, were delivered out of Egypt with a high hand and with an outstretched arm. And by many signs and tokens, God’s Presence among them was abundantly certified. This was a noble beginning. The circumstances which afterwards surrounded them were especially helpful. They were placed in the wilderness where, if they lived at all, they must live through the special protection and provision of God, for they reaped no harvests and they gathered into no barns. The bread they ate fell from Heaven! The water they drank came from a Rock

which had been smitten by command of God through the rod of Moses. All day long they were sheltered from the burning sun by a canopy of clouds. And at night the canvas city was made bright with that same canopy turned into a flame of fire! They were alone in the wilderness and apart—shut out from the rest of the world—surrounded, as it were, by the Lord, Himself, who was a wall of fire round about them and the Glory in their midst.

Nothing could have been more favorable for faith in God. Yet they must have a god that they can see! “Make us gods to go before us,” they cried with such furious clamor that Aaron yielded to their evil desires and made them the image of an ox. Behold the people of God, whom He had brought out of Egypt, bowing before the image of an ox that eats grass—an image which Moses, in sarcasm, styled a calf! They turned the Glory of the invisible God into that of a brute beast and said—“These are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” Then they degraded themselves and laid their manhood prostrate on the ground in adoration of the image of a bull. How is humanity fallen!

For century after century this was always the tendency of Israel, the most spiritual race of men upon the face of the earth. This race, educated by miracle and instructed by Revelation, continually went aside after the gods of the heathen! Abraham, among his own descendants after the flesh, had few who were like he in his high spiritual faith. The world of spiritual realities seems to be too bright, too holy for the best of such gross and carnal beings as we are.

The people of Isaiah’s day were like the rest of their race—they showed their unspiritualness and their inability to walk in the light of the Lord by making their own *wealth* their chief confidence. We read at verse seven—“Their land is also full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures.” And then it is added, “Their land is also full of idols.” Alas, this idolatry of wealth is common among God’s people even at this day! “Give us this day our daily bread” is a prayer which falls far short of the general desires even of Christian people! Our demands are for luxuries—and plenty of them. Many would be coming down very terribly in the world if they had to receive from hand-to-mouth fashion—day by day their daily bread! Yet the Lord Jesus has put these words into our mouth. The Providence of God is, to some professing Christians, a mere dream—they cannot rest till they have something more substantial to rely upon than the care of Heaven. You think I am sarcastic? Is it not true? See how your professed Believers hunger to make sure of the main chance—as eagerly as the merest worldlings, they scrape and they hoard! I have not a word to say against that Scriptural prudence which bids us, like the ant, lay by in store for wintry times. But I speak of the hunger to be rich and of the selfish expenditure which entirely forgets that our substance is to be used for the Glory of God, and that we are only stewards. I ask again, do not many slave, hoard and grasp as if there were no promise in the Scriptures of temporal provision from God’s own right hand—and no exhortation to lay up our treasures in Heaven? Are we liars? Do we say that all that we are and have is the Lord’s—and do we, after saying this, live for ourselves as if

there were no redemption and no hereafter? That there should be need for the preacher to raise such questions is an indication that there is a common tendency to worship wealth, or at least to regard it as a substantial support.

Nations also, like the Israelite people, are apt to idolize *power*. Yes, even power in the form of brute force. We read—"Their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots." Cavalry and war chariots were as much in repute in that age on land as ironclads are at this day upon the sea! And Israel trusted to these. Jehovah was the guardian of His people, the Lord of Hosts is His name. He, alone, was a match for Egypt and Babylon, but the kings of Israel and Judah did not think so! They could not feel secure without great armies. They must multiply their horses and their chariots. They forgot that "a horse is a vain thing for safety"—they knew not that only in the Lord is the salvation of His people.

The same feeling crops up among God's people at this day. We pine for visible power—it may be physical or mental—as the case requires, but we thirst to have it available, embodied in some human form. We cannot rest upon God, alone, and feel that when we are weak we are strong. The Lord takes no pleasure in the strength of the horse nor in the legs of a man, but His people often do. Eloquence, cleverness, intellect—these are still the idols which the Church dotes upon! She has not yet understood the words, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." Still we make too much of the instrument and too little of the Divine Worker! Still is there more expected from music, architecture and oratory, than from the simple Gospel and the attendant working of the Holy Spirit! How can men be brought to trust in the invisible God! Alas, it is still true, "Their land is also full of idols: the mean man bows down and the great man humbles himself." O Church of God, how long will it be before you believe your God?

These people, in the heat of their idolatry, set up *many idols*. They made *anything* into a god. He that was so impoverished that he could not make a god of silver, would make an idol out of a tree which would not rot—and having carved and gilded it—he prostrated himself before it! To what a height of folly has a man come when he can do this? You tell me that this idolatry is confined to heathen countries—alas, it is not so—idolatry is common even here! "Little children, keep yourselves from idols," is a text that still needs to be preached from—yes, to be preached in Christian congregations, for idols will intrude themselves into the sanctuary of the Lord! The forms and shapes of modern idols are many and crafty. We see no elephant-headed deity such as is the fear of the Hindus, and no absurd fetish such as the African dreads—but more dangerous because more subtle and secret—forms of idolatry are allowed to remain in our midst! Oh that the Lord would fulfill in His people the Word, "The idols He shall utterly abolish"!

May we not easily make idols of *ourselves*? Almost before we are aware of it, we may be thus debased. What more degrading than for a man to worship himself? We read of some whose god is their belly—this is the grosser part of self. What heathen ever worshipped his own belly? Yet we

all too much trust in ourselves at times—what is this but idolatry? Do we not seek ourselves in a measure—is not this idolatry? Do we not reverence our own achievements and attainments—in what does this differ from idolatry? Many gods and many lords have men made unto themselves. Like a child that must have a toy, man must have a visible trust and confidence. For this purpose, “he has sought out many inventions.” He will even worship reptiles of the river and plants of the garden rather than be without a visible deity! Alas, poor foolish creature!

I need not enlarge upon this. You all know how true it is that, one way or another, man gets away from the spiritual life which would make God everything to him. And he wanders into the sensual region where he either finds another god, or else allows some symbol or priest to stand between him and God. Our nature is so twisted and biased through sin that we seem to be under the witchery of idolatry!

As I have already said, there is nothing more absurd in the history of human nature than the fact that man is apt to trust in *man*. To worship something superior to myself is bad enough if it is not God—but to begin to put my dependence upon a man like myself or upon myself and so to allow man, who at the best is a sorry creature—to take the place of God is, indeed, a wantonness of evil! Do you wonder that God has pronounced a curse upon this provoking folly, this insult to His Divine Majesty? Hear the words of this anathema—“Cursed be the man that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.” The sin is none the less accursed because of its commonness. That which God blesses is blest, indeed, and that which He curses is cursed with an emphasis!

Concerning that sin so common and so accursed I have to speak at this time. May the Lord bless the word that we may be kept from the transgression! Here is the text—“Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for of what account is he?”

We will handle the text thus—First, *What is man?* Answer—“His breath is in his nostrils.” Secondly, *What is to be our relation to man?* “Cease you from man.” And thirdly, *Why should we cease from him?* It is answered by another question, “For of what account is he?” This puts the question—What is there in him or about him that renders him a proper object of reverence or confidence? May the Holy Spirit send us a profitable meditation!

I. Our first enquiry is, WHAT IS MAN? This question is asked many times in Scripture and it has been frequently answered with a copiousness of instruction. David even asks of Heaven, “Lord, what is man?” I will not, however, go over all that wide expanse of thought which the Bible puts before us, but simply answer the enquiry from the point of view of our text.

What is man? *He is assuredly a very feeble creature.* He must be weak, for, “his breath is in his nostrils.” We measure the strength of a chain by its weakest link. If other links are strong, yet if one is ready to snap, we judge that the whole chain is far from strong and is not to be depended upon. See, then, how weak man is, for he is weakness, itself, in a vital point! He has bones that may be hard and durable. And he has many a strong sinew, tough and wiry, as we sometimes say. But there is a weak

point about him which is found in a matter on which his life depends, namely, his breath! And what is our breath? A vapor which we scarcely see—a thing so unsubstantial that when we have it, we scarcely see it—and yet when we lose it, life is gone from us! Our earthly existence depends upon our breath and that breath is mere wind!

How feeble must that creature be whose vitality rests on a foundation so airy and unsubstantial as mere breath! A vapor is not more fleeting! We talk of strong men. Is *any* man strong? We speak of the strength of our constitutions—how is that strong which depends upon a puff of air? It is a marvel that so frail a life is not sooner ended. That we live is miraculous! That we die is but *natural*. Readily enough may that house fall which is built, not on sand, but on air! Dr. Watts has well said—

***“Our life contains a thousand springs
And fails if one is gone!
Strange that a harp of a thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long!”***

Dust we are and that dust hastens to dissolve—and so to return to the kindred dust of the earth. Under our feet are our graves and above us are the stars which will soon look down upon our silent tombs. The trees cast their leaves, but they grow green, again. We shed our life’s glories once and they return no more! Thus the trees outlive us and beneath their shade we are reminded that man is far more frail than the tree which he fells with the axe. Yes, the very grass which he mows outlives the mower! Man is a mere shadow—we have scarcely time to say that we are before we are not! Are we not foolish if we place our reliance upon such a feeble creature—so weak that his *breath*, his unsubstantial breath—is essential to his life? Who are you, O man, that trusts in man? If you have half a grain of wisdom left, how can you quit the ever-living God and put your reliance upon a poor creature who is as the grass—that today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven? Go, rest on a reed, or ride on a moth, or build on a bubble—but rely not on a man!

Moreover, *man is a frail creature*, for his strength must be measured by his fleeting breath, and that breath is in his nostrils. It seems as though his life in his breath stood at the gates, ready to be gone, since it is in his nostrils. The text says not that his breath is in his lungs, deep, hidden below, but in his *nostrils*—at the door—in the most exposed part of the face. It is at two open portals which can never be shut—as if it meant to secure an easy exit at any moment. Brothers and Sisters, there are 10,000 gates to death! One man is choked by a grape. Another dies through sleeping in a newly whitewashed room. One receives death as he passes by a reeking sewer. Another finds it in the best kept house, or by a chill taken on a walk. Those who study neither to eat nor to drink anything unwholesome, nor go into quarters where the arrows of death are flying, yet pass away all of a sudden—falling from their couch into a coffin—from their seat into the sepulcher!

The other day one of our own Brothers sat down in his chair to sleep a moment, but it was his last sleep. Another stumbled in his own room, never again to rise! These men were apparently in good health. Life is never sure for an instant. How can we place our trust in a creature which

is so soon gone? Shall we make the insect of an hour the object of our fond affection and our chief dependence? How can we be so foolish as to trust our treasure in a purse made of such a spider's web? The vault should be fit for the treasure—do you mean to trust your *soul's* confidence to a man who shall die—that may die in an hour? I asked, What is man? But before the question is answered, I have to ask, "Where is he?" He is gone like a watch in the night! How can we make a dying man the object of a living trust? "Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils."

Man is a weak and frail creature—*he is also a dying creature*. Need I further enlarge upon this? To our sorrow, many of us know that it is so. Some of you had fathers of your flesh, but they passed away and you were fatherless before you could earn your bread. Had not God preserved the orphan, you had been miserable, indeed. Some of you once leaned upon a manly arm and looked up into the smiling face of a husband. But the dear one has been laid in a grave wet with floods of tears—it is well for you that your Maker dies not. There are those here who once enjoyed dear friendships—these seemed essential to your lives—but ruthless Death has torn Jonathan away from David. It has come closer and stolen the child from its mother and the wife from the husband. Man is always dying while he lives. Oh, set not all your love, or much of your confidence, or *any* of your worship upon a creature that will soon be worms' meat!

Contemplate the dead! What do you think, now, of your idol? You who could sit down by the hour together and revel in the sight and company of your beloved object, what think you now of that which you doted on? If you could see it uncovered after a few days you would say, "Deliver me from this noisome smell, this horrible corruption, this dreadful mass of decay!" How could you ever be so vain and foolish and bereft of reason as to make a thing that comes to this, your trust and confidence? The Prophet asks, "Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgets the Lord your Maker, who has stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?" In this he rebukes our fears, but equally rebukes our carnal trusts.

But I think that the text also reminds us that *man is a very fickle creature*. His breath is in his "nostrils." That is where he wears his life and this hints to us that he is sadly changeable. As his breath is affected by his health, so is he changed. Today he loves and tomorrow he hates! He promises fair, but he forgets his words! He swears that he will be faithful unto death, but soon he betrays the confidence reposed in him. No dependence can be wisely placed in him. O man! O woman! Change is written on your brow! The lapse of years alters you! Yes, the flight of days and hours suffices to transform you! We may better trust the winds and waves than you!

David said in his haste, "All men are liars." That may not be quite true and may bear the mark of hasty judgement, but it is a rough-hewn truth which is far more accurate than flattering compliments. David might have deliberated and then have said very much the same thing with great certainty. In some senses the broad verdict is correct as it stands, for if we

make an arm of flesh our trust, to whomever that arm belongs, we shall find that we have rested on a broken reed! In the time of our calamity, when we most need help, we shall find that mortal assistance is either gone through falsehood, or is incompetent through feebleness. Then shall we know the curse of trusting in man, whose breath is in his nostrils!

Who will stand by us when we are slandered? Does not winter make all the swallows take to their wings? Who can help us when the soul is in despair? O my Brothers and Sisters, who can help us when our spirit is wounded, when the arrows of grief pierce our heart? Who can help us when we come to die? When the mysteries of eternity darken around us and we quit the light of day, what friend or fond one can be at our side as we enter the unknown land? There are certain points of life in which every man must tread a lonely pathway. We then need *God*—and if we have made a god of any man, what shall we do? Ah me, what reason we have to look to Him who is always the same! Remember how He says, “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.”

If you read the chapter through, you will also find that man is *a trembling creature*, a cowardly creature, a creature who, indeed, if he were not cowardly, yet has abundant reason to fear. Read from the 19th verse—“They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made, each one, for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake terribly the earth.”

Think of the days of Divine wrath and especially of the last dread day of Judgement—and of the dismay which will then seize upon many of the proud and the great! Are you going to make *these* your confidants? Are you going to give up Christ for the sake of the smile of these who will wail in terror when He comes? Is it so, that for the sake of some young man or woman who loves not God—and one day must quail before the coming Judge—you will let your Lord and Savior go? It is concerning such a temptation as this that the text thunders at you—“Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils,” who will fear and fly and lose his breath in very dread at the appearing of the Lord. Cease to regard these as the fond objects of your love and trust, lest the curse of God should lie upon your soul throughout eternity! O my Hearers, hearken to this!

So much concerning what man is, according to our text. Is it not a powerful argument against placing man where only God should be?

II. Secondly, WHAT IS TO BE OUR RELATION TO MAN, or what does the text mean when it says, “*Cease you from man*”?

It implies, does it not, that we very probably already have too much to do with this poor creature, man? We cannot “cease” from that with which we have nothing to do! The text implies that in all probability we have catered into connections with man which will need changing. We may even require to reverse our present conduct, break up unions, cancel alliances and alter the whole tenor of our conduct.

“Cease you from man” means, first, *cease to idolize him in your love*. Do any of you idolize any living person? Answer honestly. It is very common to idolize *children*. A mother who had lost her babe fretted and rebelled about it. She happened to be in a meeting of the Society of Friends and there was nothing spoken that morning except this word by one female friend who was moved, I doubt not, by the Spirit of God to say, “Verily, I perceive that children are idols.” She did not know the condition of that mourner’s mind, but it was the right word and she to whom God applied it knew how true it was! She submitted her rebellious will and, at once, was comforted! Cease you from these little men and women, for, though you prize them so, they are of the race from which you are to cease! Cease you from them, for their breath is in their nostrils and, indeed, it is but feebly there in childhood. A proper and right love of children should be cultivated, but to carry this beyond its due measure is to grieve the Spirit of God. If you make idols of children, you have done the worst you can for them, whether they live or die. Cease from such folly!

I will not go into the many instances in which men have been idolized politically, or idolized by a blind following of their teaching. You can idolize a minister, you can idolize a poet, you can idolize a patron—but in so doing, you break the first and greatest of the commandments—and you anger the Most High. He declares Himself to be a jealous God and He will not yield His Throne to another. Upon any who are thus erring, let me press the text home—“Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for of what account is he?”

Next, “Cease you from man”—*cease to idolize him in your trust*. There is a measure of confidence that we may place in good and gracious men, for they are worthy of it. But a blind confidence in *any man* is altogether evil. I care not who he may be, you cannot read his *heart*—and some of the greatest deceptions that have ever been worked in this world have been accomplished by persons who seemed to be self-evidently honest and sincere. I remember conversing with a person who was concerned in one of the great speculations which brought loss and ruin to many—and as I looked into his honest face and heard his open-hearted talk, I said to myself—“This is not a man who is capable of robbery. He is a plain, blunt, farmer-like sort of man who might even be the *victim* of the confidence trick.”

I afterwards learned that this is the usual style of the man who puffs a company, or betrays a trust. Of course, if a man *looks* like a thief, you button up your pockets and smile if he invites you to take shares! But you are off your guard when the man appears to be the embodiment of simple honesty. The woman in the omnibus who picks your pocket looks like the last person to be capable of such a thing—and this is why she is able to do it. Transfer this knowledge to other matters and it may save you sorrow. If you get to trusting anybody with a blind confidence beyond what you ought to give and, especially, if you trust your soul with any priest or preacher, whoever he may be, you are a fool and your folly may turn out to be an everlasting mischief which can never be undone! Hear this and learn what God would teach you—“Cease you from man, whose breath is

in his nostrils: for of what account is he?" Do not idolize man by laying yourself at his feet, or following him in the dark, for it will not only be, in itself, a folly, but it will bring you under the curse of my text.

Cease to idolize any man by giving him undue honor. There is an honor to be paid to all, for the Apostle says, "Honor all men." A measure of courtesy and respect is to be paid to every person—and peculiarly to those whose offices demand it—therefore is it written, "Honor the king." Some, also, by their character, deserve much respect from their fellow men and I trust we shall never refuse "honor to whom honor is due." But there is a limit to this, or we shall become sycophants and slaves and, what is worse, *idolaters!* It grieves one to see how certain persons dare not even think, much less *speak*, till they have asked how other people think. In some congregations there are weak people who do not know whether they have liked the sermon till they have asked a certain venerable critic to whom they act as echoes! The bulk of people are like a flock of sheep—there is a gap—and if one sheep goes through, all will follow.

If the ringleader should happen to be an infidel or a new-theology man, so much the worse! If he should happen to be orthodox, it is much better in some ways, but then it is a pity that people should follow the Truth of God in so thoughtless a manner. Public opinion is a poor substitute for conscience and is *no* substitute at all for righteousness and truth! Because the general opinion bids you bow down before this man or that, will you do so? Will you forget God, conscience, right, truth—and ask another man to tell you when you may breathe? God's people should scorn such groveling! If the Son shall make you free, you will be free, indeed. Jesus loves that the soldiers in His host should acknowledge His supremacy—but once acknowledging Him as Lord, He would have them feel that no man or *set of men* shall draw them away from His Word, either in doctrine or in precept. Worship is for God only! Render it to Him and, "Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils."

Equally does the text bid us *cease from the fear of man*. Oh, how many are kept from doing right through some man or some woman, wealthy relative, or influential friend! Are there not men in workshops who join with others in their ribaldry because they are afraid to speak out lest they should be laughed at and marked as hypocrites? Are there not persons in well-to-do circles who must attend a certain place of worship because all the respectable people go there? No matter which way conscience would take them, they are bound to follow the fashion—the *fear of men* is upon them. They do not want to be despised and remarked upon. But, my dear Friends, if any of you are doing wrong under fear of men, do not excuse yourselves, but at once obey the Word of God which says, "Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils." Who are you that you should set *man* before God? Is not this a grievous presumption? The fear of God ought so to be before your eyes that the fear of man will not weigh with you in the least. "I fear man," said one, "but I fear God infinitely more"—this was near the mark. Our Lord said, "Fear not him that can kill the body, but afterwards has no more that he can do; but fear Him who can cast both body and soul into Hell; yes, I say unto you, Fear Him." Dismiss

the cowardly fear which would make you false to your convictions in any degree! And thus, “cease from man.”

Once more, *cease from being worried about men*. We ought to do all we can for our fellow men to set them right and keep them right, both by teaching and by example. But certain folks think that everything must go according to their wishes—and if we cannot see eye to eye with them—they worry themselves and us! This is not right and that is not right and, indeed, *nothing* is right but what is hammered on their anvil. Let us please our neighbor for his good, for edification—but let us not become men-pleasers, nor grieve inordinately because unreasonable persons are not satisfied with us. To our own Master we stand or fall! And interfering brethren must be so good as to remember that we are not their servants, but we serve the Lord Christ.

Moreover, Brothers and Sisters, let us not be unduly cast down if we cannot set everybody right. Truly, the body politic, common society and especially the Church, may cause us great anxiety. But be still, the Lord reigns—and we are not to let ourselves die of grief. After all, our Lord does not expect us to rectify everything, for He only requires of us what He enables us to do. We are not magistrates, nor dictators—and when we have done our best and kept our own garments clean, and given earnest warning and cried unto God by reason of the evil of the times—then this Word comes in, “Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for of what account is he?”

“*But they say.*” What do they say? Let them say! It will not hurt you if you can only gird up the loins of your mind and cease from man. “Oh, but they have accused me of this and that.” Is it true? “No, Sir, it is not true. And that is why it grieves me.” That is why it should *not* grieve you! If it were true, it ought to trouble you, but if it is not true, let it alone! If an enemy has said anything against your character, it will not always be worth while to answer him. Silence has both dignity and argument in it. Nine times out of 10, if a boy makes a blot in his copybook and borrows a knife to take it out, he makes the mess 10 times worse and, as in your case, there is no blot, after all. You need not make one by attempting to remove what is not there. All the dirt that falls upon a good man will brush off when it is dry—but let him wait till it is dry—and not dirty his hands with wet mud. “Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils.”

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us think more of God and less of man! Come, let the Lord our God fill the whole horizon of our thoughts. Let our love go forth to Him. Let us delight ourselves in Him. Let us trust in Him that lives forever, in Him whose promise never fails, in Him who will be with us in life, in death and through eternity! Oh that we lived more in the society of Jesus, more in the sight of God! Let man go behind our back and Satan, too. We cannot spend our lives in seeking the smiles of men, for pleasing God is the one objective we pursue. Our hands, our heads and our hearts—and all that we have and are—find full occupation for the Lord and, therefore, we must, “Cease from man.”

Cease you from man because you have come to know the *best* of men, who is more than man, even the Lord Jesus Christ! And He has so fully become the beloved of your souls, that none can compare with Him. Rest in Christ as to your sins—and cease from priests! Rest, also, in the great Father as to your Providential cares—why rest in men when *He* cares for you? Rest in the Holy Spirit as to your spiritual needs—why do you need to depend on man? Yes, throw yourself wholly and entirely upon the God All-Sufficient—El Shaddai, as Scripture calls Him. Some read it, “The Many-Breasted God,” who is able to supply from Himself all the needs of His creatures. He will do for us exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or even think! “O rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him,” and cease you from man!

That was a wise and tender word of our Savior to the woman who had washed His feet. He said to her, “Your sins are forgiven you.” And then, as they began to quibble at her and talk about the expense and the waste of the ointment, He added to her, “Your faith has saved you; *go in peace*”—as much as to say, “They are going to have a discussion about you, but you go out of earshot of it. They are going to criticize what you have done. Do not tarry to hear them, but go home. I have accepted you. Let *that* be enough for you—never mind *them*. You do not need to know their opinions.”

Oftentimes to a child of God it is the best advice that can be given—“Go in peace.” Certain doubters are about to argue. Let them argue to themselves, but you go in peace! Why do you need to know the last new doubt? Would you like to taste the last new *poison*? “Prove all things,” but when it has been proved to be evil, have done with it. You do not need to hear that which can only tend to stagger your faith and defile your conscience! You have heard enough of that stuff already—go in peace. When men begin to quibble at Christ and the Doctrines of Grace, cease from them! Steal away to Jesus in private prayer. Five minutes’ communion with your Lord will be worth five years of this idle talk! Go in peace and, “Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils.”

Do you hear that professor declare that there is no God? And another that there is no Providence? And another that there is no atoning Sacrifice—and another that there is no hereafter? Now that we know that a mad dog is about, let us keep out of his way! It does not matter who he is—we have nothing to do with him. When a thief meets me, I need not stay to say, “Good night” to him. Cease you from such a man, for the very breath of his nostrils breathes death to that which is good!

III. We finish with that last question—WHY ARE WE TO CEASE FROM MAN? The answer is, *because he is nothing to be accounted of*. Begin, dear Brothers and Sisters, by ceasing from *yourselves*. Every man must cease from himself, first, and then he must cease from all men as his hope and his trust because neither ourselves nor others are worthy of such confidence. “For of what account is he?” If his breath is in his nostrils, see how short his life is—“Of what account is he?” If his breath is in his nostrils, see how weak he is—“Of what account is he?” If his breath is in his nostrils, see how fickle he is—“Of what account is he?”

What figure shall I put down for man? Some men would wish to have themselves written down at a very high figure, but a cipher is quite sufficient! Write man at *nothing* and you are somewhat *above* the mark. “For of what account is he?” Compared with God, man is less than nothing and vanity! Reckon him so and act upon the reckoning. If there were no men on the face of the earth, how would you live? If only God filled all your thoughts and all your heart, how would you live? Live just so! Then if there are a trillion men upon the face of the globe—or more—they will not sway you. If the city teems with them and if the forum is disturbed with their noise—and if they ride up to the capitol in triumph—what of it? We have ceased from them and we shall never have cause to regret it, for they will be no loss to us! If we try to reckon up what the loss might be if we lost their aid, it comes to nothing, “For of what account is he?” Cease from them and go straight on in the path of faith and duty, resting in God and believing in Him. Care nothing for the vanity of vanities, but trust in the Verity of verities, even God, Himself!

This is a special subject and someone will ask, “Can such a text as this be useful for the ungodly?” Yes, it hits the nail on the head! Some of you have been trying to save yourselves. “Cease you from man.” You have been looking to your feelings. You have been looking to your works. You have been looking to this and that of your own—cease you altogether from that evil man—*yourself*! “For of what account is he?” Some of you have kept back from Christ because you have made much of this poor nobody that is crushed before the moth—this worm of the earth—this mere vapor! Now, rise above your dead selves and think more of God! Believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him—and may His Holy Spirit help you, now, to come and commit your souls into the hands of the risen Redeemer, even He who is able to save you and keep you to the end! God so help you, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 2.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—63 (SONG III), 688, 39.**

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WALKING IN THE LIGHT OF THE LORD NO. 2713

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1901.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 4, 1880.**

***“O house of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of the LORD.”
Isaiah 2:5.***

We may regard this invitation, first of all, as addressed to the Jews. According to the preceding verses, the Gentiles are to be brought in—“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” Then, after that, finding the Jews still alienated from God, the Gentiles will turn to them and say, “O house of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of the Lord.”

Now, in a measure, this prophecy has already been fulfilled and the evidence of its fulfillment is before your very eyes at this moment! Multitudes of us Gentiles, whom the Jews only regarded as dogs and outcasts, have been converted to the faith of Christ and adopted into the family of God. So now, my Brothers and Sisters, we ought to have very great tenderness of heart towards the older branch of the family—the seed of Abraham, the house of Jacob, the children of Israel, who, for the most part, still reject our Lord Jesus Christ and remain outside the pale of His Church. A Christian is the last person who ought to ever speak disrespectfully or unkindly of the Jews. We remember that our Lord belonged to that race and that His first Apostles were also of that nation. And we regard that ancient people as the very aristocracy of mankind, tracing back their pedigree to those before whom the mightiest kings might well veil their faces, and bow in lowliest homage, for I reckon that to be descended from Abraham, “the friend of God,” and, “the father of the faithful,” is to have a lineage higher than that of any of the princes of the earth!

Let us pray to God continually for the ingathering of the Jews. They are the original branches of the good olive tree, although for a time they have been cut off because of unbelief. And we, who were only wild olive shoots, have been grafted into their places. Shall we boast and exalt ourselves over them? No, for we also seem to be of the house of Jacob—he was rightly called Jacob, that is, a supplanter, for he supplanted his brother Esau—and we have supplanted the Jews and have thus become Jacobs to those who are Jacob’s seed. Yet, they are to be grafted again into the olive tree, and it is according to the mind of Christ that we should pray and labor for their conversion, and long for that happy time when they shall be brought in and, with the fullness of the Gentiles, be gathered at the feet of the Messiah whom they have so long rejected.

Having said this, which was necessary to explain the text—for we must never forget the *literal* meaning of any passage of God’s Word, even when we are fully justified in spiritualizing it—I am now free to speak of the spiritual seed of Israel, for to them, also, this message comes, “O house of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of the Lord.” Here is, first, *an invitation* upon which we will think for a while. And then, when we have thought of it, *let us accept it*, and let us endeavor now and throughout the rest of our lives, God helping us, to “walk in the light of the Lord.”

I. First, then, HERE IS AN INVITATION. When a man receives an invitation, he naturally enquires from whom it comes. So we observe, first, that this invitation comes to us from *those to whom we have ministered aforesaid*. The literal seed of Jacob had kept God’s lamp alight in the world, and other nations had seen that light—and it afterwards turned out that those very nations which had been enlightened by the Jews, said to them, “Oh house of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of the Lord.” It should greatly encourage us, dear Friends, whenever we hear any whose conversion we have been seeking, say to us, “Come and let us walk in the light of the Lord.” You who have been blessed in turning sinners to Christ will bear witness with me that there is scarcely any joy, out of Heaven, that equals the delight of hearing a sinner express his willingness to come to Christ and so to “walk in the light of the Lord.”

I distinctly remember the first person who ever told me that I had been the means of her conversion. I remember the little cottage in which she dwelt, for she was a poor woman who resided in an obscure village. Her testimony was to me the sweetest music I had ever heard, with the exception of my Savior’s voice when I, myself, was saved by His Grace. I felt then that I must go on preaching, for this was a seal, set to my commission, for which I blessed the Lord day and night. I can recall at this moment the intense delight I had in listening to that good woman’s cheering words. I do not know that I have had so much joy over any score of converts, since, as I had over that first one! That is a very natural feeling, you know. What a fuss is generally made over the first child in a family. So it is it with our first converts—we rejoice exceedingly over them.

Still, dear Friends, however many spiritual children God may have given to us, all whom we have been the means of introducing into the

Kingdom of Christ are very precious to us. And when we hear them say, "Yes, we will go with you, for we perceive that God is with you. We will walk in the light in which you are walking," we feel very greatly encouraged and we resolve that we will persevere in such blessed service. This is the reward of our labor for the Lord! This is the harvest that the farmer, who sows the seed for Christ, desires to reap! If you have never had this joy, work on till you do have it. If you have had it, I need not tell you to work on—I think you can never leave off such blessed service! I remember well the story of a man who died some few years ago, who had saved a young man from drowning and, after rescuing that one from a watery grave, he seemed as if he was insatiable to do the same thing again and again! I think it was eight persons he rescued, one after another at Hull. He would stand by the dock, in a dangerous place, watching that he might be at hand in case anyone fell into the water. He died, at last, in the very act of saving another person's life—he seemed to be carried away with that passion. In like manner, I would have all the saint's of God encouraged as they bring one and another to Christ, to consecrate their whole time and strength to this glorious—this *Divine* pursuit of bringing men, women and children to the Lord Jesus Christ—a work which might fill an angel's heart and which *did* fill the Savior's hands!

So the invitation in our text may be looked upon as a great encouragement, for it comes from those to whom we have ministered.

But if I read this invitation aright, it comes also *from new converts*, for, according to the context, many Gentiles had just gone up to the House of God, saying, "He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths," and when they had said that to one another, they turned to the Jews and said, "O house of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of the Lord." I think it is a very pleasing thing when our new converts begin to exhort us and invite us to join with them in special acts of devotion. Yet, while it is very pleasing in some respects, it sometimes brings to us a measure of rebuke. I remember how it was with me when, in the earnestness of my young heart's affection for the Lord Jesus Christ, I spoke to some of the older Christians around me and they tried to snuff me out. A liberal supply of wet blankets was generally kept in store, in certain quarters, and brought into use whenever I went round that way. I survived that operation, however, and now that I am, myself, getting old, when some enthusiastic young spirit begins to wake me up, I hope I shall not quench his ardor by throwing a wet blanket over him!

When we commence our Christian life, we are full of earnestness and zeal and we think that we can drive the Church before us—and drag the world after us, but, by-and-by, we settle down to a much quieter state of things. I think it is a great blessing when the new converts come in among us and stir us up from our sluggishness, and make us move with something of the enthusiasm that we had in our younger days. I pray God continually to send among us many earnest men and women who shall lovingly reprove us if we are lukewarm! We constantly need the in-

fusion of new life and, so far from discouraging zeal, we will do all we can to encourage it!

The other day I heard that a young man had said a very foolish thing for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was said to be so foolish a thing that everybody condemned it. I sent for the speaker to come to see me, for, when a man boldly says, "I believe that such-and-such a thing is true, and I am going to act upon it, although everybody else says, 'You are a simpleton,'" that is the kind of man in whom my heart delights, for I am sure that there is something in him if he is willing to be counted singular because he believes he is following Christ Jesus his Lord! May God send us many such simpleminded, true-hearted, warm-blooded Christians to keep the Church from getting cold and lethargic!

Once more, it seems to me that this invitation comes from *those who seek after mutual edification*. Some had come into the House of God and *had* learned His ways, so they turned round to others, and said, "Come, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." They did not say, "Go"—they said, "'Come,' we wish you to come with us. Let us walk together in the light of the Lord." Dear friends, I beg you continually to practice this holy work of mutual exhortation, stirring one another up to greater devotion to our Savior and His service. We do not think it wise to have public meetings of this kind because such gatherings are apt to be like the Irish school, where they had not any schoolmaster, and nobody knew anything—and they taught one another! That is the general style of things where everybody speaks, or, when the meeting is more profitable, it is because there are one or two present who really *are* the instructors of the rest, even though they may not nominally be called so.

But, without meeting with this special objective and design, all Christians should be constantly stirring one another up whenever the opportunity of doing so occurs. The moment you get liberty in prayer, call in a Brother to pray with you. When you feel very happy and full of praise to God, tell some dear friend that you want to sing, and ask him to come and sing with you. You go into a neighbor's house to ask his help when you have a burden of care or sorrow resting upon you—then go and ask for his sympathy when your heart is full of joy! Tell him that you cannot sufficiently bless God by yourself and that you need him, as your friend and Brother in Christ, to aid you in the sweet labor of thanksgiving. O dear Brothers and Sisters, I beg you to seek to know one another more and more, and mix with one another with the view of helping each other's faith and love! You can scarcely imagine how much you may get from one another by this kind of mutual communion. The commerce of nations enriches and is to the advantage of all who share in it. And the spiritual unity of Christians, making a holy interchange of knowledge, feeling and sympathy, will tend to the enrichment of all. In such a Church as ours, there ought to be no difficulty in finding kindred spirits with whom you can have holy and helpful fellowship. As soon as you do find them, say to them, "Come, and let us walk in the light of the Lord."

II. Now I turn to the second head which is, LET US ACCEPT THE INVITATION. I do not want to say much about it except to urge you at once to accept it.

“Come, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.” What does this invitation mean? First, I think it means, *let us make use of that light*. Writing under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John tells us that, “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” My Brother, in his prayer just now, very sweetly prayed that God might be to each one of us all that He is—and that is *exactly* what I want you all to realize, so that, as God is light, He may be light to you, and that we, who are His people, may practically, in our daily lives, walk in the very Light of God and not have a religion locked up, like a diamond bracelet, but may wear it as we wear our everyday garments. That we may not have it like a choice lamp hidden away in a vault, but may have the light of it shining on our every footstep!

Let us “walk in the light of the Lord” *so as to have an absolute certainty about the things which we believe*. Have you ever tried to walk in the light of anybody else? I have not. I never thought it worth my while to do so. I hear sometimes of wonderful new lights that have appeared, but I usually find that they only arise from some crazy-brained individual who has no light to spare. Then I occasionally hear of others who give out a sort of phosphorescent light through some new discoveries of theirs, or the cogitations of their massive minds. And every now and then someone says, “Have you heard that Dr. So-and-So has discovered that the Book of Genesis is wrong? Have you heard that a wonderful arithmetician has found out that there are mistakes in the Book of Numbers?” “Oh, yes,” I answer. “I have heard that the Bible is all wrong from Genesis to Revelation! Or, if there is a verse in the Scriptures that the learned infidels have not yet assailed, some fool or other will attack it before long.”

If I am asked, “Are you quite sure about the truth of this Book?” I reply, “Yes, I am quite sure, for I believe entirely in the Inspiration of the Bible, and I know that whatever is in that Book is certainly true.” Everybody believes in infallibility somewhere. A Romanist believes in an infallible “Pope” and a great philosopher believes in his infallible *self*—he knows that he is right. I believe in this Infallible Book and in the Infallible God. And I ask any of you who are troubled, and worried, and tossed to and fro because of what some heretic or skeptic has said, to “walk in the light of the Lord,” and to be perfectly satisfied as to the Revelation He has given us in His Word. This Book has been tested and tried for many centuries, and it has never been found wanting. Its light has never been quenched! It shines, if possible, even more brightly, today, than it ever did. I mean that some of the mists and clouds that hovered round it, have been scattered. This lamp is and always must be the only one to guide men to Heaven, for this is the one that God Himself lighted—and all the devils in Hell can never blow it out. If all the Doctrines of the Bible are assailed, and all its precepts are rejected, and all its records are attacked, and all its promises are contradicted, it need not signify to us as much as the turn of a hair! If we have accepted it as a Revelation from God, we may be quite sure as to all that it contains, and therein our spir-

its may find absolute rest! Come away from the shadow of the dark cloud of unbelief and come out into the everlasting Light of God. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, for “if you will not believe, surely you shall not be established.”

The next sense in which we are to “walk in the light of the Lord” is to realize God’s Presence and, in consequence, *to feel our conscience perfectly at ease*. I mean this—here is a Christian man who has been doing his best for God, yet somebody suspects his motives and misrepresents his actions. Where he expected to receive approbation, he receives condemnation. He is evidently misunderstood and, as far as his fellows are concerned, he is under a cloud. What is that man to do? Why, just say, “My God, You know everything. You know with what singleness of heart I have served You, and with what purity of mind I have walked before You. I appeal from the unjust verdict of man to the Judge of all the earth, for I am sure that You will judge righteously.” It is wonderful what peace of mind is enjoyed by those who “walk in the light of the Lord.”

Perhaps somebody writes you a stinging letter. Possibly another brings against you a lying accusation. One sneers and another laughs at you, but what does it all matter if you are walking in the light of the Lord? You can live above them all and say, “I am not a servant of men, but a servant of God. I appear not before the judgment seat even of my fellow Christians, but I stand to be judged by Him who shall judge the quick and the dead! And since my heart condemns me not, I have confidence that God, who is greater than my heart, will also justify me.” You will need this kind of feeling, especially if you are called to lead the way and to serve God above others. God grant that you may have it to the very largest extent that is possible!

Now think of another meaning in the text—that is this. It is a blessed thing to “walk in the light of the Lord” and so *to obtain instruction for the Judgment*. Light is constantly used in Scripture as the figurative representation of knowledge, just as darkness is the emblem of ignorance. My Brothers and Sisters who know the Lord, I pray you to study God’s Word very deeply. I speak specially to some of you who have lately come in from the world and who confess that you know very little of the Bible. You had not godly parents. You were not brought up in the ways of religion and some of you, as lately as six months ago, did not go to any place of worship at all—but God, in the Sovereignty of His Grace, has now brought you in among His children. So, be diligent students of His Word. Meditate upon it day and night, for then shall you be “like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither.” Do not care so much about all other books in the world as about the Word of God! Drink continually at the Fountainhead!

You have heard, I daresay, of the Irishman who was converted to Christ, and whose priest told him that he had better not read the Bible because it had done so much mischief to unlearned readers, adding, “I will give you the milk of the Word, and will bring it to you.” “Well, Sir,” said Pat, “I will be very much obliged to you if you will do so, but, still, I mean to keep a cow myself, and so I shall be sure to get pure milk.” That

is the also right thing for you to do—keep a cow yourself! When you come here, I will do my best to give you the unadulterated milk of the Word. Still, I would advise you to also keep a cow yourselves. Carry a lactometer with you and check whether the milk is genuine. I like people who test and try everything we bring before them by the Word of God! I want you to do it and I would rather that you had no preacher at all than that you should neglect to *search the Scriptures*. There is Divine Light in the Word of God, therefore, “walk in the light of the Lord.”

Do not think, dear Christian Friends, that you cannot understand what is in the Word of God. The Holy Spirit has promised to teach us. There are some Doctrines of the Bible that are very mysterious, some that we call *High Doctrines*, but do not be afraid of them. Even babes in Grace may understand the Truth of God if they will but give their hearts to it—only be teachable and God, through His Word, and by the inward teaching of His Spirit, and by your own experience—will yet make you quite a great scholar, in the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. If you are but willing to learn, and especially if you are willing to put into practice the Truths that you are taught, you will find that what I say is true. I pray you, endeavor to be intelligent Christians—seek to learn what Christ is ready to teach. He is your Master—be you His disciples. He is your Rabbi—be you His scholars. Sit at His feet and learn of Him.

But there is another meaning in our text upon which I shall enlarge a little. It is this. To “walk in the light of the Lord” means, *to have the joy of the Lord*. It is a very unhappy fact that there are some Christians—and we believe they are real Christians, too—who do not walk much in the light. I believe that there are thousands who are true believers in Christ, who yet live a great part of their days in the dark. They trust under the shadow of God’s wing and there they are safe—but they do not often get out into the light of His Countenance. Now that is a great pity. You know that if you were to go to Australia in a good sound ship, you would get there even if you were always to lie down in the hold among the luggage and the rats. But I should like to go in a first-class cabin, and I do not see why you and I, if we are going to Heaven, should not go first-class! You would not think of taking a long railway journey in a luggage-van and I want you who are favored to “be in Christ” not to be satisfied with mere safety, but to look for joy and peace, also! We may begin, even here, the music which we are to sing above! It is a pity that we should forego any of the privileges which really belong to us, so, beloved Friends, if any of you are in the dark, let me say to you, in the words of the text, “Come, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.”

What is the cause of your darkness? “Oh,” says one, “I am in the dark about my condition before God. I am a believer in Christ, but I fear that God is angry with me.” Now let me try to shed a little light upon you. “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” Our Lord Himself said, “He that hears My word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” He who believes in Christ Jesus is complete in Him. If you are, at this moment, resting alone in Christ, your condition before God is that

of one whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered. You are, in the sight of God, clothed in the righteousness of Christ and, therefore, you are comely and beautiful in His eyes despite all your spots and all your imperfections! If you are a true Believer, there will be many a battle within you, but that will not affect your standing before God. You are His child, one of His elect upon whom His love has been set from all eternity—and that love never changes nor diminishes. Now walk in that light and rejoice—imperfect, yet perfectly forgiven—sinning, and yet without spot before God—in yourself undone, but saved in Jesus Christ, in whom your soul has fixed her confidence!

Is the darkness that surrounds you caused by the dispensations of God's Providence? "I am very poor," says one. "I am out of work, I have pressing claims that I cannot meet. I have a sick wife, I have a dying child." Stop, dear Friend, you have a long story to tell, and a sad one, too, but do you know that the Light of God reveals many of the mysteries of His Providence? Turn on the bull's-eye of this lantern a minute. Here is a ray of its light—"we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." I want you to "walk in the light of the Lord" so as to be able to say, "If it is the will of God, it must be right. It could not be better, even though sometimes I have thought that it could not be worse. It is a rough road, but it is the right one, for it leads to the Celestial City of habitation. It is bitter medicine, but its curing property is amazing—

***"Then come what may to me,
It will, it must be blessed!
Home in the distance I can see;
There I shall be at rest."***

But what is this darkness of your mind? Is it caused by a fierce struggle within you? Are you crying out, "I cannot understand how it is, but ever since I have been a Christian, I have felt my sin rising within me more than I ever did before! I am fighting from day to day to keep a hold on goodness at all"? Listen, dear Friend, this is frequently the experience of a true child of God that, as soon as the new life is put into him, the old life begins to struggle against it! I dare to say that there never was a real Christian who has not had, in some measure at least, to cry out with Paul, 'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death!' They who say that the Apostle was no Christian when he said that make me suspect whether they are themselves Christians, or have had any experience of what God's children have to undergo! The truth is that the more we seek holiness, the more we learn that we are not as holy as we want to be. And, the man who is as good as he wants to be is not good at all! He who has climbed so high that he does not want to get any higher had better begin at the bottom, for he is under a sad delusion. So, be encouraged by the conflict in your heart and even take comfort from it! Be of good cheer, knowing that, as Christ overcame the world, and sin, and Satan, you also shall overcome them and be able to sing, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Once more, probably you are in the dark because you are afraid to die. Says one, "I tried myself, the other night, by asking, "Could you die without fear?" That is a kind of test you need never put to yourself! Suppose Peter had been, for weeks, trying to see if he could walk on water? He could not have done it! But the instant that Christ bade him come to Him on the water, he could do it, but not previously. John Bunyan, in his earlier days, imagined that being a child of God, perhaps he could work miracles, so he thought he would say to one of the puddles in the road, "Be dry." But he felt that he ought to pray first and, as he could not find any promise that he should be able to do that sort of thing, the miracle never came off. What is the good of your having the Grace to die with if you are not going to die yet? When you come to die, if you believe in Christ, you may die without the slightest fear! You need to be a great deal more troubled about *living* than about dying—that is the far more serious thing of the two. Yet you need not be troubled about either living or dying when it is written, "Fear you not; for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." If I begin quoting the promises, I feel inclined to keep on, but you can find them for yourselves in the Word of God. You can feed upon them, live upon them, believe them and act upon them! And in that way "walk in the light of the Lord" from day to day, whatever happens to you.

Now come to this Communion Table in "the light of the Lord." Come that you may remember your Savior's death. Come saying, "He loved me and gave Himself for me. I am my Beloved's. His desire is toward me. I am coming to Him who has brought me into His banqueting house, and His banner over me is love." He says to each believing soul, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn you." Come to the Table in the right spirit and this blessed ordinance will indeed prove to be a festival of love to your souls! God grant it, for Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ISAIAH 26

Verse 1. *In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.* God is the great source of song. He "gives songs in the night." He can make the saddest heart to break forth into praise. One part of the prophecy concerning Christ's coming was, "Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." The Lord might have caused us to utter nothing but groans if He had pleased. But, instead of doing so, He delights to fill our mouths with joyous songs! Let us from our heart sing this ancient song—"We have a strong city." The Church of God is a city which has a heavenly citizenship and other unique privileges—and it is wondrously protected, for the promise in this passage is now fulfilled—"salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks."

2. *Open you the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in.* The city is not closed against the righteous and if we know and love the truth, and especially if we know and love Him who is the Truth, the gates are always open to us and we may enter the city, enjoy its privileges, and share its protection.

3. *You will keep him in perfect peace*—“Peace, peace”—that is the form of the Hebrew, and it means a double peace, the perfection of peace—a great depth of peace, the reality of peace, peace upon peace belongs to the man who trusts in the Lord. Are you vexed, worried and perplexed, dear Friend? Are you tossed to and fro as upon a stormy sea? This verse shows you the way in which you may obtain perfect peace—“You will keep him in perfect peace,”—

3. 4. *Whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You. Trust you in the LORD forever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.* Nothing can be too hard for Him, for He has “everlasting strength.” Nothing can ever happen in the future to overthrow Him, for His is not decaying strength, but “everlasting strength.” Hold on to that strength, you children of God! You may even suck honey out of this “Rock of Ages” (see margin) for there is indescribable sweetness in it! “Trust you in the Lord forever”—not only *sometimes*, but always—“*forever*,” because there is strength in God forever.

5. 6. *For He brings down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, He lays it low; He lays it low, even to the ground; He brings it even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy.* You see, there is one city which God builds and another city which He pulls down. Observe this solemn Truth of God—“For He brings down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, He lays it low—that city which is perched on the hill of self-righteousness and lifted, as it were, almost to Heaven by the pride of man—God will pull it down! It is part of God’s Glory to lift up that which is down, and to cast down that which is up—for when men exalt themselves, they shall be abused—and when they humble themselves, they shall be exalted. “He brings it even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down.” Oh, if there is anyone here who is trusting in himself, depending upon his own good works and reckoning that he will be saved by his own merits, you will have to come down from that high place, my Friend! That fine castle of yours will be left without one stone upon another, and the poorest child of God in all the world shall set his foot upon the loftiest pinnacle of your grand palace! God will bring it down so that “the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy,” shall tread on it.

7. *The way of the just is uprightness.* Or, as it might be better rendered, “The way of the just is an even path.” The righteous shall steadily and safely stand in it while others find themselves sometimes up and sometimes down, and their path shall be slippery and perilous.

7. *You, most upright, do weigh the path of the just.* God judges us by weight, not by appearance. Not by what we seem to be, but by what we are in the balances of the sanctuary.

8, 9. *Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O LORD, have we waited for You; the desire of our soul is to Your name, and to the remembrance of You. With my soul have I desired You in the night.* Some poor darkened spirit will, I trust, be able to join in this utterance of the Prophet. It is nighttime with you now. You are not enjoying the Light of God's Countenance, but be very thankful that you can say, "With my soul have I desired You in the night." If you are not a child of God, you will be able to do without God. But the fact that some of you cannot be happy unless you are living in the Light of God's love proves that you belong to Him. A child can be content without a stranger's smile, but if the one who is looking at him is his father, just because he is his father's child he must have the assurance of that father's love, or else he cannot be happy.

9, 10. *Yes, with my spirit within me will I seek You early: for when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Let favor be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD.* There are none so blind as those who will not see—and there are plenty of such people about. They say that they cannot see this, and they cannot see that, but the truth is that they willfully shut their eyes and disregard the everlasting Light of God.

11. *LORD, when Your hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yes, the fire of Your enemies shall devour them.* You know what our Lord Jesus said concerning the rich man, "In Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." He would not look at Lazarus while he was lying at his gates, but now he is obliged to look at Lazarus lying in Abraham's bosom! He would not relieve him, nor give him even a crumb from his table, but now he begs that Lazarus may be sent to dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool his parched tongue. "They will not see" now. No, "but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy towards the people of the Lord."

12. *LORD, You will ordain peace for us.* We may be attacked and assailed for a little while. We may be tossed to and fro, but, "You will ordain peace for us."

12. *For You also have worked all our works in us.* We have no works in which we can glory, for even if we have an abundance of good works, they are all God's work in us—and we give Him all the praise for them. And because He has thus worked in us, we expect that He will give us peace.

13-15. *O LORD our God, other lords beside You have had dominion over us: but by You only will we make mention of Your name. They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore have You visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish. You have increased the nation, O LORD, You have increased the nation: You are glorified: You had removed it far unto all the ends of the earth.* The Jews were scattered and diminished. When they sinned against God, they were exiled, but when the Lord returned to them in favor, He multiplied them and brought them home again.

16. *Lord, in trouble have they visited You, they poured out a prayer when Your chastening was upon them.* And it was well for them that they did so. God's true child does not get angry against his Father when He whips him! But, being chastened, he begins to pray and blessed is that chastening that drives us to our knees! "They poured out a prayer when Your chastening was upon them."

17, 18. *Like as a woman with child, that draws near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and cries out in her pangs; so have we been in Your sight, O LORD.* We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have, as it were, brought forth wind. We have not worked any deliverance in the earth. Neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen. Here is the poor Church of God in sore trouble. She says she has been disappointed, her bitterest pangs have not brought her what she expected. What shall happen, then? God will interpose!

19. *Your dead men shall live.* We shall rise with all that belong to Christ at the first and blessed resurrection, and all our dead hopes and our dead expectations shall rise, too!

19. *Together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, you that dwell in dust: for your dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.* As the soft showers cause the buried bulbs to spring up, so will God's gentle Grace fall on men's hearts, and they shall arise, though they seemed to be dead before. And at the Last Great Day, the sound of the archangel's trumpet shall be like a soft vernal shower which brings up the flowers of the earth and—

***"From beds of dust, and silent clay,
To realms of everlasting day"***

—the bodies of the saints shall rise! O blessed hope! Let us look for its fulfillment! Let us make this a part of our song. There is a city that has foundations, and there is a resurrection which will enable us to enter into that city, to dwell there forever! Oh, come let us sing of the New Jerusalem and of the white-robed multitudes that shall dwell therein for—

20. *Come, my people, enter into your chambers, and shut your doors behind you.* Enter into the secret Chambers of communion with your Lord where you shall be shut out from the world. Enter into the chambers of defense, where God will guard you. Enter into the chambers of devotion, where God shall meet with you.

20, 21. *Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment until the indignation is over. For, behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.*

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

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

CHEERING WORDS AND SOLEMN WARNINGS

NO. 729

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 13, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Say you to the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him.”
Isaiah 3:10, 11.***

THERE are two classes mentioned here, the righteous and the wicked. And into these two orders the Book of God is accustomed to divide the whole population of the globe. It speaks but little of upper and lower classes. It says but little concerning the various ranks into which civil and political institutions have divided the race of man—but from its first page to its last it is taken up with this grand division—the righteous and the wicked. Very early in human history we find the “Seed of the woman,” and the “seed of the serpent.” And we meet with Cain, who was of that Wicked One, and slew his brother, because his own works were evil and his brother’s righteous.

While the deluge destroys the ungodly, Noah floats in the ark in security as the representative of the righteous. And when the destroying angel smites the rebellious Egyptians, Israel feasts in safety upon the Passover. The two races have always been in existence and at enmity. Israel was oppressed in Egypt, attacked by Amalekites in the wilderness, beset by foes in Canaan and carried away captive into Assyria or Babylon. In the nation of Israel itself the very heart of the people was depraved by an idolatrous seed and at length eaten out by the hypocrisy of a generation of vipers who were of Israel, but were not the Lord’s chosen.

In our own age, when the Church of God is found among the Gentiles, we see still the broad mark of distinction between men who fear the Lord and men who fear Him not. The line of nature and the line of Divine Grace run the same as ever—the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent contend with each other still. And it is not the intent of God in His Providence that the line of demarcation should be withdrawn. He would not have His people enter into alliance with the camp of evil, but “come out from among them and be separate.” Nonconformity, in its spiritual sense, is the duty of every Christian man. “Be not conformed to this world, but be you transformed by the renewing of your minds.” The flood came upon the world when the sons of God were united with the daughters of men, and unholy alliances between the Church and the world provoked God to the highest possible degree. He will have the distinction maintained between the precious and the vile till time shall be no more.

God of old divided light from darkness. The light He called Day, and the darkness He called Night. And He will not have us call light darkness, nor darkness light. He forbade the Jews to sow with many seeds intermingled, or the wearing of linsey-woolsey, because He would typically forbid unhallowed blending. He will have a seed that shall serve Him and that shall fear Him, and go outside the camp bearing the reproach of His dear Son, and these shall be evermore distinct from that other seed under the dominion of the prince of the power of the air, whose rebellious enquiry is, “Who is Jehovah that we should obey His voice?”

A crimson line runs between the righteous and the wicked—the line of atoning sacrifice. Faith crosses that line, but nothing else can. Faith in the precious blood is the great distinction at the root, and all those Divine Graces which spring out of faith go to make the righteous more and more separate from the ungodly world. They, having not the root, have not the fruit. Do you believe on Jesus Christ? On whose side are you? Are you for us or for our enemies? Do you rally at the cry of the Cross? Does the uplifted banner of a dying Savior’s love attract you? If not, then you remain still out of God, out of Christ—an alien to the commonwealth of Israel—and you will have your portion among the enemies of the Savior.

This distinction is so sharp and definite that there are more who dwell in a borderland between the two conditions. There is a sharp line of division between the righteous and the wicked, as clear as that which divides death from life. A man cannot be between death and life—he is either living or dead. If there is but a *spark* of life he cannot be numbered with the dead—he lives, and he will, let us hope, live to a better purpose. But if he is dead and the vital spark is quite quenched—you may dress him as you will and hang ornaments on his ears, and fill his mouth with the sweetest dainties—but you cannot breathe into his nostrils the breath of life again. He is dead.

A clear line of demarcation exists between life and death, and such a division is fixed by God between the righteous and the wicked. There are no “betweenities”! There are no amphibious dwellers in Divine Grace and out of Grace. There are no monstrous nondescripts who are neither sinners nor saints. You are, dear Hearer, this day, alive by the quickening influences of the Holy Spirit or else you are dead in trespasses and sins! He that is not with Christ is against Him. He that gathers not with Him scatters abroad, so that to every man, woman and child in this place, my text, with its double utterances, has a voice.

If you are righteous, it shall be well with you. If you are not righteous, though you may think that you are not wicked and may feel indignant that the term should be applied to you—yet it must be and my text means *you* when it says, “Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him.” There ought to be at the outset of our discourse this morning a great searching of heart, and each one should say to himself—

***“And what am I?—My Soul, awake,
And an impartial prospect take.
Does no dark sign, no ground of fear,
In practice, or in heart appear?
“What image does my spirit bear?”***

***Is Jesus form'd, and living there?
Say, do His lineaments Divine
In thought, in word, and actions shine?"***

Do not ask such questions and then leave their answer in cloudland! Rather wait at the Mercy Seat till you know for a certainty that Christ is yours and you are His.

Dear Hearer, if there is a comfortable word spoken this morning, do not apply it to yourself! If you are not among the righteous—if you are not made righteous through the blood of Christ and through the transforming power of His Spirit—do not steal a dangerous consolation from the Word. On the other hand, if there is a dark and dreary threat, which in solemn truth applies to you, tremble at it but let it come home with power! For it may be that God will visit you in the whirlwind or in the storm of the threat, making the clouds of the text to be the dust of His feet—and while He rebukes you, you shall find it to be in love.

If the Lord shall break your heart, consent to have it broken, asking that He may sanctify that brokenness of spirit to bring you in earnest to the Savior and that you may yet be numbered with the righteous ones. We shall now come, as God may help us, to the text.

I. THE WELL-BEING OF THE RIGHTEOUS. Here let us read the words again, that we may get the fullness of their meaning. “Say you to the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.” Observe attentively the fact mentioned, the great fact—it shall be well with the righteous! The statement is singularly simple. There are few adverbs or adjectives to describe, and, therefore, to limit the announcement. The statement is made broadly. It is almost as grand in its simplicity, as the saying, “Let there be light, and there was light.”

“It shall be well with them.” That is the whole of the declaration. But the very fewness of the words creates and reveals a depth of meaning. Observe, then, we may gather from the fact that the text is without descriptive limits that it is well with the righteous ALWAYS. If it had said, “Say you to the righteous, that it is well with them in their prosperity,” we must have been thankful for so great a gift, for prosperity is an hour of peril. Or if it had been written, “Say you to the righteous that it is well with them when under persecution,” we must have been thankful for so sustaining an assurance, for persecution is hard to bear!

But when no time is mentioned, all time is included! When no particular occasion is singled out, it is because upon every occasion the saying is alike true—

***“Well when they see His face,
Or sink amidst the flood.
Well in affliction’s thorny maze,
Or on the mount with God.”***

“Say you to the righteous, that it shall be well with them,” from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same! From the first gatherings of evening shadows until the daystar shines! It shall be well with them when, like Samuel, God calls them from the bed of their childhood! It shall be well when, like David in his old age, he is stayed up in the bed to conclude his

life with a song of praise! It shall be well if, like Solomon, they shall abound in wealth, and well with them if, like Lazarus, they shall lie upon a dunghill and the dogs shall lick their sores.

It shall be well, if like Job they wash their feet with oil and their steps with butter! If the princes are before them bowing their heads, and the great ones of the earth do them obeisance. And it shall be equally well if, like Job in his trial, they sit down to scrape themselves with a potsherd, their children gone, their wives bidding them curse their God, their friends miserable comforters to them, and themselves left alone—it shall be well, always well!—

***“Tis well when joys arise,
Tis well when sorrows flow,
Tis well when darkness veils the skies,
And strong temptations blow.”***

The text evidently means that it is well with the righteous at all times alike, and never otherwise than well, because no time is mentioned, no season is excluded, and all time is intended—

***“What cheering words are these!
Their sweetness who can tell?
In time, and to eternal days,
Tis with the righteous well.”***

It shall be well with the righteous, especially in the future. The text says, “it shall be well with them.” They often dread the future, but they certainly have no reason for unbelieving fear. It shall be well with the righteous. They may look forward to a day of trouble which they clearly foresee, but they have no reason for foreboding, for it shall be well with them in the coming struggle. And if, perhaps, on the heels of that trouble there shall come another and yet another, it shall *still* be well with them, for is it not written, “In six troubles I will be with you, and in seven there shall no evil touch you”?

If they shall extend their vision to those years of coming decline—when the sere leaves shall cover their path, when the grasshopper shall be a burden, and the grinders fail because they are few and they that look out of the windows shall be darkened, it shall be well with them at eventide. Their last days shall be their best days. They shall dwell in the land Beulah, and sing upon the bank of Jordan, for their souls shall be ravished with foretastes of the rest which remains for the favored ones.

Should the man of God extend his view yet further, and through the telescope of faith should gaze upon unknown worlds, he may discern distinctly, by the light of gracious promises, that it shall be well with him in the land of the hereafter! The text hints at no end. It does not say it shall be well with us up to a certain point, but beyond that the text says nothing. No, the words are simply and grandly, “it shall be,” and nothing less. God’s “shalls” must be understood always in their largest sense, and so we know that when the cycles of time shall cease, and the wheels of this huge engine shall go to rack, it shall be well with the righteous!

Let the nations be dashed in pieces. Let there come terrific conflicts. Let Armageddon’s last dread shout be heard. Let the Euphrates be dried up. Let the sea be licked up with tongues of forked flame. Let the very

mountains melt like wax in the Presence of God! Let the elements be consumed with fervent heat—it matters nothing to the Christian what shall happen in all those days of dread catastrophe—for has not God said it shall be well with the righteous? Always well, then, and well in the future, we add, upon Divine authority.

A wise man may say to us, “It is well,” and his experience may be so little at fault that the utterance may be accurate. We ourselves may sometimes come to a fairly safe conclusion that things are well with us. But oh, how much better it is to have it under the hand and seal of Omniscience! He who searches the heart, who sees every secret thing, says that with the righteous it is well! It is the mouth of *God* that speaks the comforting assurance! Oh Beloved, if God says that it is well, ten thousand devils may say it is *ill* and we laugh them all to scorn! Blessed be God for a faith which enables us to believe God when the creatures contradict Him.

It is, says God, at all times well with you, you righteous one! Then, Beloved, if you cannot see it, let God’s Word stand in the place of your sight. Yes, believe it on Divine authority more confidently than if your eyes and your feelings told it to you. Whom God blesses is blest, indeed! And what His lips pronounces as the Truth is most sure and steadfast. It is well, we may rest assured again, with our *best* selves. The text does not say it is always well with our bodies, but our bodies are not ourselves—they are but the casket of our nobler natures—our *soul* is the true jewel. Our bodies are but the garments, our soul is the precious life which wears them for awhile. I understand the text to mean our nobler parts, our new God-given life—it shall be well with it.

If it is passed through the fire, it is but to refine it of its dross. If it is compelled to take a pilgrimage through the floods, it is that it may come up like a sheep from the washing. It is always well with our better and nobler natures! If God is but with us to sanctify us and sustain us, the worst of circumstances shall work for our good. When I looked at the text, studying it as best I could, I thought, “Yes, and if God says it is well, He means it is well emphatically.” It is well with weight. It is not a superficial statement—that it is *apparently* well—but it is a deep, true, lasting, sincere “well.”

Conceive, if you can, of the soul’s being well in the best sense in which it could be well. Now all that you have imagined and more is true of the righteous—“it shall be well.” It shall be so well with the righteous man in the sight of God as to the grand matter that it could not be better. He shall be as pure, as happy, as ennobled as a man could possibly be when Divine Grace has fulfilled its purpose in him. God has already given the Believer all that his heart can desire, for He has given him all things in Jesus. And He has insured to that man by oath and by Covenant all that he can ever want in time and eternity. In the best, highest, largest, truest sense of the term, it is well with the righteous!

I want you to observe, before I leave this fact, that it is so well with them that God wants them to know it. He would have His saints happy, and therefore He says to His Prophets, “Say you to the righteous, it shall

be well with them.” It is not wise, sometimes, to remind a man of his wealth, and rank, and prospects—for pride is so readily stirred up in us. If a Brother is endowed with remarkable talents, he will generally find that out soon enough himself. It is dangerous, perhaps, to tell him so. But it is not dangerous to assure the Christian that it is well with *him*, for otherwise the Lord would not command us to repeat the assurance in the ears of the godly!

The Lord would have every preacher comfort His people! He would have the Book, the good old Book itself, speak plainly to them of the dignity of their relationships, of the security of their portion, of the comfort of their present estate, and the glory of the world to come. “Say you to the righteous, it shall be well with them.” Say it often and plainly, for the statement will be beneficial. I desired to have said this upon the present occasion in such a way that you could see it and feel it, and rejoice in it!

Are you in Christ, my Brother, my Sister? Have you come to the fountain of His precious blood? Have you washed there? Have you trusted in Jesus? Now it may seem to you that everything goes amiss with you and the more you try to set matters right, the worse they become. But God has said to His servant, this morning, “Say you to the righteous, it shall be well with them,” and I *do* say it, yet *not* I, but *God* says it—it shall be well with you—it *is* well with you! Oh that you would believe it! Ah, if you did believe it you would be so joyful!

Well, and should not the righteous be joyful? Ought they not exceedingly to rejoice? The thought has been crossing my mind many times this week that I am not joyful enough, and that God’s people, as a whole, are not joyful enough. Am I mistaken in that idea? What is the truest worship in the world? Why, it is joy in the Lord! “Rejoice in the Lord always.” I believe that we adore God best and please Him most when the thought of Him does bring to our soul exalted pleasure. But alas, we give our God little of the sweet odors of our delight! We get to muddling our brains about our worldly estate, our sins, our conflicts and inward corruptions, and we forget what a good God we have—and His loving kindness is disregarded.

What a blessed God is ours in Christ Jesus! A sea of never-failing delights! A river of boundless joys, forever flowing on! Blessed be the name of the Lord forever and ever! Let our hearts exult at the thought of His goodness and leap for joy at the sound of His name. God Himself is our exceeding joy! And then to help us in all our holy exultation He cheers us with these heavenly words, “It is well with you, My dear Child. It is well with you now, and shall be throughout eternity.” A few minutes will scarcely suffice in full length to account for this Truth of God. As I have but so short a time, will you accompany me with earnest attention while I give a bare outline and hasty list of the causes of the Christian’s joy? More than this it were vain to attempt.

It is no wonder that it is well with the Believer when you consider that his greatest trouble is *past*. His greatest trouble was the guilt of sin. This threw him into the dungeon where there was no water, from which he has now escaped, for sin is pardoned and the repenting sinner is set free from

the terrible bondage of the Law. Sin he mourns over, but he knows that the guilt of it was endured and taken away by the great Substitute! And he rejoices that he now stands an absolved person against whom the justice of God can bring no account, for he is completely forgiven! Do you not remember the time when you thought that if God would but forgive you your sins you would not make another stipulation? If He would command you to be a galley slave, yet if sin were pardoned, you felt you could tug the oar and bear the smart of the driver's whip right cheerfully, so long as the legal whip was taken away. Now, Christian, your sin is pardoned! That which separated you from God is gone! Your iniquity is forgiven through Jesus Christ, and none can lay anything to your charge.

Then your next greatest trouble is doomed. Your second greatest trouble is *indwelling* sin. The power of sin plagues you now. Well, that is doomed! Christ, by His death, has driven the spear through the heart of sin as to its power over you. It shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the Law but under Grace! The day is hastening on when you shall drop all tendency to sin. Oh, blissful hour! Oh, joyous change, when the tendency shall be all upward, all toward good, all toward God, and not one whisper of temptation toward evil! Not one carnal passion, not a thought of crime, not one unsubdued desire—but the whole soul, through and through, washed and cleansed and made like unto God! The holiness, without which no man can see the Lord, is guaranteed to every Believer in the Covenant, and so his second greatest mischief is moved away by the blessing of his God. This ought to make him a happy man! If neither the guilt nor the power of sin can curse him, he ought to rejoice!

With regard to the Christian, he knows that his best things are safe. If the ship is wrecked, yet he never had his treasure on board this earthly vessel! If the thief should break through and steal, yet the thief cannot get at *his* jewels, for his jewels are hidden with Christ in God! If the moth should corrupt and fret his garments, yet his everlasting robe will never be moth-eaten, for that hangs up in the great House above ready for him that he may put it on after he has undressed himself and left his weekday garments in the tomb! His best things are all secure! Time cannot change them, nor death destroy them, or Satan rob him of them!

As for his *worst* things, they only work his good. He has his worst things as other men, for he cannot always feast, but his worst things are among his mercies. He gains by his losses. He acquires health by his sicknesses. He wins friends through his bereavements, and he absolutely becomes a conqueror through his defeats! Nothing, therefore, can be injurious to the Christian when the very worst things that he has are but rough waves to wash his golden ships home to port and enrich him!

My dear Friends, I was about to say of the Christian that it is so well with him that I could not imagine it to be better! He is well fed—he feeds upon the flesh and blood of Jesus! He is well clothed—"Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him"—he wears the imputed righteousness of Christ! He is well housed—he dwells in God who has been the Dwelling Place of His people in all generations. He is well married—his soul is knit in bonds of marriage union to Christ! He is well provided for—for the

present, the Lord is his Shepherd and he will not want. And he is well provided for the future—

***“This world is his, and worlds to come.
Earth is his lodge, and Heaven his home.”***

Time would fail me to say that it must be well with the Christian, because God has put within him many Graces which help to make all things well. Has he difficulties? Faith laughs at them, and overcomes them. Has he trials? Love accepts them, seeing the Father’s hand in them all. Has he sicknesses? Patience kisses the rod. Is he weary? Hope expects a rest to come. The sparkling Graces which God has put within the man’s soul qualify him to overcome in all conflicts, and to make this world subject to his power in every battle. I mean that he gets good out of the worst ill, or throws that ill aside by the majesty of the life that is in him.

Then mark how the Christian has, beside what is put within him by the Holy Spirit, this to comfort him—namely, that day by day God the Holy Spirit visits him with fresh life and fresh power! If our eternal life depended upon what we have within, apart from fresh spiritual help, we might find it to be far other than well with us. But the perennial fountains which winters’ frosts cannot freeze, and which the burning heats of summer can never dry flow perpetually to us! We draw living waters from the depth that lies under the eternal fountain which couches beneath. The everlasting fullness of God, which is treasured up in the Person of Christ, is given over by an immutable Covenant to be the provision for the faithful! Fortifications of stupendous rocks are our secure dwelling places, and the inexhaustible fullness of God in Christ Jesus is our never-failing supply.

Briefly let me run over a few things which the Christian has, from each of which it may be inferred it must be well with him. He has a Bank that never breaks, the glorious Throne of Grace. And he has only to apply on bended knee to get what he will. Over the door there is written, “Ask, and it shall be given you. Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened to you.” He has ever near him a most sweet Companion, whose loving converse is so delightful that the roughest roads grow smooth, and the darkest nights glow with brightness. The coldest and most shivering days become warm when that Companion talks. “Did not our hearts burn within us while He spoke with us by the way?”—

***“Though enwrapt in gloomy night,
We perceive no ray of light,
Since the Lord Himself is here,
'Tis not meet that we should fear.
Night with Him is never night,
Where He is, there all is light.
When He calls us, why delay?
They are happy who obey.”***

The Believer has an arm to lean upon—an arm that is never weary, never feeble, never withdrawn—so that if he has to climb along a rugged way, the more rough the road the more heavily he leans, and the more graciously he is sustained. Moreover, he is favored with a perpetual Comforter—not an angel to whisper of Heaven, but God Himself, the

blessed Paraclete, the Holy Spirit—to pour in oil and wine into every wound, and to bring to his remembrance the things which Christ has spoken. Why, Sirs, if there were anything that the Christian needed which were not supplied to him, I might admit that it must sometimes be ill with him! But when I read, “All things are yours, whether things present or things to come; or life or death, all are yours; and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s,” truly I conclude that it *is* and must be well with the righteous!

It is well with the righteous when he comes to die. Here we speak what we know, and testify what we have seen. The dying songs of saints are often in our ears. During nearly all the term of my ministry in London I have had the privilege of knowing a dear Friend in Christ Jesus to whom my heart has been greatly knit. One of the noblest and happiest of the sons of men. Yet it was not bodily vigor which made him so uniformly joyous, for as long as I have known him he has been of very weakly constitution—so that as often as the wintry months came on he has had to wend his way to Egypt, Madeira, or South America—there to pass through the winter in banishment, and return to his ministry as soon as the season allowed.

A loving heart and a large mind were blended in him. He was always making friends, and I should say never lost one. He was deeply interested in the work here, and was much at home in the midst of this great assembly—for our songs and praises, which he compared to the noise of many waters—were sweet to his ears. Now it pleased the Lord but a day or two ago that he should fall asleep—much to *my* loss, but to *his* own eternal gain! He thought that perhaps he could labor through this winter and his soul was warmed by holy zeal to stay with his people if he could, and preach the Gospel which he loved so well.

That zeal has cost his life. He wrote me one or two sweet letters on his dying bed, and when at last he closed his eyes, he uttered for his last testimony, words so like my own John Anderson that I am sure nobody could have invented them. His last words were “All right! Farewell!” Yes, that is how a Christian man can *live*! And how he can *die*! “It is all right,” says he. “It is well with me. It is right here—I have done my work, and God accepts it! It is right up there—Christ has finished His work on my account, and now farewell, till we meet again.” No tinge of sadness—no, not a whisper of grief—it is ALL, all, all right! He had served his Master long, and was glad to rest. He had fought his battle, and as the warrior sheathed his sword his eye caught the flashes of his Master’s welcome, and he said to his comrades, “All right! Farewell!” He is with God, and we are following on! All right is it *now*, and all right it *shall be* with us, also, if we are depending upon the finished work of the Well-Beloved.

Lastly, it is well with the righteous *after* death. His disembodied spirit is in Jesus’ bosom! Is it not well? When the trumpet sounds, his spirit comes down to meet the risen body—to behold the glorious advent of the once despised Son of David! To reign with Him in His reign, and triumph in His triumph, and then to be caught up to sit upon His Throne and

dwell with Him where the glorified Church is, world without end. "Say you to the righteous, it shall be well with them."

We have only a word or two left concerning the ground upon which it is well with the righteous. The text says that "they shall eat the fruit of their doings." Dear friends, that is the *only* term upon which the Old Covenant can promise that it shall be well with us. But this is not the ground upon which you and I stand under the Gospel dispensation! Absolutely to eat the fruit of all our doings would be, even to us, if judgment were brought to the line and righteousness to the plummet, a very dreadful thing. Yet there is a limited sense in which the righteous man will do this. "I was hungry, and you gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink," is good Gospel language. And when the Master shall say, "Inasmuch as you did this unto one of the least of these My people, you did it unto Me," the reward will not be of *debt*, but still it will be a reward, and the righteous will eat the fruit of his doings.

I prefer, however, to remark that there is One whose doings for us are the grounds of our dependence, and, blessed be God, we shall eat the fruit of *His* doings! He, the Lord Jesus, stood for us and you know what a harvest of joy He sowed for us in His life and death! That living holiness, that dying obedience has purchased for us unnumbered blessings! His the smart, but ours the sweet. His the sweet, but ours the rest. As we sit down at Heaven's feasts, the food which we shall there eat will be the fruit of His doings. The joy we shall there receive will be the result of His griefs, and the "well done" will be, in its real merit, the reward of His righteousness.

It shall be well with us, for we shall eat the fruits of our faith through the righteousness of Christ, the fruits of our love through His love to us, being with Him forever, and beholding His Glory. Time forbids a further enlargement. I have set you down in a garden of nuts, among groves of pomegranates—pluck and eat as you will—for all things are yours if you are numbered with the righteous!

II. The second part of the text can only occupy a minute or two. It reveals THE MISERY OF THE WICKED. "Woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him." I need not be long, because you have only to apply the negative to all that I have already said about the righteous. Observe this—it is ill with the wicked—*always* ill with him.

There is no time mentioned, all time is therefore meant. It is *always* ill with him, whether he is by prosperity made fat for the slaughter, or is made in adversity to feel the first drops of the eternal shower of Divine Justice. It is ill with the wicked on Divine authority. God says that it is ill—it must be very ill, then. It will be ill with him in the future. It shall always be ill with him. Worse and worse will his portion be till the worst thing of all shall come upon him. Beware, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces and there are none to deliver you!

It is ill with their best nature. If their body is healthy, their soul is sick. If their feet dance, yet their souls are condemned. If their mouths can sing their wanton songs, yet the wrath of God abides upon their spirits. It is ill

with them in the weightiest sense. Our words are only ounce words, God's words fall like avalanches! It is ill with you, O unconverted man, O unregenerate woman! It is ill in the most tremendous sense! It is ill, and you ought to know it, for God has told us to say it to you—"Woe unto the wicked—woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him."

Oh that you felt this, for then you might escape from its future terror! If you did but know this mischief, the dread of it might drive you to the Savior! His heart is open, the gates of mercy are not shut! He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him! But why is it ill with the wicked? It *must* be ill with him—he is out of joint with all the world. Though ordinary creatures are obedient to God, this man has set himself in opposition to the whole current of creation. The man has an enemy who is Omnipotent, whose power cannot be resisted.

He has an enemy who is all goodness, and yet this man opposes Him! How can it be well with the stubble that fights with the flame, or with the wax that strives with the fire? An insect fighting with a giant, how will it overcome? And you, poor *nothingness* contending with the *everlasting God*—how can it be anything but ill with you? It is ill with you, Sinner, because your joys all hang upon a thread. Let life's thread be cut and where are your merriments? Your dainty music, and your costly cups—the mirth that flashes from your wanton eyes, and the jollity of your thoughtless soul—where will this be when Death, with bony hands, shall come and touch your heart and make it cease its beating? It is ill with you because when these joys are over you have no more to come.

You may have one bright chapter in the story, but ah, the never-ending chapter, it is woe, woe, woe from beginning to the end! The woe of death, and after death the *judgment*—and after judgment the woe of condemnation, and then that woe that rolls onward forever—eternal woe, never coming to a pause, never knowing an alleviation! God help you, Sinner, God help you to escape from this ill of yours! It is ill with you now. You have no Mercy Seat to go to to pour out your troubles before God. You have no Father in Heaven to help you in the sorrows of this mortal life. You have no Son of Man to tread the furnace with you when your afflictions are heated seven times hotter. You have no Comforter to bring home to you the promises—you have no promises that can be brought home to you!

You have no faith to sustain you! You have no love to Christ to cheer you! You have no patience to support you! You have no hope of another and better world to make your eyes glad! You miserable wretch, where are you? If you ride in your chariot yet I will not envy you—I will prefer to be like rugged Lazarus rather than be as you are! And if you are in poverty, yet hope not to escape! You are wretched in your present poverty, but what will *eternal* poverty be, when you are driven from the Presence of God without hope to pine in vain for a drop of water to cool your parched tongue! It shall be ill with the wicked, and let no present appearance lead you to doubt it!

You are like a field that is not plowed, overgrown with weeds—and you laugh at the field that has been tormented with the plowshare! But wait,

O prosperous Sinner! Your time will come! When the weeds have gathered thick and foul, there will be a burning—for the great Husbandman will not forever endure the thorns and the thistles! And then you will wish that you, too, like the tried Christian, had known the plow of spiritual trouble and felt repentance for sin. The eyes that never weep for sin here will weep in awful anguish forever!

It will do you good to taste a little of the brine of your tears here, or else you will have to drink them forever and forever in eternity! It will be a profitable thing for you to feel the wrath of God heavy on your spirit now, for if not, it will crush you—crush you down and down without hope, world without end! It shall be ill with you. I will not stop to picture your dying bed. I know one, not far removed from me by relationship, who, when he died had no bright hopes to gild the gloomy hour, but could only say in his last moments, “It is all dark! It is all dark!”

And as he pointed to the fire grate that was without a fire he said, “It is dark like that black fireplace. I cannot see so much as a single spark of hope. Dark, all dark!” And so will it be with you! No, worse than that—it may be ghastly with the furnace blaze of Divine wrath! And as to the infinite future, I will not stop to speak of it. Forever! Forever! Forever! It shall be ill with the wicked. Oh, the wrath to come! The wrath to come!—

***“There is a death whose pang
Outlasts the fleeting breath.
Oh, what eternal horrors hang
Around ‘the second death’!
Lord God of Truth and Grace,
Teach us that death to shun
Lest we be banish’d from Your face,
And evermore undone.”***

God help you to flee from His dreadful anger, while flee you may! And may all of us be found among the righteous with whom it is forever well! If so it be, unto God shall be all the praise, while immortality shall last and Heaven’s high throne endure!

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SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATIONS

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***“Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”
Isaiah 4:13.***

For many centuries the Holy Land has been covered with thorns and briars. Travelers tell us it is so exceedingly barren that except upon the dreary desert of Sahara, you cannot find a more absolute sterility than in many parts of Judea and Israel. But the land will not remain forever thus unproductive. Even now, in spots where it can be cultivated, it flows with milk and honey, and the day is coming when the chosen people shall return to their own land which God has given to them and to their fathers by a Covenant of Salt—and when again they shall begin to irrigate the hills and to plant the valleys, to cultivate the vineyards and to scatter the seed broadcast into the well-plowed furrows! The Holy Land will again blossom—“Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree.” When this is done, the whole world will ring with the fame thereof. They will say, “Is this the Zion whom no man sought after? Is this the land which was called desolate? Is this the city whose name was FORSAKEN?” Then shall Mount Zion again be “beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.” And then shall the whole land flow with fertility—“and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

But the *spiritual* meaning of our text, to which we draw more immediate attention tonight, is this—God, by His Grace, is able to work moral and spiritual transformations. Men, comparable to thorns and briars, are, by the Sovereign Grace of God, changed and renewed so that they may then be compared to fir trees and to myrtles. This wonderful transformation is to the glory of God and is to Him “an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.” Let us talk a little with one another, first, *concerning these transformations*. Secondly, *concerning how they are worked*. And, thirdly, let us *contemplate their happy result*—they “shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

I. Let us talk CONCERNING THESE TRANSFORMATIONS.

It appears, from our text, that there are some men who may fitly be compared to thorns and briars. *The similitude may be applied to their original*. Here we must all take our share. The thorn is the child of the curse. The brier is the offspring of the Fall. There were no thorns and

briers to cause the sweat to flow from Adam's face until after he had sinned. Then did the Lord say to him, "Cursed is the ground for your sake; sorrow shall you eat of it all the days of your life, thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you." And we, too, are the offspring of the curse. What says David? "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." We are born under sin. We are subject to it from our very earliest moments and we go astray, not merely by the imitation of bad example, but from the force of a corrupt nature.

It may be that there are some here, this evening, who feel that they are under the curse. You cannot look back upon your original without discovering this. It may be, my Friends, that your parents taught you to sin—you cannot remember ever having been instructed in the way of God. It may be that this very moment you can recollect some of the earliest training that you received—and you remember that it was such as might fit you for the service of Satan, but could not lead you to the Cross of Christ. You feel that you are under the curse and you have met such afflictions and your own heart is so heavy that if I were to write anyone down as a child of the curse, you would boldly say, "Put my name in the list. Indeed, I am born of a traitor and I feel in my blood the taint of his sin." There is comfort for us, however, even though this is true of us! We are thorns, but the Lord can transform us into myrtles. Jehovah knows how to remove the curse of the first Adam by the blessing of the second Adam. He can tear up by the roots everything that is vile, sinful and accursed, and can plant in the place, thereof, everything that is lovely and of good repute—and so we shall inherit His blessing. So be of good comfort—though you are now under the curse, the Lord Jesus, who was made a Curse for us, is able yet to pronounce you blessed!

Again, *the thorn is the true image of the sinner because it is of no sort of service.* I suppose almost everything has its use, but I do not know that there has been discovered any use for the thorn and the brier. So has it been with many of us, and it is so with some of you tonight. What have you done for God? Twenty years, young man, have brought you to maturity, but what quit-rent has the Almighty ever received from you? Perhaps 40 years have ripened your manhood, but, hitherto, what songs of praise have gone up to Heaven from you? What acceptable fruits have you laid upon God's altar? You are His vineyard—what ripe grapes have ever come to Him from you? He has dug about you. He has protected you by the wall of His Providence and watched over you with tender care. How is it that when He looks for grapes, you bring forth only wild grapes? When He expects to have some return for the talent which He has committed to your care, how is it that you have wrapped it in a napkin and have hidden your Lord's money? You have been useless—not exactly so to your fellow men—your children have received your care—you have been, perhaps, some help to your neighbors and to your friends. But, as far as God is concerned, the natural man is perfectly useless! He brings no harvest to the great Owner of the ground. Did I say, just now, you were 40 years old? What if there should be, in this place, some unconverted person of sixty, seventy, or even eighty? And all these years,

in vain has the light of Heaven shone for you! In vain has the Divine long-suffering said, "Spare him yet another year." In vain the preaching of God's Word to you and all the ordinances of His House—you are still bare, leafless, fruitless! You have only lived unto yourself and you have in nowise glorified your Creator and your Preserver. You are a thorn and a brier! Yet be of good comfort—if you have a heart for better things, God can make you into the fir tree and the myrtle that yield genial shade and gladden the gardens of the Lord! He can yet transform your uselessness into true service and take you from among the idlers in the market to go and work actively and with success in His vineyard!

The thorn, too, (we have only commenced upon this point), wastes the genial influences which, falling upon good wheat, would have produced a harvest. The rain fell today, but it fell upon thorns and briars as well as upon the green blades of the wheat. The dews will weep and they will fall quite as copiously upon the thickly tangled thistles and matted briars as upon the cottager's well-weeded garden. And when the sun shines out with cheering ray, he will have rays quite as genial for the thistle and for the briars as for the fruit trees and for the barley and the wheat. So it is with you unconverted men and women! You have received God's daily favors in as great abundance as the righteous have. No, perhaps you have had even more! You have been sitting, clothed in fine linen, like Dives, while God's own saints have been rotting at your gates, like Lazarus. You have not pined for lack of the outward influences of the means of Grace. Some of you are sermon-hearers. You are constantly within God's gates. You frequent the place where the proclamation of mercy is freely made. Your Bibles are not unknown to you and yet, all this has been wasted on you. Are you not near unto cursing? Visited by daily favor, rebuked by conscience, awakened at times by the natural motion of your own heart, awakened by God's Spirit, awed under His Word and yet, for all this, you are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel! Yet despair not! If your souls seek after better things, God is able to transform these wasteful thorns, these briars that bear no fruit into fig trees that shall shower their luscious fruit all around!

It was a foolish saying of a certain preacher that the tares would never become wheat—what business had he to strain Christ's parable? This I know—the brier can become a myrtle and the thistle can become a fir tree by Divine Grace! Did the man mean to deny the possibility of conversion? Did he mean to say that Almighty Grace could not turn the lion into a lamb, the raven into a dove? If so, he uttered a direct blasphemy, for there is no miracle of Grace which God cannot perform! He can take the black lumps of ebony and make them alabaster! He can cast the tree of the Cross into Marah's bitter waters and make them sweet as the water of the well of Bethlehem for which David thirsted! He can take the poison out of the asp and the sting out of the cockatrice—and make them serviceable to God and man! The camel can go through the needle's eye! Know for sure that nothing is too hard for the Lord! He can accomplish whatever He pleases.

To continue our remarks upon the thorn and its transformation into the fir tree—*Is not the thorn a hurtful thing?* It rends and tears the passers-by. Sometimes, if I would pursue my path straight across to yonder point, I must break through a hedge of briars—and how often has the Christian been tormented and torn by the thorns of the ungodly? Let the age of martyrs tell how God's saints have had their flesh torn from their bones by these thorns and briars! And let a weeping mother tell how her son has broken her heart and turned her hair prematurely gray. And let a sorrowing wife tell how an ungodly husband has sent her to her chamber with briny tears streaming from her eyes. And let us all tell how sometimes our ungodly relatives have made our hearts beat fast with dread anxiety for them! Lot cannot live in Sodom without being vexed and David cannot sojourn in Mesech without crying, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" But remember, however much you have persecuted God's saints, however harshly you may have dealt with the followers of Christ, the Lord is able to transform you into one of them! Paul little thought, when he was riding to Damascus, that it would be so with him. He had his precious documents all safe. "I will harass the Nazarenes," he seemed to say. "I will bring them to the whipping post. I will drag them out of the synagogue and compel them to blaspheme!" Little do you know, Paul, that you shall soon bend the knee to that very Jesus of Nazareth whom you hate! A light shines about him, brighter than the noonday sun! He falls from his horse. He hears a voice which says, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" Then meekly he asks, "Who are You, Lord?" And the answer comes, "I am Jesus whom you persecute: it is hard for you to kick against the pricks." Ah, Sinner, perhaps you do not know that *you are persecuting Jesus*. You think that it is only your child, or your wife, or your mother. But, in persecuting the members of the body of Christ, you persecute the Head! Saul of Tarsus is led by the hand to Damascus and, after his conversion, who is more bold than he? The preacher upon Mars' Hill, the witness before Nero, the aged man of God sitting in the dungeon, the child of God with his head upon the block—this is the man who persecuted the saints of God—but is now full of zeal above all others for the spread of the knowledge of Christ! The thorn is turned into a fir tree and the brier into a myrtle tree.

Nor have I yet exhausted the figure. *The thorn sows its own seed* and when the winds blow they bear upon their wings the thistledown—and the seed is dropped here and there and everywhere! You cannot keep thistles to themselves. If you grow them in your own garden, they will be in your neighbor's garden before long. And if your neighbor grows them, it will be difficult for you to keep them out of your plot. And here is the worst point about an unconverted man. If you have been doing mischief, your children grow up in your own image, or your servants imitate their master. If you are an unscrupulous trader, you assist to make other traders, if not palpably dishonest, yet scandalously lax. Your language pollutes the air you breathe. Or if you keep that tolerably right, your sentiments are not without their influence upon your fellow men. You

live not unto yourselves. If you were to lead a hermit's life, your very absence from society would have its influence. If you are literally a leper, I may shut you up and make you cover your lips and cast ashes on your head and cry, "Unclean! Unclean!" but with your *spiritual* leprosy, I cannot so seclude you. You will taint the air wherever you go—it is not possible for you to do otherwise than to spread pollution round about you. O thorn, seed-sowing thorn, my God change you!

Do I tonight address some infidel who has been very earnest in the propagation of his views? How would my heart leap if the Lord would make you just as earnest in lifting up the Cross upon which you have trampled! He can do it! I pray God that He may. Do I speak tonight to one who has been furiously set against the things of God? Brethren, the worst of sinners make the best of saints! And if the Lord shall please to touch you, you shall be just as hot for Him as you now are against Him. He that has much forgiven shall love much. No one could break an alabaster box of precious ointment but the woman who was a sinner. John Bunyan used to say that he believed there would be a great band of saints in the next generation, for his own generation was noted for its many great sinners and he did hope that as these great sinners grew up, God would transform them into great saints. We could mention many names of men who have been, as it were, the devil's sergeants, but who, when God has once transformed them into His own soldiers, have made most blessed recruiting sergeants for the Kingdom of Christ. Look at John Newton, John Bunyan and other men of that stamp—and see what Sovereign Grace can do in similar cases.

Yet once more. I cannot help remarking that *it was the thorn and the brier that composed the crown that pierced the Savior's temples*. And it is our sins, our cruel sins, that have been His chief tormentors. Every soul that lives without Christ, after having heard of Him, is piercing Christ's temples afresh. When you think that He is unwilling to forgive you, that ungenerous thought wounds Him more than anything else. And when you speak ill of His name—when you slander His people and despise His saints, what are you doing but plaiting another crown of thorns to put upon His head? Yet you, you who have pierced the Savior's brow, you can yet become a myrtle to crown that brow with victory! The Savior, having fought for you and won you—having bought you with His heart's blood—will put you as a wreath about His brow "and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not, be cut off." The meaning of the whole is that God does, by the power of the Gospel, transform His enemies into His friends. He turns men from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to the Kingdom of Christ, from being possessed with devils to become full of the Holy Spirit, from being a den of dragons, full of sin, to be temples where every Grace shall shine to reflect the Glory of the Most High. Some of you can bear witness to this as a matter of experience—others of you contemplate it with strong desire.

II. Secondly, we are to consider HOW THIS TRANSFORMATION IS WORKED IN MEN.

It is worked by the *secret and mysterious agency of God the Holy Spirit*. Certainly, dear Friends, it can never be worked in us by the power of man! Let us tremble if our religion rests upon any man, for that is a poor, unstable foundation. I learn each day more and more my utter inability to do good to my fellow men apart from the Spirit of God. There come to me, sometimes, cases that completely stagger me. I try, for instance, to comfort a broken heart. I seek, but in vain, all sorts of metaphors to make the Truth of God clear. I quote the promises, bow the knee in prayer and yet, after all, the poor troubled spirit has to go away still unbelieving, for only God can give it faith! There are other cases where we know of men who have lived in sin and God has been pleased to put His afflicting hand upon them and we do not know what to say to them. They profess repentance, but we fear it is only remorse. They talk of faith in Christ, but we are afraid it is a delusion. We would convince them of sin if we could. We remind them of the past and they give an assent to every sentence we utter against them, but yet they feel not the evil of their own ways. Oh, it is hard work to deal with sinners! It needs a sharper tool than man can keep in his toolbox. Only God Himself can break hearts—and when they are broken—only the same hand that broke them can bind them up.

It is the Holy Spirit, then, who is everywhere in the midst of His Church, who comes forth and puts Himself into direct contact with a human spirit and, straightway, a change is affected. I cannot tell you with what part of man the Holy Spirit begins, but this I can tell you—He changes the whole man! The judgment no longer takes darkness for light and light for darkness! The will is no longer obstinately set against God but bows its neck to the yoke of Christ! The affections are no longer set upon sinful pleasure, but they are set upon Christ! It is true that corruption still remains in the heart, but a new heart and a right spirit are given. There is put into the quickened soul a living Seed which cannot sin because it is born of God—a living Seed which lives and abides forever! “I don’t know,” said one, “whether the world is a new world, or whether I am a new creature, but it is one of the two, for, ‘old things are passed away, and all things are become new.’” When Christ descends into the human heart to reign, He seems to take this motto, “Behold, I make all things new.” Therefore is “a new Heaven and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness,” within that poor sinner’s heart! It is a complete change. You will observe that it is not the thorn, somewhat trimmed and pruned—it is not the brier made to grow upon a wall and trained into order—that is *reformation*. But it is the thorn turned into a fir tree—this is a perfect re-creation, a making anew of the man and this happens to everyone of us, by the power and energy of the Divine Spirit, or else in the garden of the Lord we shall never bloom, nor ought we to join the Church of God on earth, for we have no part nor lot in the matter.

But, while I have said that it is the Spirit who works this change, you are enquiring *by what means He does it*. If you will kindly refer to the chapter from which my text is taken, you will observe that the Lord Jesus has to do with it—"Behold, I have given Him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people." That verse comes before my texts. We must know Christ before we can ever be changed. Some people think they are to change themselves and *then* come to Christ. Oh, no! Come to Jesus just as you are! It is the work of His Spirit to change you. You are not to work a miracle and then come to show the miracle to Christ, but you are to come to Christ to have the miracle worked. It is Christ's work to begin with the sinner as the sinner, even as the Good Samaritan did with the man who fell among thieves. He did not wait for him to be cured before he helped him, but he poured oil and wine into his wounds, lifted him upon his beast, and then carried him to the inn. And Christ is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him.

But the chapter seems to teach another lesson. You say, "I know that the Holy Spirit brings Christ home to the heart and conscience, but how am I to get at Christ?" The chapter tells you. It says that God's Word shall not return unto Him void. The way by which Christ is discovered and found by a sinner is by Christ being preached to him! "Hear, and your soul shall live." That is the Gospel! The way by which Christ comes into the soul is through Ear-gate. "Satan tries to stop up Ear-gate with mud," says John Bunyan. But, oh, it is a glorious thing when God clears away the mud of prejudice so that men are willing to hear the Truth of God! There was an old man, a member of this Church, who used to preach every Sunday in Billingsgate. Many persons tried to begin a controversy with him, but he was an old soldier in more senses than one and his answer, when anybody tried to dispute or enter into an argument with him, was, "Hear, and your soul shall live! I have not come to argue, but to preach the Truth of God—"Hear, and your soul shall live." That was a plain answer, sure enough!

Now you know that simple trust in Christ is all that He asks of you—and even that He *gives* you. 'Tis the work of His own Spirit. Hear this, then, you thorns and briers, before God sets Himself in battle array against you—before His fires devour you! Hear the gentle notes of a Father's heart as He speaks in Gospel invitations to you, "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters." May you all be brought there! May God's Grace bring you all to lay hold on Christ!

III. And then, to close—WHAT IS THE RESULT OF THIS TRANSFORMATION?

To whose honor shall so beneficial a change accrue? "*It shall be to the Lord for a name.*" As soon as that great sinner gets converted, it makes a buzz and a noise in the workshop where he goes. "What?" they ask, "has that wretch become a saint?" He used to curse, but, "Behold, he prays!" He could drink with the drunk, but now he walks in the fear of God "in

all temperance and sobriety.” He could not be trusted, but now temptation cannot turn him from his integrity. The name of Christ at one time brought the blood into his cheeks, but now—

**“Sweeter sounds than music knows
Charm him in Immanuel’s name.”**

I say there is a buzz about the workshop—the men say to one another, “What is the meaning of this? How came this about.” And though they hate the change, yet they gaze at it and admire it. They cannot understand it. They are like the magicians of Egypt—they cannot do these things with their enchantment and, therefore, they are compelled to say, “This is the finger of God.” If God converts some ordinary sinners, He does not get half as much glory out of them as He does out of these extraordinary ones. The man whose vile character was known in a whole parish, whose name was foul in the court where he lived, who had acquired a reputation for evil in the whole district—when this thorn becomes a fir tree, then everyone wonders! If I had in my garden a great briar which had once torn my hands, but one day when I walked down I saw, instead of that briar, a fir tree growing and a genial shade could be enjoyed under its branches, how astonished I would be! I would naturally ask, “Who has done this? Who could have transformed this briar into a fir tree?” And so, when a great sinner is converted, the finger of God is recognized and God is glorified! Even the ungodly are compelled to honor the name of the Most High when other ungodly ones are saved!

And then *as to the church*, the members are, perhaps, at first rather shy and cannot believe it is true. They hear that he who once persecuted the Brothers and Sisters, now professes the name of their Master and, at last, they get good evidence of the truth of it—and oh, what hallowed glee there is among the sons of God! There is a church meeting and he comes forward to confess his faith—they know how foully he has erred and they rejoice to see him brought back again. There may be one “elder brother” who is angry and will not come in but, for the most part, the household is very glad when the prodigal returns! And chief in joy among you all, when such a scene occurs, is the one who has preached the Gospel to you. Oh, the joy of my soul when some of you were brought to Christ! I remember the cheering nights I had and how I went to my house rejoicing and triumphant in my God because of some of you! You were once foul, “but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” And truly, there would be more of such joy if others were brought in! Some of the best of the members of this Church are those who were brands plucked out of the burning. May we have more such sinners saved by the blood of Jesus!

Nor is this all. There was *an angel* present when the deed was done. They are always present in the assemblies of the saints—hence it is that the women have their heads covered—“because of the angels.” If no one else could see it, yet the angels, who cover their faces when they bow before God, would have us come into His Presence in decency and in order. This angel hears us weep—a stream of light ascends to the regions

of the blessed. Straightway the bliss spreads throughout the celestial field and, as the news is propagated, “A prodigal has returned, another heir of Glory is born,” they take their harps and tune their strings anew! They bow with great reverence! They sing with loftier joy! They shout with more glorious praise, “Unto Him that loved the souls of men and washed them in His blood, to Him be glory, and honor, and power, and dominion, forever and ever!” And thus the songs of Heaven are swollen, made more deep, more mighty with tumultuous joy by sinners saved on earth! Yes, they tell it in Heaven that the thorn-brake has become a grove of firs, that the brier has become a myrtle and what, shall I dare to say?—*even the Divine Trinity break forth in joy*. Their joy cannot be increased, for God over all is “blessed forever.” But still, it is written, “He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing.” Is it not said that when the prodigal was yet a long way off, his father saw him? Can it be that among the servants and friends there was joy and none in the father’s heart? Impossible! The Eternal God, Jehovah, Himself, views with delight the chosen of His heart! Jesus sees the purchase of His blood! The Spirit sees the result of His own power and so, up to the very Throne of God, the impulse of a sinner saved is felt! She came from the brothel. He came from the prison and yet even Heaven thrills with the news! She had defiled herself with sin. He had polluted others with his crimes and yet angels tune their harps to Jehovah’s praise because of them! Was that prophetic when the woman broke the alabaster box and filled the house with the perfume? Was that prophetic of what every repentant sinner does when his broken heart fills Heaven and earth with the sweet perfume of joy because he is saved? And when she washed the Savior’s feet and wiped them with the hair of her head, was that also prophetic? Did that show how Jesus gets His greatest honor, His purest love, His fairest worship and His sweetest solace from sinners saved by blood? I think it was so. May He get such joy from us! Truly Jesus died for me and, at the foot of His Cross, I now stand weeping to tell of His true love to sinners! And O poor Sinner, Christ is able to save you! Whomever comes to Him, He will in no wise cast out. Oh, that you would come! May Sovereign Grace compel you to come in!

I sat, this afternoon, looking at one with a withered countenance and a sunken cheek, marked out for death, once a member of this Church, but foully fallen and gone far astray. And I remember two or three of his age, once also professors who, strange to say, also went away from God as he did. When I talked to him about the Lord and His infinite compassion, I could but have in my mind’s eye the prodigal who wasted his substance with riotous living, and yet his father did not spurn him, did not even rebuke him, but he—

**“—was to his Father’s bosom pressed,
Once again a child confessed,
From his house no more to roam.”**

And I thought I would say to you tonight—

“Come and welcome, Sinner, come.”

Do not think that God is harsh. Think not that Christ is not tender. There is no breast so soft as His, no heart so deeply full of sympathy. He cries over the very worst of you, “How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me. My repentings are kindled together. I cannot destroy you, for I am God, and not man.” Oh, shall my Savior plead with you in vain? Shall the tears of Jesus fall to the ground? Shall the love of God have no attracting influence? Shall not Mercy, as it rings its silver bell, draw you to the feast of love? Oh, why will you die? Is sin so sweet that you will suffer for it forever? Are the trifles of this world so important in your estimation that you will lose Heaven and Eternal Life? I pray you “seek the Lord while He may be found: call you upon Him while He is near,” and think not that He will reject you, for “He will abundantly pardon.” Oh, may He do this tonight!—

***“My God, I feel the mournful scene!
My heart yearns over dying men
And gladly my pity would reclaim
And snatch the firebrands from the flame!
But feeble my compassion proves,
And can but weep where most it loves—
Your own all-saving arm employ,
And turn these drops of grief to joy!”***

O Lord, do it, for You can! Come forth, O Jesus! Mount Your chariot! Hell shakes at Your majesty. Heaven adores Your Presence—earth cannot resist you! Gates of brass fly open and bars of iron are snapped. Come, Conqueror, and ride through the streets of this city and through the hearts of all of us, and they shall be Yours, “and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.” May God command His blessing on you, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 84.

Verse 1. *How amiable are Your tabernacles, O LORD of Hosts!* “Though they are only tabernacles, temporary structures that are soon to be taken down and carried away, they are very dear to us. Your tabernacles are so lovely to us because You meet us there.”

2. *My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh cries out for the living God.* A little starving brings on an appetite for health-giving food—and a brief absence from the House of God through sickness, or by reason of distance, makes a Christian sigh and cry for the dainties of the Divine Table. Even the heavy flesh, which is so slow to move, at last joins the heart in crying out for the living God!

3. *Yes, the sparrow has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Your altars, O LORD of Hosts, my King, and my God.* He envies even the sparrows which have no sort of bashfulness, but boldly enter God’s House and find a house for themselves there. O Lord, make me like the sparrows, blessed in finding

shelter in the courts of Your House! As for the swallow, she makes God's House a nest for herself, and a place where she may lay her young. And it is blessed when our children, as well as ourselves, love the House of God—when they have been so nurtured and cherished that they are at home there. We may well envy the sparrows and the swallows when we and our families are unable to go up to the House of the Lord. And it is as sad for those who have to go up to a place where there is nothing good to be had, a place where the Gospel is not preached and so their souls are not fed.

4. *Blessed are they that dwell in Your House.* The men who are always occupied in the Lord's service, or those who are in God's House even when they are in their own houses—the men who are always at home with God, who feel that the canopy of Heaven is the roof of God's House in which they dwell and who, therefore, never go away from God's House, but always dwell there with Him—

***“Blessed are the souls that find a place
Within the Temple of Your Grace.”***

4. *They will be still praising You. Selah.* How can they do otherwise? When they are God's children, at home with their Heavenly Father, and behold His Glory, what can they do but praise, and praise, and praise yet again?

5. *Blessed is the man whose strength is in You; in whose heart are the ways of them.* Or, as it might be rendered, “In whose heart are Your ways.” The man whose strength is wholly derived from God and who spends all his strength in God's service—the man who has God's ways in his heart and his heart in God's ways must be blessed. This is the man to get the blessing that the Lord is waiting to give. Half-hearted worshippers do not even know what the blessing is like, but the whole-hearted not only taste of it but drink it down with delight!

6. *Who passing through the Valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also fills the pools.* They get a blessing on the road to God's House as well as a blessing in the House itself. It does their heart good even to be on the way to the assembly of God's people! And they sing with good Dr. Watts—

***“How did my heart rejoice to hear
My friends devoutly say,
‘In Zion let us all appear,
And keep the solemn day!’”***

They also sing with the same writer—

“I love her gates, I love the road.”

The very road to God's House has a blessing in it for those whose hearts are right with the God of the House!

7. *They go from strength to strength,* They get stronger as they proceed on their happy, heavenward way. The men who love God and who live with God, grow stronger and stronger—not always in body, for the flesh may be growing weaker while “the inward man is renewed day by day.” “They go from strength to strength,” or, as it is in the margin, “They go from company to company,” from the company of mourners to the company of hopers—from the company of hopers to the company of

Believers—from the company of the men and women of feeble faith to the company of those who rejoice in full assurance!

7. *Everyone of them in Zion appears before God.* That is the glory of going to God's House, that we go there to appear before God, to spread our needs before Him, to confess our sin to Him, to sun our souls in the light of His Countenance. It is little for us to appear before our fellow men, but to appear before God is a blessed prelude to that day "when He shall appear" and "we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

8. *O LORD God of Hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.* O God of wrestling Jacob, hear my prayer! O God, You who did make such a gracious Covenant with Jacob, be a Covenant God to me!

9. *Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of Your Anointed.* Look upon the face of Christ, O God, for He is "Your Anointed"—

"Him, and then the sinner see!

Look through Jesus' wounds on me!"

10. *For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand.* That is, better than a thousand days spent anywhere else! Feasting and rioting with the ungodly are not worthy to be compared with feasting and praising in the courts of God's House.

10. *I had rather be a doorkeeper in the House of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.* I hope many of us can say, again with Dr. Watts—

"Might I enjoy the meanest place

Within Your House, O God of Grace!

Not tents of ease, nor thrones of power,

Should tempt my feet to leave Your door."

11, 12. *For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give Grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. O LORD of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusts in You.* Let us share that blessedness, dear Friends, and be as happy as we can by trusting in the Lord of Hosts as He deserves to be trusted.

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

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

THE WELL-BELOVED'S VINEYARD

NO. 3319

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1912.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
TO A COMPANY OF BELIEVERS AT MENTONE.**

***“My Well-Beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill.”
Isaiah 5:1.***

WE recognize at once that Jesus is here. Who but He can be meant by, “My Well-Beloved”? Here is a word of possession and a word of affection—He is mine, and my Well-Beloved. He is loveliness, itself, the most loving and lovable of beings—and we personally love Him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength—He is ours, our Beloved, our Well-Beloved! We can say no less.

The delightful relationship of our Lord to us is accompanied by words which remind us of our relationship to Him, “My Well-Beloved has a vineyard,” and what vineyard is that but our heart, our nature, our life? We are His and we are His for the same reason that any other vineyard belongs to its owner. He made us a vineyard. Thorns and briars were all our growth, naturally, but He bought us with a price, He hedged us about and set us apart for Him—and then He planted and cultivated us. All within us that can bring forth good fruit is of His creating, His tending and His preserving, so that if we are vineyards at all, we must be *His* vineyards! We gladly agree that it shall be so. I pray that I may not have a hair on my head that does not belong to Christ—and you all pray that your every pulse and breath may be the Lord’s.

This happy afternoon I want you to note that this vineyard is said to be upon “a very fruitful hill.” I have been thinking of the advantages of my own position towards the Lord and lamenting with great shame that I am not bringing forth such fruit to Him as my position demands. Considering our privileges, advantages and opportunities, I fear that many of us have need to feel great searching of heart. Perhaps to such, the text may be helpful. And it will not be without profit to any one of us if the Lord will bless our meditation upon it.

I. Our first thought, in considering these words, is that OUR POSITION AS THE LORD’S VINEYARD IS A VERY FAVORABLE ONE—“My Well-Beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill.” No people could be better placed for serving Christ than we are. I hardly think that any man is better situated for glorifying God than I am. I do not think that any women could be in better positions for serving Christ than some of you dear Sisters now occupy. Our heavenly Father has placed us just where He can do the most for us and where we can do the most for Him. Infinite Wisdom has occupied itself with carefully selecting the soil, site and every tree in the vineyard. We differ greatly and need differing situations

in order to fruitfulness—the place which would suit one might be too trying for another. Friend, the Lord has planted you in the right spot—your station may not be the best in itself, but it is the best for you! We are in the best possible position for some present service at this moment—the Providence of God has put us on a vantage ground for our immediate duty! “My Well-Beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill.”

Let us think of *the times in which we live* as calling upon us to be very fruitful when we compare them with the years gone by. Time was when we could not have met thus happily in our own place— if we had been taken in the act of breaking bread, or reading God's Word, we would have been hauled off to prison and perhaps put to death! Our forefathers scarcely dared to lift up their voices in a Psalm of praise, lest the enemy should be upon them. Truly, the lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places—yes, we have a goodly heritage on a very fruitful hill.

We do not even live in times when error is so rampant as to be paramount. There is too much of it abroad, but taking a broad view of things, I venture to say that there never was a time when the Truth of God had a wider sway that it has now, or when the Gospel was more fully preached, or when there was more spiritual activity! Black clouds of error hover over us, but at the same time we rejoice that, from John o'Groat's House to the Land's End, Christ is preached by ten thousand voices! And even in the dark parts of the earth the name of Jesus is shining like a candle in the house! If we had the pick of the ages in which to live, we could not have selected a better time for fruit-bearing than that which is now current—this age is “a very fruitful hill.”

That this is the case some of us know positively, *because we have been fruitful*. Look back, Brothers and Sisters, upon times when your hearts were warm, your zeal was fervent and you served the Lord with gladness. I join with you in those happy memories. Then we could run with the swiftest, we could fight with the bravest, we could work with the strongest, we could suffer with the most patient! The Grace of God has been upon certain of us in such an unmistakable manner that we have brought forth all the fruits of the Spirit. Perhaps today we look back with deep regret because we are not so fruitful as we once were. If it is so, it is well that our regrets should multiply, but we must change each one of them into a hopeful prayer! Remember, the vine may have changed, but the soil is the same. We still have the same motives for being fruitful and even more than we used to have. Why are we not more useful? Has some spiritual insect taken possession of the vines, or have we become frost-bitten, or sunburned? What is it that withholds the vintage? Certainly, if we were fruitful once, we ought to be more fruitful now! The fruitful hill is not exhausted—what ails us that our grapes are so few?

We are planted on a fruitful hill, *for we are called to work which of all others is the most fruitful*. Blessed and happy is the man who is called to the Christian ministry, for this service has brought more Glory to Christ than any other! You, beloved Friends, are not called to be rulers of nations, nor inventors of engines, nor teachers of sciences, nor slayers of men—but we are soul-winners—our work is to lead men to Jesus! Ours

is, of all the employment in the world, the most fruitful in benefits to men and Glory to God! If we are not serving God in the Gospel of His Son with all our might and ability, then we have a heavy responsibility resting upon us. "Our Well-Beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill." There is not a richer bit of soil outside Immanuel's land than the holy ministry for souls! Certain of us are teachers and gather the young about us while we speak of Jesus. This also is choice soil. Many teachers have gathered a grand vintage from among the little ones and have not been a whit behind pastors and evangelists in the Glory of soul-winning. Dear teachers, your vines are planted on a very fruitful hill! But I do not confine myself to preachers and teachers—for all of us, as we have opportunities of speaking for the Lord Jesus Christ, and privately talking to individuals—also have a fertile soil in which to grow! If we do not glorify God by soul-winning, we shall be greatly blamable, since of all forms of service it is most prolific in praise of God.

And what is more, *the very circumstances with which we are surrounded* all tend to make our position exceedingly favorable for fruit-bearing. In this little company we have not one friend who is extremely poor—but if such were among us, I should say the same thing. Christ has gathered some of His choicest clusters from the valley of poverty. Many eminent saints have never owned a foot of land, but lived upon their weekly wage and found scant fare at that. Yes, by the Grace of God, the vale of poverty has blossomed as the rose. It so happens, however, that the most of us here have a competence—we have all that we need and something over to give to the poor and to the cause of God. Surely we ought to be fruitful in almsgiving, in caring for the sick and in all manner of sweet and fragrant influences. "Give me neither poverty nor riches," is a prayer that has been answered for most of us—and if we do not now give honor unto God, what excuse can we make for our barrenness? I am speaking to some who are singularly healthy, who are never hindered by aches and pains and to others who have been prospered in business for 20 years at a stretch—yours is great indebtedness to your Lord! In your case, "My Well-Beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill." Give God your health and your wealth, my Brother, while they last! See that all His care of you is not thrown away. Others of us seldom know many months together of health, but have often had to suffer sorely in body—this ought to make us fruitful, for there is much increase from the tillage of affliction! Has not the Master obtained the richest of all fruit from bleeding vines? Do not His heaviest bunches come from those which have been sharply cut and pruned down to the ground? Choice flavors, dainty juices and delicious aromas come mostly from the use of the keen-edged knife of trial! Some of us are at our best for fruit-bearing when in other respects we are at our worst. Thus I might truly say that whatever our circumstances may be—whether we are poor or rich, in health or in affliction—each one of our cases has its advantages and we are planted "on a very fruitful hill."

Furthermore, when I look at *our spiritual condition*, I must say for myself, and I think for you, also, "My Well-Beloved has a vineyard on a very

fruitful hill." For what has God done for us? To change the question—what has God *not* done for us? What more could He say to us than what He has said? What more could He do for us than what He has done? He has dealt with us like a God! He has loved us up from the pit of corruption, He has loved us up to the Cross and up to the gates of Heaven! He has quickened us, forgiven us and renewed us! He dwells in us, comforts us, instructs us, upholds us, preserves us, guides us, leads us and He will surely perfect us! If we are not fruitful to His praise, how shall we excuse ourselves? Where shall we hide our guilty heads? Shall yonder sea suffice to lend us briny tears wherewith to weep over our ingratitude?

II. I go a step further, by your leave, and say that OUR POSITION, as the Lord's vineyard, IS FAVORABLE TO THE PRODUCTION OF THE FRUIT WHICH HE LOVES BEST. I believe that my own position is the most favorable for the production of the fruit that the Lord loves best in me, and that your position is the same. What is this fruit?

First, it is *faith*. Our Lord is very delighted to see faith in His people. The trust which clings to Him with childlike confidence is pleasant to His loving heart. Our position is such that faith ought to be the easiest thing in the world to us. Look at the promises He has given us in His Word—can we not believe them? Look at what the Father has done for us in the gift of His dear Son—can we not trust Him after that? Our daily experience all goes to strengthen our confidence in God. Every mercy asks, "Will you not trust Him?" Every need that is supplied cries, "Can you not trust Him?" Every sorrow sent by the great Father tests our faith and drives us to Him on whom we repose—and so strengthens and confirms our confidence in God! Mercies and miseries alike operate for the growth of faith! Some of us have been called upon to trust God on a large scale and that necessity has been a great help towards fruit-bearing. The more troubles we have, the more is our vine dug about—and the more nourishment is laid to its roots. If faith does not ripen under trial, when will it ripen? Our afflictions fertilize the soil wherein faith may grow!

Another choice fruit is *love*. Jesus delights in love. His tender heart delights to see its love returned. Am I not of all men most bound to love the Lord? I speak for each Brother and Sister here—is not that your language? Do you not all say, "Lives there a person beneath yon blue sky who ought to love Jesus more than I should?" Each Sister soliloquizes, "Sat there ever a woman in her chamber who had more reason for loving God than I have?" No, the sin which has been forgiven us should make us love our Savior exceedingly much! The sin which has been prevented in other cases should make us love our Preserver much. The help which God has sent us in hours of need, the guidance which He has given in times of difficulty, the joy which He has poured into us in days of fellowship and the quiet He has breathed upon us in seasons of trial—all ought to make us love Him! Along our life-road, reasons for loving God are more numerous than the leaves upon the olive trees. He has hedged us about with His goodness, even as the mountains and the sea are round our present resting place. Look backward as far as time endures—and then look far beyond that into the eternity which has been—and you will see

the Lord's great love set upon us! All through time and eternity reasons have been accumulating which compel us to love our Lord! Now turn sharply around and gaze before you, and all along the future, faith can see reasons for loving God, golden milestones on the way that are yet to be traversed, all calling for our loving delight in God!

Christ is also very pleased with the fruit of *hope*, and we are so circumstanced that we ought to produce much of it. The aged ought to look forward, for they cannot expect to see much more on earth. Time is short and eternity is near—how precious is a good hope through Divine Grace! We who are not yet old ought to be exceedingly hopeful. And the younger folk, who are just beginning the spiritual life, should abound in hope most fresh and bright! If any man has expectations greater than I have, I should like to see him. We have the greatest of expectations. Have you never felt like Mercy in her dream, when she laughed and when Christiana asked her what made her laugh? She said that she had had a vision of things yet to be revealed!

Select any fruit of the Spirit you choose and I maintain that we are favorably circumstanced for producing it! We are planted upon a very fruitful hill. What a fruitful hill we are living in as regards *labor for Christ!* Each one of us may find work for the Master—there are capital opportunities around us. There never was an age in which a man, consecrated to God, might do as much as he can at this time! There is nothing to restrain the most ardent zeal! We live in such happy times that if we plunge into a sea of work, we may swim and none can hinder us. Then, too, our labor is made, by God's Grace, to be so pleasant to us. No true servant of Christ is weary of the work, though he may be weary *in* the work. It is not the work that he ever wearies of, for he wishes that he could do 10 times more. Then our Lord makes our work to be successful. We bring one soul to Jesus and that one brings a hundred! Sometimes, when we are fishing for Jesus, there may be few fish, but blessed be His name, most of them enter the net and we have to live praising and blessing God for all the favor with which He regards our labor of love! I think I am right in saying that for the bearing of the fruit which Jesus loves best, our position is exceedingly favorable.

III. And now, this afternoon, at this Table, OUR POSITION HERE IS FAVORABLE EVEN NOW TO OUR PRODUCING IMMEDIATELY and upon the spot, the richest, ripest, rarest fruit for our Well-Beloved! Here, at the Communion Table, we are at the center of the Truth of God and at the wellhead of consolation! Now we enter the Holy of Holies and come to the most sacred meeting place between our souls and God!

Viewed from this Table, *the vineyard slopes to the south*, for everything looks towards Christ, our Sun. This bread, this wine, all set our souls towards Jesus Christ and He shines full upon our hearts, minds and souls to make us bring forth much fruit! Are we not planted on a very fruitful hill?

As we think of His passion for our sake, we feel that *a wall is set about us to the north*, to keep back every sharp blast that might destroy the tender grape. No wrath is dreaded now, for Jesus has borne it for us—

behold the tokens of His all-sufficient Sacrifice! No anger of the Lord shall come to our restful spirits, for the Lord says, "I have sworn that I will not be angry with you, nor rebuke you." Here, on this Table, are the pledges of His unspeakable love and these, like a high wall, keep out the rough winds. Surely, we are planted on a very fruitful hill!

Moreover, *the Well-Beloved Himself is among us*. He has not let us out to farmers, but He Himself does undertake to care for us! And that He is here we are sure, for here is His flesh and here is His blood. You see the outward tokens, may you feel the unseen reality! For we believe in His real Presence, though not in the gross corporeal sense with which worldly spirits blind themselves. The King has come into a garden—let us entertain Him with our fruits. He who for this vineyard poured out a bloody sweat is now surveying the vines—shall they not at this instant give forth a goodly smell? The Presence of our Lord makes this assembly a very fruitful hill—where He sets His feet, all good things flourish!

Around this Table we are in a place where others have fruited well. Our literature contains no words more precious than those which have been spoken at the time of communion. Perhaps you know and appreciate the discourses of Willison, delivered on sacramental occasions. Rutherford's Communion Sermons have a sacred unction upon them. The poems of George Herbert, I should think, were most of them inspired by the sight of Christ in this ordinance! Think of the canticles of holy Bernard, how they flame with devotion. Saints and martyrs have been nourished at this Table of blessing! This hallowed ordinance, I am sure, is a spot where hopes grow bright and hearts grow warm, resolves become firm and lives become fruitful—and all the clusters of our soul's fruit ripen for the Lord!

Blessed be God, *we are where we have ourselves often grown*. We have enjoyed our best times when celebrating this sacred Eucharist. God grant it may be so again! Let us, in calm meditation and inward thought, now produce from our hearts sweet fruits of love, zeal, hope and patience—let us yield great clusters like those of Eshcol, all for Jesus, and for Jesus only! Even now, let us give ourselves up to meditation, gratitude, adoration, communion, rapture—and let us spend the rest of our lives in glorifying and magnifying the ever-blessed name of our Well-Beloved whose vineyard we are—

***"While such a scene of sacred joys
Our raptured eyes and souls employ,
Here we could sit and gaze away
A long, an everlasting day!
Well, we shall quickly pass the night
To the fair coasts of perfect light—
Then shall our joyful senses rove
O'er the dear Object of our love!
There shall we drink full draughts of bliss,
And pluck new life from heavenly trees—
Yet now and then, dear Lord, bestow
A drop of Heaven on us below."***

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

ISAIAH 5:1-19; PSALM 121:1-7.

Verse 1. *Now will I sing to my Well-Beloved a song of my Beloved touching His vineyard. My Well-Beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill.* The Song of the Vineyard it by no means a joyful soul. It is, indeed, quite the reverse. It is pitched in the minor key and has a painful theme. This suffices to prove that all our hymns need not consist, as some affirm, of direct praise to God. Such a notion is not according to Scripture, for many of the Psalms are not of that character. There are songs that can be sung to the edification of one another and that is, in part, the design of sacred song. We speak to ourselves as well as to God in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. “My Well-Beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill.” The members of the Church of God are placed in a position where they have very choice opportunities of glorifying God—they are like a vineyard on a very fruitful hill—most favorably placed for fruitfulness.

2. *And He fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.* The vineyard was well chosen as to situation. The vine was carefully selected. Everything was done by walling it, to protect it from intruders. Every preparation was made for the gathering in of the fruits. The winepress was there, yet when the time came for grapes sweet and luscious, it brought forth wild grapes! You know what that means. Has it been so with us? Have we rewarded the Well-Beloved thus ungratefully for all His pains? Have we given Him hardness of heart instead of repentance? Unbelief instead of faith? Indifference instead of love? Idleness instead of holy industry? Impurity instead of holiness? Is that my case? Is it your case, dear Friends? Has even our religion been a false thing? Has it been like wild grapes or poisonous berries? Have we been at times right only by accident, and have we never carefully and sedulously sought to serve our Lord, or to bring forth fruit to His praise? O Lord, You know! Let us judge ourselves in this matter that we be not judged.

3, 4. *And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between Me and My vineyard. What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? Why, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? O you that profess to be His people, what more could Christ have done for you? What more could the Holy Spirit have done? What richer promises, what wiser precepts, what kinder Providences, what more gracious patience? “Why, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” From where came this? The stock was good, the vine-grower was wise. From where came these wild grapes?*

5, 6. *And now I will tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor dug; but there shall come up brier and thorns: I will also com-*

mand the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. “I will tell you what I will do.” He does not wait till the men of Judah have given their verdict. There was no need of any. The case was all too sadly clear. “I will take away the hedge thereof. . .and break down the wall thereof.” Those Providences which guard men from sin shall be removed. You shall be allowed to sin if you like—and as you like. Your will shall have its freedom to the fullest. “And it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste.” There is no destruction like that which comes when God destroys the fruitless vineyard! When a human enemy or the wild boar out of the woods lays it waste, it may be restored again, but if in righteous wrath, the Divine Owner of the vineyard, Himself, lays it waste, what hope remains for it? What fearful words—“It shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste.” “It shall not be pruned, nor dug; but there shall come up briars and thorns.” Nothing happens worse to a church or to a man than to be altogether without affliction—no pruning, no digging, no restraints, no pricks of conscience, no smiting with the rod. “I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.” That is the worst of all!

7. *For the vineyard of the LORD of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant: and He looked for judgment, but beheld oppression; for righteousness, but beheld a cry.* Oh, when those who profess to be God’s people live ungodly, dishonest, unchaste, ungracious lives, God is greatly grieved! His anger burns against such a Church and against such a people. And well it may. “He looked for judgment,” for they professed to be taught of God. “But beheld oppression.” He looked “for righteousness,” for they said they were righteous. “But beheld a cry.” The passage has a special reference to God’s ancient people and one cannot read it without noting how literally this terrible threat has been fulfilled.

8-10. *Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there is no place that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth! In My ears, said the LORD of Hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitants. Yes, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah.* When men are covetous after the things of this world, God has a way of making them to be filled with disappointment and with bitterness! Woe unto any man who has any god but the living God, or who lives for any objective but to glorify the Creator. Upon such a man innumerable woes shall come!

11-12. *Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflames them! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the Word of the LORD, neither consider the operation of His hands.* The covetous man was intoxicated with greed. Here is a man intoxicated with strong drink. It is never too early, it is never too late for men to drink who once are carried away with this passion. They rise up early. They continue until night and then, when they are inflamed with lust, all sorts of evil pleasures are sought after and Satan leads them captive at his will. Woe unto such! Now, it was because there were covet-

ous men who were idolaters, because there were luxuriously living men who were drunkards, who had crept into Jerusalem and lived there, and spread evils among the people—it was for this that God declared that He would lay His vineyard waste. Are there none such in the Church of God today? Ah, me! I fear there are professors who do not let it be known openly, but who in secret follow after these things!

13-14. *Therefore My people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore Hell has enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoices, shall descend into it.* What a perfect description that is of the Church of God when it goes wrong—when there is evil in it. Then evil multiplies itself greatly in the earth and Hell has to be made bigger, as it were. As one old preacher said, “They go to Hell in droves.” There is none to stop them. When the Church, itself, goes wrong, then the world is like that herd of swine that ran violently down a steep place to perish in the waters. Down, down they go! Oh, dreadful sight! Oh, terrible doom that falls upon the ungodly! Would God the Church were well awake to see the danger of mankind and that she so lived that God could bless her to the salvation of men!

15-16. *And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled: but the LORD of Host shall be exalted in judgment, and God, who is holy, shall be sanctified in righteousness.* For whoever may stain himself with sin, God will not. We may think lightly of sin, but He never does. We may be so foolish as to tolerate iniquity in ourselves and wink at it in others, but God will not do so. Even when sin was laid on Christ, He smote Him to the death! Though He was not guilty of any sin, yet when our sin lay there, God turned away His face from His Son and He died! And if He spared not sin in His Son, do you think He will spare it in us? Ah, no! He is a just God and He will clear His hands of any complicity with iniquity. The 16th verse is the song of Hannah, that greatest of ancient poetesses. It is the Song of Mary, who copied it from Hannah, “He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.”

17. *Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat.* It is always so. There is always room for the tender, the gentle and the weak when God smites the haughty and the strong.

18. *Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin, as it were, with a cart rope!* “Woe unto them.” When we get a woe in this Book of Blessings, it is sent as a warning, that we may escape from woe! God’s woes are better than the devil’s welcomes! God always means man’s good and only sets ill before him that he may turn from the dangers of a mistaken way, and so may escape the ill which lies at the end of it. “Woe, woe, woe,” though it should sound with a dreadful din in our ears, may be the means of leading us to seek and find our Savior—and then throughout eternity no woe shall ever come near to us! “That draw

iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin, as it were, with a cart rope." This is a very singular passage. It is not very easy to understand it at first sight. Here are some who are said to draw sin "with cords of vanity," which are slender enough. And yet they also draw it "as with a cart rope," which is thick enough. They are harnessed to sin and the traces appear to be fragile, insignificant and soon broken. You can hardly touch them, for they are a mere sham, a fiction—vanity! What can be thinner and weaker than cobweb-cords of vanity? Yet when you attempt to break or remove them, they turn out to be cart ropes or wagon traces, fitted to bear the pull of horse or bulls! Motives which have no logical force and would not bind a reasonable man for a moment, are, nevertheless, quite sufficient to hold the most of men in bondage. Such a slave is man to iniquity, that unworthy motives and indefensible reasons which appear no stronger than little cords nevertheless hold him as with bonds of steel—and he is fastened to the loaded wagon of his iniquity as a horse is fastened by a cart rope!

19. *That say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come, that we may know it!* Blaspheming God and rushing on the bosses of His buckler! Defying Him to smite them. And all this came from dallying with sin, from drawing iniquity with cords of vanity! Beware of the eggs of the cockatrice! Remember how drops wear stones and little strokes fell great oaks. Do not play with a cobra, even if it is but a foot long. Keep from the edge of the precipice. Fly from the lion ere he springs upon you! Do not forge for yourself a net of iron, nor become the builder of your own prison. May the Holy Spirit deliver you. May you touch the Cross and find in it the power which will loosen you and let you go!

Psalms 121:1. *I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence comes my help.* It is wise to look to the strong for strength. Dwellers in valleys are subject to many disorders for which there is no cure but a sojourn in the uplands. And it is well when they shake off their lethargy and resolve upon a climb. The holy man who here sings a choice sonnet looked away from the slanderers by whom he was tormented to the Lord who saw all from His high places and was ready to pour down succor for His injured servant. Help comes to saints only from above! They look elsewhere in vain. Let us lift up our eyes with hope, expectancy, desire and confidence! Satan will endeavor to keep our eyes upon our sorrows that we may be disquieted and discouraged. Be it ours to firmly resolve that we will look out and look up, for there is good cheer for the eyes—and they that lift up their eyes to the eternal hills shall soon have their hearts lifted up also! The purposes of God—the Divine attributes, the Immutable promises, the Covenant ordered in all things and sure—the Providence, predestination and proved faithfulness of the Lord—these are the things to which we must lift up our eyes, for from these our help must come!

2. *My help comes from the LORD, which made Heaven and earth.* What we need is help—help powerful, efficient, constant. We need a very present help in trouble. What a mercy that we have it in our God! Our hope is in Jehovah, for our help comes from Him. Help is on the road

and will not fail to reach us in due time, for He who sends it to us was never known to be too late. Jehovah who created all things is equal to every emergency! Heaven and earth are at the disposal of Him who made them, therefore let us be very joyful in our Infinite Helper! He will sooner destroy Heaven and earth than permit His people to be destroyed—the perpetual hills, themselves, shall bow rather than He shall fail whose ways are everlasting! We are bound to look beyond Heaven and earth to Him who made them both—it is vain to trust the creatures—it is wise to trust the Creator.

3. *He will not allow your foot to be moved: He that keeps you will not slumber.* Though the paths of life are dangerous and difficult, yet we shall stand fast, for Jehovah will not permit our feet to slide. And if He will not allow it, we shall not suffer it. If our feet will be thus kept, we may be sure that our head and heart will also be preserved. In the original, the words express a wish or prayer—“May He not allow your foot to be moved.” Promised preservation should be the subject of perpetual prayer. And we may pray believingly, for those who have God for their Keeper shall be safe from all the perils of the way. Among the hills and ravines of Palestine, the literal keeping of the feet is a great mercy, but in the slippery ways of a tried and afflicted life, the blessing of upholding is of priceless value, for a single false step might cause us a fall fraught with awful danger. We would not stand a moment if our Keeper were to sleep. We need Him by day and by night—not a single step can be safely taken except under His guardian eye. God is the convoy and bodyguard of His saints. No fatigue or exhaustion can cast our God into sleep—His watchful eyes are never closed.

4. *Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.* The consoling Truth must be repeated—it is too rich to be dismissed in a single line. It were well if we always imitated the sweet singer and would dwell a little upon a choice Doctrine, sucking the honey from it. What a glorious title is in the Hebrew—“The Keeper of Israel,” and how delightful to think that no form of unconsciousness ever steals over Him, neither the deep slumber nor the lighter sleep. This is a subject of wonder, a theme for attentive consideration, therefore the word, “Behold,” is set up as a way mark. Israel fell asleep, but his God was awake. Jacob had neither walls, nor curtains, nor bodyguard around him, but the Lord was in that place though Jacob knew it not and, therefore, the defenseless man was safe as in a castle! He keeps us as a rich man keeps his treasure, as a captain keeps a city with a garrison, as a royal guard protects his monarch's head. If the former verse is in strict accuracy a prayer, this is the answer to it—it affirms the matter thus, “Lo He shall not slumber nor sleep—the Keeper of Israel.” Happy are the pilgrims to whom this Psalm is a safe conduct! They may journey all the way to the Celestial City without fear!

5. *The LORD is your Keeper: the LORD is your shade upon your right hand.* Here the Preserving One who had been spoken of by pronouns in the two previous verses, is distinctly named—Jehovah is your Keeper. What a mint of meaning lies here! The sentence is a mass of bullion and

when coined and stamped with the King's name, it will bear all our expenses between our birthplace on earth and our rest in Heaven! Here is a glorious Person—"Jehovah," assuming a gracious office and fulfilling it in Person—Jehovah is your "Keeper," in behalf of a favored individual—*you*, and a firm assurance of Revelation that it is even so at this hour—Jehovah is your Keeper. A shade gives protection from burning heat and glaring light. We cannot bear too much blessing. Even Divine goodness, which is a right-hand dispensation must be toned down and shaded to suit our infirmity, and this the Lord will do for us. When a blazing sun pours down its burning beams upon our heads, the Lord Jehovah, Himself, will interpose to shade us and that in the most honorable manner, acting as our right-hand attendant and placing us in comfort and safety.

6. *The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night.* None but the Lord could shelter us from these tremendous forces. There are dangers of the light and of the dark, but in both and from both we shall be preserved—literally from excessive heat and from baneful chills—mystically from any injurious effects which might follow from Doctrine, bright or dim—spiritually from the evils of prosperity and adversity—eternally from the strain of overpowering Glory and from the pressure of terrible events, such as judgment and the burning of the world. Day and night make up all time—thus the ever-present protection never ceases.

7. *The LORD shall preserve you from all evil: He shall preserve your soul.* It is a great pity that our admirable translation did not keep to the word, "keep," all through the Psalm, for all along it is one. God not only keeps His own in all evil times but from all evil influences and operations, yes, from evils, themselves! This is a far-reaching word of covering—it includes everything and excludes nothing—the wings of Jehovah amply guard His own from evils great and small, temporary and eternal. Soul-keeping is the soul of keeping. If the soul is kept, all is kept. The preservation of the greater includes that of the lesser so far as it is essential to the main design. The kernel shall be preserved and in order thereto, the shell shall be also preserved. Our soul is kept from the dominion of sin, the infection of error, the crush of despondency, the puffing up of pride—kept from the world, the flesh, and the devil—kept for holier and greater things! Kept in the love of God, kept unto the eternal Kingdom and Glory! What can harm a soul that is kept of the Lord?

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

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

HOLY SONG FROM HAPPY SAINTS

NO. 3476

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 1915.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE, METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 5, 1871.

“Now will I sing to my Well-Beloved a song of my Beloved.”
Isaiah 5:1.

IT was a Prophet who wrote this, a Prophet inspired of God. An ordinary Believer might suffice to sing, but he counts it no stoop for a Prophet, and no waste of his important time, to occupy himself with song. There is no engagement under Heaven that is more exalting than praising God—and however great may be the work which is committed to the charge of any of us, we shall always do well if we pause awhile to spend a time in sacred praise. I would not wish to prefer one spiritual exercise before another, else I think I would endorse the saying of an old Divine who said that a line of praise was better than even a leaf of prayer—that praise was the highest, noblest, best, most satisfying and most healthful occupation in which a Christian could be found! If these may be regarded as the words of the Church, the Church of old did well to turn all her thoughts in the direction of praising her God. Though the winning of souls is a great thing, though the edifying of Believers is an important matter, though the reclamation of backsliders calls for earnest attention, yet never, never, never may we cease from praising and magnifying the name of the Well-Beloved! This is to be our occupation in Heaven—let us begin the music here and make a Heaven of the Church! The words of the text are, “Now will I sing,” and that seems to give us a starting word.

I. THE STRAINS OF THE SOUL'S SONG.

“Now will I sing.” Does not that imply that there were times when he who spoke these words could not sing? “Now,” he said, “will I sing to my Well-Beloved.” There were times, then, when his voice, his heart and his circumstances were not in such order that he could praise God. My Brothers and Sisters, a little while ago we could not sing to our Well-Beloved, for we did not love Him—we did not know Him—we were dead in trespasses and sins! Perhaps we joined in sacred song, but we mocked the Lord. We stood up with His people and we uttered the same sounds as they did, but our hearts were far from Him. Let us blush for those mock Psalms! Let us shed many a tear of repentance that we could so insincerely have come before the Lord Most High! After that, we were led to

feel our state by nature and our guilt lay heavy upon us. We could not sing to our Well-Beloved then. Our music was set to the deep bass and in the minor key. We could only bring forth sighs and groans. Well do I remember when my nights were spent in grief and my days in bitterness. It was a perpetual prayer, a confession of sin and a bemoaning of myself which occupied all my time. I could not sing, then, and if any of you are in that condition, tonight, I know you cannot sing just now. What a mercy you can pray! Bring forth the fruit which is seasonable and in your case the most seasonable fruit will be a humble acknowledgment of your sin and an earnest seeking for mercy through Christ Jesus. Attend to that, and by-and-by, you, too, shall sing to your Well-Beloved a song!

Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, it is now some years ago since we believed in Christ, but since then there have been times when we could not sing. Alas, for us there was a time when we watched not our steps, but went astray—when the flatterer led us from the strait road that leads to Heaven and brought us into sin! And then the chastisements of God came upon us—our heart was broken until we cried out in anguish, as David did in the 51st Psalm. Then if we did sing, we could only bring out penitential odes, but no songs. We laid aside all parts of the Book of Psalms that had to do with Hallelujah and we could only groan forth the notes of repentance. There were no songs for us, then, till at last Emmanuel smiled upon us once more and we were reconciled again, brought back from our wanderings and restored to a sense of the Divine favor! Besides that, we have had—occasionally had to sorrow through the loss of the Light of God’s Countenance. It is not always summer weather with the best of us. Though for the most part—

***“We can read our title clear
To mansions in the skies,”***

yet we have our fasting time when the Bridegroom is not with us. Then do we fast. He does not intend that this world should be so much like Heaven that we should be willing to stay in it—He, therefore, sometimes passes a cloud before the sun, that we in darkness may cry out, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! I would come, even to His seat.” Even the means of Grace at such times will bring us no comfort. We may go to the Throne of Mercy in private prayer, but we shall perceive but little Light even there! If the Lord withdraws Himself, there is no merry-making in the soul, but sadness, darkness and gloom that covers all. Then we hang our harps upon the willows and if any require of us a song, we tell them we are in a strange land, and the King has gone—how can we sing? Our heart is heavy and our sorrows are multiplied!

Once more, we cannot very well sing the praises of our Well-Beloved when the Church of God is under a cloud. I trust we are such true patriots, such real citizens of the New Jerusalem, that when Christ’s Kingdom does not advance, our hearts are full of anguish. My Brothers and

Sisters, if you happen to be members of a church divided against itself, where the ministry appears to be without power, where there are no additions, no conversions, no spiritual life—then, indeed, will you feel that whatever the state of your own heart, you must sigh and cry for the desolations of the Church of God. “If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget her cunning.” This is the view of every true citizen of Zion—and however our own hearts may flourish, and our souls be like a well-watered garden—yet if we see the place of worship neglected, the Lord’s House dishonored, the Church diminished and brought low, the Gospel held in contempt, infidelity rampant, superstition stalking through the land, the old doctrines denied and the Cross of Christ made to be of none effect—then, again, we feel we cannot sing—our hearts are not in tune, our fingers forget the accustomed strings, and we cannot, then, sing a song to our Well-Beloved!

With these exceptions, however, I turn to a very different strain, and say that *the whole life of the Christian ought to be describable by the text*, “Now will I sing to my Well-Beloved a song.” From the first moment in which sin is pardoned, to the last moment in which we are here on earth, it should always be our delight to sing to our Well-Beloved a song. “How can we do that?” you ask. Well, we can do it in three or four ways. There is such a thing as *thanks-feeling—feeling thankful*—and this ought to be the general, universal spirit of the Christian. Suppose, my dear Brother, you are not rich—be thankful that you have enough to eat and to drink, and wherewithal you may be clothed. Suppose, even, that you had not a hope of Heaven, I might say to a man, “Be thankful that you are not in Hell.” But to you, Christian, I would add, “Be thankful that you *never will be there* and that, if just now your present joys do not overflow, yet there remains a rest for the people of God”—let that console you! Is there ever a day in the year, or ever a moment in the day, in which the Christian ought not to be grateful? Our answer is not slow to give—there is never such a day, there is never such a moment! Always receiving blessings untold and incalculably precious, let us always be magnifying the hand that gives them. Always, Beloved, as we have been before the foundations of the world with our names engraved on the Savior’s hands, always redeemed by the precious blood, always preserved by the Power of God which dwells in the Mediator, always secure of the heritage which is given to us in Covenant by oath, by the blood of Christ—let us always be grateful and, if not always singing with our lips, let us always be singing with our hearts!

Then, Brothers and Sisters, we ought to always be *thanks-living*. I think that is a better thing than thanksgiving—thanks-living. How is this to be done? By a general cheerfulness of manner, by an obedience to the command of Him by whose mercy we live, by a perpetual, constant, de-

lighting ourselves in the Lord and submission of our desires to His mind. Oh, I wish that our whole life might be a Psalm—that every day might be a stanza of a mighty poem! That so from the day of our spiritual birth until we enter Heaven we might be pouring forth sacred minstrelsy in every thought, word and action of our lives. Let us give Him thankfulness and thanks-living.

But then let us add *thanks-speaking* with the tongue. We don't sing enough, my Brothers and Sisters! How often do I stir you up about the matter of prayer, but perhaps I might be just as earnest about the matter of praise! Do we sing as much as the birds do? Yet what have birds to sing about, compared with us? Do you think we sing as much as the angels do? Yet they were never redeemed by the blood of Christ! Birds of the air, shall you excel me? Angels of Heaven, shall you exceed me? You have done so, but I intend to emulate you henceforth and, day by day, and night by night, pour forth my soul in sacred song!

We may sometimes thank God not only by feeling thankfulness and living thankfulness, and speaking our thanks, but by that silent blessing of Him which consists in patient suffering and accepting the evil as well as the good from Jehovah's hand. That is often better thanksgiving than the noblest Psalm that the tongue could utter. To bow down before Him and say, "Not my will, but Yours be done" is to render Him a homage equal to the hallelujahs of cherubim and seraphim. To feel not only resigned, but acquiescent—willing to be anything or nothing according as the Lord would have it—this is in truth to sing to our Well-Beloved a song!

Now having put this before you, that there are some times when we cannot sing, but that, as a rule, our life should be praise, let me come again to the text by saying that sometimes, on choice occasions appointed by Providence and Grace, our soul will be compelled to say, "*Now, now* if never before, *now* beyond all other occasions, I will sing to my Well-Beloved a song." I only hope that some—that all Christians here—will feel that tonight is one of those occasions! And as you sit here in the presence of this table, upon which will soon appear the emblems of your Savior's passion, I trust you will be saying, "*Now tonight* I feel I must sing to my Well-Beloved a song, for if ever I loved Him, I love Him tonight." Let us ponder now—

II. SOME OF THE OCCASIONS IN WHICH WE MUST SING TO HIS NAME.

The first is when *our soul first perceives the Infinite Love of Jesus to us*, when we receive the pardon of sin, when we enter into the marriage relationship with Christ as our Bridegroom and our Lord. The song becomes the wedding feast. How could it be a marriage without joyfulness? Oh, do you remember, even years ago, do you not remember now that day when you first looked to Him and were lightened, and when your soul clasped

His hands, and you and He were one? Other days I have forgotten, but that day I can never forget! Other days have mingled with their fellows, and, like coins which have been in circulation, the image and superscription have departed from them. That day when first I saw the Savior is as fresh and distinct in all its outlines as though it were but yesterday coined in the mint of time! How can I forget it—that first moment when Jesus told me I was His and my Beloved was mine? Were any of you saved last week? Did any of you find Jesus Christ at any of the meetings last week? Have you found Him this morning? Did a blessing come to you this afternoon? Then hallow the occasion, pour out your soul before the Most High! Now, if never before, let your Well-Beloved have your choicest music! “Awake, my glory! Awake, psaltery and harp! I myself will awake right early. I will praise You, for though You were angry with me, Your anger is taken away and You comfort me.” Other occasions, however, come after our first day, for with Christ it is not all joy the first few weeks. No, blessed be His name! Sometimes, however, we have our high days and holidays, when the King entertains us at a feast. It is often so with my soul *at this Table*. Coming to the Communion Supper every Lord’s-Day, I don’t find it grows stale and flat with me. On the contrary, I think every time I come, I love better than I did before, to commemorate my Lord’s sufferings in the breaking of bread! And usually when we do come round the Table, we, who know what it means, feel, “Now will I sing to my Well-Beloved a song.” ‘Twas well that after supper they sang a hymn. We want some such expression for the sacred joy that rises in our soul at this feast. But not only when the emblems are before us, but when you hear a sermon that feeds your soul—when you read a Chapter and the promises are very precious—when you are in private prayer, and are able to get very near to Jesus, I know your hearts then say, “Now will I sing to my Well-Beloved a song. He has visited me and I will praise Him. He has made my soul like the chariots of Ammi-nadib, and where shall my strength and rapture be spent but at His dear feet, adoring and magnifying His ever blessed name?” Oh, I wish we often had broken through order and decorum, even, to give to our Lord a song! He well deserves it. Let not cold ingratitude freeze our praises on our lips.

We ought to praise our Lord Jesus Christ and sing to our Well-Beloved a song, particularly when we have had a *remarkable deliverance*. “You shall compass me about,” says David, “with songs of deliverance.” Were you raised from a bed of sickness? Have you passed through a great pecuniary difficulty? Through God’s help, has your character been cleared from slander? Have you been helped in some enterprise and prospered in the world? Have you seen a child restored from sickness, or a beloved wife once more given back to you from the gates of the grave? Have you just experienced the Light of Christ’s Countenance in your own soul?

Has a snare been broken? Has a temptation been removed? Are you in a joyous frame of mind? “Is any merry? Let him sing Psalms.” Oh, give your Well-Beloved a song, now that the sun shines and the flowers bloom! When the year begins to turn and fair weather comes, the birds seem to feel it and they renew their music. Do so, oh, Believer! When the winter is past, and the rain is over and gone, fill the earth with your songs of gratitude. But remember, O Believer, that you should sing your Well-Beloved a song chiefly when it is not so with you, *when sorrows befall*. He gives songs *in the night*. Perhaps there is no music so sweet as that which comes from the lips and heart of a tried Believer. Then it is real. When Job blessed God on the dunghill, even the devil, himself, could not insinuate that Job was a hypocrite! When Job prospered, then the devil said, “Does Job serve God for naught?” But when he lost his all and yet said, “Blessed is the name of the Lord,” then the good man shone like a star when the clouds are gone! Oh, let us be sure to praise God when things go ill with us! Make certain that you sing then! A holy man, walking one night with a companion, listened to the nightingale and he said, “Brother, that bird in the darkness is praising her Maker. Sing, I pray you, and let your Lord have a song in the night.” But the other replied, “My voice is hoarse and little used to sing.” “Then,” said the other, “I will sing.” And he sang, and the bird seemed to hear him and to sing louder, still, and he sang on, and other birds joined, and the night seemed sweet with song. But by-and-by the good man said, “My voice fails me, but this bird’s throat holds out longer than mine. Would God,” said he, “I could even fly away where I could sing on forever and forever.”

Oh, it is blessed when we can praise God when the sun is gone down, when darkness lowers and trials multiply. Then let us say, “I will sing to my Well-Beloved a song.” I will tell you exactly what I mean by that. One of you has just passed through a very terrible trouble and you are almost brokenhearted—you are inclined to say, “I will ask the prayers of the Church that I may be sustained.” It is quite right, my dear Brother, to do that, but suppose you could be a little stronger and say, “Now will I sing to my Well-Beloved a song”? Oh, it would be grand work! It would glorify God! It would strengthen you! “Yes, the dear child is dead—I cannot bring him back, again, but the Lord has done it and He must do right. I will give Him a song, even now.” “Yes, the property has gone and I shall be brought from wealth to poverty, but now, instead of fretfulness, I will give to my Well-Beloved extra music from my heart. He shall be praised by me now. Though He slay me, yet will I praise Him.” This is the part of a Christian—God help us to always act it!

Beloved Friends, we may well sing to our Beloved a song when it shall be near *the time of our departure*. It draws near, and as it draws near we must not dread it, but rather thank God for it. The swan is said to sing her dying song—a myth, I doubt not, but the Christian is God’s swan,

and he sings sweetest at the last. Like old Simeon, he becomes a poet at the last and pours out his soul before God! And I would we each desired, if we are spared to old age, to let our last days be perfumed with thanksgiving, and to bless and magnify the Lord, while yet we linger where mortal ears may hear the strain! Break, O fetters, and divide, you clouds! Be rolled up, O veil that hides the place of mystery from the world. Let our spirits pass into eternity singing! What a song to our Well-Beloved will we pour out from amidst ten thousand times ten thousand choristers! We will take our part—every note for Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood! Each note undefiled with sin. Each note undistracted and undivided by worldly thoughts. Each note full of perfection and acceptable to Him to whom it shall be presented! O long-expected day, begin! Our hearts are ready to cry out, “Open, you two-leaved gates, and let my spirit pass through, that I may give to my Well-Beloved a song.”

Now I just linger here a minute to put it all round to every Christian here. Brother, haven't you a song for the Well-Beloved? Sister, haven't you a song for the Well-Beloved? Aged Friend, will you not give Him a note? Young Brother full of vigor, haven't you a verse full of praise for Him? Oh, if we might all come to the Communion Table in the spirit of praise! Perhaps some can dance before the ark like David. Others, perhaps, are like Ready-to-Halt, on their crutches, but even he laid them down, according to John Bunyan, once upon a time when he heard the sweet music of praise! Let us bless the name of the Lord! The day has passed and been full of mercy, and eventide has come, and as the sun goes down let us magnify Him whose mercy lasts to us through the night and will come again upon us in the morning, and will be with us till nights and days shall no more change the scene. Lift up your hearts, my Brothers and Sisters! Let every one of you lift up your hands unto the name of the Most High and magnify Him that lives forever! “Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness—for His wonderful works to the children of men!” Now I have just a few observations to make about—

III. THE QUALITY OF THE SONG.

I will suppose that every Christian here singing has found that he has got one of the Lord's songs to sing. “Now will I sing to my Well-Beloved a song.” Dear Brothers and Sisters, the Lord's music has one thing about it—that it is *always new*. How very frequently we find in the New Testament that saints and angels sing “a *new* song.” Very different from the songs we used to sing—very different from the songs the world still delights in—ours is heart-music, soul-music. Ours is real joy—no fiction—no mere crackling of thorns under a pot. Solid joys and lasting pleasures make up the new song of the Christian! New mercies make the song always new. There is a freshness in it of which we never weary. Some of

you have heard the Gospel now for 50 years—has it gotten flat to you? The name of Jesus Christ was known to you as the most precious of all sounds 50 or 60 years ago—has it become stale now? Those of us who have known and loved Him 20 years can only say, “The more we know Him, the more sweet He is. And the more we enjoy His Gospel, the more resolved we are to keep to the old-fashioned Gospel as long as we live.” We could, indeed, sing a new song, though we have sung the same praises these 20 years. All the saints’ praises have this about them—that they are all harmonious. I do not say that their *voices* are. Here and there, there is a Brother who sings very earnestly through his nose and very often puts out the rest that are round about him! But it does not matter about the sound of the voice to the ear of man—it is the sound of the *heart* to the ear of God! If you were in a forest and there were 50 sorts of birds, and they were all singing at once, you would not notice any discord. The little songsters seem to pitch their songs in keys very different from each other, but yet, somehow or other, all are in harmony. Now the saints, when they pray—it is very strange—they all pray in harmony. So when they praise God. I have frequently attended Prayer Meetings where there were Brothers and Sisters of all sorts of Christian denominations—and I would have defied the angel Gabriel to have told what they were when they were on their knees! So is it with praise. I may say, “The saints in praise appear as one”—

***“In word, and deed, and mind,
While with the Father and the Son,
Sweet fellowship they find.”***

Though our words are broken and our notes fall short of melody, yet if our hearts are right, our words are acceptable and our music is harmony in the ears of the Most High. Beloved, be it noticed about *the saints’ music that it always seems very poor to them*. They feel that they must break out. There are some of David’s Psalms in which in the Hebrew the words are very much disconnected and broken, as though the poet had strained himself beyond the power of language. And how constantly do you find him calling upon others to help him praise God—not only to other saints, but as if he felt there were not enough saints—he calls on all creatures that have breath to praise God! How frequently do you find holy men invoking the dwellers above the skies, and earth, and air, and sea to help them lift high the praise of God and, as if they were not content with all animated beings, you will hear them bidding the trees of the forests break out and clap their hands, while they invite the sea to roar and the fullness thereof to magnify the Most High! Devout minds feel as though the whole Creation were like a great organ with ten thousand times ten thousand pipes, and we little men, who have God within us, come and put our little hands to the keys and make the whole universe echo with thunders of praise to the Most High, for man is the world’s priest—and

the man that is blood-washed makes the whole earth his tabernacle and his temple—and in that temple does everyone speak of God's Glory! He lights up the stars like lamps to burn before the Throne of the Most High and bids all creatures here below become servants in the temple of the Infinite Majesty. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, may God give us to feel this state of mind, tonight! And though we should think our praises are like to break down, and feel how mean they are compared with the majesty of Jehovah and His boundless love, yet shall we have praised Him acceptably!

I would be very earnest in the next minute or two to stir up my Brothers and Sisters here to sing to their Well-Beloved a song, because I am quite sure *the exercise will be most fitting and most beneficial*. I will speak only for myself, but I will say this—if I did not praise and bless Christ, my Lord, I would deserve to have my tongue torn out by its roots from my mouth, and I will add—if I did not bless and magnify His name, I would deserve that every stone I tread on in the streets should rise up to curse my ingratitude, for I am a drowned debtor to the mercy of God—over head and ears—to Infinite Love and boundless compassion I am a debtor! Are you not the same? Then I charge you by the love of Christ—awake, awake your hearts, now, to magnify His glorious name! It will do you much good, my Brothers and Sisters. There is, perhaps, no exercise that, on the whole, strengthens us so much as praising God. Sometimes, even when prayer fails, praise will do it. It seems to gird up the loins. It pours a holy anointing oil upon the head and upon the spirit. It gives us a joy of the Lord which is always our strength. Sometimes, if you begin to sing in a dull frame, you can sing yourself up the ladder. Singing will often make the heart rise. The song, though at first it is a drag, will, by-and-by, come to be wings with which to lift the spirit. Oh, sing more, my Brothers and Sisters, and you will sing still more, for the more you sing, the more you will be able to sing the praises of God! It will glorify God! It will comfort you! It will also prove an attraction to those who are lingering around the churches. The melancholy of some Christians tends to repel seekers, but the holy joy of others tends to attract them! More flies will always be caught with honey than with vinegar—and more souls will be brought to Christ by your cheerfulness than by your moroseness—more by your consecrated joy than by your selfish dolor! God grant us to sing the praises of God with heart and life until we sing them in Heaven! And I doubt not that, as a Church, we should thus become more useful and more would be led to cast in their lot with us, for they would perceive that God blessed us. If God should make you feel that you must praise Him tonight, the purpose that I desire to fulfill will have been accomplished!

Oh, I wish I could bid you all say, “I will sing to my Beloved a song!” But there are some of you who don’t love Him, and cannot, therefore, sing to Him. In Exeter Hall, some years ago, at one of our services, I gave out the hymn—

**“Jesus, lover of my soul
Let me to Your bosom fly.”**

There was one present who was a total stranger to the Gospel, but that touching expression, “Jesus, lover of my soul,” touched his heart and he said, “Is Jesus the lover of *my* soul? Then I will love Him, too,” and he gave his heart to Jesus and cast in his lot with His people. I would that some here would say the same! Then shall they also sing to their Beloved a song. But now their fittest duty will be prayer and penitent trust. God help them to seek and find the Savior—even Jesus Christ the Lord! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 116:1-11.**

It begins well.

Verse 1. *I love the Lord.* Can you say that? “Yes, Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You.” “I love the Lord.” Love is said to be blind, but not love to God! Love to God can see and it can give a reason for its own existence—and a good substantial reason, too. “I love the Lord.”

1. *Because He has heard my voice and my supplications.* A good reason for love will be found in the closet where prayer is answered. If you have ever been in trouble and that Divine Friend has listened to your feeble cries, you do love Him, and you cannot help loving Him!. You wonder why others do not love Him too.

2. *Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.* “Because.” He harps on that string. It is so sweet a note that he touches it again, “Because He has inclined His ear unto me.” He stooped out of Heaven. He has laid His ear down to my lips. He has caught my wandering utterances. He has inclined His ear. My sin had pushed His ear away, but He has brought His head back, again, and inclined His ear unto me. “Therefore.” You see this was given as a reason, but the Psalmist is so full that what was a reason for love now becomes a reason for something else! The flowers in the garden of Believers bloom double! Here is a second flower on this stalk. I love Him because He has inclined His ear unto me. “Therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.” I speed so well in prayer that I will keep on in that blessed business! God heard me once. He will hear me again—

**“Long as we live should Christians pray,
For only while we pray we live.”**

And as long as we live we shall find out the best way of living—to live from hand to mouth—from God’s hand to our mouth—by continual prayer! Now the Psalmist tells about this wonderful instance in which God heard his cry.

3. *The sorrows of death compassed me.* They were all round me. They made a circle. I could not find a break. They compassed me. Sorrows, deadly sorrows, the very sorrows of death!

3. *And the pains of Hell had hold upon me.* They came inside the circle and they gripped me. I was like one that did lie under the lion. He seemed to bite and tear me. “The pains of Hell had hold upon me.” Did you ever know that? I did. Oh, I can never forget, for the scars are in my mind to this day when the pains of Hell had hold upon me! They say that there is no Hell. He will never say that who has ever felt the pains of a guilty conscience—the pangs of unforgiven sin to a soul that is made alive by the Spirit of God! “The pains of Hell had hold upon me.”

3. *I found trouble and sorrow.* An unexpected find. They were hidden away—these double enemies—hidden away beneath my pleasures, beneath my sins, beneath my self-righteousness. “I found trouble and sorrow.”

4. *Then I called upon the name of the LORD.* The best hour for prayer is the time of our greatest distress. When you can do nothing else but pray, then is the very best time to pray! When you seem shut up to prayer, what a blessed shutting up it is! “Then I called upon the name of the Lord.” And what was his prayer? Very short. Very full—a sort of soldier’s prayer.

4. *O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul.* There, dear Hearer, if you need to begin to pray to God, there is a good beginning for you. “Oh, Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul.”

5. *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous.* A curious mixture. You will never understand it until you stand at the foot of the Cross.

5. *Yes, our God is merciful.* That is the practical outcome of the holy conjunction of Grace and righteousness in the atoning Sacrifice of Christ. “Our God is merciful.” Sometimes when people cannot read well, they spell the words and one, I remember, spelled God in this way—“Yes, our God is merciful.” That will do—full of mercy—merciful.

6. *The LORD preserves the simple.* You clever men take heed of this. “The Lord preserves the *simple*”—the plain, hearty, honest, sincere, sometimes ridiculed for their lack of cunning. God takes care of them.

6. *I was brought low, and He helped me.* What a sweet thing it is when you have studied a general Doctrine to be able to give yourself as a particular instance of it. “The Lord preserves the simple.” That is a grand Truth of God. “But I was brought low, and He helped me.” That is an emphatic proof! That is the enjoyable illustration of the grand Truth! Can

you say that, dear Friends? Can you put that in your diary? “I was brought low, and He helped me.”

7. *Return unto your rest, O my soul; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.* Come back. He is a good God. Why wander? Return unto your first Husband, for it was better with you than now. He has been bountiful. My soul again lives on His bounty.

8. *For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.* As I read these words, they seem as if they were written for me. Do they seem, dear Hearer, as if they were written for you? Have you undergone this trinity of salvation—your soul from death, your eyes from tears, your feet from falling? If so, then make this resolve tonight.

9. *I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living* That is to say, as He has dealt so well with me, I will always deal well with Him. I will not care to look to men—to their hope, to their help, to their judgment, to their censure—but I will set the Lord always before me. He shall be everything to me. Beloved, it is one of the best day’s work a man ever does when he turns clean away from everything but God! Oh, when you have given up all reliance upon the creature and throw yourself upon the bare arm of the Creator, now you have got at it! Now you have come to real life. All the rest is mere play-acting, but this is reality, for God alone Is, And all else is but a dream!

10, 11. *I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, All men are liars.* And uncommonly near the truth he came, even though he was in a hurry in saying it, for if you trust in any men, they must be liars to you. They will fail you either from lack of faithfulness, or else from lack of power. There are pinches where the kindest hand cannot succor. There are times of sorrow when she who is the partner of your bosom cannot find you comfort. Then you will have to go to God, and God alone, and you will never find Him fail you! The brooks of the earth are dry in summer, and frozen in winter. All my fresh springs are in You, my God, and there neither frost nor drought can come. Happy man who has got right away from everything to his God!

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

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

HOW THE LAMBS FEED

NO. 3199

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 26, 1910.

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

“Then shall the lambs feed in their pasture.”
Isaiah 5:17.

THE sense of this passage may be that Judea would be so desolated that it would become rather a wild wilderness pasture for flocks than an inhabited country. But that is not the meaning which the old readers of the Bible were accustomed to give to it. The Hebrew commentators considered “the lambs” to mean the house of Israel and regarded this as a promise that in all times of distress and affliction, God’s flock would still be fed—there would still be a people kept alive and these should still meet with suitable support. Whether that is the correct sense or not, I shall use the words as having some such meaning.

Our text deals with the lambs, and to the lambs we intend to speak—may the Good Shepherd speak to them also! Young converts, newborn souls, these words are for you—you shall feed in your pasture.

I. Our first observation is that GOD WOULD HAVE ALL HIS CHURCH FED—a simple enough observation, certainly, and clearly to be inferred from the common course of nature, for no sooner is any living thing created than there are appliances for its feeding. No sooner is a seed cast into the ground and vitalized than it gathers to itself the particles upon which it feeds. And no sooner is an animal born than it receives food. Surely the Lord does not create life in the regenerated soul without providing stores upon which it may be nourished! Where He gives life, He gives food.

Simple as this statement is, it has often been forgotten by those who should best have borne it in mind. It strikes me that it has been forgotten by some ministers. They have exhorted, threatened and thundered, but they have never fed those to whom they have preached! They have cried, “Believe! Believe!” but seldom explained *what* was to be believed, or, when they have mentioned the simple elements of the faith, they have gone no further, but have continued to speak the first principles of the Gospel and no more. These Brothers have their proper sphere, but they should not be pastors unless they can *feed* the flock of God! The wanderers must be gathered first, but afterwards they must be fed. For lack of this, many have remained in weakness and bondage—and have made no advance in the Divine Life. The necessity for spiritual food has been forgotten by some ministers who have continually harped upon the sublime Doctrines of the Gospel, but have not preached the elementary Truths of God. Surely they have not carried out their Lord’s command, “Feed My

lambs.” They have been content to feed the older people, who by reason of use have had their senses exercised, forgetting that the same necessities befall all the flock and that the lambs need to be fed as well as the sheep.

If the teachers have forgotten this, the taught have also failed to remember it. I have been very anxious, Beloved, that you should be diligent in the service of God and I have continually stirred you up, not to be sitting listening to sermons when you ought to be doing good—and the consequence has been that some have gone forth to attempt to do good whom I should not have exhorted to do so—for them it would have been better if they had waited a while, till they had learned somewhat more, both of Doctrine and experience. Young Brothers, there is a time for feeding as well as a time for working. There is work for strong men and there is nurture for babes. To little children we do not allot the labors of husbandry—some little service in the house is suitable for them and will do them good—but we do not exact much labor from them, for we know that youth is a time in which they must be learning and growing. Therefore let me say to some of you who know little or nothing of your Bibles, or of your own hearts—Wait a little, and run not before you are sent. Sit, young Brother, a while at Jesus’ feet and learn what He has to say to you. Then, when you run as a messenger, you will have a message, whereas, perhaps, you now have more foot than heart, more tongue than brain, and this is dangerous!

Let us not forget that *our souls need to be fed* and this I say to some of you who do but little for the Lord Jesus, and may be said neither to work nor to eat. Look at the mass of our Christian people, what do they do? Monday morning early at business and on till Saturday evening late at business! What is their reading? The daily paper! I condemn it not, but of what use is this to their *souls*? What, then, do they read to nourish the inner life? Ah, what? A magazine with a religious tale in it! A tale which will probably be spun out to two or three volumes! If the religion were taken out of it, it would probably be improved—and if the rest of the book were burned, some light might come of it—but none comes by reading it! I will not judge severely, but what is the reading of many Christians? Is it food for their souls? And beyond reading, what else are they doing that their spirits may be nourished? Our fathers would go into their chamber three times a day and take a quarter of an hour for meditation—how many of us maintain such a habit? Is it done once a day? It was once my privilege to live in a house where, at eight o’clock, every person, from the servant to the master, would have been found for half an hour in prayer and meditation in his or her chamber. As regularly as the time came round, that was done, just as we partook of our meals at appointed hours. If that were done in all households, it would be a grand thing for us! In the old Puritan times, a servant would as often answer, “Sir, my master is at prayers,” as he would nowadays answer, my master is engaged.” It was still looked upon as a recognized fact that Christians did meditate, did study the Word, and did pray—and society respected the interval. It is said that if in the days of Cromwell, you had walked down

Cheapside in the morning, you would have seen the blinds down at every house at a certain hour. Alas, where will you find such streets nowadays? I fear that what was once the rule is now the exception! When will God's people perceive that it is not enough to be born-again, but that the life then received must be nourished daily with the Bread of Heaven? It is not enough to be spiritually alive—our life, to be vigorous—must be familiar with its Source! Every Christian should know that he needs times for supplying his soul with the food which endures unto life eternal. As the body needs its mealtimes, so must you sit down to your heavenly Father's table until He has satisfied your mouth with good things and renewed your strength like the eagle's. The more intensely earnest we are in feeding upon the Word of God, the better!

My young Friends, *you require to be fed with knowledge and understanding* and, therefore, you should search the Scriptures daily to know what are the Doctrines of the Gospel, and what are the glories of Christ. You will do well to read the "*Confession of Faith*," and study the proof texts, or to learn the "*Assembly's Catechism*," which is a grand condensation of Holy Scripture. I would say, even to many aged Christians, that they could not spend their time better than in going over the Shorter Catechism again and comparing it with the Book of God from which it is derived. Truly, in these days, when men are so readily decoyed to Popery, we had need know what it is that we believe! Protestantism grew in this land when there was much simple, plain, orthodox teaching of the Doctrines which are assuredly believed among us. Catechism was the very bulwark of Protestantism. But now we have much earnest preaching and yet people do not know what the doctrines of the Gospel are—be you not ignorant, but be you nourished up in the Truth of God!

My young Friends, may you obtain *a spiritual understanding of God's Word* which is more than knowledge! May you discern the inward sense, compare spiritual things with spiritual, and see the relation between this Truth and the other, and the relation of all Truths of God to yourselves and to your standing before God! May the Holy Spirit feed you so! May you also be fed by mingling with the saints of God and learning from their experience! Many a young Christian gathers from advanced saints what he would never discover elsewhere. As they tell of what they have felt, and known, and suffered, and enjoyed, the lambs of the flock are strengthened and consoled. Seek for your companions those who can instruct you! It is a dreary thing for a young man to have association with those only who are below himself in experience and not to know those from whose lips drop pearls because they have been in those deeps where pearls are found. Be much with experienced Christians who have been with Jesus, and you will be fed by them!

Young Friend, much feeding will come to you by *meditation on the Truth that you hear*. As the cattle lie down and chew their cud, so does meditation turn over the Truth of God, and get the very essence and nutriment out of it. To hear, and hear, and hear, and hear, as some do, is utterly useless because when they have heard, it is all over with them—it

has gone in one ear and out the other—and has left nothing upon the mind. Press the Truth of God as men tread the grapes in the wine vat, filling the red clusters into the press of memory, and trample on them with the feet of meditation—then shall the rich juice flow forth to cheer your heart and make your spirit strong within you! Meditate, young man and maiden! This is the thing you need if you would be fed.

And, higher still, there is a Divine nourishment in Communion when the soul ascends to Jesus Christ and feeds on the Lord, Himself—when the Incarnate God becomes the soul's Bread and the bleeding Savior in His substitutionary Sacrifice, becomes the heart's wine. Feed on Him, O Beloved, you who have lately come to Him! Eat, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved! May the Lord give you a mighty hunger after His Word, after Himself and then lead you by the still waters, and make you to lie down in green pastures!

Thus much on the first simple fact—that God will have all His sheep and His lambs fed.

II. Secondly, the text says that the lambs shall feed “in their pasture,” and that leads us to observe that **YOUNG BELIEVERS HAVE THEIR OWN WAY OF FEEDING.**

I believe every single Christian has his own idiosyncrasy in that matter. Beloved, there are some of you who could not constantly hear me to profit and yet this is neither my fault nor yours, but a wise arrangement, for you can hear some other Brother and thus there is work for him as well as for me. If all could be fed by me, and by no one else, where would I put my congregation, and where would others get theirs? Certain persons can receive the Truth of God from one man better than they can from another, not because that man is any better, or the other any worse, but because there is a way of putting it, or there is a kind of congruity of nature between the hearer and the preacher. I am glad to think that God has not cast all His people in one mold and made them all desirous to listen to one voice in order to be spiritually fed!

It may happen, moreover, that in our Church there are people who cannot be instructed in one of our classes. Well, if it is so, do not quarrel with the Brother who conducts it—go to another teacher and try him! Or perhaps you are not edified by the teaching of some Christian with whom you associate. Well, the world is wide—try another. “Then shall the lambs feed in their pasture.” Each Christian has his own way of feeding on the Word. Let him have it in his own way, and do not judge him! There may be something of self in his peculiarity, but perhaps there is also something of God's purpose in it. Do not pass an Act of Uniformity, but rejoice in the diversities of operations—provided you see the same Lord!

There are several things certain about the manner of feeding of all lambs. The first is, that *if they feed in their pasture, they feed on tender grass.* Young Christians love the simple Truths of the Gospel and, therefore, these ought to be often preached. And we ought not to be angry with newborn Believers if they cannot understand the higher Doctrines. I hope we shall never, as a Church, exact from young converts the wisdom

of age. I trust we shall never say, "There, you must go back. You won't do for us, you are not up to our mark, for you cannot expound the deep things of God." God forbid! If we shut out the lambs, where shall we get our sheep? If the Lord has received them, let us receive them! No father excludes a child from his table when he is three or four years old because he is not yet able to speak Latin. If the little ones know their A B C, it is a good beginning. We think a great deal of the first little verse our babes repeat—they say it in such a strange way that nobody thinks it is language at all except father and mother, but they are charmed with the simplest form of speech which infant lips can try! So, to see a little spiritual knowledge in new converts should gratify us and cause us to love them. Leave the lambs to feed on tender grass and you older ones may take as much of the tougher herbage as you like.

Again, *lambs like to feed little and often*. They are not able to take in much at a time, but they like to be often at it. I love to see our young people coming to the Prayer Meetings and week-day services so continually. You will grow in Grace if you are often engaged in the means of Grace—but it is possible to make such things a weariness to the flesh if they become protracted. Strong saints can bear whole days of devotion and delight in them. Yes, a whole week spent alone in a sacred retreat might be a glorious holiday—a holy day—rather, an anticipation of Heaven! But for young Believers, let them have here a little and there a little—a text and a text, line upon line, precept upon precept—but let them have it often. "Then shall the lambs feed in their pasture."

The lambs, if they feed well, feed quietly in their pasture. If there is a dog in the field, they will not feed. If they are driven about here and there and not allowed to rest, they cannot feed. I pity young Christians who get into churches where there are disturbances and troubles. Oh, may we always be kept at peace! I bless God for the love that has reigned among us. May it continue and may it deepen! Beloved Friends, when we fall out with one another, we shall find that the Spirit of God has fallen out with us! We cannot expect to see young converts among us at all, much less can we hope to see them advance in Divine Grace if we indulge a party spirit, or a controversial spirit within the fold. All Believers should endeavor to maintain a sacred quiet within the Church for the sake of the little ones. Have you never heard of the child who was greatly impressed under a sermon and had resolved to pray on reaching home, but he heard his father and mother on the road home discussing the discourse and finding such fault with it, that the happy season of tenderness passed away from that child and, in later years, he was accustomed to say that his becoming an infidel was due to that conversation? Let the lambs feed in quiet. If a little bit of the sermon suits my boy, though it seems childish to me, let me be glad that there is something for him! If the preacher stated the Truth in a way which I do not like, I daresay the preacher's Master knows how to guide him far better than I do! And perhaps my neighbor who sat next to me has profited by precisely that which I have criticized. Let the lambs feed quietly. I would say to young

Christians—Never mix up in the controversies of these days. There are people about who seem to be cut on the cross and the only use they are in this world seems to be to raise irritating questions. They and the mosquitoes were created by Infinite Wisdom, but I have never been able to discover the particular blessing which either of them confer upon us! Those persons who discuss and discuss, and do nothing else, had better be left alone. If there is a way to live peaceably with all men, I should say to the young Christian, “Follow it.” The lambs feed best when they are not worried, but dwell in peace with all.

Then, next, *when lambs feed in their pasture, they feed in pleasure.* A very disorderly lot the lambs are! If you look over the gate at them, they are never proper and solemn. An artist could scarcely sketch them in their frisking and frolicking about! Young Christians ought not to be told to cease their holy mirth—they ought not to be expected as yet to groan with those that groan—but let them rejoice with those that rejoice! Their days of sorrow will probably come soon enough, without their being anticipated. Let them rejoice in the Lord, yes, let them rejoice always! I am glad our friends do not universally call out in the Tabernacle, “Hallelujah,” and “Hosannah,” and the like. But, for my part, when I am preaching in the open air in the country and our Methodist friends do so, it seems to stir my blood and I am glad of it. It is much better than having a sleepy congregation!

A little excitement in the Christian Church, especially by young converts, is by no means to be deprecated. I remember hearing dear Doctor Fletcher say, when talking to a number of children, that he once saw a boy standing on his head, dancing on the pavement and displaying all sorts of antics of joy. He stopped near him and said, “Well, my Lad, you seem to be exceedingly merry.” “I think I am, and so would you be, Sir, (or Guv’nor, I think he said,) if you had been locked up three months and had just got out.” “Well,” said the venerable man, “I thought it very reasonable, indeed, and I told him by no means to stop his performances because of me.” Now, when a poor man has felt the burden of sin and has been shut up in the prison of the Law of God, and Jesus comes and brings him out—and he begins to rejoice with unspeakable joy, and full of glory—if any man living would stop him, I would not! No, let him rejoice! Let the lambs feed “in their pasture.” And if somebody tonight should come to me, and say, “Your young converts have been extravagant in expression and injudicious in zeal,” I would reply, “My dear Brother, are you better than these young ones? At any rate, there is one respect in which you are worse, for you show a propensity to find fault with those who are serving God with all their might. Go your way and join them! If you have not a heart to do so, and if they seem to be enthusiastic beyond measure, only thank God that there are yet some few left among us who can appreciate fervor—and wish that there were a little more of it.” For my own part, I would like to see a downright fanatic. It is so long since one has set one’s eyes upon such a curiosity that I should like to see one—just one! I have seen snow enough, pray let me see a fire-flake! I have seen thousands of wet blankets—oh for the touch of a live

coal! Enthusiasm in excess might be a blessing in disguise. Let the lambs feed pleasantly in their own wild, natural way.

Once more, *when the lambs feed in their pasture, they feed in company*. They like to get with others if they can. Sheep thrive best in flocks. I call upon every young Christian here to get into some part of Christ's flock. I invite you into this portion of Christ's Church, but if you find another where, all things considered, you think it would be better for you to be, go there! Mind that you join yourself first to Christ—and after that unite with His people. Do not try to go to Heaven as a solitary individual, that is not the Christian way. Jesus gathers His people into a Church—He does not profess to lead His people one by one, as solitary pilgrims, but they are to go in groups and bands. From company to company they proceed towards the New Jerusalem. May you have much love to the visible Church and believe that, notwithstanding all her faults, there is none like her on the earth! That, notwithstanding all her spots, she is excellent for beauty, and fairest among women!

III. I must close with the remark that IN THE WORST OF TIMES, GOD WILL SEE THAT HIS LAMBS AND THE REST OF HIS FLOCK ARE FED.

It is said, in the text, "*Then shall the lambs feed in their pasture.*" That is, when the vineyard was destroyed and the hedge broken down. When thorns and briars had come up and the clouds had refused to rain. And God had sent desolation upon Israel and the people were gone into captivity—even then shall the lambs feed in their pasture! This is a blessed Truth of God—come what may, God's people shall be saved and they shall have spiritual food! There may come persecuting times. Never mind! Never did Christ seem so glorious as when He walked with His Church in the dungeon and up to the stake! Never were there sweeter songs than those which rose from the Lollards' tower and Bonner's coal-hole. Never did the Church have such marriage feasts as when her members died at the gallows and the fire! Christ Jesus has made Himself preeminently near and dear to a persecuted Church! Therefore fear not if you should have your little trouble to bear in the family, or rebuke and shame from an evil world—for you shall feed in your pasture. Though your mother should be grieved, though your husband should be angry, though your brother should ridicule, though your employer should scoff—you shall be fed with spiritual food and your soul shall surmount all these evils, triumphant in her God!

"But I dread," says one, "that there will come times of sickness to me. I have premonitions of it." Yes, but you shall be fed in your pasture. And I, for one, bear witness that sometimes periods of sickness are times of the greatest spiritual nourishment! The Lord can furnish a table in the wilderness! A very wilderness sickness is of itself, but God can find us daily manna. He can make you strongest in heart when you are weakest in body. Therefore fear not, God will feed you!

"I am afraid of poverty," says one. Are you? That has been the lot of many of His people. For many an age has the Lord chosen the poor to be His disciples. You need not fear that. Your Master was poor—you will

never be as poor as He was, for He had nowhere to lay His head. Fear not, He will feed you. Can you not trust Him? "Ah, but I fear death," says one. "Then shall the lambs feed in their pasture." Even in the Valley of the Shadow of Death you shall find tender grass! Have you never seen others die? Has it not been a joyous thing to see some saints depart? I recall to your memories, dear Brothers and Sisters, those who have but lately ascended whom we loved. Was there anything terrible about their deaths? Did they not smile upon us in their last hours and make us feel that we would willingly change places with them, and die as they died? Have I not often seen the young girl sickening with consumption and heard from her strange things that made me think her half a Prophetess—a Seer whose eyes had been anointed so that she had looked within the veil and seen the Glory of the Invisible? Oh, how texts of Scripture have been placed in golden settings by dying saints! How sweetly have they set promises to music! Speak of monks and their illuminated missals! Scripture illuminated by dying saints is far more marvelous! What amazing joy they have felt! They told us that joy was killing them—that they did not die of the disease, but of excessive delight! It was as though the great floods of Glory had burst their banks and they were being swept right away by them to eternal bliss! It has visibly been blessed for the saints to die and, therefore, it is foolish—perhaps wicked—for any child of God to be afraid to depart. "Then shall the lambs feed in their pasture," feeding near the very scythe of death and cropping choice morsels at the grave's mouth—for the Lamb, Jesus Christ, being with them—no lamb of all the flock shall have cause to fear!

We shall now separate and scatter, as congregations have scattered, I might say, these hundreds of times from this House. And scattering and going each, our own way, to his home—shall we ever meet again? Probably by no means shall we, all of us, meet in the body, so that these eyes shall look to other eyes and say, "I saw those eyes before." Well, well, truth be the truth remembered that we are a flock and must gather again in one meeting place before the Judgment Seat, on that day of wrath, that dreadful day! Shall we meet, then, as the sheep of Christ, or, meeting, will it be to be divided, to the right and to the left, as the sheep of the Great King, or the goats condemned to be cast away? We shall certainly meet there, but will it be an eternal meeting of unending joy? God grant it may! Oh, infinite mercy of the blessed God, let us all be united at the Throne of Christ!

But I hear you say, O angel, in answer to that prayer—I hear you speak out of the Glory and say, "There can be no union at the Throne of God except there first be union at the Cross." Listen to that warning and come to Jesus! There stands the Cross, which is the center of the Church! Lo, I see upon it the Son of God, His wounds still fountains of cleansing blood! Will you come to the Cross? Will you trust the Redeemer? Will you bow before Him? Will you be washed in His blood? Will you be saved with His salvation? If so, we shall all meet in Heaven to see the face of the Lamb in His Glory. God grant we may, for Jesus sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 23, 24.**

Did you ever notice that the 22nd Psalm exhibits “that Great Shepherd of the sheep” as laying down His life for the sheep? And that the 23rd Psalm exhibits “the Good Shepherd” with all His sheep around Him happy and restful, while the 24th Psalm represents “the Chief Shepherd” who shall appear in due time—and when He does appear, then shall His sheep, also, appear with Him in Glory?

Psalm 23:1. *The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not want.* [See Sermon #3006, Volume 52—“THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] How can a sheep want, or have needs, when it has a good and wise shepherd able and willing to provide for it? And how can a Believer want when he has God, Himself, the ever-gracious and Omnipotent Lord of All, to provide his needs and to prevent him from ever knowing what want means? David does not say, “I shall have all I wish for because the Lord is my Shepherd,” but he does say, “I shall not want. Not only have I no need now, but I never shall need while my Shepherd lives. Though I am only one out of His countless flock, yet He cares for me and, therefore, ‘I shall not want.’” Why should a Believer think that he shall ever want? Let him look at his present condition.

2, 3. *He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul: He leads me in the path of righteousness for His name’s sake.* Here are four blessed things that the Lord does for the Believer. “He makes me to lie down.” He gives me rest, perfect rest and He gives me so much spiritual provision that I am unable to take it all in—so I lie down and rest in it as a sheep does in the deep pastures where it seems lost in the provender! There are such deep Doctrines, such glorious privileges, such wondrous Revelations of the heart of God in this blessed Book, that you and I cannot comprehend it all, but we can lie down in it—“He makes me to lie down in green pastures.” Take a good stretch, Brothers and Sisters in Christ! Some are afraid to lie down in the green pastures of the Word of God. I know some of God’s saints who seem to be afraid of being too happy—they do not like to be too restful. Let no such fear ever cross your mind. “He makes me”—and He would not make us do what was not good for us—“He makes me to lie down in green pastures.”

Then come those three sweet words, “He leads me,” which in themselves are full of music—

***“He leads me. He leads me!
By His own hand He leads me!”***

You know how our song makes these words ring out over and over again and it is truly charming. “He leads me.” The Holy Spirit is our Guide and as the softly-flowing river of Grace marks our journey, we sing, “He leads me beside the still waters.” You and I sometimes go wandering by the noisy brooks that ripple over the stones and make such a noise because they are so shallow. But when the Spirit guides us, it is beside the deep rivers, the deep still waters that He leads us.

“He restores my soul.” Is not that a blessed little sentence? When my soul gets empty, He stores it again—re-stores it. When it goes wandering away from Him—

***“He brings my wandering spirit back
When I forsake His ways.”***

And when I get spiritually sick, He gives me a sweet restorative and renews my health—“He restores my soul.” Blessed be the name of the great Restorer!

“He leads me”—here comes those sweet words again—“He leads me in the paths of righteousness.” They are very pleasant paths, for nothing is more pleasant to a Believer than to be walking in “the paths of righteousness.” God has so constituted His people that if they get out of the right way, they get out of the way of peace. He has so re-made us that our peace and our righteousness agree together—and as long as we are led in the paths of righteousness, we are a happy and a restful people! The Lord does all this for us, “for His Name’s sake.”

4. *Yes, though I walk.* Yes, though I walk, not only though I shall walk, but though I do walk now—

4. *Through the valley of the shadow of death.* Though long before I die, I seem to learn what death means in the cold chill that takes hold upon my spirit and freezes all my joy—

4. *I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.* Some seem to think that God’s people would have no distress of mind and no trouble if they were trusting in God. But it is not so. Even *they* “walk through the valley of the shadow of death,” but they “fear no evil” even there! When all is dark around you, remember that verse, “Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness, and has no light? Let Him trust in the name of the Lord and rely upon His God.” There would be no room for faith if it were always summertime and always noontide. But Christians are sometimes called to pass through that gloomy experience which Mr. Bunyan has so beautifully pictured under the symbol here used, “the valley of the shadow of death.” It is a terrible journey, yet there is no cause for fear to strike the Christian’s heart even there for, let the worst come to the worst, he can say to his Lord, with David, “You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me”

Now look back to the 14th and 15th verses of the 22nd Psalm, and you will see how fully Christ can sympathize with His people—because He, also, walked through the valley of the shadow of death even as they have to do! Hear Him crying there, “I am poured out like water and all My bones are out of joint: My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of My body. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and My tongue sticks to My jaws and You have brought Me”—remember that this is the Savior speaking here—“You have brought Me into the dust of death.” Well then, there is great comfort for the sheep in the fact that their Shepherd has been along that gloomy way before them!

5. *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.* See what cool, calm courage David here displays. Usually, when a warrior is

in the presence of his enemies, he just eats a bit of bread, or something that he can swallow while getting ready for the fight that is impending. But David took matters much more quietly than that. Though his enemies were all around him, there was a table prepared for him—that is to say, there was everything ready for a feast just as if it had been a holiday instead of the day of battle! “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.” You may grin or howl, you devils! You may do what you like, but the true Believer takes no notice of you! His table is being prepared by his God while you, armed to the teeth, are seeking to slay him! What a contrast there is between the rage of the Believer’s enemies and the quiet, calm confidence of the man himself!

5. *You anoint my head with oil.* A sweet savor shall be upon the man who is thus anointed by his God.

5. *My cup runs over.* [See Sermons #874, Volume 15—THE OVERFLOWING CUP and #1222, Volume 21—THE OVERFLOWING CUP—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] “I have more than I expected—more than I ever asked for—more than I desired—more than I am capable of holding!” “My cup runs over.” If ever your cup does thus run over, be sure to call your poor neighbors in to catch the overflowing mercy! If ever you have more blessing than you can hold, ask some other Christian to share it with you. Recollect what Peter and his companions did when, at Christ’s command, they let down the net and caught more fish than their net could hold without breaking—they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. “What? Come and help them fish?” Oh, no—come and help them share the fish! Many persons say, “You are kindly invited to come to such-and-such a meeting,” because they want to get something out of you—but it is a better kind of invitation when you are asked because there is something to be given away—and those who have an overflowing cup want you to share the blessing with them.

6. *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.* I shall never be able to outrun the goodness and mercy of my God! I shall always have closely attendant upon me His goodness to supply my needs and His mercy to forgive my sins.

6. *And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

Psalms 24:1. *The earth is the LORD’S, and the fullness thereof.* And therefore it is also the Believer’s! The real fullness of the earth belongs to the Christian. “The meek shall inherit the earth.”

1, 2. *The world, and they that dwell therein.* For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods. So, child of God, you are in your Father’s house even while you are down here on earth! Still, that question in the next verse is very suggestive. Albeit that the earth is the Lord’s, yet we do not want to stay in it forever.

3. *Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?* [See Sermon #396, Volume 7—CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Or who shall stand in His holy place? This is the portion of the Lord’s people—to ascend the hill of the Zion that is above,

to enter the New Jerusalem and to stand in the immediate Presence of God. But who shall ever be able to do that?

4, 5. *He that has clean hands, and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully; he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.* The man who will go to Heaven is the clean man, the man who has been washed from his sins in the blood of the Lamb. And he is clean just where he was most likely to be foul—he has “clean hands.” Grace has enabled him to touch the things of the world without receiving a stain from them, and to touch holy things without defiling them. This expression—“clean hands”—refers to his outward life, but he is also clean inside, for he has “a pure heart.” If a man were clean as to his actions, but not clean as to his motives, he would not be fit to enter Heaven. But the man described here is a true man. He has not followed after vanity, neither has he uttered a lie, but he has followed the Truth of God and he has spoken the Truth. He is the man whom God will bless, but he has no righteousness of his own, so we read that, “he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.” So he needs to be saved and he needs a righteousness better than his own, and this God will give him!

6. *This is the generation Jacob, of them that seek Him, who seek Your face. Selah.* It is a wonderful thing that Jesus Christ should take His people’s name but He does. He gives His Church His own name in that remarkable passage in Jeremiah 33:16—“This is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness.” And now, to make the union complete, He takes her name as His own—Christ is here called “Jacob.”

7-10. *Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lift up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O you gates, even lift them up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of Hosts, He is the King of Glory. Selah.* Now, if Christ is our Shepherd in the meadows down here where He makes us to lie down in the green pastures of His Grace, He will also be our Shepherd in the heavenly pastures up there on the hilltops of Glory where the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne shall feed us and shall lead us unto living fountains of waters! And we shall delight forever to “follow the Lamb wherever He goes.”

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

CORDS AND CART ROPES

NO. 1821

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING
ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1885,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON DECEMBER 14, 1884.

***“Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity,
and sin as it were with a cart rope.”
Isaiah 5:18.***

THE text begins with, “Woe,” and when we get a woe in this Book of blessings it is sent as a *warning*, that we may *escape* from woe. God’s woes are better than the devil’s welcomes! God always means man’s good and only sets ill before him that he may turn from the dangers of a mistaken way and so may escape the ill which lies at the end of it. Do not think I am unkind at this time because my message sounds harsh and has a note in it of sorrow rather than of joy. It may be most for your pleasure for ages to come, dear Friends, to be, for a while, displeased. It may make the bells ring in your ears forever if, tonight, instead of the dulcet sound of the harp, you hear the shrill clarion startling you to thoughtfulness. Perhaps, “Woe, woe, woe,” though it should sound with a dreadful din in your ears, may be the means of leading you to seek and find your Savior and then, throughout eternity, no woe shall ever come near to you. May the good Spirit of all Grace put power into my warning that you may profit by it.

This is a very singular text. It is not very easy to understand it at first sight. Here are some who are said to draw sin with cords of vanity which are slender enough and, yet, they also draw it as with a cart rope which is thick enough. They are harnessed to sin and the traces appear to be fragile, insignificant and soon broken. You can hardly touch them, for they are a mere sham, a fiction—vanity. What can be thinner and weaker than cobweb cords of vanity? Yet when you attempt to break or remove them, they turn out to be cart ropes or wagon traces, fitted to bear the pull of horse or bullock! Motives which have no logical force and would not bind a reasonable man for a moment, are, nevertheless, quite sufficient to hold the most of men in bondage. Such a slave is man to iniquity, that unworthy motives and indefensible reasons which appear no stronger than little cords, nevertheless hold him as with bonds of steel—and he is fastened to the loaded wagon of his iniquity as a horse is fastened by a cart rope.

That is our subject at this time and may God make it useful to many. Beyond all things I would have you saved, you who are tugging away in the harness of sin. God grant it! May the free Spirit set you free. I shall, first of all, *explain the singular description*—explain it by enlarging upon it and quoting instances from daily life. Secondly, I shall enlarge upon *the*

woe that is certainly connected with being bound to sin. And then, thirdly, as God shall help me, *I will encourage you to get out of the traces.* I pray that you may have these cart ropes cut, that you may not be drawing iniquity and sin after you any longer. Oh that this might be salvation's hour for many of you, in which, like Samson, you may break the cords and ropes with which you have been bound!

I. First, let us EXPLAIN THE SINGULAR DESCRIPTION. Here are persons harnessed to the wagon of sin—harnessed to it by many cords, all light as vanity and yet strong as cart ropes. Let me give you a picture. Here is a man, who, as a young man, heard the Gospel and grew up under the influence of it. He is an intelligent man, a Bible reader and somewhat of a theologian. He attended a Bible class, was an apt pupil and could explain much of Scripture, but *he took to lightness and frothiness.* He made an amusement of religion and a sport of serious things. He frequented sermons that he might talk of them and say that he had heard the preacher. After the sermon, when others were impressed, he was merry. He had discovered some mistake in the preacher—in his pronunciation, in the grammatical construction of a sentence, or in a misquotation from a poet—and this he mentioned with gusto, passing by all the good that was spoken. That was only his way—he did not mean any *hurt* by it—at least he would have said so had any one seriously reproved him.

He came under the bond of this religious trifling, but it was a cord of vanity small as a packthread. Years ago he began to be bound to his sin by this kind of trifling and, at the present moment, I am not sure that he ever cares to go and hear the Gospel or to read the Word of God, for he has grown to despise that with which he sported. The wanton witling has degenerated into a malicious scoffer—his cord has become a cart rope! His life is all trifling now. You could not make him serious. He spends his time in one perpetual giggle. Every holy thing is now the subject of comedy. Like Belshazzar, he drinks his wine out of the sacred vessels of the Temple. Earnestness has a pleasantry of its own and a bold spirit yokes mirth and laughter to its cart and subdues all the faculties of the mind to God, not even excepting humor. But this man acknowledges no Lord within his heart—he laughs at the most solemn Truths of God and does not seem capable of anything higher or better. His life is a sneer. He would pull a feather out of an angel's wing and wear it in his cap.

On the solemn day of Pentecost he would have drawn a picture of the cloven tongues upon his thumb nail that he might show it as a curiosity. There is nothing sacred to him, now, nor will there be till he is in Hell—and then he will have done with his jibes and flouts. The habit of being contemptuous has grown to be a cart rope with him and it holds him most securely. I say, young men, break those wretched cords of vanity before they strengthen into cart ropes! While yet there is but a slender thread, snap it, before thread gathers to thread, and that to another, and that to another, till it has come to be a cable which even a giant could not pull asunder! There are many lamentable instances of triflers ripening into scoffers and it were a great pity that you should furnish further illustrations. Avoid trifling with religion as you would avoid common swearing or profanity, for in its essence it is irreverent and mischievous.

I have seen the same thing take another shape and then it appeared as *captious questioning*. We are not afraid to be examined upon anything in the Word of God, but we dread a quibbling spirit. I, for one, believe that the more the Word of God has been sifted, the more fully has it been confirmed. The result has been the better understanding of its teaching. The pure gold has shone the more brightly for being placed in the crucible. But there is a habit which begins thus—"I do not see *this*; and I do not understand *that*; and I do not approve of *this* and I question *that*." It makes life into a tangle of thorns and briars where ten thousand sharp points of doubt are forever tearing the mind. This doubting state reminds one of the old serpent's, "Yes, has God said?" If the statement made had been the *opposite*, the gentleman would have questioned it, for he is bound to doubt *everything*. He is one who could take either side and refute—but neither side and defend.

He could do like the eminent barrister who had made a mistake as to his side of the case and he got up and gave all the arguments most tellingly, till his client's lawyer whispered to him, "you have done for us—you have used all the arguments against your own client!" The barrister stopped and said, "My lord, I have thus told you all that can be urged against my client by those upon the other side—and I will now show you that there is nothing in the allegations." And with equal cleverness he went on to disprove what he had proved before! There are minds constructed in such a way that they can act in every way except that of plain up and down. Their machinery is eccentric—it would puzzle the ablest tongue to describe it. I like the old-fashioned consciences that go up and down, yes and no, right and wrong, true and false—the kind which are simple and need no great intellect to understand their methods. We are growing so cultured, now, that many have become like the old serpent, "more subtle than any beast of the field."

The new-fashioned consciences act upon the principle of compromise and policy which is no principle at all! To each enquiry they answer, "Yes and no. What is the time of day?" For it is yes or no according to the clock, or according to the climate, or, more generally, according to the breeches' pocket, for so much depends upon that. Practically, many are saying, "Upon which side of the bread is the butter? Tell us this and then we will tell you what we believe." People of that sort begin, at first, with an *enquiring* spirit, then go on to an *objecting* spirit, then to a *conceited* spirit and then to a perpetually *quibbling* spirit! In the case to which I refer, there is nothing earnest, for when a man is a sincere questioner and is willing to receive an answer, he is on the high road to truth. But when he merely questions and questions and questions—and never stops for an answer and is nothing but a heap of quibbling—he is not worth clearing away. The last thing he wants is an answer and the thing he dreads beyond everything is that he should be compelled to believe anything at all.

Such a man at last gets bound as with a cart rope—he becomes an atheist or worse, for all capacity for faith departs from him. He is as frivolous as Voltaire, whose forte seemed to lie in ridiculing everything. You cannot save him. How can faith come to him? How can he believe, who

must have everything explained? How can he believe in Christ, Himself, when he requires Him, first of all, to be put through a catechism and to be made to answer foolish questions? Oh, take heed of tying up your soul with cart ropes of skepticism—take heed of a Truth-denying spirit! God help you to break the bonds. Enquire, but believe! Ask, but accept the Truth of God! And be in earnest in your resolve that if you prove all things, you will also hold fast that which is good. To be always using the sieve but never to be using the mill is starving work—to be always searching after adulterations, but never to drink of the genuine milk is a foolish habit! Quibbling is a curse and carping is a crime. Escape from it while yet it is but as a cord of vanity, lest it come to be a cart rope which shall bind you fast.

I hear one say, “This does not touch me. I have not fallen either into trifling or into questioning.” No, but perhaps you may be a prisoner bound with other cords. Some have *a natural dislike to religious things* and cannot be brought to attend to them. Let me qualify the statement and explain myself. They are quite prepared to attend a place of worship, to hear sermons and occasionally to read the Scriptures—and even to give their money to help on some benevolent cause. But this is the point at which they draw the line—they do not want to think, to pray, to repent, to believe, or to make heart-work of the matter. Thinking, you know, is awkward work, and to them it is uncomfortable work because there is not much in their lives that would cheer them if they were to think of it. They had rather not see the nakedness of the land. There is an ugly thing which they do not want to have much to do with—it is called repentance—of this they require much, but they are averse to it. The more children dislike medicine the more they need it—and it is the same with repentance.

These people would rather shut their eyes and go on to destruction than stop and see their danger and turn back. To think about the past—why, they might have to mourn it and who is eager after sorrow? Then there is such a thing as a change of heart and they are rather shy of *that*, for they are almost heartless and do not like prying deep. If there were something to be done that could be managed in a day or two. If there were some pilgrimage to make, some penance to endure, some dress to be worn, they would not mind that—but thought, repentance, prayer and seeking God—they cannot endure such spiritual exactions! If there were some sacrifice to be made they would do that, but this being at peace with God, this seeking to be renewed in the spirit of their mind—well, they have no mind to it. The world is in their hearts and they have no wish to get it out. They have heard some people say that all conversation about God, the soul and eternity is dull Puritan talk, so they have picked up an expression as parrots often do and they say, “No, we do not want to be Puritans. We do not care to be extra precise and righteous over much.” What a misery it is that there should be persons who are bound with such cords of vanity as those! These are unreasonable feelings, insane aversions, unjustifiable prejudices—may the Lord save you from them and, instead thereof, give you a mind to know Him and a heart to seek after Him.

Why, as a boy, when I began to feel a sense of sin within me, I resolved that if there was such a thing as being born again, I would never rest until

I knew it! My heart seemed set upon knowing what repentance *meant* and what faith *meant* and getting to be thoroughly saved! But now I find that large numbers of my hearers back out of all serious dealing with themselves and God! They act as if they did not wish to be made happy for eternity! They think harshly of the good way. You see it is such radical work—regeneration cuts so deep and it makes a man so *thoughtful*. Who knows what may have to be given up? Who knows what may have to be done? O, my Hearer, if you indulge in such demurs and delays and prejudices in the first days of your conviction, the time may come when those little packthreads will be so intertwined with each other that they will make a great cart rope and you will become an opposer of everything that is good, determined to abide forever harnessed to the great Juggernaut car of your iniquities, and so to perish! God save you from that!

I have known some men get harnessed to that car in another way and that is by *deference to companions*. The young man liked everything that was good, after a fashion, but he could not bear for anybody to say, on Monday morning, “So you were at a place of worship on Sunday?” He did not like to say outright, “Of course I was. Where were you?” But instead he said—Well, he did look in at the chapel, or he did go to St. Paul’s or the Abbey to hear the music. “Oh,” says one, “I hear you were at the Tabernacle the other day.” Yes, he went in from curiosity, just to see the place and the crowd. That is how he puts it, as if he were ashamed to worship his Maker and to be found observing the Sabbath Day. O, poor coward! That young man, at another time, was charged with having been seen in the Enquiry Room, or weeping under a solemn sermon! He said it was rather affecting and he was a little carried away and over-persuaded, but he apologized to the devil and begged that he might hear no more of it.

He began giving way to his ungodly friends and soon he became their butt. One companion pulled his ear that way and another pulled his ear another way—and in this manner he developed very long ears, indeed. He did not go very far wrong at first, but having allowed sinful men to saddle him, they took care to ride him harder and harder as the days ran on. It was only a packthread sort of business that held him to sin by a kind of wicked courtesy. But after a while he became compliant to his equals and fawned his superiors, doing their bidding even though it cost him his soul! He was vastly more attentive to the will and smile of some downright vicious comrade—far more thoughtful of a fool’s opinion—than he was of the good pleasure of God. It is a shocking thing, but there is no doubt that many people go to Hell for the love of being respectable! It is not to be doubted that multitudes pawn their souls and lose their God and Heaven merely for the sake of standing well in the estimation of a profligate! Young women have lost their souls for very vanity, sinning in the hope of securing the love of a brainless, heartless youth! Young men have flung away all hope of salvation in order that they might be thought to be men of culture—they have denied faith in order to be esteemed “free-thinkers” by those whose opinions were not worth a pin’s head!

I charge you, dear Friend, if you are beginning at all to be a slave of other people, break these wretched and degrading bonds! I scorn that mental slavery in which many glory! What matters it to me, today, what

anybody thinks of me? In this respect I am the freest of men. Yet do I know times when, had I yielded to the packthread, I would soon have felt the cart rope. He who sins to please his friend is making for himself a slavery more cruel than the American slave ever knew! He that would be free forever must break the cords before yet they harden into chains!

Some men are getting into bondage in another way—they are forming *gradual habits of evil*. How many young men born and bred amid Christian associations do that! It is a little sip and such a little. “I do not take above half a glass.” Then why run such great risks for so small an indulgence? “The doctor”—O you doctors, what you have got to answer for!—“the doctor says I ought to take a little, and so I do.” By-and-by the little thread becomes a cart rope—the tale about the doctor ends in doing what no doctor would justify. Will he say, “The doctor says I ought,” when he comes rolling home at night, scarcely can find his way to bed and wakes up with a headache in the morning? He would have done better to ask God for Grace to escape while yet he held small pleasure in the fascinating firewater and was the master of his appetite. The cart rope is hard to break, as many have found, though I would encourage even these, by God’s Grace, to struggle for liberty.

“Well,” says a young man, “that is not *my* sin.” I am glad it is not, but any other sin, if it is persevered in, will destroy you. I will not try to describe your sin. Describe it yourself and think it over. And will you please remember the deceitfulness of sin—the way in which it comes to men—as the frost in the still evening in the wintry months comes to the lake? The pool is placid and the frost only asks that it may thinly glaze the surface. The coating is so thin you could scarcely call it ice! But having once filmed the pool, the sheet of ice has commenced and soon it is an inch thick—and in a few hours a loaded wagon might pass over it without a crash, for the whole pool seems turned to marble. So men give way to one evil passion or another—this vice or that—and the habit proceeds from bad to worse till the cords of vanity are enlarged into cart traces and they cannot escape from the load to which they are harnessed.

I fear that not a few are under the delusive notion that they are safe as they are. *Carnal security* is made up of cords of vanity. How can a sinner be safe while his sins are unforgiven? How can he be at peace while he is a slave to evil and an enemy to God? Yet many fancy that they are as good as necessary and far better than their neighbors. Surely, such as they are, must surely be secure since they are so respectable, so well inclined and so much thought of! A man may accustom himself to danger till he does not even notice it. And a soul may grow used to its condition till it sees no peril in impenitence and unbelief. As the blacksmith’s dog will lie down and sleep while the sparks fly about him, so will a Gospel-hardened sinner sleep on under warnings and pleadings. At first the hearer had to do violence to his conscience to escape from the force of the Truth of God but, at last, he is encased in steel and no arrow of the Word of God can wound him. O you that are at ease in Zion, I beseech you, listen to my admonition and fly from carnal security. O Lord, awaken them from their slumbering condition!

This is a word of warning. I have not the time, tonight, to go into all the details. I wish I had. Beware of the eggs of the cockatrice. Remember how drops wear stones and little strokes fell great oaks. Do not play with a cobra, even if it is but a foot long. Keep from the edge of the precipice. Fly from the lion before he springs upon you. Do not forge for yourself a net of iron, nor become the builder of your own prison. May the Holy Spirit deliver you. May you touch the Cross and find in it the power which will loose you and let you go.

II. But, oh, how I wish that every person here who has not yet found liberty, but is harnessed to his sin, could escape tonight, for—and this is my second point—THERE IS A WOE ABOUT REMAINING HARNESSSED TO THE CART OF SIN—and that woe is expressed in our text.

It has already been hard work to tug at sin's load. If I am addressing any here that have fallen into great sin, I know that you have fallen into great sorrow. I am sure you have. Much of history is happily covered with a veil so that its secret griefs do not become open miseries, otherwise were the world too wretched for a tender heart to live in it! Could we lift the tops of the houses; could we exhibit the skeletons hidden in closets; could we take away the curtains from human breasts—what sorrows we should see! And the mass of those sorrows—not the whole of them, but the mass—would be found to come from *sin*. When the young man turns to paths of unchastity or of dishonesty, what grief he makes for himself! What woe, what misery! His bodily disease, his mental anguish we have no heart to describe!

Ah, yes, “The way of transgressors is hard.” They put on a smile; they even take to uproarious laughter, but a worm is gnawing at their hearts. Alas, poor slaves! They make a noise as they try to drown their feelings, but as the crackling of thorns under a pot, such is the mirth of the wicked—hasty, noisy, momentary gone—and nothing left but ashes! I would not have you proceed in the path of sin if there were nothing in it worse than what has already happened to you. Surely the time past may suffice for folly! You have reaped enough of the fire-sheaves without going on with the harvest. I would, as a brother, urge you to escape from your present bondage.

And remember, if you remain harnessed to this car of sin, *the weight increases*. You are like a horse that has to go on a journey and pick up parcels at every quarter of a mile. You are increasing the heavy luggage and baggage that you have to drag behind you. A man starting in life is somewhat like a horse with but a slender load in the cart, but as he goes on from youth to manhood, and from manhood to his riper years, he has been loaded up with more sin—and what a weight there is behind him, now! Grinning devils, as they bring the heavy packages and heap them up, one upon another, must wonder that men are such fools as to continue in the harness and drag on the dreadful load as if it were fine sport! Alas, that men should sin away their souls so lightly—as if self-destruction were some merry game that they were playing at—whereas it is a heaping up unto themselves of wrath against the day of wrath and the perdition of ungodly men!

Further, I want you to notice that as the load grows heavier, *so the road becomes worse*—the ruts are deeper, the hills are steeper and the sloughs are more full of mire. In the heyday of youth, man finds beaded bubbles about the brim of his cup of sin. The wine moves itself aright, it gives its color in the cup. But as he grows older and drinks deeper, he comes nearer to the dregs and those dregs are as gall and wormwood! An old man with his bones filled with the sin of his youth is a dreadful sight to look upon! He is a curse to others and a burden to himself. A man who has 50 years of sin behind him is like a traveler pursued by 50 howling wolves. Do you hear their deep bay as they pursue the wretch? Do you see their eyes glaring in the dark and flaming like coals of fire? Such a man is to be pitied, indeed! Where shall he flee, or how shall he face his pursuers? He who goes on carelessly when he knows that such a fate awaits him is a fool—he deserves small pity when the evil day comes. O you that are drawing the wagon of sin, I implore you stop before you reach the boggy ways of infirmity, the tremendous swamps of old age!

Remember, Friends, if any of you are still harnessed to your sins and have been so for years, the day will come when *the load will crush the horse*. It is a dreadful thing when the sins which were drawn at last drive the driver before them! In the town where I was brought up, there is a very steep hill. You could scarcely get out of the town without going down a hill, but one is specially precipitous. I remember once hearing a cry in the streets, for a huge wagon had rolled over the horses that were going down the hill with it! The load had crushed the creatures that were supposed to draw it! There comes a time with a man when it is not so much he that consumes the drink as the drink that consumes him! He is drowned in his cups, sucked down by that which he, himself, sucked in! A man was voracious, perhaps, in food, and at last his gluttony swallowed *him*—at one grim morsel he went down the throat of the old dragon of selfish greed! Or the man was lustful and at last his vice devoured him. It is an awful thing when it is not the man that follows the devil, but the devil that drives the man before him as though he were his laden ass. The man's worst self, that had been kept in the rear and put under restraint, at last gets up and comes to the front—and the better self—if he ever had such, is dragged on an unwilling captive at the chariot wheels of its destroyer!

I am sure that there is nobody here who desires to be a sinner *eternally*—let him beware, then, for *each hour of sin brings its hardness and its difficulty of change*. Nobody here wants to get into such a condition that he cannot keep from sinning any longer—let him not be so unwise as to play with sin! When the moral brakes are taken off and the engine is on the down-grade and must run on at a perpetually quickening rate forever, then is the soul lost, indeed! I am sure there is not a man here who wants to commit himself to an eternity of hate of God, an eternity of lust, an eternity of wickedness and consequent wretchedness! Why, then, do you continue to harden your hearts? If you do not wish to rush down the decline, put on the brake tonight! God help you to do so or, to come back to the text, let the packthreads be broken and the cords of vanity be thrown

aside, before yet the cart rope shall have fastened you forever to the Juggernaut car of your sin and your destruction.

III. Now I want to offer **SOME ENCOURAGEMENT FOR BREAKING LOOSE.** It is time I did. I do not wish to preach a sad, unhappy sermon, tonight, but I do long to see everybody here saved from sin. My heart cries to God that as long as I am able to preach, I may not preach in vain. God knows I have never shunned to speak what I have thought and to speak very plainly and very home to you. I never come into this pulpit with the notion that I must not say a sharp thing, or somebody will be offended—or I must not deal with common sins for somebody will say that I am coarse. I care not the snap of a finger what you choose to say about me, if you will but forsake sin and be reconciled to God by the death of His Son! That is the one and only thing my heart craves and for that end I have given earnest warnings at this time. I may not much longer be spared to speak with you and, therefore, I am the more earnest to impress you while I may. Help me, O Spirit of God!

Now, listen. *There is hope for every harnessed slave of Satan.* There is hope for those who are most securely bound! “Oh,” you say, “I am afraid that I have got into the cart rope stage, for I seem bound to perish in my sin! I cannot break loose from it.” Listen. Jesus Christ has come into the world to rescue those who are bound with chains. That is to say, God, Himself, has taken upon Himself human nature with this design—that He may save men from their sins! That blessed, perfect Baby, such as never mother before had ever seen—that virgin’s Child—when they named Him, it was said, “you shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.” He has come to this world in our nature on purpose to save men from their sins! He can cut the traces which bind you to Satan’s chariot. He can take you out of the shafts. He can set you free, tonight!

You have been dragging on for years and you think there is no chance for you—but there is *more* than a chance—there is the *certainty* of salvation if you trust in Jesus! I remember reading a famous writer’s description of a wretched cab-horse which was old and worn out and yet kept on its regular round of toil. They never took him out of harness for fear they should never be able to get his poor old carcass into it again. He had been in the shafts for so many years that they feared if they took him out of them he would fall to pieces! And so they let him stay where he was accustomed to be. Some *men* are just like that. They have been in the shafts of sin so many years that they fancy that if they were once to alter, they would fall to pieces. But it is not so, old Friend! We are persuaded better things of you and things that accompany salvation. The Lord will make a new creature of you! When He cuts the traces and brings you out from between those shafts which have so long held you, you will not know yourself! When old things have passed away you will be a wonder to many. Is it not said of Augustine that after his conversion he was met by a fallen woman who had known him in his sin and he passed her by? She said, “Austin, it is I.” And he turned and said, “But I am not Austin. I am not the man you once knew, for I have become a new creature in Christ Jesus.” That is what the Lord Jesus Christ can do for *you*! Do you not believe it? It is true, whether you believe it or not! Oh that you would look to

Jesus and begin to live! It is time a change was made, is it not? Who can change you but the Lord Jesus?

Let me tell you another thing that ought to cheer you, and it is this. You are bound with the cords of sin and, in order that all this sin of yours might effectually be put away, the *Lord Jesus, the Son of the Highest, was, Himself, bound*. They took Him in the Garden of Gethsemane and bound His hands and led Him off to Pilate and Herod. They brought Him bound before the Roman governor. He was bound when they scourged Him. He was bound when they brought Him forth bearing His Cross. He was fastened hand and foot as they drove in the nails and thus fixed Him with rivets of iron to His Cross. There did He hang, fastened to the cruel tree, for sinners such as you are! If you come and trust Him to-night, *you* shall find that for you He endured the wrath of God! For *you* He paid the penalty of death that He might set you free! He bore it that you should not bear it—He died for you that you might not die. His Substitution shall be your deliverance. Oh, come, all bound and guilty as you are, and look to His dear Cross and trust yourself with Him and you shall be set free!

God grant that it may be done at this very moment!

I will tell you another cheering fact to help you to overcome your sin and break the cart ropes that now bind you—*There is in the world a mysterious Being whom you know not, but whom some of us know, who is able to work your liberty*. There dwells upon this earth a mysterious Being whose office it is to renew the fallen and restore the wandering. We cannot see Him, or hear Him, yet He dwells in some of us, as Lord of our nature. His chosen residence is a broken heart and a contrite spirit. That most powerful Being is God, the third Person of the blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit, who was given at Pentecost and who has never been recalled, but remains on earth to bless the people of God! He is still here and wherever there is a soul that would be free from sin, this free Spirit waits to help him. Wherever there is a spirit that loathes its own unholiness, this Holy Spirit waits to cleanse him! Wherever there is a groaning one asking to be made pure, this pure Spirit is ready to come and dwell in him and make him pure as God is pure!

O, my Hearer, He waits to bless you now! He is blessing you while I speak! I feel as if His Divine energy went forth with the Word of God and entered into your soul as you are listening! I trust I am not mistaken. If you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, believe, also, in the power of the Holy Spirit to make you a new creature and cleanse you—deliver you from every fetter and make you the Lord's free man!

I will tell you one thing more and I will have done. *Our experience should be a great encouragement to you*. I have tried to preach to you that are in the traces—poor worn out cab-horses to the devil, post-horses of Satan that seem never to have a holiday, dragging your cart of sin behind you through the slush of the foul city of Vanity. The mercy is that you are not horses, but *men* born for nobler purposes! You may be free, for some of us are free! Oh, what a load I had behind me once! My wagon of inbred sin was a huge one, indeed! Had it not been for the Grace of God, I would have perished in the impossible attempt to move it. I do not think that my load as to overt sin was at all like that which some of you are dragging, for

I was but a child and had not yet plunged into the follies of the world. But then I had a dogged will, a high spirit, an intense activity and a daring mind—and all this would have driven me headlong to Hell if the Spirit of God had not worked in me to subdue me to the will of the Lord!

I felt within my spirit the boiling up of that secret cauldron of corruption which is in every human bosom—and I felt that I was ruined before God and that there was no hope for me. My burden of inward sin at 15 years of age was such that I knew not what to do! We have seen pictures of the Arabs dragging those great Nineveh bulls for Mr. Leyard, hundreds of them tugging away—and I have imagined how Pharaoh's subjects, the Egyptians, must have sweated and smarted when they had to drag some of the immense blocks of which his obelisks were composed—thousands of men dragging one block of masonry! And I seemed to have just such a load as that behind me and it would not stir! I prayed, but it would not move! I took to reading my Bible, but my load would not budge. It seemed stuck in the mire and no struggling would move the awful weight. The wheels were in deep ruts. My load would not be moved and I did not know what to do. I cried to God in my agony and I thought I must die if I did not get delivered from my monstrous cumber—but it would not stir.

I have no drag behind me now! Glory be to God, I am not bound with a cart rope to the old wagon! I have no hamper behind me and, as I look back for the old ruts where the cart stopped so long, I cannot even see their traces! The enormous weight is not there! It is clean gone! There came One who wore a crown of thorns—I knew Him by the marks on His hands and in His feet—and He said, "Trust Me, and I will set you free." I trusted Him and the enormous weight behind me was gone. It disappeared! As I was told, it sank into His sepulcher and it lies buried there, never to come out again! My cart rope snapped, my cords of vanity melted, I was out of harness! Then I said, "The snare is broken and my soul has escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler. I will tell the story of my deliverance as long as I live." I can say tonight—

***"Ever since by faith I saw the stream
His flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die."***

Oh, my beloved Hearers, believe in Christ as I did! The Gospel comes to each sorrowing sinner and it says—Trust the Savior and there is joy for you. There is but a veil of gauze between you and peace—move the hand of faith and that veil will be torn to pieces! There is but a step between your misery and music and dancing and a life of perpetual delights—take that step out of *self* and into Christ—and all is changed forever! Ask Jesus to break your bonds—and with a touch of His pierced hand He will make you free as the swallow on the wing which no cage can hold! You shall see Him, and never see your sin again, forever! God bless you and break the cart ropes, and remove the cords of vanity, for Jesus' sake. Amen.—

***"Listen now! the Lord has done it!
For He loved us unto death.
It is finished! He has saved us!
Only trust to what He says.
He has done it! Come and bless Him,***

***Spend in praise your ransomed breath
Evermore and evermore!
Oh, believe the Lord has done it!
Why linger? Why doubt?
All the clouds of black transgression
He Himself has blotted out.
He has done it! Come and bless Him,
Swell the grand thanksgiving shout,
Evermore and evermore.***

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 5.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—235, 587, 553.**

TO MY HEARERS AND READERS:

DEAR FRIENDS—Owing to delays upon the road, I only reached this place on Saturday night, wearied and weak. But this morning I am refreshed and hope to rest in real earnest! I would not sit down to write these lines were it not for the importunate requests of many friends who are so kindly interested in me. It is a joy to live in the hearts of others and to be thought of by them. But what is to be said of the great privilege of being thought upon of the Lord? “This honor have all the saints.” Each one of them may say, “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon *me*.” Hence He delights to hear from us because His delight is in us. What joy lies in the assurance that His thoughts towards us are thoughts of peace and not of evil! “How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God!” We are often wandering in thought, or we are cast down, doubtful and anxious, but He says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts.” “The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you.”

In this confidence let us possess our souls. Our lives, our cares, our trials, our concerns are all considered by a love which never grows cold, a wisdom which never mistakes and a power which never fails! Why, let us have delight in the Almighty and lift up our faces unto God, seeing He takes pleasure in His people and remembers them in their low estate with a mercy which endures forever.

Yours in the ever-remembering Father,

C. H. SPURGEON. Mentone, February 1, 1885.

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

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

THE LEAFLESS TREE

NO. 121

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, MARCH 8, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“But yet in it shall be a tenth and it shall return and shall be eaten, as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.”
Isaiah 6:13.***

OUR first business tonight will be briefly to explain the metaphor employed in the text. The Prophet was told that despite all the reproofs he was instructed to deliver and, notwithstanding the eloquent earnestness of his lips, which had been just touched with a live coal from off the altar, still the people of Israel would persevere in their sins and would, therefore, be certainly destroyed! He asked the question, “Lord, how long?” that is, “How long will the people be thus impenitent? How long will Your sore judgment thus continue?” And he was informed that God would waste and destroy the cities and their inhabitants till the land should be utterly desolate. Then it was added, for his comfort, “Yet in it shall be a tenth.” And so it happened, for when “Nebuchadnezzar carried away all Jerusalem,” the historian gives this reservation—“none remained save the poorer sort of the people of the land.” They were left by the captain of the guard, “to be vinedressers and farmers.” Thus in it there was a tenth. This small remnant of the people, however, was to be nearly destroyed, too! “It shall return and shall be eaten.” The sense is eaten up or consumed. The poor creatures left in the land, many of them, fled into Egypt at the time of the conspiracy of Ishmael, (not Ishmael, the son of Hagar but an unworthy member of the royal family of Judah). And there in Egypt most of them were cut off and perished. “But,” says God, “although only this tenth shall be preserved and then even this small part shall be subjected to many perils, yet Israel shall not be destroyed, for it shall be as a teil tree and as an oak.” Their “substance is in them, when they cast their leaves” and so lose their verdure and their beauty. Thus in like manner, a holy seed, a chosen remnant, shall still be the substance of the children of Israel when the fruitful land is stripped of its foliage and that fair garden of earth is barren as the desert.

The figure is taken, first of all, from the terebinth or turpentine tree—here translated the *teil tree*. That tree is an evergreen, with this excep-

tion, that in very severe and inclement weather, it loses its leaves. But even then the terebinth tree is not dead. And so the oak—it loses its leaves every year, of course, but even then it is not dead. “So,” says God, “you have seen the tree in winter standing naked and bare, without any sign of life. Its roots are buried in the hard and frozen soil and its naked branches exposed to every blast, without a bloom or a bud. Yet the substance is in the tree when the leaves are gone. It is still alive and it shall, by-and-by, in due season bud and bloom.” “So,” He says, “Nebuchadnezzar shall cut off all the leaves of the tree of Israel—take away the inhabitants—only a tenth shall be left and they shall well-near be eaten up! But still the Church of God and the Israel of God never shall be destroyed—they shall be like the terebinth tree and the oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves! So the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.”

I hope I have made the meaning of the passage as plain as words can make it. Now, then, for the application—first, *to the Jews*. Secondly, *to the Church*. Thirdly *to each Believer*.

I. First TO THE JEWS.

What a history is the history of the Jew! He has antiquity stamped upon his forehead. His is a lineage more noble than that of any knight or even king of this island, for he can trace his pedigree back to the very loins of Abraham! And through him to that Patriarch who entered into the ark and from there to Adam, himself. Our history is hidden in gloom and darkness—but theirs, with certainty, may be read from the first moment even down till now. And what a checkered history has been the history of the Jewish nation! Nebuchadnezzar seemed to have swept them all away with the huge broom of destruction. The tenth left was again given over to the slaughter and one would have thought we would have heard no more of Israel. But in a little time they rose, phoenix-like, from their ashes! A second Temple was built and the nation became strong, once more, though often swept with desolations. In the meantime it did abide—the scepter did not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet—until Shiloh came! And, since then, how huge have been the waves that have rushed over the Jewish race! The Roman emperor razed the city to the ground and left not a vestige standing. Another emperor changed the name of Jerusalem into that of Elijah and forbade a Jew to go within some miles of it, so that he might not even look upon his beloved city! It was plowed and left desolate. But is the Jew conquered? Is he a subjugated man? Is his country seized? No, he is still one of earth’s nobles—distressed, insulted, spit upon—still it is written, “To the Jew first and afterwards to the Gentile.” He claims a high dignity

above us and he has a history to come which will be greater and more splendid than the history of any nation that has yet existed! If we read the Scriptures aright, the Jews have a great deal to do with this world's history! They shall be gathered in. Messiah shall come, the Messiah they are looking for—the same Messiah who came once, shall come again—shall come as they expected Him to come the first time. They then thought He would come a prince to reign over them and so He will when He comes again. He will come to be King of the Jews and to reign over His people most gloriously. For when He comes, Jew and Gentile shall have equal privileges, though there shall yet be some distinction afforded to that royal family from whose loins Jesus came, for He shall sit upon the Throne of His father, David, and unto Him shall be gathered all nations—

***“You chosen seed of Israel’s race,
A remnant weak and small”***

You may, indeed—

***“Hail Him who saves you by His Grace,
And crown Him Lord of All.”***

Your church shall never die and your race shall never become extinct! The Lord has said it. “The race of Abraham shall endure forever and his seed as many generations.”

But why is it that the Jewish race is preserved? We have our answer in the text—“The holy seed is the substance thereof.” There is something mysterious within a tree—hidden and unknown which preserves life in it when everything outward tends to kill it. So in the Jewish race there is a secret element which keeps it alive. We know what it is. It is the “remnant according to the election of Grace.” In the worst of ages there has never been a day so black but there was a Hebrew found to hold the lamp of God! There has always been found a Jew who loved Jesus! And though the race now despises the great Redeemer, yet there are not a few of the Hebrew race who still love Jesus, the Savior of the uncircumcised, and bow before Him. It is these few, this holy seed, that are the substance of the nation and for their sake, through their prayers, because of God's love to them, He still says of Israel to all nations, “Touch not these My anointed, do My Prophets no harm. These are the descendants of Abraham, My friend. I have sworn and will not repent. I will show kindness unto them for their father's sake and for the sake of the remnant I have chosen.”

Let us think a little more of the Jews than we have been likely. Let us pray more often for them. “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love her.” As truly as any great thing is done in this world for Christ's Kingdom, the Jews will have more to do with it than any of

us have dreamed! So much for the first point. The Jewish nation is like “a teil tree and as an oak whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.”

II. And now, secondly, THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, whereof the Jewish people are but a dim shadow and an emblem.

The Church has had its trials—trials from without and trials within. It has had days of blood-red persecution and of fiery trial. It has had times of sad apostasy, when an evil heart of unbelief and departing from the living God has broken out and a root of bitterness springing up has troubled many and, thereby, they have been defiled. Yet, blessed be God, through all the winters of the Church, she still lived and she now gives signs of a sweeter springtide, a fresher greenness and a healthier condition than she has shown before for many a day! Why is it that the Church is still preserved, when she looks so dead? For this reason—that there is in the midst of her, though many are hypocrites and impostors—a “chosen seed,” who are the “substance thereof.” You might have looked back a hundred years ago upon the professing Church of Christ in this land and what a sad spectacle it would have exhibited! In the Church of England there was mere formality. In the Independent and Baptist denominations there was truth but it was dead, cold, lifeless truth. Ministers dreamed on in their pulpits and hearers snored in their pews—infidelity was triumphant. The House of God was neglected and desecrated. The Church was like a tree that had lost its leaves—it was in a wintry state. But did it die? No! There was a holy seed within it. Six young men were expelled from Oxford for praying, reading the Bible and talking to poor people about Christ. And these six young men, with many others whom the Lord had hidden by fifties in the caves of the earth, secret and unknown—these young men, leaders of a glorious revival, came out! And though ridiculed and laughed at as Methodists, they brought forth a great and glorious revival, almost equaling the commencement of the Gospel triumphs under Paul and the Apostles and very little inferior to the great reformation of Luther, of Calvin and Zwingli! And just now the Church is, to a great degree, in a barren and lifeless state. But will she therefore die? You say that true Doctrine is scarce, that zeal is rare, that there is little life and energy in the pulpit and true devotion in the pew, while formality and hypocrisy stalk over us and we sleep in our cradles. But will the Church die? No! She is like a teil tree and an oak. Her substance is in her when she has lost her leaves. There is still a holy seed in her that is the substance thereof! Where these are, we know not. Some, I doubt not, are here in this Church—some, I hope, are to be found in every Church of professing Christians—and woe the day to the

Church that loses her holy seed, for she must die, like the oak blasted by the lightning whose heart is scorched out of it—broken down because it has got no *substance* in it!

Let me now draw your attention, as a Church connected with this place, to this point—that the holy seed is the substance of the Church. A great many of you might be compared to the bark of the tree. Some of you are like the big limbs. Others are like pieces of the trunk. Well, we should be very sorry to lose any of you, but we could afford to do so without any serious damage to the life of the tree! Yet there are *some* here—God knows who they are—who are the substance of the tree. By the word, “substance,” is meant the *life*, the inward principle. The inward principle is in the tree when it has lost its leaves. Now God discerns some men in this Church, I doubt not, who are towards us like the inward principle of the oak—they are the substance of the Church. I would gladly hope that all the members of the Church, in some degree, contribute to the substance, but I cannot think so. I am obligated to say I doubt it, because, when one has fallen and another, it makes us remember that a Church has much in it that is not life. There are some branches on the vine that are cut off because they do not draw sap from the heart of it—they are only branches bound on by profession. They are pretended graftings that have never struck root into the parent stock and that must be cut off and hewn down and cast into the fire—but there is a holy seed in the Church that is the substance of it!

Please note here that the life of a tree is not determined by the shape of the branches, nor by the way it grows, but it is the *substance*. The shape of a Church is not its life! In one place I see a Church formed in an Episcopalian shape. In another place I see one formed in a Presbyterian shape. Then, again, I see one like ours, formed on an Independent principle. Here I see one with 16 ounces to the pound of Doctrine. There I see one with eight and some with very little clear Doctrine at all! And yet I find life in all the Churches, in some degree—some good men in all of them! How do I account for this? Why, just in this way—that the oak may be alive, whatever its shape, if it has got the *substance*. If there is but a holy seed in the Church, the Church will live! And it is astonishing how the Church will live under a thousand errors if there is but the vital principle in it! You will find good men among the denominations that you cannot receive as being sound in faith. You say, “What? Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” And you go through and find there are even in them some true Nazirites of the right order! The very best of men found in the worst of churches! A Church lives not because of its rubrics and its canons and its articles—it lives because of the holy seed that is in

it as the substance! No Church can die while it has got a holy seed in it and no Church can live that has *not* got the holy seed, for “the holy seed is the substance thereof.”

Observe, again, that the substance of the oak is a hidden thing—you cannot see it. When the oak or the terebinth is standing destitute of leaves, you know that life is there somewhere. But you cannot see it. And very likely you cannot and do not know the men who are the holy seed, the substance of the Church. Perhaps you imagine the substance of the Church lies in the pulpit. No, Friend! Let us pray to God that such of us as are in the pulpit may be a part of that substance, but much of the substance of the Church lies where you don't know anything about it! There is a mine near Plymouth where the men who work in it, 250 feet below the surface, have a little shelf for their Bibles and their hymn books—and a little place where every morning, when they go down into the black darkness, they bow before God and praise Him whose tender mercies are over all His works. You never heard of these miners, perhaps, and do not know of them. But perhaps some of them are the very substance of the Church! There sits Mr. Somebody in that pew—oh, what a support he is to the Church! Yes in money matters, perhaps, but do you know, there is poor old Mrs. Nobody in the aisle that is most likely a greater pillar to the Church than he, for she is a holier Christian, one who lives nearer to her God and serves Him better—she is, “the substance thereof.” Ah, that old woman is often in prayer in the attic. That old man on his bed that spends days and nights in supplication—such people as these are the substance of the Church! Oh, you may take away your prelates, your orators and the best and greatest of those who stand among earth's mighty men and their place could be replaced! But take away our intercessors—take away the men and women who breathe out prayer by night and day and, like the priests of old, offer the morning and evening lamb as a perpetual sacrifice—and you kill the Church at once! What are the ministers? They are but the arms of the Church and the lips of it. A man may be both dumb and armless and yet live. But these, the heavenly seed, the chosen men and women who live near their God and serve Him with sacred fervent piety—*these* are the heart of the Church! We cannot do without them! If we lose them, we will die. “The holy seed is the substance thereof.”

Then, my Hearer, you are a Church member. Let me ask you—are you one of the holy seed? Have you been begotten again to a lively hope? Has God made you holy by the sanctifying influence of His Spirit and by the justifying righteousness of Christ and by the application to your conscience of the blood of Jesus? If so, then you are the substance of the

Church! They may pass by you and not notice you, for you are little, but remember, the substance is little. The life-germ within the grain of barley is too small for us, perhaps, to detect. The life within the egg is almost an animalcule—you can scarcely see it. And so the life of the Church is among the little ones where we can scarcely find it out! Rejoice if you are much in prayer—you are the life of the Church! But you—oh you proud man—pull down your grand thoughts of yourself! You may give to the Church, you may speak for the Church and act for the Church—but unless you are a holy seed, you are not the substance thereof and it is the substance which is, in reality, of the greatest value!

But here let me say one thing before I leave this point. Some of you will say, “How is it that good men are the means of preserving the visible Church?” I answer, the holy seed does this because it derives its life from Christ. If the holy seed had to preserve the Church by its own purity and its own strength, the Church would go to the dogs tomorrow! But it is because these holy ones continually draw fresh life from Christ that they are able to be, as it were, the salvation of the body and, by their influence, direct and indirect, shed life over the whole visible Church! The prayers of those living ones in Zion bring down many a blessing upon us! The groans and cries of these earnest intercessors prevail with Heaven and bring down very rich supplies of mercy from the gates of Paradise! And besides, their holy example tends to check us and preserve us in purity! They walk among us like God’s own favored ones, wrapped in white, reflecting His image wherever they go and tending, under God, to the sanctifying of Believers—not through their vaunting any self-righteousness, but by stirring up Believers to do more for Christ and to be more like He! “The holy seed shall be the substance thereof.”

III. And now I come to the third point. This is true of EVERY INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER—his substance is in him when he has lost his leaves.

The Arminian says that when a Christian loses his leaves, he is dead. “No,” says God’s Word, “he is not. He may look as if he were dead and not have so much as here and there a leaf upon the topmost branch, but he is not dead. “Their substance is in them even when they lose their leaves.”

By losing their leaves, allow me to understand two things. Christians lose their leaves when they lose their comforts, when they lose the sensible enjoyment of their Master’s Presence and when their full assurance is turned into doubt. You have had many such a time as that, have you not? Ah, you were one day in such a state of joy, that you said you could—

“Sit and sing yourself away

To everlasting bliss.”

But a wintry state came and your joy all departed. You stood like a bare tree after the wind had swept it in the time of winter, with just perhaps one sere leaf hanging by a thread on the topmost branch! But you were not dead—no, your substance was in you, when you had lost your leaves. You could not see that substance and good reason why, because your life was hid with Christ in God! You saw not your signs but you still had your substance, though you could not see it. There was no heaving of faith, but faith was there. There was no looking out of hope, but though hope’s eyelids were shut, the eyes were there, to be opened afterwards. There was no lifting, perhaps, of the hand of ardent prayer, but the hands and arms were there, though they hung powerless by the side. God said, afterwards, “Strengthen the feeble knees and lift up the hands that hang down.” Your substance was in you when you had lost your leaves! Good Baxter says—“We do not see our Graces, except when they are in exercise and yet they are as much there when they are not in exercise as when they are.” Says he, “Let a man take a walk into a forest. There lies a hare or a rabbit asleep under the leaves—but he cannot see the creature until it is frightened and it runs out. Then he sees it to be there.” So if faith is in exercise, you will perceive your evidence—but if faith is slumbering and still, you may be led to doubt its existence—and yet it is there all the while—

***“Mountains when in darkness hidden,
Are as real as in day,”***

said one. And truly the faith of the Christian, when shrouded by doubts and fears, is just as much there as when he rejoices devoutly in the display of it!

It is a common error of young converts that they attempt to live by their experience instead of tracing their life up to its precious Source. I have known persons rejoicing in the fullest assurance one day and sinking into the deepest despondency the next. The Lord will sometimes strip you of the leaves of evidence to teach you to live by faith, as John Kent says—

***“If today He deigns to bless us
With a sense of pardoned sin,
He tomorrow may distress us
Make us feel the plague within—
All to make us
Sick of self and fond of Him!”***

But ah, there is a worse phase to the subject than this! Some Christians lose their leaves not by doubts but by sin. This is a tender topic—one which needs a tender hand to touch. Oh, there are some in our

churches that have lost their leaves by lust and sin! They were once fair professors—they stood green among the Church, like the very leaves of Paradise! But in an evil hour they fell, the slaves of temptation. They were God's own people by many infallible marks and signs—and if they were so, though it is grievous that they should have lost their leaves, yet there is the sweet consolation—their substance is still in them—they are still the Lord's! They are still His living children, though they have fallen into the coma of sin and are now in a fainting fit, having gone astray from Him and having their animation suspended, while life is still there. Some, as soon as they see a Christian do anything inconsistent with his profession, say, "That man is no child of God. He cannot be! It is impossible." Yes, but, Sir, remember what he taught, who once said—"If a Brother errs, you that are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted." It is a fact! Deny it who will and abuse it, if you please, to your own wicked purposes. I cannot help it—it is a fact that some living children of God have been allowed—and an awful allowance it is—to go into the very blackest sins! Do you think David was not a child of God, even when he sinned? It is a hard subject to touch. But it is not to be denied. He had the life of God within him before and though he sinned—oh, horrid and awful was the crime—yet his substance was in him when he lost his leaves! And many a child of God has gone far away from his Master—but his substance is in him.

And how do we know this? Because a dead tree never lives again! If the substance is really gone, it never lives. And God's Holy Word assures us that if the real life of Grace could die out in anyone, it could never come again. For says the Apostle, "it is impossible, if they have been once enlightened and have tasted the Heavenly gift and have been partakers of the Holy Spirit"—if these fall away—"it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." Their tree is "dead, plucked up by the roots." And the Apostle Peter says—"For if, after they have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, they are again turned back, their last end shall be worse than the first." But now take David, or take Peter, whichever you please. Peter we will have. Oh, how foully did he curse his Master! With many an oath he denied Him. But had not Peter the life of God in him, then? Yes. And how do we know? Because when his Master looked upon him, he "went out and wept bitterly." Ah, if he had been a dead man, hardened and without the substance in him, his Master might have looked to all eternity and he would not have wept bitterly! How do I know that David was yet alive? Why, by this—that although there was a long, long winter and there were many pricks of conscience—like the workings

of the sap within a tree, abortive attempts to thrust forward here and there a shoot before its time—yet when the hour was come and Nathan came to him and said, “You are the man,” had David been dead, without the life of God, he would have spurned Nathan from him and might have done what Manasseh had done with Isaiah—cut him in pieces in his anger! But instead of that, he bowed his head and wept before God. And still it is written, “The Lord has put away your sin, you shall not die.” His substance was in him when he lost his leaves! Oh, have pity upon poor fallen Brothers and Sisters! Burn them not! They are not dead logs—though their leaves are gone, their substance is in them! God can see Grace in their hearts when you cannot see it. He has put a life there that can never expire, for He has said, “I give unto My sheep *eternal* life,” and that means a life that lives forever! The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into *everlasting* life. You may choke the well up with big stones but the water will yet find its way out and well up notwithstanding. And so the heir of Heaven may to the grief of the Church and to the injury of himself most grievously transgress. Weep, my eyes, O weep for any that have done so! O bleed, my heart and you have bled, for any that have so sinned! But yet their “substance is in them, when they cast their leaves”—so “the holy seed”—that is, Christ within them, the Holy Spirit within them, the new creature within them—“the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.”

Poor Backslider! Here is a word of comfort for you! I would not comfort you in your sins. God forbid! But if you know your sins and hate them, let me comfort you. You are not dead! As Jesus said of the damsel, “She is not dead but sleeps,” so let me say of you, “You are not dead. You shall yet live.” Do you repent? Do you grieve over your sin? That is the bud that shows that there is life within! When a common sinner, sins, he repents not, or if he does repent, it is a legal repentance. His conscience tricks him but he hushes it. He does not leave his sin and turn from it. But did you ever see a child of God after he had been washed from a foul sin? He is a changed man! I know such an one who used to carry a merry countenance and many were the jokes he made in company. But when I met him after an awful sin, there was a solemnity about his countenance that was unusual to him. He looked, I should say, something like Dante, the poet, of whom the boys said, “There is the man that has been in Hell”—because he had written of Hell and looked like it—he looked so terrible. And when we spoke of sin, there was such a solemnity about him. And when we spoke of going astray, the tears ran down his cheeks, as much as to say, “I have been astray, too.” He seemed like good Christian, after he had been in Giant Despair’s castle. Do you not remember,

Beloved, the guide who took the pilgrims up to the top of a hill called Clear? He showed them from the top of the hill a lot of men with their eyes put out, groping among the tombs and Christian asked what it meant. Said the guide, "These are pilgrims that were caught in Giant Despair's castle. The giant had their eyes put out and they are left to wander among the tombs to die and their bones are to be left in the courtyard." Whereupon John Bunyan very naively says, "I looked and saw their eyes full of water, for they remembered they might have been there, too." Just like the man talked and spoke that I once knew—he seemed to wonder why God had not left him to be an apostate forever, as the lot of Judas or Demas! He seemed to think it such a startling thing that while many had gone aside altogether from God's way, he should still have had his substance in him, when he had lost his leaves and that God should still have loved him!

Perhaps, Beloved, God allows some such men to live and sin and afterwards repent for this reason—you know there are some voices needed in music that are very rare and when, now and then, such a voice is to be heard, everyone will go to hear it. I have thought that perhaps some of these men in Heaven will sing soprano notes before the Throne—choice, wondrous notes of Grace, because they have gone into the depths of sin after profession and yet He loved them when their feet made haste to Perdition and fetched them up because He "loved them well." There are but few such, for most men will go foully into sin. They will go out from us because they are not of us, for if they had been of us they would doubtless have continued with us. But there have been a few such—great saints, then great backsliding sinners—and then, by His Grace, great saints again. Their substance was in them when they had lost their leaves. Oh, you that have gone far astray, sit and weep! You cannot weep too much, though you should cry with Herbert—

***"Oh, who will give me tears? Come all you springs,
Dwell in my head and eyes—come, clouds and rain!
My grief has need of all the watery things,
That nature has produced."***

You might well say—

***"Let every vein
Suck up a river to supply my eyes,
My weary weeping eyes. Too dry for me
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies,
To bear them out and with my state agree."***

But yet remember, "He has not forsaken His people, neither has He cut them off." For He still says—

***"Return, O wanderer, return,
And seek an injured Father's heart."***

Return! Return! Return! Your Father's heart still longs for you! He speaks through the written oracles at this moment, saying, "How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, O Israel? How can I make you as Admah? How can I set you as Zeboim? My heart longs. My repentings are kindled together. For I will heal their backslidings, I will receive them graciously, I will love them freely, for they are Mine still. As the terebinth and as the oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves, even so the holy seed within, the elect and called vessels of mercy, is still the substance thereof."

And now, what have I to say to some of you who live in black sin and yet excuse yourselves on account of the recorded falls of God's people? Sirs, know this—inasmuch as you do this, you twist the Scriptures to your own destruction! If one man has taken poison and there has been a physician by his side so skillful that he has saved his life by a heavenly antidote, is that any reason why you, who have no physician and no antidote, should yet think that the poison will not kill you? Why Man, the sin that does not damn a Christian, because Christ washes him in His blood, will damn you! Said Brookes—and I will repeat his words and have done—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, said the Apostle, be his sins ever so many. But he that believes not shall be damned, be his sins ever so few." Truly your sins may be little but you are lost for them without Christ! Your sins may be great, but if Christ pardons them, then you shall be saved! Then the one question I have to ask of you, is—Have you Christ? For if you have not, then you have not the holy seed—you are a dead tree and in due time you shall be tinder for Hell! You are a rotten-hearted tree, all touch-wood, ready to be broken in pieces, eaten by the worms of lust! And ah, when the fire shall take hold of you, what a blazing and a burning! Oh, that you had life! Oh, that God would give it to you! Oh, that you would now repent! Oh, that you would cast yourself on Jesus! Oh, that you would turn to Him with full purpose of heart! For then, remember, you would be saved—saved now and saved forever. For "the holy seed" would be "the substance thereof."

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

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

THE DIVINE CALL FOR MISSIONARIES

NO. 1351

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING APRIL 22, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send,
and who will go for Us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.”
Isaiah 6:8.*

BROTHERS AND SISTERS, the heathen are perishing and there is but one way of salvation for them, for there is but one name given under Heaven among men whereby they must be saved. God, in the glorious unity of His Divine Nature is calling for messengers who shall proclaim to men the way of life. Out of the thick darkness my ears can hear that sound mysterious and Divine, “Whom shall I send?” If you will but listen with the ear of faith you may hear it in this house today—“Whom shall I send?” While the world lies under the curse of sin, the living God, who wills not that any should perish but that they should come to repentance, is seeking heralds to proclaim His mercy. He is asking, even in pleading terms, for some who will go forth to the dying millions and tell the wondrous story of His love—“Whom shall I send?”

As if to make the voice more powerful by a threefold utterance we hear the sacred Trinity enquire, “Who will go for Us?” The Father asks, “Who will go for Me and invite My far-off children to return?” The Son enquires, “Who will seek for Me, My redeemed but wandering sheep?” The Holy Spirit demands, “In whom shall I dwell and through whom shall I speak that I may convey life to the perishing multitudes?” God, in the unity of His Nature, cries, “Whom shall I send?” and in the trinity of His Persons, He asks, “Who will go for Us?” Happy shall we be, today, if earnest responses shall be heard in this house—“Here am I, send me.” It is ours, at any rate, very solemnly to put the matter before you, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and while we shall try to plead Jehovah’s cause we trust the Holy Spirit may be here, saying of one and another, quite unknown to us, “Separate Me Saul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have called them.”

Yes, may the constraining voice of the special call of Grace come to the ear of some here present who shall respond like young Samuel and say, “Here am I, for You did call me.” First, we shall, this morning, consider the vision of Glory in reference to the offer of service made by the Prophet—the vision which he saw. And secondly, the vision of ordination which he more than saw, for his lips were touched. Thirdly, we will speak upon the Divine Voice and conclude by dwelling upon the earnest response.

I. Reverently, and with all our hearts attention, let us gaze upon THE VISION OF GLORY which Isaiah saw. It was necessary for him to see it in order that he might be brought into the condition of heart out of which

should come the full consecration expressed in—"Here am I, send me." Observe what he saw. He saw, first, the supreme Glory of God. "I saw the Lord," he says, "sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." Was it Jesus that he saw? Was this one of the anticipations of His future Incarnation? Probably so, for John writes in his 12th chapter, at the 41st verse, "These things said Isaiah, when he saw His Glory, and spoke of Him"—referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. We will not, however, insist upon that interpretation, for the word, "Lord," doubtless included, at times, the whole Godhead and, therefore, the vision may have represented the Lord Himself revealed in visible form.

As to His absolute Essence, eyes cannot behold the Lord, but He chooses to make an apparition of Himself—appearing among men in such a form as may come under the understanding of their senses. Now, Brothers and Sisters, we know of nothing that will supply a better motive for missionary work, or for Christian effort of any sort, than a sight of the Divine Glory. This is one of the strongest impulses a soul can feel. Behold, O believers in the Divine Word, at this day the Lord God, even Jehovah, is not dethroned, but sits on the Throne of His Glory! Some know Him not and others deny Him and blaspheme Him, but He is still God over all, blessed forever!

See the patience of His infinite majesty—He sits in calm Glory upon His eternal Throne. The nations furiously rage and imagine a vain thing but, "He that sits in the heavens does laugh; the Lord does have them in derision." Still are His purposes fulfilled and His soul abides in its serenity. He is the same and of His years there is no end. He sits as a King, observe, upon a throne—He never renounces His sovereignty and dominion. All things still feel the Omnipotence of the reign of God. "The Lord has prepared His Throne in the heavens and His Kingdom rules over all." The rebellions of men, can they ever shake His firm dominion? No, but out of their wildest uproar He fashions order and by their most violent resistance He works His own purposes! After all, the Lord reigns—let the earth rejoice, let the multitudes of the isles be glad! Still, despite all the hurly-burly of war and all the wickedness of men in the dark places of the earth, and the detestable blasphemies of the heathen against the Most High, the Lord sits on a throne which can never be shaken.

Nor is it a mean throne, either, nor one of little dignity. It is "high and lifted up." It is not merely above all other thrones by way of greater power, but over them all by way of supreme dominion over them, for He is King of kings and Lord of lords! I wish, dear Brothers and Sisters, we could get a glimpse of the Glory and power and dominion which belong to the Most High! If we did, though it would certainly humble us in the very dust, yet it would fire us with a consecrated indignation against those who set up other gods. It would fill us with a sacred courage to do and dare anything against these blind, deaf and dumb deities to whom it is almost too great an honor to pour contempt upon them! And it would make us feel confidence in the ultimate success of the cause and kingdom of the living God.

Even now, while He restrains His hand, He sits upon a throne high and lifted up and is even now the Governor among the nations. The day shall

surely come when all nations shall behold His Throne and bow before it and God shall be seen to be Lord over all. The God whom we serve is able to give victory to His own cause. Here is an impulse for us in all warring for His cause and crown. If you choose to take the text as referring to the Lord Jesus Christ, what a delight it is for us to think that there is no more for Him the thorny crown and the cruel lance and the contemptuous spit, but He who bowed His head to death has left the dead, no more to die and ascended to the right hand of God, even the Father!

God, having highly exalted Him, He now sits upon a throne high and lifted up. This, in fact, is the origin of our commission—"Go you, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Because all power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth, therefore we are to go forth and subdue the people under His feet. O, when will His Church fully believe in the Glory of her Lord and rejoice therein, so that His power shall fill her, as His train filled the temple? If we cannot behold His greatest glories, yet we pray that His Presence, by the Holy Spirit, like the perfumed smoke and the resplendent hems of His robes, may be known among us and fill us with adoration. Did the posts of the door move at that august Presence? Let our hearts be moved, also, as in lowly adoration we bow before Him who is Lord and Christ!

But then Isaiah saw, also, the court of the great King. He beheld the glorious attendants who perpetually perform homage, nearest to His Throne. He says, "Above it (or rather above Him) stood the seraphims," not implying that their feet rested upon the earth, or upon any other solid substance, but that they were stationary around and above the great King, poised in mid air in a circle, like a rainbow round about the Throne of God, or as a bodyguard surrounding the Throne of Majesty. There they were, waiting to know His pleasure, on the wing, ready for any errand and adoring while they waited. These seraphim may furnish us with a pattern for Christian service—as the Throne of God becomes the impulse to that service, so let these serve us as the model.

They dwell near the Lord and so should we. He is their center and their bliss, even so should He be ours. But I specially note that they were *burning* ones, for such is the meaning of the word *seraphims*, a term applied in the Hebrew to the fiery flying serpents of the wilderness. These courtiers of the great King were creatures of fire, ablaze with ardor—all glowing and shining, they worship Him—"who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire." Jehovah, who is a consuming fire, can only fitly be served by those who are on fire, whether they are angels or men. Hence that solemn question, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isa. 33:14).

None can do this but the man on fire with Divine Love. In the Presence of that consuming fire, it is not possible for lukewarmness or indifference to exist, we would be utterly burned up. To act as courtier before the burning Throne of God requires a seraphic or burning spirit and if we become lethargic and soulless we shall not be counted worthy to be employed on Divine errands. Therefore, let all coolness of love and slumber-

ing of spirit be removed. May the Lord make us, like John the Baptist, burning and shining lights! These courtiers of God were burning ones and they are, also, pictured to us—for remember these are only representations of things actually invisible and seen only in vision—as having six wings. Such are His servants full of motion, full of life!

Some that I know of who profess to serve the Lord seem to have no wings at all, but are stolid and inactive—more like the sloth than the seraph—having more weight than wing. Those who come near Him should be all in motion, quick, active, willing, awake, energetic, ready to fly upon the Lord's business with a mighty swiftness. In a word, six fold should be their wings, that they may not tarry nor tire, nor linger nor loiter in the way. Have we such readiness of mind as this? Having life and motion, these glorious spirits use their powers with prudence and discretion. They use not all their wings for flight, but with two, each one covered his face, for even *they* cannot gaze upon the dazzling brightness of Jehovah's Throne and, therefore, in humble shamefacedness of awe they adore with veiled countenance!

“With two he covered his feet,” or his body, or his lower parts, for the seraph remembers that even though sinless, he is yet a creature and, therefore, he conceals himself in token of his nothingness and unworthiness in the Presence of the thrice Holy One. The middle pair of wings was used for flight, for mere bashfulness and humility cannot offer complete adoration, there must be active obedience and readiness of heart for service. Thus they have four wings for adoration and two for active energy—four to conceal themselves and two with which to occupy themselves in service. We may learn from them that we shall serve God best when we are most deeply reverend and humbled in His Presence. Veneration must be in larger proportion than vigor—adoration must exceed activity.

As Mary at Jesus' feet was preferred to Martha and her much serving, so must sacred reverence take the first place and energetic service follow in due course. The angels do His commands, hearkening unto His voice and thus they excel. Our excellence must lie in the same direction—the union of worship with work in due proportions. The covering of the face is as necessary as the flight. The burning one is as seraphic in the veiling of his feet as in the stretching of his wings. Let us pray the Lord will fill us with the Divine enthusiasm, which is the work of the Holy Spirit, and so make us burning ones. And then when He has winged us with sacred energy, may He make us humble in mind, removing from us all vain curiosity, so that we shall not attempt to gaze with uncovered eyes on the great Incomprehensible. Let us pray that He will take away all unhallowed presumption, so that we will use no proud bravado, but cover our feet in the solemn Presence of the Holy One. Let us ask God to make us ready to every good word and work, swift to go anywhere and everywhere, as He may call us, being, as it were, six-winged in the service of our God!

Again, another part of the vision of Isaiah in the temple was the perpetual song, for these sacred beings continually cried, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His Glory.” Brothers and Sisters, let us take this cry to be the life song of each one of us! Adore the

holy God, perfection's self! Whatever He shall do with you, bless Him and still call Him holy. Find no fault with His dispensations—never dare to quarrel with any of His ways. Holy, holy, holy, is He in all things. In creation, Providence and redemption He is holy, holy, holy! Praise Him with ardor! Be not content to call Him holy once, but dwell upon the theme! Extol the Lord with all your might! Raise again and again, and again the sacred song.

Adore not only the Father, but the Son and the ever-blessed Spirit—let the Trinity in Unity be the object of your perpetual adoration—

***“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee!
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!”***

While you praise His holiness do not forget His power, but adore Him as “Jehovah of Hosts.” He is as great as He is good, as high as He is holy, as potent as He is pure! He created the heavens, the earth and all the hosts of them. Legions of angels do His bidding! Hosts of intelligences wait His call! All forces of Nature, animate and inanimate, march at His command! From the crash of thunder to the flight of an insect, all things are at His beck and call. Hosts of birds migrate at His direction. Hosts of fishes swarm the sea at His call. Hosts of locusts and caterpillars devour the fields at His order. His armies are innumerable and all living things are in their regiments a part of His camp which is very great.

Men, also, whether they will or not, shall be subservient to His supreme dominion. Their armies and their navies fulfill His decrees even when they think not of Him. He is Lord of all! Exult in this and let your hearts be brave because of it. And then dwell, that you may feel a missionary spirit, on that last part of the song, “The whole earth is filled with His Glory,” for so it really is in one sense. “Jehovah of Hosts is the fullness of the whole earth.” God is glorious all over the world! Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of His Glory. Everything adores Him except that wandering, wayward creature, man! Turn this ascription, for it may be so read, into a wish—“Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory.”

Read it, if you please, as a prophecy—“The whole earth *shall* be filled with His glory,” and then go forward, O you servants of the Most High, with this resolve—that in His hands you will be the means of fulfilling the prophecy by spreading abroad the knowledge of His name among the sons of men! The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, and He must reign over it. Are you going to succumb to the modern theory that the world is never to be converted to God? Is human history to end with the triumph of the devil over the Church of God? Is the Lord about to give up the present battle of good with evil with feeble men as the instruments? Are the conditions of the conflict to be changed altogether? Is the Holy Spirit to fail until an earthly kingdom is set up for the Lord Jesus?

Is the Gospel never to spread among the heathen? Is Christ to come upon an unenlightened heathen world, with Mohammed, the false prophet, still unconquered and the harlot of Rome still upon her seven hills and all the idols in their places? Is the battle which now glorifies God

by the weakness of man to be fought out in another manner? You may believe it if you will and go to the beds of your inglorious sloth! But I think there is something more worthy of faith than that, namely, that God will be victorious all along the line in the present battle and in the present style of conflict! By His Church, His Word and His Spirit, He means to win the victory! By the testimony of weak, feeble men to the Gospel of His Grace, He means to conquer the powers of darkness!

For nearly 2,000 years our Lord has stood foot to foot with Satan and He will not end this wrestling match till He has given His foe a deadly fall! Then the shout shall go up from a ransomed world, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns." Our prayers will never end till we see the desire of pious David fulfilled when he said, "Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory! Amen, and amen. The prayers of David, the son of Jesse are ended." We are looking and laboring for that consummation and we believe that we shall realize it, though it looks most improbable, especially just now when the heathen are converting our missionaries instead of the missionaries converting the heathen! We have had bishops turned into Zulus instead of Zulus into Christians and several other instances less known to evil fame!

But we still believe in the conquest of the world because we believe in the Omnipotence of God. Nothing short of "dominion from sea to sea" dare we ask in prayer or seek in service for our Lord Jesus! The idols must be utterly abolished! Error and sin must fly before the light of the Truth of God and holiness! The ends of the earth must yet see the salvation of our God and the whole earth must be filled with His Glory!

II. Let us now turn our thoughts to THE VISION OF ORDINATION. This man, Isaiah, was to go forth in Jehovah's name, but in order to preparation for so high a privilege, he must undergo a process peculiar but necessary. He was brought into a state which, to human judgment, would seem to disqualify him for all future usefulness, crushing the courage out of him and leaving him like a bruised reed. By reason of the glorious vision which he saw, there was no strength left in him. He was cast down as low as he could well go with a sense of his own utter unworthiness and felt himself to be less than nothing.

In the Presence of God he cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips." "Alas, alas, alas," he says, "woe has taken possession of my soul. I am destroyed by it." Yes, dear Brother, and this is our way to *success*—God will never do anything with us till He has, first of all, undone us! We must be taken to pieces and made to undergo a process much like destruction—and then we shall be newly fashioned according to a nobler mold—more fit to be used by our great Lord. I shall not regret if every Brother here called to the work of the Lord shall feel as if he could not go on with it and shall mourn daily his incapacity, his unworthiness and failure! It is good for us to be laid in the dust. Downward in breaking, in crushing, in grinding, in being made into dust we must go, for this is the way to be made strong in the Lord and in the power of His might! The death of *self* is the life of Divine Grace. When we are weak then are we strong. We can only rise to ability for the most noble errands by

being emptied of all self-sufficiency and filled with the all-sufficient Spirit of God!

Observe, next, that he made a confession of sin while thus prostrate. He said, "I am a man of unclean lips." Why does he lament the uncircumcision of his *lips* rather than the evil of his heart? It was partly because he longed to join the seraphim in their song but felt his lips unfit. And more because he was a Prophet and, therefore, his lips were the instruments of his office and he was most conscious of sin where he felt most the need of Grace. I know not that Isaiah had ever kept back any part of the Truth of God, or that he had spoken in uncomely tones, or that in his work of prophecy he had in *anything* been unfaithful, but yet he felt his shortcomings. There was nothing about him that you and I could have seen to find fault with, but *he* saw it. He felt it!

And what minister is there, that God has ever sent, who does not, when he surveys his ministry, feel that he is a man of unclean lips? Often and often does our soul say, "Oh that these lips had language! They are poor dumb things that will not speak aright. O that instead of flesh they were flames—that we might let fall a burning torrent of persuasions, entreaties and solicitations which should run amid multitudes of men like fire in dry stubble!" But it is not so with us. We are often cold and lifeless and so we are made to mourn that we have unclean lips. Who, that ever saw the Glory of God, or the love of Christ, would refuse to join in this confession?

And, then, this man of God felt, also, a deep sense of the sin of the people among whom he dwelt. He cried, "I dwell among a people of unclean lips." I do not think a man can be a good missionary if he winks at the sin that surrounds him. Unless it stinks in his nostrils. Unless it makes his soul boil with holy indignation. Unless, like Paul, his heart is stirred in him, how can he speak as he should speak, the message of his God? Familiarity with evil too often takes off the edge of tender feelings. Men readily cease to weep over the sin which is always before their eyes. You may look upon the superstitions of Rome till you almost admire the gallant show! And I suppose you may regard heathen temples till the majesty of their architecture may make you forget the infamy of their purpose.

But it must not be so! We must feel that we dwell among a people of unclean lips and we must bear their sins upon our hearts, repenting *for* them if they will not repent, and breaking our hearts over them because their hearts are as granite against their God. Only in such a frame of mind shall we be fit to go forth in God's name. And do you notice that he had a sacred awe upon him because of the Divine Presence? Do you see how bowed down he was because his eyes had seen the King, the Lord of Hosts? O favored servant of God! Isaiah, you are honored above your fellows, to behold God's Throne and Glory! What would you and I not give if we might but have stood in the temple, peered within the doorway and gazed into the smoke—and have seen some glimpse of the brightness? But Isaiah never exulted in it. On the contrary, he cried, "Woe is me!" There is no thought of the dignity to which the marvelous sight has lifted him—deep in the dust he cries, "I am undone, for I have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts!"

Now this awe-full sense of the Divine Presence is necessary to make a man serve the Lord fitly and acceptably. Forget that God is all around you, forget that you live in His Presence and are His servant—get away from Him and you can be careless—you can restrain your zeal and your conscience may be at ease. But let a man feel that God sees him and let him know that he is under His immediate guidance and he will be awakened at once to do the will of the Lord on earth after the fashion in which it is done in Heaven! He will put forth all his energies because God should be served with our best! But conscious that when he has done his best, he has fallen short of the glory of God, he will be very humble, as those *should* be who are in such a Presence.

O Lord Jesus, by Your Holy Spirit give us an overpowering sense of Your Presence! If You will but do this, we shall be a tabernacle full of worshippers, first, and of workers afterwards, and shall cheerfully adore You and labor for You. In this second part of the Prophet's vision, the most notable thing is the way in which God met and removed His servant's infirmities. His unclean lips were his great impediment. Where he most needed power, he most felt his infirmity, and so there came a seraph with the golden tongs, or snuffers, and took a burning coal from off the altar and touched his lips with it. What does this mean? We have the explanation—"Your iniquity is taken away and Your sin purged."

Fellowship with the great Sacrifice—the application of one of the coals which consumed the ever blessed Jesus is the way to make our lips ready for preaching! I believe that most of my dear Hearers have the application of the live coal to their *hearts* so as to have been purged, for we believe in Him who died for us and we are resting in His great sacrifice. But in order to be prepared for service we need to have that coal touching us again till we feel the fire. We need fellowship with the pangs and woes of Christ! We need to feel as if we, too, wished to be consumed for others, as He was consumed for us! The disinterested love which made Him die must come and influence us, that we may be willing to die for others. We need just that.

Did it not make you feel joy in your fellow men, the other day, when you read of the poor men in the pit and of their gallant deliverers? One rejoiced that manhood could exhibit such heroism. "We can do no more," said some, "it is death to go into the pit again. We cannot rescue the poor fellows and it is idle to throw away life for no purpose." The brave men who had been toiling there in the bowels of the earth, finding themselves in the presence of almost certain death, might well have stood back, but not so the bold Welshmen. One said, "If it is death to go and save them, I will go, death or no death," and then others came forward and said they would go, also. Had I been there I should have been ready to weep, because, being unskilled in the miner's craft, I should have been helpless to assist. But they would not have lacked my heartiest cheers and most ardent prayers, nor anything else that I could have done.

Assuredly since Jesus Christ has died for us, we need to be touched with something of that same zeal for the rescue of others from eternal ruin. A coal from off the altar where He was consumed must be laid on us

that we may feel willing to make any sacrifice for His dear sake and for the souls of men! That touching of the lips was the Lord's way of setting the Prophet on fire where the fire was needed. He needed lips blistered with the griefs of Christ and burning with love to men's souls—and he had such lips bestowed upon him by his God—and so was he fit to go and preach in the name of the Lord. Here, then, is the true ordination for a Christian worker!

You must be *nothing*, lying in the dust with confession of sin—and you must be purged by the great Sacrifice of Calvary and your tongue compelled to tell the tale because you have felt such royal mercy, such free mercy, such unspeakable mercy, that if you did not speak of it, the very stones in the street would cry out against you! You need this for your preparation and if you have it, my Brother, you have obtained your ordination from the great Shepherd and Bishop of your souls—and you need no other!

III. When a man is prepared for sacred work he is not long before he receives a commission. We come, then, to think of THE DIVINE CALL. I feel in my soul, though I cannot speak it out, an inward grieving sympathy with God, that God Himself should have to cry from His Throne, "Whom shall I send?" Alas, my God, are there no volunteers for Your service? What? All these priests and sons of Aaron—will none of these run upon Your errand? And all these Levites, will not one of them offer himself? No, not one. Ah, it is grievous, grievous beyond all thought, that there should be such multitudes of men and women in the Church of God who, nevertheless, seem unfit to be sent upon the Master's work, or at least never offer to go, and He has to cry, "Whom shall I send?"

What? Out of all these saved ones, no willing messengers to the heathen! Where are his ministers? Will none of these cross the seas to heathen lands? Here are thousands of us working at home. Are none of us called to go abroad? Will none of us carry the Gospel to regions beyond? Are none of us bound to go? Does the Divine Voice appeal to our thousands of preachers and find no response so that again it cries, "Whom shall I send?" Here are multitudes of professing Christians making money, getting rich, eating the fat and drinking the sweet—is there not one to go for Christ? Men travel abroad for trade—will they not go for Jesus? They even risk life amid eternal snows—are there no heroes for the Cross?

Here and there a young man, perhaps with little qualifications and no experience, offers himself—and he may or may not be welcomed. But can it be true that the majority of educated, intelligent Christian young men are more willing to let the heathen be damned than to let the treasures of the world go into other hands? Alas, for some reason or other, (I am not going to question the reasons), God Himself may look over all His Church and, finding no volunteers, may utter the pathetic cry, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?"

But there were the six-winged seraphim. Why did not the Lord send them? Ah, Brothers and Sisters, that He might have done, but it is not according to the order of the Gospel dispensation, for He is pleased, by the foolishness of *preaching* to save them that believe—and the preachers

must be men like the rest of mankind. It is great condescension on His part that He has chosen men and unto the angels He has not put in subjection the world to come whereof we speak. But He has given this honor to *us*, putting His treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be all His own. We ought to rejoice in this, but it is sad, surpassingly sad, that from among myriads of willing seraphim, God's cry should come to unwilling men, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us."

I call to your attention, again, to the fact that this is the voice of the one God and it is, also, the question of the sacred Trinity—"Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" The Father, Son and Spirit thus question us—shall not the threefold Voice be regarded? Notice the particular kind of man for whom this Voice is seeking. It is a *man* who must be sent, a man under impulse, a man under authority—"Whom shall I send?" But it is a man who is quite willing to go, a *volunteer*, one who, in his inmost heart, rejoices to obey—"Who will go for Us?" What a strange mingling this is! "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel," and yet, "taking the oversight of the flock of God not by constraint but willingly." Irresistible impulse and cheerful choice and Omnipotent compulsion and joyful eagerness most mysteriously combine! We must have a mingling of these two!

I do not know that I could put into so many words that wonderful feeling of freeness and overpowering impulse, of necessity and freedom, but our experience understands what our language cannot express. We are willing and yet a power is over us. We are willing in the day of God's power, coming forth as freely as the dewdrops from the womb of the morning and yet as truly the product of Divine power as *they* are. Such must God's servant be. I wonder if I echo and re-echo the voice of God, this morning, whether it will find amidst the thousands in this house and the thousands that may read this word, some loving responses in at least a few chosen hearts? "Whom shall I send?"—it is Jehovah's voice. "And who will go for Us?"—it is the voice of the bleeding Lamb! It is the voice of the loving Father! It is the voice of the ever blessed Spirit!

Does no one leap up at this moment and freely offer himself? Must I speak in vain? Ah, that were a light thing—must the Voice from Heaven be in vain? Did the child Samuel reply, "Here am I, for You did call me," and will no full-grown man answer to the voice of the Eternal? With your hearts and consciences I leave it.

IV. Now comes the last point, and that is THE EARNEST RESPONSE. The reply of Isaiah was, "Here am I; send me." I think I see in that response a consciousness of his being in a certain position which no one else occupied, which rendered it incumbent upon him to say, "Here am I." There was no one else in the temple. No one else saw that vision and, therefore, to him the voice of the Lord came as at once and personally as if there were not another man in all the world. "Here am I."

Now, Brothers and Sisters, if at any time the mission field lacks workers, (it is a sad thing that it should be so, but yet so it is), should not that fact make each man look to himself and say, "Where am I? What position do I occupy towards this work of God? May I not be placed just where I

am because I can do what others could not?" Some of you young men, especially, without the ties of family to hold you in this country. You without a large Church around you, or not having, yet, plunged into the sea of business. You, I say, who are standing where, in the ardor of your first love, you might fitly say, "Here am I." And if God has endowed you with any wealth, given you any talent and placed you in a favorable position, you are the man who should say, "Perhaps I have come to the kingdom for such a time as this. I may be placed where I am, on purpose, that I may render essential help to the cause of God.

"Here, at any rate, I am—I feel the Presence of the glorious God. I see the hem of His garments as He reveals Himself to me. I almost hear the rush of seraphic wings as I perceive how near Heaven is to earth and I feel in my soul I must give myself up to God. I feel in my own heart my indebtedness to the Christ of God. I see the need of the heathen. I love them for Jesus' sake. The fiery coal is touching my lips even now—here am I! You have put me where I am! Lord, take me as I am and use me as You will." May the Divine Spirit influence some of you who greatly love my Lord till you feel all this.

Then you observe that he makes a full surrender of himself. "Here am I." Lord, I am what I am by Your Grace, but here I am. If I am a man of one talent, yet here I am. If I am a man of 10, yet here I am. If in youthful vigor, here I am. If of more mature years, here I am. Have I substance? Here I am. Do I lack abilities? Yet I made not my own mouth, nor did I create my infirmities. Here I am. Just as I am, as I gave myself up to Your dear Son to be redeemed, so I give myself up, again, to be used for Your Glory because I am redeemed and am not my own, but bought with a price.

"Here I am." Isaiah gave himself up to the Lord, none the less completely, because his errand was so full of sadness. He was not to win men, but to seal their doom by putting before them the Truth of God which they would be sure to reject. We read, "And He said, Go and tell this people, Hear you indeed, but understand not; and see you indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." Thank God ours is not so hard a task! The Spirit of God is with us and men are turned from darkness to light. Ought we not to be all the more eager to go?

It is a point of great weight, an argument most telling. Do not refuse to feel its power, but yield yourselves up to God, seeing that He calls you to the most happy and blessed work which even He, Himself, could commit to you. Then comes Isaiah's prayer for authority and anointing. If we read this passage rightly we shall not always throw the emphasis upon the last word, "*me*," but read it, also, thus, "Here am I, *send* me." He is willing to go, but he does not want to go without being sent, and so the prayer is, "Lord, *send* me. I beseech You of Your infinite Grace, qualify me! Open the door for me and direct my ways. I do not need to be forced, but I would be *commissioned*. I do not ask for compulsion, but I do ask for *guidance*. I

would not run of my own head under the notion that I am doing Your service. Send me then, O Lord, if I may go! Guide me, instruct me, prepare me, and strengthen me." There is a combination of willingness and holy prudence—"Here I am; send Me."

I feel certain that some of you are eager to go for my Lord and Master wherever He appoints. Keep not back, I pray you, Brother, make no terms with God. Put it, "Here am I; send me—where You will—to the wildest region, or even to the jaws of death. I am Your soldier, put me in the front of the battle if You will, or bid me lie in the trenches. Give me gallantly to charge at the head of my regiment, or give me silently to sap and mine the foundations of the enemy's fortresses. Use me as You will. Send me and I will go. I leave all else to You. Only here I am, Your willing servant, wholly consecrated to You."

That is the right missionary spirit and may God be pleased to pour it out upon you all, and upon His people throughout the world. To me it seems that if a hundred were to leap up and each one exclaim, "Here am I; send me," it would be no wonder. By the love and wounds and death of Christ. By your own salvation. By your indebtedness to Jesus. By the terrible condition of the heathen and by that awful Hell whose yawning mouth is before them, ought you not to say, "Here am I; send me"? The vessel is wrecked, the sailors are perishing—they are clinging to the rigging as best they can—they are being washed off one by one! Good God, they die before our eyes and yet there is the lifeboat new and trim. We need men! Men to man the boat! Here are the oars, but never an arm to use them! What is to be done? Here is the gallant boat, able to leap from billow to billow, only men are needed! Are there none? Are we all cowards? A man is more precious than the gold of Ophir.

Now, my brave Brothers, who will leap in and take an oar for the love of Jesus and yon dying men? And you brave women, you who have hearts like that of Grace Darling, will not you shame the laggards and dare the tempest for the love of souls in danger of death and Hell? Weigh my appeal in earnest and at once, for it is the appeal of God! Sit down and listen to that sorrowful yet majestic demand, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" and then respond, "Ready, yes, ready! Ready for anything to which our Redeemer calls us." Let those who love Him, as they perceive all around them the terrible token of the world's dire need, cry in an agony of Christian love, "Here am I; send me!"

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MESSENGERS WANTED

NO. 687

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 22, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send,
and who will go for Us? Then said I, Here am I! Send me.”
Isaiah 6:8.***

God’s great remedy for man’s ruin of man is the sacrifice of His dear Son. He proclaims to the sons of men that only by the Atonement of Jesus can they be reconciled unto Himself. In order that this remedy should be of any avail to any man he must receive it by faith—for without faith men perish even under the Gospel dispensation. There is at the present moment great lack of men to tell out the story of the Cross of Jesus Christ and many considerations press that lack upon our hearts. Think how many voices all mingle into this one—“Who will go for Us?” Listen to the wounds of Jesus as they plaintively cry, “How shall we be rewarded? How shall the precious drops of blood be made available to redeem the souls of men unless loving lips shall go for us to claim by right those who have been redeemed by blood?”

The blood of Jesus cries like Abel’s blood from the ground, “Whom shall I send?” and His wounds repeat the question, “Who will go for us?” Does not the purpose of the Eternal Father also join with solemn voice in this demand? The Lord has decreed a multitude unto eternal life. He has purposed, with a purpose which cannot be changed or frustrated, that a multitude whom no man can number shall be the reward of the Savior’s travail. But how can these decrees be fulfilled except by the sending forth of the Gospel, for it is through the Gospel, and through the Gospel alone, that salvation can come to the sons of men!

I think I hear the awful voice of the purpose mingling with the piercing cry of the Cross appealing to us to declare the Word of Life. I see the handwriting of old Eternity bound in one volume with the crimson writing of Calvary, and both together write out most legibly the pressing question—“Who shall go for us to bring home the elect and redeemed ones? The very sins of men, horrible as they are to think upon, may be made an argument for proclaiming the Gospel! Oh the cruel and ravenous sins which destroy the sons of men and rend their choicest joy in pieces!

When I see monstrous lusts defiling the temple of God, and many gods and many lords usurping the Throne of the Almighty, I can hear the loud cry, "Who will go for Us?" Do not perishing souls suggest to us the question of the text? Men are going down to the grave perishing for lack of knowledge! The tomb engulfs them, eternity swallows them up, and in the dark they die without a glimmer of hope! No candle of the Lord ever shines upon their faces. By these perishing souls we implore you this morning to feel that heralds of the Cross are needed—needed lest these souls be ruined everlastingly! Needed that they may be lifted up from the dunghill of their corruption and made to sit among princes redeemed by Christ Jesus! The cry wells into a wail of mighty pathetic pleading—all time echoes it and all eternity prolongs it—while Heaven, earth, and Hell give weight to the chorus.

Beloved, there are two forms of missionary enterprise conducted by two classes of agents. I so divide them merely for the occasion—they are really not divided by any rigid boundary. The first is the agency of those specially dedicated to the ministry of the Word who give themselves wholly to it—who are able, by the generous effort of the Christian Church, or by their own means—to set their whole time apart for the great work of teaching the Truth of God. As there are but few in this assembly who can do this, I shall not translate my text in its reference to ministers although it has a loud voice to such.

I shall rather refer to another and equally useful form of agency, namely, the Christian Church as a whole—the Believers who, while following their secular avocations, are heralds for Christ and missionaries for the Cross. Such are wanted here. Such are needed in our colonies. Such might find ample room in the great world of heathendom! Men and women, who, if they did not stand up beneath the tree to address the assembled throng, would preach in the workshop! Who, if they did not teach the hundreds, would at the fireside instruct the twos and threes. We want both sorts of laborers, but I may do more good on this present occasion by stirring up this second sort.

You may all be teachers of Christ in another sense. You can all give yourself to the work of God in your own calling and promote your Master's glory perseveringly in your daily avocations. I lift up an earnest cry in God's name for consecrated men and women, who, not needing to wait till the Church's hands can support them, shall support themselves with their own hands and yet minister for Christ Jesus wherever Providence may have cast their lot. The person wanted, as described in the questions, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us?" The person wanted is viewed from two points. He has a character bearing two aspects. The person

wanted has a Divine side—"Whom shall I *send*?" Then he has a human aspect—"Who will *go* for Us?"

But the two meet together—the human and Divine unite in the last words, "for Us." Here is a man, nothing more than a man of human instincts, but clad, through Divine Grace, with super-human, even with *Divine* authority. Let us look, then, at this two-sided person. He is divinely chosen—"Whom shall I send?" As if in the eternal counsels this had once been a question, "Who shall be the chosen man. Who shall be the object of My eternal love, and in consequence shall have this Grace given him that he should tell to others the unsearchable riches of Christ?" Beloved, what a mercy it is to us who are Believers that to us this is no more a question—for sovereignty has pitched upon us and eternal mercy, not for anything good in us, but simply because God would have it so, has selected us that we may bring forth fruit unto His name.

As we hear the question, let us listen to the Savior's exposition of it. "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." The workers for the living God are a people chosen by the Most High. He sends whom He wills. He makes choice of this man and not another, and in every case exercises His own sovereign will. This question indicates a person cheerfully willing, and this is what I meant by the human side of the messenger. "Who will go for Us?" The man sought for is one who will go with ready mind—there would be no need to ask, "who will go?" If a mere slave or machine without a will could be sent.

Beloved, the purpose of God does not violate free agency, or even the free will of man. Man is saved by the will of God, but man is made willing to be so saved! The fault is not in the hyper-Calvinist that he insists upon sovereignty, nor in the Arminian that he is so violent for free agency. The fault is in both of them because they cannot see more truths than one, and do not admit that truth is not the exclusive property of either, for God is a Sovereign, and, at the same time, man is a responsible free agent!

Many among us are perpetually seeking to reconcile truths which probably never can be reconciled except in the Divine mind. I thank God that I believe many things which I do not even wish to understand. I am weary and sick of arguing and understanding, and misunderstanding. I find it true rest and joy, like a little child, to believe what God has revealed and to let others do the puzzling and the reasoning. If I could comprehend the whole of Revelation I could scarcely believe it to be Divine! But inasmuch as many of its doctrines are too deep for me and the whole scheme is too vast to be reduced to a system, I thank and bless God that He has deigned to display before me a Revelation far exceeding my poor limited abilities.

I believe that every man who has Jesus has Him as a matter of his own choice—it is true it is *caused* by Divine Grace, but it is there—it is there. Ask any man whether he is a Christian against his will and he will tell you certainly not, for he loves the Lord and delights in His Law after the inward man. Your people are not led unwillingly to You in chains, O Jesus, but Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power. We willingly choose Christ because He has from of old chosen us! In the matter of holy work every man who becomes a worker for Jesus is so because he was chosen to work for Him—but he would be a very poor worker if he himself had not chosen to work for Jesus!

I can say that I believe God ordained me to preach the Gospel, and that I preach it by His will—but I am sure I preach it with my own will, too, for it is to me the most delightful work in all the world! If I could exchange with an emperor I would not consent to be so lowered. To preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ is one of the sweetest and noblest employments and even an angel might desire to be engaged in it. The true worker for God must be impelled by Divine election, but yet he must make and will make, by Divine Grace, his own election of his work. The two meet together in this—the man is sent by the Three in One, who here asks, “Who will go for Us?”

Every faithful Christian laborer labors for God. Brethren, when we tell others the story of the Cross we speak of God the Father. It is through our lips that the prodigal son must be reminded that the hired servants have bread enough and to spare. It may be through us that he will be shown his rags and his disgrace. Through us he will discover more clearly the disgrace of feeding swine. The Spirit of God is the efficient Agent, but it is by us that He may work. It is by us that the Divine Father falls upon the neck of His prodigal child. He does it, but it is through the teaching of His Word in some form or other. The promises are spoken by our lips, the sweet invitations are delivered by our tongues. We, as though God did beseech them by us, are to pray them in Christ’s stead to be reconciled to God. God the Father says to you who know and love Him, “Will you go for Me and be an ambassador for Me?”

Nor must we forget our tender Redeemer. He is not here, for He is risen. He will come again, but meanwhile He asks for someone to speak for Him, someone to tell Jerusalem that her iniquity is forgiven. Someone to tell His murderers that He prays for them, “Father, forgive them.” To assure the blood-bought that they are redeemed. To proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound. Jesus from His Throne of Glory says, “Who will go for Me and be a speaker for Me?”

Moreover, that blessed Spirit, under whose dispensational power we live at the present hour, has no voice to speak to the sons of men audibly

except by His people. And though He works invisibly and mysteriously in the saints, yet He chooses loving hearts, and compassionate lips, and tearful eyes to be the means of benediction. The Spirit descends like the cloven tongue, but He sits upon *disciples*—there is no resting place for the Spirit of God nowadays within walls, and even the Heaven of heavens contains Him not, but He enthrones Himself within His people. He makes us God-bearers, and He speaks through us as through a trumpet to the sons of men.

So you see that the adorable Trinity cry to you, you blood-bought, blood-redeemed sons of God, and says, “Are you seeking to promote Our glory? Are you effecting Our purposes? Are you winning those purchased by Our eternal sacrifice?” Turning to the Church assembled here the Lord pronounces those ancient questions, “Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us?”

By God’s help, we would say a little upon the person offering himself. “Here am I! Send me.” The person offering himself is described in the chapter at very great length—he must be an Isaiah. Being an Isaiah, he must, in the first place, have felt his own unworthiness. My Brother, my Sister, if you are to be made useful by God in soul-winning you must pass through the experience which Isaiah describes in the chapter before us. You must have cried in bitterness of spirit, “Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips!” God will never fill you with Himself until He has emptied you of your own self. Till you feel that you are weak as water you shall not see the splendor of the Divine power.

May I ask, then, those of you who feel desirous to serve God, this experimental question, “Have you been made fully conscious of your own utter unfitness to be employed in any work for God, and your own complete unworthiness of so great an honor as to become a servant of the living God? If you have not been brought to this you must begin with yourself—you cannot do any good to others—you must be born-again! And one of the best evidences of your being born-again will be a discovery of your own natural depravity and impurity in the sight of God.

Now, Beloved, I want you to notice how it was that Isaiah was made to feel his unworthiness. It was first by a sense of the Presence of God. “I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up.” Have you ever had a consciousness of the Presence of God? The other day I was prostrated in soul, utterly prostrated, with this one word “I Am!” There is everything in that title, the I Am! God is the truest of all existences. With regard to all other things, they may or may not be, but I Am!

It came with such power to me. I thought, Here am I sitting in my study, whether I am, or whether that which surrounds me really is, may be a question, but, God is—God is here. And when I speak God’s Word in

His name, though I am nothing, God is everything, and as to whether or not His Word shall be fulfilled there cannot be any question, because He still is called, not, "I Was," but "I Am," Infinite, Omnipotent, Divine! Think of the reality of the Divine Presence, and the certainty of that Divine Presence everywhere, close here, just now! "I Am!" O God, if we are not, yet You are!

I scarcely think that any man is fit to become a teacher of others till he has had a full sense of the Glory of God crushing him right down into the dust, a full sense of that word, "I Am." You know a man cannot pray without it, for we must believe that He is, and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. And if a man cannot pray for himself, much less can he rightly teach others. There must be the fullest conviction of the reality of God, an overwhelming sight and sense of His Glory, or else you cannot benefit your fellows. The source of Isaiah's sense of nothingness was that Isaiah saw the Glory of Christ!

Have you ever sat down and gazed upon the Cross till, having read your own pardon there, you have seen that Cross rising higher and higher till it touched the heavens and overshadowed the globe? Then you have seen and felt the Glory of Him who was lifted up, and have bowed before the regal splendor of Divine Love, incarnate in suffering humanity, and resplendent in agony and death. If you have ever beheld the vision of the Crucified, and felt the glory of His wounds, you will then be fit to preach to others.

I have sometimes thought that certain Brethren who preach the Gospel with such meager power and such lack of unction have no true knowledge of it. There is no need to talk of it with bated breath. It is sneered at as being such a very simple tale—"Believe and live"—but after all, no philosopher ever made such a disclosure! And if a senate of discoverers could sit through the ages they could not bring to light any fact equal to this—that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. Well may you open your mouth boldly when you have such a subject as this to speak upon! But if you have never perceived its Glory, you are utterly incapable of fulfilling God's errand.

Oh, to get the Cross into one's heart! To bear it upon one's soul, and above all, to feel the Glory of it in one's whole being is the best education for a Christian missionary whether at home or abroad! It will strike you too, dear Friends, that the particular aspect in which this humiliation may come to us will probably be a sense of the Divine holiness, and the holiness of those who see His face. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts!" was the song which overawed the Prophet. What messengers are those who serve so holy a God? Free from earth and all its grossness, like flames of fire they flash at His command!

Who then, am I—a poor creature, cribbed, cabined, and confined within this house of clay? Who am I—a sinful worm of the dust, that I should aspire to the service of so thrice holy a God? Oh let us serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling, fearful lest we should do mischief while seeking to do good, and pollute the altar while attempting to offer sacrifice upon it!

The next preparation for Christian work is we must possess a sense of mercy. Then flew one of the seraphims and took a live coal from off the altar. We explained in our reading that the altar is for sacrifice, and that the lip must be touched with a coal of that sacrifice. Then, being so touched, they derive two effects. In the first place, the lips are purged of iniquity, and in the next place they feel the influence of fire, enabling them to speak with vehemence and force. Beloved Hearer, you say, perhaps in zeal, “I desire to serve Christ and to tell abroad the story of His Cross.” Have you proved that story to be true? Were you ever washed in the fountain? How can you bid others come if you have never come yourself?

Have your sins been put away? “I hope so.” Do you *know* it? I question if you can preach with any power till you have a full assurance of your own salvation. To teach the Gospel with “but” and “if” is a poor teaching. You Sunday school teachers cannot hope to do much good to others while you doubt your own acceptance in the Beloved. You must know that you are saved! Oh Beloved, you must feel the touch of that live coal! You must feel that Christ gave Himself for you. You Little-Faiths may get to Heaven, but you must keep in the back rank while here—we cannot put you in the front of the battle!

Though God may make you of service, we cannot expect you to be eminently of service. The man who would serve God must know himself to be saved! The effect of that live coal will be to fire the lips with heavenly flame. “Oh,” says one man, “a flaming coal will burn the lips so that the man cannot speak at all.” That is just how God works with us—it is by consuming the fleshly power that He inspires the heavenly might. Oh let the lips be burnt, let the fleshly power of eloquence be destroyed—but oh for that live coal to make the tongue eloquent with Heaven’s flame—the true Divine power which urged the Apostles forward and made them conquerors of the whole world!

According to the text the man who will be acceptable must offer himself cheerfully. “Here am I!” How few of us have in very deed given ourselves to Christ? It is with most professors, “Here is my half guinea, here is my annual contribution,” but how few of us have said, “Here am I”? No, we sing of consecration as we sing a great many other things which we have not realized—and when we have sung it we do not wish to be taken at our

word. It is not, “Here am I!” The man whom God will use must in sincerity be a consecrated man.

I have explained that he may still keep to his daily work, but he must be consecrated to God in it. He must sanctify the tools of his labor to God and there is no reason why they should not be quite as holy as the bronze altar or the golden candlestick. You will observe that the person who thus volunteered for sacred service gave himself unreservedly. He did not say, “Here am I, use me where I am,” but “*send me.*” Where? No condition as to place is so much as hinted at. Anywhere, anywhere, anywhere—send me!

Some people are militia-Christians—they serve the King with a limitation and must not be sent out of England. But others are soldier-Christians who give themselves wholly up to their Lord and Captain. They will go wherever He chooses to send them. Oh come, my Master, and be absolute Lord of my soul! Reign over me and subdue my every passion to do and be and feel all that Your will ordains. Blessed prayer! May we never be content till we get all that is to be gotten by way of joyful experience and holy power, nor until we yield all that is to be yielded by mortal man to the God whose sovereign right to us we claim!

Notice one more thought, that while the Prophet gives himself unreservedly, he gives *obediently*, for he pauses to ask directions. It is not, “Here am I! Away I will go,” but “Here am I! Send me.” I like the spirit of that prayer. Some people get into their head a notion that they must do something uncommon and extraordinary, and though it may be most unreasonable and most irrational, it is for that very reason that the scheme commends itself to their want of judgment. Because it is absurd, they think it to be Divine! If earthly wisdom does not justify it, then certainly heavenly wisdom must be called in to endorse it!

Now I conceive that you will find that whenever a thing is wise in God’s sight it is really wise, and that a thing which is absurd is not more likely to be adopted by God than by man! Though the Lord does use plans which are called foolish, they are only foolish to fools, but not actually foolish. There is a real wisdom in their very foolishness—there is a wisdom of God in the things which are foolish to man. When a project is evidently absurd and ridiculous, it may be my own but it cannot be the Lord’s and I had better wait until I can yield up my whims, and subject myself to Divine control, saying, “Here am I! Send me.”

In the last place—the work which such persons will be called to undertake. Isaiah’s history is a picture of what many and many a true Christian laborer may expect. Isaiah was sent to preach very unpleasant truth, but like a true hero he was very bold in preaching it. “Isaiah is very bold,” says the Apostle. Now if you are called of God either to preach or teach, or whatever it is, remember the things you have to preach or teach will not

be agreeable to your hearers. Scorn on the man who ever desires to make truth palatable to unhallowed minds. If he modulates his utterances or suppresses the Truth which God has given him even in the slightest possible degree to suit the tastes of men, he is a traitor and a coward!

Let him be drummed out of God's regiment, and driven from the army of God altogether! God's servants are to receive God's message, and whether men will hear or whether they will not, they are to deliver it to them in the spirit of old Micaiah, who vowed, "As the Lord my God lives, whatever the Lord said to me, that will I speak." But this is not the hardest task—the most severe labor is this—we may have to deliver unpleasant truth to people who are resolved not to receive it! To people who will derive no profit from it, but rather will turn it to their own destruction.

You see in the text that ancient Israel was to hear but *not to receive*—they were to be preached to, and the only result was to be that their heart was to be made fat, and their ears dull of hearing. What? Is that ever to be the effect of the Gospel? The Bible tells us so. Our preaching is a savor of death unto death, as well as of life unto life. "Oh," says one, "I should not like to preach if that is the case." But remember, Brother, that the preaching of the Cross is a sweet savor of Christ either way. The highest object of all to a Christian laborer is not to win souls—that is a great object—but the great object is to glorify God! Many a man has been successful in this who did not succeed in the other. If Israel is not gathered, still, if we bear our testimony for God, our work is done.

No farmer thinks of paying his men in proportion to the harvest. He pays his workers for work done, and so will it be with us, by God's Grace! And if I happen to be a very successful laborer here, I boast not, nor claim any large reward on that account. I believe that had I preached the Gospel with earnestness and waited upon God, and if He had denied me conversions, my reward would be as great at the last, in some respects, because the Master would not lay to my door a non-success which could not be attributed to myself.

Now it would be a very pleasant thing for me to ask you whether you would go for God in your daily vocation and tell of Jesus to sinners who are willing to hear of Him—you would all be glad to do that. If I were to ask which sister here would take a class of young women, all anxious to find Christ, why you would all hold up your hands! If I could say, "Who will take a class of boys who long to find the Savior?" you might all be glad of such an avocation—but I have to put it another way lest you should afterwards be dispirited. Who among you will try and teach the Truth of God to a drunken husband?

Who among you will carry the Gospel to despisers and profligates and into places where the Gospel will make you the object of rage and deri-

sion? Who among you will take a class of ragged roughs? Who among you will try and teach those who will throw your teaching back upon you with ridicule and scorn? You are not fit to serve God unless you are willing to serve Him anywhere and everywhere. You must, with the servant, be willing to take the bitter with the sweet. You must be willing to serve God in the winter as in the summer. If you are willing to be God's servant at all, you are not to pick and choose your duty and say, "Here am I, send me where there is pleasant duty." Anybody will go then!

If you are willing to serve God you will say today, "Through floods and flames if Jesus leads, I will, by the Holy Spirit's aid, be true to my following." Now, though I have said nothing particularly with regard to foreign missions, I have preached this sermon with the view that God will stir you all up to serve His cause, and particularly with the hope that the missionary feeling being begotten may show itself in a desire also to carry the Gospel into foreign parts.

Pastor Harms has lately been taken to his rest, but those of you who know the story of his life must have been struck with it—how an obscure country village, on a wild heath in Germany, was made to be a fountain of living waters to South Africa! The poor people had little care for the name of Jesus till Harms went there, and, notwithstanding that I have no sympathy with his Lutheran High-Churchism and exclusiveness, I may say he went there to preach Christ with such fire that the whole parish became a missionary society, sending out its own men and women to preach Christ crucified.

That ship, the *Candace*, purchased by the villagers of Hermansburgh with their own money, went to and from South Africa, taking the laborers to make settlements and to undertake Christian enterprise in that dark continent. The whole village was saturated with a desire to serve God and preach the Gospel to the heathen, and Harms at the head of it acted with a simple faith worthy of Apostolic times! I would that my God would give me what I should consider the greatest honor of my life—the privilege of seeing some of the Brothers and Sisters of this church devoted to the Lord and going forth into foreign parts.

One gave his farm for students to be educated, another gave all he had, until throughout Hermansburgh it became very much like Apostolic days when they had all things in common, the grand object being that of sending the Gospel to the heathen. The day may come when we who have been able to do something for this heathen country of England may do something for other heathen countries in sending out our sons and daughters.

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THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

NO. 2392

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
DECEMBER 23, 1891.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 24, 1854.**

***“Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call
His name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall He eat, that
He may know to refuse the evil, and choose the Good.”
Isaiah 7:14, 15.***

The kingdom of Judah was in a condition of imminent peril. Two monarchs had leagued themselves against her, two nations had risen up for her destruction. Syria and Israel had come up against the walls of Jerusalem with full intent to raze them to the ground and utterly destroy the monarchy of Judah. Ahaz the king, in great trouble, exerted all his ingenuity to defend the city and, among the other contrivances which his wisdom taught him, he thought it fit to cut off the waters of the upper pool, so that the besiegers might be in distress for lack of water. He goes out in the morning, no doubt attended by his courtiers, makes his way to the conduit of the upper pool, intending to see after the stopping of the stream of water, but lo, he meets with something which sets aside his plans and renders them needless! Isaiah steps forward and tells him not to be afraid for the smoke of those two firebrands, for God should utterly destroy both the nations that had risen up against Judah. Ahaz need not fear the present invasion, for both he and his kingdom would be saved. The king looked at Isaiah with an eye of incredulity, as much as to say, “If the Lord were to send chariots from Heaven, could such a thing as this be? Should He animate the dust and quicken every stone in Jerusalem to resist my foes, could this be done?”

The Lord, seeing the littleness of the king's faith, tells him to ask for a sign. “Ask it,” He says, “either in the depth, or in the height above. Let the sun go backward ten degrees, or let the moon stop in her midnight marches. Let the stars move from one side to the other in the sky in grand procession! Ask any sign you please in the Heaven above, or, if you wish, choose the earth beneath, let the depths give forth the sign, let some mighty waterspout lose its way across the pathless ocean and travel through the air to Jerusalem's very gates! Let the heavens shower a golden rain instead of the watery fluid which usually they distill. Ask that the fleece may be wet upon the dry floor, or dry in the midst of dew. Whatever you please to request, the Lord will grant it to you for the confirmation of your faith.” Instead of accepting this offer with all gratitude, as Ahaz should have done, he, with a pretended humility, declares that he will not ask, neither will he tempt the Lord his God! Whereupon Isaiah, waxing indignant, tells him that since he will not, in obedience to

God's command, ask for a sign, behold, the Lord, Himself, will give him one—not simply a sign, but *this* sign, the sign and wonder of the world, the mark of God's mightiest mystery and of His most consummate wisdom, for, "a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

It has been said that the passage I have taken for my text is one of the most difficult in all the Word of God. It may be so—I certainly did not think it was until I saw what the commentators had to say about it and I rose up from reading them perfectly confused! One said one thing and another denied what the other had said. And if there was anything that I liked, it was so self-evident that it had been copied from one to the other and handed through the whole of them!

One set of commentators tells us that this passage refers entirely to some person who was to be born within a few months after this prophecy, "for," they say, "it says here, 'Before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that you abhor shall be forsaken of both her kings.'" "Now," say they, "this was an immediate delivery which Ahaz required and there was a promise of a speedy rescue, that, before a few years had elapsed, before the child should be able to know right from wrong, Syria and Israel should both lose their kings." Well, that seems a strange frittering away of a wonderful passage, full of meaning, and I cannot see how they can substantiate their view when we find the Evangelist Matthew quoting this very passage in reference to the birth of Christ, and saying, "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with Child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel."

It strikes me that this Immanuel, who was to be born, could not be a mere simple man and nothing else, for if you turn to the next chapter of Isaiah, at the 8th verse, you will find it said, "He [king of Assyria] shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of *Your land, O Immanuel.*" Here is a *government* ascribed to Immanuel which could not be His if we were to suppose that the Immanuel here spoken of was either Shear-Jashub, or Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, or any other of the sons of Isaiah! I therefore reject that view of the matter. It is, to my mind, far below the height of this great argument—it does not speak or allow us to speak one half of the wondrous depth which couches beneath this mighty passage!

I find, moreover, that many of the commentators divide the 16th verse from the 14th and 15th verses, and they read the 14th and 15th verses exclusively of Christ, and the 16th verse of Shear-Jashub, the son of Isaiah. They say that there were two signs, one was the conception by the virgin of a Son, who was to be called Immanuel, who is none other than Christ, but the second sign was Shear-Jashub, the Prophet's son, of whom Isaiah said, "Before this child, whom I now lead before you—before this son of mine shall be able to know good and evil, so soon shall both nations that have now risen against you lose their kings." But I do not like that explanation because it seems to me to be pretty plain that the same

child is spoken of in the one verse as in the others. “Before the Child”—the same Child—it does not say that Child in one verse and then this child in another verse, but before the Child, this one of whom I have spoken, the Immanuel, before He “shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that you abhor shall be forsaken of both her kings.”

Then another view, which is the most popular of all, is to refer the passage, first of all, to some child that was then to be born, and afterwards, in the highest sense, to our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps that is the true sense of it—perhaps that is the best way of smoothing difficulties—but I think that if I had never read those books at all, but had simply come to the Bible, without knowing what any man had written upon it, I would have said, “There is Christ here as plainly as possible! Never could His name have been written more legibly than I see it here. ‘Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son.’ It is an unheard of thing, it is a miraculous thing and, therefore, it must be a God-like thing! She ‘shall call His name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.’ And before that Child, the Prince Immanuel, shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that you abhor shall be forsaken of both her kings, and Judah shall smile upon their ruined palaces.”

This morning, then, I shall take my text as relating to our Lord Jesus Christ, and we have three things, here, about Him. First, *the birth*. Secondly, *the food*. And, thirdly, *the name of Christ*.

I. Let us commence with THE BIRTH OF CHRIST—“Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son.”

“Let us even now go unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass,” said the shepherds. “Let us follow the star in the sky,” said the Eastern Magi, and so say we this morning. Hard by the day when we, as a nation, celebrate the birthday of Christ, let us go and stand by the manger to behold the commencement of the Incarnation of Jesus! Let us recall the time when God first enveloped Himself in mortal form and tabernacled among the sons of men! Let us not blush to go to so humble a spot—let us stand by that village inn and let us see Jesus Christ, the God-Man, become an Infant of a span long!

And, first, we see here, in speaking of this birth of Christ, a *miraculous conception*. The text says expressly, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son.” This expression is unparalleled even in Sacred Writ! Of no other woman could it be said beside the Virgin Mary, and of no other man could it be written that his mother was a virgin. The Greek word and the Hebrew are both very expressive of the true and real virginity of the mother, to show us that Jesus Christ was born of woman and *not of man*. We shall not enlarge upon the thought, but still, it is an important one, and ought not to be passed over without mentioning. Just as the woman, by her venturous spirit, stepped first into transgression—lest she should be despised and trampled on, God, in His wisdom devised that the woman, and the woman, alone, should be the author of the Body of the God-Man who should redeem mankind! Albeit that she, herself, first tasted the accursed fruit, and tempted her husband (it may be that Adam, out of love to her, tasted that fruit lest she should be degraded,

lest she should not stand on an equality with him), God has ordained that so it should be, that His Son should be sent forth “born of a woman,” and the first promise was that the Seed of the woman, *not* the seed of the man, should bruise the serpent’s head.

Moreover, there was a peculiar wisdom ordaining that Jesus Christ should be the Son of the woman, and not of the man, because, had He been born of the flesh, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and merely flesh—and He would, naturally, by carnal generation, have inherited all the frailties and the *sins* and the infirmities which man has from his birth. He would have been conceived in sin and shaped in iniquity, even as the rest of us. Therefore He was not born of man, but the Holy Spirit overshadowed the Virgin Mary and Christ stands as the one Man, save one other, who came forth pure from his Maker’s hands, who could ever say, “I am pure.” Yes, and He could say far more than that other Adam could say concerning *his* purity, for He maintained His integrity and never let it go! And from His birth down to His death He knew no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. Oh, marvelous sight! Let us stand and look at it. A Child of a virgin, what a mixture!

There is the finite and the Infinite, there is the mortal and the Immortal, corruption and Incorruption, the manhood and the Godhead, time married to eternity! There is God linked with a creature, the Infinity of the august Maker come to tabernacle on this speck of earth—the vast unbounded One whom earth could not hold and the heavens cannot contain—lying in His mother’s arms! He who fastened the pillars of the universe and riveted the nails of creation, hanging on a mortal breast, depending on a creature for nourishment! Oh, marvelous birth! Oh, miraculous conception! We stand and gaze and admire. Verily, angels may wish to look into a subject too dark for us to speak of! There we leave it, a virgin has conceived and borne a Son.

In this birth, moreover, having noticed the miraculous conception, we must notice, next, *the humble parentage*. It does not say, “A princess shall conceive and bear a Son,” but a virgin. Her virginity was her highest honor—she had no other. True, she was of royal lineage—she could reckon David among her forefathers—and Solomon among those who stood in the tree of her genealogy. She was a woman not to be despised, albeit that I speak of humble parentage, for she was of the blood-royal of Judah. O Babe, in Your veins there runs the blood of kings! The blood of an ancient monarchy found its way from Your heart all through the courses of Your body! You were born, not of mean parents, if we look at their ancient ancestry, for You are the Son of him who ruled the mightiest monarchy in his day, even Solomon, and You are the descendant of one who devised in his heart to build a Temple for the mighty God of Jacob!

Nor was Christ’s mother, in point of intellect, an inferior woman. I take it that she had great strength of mind, otherwise she could not have composed so sweet a piece of poetry as that which is called the Virgin’s Song, beginning, “My soul does magnify the Lord.” She is not a person to be despised. I would, this morning, especially utter my thoughts on one thing which I consider to be a fault among us Protestants. Because Ro-

man Catholics pay too much respect to the Virgin Mary, and offer prayer to her, we are too apt to speak of her in a slighting manner. She ought not to be placed under the ban of contempt, for she could truly sing, "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." I suppose Protestant generations are among the "all generations" who ought to call her blessed. Her name is Mary, and quaint George Herbert wrote an anagram upon it—

***"How well her name an ARMY does present,
In whom the Lord of Hosts did pitch His tent."***

Though she was not a princess, yet her name, Mary, by interpretation, signifies a princess, and though she is not the queen of Heaven, yet she has a right to be reckoned among the queens of earth. And though she is not the lady of our Lord, she does walk among the renowned and mighty women of Scripture.

Yet Jesus Christ's birth was a humble one. Strange that the Lord of Glory was not born in a palace! Princes, Christ owes you nothing! Princes, Christ is not your debtor! You did not swaddle Him, He was not wrapped in purple, you had not prepared a golden cradle for Him to be rocked in! Queens, you did not dandle Him on your knees, He hung not at your breasts! And you mighty cities, which then were great and famous, your marble halls were not blessed with His little footsteps! He came out of a village, poor and despised, even Bethlehem! When there, He was not born in the governor's house, or in the mansion of the chief man, but in a manger! Tradition tells us that His manger was cut in solid rock—there was He laid and the oxen likely enough came to feed from the same manger, the hay and the fodder of which was His only bed. Oh, wondrous stoop of condescension, that our blessed Jesus should be girded with humility and stoop so low! Ah, if He stooped, why should He bend to such a lowly birth? And if He bowed, why should He submit, not simply to become the Son of poor parents, but to be born in so miserable a place?

Let us take courage here. If Jesus Christ was born in a manger in a rock, why should He not come and live in our rocky hearts? If He was born in a stable, why should not the stable of our souls be made into a house for Him? If He was born in poverty, may not the poor in spirit expect that He will be their Friend? If He thus endured degradation at the first, will He count it any dishonor to come to the very poorest and humblest of His creatures and tabernacle in the souls of His children? Oh, no! We can gather a lesson of comfort from His humble parentage and we can rejoice that not a queen, or an empress, but that a humble woman became the mother of the Lord of Glory!

We must make one more remark upon this birth of Christ before we pass on, and that remark shall be concerning *a glorious birthday*. With all the humility that surrounded the birth of Christ, there was yet very much that was glorious, very much that was honorable. No other man ever had such a birthday as Jesus Christ had! Of whom had Prophets and seers ever written as they wrote of Him? Whose name is engraved on so many tablets as His? Who had such a scroll of prophecy, all pointing to Him as Jesus Christ, the God-Man? Then remember, concerning His birth, when did God ever hang a fresh lamp in the sky to announce the

birth of a Caesar? Caesars may come and they may die, but stars shall never prophesy their birth! When did angels ever stoop from Heaven and sing choral symphonies on the birth of a mighty man? No, all others are passed by, but look—in Heaven there is a great light shining and a song is heard—“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

Christ’s birth is not despicable, even if we consider the visitors who came around His cradle. Shepherds came first and, as it has been quaintly remarked by an old Divine, the shepherds did not lose their way, but the wise men did! Shepherds came first, unguided and unfed, to Bethlehem. The wise men, directed by the star, came next. The representative men of the two bodies of mankind—the rich and the poor—knelt around the manger—and gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, and all manner of precious gifts were offered to the Child who was the Prince of the kings of the earth, who, in ancient times was ordained to sit upon the Throne of His father, David, and in the wondrous future to rule all nations with His rod of iron!

“Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son.” Thus have we spoken of the birth of Christ.

II. The second thing that we have to speak of is THE FOOD OF CHRIST—“Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.”

Our translators were certainly very good scholars and God gave them much wisdom so that they craned up our language to the majesty of the original, but here they were guilty of very great inconsistency. I do not see how butter and honey can make a child choose good and refuse evil. If it is so, I am sure butter and honey ought to go up greatly in price, for good men are very much required! But it does not say, in the original, “Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good,” but, “Butter and honey shall He eat, till He shall know how to refuse the evil, and choose the good,” or, better still, “Butter and honey shall He eat, when He shall know how to refuse the evil, and choose the good.”

We shall take that translation and just try to make clear the meaning couched in the words. They should teach us, first of all, *Christ’s proper Humanity*. When He would convince His disciples that He was flesh, and not spirit, He took a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb, and ate as others did. “Handle Me,” He said, “and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have.” Some heretics taught, even a little after the death of Christ, that His body was a mere shadow, that He was not an actual, real Man—but here we are told He ate butter and honey just as other men did. While other men were nourished with food, so was Jesus! He was very Man as certainly as He was verily and eternally God. “In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.” Therefore we are told that He ate butter and honey to teach us that it was actually a real Man who, afterwards, died on Calvary.

The butter and honey teach us, again, that Christ was to be *born in times of peace*. Such products are not to be found in Judea in times of strife—the ravages of war sweep away all the fair fruits of industry—the unwatered pastures yield no grass and, therefore, there could be no butter. The bees may make their hive in the lion's carcass and there may be honey there, but when the land is disturbed, who shall go to gather the sweetness? How shall the babe eat butter when its mother flees away, even in the winter time, with the child clinging to her breast? In times of war, we have no choice of food—then men eat whatever they can procure and the supply is often very scanty. Let us thank God that we live in the land of peace and let us see a mystery in this text, that Christ was born in times of peace.

The temple of Janus was shut before the Temple of Heaven was opened! Before the King of Peace came to the Temple of Jerusalem, the horrid mouth of war was stopped! Mars had sheathed his sword and all was still. Augustus Caesar was emperor of the world, none other ruled it and, therefore, wars had ceased—the earth was still, the leaves quivered not upon the trees of the field, the ocean of strife was undisturbed by a ripple, the hot winds of war blew not upon man to trouble him—all was peaceful and quiet! And then came the Prince of Peace, who, in later days, shall break the bow, cut the spear in sunder and burn the chariot in the fire.

There is another thought here. "Butter and honey shall He eat when He shall know how to refuse the evil, and choose the good." This is to teach us *the precocity of Christ*, by which I mean that even when He was a child, even when He lived upon butter and honey, which is the food of children, He knew the evil from the good. It is, usually, not until children leave off the food of their infancy that they can discern good from evil in the fullest sense. It requires years to ripen the faculties, to develop the judgment, to give full play to the man—in fact, to *make* him a man. But Christ, even while He was a Baby, even while He lived upon butter and honey, knew the evil from the good, refused the one, and chose the other. Oh, what a mighty intellect there was in that brain! While He was an Infant, surely there must have been sparklings of genius from His eyes! The fire of intellect must have often lit up that brow! He was not an ordinary child—how would His mother talk about the wonderful things the little Prattler said! He played not as others did. He cared not to spend His time in idle amusements. His thoughts were lofty and wondrous. He understood mysteries and when He went up to the Temple in His early days, He was not found, like the other children, playing about the courts or the markets, but sitting among the doctors, both hearing and asking them questions! His was a master-mind—"Never man spoke like this Man." So, never child thought like this Child—He was an astonishing One, the wonder and the marvel of all children, the Prince of children—the God-Man even when He was a Child! I think this is taught us in the words, "Butter and honey shall He eat when He shall know how to refuse the evil, and choose the good."

Perhaps it may seem somewhat playful, but, before I close speaking upon this part of the subject, I must say how sweet it is to my soul to be-

lieve that as Christ lived upon butter and honey, surely *butter and honey drop from His lips*. Sweet are His Words unto our souls, more to be desired than honey or the honeycomb! Well might He eat butter whose Words are smooth to the tried, whose utterances are like oil upon the waters of our sorrows! Well might He eat butter, who came to bind up the broken-hearted, and well did He live upon the fat of the land, who came to restore the earth to its old fertility and make all flesh soft with milk and honey, ah, honey in the heart—

**“Where can such sweetness be
As I have tasted in Your love,
As I have found in Thee?”**

Your Words, O Christ, are like honey! I, like a bee, have flown from flower to flower to gather sweets and concoct some precious essence that shall be fragrant to me, but I have found honey drop from Your lips, I have touched Your mouth with my finger and put the honey to my lips, and my eyes have been enlightened, sweet Jesus! Every Word of Yours is precious to my soul—no honey can compare with You—well did You eat butter and honey!

And perhaps I ought not to have forgotten to say that the effect of Christ’s eating butter and honey was to show us that *He would not, in His lifetime, differ from other men* in His outward guise. Other Prophets, when they came, were dressed in rough garments and were austere and solemn in manner. Christ came not so—He came to be a Man among men, a feaster with those that feast, an eater of honey with eaters of honey. He differed from none and, therefore, He was called a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. Why did Christ do so? Why did He so commit Himself, as men said, though it was verily a slander? It was because He would have His disciples not regard meats and drinks, but despise these things, and live as others do. It was because He would teach them that it is not that which goes *into* a man, but that which comes out, that defiles him! It is not what a man eats, with temperance, that does him injury—it is what a man *says* and *thinks*. It is not abstaining from meat, it is not the carnal ordinance of, “Touch not, taste not, handle not,” that makes the fundamentals of our religion, albeit it may be good addenda thereunto. Butter and honey Christ ate, and butter and honey may His people eat! No, whatever God, in His Providence gives unto them, that is to be the food of the Child Christ.

III. Now we come to close with THE NAME OF CHRIST—“And shall call His name Immanuel.”

I hoped, dear Friends, that I would have my voice this morning, that I might talk about my Master’s name. I hoped to be allowed to drive along in my swift chariot, but, as the wheels are taken off, I must be content to go as I can. We sometimes creep when we cannot go and go when we cannot run, but oh, here is a sweet name to close up with—“She shall call His name Immanuel.” Others in the olden time called their children by names which had meaning in them. They did not give them the names of eminent persons whom they would very likely grow up to hate, and wish they had never heard of! They had names full of meaning which recorded some circumstance of their birth. There was Cain—“I have gotten a man from the Lord,” said his mother, and she called him Cain, that is,

“Gotten,” or, “Acquired.” There was Seth—that is, “Appointed,” for his mother said, “God has appointed me another seed instead of Abel.” Noah means “Rest,” or, “Comfort.” Ishmael was so called by his mother because God had heard her. Isaac was called, “Laughter,” because he brought laughter to Abraham’s home. Jacob was called the supplanter, or the crafty one, because he would supplant his brother. We might point out many similar instances—perhaps this custom was a good one among the Hebrews, though the peculiar formation of our language might not allow us to do the same, except in a certain measure.

We see, therefore, that the Virgin Mary called her son, Immanuel, that there might be *a meaning in His name*, “God with us.” My soul, ring these words again, “God with us.” Oh, it is one of the bells of Heaven! Let us strike it yet again—“God with us.” Oh, it is a stray note from the sonnets of Paradise! “God with us.” Oh, it is the lisp of a seraph! “God with us.” Oh, it is one of the notes of the singing of Jehovah when He rejoices over His Church with singing! “God with us.” Tell it, tell it, tell it—this is the name of Him who is born today—

“Hark, the herald angels sing!”

This is His name, “God with us”—God with us, by His Incarnation, for the august Creator of the world did walk upon this globe! He who made ten thousand orbs, each of them more mighty and more vast than this earth, became the Inhabitant of this tiny atom! He who was from everlasting to everlasting, came to this world of time and stood upon the narrow neck of land betwixt the two unbounded seas! “God with us.” He has not lost that name—Jesus had that name on earth and He has it, now, in Heaven! He is *now*, “God with us.”

Believer, He is God with you to protect you! You are not alone, because the Savior is with you! Put me in the desert, where vegetation grows not—I can still say, “God with us.” Put me on the wild ocean and let my ship dance madly on the waves—I would still say, “Immanuel, God with us.” Mount me on the sunbeam and let me fly beyond the western sea—still I would say, “God with us.” Let my body dive down into the depths of the ocean and let me hide in its caverns—still I could, as a child of God say, “God with us.” Yes, and in the grave, sleeping there in corruption—still I can see the footmarks of Jesus! He trod the path of all His people and His name is still, “God with us.”

But if you would know this name most sweetly, you must *know it by the teaching of the Holy Spirit*. Has God been with us this morning? What is the use of coming to Chapel if God is not there? We might as well be at home if we have no visits of Jesus Christ and, certainly, we may come, and come, and come as regularly as that door turns on its hinges unless it is, “God with us,” by the influence of the Holy Spirit! Unless the Holy Spirit takes the things of Christ and applies them to our heart, it is *not*, “God with us.” Otherwise, God is a consuming fire. It is “God with us” that I love—

**“Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find.”**

Now ask yourselves, do you know what “God with us” means? Has it been God with you in your tribulations, by the Holy Spirit’s comforting influence? Has it been God with you in searching the Scriptures? Has the

Holy Spirit shone upon the Word? Has it been God with you in conviction, bringing you to Sinai? Has it been God with you in comforting you, by bringing you, again, to Calvary? Do you know the full meaning of that name, Immanuel, "God with us"? No—he who knows it best knows little of it! Alas, he who knows it not at all is ignorant, indeed—so ignorant that his ignorance is not bliss, but will be his damnation! Oh, may God teach you the meaning of that name, Immanuel, "God with us"!

Now let us close. "Immanuel." It is wisdom's mystery, "God with us." Sages look at it and wonder. Angels desire to see it. The plumb-line of reason cannot reach half-way into its depths. The eagle wings of science cannot fly so high and the piercing eye of the vulture of research cannot see it! "God with us." It is Hell's terror! Satan trembles at the sound of it. His legions fly apace, the black-winged dragon of the Pit quails before it! Let Satan come to you suddenly and do you but whisper that word, "God with us"—back he falls—confounded and confused! Satan trembles when he hears that name, "God with us." It is the laborer's strength—how could he preach the Gospel, how could he bend his knees in prayer, how could the missionary go into foreign lands, how could the martyr stand at the stake, how could the confessor acknowledge his Master, how could men labor if that one word were taken away? "God with us," is the sufferer's comfort, is the balm of his woe, is the alleviation of his misery, is the sleep which God gives to His beloved, is their rest after exertion and toil.

Ah, and to finish, "God with us" is eternity's sonnet, is Heaven's hallelujah, is the shout of the glorified, is the song of the redeemed, is the chorus of angels, is the everlasting oratorio of the great orchestra of the sky! "God with us"—

***"Hail You Immanuel, all Divine,
In You Your Father's glories shine!
You brightest, sweetest, fairest One,
That eyes have seen or angels known."***

Now, a happy Christmas to you all and it *will* be a happy Christmas if you have God with you! I shall say nothing, today, against festivities on this great birthday of Christ. I hold that, perhaps, it is not right to have the birthday celebrated, but we will never be among those who think it as much a duty to celebrate it the wrong way as others the right! But we will, tomorrow, think of Christ's birthday. We shall be obliged to do it, I am sure, however sturdily we may hold to our rough Puritanism. And so, "let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Do not feast as if you wished to keep the festival of Bacchus! Do not live, tomorrow, as if you adored some heathen divinity. Feast, Christians, feast! You have a right to feast. Go to the house of feasting tomorrow! Celebrate your Savior's birth. Do not be ashamed to be glad—you have a right to be happy. Solomon says, "Go your way, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God now accepts your works. Let your garments be always white and let your head lack no ointment."—

***"Religion never was designed
To make our pleasures less."***

Remember that your Master ate butter and honey. Go your way, rejoice tomorrow, but, in your feasting, think of the Man in Bethlehem—let Him have a place in your hearts, give Him the glory, think of the virgin who conceived Him—but think, most of all, of the Man born, the Child given! I finish by again saying—

“A HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL!”

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
*Matthew 2:1-12.***

Verse 1. *Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, Our Lord was born in Bethlehem, an inconsiderable village of Judea. Its name, however, is significant—it means, “the house of bread.” Truly Bethlehem has become, in a spiritual sense, the house of bread to all who feed on Christ. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem—*

2. *Saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews?* There was another king, of whom we have just read—“Herod the king,” but he was an Idumaeon, an Edomite. He had no right to the throne. But here is born the true Heir to the throne of David, and the Magi from the East have come to ask for Him.

2, 3. *For we have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.* Tidings of the arrival of these strangers in the Jewish capital, asking for the new-born King, would be sure to spread rapidly! The news soon reached the palace and Herod, one of the most suspicious and cruel of tyrants and, therefore, the most cowardly of men, “was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.”

4. *And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.* They could tell him if they wished to do so, for they were deeply versed in the Scriptures. The Scribes copied the Sacred Writings. The Pharisees had counted the very letters of the Word—they could tell which was the middle letter of the Old Testament. They were great at the letter, but, alas, they had missed the spirit! Men may know a great deal about the Bible and yet really know nothing of it. The husks of Scripture yield small profit—we need to come to the kernel, the real corn, the *spiritual* meaning of the Inspired Word.

5-7. *And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the Prophet, And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of you shall come a Governor who shall rule My people Israel. King Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.* He half suspected that he would not see them again, so he determined to get all the information he possibly could out of them.

8. *And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, “Go and search diligently for the young Child; and when you have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also.* It was like his deep, cunning

spirit to try to find out where the Child was, that he might kill Him! He looked upon Him as a rival, as one who might rob him of his throne, so he would put Him to death if he could and, meanwhile, he would pretend that he wanted to worship Him.

9. *When they had heard the king, they departed, and, lo, the star, which they saw in the East, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was.* It was probably not a star in the sense in which we use the word, that is a planet, or a fixed star, but a meteoric brightness which moved in the sky, and so guided the wise men. They do not appear to have seen its light after they set out on their journey—it directed them to the region of Judea so they came to the capital city, Jerusalem. When they departed from Herod, the star appeared, again, and guided them to the little town of Bethlehem, where they found the Christ. God may sometimes send us stars, bright lights of joy, to guide us on our way. He may also take them away, again, and then we must walk by faith. When they reappear, we will be glad to have them once more, as the wise men were.

10, 11. *When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they were come into the house.* For it would seem that the mother and child had moved out of the stable into a house. The town was, perhaps, not now quite so crowded, and there was more room for Mary and her blessed baby—“When they were come into the house”—

11. *They saw the young Child with Mary, His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.* These were the products of their country, such as they would give to princes. Such treasures must have been of great use to Mary and Joseph to help them take care of the wondrous child who had been entrusted to their charge.

12. *And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.* I remember a long sermon by a learned man, to show that we may sometimes break our promise, if, upon further consideration, we find we did wrong in making it, saying that these wise men, though they had promised to go and tell Herod all about the young Child, did not do so when warned of God by a dream. After reading his very ingenious dissertation, I turned to the text and there discovered that the wise men *never made any promise of the kind*—so that it was a sermon on a nonexistent text! They never agreed to return! Herod told them to do so, which is one thing, but they did not promise to do so—that would have been quite another thing. They broke no promise and, therefore, needed no excuse. They were in supernatural communication with God—He had guided them by a star and now He speaks to them in a dream and bids them go back to their own country another way. May we all be under like unerring guidance! Amen.

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

NO FIXITY WITHOUT FAITH

NO. 2305

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 23, 1893.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 11, 1889.**

***“If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established.”
Isaiah 7:9.***

As I told you in the reading, Isaiah had a very heavy commission from God. He was to go and speak to people who would not hear him and to be to them a messenger rather of death, than of life. Though the message, itself, would be full of life, yet they would refuse it, and so bring upon themselves a tenfold death. As a sort of experiment in his work, he was called upon, first, to go and speak to king Ahaz, that wicked king. He knew in his own soul that what he had to say would be rejected, but, nevertheless, at the command of God, he went to speak to the king. He was told where he would meet him. God knows where to send His faithful servants. He has arranged every circumstance about the true preacher—what he shall say and where he shall say it—and every congregation is a picked congregation for God's sent servants. He knows who comes and who is away. He knows how to adapt the message with great specialty to the individual case of each person who is within sound of the preacher's voice and He knows how to adapt even the voice, itself, to the ears of every hearer. We know all this, for we have had abundant evidence of it again and again.

The tidings which Isaiah took to Ahaz were very pleasant ones. He was not to be afraid of the king of Israel and the king of Syria. These men were determined to destroy him and his people, but they were only like smoking firebrands, almost extinct. Their power would soon come to an end and, therefore, the Prophet told the king not to be distressed, but to be quiet and to wait patiently till he saw what God would do. Then he challenged the faith of Ahaz and warned him that if he did not believe, neither would he be established! Isaiah anticipated what was all too true, that Ahaz would not trust, that he would prefer to look to outward means, send for the king of Assyria and lean upon an arm of flesh rather than put his trust in God. He might have waited, surely, and not have indulged his fears until there was reason for them, but no, he must be all in a fright and a fume notwithstanding that God had said to him, by His servant, Fear not, neither be faint-hearted.”

Well now, these words of Isaiah to Ahaz furnish us with a warning and an encouragement. God seems to speak out of this blessed Book to you and to me, tonight! Certainly, He speaks to me—I hope to you, also—“If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established.”

I. Our first head shall be, GOD DESERVES TO BE BELIEVED. We cannot say this of everybody. Many men deserve to be believed—their character is such that we are bound to trust them. Some men, on the other hand, ought not to be believed—their character is such that we would be foolish to confide in them. But I say, tonight, of Him who created the heavens and the earth, the God of this Word of God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He claims to be believed and He deserves to be believed!

For, first, *He is God and, being God, He cannot lie.* The conception of a lying God may be possible to a heathen, but I trust that to you it is quite out of the question. The very idea of “God” to us means perfect truthfulness, indisputable veracity—God who, from the very necessity of His Nature, cannot lie. He can do anything that is right, but He cannot do a wrong thing. He cannot say an untruthful thing. He cannot, either in word, or deed, or thought, be guilty of falsehood. He is God and He cannot lie. To impute a lie to God is blasphemy! I will use no softer word. You have brought dishonor upon the sacred name when you have, in any way, connected the name of Jehovah with a lie. “Has He said, and shall He not do it?” Oh, Beloved, do not treat the Lord as if He were a liar! Remember that when you doubt His promise—since you know He can fulfill it if He wills, for He is Omnipotent—when you doubt His promise, you are casting a suspicion upon the veracity of the Eternal God! Do you mean to do that? Have you never read that word of the beloved and loving disciple, “He that believes not God has made Him a liar; because He believes not the record that God gave of His Son”? Did you really mean to make God a liar? Were you guilty of such infamy as that? Well, I will say no more upon that point but He deserves to be believed because He is God. It is essential to every true idea of God to believe that God must be true.

He deserves to be believed because *His Word has always been true.* Any person who is a student of prophecy knows how literally, even in small things, the prophecies of God have been fulfilled. There was a little book which was published, some time ago, by Mr. Urquhart, of Weston-super-Mare, upon fulfilled prophecy. I gave a copy to a Brother, the other day, and on writing to me, he said that he had found it much more interesting than any story or novel he had ever read in his life, and vastly more astounding than any romance, for every jot and tittle, to the dots of the i’s, and the crosses of the t’s, in the prophecies of God’s servants, had been recorded in history! In the ruins of Tyre, Sidon and Babylon, and the like, we have, in every stone, a witness of the faithfulness of God to His Word!

Nor is it merely in history that the Lord has been proved to be true. You and I—I hope I may say that, but I do speak for many here—have proved the faithfulness of God. He has thrown us into different trials. We have had opportunities for testing the promises which we could not have tested if we had not been tried. Just as you are unable to see the stars by day, but if you go down a well, you can see them, directly, at any time of day or night, so, dear Friends, God puts us down these deep wells of trial, and then we see His starry promises shining brightly! I would rather take the promise of God than the promise of the Bank of England! The Bank of England might fail—a terrible disaster, certainly, and highly improbable—

but the Word of God *cannot* fail, for the Lord has greater resources than the whole nation has, or all the nations of the earth put together!

The inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers in God's sight! He takes up such isles as we dwell in as very little things. Oh, Friends, the Lord may well have all our confidence, for when we confide in Him to our utmost, we have leaned with very little pressure upon the veracity of God! The bull that bore the gnat upon his forehead smiled when the gnat hoped that his weight was not too much for him—and for God to bear us up is as nothing to Him! We may come to Him with what we call our great needs and He will smilingly say, "A crumb from My table will suffice for a million such as you." The things that are but trifles with the Most High would be enough for all the inhabitants of the world, if they would come to Him—therefore let us trust Him, as I sometimes say, "Up to the hilt." Let us go in for glorious trusting of our God! When a man swims, it is a good thing to have deep water. You do not need, then, to calculate whether it is a mile deep or twenty miles—if you are swimming, why, you are swimming! When you come to trust in the Infinite God, let Him be infinite in your thoughts as far as the finite can accept infinity. Trust Him without limit or bound, without suspicion or mistrust!

For, further, as He must be true, being God, and as He has been true, being God, so *He has no motive for being untrue*. Why does God ever speak to us at all? Why does the Infinite ever stoop out of His boundless Glory to make Himself known to creatures that, before Him, are much more insignificant than an ant on the anthill can be to a man? You have never strained yourselves, I am sure, to reveal yourselves to a worm—and yet God has put forth all His sacred ingenuity to manifest Himself to man who, compared with his Maker, is but the insect of a minute! Why, do you think, He should speak to us—to deceive us? It seems to me to be the height of absurdity to suppose that if Jehovah breaks the eternal silences, it is to mislead a poor, miserable creature like man. Oh, no! The love that makes Him speak cannot be questioned and the Truth which He speaks must not be doubted!

If God reveals Himself to men at all, men may, like little children with a father, feel themselves quite sure that they may most safely trust every word of the Revelation. Men talk of all the "mistakes of Scripture." I thank God that I have never met with any! Mistakes of *translation* there may be, for translators are men, but mistakes of the original Word there never can be, for the God who spoke it is Infallible and so is every Word He speaks! And in that confidence we find delightful rest. There can be no motive for God to give us a Book that is partly true and partly false, about which we are to be the judges, accepting this portion and discarding the other. That would make us worse off and fill us with yet more self-conceit than we would have had if we had been left without the Book at all! This can never be the case—therefore let us believe that, in God's motive for speaking to us, which must be condescending love, there is a guarantee that He speaks the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth.

I feel almost ashamed to be talking like this about Him who is so surely true, and whom you and I have tried and proved these many years. It seems so idle to have to prove what nobody ought to doubt. For, once

more, remember that *the honor of God is involved in His veracity*. If you say that God is not Almighty, we may pray God to forgive your mistake. But if you say that He is not truthful, there is a spitefulness, a malice about your assertion which is a grievous wrong to His holy Character. God untrue? Oh, Sir, I beseech you, do not think so for a moment, for this is a high crime and misdemeanor against the Majesty of the Eternal Throne! God will sooner cease to be than break His promise or forget His pledged Word. He is very jealous for His own Glory. He calls Himself, in the Ten Commandments, a jealous God, and so He is. He will never permit the Glory of His infinite Majesty to be tainted by the suspicion of a falsehood. Therefore, let not any child of His ever doubt Him and, as I fear we have done so, let us tremble before Him and repent that we should ever have had the audacity, even, to tolerate within a mile of our thoughts, *anything* like a suspicion of our God. His honor is compromised if He breaks His Covenant, but this He cannot do, as Paul writes to the Hebrews, “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” The blood of the only-begotten Son of God has sealed the Covenant—and sooner shall Heaven and earth pass away than any part of that Covenant shall fall to the ground!

Only this one thing I add. Suppose, even for a moment—a supposition we will not even make—that we could not trust in the truthfulness of God? *What would be left for us to trust to?* When rocks move, what stands firm? If God, Himself, can change, or be not true—come, Night, and swallow me up in your blackness! Come Chaos, and devour me! Oh, for annihilation, that we might cease to be if God has ceased to be true! Then would the harbors be turned to whirlpools! Then would the rocks be turned into clouds! Would there be anything left? Would not everything disappear, like the foam of the sea, if God could be proven to not be true? Thank God, we do not live in such a chaos as that! We know that He is true and, with Paul, we cry, “Let God be true, but every man a liar.” Let everything else be swept away like chaff before the wind, but the eternal God and His Word will stand unmoved forever and ever!

That is my first point—God deserves to be believed.

II. But, secondly, SOME ARE NOT WILLING TO BELIEVE GOD. That is clear by the fear expressed in the text—“If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established.”

“If you will not believe.” Believing is a matter of the will. A man does not believe without being *willing* to believe. God’s Grace works faith, not *upon* us, but *in* us. God works in us to will and to do and, in the willing, He leads us up to believing. We voluntarily believe and, certainly, men voluntarily *disbelieve*—and some of them, with strong perversity of will, would not believe even though one rose from the dead! Why is this, this strange unwillingness of some men, no, in a sense, of *all* men, to believe in God?

They are willing to believe other things. We have numbers of persons about who are like fish with their mouths open, ready for any bait. It does not matter how absurd may be the dream of a man, if he will persistently

enough stand up in the street and publish his dream, or will print it, he will be certain to find a number of fools who will believe what he says! In this country, although we think ourselves so very wise, Carlyle was not far off when he spoke of our population as consisting of so many millions, "mostly fools." At any rate, there is a considerable sprinkling of them about. See how readily men believe what they read in the newspaper, though, probably, there is not a fragment of truth in it! That is all the better for the paper because the lie can be contradicted tomorrow, and that will make another column or two, and so fill up at a time when there is a dearth of news! But there is great credulity among men in general. Do you think that anybody could sell patent medicines if everybody were wise? No, but everybody is not wise. We are willing to believe what a man tells us if he will only tell it to us bravely enough, with a sufficient quantity of brass. But when it comes to believing God's Word, many manifest a strange incapacity to believe! The box is shut and you cannot find the key! But bring a lie of man, and the box opens of its own accord! There is a sort of, "Open sesame," then. Alas, often the falsehood of men is received and the Truth of God is rejected!

Another thing is significant, that *men cling tenaciously to faith in themselves*. They do believe, they will believe, that they can work their way to Heaven. You talk to them about their sin. Well, they cannot deny it, but they so extenuate it as to make it appear to be rather their *misfortune* than their fault. It is, with them, a calamity to be sinners, rather than a grave offense. So they make it out to be and, in the future, those poor creatures are going to manage themselves! The wine cup, it is true, has tempted them, and they have fallen many times—but now they know better—they will *never* be affected by drink, again! The lust of the flesh which has led them captive to many a Delilah—oh, yes, they have "sown their wild oats"—but they will never go into *that* form of evil, again—and so on, and so on! The creature that has done nothing right, but everything that is wrong, still believes in himself. He goes to church and calls himself a "miserable sinner," and yet continues to be a happy believer in his capacity to rule himself. "We have done the things we ought not to have done, and have left undone the things we ought to have done; and there is no health in us." Yes, we said that on our knees, but when we get on our legs, again, we are going to do the things we ought to do, and to leave undone the things which should be left undone—and we feel as healthy—from the crown of our head to the sole of our feet, as if we never had a disease about us in our lives! Now, that is a strange thing, that man can believe in himself and yet cannot believe in God! This is the madness of our nature—that man thinks that he can do everything when he can do nothing!

Then, observe how, instead of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life, *some prefer an emotional religion*. I am astounded at some people, how readily they are excited, how easily they are "saved"—at least they say they are saved. Do they believe the promises and hang upon the Word of God? No, but they "feel" so much. These same feelings that seem to lift you up to Heaven will thrust you down to the depths of Hades! Yet these people prefer mere natural emotions, an inward feeling, to this

which is the infinitely sounder way—to believe in God and in Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

Next, *some stubbornly suffer under unbelief*. They have been pining for rest for years and they have not attained it, yet. Still, they will not believe in Christ. Oh, what would they not give if they could but have a night's calm rest and could by day go to business without distress of mind! Yet they will not give themselves up to Christ to be saved, simply trusting Him to save them. They have brought themselves near to the door of suicide and wished they had never been born—yet they will not take the healing medicine that lies close by their hands! They will do *anything*, sooner than trust in God!

I notice, too, *that such people demand this and that of God, beyond what He has revealed*. God has spoken, but that is not enough for them. God must do something else for them—they must dream some peculiar dream, they must see some strange vision—they must fancy that they hear a voice in the air. Pshaw! Put the whole of that nonsense away! Believe what God has said and you are on sure ground. Come to this “more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place.” Believe this and your peace shall be like a river and your righteousness as the waves of the sea! But no—they will not. God must do this or that to oblige them, or else they will not believe Him. You make Him a liar if He will not pamper your whims—but He will do nothing of the sort!

I might, with profit, dwell on that point, but time flies too rapidly for me to say more upon it.

III. Notice, in the third place, that FAITH IS NOT A THING TO BE DE-SPISED.

Have you never heard people say, “Oh, they preach up faith, you know?” “Well, what is faith?” “Well, it is just believing so-and-so.” Listen, Sirs, and then speak like that no more! Faith is a most wonderful thing, for *it is a fair index of the heart*. If you will not believe in God, I see that in your heart you *hate* God. But if you will believe Him, you love Him. We trust a man whom we love. I think that there is little trust in men towards whom we have no esteem and affection. If you believe God, your heart is right with Him. If you will not believe Him, do what you may, you are out of order with your God, I am sure of that. We know that a child who does not believe his father's word is not a loving and obedient child.

Faith in God is, next, *a sure proof of a change of mind*, for, by nature, we do not think of God, much less do we trust Him—we trust what we can see, hear, taste and feel. When we trust God, it shows that we have undergone a great change of mind, an amazing change, of which there can be no surer evidence than that we see Him who is invisible and we live under the influence of His Presence, and we really seek to please Him whom mortal eyes have never seen.

Does anyone think that faith is a little thing? Why, it *inaugurates purity of life*. The moment that a man believes in Christ Jesus, and trusts Him, he ceases from the sin he formerly loved. Sin becomes to him a burden and a plague. If you believe, your belief will kill your sinning, or else your sinning will kill your believing! The greatest argument against the Bible is

an unholy life—and when a man will give that up—he will convict himself. The Book will convict him when he has put out of the way that darling sin that now stands between him and God. A belief in God, as He reveals Himself in Christ, is the inauguration of a life of self-sacrifice and holiness.

Do any still talk of faith as being a little thing? Why, it is faith *that leads to prayer*, and prayer is the very breath of God in man, returning from where it came! If you believe, you will pray. How can you pray if you do not believe? Do you knock at a door of which you are persuaded that there is nobody there to hear you? You are not such a fool, I trust, but when you believe that there is a God, and that God is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, you will begin to seek Him—and you will never leave off seeking Him as long as you are in the land of the living!

Faith little? Why, *it is faith that glorifies God*. All the works that we can ever do, be they what they may, can never bring such Glory to God as a single act of trust! I venture to say that the highest adoration is not that of cherubim and seraphim before the blazing Throne of God, but that of a poor sinner, conscious of guilt, who, nevertheless, believes in God as He reveals Himself in Christ, putting away sin by the great Sacrifice. If you can, tonight, believe, even if you are the biggest sinner out of Hell—it you can believe, I say—that God can pardon you, you have done Him honor! And if you, poor, troubled Christian, in the very vortex of your grief, can still believe that God is faithful and that He will bear you through, you have glorified His blessed name more than angels can! This is practical music that consists not in sound, but in the inner sense of the *heart*. It is true melody to God. Faith is not the trifle that some think it to be. This holy trust in God is the heart and soul of all true experimental godliness!

IV. So I have come to my last point, grieving that I have had to slur so much where I should have liked to speak at length—THOSE WHO REFUSE TO EXERCISE FAITH WILL MISS MANY GREAT PRIVILEGES. I might mention many, but the text gives us the one which I will dwell upon—“If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established.”

It means, first, that those who believe not will miss *establishment in comfort*. If you believe not in God, your heart shall be moved like the trees of the woods by the wind. You shall be tossed to and fro like the waves that dash on the rocks. You shall be driven along like a rolling thing that is twisted about by the whirlwind. But if you will believe in God and in His dear Son who reveals Him, then you shall come to an anchorage and there you shall outride every storm! Fear shall depart and your soul shall be at rest. Oh, you do not know the profound calm that spreads over the spirit when it has done with itself and just commits itself to God! You never can know this if you will not believe.

In the next place, if you will not believe, you shall never enjoy *establishment in judgement*. There are many persons who do not know what to believe—they heard one man, the other day, and they thought that he spoke very cleverly, and they agreed with him. They heard another, the next day, who was rather *more* clever, and he went the other way, so they went with him! Poor Souls, driven to and fro, never knowing what is what! “If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established.” You shall be

like the moon that is never, two days, alike. You shall seem to believe this and to believe that, and yet, really believe nothing! But if you will come and trust your God—wholly believe every Word that He has spoken and, especially, believe the Incarnate Word, the ever-blessed Son of God who gave Himself for the guilty—then you shall begin to know something! You shall put things in their right places and, knowing the Truth of God, you shall know more of it and you shall get the assurance of faith from which you shall never be shaken, as the Holy Spirit shall bear witness to the Truth within your soul.

Next, we need an *establishment in conduct*. Look at certain men who once professed to be converted. They were down at a revival meeting the other day and they went to the penitent form. But then, a day or two after, they went to quite another form. They made a confession of faith and joined the Church. Ah, me, the Church will be well rid of them if their conduct is such as it has been, lately! But why is it that their conduct is not always as it should be? How is it that many men are this and that and 20 things? How is it that there is inconsistent behavior? My text supplies the answer, “If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established.” But a *genuine faith* in God, a solid faith in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, a true realization of the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit will keep you from stumbling and you shall be preserved faultless until the coming of your Lord!

So it is, also, with *establishment in hope*. We know some who are, at times, all bright of eyes and cheerful with hope, and they look into the Eternal World with great delight. They half wish that they could die at once and be where Jesus is! But after a very short time their castle in the air melts away—they have no joy, no hope, no peace. No, “If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established.” If you hope without believing, your hope is an anchor that has not gripped anything. If you expect without a proper ground of expectation, or if the ground is not what God has said, then you may expect what you like, but as your expectation is not from *Him*, it will certainly be disappointed. Oh, that you would make the Word of God the top and bottom of everything in your life! Oh, that you would take it as the Alpha and Omega of your knowledge of things Divine! Then would you be established, for there would be something to ground your hope upon, which even Satan could not destroy!

And, lastly, we need to be *established in spiritual vigor and strength*. You do not need to be always babes in Christ—you need to be fathers. You desire to be useful—you need to be bringing others to Christ. Perhaps you look at some with envy. You say, “Such-and-such a person is quite a mother in Israel. Such-and-such a man is a standard-bearer for Christ. But I am a poor, puny thing, of no use to the Lord.” If you would grow, you must believe your God! He that gets close to God and leans wholly upon God, shall have Divine strength imparted to him. We have never believed God, any one of us, as we ought to have believed Him. Some of us have believed Him, as we thought, without reserve at times. Have we not gone to Him? We will not tell the story now—but have we not gone to Him in abject need and cast ourselves upon Him—and found all supplies even exceeding abundantly above what we asked for or even thought? Then

have we found that our God has been to us like the illimitable waters of the great sea, and we have cried to others, “Bring your great vessels and fill them from this ocean.”

I am told that in the olden times, on Christmas Day, it was the custom in country villages for the squire always to fill with good things whatever vessels the poor people brought up to the hall, that they might have a Christmas dinner. It was strange how big the basins grew year after year! Whenever the man came round with the crockery cart, every good housewife would look all over his stock to see if there was not a still larger basin. It was a rule that the squire’s servants should always fill the bowl, whatever size it was, and thus the bowls grew bigger and bigger! Oh, my dear Friends, God will fill your bowl however large it is! Get as big a bowl as you can—and when you bring it, if ever there comes a whisper in your ear, “Now you have presumed upon God’s benevolence, you have brought too big a bowl”—smile at yourself and say, “This is as nothing to His overflowing fullness.”

If I said, “O poor Sea, poor Sea, now you will be drained dry, for they bring such big bowls to be filled with your waters!” The sea, tossing its mighty billows far and wide, would laugh at my folly! Come, then, and bring your largest conceptions of God and multiply them ten thousand-fold and believe in Him as this Book would make you believe in Him! Open your mouth wide and He will fill it. He bids you, even, to *command Him*. He says, “Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands command you Me.” That is a wonderful expression! Rise to the sublimity of faith and be daring with your God!

And you guilty ones, look up, believing that He is greater in mercy than you are in sin—and more able to forgive than you are to transgress—and you shall find it so! But “if you will not believe, surely you shall not be established.” Let us all go home, believing in Christ Jesus, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.
ISAIAH 7:1-16; 2 CHRONICLES 28:1-16.

Isaiah 7:1, 2. *And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Tadah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, King of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind. They were tossed to and fro, bent, thrown down, as the trees of a forest in a tornado. They had already felt the power of these two confederate kings and they were terribly afraid. David, himself, would have had confidence in God, but, “the house of David” had gone far astray. Ahaz had cast off the fear of God and he had, therefore, great fear of men.*

3. *Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, you, and Shear-Jashub your son. Shear-Jashub was but a child and why Isaiah was to take his son with him does not appear, except that his name signifies, “The remnant shall return,” and it was part of the Prophet’s message that*

the remnant, the people who had been carried away captive, should return.

3. *At the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field.* God knows the exact spot where His servants shall meet with the men to whom He sends them. There is a corner where the fuller's field just juts upon the upper pool—there Isaiah will meet king Ahaz—and there he is to speak to him. Is there any spot by the “Elephant and Castle” where God means to meet with some soul, tonight? I pray that it may be so.

4. *And say unto him.* The Prophet is told the word he is to speak as well as the place where he is to deliver the message. Isaiah knew that he was soon to go and deal with men of hard heart and deaf ears. The other day we read the sixth chapter of this prophecy and we noted the hard task that Isaiah had to perform. Now he is beginning his work with the man whom the Bible calls, “That King Ahaz,” as if it could not say anything bad enough of him, but had merely to mention his name and everybody would know who was meant.

4. *Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah.* Their kingdoms were dying out. They were like burnt-out firebrands—they made a little smoke—and within a very short time there would be nothing left of them. And Ahaz need not be afraid of them.

5-9. *Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against you, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal: thus says the Lord GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Renzaliah's son.* God did not intend it to grow any bigger. These two little kingdoms of Syria and Ephraim were to keep as they were until they were destroyed.

9-12. *If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established. Moreover the LORD spoke again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask you a sign of the LORD your God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD.* He put his refusal very prettily, as men often do when they want to say an evil thing. He refused to accept a sign from the Lord under the idle pretense that it would be tempting God. We never tempt God when we do what He bids us! There is no presumption in obedience. It was an idle compliment, to conceal the impudence of his heart. The Lord invited him to acknowledge Jehovah as his God—“Ask you a sign of Jehovah your God.” But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, neither will I tempt Jehovah.” He did not say, “Jehovah, my God.” And his silence meant dissent.

13. *And he said, Hear you now, O house of David.* Observe, the Prophet does not say, “Hear now, O Ahaz,” as if God would not deal with Ahaz on his own account, but only because he was of the “house of David.” The Lord remembered His Covenant with David. God sometimes blesses men

for the sake of their fathers. He might not hear a word that they have to say, but He remembers their fathers and the amity and harmony which there was between Himself and their fathers.

13, 14. *Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God, also? Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son. A most wonderful sign is this!*

14, 15. *And shall call His name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.* Whereupon a wise commentator says that before children are able to learn, their parents should look upon the very feeding of them as a means of making them to know the difference between good and evil.

16. *For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that you abhor shall be forsaken of both her kings.* This was the sign-manual. Judah could not be destroyed, for our Lord was to spring out of Judah—and this was the sign that Judah must stand because Immanuel must be born of that nation—and the time for this great event was fixed by the Lord. Until a child is some few years of age, he does not distinguish between good and evil; but in a shorter time than it would take a child to come to years of responsibility, God meant to cut off both those kings—and He did. This was a very wonderful prophecy and ought to have filled Ahaz with great delight, and with confidence in God, but it did nothing of the kind. Now we are going to read more of the story of this King Ahaz.

2 Chronicles 28:1-3. *Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD, like David, his father, for he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim. Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.* God had driven out the Canaanites because of these abominations and, therefore, for His own people to practice them was peculiarly provoking to Him.

4. *He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.* He could not do enough of it—so many trees, so many altars. There are some men who use every opportunity for sin with a diligence which would bring the blush into the face of Christians who are not as diligent in obeying as these men are in sinning.

5. *Therefore the LORD, his God, delivered him into the hands of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.* It did not look as if the captives would ever return, yet the Prophet's son was named Shear-Jashub, "The remnant shall return." Ahaz might have said to Isaiah, "Your child's name is a lie." We shall see.

6-11. *For Pekah, the son of Remaliah, slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men; because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers. And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew Maaseiah, the king's son, and Azrikam the governor of the house, and Elkanah that was next to the king. And the children of Israel*

carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand, women, sons, and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria. But a Prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded, and he went out before the host that came to Samaria and said unto them, Behold, because the LORD God of your fathers was angry with Judah, He has delivered them into your hand, and you have slain them in a rage that reached up unto Heaven. And now you purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you: but are there not with you, even with you, sins against the LORD your God? Now, hear me, therefore, and deliver the captives again, which you have taken, captive of your brethren: for the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you. It was very wonderful that these wild fellows should listen to this Prophet with all those captives round about them. It was a brave act on the part of the Prophet Oded to go out and utter his protest.

12-15. *Then certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, and Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai, stood up against them that came from the war, and said unto them, You shall not bring in the captives here: for whereas we have offended against the LORD already, you intend to add more to our sins and to our trespass: for our trespass is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel. So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes and all the congregation. And the men which were expressed by name rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brethren: then they returned to Samaria. What a wonderful thing that was! Ahaz ought to have said to Isaiah, "Your child's name is right, after all, for the remnant has returned." Did it not seem as if Ahaz must now trust God? But notice what the next verse says.*

16. *At that time did King Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him.* When men are determined to be unbelievers and disobedient, they will send anywhere for help but to the Lord. Israel and Syria were very little kingdoms, but Assyria was a great empire, the mighty nation of the period. Yet no help came to Ahaz from that quarter, for we read in the 20th verse, "And Tilgath-Pilneser, king of Assyria, came unto him and distressed him, but strengthened him not." The 21st verse tells us that Ahaz bribed the king of Assyria, "but he helped him not." That is always the dirge at the end of all efforts to secure human instead of Divine aid.

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

“And He will be as a sanctuary.”
Isaiah 8:14.

MANY of the Rabbis, and I think with good reason, refer this to the Messiah. We refer it to Jesus Christ, the Man of Nazareth, the Son of God, who is the Messiah of God to our souls. We are, no doubt, justified in referring it to our Lord Jesus Christ, because Peter, speaking by the Holy Spirit, uses the next part of the verse in reference to Him. He declares that it was written that Jesus should be a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense. If, then, the latter part of the verse is by Divine Authority interpreted as belonging to Christ, we may be pretty sure that the former part of the verse requires the same construction!

So then, as a subject for our present meditation, we take the fact that Jesus Christ will be as a sanctuary. He will be as a sanctuary in three respects, upon each of which we shall speak with all possible simplicity. First, Jesus will be as a sanctuary—

I. IN WHICH WE, AS POOR GUILTY SINNERS, SHALL FIND A SHELTER.

A sanctuary was a place where a criminal who dared not appear before the tribunals of his country found a shelter. Such sanctuaries once abounded in England. Certain shrines which were considered sacred had this privilege or this curse—I do not know which it was—accorded to them—that whenever a criminal had fled to them, he was beyond the arm of justice. There was such a sanctuary in Westminster and another not far from this Tabernacle, but they were ultimately abolished. Among the Jews the privilege of the sanctuary was kept in proper check, yet it was not forbidden. Certain cities were set apart to which man-slayers, who had accidentally slain anyone, might flee for security. We find also that among the Jews, some hoped to find shelter in the precincts of the Temple. Joab went to the altar and laid hold upon the horns, and thought himself secure, though when Solomon sent and bade him come outside, he said, “No, but I will die here,” so that the altar in those days was *not* a sanctuary. It was not until later times that it was unjustifiable to kill men when they had entered into holy places, and hence holy places and sanctuaries became places of refuge.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is a place of secure refuge for every soul that flies to Him. The moment a sinner believes in Jesus, he is safe—and continuing to believe, he remains safe in life, safe in death, safe in judgment, safe in eternity! The passing out of self-righteousness into confidence in Christ is the act that saves the soul. When your faith lays its hand upon the dear head of the Redeemer—what if I say upon the horns of the altar of His Sacrifice—then is your soul secure and nothing can destroy it!

Let us explain this mystery. Why is it that believing in Jesus makes the soul safe? It is because when God was angry with men and must necessarily smite men for their sins, Jesus interposed. The blows that ought to have fallen upon men fell upon the Savior. The debt which was due from the multitude of sinners to the great God, Jesus paid—

***“He bore that man might never bear
His Father’s righteous ire.”***

It will be manifest to you all that if Jesus Christ suffered, thus, in our stead, we shall not be called on to suffer the penalty He discharged. If Jesus paid our debts, they are cancelled and we are in debt no longer! If Jesus Christ became our Substitute and stood for us before God, then our warfare is accomplished and, henceforth, the Law of God can exact nothing at our hands. Do you ask for whom did Jesus Christ thus shed His blood as a Substitute, a Representative? We answer, for as many as believe on His name. “For God so loved the world”—now, mark, here is the gauge, this is the test! I have heard people dwell on that word, “so,” as if it were something boundless and unqualified, without measure or limitation! But listen to the passage—“For God so loved the world”—so much and no more—“that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” The work of Christ thus begins and ends with, “*Whoever believes on Him.*” If you believe not, dying as you are, the death of Christ has nothing to do with you except to plunge you into yet deeper despair! It is only to the man who believes that the blood is applied! No other soul under Heaven has any share in the merit of that glorious Sacrifice, or shall be accepted thereby, but the men who believe. But for every soul that believes in Him, Jesus Christ has borne all the punishment that soul deserved to have borne. God cannot in justice punish that man, for He has punished Christ instead of him. For every soul that believes, Christ has drunk the cup of wrath to the very dregs. There is not a drop left in that cup for anyone who believes on Christ, for Christ has drained it. By Jesus the debts have all been discharged—He has not left one of them in the book of God’s record. Every soul that believes is secure before the courts of Heaven because Jesus stood for him! My main enquiry here must be, “Do you believe in Jesus?” I will put it in other words. To believe is to trust. Do you *trust* in Jesus? Do you rely upon Him? If so, then Jesus stood for you!

Now do you see how Jesus Christ becomes a Sanctuary? Just in this way. Because I fear God's anger for my sin, by faith I put myself beneath the Cross of Christ. There God's anger fell upon the innocent Victim. Divine Justice was clear when it allowed the Holy One to be condemned and put to death. But that same Justice demands a full release for those on whose behalf He mediated! Their faith furnishes the evidence of their freedom. *If God has punished Christ for my sin, He will not also punish me for it.* If Christ has paid my debt, then paid it is—nor will God, the Judge of all, bring the handwriting of ordinances which was once against me, to indict me for charges that have been fully satisfied! Where is common equity if the Substitute should suffer and then the man for whom the Substitute suffered should suffer again? Thus Justice, itself, puts a canopy over the head of the ransomed sinner. When the fiery sleet of God's wrath descends, he smiles, because he has found a retreat, a Sanctuary. The fury of the storm spent itself upon the great Substitute. He bore it all and the sinner escaped. Oh, what a blessed Truth of God! He who has never realized it for himself has never known the Gospel. I care not how high your professions, nor how great your boastings, nor to what church you belong—if you have not come to rest in the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ, you do not know the first letter of the Gospel alphabet! May the Lord, the Holy Spirit, teach you, for this is the Gospel of the Grace of God which we declare unto you, knowing that we shall have to answer for our preaching at the last assize!

Mark, the Lord Jesus Christ in this way becomes a Sanctuary to us *from all our deadly fears*. Who among us is not sometimes disturbed with the recollection of his past life? Surely it has not been as it ought to have been with us. What black spots does our memory conjure up? How much of our time has run to waste? Were you called to die now—and oh, how soon the summons will come—every week takes some of you away! But in the solemn hour of death, would not your past life bring up dismal fears, deep regrets and dark forebodings? What, then, would you do? Why, what should you do but—as you have done before—fall back upon this great Truth that Jesus died for him that believes and, trusting in Him, you would say—

***“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Your kind arms I fall!
Be You my strength, my righteousness,
My Savior and my All!”***

So might you lean your head back upon your pillow and feel it sweet to die with confidence in Christ. Thus, Beloved, from God's wrath and from our deadly fears, the Lord Jesus Christ becomes a Sanctuary to those who trust Him.

A Sanctuary He is, likewise, from all our cares. From anxiety and disquietude, who among us is exempt? In the midst of trials and troubles,

be they in mind, body, or estate—from pain, poverty, or pressure of any kind, is it not a blessed thing to say—

***“His way was much rougher and darker than mine
Did Christ, my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?”***

The remembrance of what He endured for you becomes a sanctuary from dejection and despair! The Friend you trust will prove true. He will treat you tenderly, to whatever cause you trace your hardships.

Permit me to ask each and every one of you individually—Have you ever fled to this Sanctuary? Can you answer, “Yes”? Then happy are you! Go and tell others about it? Let not your tongue be silent. Let others know that there is a covert from the tempest and a shelter from the rough wind; and that you have found and proved it. Be not afraid to speak. There is more reason to fear silence than speech with such a safeguard from sins, snares, and sorrows! Publish it to the worst and vilest, if you meet with them. Let your kinsfolk and acquaintances know that there is a safe sanctuary in Christ and that you have tested its virtues and its validity. The weight of your personal testimony may be blessed by God’s Spirit to their conversion! At any rate, your duty to your fellow creatures and your devotion to your heavenly Benefactor demand this grateful service! Or perhaps you may have never resorted to this Sanctuary. Then be sure that your peril is fearful and your doom is imminent! Out of Christ there is no hope! He that believes not on Him is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God! At this present moment—and who can tell how critical the present moment may be—the wrath of God abides on you! It rests on you, moral though you may be as a citizen, virtuous though you may be as a young man, or pure and affectionate as a young woman, seeing you have not believed! The one thing necessary is lacking. No plea you can offer is valid. You have put yourselves out of court. The wicked shall be cast into Hell with all the nations that forget God! That is the category in which you place yourselves. You have forgotten God! You have neglected Christ! You have never reached a resting place!

Oh, listen! Do you not long for an asylum, a sanctuary, a safe retreat? Are you anxious to reach it? You may easily find it! As you run eagerly, you will read clearly. If you are really humbled and brought to know your need of a Savior, He is easy of access. Just give up all your doings and cast yourselves into His arms. I have used this illustration before, but it will answer my purpose again. There is a boy in a burning house. He is clinging yonder to a windowsill. If he falls to the ground, he will be dashed to pieces. But a strong man standing underneath cries, “Boy, drop! I will catch you!” His hands let go and he falls safely into the arms that are stretched out to rescue him. That letting go is an act of faith, and he is saved thereby. Such faith I would have you now exercise—let go of everything you have been clinging to—just drop into the Savior’s arms and on His sacred bosom you shall find rest. Depend on Him, and

on Him alone. 'Tis all that is asked of you! Will you tell me that you are not fit? Did you ever hear of fitness in connection with a sanctuary? Why, the worst of thieves, and even murderers, were accustomed to fly to the sanctuary! So, however vile you may be, Christ sets the sanctuary of His Atonement wide open before you, that you may go to it and find shelter—

***“Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream.
All the fitness He requires
Is to feel your need of Him—
This He gives you,
'Tis His Spirit's rising beam.”***

Right joyful should I be if, by the Holy Spirit's power, I might persuade some of you to flee to Jesus and depend alone upon Him. This would be the happiest day of your lives, the beginning of a new life! Well do I recollect when I looked to my Lord and Master and found salvation in Him. Never can I forget the happy day when Jesus took my sins away. Most affectionately and earnestly do I entreat you to look to Him—and so shall your eyes be enlightened. Depend on a Crucified Savior and you shall find peace and comfort to your souls. Secondly, Jesus Christ is a Sanctuary in the sense of—

II. A PLACE OF WORSHIP.

We often hear people talk, nowadays, of exclusively holy places. They will sometimes call some edifice, be it a parish church or a private chapel, a sanctuary. I take it that this is a mistaken use of the word if used exclusively. No one place is a bit more sacred than another! Those who would draw near to the Lord should remember that—

***“Wherever we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground.”***

It is nothing but a relic of Judaism, or a result of Roman Catholic superstition, to suppose that there are specially holy places constructed of bricks and mortar, or consecrated stones. Your bedroom, where you bow the knee, may be as near the gate of Heaven as the grand cathedral along whose vaulted roofs the music of song has resounded for centuries! Jesus Christ, however, is a Sanctuary! He is the Holy Place of His people's worship! Treasure that up. You may worship God anywhere if you get with Christ, but if you forget Christ, you can worship nowhere! “No man comes unto the Father but by Me,” says Christ. You can never have an acceptable worship of the Most High except through Jesus Christ.

I will take you for a moment into that which was called the Holy Place under the old Jewish law, the Holy of Holiest. What was there? Only two things which could be seen. The one was the golden censer, and the other was the Mercy Seat, and both of these things were instructive. Now, Beloved, when you go to the Lord to worship, the first thing you need is somebody to render your worship acceptable. See there, in the Person of

your Lord Jesus Christ, a golden censor, representing the sweet merit of His prevalent intercession by which you are accepted. When the High Priest went into the Holy Place, he filled this golden censer and waved it to and fro till the sweet perfumed smoke went up before the Mercy Seat. That is just what Jesus does in Heaven for us! We burn the incense here, below, and the sweet perfume of His merit continually ascends before the Throne of the Most High and Holy God. And beneath the cloud of smoke we worship. Jesus becomes a Sanctuary for us, and you can never worship God aright till you feel that Jesus' merits go with your worship. If your prayers are perfumed with the incense of your own merits and you think they will be acceptable, you know not what you are doing! But if you see that golden censer and look to God through the smoke of Jesus' merits, then do you really worship—and Christ thus becomes to you a Sanctuary!

The other article of furniture in the Holy of Holies was the Mercy Seat—a square casket upon which were set cherubim with outstretched wings. It was before this Mercy Seat, perhaps, that all prayer had to be offered. There was only one place where Israel's gifts could really come up before God—and that was before the Mercy Seat. Now, Beloved, when we go to God, we cannot go directly to Him—we must go to the Mercy Seat first. "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God," said Luther, and he was quite right. We may not come unto God except through Jesus Christ! We look towards God in the Person of His dear Son. God in the Son of Mary. God in the Man of Nazareth. God in the bleeding Sufferer of Calvary—we look there, and we look through Jesus Christ up to the unseen, but ever-glorious Father—and with Jesus' merits before us, with His precious blood before our mind's eye, we come to God through Jesus Christ—and we are accepted in the Beloved!

But, Beloved, I am afraid that many Sundays, and many weekdays, too, we try to worship God without Christ! It will never do—it cannot succeed! If ever you come out of your closet without the sense of having put the blood before God, you have had a lost season of retirement! If you ever go out of this Tabernacle feeling that in all the worship there has been no sense of Christ's Presence, no thoughts of His precious blood—that worship has been worthless—the time has been wasted! Without the incense of His merit, without the Mercy Seat of His substitutionary Sacrifice, there is no Sanctuary, there is no worship, there is no drawing near to God!

Inside the Mercy Seat, if you had been permitted to open the lid and look in, you would have seen three things. First, you would have seen a golden pot of manna. Now communion is one of the sweetest portions of worship. Communion is set forth in Scripture by eating bread with one another. So the eating of manna with God is typical of communion, but we get no manna unless it comes out of the golden pot of Christ! I find no

manna, except it is concealed beneath the Mercy Seat—no eating with God unless we come through Jesus Christ. Do not, I beseech you, attempt to commune with God apart from a precious sense of a Crucified Savior! It is at the Cross' foot that Jacob's ladder stands, the top of which is in Heaven. If you would see a Covenant God, you must get the telescope of faith and stand at the foot of the Cross and look, for you shall see God nowhere but in Jesus! You shall feed upon heavenly manna nowhere but as you feed upon Christ!

Another mode of worship is that of service, for to work for God is the best of service. Inside the Ark there was Aaron's rod that budded. What was that? It was Aaron's symbol of work when he was called to work for God. Do you want to know whether you are called to work for God? Look for your Aaron's rod in Christ! You will never have a rod that buds if you look away from the Lord to the visible Church. The Church may call you when you have no Divine vocation. There are thousands of priests who have had bishops' hands upon their heads, who are neither God's ministers nor truly called to minister among men! But if you see your calling in Christ, if you get Aaron's rod that budded, full of life and vigor, the Spirit of God will maintain you in your work. In your worship, then, and in your service, Christ must be your Sanctuary.

One other thing was in the ark, and that was the tablets of stone, the perfect tablets of the unbroken Law of God fairly written out. If you desire to have the Law written on your hearts, if you desire to have perfect righteousness in keeping the Law of God, you must not try to approach God for yourselves, but you must come through the Mediator, Jesus Christ! He who would offer to God a perfect obedience must take the imputed righteousness of the Immaculate Son of God, and being arrayed in that, he shall worship God aright, Christ being a Sanctuary for him.

I am very, very anxious that every Believer here should draw a ring, as it were, around himself and ask his heavenly Father for help, that he may draw near through the torn veil of the Savior's pierced body and come spiritually, with heart, and soul, and strength, near to the Throne of God, worshipping the Most High! Our third point is that Jesus is a Sanctuary in the sense of—

II. A DWELLING PLACE.

This is an unusual sense, perhaps, but it is a Scriptural one. "He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. In the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me. He shall set me up upon the rock." The priest under the old Law only went into the Holy of Holies once a year, but every priest unto God—and you are all such who have believed—every priest unto God goes in and never goes out again—at least, he never needs to go out! He may abide always in the Holy Place—a place where in the morning he sings his waking song—and a place wherein at night he sups with Christ.

The Sanctuary was a place in which only one Person ever dwelt, and that was God, Himself. The mysterious light which they called the Shekinah shone from between the wings of the cherubim. There were the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night—the symbols of the Divine Presence. It was God’s House. No man lived with Him, no man could. The High Priest went in but once a year, and out he went again to the solemn assembly. But now, in Christ Jesus, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead, bodily, we find a Sanctuary to reside in, for we dwell in Him—we are one with Him! God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. And as God was in Christ, so is it written, “You in Me, and I in you.” Such is the union between Christ and His people. Every Believer is in Christ, even as God is in Christ. So Christ is the Sanctuary where God and man may meet together and live in perpetual delight and solace! My Beloved, do you always dwell in Christ? I wish I did. I find it comparatively easy to get fellowship with Christ, but oh, it is so difficult to keep it up. When one climbs the mountain, gets one’s forehead bathed in the sunlight, talks with God and feels the world to be far below in the valley, one feels that it is good to be there! But ah, we are soon down again, mixing with the people, marrying and giving in marriage. We are fighting our battles and buying and selling again! Oh, that we could have Peter’s wish and build three tabernacles, for it is good to be there, where the transfigured Master reveals Himself to His delighted people! Oh, that we could always live in the banqueting-house, and see that banner of love always floating over us! And let me tell you, we may do so! There have been some of the saints who have been helped to do it. They have been as much with God when they have been trading across the counter as when they have been bowing the knee—as much with Jesus in their daily toils as in their Sabbath rest! Why should it not be so with us? I covet. I covet beyond all luxuries, to walk with God! If I might have this, I would not ask for anything else beneath these skies—

***“Oh, that I might forever sit
With Mary at the Master’s feet
To hear His gracious voice!”***

Oh, that I might go into the door of His House and never find my way out! If we leave the Table, it is not because the feast is over or the Master has dismissed the guests. Oh, never! You are not straitened in Him, but in yourselves. The deep bottomless sea of His precious love is all before you! If you thirst, it is because you will not drink! If you live in the cold Arctic regions, distant from Christ, it is not because the sunlight of His love could not warm and cheer you. If you would come into the equatorial regions of a simpler faith and a more abundant trustfulness, you might yet have all the luxuriance of a tropical heat sent into your souls! Come up higher, Brothers and Sisters! From the lowest chambers come to the highest ones! From the Master’s feet come to His bosom, and from His

bosom come to His lips. From the outside court or tabernacle come to the court of the priests, and from the court of the priests come to the Holiest of All. Advance! Come boldly! The Lord help you by His Spirit to come and dwell in the Sanctuary! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 10:1-20.**

Verse 1. *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.* Now these people had persecuted the Apostle. Whenever he went they had followed him—they had hindered his work—they had sought his life and yet this was the only return that he made to them—to desire and pray that they might be saved! Let us never be turned aside from this loving desire for those among whom we dwell. We wish them nothing worse—we cannot wish them anything better than that they may be saved. Let us not only desire it, but let us *pray* for it. Let us turn our desires into the more practical and holy form of intercession.

2. *For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.* Always make allowance for anything that is good in those who, as yet, are not converted. We must not be unjust with them because we desire to be faithful to them.

3. *For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.* And that is the great mischief with persons who are not saved. They are very sincere, very earnest, but they will not submit to the righteousness of God—they will not agree to be made righteous by the Grace of God through Jesus Christ. But they “go about”—that is the Apostle's word. It is very expressive of the energy men will put into it, and the shifts to which they will have recourse in order to work out a righteousness of their own. They will go about, yes, even to the very gates of Hell! They will try to climb up by prayers, even to the gates of Heaven! They will go about to establish their own righteousness, but they do not know the righteousness of God—and they refuse to submit themselves to it.

4. *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for everyone who believes.* He that believes in Christ is as righteous as the Law of God could have made him, if he had kept it perfectly. The end of the law is righteousness, that is, the fulfilling of it—and he who has Christ will see the Law fulfilled in Christ, and the righteousness of Christ applied to himself!

5, 6. *For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the law, That the man who does those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise—Ah, that is a very different sort of*

thing! It does not speak about doing and living, “but the righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise.”

6-9. *Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (That is, to bring Christ down from above). Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (That is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach. That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.* There is the Gospel in a nutshell! What a very simple way it is—to believe these great facts about the Lord Jesus Christ—really to believe them so that they became practical factors in your life. This is all the way of salvation. Christ has not to be fetched down. He has come! He has not to be sent up. He has risen from the dead! The work is finished! What you have to do is to believe in that finished work and accept it as your own—and you shall be saved!

10. *For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* How different all this from that going about to establish our own righteousness, this setting up of prayers, tears, church attendance, chapel attendance, good works and I know not what besides! Instead of that, here is Christ set forth and, “you are complete in Him.” If you take Him to be yours, you are, “accepted in the Beloved,” and “being justified by faith, you have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Oh, what a blessing this is!

11. *For the Scripture says, Whoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed.* Though he did much that he need be ashamed of, yet when the Law of God so brought him to believe in Jesus Christ for righteousness, he is righteous! And he is so righteous that he shall never be ashamed of his righteousness, nor ashamed of his faith in Christ! Would God that some who are going about after a righteousness of their own would be led to try this method and believe in Jesus Christ.

12. *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek.* What a blessed word that is—“There is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile”! There are some who want to keep up that difference. They say that we are Israel, or something of the kind. I do not care what we are. There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek!

12. *For the same Lord over all is rich unto all who call upon Him.* Someone said to me, “I think that the Romish Church cannot be a Christian Church. I do not think that the Church of England is a Christian Church. Do you think the Baptists are a Christian Church?” And my answer was, “The Christian Church is to be found mixed up in all churches, and no churches at all.” It is a people that God has chosen from among men—and they are to be found here and there and everywhere—a spiritual seed that God has marked out to be His own! And

they are known by this—that they call upon the Lord and, “the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him.”

13. *For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* We call upon that name by having confidence in it. By speaking to God in prayer, using that name. By adoring and reverently proclaiming the majesty and the name of God. Whoever shall call upon or invoke that great name shall be saved!

14. *How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?* For at the bottom of the saving invocation or call there must be real faith. There cannot be any true worship of God unless it be grounded and bottomed upon faith in God.

14. *And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?* There cannot be such a thing as believing what has never been spoken in our hearing, and has never been made known to us. Of course, reading often answers the same end as hearing. It is a kind of hearing of the Word, but a man must know, or he cannot believe.

14. *And how shall they hear without a preacher?* How is that possible? Do you see the machinery of the Gospel? There is the calling upon the name. That comes of faith. There is the faith that comes of hearing, but there is the hearing that comes of preaching. Now a little farther.

15. *And how shall they preach, except they are sent?* Poor preaching. It will not be the kind of preaching that produces believing hearing, except they are sent. If God does not send the man, he had better have stayed at home! It is only as God sends him that God will bless him. He is bound to back up His own messenger when he delivers God’s own message. “How shall they preach, except they are sent?”

15. *As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them who preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.* And they are so beautiful because, you see, God has put them at the root of everything. God makes the preacher whom He sends to be the source of so much good, or the channel of so much good, for by his preaching comes the hearing, and by the hearing comes the believing—and out of the believing comes the calling upon the name and the salvation!

16. *But they have not all obeyed the Gospel.* “But.” A sorrowful “but” is this. Oh, this is the mischief of it. The Gospel, then, has an authority about it—or else the Apostle would not speak of obeying the Gospel. Men are bound to believe what God declares to them, and their not believing is a disobedience! “They have not all obeyed the Gospel.”

16. *For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report?* As if there were so few that did believe it, that he had to ask who they were!

17. *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.* You are wise, therefore, dear Friend, if you are seeking salvation to be a hearer of the Word. But mind that it is the Word of God that you hear, because the word of man cannot save you. It may delude you. It may give

you a false peace. But the hearing that saves is hearing which comes by the Word of God. Oh, take care, then, that you do not run here and there just because of the cleverness of certain speakers, but keep to the Word of God—whoever preaches it—for “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

18. *But I say, Have they not heard?* These very people for whom the Apostle prayed—have they not heard?

18. *Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.* The preaching of the Gospel went forth among those Israelites who rejected it. Wherever they went, the Gospel seemed to follow them like their shadows. They could not escape from it, but they did not believe it.

19. *But I say, Did not Israel know?* Assuredly, Israel did know, but did not believe.

19. *First Moses says, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.* Moses told them that it would be so if they rejected Christ. Christ would be preached to the Gentiles, and those whom they thought to be foolish would come in and accept what they had rejected!

20. *But Isaiah is very bold, and says, I was found of them that sought Me not: I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me.* He told them, therefore, that God would save a people who up to now had never sought after God—that He would send the Gospel to a people that were dead in sin, and had never asked to receive the light and life of God!

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

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

“I AND THE CHILDREN”

NO. 1194

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 20, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of Hosts, which dwells in Mount Zion.”
Isaiah 8:18.***

WE might possibly have had some difficulty in explaining this verse, or we might have referred it to the Prophet Isaiah and his sons, had not Inspiration been its own expositor. Turn to the New Testament and the text will be no mystery to you. Its key hangs on its proper nail. In the second chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and at the 11th verse, we read—“For both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Your name unto My brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto You. And again, I will put My trust in Him. And again, Behold, I and the children which God has given Me.”

We have thus, from Divine Revelation, assured evidence that it is our Lord who speaks, and speaks of His people as His children. This clue we will follow. The context sets forth, as is most common throughout the whole of Scripture, the different results which result from the *appearance* of the Savior. He is rejected by many and accepted by others. He was set for the fall and rise of many in Israel. To those who received Him, He is a glory and a defense, but to others, “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.”

Even now His Gospel is a “savor of death unto death” as well as a “savor of life unto life.” The election of Divine Grace is always being worked out. The separating process continues and will continue until the eternal purpose has been completely fulfilled. Those whom the Lord has chosen feel the attractions of the Savior and come to Him—while others willfully and wickedly close their eyes to His brightness and reject Him—and He leaves them in their willing unbelief. “He came unto His own and His own received Him not, but to as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on His name.”

Of those who received the Lord, we find it written that the Testimony of God would be left in their charge. “Bind up the Testimony; seal the Law among My disciples.” The outside world rejects the Testimony of God—its own thoughts and opinions are much more pleasant to it—but among the Lord’s disciples His commands are prized and His teachings sacredly preserved. They see the seal of the living God upon the Gospel and they also set to it their seal that God is true. They accept the Gospel of Jesus as the very Truth of God and hold it, and mean to hold it against all comers.

To the true disciples of Jesus there may come times of darkness. It has been so with the Church of old and will always be so. But they have this star to gild their midnight—Christ, their Master and Representative—is waiting upon the Lord and expecting and pleading for brighter and happier times. "I will wait," says He, "upon the Lord that hides His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him." Christ, in the dark ages of Judaism, looked for the dawn of the Gospel day and even now He sets Himself upon His watchtower and looks for a golden age for His redeemed people. So interested is He in their welfare that He will not rest till their brightness shines forth as a lamp that burns!

Having thus noted the context, we will come closely to the text. On this earth a people exist who have accepted the Messiah and have become His disciples—and look for all from their Lord. Of these people the text says, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given Me." Here we shall notice, first, *a remarkable relationship ascribed to Christ*. Secondly, *a spontaneous avowal of it*—"Behold, I and the children whom You have given Me." And thirdly, *a common function*—common to the Lord and to His disciples—they are appointed to be "signs" and "wonders" in Israel from the Lord of Hosts which dwells in Mount Zion.

I. First, here is A REMARKABLE RELATIONSHIP. Jesus is called a *Father*. Now, this is not according to precise theology, or according to the more formal doctrinal statements of Scripture, so we must, therefore, take care that we do not confuse ourselves. Jesus is not, "*the Father*," and we must always carefully maintain the distinction of Persons in the Godhead. The Son of God is one *with* the Father, but He is not *the Father*. And we must take care we do not ascribe to the Son acts which are peculiar to the Father. According to correct speech, it is the first Person of the Divine Trinity whom we call the Father, who has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. And when we say, "Abba, Father," "Our Father which are in Heaven," and, "Thanks be unto the Father," we do not refer to the Lord Jesus, but to "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Still, the title of Father is very applicable to our Lord Jesus Christ for many reasons. First, because *He is our federal Head*. We speak correctly of "father Adam," and Jesus is the second Adam who heads up our race anew and is the representative Man of redeemed mankind. He, only, of all mankind, stands to others as Adam stood—head of a Covenant—involving others in His acts. The second Adam, therefore, may well regard us as His children in whom the Covenant promise is fulfilled, "His seed, also, will I make to endure forever."

As the first Adam looking down the ages upon us, may well cry with astonishment, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me!" So Jesus, viewing the vast company of the faithful, sees in them His seed, and finds in them a sacred satisfaction for the travail of His soul. We are in Him. He stands for us and we are, in this sense, His children. *Our Lord is also Father of the golden age* of Grace and Glory. Isaiah calls Him, "the

Son born," and, "the Child given," and yet, "the Everlasting Father." And our hymn has well translated that expression—

**"Sire of ages newer to cease,
Prince of life and Prince of peace."**

There is an age of silver in which we now live, which Christ has produced by His first Advent and the consequent proclamation of the Gospel. And there is an age of gold yet to come, delightfully anticipated by the saints, of which Christ will be the Father and Lord. Then in Him, and in His seed, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed! Indeed, I might say, that the eternity of blessedness in which the sanctified shall dwell is an age which claims Christ for its Father—and so He may well be called, "the Father of Eternity," or, "the Everlasting Father."

Again, there is a sense in which Christ is our Father *because by His teaching we are born unto God*. Just as the minister who brings a soul to Christ is said to be the spiritual parent to such a soul, and is, indeed, instrumentally so, so the Lord Jesus, as the Author of our faith, is our spiritual Father in the family of God. And of Him the whole family in Heaven and earth is named. Our Lord, in bringing many sons unto Glory, is truly their Father, for He calls them into spiritual life and puts them among the children of God. He is that "corn of wheat" which, except it fall into the ground and die, it abides alone. But, inasmuch as He has died, He brings forth much fruit. And we—all of us who have believed in Him—are the living fruit of our dying and risen Savior! Therefore we speak correctly when we call Him Father. He is our elder Brother, but He is also "over His own house, whose house we are." The Word which quickened us came to us by Jesus Christ who is Lord of all!

Now, let us see whether there is not much of teaching in this metaphor by which we are called children of the Lord Jesus. The expression denotes, first, that we derive our spiritual life from Him as children take their *origin* from their father. Of Him we are. If He had not created us, we had not been in the world. If He had not redeemed us, we had not possessed a portion in the world to come. If He had not called us, we had still been in darkness and in death. If He had not quickened us—for He quickens whom He wills—we had still lain among the dry bones of the valley of sin. That we are, we owe to the Father's Providence—but that we are born again, we owe to the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Apart from that matchless scheme of which Christ is the Sum and Substance, there had been no pardoned sinners, no Believers, no children adopted into the family of God, no heirs of God, no priests and kings to reign with Christ forever and ever! As we look at the dear wounds of Jesus, we see the rock from where we were hewn. When we gaze upon His precious blood, we see the life blood of our souls! He is the Root that bears us, the Stem of which we are the branches. Children do not merely get their origin from their father, but they have a *likeness* to his nature—and this is most true in the case of our Lord and His regenerated people, for He has become like to us—and on the other hand, He has made us like to Him.

Note how the Apostle puts it, "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He Himself also took part of the same." "Both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one." "It behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren." As a father feels for his children because they are of the same flesh and blood as himself, so does the Lord sympathize with His people, for they are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. No father can be so thoroughly one with his offspring as Jesus is with us! Moreover, our Divine Lord is bringing us into His likeness and making us partakers of His Nature. True Believers are as like their Lord as little children are like their father.

As I said last Thursday night, the likeness may be in some points a caricature, so that we smile to see ourselves represented and misrepresented in our children, yet there it is—we see our image in them—and so the image of Christ is upon all His believing people! It is much marred and very miniature, but still it is the true image of His love. As on the prepared glass of the photographer, the likeness is present, but needs to be brought out by means best known to himself. So it is with us—the image of God has been renewed in us, but it lies somewhat hidden—and the Holy Spirit has it in hand to develop in us the life of Christ. And His work will be complete at the appearing of our Lord and Savior, "for when He shall appear we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is."

I believe that the text has in it very clearly the idea of *charge and responsibility*. Children are always a charge—a comfort sometimes. No parent has a child without being under obligations to God to take care of it and to nurse it for Him. Sometimes the responsibility becomes very heavy and involves much anxiety. Wherever conscience is lively, fatherhood is regarded as a solemn thing. Now, Jesus Christ, when looking upon His people, calls them, "children whom God has given Me," as if He recognized the charge laid upon Him to keep, instruct and perfect His own people. Remember His last words to His Father before He went to His passion?

"I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave Me out of the world. Yours they were, and You gave them to Me and they have kept Your word. While I was with them in the world I kept them in Your name: those that You gave me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." Like Jacob with Laban's sheep, our Lord looked upon His elect as a charge for which He was responsible. And before He departed out of this life He rendered in an account to His heavenly Father. Even now that Great Shepherd of the sheep charges Himself with the preservation of His own ransomed ones! And when He, at the last, shall gather all His redeemed people around Him, there will not be one missing—and He will say, "Behold, I and the children that You have given Me." We call Him, Father, then, because as a father has charge of his family and is before God responsible for their training and up-bringing, so Christ Himself is Surety for His people and is under bond to bring the many sons unto Glory.

In our relationship towards our children there is involved very often a great deal of *care and grief*. They are happy parents, indeed, who can say

of a child, "He never caused me anxiety"! Happy father who can say of all his household, "I have had no sorrow from one of them"! I fear the case is rare. I know that this Father of whom we are speaking had care and grief enough for His household. Yes, for their sakes He bore a weight of woe which crushed Him to the ground! Oh, you sorrowing parents! Take comfort as you remember the greater griefs of the Head of the chosen family! For all their infirmities and sins and willful wanderings were laid upon Him and, for His children's sake, His "soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death."

The pangs of His sacred Fatherhood brought Him to Gethsemane and its bloody sweat. Yes, to Calvary, and its shameful doom—what are *our* griefs compared with these? Jesus must *die* for His family that He might be able to say, "Here am I, and the children which You have given Me." Count it not, therefore, a strange thing, since you cost your Lord so much anguish, if sometimes *your* children should pour coals of fire into your bosoms! But, Brothers and Sisters, the possession of children involves a very *near and dear love*. You may try to love other people's children, but I think there will always be a loving tenderness to your own which you cannot give to a stranger's child, however much you try. Your own children, after all—it is natural and it is right—must have the warmest place in your heart.

Even thus the Lord has a special love for His own. He manifests Himself to them and not unto the world. It is almost a degradation of the love of Christ to compare it to anything *human*. It is so amazing, so Divine, that it transcends comparison! If all the loves of parents could be piled up together in one vast mound—the love of fathers and the most tender love of mothers—yet the whole of that Alp would not equal the immeasurable love of Jesus Christ to His own people! Who understands its heights and depths, its lengths and breadths? Oh, You dear Lord and Savior! Because of Your dear love to us we call You not only Rabbi, but Father! And as we hear You say to us, "Children, have you any meat?" We answer, "Yes, You, Father of Your Church. Your Table feasts us to the full."

Children, however, when they behave aright, bring to the heart of their parent sweet solace and *dear delight*. Oh, I love the thought, and I long to bring it out before you, that as a father is pleased when he sees his children growing up in the fear of God—when he observes their good character and qualities, when he marks their struggles for that which is right and their attempts to curb themselves in that which is wrong—so is Jesus pleased with us! He speaks with great delight in our text, "Behold, I and the children." He is evidently gratified with them. The sight of them gives Him content. We readily see anything that is good in our children. We have a quick eye for their beauties. Sometimes, perhaps, we do not sufficiently see that which is deficient or wrong—but assuredly our Lord must have a very keen eye for His people's loveliness, for He says of His Church, "You are all fair, My Love. There is no spot in you."

We can see many spots in ourselves, but He looks at us with other eyes. I suppose He looks at us through the glass of His own righteous-

ness, with eyes full of perfect love. His delights are with the sons of men. He rejoices over us with singing. Never does a prayer of penitence rise from a breaking heart without rejoicing the soul of Jesus, for, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." Never does a Believer struggle against wrong, endure oppression patiently, or conquer sin but Jesus is glad! Each budding Grace and growing virtue charms Him, even as parents are charmed with their hopeful little ones. Our joy in our sons and our daughters looks forward and refreshes us with the prospect of what they will be. How many bright hopes light up a mother's heart as she thinks of her son or daughter! She reckons upon comfort from them in her declining years.

Our Lord knows what His people are to be and He rejoices therein. Oh, if you could see yourselves as you will be in the future, you would not know yourselves! If you could only have a photograph of your future Glory and could study it, you would say, "Shall I ever be like *that*? Shall I ever be so fair, bright and pure as *that*?" Remember, the Lord Jesus sees you as you *shall* be and He takes delight in you and says, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given Me." Putting, then, all these things together, you will not fail to see the fitness of the figure by which our Lord is represented as standing in the midst of His own redeemed—as Father among His children.

II. Now we shall turn to the second point, and utter a few words upon it. There is a SPONTANEOUS AVOWAL. He says, "Behold, I and the children whom You have given Me." The Lord *acknowledges* His children. Sometimes they are ashamed to acknowledge Him and He might always be ashamed to claim them, but He never is. He speaks of them without hesitation. It is, "*I and the children.*" They are defiled and unworthy. They have been falling in the mire and have torn their clothes and I know not what else, but He says, "They are My children." And He never thinks of casting them off.

It amazes me that He does so claim them—but it is His infinite love to them and His boundless delight in them which make Him say—"I have called you by your name, you are Mine." Not only does Jesus claim them as His, publicly, but He *glories in them* as being God's *gift* to Him—"The children whom *You have given Me,*" as if they were something *more* than ordinary children! They are the promised fruit of the "travail of His soul." They are the reward which Jehovah covenanted to bestow on Him for His agonies and death! He looks upon them as the spoil of His great battle of life, as the crown of His life's labor! Solomon gave to Hiram, the King of Tyre, certain cities. But he did not like them and called them Cabul, or "foul." But our Redeemer is well-pleased with His reward. He takes His purchased inheritance to His heart and rejoices, saying, "Behold, I and the children whom You have given Me."

Observe that the Lord not only acknowledges His people and delights in them, but He *challenges inspection*. He says, "Behold!—look at them—I am not ashamed of them. Look at them, My Father—look at them all glorious in Your Son, all washed in My blood, all robed in My righteousness—look

at them, and see how glorified I am in them! Your eyes, though full of fire against sin, can see no sin in them! Your hand, though it grasps the thunderbolt of vengeance against transgression, will not smite them, for I have made Atonement." "Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me," is a call to the whole *world* to look, "for these things were not done in a corner!"

Jesus did not come into the world that He and His children should be hidden under a bushel and should not be known! No, standing right out, as a city set on a hill, Jesus says, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given Me." "Look at them, for they are meant to be looked at! They are set 'for signs and wonders' throughout all generations." And notice again—for it affects my mind much more powerfully than I can express, "Behold, *I and the children.*" I can understand a mother speaking thus about herself and children, but for Christ, the God of Glory, to unite His glorious name with such poor worms of the dust is very wonderful!

There! Sit down and wonder and weep over it as Jesus says, "I and the children." Well did old Rowland Hill sing—

***"And when I shall die, receive me, I'll cry
For Jesus has loved me—I cannot tell why.
But this thing I find, we two are so joined
He won't be in Heaven and leave me behind."***

Jesus will not be without us! He cannot bear it! You mothers do not think it enough to be indoors in bed, yourselves, when night comes on—you want the dear children to be safely housed, too. If you were pursued by wolves on some snowy plain in Russia, you would not be satisfied to escape, yourself, and leave your children to be devoured. Your motto would be, "I and the children." You would live or die with them! How often, when mothers have been overtaken in snowstorms, have they been found dead—with their little ones nestling in their bosoms still alive! The mother has often taken off her garments to wrap them around her babe—and even so, Christ has stripped Himself of every honor and comfort—and *died* to prove His infinite love for His own!

It is no idle sentence in which He sets forth His union with His beloved in very deed and binds Himself and them in one sacred bond. I cannot tell you how I rejoice in these words! I have them in my mouth and in my heart—"I and the children." Blessed be our Lord for speaking thus!

Now, Beloved, if Jesus claims us so lovingly, let us always claim Him! And if Christ takes us into partnership—"I and the children"—let us reply, "Christ is all." Let Him stand first with us and let our name be forever joined with His name. Let us be bound up in the bundle of life with Him. It is plain that He delights in us—let us delight in Him! It is clear He glories in us—let us glory in Him! He invites others to look at us and Him—let us invite all mankind to behold our glorious Lord! Let us get behind our Lord and set Him always before us. Whoever visits us, let them not leave us without taking knowledge that we have been with Jesus!

If we show our treasures, as Hezekiah did, let us begin with showing our Savior, for no Babylonians will ever come and take *Him* away from us!

Our "soul shall make her boast in the Lord," and none shall ever stop us of this glorying here or hereafter! Enough, then, concerning the *spontaneous avowal*. Oh, may we be among the happy company of whom our Lord shall say, "Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me"!

III. Thirdly—and into this I would throw the strength of the discourse—there is A COMMON FUNCTION. Christ and His people "are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of Hosts which dwells in Mount Zion." Both Christ and His people are set for a purpose. First, they are to be "signs and wonders" by way of *testimony*. Our Lord is called the "Word of God." A word is the means of communication between one mind and another. God speaks to men by Christ—no—Christ is His *speech*. If you want to know what God has to say to you, see what Christ was and is!

In the same manner, only in an inferior degree, Believers are God's voice to men—He speaks to the world through His people. In a happy Christian, God says, "I will make you happy, too, as I have made this man, if you seek Me in the same way as this man did." In the Believing Christian who gets his prayers answered, God says to men, "I will hear your prayer if you pray as this man does, with faith in My promise."

All the world of Nature reveals God, but the revelation is inarticulate and rather resembles the teaching of a picture or a hieroglyph than a clear distinct voice. But we, my Brothers and Sisters, are to be God's mouth among the sons of men! And our *conversation*, our *profession*, our *life* in its entirety is to be a witness from God to man—a testimony for the Truth of God, for righteousness, for holiness, for the power of the quickening Spirit, for the efficacy of redeeming blood—and for all the Truths contained in Divine Revelation. We are not to be blank sheets, or papers with a blot on them and nothing more. We are to be letters written by God and passed round among men that they may read in us what God has to say! Now, it is very clearly so in Christ—His holy life and blessed death are a wonderful witness to the people. And as to us, the Lord has said. "You are also My witnesses." I would inquire concerning many of you here who have made a profession, whether you are really God's voice to men. If not, what is the use of your dumb religion?

We are, secondly, signs and wonders among sinners by way of *marvel*. Believers, by their declaration of God's Testimony, become more and more singular in the judgment of men. No man but a Christian can understand a Christian. The spiritual discerns all things, yet he, himself, is discerned of no man. Carnal minds cannot make us out, "for we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God." The person who never strikes you as having anything singular about him, who is just like men of the world, is probably no Christian. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, yourself, the unregenerate will misunderstand and misrepresent you. But if everybody is pleased with you—it is pretty clear that God is not—for "the friendship of this world is enmity with God."

Genuine Christians will generally be reckoned by the world to be singular people. For instance, they profess to have been *converted*—and so to have undergone a miraculous change. They profess to have a new life,

compared with which they were dead before. The world calls this nonsense. Regeneration! What fanaticism! In the days of Whitfield and Wesley the loose spirits made rare fun of the idea of being born again—and the preacher of regeneration was dubbed Mr. Wildgoose—and his followers a set of enthusiasts. The world *now* practices the crafty device of *using our terms* and phrases, but meaning something else by them—thus talking of being regenerated by *baptism* and such other nonsense! To be "born again" is still a marvel to the sons of men!

The real Christian is a man who has faith in Providence and believes in God—therefore he is calm and unmoved in times of distress. He believes in the lilies which do not spin and yet are clothed, in the ravens which sow not and do not reap and yet are fed—therefore, though using his utmost diligence, he is not anxious, but lives in peace. The world envies him, but cannot comprehend him! Moreover, the Christian is a man who has power in prayer—he asks and receives, knocks and it is opened unto him—and the outside world either disbelieves the fact or else looks upon it as a strange affair. It must be so! We must be wondered at!

Yet I do not say that some of you Christian people are a marvel or wonder at all, for I do not think you are—the marvel is that you dare call yourselves Christians! I mean that the *genuine* Christian is, in many points, a singular person, so singular that others cannot read his riddle. When a man becomes converted in an ungodly family, he is like a young swan in a duck's nest—they cannot understand him. They say, "This is a strange bird! Where did he come from?" They count him ugly because he is not like the rest. Frequently, ungodly relatives consider the young convert to be going out of his mind, or as being naturally weak in the intellect. They put him down as insane while he is sorrowful, and as idiotic when he is joyous!

The world cannot understand a Christian's endurance of trial, but they set it down to hard-heartedness. They see him calm and composed. He neither raves nor blasphemes nor tears his hair. And if the worst comes to the worst, he still says, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." This perplexes worldlings and no wonder, for it puzzled the devil himself! He laid Job, covered with boils, on a dunghill—scraping himself with a piece of potsherd. He was brought to poverty. His own wife tempting him and his friends accusing him, yet that man, who was a greater conqueror than Alexander or Napoleon, still said, "What? Shall we receive good from the hands of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil? The lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." When the Lord allows any of us to be similarly tried and sustains us in the trial, we become "a wonder unto many."

One of the greatest wonders to the ungodly is a Christian's deathbed. Ungodly men, who have despised religion altogether, have been troubled in conscience and almost persuaded to be Christians through the holy triumphs of dying saints! Many an Infidel remembers his mother's holy life—how quiet, how loving she was—making the house always happy. And he

remembers how grieved she was when her boy began to be skeptical about his mother's Savior. That dying charge of hers will ring in his memory forever! That dying look of joyful triumph from those eyes which had no tear in them except for those that were left behind—that expiring song, that shout of victory—he cannot get over it! If a man wishes to be skeptical, he must not see true Christians either live or die—otherwise facts will convince him against his will—or make it hard to doubt.

When the Believer's testimony for good becomes a marvel, it is not unusual if he, afterwards, becomes *an object of contempt*. What did the world say of the Master? "They called the Master of the house Beelzebub." He was despised and rejected of men. And if you are one of His disciples, the world will despise you, also! I will tell you what they say of us—"They are all a parcel of dupes, led by the nose by a man. They will believe anything he tells them." All this because you are true to your pastor and the Word of God! Then, as soon as they see that you are not led by a man, but think for yourself, they cry, "Ah, you are one of those pig-headed ones! You will never be taught! Why don't you believe as your fathers did, and keep to the old Church?"

If the world cannot wound us on one side, it tries the other. If they cannot accuse us of being black, our enemies will say that we are of a sickly white. Readily do accusers change their sweet voices and cry, "Ah! It is all a scheme for motley getting." If the minister is zealous, they say, "Self-interest is at the bottom. If it is not love of money, it is love of power and influence." To the Christian people they say, "No doubt you increase your business by it. Many a man puts his religion in his shop window and finds it pays amazingly well." They know in their own souls that you are free from any sinister motive, but they will not do you justice. Like Satan, they say, "Does Job serve God for nothing? Have You not set a hedge about him, and all that he has?"

Meanwhile, if you were in poverty through religion, they would sing another tune and say, "A pretty thing comes of being a Christian! Why, you will soon be without shoes for your feet! Look what you bring yourself and your family to." If God pays good wages, the devil says, "You only serve Him for the wages." If present mercies are small, the old accuser tauntingly exclaims, "A pretty master you serve! See how He starves you?" There is no pleasing the world—and we have no desire to please it! As Paul said, "The world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." I know the kind of tone adopted by others—they plume themselves upon their intellect and set us down as behind our times. "We have no patience," they say, "with this believing in prayer, this expectation of conversion, this reliance upon atonement and imputed righteousness.

"Why, it is downright stupidity! Such preaching is only an echo from the graves of Puritans! No doubt Puritanism was a power in the days of Cromwell, but it is out of date *now*. We require more advanced thought in this enlightened age when we have locomotives on railways and other grand improvements, and have discovered that the universe made itself! We cannot afford to keep behind these intelligent times and must go in for

a splendid smash like other people." If *this* does not wound us they will say, "These people are not thinkers—they have no culture." And so they set us down for fools. In which we greatly rejoice—being glad to be fools for Christ's sake!

Christians in all ages have been considered fools. If you are traveling in Switzerland and see an idiot, he is a "Cretin"—that is, a Christian. Yes! Such was the byword—the fool was called a Christian and the Christian was thought a fool! We are satisfied to bide our time, knowing that the day shall come in which the worldly wise will not only be called fools by Myers, but will confess themselves so in endless despair. But now they say, "These people are too precise, they make life dreary!" We are, in our own esteem, the happiest people in the world! And we could not be much happier this side of Heaven! But because we do not care for their vain pleasures, their husks, and swine's' meat, we are austere and miserable. Only they think so who know nothing about us! We have meat to eat which they know not of, and, like Daniel and his brothers, though we taste not of the world's dainties, we are in better shape than those who do.

Men of the world are apt to say, "You are such a set of bigots! You think everybody wrong but yourselves." Is it a wonder that if we think we are right—we do not believe that those who are opposed to us can be right, also! If we know that two and two make four, we are intolerant enough to affirm that they cannot make five! It is a degradation to my intellect to expect me to believe that "yes" and "no" can be equally correct upon the same matter! Triflers with religion may consent to such folly, but those who are in earnest cannot do so. If to be sure that what God says is true is bigotry, we confess that bigotry! Our Master says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned"—we believe this and the damnatory clause, too! And we are content to abide the judgment of the Last Great Day as to whether such a belief will then be accounted bigotry or not!

Our despisers often cry, "See what conceit and pride! They think themselves God's elect and that He has a special favor for them, and pardons their sins, and saves them." That is correct! Call that *conceit* if you please—we are not ashamed to confess it! If you saw a rich man going down the street and were rude enough to say, "See how conceited a man he is! He thinks himself worth 10,000 pounds," he might quietly smile and say, "I do think so, and rightly, too, for I am worth several hundred thousand pounds." They say we are conceited because we rejoice—but it is our fault not to rejoice more! The Lord has done great things for us, we dare not deny it and have no wish to do so. He has made us to be His sons and daughters and we must glory in His name!

If others mistake our joy for pride we cannot help it, for we know right well that we give all the glory to God in our own souls. When Believers thus become, as they will be, objects of contempt, they will be assailed with ridicule and spattered with slander! Bad motives will be imputed to them and the Truths for which they are willing to die will be attacked—both in their persons and their testimonies. They *must* bear reproach—

and if they do—they will become wonders again! If they suffer but never retaliate. If they never return railing for railing. If they bear and forbear, their patience will make them wonders! As the ages shall roll on, the holy and the godly and the Christ-like—Jesus and His children—will go from victory to victory! In every coming age, even though persecution should rage as it did in former days, the Church of God will bear it and defeat it!

Superstition, heresy and worldliness will come, but the Church will pass through the storm! And at the last, when Truth shall conquer, when Gethsemane shall be transfigured into Paradise and the shame of the Cross of Calvary shall be lost in the Glory of the “Great White Throne”—when there shall be no more the crown of thorns, and nails, and sponge and vinegar—but when Jesus shall be proclaimed, “King of kings and Lord of lords,” and all His people shall reign with Him, *then* will the saints be signs and wonders, indeed! Know you not that you shall judge kings, sitting as assessors at the right hand of God? Know you not that you shall be the Glory of Christ in that day? When the ungodly shall cry, “Rocks, hide us! Mountains, fall on us!” “The righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

Hold on, my Brothers and Sisters! And hold out to the end! Be humble and quietly faithful. Do not *try* to be a wonder, but *be* a wonder! Do not *try* to do some astonishing thing to attract attention, but “let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.” Do not believe that the common Christianity of the present age will carry anybody to Heaven! It is a counterfeit and a sham! It does not make men different from their fellows! It pretends to have faith and has none. It talks about love and does not show it. It brags of truth and evaporates it into thin air in its tolerant charity. May God give us back the *real* thing—strong belief in the Gospel, real faith in Jesus, real prayer to Him, real spiritual power!

Then, again, there will be persecution, but it will only blow away the chaff and leave the pure wheat! The world likes us better because we like the world better—it calls us friends because we hide our colors and sheathe our swords and play the coward. But if we preach and live the Gospel in the old Apostolic way, we shall soon have the devil roaring round the camp and the seed of the serpent hissing on all sides! But we fear not, for “the Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.”

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 8:11-22; 9:1-7.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—PSALM 116 (SONG II) 255, 342.**

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SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

NO. 172

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 17, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“To the Law and to the Testimony. If they speak not according
to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.”
Isaiah 8:20.***

WHEN men will not learn of God, how huge their folly grows! If they despise the wisdom that is from above, how grievously does God allow them to prove their own ignorance! When a man will not bow down before God the Most High, immediately he builds for himself an idol. He makes an image of wood or stone and he degrades himself by bowing before the work of his own hands. When men will not receive the Scripture Testimony concerning God's creation, straightway they begin to form theories that are a thousand times more ridiculous than they have ever endeavored to make the Bible account of it. God leaves them, if they will not accept His solution of the problem, to grope for another and their own solution is so absurd that all the world except themselves have sense enough to laugh at it.

And when men leave the Sacred Book of Revelation, ah, my Friends where do they go? We find that in Isaiah's time they went to strange places. For he says in the 19th verse that they sought unto familiar spirits, unto wizards that did peep and mutter. Yes, they sought for things concerning the living among the dead and became the dupes of sorcery. It is marvelous that the men who most of all rail at faith are remarkable for credulity. One of the greatest unbelievers in the world who has called himself a free-thinker from his birth, is to be found now tottering into his tomb, believing the least absurdity that a child might confute.

Not caring to have God in their hearts, forsaking the Living Fountain, they have hewn out to themselves cisterns which are broken and hold no water. Oh, that we may each of us be more wise! That we may not forsake the good old path nor leave the way that God has prepared for us. What wonder we should travel among thorns and briars and rend our own flesh or worse than that—fall among dark mountains and be lost among the chasms thereof if we despise the guidance of an unerring Father. Seek in the Word of God and read. Search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life and these are they that testify of Jesus Christ.

I feel at this particular crisis of religious affairs it is imperative upon the Christian minister to urge his people to hold fast the doctrines of the truth—the Words of God. This seems likely to become the age of preach-

ing, rather than the age of praying. We now see everywhere large congregations assembling in halls and abbeys to listen to the Word preached. And it is an ominous sign of the times that these sermons are not only now espoused by the orthodox, but even by those whom we have considered to be at least somewhat heretical from the old faith of the Protestant Church. It becomes, therefore, a serious thing. It is most probable—and may not every wise man see it?—that whosoever may now arise who has some powers of oratory and some graces of eloquence will be likely to attract the multitude, preach he what he may, though the word that he should utter be as false as God’s Word is true and as contrary to the Gospel as Hell is opposed to Heaven.

Does it not seem probable that in this age he would attract a multitude of followers? And is it not also very likely that through that spurious charity which is now growing upon us—which would gag the mouths of honest reprovers—we shall find it hard to rebuke the impostor when he arises and difficult to expose the falsehood even though it may be apparent unto us? We are now happily so well commingled together—the Dissenter and the Churchman have now become so friendly with each other—that we have less to dread the effects of bigotry than the effects of latitudinarianism. We have some reason now to be upon the watchtower lest haply some should arise in our midst—the spurious offspring of these happy times of evangelical alliance—who will claim our charity while they are preaching that which we in our hearts do totally condemn.

And what better advice can the minister give in such times as these? To what book shall he commend his hearers? How shall he keep them fast? Where is the anchor which he shall give them to cast into the rocks? Or where the rocks into which they should cast their anchor? Our text is a solution to that question. We are here furnished with a great answer to the inquiry—“To the Law and to the Testimony if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.”

First, I shall endeavor this morning to urge you to bring *certain things* to which we are afraid a superstitious importance may be attached, “to the Law and to the Testimony.” Secondly, I shall try to show the *good effects* that will follow, if each of you rigidly bring everything you hear and believe, “to the Law and to the Testimony.” And, thirdly, I shall give you some *powerful reasons* why you should subject everything to this sacred touchstone. And I will close by offering you *some little advice* how you may do this truly and profitably.

I. Permit me to urge upon you the bringing CERTAIN THINGS “to the Law and to the Testimony.”

1. First, I would have you bring the ideas engendered in you by your early training, to the test of the Book of God. It is very much the custom of people to say, “Was I not born in the Church of England? Ought I not therefore to continue in it?” Or, on the other hand, “Was not my grandmother an Immersionist? Ought not I therefore to continue in the Baptist

denomination?” God forbid that I should say anything against your venerable and pious relatives—or that you should pay any disrespect to their teaching! We always respect their advice, even when we cannot receive it, for the sake of the person who offers it to us—knowing that their training, even should it have been mistaken, was nevertheless well meant.

But we claim for ourselves, as men, that we should not be fed with doctrines as we were fed in our helpless infancy, with food chosen for us. We claim that we should have the right of judging whether the things which we have received and heard are according to this Sacred Book. And if we find that in anything our training has been erroneous, we do not consider that we are violating any principle of affection if we dare to come forth from our families and join a denomination holding tenets far different from those which our parents had espoused. Let us each recollect that as God has given every man a head on his shoulders, every man is bound to use his own head and not his father’s.

God gave your father judgment. Well and good. He judged for himself. He has given you a judgment—judge for yourself, too. Say concerning all that you have received in your early childhood, “Well, I will not lightly part with this, for it may be sterling gold. But at the same time, I will not blindly hoard it, for it may be counterfeit coin. I will sit down to the study of the Sacred Book and I will endeavor, as far as I can, to unprejudice myself. I will read the Bible just as if I had never heard any preacher, or had never been taught by a parent. And I will then endeavor to find out what God says and what God says, be it what it may, I will believe and espouse, hoping that by His grace I may also feel the power of it in my own soul.”

2. Remember, also, to bring the preachers of the Gospel to this standard. A great many of you know but very little about what Gospel is. The general notion of the masses is that we are every one of us right—that though today I may contradict someone else and someone else may contradict me—yet we are all right. And though it is treason to common sense to believe such a thing, yet this is a common idea. Some men always believe like the last speaker. Should they hear the most hyper of hyper-Calvinists, they believe with him the fullness of the doctrine of reprobation. Should they hear on the morrow the lowest of Arminians, they believe with him the most universal of redemptions and the most powerful of free wills. Should they then hear the genuine Calvinist, who preaches that man has destroyed himself, but in God is his help found, perhaps then they think this man contradicts himself and for once they rebel against their teachers.

But it is probable that should they hear such a person again, they will be easily reconciled to seeming contradictions. For to them it is just the man’s appearance, just the man’s way of saying the thing that they like and not the thing that he says. Just as I have heard of holy Mr. Durham, the writer of that sweet book on Solomon’s Song. If I had lived in his time, I should never, I think, have wanted to hear any other preacher. I would

have sat, both by night and day, to receive the sweet droppings of his honeyed lips. But in his time there was a young preacher, whose name is totally forgotten, whose church was crowded to the door and Mr. Durham's meeting house hard by forsaken.

The reason of that is because the masses of people do not lay hold upon what is said, but upon how it is said. And if it is said smartly, said prettily, and said forcibly, that is enough for them—though it is a lie. But if the Truth of God is spoken, that they will not receive, unless it be attended by some graces of oratory and eloquence. Now, the Christian that has got above his babyhood does not care about how the man says it. It is the thing that is said that he cares about. All he asks is, "Did he speak the truth?" He just gets hold of the core. To him the straw is nothing and the chaff less. He cares not for the trimming of the feast nor for the exquisite workmanship of the dish. He only cares for that which is solid food for himself.

Now, my dear Friends, I claim for myself when I enter this pulpit the right of being heard. But I do not claim the right of being *believed* unless the words that I speak shall be in accordance with this Sacred Book. I desire you to serve me as I would have you serve everybody else—bring us each "to the Law and to the Testimony." I thank God that of my Bible I have no need to be ashamed. I sometimes am ashamed of this translation of it, when I see how, in some important points, it is not true to God's Word. But of God's own Word I can say it is the man of my right hand, my meditation both day and night and if there is anything I preach that is contrary to this Word, trample it in the mire, spit upon it and despise it. The truth lies here. It is not what *I* say, but what my *God* says that you are demanded to receive. Put myself and put all my Brethren into the sieve. Cast us each into the fire. Put us into the crucible of truth. And what is not according to God's Word must be consumed like dross.

3. There is another class of men quite contrary to those I have referred to. These men are their own preachers. They believe no one but themselves and without knowing it, there is every reason for them to hate the Pope, because "two of a trade never agree," they being popes themselves. These persons, if they hear a truth preached, judge it not by the Bible, but by what they think the truth ought to be. I have heard a person, for instance, say, when he has heard the doctrine of Election or of Particular Redemption, "Well, now, the doctrine does not please me, I do not like it." And then he begins to urge some objection which he has forged upon his own anvil, yet never trying to quote a Scripture text to refute it, if he can—never turning to some old saying of the Prophets and endeavoring to find out if the doctrine was an error, but only judging of it by his own opinion, by his wishes as to what the truth ought to be.

What would you think of a man who should say to an astronomer, "Now, it is of no use your telling me that the constellation of Scorpio is of such-and-such a shape. I tell you, I do not like the looks of it. My dear

Fellow, I don't think that the constellation of Scorpio ought to have been made that shape. And I think this star ought to have been put just here instead of there—and then all would be well.” The astronomer would simply smile at him and say, “Your opinion makes no difference, because it does not alter facts. If you think I am wrong, your right way to disprove me is not to say where you *think* the stars ought to be, but just come and take a look through my telescope and see where the stars *are*.”

Now it is just the same with the Truth of God. People say, “I do not like such a truth.” That is no refutation of it. The question is—Is it in the Bible? Because if it is there, like it or not like it, it is a fact and all the minister has to do is to report the facts that he finds there. Why, the astronomer cannot put the stars in a row, like a row of gas lights, to please you—and the minister cannot put the doctrines into a shape in which you would wish to have them cast. All the astronomer does is to map them out and say, “That is how they are in the sky.” You must then look at the sky and see whether it is so. All I have to do is to tell you what I find in the Bible. If you do not like it, remember, that is no refutation of it, nor do I care for your liking it or not liking it—the only thing is, is it in the Bible? If it is there I shall not stop to prove it. I do not come here to prove a doctrine at all. If it is in the Bible, it is true—there it is. I tell it out. Reject it and you do so to your own condemnation. For you yourself believe the Bible to be true and I prove it to be there and therefore it must be true.

Should it be according to your mind? Would you like to have a Bible made for the devices of your own heart? If it were, it would be a worthless thing. Would you desire to have a Gospel according to your wishes? Then with some of you it would be a Gospel that allowed lasciviousness. Would you wish to have a revelation made that should pamper you in your lusts and indulge you in your pride? If so, know this, God will never stoop to feed your haughtiness or wantonness. The Bible is a God-like book. He demands your faith in it. And though you kick against it, this stone can never be broken. But, mark you, you may be broken upon it. Yes, it may fall upon you and bruise you to powder. Bring, then, I beseech you, your own thoughts and your own sentiments to the touchstone of the truth, for “if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.”

4. And just do the same with all books that you read. This is the age of bookmaking and book-writing. Nowadays, what with periodical literature and the books upon our shelves, our Bibles do not get much read. I will tell you a truthful story as it was told to me yesterday. There was a young man, who is now a student for the ministry. So extraordinarily ignorant was he of his own Bible that upon hearing a young minister mention the story of Nebuchadnezzar's being driven out from men until his nails did grow like birds' claws and his hair like eagles' feathers, he said to the minister at the close of the sermon, “Well, that was a strange story you told the people. Where did you fish that up?”

“Why,” said the minister, “have you never read your Bible? Can you not find it in the Book of Daniel?” The young man had read a great many other things but never read his Bible through and yet was going to be a teacher of it! Now, I fear that the same ignorance is very current in many persons. They do not know what is in the Bible. They could tell you what is in the *Churchman’s Penny*, or the *Christian’s Penny*, or the *Churchman’s Magazine*, or the *Wesleyan Magazine*, or the *Baptist Magazine*, or the *Evangelical Magazine* and all that. But there is one old magazine, a magazine of arms, a magazine of wealth, that they forget to read—that old-fashioned book called the Bible. “Ah,” said one, when he came to die who had been a great classic reader, “I would to God I had spent as much time in reading my Bible as I have spent in reading Livy! I Would to God I had been exact in my criticisms of Holy Scripture as I was in criticisms upon Horace!”

Oh, that we were wise to give the Bible the largest share of our time and ever to continue reading it, both by day and night, that we might be as trees planted by the rivers of water bringing forth our fruit in our season! Let us remember, as ministers of the Gospel, what M’Cheyne beautifully said. “Depend upon it,” said he, “it is God’s Word, not man’s comment upon God’s Word, that saves souls.” And I have marked that if ever we have a conversion at any time, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the conversion is rather traceable to the *text*, or to some Scripture quoted in the sermon, than to any trite or original saying by the preacher. It is God’s Word that breaks the fetters and sets the prisoner free—it is God’s Word instrumentally that saves souls and therefore let us bring everything to the touchstone. “To the Law and to the Testimony. If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.”

II. Now I pass to my second point. Brethren, let me show you some of the GOOD EFFECTS that you will derive from a minute and careful study of the Law and testimony of God.

1. First, remember, that unless you study the Word of God you will not be competent to detect error. A man may, in your hearing, preach downright falsehood but you will not be qualified to judge concerning that falsehood unless you have studied the Word of God. You and I would not best to sit on the judgment bench of some of the superior courts of our land because we are not acquainted with the intricacies of the law. We could not quote precedents, for we have not been taught therein. And so no man is able to judge concerning the thing that he hears unless he is able to quote Scripture—unless he understands the Word of God and is able to perceive and to know what it means.

But I hear someone say that the Bible is so difficult a book that he is sure he never could understand it. Mark you, Man, the Bible is so plain a book that he that is willing to understand it may do so. It is so plain that he that runs may read and read while he runs. Yes, it is so plain that the simpler a man is, the more easily he can understand it. All the learning

that man ever received is rather a hindrance than a benefit when he comes for the first time to read the Word. Learning may untie many a knot afterwards, it may unravel many a mystery in after times. But we have heard deep-minded critics say that at first they would have given all the world if they could have thrown their learning aside just to read the Bible as the humble cottager reads it and believe it as God's Word without any quibbles of criticism.

You know how Mrs. Beecher Stowe represents Uncle Tom reading it. He could not read it fast. So he just spelt it over letter by letter and word by word. And the Bible is one of the books, she says, that always gains by that way of reading. You recollect how He read it. "Let—not—your— hearts—be —." And then he stopped at the long word and he fumbled it out at last and it was, "troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me." Why, it gets sweeter from your being a long time reading it. And so far from your want of learning disqualifying you from understanding the Bible, the mass of it is all the more understandable from the simplicity of your heart.

Come and search the Scriptures, they are not such mysterious fables or learned volumes of hard words as some men say. This is no closed book as the priest would tell us. It is a volume which the Sunday-School child may understand if the Spirit of God rests upon his heart. It is a book which the rough-handed workman may comprehend as well as the learned divine and many such have become exceedingly wise therein. I say again, read your Bibles, that you may be qualified to detect error.

2. But again, I do not like a man who is always looking out for error. That man has got some error in his own heart, depend upon it. They say, "Set a thief to catch a thief." And it is very likely that there is some love of error in your heart or else you would not be so ready to suspect it in other people. But let me give you another reason to search your Bibles. When you are in a matter of dispute you will be able to speak very confidently. There is nothing gives a man so much power among his fellows as confidence. If in conversation I am contradicted as to any sentiment that I propound, if I have got Scripture at my fingers' ends, why I laugh at my opponent and though he is ever so wise and has *read* ten times more books than I have ever *seen*, I just smile at him, if I can quote Scripture. For then I am confident—I am sure—I am certain about the matter—for "thus says the Lord," is an argument that no man can answer.

It makes a man seem very foolish when he has to speak in a diffident manner. I always think that certain elegant ministers who are afraid of being called dogmatic and who therefore propound the Gospel as if they did not hardly like to say they were sure it was true—as if they thought so, they nearly thought so—still they did not think so quite enough to say they knew—but leave it to their hearers—I always think they show the littleness of their minds in so doing. It may be a great thing to doubt, but it is a great thing to hold your tongue while you are doubting. And not to

open your mouth till you believe and then, when you do open your mouth, to say the thing you know is true and stick to it—not as an opinion—but as an incontrovertible fact. No man will ever do much among his fellows till he can speak confidently what he knows to be revealed.

Now, Bible readers, you can attain this confidence, but you can get it nowhere else but at the foot of Scripture. Hear ministers alone and you shall be led to doubt for one of them shall confound what his brother sought to prove. But read your Bibles and when you get the Word legible by its own light, impressed upon your own hearts by the Holy Spirit, then—

***“Should all the forms that men devise,
Assault your faith with treacherous art,
You’ll call them vanity and lies,
And bind the Gospel to your heart.”***

3. Furthermore, search the Scriptures and bring everything you hear to this great test, because in so doing you will get a rich harvest of blessing to your own soul. I suppose there is scarce a text in Holy Scripture that has not been the instrument of the salvation of a soul. Now, he that walks among wise men will be wise. And he that walks among the wise men that wrote Holy Scripture stands at least the highest probability of being made wise unto salvation. If I desired to put myself into the most likely place for the Lord to meet with me, I should prefer the house of prayer. For it is in preaching that the Word is most blessed. But still, I think I should equally desire the reading of the Scriptures, for I might pause over every verse and say, “Such a verse was blessed to so many souls—then, why not to me? I am at last at the pool of Bethesda. I am walking among its porches and who can tell but that the angel will stir the pool of the Word, while I lie helplessly by the side of it, waiting for the blessing?” Yes, the truth is so great that God has blessed every Word of Scripture.

I remember a striking anecdote of the conversion of a man by a passage of Scripture that did not seem adapted for any such purpose. You know that chapter in Genesis, that very dull chapter, where we read, “and Methuselah lived 969 years and he died,” and such a one lived so many years and he died? We have heard of its being read once in public and a man who stood there when he heard the words often repeated, “and he died,” thought, “Ah, And I shall die!” And it was the first note of warning that had ever struck his seared conscience and was the means under God of bringing him to Jesus.

Now, read the Scriptures for this reason. If you desire salvation and if you are panting after mercy, if you feel your sin and want salvation, come to this sea of love, to this treasury of light, to this wardrobe of rich clothing, to this fountain of bliss. Come and have your wants supplied out of the fullness of the riches of Jesus, who is “evidently set forth” in this Word, “crucified among you.”

III. And now let me endeavor, as briefly as I can, to urge upon you yet again the constant and perpetual reading of the Word of God—not only for the reasons that I have now propounded—but for others more important. Many false prophets have gone forth into the world—I beseech you, then, if you would not be led astray—be diligent in the study of the Word of God. In certain parts of Dr. Livingston’s travels he tells us that his guides were either so ignorant or so determined to deceive him that he could have done far better without them than with them. He had constantly to refer to his compass, lest he should be led astray.

Now, I would not say a hard thing if I did not believe it true. But I do solemnly think that there are some professed teachers of the Word who are either so ignorant of spiritual things in their own hearts, or else so determined to preach anything *but* Christ, that you might do better without them than with them. And hence you have an absolute necessity to turn perpetually to this great compass by which alone you can steer your way. I scorn a charity that after all is not charity. I must tell you what I believe.

Some would have me now stand here and say, “All that are eminent preachers are most certainly truthful preachers.” Now I cannot say it. If at any time I hear a man preach the doctrine of Justification by Faith alone, through the merits of Christ, I give him my hand and call him my Brother because he is right in the main thing. But when I do that I am a long way from endorsing many other of his sentiments. It may be that he denies the effectual power of the Spirit in conversion. It may be he does not hold the doctrine of the entire depravity of the human race—does not insist upon free Sovereign Grace—does not hold forth and teach the doctrine of Substitution and satisfaction through Christ.

Now I will not so befool myself as to tell you that wherein that man differs from the Word of God he is true. No doubt that man may be blessed for your salvation but there may be a curse upon his ministry notwithstanding—so that while you may be saved by it—you may be all your lifetime subject to bondage through it. And you may go groaning, where you ought to have gone singing—crying, where you might have had a sacred burst of joy. You sit under such-and-such a man who has been made the means of your conversion. But he tells you that your salvation depends upon yourself and not upon the power of Christ. He insists upon it that you may, after all, fall from grace and be a cast away. He tells you that although you are saved, God did no more love you than He loved Judas—that there is no such thing as special love, no such thing, in fact, as Election.

He tells you that others might have come to Christ, as well as yourself—that there was no extraordinary power put out in your case more than in any others. Well, if he does not lead you to glory in man, to magnify the flesh and sometimes to trust in yourself—or else lead you to distress yourself where there is no need for distress—I should marvel indeed, inasmuch as his doctrine is false and must mislead you. It may be the

means of your salvation yet it may fail in many points to minister to your edification and comfort. Therefore, if you would not be thus misled, search the Scriptures.

But ah, there is a solemn danger of being absolutely misled. You may hear all that the minister says, but he may forget to tell you the vital part of the truth. He may be one who delights in ceremonies, but does not insist upon the grace therein. He may hold forth to you the rubric and sacrament and tell you there is efficacy in obedience to the one and attention to the other. And he may forget to tell you that, "Except a man be born again of the Spirit he cannot see the kingdom of God." Now, under such a ministry you may not only be misled, but alas, you may be destroyed altogether.

He may be one who insists much upon morality of life. He may tell you to be honest, just and sober. But maybe he may forget to tell you that there is a deeper work required than mere morality. He may film the surface over and never send the lancet into the deep ulcer of your heart's corruption. He may give you some palliating dose, some medicine that may still your conscience. He may never say to you, "There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked." He may be one of those that prophesies smooth things—that does not like to disturb you. And oh, remember that your minister may be the instrument in the hands of Satan of blindfolding your eyes and leading you to Hell, while all the while you thought you were going to Heaven.

Ah, and hear me yet—I do not exclude myself from my own censure. It may be possible—I pray God it may not be so—that I myself may have mistaken the reading of Holy Scripture. That I may have preached to you, "another Gospel which is not another," and therefore I demand of you that my own teaching and the teaching of every other man whether by pen or lip should be always brought "to the Law and to the Testimony," lest we should deceive you and lead you astray. Ah, my Hearers, it would be an awful thing if I should be the means of leading any of you into the gulf of Hell. Although in some measure your blood must be upon my head if I deceive you—yet I beseech you, remember that I am not further responsible for your souls than my power can carry me. If you are misled by me, after this solemn declaration of mine, you shall be as verily guilty as if I had not misguided you.

For I charge you, as you love your own souls, as you would make sure work for eternity, put no more trust in me than you would in any other man, only so far as I can prove, by infallible testimony of God's Word, that what I have said is true. Stand always to this—"To the Law and to the Testimony. If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them."

I heard a story once that I remember to have told before, of some young person going out of the place and saying, "Well, I don't like Mr. Spurgeon at all. He is so high in doctrine—He said so-and-so." And then the young

body quoted a text out of the Bible as a very wicked thing that I had said—something about the potter having power over the clay. So the friend who was with her said, “It was Paul said that, not Mr. Spurgeon.” “Ah,” she said, “and I think the Apostle Paul was a great deal too high, too.”

Well, we are very glad to incur censure of that sort and will not at all object to go with Paul wherever he may go. But we do beseech you never at any time to take our bare saying for a thing but always to turn to your Bible and see whether it is so! That is a good habit some Christian fathers have. When the boys and girls come home, they say “Well, now, what was the text?” And then the father wants them to explain what the minister has said. And even the small boy knows something and tells something or other that the minister said from the pulpit. Then the father turns to his Bible to see whether these things are so. Then he endeavors to explain the hard things. So that they become like those noble Bereans, who were more noble than those of Thessalonica, because they searched the Scriptures, whether those things were so.

And now I may just hint at one or two peculiarities in that which I have ever preached to you which peculiarities I desire you most anxiously to inquire into. Now take nothing at second hand from me, but try all of it by the written Word. I believe and I teach that all men by nature are lost by Adam’s Fall. See whether that is true or not. I hold that men have so gone astray that no man either will or can come to Christ except the Father draw him. If I am wrong find me out. I believe that God, before all worlds, chose to Himself a people whom no man can number for whom the Savior died, to whom the holy Spirit is given and who will infallibly be saved. You may dislike that doctrine—I do not care—see if it is not in the Bible. See if it does not there declare that we are “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,” and so on.

I believe that every elect child of God must assuredly be brought by converting grace from the ruins of the Fall and must assuredly be “kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation,” beyond the hazard of ever totally falling away. If I am wrong there, get your Bibles out and refute me in your own houses. I hold it to be a fact that every man who is converted will lead a holy life and yet at the same time will put no dependence on his holy life, but trust only in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

And I hold that every man that believes is duty bound to be immersed. I hold the baptism of infants to be a lie and a heresy. But I claim for that great ordinance of God, Believer’s Baptism, that it should have the examination of Scripture. I hold that to none but Believers may immersion be given and that all Believers are duty bound to be immersed. If I am wrong, well and good. Do not believe me. But if I am right, obey the Word with reverence.

I will have no error, even upon a point which some men think to be unimportant. For a grain of truth is a diamond and a grain of error may be of serious consequence to us—to our injury and hurt. I hold, then, that none but Believers have any right to the Lord's Supper. That it is wrong to give the Lord's Supper indiscriminately to all and that none but Christians have a right either to the doctrines, the benefits, or the ordinances of God's house. If these things are not so, condemn me as you please. But if the Bible is with me, your condemnation is of no avail.

And now I charge you that are now present to read your Bibles for one thing—read your Bibles to know what the Bible says about *you*. And some of you, when you turn the leaves over, will find the Bible says, “You are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.” If that startles you, turn over another page and read this verse—“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” And when you have read that, turn to another and read, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” I pray you, put not away your Bibles till their dust condemns you—but take them out, bend your knees, seek for the Spirit of Divine teaching and turn these pages with diligent scrutiny—see if you can find there the salvation of your souls through our Lord Jesus Christ. May the blessing of God rest upon you in so doing, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

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IMMANUEL—THE LIGHT OF LIFE

NO. 2163

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 14, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first He highly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined.”
Isaiah 9:1, 2.

As in this case the Revised Version is much to be preferred, we will now read it—

“But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish. In the former time He brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time has He made it glorious, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined.”
Isaiah 9:1, 2.

When Judah was in sore distress, the sign that she should be delivered was Immanuel. “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14). When no other ray of comfort could be found, light came from the promise of the wondrous birth of Him whose name is “God with us.” God alone would be the Deliverer of Judah when overmatched by her two enemies. God would be with them and He gave them as a pledge a vision of that time when, in very deed, God would dwell among men and wear their Nature in the Person of The Virgin-Born.

It is noteworthy that the clearest promises of the Messiah have been given in the darkest hours of history. If the Prophets had been silent upon the Coming One before, they always speak out in the cloudy and dark days, for well the Spirit made them know that the coming of God in human flesh is the lone star of the world's night. It was so in the beginning, when our first parents had sinned and were doomed to quit the Paradise of delights. It was not meet that rebels should be dwellers in the garden of the Lord—they must go forth to till the ground from where they were taken—but before they went, there fell upon their ears the prophecy of the Deliverer who would be born—“The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.”

How brightly shone that one promise amid the surrounding gloom! The earliest Believers found in this hope of the coming Conqueror of the serpent, a solace amid their labor and sorrow. When Israel was in Egypt,

in the sorest bondage, and when many plagues had been worked on Pharaoh, apparently without success for he knew not the Lord and neither would he let His people go—then Israel saw the Messiah set before her as the Paschal Lamb, whose blood sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts secured the chosen from the avenger of blood. The type is marvelously clear and the times were marvelously dark!

It seemed as if the Lord would make the consolation to abound even as the tribulation abounded. I will not multiply instances, but I will quote three cases from the prophetic Books which now lie open before us. In Isaiah, turn to his 28th chapter and the 16th verse, and you read that glorious prophecy—“Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believes shall not make haste.” When was that given? It was pronounced when the foundation of society in Israel was rotten with iniquity and when its corner stone was oppression. Read from verse fourteen—“Therefore hear the Word of the Lord, you scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because you have said, ‘We have made a covenant with death, and with Hell are we at agreement; whom the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves.’ ” Thus, when lies and falsehoods ruled the hour, the Lord proclaims the blessed Truth that the Messiah would come and would be a sure foundation for Believers.

Next, look into Jeremiah and pause at the 23rd chapter and the fifth verse—“Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” When was this clear testimony given? Read the former verses of the chapter and see that the pastors were destroying and scattering the sheep of Jehovah’s pasture. When the people of the Lord thus found their worst enemies where they ought to have met with friendly care, *then* they were promised happier days through the coming of the Divine Son of David.

I will only further detain you while we glance at Ezekiel 34:23, where the Lord says, “And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.” When came this cheering promise concerning that great Shepherd of the sheep? It came when Israel is thus described: “And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yes, My flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.” Thus you see that in each case, when things were at their worst, the Lord Jesus was the one well of consolation in a desert of sorrows—

***“Midst darkest shades, if He appears,
Our dawning has begun.
He is our soul’s bright morning star,***

And He our rising sun.”

In the worst times we are to preach Christ and to look to Christ! In Jesus there is a remedy for the direst of diseases and a rescue from the darkest of despairs. Ahaz, as the chapter tells us, was in great danger, for he was attacked by two kings, each one stronger than himself. But the Lord promised him deliverance and commanded him to choose a sign either in the heights, or in the depths. This, under a hypocritical presence, he refused to do and therefore the Lord chose as His own token the appearance of the heavenly Deliverer who would be God and yet born of a woman. “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”

He was to eat butter and honey, like other children in that land of milk and honey, and yet He was to be the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. We see here Godhead in union with Manhood! We behold Jesus, Man “of the substance of His mother,” and yet, “God over all, blessed forever.” Surely this God-appointed sign was both in the depth and in the height above—the Man of Sorrows, the Son of the Highest. This vision was the light of the age of Ahaz. It is God’s comfort to troubled hearts in *all* ages—it is God’s sign of Grace to us this morning. The sure hope of sinners and the great joy of saints is the Incarnate Lord, Immanuel, God with us! May He be your joy and mine even this day. He it is who is the great light of the people who dwell in the land of the shadow of death! If any among you are in that dreary land, may He be light and life to you! He alone could make the darkness of Zebulun and Naphtali to disappear in a blaze of glory! He can do the same for those who sorrow at this hour!

Now, if I may have your patient attention, I shall, as I am enabled, *illustrate this fact by the content*. Scripture best explains Scripture, as diamond cuts diamond. The Word of God carries its own keys for all its locks. It is profitable to study Scripture, not in fragments, but in connected paragraphs. It is well to see the glory of a star, but better to behold the whole constellation in which it shines. When I have dwelt upon the context, I shall, in the second place, *press home certain joyful Truths connected with the subject*.

I. There is to be a light breaking in upon the sons of men who sit in darkness and this light is to be found only in the Incarnate God. Let me ILLUSTRATE THIS FACT BY THE CONTEXT. I must carry you back to the 14th verse of the seventh chapter. *The sign of coming light is Jesus.* “Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” In Judah’s trouble, the Virgin-Born was God’s token that He would deliver and speedily—for in less time than it would take such a child to reach years of knowledge, both Judah’s royal adversaries would be gone.

The sign was good for Ahaz, but it is better far for us. Behold the Incarnate Son of God born of Mary at Bethlehem—what can this intend for us but Divine Grace? If the Lord had meant to destroy us, He would not have assumed our nature. If He had not been moved with mighty love

to a guilty race, He would never have taken upon Himself their flesh and blood. It is a miracle of miracles that the Infinite should become an Infant—that He who is pure Spirit and fills all things, should be wrapped in swaddling bands and cradled in a manger! He took not on Him the nature of angels, though that would have been a tremendous stoop from Deity, but He descended lower, still—for He took on Him the seed of Abraham. “He was made in all things like unto His brethren,” though, “He counted it not robbery to be equal with God.”

It is not in the power of human lips to speak out all the comfort which this one sign contains. If any troubled soul will look believingly at God in human flesh, he must take heart of hope. If he looks believingly, his comfort will come right speedily. The birth of Jesus is the proof of the good will of God to men—I am unable to conceive of proof more sure. He would not have come here to be born among men, to live among them, suffer and to die for them, if He had been slow to pardon, or unwilling to save! O despairing Soul, does not Immanuel, God with us, make it hard to doubt the mercy of the Lord?

We have comfort in the fact that our Lord was truly Man. He whom we worship became one with us in nature. He was born as other children are born, save that His mother was a virgin. He was fed as other children were fed, upon curds and honey, the food of a pastoral country. He had to be developed as to His natural powers, even as other little ones. He grew up from childhood to youth and from youth to manhood, passing through all the gradations of human weakness, even as we have done. And He was obedient to His parents, even as other children should be. He is, therefore, really and truly a Man—and this fact is a bright particular star for sinners’ eyes. Come to Jesus, all you who languish under terror and dread because of the majesty of Deity, for here you see how compassionate He is, how sympathetic He can be, yes, how near of kin He has become!

He is God, but He is God *with us*. He is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh—a Brother born for adversity. And here the most trembling may be at rest. God in our nature is a grand prophecy of salvation and bliss for us. Why has He come down to us but that we may come up to Him? Why has He taken our nature in its sorrow, but that we may be made partakers of the Divine Nature in righteousness and holiness? He comes down, not to thrust us lower, but to lift us to heights of perfection and glory! That Jesus is Man, and yet God, is full of hope and joy for us who believe in Him. I do not feel as if I wanted to enlarge upon this glorious Truth with words alone. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would convey to each one of my hearers the light which shines from the star of Incarnation!

Oh, that at this moment the people who walk in darkness may see in the Incarnate God a great light and perceive in Him the prophecy and assurance of all good things! Not long shall evil oppress the Believer, for in Christ Jesus God is with us! And if God is for us, who can be against us?—

***“O joy! There sits in our flesh,
Upon a throne of light,***

***One of a human mother born,
In perfect Godhead bright!
Forever God, forever Man,
My Jesus shall endure!
And fixed on Him, my hope remains
Eternally secure.***

Further on we see our Lord Jesus as *the holdfast of the soul in time of darkness*. See in the eighth verse of the eighth chapter the whole country overwhelmed by the fierce armies of the Assyrians as when a land is submerged beneath a flood. Then you read—“And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.” The one hope that remained for Judah was that her country was Immanuel’s land! There would Immanuel be born. There would He labor and there would He die. He was by Eternal Covenant the King of that land and no Assyrian could keep Him from His throne.

Whatever the enemy might do, the land was still, “Your land, O Immanuel!” If, my dear Friend, you are a believer in Christ, you belong to Him and you always were His, by Sovereign right, even when the enemy held you in possession. The devil had set his mark upon you so that you might be forever his branded slave, but he had no legal right to you, for Immanuel had redeemed you and He claimed you as His own. Had we known, we might exultingly have gloried over you, “Your soul, O Immanuel!” The Father gave you to Jesus and Jesus Himself bought you with His blood and, though you knew it not, He had the title-deeds of you and would not lose His inheritance.

Herein lay your hope when all other hope was gone! Herein is your hope now! If you belong to Jesus, He will have you. If He bought you with His blood, He will not shed that blood in vain. If on the Cross He bore your sin, He will not suffer you to bear it and so to make void His sacrifice. If you belong to Him He will deliver you, even as David snatched the lamb of his flock from the jaw of the lion and the paw of the bear. O Sinner, this is the great hope we have for you—if you were given of old to Jesus He will rescue you from the hand of the enemy! This, also, is your own hope—if you believe in Jesus you belong to Jesus! If you trust Him, He has redeemed you with a price and will also redeem you with power. If you cast your guilty soul at His dear feet and take Him to be your own Savior, you are not your own, but bought with a price—and sooner shall Heaven and earth pass away than one whom Jesus calls His own shall be left to perish. “Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end.” Immanuel, God with us, is strong to rescue His own out of the enemy’s hands.

Further on in the chapter we learn that Jesus is *our star of hope as to the destruction of the enemy*. The foes of God’s people shall be surely vanquished and destroyed because of Immanuel. Note well, in verses nine and 10, how it is put twice over, like an exultant taunt—“Gird yourselves, and you shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and you shall be

broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nothing; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for Immanuel.” Our version translates the word into “God with us,” but it is, “Immanuel.” In Him, even in our Lord Jesus Christ, dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and He has brought all that Godhead to bear upon the overthrow of the foes of His people.

Let the powers of darkness consult and plot as they may, they can never destroy the Lord’s redeemed. Lo! I see councils of evil spirits—they sit down in Pandemonium and conspire to ruin a soul redeemed by blood. They lay their heads together. They use a cunning deep as Hell—they are eager to destroy the soul that rests in Jesus. In vain their devices, for the Incarnate God is embodied Wisdom! Now see them—they rise from the council table. They put on their harness. Their arrows are dipped in malice and their bows are strong to shoot afar. Each foul spirit takes his sword, his sharp sword, that will cut a soul to the center and kill it with despair—but their weapons shall all fail. If we fly to Jesus, who is God with us, no weapon that is formed against us shall prosper.

His name, Immanuel, is the terror of the hosts of Hell! God with us means confusion to our foes. As the death of death and Hell’s destruction, our Immanuel cries to the legions of the Pit, “Gird yourselves, and you shall be broken in pieces. Gird yourselves, and you shall be broken in pieces”! Let us take courage and defy the legions of darkness. Let us charge them with this war cry, “God is with us.” Immanuel, who has espoused our cause, is God Himself, almighty to save—the enemies of our souls shall be trodden under His feet and He shall shortly bruise Satan even under our feet. Satan, from the first, hated God in our nature, for thus man was exalted beyond the angels and this, his pride could not endure. The Lord Jesus is as the star Wormwood to our spiritual adversaries, rousing their fiercest hate and foreboding their sure overthrow.

Further on we find *the Lord Jesus as the morning light after a night of darkness*. The last verses of the eighth chapter picture a horrible state of wretchedness and despair—“And they shall pass through it, hard-pressed and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward. And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness.” But see what a change awaits them! Read the fine translation of the Revised Version: “But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish.” What a marvelous light from the midst of a dreadful darkness! It is an astounding change, such as only God with us could work!

Many of you know nothing about the miseries described in those verses, but there are some here who have traversed that terrible wilderness and I am going to speak to them. I know where you are this morning—you are being driven as captives into the land of despair and for the last few months you have been tramping along a painful road, “hard-pressed and hungry.” You are sorely put to it and your soul finds no food

of comfort, but is ready to faint and die. You fret yourself—your heart is wearing away with care and grief, and hopelessness. In the bitterness of your soul you are ready to curse the day of your birth. The captive Israelites cursed their king who had led them into their defeat and bondage. In the fury of their agony they even cursed God and longed to die.

It may be that your heart is in such a ferment of grief that you know not what you think, but are like a man at his wits' end. Those who led you into sin are bitterly remembered and as you think upon God you are troubled. This is a dreadful case for a soul to be in and it involves a world of sin and misery. You look up, but the heavens are as brass above your head. Your prayers appear to be shut out from God's ear. You look around you upon the earth and behold, "trouble and darkness, and dimness of anguish." Your every hope is slain and your heart is torn asunder with remorse and dread. Every hour you seem to be hurried by an irresistible power into greater darkness, yes, even into the eternal midnight.

In such a case none can give you comfort save Immanuel, God with us! Only God, espousing your cause and bearing your sin, can possibly save you! Look, He comes for *your* salvation! Behold, He has come to seek and to save that which was lost! God has come down from Heaven and veiled Himself in our flesh that He might be able to save to the uttermost. He can save the chief of sinners—he can save *you*. Come to Jesus, you that have gone furthest into transgression, you that sit down in despondency, you that shut yourselves up in the iron cage of despair. For such as you there shines this star of the first magnitude! Jesus has appeared to save and He is God and Man in one Person—Man that He may feel our woes—God that He may help us out of them! No minister can save you! No priest can save you—you know this right well—but here is One who is able to save to the uttermost, for He is God as well as Man!

The great God is good at a dead lift. When everything else has failed, the lover of Omnipotence can lift a world of sin! Jesus is almighty to save! That which in itself is impossibility is possible with God. Sin which nothing else can remove is blotted out by the blood of Immanuel. Immanuel, our Savior, is God with us—and God with us means difficulty removed and a perfect work accomplished! But I fail to tell you in words. Oh, that the Light, itself, would shine into your souls that those of you who have as yet no hope may see a great light and may from now on be of good courage!

Once more, dear Friends, we learn from that which follows our text that *the reign of Jesus is the star of the golden future*. He came to Galilee of the Gentiles and made that country glorious, which had been brought into contempt. That corner of Palestine had very often borne the brunt of invasion and had felt more than any other region the edge of the keen Assyrian sword. They were at first troubled when the Assyrian was bought off with a thousand talents of silver, but they were more heavily afflicted when Tiglathpileser carried them all away to Assyria, for which see the 15th chapter of the second book of the Kings.

It was a wretched land, with a mixed population despised by the purer race of Jews. But that very country became glorious with the Presence of the Incarnate God! It was there that all manner of diseases were healed. It was there the seas were stilled and the multitudes were fed! It was there that the Lord Jesus found His Apostles and there He met the whole company of His followers whom He had risen from the dead. That first land to be invaded by the enemy was made the headquarters of the army of salvation! This very Zebulun and Naphtali, which had been so downtrodden and despised, was made the scene of the mighty works of the Son of God!

Even so, at this day His gracious Presence is the day-dawn of our joy! If Christ comes to you, my dear Hearer, as God with us, then shall your joy be great, for you shall joy as with the joy of harvest and as those rejoice that divide the spoil! Is it not so? Many of us can bear our witness that there is no joy like that which Jesus brings. Here read and interpret the third verse of the ninth chapter. Then shall your enemy be defeated, as in the day of Midian. Gideon was, in his dream, likened to a barley cake which struck the tent of Midian, so that it lay along. He and his few heroes, with their pitchers and their trumpets, stood and shouted, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!” and Midian melted away before them! So shall it be with our sins and doubts, and fears if we believe in Jesus, the Incarnate God—they shall vanish like the mists of the morning. The Lord Jesus will break the yoke of our burden and the rod of our oppressor as in the day of Midian. Be of good courage, you that are in bondage to fierce and cruel adversaries, for in the name of Jesus, who is God with us, you shall destroy them!

This you see in the fourth verse. Please follow me as I dwell on each verse. When Jesus comes, you shall have eternal peace, for His battle is the end of battles. “All the armor of the armed man in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood, shall even be for burning, for fuel of fire.” This is the rendering of the Revision and it is good. The Prince of Peace wars against war, and destroys it. What a glorious day is that in which the Lord breaks the bow and cuts the spear in sunder, and burns the chariot in the fire! I think I see it now. My sins, which were the weapons of my foes, the Lord piles in heaps. What mountains of prey! But soon He brings the fire-brand of His love from the altar of His sacrifice and He sets fire to the gigantic pile. See how they blaze! They are utterly consumed forever. The enemy has now no weapon that he can use against my soul.

The Incarnate God has broken the power of the adversary, for the sting of death is sin and that He has made an end of. He has thus destroyed the war which raged in our souls and now He reigns as Prince of Peace—and we have peace in Him. Now is it that the Lord Jesus becomes glorious in our eyes and He whose name is Immanuel is now crowned in our heart with many crowns and honored with many titles. What a list of glories we have here! What a burst of song it makes when we sing of the Messiah—“His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace”! Each word sounds like a salvo of

artillery! It is all very well to hear players on instruments and sweet singers rehearse these words—but to *believe* them and realize them in your own soul, is better by far!

When every fear and every hope, and every power and every passion of our nature fills the orchestra of our heart and all unite in one inward song unto the glorious Immanuel, what music it is! He is to us the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace and much more than words can tell. Do but get Christ Jesus in your soul as the Incarnate God and He will set up a government within your nature which shall bring you peace, righteousness, joy and eternal glory! He will so reign over you that your happiness shall know no bounds! You shall climb from Grace to Grace, from joy to joy, from peace to peace, yes, from Heaven to the highest Heaven! This all along shall be your comfort, that Jesus is both God and Man, even God with us.

Thus have I very briefly skimmed over the connection. Had we time and Grace, what a wealth of thought might be drawn from these inexhaustible mines!

II. But now, secondly, I want to PRESS HOME CERTAIN TRUTHS CONNECTED WITH MY THEME. Come, Holy Spirit, to help the preacher! Come, Divine Comforter, to troubled hearts and give them rest in Immanuel! Immanuel is a grand word. “God with us” means more than tongue can tell! It means enmity removed on our part and justice vindicated on God’s part. It means the whole Godhead engaged on our side, resolved to bless us. But you say to me, “Who is this? Are you sure that Immanuel is Jesus of Nazareth?”

Yes, *Jesus is Immanuel*. Will you turn to Matthew 1:21 and read onward, “And she shall bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins. Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying: Behold, a virgin shall be with Child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” Do you see this? They call His name Jesus to fulfill the prophecy that they should call His name Immanuel! It is a singular fulfillment surely. It can only be accounted for by the fact that the Holy Spirit regards the name, “Jesus,” as being tantamount to the name, “Immanuel.” The Savior is God with us. Jesus, a Savior, is, in the Hebrew, Joshua, or Jehoshua, that is, Jehovah saving.

The sense is the same as that of Immanuel or, “God with us,” or *for us* since God for us is sure to save us. The two names are the same in essential meaning. If God has come to save, then God is with us. If God Himself is our salvation, then God is on our side. And if the Child born of the virgin is indeed the Lord of Glory, then is God our friend! Strong Son of God! Immortal Love! We have not seen Your face, but we can trust Your power and rest upon Your love. Your very birth brings hope! But as for Your death, when You did bear our sins in Your own body on the Cross, this is the fulfillment of all our desires in the canceling of sin, the removal of wrath and the securing of eternal life! Yes, Jesus is God with us.

Perhaps you wish to know a little more of the incident in the text which exhibits *Jesus as the great light*. We have spoken of Zebulun and Naphtali—were those regions really benefited by the coming of the Lord Jesus? Just look a little further on, to Matthew 4:12: “Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, The land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”

Yes, Beloved, our Lord made His home in the darkest parts. He looked about and saw no country so ignorant, no country so sorrowful as Galilee of the Gentiles and therefore He went there and lifted it up to Heaven by priceless privileges! His ministry of repentance and faith was in itself a glorious light! But He did many mighty works to confirm it. Why, the whole country round was full of sick folk whom He had restored. You could not go half a mile but what you met a blind man who told of how Jesus had restored his sight, or a sick woman who had been raised up from the fever, or some paralytic who had been made whole! That country must have been glad, indeed. Multitudes would never forget how they heard Him by the sea. They said, “What sermons He preached! He made our hearts dance for joy and then He fed us and we ate of barley loaves and little fish till we were filled. He is a wonderful Prophet and this is a wonderful country. It was once dark enough, but now enlightened by His Presence.”

Beloved, I pray that Jesus may come to you if you are in the dark, today, and work miracles for you, feed you and touch you and make you glad so that, though you were the most unhappy of beings, you may become the happiest of mortal men! Galilee—plundered, despoiled, despised—became, by-and-by, glorious—because of Him who is Immanuel. This is a happy omen for you, dear Friends—if you have been the most sorrowful of beings, the Lord Jesus may come at once to you and make you rejoice with great joy! Jesus rescues from contempt, from ignorance, from misery, from despair and therein reveals Himself as “God with us.”

We will turn back to where we opened our Bibles at the first and there we learn that, to be God with us, *Jesus must be accepted by us*. He cannot be with us if we will not have Him. Hear how the Prophet words it: “Unto us a Child is *born*, unto us a Son is *given*.” As a Child He was born, as a Son He was *given*. He comes to us in two ways—in His human nature, born—in His Divine Nature, given. But I want you to see that all the sweetness and light that can come to you through Him must come by your putting both your hands upon Him and taking Him to be your own.

Here is one hand, “*Unto us a Child is born.*” Here is the other, “*Unto us a Son is given.*”

Do you ask, “What are those two hands?” I received a note from one of my hearers, who pleads, “Tell me, Sir, what faith is. Tell me what you mean by believing and trusting.” My dear Friend, I am always telling you *that* and I mean to keep on always telling you it so long as I have a tongue to move. By a daring act of appropriation take Jesus to be yours and say with me—oh, that we could all say it in one great shout!—“UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN, UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN.” God gives Him, we take Him! He is born, we take Him up in our arms and feel ready to cry, “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace; for my eyes have seen Your Salvation.”

He is a Son given. Shall we not accept this Gift of gifts and love Him because He has first loved us? To believe is to take freely what God gives freely. It is the simplest thing that can be. I could not explain to you what to *drink* is, but I will put this glass to my lips and actually perform the action. Now you see what it is. The water is put to the lips, it is allowed to flow into the mouth and down the throat and so it is drunk. Take Christ just so. Up to the very lips of your reception He flows—open the mouth of your soul and take Him into yourself. “May I?” you ask. *May* you? You are threatened with damnation if you do not! This is one side of the Gospel message—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned.”

A man may certainly do that which involves him in condemnation if he does not do it. That awful threat is one of the most powerful bits of Gospel that I know of—it drives while the promise draws. If you want Christ, you may have Him. If you desire to have God with you, He waits to be gracious unto you. If you wish for Immanuel, behold Him in Jesus, your Lord. “Oh, but I wish I had some sign that I might be sure!” What sign do you need beyond the gift of God, the birth of Jesus? Away with demands which are wild and ungenerous. The Word of God bids you believe and live. The moment you believe in Jesus He is yours.

Say, then, this morning, “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given,” and say it with fullness of delight! Be sure that you go on with the verse to the end—“and the government shall be upon His shoulder.” If Christ is your Savior He must be your King—

***“But know, nor of the terms complain
Where Jesus comes He comes to reign:
To reign, and with no partial sway;
Lusts must be slain that disobey.”***

The moment we really believe in Jesus as our salvation we fall before Him and call Him Master and Lord. We serve when He saves. He has redeemed us unto Himself and we acknowledge that we are His. A generous man once bought a slave-girl. She was put up on the block for auction and he pitied her and purchased her. But when he had bought her he said to her, “I have bought you to set you free. There are your papers, you are a free woman.” The grateful creature fell at his feet and cried, “I will never leave

you! If you have made me free I will be your servant as long as you live and serve you better than any slave could do.”

This is how we feel towards Jesus. He sets us free from the dominion of Satan and then, as we need a Ruler, we say, “And the government shall be upon His shoulder.” We are glad to be ruled by “Immanuel, God with us.” This, also, is a door of hope to us. That Jesus shall be the Monarch of our hearts is our highest joy! To us He shall always be “Wonderful.” When we think of Him, or speak about Him, it shall be with reverent awe. When we need advice and comfort, we will fly to Him, for He shall be our Counselor. When we need strength, we will look to Him as our Mighty God. Born again by His Spirit, we will be His children and He shall be the Everlasting Father. Full of joy and rest, we will call Him Prince of Peace.

Are you willing to have Christ govern you? Will you spend your lives in praising Him? You are willing to have Christ to pardon you, but we cannot divide Him and therefore you must also have Him to *sanctify* you. You must not take the crown from His head but accept Him as the Monarch of your soul. If you would have His hand to help you, you must obey the scepter which it grasps. Blessed Immanuel, we are right glad to obey You! In You our darkness ends and from the shadow of death we rise to the Light of life! It is salvation to be obedient to You. It is the end of gloom to her that was in anguish to bow herself before You!

May God the Holy Spirit take of the things of Christ and show them unto us and then we shall all cry—

***“Go worship at Immanuel’s feet!
See in His face what wonders meet!
Earth is too narrow to express
His worth, His Grace, His righteousness.”***

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Isaiah 7:10-16; 8:5-8, 19-22; 9:1-7.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—251, 260, 256.

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HARVEST JOY

NO. 2265

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 17, 1892.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 6, 1890.**

***“You have magnified the nation, and increased the joy: they joy
before You according to the joy in harvest, and as men
rejoice when they divide the spoil.”
Isaiah 9:3.***

NOTICE that I make a correction in the version from which I am reading. The Authorized Version has it, “You have multiplied the nation, and *not* increased the joy.” This is not consistent with the connection. The Revised Version has very properly put it, “You have multiplied the nation, You have increased their joy.” I have not any learning to display, but I think I could show it to you, if this were the proper time, how the passage came to be read with a, “not,” and I could also prove to you that, in this instance, the Revisers were right in making their alteration.

Tonight, there are about 82 persons who have confessed Christ before the Church, have been baptized and who are to be received into our fellowship. We feel very grateful for this large addition to our members and, all the more so, because it is no strange thing, but month by month, all the year round, they continue to come, though not in such large numbers as at this time. God be thanked for thus blessing us! We cannot allow these occasions to pass over without joying before the Lord as men rejoice when they gather in their sheaves of corn!

To bring out your joy, think of how we would feel if we did not have an increase in the Church, or very few were ever added. The good old people seem quite content to be very few. Their notion is that the way to Heaven is very narrow, as, indeed, it is, and that, therefore, they must not expect many to find their way. I remember a Church where the good old deacons used to say of the converts, “Summer them and winter them. Keep them out till we have tried them for a very long time.” It came to pass, after the process of, “summering and wintering,” that a great many of them never came forward at all! Though they were very excellent people, they never summoned courage enough to join such a Church. Did you ever hear a farmer say of his wheat, “Summer it and winter it, and then take it into the barn”? No, farmers are not such fools! But these good men were so very wise that they became otherwise, so they said, “Keep the corn out in the field; else you will bring in some poppies, or some cornflowers, and we

do not want them. Keep the converts out of the Church till you are sure that there are no hypocrites among them.”

Well, dear Friends, we are not at all of this mind! We try to use every caution and great prudence—and our friends do not come into this Church without experiencing an examination—some of them even think it to be an ordeal—yet I find that the more difficult it is to get into a Church, the more people want to come into it! And whenever the barriers are lowered and you tell people that they may come without any test as to the state of their souls, nobody cares to come! Well, we have taken pains and care, and have sought only to welcome the worthy, that is, those who are trusting in Jesus—and yet we have had a great number come, by His Grace! But suppose that we had none? Well, I hope every Christian man and woman here would be troubled about it. I should not wonder if the question arose, “Had we not better put somebody else on the platform?” That somebody who is now here would be the first to say, “If I am doing no good, let somebody else come and try, for it would be sad and sickening business to be fishing for souls and never catching anything.”

Last winter, at Mentone, I went out in a boat where I was assured that there were shoals of fish. And I had a line, I should think it was 150 feet long—and after waiting hour after hour and never feeling the fish bite—I gave up the useless occupation. I think every minister is bound to give up the spiritual fishery in any particular place if, after many days’ toil, he has caught nothing for Christ. Rachel says, “Give me children, or I die!” Christ’s servant says, “Give me converts, or I die!” Indeed, we are dead as far as our ministry is concerned unless God blesses it.

We also feel that we ought to be glad when others are joined to the Church because we look back, with exquisite pleasure, upon our own joining of it. I remember the trouble it cost me to join the Church. I think I went to see the pastor some four or five days running—he was always too busy to see me—till, at last, I told him it did not matter, for I would go to the Church Meeting and *propose myself* as a member. And then he, all of a sudden, found time to see me—and so I managed to get into the Church and confess my faith in Christ! Oh, dear Friends, that was one of the best days’ work I ever did, when I openly declared my faith in Christ and united myself with His people! I think many here could say the same—they remember when they united with the people of God, and publicly avowed their faith. You do not regret it Brothers and Sisters, do you? I am sure you feel that it was a happy day when you could say—

**“Tis done! The great transaction’s done—
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine!”**

By the peace of mind which has come to us from joining with the people of God after believing in Christ, we feel glad to see other young soldiers stooping to take up the Cross of Christ and following Him, “outside the camp, bearing His reproach.”

I. Looking at our text, I notice in it, first, A WORD OF DISCRIMINATION. If you look carefully at the passage, you will soon see it—

“*You have multiplied the nation, and increased the joy.*”

Observe, first, that *conversion must be the Lord's work*. The only multiplication of the Church of God that is to be desired is that which God sends—"You have multiplied the nation." If we add to our Churches by becoming worldly, by taking in persons who have never been born again. If we add to our Churches by accommodating the life of the Christian to the life of the worldling—our increase is worth nothing at all—it is a loss rather than a gain! If we add to our Churches by excitement, by making appeals to the passions rather than by explaining the Truth of God to the understanding. If we add to our Churches otherwise than by the power of the Spirit of God making men new creatures in Christ Jesus, the increase is of no worth whatever!

A man picked himself up from the gutter and rolled up against Mr. Rowland Hill one night as he went home, and he said, "Mr. Hill, I am pleased to see you, Sir. I am one of your converts." Rowland said, "I thought it was very likely you were. You are not one of *God's* converts, or else you would not be drunk." There is a great lesson in that answer. *My* converts are no good. Rowland Hill's converts could get drunk—but the converts of the Spirit of God—*those* are really renewed in the spirit of their mind by a supernatural operation! And these are a real increase to the Church of God. "You have multiplied the nation." Pray hard that the Lord may continue to send us converts! He never sends the wrong people. However poor they may be, however illiterate—if they are converted, as they will be if the Lord sends them—they will be the very people that we want. May God send us thousands more!

The text also teaches us, with a word of discrimination, that *conversion must be such as the Lord describes* in this chapter—"The peoples that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined." When God brings men to the Church, they are the people who have undergone a very remarkable change. They have come out of darkness, palpable, horrible—into light, marvelous and delightful! God sends no other than these. If you are not changed characters. If you are not new creatures in Christ Jesus. If you cannot say, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see," the Church cannot receive you as you are and God has not sent you! Now, who can turn us from darkness unto light but God? Who can work this great miracle within the heart? Darkness of heart is very hard to move. Who but God can make the eternal Light of God burst through the natural darkness and turn us from the power of Satan unto God?

Next, *conversion must have a distinct relation to Christ*. Look down the chapter, just a little way, and you come to this wonderful passage—"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be on His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." We need converts who know *this* Christ—men and women to whom He is "Wonderful," to whom He has become the "Counselor." We need no additions to the Church of those who cannot call Him, "The Mighty God. The Everlasting Father." We need men and women to whom Christ has become, "The

Prince of Peace.” If these are added to us, the Church grows exceedingly! If others are added, they do but increase our burden. They become our weakness. In many cases they become our disgrace. Dear Hearers, you know whether you are trusting Christ or not. If you are, come and confess Him! If you are not, weep in secret places, and cry to God the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ to you as the Wonderful, Counselor, and The Mighty God, and then, when you know Him as your Lord and Savior, come and join yourself to His people, and God will, in your case, have multiplied the nation!

Once more, about this discrimination, *the joy must be such as God gives*. The text says, “You have multiplied the nation, and increased the joy.” The joy that we ought to have tonight—the joy of any growing Church—will be joy such as God gives! That is the kind of joy we desire to have. If anybody wishes to see the Church grow that we may excel other Churches, that is not the joy that God gives. If we like to see converts because we are glad that our opinions should be spread, God does not give that joy. If we crave converts that we may steal them from other people, God does not give that joy, if it is a joy. I do not think God is the lover of sheep stealers—and there are plenty such about. We do not desire to increase our numbers by taking Christian people away from other Christian communities. No, the joy which God gives us is clear, unselfish delight in Christ being glorified, in souls being saved, in the Truth of God being spread and in error being baffled! God give us a joy over those who are added to us which shall be pure, Christlike and heavenly! Oh, that He might increase such joy! I think that He *has* increased it.

Did you ever worship in a place where there were more pews than people? Did you ever go to a Church or Chapel where the preacher could preach upon anything except the Gospel of Christ? Where you might hear about anything except the precious blood of Christ? The minister would be sure not to mention *that*. Then I think I see you go grumbling down the aisle after every service, or you sit there and look up at the pulpit and long for what you never hear till the Sabbath becomes more wearisome than any day of the week. Oh, dear! Few people; little to be learned; very little to be given; a terrible “starvation camp” where every man looks at his fellow and wonders who is going to die next! Well, now, we ought to thank God that it is not so with us. Look on this company gathered here tonight. Think of the congregation we had this morning—remember the deep attention and think in how many cases God has blessed the Word to the hearers. I never, personally, felt so weak, or felt as great a burden in preaching—yet I never had so large a blessing—there are more converts than ever! Glory be to God, this is the kind of joy that comes from Him—in His Word, in His power—that out of weakness makes His servant strong!

So much by way of discrimination.

II. Now, secondly, notice a WORD OF DESCRIPTION, which is the main part of the text. The joy of the Church in receiving converts may be compared to the joy in harvest. In all nations, the time of reaping the corn and

gathering it into the garner has been regarded as a festival. What is the joy of harvest?

Well, it is *a joy which we ought to expect*. The farmer expects a harvest. He says, "It is so many weeks to harvest." He sows his seed with a view to harvest. He hires men to clear out the weeds with a view to a harvest. Well, now, every Church should be looking for a *spiritual* harvest. One said to me, once, "I have preached for several years and I believe God has blessed the Word, but nobody ever comes forward to tell me so." I said to him, "Next Lord's-Day say to the people, 'I shall be in the vestry when the sermon is finished, to see friends who have been converted.'" To his surprise, 10 or 12 came in—and he was quite taken aback—but, of course, quite delighted. He had not looked for a harvest, so of course he did not get one!

You know the story I tell of my first student, Mr. Medhurst. He went out to preach on Tower Hill, Sunday after Sunday. He was not, then, my student, but one of the young men in the Church. He came to me and said, "I have been out preaching now for several months on Tower Hill and I have not seen one conversion." I said to him, rather sharply, "Do you expect God is going to bless you every time you choose to open your mouth?" He answered, "Oh! No, Sir! I do not expect Him to do that." "Then," I replied, "that is why you do not get a blessing." We ought to *expect* a blessing! God has said, "My Word shall not return to Me void"—and it will not! We ought to look for a harvest! He who preaches the Gospel with his whole heart ought to be surprised if he does *not* hear of conversions—and he ought to begin to say in his heart, "I will know the reason why," and never stop till he has found it out. The joy of the harvest is what we have a right to *expect*.

The joy of harvest, next, is *a joy which has respect for former toil*. He is bound to rejoice in a harvest who has sorrowed in plowing, in the sowing of the seed, in watching his crop when it was in the ear—and when frost, blight and mildew threatened to destroy it. Brothers and Sisters, many of us here can rejoice with the joy of harvest, because, in those converted to Christ, we see the fruit of our soul's travail! I thank God, first, and I thank many of you, next, that when I sit to see enquirers, I find that I am very generally the spiritual *grandfather* of those who come, rather than their father in the faith, for I find that you, whom God gave me in years past are, many of you, diligent in seeking the souls of others. In the case of many of you who join the Church, your conversion is due to this Sister and to that, to this Brother and to that, rather than distinctly to my ministry. I am very glad to have it so!

During the last two days I have spoken to two friends, both of whom said to me, "I am your spiritual grandchild." One from America said so this morning. I asked, "How is that?" The answer was, "Mr. So-and-So, whom you brought to Christ, came out to America and he brought me to Christ." You who have had any part in the conversion of these 82 who are to be received tonight will rejoice in proportion as you have sighed,

prayed, been beaten, foiled and disappointed—in that very proportion you will rejoice with the joy of harvest!

But, next, it is *a joy which has solid ground to go upon*. I do not know of a more joyful occasion than when young men and women, and, for that matter, old men and women, too, are brought to confess Christ and to unite with His people. It is a very joyful thing to attend a wedding, but it is always a speculation as to how it will turn out—but when you come to see a soul yield itself to Christ, there is no speculation about that—you have a blessed certainty! Oh, I think the angels sing more sweetly than ever as they hear a man, or woman, or child say, “I trust in Jesus. I confess His name.” When we know and believe that true faith in Christ means present salvation, there is a great joy about that!

I heard, the other day, of some preachers who say that there is no such thing as present salvation. And though they constantly preach, they tell the people, every now and then, that they must be saved when they come to *die*. They say there is no such thing as being saved *now*. I should like to present those brethren with a little “Catechism for the Young and Ignorant” which Mr. Cruden was known to give away, for, if they are not “young,” they certainly must be “ignorant” of the first principles of the faith! You are saved, dear Hearer, if you have believed in Christ Jesus! You are saved even now! If you were not, I do not see any reason why we should rejoice over you with the joy of harvest.

Moreover, we believe that if you have trusted Christ, you will be saved *eternally*. Angels do not rejoice prematurely over repentant sinners! They never have to say to one another, “Gabriel, Michael, you made a very terrible mistake the other day. You rejoiced in the Presence of God over that man who, after all, has gone down to Hell. You rang the bells too soon.” Angels do not do that! Jesus gives to His sheep ETERNAL life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of His hand. Therefore, we feel that the confession of Christ is, in itself, a thing to rejoice over, and the *immediate* and *eternal* salvation that goes with it, warrant us in rejoicing with the joy of the harvest!

Moreover, this is *a joy which looks to the future*. Men rejoice in the harvest because they remember that all through the winter they will feed upon the food which they are now gathering. The poorest man in London has reason to be thankful for a good harvest, for it will help to make food cheaper. We are to enjoy, in days to come, what we gather in the harvest time. There are 16 girls coming from the Orphanage to join the Church and I am rejoicing in my heart over 16 women who will, I trust, during a long life, glorify Christ! Sixteen matrons in the Church who shall be Deborahs, Dorcasses and Phoebes, or whoever else you may like to think of among holy women! The boys, also, who come, however young they may be, and however little they may appear in some men’s eyes—we cannot tell to what they will grow. I may be receiving, tonight, a Livingstone, or a Moffat, or a Williams, or a Whitefield, or a Wesley, or some other servant of God, who, in some sphere or other, will serve Him right nobly!

Beloved, some of us will soon be gone. There are some here who are older than I am, who, in the natural course of things, will soon sleep in the cemetery. Are you not glad to see others coming forward? They will “hold the fort” when you can no longer stand upon its walls and, on account of this hope of the future, I rejoice with the joy of harvest!

This is *a joy which we may join*, for, in the harvest, anybody who likes may rejoice! There is the proprietor of the field—he rejoices. How greatly Christ rejoices! There are laborers—they may shout as they bring home the loads. They know what that field of wheat has cost. Let us, who are working for Jesus here, have the joy of harvest. The on-lookers, too, as they go by, see the harvest gathered in, will stop and even give a shout over the hedge. If you are not, yourself, saved, you might be glad that other people are! Even if you are not, yourself, going to Heaven, rejoice that others are choosing the blessed road. I invite even *you* to come and share with us the joy of harvest. The gleaner, Ruth, over yonder says, “I have stooped many times. I have almost broken my back over the work and I have only picked up this little handful.” I know you, Sister, and I am pleased that you should bring even one to Christ! I know you, my Brother; and I rejoice with you that you should bring even one child to the Savior! Though you are but a gleaner, join heartily with us, tonight, in the joy of the harvest!

Then something happens in our harvest that cannot happen in the common harvest, for the harvested ones rejoice! Sheaves cannot sing, ears of wheat cannot lift up their voices, but in *our* harvest the happiest of all are those who are called by Divine Grace! And, while they are happy, we are happy and all are happy! The angels hovering over the assembly tonight will mark this, the first Sabbath in July, and it shall be a red-letter day even to them, so many shall, tonight, for the first time, come to the Table of their Lord and here confess His name!

I have a great deal more to say, but our time is nearly gone. I can only say that this is *a joy which has its moderating tone*. “Why,” you ask, “what is that?” The farmer says, “I have got that load in very well, but I wonder how it will thresh out.” I often think of you who are added to the Church—and I think that you are first-rate people, and that I never saw better—but I wonder how you will turn out when you get inside the Church. There are members of the Church whom I never hear of as doing *anything* for Christ. They may be working away quietly, but I am afraid that some are not. I know that there are some in this Church who are no better than they should be! Indeed, that is true of us *all*, but there are some who are not what they ought to be, as to practical service for Christ. We get many passengers to ride in the coach, but not so many to pull it! We get plenty of people to eat the fruit, but not so many to plant fresh trees. Yet I say not even this very heavily, or with any great emphasis, for the bulk of the members of this Church are earnestly engaged in the service of God, for which I bless His name! Still, there is the question concerning the harvest, “How will it thresh out?”

There is another question—How much of it will be found to be real wheat in the Last Great Day? Ah, we may judge our very best and examine very carefully, but there will always be the goats in the sheep—and the tares with the wheat. And that is the dash of bitterness in our cup of rejoicing. God grant that we may not have many added to us who will deteriorate instead of growing better! How will they stand at the Last Great Day? “Well,” says one, “I am glad that you make that remark. I have always been opposed to revivals, because they bring in so many—and many of the converts fall away.” Dear Friends, do you remember Mr. Fullerton’s answer to that? I thought it was as good and as complete as it was humorous. He said that when persons say that they do not like revivals because certain of the converts afterwards turn back, they are like his countryman who picked up a sovereign, but when he went with it to the bank, it turned out to be a light sovereign and he only got 18 shillings for it. Mark you, he found it, so the 18 shillings were clear gain!

Some time after, he saw another sovereign lying in the road and he would not pick it up, “for,” he said, “I lost two shillings by the one I picked up the other day. I shall not pick you up for very likely I should only get 18 shillings for you.” So he passed on, and left it where it was. I cannot imagine an Irishman being so unwise! Certainly, no Scotchman would have been! And I think no Englishman, either. However, that is the style of unwisdom of a man who says that at a revival so many come in, and then so many turn out to be bad. Well, but those who remain are a clear gain! And you ought to desire to have a like gain, again and again! You will get rich through such losses if God will continue to give them to you!

However, I hope that I shall not have any light sovereigns tonight. Yet, if these converts do not turn out to be 20 shillings in the pound, but only 18 shillings, I will be greatly rejoiced to have the 18 shillings and God shall have all the glory!

I think that I will pause here, though there is another division of my discourse and, in closing, I will ask four questions.

First, *What do we say of those who never sow?* Well, they will never reap. They will never have the joy of harvest. Am I addressing, in this great assembly, any professing Christians who never sow, never speak a word for Christ, never call at a house and try to introduce the Savior’s name, never seek to bring children to the Savior, take no part in the Sunday school or any other service for Christ? Do I address some lazy man here, spiritually alive only for himself? Oh, poor Soul, I would not like to be you, because I doubt whether you can be spiritually alive at all! Surely, he who lives for himself is dead while he lives! And you will never know the joy of bringing souls to Christ! And when you get to Heaven, if you ever *do* get there, you will never be able to say, “Here am I, Father, and the children You have given me.” You will have to abide eternally *alone*, having brought no fruit unto God in the form of converts from sin. Shake yourselves up, Brothers and Sisters, from sinful sloth!

“Oh!” says one, “I am not my brother’s keeper.” No, I will tell you your name—it is Cain. You are your brother’s *murderer*, for every professing

Christian who is not his brother's keeper, is his brother's killer! And you can be sure that it is so, for you may kill by *neglect* quite as surely as you may kill by the bow or by the dagger!

Next, *What do we say to those who have never reaped?* Well, that depends. Perhaps you have only just begun to sow. Do not expect to reap before God's time. "In due season you shall reap if you faint not." There is a set season for reaping. But, if you have been a very long time sowing and you have never reaped, may I ask the question, Where do you buy your seed? If I were to sow my garden, year by year, and nothing ever came up, I should change my seeds man! Perhaps you have bad seed, my dear Friend, and have not sown the pure and undiluted Gospel. You have not brought it out in all its fullness. Go to the Word of God and get "seed for the sower" of a kind that will feed your own soul, for it is "bread for the eater." When you sow that kind of Seed, it will come up!

Next, *What shall I say to those who know the Lord but have never confessed Him.* What shall I say to you? Well, I do not think that I will say what I think, but I think very seriously about persons who have been converted and yet never tell the man who was the means of saving them that it has happened. "Well," says one, "I do not think that I shall confess Christ. The dying thief did not confess Him, did he? He was not baptized." No, but he was a *dying* thief, remember, and if you are not baptized, I think that you will be a *living* thief, for you will rob God of His Glory and you will rob His servant, also, of the comfort which he ought to receive. Our wages are to *hear that souls are saved* and, if we do not hear of it, we are robbed of our wages! You muzzle the ox that treads out the corn if you allow a man to toil and labor—and you get good from his services—but you give him no return by way of encouragement! Come out, you who have been hidden away like cowards! Men or women, if you love Christ and have never confessed Him, come out straight away and be not ashamed to say, "I am a soldier of the Cross, a follower of the Lamb." May the great Captain of our salvation force you to do this right speedily!

Once more, *What do we say to those who do confess Christ and who are going to confess Him tonight?* Well, we say this—"Come in, you blessed of the Lord! Why do you stand outside?" Beloved, when you do come in, keep your garments unspotted from the world. Come in with a true heart and a reverent spirit with this prayer upon your lips, "Hold You me up, and I shall be safe." May none of you who are, tonight, gathered into the barn, turn out to be mere weeds dried in the sun! The Lord save you and keep you! And may you remember that the vows of the Lord are upon you and may you never, in any way, dishonor that great name by which you are henceforth to be named!

God bless every one of this great mass of people! "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," for "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." God save all of us from that fearful doom, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ISAIAH 49:13-26.

Verse 13. *Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the LORD has comforted His people, and will have mercy upon His afflicted.* When God blesses His Church, He blesses the world through her. Therefore, Heaven and earth are invited to be glad in the gladness of the Church of God! Oh, that God would visit His Church—no, He has already done so, and I feel inclined to cry out, as the text does—“Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth: and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD has comforted His people.”

14. *But Zion said, the LORD has forsaken me, and my LORD has forgotten me.* We often judge contrary to the truth and when God is blessing us, we dream that He has forgotten us. Oh, wicked unbelief! Cruel unbelief! It robs God of glory; it robs us of comfort. It snatches the song out of our mouth and fills our soul with groaning—“Zion said, the LORD has forsaken me, and my LORD has forgotten me.”

15. *Can a woman forget the sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet I will not forget you.* The child is in a condition in which it reminds the mother of itself—her sucking child, her own child. Can she forget it? It is not according to nature—

**“Yet,’ says the Lord, ‘should nature change,
And mothers monsters prove,
Zion still dwells upon the heart
Of everlasting love.”**

What is true of God’s Church as a whole, is true of every member of it. If any of you think that God has passed over you, one of His believing children, you think what is untrue! He cannot do it! It would be contrary to His Nature. As long as He is God, He *must* remember His people.

16. *Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.* How appropriately Christ can say this when He looks on the nail prints, “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands”! As I said, this morning, Jesus can give nothing, He can take nothing, He can do nothing, He can hold nothing without remembering His people—“I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.” How I love that verse of Toplady’s hymn that speaks of this blessed Truth of God!—

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

16, 17. *Your walls are continually before Me. Your children shall make haste.* There shall be many of them! Converts shall be added to the Church in great numbers. They shall hurry up—they shall not be long in coming. Very often they delay too long. The promise is, “Your children shall make haste.”

17. *Your destroyers and they that made you waste shall go forth of you.* I wish this were carried out. If it were, many of the Churches of Christ which are plagued with false doctrines and worldly habits, which are laying them waste, would be delivered from those curses. The enemies outside the walls, however malicious they are, will never be so mischievous as the traitors inside the fortress! Save Troy from the wooden horse and save Zion from the traitors in her midst that seek to do her harm.

18. *Lift up your eyes round about, and behold; all these gather themselves together, and come to you.* There is a great company coming! The Church is going to be increased. Have faith in God. We are not going to receive them, now, only by ones and twos—we thank God we receive them by tens and scores! They are coming by hundreds and by thousands—let us *expect* them. By faith, let us see them coming even now. [It is remarkable that this sermon and exposition, which were selected long ago for publication this month, should be issued just as the Tabernacle Church is again having a large ingathering of converts. Those who have regularly read the sermons have been struck with the amazing appropriateness of several of them, either to the condition of the Tabernacle Church, or the general state of the churches of our land. A notable instance of this fact is described in the “Personal Notes” of the *Sword and the Trowel* for July. Many can see the overruling hand of the Lord even in the order in which the sermons have been published!]

18. *As I live, says the LORD, you shall surely clothe yourselves with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on you as a bride does.* What an ornament to a Church, her converts are! These are our jewels! We care nothing for gorgeous architecture or grand music in the worship of God! Our true building is composed of our converts—our best music is their confession of faith. May God give us more of it!

19-21. *For your waste and your desolate places, and the land of your destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed you up shall be far away. The children which you shall have, after you have lost the other, shall say again in your ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell. Then shall you say in your heart, Who has begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? And who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?* Sometimes a Church is brought very low—there are no additions, there is no unity—everything is breaking up and going to pieces. When God visits that Church, what a change is seen! Then people come flocking to it and the Church wonders where the converts came from. May the Lord make us wonder in that fashion! It will take a great deal to astonish us, after all these years of mercy, yet the Lord can do it. It may be He will make these latter days to be better than the former. Though we have had nearly 40 years of blessing together, He may yet increase it and give us to rejoice yet more and more!

22. *Thus says the LORD GOD, Behold, I will lift up My hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people; and they shall bring your sons*

in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. We do not mind how they are brought if they do but come! Some in the arms and some after the Oriental method of putting the child on the shoulder. When God lifts up His hand, great wonders of mercy and Grace are worked.

23. *And kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers.* It will take a long time before they learn that art, for kings and queens have generally been destroyers of the Church of Christ! Those will be grand days when kings shall be the nourishers of the Church and queens her nursing mothers!

23. *They shall bow down to you with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of your feet.* I have heard the first part of this verse quoted as an argument for the union of Church and State—"Kings shall be your foster fathers, and queens your nursing mothers." I have not the slightest objection—if they will *bow down* to the Church—"with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of her feet." What is proposed to us is that the Church should bow down to the State, with *her* face toward the earth and lick up the dust of the feet of the State, by becoming obedient to rules and regulations made by princes and parliaments! This is NOT according to the mind of God, nor according to the heart of His people.

23. *And you shall know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me.* If we wait for Christ, for His coming, for the help which He brings, for the salvation that is worked by Him, we shall not be ashamed.

24-26. *Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus says the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contends with you, and I will save your children. And I will feed them that oppress you with their own flesh; and they shall be drunk with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the LORD am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.* The mighty may hold their prey with a strong hand, but there is a stronger hand that will deliver the captive. It is Jehovah, the Savior, the Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob, who says, "I will contend with him that contends with you, and I will save your children." Here is a Divine promise for every parent to plead—"I will save your children." May the Lord give you Grace to claim that promise, even now, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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THE JOY OF HARVEST

NO. 3058

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1865.

[Other sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon harvest subjects are as follows: #2896, Volume 50—HARVEST TIME (the first of his sermons ever *published*). Number 2265, Volume 38—HARVEST JOY; #1127, Volume 19—HARVEST MEN WANTED; #1562, Volume 26—HARVEST PAST, SUMMER ENDED and MEN UNSAVED (double number); #705, Volume 12—FIELDS WHITE FOR HARVEST And #880, Volume 15—THE FORMER AND THE LATTER RAIN—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

“They joy before You according to the joy in harvest.”
Isaiah 9:3.

HARVEST crowns the year with God’s goodness. When the harvest is abundant, there is universal joy. Everybody rejoices. The owner of the land is glad because he sees the recompense of reward. The laborers are glad for they see the fruit of their toil. Even those to whom not a single ear may belong, nevertheless sympathize in the common joy because a rich harvest is a gift to all the nation. It is a joyous sight to see the last loaded wagon come creaking down the village road, to note the youngsters who shout so loudly yet know so little what they are shouting about, to mark the peasant on the top of the wagon as he waves his hat and gives vent to some gleeful exclamation—and to see them taking it all to the stack or barn. There is joy throughout the village! There is joy throughout the land when the harvest time comes! They that divide the spoil shout loudly, their joyous clamor reaches the heavens!

A better joy than this, however, greets the more auspicious season when a sinner finds his Savior, when the prayers that he has sown, like handfuls of seed, come up and the good yellow ears of confidence in his Savior are brought to maturity. The joy of those who have found the Savior is greater than harvest time—they can say with the Psalmist, “You are more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey.” Burst, you barns! Overflow, you wine vats! But you cannot give such joy to your possessors as Christ, really grasped and laid hold upon, can give to a soul that feels its need of Him! The joy of harvest is far exceeded by the joy of simple faith!

We, as a Church, like Christian Churches in all ages, have had times of ingathering when we have rejoiced before God as with the joy of harvest. And there comes even a brighter day than has ever dawned upon this poor misty earth—the day of the coming of the Son of Man, when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise, when Christ shall thrust in His golden sickle and shall reap the harvest of this world! And then shall the righteous rejoice before Him with a greater joy than ten thousand harvest years have ever known!

I. Let us talk, then, of our own joy at the present time as the joy of harvest. The joy of receiving as members of the Church these converts from the world is THE JOY OF REALIZATION and, therefore, is like the joy of harvest!

Faith realizes what she sought and expected. It is an act of faith, in some sort, when the farmer casts his good seed into the earth to die. He loses sight of it for a long time. It must rot and decay under the clods. It is not quickened unless it dies. But he believes that it will be ultimately to his gain to sustain a loss of those golden handfuls. When he sees the harvest, his faith is honored and proved to be sound sense. Thus, too, his cherished hopes are fulfilled. When he first saw the green blade appearing above the soil, he had hope of golden ears. When the whole field grew green and looked like his own pastures, then he thought full sure that harvest time would come and each day, as he has walked across his field, or round about it—as he has seen first the blade, and then the ear—he has hoped to see the full corn in the ear. And now his hopes are all fulfilled in the harvest before him! His labor is all repaid. Many a time have his workmen plodded to and fro over that ground. It was toilsome drudgery—to plow, to harrow, to sow—then there was much weeding, the hoe had to be in frequent use. But now he grudges no labor that has been spent—he has a good return for all his outgoing in the incoming of his harvest! Harvest is the realization of faith, of hope and of labor.

So is it with the conversion of souls. We sow the Word of God in faith. How often have I preached the Gospel here and I have felt that there was no power whatever in it, of itself, to convert souls, and no power whatever in souls to make it converting to them! Yet I felt and knew that God would honor His own Truth and make it quickening to those whom He had ordained unto eternal life. And you, sitting in these pews and offering your silent prayers, have hoped that it would be so, too. You have anticipated it. Your faith has been exercised with my faith, expecting that God's Word would not return unto Him void. And I know that many of you, earnest men and women, have looked out for results—you have had a quick ear to catch a hopeful word from your own children. You have had a quick eye to notice the tears of any who sat in the same pew with you. And sometimes your hopes rose very high—and sometimes sank very low. But now that you have seen many of these in whom you have been interested, brought in and added to the Church, you seem to go beyond hope and you bless God that His Word has been honored and that souls have been saved!

I cannot tell how many of you have labored for those particular persons who are to be added to us. I know that some of you have, but I venture to say that you who have prayed the most, will rejoice the most. You who have spoken most to souls. You who have labored most to bring them to Christ will have the greatest part in the present joy of harvest! As for you loiterers, who do nothing but look on—as for you who are ready at meal-time to come in and dip your bread into our vinegar, but have nothing to do with the labor, you who have not toiled with us side by side—you will have little joy. You will perhaps stand by and be suspicious concerning the results. Like the elder brother, you will be

angry and not come in while we have music and dancing over the Brother who was lost and is now found—who was dead and is alive! But you who have believed the most, you who have hoped the most, you who have worked the most—you shall keep the feast and rejoice before God with the joy of harvest! Glory be unto God! He has not failed us! His Word has not returned unto Him void! He has heard the cry of His children! He has given to us to sow in tears and to reap in joy!

II. Change the note a little and observe that the joy of harvest is THE JOY OF CONGRATULATION.

I think I may congratulate you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, on the ingathering of converts into the Church. There is a time for rebuke and there is a time for expressing our mutual comfort in one another. Let us congratulate one another *that the Spirit of God is with us as a people and with us in no mean measure*. Oh, what would other churches give to have such an increase as we have had year by year? God has been pleased to add to us, year by year, pretty nearly after the rate of four hundred members in a year till our numbers have been swollen beyond our most sanguine hopes. Oh, how greatly has He multiplied the people and increased our joy! Surely the Spirit of God is with us! Every month we have testimony that the Word has been made useful. I do not think there has been a sermon preached here which God has not blessed. Ought we to restrain the expression of our gratitude through any fear of trespassing on humility, when we can say, from positive facts, that there have been those who have come to us and professed either that they have found the Savior, or that they were led to tremble under a sense of sin through the Word every time it has been preached? Surely, the Spirit of God is manifestly with us! Shall we not recognize His Presence? Must we not now adoringly bless Him, that though we are not worthy that He should come under our roof, He does deign to abide with us and make the place of His feet glorious?

Let us congratulate one another that *our prayers, notwithstanding all the faults that mar them and the infirmities that cleave to them, are being heard!* They are penetrating Heaven, they are entering the pearly gate, they are going up before the Throne of the Most High! Through Jesus' blood, which they use as their great prevailing weapon, they are moving the arm which moves the world! Blessings are coming down upon our sons and daughters, upon our kinsfolk and acquaintances in answer to our wrestling, believing prayers! Let us congratulate one another. If we were depressed, if we were like a wilderness, we would console one another. Let us now felicitate one another, interchange our cheerful smiles and our thankful greetings! Let us take the right hand of fellowship over again and, looking back upon the past, vow for the future, in God's name, that if He will but strengthen us, nothing shall daunt our courage, nothing shall restrain our zeal! What He has done shall make us aspire to more! What has been accomplished by us, as a people, shall be but a steppingstone to more daring attempts, to more zealous adventures, to more arduous labors for the promotion of His Kingdom and the extension of His sway! Let us, then, have the joy of congratulation! As the farmer congratulates the men, and as the men

congratulate the master, as the one says, "Blessed be you in the name of the Lord," and the others reply, "We wish you a blessing in God's name," so now let us congratulate each other upon God's mercy which we have received!

III. And is not the joy of harvest particularly A JOY OF GRATITUDE?

I envy not the man who can see the Church increased and yet not feel a sacred, grateful joy. I know some little narrow souls, so compressed within their own selfishness, that to feed their own souls and cherish their own feelings seems to them the only aim and end of Gospel ministry. Whether souls, other than their own, are lost or saved, they care not. It has been the lot of some of us to be, at times, cast among a narrow-minded class of people who say, with a supine satisfaction, "There are very few that shall be saved." And the fewer the number in their fellowship, the more confident they grow of their own election! The appearance of a candidate for Baptism or church membership is the signal for all of them to put on their spectacles and look him through and through to see if he is not a hypocrite. I do not know that their churches are so particularly pure, but I do know that it is particularly difficult to get into them! I do not know that they are worth getting into, but I do know that they *ought* to be worth it, considering the time it takes before one can possibly be received into their enclosure! You must be summered and wintered and tried this way and that before you can be received—and when you are received, the members are sure to rub their hands together and say, "Well, it's a serious thing to receive members." And they are about as glad as I suppose a poor man might be who had 19 children, when there is another coming to eat of the scanty loaf! They seem to think that the addition of so many new members would make the whole of the old members so much the poorer. For my part—and I think I can speak for all here—we greatly rejoice when new converts are welcomed into the Church—and the more there are brought into the Christian family, the more joyful we shall be! We will bless our God—without ceasing will we bless His name, that He does add to us, for this is His work! Jesus sees of the fruit of His passion. The Spirit sees the result of His operation. The Divine Father sees His own children returning to His own board and herein we do rejoice, yes, and we will rejoice with the joy of gratitude!

IV. I have been trying to think over the various causes for joy we may have concerning those who are just now added to us, but I do not think I can sum them all up. THE JOY OF SYMPATHY, however, cannot be lacking.

In many cases you may not know the persons admitted, yet you may enter into the fellowship of their circumstances. A parent's joy may kindle some fellow-feeling. There are fathers and mothers here who feel the tears rising in their eyes because a dear boy or a dear girl has been before the Church and borne witness to faith in Jesus—and is now to be publicly received with the right hand of fellowship into communion with that Church of which the parents have long been members. Estimate the prayers uttered or unexpressed, the sighs that have gone up to Heaven, the many fears, the motherly pangs, the fatherly cares—and now share the joy of the parents while they say to you, "Magnify the Lord with us,

and let us exalt His name together!" Here, too, are wives who see their husbands saved and there is much joy occasioned thereby. There will be a happy household now. Here are sisters and brothers who have watched over brothers and sisters with the most sedulous attention and importunate prayer and, at last, they see them relent the stubbornness they once indulged and confess the Savior whom once they despised!

But, oh, pardon me when I entreat you to sympathize with me and to share my joy, for it is a joy that overflows just now, and would gladly call kinsfolk and friends to rejoice with me! What a mercy to be the means of saving a soul from death and hiding a multitude of sins! How precious is that promise, "they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever." As I sight that constellation in the Scriptural heavens, my heart beats with grateful emotion. But I do not ask you to share only my joy, but to share the joy of earnest teachers and other workers in this Church! Need I mention names? You know the persons without my breathing their names. The men, the women who love the souls of sinners and have been blessed in our midst in bringing them to Jesus are entitled to your sympathetic greetings! Rejoice with them! They have reaped their golden sheaves and they are rejoicing with the joy of harvest! I pray you to share their joy and to increase their joy! Sunday school teachers— God blesses you so that out of our school there come many additions to the Church. You who conduct our catechumen classes, God blesses you—and we have additions from your midst. Young men who preach in the street, you missionaries who toil in your little rooms and serve God by speaking a word of exhortation—you have all been honored this month—there has been some fruit from every department of service! Therefore let us join in sympathy with the laborers whom God has thus honored, in thanking God for their success in souls saved!

And may I not ask you to rejoice because there is One who loves souls better than I do, better than you do and who rejoices more than any of us? It is the Man who bought them with the wounds in His hands, and feet, and side! He looks down upon those who have come up to Him from the wilderness and are looking to Him alone for salvation. Their eyes that were once red with weeping, now flash with hallowed joy! His eyes, that were full of pity, beam with satisfaction and unfeigned delight sits upon the Savior's brow! I cannot see Him with these dim mortal eyes, but I know by an inward consciousness that He is here. Each soul that has trusted Him has been another jewel for His crown, another flush of pleasure in return for His pangs of grief. Come, then, let us rejoice with Him! Jesus, Companion of our sorrow, Captain of our salvation, when You are glad we are exceedingly refreshed!

Nor is this all, for in yonder skies there are those who wait upon our Master, who once waited on Him on earth, and are now glad to hymn His praise before His Throne. Oh, could you hear their songs, you would find that they are just now louder and sweeter than is ever known. "Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah," always rolls up to the Throne of God and the Lamb. But now it is deeper, its volume is more mighty and its note more sweet as they sing over the ingathering of souls into God's

Church. Christ Himself said, "I say unto you, there is joy in the Presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." How much more joy is there when, by scores and even by hundreds, repenting sinners find the Savior!

Think what might have been the lot of those who profess now to have been saved. You have need of an inspired Prophet to tell you that. Some of them might still have been where they once were—upon the ale-house bench, with the drunkard. Yes, and where some of *them* were who have been washed and cleansed—with the harlot in her midnight sin. There are young ones to be added to this Church who have never gone into open sin, but if they had not been called by Grace, little do we know what might have been the career of vice before them. Temptation might have led to sin, sin might have ripened into habit, habit might have gathered force until they became ringleaders in mischief—but they are washed, they are cleansed! And O Satan, what a harvest you have lost! What soldiers have been taken from your ranks! How much mischief might they have done which now they shall scrupulously avoid, for Grace has turned them in another road and filled their mouths with another song!

Think, too, of what they now shall be through Divine Grace. I cannot depict to you each case. I know that there are some here upon whom we look with the hope that they will be teachers of others. We have, especially, holy mothers bringing up their children in God's fear and holy fathers seeking the conversion of their little ones. Their seed, as a generation which the Lord has blessed, shall become, in later years—some of them—pillars of the Church, honored and honorable! They shall serve their Master in this life, they shall bear testimony to His faithfulness in death and they shall sing His praise forever!

Still, with all this joy of harvest, there is one mortifying reflection. I would not say much about it lest it should dampen your joy. It is this. *Out of those who are added to the Church, there are always some who are not saved.* Let us judge carefully and watch earnestly. Some come like Judas with a lie in their right hand and put on Christ by profession who are not followers of Christ in spirit and in truth. Search yourselves, Brothers and Sisters, and if you are not Christ's, do not dishonor His name by venturing to be called by it!

And there is another grievous thought. *While so many are gathered in, there are many who are left out.* Some of you have been with us in our best days and I am afraid I shall have to ring that text again in your ears, as I have done before—"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, but you are not saved, you are not saved." Your sister is saved, but you are not saved! Your wife is saved, but you are not! Two of you sleep in one bed—one has been taken and the other left. Two of you grind at one mill in your daily work—one has been taken and the other left. You are not saved, you are not saved! And when the time comes for you to die, these will be sad words to ring in your ears with a more doleful sound than death-knell ever knew, "Not saved! Not saved!" Amidst the joy of harvest, let us not forget to pray for those who are still wandering in the paths of sin or pandering to the vanities of the world.

Another harvest is coming when Christ shall gather together His people. There will be, first of all, the ingathering of the righteous. Do not

make a mistake about the Day of Judgment, as though the righteous and the wicked were to be judged together, for remember that first of all there will come the day when the righteous shall be gathered. If you read the 14th Chapter of the Book of Revelation, you will find that the harvest precedes the vintage. [See Sermon #2910, Volume 50—THE HARVEST AND THE VINTAGE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The righteous are gathered as the harvest of the earth and afterwards the vintage of the world is gathered—that is, the wicked. The harvest is gathered into the garner of God—and the vintage “into the great winepress of the Wrath of God”—and there the grapes are trodden under foot till the blood flows out, even up to the horses’ bridles! Well, there is to come a harvest of the righteous and what joy there will be when you see the countless number that swells the ranks of the blessed! O you angels, you had need to be twice ten thousand times ten thousand when, at the ingathering of sheaves that no man can number, you welcome the multitudes of the redeemed! What shouts there will be when millions upon millions mount to the upper skies! It was a time of great joy when all Israel passed through the Red Sea, but how much greater joy will there be when ten thousand times ten thousand, even myriads of myriads, shall enter into their eternal rest!

There will be joy in the persons saved—each one will have a separate song or make a distinct note in the one song. What joy over Magdalene and the dying thief! What joy over Manasseh and Saul of Tarsus! Each separate case shall stand out clear and bright, as though it were better than another and yet each one shall claim that his is the choicest exhibition of Divine Love and Faithfulness. What joy when, all together, the Lord’s jewels shall be put into His casket!

Think of where they shall be gathered from—from poverty, from sickness, from beds of dust and silent clay. They shall be gathered from slander and rebuke, from persecution and from suffering, from the lion’s jaws and from the flames—they shall be gathered, ten thousand times ten thousand of them—from sin and suffering, to sin and suffer no more!

To where will they be gathered? Gathered to their Savior, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born whose names are written in Heaven! Remember that they will all be gathered, not one will be absent and everyone will be gathered in a perfect state, not one unripe for Heaven, not one green ear, not one child of God unfit for his heavenly heritage, but all ready and prepared through the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit! Oh, that my eyes could see the glorious day! The pearly gates stand wide open and first comes the Savior up the eternal hills, leading the van fresh from the battlefields of Armageddon, where, for the last time, He has fought and triumphed over all His foes! And here comes the noble army of martyrs waving the palm branches and then the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, the great assembly of the ministers and preachers of the Word, and the hosts of those who have come through great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! Listen how Hell gnashes her teeth! How the infernal lake is stirred to envious burning while the fiends see these brands plucked from the fire as they ascend to Heaven! Listen to the

symphonious harpings of the myriads of spirits as from the battlements of Heaven they look on with wonder and gaze upon the new inhabitants of Jerusalem who are coming to people it and make it even more glorious than it was before! Listen how they begin the song, “Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.” And listen how the multitude of the redeemed join in the chorus, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father—to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever!”

And they sing again and yet again, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns.” May you and I be partakers of the joy of harvest and not be yonder with those among whom there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth because they would not trust the Lamb, because they would not come to Him that they might have life—but chose their own delusion and followed out their own corruptions till they met with the due dessert of their evil deeds! God bless you, dear Friends, every one of you, and make you partakers of the present joy and the everlasting felicity of the saints, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 9:35-38; 10:1; 13:3-8; 18-23.**

Matthew 9:35. *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.* This was His answer to the blasphemous slanders of the Pharisees. A glorious reply it was! Let us answer calumny by greater zeal in doing good! Small places were not despised by our Lord—He went about the *villages* as well as the *cities*. Village piety is of the utmost importance and has a close relation to city life. Jesus turned old institutions to good account—the “*synagogues*” became His seminaries. Three-fold was His ministry—expounding the old, proclaiming the new, healing the diseased. Observe the repetition of the word, “*every*,” as showing the breadth of His healing power. All this stood in relation to His royalty, for it was “*the Gospel of the Kingdom*” which He proclaimed. Our Lord was “the Great Itinerant”—*Jesus went about preaching and healing*. His was a Medical Mission as well as an evangelistic tour. Happy people who have Jesus among them! Oh, that we might now see more of His working among our own people!

36. *But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.* A great crowd is a demand upon compassion, for it suggests so much sin and need. In this case the great need was instruction—“*they fainted*” for lack of comfort. They “*were scattered abroad*” for lack of guidance. They were eager to learn, but they had no fit teachers. “*Sheep having no shepherd*” are in an ill plight. Unfed, unfolded, unguarded—what will become of them? Our Lord was stirred with a feeling which agitated His inmost soul. “*He was moved with compassion.*” What He saw affected not only His eyes, but His heart. He was overcome by pity. His whole frame was stirred with an emotion which put every faculty into forceful movement. He is even now affected

towards our people in the same manner. *He* is moved with compassion if *we* are not.

37, 38. *Then He said unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray you therefore the Lord of the Harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.* His heavy heart sought solace among “*His disciples*” and He spoke to them. He mourned the scantiness of workers. Pretenders were many, but real “*laborers*” in the harvest were few. The sheaves were spoiling. The crowds were ready to be taught, even as ripe wheat is ready for the sickle; but there were few to instruct them and where could more teaching men be found? God only can thrust out, or “*send forth laborers.*” Man-made ministers are useless! Still are the fields encumbered with gentlemen who cannot use the sickle. Still the real ingatherers are few and far between. Where are the instructive, soul-winning ministries? Where are those who travail in birth for their hearers’ salvation? Let us plead with the Lord of the Harvest to care for His own harvest and send out His own men. May many a true heart be moved by the question, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” to answer, “Here am I! Send me.”

Matthew 10:1. *And when He had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.* See the way of making Apostles! They were first *disciples* and afterwards teachers of others—they were specially *His*, and then they were given to be a blessing to men. They were “*called unto Him*” and thus their higher call came to them. In the Presence of their Lord they received their equipment—“*He gave them power.*” Is that so with us in our own special office? Let us come to Him that we may be clothed with His authority and girded with His strength! Their power was miraculous, but it was an imitation of their Lord’s—and the words applied to it are very much the same as we have seen in use about His miracles of healing. The 12 were made to represent their Lord. We, too, may be enabled to do what Jesus did among men. Oh, for such an endowment!

Matthew 13:3. *And He spoke many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow.* He had much instruction to give and He chose to convey it *in parables*. What wonderful pictures they were! What a world of meaning they have for us as well as for those who heard them! This parable of the sower is a mine of teaching concerning the Kingdom of God, for the seed was “the word of the Kingdom.” (See verse 19). “*Behold*”—every word is worthy of attention. Maybe the Preacher pointed to a farmer on the shore who was beginning to sow one of the terraces. “*A sower,*” read, “*The Sower.*” Jesus, our Lord, has taken up this business of the Sower at His Father’s bidding. The Sower “*went forth.*” See Him leaving the Father’s house with this one design upon His heart—“*to sow.*”

4. *And when He sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up. When HE sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside—even when the Chief Sower is at work, some seed fails. We know He sows the best of seed and in the best manner, but some of it falls on the trodden path and so lies uncovered and unaccepted of the*

soil. That soil was hard and beaten down with traffic. There, too, on the wayside, we meet with dust to blind, settlements of mud to foul and birds to pilfer—it is not a good place for good seed. No wonder, as the seeds lay all exposed, that the *fowls came and devoured them up*. If the Truth of God does not enter the *heart*, evil influences soon remove it.

5, 6. *Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.* Among the rocks or on the shallow soil with the unbroken rock-pan underneath, the seed fell—for if the sower had altogether avoided such places he might have missed some of the good ground. In these *stony places* the seed speedily *sprang up* because the rock gave it all the heat that fell on it, and so hastened its germination. But, soon up, soon down. When the time came for the sun to put forth its force, the rootless plants instantly pined and died. *They had no deepness of earth* and “*no root.*” What could they do but *wither quite away*? Everything was hurried with them—the seeds had no time to root themselves and so in hot haste the speedy growth met with speedy death. No trace remained.

7. *And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them.* The ground was originally a thorn-brake and had been cleared by *the thorns* being cut down. But speedily the old roots sent out new shoots and other weeds came up with them—and the tangled beds of thistles, thorns, nettles, and what not, strangled the feeble shoots of the wheat. The native plants *choked* the poor stranger. They would not permit the intrusive corn to share the field with them—evil claims a monopoly of our nature. Thus we have seen three sets of seed come to an untimely end.

8. *But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.* This would repay all losses, especially at the highest rate of increase here quoted. To the bird, the weather and the weeds, three sets of seeds have gone. Yet, happily, one remains to increase and fill the barn. The sowing of good seed can never be a total failure—“*other fell into good ground.*” The harvest was not equally great on every spot of fertile soil. It varied from *an hundredfold to thirtyfold*. All good ground is not alike good and, besides, the situation may differ. Harvests are not all alike in the same farm, in the same season and under the same farmer—and yet each field may yield a fairly good harvest. Lord, if I cannot reach to a hundredfold, let me at least prove to be good ground by bearing thirtyfold.

18. *Hear you therefore the parable of the sower.* Because you see behind the curtain and have Grace given to discern the inner meaning through the outer metaphor, come and *hear* the explanation of *the parable of the sower*.

19. *When anyone hears the word of the Kingdom, and understands it not, then comes the Wicked One, and catches away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the wayside.* The Gospel is “*the word of the Kingdom.*” It has royal authority in it . It proclaims and reveals King Jesus and it leads men to obedience to His sway. To hear but not to understand is to leave the good seed on the outside of your nature and not to take it into yourself. Nothing can come of such

hearing to anyone. Satan is always on the watch to hinder the Word—*“Then comes the Wicked One,”* even at the moment when the seed fell. He is always afraid to leave the Truth of God even in hard and dry contact with a mind and so he *catches it away* at once and it is forgotten, or even disbelieved. It is gone, at any rate. And we have not in our hearer’s mind a cornfield, but a highway, hard and much frequented. The man was not an opposer. He *“received seed”* but he received the Truth as he was, without the soil of his nature being changed—and the seed remained as it was till the foul bird of Hell took it off the place and there was an end of it. So far as the Truth *was sown in his heart*, it was in his natural, unrenewed heart and, therefore, it took no living hold. How many such hearers we have! To these we preach in vain, for what they learn, they unlearn, and what they receive they reject almost as soon as it comes to them! Lord, suffer none of us to be impervious to Your royal Word, but whenever the smallest seed of Your Truth falls on us, may You open our soul to it!

20, 21. *But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that hears the Word, and with joy receives it; yet has he not root in himself, but endures for awhile: but when tribulation or persecution arises because of the Word, by-and-by he is offended.* Here the seed was the same and the sower the same, but the result somewhat different. In this case there was earth enough to cover the seed and heat enough to make it grow quickly. The convert was attentive and easily persuaded. He seemed glad to accept the Gospel at once. He was even eager and enthusiastic, joyful and demonstrative. *He hears the Word and with joy receives it.* Surely this looked very promising! But the soil was essentially evil, hard, barren, superficial. The man had no living entrance into the mystery of the Gospel, no root in himself, no principle, no hold of the Truth of God with a renewed heart. And so he flourished hurriedly and showily for a season but only for a season. It is tersely put, *“He endures for awhile.”* That *“awhile”* may be longer or shorter according to circumstances. When matters grow hot with Christians, either through affliction from the Lord, or persecution from the world, the temporary Believer is so sapless, so rootless, so deficient in moisture of Grace, that he dries up and his profession withers. Thus, again, the sower’s hopes are disappointed and his labor is lost. Till stony hearts are changed it must always be so. We meet with many who are soon hot and as soon cold. They receive the Gospel *“anon”* and leave it *“by-and-by.”* Everything is on the surface and, therefore, is hasty and unreal. May we all have broken hearts and prepared minds, that when the Truth of God comes to us it may take root in us and abide.

22. *He also that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the Word and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the Word, and he becomes unfruitful.* This class of hearers we know by personal acquaintance in this busy age. They *hear the Word*, they are affected by the Gospel, they take it *as seed* into their minds and it grows well for a season. But the heart cannot belong to two absorbing objects at the same time and, therefore, these men cannot long yield themselves up to the world and Christ, too. Care to get money, covetousness,

trickery and sins which come from desires to be rich, or else pride, luxury, oppression and other sins which come of having obtained wealth, prevent the man from being useful in religious matters, or even sincere to himself—“*he becomes unfruitful.*” He keeps his profession. He occupies his place, but his religion does not grow. In fact, it shows sad signs of being choked and checked by worldliness. The leaf of outward religiousness is there, but there is no dew on it. The ear of promised fruit is there, but there are no kernels in it. The weeds have outgrown the wheat and smothered it! We cannot grow thorn and corn at the same time—the attempt is fatal to a harvest for Jesus. See how wealth is here associated with *care, deceitfulness* and *unfruitfulness*. It is a thing to be handled with care. Why are men so eager to make their thorn-brake more dense with briars? Would not a good farmer root out the thorns and brambles? Should we not, as much as possible, keep free from the care to get, to preserve, to increase and to hoard worldly riches? Our heavenly Father will see that we have enough—why do we fret about earthly things? We cannot give our minds to these things and also to the Kingdom of God.

23. *But he that received seed into the good ground is he that hears the Word and understands it; which also bears fruit, and brings forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.* Here is the story of the Word’s success. This fourth piece of land will repay all charges. Of course no one parable teaches all the Truth of God and, therefore, we have no mention here of the plowing which always precedes a fruitful harvest. No heart of man is good by nature—the good Lord had made this plot into “*good ground.*” In this case, both thought and heart are engaged about the heavenly message and the man “*hears the Word and understands it.*” By being lovingly understood, the Truth gets into the man and then it roots, it grows, it fruits, it rewards the sower. We must aim at the inward apprehension and comprehension of the Word of God for only in this way can we be made fruitful by it. Be it ours to aim to be among those who would bear fruit *an hundredfold!* Ah, we would give our Lord ten-thousand fold if we could! For every sermon we hear we should endeavor to do a hundred gracious, charitable, or self-denying acts. Our Divine Sower, with such heavenly seed, deserves to be rewarded with a glorious harvest!

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

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

JOY IN HARVEST

NO. 3315

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 16, 1912.

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

“They joy before You according to the joy in harvest.”
Isaiah 9:3.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon harvest subjects are as follows—#2896, Volume 50—
HARVEST TIME (**the first of his Sermons that was ever published**);
#2265, Volume 39—HARVEST JOY (**a Sermon upon the whole of Isaiah 9:3**);
#1127, Volume 19—HARVEST MEN NEEDED; #1562, Volume 26—
HARVEST PAST, SUMMER ENDED AND MEN UNSAVED; #706, Volume 12—
FIELDS WHITE FOR HARVEST; #880, Volume 15—
THE FORMER AND THE LATTER RAIN and #3058, Volume 53—THE JOY OF HARVEST—
Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

THE other day I was one of a glad company who kept the feast with great rejoicing, and together we shouted, “Harvest Home.” It was a deep delight to see the rich and poor rejoicing together—and when the cheerful meal was ended, I was greatly glad to turn one of the tables into a temporary pulpit—and in the fine large barn be privileged to preach to an earnest, eager audience, the glorious Gospel of the ever-blessed God!

My heart was truly merry, in harmony with the happy occasion, and I shall now try to keep in the same key and talk to you a little upon the joy in harvest.

Londoners, and other city dwellers are apt to forget that it is harvest time, or to forget to render special praise to God for it. Living in these great deserts of dingy bricks we scarcely know what an ear of corn is like, except as we see it dried and white in the window of a corn-dealer’s shop. Yet let us all remember that there is such a season as harvest when, by God’s goodness, the fruits of the earth are gathered in for the food of man.

We begin to study our theme by seeing—**I. WHAT THE JOY OF HARVEST IS** which is here taken as the simile of the joy of the saints before God. I am afraid that to the more selfish order of spirits, the joy of harvest is simply, or chiefly, that of personal gratification at the increase of wealth. Sometimes the farmer only rejoices *because he sees the reward of his toils* and is so much the richer man. I hope that with many there mingles the second cause of joy, namely, sincere gratitude to God that an abundant harvest will give bread to the poor and remove complaining from our streets. There is a lawful joy in harvest, no doubt, to the man who is enriched by it, for any man who works hard has a right to rejoice when, at last, he gains his desire and reward. It would be well, too, if men would always recollect that their last and greatest harvest will be to

them according to their labor. He that sows to the flesh will of the flesh reap corruption—and only the man that sows to the spirit will of the spirit reap everlasting life. Many a young man commences life by sowing what he calls his wild oats, which he had better never have sown, for they will bring him a terrible harvest! He expects that from these wild oats he will gather a harvest of true pleasure, but it cannot be—the truest pleasures of life spring from the good seed of righteousness—not from the hemlock of sin! As a man who sows thistles in his furrows must not expect to reap the golden sheaves of wheat, so he who follows the ways of vice must not expect happiness. On the contrary, if he sows the wind of evil-doing, he will reap the whirlwind of remorse and everlasting despair! When a sinner feels the pangs of conscience, he may well say, “This is what I sowed.” When at last he shall receive the full retribution for his sin, he will be able to blame no one but himself! Seeing he sowed tares, there was nothing to be reaped but tares. But, on the other hand, the Christian, though his salvation is not of works, but of Grace, will have a gracious and glorious reward given to him by his Master. Even though sowing in tears, he shall reap in joy. Having put his talents entrusted to him to use, out to good trading, or at least to interest, he shall share his Master’s joy and hear with delight his Master welcome and repay with His, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” The joy in harvest rightly consists in part in the reward of earnest labor—may such be the joy we find in serving our Lord!

The joy in harvest has another element in it, namely, that of *gratitude to God for favors bestowed*.

We are singularly dependent on God—far more so than most of us imagine or remember. When the people of Israel were in the wilderness, they went forth every morning and gathered the manna. This taught them that God gave them their daily bread. Now, our manna does not come to us every morning, but it comes once a year and is preparing all the time. Behind the baker’s cart with its daily call is the miller. Behind the miller is the farmer and behind the farmer is God who makes the earth to yield her fruits and to multiply them for the sustaining of the whole race of men! Our supply is as much a Divine gift as if it lay like a hoar-frost around the camp. If we went out into the field and gathered food which dropped down directly from the skies, we would think it a great miracle to admire and wonder at—but is it not quite as great a marvel that our bread should come up from the earth as that it should come down from the sky? The one God who bade the heavens let fall the angels’ food in the wilderness bids the dull earth, in its due season, yield the corn for the millions of mankind! Therefore, whenever that harvest comes, let us be grateful to God and let us not allow the season to pass without Psalms and songs of thanksgiving! I believe it is correct to say that there is never in the world, as a rule, more than sixteen months’ supply of food—that is to say, when the harvest has been gathered in, there may be sixteen months’ future supply—but at the time of harvest beginning there is not usually enough wheat in the whole world to last

the population more than four or five months. So that if the harvest did not come, we would be on the verge of famine. We still live from hand to mouth. Let us pause and bless our God and let the joy of harvest be the joy of gratitude!

To the Christian it should be great joy, by means of the harvest, *to receive an assurance of God's faithfulness*. The Lord has promised that seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, shall never cease. And when you see the loaded wagon carrying in the crop you may say to yourself, "God is true to His promise. Despite the dreary winter and the damp spring, autumn has come with its golden grain." What a strong comfort is this! Depend upon it, that as the Lord keeps this promise, He will keep all the rest! All His promises are, "yes and amen in Christ Jesus." If He keeps His Covenant with the earth, much more will He keep His Covenant with His own people whom He has loved with an everlasting love! Go, Christian, to the Mercy Seat with the promise on your lips and plead it! Be assured it is not—it cannot be—a dead letter! Let not unbelief cause you to stammer when you mention the praise before the Throne of God, but say it boldly—"Fulfill this Word unto Your servant on which You have caused me to hope." Shame upon us that we so little believe our God! The world is full of proofs of His goodness. Every rising sun, every falling shower, every revolving season certifies His faithfulness. Why do we doubt Him? If we never doubt Him till we have cause for it, we shall never know distrust again! Encouraged by the return of harvest, let us resolve in the strength of the Spirit of God that we will not waver, but will believe in the Divine Word and rejoice in it!

Once more. To the Christian, in the joy in harvest there must always be the *joy of expectation*.

As to the farmer there is an assured harvest for which he waits patiently and persistently, so there is a glorious spiritual harvest for all who wait and faithfully long and look for the coming and the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

The mature Christian, like the ripe ear of corn, hangs down his head with holy humility. When he was but green and immature in the things of God, he stood boldly erect and was somewhat boastful. But now that he has mellowed and ripened and become full of the blessing of the Lord, he is humbled, thereby, and bows himself down. He is waiting for the sickle and he dreads it not, for no common reaper shall come to gather Christ's people to Him but He, Himself, shall reap the harvest of the world! The Lord leaves the destroying angel to reap the vintage and cast it into the wine-vat to be trodden with vengeance! But as for the grain which He, Himself, has sown, He will gather it Himself with His own golden sickle! We are looking for this. We are growing among the tares and sometimes we are half-afraid lest the tares should be stronger than ourselves and choke the wheat—but the separation will come, by-and-by, and when the corn is well winnowed and stored in the garner, we shall be gathered there. It is this expectation which even now makes our hearts throb with joy! We have in the past, too, gone to the grave with

precious sheaves that belonged to our Master and when we were there, we thought we could almost say, "Lord, if they sleep they shall do well. Let us die with them." Our joy in harvest is the hope of being at rest with all the saints and forever with the Lord! A view even of the shadowy harvests upon earth should make us exceedingly glad because they are the image and foreshadowing of the eternal harvest above! So much about the joy in harvest. I hasten onward.

II. Let us continue our theme by looking now at WHAT JOYS THEY ARE WHICH TO THE BELIEVER ARE AS THE JOY IN HARVEST. It is the *joy* in harvest. It is a common notion, a popular delusion, that Christians are an unhappy people. It is true that we are tried, but it is false that we are miserable! With all their trials, Believers have such a compensation in the love of Christ that they are still a blessed generation and it may be said of them, "Happy are you, O Israel."

One of the first seasons. One of the blessed occasions in which we knew a joy equal to the joy in harvest—a season which has continued with us ever since it commenced—was *when we found the Savior* and so obtained salvation. Brothers and Sisters, each of you can recollect for yourselves the time of the plowing of your souls. I give my witness. My heart was fallow and covered with weeds, but on a certain day the great Farmer came and began to plow my soul. Ten black horses were His team and it was a sharp plow that He used—and the plow made deep furrows. The Ten Commandments were these black horses and the Justice of God, like a plow, tore my spirit. I was condemned, undone, destroyed, lost, helpless, hopeless—I thought Hell was before me! Then there came a cross-plowing which added to my distress, for when I went to hear the Gospel, it did not comfort me—it made me wish I had a part in it—but I feared that such a gift was out of the question! The choicest promise of God seemed to frown at me and His threats seemed to thunder at me! I prayed, but found no answer of peace. It was long with me thus. But after the plowing, came the sowing. God who plowed the heart in mercy, made it conscious that it needed the Gospel—and then the Gospel seed was joyfully received! Do you not remember that auspicious day when at last you began to have some hope? It was very little—like a green blade that peeps up from the soil—you scarcely knew whether it was grass or corn, whether it was presumption or true faith. It was a little hope, but it grew very pleasantly. Alas, a frost of doubt came—some snow of fears fell! Cold winds of despondency blew on you and you said, "There can be no hope for me." But what a glorious day was that when at last the wheat which God had sown ripened and you could say, "I have looked unto Him and have been lightened! I have laid my sins on Jesus, where God laid them of old, and they are taken away and I am saved!" I remember well that day, and so, no doubt, do many of you. O Sirs, no farmer ever shouted for joy as our hearts shouted when a precious Christ was ours and we could grasp Him with full assurance of salvation in Him! Many days have passed since then, but the joy of it is still fresh with us. And, blessed be God, it is not only the joy of the first day that we

look back upon—it is the joy of every day since then, more or less, for our joy no man takes from us—we are still walking in Christ even as we received Him!

Even now all our hope on Him is stayed, all our help from Him we bring and our joy and peace continue with us because they are based upon an immovable Foundation! We rejoice in the Lord! Yes, and we will rejoice! The joy in harvest generally shows itself by the farmer giving a feast for his friends and neighbors. And usually those who find Christ express their joy by telling their friends and their neighbors what great things the Lord has done for them. The Grace of God is communicative! A man cannot be saved and *always* hold His tongue about it—as well look for dumb choirs in Heaven, as for a silent Church on earth! If a man has been thirsty and has come to the Living Water, the river of this Water of Life—his first, best impulse will be to cry, “Ho! Everyone that thirsts!” Have you felt that joy in harvest? The joy that makes you wish that others could share it with you? If so, I entreat you, do not repress the gracious impulse to proclaim your happiness! Speak of Christ to brothers and sisters, to friends and kinsfolk! And if the language is stammering, the message in itself is so important that the words in which you utter it will be quite a secondary matter. Tell it, tell it out far and wide that there is a Savior! That you have found Him and that His blood can wash away transgression! Tell it everywhere and so the joy in harvest shall spread over land and sea and the name of our God shall be glorified!

We have yet another joy which is like the joy in harvest. It is *the joy of answered prayer*.

I hope we all know what it is to pray in faith. Some prayers are not worth the words used in offering them because there is no faith mixed with them. “With all your sacrifice you shall offer salt,” and the salt of faith is necessary if we would have any of our sacrifices accepted. Those who are familiar with the Mercy Seat know that prayer is a reality and that the Doctrine of Divine Answers to Prayer is no fiction! Sometimes God will delay to answer for wise reasons—then His children must cry and cry, and cry again. They are in the condition of the farmers who must wait for the precious fruits of the earth—and when at last the answer to prayer comes, they are then in the farmer’s position when he receives the harvest. Remember Hannah’s wail and Hannah’s prayer? In the bitterness of her soul she cried to God, and when her child was given to her she called it, “Samuel,” meaning, “Asked of God” for, she said, “For this child I prayed.” He was a very dear child to her because he was a child of prayer. Any mercy that comes to you in answer to prayer will be your Samuel mercy, your darling mercy! You will say of it, “For this mercy I prayed,” and it will bring the joy of harvest to your spirit. If the Lord desires to surprise some of His children, He has only to answer their prayers, for they would be astonished if an answer came to their petitions! I know how they speak about answer to prayer. They say, “How remarkable! How wonderful!” as if it were remarkable that God should be honest and that the Most High should keep His promise! May we not so

dishonor Him by our doubt! Oh, for more faith to rest upon His Word and we would have more of these harvest joys!

We have another joy in harvest in ourselves *when we conquer a temptation*. We know what it is, sometimes, to get under a cloud—sin within us rises with a darkening force, or an external adversity beclouds us—and we miss the plain path in which we were accustomed to walk. A child of God at such times will cry mightily for help, for he is fearful of himself and of his surroundings. Some of God's people have been by the week and month together exposed to the double temptation, from outside and from within, and have cried to God in bitter anguish.

It has been a very hard struggle. The sinful action has been painted in very fascinating colors and the siren voice of temptation has almost enchanted them. But when at last, to change the figure, they have come through the Valley of the Shadow of Death without having slipped—when, after all, they have not been destroyed by Apollyon, but have come forth again into the clear morning light—they know an unspeakable joy compared with which the joy in harvest is mere childish merriment! Those know deep joy who have felt bitter sorrows. As the man feels that he is the stronger for the conflict. As he feels that he has gathered experience and stronger faith from having passed through the trial, he lifts up his heart and rejoices, not in himself, but before his God with the joy in harvest! Brothers and Sisters, Beloved, you know what that means!

Again, there is such a thing as the joy in harvest when *we have been made useful in God's service*. The master-passion of every Christian should be to be useful in the Master's Kingdom. There should be a burning zeal within us for the Glory of God. When this is so and the Christian desiring to be used has laid his plans and set about his work, he begins to look for the results—but it may be weeks, or years, before he is privileged to see them.

The true worker is not to be blamed that as yet there are no fruits, but he is to be blamed if he is content to always be without fruits. A preacher may preach without seeing conversions flow and who shall blame him? But if he is happy, or even content, notwithstanding this, who will justify him? It is ours to break our own hearts if we cannot, by God's Grace, break other men's hearts! If others will not weep for their sins, it should be our constant habit to weep for them. When the heart becomes earnest, warm, zealous—God usually gives a measure of success—some fifty-fold, some a hundred-fold. When the success comes, it is the joy in harvest, indeed! I cannot help being egotistical enough to mention the joy I felt when first I heard that a soul had found peace through my youthful ministry. I had been preaching in a village some few Sabbaths with an increasing congregation, but I had not heard of a conversion. And I thought, "Perhaps I am not called of God. He does not mean me to preach, for if He did, He would give me spiritual children." One Sabbath my good deacon said, "Don't be discouraged. A poor woman was savingly impressed last Sabbath." How long do you suppose it was before I saw that woman? It was just as long as it took me to reach her cottage! I was

eager to hear from her own lips whether it was a work of God's Grace or not. I always looked upon her with interest, though only a poor laborer's wife, till she was taken away to Heaven, after having lived a holy life. Many since then have I rejoiced over in the Lord, but that first seal to my ministry was peculiarly dear to me. It gave me a sip of the joy of harvest! If somebody had left me a fortune, it would not have caused me one hundredth part of the delight I had in discovering that a soul had been led to the Savior! I am sure Christian people who have not known this joy have missed one of the choicest delights that a Believer can know this side of Heaven. In fact, when I see souls saved, I do not envy Gabriel his throne, nor the angels their harps. It will be our Heaven here to be out of Heaven for a season if we can but thereby bring others to know the Savior and so add fresh jewels to our Redeemer's crown!

I will mention yet another delight which is to us as the joy in harvest, and that is, *fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ*. This is not so much a subject for speech as for musing—for deep experience and real enjoyment. If we attempt to speak of what communion with Christ is, we cannot but fall short of declaring it. Solomon, the wisest of men, when inspired to write of the fellowship of the Church with her Lord, was compelled to write in allegories and emblems. And though to the spiritual mind the Song of Songs is always a source of holy delight, yet to the carnal mind and to the formal Christian, it seems a mere love song. The natural man discerns not the things that are of God, for they are spiritual and can only be spiritually seen and known. But oh, the bliss of knowing that Christ is yours and of entering into nearness of communion with Him! To thrust your hands into His side and your finger into the print of the nails—these are not everyday joys! But when such near and dear communing come to us on our high days and holy days, they make our souls like the chariots of Amminadib, or, if you will, they cause us to tread the world beneath our feet—and all that the world calls good or great! Our condition matters little or nothing to us if Christ is with us! He is our God, our Comfort, and our All—and we rejoice before Him as with “the joy in harvest.” I have no time to enlarge further, for I want to close with one other intensely practical word. It is this—

III. SHALL WE NOT DESIRE MORE AND MORE THIS “JOY IN HARVEST?” Many of God's people are just now anxiously desiring a harvest which would bring to us an intense delight. Of late, divers persons have communicated to me in many ways the strong emotion they feel of deep pity for the souls of men. Others of us have felt a mysterious impulse to pray more than we ever have and to be more anxious than we ever were, that Christ would save poor perishing sinners. We shall not be satisfied until there is a thorough awakening in this land! We did not raise the feeling in our own minds, but we do not desire to repress it! We do not believe it can be repressed! And others will feel, too, the same heavenly affection and will sigh and cry to God day and night until the blessing comes! This is the sowing, this is the plowing, this is the harrowing—may it go on to harvesting! I long to hear my Brothers and Sisters universally

saying, "We are full of anguish! We are in agony till souls are saved." The cry of Rachel, "Give me children, or I die," is the cry of your minister this day—and the longing of thousands more besides! As that desire grows in intensity, a revival is surely approaching! We *must* have spiritual children born to Christ, or our hearts will break for the longing that we have for their salvation! Oh, for more of these longings, yearnings, cravings, tra-
vailing! If we plead till the harvest of revival comes, we shall partake in the joy of it!

Who will have the most joy? Those who have been the most concerned about it! You who do not pray in private, nor come out to Prayer Meetings will not have the joy when the blessing comes and the Church is increased. You had no share in the sowing, therefore you will have little share in the reaping. You who never speak to others about their souls, who take no share in Sunday school or mission work, but simply eat the fat and drink the sweet shall have none of the joy in harvest, for you do not put your hands to the work of the Lord! And who would wish that idlers should be happy? Rather in our zeal and jealousy we feel inclined to say "Curse you, Meroz! Curse you bitterly, the inhabitants thereof, because they came not up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

If you come to the help of the Lord by His own Divine Spirit, you shall share in the joy in harvest. Perhaps none will have more of that joy than those who shall have the privilege of seeing their own dear ones brought to God. Some of you have children who are a trial to you whenever you think of them—let them be such a trial to you that they drive you to incessant prayer for them! And if the blessing comes, why would it not drop on them?

If a revival comes, why should not your daughter be converted? And that wild boy of yours be brought in? Or even your gray-headed father who has been unbelieving and skeptical—why should not the Grace of God come to him? And oh, what a joy in harvest you will have then! What bliss will thrill through your spirit when you see those who are yours by ties of blood united to Christ your Lord!

Pray much for them with earnest faith and you shall yet have the joy in harvest in your own house—a shout of "harvest home" in your own family!

But possibly you, my Hearer, have not much to do with such joy, for you are, yourself, unsaved. Yet it is a grand thing for an unconverted person to be under a ministry that God blesses and with a people that constantly pray for conversions.

It is a happy thing for you, young man, to have a Christian mother! It is a great gift for you, O unconverted woman, that you have a godly sister! These make us hopeful for you. While your relations are prayerful, we are hopeful for *you*. May the Lord Jesus be yet yours. But, ah, if you remain unbelieving, however rich a blessing comes to others, it will leave *you* none the better for it! "If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land." But there are some who may cry in piteous ac-

cents, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!” It has been remarked that those who pass through a season of revival and remain unconverted are more hardened and unimpressed than before. I believe it to be so and I therefore pray the Divine Spirit to come with such energy that none of you may escape His power! May you be led to pray—

***“Pass me not, O mighty Spirit!
You can make the blind to see.
Witness of Jesus’ merit,
Speak the word of power to me.
Even me!
Have I long in an been sleeping,
Long been slighting, grieving Thee?
Has the world my heart been keeping?
Oh forgive and rescue me!
Even me.”***

Oh, for earnest, importunate prayer from all Believers throughout the world! If our Churches could be stirred up to incessant vehement crying to God, so as to give Him no rest till He makes Zion a praise in the earth, we might expect to see God’s Kingdom come and the power of Satan fall! As many of you as love Christ, I charge you by His dear name to be much in prayer! As many of you as love the Church of God and desire her prosperity, I beseech you to keep not back in this time of supplication! The Lord grant that you may be led to plead till the harvest joy is granted!

Do you remember my saying one Sabbath, “The Lord deal so with you as you deal with His work this month”? I feel as if it will be so with many of you—that the Lord will deal so with you as you shall deal with His Church. If you scatter little, you shall have little! If you pray little, you shall have little favor. But if you have zeal and faith and plead much and work much for the Lord—good measure shaken together, pressed down and running over—shall the Lord return into your own hearts and lives! If you water others with trickling drops, you shall receive only drops in return. But if the Spirit helps you to pour out rivers of Living Water, then floods of heavenly Grace shall flood in your spirit!

God bring in the unconverted and lead them to a simple trust in Jesus—then shall *they*, also, know the joy in harvest! We ask it for His name’s sake. Amen!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 9:1-7.**

The last verses of the 8th Chapter picture a horrible state of wretchedness and despair—“And they shall pass through it, hard-pressed and hungry: and it shall come to pass that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves and curse their king and their God, and look upward. And they shall look unto the earth and behold trouble and dark-

ness, gloom of anguish, and they shall be driven to darkness.” But see what a change awaits them!

Verse 1. *Nevertheless the gloom shall not be such as was in her vexation when at the first He lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali. And afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nation.* Read the fine translation of the Revised Version—“But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish.” What a marvelous light from the midst of a dreadful darkness! It is an astounding change, such as only God with us could work. Many of you know nothing about the miseries described in those verses, but there are some who have traversed that terrible wilderness—and I am going to speak to them. I know where you are. You are being driven as captives into the land of despair. And for the last few months you have been tramping along a painful road, “hard-pressed and hungry.” You are sorely put to it and your soul finds no food of comfort, but is ready to faint and die. You fret yourself. Your heart is wearing away with care, grief and hopelessness. In the bitterness of your soul you are ready to curse the day of your birth! The captive Israelites cursed their king who had led them into their defeat and bondage. In the fury of their agony, they even cursed God and longed to die! It may be that your heart is in such a ferment of grief that you know not what you think, but are like a man at his wit’s end.

For such as you there shines this star of the first magnitude—Jesus has appeared to save and He is God and Man in one Person—Man that He may feel our woes, God that He may help us out of them! No minister can save you, no priest can save you—you know this right well. But here is One who is able to save to the uttermost, for He is God as well as Man! The great God is good at a dead lift! When everything else has failed, the lever of *Omnipotence* can lift a world of sin! Jesus is almighty to save! That which in itself is impossibility, is possible with God. Sin which nothing else can remove is blotted out by the blood of Immanuel! Immanuel, our Savior, is God With Us—and God With Us means difficulty removed and a perfect work accomplished!

2. *The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined.* Jesus came to Galilee of the Gentiles and made that country glorious, which had been brought into contempt. That corner of Palestine had very often borne the brunt of invasion and had felt more than any other region the edge of the keen Assyrian sword. They were at first troubled when the Assyrian was bought off with a thousand talents of silver, but they were more heavily afflicted when Tilgath-Pilneser carried them all away to Assyria, for which see the 15th Chapter of the Second Book of the Kings. It was a wretched land, with a mixed population, despised by the purer race of Jews—but that very country became glorious with the Presence of the Incarnate God! Even so, at this day His gracious Presence is the dawn of our joy!

3. *You have multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before You according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.* The Revised Version reads, “You have increased their joy.” If Christ comes to you, my dear Hearer, as God With Us, then shall your joy be great, for you shall joy as with the joy of harvest, and as those rejoice that divide the spoil! Is it not so? Many of us can bear our witness that there is no joy like that which Jesus brings!

4. *For You have broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.* Your enemy shall be defeated, “as in the day of Midian.” Gideon was, in his dream, likened to a barley cake which struck the tent of Midian, so that it lay along. He and his few heroes, with their pitchers and their trumpets, stood and shouted, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!” and Midian melted away before them. So shall it be with our sins, doubts and fears if we believe in Jesus, the Incarnate God—they shall vanish like the mists of the morning! The Lord Jesus will break the yoke of our burden and the rod of our oppressor, as in the day of Midian! Be of good courage, you that are in bondage to fierce sad cruel adversaries—for in the name of Jesus, who is God With Us—you shall destroy them!

5. *For every warrior’s sandal from the noisy battle, and garments rolled in blood will be used for burning and fuel of fire.* When Jesus comes, you shall have eternal peace, for His battle is the end of battles. “All the armor of the armed man in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood, shall even be for burning, for fuel of fire.” This is the rendering of the Revision and it is good. The Prince of Peace wars against war and destroys it. What a glorious day is that in which the Lord breaks the bow and cuts the spear in sunder, and burns the chariot in the fire! I think I see it now. My sins, which were the weapons of my foes, the Lord pile in heaps. What mountains of prey! But look! He brings the fire-brand of His love from the altar of His Sacrifice and He sets fire to the gigantic pile! Look how they blaze! They are utterly consumed forever!

6. *For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.* Now is it that the Lord Jesus becomes glorious in our eyes! And He whose name is Immanuel is now crowned in our heart with many crowns and honored with many titles. What a list of glories we have here! What a burst of song it makes when we sing of the Messiah—“His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace!” Each work sounds like a salvo of artillery. It is all very well to hear players on instruments and sweet singers rehearse these words—but to *believe* them and realize them in your own soul is far better! When every fear, every hope and every power and every passion of our nature fills the orchestra of our heart—and all unite in one inward song unto the glorious Immanuel—what music it is!

7. *Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His Kingdom, to order it, and to estab-*

lish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will perform this. If Christ is your Savior He must be your King—

**“But know, nor of the terms complain,
Where Jesus comes He comes to reign!
To reign, and with no partial sway—
Lusts must be slain that disobey.”**

The moment we really believe in Jesus as our Salvation, we fall before Him and call Him Master and Lord. We serve when He saves. He has redeemed us unto Himself and we acknowledge that we are His. A generous man once bought a slave girl. She was put upon the brook for auction and he pitied her and purchased her. But when he had bought her, he said to her, “I have bought you to set you free. Here are your papers, you are a free woman.” The grateful creature fell at his feet and cried, “I will never leave you! If you have made me free, I will be your servant as long as you live and serve you better than any slave could do.” This is how we feel towards Jesus. He sets us free from the dominion of Satan and then, as we need a Ruler, we say, “And the government shall be upon His shoulder.” We are glad to be ruled by “Immanuel, God With Us.” This also is a door of hope to us! That Jesus shall be the monarch of our hearts is our exceeding joy. To us He shall always be “Wonderful.” When we think of Him, or speak about Him, it shall be with reverent awe. When we need advice and comfort, we will fly to Him, for He shall be our Counselor. When we need strength, we will look to Him as our Mighty God. Born-again by His Spirit, we will be His children and He shall be The Everlasting Father! Full of joy and rest, we will call Him Prince of Peace!

Are you willing to have Christ to govern you? Will you spend your lives in praising Him? You are willing to have Christ to pardon you, but we cannot divide Him and, therefore, you must also have Him to sanctify you! You must not take the crown from His head, but accept Him as the Monarch of your soul! If you would have His hand to help you, you must obey the scepter which it grasps. Blessed Immanuel, we are right glad to obey You! In You our darkness ends, and from the shadow of death we rise to the Light of Life! It is salvation to be obedient to You. It is the end of gloom to her who was in anguish to bow herself before You!

May God the Holy Spirit take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, and then we shall all cry—

**“Go worship at Immanuel’s feet!
See in His face what wonders meet!
Earth is too narrow to express
His worth, His Grace, His righteousness!”**

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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HIS NAME—WONDERFUL!

NO. 214

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 19, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“His name shall be called Wonderful.”
Isaiah 9:6.*

ONE evening last week I stood by the seashore when a storm was raging. The voice of the Lord was upon the waters. And who was I that I should tarry within doors when my Master's voice was heard sounding along the water? I rose and stood to behold the flash of His lightning and listen to the glory of His thunder. The sea and the thunder were contesting with one another. The sea with infinite clamor striving to hush the deep-throated thunder so that his voice should not be heard. Yet over and above the roar of the billows might be heard that voice of God as He spoke with flames of fire and divided the way for the waters. It was a dark night and the sky was covered with thick clouds and scarcely a star could be seen through the rifts of the tempest. But at one particular time I noticed far away on the horizon as if miles across the water, a bright shining, like gold.

It was the moon hidden behind the clouds so that she could not shine upon us. But she was able to send her rays down upon the waters, far away, where no cloud happened to intervene. I thought as I read this chapter last evening that the Prophet seemed to have stood in a like position when He wrote the words of my text. All around him were clouds of darkness. He heard Prophetic thunders roaring and he saw flashes of the lightning of Divine vengeance. He saw clouds and darkness for many a league through history. But he saw far away a bright spot—one place where the clear shining came down from Heaven. And he sat down and he penned these words—“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined.”

And though he looked through whole leagues of space where he saw the battle of the warrior “with confused noise and garments rolled in blood,” yet he fixed his eye upon one bright spot in the future and he declared that there he saw hope of peace, prosperity and blessedness. For said he, “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful.”

My dear Friends, we live today upon the verge of that bright spot. The world has been passing through these clouds of darkness and the light is gleaming on us now like the first rays of morning. We are coming to a brighter day and “at evening time it shall be light.” The clouds and darkness shall be rolled up as a mantle that God needs no longer and He shall appear in His glory and His people shall rejoice with Him. But you must mark that all the brightness was the result of this Child born, this Son given whose name is called Wonderful. And if we can discern any brightness in our own hearts, or in the world’s history, it can come from nowhere else than from the One who is called “Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God.”

The Person spoken of in our text is undoubtedly the Lord Jesus Christ. He is a Child born, with reference to His human nature. He is *born* of the virgin a child. But He is a Son *given*, with reference to His Divine Nature, being given as well as born. Of course the Godhead could not be born of woman. That was from everlasting and is to everlasting. As a Child He was born, as a Son He was given. “The government is upon His shoulder and His name shall be called Wonderful.” Beloved, there are a thousand things in this world that are called by names that do not belong to them. But in entering upon my text I must announce at the very beginning that Christ is called Wonderful, because He is.

God the Father never gave His Son a name which He did not deserve. There is no compliment here, no flattery. It is just the simple name that He deserves. They that know Him best will say that the word does not overstrain His merits but rather falls infinitely short of His glorious deserving. His name is called Wonderful. And mark, it does not merely say that God has given Him the name of Wonderful—though that is implied. But “His name shall be *called*” so. It *shall* be. It is at this time called Wonderful by all His believing people and it shall be. As long as the moon endures there shall be found men and angels and glorified spirits who shall always call Him by His right name. “His name shall be called Wonderful.”

I find that this name may bear two or three interpretations. The word is sometimes in Scripture translated “marvelous.” Jesus Christ may be called Marvelous. And a learned German interpreter says that, without doubt, the meaning of *miraculous* is also wrapped up in it. Christ is the Marvel of marvels, the Miracle of miracles. “His name shall be called *Miraculous*,” for He is more than a man, He is God’s highest miracle. “Great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh.” It may also mean *separated*, or *distinguished*. And Jesus Christ may well be called this. For as Saul was distinguished from all men, being head and shoulder taller than they, so is Christ distinguished above all men. He is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows and in His character

and in His acts He is infinitely separated from all comparison with any of the sons of men. “You are fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into Your lips.” He is “the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely.” “His name shall be called the *Separated One*,” the Distinguished One, the Noble One, set apart from the common race of mankind.

We shall this morning keep to the old version and simply read it thus, “His name shall be called Wonderful.” And first I shall notice that Jesus Christ deserves to be called Wonderful for *what He was in the past*. Secondly, that He is called Wonderful by all His people for *what He is in the present*. And in the third place, that He *shall* be called Wonderful, for *what He shall be in the future*.

I. First, Christ shall be called Wonderful for WHAT HE WAS IN THE PAST. Gather up your thoughts for a moment, my Brethren, and center them all on Christ and you will soon see how wonderful He is. Consider His eternal existence, “begotten of His Father from before all worlds.” Being of the same substance with His Father—begotten, not made, co-equal, co-eternal, in every attribute. “Very God of very God.” For a moment remember that He who became an infant of a span long was no less than the King of Ages, the Everlasting Father who was from eternity and is to be to all eternity. The Divine Nature of Christ is indeed wonderful. Just think for a moment how much interest clusters round the life of an old man. Those of us who are but as children in years look up to him with wonder and astonishment as he tells us the varied stories of the experience through which he has passed. But what is the life of an aged man—how brief it appears when compared with the life of the tree that shelters him!

It existed long before that old man’s father crept a helpless infant into the world. How many storms have swept over its brow? How many kings have come and gone? How many empires have risen and fallen since that old oak was slumbering in its acorn cradle? But what is the life of the tree compared with the soil on which it grows? What a wonderful story that soil might tell! What changes it has passed through in all the eras of time that have elapsed since, “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

There is a wonderful story connected with every atom of black mold which furnishes the nourishment of the oak. But what is the history of that soil compared with the marvelous history of the rock on which it rests—the cliff on which it lifts its head? Oh, what stories might *it* tell? What records lie hidden in its bowels? Perhaps it could tell the story of the time when “the earth was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the earth.” Perhaps it might speak and tell us of those days when the morning and the evening were the first day and the morning and

the evening were the second day and could explain to us the mysteries of how God made this marvelous piece of miracle—the world.

But what is the history of the cliff compared with that of the sea that rolls at its base—that deep blue ocean over which a thousand navies have swept without leaving a furrow upon its brow? And what is the history of the sea compared with the history of the heavens that are stretched like a curtain over that vast basin? What a history is that of the hosts of Heaven—of the everlasting marches of the sun, moon and stars! Who can tell their generation, or who can write their biography? But what is the history of the heavens compared with the history of the angels? They could tell you of the day when they saw this world wrapped in swaddling bands of mist—when, like a newborn infant, the last of God’s offspring—it came forth from Him and the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy.

And what is the history of the angels that excel in strength compared with the history of the Lord Jesus Christ? The angel is but of yesterday and he knows nothing. Christ, the Eternal One, charges even His angels with folly and looks upon them as His ministering spirits that come and go at His good pleasure. Oh, Christians, gather with reverence and mysterious awe around the Throne of Him who is your great Redeemer. For “His name is called Wonderful,” since He has existed before all things and “by Him all things were made. And without Him was not anything made that was made.”

Consider, again, the incarnation of Christ and you will rightly say that His name deserves to be called “Wonderful.” Oh, what is that I see? Oh, world of wonders, what is that I see? The Eternal of ages, whose hair is white like wool, as white as snow becomes an infant! Can it be? You Angels, are you not astonished? He becomes an infant, hangs at a virgin’s breast, draws His nourishment from the breast of woman. Oh wonder of wonders! Manger of Bethlehem you have miracles poured into you! This is a sight that surpasses all others. Talk of the sun, moon and stars! Consider the heavens—the work of God’s fingers—the moon and the stars that He has ordained. But all the wonders of the universe shrink into *nothing* when we come to the mystery of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a marvelous thing when Joshua bade the sun to stand still, but more marvelous when God seemed to stand still and no longer to move forward, but rather, like the sun upon the dial of Ahaz did go back ten degrees and veil His splendor in a cloud.

There have been sights matchless and wonderful at which we might look for years and yet turn away and say, “I cannot understand this. Here is a deep into which I dare not dive—my thoughts are drowned. This is a steep without a summit. I cannot climb it. It is high, I cannot attain it!”

But all these things are as nothing compared with the incarnation of the Son of God. I do believe that the very angels have ever wondered but once and that has been incessantly ever since they first beheld it. They never cease to tell the astonishing story and to tell it with increasing astonishment, too, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born of the Virgin Mary and became a man! Is He not rightly called Wonderful? Infinite and an infant—eternal and yet born of a woman? Almighty and yet hanging on a woman's breast? Supporting the universe and yet needing to be carried in a mother's arms? King of angels and yet the reputed son of Joseph? Heir of all things and yet the carpenter's despised son? WONDERFUL are You, O Jesus, and that shall be Your name forever!

But trace the Savior's course and all the way He is wonderful. Is it not marvelous that He submitted to the taunts and jeers of His enemies? That for a long life He should allow the bulls of Bashan to gird Him round and the dogs to encompass Him? Is it not surprising that He should have bridled in His anger when blasphemy was uttered against His sacred Person? Had you or I been possessed of His matchless might we should have dashed our enemies down the brow of the hill, if they had sought to cast *us* there. We should never have submitted to shame and spitting. No, we would have looked upon them and with one fierce look of wrath have dashed their spirits into eternal torment. But He bears it all—keeps in His noble spirit—the Lion of the tribe of Judah, but bearing still the lamb-like character of—

***“The humble Man before His foes,
A weary Man and full of woes.”***

I do believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the king of Heaven and yet He was a poor, despised, persecuted and slandered man. But while I believe it I never can understand it. I bless Him for it. I love Him for it. I desire to praise His name while immortality endures for His infinite condescension in thus suffering for me. But to understand it, I can never pretend. His name must all His life be called Wonderful.

But see Him die. Come O my Brothers and Sisters, you children of God and gather round the Cross. See your Master. There He hangs. Can you understand this riddle—God was manifest in the flesh and crucified of men? My Master, I cannot understand how You could stoop Your awful head to such a death as this—how You could take from Your brow the coronet of stars which from old eternity had shone resplendent there. How You should permit the crown of thorns to gird Your temples astonishes me even more. That You should cast away the mantle of Your glory, the azure of Your everlasting empire I cannot comprehend. How You should have become veiled in the ignominious purple for awhile and then be bowed to by impious men who mocked you as a pretended king and how

You should be stripped naked to Your shame without a single covering—this is still more incomprehensible.

Truly Your name is Wonderful! Oh, Your love to me is wonderful, passing the love of woman. Was ever grief like Yours? Was ever love like Yours that could open the flood gates of such grief? Your grief is like a river. But was there ever a spring that poured out such a torrent? Was ever love so mighty as to become the fount from which such an ocean of grief could come rolling down? Here is matchless love—matchless love to make Him suffer, matchless power to enable Him to endure all the weight of His Father's wrath. Here is matchless justice that He Himself should acquiesce in His Father's will and not allow men to be saved without His own sufferings. And here is matchless mercy to the chief of sinners that Christ should suffer even for us. "His name shall be called Wonderful."

But He died. He *died!* See Salem's daughters weep! Joseph of Arimathea takes up the lifeless Body after it has been taken down from the Cross. They bear it away to the sepulcher. It is put in a garden. Do You call Him Wonderful now?—

***"Is this the Savior long foretold
To usher in the age of gold?"***

And is He dead? Lift His hands! They drop motionless by His side. His foot exhibits still the nail print. But there is no mark of life. "Aha," cries the Jew, "Is this the Messiah? He is dead. He shall see corruption in a little space of time. Oh, Watchman, keep good guard lest His disciples steal His body. His body can never come forth unless they steal it. For He is dead. Is this the Wonderful, the Counselor?" But God did not leave His soul in Hades. Nor did He suffer His body—"His holy One"—to see corruption.

Yes, He is Wonderful, even in His death. That clay-cold Corpse is Wonderful. Perhaps this is the greatest wonder of all—that He who is "Death of death and Hell's destruction" should for a while endure the bonds of death! But here is the real wonder—He could not be held by those bonds. Those chains which have held ten thousand of the sons and daughters of Adam and which have never been broken yet by any man of human mold, save by a miracle, were but to Him as green straws. Death bound our Samson fast and said, "I have him now, I have taken away the locks of his strength. His glory is departed and now he is mine."

But the hands that kept the human race in chains were nothing to the Savior. The third day He burst them and He rose again from the dead, from henceforth to die no more. Oh, You risen Savior—You who could not see corruption—You are Wonderful in Your resurrection! And You are Wonderful, too, in Your ascension—as I see You leading captivity captive and receiving gifts for men. "His name shall be called Wonderful."

Pause here one moment and let us think—Christ is surpassingly Wonderful. The little story I have told you just now—not little in itself, but little as I have told it—has in it something surpassingly wonderful. All the wonders that you ever saw are nothing compared with this. As we have passed through various countries we have seen a wonder and some older traveler than ourselves has said, “Yes this is wonderful to you, but I could show you something that utterly eclipses that.” Though we have seen some splendid landscapes with glorious hills and we have climbed up where the eagle seemed to knit the mountain and the sky together in his flight and we have stood and looked down and said, “How wonderful!” Says he, “I have seen fairer lands than these and wider and richer prospects by far.”

But when we speak of Christ none can say they ever saw a greater wonder than He is! You have come now to the very summit of everything that may be wondered at. There are no mysteries equal to *this* mystery, there is no surprise equal to *this* surprise. There is no astonishment, no admiration that should equal the astonishment and admiration that we feel when we behold Christ in the glories of the past. He surpasses everything.

And yet again—wonder is a short-lived emotion. You know it is proverbial that a wonder grows gray-headed in nine days. The long period that a wonder is found to last is about that time. It is such a short-lived thing. But Christ is and ever shall be Wonderful. You may think of Him through three-score years and ten—but you shall wonder at Him more at the end than at the beginning. Abraham might wonder at Him when he saw His day in the distant future. But I do not think that even Abraham himself could wonder at Christ so much as the very least in the kingdom of Heaven today wonders at Him, seeing that we know more than Abraham and therefore wonder more.

Think again for one moment and you will say of Christ that He deserves to be called Wonderful—not only because He is always Wonderful and because He is surpassingly Wonderful—but also because He is altogether Wonderful. There have been some great feats of skill in the arts and sciences. For instance, if we take a common wonder of the day, the telegraph—how much there is about that which is wonderful! But there are a great many things in the telegraph that we can understand. Though there are many mysteries in it, still there are parts of it that are like keys to the mysteries so that if we cannot solve the riddle wholly, it is disrobed of some of the low garments of its mystery. But if you look at Christ anywhere, anyway—He is *all* mystery, He is *altogether* Wonderful—always to be looked at and always to be admired.

And again, He is universally wondered at. They tell us that the religion of Christ is very good for old women. I was once complimented by a per-

son who told me he believed my preaching would be extremely suitable for blacks—for Negroes. He did not intend it as a compliment, but I replied, “Well Sir, if it is suitable for blacks I should think it would be very suitable for whites. For there is only a little difference of skin and I do not preach to people’s skins but to their hearts.” Now, of Christ we can say that He is universally a wonder, the strongest intellects have wondered at Him. Our Lockes and our Newtons have felt themselves to be as little children when they have come to the foot of the Cross. The wonder has not been confined to ladies, to children, to old women and dying men—the highest intellects and the lustiest minds have all wondered at Christ. I am sure it is a difficult task to make some people wonder. Hard thinkers and close mathematicians are not easily brought to wonder—but such men have covered their faces with their hands and cast themselves in the dust and confessed that they have been lost in wonder and amazement. Well then may Christ be called Wonderful.

II. “His name shall be called Wonderful.” He is wonderful for WHAT HE IS IN THE PRESENT. And here I will not diverge but will just appeal to you personally. Is He wonderful to *you*? Let me tell the story of my own wonderment at Christ and in telling it I shall be telling the experience of all God’s children. There was a time when I wondered not at Christ. I heard of His beauties but I had never seen them. I heard of His power but it was nothing to me. It was but news of something done in a far country—I had no connection with it and therefore I observed it not. But once upon a time there came one to my house of a black and terrible aspect. He smote the door. I tried to bolt it—to hold it fast. He smote again and again, till at last he entered and with a rough voice he summoned me before him. And he said, “I have a message from God for you. You are condemned on account of your sins.” I looked at him with astonishment. I asked him his name. He said, “My name is Law.” And I fell at his feet as one that was dead. “I was alive without the Law once—but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.”

As I lay there, he smote me. He smote me till every rib seemed as if it must break and my bowels be poured forth. My heart was melted like wax within me. I seemed to be stretched upon a rack—to be pinched with hot irons—to be beaten with whips of burning wire. A misery extreme dwelt and reigned in my heart. I dared not lift up my eyes. I thought within myself, “There may be hope, there may be mercy for me. Perhaps the God whom I have offended may accept my tears and my promises of amendment and I may live.” But when that thought crossed me, heavier were the blows and more poignant my sufferings than before, till hope entirely failed me and I had nothing wherein to trust. Darkness black and dense gathered round me. I heard a voice as it were, rushing to and fro and I

heard wailing and gnashing of teeth. I said within my soul, “I am cast out from His sight, I am utterly abhorred of God, He has trampled me in the mire of the streets in His anger.”

And there came One by of sorrowful but of loving aspect and He stooped over me and He said, “Awake you that sleep and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light.” I arose in astonishment and He took me and He led me to a place where stood a Cross and He seemed to vanish from my sight. But He appeared again hanging there. I looked upon Him as He bled upon that tree. His eyes darted a glance of love unutterable into my spirit and in a moment, looking at Him, the bruises that my soul had suffered were healed. The gaping wounds were cured. The broken bones rejoiced. The rags that had covered me were all removed. My spirit was white as the spotless snows of the far-off north. I had melody within my spirit for I was saved, washed, cleansed, forgiven through Him that did hang upon the tree.

Oh, how I wondered that I should be pardoned! But it was not the pardon that I wondered at so much—the wonder was that it should come to *me*. I wondered that He should be able to pardon such sins as mine—such crimes—so numerous and so black and that after such an accusing conscience He should have power to still every wave within my spirit and make my soul like the surface of a river, undisturbed, quiet and at ease. His name then to my spirit was Wonderful. And, Brothers and Sisters, if you have felt this, you can say you thought Him wonderful then—if you are feeling it, a sense of adoring wonder enraptures your heart even now.

And has He not been Wonderful to you since that auspicious hour, when first you heard Mercy’s voice spoken to you? How often have you been in sadness, sickness and sorrow? But your pain has been light, for Jesus Christ has been with you on your sickbeds. Your care has been no care at all for you have been able to cast your burden upon Him. The trial which threatened to crush you rather lifted you up to Heaven and you have said, “How wonderful that Jesus Christ’s name should give me such comfort, such joy, such peace, such confidence.”

Never shall we forget, Beloved, the judgments nearly two years ago of the Lord when by terrible things in righteousness He answered our prayer that He would give us success in this house. We cannot forget how the people were scattered—how some of the sheep were slain and the shepherd himself was smitten. I may not have told in your hearing the story of my own woe. Perhaps never soul went so near the burning furnace of insanity and yet came away unharmed. I have walked by that fire until these locks seemed to be crisp with the heat thereof. My brain was racked. I dared not look up to God and prayer that was once my solace, was cause of my fright and terror. I shall never forget the time when I first became

restored to myself. It was in the garden of a friend. I was walking alone, musing upon my misery which was much cheered by the kindness of my loving friend, yet far too heavy for my soul to bear. On a sudden the name of Jesus flashed through my mind. The Person of Christ seemed visible to me. I stood still.

The burning lava of my soul was cooled. My agonies were hushed. I bowed myself there and the garden that had seemed a Gethsemane became to me a Paradise. And then it seemed so strange to me that nothing should have brought me back but that name of Jesus. I thought, indeed, at that time that I should love Him better all the days of my life. But there were two things I wondered at. I wondered that He should be so good to me and I wondered more that I should have been so ungrateful to Him. But His name has been from that time “Wonderful” to me and I must record what He has done for my soul.

And now, Brothers and Sisters, you shall all find, every day of your life—whatever your trials and troubles—that He shall always be made the more wonderful by them. He sends you troubles to be like a black foil to make the diamond of His name shine the brighter. You would never know the wonders of God if it were not that you find them out in the furnace. “They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, *these* see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep.” And we shall never see the wonders of God except in that deep. We must go into the deep before we know how wonderful His power and His might to save.

I must not leave this point without one more remark. There have been times when you and I have said of Christ, “His name is Wonderful indeed, for we have been by it transported entirely above the world and carried upward to the very gates of Heaven itself.” I pity you, Beloved, if you do not understand the rhapsody I am about to use. There are moments when the Christian feels the charms of earth all broken and his wings are loosed and he begins to fly. And up he soars, till he forgets earth’s sorrows and leaves them far behind and up he goes till he forgets earth’s joys and leaves them like the mountaintops far below—as when the eagle flies to meet the sun. And up, up, up he goes, with his Savior full before him almost in vision beatific.

His heart is full of Christ. His soul beholds his Savior and the cloud that darkened his view of the Savior’s face seems to be dispersed. At such a time the Christian can sympathize with Paul. He says, “Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell: God knows”! But I am, as it were, “caught up to the third Heaven.” And how is this rapture produced? By the music of flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery and all kinds of instruments? No. How then? By riches? By fame? By wealth? Ah, no. By a strong mind? By a lively disposition? No. *By the name of Jesus.* That one name is all

sufficient to lead the Christian into heights of transport that verge upon the region where the angels fly in cloudless days.

III. I have no more time to stay upon this point, although the text is infinite and one might preach upon it forever. I have only to notice that His name shall be called Wonderful IN THE FUTURE.

The day is come, the Day of Wrath, the day of fire. The ages are ended. The last century, like the last pillar of a dilapidated temple has crumbled to its fall. The clock of time is verging to its last hour. It is on the stroke. The time is come when the things that are made must disappear. Lo, I see earth's bowels moving. A thousand hillocks give up the slumbering dead. The battlefields are clothed no more with the rich harvests that have been soaked with blood. But a new harvest has sprung up. The fields are thick with men. The sea itself becomes a prolific mother and though she has swallowed men alive—she gives them up again and they stand before God—an exceeding great army.

Sinners! You have risen from your tombs. The pillars of Heaven are reeling. The sky is moving to and fro. The sun, the eye of this great world, is rolling like a maniac and glaring with dismay. The moon that long has cheered the night now makes the darkness terrible, for she is turned into a clot of blood. Portents and signs and wonders past imagination make the heavens shake and make men's hearts quail within them. Suddenly upon a cloud there comes one like unto the Son of Man.

Sinners, picture your astonishment and your wonder when you see Him! Where are you, Voltaire? You said, "I will crush the wretch." Come and crush Him now! "No" says Voltaire, "He is not the man I thought He was." Oh how will he wonder when he finds out what Christ is! Now, Judas, come and give Him a traitor's kiss! "Ah! no," says he, "I knew not what I kissed—I thought I kissed only the son of Mary, but lo! He is the everlasting God." Now, you kings and princes that stood up and took counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us break His bands asunder and cast His cords from us," come now, take counsel once more—rebel against Him now! Oh, can you picture the astonishment, the wonder, the dismay when careless, godless infidels and Socinians find out what Christ is? "Oh!" they will say, "This is Wonderful, I thought not He was such as this"—while Christ shall say to them, "you thought that I was altogether such as yourselves. But I am no such thing. I am come in all My Father's glory to judge the quick and the dead."

Pharaoh led his hosts into the midst of the Red Sea. The path was dry and either shore stood like a wall of alabaster—the clear white water stiff as with the breath of frost consolidated into marble. There it stood. Can you guess the astonishment and dismay of the hosts of Pharaoh when they saw those walls of water about to close upon them? "Behold, you

Despisers, and wonder and perish!” Such will be your astonishment when Christ, whom you have despised today—Christ, whom you would not have to be your Savior—Christ whose Bible you left unread, whose Sabbath you despised—Christ, whose Gospel you rejected—shall come in the glory of His Father and all His holy angels with Him. Yes, then indeed, will you “behold and wonder and perish.” You shall say, “His name is Wonderful.”

But perhaps the most wonderful part of the Day of Judgment is this—do you see all the horrors yonder? The black darkness, the horrid night, the clashing comets, the pale stars, sickly and wan, falling like figs from the fig tree? Do you hear the cry, “Rocks, hide us, mountains on us fall”? “Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise.” But there never was a battle like this. This is with fire and smoke, indeed. But do you see yonder? All is peaceful. All serene and quiet. The myriads of the redeemed—are they shrieking, crying, wailing? No. Look at them! They are gathering—gathering round the Throne. That very Throne that seems to scatter as with a hundred hands death and destruction on the wicked becomes the sun of light and happiness to all Believers.

Do you see them coming robed in white with their bright wings? While gathering round Him they veil their faces. Do you hear them cry, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, for You were slain and You have risen from the dead. Worthy are You to live and reign, when death itself is dead”? Do you hear them? It is all song and no shriek. Do you see them? It is all joy and no terror. His name to them is Wonderful. But it is the wonder of admiration, the wonder of ecstasy, the wonder of affection and not the wonder of horror and dismay. Saints of the Lord, you *shall* know the wonders of His name when you shall see Him as He is and shall be like He is in the day of His appearing!

Oh, my enraptured Spirit, you shall bear your part in your Redeemer’s triumph, unworthy though you are—the chief of sinners and less than the least of saints. Your eye shall see Him and not another. “I know that my Redeemer lives and when He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth, though worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” Oh, make yourselves ready, you virgins! Behold, the Bridegroom comes! Arise and trim your lamps and go out to meet Him. He comes—He comes—He comes! And when He comes, you shall well say of Him as you meet Him with joy, “Your name is called Wonderful. All hail! All hail! All hail!”

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HIS NAME—COUNSELOR

NO. 215

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 26, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor.”
Isaiah 9:6.***

LAST Sabbath morning we considered the first title, “His name shall be called Wonderful.” This morning we take the second word, “Counselor.” I need not repeat the remark that, of course, these titles belong only to the Lord Jesus Christ and that we cannot understand the passage except by referring it to Messiah—the Prince. It was by a counselor that this world was ruined. Did not Satan mask himself in the serpent and counsel the woman with exceeding craftiness? Did not he convince her that she should take unto herself of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the hope that she would be as God? Was it not that evil counsel which provoked our mother to rebel against her Maker and did it not as the effect of sin bring death into this world with all its train of woe?

Ah, Beloved, it was meet that the world should have a Counselor to restore it—if it had a counselor to destroy it. It was by counsel that it fell and certainly without counsel it never could have arisen. But mark the difficulties that surrounded such a Counselor. ‘Tis easy to counsel mischief. But how difficult to counsel wisely! To cast *down* is easy, but to build *up* how difficult! To confuse this world and bring upon it all its train of ills was an easy thing. A woman plucked the fruit and it was done. But to restore order to this confusion, to sweep away the evils which brooded over this fair earth—this was work. indeed! And “Wonderful” was that Christ who came forward to attempt the work and who in the plentitude of His wisdom has certainly accomplished it to His own honor and glory and to our comfort and safety.

We shall now enter upon the discussion of this title which is given to Christ—a title peculiar to our Redeemer. And you will see why it should be given to Him and why there was a necessity for such a Counselor.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ is a Counselor in a three-fold sense. First, He is *God’s Counselor*. He sits in the cabinet council of the King of Heaven. He has admittance into the privy chamber and is the Counselor with God. In the second place, Christ is a Counselor in the sense which the Septuagint translation appends to this term. Christ is said to be *the Angel of the Great Council*. He is a Counselor in that He communicates to us in God’s behalf what has been done in the Great Council before the foundation of the world. And thirdly, Christ is *a Counselor to us and with*

us because we can consult with Him and He does counsel and advise us as to the right way and the path of peace.

I. Beginning then, with the first point—Christ may well be called Counselor for He is a COUNSELLOR WITH GOD. And here let us speak with reverence for we are about to enter upon a very solemn subject. It has been revealed to us that before the world was when as yet God had not made the stars, long before space sprang into being, the Almighty God did hold a solemn conclave with Himself. Father, Son and Spirit held a mystic council with each other as to what they were about to do. That council, although we read but little of it in Scripture, was nevertheless most certainly held. We have abundant traces of it. It is a doctrine obscure through the effulgence of that light to which no man can approach. And it is not simply and didactically explained—as some other doctrines are. But we have continual tracings and incidental mentioning of that great, eternal and wonderful council—which was held between the three glorious Persons of the Trinity before the world began.

Our first question with ourselves is why did God hold a council at all? And here we must answer that God did not hold a council because of any deficiency in His knowledge, for God understands all things from the beginning. His knowledge is the sum total of everything that is noble—and infinite is that sum total—ininitely above everything that is counted noble. You, O God, have thoughts that are unsearchable and You know what no mortal can ever attain. Nor, again, did God hold any consultation for the increase of His satisfaction. Sometimes men, when they have determined what to do, will nevertheless seek counsel of their friends because, they say, “If their advice agrees with mine it adds to my satisfaction and confirms me in my resolution.”

But God is everlastingly satisfied with Himself and knows not the shadow of a doubt to cloud His purpose. Therefore the council was not held with any motive or intent of that sort. Nor, again, was it held with a view of deliberation. Men take weeks and months and sometimes years to think out a thing that is surrounded with difficulties. They have to find the clue with much research—enveloped in folds of mystery they have to take off first one garment and then another—before they find out the naked glorious truth. Not so God. God’s deliberations are as flashes of lightning. They are as wise as if He had been eternally considering. And the thoughts of His heart, though swift as lightning, are as perfect as the whole system of the universe. The reason why God is represented as holding a council, if I think rightly, is this—that we might understand how *wise* God is.

“In the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom.” It is for us to think that in the council of the Eternal Three, each Person in the undivided Trinity being omniscient and full of wisdom, there must have been the sum total of *all* wisdom. And again, it was to show the unanimity and cooperation of the sacred Persons—God the Father has done nothing alone in creation or salvation. Jesus Christ has done nothing alone. For even the work of His redemption, albeit that He suffered in some sense alone,

needed the sustaining hand of the Spirit and the accepting smile of the Father before it could be completed. God said not, “I will make man,” but “Let *Us* make man in our own image.” God says not merely, “I will save,” but the inference from the declarations of Scripture is that the design of the three Persons of the blessed Trinity was to save a people to themselves who should show forth their praise. It was, then, for our sakes, not for God’s sake, the council was held—that we might know the unanimity of the glorious Persons and the deep wisdom of their devices.

Yet another remark concerning the council. It may be asked, “What were the topics deliberated upon at that first council which was held before the daystar knew its place and planets were formed?” We reply, “The first topic was creation.” We are told in the passage we have read, [Proverbs 8] that the Lord Jesus Christ, who represents Himself as Wisdom, was with God before the world was created and we have every reason to believe that we are to understand this as meaning that He was not only with God in company, but with God in co-operation. Besides, we have other Scriptures to prove that “all things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made.” And to quote again a passage that clinches this Truth—God said, “Let *Us* make *man*”—so that a part of the consultation was with reference to the making of worlds and the creatures that should inhabit them. I believe that in the sovereign council of eternity the mountains were weighed in scales and the hills in balances.

Then was it fixed in sovereign council how far the sea should go and where should be its bounds—when the sun should rise and come forth, like a giant from the chambers of his darkness and when he should return again to his couch of rest. Then did God decree the moment when He should say, “Let there be light,” and the moment when the sun should be turned into darkness and the moon into a clot of blood. Then did He ordain the form and size of every angel and the destinies of every creature. Then did He sketch in His infinite thought the eagle as he soared to Heaven and the worm as he burrowed into the earth. Then the little as well as the great, the minute as well as the immense came under the sovereign decree of God. There was that book written, of which Dr. Watts sings—

**“Chained to His throne a volume lies,
With all the fates of men,
With every angel’s form and size,
Drawn by the eternal pen.”**

Christ was a Counselor in the matter of creation—with none else took He counsel—none else instructed Him. Christ was the Counselor for all the wondrous works of God.

The second topic that was discussed in this council was the *work of Providence*. God does not act towards this world like a man who makes a watch and lets it have its own way till it runs down. He is the Controller of every wheel in the machine of Providence. He has left nothing to itself. We talk of general laws and philosophers tell us that the world is governed by

laws and then they put the Almighty out of the question. Now, how can a nation be governed by laws apart from a sovereign, or apart from magistrates and rulers to carry out the laws? All the laws may be in the statute book, but take all the police away, take away every magistrate, remove the high court of parliament—what is the use of law?

Laws cannot govern without active agency to carry them out. Nor could nature proceed in its everlasting cycles by the mere force of law. God is the great power of all things. He is *in* everything. Not only did He make all things but by Him all things consist. From all eternity Christ was the Counselor of His Father with regard to Providence—when the first man should be born, when he should wander and when he should be restored—when the first monarchy should rise and when its sun should set—where His people should be placed, how long they should be placed and where they should be moved. Was it not the Most High who divided to the nations their inheritance? Has He not appointed the bounds of our habitation? Oh, Heir of Heaven, in the day of the great council Christ counseled His Father as to the weight of your trials—as to the number of your mercies—if they are numerable and as to the time, the way and the means whereby you should be brought to Himself! Remember there is nothing that happens in your daily life but what was first of all devised in eternity and counseled by Jesus Christ for your good and in your behalf—that all things might work together for your lasting benefit and profit.

My Friends, what unfathomable depths of wisdom must have been involved when God consulted with Himself with regard to the great book of Providence! Oh how strange Providence seems to you and to me! Does it not look like a zigzag line, this way and that way, backward and forward, like the journeying of the children of Israel in the wilderness? Ah, my Brethren, to God it is a straight line. Directly God always goes to His object. And yet to us He often seems to go round about.

Ah, Jacob, the Lord is about to provide for you in Egypt when there is a famine in Canaan and He is about to make your son Joseph great and mighty. Joseph must be sold for a slave. He must be accused wrongfully. He must be put into the pit and prison He must suffer. But God was going straight to His purpose all the while—He was sending Joseph before them into Egypt that they might be provided for and when the good old Patriarch said, “All these things are against me,” He did not perceive the Providence of God—for there was not a solitary thing in the whole list that was against him—everything was ruled for his good.

Let us learn to leave Providence in the hand of the Counselor. Let us rest assured that He is too wise to err in His predestination and too good to be unkind. Let us remember that in the council of eternity the best was ordained that could have been ordained—that if you and I had been there we could not have ordained half so well—but that we should have made ourselves eternal fools by meddling therewith. Rest certain that in the end we shall see that all was well and must be well forever. He is “Wonderful, the Counselor,” for He counseled in matters of Providence.

And now with regard to *matters of grace*. These were also discussed in the Everlasting Council, when the Three Divine Persons in the solemn seclusion of their own loneliness consulted together, the works of grace. One of the first things they had to consider was how God should be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly—how the world should be reconciled unto God. Hence you read in the book of Zechariah, if you turn to the sixth chapter and the thirteenth verse, this passage—“The council of peace shall be between them both.” The Son of God with His Father and the Spirit ordained the Council of Peace. Thus was it arranged. The Son must suffer. He must be the Substitute, must bear His people’s sins and be punished in their place. The Father must accept the Son’s substitution and allow His people to go free because Christ had paid their debts. The Spirit of the living God must then cleanse the people whom the blood had pardoned and so they must be accepted before the presence of God, even the Father. That was the result of the Everlasting Council.

But O my Brethren, if it had not been for that council, what a question would have been left unsolved! Neither you nor I could ever have thought how the two should meet together—how mercy and justice should kiss each other over the mountain of our sins. I have always thought that one of the greatest proofs that the Gospel is of God is its revelation that Christ died to save sinners. That is a thought so original, so new, so wonderful—you have not got it in any other religion in the world—so that it must have come from God. As I remember to have heard an un-schooled and illiterate man say, when I first told him the simple story of how Christ was punished in the place of His people—he burst out with an air of surprise, “Faith! That’s the Gospel, I know. No man could have made that up. That must be of God.”

That wonderful thought—that a God Himself should die, that He Himself should bear our sins, so that God the Father might be able to forgive and yet exact the utmost penalty—is super-human, super-angelic! Not even the cherubim and seraphim could have been the inventors of it—but that thought was first struck out from the mind of God in the councils of eternity when the “Wonderful, the Counselor,” was present with His Father.

Again—another part of the Everlasting Council was this—*who should be saved?* Now my Friends, you that like not old Calvinistic doctrine will perhaps be horrified, but I cannot help that. I will never modify a doctrine I believe, to please any man that walks upon earth. But I will prove from Scripture that I have the warrant of God in this matter and that it is not my own invention. I say that one part of the Everlasting Council was the predestination of those whom God had determined to save and I will read you the passage that proves it. “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him that works all things after the counsel of His own will.” The predestination of each one of God’s people was arranged at the Everlasting Council where God’s will sat as the sovereign umpire and undisputed president. There was it said of each redeemed one, “At such an hour I will call him by My grace, for I

have loved him with an everlasting love and by My loving-kindness will I draw him.”

There was it originated when the peace-speaking blood should be laid to that elect one’s conscience, when the Spirit of the living God should breathe joy and consolation into his heart. There was it settled how that chosen one should be “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” And there was it determined and settled by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie, that every one of these should be eternally saved—beyond the shadow of a risk of perishing. The Apostle Paul was not like some preachers who are afraid to say a word about the Everlasting Council, for he says in his Epistle to the Hebrews—“God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His *council*, confirmed it by an oath.”

Now, you hear some talk about the immutability of the promise—that is good. But the immutability of God’s Council—that is to fathom to the very uttermost the doctrines of grace. The Council of God from all eternity is immutable. Not one purpose has He ever altered, not one decree has He ever changed. He has nailed His decrees against the pillars of eternity and though the devils have sought to rend them down from the posts of His magnificent palace, yet, says He, “I have set My king upon My holy hill of Zion.” The decree shall stand. I will do all My pleasure. Your counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. You, Lord, in the beginning have made the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth. You have determined Your plans and purposes and they stand fast forever and ever.

I think I have sufficiently declared how Christ was the Counselor in the transcendent affairs of nature, Providence and grace in the Everlasting Council of eternity. But now I would have you notice what a mercy it was that there was such a Counselor with God and how fit Christ was to be the Counselor. Christ Himself is Wisdom. He charges His angels with folly. But He is God only wise Himself. If a fool undertakes to be a counselor, his counsel is folly—but when Christ counseled, His counsel was full of wisdom. But there is another qualification necessary for a counselor. However wise a man is, he has no right to be a counselor with a king unless he has some dignity and standing. There may happen to be in my congregation some person of great talent—but if my friend should present himself at the cabinet council and give advice—he would most probably be unceremoniously dismissed. They would say, “Are you of the king’s council? If not, what right have you to stand here?”

Now Christ was glorious. He was *equal* with His Father, therefore He had a right to counsel God—to counsel *with* God. Had an angel offered his advice to God it would have been insufferable impertinence—had the cherubim or seraphim volunteered to give so much as one word of counsel it would have been blasphemy. He would take no counsel from His creatures. Why should Wisdom stoop from His Throne to counsel with created folly? But because Christ was far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named, therefore He had a right, not only from His wisdom but from His rank, to be a Counselor with God.

But there is one thing that is always necessary in a man before we can rejoice in his being a counselor. There are some counselors concerning the legislation of our country in whom you or I could not rejoice much because we feel that in their counsels the most of us would be forgotten. Our farming friends would probably rejoice in them. There is not much doubt they will consult *their* interests. But whoever heard of a counselor yet who counseled for the poor? Or who has these many years heard as much as an inkling of the name of a man who really counseled for economy and for the good of his nation? We have plenty of men who promise us that they will counsel for us—abundance of men who, if we would but return them to parliament would most assuredly pour forth such wisdom in our behalf that without doubt we should be the most happy and enlightened people in the world according to their promises.

But alas, when they get into office they have no hearty sympathy with us! They belong to a different rank from the most of us—they do not sympathize with the wants and the desires of the middle class and of the poor. But, with regard to Christ, we can put every confidence in Him for we know that in that Everlasting Council He sympathized with man. He says, “My delights were with the sons of men.” Happy men to have a counselor who delights in them! Moreover, He, though He was not man, yet foresaw that He was to be “bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh” and therefore in the Everlasting Council He pleaded His own cause when He pleaded *our* cause—for He well knew that He was to be tempted in all points like as we are and was to suffer our sufferings and to be our Covenant Head in union with ourselves. Sweet Counselor! I love to think You were in the Everlasting Council—my Friend, my Brother—born for adversity!

II. Having thus discussed the first point I shall proceed to consider briefly the second, according to the translation of the Septuagint. Christ is THE ANGEL OF THE GREAT COUNCIL. Do you and I want to know what was said and done in the Great Council of eternity? Yes, we do. I will defy any man, whoever he may be, not to want to know something about destiny. Why do the common people appeal to the witch, the pretender? What is their purpose when they enquire of the astrologer and read the books of the pretended soothsayer? Why, it means that man wants to know something about the Everlasting Council.

And what does all the perplexing research of certain persons into the prophecies mean? I consider very often that the inferences drawn from prophecy are very little better, after all, than the guesses of the Norwood gypsy. Some people who have been so busy in foretelling the end of the world, would have been better employed if they had foretold the end of their own books and had not imposed on the public by predictions, assaying to interpret the prophecies, without the shadow of a foundation.

But, from their credulity we may learn that among the higher class as well as among the more ignorant there is a strong desire to know the councils of eternity. Beloved, there is only one glass through which you and I can look back to the dim darkness of the shrouded past and read the counsels of God and that glass is the Person of Jesus Christ. Do I

want to know what God ordained with regard to the salvation of man from before the foundation of the world? I look to Christ. I find that it was ordained *in* Christ that He should be the first elect and that a people should be chosen in Him. Do you ask the way in which God ordained to save? I answer, He ordained to save by the Cross. Do you ask how God ordained to pardon? The answer comes—He ordained to pardon through the sufferings of Christ and to justify through His resurrection from the dead.

Everything that you want to know with regard to what God ordained—everything that you *ought* to know—you can find out in the Cross. I must look to Christ. What do these wars mean, this confusion, these garments rolled in blood? I see Christ born of a virgin and then I read the world's history backwards and I see that all this led to Christ's coming. I see that all these leaned one upon another, as I have sometimes seen clusters of rocks leaning on each other and Christ the great leading Rock bearing up the superincumbent mass of all past history. And if I want to read the future I look at Christ and I learn that He who has gone up to Heaven is to come again from Heaven in like manner as He went up to Heaven. So all the future is clear enough to me. I do not know whether the Pope of Rome is to obtain an universal empire or not. I do not know whether the Russian empire is to swallow up all the nations of the continent. There is one thing I know—God will overturn, overturn, overturn—till He shall come whose right it is to reign.

And I know that though the worms devour my body, yet when He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth, *in my flesh* shall I see God and there is enough in that for me. All the rest of history is unimportant compared with its end, its issues, its purpose. The end of the first Testament is the first advent of Christ. The end of this second Testament of modern history is the second advent of the Savior and then shall the book of time be closed. But none could open the Old Testament history and interpret it except through Christ. Abraham could understand it, for He knew that Christ was to come. Christ opened the book for him. And so modern history is never to be understood except through Christ. None but the Lamb can take the book and open every seal. But he who believes in Christ and looks for His glorious advent—he may open the book and read therein and have understanding—for in Christ there is a revelation of the eternal councils.

“Now,” says one, “Sir, I want to know one thing and if I knew *that* I would not care what happened. I want to know whether God from all eternity ordained me to be saved.” Well, Friend, I will tell you how to find that out and you may find it out to a certainty. “No,” says one, “But how can I know that? You cannot read the book of fate. That is impossible.” I have heard of some divine of a very hyper school, indeed, who said, “Ah, blessed be the Lord, there are some of God's dear people here. I can tell them by the very look of their faces. I know that they are among God's elect.”

He was not half so discreet as Rowland Hill, who when He was advised to preach to none but the elect, said, “I would certainly do so if someone would chalk them all on the back first.” That was never attempted by anybody, so Rowland Hill went on preaching the Gospel to every creature, as I desire to do. But you may find out whether you are among His chosen ones. “How?” says one. Why, Christ is the Angel of the Covenant and you can find it out by *looking to Him*. Many people want to know their election before they look to Christ. Beloved, you cannot know your election except as you see it in Christ.

If you want to know your election, thus shall you assure your hearts before God—do you feel yourself this morning to be a lost, guilty sinner? Go straightway to the Cross of Christ and tell Christ that and tell Him that you have read in the Bible, “That him that comes unto Him He will in no wise cast out.” Tell Him that He has said, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom you are chief.” *Look to Christ* and believe on Him and you shall make proof of your election directly—for so surely as you believe you are elect. If you will give yourself wholly up to Christ and trust Him then you are one of God’s chosen ones. But if you stop and say, “I want to know first whether I am elect,” that is impossible. If there is something covered up and I say, “Now, before you can see this you must lift the veil”—and you say, “No, but I want to see right through that veil,” you cannot. Lift the veil first and you shall see. Go to Christ guilty, just as you are. Leave all curious inquiry about your election alone. Go straight away to Christ, just as you are, black in sin, naked, penniless and poor and say—

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

and you shall know your election.

The assurance of the Holy Spirit shall be given to you so that you shall be able to say, “I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.” Now notice this. Christ was at the Everlasting Council—*He* can tell you whether you were chosen or not—but you cannot find that out anywhere else. You go and put your trust in Him and I know what the answer will be. His answer will be—“I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore in loving kindness have I drawn you.” There will be no doubt about His having chosen *you*, when you shall feel no doubt about having chosen *Him*.

So much for the second point. Christ is the Counselor. He is the Angel of the Council because He tells God’s secrets to us. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and He will show them His Covenant.”

III. The last point is Christ is A COUNSELLOR TO US. And here I shall want to give some practical hints to God’s people. Somehow or other, Brethren, it is not good for man to be alone. A lonely man must be, I think, a miserable man. And a man without a counselor, I think, must of necessity go wrong. “Where there is no counselor,” says Solomon, “The people fall.” I think most persons will find it so. A man says, “Well, I’ll

have my own way and I will ask nobody.” Have it, Sir—have it—and you will find that in having your own way you have probably had the worst way you could.

We all feel our need at times of a counselor. David was a man after God’s own heart and dealt much with his God. But he had his Ahithophel with whom he took sweet counsel and they walked to the house of God in company. Kings must have some advisers. Woe unto the man that has got a bad counselor. Rehoboam took counsel of the young men and not of the old men and they counseled him so that he lost ten-twelfths of his empire. We know many who counsel at the hands of foolish charms instead of going to Christ. They shall have to learn that there is but one Christ who is to be trusted. And that however necessary a counselor may be, yet none other shall be found to fulfill the necessity but Jesus Christ the Counselor. Let me make a remark or two with regard to this Counselor, Jesus Christ.

And, first, Christ is a *necessary Counselor*. So sure as we do anything without asking counsel of God we fall into trouble. Israel made a league with Gibeon and it is said they took of their victuals and they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord. And they found out that the Gibeonites had deceived them. If they had asked counsel first no cunning deception could have imposed on them in the matter. Saul, the son of Kish, died before the Lord upon the mountains of Gilboa and in the book of Chronicles it is written, “he died because he asked not counsel of God, but sought unto the wizards.”

Joshua, the great commander, when he was appointed to succeed Moses was not left to go alone, but it is written, “And Eliezer the priest shall be his counselor and he shall ask counsel of the Lord for him.” And all the great men of olden times, when they were about to do an action, paused and they said to the priest, “Bring here the ephod,” and he put on the Urim and the Thummim and appealed to God and the answer came and sound advice was vouchsafed. You and I will have to learn how necessary it is always to seek advice of God.

Did you ever seek God’s advice on your knees about a difficulty and then go amiss? Brethren, I can testify for my God that when I have submitted my will to His directing Spirit I have always had reason to thank Him for His wise counsel. But when I have asked Him, having already made up my own mind and had my own way—just like the Israelites with the quails of Heaven—while the meat was yet in their mouth the wrath of God came upon them. Let us take heed always that we never go before the cloud. He that goes before the cloud goes a fool’s errand and will be glad to get back. An old Puritan used to say, “He that carves for himself will cut his fingers. Leave God to carve for you in Providence and all shall be well. Seek God’s guidance and nothing can go amiss.” It is wise counsel.

In the next place, Christ’s counsel is *faithful counsel*. When Ahithophel left David it proved that he was not faithful. And when Hushed went to Absalom and counseled him, he counseled him craftily, so that the good counsel of Ahithophel was brought to nothing. Ah, how often do our

friends counsel us craftily! We have known them do so. They have looked first to their own advantage and then they have said, "If I can get him to do such-and-such it will be the best for me." That was not the question we asked them. It was what would be best for *ourselves*. But we may trust Christ—that in *His advice* to us there never will be any self-interest. He will be quite certain to advise us with the most disinterested motives so that the good shall be to us and the profit to ourselves.

Again—Christ's counsel is *hearty counsel*. I hate to go to a lawyer above all people. The worst kind of conversation is, I think, conversation with a lawyer. There is your case! Dear me, what an interest you feel in it! You spread it out before him and he says, "There is a word upon the second page not quite correct." You look at it and you say, "Ah, that is totally unimportant. That does not signify anything." He turns to another clause and he says, "Ah, there is a good deal here!" "My dear Fellow," you say, "I do not care about those petty clauses, whether it says lands, properties, or inheritance—what I want you to do is to set this difficulty right in point of law." "Be patient," he says. You must go through a great many consultations before he will come to the point and all the while your poor heart is boiling over because you feel such an interest in the main point.

But he is as cool as possible. You think you are asking counsel of a block of marble. No doubt his advice will come out all right at last and it is pretty certain it will be good for you. But it is not *hearty*. He does not enter into the sympathies of the matter with you. What is it to him whether you succeed or not—whether the object of your heart shall be accomplished or not? It is but a professional interest he takes. Now, Solomon says, "As ointment for perfume, so is hearty counsel." When a man throws his own soul into your case he says, "My dear Friend, I'll do anything I can to help you, let me look at it." And he takes as deep an interest in it as you do yourself. "If I were in your position," he says, "I should do such-and-such. By-the-by, there is a word wrong there." Perhaps he tells you so, but he only tells you because he is anxious to have it all right. And you can see that his drift is always towards the same end you are seeking and that he is only anxious for your good. Oh, for a counselor that could tie your heart into unison with his own! Now Christ is such a Counselor as that. He is a *hearty* Counselor. His interests and your interests are bound up together and He is hearty with you.

But there is another kind of counsel still. David says of one, who afterwards became his enemy, "We took sweet counsel together." Christian, do you know what *sweet* counsel is? You have gone to your Master in the day of trouble and in the secret of your chamber you have poured out your heart before Him. You have laid your case before Him with all its difficulties—as Hezekiah did Rabshakeh's letter and you have felt that though Christ were not there in flesh and blood—yet He was there in spirit and He counseled you. You felt that His was counsel that came from the very heart. But He was something better than that. There was such a sweetness coming with His counsel, such a radiance of love, such a fullness of

fellowship, that you said, “Oh that I were in trouble every day, if I might have such sweet counsel as this!”

Christ is the Counselor whom I desire to consult every hour and I would that I could sit in His secret chamber all day and all night long. To counsel with Him is to have sweet counsel, hearty counsel and wise counsel all at the same time! Why, you may have a friend that talks very sweetly with you and you will say, “Well, he is a kind, good soul, but I really cannot trust his judgment.” You have another friend, who has a good deal of judgment and yet you say of him, “Certainly he is a man of prudence above a great many, but I cannot find out his sympathy. I never get at his heart—if he were ever so rough and untutored, I would sooner have his heart without his prudence, than his prudence without his heart.” But we go to Christ and we get wisdom. We get love, we get sympathy. We get everything that can possibly be wanted in a Counselor.

And now we must close by noticing that Christ has special counsels for each of us this morning and what are they? Tried Child of God, your daughter is sick. Your gold has melted in the fire. You are sick yourself and your heart is sad. Christ counsels you and He says, “Cast your burden upon the Lord. He will sustain you. He will never suffer the righteous to be moved.” Young man, you that are seeking to be great in this world, Christ counsels you this morning—“Seek you great things for yourself? Seek them not.” I shall never forget Midsummer Common. I was ambitious. I was seeking to go to college—to leave my poor people in the wilderness that I might become something great. And as I was walking there that text came with power to my heart—“Seek you great things for yourself? Seek them not.”

I suppose about forty pounds a year was the sum total of my income and I was thinking how I should make both ends meet and whether it would not be a great deal better for me to resign my charge and seek something for the bettering of myself and so forth. But this text ran in my ears, “Seek you great things for yourself? Seek them not.” “Lord,” said I, “I will follow Your counsel and not my own devices.” And I have never had cause to regret it. Always take the Lord for your Guide and you shall never go amiss.

Backslider! You that has a name to live and are dead, or nearly dead, Christ gives you counsel—“I counsel you to buy of Me gold tried in the fire and white raiment, that you may be clothed.” And Sinner! You that are far from God, Christ gives *you* counsel—“COME unto Me, all you that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest,” Depend on it, it is loving counsel. Take it. Go home and cast yourself upon your knees. Seek Christ. Obey His counsel and you shall rejoice that you listened to His voice and heard it and lived!

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HIS NAME—THE MIGHTY GOD

NO. 258

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 19, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“The mighty God.”
Isaiah 9:6.***

OTHER translations of this Divine title have been proposed by several very eminent and able scholars. Not that any of them are prepared to deny that this translation is after all, most accurate, but rather that while there are various words in the original which we render by the common appellation of “GOD,” it might be possible so to interpret this as to show more exactly its definite meaning. One writer, for example, thinks the term might be translated, “The Irradiator”—He who gives light to men. Some think it bears the meaning of “The Illustrious”—the bright and the shining One. Still there are very few, if any, who are prepared to dispute the fact that our translation is the most faithful that could possibly be given—the mighty God.”

The term here used for God, El, is taken from a Hebrew root, which, as I take it, signifies *strength*. And perhaps a literal translation even of that title might be, “The Strong One,” the strong God. But there is added to this an adjective in the Hebrew, expressive of mightiness and the two taken together express the omnipotence of Christ, His real deity and His omnipotence, as standing first and foremost among the attributes which the Prophet beheld. “The mighty God.” I do not propose this morning to enter into any argument in proof of the Divinity of Christ, because my text does not seem to demand it of me. It does not say that Christ shall be “the mighty God”—that is affirmed in many other places of Sacred Writ. But here it says, “He shall be called Wonderful,” called “Counselor,” called, “The mighty God.” And I think that, therefore, I may be excused from entering into any proof of the fact, if I am at least able to establish the truth of that which is here foretold, inasmuch as Christ is indeed called at this day and shall be called to the end of the world, “the mighty God.”

First, this morning, I shall speak for a moment on the folly of those who profess to be His followers, but who do not call Him “the mighty God.” In the second place I shall try to show how the true Believer practically calls Christ “the mighty God,” in many of the acts which concern his salvation.

And then I shall close by noticing how Jesus Christ has proved Himself, indeed, to be “the mighty God” to us and in the experience of His Church.

I. First let me point out THE FOLLY OF THOSE WHO PROFESS TO BE THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST, YET DO NOT, AND WILL NOT, CALL HIM GOD. The question has sometimes been proposed to me—how is it that those of us who hold the Divinity of Christ—manifest what is called “un-charitableness” towards those who deny Him. We continually affirm that an error with regard to the Divinity of Christ is absolutely fatal and that a man cannot be right in his judgment upon any part of the Gospel unless he think rightly of Him who is personally the very center of all the purposes of Heaven and the foundation of all the hopes of earth. Nor can we admit of any latitudinarianism here. We extend the right hand of fellowship to all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth. But we cannot exchange our Christian greetings with those who deny Him to be “very God of very God.” And the reason is sometimes asked—for say our opponents—“We are ready to give the right hand of fellowship to you, why don’t you do so to us?” Our reply shall be given thus briefly—“You have no right to complain of us, seeing that in this matter we stand on the defensive. When you declare yourselves to believe that Christ is not the Son of God, you may not be conscious of it, but you have charged us with one of the blackest sins in the entire catalogue of crime.

“The Unitarians must, to be consistent, charge the whole of us, who worship Christ, with being idolaters. Now idolatry is a sin of the most heinous character. It is not an offense against men, it is true, but it is an intolerable offense against the majesty of God. We are ranked by Unitarians, if they are consistent, with the Hottentots. “No,” say they, “we believe that you are sincere in your worship.” So is the Hottentot. He bows down before his Fetish, his block of wood or stone and he is an idolater. And although you charge us with bowing before a man, yet we do hold that you have laid at us a sin insufferably gross and we are obliged to repel your accusation with some severity. You have so insulted us by denying the Godhead of Christ—you have charged us with so great a crime—that you cannot expect us to sit coolly down and blandly smile at the imputation. It matters not what a man worships, if it is not God, he is an idolater.

There is no distinction in principle between worship to a god of mud and a god of gold. No, further—there is no distinction between the worship of an onion—and the worship of the sun, moon and stars. These are alike idolatries. And though Christ is confessed by the Socinian to be the best of men, perfection’s own self—yet if He is nothing more, the vast mass of the Christian world is deliberately assailed with the impudent accusation of being idolaters. Yet those who charge us with idolatry expect us to receive them with cordial kindness! It is not in flesh and blood for us to do

so, if we take the low ground of reason. It is not in grace or truth to do so, if we take the high ground of revelation. As men, we are willing to show them respect—we regard them, we pray for them—we have no anger or enmity against them. But when we come to the point of *theology*, we cannot, as we profess to be followers of Christ, tamely see ourselves charged with an offense so dreadful and so heinous as that of idol worship.

I confess I would almost rather be charged with a religion that extenuated murder, than with one that justified idolatry. Murder, great as the offense is, is but the slaying of man. But idolatry is in its essence the killing of God—it is the attempt to thrust the Eternal Jehovah out of His seat and to foist into His place the work of His own hand, or the creature of my own conceit. Shall a man charge me with being so besotted as to worship a mere man? Shall he tell me I am so low and groveling in my intellect that I should stoop down to worship my own fellow creature? And yet does he expect me after that to receive him as a brother professing the same faith? I cannot understand his presumption! The charge against our sanctity of heart is so tremendous—the accusation is so frightful—that if there has been some severity and bitterness of temper in the controversy, the sin lies upon our opponent and not on us. For he has charged us with a crime so dreadful that an upright man must repel it as an insult.

But to go further. If Jesus Christ is not a Divine Person or if I could once imagine that He were no more than a mere man, I should prefer Muhammed to Christ. And if you ask me why, I think I could clearly prove that Muhammed was a greater Prophet than Christ. If Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, co-equal, co-eternal with the Father, He so spoke as to induce that belief in the minds of His own disciples and of His adversaries likewise. Muhammed, with regard to the unity of the Godhead, is so clear and so distinct, that there is no Muslim to this day that has ever fallen into idolatry. You will find that throughout the whole of the Muslim world the cry is still sternly uttered and faithfully believed, “There is but one God and Muhammed is his prophet.”

Now, if Christ were but a good man and a Prophet, why did He not speak more decisively? Why has He not left on record a war cry for the Christian which would be as explicit and decisive as that of Muhammed? If Christ did not mean to teach that He Himself is God, at least He was not very clear and definite in His denial and He has left His disciples extremely in the dark, the proof whereof is to be found in the fact that at the present day, nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of the whole of the professed followers of Christ, do receive Him and bow down before Him, as being very God. And if He is not God, I deny His right to be esteemed as a Prophet. If He is not God, He was an impostor, the grandest, the greatest of deceivers that ever existed. This, of course, is no ar-

gument to the man who denies the faith and does not avow himself to be a follower of Christ. But to the man that is Christ's follower, I do hold that the argument is irresistible, that Christ could not have been a good and great Prophet, if He were not what He certainly led us to believe Himself to be—the Son of God, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God—He very God, by whom all things were made and without whom was not anything made that is made.

I will say yet another thing—which may startle the Believer—but which is intended rather to reduce the heterodox doctrine of Christ not being God to an absurdity. If Christ were not the Son of God, His death, so far from being a satisfaction for sin, was a death most richly and righteously deserved. The Sanhedrim before which He was tried was the recognized and authorized legislature of the country. He was brought before that Sanhedrim, charged with blasphemy, and it was upon that charge that they condemned Him to die, because He made Himself the Son of God. Now, I do not hesitate honestly to declare, that if I had been called on to plead in that case, I should have pleaded a frank admission. And that, moreover, I should have stood up and said and felt that I had a clear case before me, which nothing but lying and perjury could ever have put on one side, if Jesus of Nazareth had been charged with having declared Himself to be the Son of God.

Why, His whole preaching seemed to derive from there it's unrivalled authority. There was continually in His actions and in His Words, a claim to be something more than man ever could lay claim to. And when He was brought before the Sanhedrim, witnesses enough might have been found to prove that He had made Himself the Son of God. If He were not so, His condemnation for blasphemy was the most just sentence that ever was pronounced and His crucifixion on Calvary, was absolutely the most righteous execution that ever was performed by the hand of the government. It is His being verily God that frees Him from the charge of blasphemy. It is the fact that He *is* God. and that His Godhead is not to be denied, that makes His death an unrighteous deicide at the hand of apostate man and renders it, as before God, an acceptable sacrifice for the sins of all the people whom He redeemed with His most precious blood. But if He is not God, I do repeat, that there is no reason whatever why we should have had a New Testament written. For there would be then nothing in the sublime central-fact of that New Testament but the righteous execution of one who certainly deserved to die.

Do you remember, my dear Friends, when the Apostle Paul was preaching on the resurrection of the dead, in his letter to the Corinthians, how he uses an *ex post facto* argument, to show the natural consequences, if it were possible to overturn the truths? He says, "If Christ is not risen, then

is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain and you are yet in your sins.” Now, I may fairly use the Apostle’s line of argument in reference to the Godhead and Sonship of Christ, of which His resurrection gave such a palpable demonstration—“If Christ is not the Son of God, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain and you are yet in your sins all our visions of Heaven are blasted and withered. The brightness of our hope is quenched forever. That Rock on which our trust is built turns out to be nothing better than mere sand. If the Divinity of Christ is not proved. All the joy and consolation we ever had in this world in our belief that His blood was sufficient to atone for sin has been but a dream of fancy and a “figment of idle brains.” All the communion we have ever had with Him has been but an illusion and a trance and all the hopes we have of beholding His face in Glory and of being satisfied when we awake in His likeness are but the foulest delusions that ever cheated the hopes of man.

Oh, my Brethren, and can any of you believe that the blood of all the martyrs has been shed as a witness to a *lie*? Have all those who have rotted in Roman dungeons, or have been burned at the stake because they witnessed that Christ was God, died in vain? Verily, if Christ is not God, we are of all men the most miserable. To what purpose is the calumny and abuse that we have had to endure day after day? To what purpose are our repentance, our sighs, our tears? To what purpose is our faith? To what purpose have our fears and bodings been supplanted by our hope and confidence? To what purpose our joy and our rejoicing, if Christ is not the Son of God? Will you put yourselves all down for fools—can you imagine that God’s Word has misguided you? That Prophets and Apostles and martyrs and saints, have all leagued together to lead you into a trap and to delude your souls?

God forbid that we should think such a thing. There is no folly in the world that has in it so much madness, compared with the folly of denying the Divinity of Christ and then professing to be His followers. No, Beloved—

***“Let all the forms that men devise,
Assault our faith with treacherous art—
We’ll call them vanity and lies,
And bind the Gospel to our heart!”***

We will write this on the forefront of our banner—Christ is God—co-equal and co-eternal with His Father—very God of very God, who counted it not robbery to be equal with God.

II. This brings me to the second part of the subject—HOW DO WE CALL CHRIST THE MIGHTY GOD? Here there is no dispute whatever. I am now about to speak of matters of pure fact. Whether Christ is mighty God or not, it is quite certain that we are in the constant habit of calling

Him so. Not, I mean, by the mere utterance of the term, but we do so in a stronger way—in fact—and actions speak louder than words. Now, Beloved, I will soon prove that you and I are in the habit of calling Christ God. And I will prove it first, because it is our delight and our joy and our privilege to attribute to Him the attributes of Deity.

In hours of devout contemplation, how often do we look up to Him as being the Eternal Son? You and I sit down in our chambers and in our House of Prayer and as we muse upon the great Covenant of Grace, we are in the habit of speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ's everlasting love to His people. This is one of the jewels of our life, one of the ornaments with which we array ourselves as a bride does. This is a part of the manna that tastes like wafers made with honey upon which our souls are desirous to feed. Speak of God's eternal love, of our names having been inscribed in His eternal book and of Christ's having borne them from before the foundation of the world upon His breast, as our great High Priest, our Mediator before the Throne of Heaven. In so doing, we have virtually called Him the mighty God. Because none but God could have been from everlasting to everlasting. As often as we profess the doctrine of election, we call Christ the mighty God. As often as we talk of the Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, so often do we proclaim Him to be God—because we speak of Him as an Everlasting One and none could be from everlasting but One who is self-existent—who is God.

Again—how frequently do we repeat over to ourselves that precious verse—

***“Jesus Christ the same yesterday
and today and forever”?***

We are always in the habit of ascribing to Him immutability. Some of our choicest hymns are founded on that circumstance and our richest hopes flow from that attribute. We know that all things will change. We are convinced that we ourselves are mutable as the winds and as easily moved as the sand by the waves of the sea. But we know that our Redeemer lives and we cannot entertain a suspicion of any change in His love, His purpose, or His power. How often do we sing—

***“Immutable His will
Though dark may be my frame,
His loving heart is still unchangeably the same.
My soul through many changes goes—
His love no variation knows!”***

Do you not see that you have in fact called him God, because none but God is immutable? The creature changes. This is written on the forefront of creation—“Change!” The mighty ocean, that knows no furrows on its brow, changes at times and at times shifts its level. It moves here and

there and we know that it is to be licked up with forked tongues of flame and yet we ascribe to Christ immutability. We do, then, in fact, ascribe to Him Divinity—for none but the Divine can be immutable. Is it not also our joy to believe that wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there is He in the midst of them? Do we not repeat it in all our Prayer Meetings? Perhaps some minister in Australia began the solemnities of public worship this day with the reflection that Jesus Christ was with him, according to His promise and I know that as I came here the same reflection comforted me, "Yes, I am with you always even to the end of the world." Wherever a Christian is found, there is God. And though there are but two or three met in a barn, or on the greensward under the canopy of God's blue sky, yet there Christ vouchsafes His presence.

Now I ask you, have we not ascribed to Christ, Omnipresent? And who can be Omnipresent but God? Have we not thus, in fact, though not in words, called Christ "God"? How is it possible for us to dream of Him as being here and there and everywhere—in the bosom of His Father, with the angels and in the hearts of the contrite all at the same time—if He were not God? Grant me that He is Omnipresent and you have said that He is God, for none but God can be present everywhere.

Again, are we not also desirous to ascribe to Christ Omniscience? You believe when your heart is aching that Christ knows your pains and that He reckons every groan. Or at least if you do not believe it, it is always my satisfaction to know that—

***"He feels at His heart,
All my sighs and my groans."***

And so He does yours. Wherever you are, you believe that He hears your prayers, that He sees your tears, that He knows your wants, that He is ready to pardon your sins. You believe that you are better known to Him than you are to yourself. You believe that He searches your hearts and tries your reins and that you never can come to Him without finding Him full of sympathy and full of love. Now do you not see that you have ascribed Omniscience to Him? Therefore, though not in words, you have, in accents louder than words, called Him the mighty God, for you have assumed that He is Omniscient. And who can be Omniscient but the very God of very God? I shall not stop to descant upon the other attributes, but I think we might prove that we have each of us ascribed to Christ all the attributes of the Godhead in our daily life and in our constant trust and intercession. I am sure that it is true of many loving hearts of God's own children here. We have called Him the mighty God and if others have not called Him so, nevertheless the text is verified by our faith. "He shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God." So He is and so He shall be, world without end.

And now I have another proof to offer, that Christ is called “the mighty God.” We call Him so in many of His offices. We believe this morning that Christ is the Mediator between God and man. If we would understand the term mediator, we must interpret it as Job did—one “that might lay his hand upon us both.” We are accustomed to say that Jesus Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant and we offer our prayers to God through Him because we believe that He mediates between us and the Father. Let it once be granted, then, that Christ is the Mediator and you have asserted His Divinity—you have virtually called Him the Son of God. And you have granted His humanity, for He must put His hand upon both. Therefore He must put His hand upon man in our nature—He must be touched with a feeling of our infirmities and be in all points like as we are. But He is not a Mediator unless He can put His hand upon God, unless as Fellow of the Eternal One, He shall be able without blasphemy to place His hand upon the Divine Being.

There is no mediatorship unless the hand is put on both and who could put His hand on God but God? Can cherubim or seraphim talk of laying their hands on the Divine? Shall they touch the Infinite? “Dark with insufferable light His garments appear”—then what is He Himself in the glorious Essence of Deity?—an all-devouring and consuming fire. Only God can put His hand on God and yet Christ has this high prerogative, for mark, there is no mediatorship established—there cannot be—unless the two are linked. If you wished to build a bridge you might commence on this side of the river—but if you have not connected it with the other side—you have not built the bridge. There can be no mediatorship unless the parties are fully linked. The ladder must have its feet on earth but it must reach to Heaven, for if there were a single breach we should fall from its summit and perish. There must be entire communication between the two. Do you not see, therefore that in calling Christ Mediator we have in fact called Him the mighty God?

But again—we call Christ our Savior. Now, have any of you that foolish credulity which would lead you to trust in a *man* for the everlasting salvation of your soul? If you have, I pity you—your proper place is not in a Protestant assembly, but among the deluded votaries of Rome. If you can commit the keeping of your soul to one like yourself, I must indeed mourn over you and pray that you may be taught better. But you trust your salvation to Him whom God has set forth for a propitiation, do you not, O follower of Jesus? Can you not say all your hope is fixed on Him, for He is all your salvation and all your desire? Does not your spirit rest on that unbuttressed pillar of His entire satisfaction, His precious death and burial, His glorious resurrection and ascension?

Now, observe, you are either resting on man, or else you have declared Christ to be “the mighty God.” When I say I put my faith in Him, I do most honestly declare that I dare not trust even to Him, if I did not believe Him to be God. I could not put my trust in any being that was merely created. God forbid that my folly should ever go to such an extent as that. I would sooner trust myself than trust any other man and yet I dare not trust myself, for I should be accursed. “Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.” And would the Socinian have me to believe that I am to preach faith in Christ and that yet, if my Hearers trust Christ, they will be accursed, as they assuredly must be, if He is nothing but man? For again I repeat it—“cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.” You get a blessing by faith in Jesus, but how? Is it not because—“Blessed is he that trusts in the Lord and whose hope the Lord is?” Christ is very Jehovah and therefore the blessing comes to those who trust in Him. So, then, as often as you put your trust in Jesus, for time and eternity, you have called Him, “the mighty God.”

This subject is capable of the greatest expansion and I do believe there is sufficient interest attaching to it to warrant me in keeping you to a late hour this day, but I shall not do so. There has been enough said, I think, to prove at least that we are in the habit continually of calling Christ “the mighty God.”

III. My third proposition is to explain to you how CHRIST HAS PROVED HIMSELF TO US TO BE “THE MIGHTY God.” And here Beloved, without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness, for the passage from which the text is taken says, “Unto us a Child is born.” A child! What can that do? A child totters in its walk, it trembles in its steps—and it is a child newly born. Born!—an infant hanging on its mother’s breast, an infant deriving its nourishment from a woman? What? Can that work wonders? Yes, said the Prophet, “Unto us a Child is born.”

But then it is added, “Unto us a Son is given.” Christ was not only born, but given. As Man He is a Child *born*, as God He is the Son *given*. He emotes down from on high—He is given by God to become our Redeemer. But here behold the wonder! His name is named! This child’s name “shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God.” Is this child, then, to us the mighty God? If so, O Brethren, without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness, indeed! And yet, just let us look, look through the history of the Church and discover whether we have not ample evidence to substantiate it. This Child born, this Son given, came into the world to enter into the battle against sin. For thirty years and upwards He had to struggle and wrestle against temptations more numerous and more terrible than man had ever known before. Adam fell when but a woman tempted him. Eve fell when but a serpent offered fruit to her—but

Christ—the second Adam, stood invulnerable against all the shafts of Satan though tempted He was in all points, like as we are.

Not one arrow out of the quiver of Hell was spared—the whole were shot against Him. Every arrow was aimed against Him with all the might of Satan's army and that is not little! And yet, without sin or taint of sin, more than conqueror He stood. Foot to foot with Satan, in the solitude of the wilderness—hand to hand with him on the top of the pinnacle of the temple—side by side with him in the midst of a busy crowd—yet ever more than conqueror. He gave him battle wherever the adversary willed to meet Him and at last, when Satan gathered up all his might and seized the Savior in the garden of Gethsemane and crushed him till He sweat as it were, great drops of blood—then when the Savior said, “Nevertheless, not as I will but as You will”—the tempter was repulsed. “Go! Go!” Christ seemed to say. And away the tempter fled, nor dare return again. Christ, in all His conquests over sin, seems to me to have established His Godhead. I never heard of any other creature that could endure such temptation as this.

Look at the angels in Heaven. How temptation entered there I know not, but this I know, that Satan, the great archangel, sinned and I know that he became the tempter to the rest of his companions and drew with him a third part of the stars of Heaven. Angels were but little tempted—some of them not tempted at all—and yet they fell. And then look at man—slight was his temptation—yet he fell. It is not in a creature to stand against temptation. He will yield, if the temptation is strong enough. But Christ stood and it seems to me, that in His standing He proved Himself to have the most radiant purity, the immaculate holiness of Him before whom angels veil their faces and cry—

“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth.”

But these proofs might appear insufficient if He did not accomplish more than this. We know also that Christ proved Himself to be the “mighty God” from the fact that at last all the sins of all His people were gathered upon His shoulders and, “He bare them in His own body on the tree.” The heart of Christ became like a reservoir in the midst of mountains. All the tributary streams of iniquity and every drop of the sins of His people, ran down and gathered into one vast lake, deep as Hell and shoreless as eternity. All these met, as it were, in Christ's heart and yet He endured them all. With many a sign of human weakness, but with convincing signs of Divine Omnipotence, He took all our griefs and carried all our sorrows. The Divinity within strengthened His Manhood and though wave after wave rolled over His head, till He sank in deep mire where there was no standing and all God's waves and His billows had gone over Him—yet did He lift up His head and more than a conqueror, at length, He put the sins of His people to a public execution. They are dead.

They have ceased to be. And, if they are sought for, they shall not be found any more. Certainly if this is true, He is “the mighty God,” indeed.

But He did more than this, He descended into the grave and there He slept, fast fettered with the cold chains of death. But the appointed hour arrived—the sunlight of the third day gave the warning and He snapped the bands of death as if they were but thread and came forth to life as “the Lord of life and glory.” His flesh did not see corruption, for He was not able to be held by the bands of death. And who shall be the death of death, the plague of the grave, the destroyer of destruction, but God? Who but immortal life, who but the self-existent, shall trample out the fires of Hell? Who, but He whose Being is eternal, without beginning and without end, shall burst the shackles of the grave? He proved Himself, then, when He led captivity captive and crushed Death and ground his iron limbs to powder—He proved Himself, then to be the mighty God!

Oh, my Soul, you can say that He has proved Himself in your heart to be a mighty God. Sins many has He forgiven you and relieved your conscience of the keen sense of guilt. Grievs innumerable has He assuaged. Temptations insurmountable has He overcome. Virtues once impossible has He implanted, grace in its fullness has He promised and in its measure He has given. My soul bears record that what has been done for me could never have been done by a mere man. And you would rise from your seats, I am sure, if it were needful, and say, “Yes, He that has loved me, washed me from my sins and made me what I am, must be God, none but God could do what He has done—could bear so patiently—could bless so lavishly, forgive so freely, enrich so infinitely. He is, He must be—we will crown Him such—“The mighty God.”

And in conclusion, lest I weary you, permit me now to say I beg and beseech of you all present, as God the Spirit shall help you, come and put your trust in Jesus Christ. He is “the mighty God.” Oh, Christians, believe Him more than ever. Cast your troubles constantly on Him. He is “the mighty God.” Go to Him in all your dilemmas, when the enemy comes in like a flood, this mighty God shall make a way for your deliverance. Take to Him your griefs, this mighty God can alleviate them all. Tell Him your backslidings and sins—this mighty God shall blot them out.

And, O Sinners, you that feel your need of a Savior, come to Christ and trust Him for He is “the mighty God.” Go to your houses and fall on your knees and confess your sins and then cast your poor, guilty, helpless, naked, defenseless souls before His Omnipotence, for He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. When He died He was not manhood without Divinity, but He was “the mighty God.” This, I say, we will write on our banners, from this day forth and forever. This shall be

our joy and our song—the Child born and the Son given is to us “the mighty God.”

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A CHRISTMAS QUESTION

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**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 25, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.”
Isaiah 9:6.***

UPON other occasions I have explained the main part of this verse—“the government shall be upon His shoulders, His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God.” If God shall spare me, on some future occasion I hope to take the other titles, “The Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” But now this morning the portion which will engage our attention is this, “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.” The sentence is a double one, but it has in it no tautology. The careful reader will soon discover a distinction. And it is not a distinction without a difference. “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.”

As Jesus Christ is a Child in His human nature, He is born, begotten of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. He is as truly-born, as certainly a Child, as any other man that ever lived upon the face of the earth. He is thus in His humanity a Child born. But as Jesus Christ is God’s Son, He is not born. But given, begotten of His Father from before all worlds, begotten—not made, being of the same substance with the Father. The doctrine of the eternal affiliation of Christ is to be received as an undoubted truth of our holy religion. But as to any explanation of it, no man should venture thereon, for it remains among the deep things of God—one of those solemn mysteries, indeed, into which the angels dare not look, nor do they desire to pry into it—a mystery which we must not attempt to fathom, for it is utterly beyond the grasp of any finite being.

As well might a gnat seek to drink in the ocean, as a finite creature to comprehend the Eternal God. A God whom we could understand would be no God. If we could grasp Him He could not be infinite. If we could understand Him, then were He not Divine. Jesus Christ then, I say, as a Son, is not born to us, but given. He is a blessing bestowed on us, “For God so loved the world, that He sent His only begotten Son into the world.” He was not born in this world as God’s Son, but He was sent, or was given, so that you clearly perceive that the distinction is a suggestive one and conveys much good truth to us. “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.”

This morning, however, the principal object of my discourse and, indeed, the sole one, is to bring out the force of those two little words, “unto

us.” For you will perceive that here the full force of the passage lies. “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.” The divisions of my discourse are very simple ones. First, is it so? Secondly, if it is so, what then? Thirdly, if it is not so, what then?

I. In the first place, Is it so? Is it true that unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given? It is a fact that a Child is born. Upon that I use no argument. We receive it as a fact, more fully established than any other fact in history, that the Son of God became man, was born at Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger. It is a fact, too, that a Son is given. About that we have no question. The infidel may dispute, but we, professing to be believers in Scripture, receive it as an undeniable Truth of God—that God has given His only begotten Son to be the Savior of men. But the matter of question is this—Is this Child born to *us*? Is He given to *us*? This is the matter of anxious enquiry. Have we a personal interest in the Child that was born at Bethlehem? Do we know that He is our Savior?—that He has brought glad tidings to us?—that to us He belongs? That we belong to Him? I say this is matter of very grave and solemn investigation.

It is a very observable fact, that the very best of men are sometimes troubled with questions with regard to their own interest in Christ. But men who never are troubled at all about the matter are very frequently presumptuous deceivers, who have no part in this matter. I have often observed that some of the people about whom I felt most sure were the very persons who were the least sure of themselves. It reminds me of the history of a godly man named Simon Brown, a minister in the olden times in the City of

London. He became so extremely sad in heart, so depressed in spirit, that at last he conceived the idea that his soul was annihilated.

It was all in vain to talk to the good man, you could not persuade him that he had a soul. But all the time he was preaching and praying and working, like a man that had two souls than none. When he preached, his eyes poured forth plenteous floods of tears and when he prayed, there was a Divine fervor and heavenly prevalence in every petition. Now so it is with many Christians. They seem to be the very picture of godliness—their life is admirable and their conversation heavenly, but yet they are always crying—

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

So does it happen, that the best of men will question while the worst of men will presume.

Yes, I have seen the men about whose eternal destiny I had serious questioning, whose inconsistencies in life were palpable and glaring. They

have prated concerning their sure portion in Israel and their infallible hope, as though they believed others to be as easily duped as themselves. Now, what reason shall we give for this foolhardiness? Learn it from this illustration—You see a number of men riding along a narrow road upon the edge of the sea. It is a very perilous path, for the way is rugged and a tremendous precipice bounds the pathway on the left. Let but the horse's foot slip once and they dash downwards to destruction. See how cautiously the riders journey, how carefully the horses place their feet. But do you observe yon rider, at what a rate he dashes along, as if he were riding a steeplechase with Satan?

You hold up your hands in an agony of fear, trembling lest any moment his horse's foot should slip and he should be dashed down. And you ask, why so careless a rider? The man is a blind rider on a blind horse. They cannot see where they are. He thinks he is on a sure road and therefore it is that he rides so fast. Or to vary the picture—sometimes when persons are asleep, they take to walking and they will climb where others will not think of venturing. Giddy heights that would turn our brain seem safe enough to them.

So there are many spiritual sleep-walkers in our midst, who think that they are awake. But they are not. Their very presumption in venturing to the high places of self-confidence proves that they are sleep walkers. Not awake, but men who walk and talk in their sleep. It is, then, I say, really a matter of serious questioning with all men who would be right at last, as to whether this Child is born to us and this Son given to us—I shall now help you to answer the question.

1. If this Child who now lies before the eyes of your faith, wrapped in swaddling clothes in Bethlehem's manger, is born to you, my Hearer, then *you* are born again! For this Child is not born to you unless you are born to this Child. All who have an interest in Christ are, in the fullness of time, by Grace converted, quickened and renewed. All the redeemed are not yet converted, but they will be. Before the hour of death arrives their nature shall be changed, their sins shall be washed away, they shall pass from death unto life. If any man tells me that Christ is his Redeemer, although he has never experienced regeneration, that man utters what he does not know. His religion is vain and his hope is a delusion.

Only men who are born again can claim the babe in Bethlehem as being theirs. "But" says one, "how am I to know whether I am born again or not?" Answer this question also by another—has there been a change effected by Divine Grace within you? Are your loves the very opposite of what they were? Do you now hate the vain things you once admired and do you seek after that precious pearl which you at one time despised? Is your heart thoroughly renewed in its object? Can you say that the bent of your desire is changed? That your face is Zion-ward and your feet set upon the path of Grace? That whereas your heart once longed for deep

draughts of sin, it now longs to be holy? And whereas you once loved the pleasures of the world, they have now become as chaff and dross to you, for you only love the pleasures of heavenly things and are longing to enjoy more of them on earth, that you may be prepared to enjoy a fullness of them hereafter?

Are you renewed within? For mark, my Hearer, the new birth does not consist in washing the outside of the cup and platter, but in cleansing the inner man. It is all in vain to put up the stone upon the sepulcher, wash it extremely white and garnish it with the flowers of the season. The sepulcher itself must be cleansed. The dead man's bones that lie in that morgue of the human heart must be cleansed away. No, they must be made to *live*. The heart must no longer be a tomb of death, but a temple of life. Is it so with you, my Hearer? For remember, you may be very different in the outward, but if you are not changed in the inward, this Chile is not born to you.

But I put another question. Although the main matter of regeneration lies within, yet it *manifests itself without*. Say, then, has there been a change in you in the exterior? Do you think that others who look at you would be compelled to say, This man is not what he used to be? Do not your companions observe a change? Have they not laughed at you for what they think to be your hypocrisy, your Puritanism, your sternness? Do you think now that if an angel should follow you into your secret life, should track you to your closet and see you on your knees, that he would detect something in you which he could never have seen before? For, mark, my dear Hearer, there *must* be a change in the outward life, or else there is no change within. In vain you bring me to the tree and say that the tree's nature is changed. If I still see it bringing forth wild grapes, it is a wild vine still. And if I mark upon you the apples of Sodom and the grapes of Gomorrah you are still a tree accursed and doomed, notwithstanding all your fancied experience.

The proof of the Christian is in the *living*. To other men, the proof of our conversion is not what you feel, but what you do. To yourself your feelings may be good enough evidence, but to the minister and others who judge you, the outward walk is the main guide. At the same time, let me observe that a man's outward life may be very much like that of a Christian and yet there may be no religion in him at all. Have you ever seen two jugglers in the street with swords, pretending to fight with one another? See how they cut and slash and hack at one another, till you are half afraid there will soon be murder done. They seem to be so very much in earnest that you are half in the mind to call in the police to part them. See with what violence that one has aimed a terrific blow at the other one's head, which his comrade dexterously warded off by keeping a well-timed guard.

Just watch them a minute and you will see that all these cuts and thrusts come in a prearranged order. There is no heart in the fighting af-

ter all. They do not fight so roughly as they would if they were real enemies. So, sometimes I have seen a man pretending to be very angry against sin. But watch him a little while and you will see it is only a fencer's trick. He does not give his cuts out of order, there is no earnestness in his blows. It is all pretense, it is only mimic stage play. The fencers, after they have ended their performance, shake hands with one another and divide the coppers which the gaping throng have given them. And so does this man do—he shakes hands with the devil in private and the two deceivers share the spoil.

The hypocrite and the devil are very good friends after all and they mutually rejoice over their profits. The devil leering because he has won the soul of the professor and the hypocrite laughing because he has won his wealth. Take care, then, that your outward life is not a mere stage play, but that your antagonism to sin is real and intense—and that you strike right and left, as though you meant to slay the monster and cast its limbs to the winds of Heaven.

I will put another question. If you have been born again, there is another matter by which to try you. Not only is your inward self altered and your outward self, too, but the very root and principle of your life must become totally new. When we are in sin we live to self, but when we are renewed we live to God. While we are unregenerate, our principle is to seek our own pleasure, our own advancement. But that man is not truly born again who does not live with a far different aim from this. Change a man's principles and you change his feelings, you change his actions. Now Grace changes the principles of man. It lays the axe at the root of the tree. It does not saw away at some big limb. It does not try to alter the sap. But it gives a new root and plants us in fresh sod.

The man's inmost self, the deep rocks of his principles upon which the topsoil of his actions rest—the soul of his manhood is thoroughly changed and he is a new creature in Christ. "But," says one, "I see no reason why I should be born again." Ah, poor creature, it is because you have never seen yourself. Did you ever see a man in the looking glass of the Word of God—what a strange monster he is. Do you know a man by nature has his heart where his feet ought to be—that is to say, his heart is set upon the earth, whereas he ought to be treading it beneath his feet. And stranger mystery still, his heels are where his heart should be—that is to say, he is kicking against the God of Heaven when he ought to be setting his affections on things above. Man by nature when he sees clearest only looks down—can only see that which is beneath him—he cannot see the things which are above.

And strange to say, the sunlight of Heaven blinds him. Light from Heaven he looks not for. He asks for his light in darkness. The earth is to him his Heaven and he sees suns in its muddy pools and stars in its filth. He is, in fact, a man turned upside down. The Fall has so ruined our na-

ture, that the most monstrous thing on the face of the earth is a fallen man. The ancients used to paint griffins, dragons, chimeras and all kinds of hideous things. But if a skillful hand could paint man accurately none of us would look at the picture, for it is a sight that none ever saw except the lost in Hell. And that is one part of their intolerable pain, that they are compelled always to look upon themselves. Now, then, if you cannot see that you must be born again this Chile is not born to you.

2. But I go forward. If this Child is born to you, you are a Chile and the question arises, are you so? Man grows from childhood up to manhood naturally. In Grace men grow from manhood down to childhood. And the nearer we come to true childhood, the nearer we come to the image of Christ. For was not Christ called “a Chile,” even after He had ascended up to Heaven? “Your holy Chile Jesus.” Brothers and Sisters, can you say that you have been made into children? Do you take God’s Word just as it stands, simply because your heavenly Father says so? Are you content to believe mysteries without demanding to have them explained? Are you ready to sit in the infant class and be a little one?

Are you willing to hang upon the breast of the Church and suck in the unadulterated milk of the Word—never questioning for a moment what your Divine Lord reveals? Believing it on His own authority, whether it seemed to be above reason, or beneath reason, or even contrary to reason? Now, “except you be converted and become as little children,” this Chile is not born to you. Except like a Chile you are humble, teachable, obedient, pleased with your Father’s will and willing to assign all to Him, there is grave matter of question whether this Child is born to you.

But what a pleasing sight it is to see a man converted and made into a little Chile. Many times has my heart leaped for joy, when I have seen a giant infidel who used to reason against Christ—who had not a word in his dictionary bad enough for Christ’s people—come by Divine Grace to believe the Gospel. That man sits down and weeps, feels the full power of salvation and from that time drops all his questioning. He becomes the very reverse of what he was. He thinks himself meaner than the meanest Believer. He is content to do the meanest work for the Church of Christ and takes his station—not with Locke or Newton, as a mighty Christian philosopher—but with Mary as a simple learner, sitting at Jesus’ feet, to hear and learn of Him. If you are not children, then this Chile is not born to you.

3. And now let us take the second sentence and put a question or two upon that. Is this Son given to us? I pause a minute to beg your personal attention. I am trying, if I may, so to preach that I may make you all question yourselves. I pray let not one of you exempt himself from the ordeal but let each one ask himself, is it true that unto me a Son is given? Now, if this Son is given to you, you are a son yourself. “For unto as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God.” “Christ

became a Son that in all things He might be made like unto His brethren." The Son of God is not mine to enjoy, to love, to delight in, unless I am a son of God, too.

Now, my Hearer, have you a fear of God before your eyes—a filial fear, a fear which a Child has lest it should grieve its parent? Say, have you a Child's love to God? Do you trust to Him as your Father, your Provider and your Friend? Have you in your breast, "The spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father"? Are there times with you when on your knees you can say, "My Father and my God"? Does the Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you are born of God? And while this witness is born, does your heart fly up to your Father and to your God, in ecstasy of delight to clasp Him who long ago has clasped you in the covenant of His love, in the arms of His effectual Grace? Now, mark my Hearer, if you do not sometimes enjoy the spirit of adoption, if you are not a son or daughter of Zion, then deceive not yourself, this Son is not given to you.

4. And, then, to put it in another shape. If unto us a Son is given, then we are given to the Son. Now, what do you say to this question, also? Are you given up to Christ? Do you feel that you have nothing on earth to live for but to glorify Him? Can you say in your heart, "Great God, if I am not deceived I am wholly Yours?" Are you ready today to write over again your consecration vow? Can you say, "Take me! All that I am and all I have, shall be forever Yours. I would give up all my goods, all my powers, all my time and all my hours and Yours I would be—wholly Yours." "You are not your own—you are bought with a price." And if this Son of God is given to you, you will have consecrated yourself wholly to Him. And you will feel that His honor is your life's object, that His glory is the one great desire of your panting spirit.

Now is it so, my Hearer? Ask yourself the question, I pray, and do not deceive yourself in the answer. I will just repeat the four different proofs again. If unto me a Child is born then I have been born again. And, moreover, I am now in consequence of that new birth, a Child. If, again, a Son has been given to me, then I am a son. And again I am given to that Son who is given to me. I have tried to put these tests in the way that the text would suggest them. I pray you carry them home with you. If you do not remember the words, yet remember to search yourselves and see, my Hearers, whether you can say, "Unto me this Son is given." For, indeed, if Christ is not my Christ, He is of little worth to me. If I cannot say He loved me and gave Himself for me, of what avail is all the merit of His righteousness, or all the plenitude of His atonement?

Bread in the shop is well enough, but if I am hungry and cannot get it, I starve although granaries be full. Water in the river is well enough but if I am in a desert and cannot reach the stream, if I can hear it in the distance and am yet lying down to die of thirst—the murmuring of the rill, or the flowing of the river only helps to tantalize me while I die in dark de-

spair. Better for you, my Hearers to have perished as Hottentots, to have gone down to your graves as dwellers in some benighted land, than to live where the name of Christ is continually hymned and where His glory is extolled and yet to go down to your tombs without an interest in Him, unblest by His Gospel, unwashed in His blood, unclothed of His robe of righteousness. God help you, that you may be blessed in Him and may sing sweetly, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given."

II. This brings me to my second head, upon which I shall be brief. Is it so? IF IT IS SO, WHAT THEN? If it is so, why am I doubtful today? Why is my spirit questioning? Why do I not realize the fact? My hearer, if the Son is given to you, how is it that you are this day asking whether you are Christ's, or not? Why do you not labor to make your calling and election sure? Why tarry in the plains of doubt? Get up, get up to the high mountains of confidence. Never rest till you can say without a fear, "I know that my Redeemer lives. I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him."

I may have a large number of persons here to whom it is a matter of uncertainty as to whether Christ is theirs or not. Oh, my dear Hearers, rest not content unless you know assuredly that Christ is yours and that you are Christ's. Suppose you should see in tomorrow's newspaper—(although, by the way, if you believed anything you saw there you would probably be mistaken)—but suppose you should see a notification that some rich man had left you an immense estate. Suppose, as you read it, you were well aware that the person mentioned was a relative of yours and that it was likely to be true. It may be you have prepared tomorrow for a family meeting and you are expecting brother John and sister Mary and their little ones to dine with you.

But I very much question whether you would not be away from the head of the table to go and ascertain whether the fact were really so. "Oh," you could say, "I am sure I should enjoy my Christmas dinner all the better if I were quite sure about this matter." And all day, if you did not go, you would be on the tiptoe of expectation. You would be, as it were, sitting upon pins and needles until you knew whether it were a fact or not.

Now there is a proclamation gone forth today and it is a true one, too, that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners. The question with you is whether He has saved you and whether you have an interest in Him. I beseech you, give no sleep to your eyes and no slumber to your eyelids, till you have read your "title clear to mansions in the skies." What, man? Shall your eternal destiny be a matter of uncertainty to you? What! is Heaven or Hell involved in this matter and will you rest until you know which of these shall be your everlasting portion? Are you content while it is a question whether God loves you, or whether He is angry with you? Can you be easy while you remain in doubt as to whether you are condemned in sin, or justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus?

Get up, Man. I beseech you by the living God and by yours own soul's safety, get up and read the records. Search and look and try and test yourself to see whether it is so or not. For if it is so, why should not we know it? If the Son is given to me, why should not I be sure of it? If the Child is born to me, why should I not know it for a certainty, that I may even now live in the enjoyment of my privilege—a privilege, the value of which I shall never know to the full, till I arrive in Glory?

Again—if it is so, another question. Why are we sad? I am looking upon faces just now that appear the very reverse of gloomy, but maybe the smile covers an aching heart. Brothers and Sisters, why are we sad this morning, if unto us a Child is born, if unto us a Son is given? Hark, hark to the cry! It is “Harvest home! Harvest home!” See the maidens as they dance and the young men as they make merry! And why is this mirth? Because they are storing the precious fruits of the earth, they are gathering together unto their barns wheat which will soon be consumed. And what, Brothers and Sisters, have we the bread which endures to eternal life and are we unhappy?

Does the worldling rejoice when his corn is increased and do we not rejoice when, “Unto us a Child is born and unto us a Son is given”? Hark, yonder! What means the firing of the Tower guns? Why all this ringing of bells in the Church steeples, as if all London were mad with joy? There is a Prince born. Therefore there is this salute and therefore are the bells ringing. Ah, Christians, ring the bells of your hearts, fire the salute of your most joyous songs, “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.” Dance, O my Heart, and ring out peals of gladness! You drops of blood within my veins dance every one of you! Oh, all my nerves become harp strings and let gratitude touch you with angelic fingers! And you, my tongue, shout—shout to His praise who has said to you—“Unto you a Child is born, unto you a Son is given.”

Wipe that tear away! Come, stop that sighing! Hush yon murmuring. What matters your poverty? “Unto you a Child is born.” What matters your sickness? “Unto you a Son is given.” What matters your sin? For this Child shall take the sin away and this Son shall wash and make you fit for Heaven. I say, if it is so—

***“Lift up the heart, lift up the voice,
Rejoice aloud! You saints rejoice!”***

But, once more, if it is so, what then? Why are our hearts so cold? And why is it that we do so little for Him who has done so much for us? Jesus, are You mine? Am I saved? How is it that I love You so little? Why is it that when I preach I am not more in earnest and when I pray I am not more intensely fervent? How is it that we give so little to Christ who gave Himself for us? How is it that we serve Him so sadly who served us so perfectly?

He consecrated Himself wholly—how is it that our consecration is marred and partial? Why are we continually sacrificing to self and not to Him? O Beloved, yield yourselves up this morning. What have you got in the world? “Oh,” says one, “I have nothing. I am poor and penniless and all but homeless.” Give yourself to Christ. You have heard the story of the pupils to a Greek philosopher. On a certain day it was the custom to give to the philosopher a present. One came and gave him gold. Another could not bring him gold but brought him silver. One brought him a robe and another some delicacy for food. But one of them came up and said, “Oh, Solon, I am poor, I have nothing to give to you, but yet I will give you something better than all these have given. I give you myself.”

Now, if you have gold and silver, if you have anything of this world’s goods, give in your measure to Christ. But take care, above all, that you give yourself to Him and let your cry be from this day forth—

***“Do not I love You dearest Lord?
Oh search my heart and see,
And turn each cursed idol out
That dares to rival You.
Do not I love You from my soul?
Then let me love nothing.
Dead be my heart to every joy,
When Jesus cannot move.”***

III. Well, now I have all but done, but give your solemn, very solemn attention, while I come to my last head— IF IT IS NOT SO, WHAT THEN? Dear hearer, I cannot tell where you are—but wherever you may be in this hall, the eyes of my heart are looking for you, that when they have seen you, they may weep over you. Ah, miserable Wretch, without a hope, without Christ, without God. Unto you there is no Christmas mirth, for to you no Child is born. To you no Son is given. Sad is the story of the poor men and women, who during the week before last fell down dead in our streets through cruel hunger and bitter cold. But far more pitiable is *your* lot—far more terrible shall be your condition in the day when you shall cry for a drop of water to cool your burning tongue and it shall be denied you. When you shall seek for death, for grim cold death—seek for Him as for a Friend and yet you shall not find Him.

For the fire of Hell shall not consume you, nor its terrors devour you. You shall long to die, yet shall you linger in eternal death—dying every hour, yet never receiving the much coveted blessing of death. What shall I say to you this morning? Oh, Master, help me to speak a word in season, now. I beseech you, my Hearer, if Christ is not yours this morning, may God the Spirit help you to do what I now command you to do. First of all, confess your sins. Not into my ear, nor into the ear of any living man. Go to your chamber and confess that you are vile. Tell Him you are a wretch undone without His Sovereign Grace.

But do not think there is any merit in confession. There is none. All your confession cannot merit forgiveness, though God has promised to pardon the man who confesses his sin and forsakes it. Imagine that some creditor had a debtor who owed him a thousand pounds. He calls upon him and says, "I demand my money." But, says the other, "I owe you nothing." That man will be arrested and thrown into prison. However, his creditor says, "I wish to deal mercifully with you, make a frank confession and I will forgive you all the debt." "Well," says the man, "I do acknowledge that I owe you two hundred pounds." "No," says he, "that will not do." "Well, Sir, I confess I owe you five hundred pounds," and by degrees he comes to confess that he owes the thousand. Is there any merit in that confession? No.

But yet you could see that no creditor would think of forgiving a debt which was not acknowledged. It is the least that you can do, to acknowledge your sin. And though there are no merit in the confession, yet true to His promise, God will give you pardon through Christ. That is one piece of advice. I pray you take it. Do not throw it to the winds. Do not leave it as soon as you get out of Exeter Hall. Take it with you and may this day become a confession day with many of you.

But next, when you have made a confession, I beseech you renounce yourself. You have been resting perhaps in some hope that you would make yourself better and so save yourself. Give up that delusive fancy. You have seen the silkworm—it will spin and spin and spin and then it will die where it has spun itself a shroud. And your good works are but a spinning for yourself a robe for your dead soul. You can do nothing by your best prayers, your best tears, or your best works, to merit eternal life. The Christian who is converted to God will tell you that he cannot live a holy life by himself.

If the ship in the sea cannot steer itself aright, do you think the wood that lies in the carpenter's yard can put itself together and make itself into a ship and then go out to sea and sail to America? Yet, this is just what you imagine. The Christian who is God's workmanship can do nothing and yet you think you can do something. Now, give up self. God help you to strike a black mark through every idea of what you can do.

Then, lastly and I pray God help you here my dear hearers—when you have confessed your sin and given up all hope of self-salvation—go to the place where Jesus died in agony. Go then in meditation to Calvary. There He hangs. It is the middle Cross of these three. Methinks I see Him now. I see His poor face emaciated and His visage more marred than that of any man. I see the beady drops of blood still standing round His pierced temples—marks of that rugged crown of thorns. Ah, I see His naked body—naked to his shame. We may count all his bones. See there! His hands rent with the rough iron and His feet torn with the nails. The nails have rent through His flesh!

There is now not only the hole through which the nail was driven, but the weight of His body has sunken upon His feet and, look, the iron is tearing through His flesh! And now the weight of His body hangs upon His arms and the nails there are rending through the tender nerves. Hark! Earth is startled! He cries, “Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani?” Oh, Sinner, was ever a shriek like that? God has forsaken Him! His God has ceased to be gracious to Him!

His soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. But hark, again, He cries, “I thirst!” Give Him water! Give him water! You holy women let Him drink. But no, His murderers torture Him. They thrust into His mouth the vinegar mingled with gall—the bitter with the sharp, the vinegar and the gall. At last, hear Him, Sinner, for here is your Hope. I see Him bow His awful head. The King of Heaven dies. The God who made the earth has become a Man and the Man is about to die. Hear Him! He cries, “It is finished!” and He gives up the ghost.

The atonement is finished, the price is paid, the bloody ransom counted down, the sacrifice is accepted. “It is finished!” Sinner, believe in Christ. Cast yourself on Him. Sink or swim, take Him to be your All in All. Throw now your trembling arms around that bleeding Body. Sit now at the feet of that Cross and feel the dropping of the precious blood. And as you go out, each one of you say in your hearts—

***“A guilty, weak and helpless worm,
On Christ’s kind arms I fall,
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my All.”***

God grant you Grace to do so for Jesus Christ’s sake. May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, forever and ever. Amen and Amen.

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

HIS NAME—THE EVERLASTING FATHER NO. 724

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 9, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“The Everlasting Father.”
Isaiah 9:6.*

How complex is the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ! Almost in the same breath the Prophet calls Him a “Child,” and a “Counselor,” a “Son,” and “the Everlasting Father.” This is no contradiction, and to us scarcely a paradox, but it is a mighty marvel that He who was an Infant should at the same time be Infinite—He who was the Man of Sorrows should also be God over all, blessed forever—and that He who is in the Divine Trinity always called the Son, should nevertheless be correctly called “the Everlasting Father.”

How forcibly this should remind us of the necessity of carefully studying and rightly understanding the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ! We must not suppose that we shall understand Him at a glance. A look will save the soul, but patient meditation alone can fill the mind with the knowledge of the Savior. Glorious mysteries are hidden in His Person. He speaks to us in plain language, and He manifests Himself openly in our midst, but yet in His Person itself there is a height and depth which human intellect fails to measure.

When he has looked long and steadily, the devout observer perceives in his Well-Beloved beauties so rare and ravishing that he is lost in wonder! Continued contemplation conducts the soul, by the power of the Holy Spirit, into an elevation of delighted admiration which the less thoughtful know nothing of. So deep is the mystery of the Person of our Lord that He must reveal Himself to us or we shall never know Him! He is not discovered by research nor discerned by reason. “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona,” said Christ to Peter, “for flesh and blood have not revealed this unto you.” “When it pleased God,” says the Apostle, “to reveal His Son in me.”

Another Apostle asked the question, “How is it that You manifest Yourself unto us?” There is no seeing Jesus except by His own light. He is the Door, but no man opens that Door but Jesus Himself, for “He opens, and no man shuts. He shuts, and no man opens.” He is the lesson, but He is also the schoolmaster. He is both key and lock, answer and riddle, way and guide. He is that which is to be seen, for we are to look unto Him, but it is *by* Him that we are enabled to see, for He gives sight to the blind!

Let us then, dear Friends, if we really desire to understand that most excellent of all sciences—the science of Christ Crucified—entreat the Lord Himself to be our Rabbi, and beg to be allowed to sit with Mary at the Master’s feet. Be this our prayer, that “we may know Him,” and be this our desire, that “we may grow in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” For “to know Him is life eternal,” and to be taught of Him is to be “wise unto salvation.”

The title before us is a somewhat difficult one. Some years ago I preached to you from “His Name—Wonderful” [Sermon #214, Volume 4.] I felt I could expatiate upon that with ease. We advanced as far as “Counselor,” and then we halted a while. After a time we were led to preach upon “The Mighty God.” But we have been somewhat diffident of our ability to open up this particular title, for there is a depth in it which we are not able to fathom. This morning I cannot pretend to dive into the profound depths of the Word, but can only skim the surface as the swallow skims the sea. Silver of deep learning and gold of profound thought I have none—but such as I have I give you. If my basket contains nothing more than a barley loaf and a few small fishes, may the Master of the feast multiply the food in the breaking, that there may be food convenient for His people.

It is necessary at the outset to observe that the Messiah is not here called “Father,” by way of any confusion with Him who is pre-eminently called “THE FATHER.” Our Lord’s proper name, so far as the Godhead is concerned, is not the Father, but the Son. Let us beware of confusion. The Son is not the Father, neither is the Father the Son. And though they are one God, essentially and eternally, being forever One and indivisible, yet still the distinction of Persons is to be carefully believed and observed. For the mere word “Persons” we do not contend—it is but a make-shift word, although we know not what better term to use.

But the fact is all-important that the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Father. Our text has no bearing upon the *position* and *titles* of the three Persons with regard to each other. It does not indicate the relation of Deity to itself, but the relation of Jesus Christ to *us*. He is to us “the Everlasting Father.” The light of the text divides itself into three rays—Jesus is Everlasting.” He is a “Father.” He is the “Everlasting Father.”

I. First, Jesus Christ is EVERLASTING. Of Him we may sing with David, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.” A theme for great rejoicing on our part! Rejoice, Believer, in Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever! Jesus always was. The Babe born in Bethlehem was united to the Word which was in the beginning, by whom all things were made. The title by which Jesus Christ revealed Himself to John in Patmos was, “Him which is, and which was, and which is to come.”

“His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow,” to betoken that He is the Ancient of Days. “Before sin was born, or Satan fell, He led the host of morning stars. (Your generation who can tell, or count the number of Your years)?” In His priesthood, Jesus, like unto Melchisedec, “has neither beginning of days nor end of life.” His pedigree is thus declared by Solomon: “When there were no depths, I was brought forth. When there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills were I was brought forth. While as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.

“When He prepared the heavens, I was there. When He set a compass upon the face of the depth: when He established the clouds above: when He strengthened the fountains of the deep: when He gave to the sea His decree that the waters should not pass His commandment: when He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as one brought

up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and My delights were with the sons of men.”

Think not that the Son of God ever commenced to be—

**“Ere the blue heavens were stretched abroad,
From everlasting was the Word;
With God He was; the Word was God,
And must divinely be adored.”**

If He were not God from everlasting, we could not so devoutly love Him. We could not feel that He had any share in the eternal love which is the fountain of all Covenant blessings. He must be eternal who has a part in the eternal purpose! Since our Redeemer was from all eternity with the Father, we trace the stream of Divine love to Himself equally with His Father and the blessed Spirit. We were chosen in Him from before the foundation of the world, and thus in our eternal election He shines forth gloriously.

We bless and praise, and magnify Him that the name, “Son,” does not at all import any time of birth or generation, or of beginning. We know that He is as *eternally* the Son as the Father is eternally the Father, and must be looked upon as God from everlasting. He is “the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: for by Him were all things created that are in Heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they are thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.”

As our Lord always was, so also He is for evermore the same. Jesus is not dead! He ever lives to make intercession for us. He has not ceased to be. He has gone out of sight, but He sits at the right hand of the Father. Of Him we read, “And, You, Lord, in the beginning have laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Your hands: they shall perish, but You remain. And they all shall wax old as does a garment, and as a vesture shall You fold them up, and they shall be changed: but You are the same, and Your years shall not fail.” Jesus is as truly the I AM, as that Jehovah who spoke out of the burning bush to Moses, at Horeb!

He lives! He lives! This is the foundation of your comfort, “Because He lives you shall live also.” “Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find Grace to help in time of need.”

Resort to Him in all your times of need, for He is waiting to bless you still! He is made higher than the heavens, but He still receives sinners and effectually puts away their sins. And since “He ever lives to make intercession for them, He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.” Jesus, our Lord, ever shall be! He could not be called “Everlasting” if it were supposable that He must one day cease to exist! No, Believer, if God shall spare your life to fulfill your full day of threescore years and ten, you shall find that His cleansing fountain is still opened and His precious blood has not lost its power! You shall find that the Priest who filled the healing fount with His own blood still lives to purge you from all iniquity!

When only your last battle remains to be fought you shall find that the hand of your conquering Captain has not grown feeble, nor His arm waxed short. The living Savior shall cheer the living saint! Nor is this all, for when death has taken you away as with a flood, and all the men of your generation have fallen like grass beneath the mower's scythe, Jesus shall live, and you, caught up to Heaven, shall find Him there bearing the dew of His youth! And when the sun's burning eye shall be dim with age, and the lamps of Heaven shall be paled into eternal midnight—when all this world shall melt as melts the winter's ice at the approach of spring—then shall you find the Lord Jesus still remains the perennial spring of joy, and life, and glory to His people!

Living waters you may draw from this sacred well! Jesus always was, He always is, He always shall be! He is eternal in all His attributes, in all His offices, in all His might, and power, and willingness to bless, comfort, guard and crown His chosen people. The connection of the word, "Father," with the word, "Everlasting," allows us very fairly to remark that our Lord is as everlasting as the Father, since He Himself is called "the Everlasting Father," and whatever antiquity paternity may imply is here ascribed to Christ.

According to our common notions, of course, the Father must be before the Son, but we must understand that the terms used in Scripture to represent Deity to us are not intended to be *literally* understood, and rendered in their exact terrestrial sense. They are only so far descriptive as they may be but do not compass the whole Truth of God, for human language utterly fails to convey the very essence and fullness of celestial things. When God condescends to speak to men, who are but as infants before Him, He adopts their childish speech and brings down His loftiness of thought to the littleness of their capacities.

Babes have no words for the thoughts of senators and philosophers, and such matters must be stated in childish language if babes are to know them—and then the statement must inevitably fall far short of the great fact. The relation between the Father and the Son is a case in point. It is not precisely the same as the relation between a father and a son on earth, but that happens to be the nearest approach to it among men. We must beware of stretching and straining the Word in its letter, especially in points where it would make us err from the spirit of the Truth. Christ Jesus is as eternal as the Father or He would never have been called "the Everlasting Father."

It is the manner of the Easterns to call a man the father of a quality for which he is remarkable. To this day, among the Arabs, a wise man is called "the father of wisdom." A very foolish man is called, "the father of folly." The predominant quality in the man is ascribed to him as though it were his *child*, and he the father of it. Now, the Messiah is here called in the Hebrew "the Father of Eternity," by which is meant that He is pre-eminently the possessor of eternity as an attribute. Just as the idiom, "the father of wisdom," implies that a man is pre-eminently wise, so the term, "Father of Eternity," implies that Jesus is pre-eminently *eternal*—that to Him, beyond and above all others—*eternity* may be ascribed.

No language can more forcibly convey to our minds the eternity of our Lord Jesus. No, without straining the language, I may say that not only is *eternity* ascribed to Christ, but He is here declared to be the *parent* of it. Imagination cannot grasp this, for eternity is a thing beyond us! Yet if

eternity should seem to be a thing which can have no parent, be it remembered that Jesus is so surely and essentially eternal that He is here pictured as the Source and Father of eternity. Jesus is not the *child* of eternity, but the Father of it! Eternity did not bring Him forth from its mighty deep, but He brought forth eternity!

Independent, self-sustained, uncreated, eternal existence is with Jesus our Lord and God. In the highest possible sense, then, Jesus Christ is “the Everlasting Father.” I will only pause one minute to draw a practical inference from this doctrine. If our Immanuel is, indeed, eternal and ever-living, let us never think of Him as One dead, whom we have lost, who has ceased to be! What could be a greater sorrow than the thought of a dead Christ? He lives, and lives to care for us. He lives in all the attributes which adorned Him upon earth, as gentle and kind and gracious now as He was then. Come to Him, Christian, rest upon Him now, just as if He were visible in this place, and you can whisper into His ear your troubles, and confess your sins at His feet. He is here *spiritually*. Your eyes cannot see Him, but *faith* will be better evidence to you than eyesight. Trust Him now with your cares! Rest upon Him in your present difficulties!

And you, poor Sinner, if Christ were on this platform would you not come and touch the hem of His garment and cry, “Jesus, let Your pitying eyes look on me and change my heart”? Well, dear Friend, Jesus lives! He is the same today as He was in the streets of Jerusalem. And though your feet cannot bear you to Him, yet your *desires* shall serve you instead of feet! And though your finger cannot touch Him, your *confidence* shall be a hand to you. Trust Him now! He whose love made Him die lives on! His precious blood can never lose its power. Come now, humbly come, and confide in “the Everlasting Father.”

II. We come, in the second place, to the difficult part of the subject, namely, Christ being called FATHER. In what sense is Jesus a Father? Answer, first. He is *federally* a Father representing those who are in Him, as the head of a tribe represents his descendants. The Apostle Paul comes to our help here, for in the memorable chapter in Corinthians he speaks of those who are in Adam, and then he talks of a second Adam.

Adam is the father of all living. He *federally* stood for us in the garden, and federally fell and ruined us all. He was the representative man by whose obedience we should have been blessed, but through whose *disobedience* we have been made sinners. The curse of the Fall comes upon us because Adam stood in a relation towards us in which none of us stand towards our fellows. He was the representative head for us—and what a fall was there when he fell—every one of us in his loins fell in him. “In Adam all die.”

Since his day there has been but one other here to the human race *federally*. It is true, Noah was the father of the present race of men, for we have all sprung from him, but there was no covenant with Noah in which he represented his posterity. There was no condition of obedience by which he might have obtained a reward for us, and no condition of disobedience for the breach of which we are called to smart. The only other man who is a representative man before God is the *second* Adam, the man Christ Jesus, the Lord from Heaven! Brothers and Sisters, we mournfully call Adam father, for we are cast out of Eden by him—and we till the ground with the sweat of our face—in sorrow did our mothers bring us forth, and to the grave in sorrow must we go.

But we who have believed in Jesus call another man Father, namely, the Lord Jesus! And we speak this not sorrowfully but joyfully, for He has opened the gates of a better Paradise. He has taken away the sweat of toil from our faces spiritually, for we who have believed do “enter into rest.” He has borne Himself the pangs which were brought upon us by sin. He took our sicknesses and bore our sorrows, while death itself, the heaviest affliction, He has overcome, so that he that lives and believe in Him shall never die, but pass out of this world into the life celestial!

The grand question for us is this, Are we still under the Old Covenant of works? If so, we have Adam as our father, and under that Adam we died. But are we under the Covenant of Grace? If so, we have Christ as our Father, and in Christ shall we be made alive! Generation makes us the sons of Adam. *Regeneration* acknowledges us as the sons of Christ. In our first birth we come under the fatherhood of the fallen one. In our second birth we enter into the fatherhood of the innocent and perfect One. In our first fatherhood we wear the image of the earthy. In the second we receive the image of the heavenly.

Through our relation to Adam we become corrupt and weak, and the body is put into the grave in dishonor, in corruption, in weakness, in shame. But when we come under the dominion of the *second* Adam we receive strength, and quickening, and inward spiritual life—and therefore our body rises again like seed sown which rises to a glorious harvest in the image of the heavenly—with honor, and power, and happiness, and eternal life! In this sense, then, Christ is called Father, and inasmuch as the Covenant of Grace is older than the Covenant of Works, Christ is, while Adam is not, “the Everlasting Father.” And inasmuch as the Covenant of Works, as far as we are concerned, passes away, being fulfilled in Jesus, and the Covenant of Grace never passes but abides forever, Christ, as the Head of the New Covenant, the federal representative of the great economy of Grace, is “the Everlasting Father.”

Secondly, Christ is a Father in the sense of a Founder. You know, perhaps, or at least you readily remember when I remind you, that the Hebrews are in the habit of calling a man a father of a thing which he invents. For instance, in the fourth chapter of Genesis, Jubal is called the father of such as handle the harp and organ. Jabal was the father of such as dwell in tents and have cattle—not that these were *literally* the fathers of such persons—but the *inventors* of their occupations. Jabal first took upon himself a nomadic tent life and set the example of wandering about with flocks and herds. Jubal first put his fingers to musical strings, and his lips to pipes from which the wind is breathed melodiously.

The Lord Jesus Christ is in this sense the Father of a wonderful system. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ, who brought life and immortality to light, and introduced a new phase of worship to this world is, in that respect, a Father. He is the Father of all Christians—the Father of Christianity—the Father of the entire system under which Divine Grace reigns through righteousness. Jesus is the Father of a great doctrinal system. All the great Truths of God which we are in the habit of delivering in your hearing as the precious Truths sent down from Heaven, fell first, clearly and powerfully, from the lips of Jesus.

These things were dimly hinted at in the ceremonies of the Law, but Christ first of all put them into plain letter so that he who runs may read them. Practically it is Jesus who teaches us the doctrine of electing love. It

is Christ who reveals to us redemption by blood. It is Christ that reveals regeneration by the work of the Spirit, saying plainly, "You must be born-again." It is Christ that reveals the perseverance of the saints. In fact, there is no doctrine of the Christian system which is not so clearly set in the light of His own glorious Spirit by His teaching that we may not fairly call Him the Father of it.

Our great Master is also the Father of a great practical system. If there are any in the world who "love their neighbors as themselves," the Man of Nazareth is their Father, for, albeit that the Law signified all that, yet men had not discovered it, but had misread the Law. "Eye for eye and tooth for tooth" was their version of Law. But Christ comes and says, "I say unto you, Resist not evil. If any man smite you on the one cheek, turn to him the other also." If any man can suffer with patience and can return good for evil, heaping coals of fire upon the head of his foes, this man is a child of Christ!

If men worship God in the spirit and have no confidence in the flesh. If they know no holy place but recognize every place as holy where a holy man is found, such are the true children of Christ, for He said, "They that worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth." He is the Father of *spiritual* worship. It has been common to call Socrates the "father of philosophy." Jesus is Father of the philosophy of salvation! Galen may be the "father of medicine," Jesus is Father of the medicine of souls! Herodotus is credited as the "father of history," but Jesus is the Father of Heaven on earth! He is the Father of disinterested living, of true love to men! He is the Father of forgiving one's enemies, the Father, in fact, of the Divine system of Christian life!

The system of salvation claims Christ to be its Father. Whoever said, "By grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God"? Who but the Apostle of this Man, Christ Jesus? Who told men that it was not by works of righteousness which they had done, but by the merit of His passion and His life that they were saved? Who revealed the way of faith to men but Christ, the great doctrine of, "Believe and live"? And those who receive it may claim Christ as Father. He is the Father of the Christian faith—a faith, my Brothers and Sisters, which has done much already for the world.

For in old Rome it put down the fights in the Coliseum, threw down the bestial gods of heathendom, and albeit that it is doing much for the world even now, and helping to purge the vast Augean stable of humanity, it is to do more still! It is to cast out war. It is to destroy error. It is to regenerate the human race. The Father of this purifying system which is doctrinal and practical, and which has already worked the best results for men, is the Lord Jesus! And since it was devised of old, and will be prolonged as long as the world stands, He is called "the Everlasting Father."

Now, there is a third meaning. The Prophet may not so have understood it, but we so receive it, that Jesus is, in the third place, a Father in the great sense of a Life-Giver. That is the main sense of "father" to the common mind. Through our fathers we are called into this world. Now it is by Christ that there is a communication of Divine energy to the soul. It is through Him, through His teaching—through the Spirit that He has given, through the blood that He has shed—that life is given to those who were dead in trespasses and sins. He that sits upon the throne said,

“Behold, I make all things new.” “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new.”

“This is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” “For as the Father raises up the dead, and quickens them, even so the Son quickens whom He will. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that hear shall live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself.” We know that through Jesus Christ the Divine life is given to us. “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” He gives the living water, and then it is in us “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

He is that living grain of wheat which was cast into the ground to die, that it might not abide alone, but become a root that brings forth fruit, which fruit we now are, receiving life from Him as the stem receives life from the seed from which it sprang. Jesus is our Father in that sense. It is the Spirit of God who operatively quickens the soul and makes us live, but Jesus Christ’s Gospel is the channel through which the Spirit works, and Jesus Christ is the true life to us. Receiving Christ we receive life, and without Him we cannot have life. “He that has the Son has life. He that has not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

As through the energy of Adam this vast world is peopled till hill and dale are covered with a teeming population, so through the life-energy of our Lord Jesus Christ the plains of Heaven and the celestial hills shall be peopled with a throng that no man can number. Out of every realm, a people, speaking every language—having been bronzed by the heats of the torrid zone, or frozen amidst the frosts of the frigid north—Christ shall find a people into whom His quickening shall come, and they shall live through the energy of His Spirit, and He shall be their everlasting Father. It is in this sense, because that life is everlasting and can never die out, that Jesus Christ is called “the Everlasting Father.”

Everything in us calls Christ, “Father.” He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. If we love Him, it is because He first loved us. If we patiently endure, it is by considering “Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself.” He it is who waters and sustains all our graces. We may say of Him, “All my fresh springs are in You.” The Spirit brings us the water from this well of Bethlehem, but Jesus is the Well itself. Spring up, O Well! Spring up, O Well! Divine Father, blessed Jesus, prove Your Fatherhood by re-quickening our souls this morning according to Your Word!

Fourthly, I do not think that we have yet come to the bottom of this title of “Everlasting Father.” The term implies that Jesus Christ is to be in the *future*, the Patriarch of an age. Many translators render the passage, “the Father of the future age.” So Pope in his famous Poem of the Messiah understands it, and calls Him, “The promised Father of the future age.” It has been the custom with men to speak of ages as “the age of brass or iron,” and “the age of gold.”

This age of gold we are always looking for! The world’s face is constantly turned to it—so much so that quacks play upon the simplicity of men and tell them when this golden age is coming and fleece them of their pence—and sometimes of their pounds under the notion that they can tell them somewhat about the good times which are coming. They know nothing

about it whatever. They are blind leaders of the blind. But this one thing is clear to everyone who cares to see it, namely, that such an age of gold *shall* come—that a period far brighter than fancy paints will dawn upon this poor, darkened, enslaved world.

I am always jealous with a godly jealousy lest you should forget this doctrine, or throw it up in disgust because of the shameful way in which it is made merchandize of by others. Brethren, calculate no dates! Sit down to devise no charts, but in your heart be satisfied with this—that there *will* be a kingdom and a reign—and that in that kingdom there shall be no strife to vex the nations. There shall be no affliction to grieve the people. In that kingdom, Jesus, the King, shall be conspicuous and His refulgent glory shall be the light of all the inhabitants. It shall be a New Jerusalem coming down from Heaven, prepared by God, as a bride is prepared for her husband, worthy of her Lord and a meet recompense for the crown of thorns, for the flagellation of His shoulders, for the shame, the spitting, and the Cross!

Lift high the Cross, my Brothers and Sisters, for it shall be lifted high! Speak not of Christ with bated breath, for He comes to be a King. You Christians, think not yourselves, though despised and rejected of men, to be men of a mean birth, for “it does not yet appear what you shall be. But we know that when He shall appear you shall be like He, for you shall see Him as He is.” Joyfully drink the cup of bitterness, for you shall soon drink the wines on the lees well refined! Cheerfully pass through the darkness, for the morning breaks, and the day dawns, and the shadows flee away. Be content to have the offscouring of all things, for one day, when kings shall bow down before Him, and all nations shall call Him blessed, you shall partake in His honor, and shall be as princes upon the throne with Him!

Yes, He is to be the Father of a future age. Men have called certain great patriots the fathers of their country. Today let us call Christ the Father of our *world*. O Jesus, You have given to earth far better than a creation. You have formed it from chaos into order and then brought it from darkness into light! You have brought it from death into warm life and beauty! You have recovered it from worse than pristine chaos and saved it from a darkness worse than the primeval gloom. You have saved it from a death more horrible than the primeval shades.

You have descended into the depths into which this pearl, the world, was cast! Like a mighty diver all the waves and billows have gone over You. But You have come up again bringing this pearl with You, and it shall glisten in Your crown forever when You shall be admired of angels and adored of all created spirits. This shall be the sweetest part of their admiration and their adoration—You were slain and have redeemed us unto God by Your blood, and therefore unto You be glory forever and ever. He shall be in this sense, then, the Father of an everlasting age.

Once more—for the text is very prolific—Christ may be called a Father in the loving and tender sense of a Father’s office. Here is a text to show what I mean. God is called the Father of the fatherless, and Job, I think, says of himself that he became a father to the poor. You know what it means, of course, at once. It means that he exercised a father’s part. Now, albeit that the Spirit of adoption teaches us to call God our Father, yet it is not straining truth to say that our Lord Jesus Christ exercises to all His people a Father’s part.

According to the old Jewish custom the elder brother was the father of the family in the absence of the father. The first-born took precedence of all, and took upon him the father's position. So the Lord Jesus, the First-Born among many Brethren, exercises to us a Father's office. Is it not so? Has He not succored us in all time of our need as a father succors his child? Has He not supplied us with more than heavenly bread as a father gives bread unto his children? Does He not daily protect us? No, did He not yield up His life that we, His little ones, might be preserved? Will He not say at the last, "Here am I, and the children that You have given Me. I have lost none"?

Does He not chastise us by hiding Himself from us, as a father chastens his children? Do we not find Him instructing us by His Spirit and leading us into all Truth? Has He not told us to call no man father upon earth in the sense that He is to be our true Guide and Instructor? And are we not to sit at His feet and make Him our Rabbi and our authoritative Teacher? Is He not the Head in the household to us on earth, abiding with us, and has He not said, "I will not leave you orphans (that is the Greek word), I will come unto you"?

As if His coming were the coming of a Father, if He is a Father, will we not give Him honor? If He is the Head of the household, will we not give Him obedience, and say in our hearts, "Other lords have had dominion over us, but from now on, Everlasting Father, we will give You reverence"? If He is, in all these senses, "the Everlasting Father"—

***"Then let us adore and give Him His right,
All glory and power, and wisdom and might,
All honor and blessing, with angels above,
And thanks never-ceasing, for infinite love."***

III. Lastly, we weigh the words, "EVERLASTING FATHER." I have already explained what this means. Christ is called, "the Everlasting Father" because He does not, Himself, as a Father, die or vacate His office. He is still the Federal Head and Father of His people. He is still the Founder of Gospel Truth and of the Christian system—not allowing archbishops and popes to be His vicars and to take His place. He is still the true Life-Giver from whose wounds and by whose death we are quickened. He reigns, even now, as the patriarchal King. He is still the loving family Head. And so, in every sense, He lives as Father.

But here is a sweet thought. He neither Himself dies, nor becomes childless! He does not lose His children! If His Church could perish He would not be a Father. A Father without a son? And this is the best of all, that He is "an Everlasting Father" to all those to whom He is a Father at all. If you have entered into this relationship so as to be in union with Christ, and to be covered with the hem of His garment, you are His child and you shall forever be! There is no unfathering Christ, and there is no unchilding us! He is everlastingly a Father to those who trust in Him, and He never does, at any one moment, cease to be Father to any one of these.

This morning you may have come here in trouble, but Christ is still your Father. This day you may be much depressed in spirit and full of doubts and fears. A true father never ceases, if he is a father, to exercise his kindness to a child. Nor does Jesus cease to love and pity *you*. He will help you. Go to Him, and you shall find that loving Friend to be as tender as in the days of His flesh. He is the Author of an *eternal* system. As I glanced at the words, "Everlasting Father," and thought of Him as the

Founder of an ever-living system, I said to myself, "Ah then, the Christian religion will never die out!" It is not possible that the Truth as it is in Jesus should ever be put away if He is "the Everlasting Father"!

I feel as if I should quote again Master Hugh Latimer, when, standing back to back with Ridley—"Courage, Master Ridley," he said, "we shall this day light such a candle in England as shall never be put out." Look yonder at Christ on the Cross! He did that day light such a candle as never can be put out! He is "the Everlasting Father." He set rolling that day, as it were, a snowflake of Truth as He died upon the Cross.

And you know what the snowflake does upon the high Alps—a bird's wing, perhaps, sets it rolling, and it gathers another and another and another, till, as it descends, it becomes a mass of snow! And by-and-by, as it leaps from crag to crag, it grows larger and larger and larger until ponderous masses of ice and snow cohere together. And at the last, with an awful thundering crash, the *avalanche* rolls down, fills the valley and sweeps all before it! Even so this Everlasting Father on the Cross set in motion a mighty force which has gone on swelling and increasing, gathering to be a ponderous mass of mighty teaching! And the day shall come when, like an irresistible avalanche, it shall fall upon the palaces of the Vatican and upon the towers of Rome! There shall come a day when the mosques of Mohammed and the temples of the gods shall be crushed beneath its stupendous weight—and the Everlasting Father shall have done the deed!

"The Everlasting Father," last of all, because He is the Father, in all His people, of eternal life. Adam, you are a father, but where are your sons? If you could return to earth, O Mother Eve, where would you find your children? I think I see her as she paces round the earth and finds nothing but little grassy mounds, heaps of turf, and sometimes a valley sodden blood-red where her children have been slain in battle. I hear her weeping for her children. She will not be comforted because they are not!

But hush, Mother Eve, what life did you give them? What life was that which Father Adam conferred upon your sons and daughters? Why, only life *terrestrial*, a *bubble* life that melted and disappeared! But Jesus, as He comes again, will find *none* of His children dead! None of His sons and daughters lost! Because He lives, they live also, for He is the Everlasting Father and makes those to have everlasting life who live and breathe through Him. Thrice happy they who have an interest in the truth of our text!

Now, dear Hearers, may I ask you whether Christ is Everlasting Father to you? There are other fathers. The Jew said, "We have Abraham as our father," and to this day certain divines teach that we have covenant rights because of our earthly fathers. They believe in the Abrahamic Covenant much after the manner of the Jews. "We have Abraham as our father"—therefore we have a right to baptism. Therefore we are church members—"born into the church." Yes, I have heard it said, "born into the church."

Let no man deceive you! This is *not* Christ's teaching! "You must be born-again." If not, though your mother were a saint in Heaven, and your father an undoubted Apostle of God, you should derive no advantage but a world of solemn responsibility from the fact—unless you are *yourself* born-again! Do not, then, say unto yourself, "we have Abraham as our father," for God is able of the very stones to raise up children unto Abraham! We had a very remarkable instance not very long ago in this

Tabernacle of how God does sometimes bless the outcasts and leaves some of you, the children of godly parents, in the hardness of your heart to perish.

There was a man known in the village where he lives by the name of Satan because of his being so thoroughly depraved. He was a sailor, and as another sailor in that town had been the means of the conversion of all the sailors in a vessel that left the town, this man desired to sail with him to try and beat his religion out of him. He did his best, but he signally failed, and as they happened to be coming to London, his friend asked him whether he would come to the Tabernacle. He did not mind coming to hear me, for, as it happened, I was brought up near the place where he lived.

This Satan came here on the Lord's Day morning, when the text was upon soul murder, [Sermon #713, Volume 12] and he sat (some of you noticed him that day), and sobbed and cried under the sermon at such a broken-hearted rate that he could only say, "People are noticing me, I had better go out." But his companion would not let him go out, and that man from that day forth was begotten by the Everlasting Father and is living and walking in the Truth of God, an earnest Believer, doing all that he can for the spread of the kingdom, and singularly clear in his doctrinal knowledge!

Here is a man who had been everything that was possible in the way of evil, yet God met with him! And some of you who have Abraham as your father, and are related to godly people, are just all the more hardened for all the preaching you have heard! May God have pity upon you and save you yet! Do not be content with fleshly fatherhood! Get the *spiritual* fatherhood which comes from Christ. Others of you are this day perhaps saying, "Well, we can trust in our good works." Well, then, Adam is *your* father, and you know what will come of you!

Adam was driven out of Paradise, and you will never be admitted there! Adam lost all his hopes and you will lose yours. On the ground of the Law shall no flesh living be justified! Alas, I fear that many here have another father. How does Christ put it? "You are of your father, the devil," says He, "for his works you do." Not works merely of open sin in the form of adultery, uncleanness, theft, and such like, but opposition to Christ is peculiarly a work of the devil! And unbelief in Christ is the devil's masterpiece! If you do not, then, trust the Lord Jesus, do not say tonight when you kneel at the bedside, "Our Father, which are in Heaven," for *your* father is *not* in Heaven—your father is in Hell!

Go to the blood of Jesus and ask that you may be cleansed from all iniquity, and then may you say through the Everlasting Father, "O God, You have made me Your child, and I love and bless Your name." May God be pleased to give you all His blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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“THE ZEAL OF THE LORD”

NO. 3432

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

***“The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.”
Isaiah 9:7.***

BEYOND all controversy, this is a most remarkable text. Zeal is an attribute which is attributable to man—we do not often think or speak of the zeal of the Lord of Hosts! At first sight, it might seem to be a misplaced word—God’s zeal, the Divine arm, the fervency of the Infinite. Yet, if we think a little as we commune together tonight, I do not doubt but that much of comfort will cluster round the word, “The zeal of the Lord of Hosts.” When I turn to Holy Writ, I do not find that, in connection with the Creation, the word, zeal, was ever used—and yet it was a glorious work, to make ten thousand, thousand worlds, to fill space with ponderous orbs, before whose dimensions human imagination, itself, is staggered! It was no small work to make this world, with all its varieties of skill and art, adaptation and beauty. The morning stars might well sing together at the sight of it, and burst forth into a new hymn, as the light first shone upon this, our planet. But the Lord seems to have done it much at His ease. In six days He finished it and rested from all His work. No element of hardness, no token of zeal! Indeed, what is there in the mere creative act to awaken those marvelous attributes which dwell in the bosom of the Infinite Jehovah? Wisdom? Why, it is but the play of wisdom! Power? It was but a mere freak of power. There is such boundless power in God, that all that He has created is but a drop in the bucket, and as a very little thing, compared with Him! Nor, if I remember rightly, does the idea ever come up in connection with the sustaining of worlds and the guiding of the events of Providence. It is true, He calls them all by their names, and by the greatness of His power, not one fails. Arcturus with his sons, Mazzaroth in his season, the Pleiades in their delightful influences—all these are swayed and governed by Him! But we find not that He was awakened up to zeal at all concerning them. And in the wonders of Providence which have been worked upon earth, it is remarkable how gently, how easily Jehovah seems to take them! Look at that splendid work at the Red Sea—a work which God, Himself, seems to have selected as a masterpiece of His skill and of His power, for even in Heaven they sing the Song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb—that song, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea.” But how did He accomplish that stupendous work? “You did blow with Your wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in her mighty waters.” No enthusiasm, no stirring up of strength—just the tender breath of His mouth and it is

all done—and the chivalry of Egypt sinks into the middle of the sea! Nor when I hear of angels being formed of the Lord, whenever that event may have taken place, do I hear of anything like the zeal of the Lord in connection therewith. Nor even the creation of Adam, when He took the man and placed him in the garden to till it. I pray I may use no expression which will dishonor the Most High, yet when we speak of Him, we are obliged to use language according to the analogies of human kind. It seems to me that when God created mere materialism, there was nothing to excite the Divine mind beyond a mere complacency when He looked upon it and said, “It was very good.” And when He created pure spirits that were incapable of singing such as angels, He rejoiced to see their happiness, but inasmuch as they could not have communion with Him, being so good as not to know good or evil, His soul does not seem to have been stirred. But He desired, if I may use such language concerning Him, to have a race of beings surrounding Him who should know both good and evil, who should know evil by having practically fallen into it, having so smarted under it as to know it to be evil in a practical and experimental sense—a race of creatures who should, from henceforth, never choose evil, who should voluntarily choose that which is good forever and forever because they should be so bound to Him, the source of all goodness, by an overwhelming obligation of love, that while they know evil, they shall bewail it—while they understand what it is to sin, they shall never, throughout eternity, either in thought or imagination, defile themselves with sin, but shall remain immaculately perfect through the constraint of a love which He shall reveal toward them, which shall be sufficient to wash their robes and make them white, world without end! It seems to me that He desired to have a race of creatures that should not be like angels or a race of creatures apart from Himself—but a race that should be His sons, that should be mysterious and wonderful—and His plan was this, that Jesus, His only Son, should come into this world and take upon Himself the flesh and nature of fallen creatures, that in that flesh He should die and put away the guilt of all their sin, and that by His flesh, when risen, He should establish a link between them and God, so that there should be nothing between God and man. God blessed first forever, and then Jesus, the Man, positively and really a Man, clinging by His Manhood through His Godhead to those chosen creatures whom He should have purified and made clean, who should forever exist, the children of God, partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust. It is not for me—it is not for *anyone* to strike out the Divine idea and say this is what God meant and intended, but we have enough of Scripture to let us say that this was a part of His aim, at any rate, that in Jesus Christ there should be a race of creatures distinct from all others, because actually alive with the Deity—creatures who, to use the expression of the serpent, should “be as gods, knowing good and evil,” and be as gods always and forever, preferring the good, though they have tasted the evil, and might have chosen it, but were constrained by Divine Grace to bewail it and, henceforth, to keep close to God, world without end!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, it was such a plan as this that awoke the zeal of God! This was what could not have been done by mere power, but must bring forth all the attributes of God—the work that had to be achieved here was worthy of a great Creator—it was a work which would reveal the Deity as no other work had ever done and, therefore, if I may use the expression (I have often to excuse myself, not to you, but to Him), He seems to brace Himself up to a display of all the Divine Energy and Almighty Omnipotence, to accomplish His purpose, to carry out His plan and make Jesus the King of a chosen company! “The zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall perform this.”

I. GOD ENTERS INTO THE PLAN OF GLORIFYING CHRIST AND MAKING TO HIMSELF A PEOPLE WITH GREAT ZEAL.

This can be proved in the following way—we judge of a man’s zeal when the purpose has been long in His heart, and He has most industriously followed it through a long period. Now, the plan of Grace through Jesus Christ was in the eternal heart before the worlds were made. He had it all in His mind. Hence He speaks of Christ as “the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world,” and never once has the Divine mind turned aside from this purpose. Think, then, what zeal God must have towards the achievement of this design, when through these long ages, as we call them, He has still resolved to push on the work which He determined to do. Think, again, that all the agents of Providence that have ever occurred on this globe have had an eye to that purpose—from the little up to the great. When He set the bounds of the people, He set them according to the children of Israel. He had an eye to the people of His love and to the Son of His choice, even when He was mapping out the territories which the different races should inhabit and not a king has fallen from His throne, not an army has devastated a province, no changes of government, no challenges of race have ever taken place apart from the Divine intent—that He would set His Son upon His holy hill of Zion, and make Him to be a King over all the nations of the earth. To that purpose God has steadily adhered all this while and, therefore, I honor “the zeal of the Lord of Hosts.”

Just think a moment, and I will show you God must be zealous in this matter. Behold, *His Son stoops to become a Man*. You see Him lying as a Baby in Bethlehem’s manger. You behold Him as a Youth obedient to His parents, as a full-grown Man, a Servant of servants in His toil. Now, when the Lord looks down upon His Son, how He must resolve to glorify Him! Oh, what must be the thought in that fraternal bosom! Does My Son thus stoop? Does He take such a Nature into union with Himself? Oh, I will crown His head with many crowns! For all His stoopings He shall have a glory. Does He sit there at a harlot’s side at the well of Samaria? Does He sit there at the table with publicans and sinners? Does He go down to bear the sorrows of the sins of men? God seems to declare by Himself that He will give Him a name that is above every name—for all His stooping He shall have an exaltation—the name at which every knee shall bow, even the name of Jesus, and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord to the Glory of God the Father!

Or, look further through your tears, *behold the wondrous Sacrifice of Calvary*. Can you behold Jesus, smarting, suffering, bleeding, dying—and can you imagine God looking on, a regular spectator? Oh, no! If we may suppose Him to be capable of passions like ourselves, we shall have to say, as He looked upon His dying Son, He vowed that He would lift His head above the sons of men, and make Him see a numerous seed to recompense His pain. If anything could make a man zealous in his cause, it would be to see it stained with the best blood on earth, to see it stained with his own son’s blood! Surely a man would say, I consecrate myself over the blood of my child to live and die, to honor the name that was thus put to shame for my purpose, my design. And God says the same! The zeal of God burned at Calvary!

Think again. *Jesus Christ at this moment is everywhere dishonored*. Millions use Christ’s name in superstition, worshipping a crucifix, making a God out of the very images. Multitudes of people practice idolatry, enshrine and adore false deities, and what does God say? Do you think that He looks on like Jove, fabled among the heathen an impassive spectator? Oh, it is not so! He hears the blasphemies of men! He sees their sins and though He keeps His right hand in His bosom and we sometimes say, “Now, where is Your zeal and the soundings of Your heart,” it is only because He is Divine and can put a Divine restraint upon His zeal that He does not rise at once and sweep away the idols and devastate the nations! His long-suffering makes Him wait. His pity bids Him tarry. But the day shall come—and it draws near—when with the hammer, He shall break in pieces, and with the iron rod He shall dash, like a potter’s vessel, the usurpers who dare to stand in Christ’s way and to take away the Kingdom from the rightful heir! Yet the very sins of men are stirring up the Lord and their iniquities, transgressions and blasphemies are almost exciting His holy soul, making a zeal to burn within Him which, one of these days, in the set time, will perform its work!

Only one more proof on this point, and it is this—Brothers and Sisters, *we become zealous when we hear the cries and tears of the oppressed*. I think I see a senator standing on the floor of the House of Commons, pleading, in years gone by, the cause of Africa’s down-trodden sons. I do not wonder at the zeal of Wilberforce, or the marvelous eloquence of Fox. What a cause they had! They could hear the clanging of the fetters of the slaves, the sighs of prisoners, the shrieks of women—and this made them speak, for they burned with an indignation which carried them away! Pity pulled up the sluices of their speech and their souls ran out in mighty torrents of overwhelming eloquence! Now, think. The Lord this day hears the sighs of the oppressed all over the world. He hears the sighs of the sorrowful and, beyond that there comes up the daily cries of His elect, who day and night beseech His Throne. Oh, that we were more clamorous! Oh, that we were more intensely importunate! Oh, that we gave Him no rest until He would establish and make Jerusalem a praise on the earth, for, remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, “And shall not God avenge His own elect? Though they cry night and day unto Him, I tell you He will avenge them speedily.”

You see, then, proofs of God’s zeal and the source of it, if we may use such a term. It is His purpose, a purpose to which He has kept so long. His zeal is, moreover, excited by Christ’s humiliation, by the blasphemies and sins of men and by the tears of His people. God is not as we are—cold, insensible. He is full of zeal! And in the great good old cause, which shall, at last, win the day, there may be zealous partisans, but none is so zealous as the Lord of Hosts! A Master in the midst of Israel! We will now change the strain, and notice the second point. The text says His zeal will perform it. That is to say—

II. HIS ZEAL WILL PERFORM THE SETTING OF CHRIST UPON HIS KINGDOM AND THE ESTABLISHING OF IT FOREVER.

But it will perform everything that has to do with that Kingdom. God’s zeal will not leave a single jot or tittle of the Covenant of His Grace unfulfilled. He has lifted His hand. He has sworn by Himself that Christ shall see of the travail of His soul—and the zeal of God will carry this out!

Notice, then, Brother and Sisters, tonight, first, that *the Lord will secure the salvation of all His chosen*. Nothing else could secure it but God’s own zeal. The zeal of all the Church could not secure it. Men might perish, notwithstanding every act, but God knows them who are His, and He will find them! If there are some of them, tonight, plunged into the depths of sin, or others far gone in Atheism or unbelief, the zeal of God will find every blood-bought one, and Christ shall have every single soul that the Father gave Him—and that He redeemed with blood from among men. Oh, there is joy in this! But we cannot stay to think of it.

This secures, in the next place, *the spread of the Truth of God*. Sometimes we sit down and say, “Truth, though mighty in itself, does not prevail among a godless generation set upon their idols.” And oftentimes we mourn and lament because the battle has turned against the Lord. But, Brothers and Sisters, God’s Truth is wide enough and safe enough—we need not weep over a few defeats! God has ordained that the laurels of the King are all safe! He has trodden the winepress alone, but the victory is sure to Him! We have but to keep on in the patience and tribulation of the saints till the set time shall come, and every Truth that God has declared shall be crowned and honored. Wisdom is justified of all her children, and the Infinite Wisdom of Jesus shall be justified in all His teaching. But the grand meaning is this—that the day is sure to come when all the nations shall be converted unto God! I am not going into any pre-millennial or post-millennial theories. I am neither a Prophet nor the son of a Prophet, but if there is anything plain in Scripture, it seems to be this—that there is a Kingdom of Christ, that there will be a reign of Christ over the people, that the Son of David shall rule the Kingdom, from the rivers even to the ends of the earth—they that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him, the heathen shall come and lick the dust at His feet and He shall be King of kings and Lord of lords! “The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this,” says the text. I thank the Master for that word. All the missionary societies in the world will never know how to perform it! If they were strengthened to the uttermost, they would never be able to achieve this work. Not all the ministry will ever be able to per-

form this. Nor do I see any means adapted to achieve so sublime an end. Why, the population is increasing upon Christianity. We do not hold our own. Relatively, to the population, I suppose, there are not so many believers in Christ, today, as there were a hundred years ago. We are going backward instead of forward. See, you sons of men, your zeal and your earnestness—no, your *lack* of zeal and your *lack* of earnestness—see what it will come to! Poor, vain instruments, what can we perform? But in the rear there is One who will do it! As in the days of battle, when the front ranks are beaten, and one rank after another is driven back, up comes the old guards—and they never quail and know not how to say retreat—and so they win the day! Now, behold a greater than all the hosts of men, the Eternal Ages, the Ancient of Days, the Infinite, Himself, shall bring up His servants in the day of battle! And He shall thunder gloriously! The Gospel shall be proclaimed! The Kingdom shall be won! Christ shall reign and the “Hallelujah” shall come up unto the Lord Omnipotent, who not only gets the Kingdom, but gets it by His own power, wins by His own zeal! “The Lord of Hosts, the Lord of Hosts shall perform this.” Now, our last word is practical—

III. THE PRACTICAL TEACHING WHICH ARISES OUT OF THIS TRUTH.

The expression of the text is only used four times in Scripture. One of these is a repetition of another. Virtually it is only used three times—in Isaiah 63:15, “the zeal of the lord of Hosts” is used, as I have already used it, *as an argument for prayer*. God is thus addressed, “Where is Your zeal, and the sounding of your heart, and of Your mercies towards me? Are they restrained?” What a plea in prayer for us tomorrow night! O God convert the sons of men! Put an end to blasphemy and sin. If You do not, we have heard of Your zeal, but where is Your zeal? You can do it—why don’t You do it? You can save. The hardest heart will yield to You. The rod of iron and steel shall be broken by the iron of the Cross. Oh God, where, where, where is Your zeal? Have You forgotten the great Fall and the Kingdom, and the Covenant, and Your oath? Have You forgotten Your Son—His griefs, His merits—Your promised recompense to Him? Where is Your zeal? Oh, but this is a battering ram with which to shake the very gates of Heaven! Men of prayer and faith, learn how to use this! The next time you are wrestling with the Angel, if you would overcome Him, here is the master plea, “Where is Your zeal, and the sounding of your heart?” Let us thus flee to God!

But the text may be used, in the second place, *as a ground of hope*. If you turn to Isaiah 37:32, you will see that there it is used in relation to the salvation of a remnant—the remnant of Judah. When you and I feel ourselves to be like a remnant, cut off, and put away—when we feel ourselves to be unworthy of the Divine notice, let us recollect that God is zealous to save His remnant and let us ask Him to save us—and appeal to the very zeal of God to give salvation to us who need it so much!

But not to dwell longer on this part of the subject, I am sure you will perceive that our text, practically, is *a good reason for confidence*. You begin to be dispirited in God’s work—it ought not to be so. If any of you are ready to give up your Sunday school work, or whatever it is you are

engaged in, oh, say not so! God is so zealous that He will not let the good cause fail. There may be, as there will be in every great battle, a certain sort of temporary defeat which may be but a retiring of the troops, that they may the more sternly and successfully advance again to the front. So is it with the Cross of Christ. There are slight repulses, but everything is working to ultimate victory. Look at the sea as it comes up towards flood and then the waves retire. A child might sit down and weep, and say, “I thought the sea was coming up to here, but look, it has gone back again, and it has not washed my feet.” In the long run the sea is still coming up, and it is thus a type of the good cause of Christ! Our lives are but like seconds in the tide of this great time of ours, which is itself but a second in the great duration of eternity! Because the good old cause does not seem to prosper for a single day and the Kingdom does not come to Christ in my short life, shall I sit down and weep? No, I am but one among millions who shall achieve the Divine Purpose—one little coral insect, helping to pile up the rock on which, by-and-by, shall grow the cedar and the palm tree and the lovely flowers! And the winds shall waft across it insects in every gale—I will do my work, though it is beneath the waves! I will do my work and die—and others shall do the same, but the rock is rising and God’s Purpose is being accomplished! In the words of the Prayer of Moses, “Let Your work appear unto Your servants, and Your Glory unto their children.” Lord, let us take the work and give our children the glory! Let us work on—they shall live to see the Glory! Some future generation shall see the triumph. And the best of it all is, we shall see it, too, for it will be but a sleep between now and then—a little leaning upon the Savior’s bosom in our disembodied state—and then the trumpet shall ring so shrill and clear through Heaven and earth and we shall come to dwell again in these bodies of ours, restored and rendered fit for purified spirit to dwell in! And our eyes shall see in that day, the God that died for us, and oh, how we will adore Him and magnify Him! And we will say together, the cause for which we struggled, the Kingdom for which we fought, has come at last! It was a long day and a weary one, and we feared the Master would not come. Some of us fell asleep before His appearing, but we awaken at the knocks at the door—we awaken even with the blessed sleepers, and we come to see the triumph as we once of old saw the praise! Glory be to God, the victory is secure! Let us work on till then.

But last of all, if God is thus zealous for the crown rights, the Kingdom of Christ, *let us be zealous, too*. This is not the day of zeal—this is the day of cleverness and achievement. It is not the day of solid earnestness—it is the day of mere sensationalism and nothing more. Oh, what a sight it would have been to have seen old John Knox, when old and worn, go up into his pulpit, and though before he began to preach, he seemed so weak that he could scarcely stand, yet he did not proceed far in preaching up the Master’s name, before, as an old historian says, “He did seem to use such force that one would think he would dash the pulpit into fragments”—dash it into shivers, I suppose, before the Popish priests and hypocrites of the age! How his eyes flashed fire as he spoke out his Mas-

ter’s truth, as he denounced Popery and held up the Truths of God and the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus! We need more men of this sort! Oh, that God would but send us one, such, and then to back him, a race of Covenanters who would, with their very blood dedicate themselves to the Truth and the Kingdom of Christ against the insidious advances of Popery and the infidelity of Rome and Hell, which are twin brothers! Oh, that once again the Church were earnest to have no head or king of the Church but Christ, no creed but the Bible, no Baptism but the Baptism which He has taught, no sacrament but what He reveals, no Doctrine but what that book dictates—the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible! May we come back to this in purity, to this with earnestness, and then it will not be long before we shall hear Him coming in the chariot, paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem and we shall go forth to meet Him, even to meet King Solomon, with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart! Oh, God of Zeal, drop Your zeal upon us, now, and make us zealous, too, even we, redeemed by blood, by Your Holy Spirit, inhabit and consecrate us afresh, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 40:1-17; 25-31; JOHN 1:29-42.**

Verses 1, 2. *Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she has received of the LORD’S hand double for all her sins.* God would have His people happy. He knows that we are not in strong, vigorous state, neither do we honor His name while we are lacking in holy joy. Let the sinners be uncomfortable. Let them be “like the troubled sea that cannot rest.” But as for God’s people, it is His great joy that they should be happy. He bids His servants again and again to comfort them! Sometimes we are in a condition of warfare and we are under the chastising rod, but now the Lord appears graciously to His servants, and He says, “Your warfare is over: your chastisement is ended.” Now the Lord returns in mercy and He grants a sense of forgiven sin.

3. *The voice of him that cries in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.* You know this was John the Baptist coming to proclaim the Savior. That was the best comfort God’s people could have—the coming of the Lord. So it is now. The joy of the Church is the coming of the Lord! And to each one of us the greatest source of joy is the drawing near to us of our Lord. If He appears to us, our winter is over, our summer’s sun has come! If Christ is with us, the time of the singing of birds has come and our heart is glad.

4, 5. *Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places, plain: And the Glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it.* Wherever Christ comes, it is so. All things are right at His appearing and if the Lord but

manifests Himself to us tonight, each one, we shall find the crooked things made straight. We shall see the mountains of difficulty, leveled, and the deep depressions will all be filled up and there will be a causeway along which the Lord triumphantly shall ride to display the greatness of His power! There is nothing that shall hinder the coming of the Lord to us, and when He comes, there is nothing that shall stand against Him!

6-8. *The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the fields. The grass withers, the flower fades because the breath of the LORD blows upon it: surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades: but the Word of our God shall stand forever.* Now that is a cry that we all need to hear—the death cry of all creature confidence—for man at his very best is only like grass and the flower. They will be mown down in due time, but if the scythe comes not near them, yet will they fade in their season, for they are transient things and every hope and confidence which is based upon that which is seen, must be temporal and must pass away. All the joy that you have tonight—all the hope and all the confidence you have which is based upon an earthly thing—must, by degrees, all disappear. Nothing is eternal but that which springs out of the Eternal. Unless our hope is in the Lord, alone, that hope will at some time or other fail us! This is a cry we need to hear because, until we are sick of the creature, we shall not turn to the Creator! Till we have done with false confidences, we shall not make God our trust!

9. *O Zion, that brings good tidings, get you up into the high mountain! O Jerusalem, that brings good tidings, lift up your voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!* Look away from these fading things and behold your God. Look away from the brightest joy you have, though it is like the meadow, all alive with many colored flowers, and look to your God, and to your God, alone! “Behold your God”—your God in Christ! Your God who has come through the wilderness, making a highway for Himself, that He may come to you. Rejoice in Christ, your Savior, and you shall have a joy that never shall be taken from you!

10, 11. *Behold, the Lord God will come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him: behold, His rewards are with Him, and His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd.* Do you belong to the flock tonight? Then let this comfort you. Never mind about the fading flowers. “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd.” He has brought you into the pasture tonight. Depend upon it, He has not led you by a wrong way. And now, though your soul is hungry and thirsty, you shall not lack, for, “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd.”

11. *He shall gather the lambs with His arm.* The feeblest, first. The most care for those that need most care. “He shall gather the lambs with His arm.”

11. *And carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.* Your sorrow is to come. It is known to yourself alone. None can sympathize with you. He will gently lead you. There is no overdriving

with Christ. Sometimes His ministers, in order to get God’s people right, one way, overdrive them another, and it is possible while rebuking the hypocrite, to cause grief to the sincere Believer, but our Lord is a better Shepherd than the under shepherds are at their very best. “He shall gather the lambs with His arm, carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.” Oh, what a blessed Helper we have! Let us rest in Him.

12-17. *Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out Heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being His counselor, has taught Him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance. Behold, He takes up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before Him are as nothing: and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity.* Who would not trust such a God as this—this only God? How well may we be content to turn away from the fading creatures to this eternal Lord and put our trust in Him! Indeed, the wonder is that we trust the creature and do not trust the mighty Creator! Faith, which seems so difficult, after all, is nothing better than sanctified commonsense! It is the most commonsense thing in all the world to trust in Omnipotence—in infinite, unchanging love—in Infallible Truth. To trust anywhere else needs a great deal of justification, but to trust in God needs no apology. He well deserves it. O My soul, trust you in Him!

25, 26. *To whom, then, will you liken Me, or shall I be equal? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and behold who has created these things that bring out their host by number: He calls them all by names by the greatness of His might for that He is strong in power; not one is missing.* There is no other power that hangs yon lamps of Heaven in their places and keeps them always burning, except the power of His Word! This whole round earth of ours hangs on nothing but the bidding of the Most High. I remember how Luther used to console himself in troublous times by saying, “Look at yonder arch of blue. There is not a pillar to hold it up, and yet, whoever saw the skies fall?” Nothing but the power of God keeps them up. My Soul, if all the worlds were made by His Word, cannot you hang on that Word? If all things exist but by the will and Word of your Father, can He not support you, and can you not trust Him? Oh, this confidence in the invisible and eternal ought to be natural to us as God’s children! But, alas, here is our great sin—that we frequently trust in an arm of flesh and forget our God!

27. *Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?* He forgets no star among the myriads, no creature among the multitudes. He has marked in His book the track of every single atom of air and every particle of dust, and every drop of spray—how can you be forgotten?

28, 29. *Have you not known? Have you not heard that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth faints not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding. He gives power to the faint. He loves to pour out into empty vessels. He does not give His power to the strong, but, “He gives power to the faint,” and the more faint you are, the more room for His strength. Trust in Him! If you are so burdened that you cannot stand, lean on Him! The more you lean, the better will He love you. He delights to help His people. “He gives power to the faint.”*

29-30. *And to them that have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. We sometimes wish that we were as young as some, and that we had all their overflowing spirit—all the effervescence of their juvenile ardor. Ah, well, we need not wish for it, for mere mortal power shall droop and die—and earthly vigor cease—while such as trust the Lord shall find their strength increased. “Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall.”*

31. *But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles—That is very much when they begin. They are all for flying and God gives them a glorious flight, and they are so happy and so delighted. But they will do better than that!*

31. *They shall run, and not be weary. Is that better than flying? Yes it is—a better pace to keep up, but God enables His servants at length to stay along the road of duty and to run in it. But there is even a better pace than that!*

31. *And they shall walk and not faint. It is a good steady pace. It is the pace that Enoch kept when he walked with God. Sometimes it is easier to take a running spurt than it is to keep on, day by day—walk, walk, walk in the sobriety of Christian conversation. Many under excitement can run a race, but it is the best of all to be able to steadily to walk on, walking with God the Lord. The Lord bring us to that pace! “They shall walk and not faint.”*

JOHN 1:29-42.

Verse 29. *The next day John saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world. John lost no time. He had no sooner discovered the Savior than he bore witness of Him. “The next day.” As soon as ever his eyes lighted upon Jesus, he had his testimony ready for Him. “Behold!” he said, “the Lamb of God.”*

30-33. *This is He of whom I said, After me comes a Man which is preferred before me: for He was before me. And I knew Him not: but that He should manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not. At first.*

33, 34. *But He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I saw and bare record, that this is the Son of God. Notice how very clear John is. There is no mistaking him. He repeated himself lest there should be any*

possibility of an error. And he gives the detail of the mode by which he recognized the Savior, in order that all might be persuaded to accept Jesus as in very truth the Messiah and the Son of God! And so we are to preach very plainly—not with enticing words of men’s wisdom—but with demonstration of the Spirit and with power. What have we to conceal? No, we have everything to reveal and our business is that men should be convinced that Jesus is the Christ—and should come and put their trust in Him.

35, 36. *Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God!* There is no objection to preaching the same sermon twice if it is on such a matter as this! “Behold the Lamb of God,” he said one day. And the next day he did not vary the phraseology. He had no new metaphor—no new figure with which to set forth Christ, but, as striking a nail upon the head and the same nail will help to fasten it, and may do more service than bringing out a new nail, so he gets to the same word and the same subject—“Behold the Lamb of God.”

37. *And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.* They went beyond their teacher. And oh, what a mercy it is if our hearers can go Christward far beyond us! John was well content to be left behind if they followed Jesus, and so may any minister of Christ rejoice if his people will follow Jesus, even if they go far beyond his attainments.

38. *Then Jesus turned and saw them following, and said unto them, What do you seek?* Christ wants intelligent followers, so He asks the question, “What do you seek?”

38, 39. *They said unto Him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master), where do You dwell? He said unto them, Come and see.* Which is often His answer to enquirers—“Come and see.” “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good.” Learn by experience. Do not merely hear what I say, but come and see.

39-42. *They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his own brother, Simon, and said unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.* This is how the Kingdom began to grow—by individual effort. “Andrew found Simon”—one convert must bring another—“and He brought Him to Jesus.”

42. *And when Jesus beheld him, He said, You are Simon, the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A Stone.* There was a meaning in the change of names, for there was about to be a change of character—the timid son of a dove soon to become a very rock for the Church!

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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

CHRIST'S REST AND OURS

NO. 2542

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 7, 1897.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*"His rest shall be glorious."
Isaiah 11:10.*

THE Lord Jesus Christ, who is "the root of Jesse"—"the shoot from the stock of Jesse," as the first verse of this chapter might be rendered—is the very center of all Israel! And He is also the rallying-point of the Gentiles, for He has made both Jew and Gentile to be one, having "broken down the middle wall of partition between us." And now, around the one ensign of His glorious name, all the believing hosts gather with glad accord. He is the King of the Jews, but He is also our King and, with Paul, we cry, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." Let us, dear Friends, always look upon Christ as the great Standard-Bearer of all the hosts of God and let us pitch our tents as near His ensign as we can, and constantly follow where His banner leads the way.

The text says that "His rest shall be glorious," and I take it that the glory of His rest is in harmony with the glory of all that He has ever done. Rest is most enjoyable to the man who has toiled the hardest—the very labor which has gone before has prepared him for the sweetness of the rest. And the glory of Christ's rest lies very much in what He has passed through in order to obtain it. He, Himself, is glorious. His service and His suffering were both glorious. His death was in the truest sense, glorious, and now, all the rest which has followed upon His consummated service is glorious in the very highest degree. Yes, it is, itself, "glory." If you look in the margin of your Bible, you will see that our text may be read, "His rest shall be glory."

Without any further preface, let us come to the consideration of these words, "His rest shall be glorious," or, "His rest shall be glory." First, I want to apply our text to *the rest which Christ Himself has taken*. Secondly, to *the rest which He has given to His people*. And, thirdly—to bring the subject very close home to this evening's Communion Service—to show the bearing of our text upon *the rest which Christ sets forth in this banquet of His love*. The rest which He gives us at His Table is truly glorious. Oh, that we may all enjoy that rest very intensely and very specially! If we do, I am sure that you will not need for me to tell you that it is glorious, for you will realize that it is—your heart will be ready to burst out with holy song as you delight in the rest which God gives to every believing heart!

I. First, let us notice the relation of our text to the rest which CHRIST PERSONALLY HAS ENJOYED, IS ENJOYING AND WILL ENJOY.

The first rest that I know of, that ever fell to the lot of our Well-Beloved, was *His rest in His Church*. We read in Zephaniah 3:17, "He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing." The idea of this passage seems to be that we had all gone astray and were lost and ruined—and God fixed His love upon His people and determined to save them. If such a metaphor can be tolerated for a moment, there was no rest for God until He had ordained and settled a plan by which He could justly save His own. When that great matter was completed, when the sacred agreement was made between the Divine Trinity in Unity, when the Lord Jesus Christ had become the Surety of His people and had entered into Covenant engagements with the Father on their behalf, then, but not till then, was He fully at rest! When the Father was able to look upon men—

***"Not as they were in Adam's fall,
When sin and ruin covered all,"***

but as they are in Christ, the second Adam, then His Divine complacency went forth towards His elect as He viewed them in the Person of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son—and He rested in His love. All was arranged, the Covenant was signed and sealed, and He felt that the grandest of all His designs would certainly be carried out in due time—and He rested in His love. It never occurred to the heart of God to change His purpose concerning His people. Never once did He think of casting them away! They were to be bought with a great price and, in themselves, they would be little worth buying, but He rested in the fact that He had chosen them, that He had set them apart to be His portion, that He loved them with all His heart and that He intended to do them good. His purpose was worthy of a God and, therefore, He rested in it.

He had devised a plan which would bring even greater glory to His Deity and, therefore, He was at rest concerning the objects of His love. He had set His seal to this Covenant, that they should, every one of them, be redeemed, that they should be saved, perfected and brought Home to behold His face in righteousness as the dear children of His love. And the infinitely Glorious One did, as it were, settle Himself down to rest in that "Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure." And, Beloved, you and I feel that His rest was glorious—it would occupy us throughout eternity to tell all the glory which lies hidden in that great settlement of eternal love! We talk of it, here, and it is a charming theme. We sing of it and there is no higher and grander strain under Heaven!

Now change the scene and think of Christ's rest in His grave. The Divine Son of God, in due time, condescended to take upon Himself the mantle of our inferior race. He appeared at Bethlehem, a Man-Child, having assumed our nature in its utmost weakness. He lived here upon earth a toilsome life—little rest did He know. His labor afforded Him sweet solace, for in doing the will of His Father He had meat to eat of which even His disciples knew not. But rest was seldom His portion. He had come here to serve, not to be served. To toil with all His strength, but, at last, His labors were all over and He bowed His head and said, "It

is finished." Christ did not fall asleep until His work was all done—there was nothing more for that dear and most precious body to do.

There it hangs upon the Cross, still and quiet. I see Joseph and his friends extracting the nails, bringing the body down the ladder, reverently washing it, wrapping it in fine linen and costly spices, and then laying it in the tomb of honor. Men designed that He should be buried in a felon's grave, but it was not so, for He made His grave with the rich and honorable counselor, Joseph of Arimathea. This morning, (*see sermon #1789, Volume 30—"Joseph of Arimathea"—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>*), I conducted you to the place of His rest where Joseph and Nicodemus and the godly women laid Him in the grave, and there He rested. I like to think of that Jewish Sabbath when He took His greater Sabbath, resting, seeing no corruption, as He would have done in that time, in such a hot climate, if it had not been for the preserving power of God and the nature of His body, which could not see corruption because it had no taint of sin about it. There the great Champion lay and rested.

I do not wonder that the angels came and sat, one at the head, and the other at the foot of the spot where He had lain, for there was something very glorious and sublime about that rest. While He lay there, He was the terror of His foes—they sealed the tomb and set a watch lest He should escape them, after all. In the tomb, He was the grief of His Friends, for they thought He was gone forever. Had they but known what they ought to have known. Had they but remembered and understood what Christ had told them, they would have realized that He was but resting a little while and that He would soon rise again in glorious triumph from the dead! I say that even while He sleeps there in that new tomb, His rest is glorious—

"All His work and warfare done."

He has performed it all and now He rests. He who is, Himself, Life and Immortality lies there locked in the arms of Death. He who makes all spirits and gives breath to every nostril that breathes, deigns, for a little season, to surrender Himself as a captive in the bonds of Death—in that very act destroying Death for all His people, putting an end to sin, achieving the eternal purpose of the blessed God and opening the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers! Oh, tread lightly over the spot where our dear Lord once slept, for in that sleep He was truly glorious!

Now, beloved Friends, our Divine Lord has gone away from us up into His *rest in Glory*. "This Man, after He had offered one Sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool." He is taking His rest now, for His work is done. There is nothing for Him to do, or for us to do, by way of perfecting righteousness and salvation—Christ has accomplished it all and now He rests! It must be Divinely glorious to Him thus to sit down at the right hand of God. He is not now fighting as a warrior, for He has already been to Edom and has returned with His garments dyed in blood, having trodden all His enemies in the winepress of His wrath. Now He rests and with an unbroken calmness of spirit waits until the ages shall have rolled on, till the end shall come, till He shall have trodden Satan

finally beneath His feet, till He shall send out that last great summons, "Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." Till then, He rests in Glory, and His rest is glorious!

I suspect, however, that my text specially relates to the rest that is *to come to this earth in the latter days*. I will not go into the question of dates, or the arrangement of future events. If you read the chapter from which our text is taken, you have the great fact plainly foretold—"But with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins. The wolf, also, shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

I do not know that everybody will be converted, but everybody will be enlightened—and every harmful agency will be restrained from evil. If the wolf still remains a wolf, it will dwell with the lamb without injuring it. There shall be such days of happiness and peace on earth, that men shall hang the sword upon the wall and study war no more! Children shall ask their fathers what was the ancient use of swords, spears, helmets and guns, for they shall be no more employed in destroying precious lives. The power of sin shall be broken and there shall be a general spreading of the principles of life, light, truth, love and liberty over the whole earth! Well may we sing—

***"O long expected day, begin!
Dawn on these realms of woe and sin!"***

When that Day of the Lord comes, "His rest shall be glorious." Then shall men say, "the King of Glory reigns, His unsuffering Kingdom is established on the earth." We may not live to see that day and we cannot tell when it will be. It is a pity ever to dogmatize about *prophecy*, which will always be understood when it is fulfilled. And probably most of it not till then. When all the prophecies in that wonderful Book of the Revelation have been fulfilled—in the light that we shall then have, we shall wonder that we did not understand it before! But we do not, we cannot, we shall not comprehend its mysteries until Providence shall loose every seal and spread the Book open before us! But, certainly, whenever Christ's reign on earth begins, "His rest shall be glorious."

And, after that, when the Lord shall have let both Death and Hell see that on the battlefield where Adam was routed and ruined, another Adam shall rout the foes of God and man—when that great conflict is over and the long millennium of peace is over, too—when Christ shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father that God may be All in All, then *Christ and His people shall, together, enter into an everlasting rest*. "There remains, therefore, a rest to the people of God." Oh, the bliss of

that heavenly rest! Oh, the deep, unruffled calm of our spirit throughout eternity with Christ, for even there we shall find our rest in being one with Him, forever to behold His face, forever to adore Him, forever to delight ourselves in heavenly communion with the God-Man, our Savior and our Lord!

To me, it always seems to be the climax of Heaven to be with Christ forever. I believe in the Communion of Saints above and in our recognition and love of one another. I believe in all those heavenly employments that shall occupy our eternal life. I believe in a thousand sources of joy in that blest land, for there are *pleasures*, as well as pleasure, at God's right hand forevermore! But, as the summit of Mont Blanc rises above the surrounding hills and with its snowy whiteness seems to pierce the very sky, so the summit of my expectation of Heaven is to be where Christ is, to behold Him, to see His face and to share His triumphant joy and rest, for, "His rest shall be glorious," and His rest and ours, too, shall be glory! Therefore, prepare yourselves for this rest, my Beloved. "Yet a little while and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." A few more rolling years and we shall be in the eternal summer, in endless daylight where no eventide shall ever come—"forever with the Lord."

II. Now let us turn to the second part of the subject, on which I must speak more briefly. That is, THE REST WHICH JESUS GIVES TO HIS PEOPLE IS GLORIOUS.

Is it not so? I remember when I first enjoyed *rest in the pardon of sin*. It was so glorious that I wanted to shout, "Hallelujah!" all day long. He who has groaned under the lead of guilt, when Jesus comes and touches it and it all disappears, and he realizes that he is absolutely, perfectly, and eternally forgiven—why, he is ready to leap for joy! There are no words in the hymn book that are rich enough or good enough to express the delight of a pardoned soul! The glory of it lies in the fact that we are justly forgiven. God is "just, and the Justifier of him which believes in Jesus." A sinner is forgiven by an act of mercy, it is true, but by an act of mercy which does not sully the snow-white garments of Divine Justice. My heart never knows how to express its delight for that forgiveness which, through the precious blood of Christ, is as just an act on the part of God as condemnation would have been. Oh, how wondrous is the blending of the Divine attributes so that Justice and Mercy can meet together, and that righteousness and peace can kiss each other in the salvation of the poor, guilty sinner who believes in Jesus! Truly, the rest of pardoned sin is glorious.

Do you and I ever get to fretting after we have enjoyed that rest? Yes, alas, even when our sin is all forgiven, we are often worried with anxious cares about this thing and that—our families, our business, our poor frail bodies, all sorts of things. Oh, but when we take all that burden and lay it down where we laid our load of sin and Jesus gives us rest about it all, that *rest in relief from care is truly glorious!* It is not the rest of carelessness—quite the opposite. When I thus rest in Christ, I have done with my care the very thing that ought to be done with it—I have laid it on Him who cares for me. Now, having done the best that could be done,

what reason remains for giving my heart any trouble? I know that the most bitter medicine I shall have to take will be most salutary and I know that the sweet will not sour upon me, the Lord will take care that it shall not. He will make all things work together for my good, so I can confidently say, "do what you will with me, Lord, I have no care, no fret, no worry, for I have left all with you."

Then, next, what a glorious rest Christ gives His people *in the satisfying of the heart!* No human being can fill a human heart. It would be an easier task to fill a bottomless pit with leaking buckets than for man to fill a human heart as it is by nature. Here! Pour in worlds, as though there were as many worlds as there are drops of water in the sea—what is there in all worlds that can ever fill a human heart? We all know the story of Alexander, with the whole world in his grip, sighing because there was not another world to conquer—and if he could have conquered another world, he would have cried quite as much to conquer two more! When he had vanquished two more, he would have had a fourfold hunger for more and, if he could have won those eight worlds, he would have had eight times as much ambition for eight more! And if he could have obtained them, his hunger would have grown in proportion to that which he thought would satisfy him.

But now look at a child of God when he enjoys rest in Christ. If he is in a right state of heart, he says, "the Lord Jesus Christ is mine and the Providence of God is mine for this world and for that which is to come, and the Heaven of heavens shall be mine in due time! I have all I need. My passions shall no more lead me astray, for I am married to Christ, and my heart finds its utmost satisfaction in Him. If I may but glorify Him here and enjoy Him forever hereafter, I could not wish for more." Such a man feels like David when he went in and sat before the Lord, and said, "Who am I, O Lord God? And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" I wish that Christian people would more often feel, enjoy, and talk about this rest. If you do not know what it is, go to Christ for it at once! Some of us bless the Lord that we know what it is. We cannot yet sing that—

***"Not a wave of trouble rolls
Across our peaceful breast,"***

but we do feel that when the waves roll, they do not break the quiet calmness of our spirit. When troubles come, they do not disturb the blessed serenity that reigns in the deep caverns of our soul.

Now, Beloved, only one more remark upon this point, and that is concerning *rest in the perfection of our joy*. We are hastening on to the end of this mortal life. Some dear members of this Church are in the deep river even now. They began to enter the stream some time ago, they gradually waded in till they found the waters knee-deep and some are chest deep in the cold stream, but it has not quenched their joy, or dampened their ardor, or stilled their song! I believe that the happiest members of this Church are those who are about to die. My observation enables me to say that they are more joyful by far than any of us who sit here! The most of them that I know are full of holy transports and a desire to depart—a kind of heavenly homesickness is upon them—they long to be Home.

They have heard the ringing of the bells of the mother country, the New Jerusalem! They have caught the music of the heavenly harps, for the wind sometimes blows that way to God's people and bears a few notes of the eternal anthem to ears that are being prepared for it. I say again that the happiest members that we have are those who are just going Home and, Beloved, you and I are on the road, our faces are already lit up with some gleams of the Glory yet to be revealed. Our hearts are charmed with the prospect of enjoying this eternal keeping of Sabbath. The very anticipation of it gives us a young Heaven here below! We have not yet come into possession of the inheritance, but it is ours by purchase, by promise and by gift Divine. We have the buds of Heaven that we can wear even here—wait a little while, and we shall have the full-blown roses in the land where flowers never fade! I congratulate some of our beloved Friends on the certainty that it cannot be very long with them before sorrow and sighing shall forever flee away!

We will follow you, dear Brothers and Sisters who will get Home first. We younger folk are growing old as fast as we can and we are glad of it, because we shall be the sooner in the Home Country of the Well-Beloved to whom we are married and we long for the wedding feast. We have already had the kiss from His lips and we can never be satisfied till we are with Him to all eternity. Our good Lord has sent some manna down to let us know what angels feast upon. He has given us sips of sweetness while yet we linger here in the Valley of Bitterness. We will struggle on, and press on, and we rejoice that time flies faster with us, now, than ever! The wheels of our chariot are being quickened until the axles are hot with speed—and we shall soon be with the Well-Beloved—and then His rest and ours will, indeed, be glorious!

III. I will not trust myself to say more about that heavenly rest, but I will finish up with my third point which is this, THE REST SET FORTH AT THIS COMMUNION TABLE IS VERY GLORIOUS.

I do not believe in coming up to a set of rails and kneeling down to receive the bread and wine. It was never so done in our Lord's day, nor for centuries afterwards. Look at that famous picture of the Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci—our Lord and His Apostles are depicted sitting around a table. So it should always be—any posture but that of sitting as much at ease as possible violates the very meaning of the supper! Is it not strange that when Christ bids men *sit* or recline at the supper table, they will not do so, but they will kneel? Then, as it is a *supper*, the first principle with many is that it must be taken in the morning before breakfast—with some people, everything must be contrary to Christ's command! High-Churchism means high treason against Christ—that is the plain English of the matter—at least as to the symbolical teaching, though I thank God that there are many of those who fall into that error who are right at heart and true Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe that the Communion is not the Lord's breakfast, but, "the Lord's Supper," so I like to take it in the evening. Though any time in the day may be acceptable to God, yet certainly the evening must be preferred. And it never was meant to be the *adoration of a wafer*. It was just

an ordinary meal at which Christ reclined with His disciples, one of them actually leaning his head on the Savior's bosom, and all of them lying as easily as they could, for that was part of the teaching of it. The passover in Egypt had to be eaten by the Israelites with their loins girt and every man with his staff in his hand, for they had not, then, come to their rest. They were still in the land of their taskmaster and they had to go through the wilderness to get to their rest. But when you come to the Lord's Supper, there is no eating in haste with your staff in your hand—you have reached your journey's end, for, "they which have believed do enter into rest."

What, then, is the rest we enjoy at the Lord's Table?

Well, first, we shall have the *sweet rest of knowing that we are His children*. I remember the time when I longed to have the crumbs that fell from His table. If He told me that it was not meet to give the children's bread to dogs, I felt that I could answer, "truth, Lord, yet the little dogs may eat of the crumbs that fall from the Master's table, and a few crumbs will be enough for me." I think I sympathized once with the prodigal son when he resolved to say to his father, "Make me as one of your hired servants." I should have been glad to take that position, but that is not the way our Lord acts towards those whom He receives—Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him, and that is your place if you are a child of God—you are Christ's table companion! King Arthur and his knights sat at a round table that no one might seem superior to any other and, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all you are brethren." We shall sit together to receive of His flesh and of His blood and, by His own sweet Spirit's aid, we shall feed upon the same food and drink of the same cup. May God grant that we may find sweet rest as we realize that we are His children!

Then, the next rest set forth at this Communion Table is that we *are eternally provided for*. On the Table there will be bread and the fruit of the vine, but, *spiritually*, there will be the flesh of Christ and the blood of Christ. We shall eat of the bread and drink of the cup, but we shall never consume the Divine food of which these are the emblems. That flesh of His shall always be the meat of His redeemed. That blood of His shall always be our spiritual nutriment. We are eternally provided for—we have manna that will never become corrupt, we have wine that will never turn sour—we have food unto life eternal. Therefore, Beloved, be quite at rest. You have, first, the spirit of adoption, and then you have everything provided for you which you can possibly need between here and Heaven.

There is something that you may rest upon even more sweetly than these blessed Truths of God and that is, *you have become one with Christ*. Do you see that symbolized at the Communion Table? Surely, there can be no closer union than when the flesh of Christ is our spiritual food and the blood of Christ becomes our spiritual drink that is a real, living, loving, lasting, indissoluble union! We are one with Christ—"we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones." I once saw in a work by a man who ought to have known better, a statement charging me with uttering something akin to blasphemy, for I was actually

heard to say, "We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones." Yes, Sir Critic, I did say it! But I quoted it from the Scriptures! Let those who find fault with that sentence settle the matter with the Spirit of God who inspired Paul to write it. It is true that every believing soul is as much one with Christ as the hand is a member with the head—as much one with Christ as the body is one with the soul which quickens it—then who shall separate us? Who shall tear the limbs of Christ away? Who shall take away from Christ so much as His little finger and leave Him a maimed Christ?

Some people believe that children of God can fall from Grace. If that were true, the members of Christ's mystical body would be severed from Him and He would be no longer a perfect Christ! I believe no such teaching as that! If I am one with Christ, I defy the devil, himself, to tear me away from Him—

***"Once in Him, in Him forever!
Nothing from His love can sever."***

Now fall back on that glorious Truth of God, Beloved, and rest. There is no such pillow as that for an aching heart. There is no such peace as that which springs from a consciousness of eternal safety by virtue of a living, conjugal, marital union between you and Jesus Christ, the Well-Beloved of God, the Truly-Beloved of His people. There is good reason for rest there.

A further rest that we enjoy as we come to the Communion Table arises from the fact that *we are sure of His coming, again, and of His eternal reign*. How long are we to come to this Table? How long are we to eat of this bread and drink of this cup? "Till He comes." There is nothing needed to complete our bliss but that He shall come again. He said to His disciples, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." Possibly, some of us will live till Christ comes. I do not know and I do not particularly care. This I do know—if we fall asleep in Him before He comes, those who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will have no preference over those who are asleep in Jesus, for when the trumpet shall sound, the dead in Christ shall rise *first* and *then* they who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air! And so shall we always be with the Lord.

What if somebody shall put his finger on your eyelids and close them in death and you shall sleep in the dust? Yet let me whisper in your ear that word of Job, "I know that my Redeemer lives and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself: and my eyes shall behold, and not another." I do not see what more you can need to make you restful and happy! You say you do not wish to die? Well, perhaps you never may, but why should you fear death? Why should you dread the grave? Our Lord Jesus left His grave clothes behind for our use, and He carefully laid the napkin apart for our friends to wipe their eyes with. We go not to a bare, unfurnished chamber when we go to our last sleep on this earth—

***“Tis no mere morgue to fence
The ruins of lost innocence,
A place of sorrow and decay—
The imprisoning stone is rolled away!”***

Therefore, comfort one another with these words and believe that the rest which Jesus gives us will be glorious, indeed!

I wish that everybody here had that rest. I am afraid that some of you have no rest at all. I pray that you never may have any until you come and take Jesus Christ by an act of simple faith to be your rest forever and ever. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 51:1-13.**

Verses 1, 2. *Hearken to Me, you that follow after righteousness, you that seek the Lord: look unto the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you are dug. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bore you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.* This is for your comfort, dear Friends. If God could make out of Abraham and Sarah so great a nation as that of Israel, what is there that He cannot do? Do you say that the cause of God is brought very low in these evil days? It is not so low as when there seemed to be none but Abraham faithful in the whole world! Yet God made that one mighty man to be like a foundation upon which He built up the chosen people, to whose keeping He committed the sacred Oracles. And if He did that, what can He not do? However low you may individually sink, or however weak you may feel, look back to Abraham and learn from his experience what God can do with you.

3. *For the Lord shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the Garden of the Lord.* Then what will her gardens be in those glorious days? When her very wilderness is like Eden and her desert like the Garden of the Lord, what will her cultivated places be? Oh, what grand times are yet in store for the Church of the living God! Let us hope on, pray on and work on, never doubting, for, as John Wesley said, “The best of all is God is with us.” And if He is with us, all must be well!

3. *Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.* For God's Church is no prison, no den of dragons, or cage of owls. It is a place for joy and gladness, for thanksgiving and the voice of melody. Come, then, and let us bless the Lord with all our hearts! God is still good to Zion and He will not desert her. He did much for Abraham—He will do much for us. We may find many precious things in the hole of that pit from which we were dug!

4, 5. *Hearken unto Me, My people; and give ear unto Me, O My nation: for a Law shall proceed from Me, and I will make My judgment to rest for a light of the people. My righteousness is near. My salvation is gone forth, and My arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon Me, and on My arm shall they trust.* God will not always be forgotten! Man will not always trust to his fellow man to save him, or put his confidence in the

idols he has made. The day is coming when the King of Kings shall come to claim His own, again, and His loyal people shall see the Kingdom spread as it never has done yet! Blessed be His name, this promise shall certainly be fulfilled, "the isles shall wait upon Me, and on My arm shall they trust." It is remarkable that there are so many prophecies made concerning the isles—and that it is in islands, at this day, that the Gospel seems to have spread so marvelously. In our own British isles, in the isles of the Southern Seas, and in Madagascar, what wonders of Grace have been worked!

6, 7. *Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but My salvation shall be forever, and My righteousness shall not be abolished.* What a mercy it is to get a hold of something that will never wear out and that can never be dissolved—something against which the tooth of time may fret itself in vain! This abiding, indestructible thing is the eternal salvation—the everlasting righteousness—which the Lord Jesus has worked out and brought in for His people! Happy people who have this treasure for their eternal heritage!

7. *Hearken unto Me, you that know righteousness.* In the first verse of this chapter, there is a message for those who *follow* after righteousness. Here is a word for those who *know* it—"Hearken unto Me, you that know righteousness."

7. *The people in whose heart is My Law; fear you not the reproach of men, neither be you afraid of their reviling.* If you are true to God, they will be sure to revile you. A Christian should not expect to go to Heaven in a whole skin—it is a part of the nature of serpents and snakes in the grass to try, if they can, to bite at the heel of the child of God, even as that old serpent, the devil, bit at the heel of Him who has broken the dragon's head. "Fear you not the reproach of men, neither be you afraid of their reviling," for your Master suffered in the same fashion long ago.

8. *For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but My righteousness shall be forever, and My salvation from generation to generation.* Let them snarl and let them bite, if they will! They can do no harm to that righteousness which shall be forever, or to that salvation which is from generation to generation.

9. *Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old.* We long for God to come again upon the stage of action, to interpose in the world's affairs and to let men see what He can do. Time was when He was to be found by the burning bush, or on the mountain's brow, or in the cave, or by the well and earth seemed, then, like the vestibule of Heaven! Come again, O Jehovah, great Lord and King, let Your goings be seen once more in the sanctuary!

9, 10. *Are you not the arm that cut Rahab apart and wounded the dragon! Are you not the One who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; that has made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?* Our prayer is that God may do all this again—and the answer to our prayer is found in the following verse.

11. *Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing unto Zion.* Just as they came out of Egypt of old, and with singing and with sound of timbrel, marched through the Red Sea, so shall God bring His people “with singing unto Zion.”

11. *And everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.* Just as Pharaoh turned his chariot to flee from Israel and the depths covered him and all his Egyptians, so sorrow and mourning shall flee away from the redeemed of the Lord.

12. *I, even I, am He that comforts you.* Oh, the beauty and blessing of these glorious words! Let me read them again—“I, even I, am He that comforts you.”

12. *Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass?* You see the grass cut down by the mower's scythe, lying in long rows and withering in the sun—are you afraid of that grass? “No,” you say, “certainly not.” Then be not afraid of *men*, for they shall be cut down after the same fashion!

13. *And forget the Lord your Maker, that has stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and have feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? And where is the fury of the oppressor?* Why, in the hand of God, and He can let it out, or hold it in according to His infinite wisdom and almighty power! Why, then, are you afraid? Is there any might in all the world except the might of the Omnipotent One? Can anything happen but what He permits? Be still, then, and rest in Him—“Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and forget the *Lord your Maker?*” In your fear there is something of egotism, something of your own self. Lay that aside and, as a babe does not feel itself wise enough to judge of danger, but sleeps calmly upon its mother's bosom, so do you! All is well that is in God's hands and you, also, are in God's hands if you have received His Atonement in the Person of His dear Son. Therefore, give up your heart to joy and gladness, and let sorrow and sighing flee from you! Even now, let this be your happy song, as it is also mine—

***“All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to the King!”***

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—337, 386.

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A NEW SONG FOR NEW HEARTS NO. 928

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 1, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And in that day you shall say, O Lord, I will praise You:
though You were angry with me,
Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.”
Isaiah 12:1.*

THIS prophesy is said by some to relate to the invasion by Sennacherib. That calamity threatened to be a very terrible display of Divine anger. It seemed inevitable that the Assyrian power would make an utter desolation of all Judea. But God promised that He would interpose for the deliverance of His people and punish the stout heart of the king of Assyria. And in that day His people should say, “We will praise You though You were angry with us, and therefore sent the Assyrian monarch to chastise us. Your anger is turned away, and You comfort us.”

If this is the meaning of it, it is an instance of sanctified affliction—and it is a lesson to us that whenever we smart under the rod, we may look forward to the time when the rod shall be withdrawn. And it is also an admonition to us that when we escape from trial we should take care to celebrate the event with grateful praise. Let us set up the pillar of memorial, let us pour the oil of gratitude upon it, and garland it with song, blessing the Lord whose anger endures but for a moment, but whose mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.

It is thought by others that this text mainly relates to the latter days, and I think it would be impossible to read the eleventh chapter without feeling that such a reference is clear. There is to be a time when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the cockatrice den. Then the Lord will set His hand again, the second time, to recover the remnant of His people. Then He will repeat His wondrous works of Egypt and at the Red Sea, so that the song of Moses shall be rehearsed again, “The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt Him.”

In that day the Jewish people upon whose head the blood of Christ has come, who these many centuries have been a people scattered and peeled, and sifted as in a sieve throughout all nations—even these shall be restored to their own land—and the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. They shall participate in all the glories of the millennial reign, and with joy shall they draw water out of the wells of salvation. In those days, when all Israel shall be saved, and Judah shall dwell safely, the jubilant thanksgiving shall be heard, “O Lord, I will praise You. For though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.”

The whole people shall sing with such unanimity, with such undivided heart that they shall speak as though they were but one man. They shall use the singular where their numbers might require the plural, “I will

praise You,” shall be the exclamation of the once divided but then united people!

Although both these interpretations are true, and both instructive, the text is many-sided and bears another reading. We shall find out the very soul of the passage if we consider it as an illustration of what occurs to every one of God’s people when he is brought out of darkness into God’s marvelous light. When he is delivered from the spirit of bondage beneath Divine wrath and led by the Spirit of Adoption into the liberty wherewith Christ makes him free. In that day I am sure these words are fulfilled. The Believer does then say right joyously, “O Lord, I will praise You: though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.”

In regarding the text from this point of view, we shall first observe the prelude of this delightful song. And then, secondly, we shall listen to the song itself.

I. First I shall ask your consideration of THE PRELUDE of this charming song. Here are certain preliminaries to the music. They are contained in the first line of the text. “In that day you shall say.” Here we have the tuning of the harps, the notes of the music follow in the succeeding sentences. Much of instruction is couched in these seven words of prelude. Note then, first, there is a time for that joyous song which is here recorded. “In that day.” The term, “that day,” is sometimes used for a day of terror, and often for a period of blessing. The common term to both is this—they were both days of the manifestation of Divine power.

“That day,” a day of terrible confusion to God’s enemies. “That day,” a day of great comfort to God’s friends. The day being in either case the time of the making bare of God’s arm and the manifestation of His strength. Now, the day in which a man rejoices in Christ is the day in which God’s power is revealed on his behalf in his heart and conscience, and the Holy Spirit subdues him to the reign of Christ. It is not always that God works with such effectual power as this in the human heart—He has His set times. Oftentimes the word of human ministry proves ineffectual—the preacher exhorts, the hearer listens, but the exhortation is not obeyed. It sometimes happens that even desires may be excited, and yet nothing is accomplished, for these better feelings prove to be as those spring blossoms on the trees which do not knit and fall fruitless to the ground.

There is, however, an appointed time for the calling of God’s elect, a set time in which the Lord visits His chosen with a power of Grace which they cannot effectually resist. He makes them willing in the day of His power. It is a day in which not only is the Gospel heard, but our report is believed, because the arm of the Lord is revealed. To everything, according to Solomon, there is a season—a time to break down and a time to build up. A time of war, and a time of peace. A time to kill, and a time to heal. And even so, there is a time for conviction and a time for consolation.

With some who are in great distress of spirit, it may be God’s time to wound and to kill. Their self-confidence is yet too vigorous, their carnal righteousness is yet too lively. Their confidences must be wounded, their righteousness must be killed. For otherwise they will not yield to Grace. God does not clothe us till He has stripped us. He does not heal till first He has wounded. How should He make alive those who are not dead? There is a work of Grace in the heart of digging out the foundations before

Grace begins to build up our hopes—woe to that man who builds without having the foundation dug out—for his house will fall. Woe to that man who leaps into a sudden peace without ever having felt his need of pardon, without repentance, without brokenness of spirit. He shall see his hasty fruit wither before his eyes.

The time when God effectually blesses is sometimes called “a time of love.” It is a time of deep distress to us, but it is a time of love with God—a time wisely determined in the decree and counsel of the Most High—so that healing mercy arrives at the best time to each one who is interested in the Covenant of Grace. Someone may enquire, “When do you think will be the time when God will enable me to say, ‘Your anger is turned away?’” My dear Brother, you can easily discern it! I believe God’s time to give us comfort is usually when we are brought so low as to confess the justice of the wrath which He is pouring upon us.

Humbleness of heart is one sure indication of coming peace. A German nobleman some years ago went over the galleys at Toulon. There he saw many men condemned by the French government to perpetual toil at the galley oar on account of their crimes. Being a prince in much repute, he obtained the favor that he should give liberty to one of the captives. He went about among them, and talked to them, but found in every case that they thought themselves wrongly treated, oppressed, and unrighteously punished. At last he met with one who confessed, “In my case my sentence is a most just and even a merciful one. If I had not been imprisoned in this way I should most likely have long ago been executed for some still greater crime. I have been a very great offender, and the law is doing nothing more than it ought to do in keeping me in confinement for the rest of my life.”

The German nobleman returned to the manager of the galleys and said, “This is the only man in all this gang that I would wish to set free, and I elect him for liberty.” It is so with our great Liberator, the Lord Jesus Christ, when He meets with a soul that confesses its demerit, owns the justice of Divine wrath, and has not a word to say for itself. Then He says, “Your sins which are many are forgiven you.” The time when His anger is turned away is the time when you confess the justice of His anger, and bow down and humbly entreat Him for mercy. Above all, the hour of Grace has struck when you look ALONE to Christ.

While you are looking to any good thing in yourself, and hoping to grow better, or to do better, you are making no advances towards comfort. But when you give up in despair every hope that can be grounded in yourself and look away to those dear wounds of His—to that suffering humanity of the Son or God who stooped from Heaven for you—then has the day dawned wherein you shall say, “O Lord, I will praise You.” I pray earnestly that this set time to favor you may be now come—the time when the rain is over, and the voice of the turtle is heard in your land.

Looking again at the preliminaries of this song you notice that a word indicates the singer. “In that day you shall say.” “You.” It is a singular pronoun, and points out one individual. One by one we receive eternal life and peace. “You,” the individual, “you,” singled out to feel in your conscience God’s wrath. You are equally selected to enjoy Jehovah’s love. Ah, Brethren, it is never a day of Grace to us till we are taken aside from the multitude and set by ourselves. Our individuality must come out in con-

version—even if it never appears at any other time. You fancy, so many of you, that it is all right with you because you live in a Christian nation. I tell you it is woe unto you! Having outward privileges they involve you in responsibilities, but bring you no saving Grace.

Perhaps you fancy that your family religion may somewhat help you, and the erroneous practices of certain Christian Churches may foster this delusion, but it is not so. There is no birthright godliness—“You must be born again.” The first birth will not help you, for, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh. And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Still, I know you fancy that if you mingle in godly congregations, and sing as they sing, and pray as they pray, it shall go well with you—but it is not so. The wicket gate of eternal life admits but one at a time. Is it not written, “You shall be gathered one by one, O you children of Israel”?

Don't you know that when the fountain is opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness, it is declared by the Prophet Zechariah, “The land shall mourn, every family apart. The family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart. The family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart. The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart. The family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart. All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart”! You must *each one* be brought to feel the Divine anger in your souls, and to have it removed from you, that you may rejoice in God as your salvation.

Has it been so with you, then, dear Hearer? Are you that favored singer? Are you one of that chosen throng who can say, “Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me”? Away with generals. Be not satisfied except with *particulars*. Little matters it to you that Christ should die for ten thousand men, if you have no part in His death. Little blessing is it to you that there should be joy from myriads of hearts because they are pardoned if you should die unpardoned! Seek a personal interest in Christ, and do not be satisfied unless in your own heart you have it satisfactorily revealed that your sin in particular is by an act of Grace put away.

I like to remember that this word, “you,” is spoken to those who have been by sorrow brought into the last degree of despair. “In that day you shall say, though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away.” You poor down-trodden Heart, where are you? You Woman of a sorrowful spirit, rejoice, for in that day of mercy you shall sing. You broken-hearted Sinner, ready to destroy yourself because of the anguish of conscience—in the day of God's abounding mercy you shall rejoice, even you—and your note shall be all the sweeter because you have had the most sin to be forgiven, and felt most the anger of God burning in your soul. Dwell on that, Mourners, and God grant it may be realized personally by yourselves.

The next thing to be noted in the preliminaries is the Teacher. “In that day you shall say,” who says this? It is God alone who can so positively declare, “you shall say.” Who but the Lord can thus command man's heart and speech? It is the Lord alone. He who has made us is master of our spirits. By His Omnipotence He rules in the world of mind as well as matter, and all things happen as He ordains. He says, “In that day,” that is, in God's own time, “you shall say.” And He who thus declares will make good the word. Here is revealed God's will—and what the Lord wills shall be accomplished. What He declares shall be spoken, shall assuredly be spoken.

Here is consolation to those feeble folk who fear the Word will not be fulfilled. "You shall say," is a Divine Word and cannot fail. The Lord, alone, can give a man the right to say, "Your anger is turned away." If any man presumes to say, "God has turned His anger away from me," without a warrant from the Most High, that man lies to his own confusion. But when it is written, "You shall say," it is as though God had said, "I will make it true, so that you shall be fully justified in the declaration." Yet more comfort is here, for even when the right to such a blessing is bestowed, we are often unable to enjoy it because of weakness.

Unbelief is frequently so great that many things which are true we cannot receive. Under a sense of sin we are so desponding that we think God's mercy too great for us. And therefore we are not able to appropriate the blessing presented to us, though it is inexpressibly delightful. Blessed be God, the Holy Spirit knows how to chase away our unbelief and give us power to embrace the blessing! He can make us accept the Covenant favor and rejoice in it so as to avow the joy.

There are some of you whom I have tried to induce to believe comfortable truths about yourselves, but you have fairly defeated me. I have put the Gospel plainly to you, for I have felt sure that its promises were meant for you. And I have said within my heart, "Surely they will be comforted this morning. Certainly their broken hearts will be bound up by that gracious Word." But oh, I cannot make you say, "Lord, I will praise You." I am unable to lead you to faith and peace. Here, however, is my joy—my Master can do what His servant cannot! He can make the tongue of the dumb sing. He delights to look after desperate cases. Man's extremity becomes His opportunity.

Where the most affectionate words of ours fail, the consolations of His blessed Spirit are divinely efficacious. He cannot merely bring the oil and the wine, but He knows how to pour them into the wounds and heal the anguish of the contrite spirit. I pray the Master that He who alone can teach us to sing this song may graciously instruct those of you who have been seeking rest these many months, and finding none. "I am the Lord which teaches you to profit." He can put a song into your mouth, for nothing is beyond the range of Divine Grace.

Once more. "In that day you shall say." Here is another preliminary of the song, namely, the tone of it. "You shall say, O Lord, I will praise You." The song is to be an open one, avowed, vocally uttered, heard of men and published abroad. It is not to be a silent feeling—a kind of soft music whose sweetness is spent within the spirit. No. In that day you shall say, you shall speak it outright, you shall testify and bear witness to what the Lord has done for you! When a man gets his sins forgiven he cannot help revealing the secret. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing."

Even if the forgiven one could not speak with his tongue, he could say it with his eyes—his countenance, his manner—his very gait would betray him! The gracious secret would ooze out in some fashion. Spiritual men, at any rate, would find it out, and with thankfulness mark the joyful evidences. I know that before I found the Savior, had you known me, you would have observed my solitary habits. And if you had tracked me to my chamber, and to my Bible, and my knees, you would have heard groans

and sighs which betokened a sorrowful spirit. The ordinary amusements of youth had in those days few attractions for me, and conversation, however cheerful, yielded me no comfort.

But that very morning that I heard the Gospel message, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth," I am certain that no person who knew me could have helped remarking the difference even in my face! A change came over my spirits, which as I remember was even indicated in the way in which I walked, for the heavy step of melancholy was exchanged for a more cheerful pace. The spiritual condition affects the bodily state, and it was evidently so with me. My delight at being forgiven was no ordinary sensation, I could have fairly leaped for joy!—

***"All through the night I wept full sore,
But morning brought relief.
That hand which broke my bones before,
Then broke my bonds of grief.
My mourning He to dancing turns,
For sackcloth joy He gives,
A moment, Lord, Your anger burns,
But long Your favor lives."***

If I had not avowed my deliverance the very stones must have cried out! It was not in my heart to keep it back, but I am sure I could not have done so if I had desired. God's Grace does not come into the heart as a beggar into a barn, and lie hidden away as if it stole a night's lodging. No, its arrival is known all over the house, and every chamber of the soul testifies its presence! Grace is like a bunch of lavender—it discovers itself by its sweet smell. Like the nightingale it is heard where it is not seen. Like a spark which falls into the midst of straw it burns, and blazes, and consumes, and so reveals itself by its own energetic operations.

O Soul, burdened with sin, if Christ does but come to you, and pardon you, I will be bound for it that before long all your bones shall say, "Lord, who is like unto You?" You will be of the same mind as David, "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, You God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness." You will gladly say with him, "Your vows are upon me, O God: I will render praise unto You, for You have delivered my soul from death." Not only will you soberly tell what great things Divine Grace has worked for you, but it will be very unlikely that your exuberant joy may lead you beyond the bounds of solemn decorum.

The precise and slow going will condemn you, but you need not mind, for you can offer the same excuse for it as David made to Michal when he danced before the ark. Far be it from me to condemn you, should you cry, "Hallelujah," or clap your hands! It is our cold custom to condemn every demonstration of feeling, but I am sure Scripture does not warrant us in our condemnation. For we find such passages as these, "O clap your hands, all you people! Shout unto God with the voice of triumph." "Praise Him upon the loud cymbals: praise Him upon the high sounding cymbals." What if the overflowing of holy joy should seem to be disorderly, what matters it if God accepts it? He who has long been in prison, when he gets his liberty may well take a frisk or two, and an extra leap for joy, and who shall begrudge him?

He who has long been hungry and famished, when he sees the table spread, may be excused if he falls to with more of eagerness than polite-

ness. Oh, yes, they shall say it, they shall say it, "I will praise You, O Lord!" In the very disorderliness of their demonstration they shall the more emphatically say, "I will praise You: though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away." Thus much on the prelude of the song. Now let us hear the song itself.

II. In THE SONG ITSELF I would call to your notice the fact that all of it is concerning the Lord. It is all addressed to Him. "O Lord, I will praise You: though You were angry, Your anger is turned away." When a soul escapes from the bondage of sin and becomes consciously pardoned, it resembles the Apostles on the Mount Tabor, of whom we spoke the other Sunday morning. It sees no man, save Jesus only. While you are seeking Grace you think much of the minister, the service, the outward form—but the moment you find peace in God through the precious blood of Christ—you will think of your pardoning God only.

Oh, how small everything becomes in the presence of that dear Cross where God the Savior loved and died! When we think of all our iniquity being cast into the depth of the sea we can no more boast of anything that was once our glory. The instrumentality by which peace came to us will be always dear to us. We shall esteem the preacher of the Gospel who brings salvation to us to be our spiritual father—but still we shall never think of praising *him*—we shall give all the glory to our God. As for ourselves, self will sink like lead amidst the waters when we find Christ. God will be All in All when iniquity is pardoned.

I have often thought that if some of my Brethren who preach a Gospel in which there is little of the Grace of God had felt a little more conviction of sin in being converted, they would be sure to preach a clearer and more gracious Gospel. Many nowadays appear to leap into peace without any convictions of sin—they do not seem to have known what the guilt of sin means. They scramble into peace before the burden of sin has been felt. It is not for me to judge, but I must confess I have my fears of those who have never felt the terrors of the Lord. And I look upon conviction of sin as a good groundwork for a well-instructed Christian.

I observe, as a rule, that when a man has been put in the prison of the Law. When he has been made to wear the heavy chains of conviction, and at last obtains his liberty through the precious blood of Christ, he is pretty sure to cry up the Grace of God and magnify Divine mercy. He feels that in his case salvation must be of Grace from first to last. And he naturally favors that system of theology which magnifies most the Grace of God. Those who have not felt this—whose conversion has been of the more easy kind, produced rather by excitement than by depth of thought—seem to me to choose a flimsy divinity in which man is more prominent, and God is less regarded.

I am sure of this one thing—that I personally desire to ascribe conversion in my own case entirely to the Grace of God—and to give God the glory of it. And I dread that conversion which could in any degree deprive God of being in His everlasting decrees the cause of it, by His effectual Spirit the direct Agent of it, by His continued working through the Holy Spirit the Perfecter of it. Give God the praise, my Brethren. You must do so if you have thoroughly experienced what God's anger means, and what the turning away of it means.

The next thing in this song is that it includes repentant memories. “O Lord, I will praise You: though You were angry with me.” There was a time when God was to our consciousness angry with us. When was that? And how did we know that God was angry with us? Outsiders think when we talk about conversion that we are merely talking of sentimental theories. But let me assure you that it is as much matter of *fact* to us with regard to our spiritual nature, as your feelings of sickness and of recovery are real and actual to you. Time was when some of us read the Word of God, as we read it, believing it to be an Inspired Book, we perceived that it contained a Law, holy and just—the breach of which was threatened with eternal death.

As we read it we discovered that we had broken that Law, not in some points, but in *all*. And we were obliged, as we read it, to feel that all the sentences of that Book against sinners were virtually sentences against us. We may perhaps have read these chapters before, but we had given them no serious thought until on this occasion we were led to see that we stood condemned by the Law of God as contained in Holy Scripture. Then we felt that God was angry with us. It was not a mere idea of ours—we had this Book in evidence of it. If that Book were indeed true, we felt we were condemned. We dared not think the old Book to be a cunningly devised fable. We knew it was not, and therefore from its testimony we concluded that God was angry with us.

At the same time we learned this terrible Truth from the Book—our conscience suddenly awoke and confirmed the fact, for it said—“What the Book declares is correct. The just God must be angry with such a sinful being as you are.” Conscience brought to our recollection many things which we would gladly have forgotten. It revealed to us much of the evil of our hearts which we had no wish to know. And thus, as we looked at Scripture by the light of conscience, we concluded in ourselves that we were in a very dreadful plight, and that God was angry with us. Then there entered into us at the same time, over and above all the rest, a certain work of the Holy Spirit called conviction of sin.

“When He, the Spirit of Truth is come,” He shall convict the world of sin. He has come. And He has convicted us of sin in a way in which the Scripture would not have done apart from Him—and our conscience would not have done apart from Him. But His light shone in upon us and we felt as we never felt before. Then sin appeared exceedingly sinful, as it was committed against Infinite Love and goodness. Then it appeared to us as though Hell must soon swallow us up—and the wrath of God must devour us. Oh, the trembling and the fear, the dismay and the alarm which then possessed our spirits! And yet, my Brethren, at this very time, the remembrance of it is cause for thankfulness.

In the Hebrew, the wording of our text is slightly different from what we get in the English. Our English translators have very wisely put in the word “though,” a little earlier than it occurs in the Hebrew. The Hebrew would run something like this, “O Lord, I will praise You: You were angry with me.” Now we do this day praise God that He made us feel His anger. “What?” you say. “What? Is a sense of anger a cause for *praise*?” No, my Brethren, not if it stood alone, but because it has driven us to Christ. If wrath had been laid up for us hereafter, it would be a cause of horror, deep and dread. But that it was let loose in measure upon us here, and

that we were thus condemned in conscience that we might not be condemned at last is reason for much thankfulness.

We should never have felt His love if we had not felt His anger. We laid hold on His mercy because of necessity. No soul will accept Christ Jesus until it must. It is not driven to faith until it is driven to self-despair. God's angry face makes Christ's loving face dear to us. We would never look at the Christ of God, unless first of all the God of Christ had looked at us through the tempest and made us afraid. "I will praise You, that You did let me feel Your anger, in order that I might be driven to discover how that anger could be turned away." So you see the song in its deep bass note includes plaintive recollections of sin pressing heavily on the spirit.

The song of our text contains in itself blessed certainties. "I will praise You: though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away." Can a man know that? Can a man be quite sure that he is forgiven? Yes, that he can. He can be as sure of pardon as he is of his existence, as infallibly certain as he is of a mathematical proposition. "No," says one, "but how is it?" My Brother, albeit that this is a matter for spiritual men, yet at the same time it is a matter of certainty as clearly as anything can be ascertained by human judgment. The confidence of a man's being pardoned, and God's anger being turned away from him is not based upon his merely *feeling* that it is so. Nor his merely *believing* that it is so.

You are not pardoned because you work yourself up into a comfortable frame of mind and *think* you are pardoned. That may be a delusion. You are not necessarily delivered from God's anger because you believe you are—you may be believing a lie, and may believe what you like—but that does not make it true. There must be a fact going before, and if that fact is not there, you may believe what you choose, but it is pure imagination, nothing more.

On what ground does a man know that God's anger is turned away? I answer thus, on the ground of this Book. "It is written," is our basis of assurance. I turn to this Book, and I discover that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into this world and became the Substitute for a certain body of men. That He took their sins, and was punished in their place in order that God, without the violation of His justice, might forgive as many as are washed in Christ's blood. My question then is, for whom did Christ die? The moment I turn to the Scriptures, I find very conspicuously on its page this declaration, that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

I am a sinner, that I am clear of. That gives me some hope. But I next find that, "He that believes on Him is not condemned." Looking to myself I find that I do really believe, that is, I trust Jesus. Very well, then, I am sure I am not condemned, for God has declared I am not. I read again, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." I know that I have believed, that is to say, trusted—I trust my salvation with Christ. And I have also, in obedience to His command been baptized—then I am saved, and shall be saved, for it says so. Now this is a matter of Testimony which I receive. He that believes in Christ receives the Testimony of God—and that is the only Testimony he wants.

I know it has been thought that you get some special revelation in your own soul—some flash, as it were, of light—some extraordinary intimation. But nothing of the kind is absolutely needed. I know that the Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are born of God. But the first essential

matter is God's witness in the Word. "He that believes not God, has made Him a liar, because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son." God's witness concerning His Son is this—that if you trust His Son you are saved. His Son suffered for you. His Son bore the punishment that was due for your sins—God declares it—that you are forgiven for Christ's sake.

He cannot punish twice for one offense—first His Son and then you. He cannot demand retribution from His Law to vindicate His justice, first from your Substitute and then from you. Was Christ your Substitute? That is the question. He was if you trust Him—your trusting Him is the evidence that He was a Substitute for you. Now see, then, the moment I, being under His anger, have come to trust my soul forever in the hands of Christ, God's anger is turned away from me because it was turned upon Christ. And I stand, guilty sinner as I am in myself, absolved before God—and feel that none can lay anything to my charge, for my sins were laid on Christ, and punished upon Christ—and I am clear.

And now what shall I say unto the Lord, but, "I will praise You: for though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me." It is a matter of certainty. It is not a matter of "if," "and," or "but." It is a fact. This morning you are either forgiven or you are not. You are either clean in God's sight or else the wrath of God abides on you. And I beseech you, do not rest till you know which it is. If you find out that you are unforgiven, seek the Savior. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." But if you believe in Him, you are no longer guilty—you are forgiven. Do not sit down and fret as if you were guilty, but enjoy the liberty of the children of God. Being justified by faith, have peace with God through Jesus Christ your Lord.

Time fails me, but I must add that our song includes holy resolutions—"I will praise You." I will do it with my heart in secret. I will get alone and make my expressive silence sing Your praise. I will sit and pour out liquid songs in tears of gratitude, welling up from my heart. I will praise You in the Church of God, for I will search out other Believers, and I will tell them what God has done for me. I will cast in my lot with Your people—if they are despised, I will bear the shame with them—and count it honor. I will unite myself to them, and help them in their service. And if I can magnify Christ by my testimony among them, I will do it.

I will praise You in my life. I will make my business praising You. I will make my parlor and my drawing room, I will make my kitchen and my fields praise You. I will not be content unless all I am and all I have shall praise You. I will make a harp of the whole universe. I will make earth and Heaven, space and time to be but strings upon which my joyful fingers shall play lofty tunes of thankfulness. I will praise You, O my God! My heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise—and when I shall die, or rather pass from this life to another, I who have been forgiven so much sin through such a Savior, will, by Your Grace, continue to praise You—

***"Oh, how I long to join the choir
Who worship at His feet!
Lord, grant me soon my heart's desire!
Soon, soon Your work complete!"***

Note once more that this is a song which is peculiar in its character, and appropriate only to the people of God. I may say of it, "no man could

learn this song but the redeemed." He only who has felt his vileness, and has had it washed away in the "fountain filled with blood," can know its sweetness. It is not a Pharisee's song—it has no likeness to, "God I thank You that I am not as other men." It confesses, "You were angry with me," and there owns that the singer was even as others. But it glories that through infinite mercy the Divine anger is turned away. And herein it leans on the appointed Savior.

It is not a Sadducean song, no doubt mingles with the strain. It is not the philosopher's query, "There may be a God, or there may not be," it is the voice of a believing worshipper. It is not, "I may be guilty, or I may not be." It is all positive, every note of it. "You were angry with me." I know it, I feel it, yet, "Your anger is turned away." Of this, too, I am sure. I believe it upon the witness of God! I cannot doubt His Word. It is a song of strong faith, and yet of humility. Its spirit is a precious incense made up of many costly ingredients. We have, here, not one virtue, alone, but many rare excellences.

Humility confesses, "You were angry with me." Gratitude sings, "Your anger is turned away." Patience cries, "You comfort me," and holy joy springs up, and says, "I will praise You." Faith, hope, and love all have their notes here, from the bass of humility up to the highest alto of glorious communion, all the different parts are represented. It is a full song—the swell of the diapason of the heart!

I have done when I have said just these words by way of practical result from the subject. One is a word of consolation—consolation to you who are under God's anger this morning. My heart goes out after you. I know what your sorrow is. I knew it by the space of five years at a time—when I mourned the guilt and curse of sin. Ah, poor Soul, you are in a sad plight, indeed. But be of good cheer! You have in your bosom, if you will believe me, a key which will open every lock in Doubting Castle wherein you are now confined. If, Man, you have but heart to take it out of your bosom, and out of the Word of God—and use it—liberty is near.

I will show you that key—look at it, "Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out." "Oh, but that does not happen to fit," you say. Well, here's another—"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses from all sin." Does not that meet your case? Then let me try again—"He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." "To the uttermost"—dwell on that and be comforted! I never knew God to shut a soul up in the prison of conviction but He sooner or later released the captive. The Lord will surely bring you out of the low dungeon of conviction. The worst thing in the world is to go unchastened—to be allowed to sin and eat honey with it—this is the precursor of damnation.

But to sin, and have the wormwood of repentance with it—this is the prelude of being saved! If the Lord has embittered your sin, He has designs of love towards you. His anger shall yet be turned away. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them. I the God of Israel will not forsake them."

The next is a word of admonition. Some of you have been forgiven, but are you praising God as you should? I have heard say that in our Churches there are no more than five per cent who are doing any real work for Christ. That is not true of *this* Church. I should be very sorry if it

were, but I fear there are more than five per cent who are doing *nothing*. Where are you who have felt His anger pass away, and yet are not praising Him? Come, bestir yourself, bestir yourself! Seek to serve Jesus! Do you not know that you are meant to be the winners of souls?

The American bee keeper, when he wants to collect a hive, catches first a single bee. He puts it in a box with a piece of honeycomb and shuts the door. After awhile, when it is well fed, he lets it out. It comes back again after more of the sweet, but it brings companions with it. And when they have eaten the honey they always bring yet a more numerous band, so by-and-by there is a goodly muster for the hive. After this fashion ought *you* to act. If you have found mercy, you ought to praise God and tell others, so that they may believe. And in their turn lead others to Jesus. This is the way the kingdom of God grows.

I am afraid you are guilty here. See to it, dear Brother. See to it, dear Sister—and who can tell of what use you may yet be? There was a dear servant of Christ who was just on the borders of the grave, very old and very ill, and frequently delirious, so that the doctors said no one must go into the chamber except the nurse. A little Sunday school boy, who was rather curious, peeped in at the door to look at the minister, and the poor dying servant of God saw him, and the ruling passion was strong in death. He called him. “David,” said he, “did you ever close in with Christ? I have done so many a time, and I long that you may.” Fifty years after, that boy was living and bearing testimony that the dying words of the good man had brought him to Jesus—for by them he was led to close in with Christ.

You do not know what half a word might do if you would but speak it! O keep not back the good news that might bring salvation to your wife, to your husband, to your child, to your servant! If you have, indeed, felt the Lord’s anger pass away this morning, go home to your chamber, and on your knees repeat this vow, “My God, I will praise You! I have been a sluggard, I have been very silent about You. I am afraid I have not given You of my substance as I ought. I am sure I have not given You of my heart as I should. But oh, forgive the past, and accept Your poor servant yet again. ‘Then I will praise You. For though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.’ ”

God bless you, for Christ’s sake.

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

“MR. MOODY’S TEXT” NO. 2541

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, OCTOBER 31, 1897.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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***“I will trust and not be afraid.”
Isaiah 12:2.***

I saw this text advertised as being printed in colors and it was called, “Mr. Moody’s Text.” When I saw him yesterday, I asked him how it was his text any more than it is mine. He said that he was sure he did not know—he never called it his text, so far as he knew. Somebody may have thought it a very proper text for him and so it is, but I lay claim to the text, too, and I should advise every Christian to say, “That is my text also.” I would be very glad if some who are not Christians should be brought, by the Grace of God, into the bonds of the Covenant and should be able to lay hold on this text, and so say, “I will trust and not be afraid.” I told Mr. Moody that if it belonged to nobody else in particular, it certainly was mine. He said, “How so?” “Well,” I replied, “I told my people the meaning of that text some time ago.” I said to you, dear Friends, that you might get to Heaven by the Free Grace train if you did but get on board it anywhere, but that it was always advisable, if you could, to travel first-class. I pointed out the third-class carriage to you. This is it—“What time I am afraid, I will trust in the Lord.” If you get in there, you will go all right to the journey’s end, but it is much better to be where there are nice, soft cushions to sit upon. This is the first-class carriage—“I will trust and not be afraid.” You are no safer, I suppose, in one carriage than in the other, but, certainly, you are much more comfortable in this first-class carriage! “I will trust and not be afraid.”

Having told that story, I claim the text as being my own. However, it will be all the more mine by belonging to other people. I count that it is rather a narrowing of a man’s possessions when he cannot permit others to enjoy them without losing the enjoyment of them, himself. But it makes your treasure all the richer and the larger when everybody else may have it and yet you, yourself, may have none the less. So is it with this delightful text! I may say it. You may say it, my Brother, and you, my Sister. And you, venerable Sir, and you, juvenile Believer—you may each one say, by the Grace of God, “I will trust and not be afraid.”

The man, however, who dares to say it, and who ought to say it, is the man described in this remarkable chapter of Isaiah. “In that day *you* shall say, O Lord, I will praise You.” The man who can truly say, “I will trust and not be afraid,” is the man who from his heart praises God—the man who spends his breath and spends his life in magnifying the Most

High. Then the Prophet goes on, “I will praise You: though You were angry with me.” So that the man who can say, “I will trust and not be afraid,” is the man who has felt something of the anger of God, one who has known what it is to come under the lash of the Law, but also who has realized what it is to be delivered from its iron grip. He who has never felt the burden of sin will, I think, never know the joy of faith. What has he to trust about? What cause is there for his being afraid when he does not see any sin in himself? But he who is consciously a sinner is the man who can say, “I will trust and not be afraid,” when the Lord has forgiven him his sin.

Isaiah proceeds, “Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away and You comforted me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid.” When your whole salvation is found in God, especially in God as He reveals Himself in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ—when Christ is your Savior and has saved you from your sin then, indeed, may you say, “I will trust and not be afraid.”

It is in the hope that I am addressing many persons here of this character that I have taken this text, “I will trust and not be afraid.” If I can, I am going to do four things with the text. First, I am going to *twist the text*. Secondly, to *untwist it*. Thirdly, to *press it*. And fourthly, to *praise it*.

I. First, then, I propose to do what you may think is a very horrible thing, and what, as a rule, I will not do. That is, I am going to **TWIST THE TEXT**.

Mark you, I shall not do this, myself—I only intend to tell you how a great many persons twist it. They use most of the same words, but they put them in the wrong position. For instance, one man says, “*I will not trust and yet I will not be afraid.*” He does not say, “I will trust and not be afraid,” but, “I will not trust and *yet* I will not be afraid. I am no Believer in Christ. I do not need any Free Grace Gospel. I need no mercy, for I am righteous, I have kept the Law. I shall not trust in Jesus and yet I shall not be afraid.” Alas, there are persons who do not say that in words, but, in effect, that is exactly what they say! They have no righteousness but their own and that is only filthy rags—yet they say that they are rich, increased in goods and have need of nothing. I heard of a man who wrote over his door these words, “Let no evil person enter here.” One of his neighbors remarked that if he carried out his own orders, he would never be able to go into his own house!

I am afraid that there are many people who think all others evil except themselves, yet if they could but look within, they would discover that the evil person not only lives in their house, but that his head is under their hat! They are, in fact, themselves the evil persons, though they think that they are righteous. Now, dear Friend, if you fancy that you can live in this world wrapped up in yourself without being afraid. If you suppose that you can, without fear, die clad only in your own righteousness, I pray you do not be such a fool as to suppose that you can wake up in the next world in your own righteousness and not be afraid. Oh, if you had but a clear view of how defective and how defiled your righteousness is in the sight of God, you would never dare to put any confi-

dence in it! Much better men than you, such for instance as *David*, have cried, “Enter not into judgment with Your servant: for in Your sight shall no man living be justified.” The Gospel teaches us that there is no salvation by our own works. If there were, what need would there be of the work of Christ? What need of yonder awful tragedy on Calvary if we could save ourselves and could stand calm and quiet and fearless without a trust in the Lord Jesus Christ? I do pray you, do not adopt such proud and boastful language as to say, “I will not trust and yet I will not be afraid.”

Are you an utter worldling? Do you say, “Give me plenty to eat and drink, and I do not care about that faith of which you make so much. I want ready cash! I want to have my portion now”? If that is the way you talk, now, there may come a time when you will be quiet and alone, when fear will steal over you. There may come a time of trouble when the comforts of this world will vanish from you. There may come a season of sickness when all your money bags, if they were laid upon your suffering body, could not heal it, and when all your broad possessions will only make it the harder to die, and leave them all! Do not try to twist my text in that way, I do implore you, for it must be a losing game for you if you say, “I will not trust and yet I win not be afraid.”

Then I have seen the text twisted another way, thus, “*I will be afraid and not trust.*” There are many people who are doing this. If they are not saying it in words, they are practically doing it. They are naturally timorous, they are afraid of many of the ordinary events that happen in the Providence of God and they also have sufficient conscience to know that they have done wrong in the sight of God—and that sin must be punished. So they are afraid and they keep on being afraid, for they will not trust in Christ Jesus to save them. This is a very painful condition for anyone to be in—and if it should get still more painful, I should not wonder—and neither should I particularly pity the person who is in such a state. If he chooses to be afraid and refuses to trust, whatever mischief follows upon such mistrust he richly deserves. O Friend, if you are afraid, I do pray you to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ! If you do not, I fear that one of these days you will get to trust in your being afraid!

You ask, “How can I do that?” I have seen scores of persons who, because they have felt the weight of sin, have begun to trust in their convictions. They have said, “We are not like some whom we know. We cannot sin without fearing the price of conscience. We are seeking the Savior, we are desirous of finding Christ.” Yet there they stick. I heard one say that such a state of mind as that is often the doorstep to Grace. So I believe it is, but if any of you go to your homes and sit on the doorstep all night, I think it is highly probable that the policeman will want to know what you are doing there. I should suspect that you had taken something that had not done you any good if you sat there all night! I would not recommend you to attempt it, even literally. But, *spiritually*, it is a horrible thing to get to the doorstep of Grace and sit there—to get to the doorstep of Heaven and sit there, for outside of Heaven is Hell—even if it is the very doorstep of Heaven!

If you are not in Christ, you are out of Christ! He that is not alive is dead. He that is not washed is foul. He that is not regenerate is unregenerate. There cannot be any space between these two—there is no neutral border ground. I pray you, therefore, do not trust in your being afraid! Do not settle down contentedly in that condition. I have known people go in and out of the House of God for years and never accept Christ. And they have grown to be confirmed doubters, confirmed distrusters, confirmed despairers. Oh, I pray you, do not get into that state! It is a horrible condition of heart! Instead of saying, “I will be afraid and will not trust,” may God the Holy Spirit sweetly incline you to say, “I will trust and not be afraid.”

There is a third class of people who twist my text in this way, “*I will trust and be afraid.*” Again I confess that they do not say it, but they *do* it, and actions speak louder than words. They trust yet they are afraid. It looks as if that could not be, yet I have known some, about whom I have been compelled to think, in the judgment of charity, that they do trust and, therefore, that they are saved, yet, for all that, they are very much afraid. Oh, these dear good inconsistent people! They seem as if they were resolved to shut themselves out of the Kingdom of God even while the door of Mercy stands wide open! The sun is shining brightly, so they pull down all the blinds, and they cannot be satisfied until they have excluded every ray of light. This is not right, for, my dear doubting Friend, it brings no glory to God! It is no recommendation of true religion and it is a stumbling block in the way of a good many other people. If I am addressing any such persons, young or old, I pray the Lord to enable them to give up this bad habit of trusting and yet being afraid.

Be of good courage, you very, very timid ones, and alter your tone. Try to put a, “Selah,” into your life, as David often did in his Psalms. Frequently he put in a, “Selah,” and then he changed the key, directly. In like manner, change the key of your singing—you are a great deal too low. Let the harp strings be tightened up a bit and let us have no more of these flat, mournful notes! Give us some other key, please, and begin to say with the Prophet Isaiah, “O Lord, I will praise You: though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away and You comforted me. Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid.”

II. Now, in the second place, I am going to *untwist the text*. That is to say, I will try to spread it out a little, to show you what there is in it, applying it to different instances in which it will be right and proper for you to say, “I will trust and not be afraid.”

And first, dear Friend, say this about *trusting in Christ*. “I will trust and not be afraid.” Some dear souls are afraid to trust Jesus. If they better understood the matter, they would be afraid *not* to trust Him. He commands us to trust Him and He has declared very plainly what are the consequences of disobedience to this command—“He that believes not shall be damned”—so that faith must be a *duty*, and unbelief a terrible offense in the sight of God. Where it becomes a thoroughly confirmed unbelief which masters the mind and heart, it is a truly awful state for anyone to be in. Beloved, never be afraid of trusting Christ! Lean hard on

Him—lean your whole weight on Him. Come lay at His feet your burdens, your sins, your cares, your troubles—nothing delights our Lord more than being trusted—and the more we trust Him the more we please Him. “Without faith it is impossible to please Him,” but when you have faith, then you may lay what you will on the great Burden-Bearer, “casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you,” saying, as you do so, “I will trust and never be afraid of trusting Jesus; but I will be afraid of distrusting Him.”

O dear Friends, never be afraid of Jesus! Do you fear Immanuel, or dread the Lamb of God? The Lamb is a beautiful emblem of Christ—what little child is afraid of a lamb? He might be afraid of a young lion, but even an infant will put its hand on a lamb and play with it without the slightest fear. Never be afraid of coming to Christ! As I have often told you, you need a Mediator between yourselves and God, but you need no Mediator between yourselves and the Mediator, the Man Christ Jesus! That were to make the Mediator of no use to you. Come to Him just as you are and say, “I will not be afraid of the Lord Jesus Christ. I will trust Him and not be afraid.”

Go on to say, “I will trust and not be afraid *concerning all my past sinfulness*. It is enough to make me afraid, but I have read in the Scriptures that, ‘the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.’ And that, ‘all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.’ So then, I, red-handed, black as Hell’s most profound night, am not afraid to come and wash in the Fountain filled with blood, crying to the Lord as I do it, ‘Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow—yes, whiter than snow.’” O Beloved, trust in Jesus and be not afraid, whatever your iniquity and transgression may have been in the past, for He shall blot out as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins!

As for *present sinfulness*, your heart is very sinful, “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,” but you may say, even concerning that, “I will trust and not be afraid,” for the Lord has said, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” He can make you pure and holy! He can give you a heart of flesh, tender and sensitive to the movements of His Divine Spirit. You shall have a new nature, having within it a living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever!

Now I want you to go a stage further, if you can, and say, “I will trust and not be afraid *about anything concerning which I dare trust*.” There are some things about which you *cannot* trust God. If you go into evil company, you may not say, “I will trust God that I shall not be injured.” If you begin to frequent places of questionable amusement, you may not say, “I trust God that I may go in and out of this place and yet not take any disease.” That is presumption, not faith! But whenever you trust God about your cares, your troubles, or whatever it may be, say to yourself concerning this, also, “I will trust and not be afraid.” Is it not a blessed thing that all the needs of God’s people can be readily supplied by their God? It has been calculated that to feed the children of Israel in the wilderness, it must have required a hundred thousand bushels of manna every day. Now, you young people, set to work and calculate how much

that makes in 40 years! From where did it all come? Well, as far as the eye could see, it came from nowhere—yet it fell everywhere! If you were in need of a hundred thousand bushels of wheat tomorrow—I mean, if you, as a Child of God, really needed it, God could get that where he got the hundred thousand bushels of manna every morning—that is, out of His own All-Sufficiency. He can certainly supply all your needs—therefore say, “I will trust and not be afraid about anything and about everything that is a lawful subject of trust. Whatever God calls me to be, to do, or to suffer, I will trust in Him and not be afraid.”

I desire always to do this as God’s minister. I have not always done it, I am sorry to say, yet I wish to do it. Did you ever notice this one thing about Christian ministers, that they need even more mercy than other people? Possibly someone asks, “How do you know that?” Well, I feel quite safe when I am following the Apostle Paul. And if you look through his Epistles to the Romans, to the Corinthians, to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians and to Philemon, you will see what blessings he wishes to the people at the beginning of each letter. Or if it is not quite at the beginning, it is a few verses down—“Grace unto you, and peace.” You remember that Paul also wrote three Epistles to *ministers*—there are two to Timothy and one to Titus. What does he say to them? He says, “Grace, *mercy*, and peace, from God our Father, and Jesus Christ our Lord,” as if he thought that, although everybody needs mercy, ministers need it more than anybody else!

And so we do, for if we are not faithful, we shall be greater sinners, even, than our hearers, and it needs much Grace for us always to be faithful—and much mercy will be required to cover our shortcomings. So I shall take those three things to myself—“Grace, mercy, and peace.” You may have the two, “Grace and peace,” but I need mercy more than any of you. So I take it from my Lord’s loving hands and I will trust and not be afraid, despite all my shortcomings, and feebleness, and blunders, and mistakes in the course of my whole ministry. I will still cast all my burden upon my blessed Lord and will still go on trusting and not being afraid. But, dear Friends, you may do the same—let us all do it! God help us to do it, from this time forth, and He shall have all the glory!

III. I shall only occupy a very few minutes over the other two points. I have twisted the text and untwisted it. Now I have to PRESS IT HOME UPON YOUR HEARTS.

“I will trust and not be afraid,” because, if I am afraid, it will *dishonor God*. If I trust God and then am afraid, it will bring disgrace upon His name. What am I afraid of? If He has given me a promise and I trust it, why should I be afraid? Am I afraid that He cannot fulfill it? Let not any of us get like Moses when he said, “The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and You have said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them to suffice them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them to suffice them?” Moses had got into a questioning state of mind, but God said to him, “Is the Lord’s hand waxed short? You shall see, now, whether My word shall come to pass unto you or not.” God *can*

certainly fulfill His promise, whatever the promise may be. Why be afraid, then? Are you afraid that He *will not* fulfill His promise? That is a slur upon His honor, upon His Truth, upon His faithfulness!

“Oh, but I cannot think that He would fulfill His promise to *me!*” You must have a very strange code of morality, I should think, to talk like that! Do you imagine that a man may break his promise to another if that other happens to turn out badly? Why, if I made a promise to the devil, and it were a proper promise for me to make, I would keep it! I should not consider that I had any right to run back from my pledged word because the person to whom I promised to give something was not what he should be! And depend upon it, God will keep His promise whatever *you* may be. “If we believe not, He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself.” Do not, therefore, doubt either God’s power or His willingness to fulfill His promise to you.

“Ah,” you say, “I know that He *used* to keep His promise, and that He blessed Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and David, and Daniel, and many more.” And has God changed since then? Has He become a fickle God? Oh, you slander Him by the very thought! It verges upon blasphemy! He who was true to Abraham will be true to all who trust Him. He has never been false to anyone yet and He never will be. He is the same yesterday, and today, and forever—an Immutable God, keeping His Word from generation to generation and departing not from the Covenant which He has made with the sons of men. Oh, trust Him and be not afraid, or else you will dishonor His holy name! You would not wish to do that, I am sure.

Again, trust Him, and be not afraid, *or else you will greatly plague yourself*. Do you not think that by not trusting God we often make rods for our own backs? We think we can foresee a great trouble which very likely will never come. I knew one good old soul who used to worry herself about whether she would have enough money left to bury her. That is a trouble which, I confess, will never occur to me—I think that people will be quite willing to bury me, whether I provide for it or not—sooner or later, they will attend to that! [Brother Spurgeon went Home almost six years *before* this sermon was published.] But it did trouble the poor old lady very much. She said that if she lived to be 80, all her money would be spent. She was then just about 70, and she died that year—so she had worried about 10 years which she afterwards spent in Heaven! What was the good of all that fretting? “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof?” Do not import from tomorrow the sorrow which belongs to it, but leave all your cares and anxieties in the hands of God, or else you may worry, and trouble, and fret, and vex, and grieve yourself and, worse still, you will also grieve the Spirit of God!

Permit me to also add that I would earnestly entreat you to trust and not be afraid, *or else you will be a worry to other people*. It is our duty to bear with sad people and I hope we do, but when there are people who have nothing to be sad about, it is an extraordinary tax upon patience which ought not to be levied! There is enough misery in this world without you and me making an unnecessary pennyworth of it—

“O you banished seed, be glad!”

You are the children of the happy God. Rouse yourselves up and spread all around you an atmosphere of cheerfulness and joy, as you sing, “I will trust and not be afraid.”

If you do not trust, *you will get more and more afraid*. If you do not strive against your fear, and pray against it, you will, at last, get to be afraid to be indoors for fear a stack of chimneys should fall upon the house. You will be afraid to go into the street lest a tile should be blown from the roof. You will be afraid to go to sleep lest you should die before you awake—and you will be afraid to keep awake for fear you should meet any new trouble. You will get to be like an aspen leaf, forever trembling! Instead of being in this wretched state, the Christian should ask God that he may be courageous—and faith is a grand support to courage and steadfastness. Nothing can occur to us but what God ordains! Nothing can happen to the Believer but what God has prepared or permitted for him. Put on the whole armor of God and you shall be, from head to foot, covered against all the fiery darts of the Wicked One.

Then, indeed, you may trust and not be afraid! God grant that our text may be so pressed home upon our hearts that we may at once begin to be more cheerful if we have been dull and sad in the past!

IV. Now, lastly, I am going to praise the text and then I shall have done. O Brothers and Sisters, if you can say, “I will trust and not be afraid,” how *bold* you will be! You will go forward in duty. You will go forward in service. You will go forward in the confession of Christ before men, not asking whether men like it or dislike it, for while you trust in God you will not be afraid of men! I daresay you have heard the story of a certain boy who went to sea. On his first voyage, the captain said to him, “Can you climb?” He answered, “Oh, yes!” He thought he could climb, for he had been up an old tree at home after a raven’s nest. So, after a time, the captain told him to climb the mast to attend to something up aloft. As the ship plunged into the trough of the sea and then rose, again, to the crest of the waves, and the poor boy felt the mast swaying to and fro as the tree in the garden had never done, he began to feel very strange and he feared that he would fall.

The good captain, who was watching him and who thought it very likely that he *would* fall, shouted out to him, “Boy, look up! Look up!” He did look up and that saved him! He had been growing dizzy and would have fallen if he had continued looking at the waves—and then he would have been killed. But when he looked up, everything above was all right. The sun does not reel to and fro! So looking up, the lad forgot his fears, performed his duty and descended in safety. You will find that the best thing for you to do, also, my dear Brothers and Sisters, is to look up! When you have been looking down and all around you, and you have begun to tremble and to fear that you will fall, look up, look up! Say, “I will trust and not be afraid”—and that looking up will make you bold in your Master’s service!

Then, again, I press this text upon you because it will make you wise. I am sure that many a man has done a wrong thing through being afraid. It is the man on board the boat who gets to worrying and moving about—

who causes confusion and upsets the craft. But the person who knows that he cannot do anything by worrying or leaping from one side to the other, who just keeps his place and does the proper thing—then the boat goes on all right. Here is a man in the market. He is dealing in certain goods and, somehow, everything seems to go against him. Now, if he frets, and worries, and says, “I shall get into *The Gazette*, I know that I shall,” it is very likely that he will. But if he is wise enough just to step aside into some quiet comer and there stand still and pray—all will be well. No one but the Lord heard what he said, but that did not matter. Just speaking to God in that fashion quiets his mind and calms his spirit. And when he comes back, he seems to say to himself, “Now I am ready for anything. I am cool and restful and I can see what I ought to do because I am not afraid. I am trusting in God.” If you are afraid, you cannot win the battle of life. You must have courage, and courage can only come to you through faith. Therefore, again I press the text upon you—say from your heart, “I will trust and not be afraid”—and you will do the wisest thing that can possibly be done.

Then, how *strong* you will be—so strong that you will be able to communicate your strength to others! When that ship, *Castor and Pollux*, was tossed about on the sea, everybody on board was in a tremble except one man—a little Jew whom they all despised, at first, but whom they all came to honor. You know the story—“And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them and said, *Sirs, you should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God has given you all them that sail with you. Therefore, *Sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.*”*

Then later on, Paul said, “This day is the fourteenth day that you have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Therefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat.” That was the very best thing for them all—what can a sailor do when he has not had anything to eat? What can any of us do when we get starved? So they all ate and were strengthened, and when the time came for action, they were ready for it. It was Paul’s calm confidence in God that was the means of saving all who were in that vessel.

O dear child of God, if you can be like that brave man, you will be a great blessing wherever you are! And then, lastly, how happy you will be! If you can say, “I will trust and not be afraid,” you will be as happy as the days are long at mid-summer and your heart shall sing as do the birds in

the early morning! And your soul shall be like a watered garden in the flowery month of June and you, yourself, shall have two heavens—a Heaven on earth and then the eternal Heaven above! You shall go from glory unto glory, God Himself being with you. I pray the Holy Spirit, Himself, to write this message on your hearts, “I will trust and not be afraid.”

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 27.**

Verse 1. *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?* If a man has a light that can never go out, a sun which will never set and a salvation which must always save—and God is all that and more to everyone who trusts him—then what ground has he for fear?

1. *The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* If I live in Him and He lives in me, who can kill me? Who can hurt me? If He is my strength, what duty will be impossible? What suffering will crush me? “Of whom shall I be afraid?”

2. *When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.* They were both wicked in character and fierce in disposition, for they had resolved to eat him right up, as wild beasts might have done. They were successful as far as they were permitted to go, for he says, “They came upon me.” Yet he needed not to lift either sword or spear against them, for “they stumbled and fell” of themselves. Such is the power of God that He soon discovers the weakness of the adversaries of His people.

3. *Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear.* It is then that we mostly do fear, before the fight begins, when the enemy lies encamped against us. We do not know how strong is the foe, nor what mischief he is going to do to us—and the uncertainty often brings a dread with it. Yet, says the Psalmist, “though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear.”

3. *Though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.* Let my enemies begin the battle, let the noise and the smoke and the dust of the fight surround me, I will still be—

**“Calm ‘mid the bewildering cry,
Confident of victory.”**

4. *One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after.* It is a grand thing to get your heart so focused that it has but one desire—and then to be aroused to the practical pursuit of that one object.

4. *That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in His temple.* Is it possible for a man to live in God’s house all his days? Oh, yes Good men do not desire impossibilities. “But,” you say, “we cannot always be in the Church or the Meeting House.” No, and even if you were, you might not be in God’s house any the more for that! But to be like a child at home with God wherever you may be. To live in Him and with Him wherever you are, *this* is to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of your life! You may begin dwelling in the lower rooms of that house even now and, by-and-by, He will call to you and say, “Friend, come up higher,” and you

will ascend to the Upper Room where the glorified dwell forever with their God. It is my one desire always to be—

**“No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home,”**

at home with my God all the days of my life, that I may behold His unutterable beauty and that I may enquire in His temple what is His will and what are the exceedingly great and precious promises which He has made to me in His Word.

5. *For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion.* If you live in God, it matters little whether you have trouble or delight, for you shall be hidden in His pavilion!

5. *In the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock.* There is the pavilion of Sovereignty. There is the tabernacle of Sacrifice. There is the Rock of Immutability and he who can get in or on those three places is the safest man under Heaven! Hidden in God’s royal tent, secreted in the innermost shrine of Deity—the Holy of Holies—and set up by the Lord, Himself, upon an uncrumbling rock, what more can he desire?

6. *And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me. Therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy. I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the LORD.* David always comes back to his God. No, he never goes away from Him. Trusting Him, praising Him, adoring Him—this is the very life of this Psalm, as it ought to be of our whole life. The Psalmist says, “I will sing.” But the next verse is—

7. *Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice—have mercy also upon me and answer me.* One moment he praises and the next moment he prays! That is quite right. I have often said to you that we live by breathing in and breathing out. We breathe in the atmosphere of Heaven by prayer and we breathe it out again by praise. Prayer and praise make up the essentials of the Christian’s life. Oh, for more of them—not prayer without praise, nor praise without prayer! Prayer and praise, like the two horses in Pharaoh’s chariot, make our Christian life to run smoothly and swiftly to God’s honor and glory.

8. *When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek.* As if it were an echo, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.” And he did seek it and seek it at once. But, oh, there are many who have long been called to seek God’s face who have never obeyed the summons! Are you among that number? If so, the Lord have mercy upon you and call you, yet again! When He says, “Seek you My face,” answer, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.”

9. *Hide not Your face far from me; put not Your servant away in anger: You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.* This is grand praying on the part of David! He pleads the past as a reason for mercy in the present—“You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.” It is a very bad thing to live on past experiences, alone. We need fresh visitations from God. Old manna and old experiences soon become corrupt, but you can make some use of your past experience. As you may have seen the bargeman down on the canal, you may push backward to send your boat forward.

Sometimes, when you have but little hope within you, you may recollect what God did for you in the past—and then you can plead with Him to do the same again—“You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.”

10. *When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.* “My father and my mother are the last to forsake me. They were the first to love me, and they will be the last to leave me, but if they do leave me, then Jehovah will take me up and He will be both father and mother to me.” Just as it was said to Naomi concerning Ruth, “Your daughter-in-law, which loves you, is better to you than seven sons,” so may the Lord say to His bereaved people, “Am I not better unto you than father, or mother, or sister, or children, or wife, or husband? Am I not better than all beside? Can you not find all in Me?” “The Lord will take me up.” What a beautiful figure this is! The child seems deserted, but God takes it up and carries it in His bosom. “Oh, I am no child!” says one. But do you not recollect that precious text, “Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you”—you old ones as well as young ones—“I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.” It is well to be bereft of every earthly confidence that we may be taken up by God alone.

11. *Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies.* “Make it clear what I ought to do. Make it so clear that I shall do it. Let me not try to excuse myself, but may my way be so plainly upright and true that even my enemies cannot say anything against me! ‘Lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies.’”

12. *Deliver me not over unto the will of my enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.* “Cruelty is their very breath. Lord, save me from their cruelty!”

13. *I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.* “I had fainted, unless I had believed.” You have the choice between these two things—you must either faint or have faith. Faith is the blessed smelling salts that will often prevent a fainting fit. Get but a sniff of the promises, do but know how strong they are, and your poor flagging spirit will revive! “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see.” What? “*Believed to see?*” That is David’s way of putting it. Many want to see to believe—that is our carnal way, but the faith way, the gracious way is, “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of Jehovah in the land of the living.”

14. *Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.* He is worth waiting upon! God help us all to wait on Him, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—196, 175, 675.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
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FEARING AND TRUSTING— TRUSTING AND NOT FEARING NO. 3362

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 10, 1913.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 15, 1867.**

*“What time I am afraid, I will trust in You.”
Psalm 56:3.*

*“I will trust, and not be afraid.”
Isaiah 12:2.*

I INTEND this evening to have two texts, though I shall not therefore have two sermons and so keep you a double length of time! Our first text, which will suffice to begin with, is in the 56th Psalm, at the 3rd verse—*“What time I am afraid, I will trust in You.”*

David was one of the boldest of men. From his youth up, he was noted for his courage. As a youth he went, in simple confidence in God, and attacked the giant Goliath. Throughout life there was no man who seemed to be more at home in wars and battles—and less likely to be afraid. But yet this hero, this courageous man, says that he *was* sometimes afraid. And I suppose that there are none of us but must plead guilty to the impeachment that sometimes the brave spirit gives way and that we tremble and are afraid. It is a disease for which the cure is here mentioned, *“What time I am afraid, I will trust in You.”* When my soul suffers from the palsy of fear, I will lay hold upon the Strong One and get strength from Him—and so my fears shall all be cast out.”

To be afraid is, in some cases, *a very childish thing*. We sometimes expect to see our little children frightened and that they will not bear to be alone in the dark, but we are surely not afraid to be there! The more we are afraid, the more childish we become. Courage is manly, but to be afraid is to be like a child. It is not always so, however, for there are some great and sore dangers which may well make the very boldest man tremble.

To be afraid is always *a distressing thing*. The heart beats quickly and the whole system seems to be thrown out of order. There have been known cases of men who have had to endure severe terror for several hours—and their hair has all turned gray in a single night. No doubt, too, there have been diseases which have brought men to their graves

which have been caused by fright. Fear is always distressing and whether it is the fear of outward danger, or fear of inward sin, it is always a terrible thing to have to go mourning because of being afraid.

And to be afraid, too, is always *a weakening thing*. The man who can keep calm in the midst of difficulty is better able to meet it. If he is at sea in a storm, if his mind is quiet, he is likely to steer his vessel safely through the danger. But if he is perturbed and cast down with agitated alarm, we can have but little confidence in him, for we know not where he may steer the boat! A man who is afraid often runs into worse dangers than those from which he seeks to escape. He plunges himself into the sea to escape from the river—and it is as though he fled from a lion—and a bear met him.

To be afraid, then, is generally a very mischievous thing. And though sometimes exceedingly excusable, yet full often it is also exceedingly dangerous. David, however, here gives us the cure for fear, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in You.”

I shall not have time this evening to take all the fears and amazements which distress humanity, but there are four or five which we will mention and which may comprehend the others—

I. SOMETIMES WE ARE AFRAID OF TEMPORAL TROUBLES.

If some of you have such a smooth path in life that you are untried in this respect, yet the great proportion of mankind have a hard fight to find bread to eat and garments with which they shall be clothed. And in the lives of the poor, especially, there must often be sad times when they are afraid lest they should not be able to provide things necessary and should be brought to absolute starvation. Such a fear must very often afflict those who are in extreme poverty. And you, too, who are in business, in this age of competition, you are, no doubt, frequently afraid lest, by a failure in this direction or in that, you should not be able to meet your engagements—and the good ship of your business should drive upon the rocks.

Such fears, I suppose, fall to the lot of all young tradesmen when they are starting in business but, perhaps, there are a few older ones who have done longer and rougher work and are quite free from such times of anxious fear.

And, Brothers and Sisters, even if we have none of these troubles about what we shall eat and what we shall drink, yet we have our domestic troubles that make us to be much alarmed. It is no small thing to see a child sick, or, still worse, to see your life’s partner gradually fading away and to know, as some do, that the case is beyond all medical skill—and that she, who is so dear, must be taken away.

And you wives, perhaps, are, some of you, dreading the hour when you may become widows and your little children may be fatherless. You have often been afraid as you have looked ahead to the calamity which seemed to overshadow you. God has not made this world to be a nest for us—and if we try to make it such for ourselves—He plants thorns in it so that we may be compelled to mount and find our soul's true home somewhere else, in a higher and nobler sphere than this poor world can give!

Now, whenever we are tried with these temporal affairs, David tells us we are to trust in God. "What time I am afraid, I will trust in You." I will just do this—after having done my best to earn my daily bread and to fight the battle of life, if I find I cannot do all I would, I will throw myself upon the promise of God, wherein He has said, "Your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure." I will believe that my Heavenly Father, who feeds the ravens, will feed me, and that if He does not allow even the gnats that dance in the sunbeam to perish for lack of sustenance, He will not allow a soul that rests upon Him to perish for lack of daily bread. Oh, it is a sweet thing, though, perhaps, you may, some of you, think it a hard thing—it is a sweet thing when God enables you to leave tomorrow with Him and to depend upon your Father who is in Heaven!

I speak to the tradesman and all who often have to do business in great waters, who seem to go from waterspout to waterspout and over whom all God's waves and billows seem to go—I believe you will find yourselves much stronger to do battle against these difficulties if it is your constant habit to commit all your cares to Him who cares for you. It will all go wrong with us, even in smooth waters, if we do not have God to be the Pilot. And as to rough weather, we shall soon be a wreck if we forget Him! I know of nothing more delightful to the Believer than every morning to commit the day's troubles to God and then go down into the world feeling, "Well, my Father knows it all." And then at night to commit the troubles of the day again into the great Father's hands and to feel that He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." It is sweet sleeping when you can have a promise for the pillow at your head! You know, perhaps, the good old story which is told of the woman on board ship who was greatly afraid in a storm, but she saw her husband perfectly at peace and she could not understand it. Her husband said he would tell her the reason, so, snatching up a sword, he pointed it at her heart. She looked at it, but did not tremble. "Well," he said, "are you not afraid? The sword is sharp and I could kill you in a moment." "No," she said, "because it is in your hands!" "Ah," he replied, "and that is why I am not

afraid—because the storm is in my Father’s hands and He loves me more than I love you!”

A little child was at play in a lower room and as he played away by himself, amusing himself, about every ten minutes he ran to the foot of the stairs and called out, “Mother, are you there?” and his mother answered, “Yes, I am here,” and the little lad went back to his sport and fun—and was as happy as happy could be—and until again it crossed his mind that his mother might have gone. So he ran to the stairs again and called, “Mother, are you there?” “All right,” she said, and as soon as he heard her voice again, back he went once more to his play. It is just so with us. In times of temporal trouble we go to the Mercy Seat in prayer and we say, “Father, are You there? Is it Your hand that is troubling me? Is it Your Providence that has sent me this difficulty?” And as soon as you hear the voice which says, “It is I,” you are no longer afraid! Oh, happy are they who, when they are afraid in this way, trust in the Lord!

A second great fear, through which some of you have never passed, but through which all must pass who enter into Heaven, is a—

II. FEAR CONCERNING THE GUILT OF PAST SIN.

Do not tell me with regard to temporal troubles that they are sharp and bitter! Believe me, that trouble for sin is far more bitter and keen. Do you remember when God was pleased to awaken you from your long sleep—when you looked within and saw that you were all defiled, full of pollution and all manner of evil? Do you recollect how the thoughts pierced you like poisoned arrows—“God requires that which is pure.” “For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof at the Day of Judgment”? Do you recollect how it seemed as though Hell flared up right before you where you stood and it seemed as though there was only a step between you and death! The terrors of the Lord got hold upon you, and the very marrow of your bones seemed to freeze as you thought about an angry God and of how you, in your sins, without any preparation, could meet Him! Oh, it is not so long ago with some of us but what we recollect being startled in our sleep under a sense of sin! And all day long the common joys of men were no joys to us, and though before we had been sprightly and cheerful like others—yet our mirth was now turned into mourning and all our laughter into lamentation!

Perhaps some of you are passing through this state of mind now. You are now conscious of your old sins. The sins of your youth are coming up before your remembrance. Now, if so, listen to what David says, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in You.” Beloved, if you would ever get rid of the fear of your past sins, remember that the Lord Jesus Christ came in-

to the world to suffer for the sins of all who will trust Him. All the sins of all His people were reckoned as upon Him and all that they should have suffered on account of those sins, Jesus Christ suffered in their place! The mighty debt, too huge for us to calculate, was all laid upon Him and He paid it to the last farthing! He was sued and summoned at the court of the Eternal Justice, for the sins of His people were reckoned as upon Him—and all that they should have rendered with hands and feet, and brow and side, He discharged—the whole tremendous debt that was due to God, the debt caused by the sins of all His people were paid by Him!

Now, it is a blessed thing when sin burdens us to fly away to Christ and stand in spirit beneath the Cross—and feel that under that crimson canopy, no flash of Divine penalty shall ever fall upon us! “Smite me? Great God, You cannot, for have You not smitten the redeeming Christ on my account? Is it not recorded that for those who trust Him, Your Son is both Surety and Substitute? How, then, can You first sue the Substitute and then afterwards sue the person for whom the Substitute stood?” Faith thus clings to the Cross and feels, no—*knows*—that all is safe! I would God that some of you who are lamenting over the burden of your sins and are pressed down by it, would look to the Son of God pouring out His life and would trust Him, for then your sins would be gone in a moment! Only look on Jesus and though you had committed all the sins that are committable by mortal man, yet Jesus Christ can put them all away! If every form of iniquity were heaped upon you till you were dyed through and through with it, like the scarlet that has been lying long a-soak in the dye, yet let the crimson blood of Jesus come into contact with your crimson sins and they—

**“Shall vanish all away,
Though foul as Hell before!
Shall be dissolved beneath the sea,
And shall be found no more!”**

Now, I know it is very easy when we do not feel our sins to trust in Christ, but the business of faith is to trust in Christ when you *do* feel your sins! Brothers and Sisters, it would be cheap faith to take Christ as the saints’ Savior, but it is the faith of God’s elect to take Him as the *sinner’s* Savior. When I can see marks of Grace in myself, to trust Christ is easy—but when I see no marks of anything good, but every mark of everything that is evil and then come and cast myself upon Him and believe that He can save me, even me, and rest myself upon Him—this is the faith which honors Christ and which will save us! May you have it and such time as you are afraid of sin, may you trust in Christ! A third fear, which is remarkably common, is a—

III. FEAR LEST WE SHOULD BE DECEIVED.

Among the best and most careful of Believers this fear intrudes itself, “Lest, after having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” Lest, after having been united to the Church, I should prove to be a dead member and so be cut out of the living vine. All these fears have I met with. One has said, “I fear I was never chosen of God.” Another has said, “I fear I never was effectually called.” And yet a third has said, “I fear I never possessed the repentance that needs not to be repented of.” Still others have confessed, “I am afraid my faith is not the faith of God’s elect.” Very frequently have I heard this, “I am afraid I am a hypocrite,” which is one of the oddest fears in all the world, for nobody that is a hypocrite was ever afraid of it! It is the hypocrite who goes on peacefully, without fear, confident where there is no ground for confidence. But these fears abound and, in some respects, they are healthy. Better to go to Heaven doubting, than to Hell presuming! Better to enter into life crippled and maimed, than having two eyes and hands, and feet, to be cast into the destroying fire! We cannot say too much in praise of assurance—and we cannot speak too much against presumption. Dread that! Shun it with all your might!

But when you and I are besieged by these doubts and fears—and I very often am—as to whether we are the children of God or not, what is the best thing for us to do? “What time I am afraid, I will trust in You.” This is the shortcut with the devil! This is the way to cut off his head more readily than anyway else. Go straight to Christ! Do not stop to argue with Satan. He is a crafty old liar and he will be sure to defeat you if it comes to argument between you. Say to him, “Satan, if I am deceived, if all I have ever known up till now has been only head knowledge, if I am nothing but a mere hypocrite, yet now—

***“Black, I to the fountain fly
Wash me, Savior, or I die!”***

It is a blessed thing to begin again—to be always beginning and yet always going on—for no man ever goes on to perfection who forgets his first love, his first faith and forgets to walk in Christ Jesus as he walked in Him at the first!

Beloved, whatever may be the doubt that comes to you tonight, I beseech you remember it is still, “Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” If you have been a backslider, weep over it. If you have been a great sinner, be sorry for it, but still remember, “All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” And, “Where sin abounded, Grace does much more abound.” The Gospel’s voice is still, “Return, you backsliding children, for I am married unto you, says the Lord.” “Come,

now, let us reason together. Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow.” Come, come, come, you doubting ones, trembling and broken to pieces! Come again—a guilty, weak and helpless worm—and cast yourself into Jesus’ arms!

But we cannot tarry upon that. A fourth fear, which is frequent enough to cause Christians much distress, is—

IV. A FEAR THAT WE SHALL NOT HOLD ON AND HOLD OUT TO THE END.

Many thousands of God’s saints are quite unnecessarily troubled with this. Remember that where God begins to work, He does not ask *us* to finish. He always completes His own work. If you have begun the work of salvation, you will have to carry it on, but if God has begun the good work in you, He will carry it on and bring it to its perfection of completeness in “the day of Christ.” Yet there are thousands who say, “Should I be tempted, I might fall! Working as I do with so many others, none of whom fear God, but who sneer and ridicule at Divine things, I might, perhaps, turn aside and prove like one of them.” It is very proper that you should have that fear, very proper that you should be distressed at it—

***“What anguish has that question stirred,
If I should also go!”***

But, dearly Beloved, what time you are afraid, do not say, “I shall be able to hold out”—do not trust in yourselves, or you will trust a broken reed—but what time you are afraid, renew your trust in Christ! Go with the temptation which you now experience and which you expect to return tomorrow, to the Lord and He will, with the temptation, show the way of escape out of it. I remember a miner who had been a sad, drunken man, and a great blasphemer, but he was converted among the Methodists—and a right earnest man he was! But he seemed to have been a man of strong passions and, on one occasion when he was praying, he prayed that sooner than that he might ever go back to his old sins, if God foresaw that he would not be able to bear up under the temptation, He would take him to Heaven at once! And while he was praying the prayer in the Prayer Meeting, he fell dead! God had answered him. Now, if you are to be tried in the order of Providence in a way that you cannot bear and there is no other way of escape for you, God will take you clean away to where no temptation shall ever come near you! What time you are afraid, put your trust in Him and all will be well!

The last fear I have to mention, and then I shall have done with my first text, is this—

V. THE FEAR OF DEATH.

There are some “who, through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage.” But Christ came to deliver such—and where Christ works, He delivers us from that fear! Beloved, do you ever get afraid of death? You do, perhaps, when you feel very sick or when you are very ill and low spirited. You begin to look ahead and you say, “I have run with the footmen and they have wearied me. What shall I do when I have to contend with the rider on the pale horse? My trials have been so great that I have scarcely found faith enough to bear them! What shall I do in the last great trial of the swellings of Jordan?” Now, what ought you to do at the time you are afraid of dying, but to say with David, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in You”? Oh, fear not to die! If you are in Christ, death is nothing! “But the pain, the dying struggle,” you say. Oh, there is no pain in death! It is the life that is full of pain. Death? What is it? Well, it is but a pin’s prick and then it is over. “Many lie a-dying for weeks or months together,” say some. No! Say they *live*, for ‘tis living that makes them full of pain and anguish, but death ends all that! Death is just the passing through the narrow stream that is the entrance in the fields where—

***“Everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers.”***

To be afraid to die must be because we do not understand it, for if Believers know that to die is but to enter into the arms of Jesus Christ, surely they will be able to sing bravely with one good old saint—

***“Since Jesus is mine, I’ll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off this garment of clay!
To die in the Lord is a Covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to Glory, through death, led the way!”***

What time you are afraid of dying, trust in the living Savior, for in Him are life and immortality! Remember—

***“Jesus can make our dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on His breast we lean our head,
And breathe our life out softly there.”***

He will keep you where you shall sing—

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

You shall fear no fear and know no evil because He shall be with you! And you shall find that His rod and His staff do comfort you!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, I have taken you far, like a guide conducting a number of travelers up the first road on a mountain. And I think we

have gathered something even there, but now I want you to go up still higher. I feel as if, in handling this text, we have been travelling third class to Heaven, but now I want you to get into the first class! Hitherto we have been going in a sort of parliamentary train, which will get to Heaven safe enough, but I want you now to take the express.

My second text will let you know what I mean. It is in the 12th Chapter of Isaiah and the 2nd verse—“*I will trust and not be afraid.*”

This is several stages beyond the first text. David says, “What, time I am afraid, I will trust in You.” Isaiah says, “I will trust and not be afraid,” which is far better! When David is afraid, He trusts in God, but Isaiah trusts in God, first, and then he is not afraid at all! I told you in the first case that there was disease and that faith was the remedy, but you know prevention is always better than cure. I have heard of a man who had serious chills and he was thankful to have a medicine which helped him through it. But his neighbor said he should not be very thankful for that, for he had a remedy which prevented him from ever having the malady! So with you who are doubting and fearing—it is a good thing that faith can bear you through it—but how much better it will be if you get a faith that does not have these doubts, that lives above these fears and troubles!

Look! There are two vessels yonder, and a storm is coming on. I see a great hurrying and scurrying on the deck of one. What are they doing? They have a great anchor and they are throwing it out! The storm is coming and they want to get a good hold, for fear lest they should be driven on the shore.

But on the deck of the other vessel, I see no bustle at all. There is the watch pacing up and down as leisurely as possible. Why are they not in a panic? “Ahoy there! Ahoy! What makes you so calm and assured? Have you got out your anchor? Look! Your comrades in the other vessel, how busy they are!” “Oh,” says the watch, “but we had our anchor out a long while ago, before the storm came on and, therefore, we have no need to trouble, now, and hurry to throw it out.”

Now, you who are full of doubts, fears and troubles, you know the way to be safe is to throw out the anchor of faith! But it would be better if you had the anchor of faith already out so that you could trust in God and not be afraid at all!

Let us take the fears which we have already mentioned over again. Faith saves from—

I. THE FEAR OF TEMPORAL TROUBLE.

The man who fully trusts in God is not afraid of temporal trouble. You have read, perhaps, the life of Bernard Palissy, the famous potter. He

was confined for many years on account of his religion and he was only permitted to live at all because he was such a skillful workman that they did not want to put him to death. King Henry the Third of France said to him, one day, “Bernard, I shall be obliged to give you up to your enemies to be burned unless you change your religion.” Bernard replied, “Your Majesty, I have often heard you say you pity me, but believe me I greatly pity you, though I am no king but only a poor humble potter. There is no man living that could compel me to do what I believe to be wrong—and yet you say you will be compelled—those are kingly words for you to utter!” And he could say this to the king, in whose hands his life was! Bernard was a very poor man. As I have told you, he used to earn his bread by making pottery. And he used to say, in his poverty, that he was a very rich man, for he had two things—he had Heaven and earth. And then he would take up a handful of the clay by which he earned his living. Happy man! Though often brought to the depths of poverty, he could say, “I will trust and not be afraid.”

Take as another example. Martin Luther. They came to Martin one day and they said, “Martin, it is all over with the Reformation cause, now, for the Emperor of Germany has sworn a solemn oath to help the pope.” “I do not care a snap of my finger for both of them,” he said, “nor for all the devils in Hell! This is God’s work, and God’s work can stand against both emperors and popes!” Luther was a man who trusted—really, intensely—and because of this he was not afraid. Is not that much better than being afraid, and then having to trust to banish the fear? Now, God is with me, and come what may—

***“Should earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurled.
Now I can smile at Satan’s rage,
And face a frowning world.
Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall—
I shall in safety reach my home,
My God, my Heaven, my All.”***

Oh, if we can all get to this brave assurance of faith, happy shall we be in the midst of the worst trouble! Faith also saves from the—

II. FEAR CONCERNING PAST SIN.

He is in a blessed state who is delivered from such fear because he who is not is not afraid. One of you knows a man, perhaps, who has got into debt and who owed a great deal. But some little time ago a friend paid all his debts for him—and he has the receipt! Now, when he walks the streets, is this man afraid of the sheriff’s officer? Does he fear that he shall be arrested? Why, no! He knows he shall not, because he carries

the receipt with him! Every man who trusts Christ perceives his own sin, but he also perceives that Christ paid for all his sin. He that believes has the witness of his pardon in himself which he carries with him as a receipt and which eases his conscience and prevents his fears. Oh, if you can but know that Christ died for you! If you can but rest alone in Him so as to know that He is yours, then all the sins that you have ever committed, though you lament them, shall never cause you a moment's uneasiness, for they are drowned beneath the Red Sea of the Savior's blood and, therefore, you may say, "I will trust and not be afraid." As to that third fear which I mentioned—the fear lest we should be hypocrites, or—

III. LEST THE WORK OF GRACE SHOULD NOT BE RIPENED IN OUR HEARTS—

There is one way of getting rid of that fear entirely! If you take a sovereign across the counter, you may not know whether it is a good one—you may have some doubts about it. But if you get it straight from the Mint, I do not suppose you will have any suspicion of it at all! So when a man asks, "Is my faith right? Is my religion right?" If he can say, "I got it straight from the Throne of God by trusting in the blood of Jesus Christ"—then he will know that he received it from Headquarters—and there can be no mistake about it! A Christian has no right to be always saying—

"Do I love the Lord or no?

Am I His, or am I not?"

He may be compelled to say it, sometimes, but it is far better for him to come just as he is and throw himself at the foot of the Cross and say, "Savior, You have promised to save those that believe! I believe, therefore You have saved me!" I know some think this is presumption, but surely it is worse than presumption not to believe God! And it is true humility to take God at His word and to believe Him.

I think I once illustrated this Truth of God in this place in this way. A good mother has two children. Christmas is drawing near and she says to one of them, "Now, John, I shall take you out on Christmas Day to such a place and give you a great treat." She promises the same to William. Now, Master John says to himself, "Well, I do not know. I do not know whether my mother can afford it. Or perhaps I do not deserve it. I hardly think she will take me—it will be presumption in me to believe that she will."

But as for little Master William, he is no sooner told that he is to go out on Christmas Day than he claps his hands and begins to skip—and tomorrow tells all his playmates that his mother is going to take him out

on Christmas Day! He is quite sure of it. They begin to ask him, “How do you know?” “Why,” he says, “Mother said so.” Perhaps they mention some things that make it look rather unlikely. “Oh, but,” he says, “my mother never tells lies and she told me she would take me, and I know she will!” Now, which of those children, do you think, is most to be commended—the bigger boy, who raised difficulties and suspected his mother’s word? Why, he is a proud little fellow who deserves to go without the pleasure! But as for his little brother, William, who takes his mother at her word—I do not call him proud. I consider him truly humble—and he is the child who really deserves the mother’s fondest love! Now, deal with God as you would have your children deal with you! If He says He will save you if you trust Him, then if you trust Him, why, He will save you! If He is a true God, He cannot destroy the soul that trusts in Christ! Unless this Bible is one great lie from beginning to end, the soul that trusts in Christ must be saved! If God is true, every soul that trusts in Jesus must be safe at the last. Whatever he may be and whoever he may be, if he trusts his soul with Christ and with Christ, alone, He cannot be cast away unless the promise of God can be of no effect! “I will trust and not be afraid.”

So, Brothers and Sisters, it will be with other fears—time fails us to mention them—whatever they may be. May you get into such a blessed state of confidence in the love of God, in the love of Christ’s heart, in the power of Christ’s arm, in the prevalence of Christ’s plea, that at all times you may trust in Him and in nothing, whatever, be afraid!

God bring us all up to this second platform and give us Divine Grace to stay there—and happy shall you be and have a foretaste of Heaven upon earth! Amen.

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

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

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS CONCERNING ZION NO. 2612

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 5, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 8, 1883.

*“What will they answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD
has founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it.”
Isaiah 14:32.*

ZION evidently attracted great attention in its own day and, I suppose, the term, “Zion,” stood for the whole city. It was a city of many singularities and it was especially remarkable for its worship when Jerusalem was as it should be. It had a Temple, but there was no image in it. Worship was continually carried on there, but the God who was worshipped was invisible. This made Zion and its Temple different from all other cities and all other temples under Heaven, for, wherever else you went, you saw graven images set up and men prostrating themselves before the work of their own hands. It was not so in Zion. There, the one living and true God resided, and the Temple at Jerusalem was the center of His worship for all the faithful—and every type or symbol in His solemn service was meant to teach the people concerning Him. Zion was remarkable, not so much for the strength of its defenses, the beauty of its palaces and the glory of its Temple, as for being “the city of the great King.” “God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved.” Hence, although Zion was but a little hill and other hills were great compared with it, yet the fame of it went forth even to the ends of the earth.

Zion is always a type of the Church of the living God—and everywhere the Church of God is singular and, for that reason, noticeable. It is a power altogether unlike all other powers, a Kingdom quite different from the kingdoms of the earth. It uses not the force of arms—it has no defense except the indwelling Deity—it knows nothing of the pomp of earthly splendor, it exists for God's Glory and for no other purpose. Its reason for being a Church at all is that Jesus Christ may be honored and glorified in its midst and, therefore, the true Church of Christ is sure to be noticed, however obscure it may be in any particular place. You cannot plant a Christian Church in a village without its being discovered. It may be said of Christ's Church as it was said of Himself, “He could not be hidden” neither can His Church! And in any kingdom or country, though the true Christians may form a very small remnant, yet they are sure to be noticed. They are as a fire that gives light as well as heat and, therefore, their presence must be known and felt.

I push this Truth of God a little further and say that if you are one of the citizens of this Zion, one of the members of the Church of God, you, also, will be known. You cannot go through the world unobserved! You

are like Bunyan's pilgrim when he passed through Vanity Fair. He was but a humble individual, yet everybody looked at him because he hurried through the fair, neither attracted by its business nor detained by its wealth. Christian and his companion simply sped on and when the men of the place asked them, "What will you buy?" they gave no answer but this, "We buy the Truth," and hastened on as fast as they could! And you must do the same if you are bound for the Celestial City. It may be that they will not take you, as the people of Vanity Fair took Faithful, and send you to Heaven in a chariot of fire, but they will be sure to notice you. In a free country like this, you may be almost anything that you like except a Christian. There is no liberty for you and you will find that the dogs of Hell will bark at you because you are a stranger and a foreigner in this world! If you were a child at home, they would not trouble you, but you are of a different race from the men of the world who have their portion in this life—and, as you pass along, they will let you know that you do not belong to them.

They do not wish to understand you and you will find that they will always be ready to misrepresent you. And when they have finished their misrepresentation, they will endeavor to laugh you to scorn. Of old, Zion was so remarkable that the nations sent messengers to enquire about it. And today the people of God are a remarkable people, a pilgrim race, strangers and sojourners in the world, passing on to "a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." If you are a true Believer in Christ, you will be sure to be noticed, questioned, quizzed, criticized, caricatured, misrepresented—never mind all that—it is the lot of all the holy Seed, and the citizens of Zion must expect such treatment until the Lord Himself shall come.

Our text may be made to apply to all God's people and I shall use the Jews and Zion as the basis upon which I shall build up my discourse. From their history we shall try to gather the true meaning of the passage. In it we have the mention of messengers and we shall enquire, first, *What do these messengers of the nation ask?* Secondly, *why should they be answered?* And, thirdly, *how shall they be answered?* "That the Lord has founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it."

I. First, WHAT DO THESE MESSENGERS ASK?

Messengers came from Babylon to Zion and, no doubt, one of the first questions they asked was, "*What is the treasure of Zion?* What is the wealth of this city? It stands not by the sea, like Tyre, so that it may flourish by its merchandize. It is not situated among the cedars of Lebanon, so that it may sell its precious wood or its carved work. This city stands in a strange place and yet we see that it is a wealthy place—what is the source and the extent of its wealth?" Unhappily, Hezekiah forgot how to answer that question aright, and he took the Babylonian messengers through his palace and showed them his *material* treasures. He led them from one secret cabinet to another and let them see all his riches. And they looked on with wondering, covetous eyes and went home to tell what loot there would be there, what a grand place Jerusalem would be to sack and how all Babylon might be the richer because of the treasures that were hidden there. How unwise was Hezekiah! He ought to have given a far better answer. I have been in churches on the Continent

where I have been asked by the guide whether I would like to see the treasury, and I have seen it. In one church, I saw what was estimated at about a million pounds sterling in the form of plates of different kinds for the adornment of the altar. I saw a treasure which was regarded as far more precious than gold and silver—a saint with all his bones laid bare, a skeleton saint decorated with emeralds, rubies and all kinds of precious stones—but it was a ghastly sight for all that! If I had purchased him, I would have speedily buried him. Should not such a treasure be buried in the earth? It is the best place for saints and sinners, too, when they are dead.

I do not doubt that living saints are a precious treasure in the Church of God, yet it would not do, if the messengers of the nations asked us what our chief treasure is, to exhibit the members of the Church—saints alive or saints dead—or to talk about the wealth of the Church, or the intellect of the Church, or even the earnestness and prayerfulness of the Church, precious as these things are. There is a better answer to that question and our text tells us that the great treasure of the Church is the fact that Jehovah has founded her. His Grace is the inexhaustible storehouse from which she derives all her spiritual wealth!

The messengers of the nations probably asked next, “*What is Zion’s confidence?*” When city after city had been overthrown by Rabshakeh and Sennacherib, if messengers came into Jerusalem, no doubt they were amazed to find the people holding out against the great king who smote and overcame wherever he went. And they said and Rabshakeh said, “What is your confidence? Has not the king of Assyria smitten all the gods of the people whom he has fought? Upon whose arm do you rely?” If the people had taken the messengers and bid them look from the rocky sides of Zion, down the steep precipice into the ravines, and if they had said, “Who can climb up here?” Or if they had pointed to the tower of David, or to the walls of the city well jointed together, or to its massive gates and said, “These are our defenses,” it would have been a poor and sorry reply, for no walls stood out long against the kings of Babylon! They brought their battering-rams and engines to the siege and very soon they cast up breast-works and all kinds of entrenchments and, before long, made a breach in the city walls and rushed in and slew the inhabitants.

But what a good answer it would have been to say, “Jehovah is our confidence. He is our defense, our castle and high tower, our battleaxe and weapons of war. And He has said that Sennacherib shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with a shield, nor cast a bank against it. The adversary may come near enough to mark the walls and bulwarks of Zion and count her towers, but he shall not be able to capture her, for ‘God shall help her, and that right early.’ He is our defense! Not the valiant men that stand upon the watchtowers and shoot swift arrows against the foe. Not the trained armies that throng her gates and charge upon the adversary with sword and shield, but the Lord God is a wall of fire round about us and the glory in our midst.” What a grand answer that would have been to the question of the messengers!

Let us also, Beloved, give the same answer to all who ask what is our confidence. Let us tell them that our confidence is in God alone. If, dear

Friends, we are truly citizens of Zion, this is one of the marks of our citizenship, that our entire confidence is in that unseen arm upon which alone we lean. We look only to God for our salvation, and we cast away all confidence in ourselves, or in our fellow men, reckoning all earthly supports as being like broken cisterns that can hold no water, and trusting alone to the deep eternal fountain of Grace that wells up in the heart of God Himself.

No doubt the messengers of the nations also asked, *“What is the history of this Zion? What is the story of the nation of which Jerusalem is the capital? Where did your fathers come from? Did they obtain possession of this land with their own bow and their own swords? Have they made advances, step by step, to the greatness whereof they now boast?”* The right answer to that question was, “God has founded Zion.” That was the secret of her glorious history and the messengers ought to have received no other reply but that to their enquiry! Sometimes, nowadays, men come to us and they say, “Where did your Church come from? What is the origin of it? From where did it arise?” Well, you may tell the story, if you give all the glory to God and if you reflect all honor upon the power of Divine Truth, but never fail to go back to the very beginning and answer, “God has founded Zion,” for if there is a church which cannot trace its foundation to the eternal Truth of God’s Word, to the eternal power of God’s Spirit, to the eternal founding by God’s own Sovereign Grace, it is not the Church of God at all!

I hope you would give a similar answer to the question about your own history. If you are a believer in Christ, how came you to be a Christian? How was it that you ever began to love the Lord? How is it that you have a good hope of Heaven? How is it that you believe that you have eternal life? This is the answer for you to give—

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

Each saved soul must say, “It is of God’s Grace that I am what I am. As God has founded Zion, so has He founded me.”

Another question which these messengers would be sure to ask would be this—*“What is the expectation of Zion?”* You say that Jehovah built it and that He has, up to now, guarded and preserved it, but to what end is such a little city as this made so conspicuous? Why is it so honored by the Divine Presence? Oh, then I hope the people opened their mouths wide and told the messengers that God had founded Zion and that the poor of His people would trust in it and that they added, “So we have the expectation of being provided for, preserved, delivered, magnified through God’s mercy.” And as for you and me, Beloved, when they say to us, “What do you expect?” let us open our mouth wide and tell what God has done and what we expect He will yet do for us—that He will guide us by His counsel and, afterwards, receive us to Glory—that He will correct and chasten us as a man chastens his own son—that He will perfect our education and then will take us Home to dwell with Him where sorrow and sighing can never come! Then let us tell them of the coming of our Lord and of the Glory that is wrapped up in His advent. And let our hearts burn and our eyes sparkle as, with joyful lips, we talk of the things

which God has prepared for them that Love Him and which He has revealed to us by His Spirit!

II. Now, secondly, WHY SHOULD THESE MESSENGERS BE ANSWERED?

The question in our text is, “What will they answer the messengers of the nation?” But there is no hint of any question as to whether they are to be answered or not. It is taken for granted that a reply is to be given to their enquiries. I hope, dear Brothers and Sisters, that we shall always be ready to give an answer with meekness and fear to every man who asks of us a reason for the hope that is in us. Questions will be sure to be put to Christians, for they are men wondered at and, hence, there is a necessity for us to be well taught of God and to have our minds stored with heavenly knowledge, that we may not be dumb when we ought to speak, but may always be ready with such an answer as shall be acceptable to God and may be beneficial to those who ask the question.

Some who come to Zion *ask questions out of curiosity*. I should not wonder if the ambassadors who came to Jerusalem looked all about the city with wondering eyes and kept on enquiring, “What is this? What is that? What is the meaning of this memorial and what is the intention of this symbol?” They did not ask these questions because they cared particularly about what they saw—possibly they asked even more questions when they were in Epsom, or when they sauntered through the streets of Nineveh, but, having come to Jerusalem, they had a curiosity about what was to be seen there, so they began to enquire. In like manner, Beloved, there will come to you, to your Zion, to your house, persons who will make enquiries about your religion—not that they love it, or believe in it—but, still, they would like to know about it. Men are curious about religious matters. They jot down in their notebook information that they gather concerning them. They may not be, themselves, devout, but they would like to know what is the nature and extent of your devotion. They may not be, themselves, Believers, but they would be glad to learn what kind of faith yours is. Would you discourage this curiosity? I think you would be very unwise if you did so. No, rather try to make some use of it. It is, in itself, nothing particularly worthy of notice, but there is at least a measure of hopefulness about it. When men’s minds once begin to work, we are led to hope and pray that the Spirit of God may work with them and work in them, according to the good pleasure of His Grace. It is a very hopeful thing when you, my Brothers in the ministry, get an attentive audience to listen to you. Mind that you always give them something worth listening to! It were an ill day for you and me, in trying to do good, if we could never persuade anyone to listen at all. Let us hold the wedding guest and detain him with our tale, though it may seem to him to be as sad as that of the Ancient Mariner of whom Coleridge speaks, let us try to hold him fast till we have told him—

***“The old, old story
Of Jesus and His love!”***

We shall not complain if people ask, simply out of curiosity, about our religion, for that very curiosity will give us an opportunity to set things belonging to the Kingdom of God before minds which are somewhat receptive. If you ever lose your present access to those ears and they grow fast closed to your message, you will say, “I wish that even that curiosity

would come back, again,” for curiosity about the things of God may lead to something better, by-and-by, if you know how to use it wisely. So, we will answer the messengers of the nation even though they ask merely from curiosity.

No doubt there are others who *ask out of contempt*. The ambassadors of a great power like Babylon, when they passed inside the walls of Zion, most likely said, “So this is your precious capital, is it? This little pettifogging village that we could put in one corner of Babylon and never know that it was there—is the city of the great King, is it?” And they laughed within themselves for very scorn and said, “This little miserable dog hole is your wonderful city, is it? Why, in Babylon, we have hanging gardens, wondrous palaces and mighty works of art and yet you say, ‘Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion?’” And they gave a loud guffaw at the very thought of what seemed to them so absurd! Well, Brothers and Sisters, shall we refuse to answer when our questioners ask in contempt concerning our Zion? Sometimes we shall do well not to reply, for we are forbidden to cast pearls before swine, but, on other occasions we may answer them because we do not wish men to think that we are ashamed or afraid to declare our convictions, or that we have nothing to say concerning the faith that we hold. Oh, proclaim it, though all Philistia shall be listening! Proclaim it among the nations that the Lord reigns! Proclaim it amid a senate of philosophers or a parliament of kings!

This Truth of God might well be written across the sky and the sun, itself, as it makes its daily circuit, should be the Mercury to bear this message everywhere! The heavens should proclaim the Glory of God and the firmament show His handiwork! And it is our desire and intention to let the Gospel be published wide as the light of day! Publish it even to the contemptuous, for, sometimes, even he who despises is not the last to be converted. And an enemy who has enough light to hate the Truth of God may have enough to be brought to love it! Think not that a man like Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of the saints, is the most hopeless of mankind. God thought not so and He brought him in penitence to His feet and made him to be not a whit behind the very chief of His servants! Therefore, if men ask you about religion, even out of contempt, and you can see the sneer upon their faces as they ask the question, give them an answer! Tell them of Jesus’ dying love and of all that wonderful plan of salvation arranged by the Sovereign Grace of God. You may even find your answer in our text—“The Lord has founded Zion and the poor of His people shall trust in it.”

But sometimes, no doubt, the messengers of the nations will *ask out of admiration*. There were some of them that came, like the Queen of Sheba, and asked about everything because they admired it all. And there are, perhaps among us, some whose hearts God has touched. They have the first signs and tokens of an affection for the Truth of God and for the Lord—and when they come where you are who love His dear name, they will ask you many questions most admiringly. Oh, never be slow to answer such enquirers! No, but set out before their eager eyes all the wonders of Zion and all the glories of your Lord! Tell them what the Lord has done for you and for all His people. Tell them how you were washed in

the blood of the Lamb, how your heart has been changed, cheered and comforted. Tell them everything, for now that the Lord has given them some hungering and some thirsting after these things, now is your time to bring out the “butter in a lordly dish!” Now is your opportunity to set before them the Bread that came down from Heaven, even Christ Jesus who is the Bread of Life. Now let them all know about the “wines on the lees, well-refined,” and the “fat things full of marrow,” for you have before you those who will gladly feed on all the dainties and delights provided in the great banquet of the Gospel.

And it may be that while you are telling the story, there will be some enquirers who will *ask because they want to enjoy these good things for themselves*. The spouse in the Canticles said, “I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved, that you tell Him, that I am love-sick.” And they then asked her, “What is your Beloved more than another beloved, O you fairest among women? What is your Beloved more than another beloved, that you so charge us?” So the spouse sat down and told them of all His matchless beauties and finished up by saying, “This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.” Then they enquired, “Where is your Beloved gone, O you fairest among women?—Where is your Beloved turned aside?—That we may seek Him with you.” In like manner, dear Friends, when you see others who are willing to hear what you can say to them about Christ, do not hesitate to tell them, for perhaps they, too, will love your Savior! Perhaps they have a wish to participate in the merits of His blood and the blessings of His salvation—and that is exactly what you wish concerning them and concerning all mankind, for you often say—

**“His worth, if all the nations knew
Surely the whole world would love Him, too.”**

Therefore, tell all who are in the world about it, praying God’s Spirit to open their hearts that they may receive the message and may trust in Jesus and be saved.

O my dear Hearers who love the Lord, be none of you reticent about these precious things, but answer the messengers of the nation whenever you meet with them! It may do them good, contemptuous though they may be! It may do them good though they are, for the time, but curiosity-mongers. Therefore tell them. Tell them the story fully, for, at any rate, it will do *you* good. It is a very useful thing for a man to proclaim what spiritual Truth he knows, for he thereby teaches himself. It will increase your own sense of safety if you declare to others what the real defense of Zion is. It will increase your own sense of joy if you proclaim what is the true joy of Zion. For your own good, do this, and do it also for the Glory of God. You are to be God’s mouth to man—let not God ever seem to be silent because you are idle! O you people of God, “You are God’s heritage”—the word the Apostle uses means, “You are God’s *clergy*,” so I charge you, be not dumb dogs that cannot bark, but let others know what the Lord has done for your souls! “You that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence,” but speak and speak, and speak yet again, and give to the messengers of the nations an answer to their enquiries concerning Zion and the Church of the living God!

III. Now I come to the closing and most important point. How SHALL THESE ENQUIRERS BE ANSWERED?

According to our text, they are to be answered by this declaration—“The LORD has founded Zion.” Whenever any religious enquiry is put to you, let it be definitely made known in your answer that *every good thing that you have, or that the Church of God has, comes from God*. Leave your hearer in no doubt about this matter—do not let him suppose that it came by your own exertion or merit—but say most plainly, “The Lord has founded Zion.” If one soul is saved, God has done it. If 500 souls are saved and banded together in Christian fellowship, “this is the finger of God.” And if there are tens of thousands of saved saints in the world, this is what the Lord has done by His own Almighty power! It is not *of* man, neither is it *by* man, but it is of the Lord alone! Make that Truth of God very conspicuous in your answers to all enquirers.

And that being done, make this Truth equally plain, that *the Lord is the Founder of His Church*—His true Church—that all her doctrines are revealed in His Word and are her doctrines because He has given them to her—that her ordinances are taught by Christ, Himself, in His own Word and, therefore—and for that reason only—are they ordinances of His Church! Lay this down with the utmost emphasis, that the Lord has founded Zion as to her doctrines and her ordinances and also as to all the polished stones that He has built into all her walls. Christ is the one Foundation of His Church and God has laid Him in Zion as the chief Cornerstone—elect, precious—but every stone that is laid upon Him is laid there according to the Divine purpose and predestination, yes, and by the effectual working of the power of the Holy Spirit who brings men up from the quarry of sin and builds them upon the Foundation of Christ Crucified!

To make our answer to these messengers complete, they will want to know all about our Church and our Zion, so let us acknowledge our own poverty. You notice, in the text, that the answer is, “The Lord has founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it.” Say to the enquirers, “Ah, you must not look for anything great in us! We are poor by nature and poor by practice, too. And in ourselves we are less than nothing and vanity.” There may be some very good people in the world who think that they are perfect. We are not among them—we could not, dare not, will not stand up and say, “We thank God that we are not as other men are.” We have rather, each one of us, to smite upon our breasts and say, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” It is most important, in our testimony, that we should confess our spiritual poverty, for our Lord Jesus is never magnified unless He is set forth as the Savior of sinners. And Grace is never glorified unless sin is denounced and bemoaned. O Beloved, let your own poverty be a black foil that shall make the precious gem of Divine Grace shine the more gloriously in the eyes of men!

Then say also that, *as God has founded Zion, we mean to cleave to her*. That is to say, if this Bible is God’s Book, we believe in it from cover to cover. If any doctrine, however mysterious, is taught by the Spirit of God, we accept it. If we do not understand it, we believe it. If there are any ordinance commanded by God, we will obey it to the best of our ability as it is delivered to us. I cannot agree with those who say that they have “new truth” to teach. The two words seem to me to contradict each other—that which is new is not true. It is the old that is true, for truth is as old as

God. Albeit that its locks are bushy and black as a raven for strength and force, yet I might say of every Truth of God that its head and its hair are white like wool, as white as snow, for its antiquity. "Ah, but," they say, "we are wise in this generation; we have learned much from this source and that." Have you? Then keep your precious knowledge to yourselves—we do not covet it. We are content to believe concerning this Word, that the Lord has founded it and, we poor simpletons mean to trust in it, and to cleave to it, come what may.

Do you notice how sweetly is put in the text *the resolve to trust in what God has founded?* "The poor of His people shall trust in it." The inhabitants of Jerusalem sheltered behind the walls of Zion and they felt perfectly safe. There was Sennacherib coming up with hordes of Assyrians, apparently numerous enough to eat them all up, but when they knew that God had founded Zion and meant to preserve her, they might smile at the king of Babylon, and they did so. "The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised you, and laughed you to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head at you." If Zion is founded by God, vain is all the might and malice of man or devil against it—it shall stand against all who oppose it. I can fancy Luther talking like this, only with stronger sentences than I can put together, and bidding the people join in singing that favorite Psalm of his, the 46th—"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear though the earth is removed and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea."

Let us, also, have this brave confidence, my Brothers and Sisters! Trust in Jehovah and be at ease concerning His Truth and cause. Let nothing daunt or disturb you. God has routed greater men than the wiseacres of the 19th Century! And when they are all swept into the nothingness from which they came, His Truth shall still live and triumph, glory be to the name of Him who sent it to us and, thereby, founded the one only Eternal City, the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of His Truth! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ISAIAH 14.

Verse 1. *For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob.* This promise had a measure of fulfillment when Israel was brought back from Babylon. And it is still true that when God's people come to their worst, there is always something better before them. On the other hand, it is equally sure that when sinners come to their *best*, there is always something terrible awaiting them. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, "God has not cast away His people which He foreknew." And his declaration agrees with this prophecy, "The Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land" I believe that there will be a far grander fulfillment of this prophecy in that day when God shall bring back His chosen people to their own country—and then shall be

the fullness of blessing to the Gentiles, also. “The strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob.”

2. *And the people shall take them and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the LORD for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors.* The chosen people now have the worst of it in many parts of the world, but they shall have the best of it, by-and-by. They shall not always be trampled on—their time of uplifting shall come at the last. And there is nothing after the last—that which is last, lasts forever.

3, 4. *And it shall come to pass in the day that the LORD shall give you rest from your sorrow, and from your fear, and from the hard bondage wherein you were made to serve, that you shall take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How has the oppressor ceased! The golden city ceased!* O child of God, you shall, by-and-by, have a glorious season of rest! Today is your time of labor. You are now under hard bondage, but you shall yet come forth into the fullness of your liberty in Christ Jesus. In that day Jehovah, Himself, shall give you rest from all your grief and fears. You shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. This was a great prophecy for Isaiah to utter, for, in his day there was no power on earth equal to that of Babylon. That great city abounded in palaces and extraordinary wealth—and its power was such that no kingdom could stand against it. For a while it broke in pieces all those who fought against it, yet God broke Babylon in His own time. And here is a song of rejoicing in anticipation of its overthrow, “How has the oppressor ceased! The golden city ceased!”

5. *The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked and the scepter of the rulers.* No power can ever be permanently strong that is founded upon wickedness. Sooner or later it will have to come to an end. A falsehood may array itself in the garments of wisdom and strength and go forth to fight hopefully for victory, but, in the end, it must die. The stone of the Truth of God will reveal the giant’s brow and lay him headlong in death.

6, 7. *He who emote the people in wrath with a continual stroke. He that ruled the nations in anger is persecuted, and none hinders. The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing.* The Babylon that none could resist becomes, herself, destroyed and there is no one to come to her assistance. Go at this day and see where the owl dwells, and mark the habitation of the dragons, and say to yourself, “This is Babylon, the great city that was the queen over all nations. But she did evil in the sight of the Lord, and spoke extremely proudly and, behold, Jehovah has crumbled her in the dust and, now that Babylon is gone, ‘the whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing.’”

8. *Yes, the fir trees rejoice at you, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since you are laid down, no feller is come up against us.* For the cruel kings of Babylon cut down the nations as the woodman with his axe fells the trees of the forest. But when the power of Babylon was broken, peace and quietness reigned everywhere. O Brothers and Sisters, what a blissful day it will be when the modern Babylon is taken away, for to this hour she is the troubler among the nations! Wherever the blight of Popery comes, there is evil, there is oppression, there is bondage—and only

when Romanism shall be utterly swept away and cast like a millstone into the flood, will it be said, "The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing." Here is a very wonderful picture of the king of Babylon going down to the grave!

9, 10. *Hades from beneath is moved for you to meet you at your coming: it stirs up the dead for you, even all the chief ones of the earth; it has raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto you, Are you also become weak as we? Are you become like unto us? It is a fine pictorial representation of the spirits of departed kings lifting themselves up from their beds of dust and saying, "Are you, king of Babylon, that slew us, also come here? The mighty conqueror—are you yourself conquered—and brought to the grave?"*

11-15, *Your pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of your viols: the worm is spread under you, and the worms cover you. How are you fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How are you cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations! For you have said in your heart, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the height of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. Yet you shall be brought down to Hades, to the sides of the Pit. God hates pride with a perfect hatred! He drives His sword through the very heart of it and cuts it in pieces. None can be great and mighty, and boast of what they are able to do without provoking the King of Kings to put forth against them some of His great power! Oh, let none of us talk about climbing to Heaven by our good works, or getting there by our merits, lest it should happen to us, also, that we should "be brought down to Hades, to the sides of the Pit."*

16-18. *They that see you shall narrowly look upon you, and consider you, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners? All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house. That is, they lie in state, each one in the mausoleum of his family. They went down to death and they were buried with all the honor and glory that were supposed to be due to their high position.*

19. *But you are cast out of your grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcass trodden under feet. So total, so terrible, so disgraceful was the destruction of Babylon, that no honor or glory remained to it.*

20-22. *You shall not be joined with them in burial because you have destroyed your land and slain your people: the seed of evildoers shall never be removed. Prepare slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers; that they do not rise, nor possess the land, nor fill the face of the world with cities. For I will rise up against them, says the LORD of Hosts. And he has done it. It seemed the most unlikely thing to happen, but the Lord spoke, and it was done—all the glory of Babylon was swept away. "I will rise up against them, says the Lord of Hosts."*

22-27. *And cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew, says the LORD. I will also make it a possession for the bittern*

and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the boom of destruction, says the LORD of Hosts. The LORD of Hosts has sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: that I will break the Assyrian in My land, and upon My mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this in the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the LORD of Hosts has purposed, and who shall disannul it? And His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back? And God did this to the Assyrians in the day when Sennacherib invaded the land and the Angel of Destruction slew the whole host in one night! What a striking simile the Lord uses here! “This is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the Lord of Hosts has purposed, and who shall disannul it? And His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?” Conceive in your mind the picture drawn here—Jehovah Himself puts out the hand of His almightiness and challenges the nations to stand up in opposition to it!

28. *In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden. About this time, the Philistines had plucked up courage and had invaded Judah.*

29. *Rejoice not, whole Palestina, because the rod that smote you is broken: for out of the serpent’s root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent. Ahaz was defeated, but Hezekiah was raised up to be the leader of the LORD’s people.*

30. *And the firstborn of the poor shall feed, and the needy shall lie down in safety: and I will kill your root with famine, and he shall slay your remnant. If God’s enemies have a bright day or two, it shall soon be stormy weather with them. They may for the moment exult over God’s people, but He knows that their day of reckoning is coming.*

31. *Howl, O gate; cry, O city; you, Palestina, are dissolved: for there shall come from the north a smoke, and none shall be alone in his appointed times. That is the way the Babylonians would come running down from the north. No one would be able to hide himself from them, not a single person would find a shelter, or escape from their terrible adversaries.*

32. *What will they answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD has founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it. Though the passage seems dark at first, yet it is full of consolation to the people of God and is of similar import to that other gracious promise—“No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn.”*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” —46 (VERSION I), 722, 886.

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

THE FRUITS OF GRACE

NO. 3515

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 8, 1916.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of Hosts; one shall be called the City of Destruction. In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. And it will be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of Hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and He shall send them a Savior, and a Great One, and He shall deliver them. And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yes, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it. And the Lord shall smite Egypt: He shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the Lord, and He shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them. In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be one of three with Egypt and with Assyria, even blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of Hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt, My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance.”
Isaiah 19:18-25.

THIS is a very remarkable prophecy. Attempts have been made to explain it as if it were already fulfilled. I believe all such attempts to be utter failures. This promise stands on record to be fulfilled at some future day. In those bright days for which some of us are looking—when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea—then shall this word to Egypt be verified. Yes, and God shall be glorified both by Egypt and Assyria, as well as in the land of Israel. This ought to be an encouragement to carry on missionary operations with great vigor. Here is a distinct promise for Assyria and for Egypt. Let not the missionary be afraid, even if for thousands of years to come there should be little apparent success to the preaching of the Gospel. If the Lord should tarry another 6,000 years, yes, sixty thousand years—and He may—we are still to go on working, still to go on laboring, looking for His coming and expecting it, but not relaxing our efforts because He pleases to delay it, for the Lord has sworn that all flesh shall know His Glory and you may depend upon it—there is no spot of earth that shall be left to be Sa-

tan's dominion! It shall be conquered for Christ, and in truth He shall "see of the travail of His soul, and He shall be satisfied." It is most encouraging to find Egypt mentioned. You find it in one of the Psalms, "Princes shall come out of Egypt, and they shall come out of Ethiopia." Now this I believe to be the literal meaning of the passage. You must understand that the prophecy was given to the people of Israel and it was given to them, as it were, to children who were using types and figures. It speaks in their language. Hence it speaks of altars, pillars and oblations, all of which are to be understood, now, in the *spiritual* sense. The Church of God has come to her manhood, in which she has done with material altars and material oblations, seeing that she has Christ to be her only Altar, her only Priest and prayer and praise to be the spiritual oblation which she shall bring! I understand the prophecy to be, in brief, just this. In the latter day, Egypt will be converted, and Assyria, too, and wonders of Grace will be performed in that land—and the people of the land shall, with delight, worship the Most High!

Having said this, I am now going to use the text for another purpose. Here is *a wonderful display of the Grace of God* in this promise to Egypt. I see the very heart of God revealed! I see a display of what God will do, not to Egypt, only, but also to others, and though we have much to say, we will try to open up, in as few particulars as we can make them, the display of Grace which God gives among the sons of men. We begin thus—

I. THE GRACE OF GOD OFTEN COMES TO THE VERY WORST OF MEN.

It is promised to Egypt. Now Egypt was the nation which was the type of God's enemies. It was over Egypt that He triumphed at the Red Sea when Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord?" And we regard Egypt as always being typical of the enemies of God—the peculiar and chief enemies! Yet the Grace of God is to come to Egypt! And so will it come often to the worst enemies that God has. Saul of Tarsus, foaming at the mouth with rage against the Christ of God, was met and conquered by Eternal Love—and his heart was renewed and he was made an Apostle! And oftentimes since then, Electing Love has chosen those who were most furious against Christ! The power of the Holy Spirit has come upon them and turned the lions into lambs, and made them lie down at the feet of the Savior. Let us have hope for the worst of men, and let the worst of men have hope for themselves under the Gospel of Jesus Christ! The Egyptians were a peculiarly debased people as to their idolatry. If you go into the British Museum you will still see the cats, the crocodiles, the scarlet ibis which they were accustomed to worship. Besides that, it was one of the sarcasms of the Roman poets that the Egyptians worshipped gods which they grew in their own gardens. They had the sacred beetle, the sacred mouse and I know not what. And yet, degraded as they were by idolatry, the Grace of God was to come to them! And men may have gone far into superstition—they may have debased even their own intellect by what they have tried to believe and forced themselves down into the very

deeps of superstition—and yet, for all that, the Grace of God can come to them and lift them up! The Egyptian were degraded politically, too, for we read in one passage of the Prophets that Egypt shall be the most base of all nations and yet, though the most base of nations in that respect, the Grace of God shall come to them! Oh, how wondrous is the Sovereignty of God! The devil cannot dye a soul so scarlet in sin but what the blood of Christ can make it white as snow! Satan cannot drive a chosen sheep of Christ so far on the mountains of vanity, or into the deserts of sin, but what the Great Shepherd of the sheep can find that sheep and bring it back! There is hope for the most sunken. There is hope for those who grovel and who sink in the mire! The Infinite Compassion of God can reach them and the Eternal Power of God can lift them up!

But there is one singular note in the text, that one of the cities in that land of Egypt (if I read the text aright) that was to be saved was called the City of Destruction. It had come to be named by that name, and yet, think of that, God looked upon it with mercy! Now there are in villages and there are in towns, and certainly there are in London, men that have become so notorious for every sort of vice and sin that they are only known as the devil's own servants. And if anybody in the place were to speak of them, it would be with no question about the horrible condition of their minds and the state of their character! And yet in how many cases has the Lord been pleased to make such beings, new men in Christ Jesus? I have some in my mind's eye, now, who have been to me a source of unutterable joy, whose characters were known and certainly not admired! They were the dread of all with whom they dwelt. I remember one whose fist had many a time laid low his adversary and whose oaths, and cursing and songs at midnight often made the village tremble when he was filled with drink. But what a humble child he became when at last the Gospel brought him down! How changed and how quiet was his manner when Jesus Christ had renewed his soul—something like John Bunyan with his drink and his Sabbath-breaking—but what a saint was he when bowed at his Savior's feet! He found his sins forgiven! We must not say, "Our children are hopeful and God will save them, but we cannot expect Him to look upon the fallen and degraded." Ah, it is Pharisaism that would make us speak so! The Gospel has found some of its brightest jewels in the lowest haunts of vice. Bear it, bear it into the caves of darkness where the blackness seems to be palpable, and to hang like the glooms of death—bear you aloft the everlasting torch which the Divine Lord, Himself, has kindled, and you shall discover by its light some precious blood-redeemed ones who shall be to the praise of the Glory of His Grace! "One shall be called the City of Destruction, but thus says the Lord, I have delivered it, I will save it for My name's sake."

Now this ought to be very encouraging to every Hearer present, for where there is mercy proclaimed to the chief of sinners, there is encouragement to every form of sinner to come humbly to the heavenly Father and plead the precious blood of Jesus—and obtain life and peace! God

grant we may be led there for His name's sake! But now the second observation is that Grace is displayed in our text from the fact that—

II. GOD'S GRACE SENDS A SAVIOR.

Note, too, that He adds this word, "A GREAT ONE, and He shall deliver them." Beloved Friends, you know, all of you, what I have to say, but yet, though you know it, I know no story ever makes your spirit more glad than the old, old story of the Savior! He who has come to save us is Jesus, the Son of God! He comes to save us from every stain of sin! He has come to save us from our propensity to sin, from the power of our habits and from the snares of Satan! He has come to save us from eternal death, to save us from the wrath to come. God has sent us a Savior! We could not have saved ourselves, but One has come who can! The text says that Savior is a Great One. Oh, I needed a great Savior! A little Savior would not have answered my turn, for great sin needs a great Atonement, and my hard heart needed great Grace to soften it down. Now He that came to save us was God, Himself—Jesus—nothing less than God—counting it not robbery to be equal with God. He is great in His Nature, for as God, He is Infinite—Omnipotent! He is also great in what He has done. Look to Him on the Cross—it is the Son of God pouring out His life for sinners that they may live through His death! There must be great merit in such a Sacrifice! I never dare believe in any limited merit in Christ. He who gave Himself there upon the Cross, being very God of very God, though certainly Man—there can be no limit set to the value of the Atonement which He made! Oh, Beloved, it is a great Savior that God gives. And now that He has risen from the dead, He stands before God to plead for us—and it is no little plea—no plea which might be put back or put off! With authority He pleads before His Father's Throne—points to His own wounds—and the Father's heart always yields to the Son's intercession! You have a great Savior, for He is a great pleader! And, besides that, all power is in His hands—the keys of death and Hell are at His belt and the government shall be upon His shoulders—and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God. Oh, what a Savior we have! Dare we doubt Him? When we cast ourselves upon Him, is there not an end to all our fears, for Jesus is mighty to save and what a word that is in the text—"a Savior and a Great One, and He shall deliver them"! God did not send Christ at a whim. Jesus did not come here to save those who might, perhaps, be saved—to make men salvable—but *He will save all He came to save*. Those on whom He fixed His eyes of everlasting love, for whom the precious drops were shed—these He will, by the power of His arm, pluck from the jaws of the lion, because, with the blood of His heart He has redeemed them! "He shall deliver them." Oh, you that trust in Jesus, lay this word home! May the Spirit of God lay it home to you. He shall deliver them from all temptation, from all trial, from all affliction, from death, itself! "He shall deliver them."

Now put the two points together. We have mentioned that the Grace of God comes to the greatest of sinners, and it brings to them a Savior, and

a Great One. And I have laid open to you something of the heart of God in the greatness of His compassion. But we must pass on. Where the Grace of God comes, it seems from the text that—

III. IT CHANGES MEN'S LANGUAGE.

Turn to the 18th verse. "In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan"—the spiritual meaning of which is that the Grace of God shall make men speak that holy and pure language which is the mark of a child of God. O dear Hearer, if the Grace of God ever meets with you, your friends will know it—everyone—by your conversation! That man could not speak without an oath—there will be no oath now! When he did speak, it was in a proud, boastful, hectoring way about himself. Ah, you will hardly know him to be the same man, for he will speak so humbly and so gently, and when he comes to speak about himself, he will have tears in his eyes to think of what he used to be—and what the Grace of God has done for him! Then his language would be lascivious and unclean at times, but now he desires not even to hear of such things, much less to mention them, for it is a shame for a Christian to speak of the things which are done by many in secret. The Grace of God soon rinses out a man's mouth. His wife knows it, his children know it, his workfolk know it and though some of them will think him a fool to speak after the way in which he now does, though he does not imitate the language of Christians, and is not a cant, yet there is something about his very brogue and talk that might make men say, "You, also, were with Jesus of Nazareth, for your speech betrays you." Oh, would not it be a mercy if God would change the speech of some in London? Even our boys in the streets sometimes talk in a way that is enough to make your blood chill. Foul words are very common in our streets and elsewhere. O, Sovereign Grace, come and visit these, and they shall speak no longer the language of Babylon and the language of Belial, but they shall speak the language of Canaan, for God shall give them a pure language! When you hear men that once could curse begin to pray. When those who were given to blasphemies begin to pray. And when, instead of hearing the noise of strife in the working-man's house, you hear the song of praise, then is fulfilled the saying that is written, "In that day shall five cities speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of Hosts." But I must pass on. Where the Grace of God comes—

IV. IT SETS MEN ON HOLY SERVICE.

"There shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord." When a man is in sin, he worships himself, or he serves his pleasure and Satan. But when the Grace of God comes, the man begins at once to serve God and becomes God's servant. I am sure I know houses now that have an altar to God in them—the family altar—where you would not have thought such a thing could ever have been! I know some, too, that will this very day give of their substance to God, who two or three years ago would have scorned the act. They would have said it was a waste of money altogether to give anything to the cause of the Most High! There are some teaching at the

Sunday school, and spending the day of rest in, perhaps, the hardest toil of the week, and doing it very cheerfully, too, who once would have laughed to scorn any proposal that they should have done any such thing! The Lord, when He gets men's hearts and washes away their sins, takes them into His service, and makes those who were most ready to serve Satan become most willing to serve Him! Is not this true—I appeal to many here present—is it not your delight, now, to do all you can for the Lord Jesus Christ? Perhaps, however, while you say, "Yes," you also add, "But I do not do half as much as I should, nor as I ought." You feel precisely as I also felt—and I must make the same confession as yourself. But, Brothers and Sisters, do not let it end in confession. Let us wake up and do more, for the love that saved us, the love that bought us at such a price, ought not to be recompensed so poorly as it has been! And let us pray for the Grace of God, that we may always have an altar in our own hearts and be, ourselves, the sacrifice—that our whole life may be a life of consecration to the living God! Oh, that our common dress might be as priestly vestments and our ordinary meals as sacraments, and ourselves as priests unto the living God! May our whole life be a Psalm, and our whole being a hallelujah to the Most High! Where the Grace of God comes with power, it makes the worst of men become the best, and the lowest of the low become true servants of the living God! "Can it be?" asks one, "can I ever be a servant of God" Ah, yes! Listen to the song of Heaven! "We have washed our robes"—then they needed washing—"and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! Glory be to Him who has made us kings and priests unto our God."

The next display of Divine Grace in the text is to be seen in this, that where the Grace of God comes—

V. IT TEACHES MEN TO PRAY.

We read in the 20th verse, "They shall cry unto the Lord because of oppressors." This is a kind of prayer that only God can teach us. You can easily learn to say a form of prayer, or to read one from a book, but a prayer that can fairly be called a *cry* is the fruit of Grace! The cry is the natural expression of distress. There is no hypocrisy in a cry! When one is sorely sick and ready to die, and cries out in anguish, it is the genuine expression of an oppressed spirit. God always teaches His children to pray such prayers as those. And oh, how sweetly will saved souls pray! Next to the songs of angels, I think the prayers of new converts are among the sweetest things that ever reach our ears. When we have been professors a long time, we are very apt to get into a sort of stilted mode of talking to God in prayer—and men that have more gifts than Graces will spend the time in words, words, words. But oh, how has my heart leaped when I have heard a cry such as, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" When some soul, ready to burst with fear of the wrath to come, has cried out, "Jesus, Lord, have mercy upon me!" Or when some heart that has just found Jesus, has praised and magnified the exceeding mercy that has put away its sin. Christ can teach the blasphemer to pray! He can take the profane into His school and teach them all to cry—and what all

the clergy and ministry in the land could not do, namely, teach a man to pray one sincere prayer—God the Holy Spirit can do to the very offscouring and the scum of the universe when once He comes to deal with them in the way of Grace! Wonders of Grace belong to God! He that teaches us to pray will teach us to praise Him in Heaven. The soul that lisps out its desires sincerely to God shall one day sing with cherubim and seraphim before the Eternal Throne. But I must hasten on. Where Grace comes—

VI. IT INSTRUCTS MEN.

We learn this from the next verse, “And the Lord shall be known in Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day.” It is a very serious evil with many hearers that they are altogether ignorant of the things of God, but it is delightful to observe how sweetly the Holy Spirit can teach. I have spoken lately with some whom God has called, by His Grace, during the past few weeks, and I have been surprised that, although they had never been Bible readers, nor received any religious instruction in their youth, when the Grace of God showed them their sin, He did it thoroughly. And when He showed them the Savior, He did it in a wondrous way, so that when they came to read the Bible, it was not difficult for them to understand it, nor to lay hold upon it with delight—and some have become well instructed in the things of the Kingdom in a very short time, indeed! There is no teacher like the Holy Spirit! “All your children shall be taught of the Lord,” and when He teaches, they are taught, indeed! What profits it to a man to know all earthly knowledge, if he knows not his God? But where Divine Grace comes, the man is no longer a stranger to the Lord—he knows the Father, the Son, the Spirit! He must know the Father, for he has become His child. He must know the Son, for He is his only confidence. He must know the Spirit, for it is the Spirit that dwells in him and has renewed him. Oh, that God would be pleased, tonight, to take some fresh scholars into His school! Don’t say, “I am poor and illiterate.” What does that matter? With the Lord to teach you, you will make an apt scholar! We can only teach your ears—He can teach your hearts! We can only write the copy in a book, but He can write it on the fleshy tablets of your souls. Never despair of being instructed in the things of Heaven! The Lord can graciously instruct you, and if He leads you, tonight, to receive the Savior—the Great One—He will begin the Divine teaching which will end in your being complete in Christ and your entering into His Glory! I want you to notice a little more. Where the Grace of God comes into a man’s heart—

VII. IT MAKES EVEN TROUBLE A BLESSING TO HIM.

Read the 22nd verse. “The Lord shall smite Egypt”—there is the trouble—“He shall smite”—there is the trouble again—“and heal it”—there is the mercy—“and they shall return even to the Lord, and He shall be entreated of them and shall heal them.” An ungodly man, when he is in trouble, has nothing whatever to sustain him, and no good comes out of the trouble. But get the heart renewed, and let the man receive the Savior, and perhaps the greatest mercies he has are those which are blessings in disguise! I read a story the other day—an incident which hap-

pened to a City Missionary. He was preaching one night out in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and there was a man—an extremely aged man, who had lost his wife, and lived in an attic, alone. He had scarcely a rag upon him and was nearly starved—and he was going out to commit suicide, but, moved by curiosity, he listened to the preaching of the Gospel—and it saved his soul! It turned out that he had once been worth £100,000 and had been a distinguished merchant, but had lost his all in a foolish speculation and had come down from the heights of riches to the lowest poverty—and at an extreme age he found Christ! The missionary found him friends who provided him with about enough to keep body and soul together. They provided a humble crust in a very lowly, solitary room. And he used to say that now he had found the Lord—but he might never have found Him if he had not lost all his wealth—and he looked upon it as the greatest blessing that had ever occurred to him, that he was brought to such beggary, that he was able and willing to stand in the street to listen to a sermon! For he said that in his riches he had despised the Gospel and had been altogether an atheist and an unbeliever. But now, when brought to his lowest, Christ had found him and he had more happiness with his cross than he had with his wealth! Oh, get the Grace of God in your heart, and then broken limbs will be a blessing! That long depression of trade that brought you so low will appear a very different thing, then! Perhaps your lot is very lowly, now, and your toils severe, but God's Grace will gild all these dark things in such a way that you shall even learn to glory in tribulation, also, and bless the Lord that He did not leave you to be a stranger to Him, but made you His child and, therefore, made you feel His rod—for what son is there whom his father chastens not? Beloved, what a blessing it is to have the Grace of God, seeing it turns adverse circumstances into true prosperity and makes our losses to be our lasting gains! One other reflection, and that is this concerning the Grace of God—

VIII. IT CHANGES THE RELATIONS OF MEN TO ONE ANOTHER.

Read the 23rd verse. "In that day there shall be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians." Now the Egyptians and the Assyrians were enemies to one another—they were always fighting. There was a bloody feud and war between them century after century, but when the Grace of God shall visit them both, there shall be no more fighting! The Egyptian shall go and visit the Assyrian, and the Assyrian shall visit the Egyptian. Have you ever met with such a case? Two brothers were at enmity and would not speak to each other. One of them was saved by Grace, and he thought, "Oh, if my brother John might be converted!" He wanted to fall into his brother's arms and make it all up and be friends again. Meanwhile, brother John had heard the Gospel somewhere else and his soul had been saved! And he goes to find the other brother, and they are reconciled, and the families that had been at a distance are knit together in love! Oh, the Gospel soon breaks down barriers! I won't give a penny for your religion if you are at enmity

with anybody—if you can say of anyone of your kith and kin, “I will never speak to them again.” Mind, in that day when you appear before God, how can you expect mercy? Well, now, genuine Grace makes us forgive as we have been forgiven—and it establishes intercommunications between those who had long been enemies to one another. Should there happen to be in this place at this time any that have long been at variance, I believe that there is no way of establishing a lasting love between you like your both loving Jesus Christ! If you cannot meet anywhere else, you are sure to meet if you come to the Cross. A common Savior will bind you together! Bought with the same blood and filled with the same Divine Life, you will become members of the same mystical body—you cannot help loving each other! Oh, that God would put an end in the world to all wars between nations, as well as all strife between individuals! It won’t come about by trade, nor politics, nor by anything of man’s devising! But if the Gospel spreads, if God converts Egypt and converts Assyria, then Egypt will not desire war with Assyria, nor Assyria with Egypt, but they shall be one in Christ Jesus the Lord! Wonders of Grace! Wonders of Grace, that those that hated should love, and enemies should become friends! We will close with these last words. Where the Grace of God comes—

IX. IT MAKES MEN TO BE BLESSED AND TO BE A BLESSING.

You will find that affirmed in the last two verses. “They shall be a blessing in the midst of the land, and it shall be said, Blessed be Egypt, My people.” The man that was accursed before, and was a curse, becomes blessed and is a blessing! I will not enlarge upon it, but I will say this to you, the members of the Church. It has delighted me to find the many earnest hearts there are here that are trying to do good, some in one way, and some in another. I would in every case, if my encouragement were worth your having, give it to you very heartily. But, Beloved, if I do not know of it, and if no one knows of it but yourself and God, go on, go on! It is God’s work to save souls and you are workers together with Him. Oh, this city needs you—needs ten thousand earnest spirits! The lodging houses need you! The alleys and the courts need you! The poor need you—even the rich need you! If you have anything to say of the remedy which wisdom has prepared for the remedy of sin’s disease, the millions need it! They won’t come to hear the Gospel preached—take it to their houses, carry it to their doors! If they reject a Savior, let it not be for lack of your hunting after them! Push it in their way. Sow beside all waters. In season and out of season teach the Word of God! You know not where God may bless you. But never be discouraged because of the badness of the neighborhood, or the lowness of the character of the people. If Egypt shall be saved, have faith for this Egypt! If Assyria shall be saved, have confidence in God for those who are often worse than heathens and you shall have your reward in that day when He of the pierced hands shall distribute crowns to those who faithfully serve Him! Rewards, not of debt, but of Grace, shall be given to the most obscure and unknown of you, who for His sake have sought to teach little children or to reclaim

the adult who has fallen into sin. Take courage—your work of faith and labor of love are not in vain in the Lord and will yet do wonders to the praise of His Grace.

And as to you who are not saved. I have been saying great things of encouragement to you. I don't know who may take hold of them, but if there were one here who should reckon himself to be quite out of hope, it is to that man or woman I spoke! And if there is a person here who says, "You don't mean *me*—you don't know my character," I will suppose it to be the worst character that was ever heard of—I meant you! He is "able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Seek you the Lord! Confess your sins to Him. Weep out your confession with your head on your Father's bosom and say, "Forgive me, forgive me for Your Son's sake," and it shall be done unto you! God grant it may be done, even now, for His name's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ACTS 9:1-22.**

Verses 1, 2. *And Saul, yet breathing out threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of the Way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.* His very breath was threatening. Slaughter seemed to be a necessity of his existence! He was breathing out threats and slaughter—could not breathe without them—could not speak without them. So full was he of fury against the people of God, that Jerusalem was not enough for him—he wanted wider hunting grounds—he must go to Damascus!

3. *And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus.* There was his prey before him and the wolf was ready to leap upon it.

3-5. *And suddenly there shined round about him a light from Heaven. And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? And he said, Who are You, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you persecute: it is hard for you to kick against the pricks.* So it is when God means to save a man! He will make every kick that he gives against the Gospel to be like that of an ox that kicks against the goad and wounds itself!

6. *And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what will You have me to do? What a sudden change! Before, he knew what he was going to do. He was going to do his own will and wreak his own vengeance, but now it is, "Lord, what will You have me to do? My will is in a moment subdued. What is it You ask of me?"*

6-9. *And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told you what you must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth: and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days*

without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. And what a battle went on in his soul! One, perhaps, which even he could scarcely describe afterwards! Brothers and Sisters, some of you can surely guess, for you, perhaps, have felt the same. Some souls are born to God with terrible pangs—and Saul was one. And oh, what strong Believers those often are who have great difficulty in coming to peace! “And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.”

10. *And there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias—* One of those to whom Paul had intended to pay his cruel respects.

10. *And to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold I am here, Lord.* A grand way to be able to answer the Lord at all times! May we never be, dear Friends, where we shall be ashamed to say, “Behold, I am here, Lord.” Some Christians go into very strange company—and they would not like their Master to know. They would be ashamed to say, “Behold, I am here, Lord.”

11. *And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus.* The Lord knows the whereabouts of His people. He knows your whereabouts tonight, young man. I only trust that though you are an opponent of the Gospel, He has brought you here on purpose that you may become one of His best advocates through His renewing Grace!

11. *For, behold, he prays.* There was the secret sign and mark of a changed character! “Behold, he prays.” What a wonder! He prays—he that breathed out slaughter! He prays—he that came to destroy! “Behold, he prays.”

12-16. *And has seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he has done to Your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on Your name. But the Lord said unto him, Go your way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name’s sake.* And it seemed a gracious retribution of him, did it not? I say not a penal infliction. I know not how to put it better than, “a gracious retribution”—that he who made saints to suffer should now have the high privilege to take the front rank in suffering, himself! Often, I doubt not, when he was bearing and enduring with such matchless fortitude, he thought of those saints whom he had harried and worried in the days of his carnal estate—and how he must have prized them and with what wonder must he have said, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all the saints, is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

17. *And Ananias went his way and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul—* Oh, what new words, “Brother Saul!” A few days before no man dared have used such language of familiarity to this mighty disciple of Gamaliel, armed with authority from the chief priests! Now how sweetly it must have sounded in his ears, “Broth-

er Saul!” Oh, there is nothing that makes us such Brothers as the Gospel! “This is the dear uniting bond that will not let us part.”

17, 18. *The Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto you in the way as you came, has sent me, that you might receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And immediately there fell from his eyes as if it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.* What else should a Believer be but be baptized? It is the very next step which he should take after he has found the Savior!

19. *And when he had received meat, he was strengthened.* It seemed unimportant to put that in here, did it not? Yet it is not so. While Grace heals the infirmities of the mind, bodily food is still needed for the body. And sometimes it is well with your young convert, when he has been a long time in distress of mind, that you refresh him in body as well as cheer him in heart.

19, 20. *Then was Saul certain days with the disciples who were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.* And had they ever heard such a preacher before? How they gnashed their teeth at him—the unbelievers! And how the timid saints crept in and heard this man advocate—this man who had had a wonderful twist in his mind from which he never recovered—who had seen something—as yet he, himself, could hardly tell all that he had seen. Oh, it must have been fine hearing to listen to his preaching that Christ is the Son of God!

21, 22. *And all who heard him were amazed, and said: Is not this he who destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came here for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the very Christ.* And this is the great thing to prove to the Jew! Oh, when shall it come to pass that poor forsaken Israel shall know that this is the very Christ? God grant her restoration right speedily!

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

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

THE NAIL IN A SURE PLACE

NO. 3402

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 1914.

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

“And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place, and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father’s house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father’s house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flacons. In that day, says the Lord of Hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed and be cut down and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off: for the Lord has spoken it.”
Isaiah 22:23-25.

WE have read, in your hearing, the occasion of these words. Shebna the scribe, having become proud and vainglorious, was to be put away and his place to be occupied by a better man on whom God promised to establish His favor. When Shebna the scribe was put away, it was like the drawing out of a nail which, apparently, had been well fastened, and all that had been hanging upon it came down with its fall. Thus did Shebna’s family suffer for his sin. It is just so in the world at this day. It were well if some men who have gone into evil ways had considered this. It is not they, alone, who suffer. Such is the order and constitution of the commonwealth of manhood, that when the husband sins, the household must feel much of the smart. Oftentimes, for wife and children, there has been wrung out a cup of bitterness, of which they have been made to drink, not through their own fault, but through the fault of the head of the family. Should there be any men here who have strayed into this house, tonight, who contemplate putting forth his hand to that which is not good, though he might dare to risk the consequences for his own sake, yet, for the sake of the children of his loins and the wife of his bosom, let him pause lest, perhaps, he fill their lives with bitterness, or send them to their graves prematurely in poverty and shame.

That is not, however the subject upon which I shall talk at this time. When Shebna was removed, there was room for Eliakim. Let this furnish the key to a spiritual lesson. It has been generally propounded and admitted by commentators and expositors that Eliakim is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. While this passage literally refers to Eliakim, himself, it may, with very great instructiveness, be used as applicable to the Lord Jesus—and so I use it. The first point will be this—

I. IN ORDER TO MAKE ROOM FOR JESUS CHRIST, THERE MUST BE AN OVERTHROW OF SOMEBODY ELSE, just as in order to make room

for Eliakim, Shebna, who seemed to be like a nail fastened in a sure place, must be pulled out and there must be a downfall of his glory.

Beloved, whenever Jesus Christ comes into the heart, before He rides in state into the Castle of Mansoul, there is a battle, a strife, a struggle, a casting down of the image of sin, and a setting up of the Cross in its place. All men, by nature, have some kind of righteousness. There is no man so vile but he still wraps himself up in his rags and cajoles himself into the belief that he has some degree of excellence, spiritual or moral. Before Christ can come into the heart, all this *natural excellence must be torn to shreds*. Every single stone of the wall upon which we have built before, must come down, and the foundations must be utterly destroyed before we shall ever build right and for eternity upon the Cornerstone of Christ Jesus. All our conceit about our past righteousnesses must be completely overthrown. Perhaps we flatter ourselves that all is well because we have been baptized or have come to the Communion, like one who was visited, a few days ago, by an Elder. Seeing that she was sick and near to die, he asked her, "Have you a good hope?" "Oh, Sir, yes! A good and blessed hope." "And pray," he asked, "what is it?" "Well," she said, "I have taken the Sacrament regularly for 50 years." What do you think of that in a Christian country, from the lips of one who had attended a Gospel ministry? Her confidence was built upon the mere fact of her having attended to an outward ceremony to which, probably, she had no right whatever! There are hundreds and thousands who are thus resting upon mere ceremonies! They have been Church-goers or Chapel-goers from their youth up. They have never been absent, except under sickness, from their regular place of worship. Good easy souls! Are these the boats upon which they hope to swim in eternity? They will surely sink to their everlasting destruction! Some base their confidence on the fact that they have never indulged in the grosser vices. Others that they have been scrupulously honest in their commercial transactions. Some that they have been good husbands. Others that they have been charitable neighbors. I know not of what poor flimsy tissue men will not make a covering to hide their natural nakedness! But all this must be unraveled—every stitch of it! No man can put on the robes of Christ's righteousness till he has taken off his own. Christ will never go shares in our salvation. God will not have it said that He partly made the heavens, but that some other spirit came in to conclude the gigantic work of Creation, much less will He divide the work of our salvation with any other! He must be the only Savior as He was the only Creator! In the winepress of His sufferings, Jesus stood alone—of the people, none were with Him—no angel could assist Him in the mighty work. In the fight He stood alone—the solitary Champion, the sole Victor! So, too, you must be saved by Him, alone, resting entirely on Him and counting your own righteousness to be dross and dung, or else you can never be saved at all! It must be down with Shebna, or else it cannot be up with Eliakim! It must be down with self, or it can never be up with Christ! Self-righteousness must be

set aside to make room for the righteousness of Jesus—otherwise it can never be ours.

We must, with equal thoroughness, be ready to give up *all confidence in our own resolutions, or vows, or endeavors* for the future and come to rest the future where we rest the past—on Christ, and Christ alone. I know it is the idea of many that albeit they have slipped and fallen in the past, yet they shall be able to stand upright in the future. Have they not resolved it? Can they not do it? Are they not able to do as they will? As they have had much ability for evil, have they not an equal ability for good? So self-sufficiency talks. But when a man comes to know himself, and to know Christ, he sings another note. “Ah,” said an aged saint, as he heard of men that were taken to the police station, and of some that were condemned to die, and others that were transported—“Ah,” said he, “he today, I tomorrow if the Grace of God did not prevent.” So every truly humbled man will say, when he hears of the great offenses of others, “They today, and I tomorrow, unless Grace shall intervene to keep me from following their evil example.” Brothers and Sisters, our only hope for the future lies in this—that those who trust Jesus are in Jesus Christ’s hands and that He is able to keep that which they commit to Him. Those who trust in Jesus have this promise that the Holy Spirit shall dwell in them and walk in them—writing a law upon their hearts making their hearts new—molding their natures into the nature of Christ, causing them to hate evil and to choose that which is good. You will never kill a single evil passion through your own strivings apart from the precious blood of Christ! Those vipers within our bosom will never die till they are sprinkled with the blood of the Great Sacrifice—and then they all depart. Jesus comes and fills the heart and then evil is crushed beneath His foot and is utterly slain, so that Christ becomes fully formed in us the hope of Glory!

Now, it is hard for a man to give up these two things—all glorying in the past and all hope for the future in himself. It is hard to be a pauper and to knock at Mercy’s door and ask for alms, and yet only as paupers can we come. I do not allude exclusively to you that have been great sinners, outwardly only, but I mean you moral men and women, you that are good and excellent in a thousand ways. You must still come, just as the poor publican came, with, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” These are God’s terms and He will accept you on no other. Oh, be not proud enough to kick at them, but submit yourself to the dictates of Eternal Love and let your vanity and self-opinion be abased that Jesus Christ may be All-in-All to you!

Before I leave this point, let me remark that as this is to be done before we come to Christ, so all our life long it is one of the things about which we must always be vigilant, for the tendency of human nature, as long as we are in this world, is to get something to rest upon in ourselves. We can hardly be indulged with the light of Jehovah’s Counten-

ance before we begin to make a confidence of it—and if our graces for a little while bud and bloom like seeming flowers, we very soon begin to compliment ourselves upon our imaginary goodness! Though every excellence is borrowed, we begin to be proud of it and to forget that in Him is all our salvation, and all confidence. This knocking down has to be persevered in, for the flesh lusts against the Spirit and yet as fast as we can, in our pride build up anything in which we can glory, the Lord sends a terrible blast of some kind or other against the wall, and sweeps it all down, that Jesus Christ may alone be exalted in our experience.

Thus much upon the first point. There must be a down-throwing, a pulling out of one nail before there can be another for us to hang upon. Now, let us turn to a second thought, which is this—

II. THE NATURE OF OUR TRUE DEPENDENCE, as set forth in the words of the 23rd and 24th verses.

The reliance of a really saved soul is upon the Person, the work and righteousness of Jesus Christ only. This dependence is warranted by *God's appointment*. Turn to the 23rd verse—"I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place." That other nail, in the 25th verse, God never fastened, but this is one that God fastens and what God does, lasts forever! Do you, dear Hearer, rest your soul's salvation alone upon Jesus? Then, mark you, He can never fail you, for if He did, then would it be true that God had been mistaken. It were blasphemy to think it! If the Lord appoints Jesus Christ to be a Propitiation for sin, and yet He does not make that Propitiation, then there is a mistake somewhere. If God bids me lean my whole weight upon His Son, and I do so lean, and yet am not sustained, then is there a great mistake, not on my part only, but on the part of Infinite Wisdom! But we cannot suppose that. The Lord knew what He was doing when He appointed the Only-Begotten to be the sinner's pillar of strength, upon which he might lean. He knew that Jesus could not fail—that as God, He was all-sufficient. That as perfect Man He would not turn aside. That as a bleeding Surety, having paid all the debt of our sin upon Calvary, He was able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him. I come into this pulpit so continually that it is a place to which I am more accustomed than any other in the world! And this is the one cry I am always uttering in various shapes and ways—it is this one Truth of God I present with unwearyingly interest—Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on the Cross of Calvary, bearing upon Himself the sin of all that trust Him, and for all that trust Him, He has made a full Atonement, so that their sins are forgiven! Christ has paid their debts, they are free! He was punished for them! They cannot be punished. God cannot punish the same sin twice! If He punishes Christ, He will not punish any for whom Christ died! Now, if these statements were my own invention. Did I promulgate it as coming out of my own thoughts, it were worthy of no acceptance—but inasmuch as God reveals it in His Word—oh, this is the soul and marrow of the Christian religion! Rest on it and if you are deceived, were such a thing possible, what a consolation would you have

in appealing to the proclamation of Divine Mercy as an answer to all the terrors that menaced you! But that can never be! Impossible! It is the Truth of God, O Sinner! However guilty you may be, believe this Truth—that Christ is able to save you—and go and cast yourself on Him! Rest on His finished work, and as God is true, He will not, He *cannot*, turn aside from His solemn oath and promise—“He that believes in Christ is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already because he has not believed on the Son of God.” The Christian’s dependence, then, is of Divine appointing.

Moreover, the Believer’s dependence *is of God’s sustaining*, for note, “I will fasten Him as a nail in a sure place, and He shall be for a glorious throne to His father’s house.” God ensures the future—that Christ shall always be to His people their glory and their defense. You know how we like good names to be attached to great compacts. In all commercial dealing, especially in large transactions, we like good and safe men to trust in, though, indeed, where are they to be found now-a-days—since the best of them are sharper than a thorn-edge? Oh, Honesty, you are fled, perished, buried years ago, and the very rags you once did wear are rotten! But, here, if nowhere else, here in the Gospel, we have a name in which we may trust the name of the thrice-holy God that cannot lie! And He declares that He will sustain His Son as the Savior of His people. Need I urge any rational spirit to depend where God pledges His Word? “Let God be true, and every man a liar,” and if you have God’s Word for it, cast yourselves unreservedly upon His Word! You shall not find Him fail you! You shall rejoice as in Heaven you sing of the faithfulness of the God that spoke and the everlasting righteousness with which He fulfils every Word He has spoken!

Further still, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Believer’s great foundation and confidence, is also *the Christian’s fountain of glory*. “He shall be for a glorious throne to his father’s house.” All his father’s house was to be ennobled through the ennobling of Eliakim and so is the Christian ennobled through the ennobling of the Lord Jesus Christ. By nature what are we but despicable? If we consider the heavens, the work of God’s fingers, we are so minute as not to be worthy to be called specks in Creation! If we look at our sinfulness, we are reduced still lower in the scale. And if we see our continued tendency to fresh sin, we are obliged to say, “Lord, what is man, that You are mindful of him at all?” But yet man is an honorable creature when he lays hold on Christ! Then he is lifted up and made to have dominion over all the works of God’s hands. All things are put under his feet in the Person of Christ Jesus. There is no honor in the whole universe—no, not the honor of the angels, themselves—that can exceed the honor that is put upon the man who believes in Jesus Christ. I wish we always thought so, for indeed, it is so. In the olden times, when one was brought before the magistrate to be accused and adjudged to death for his Christianity, he blushed not to avow his

soul's attachment to his Savior with open face. When they asked him what he was, he said, "A Christian." "And what is your name?" He said, "My name is Christian." "And what is your occupation?" "My occupation is a Christian." "And what is your wealth, what are your degree and rank?" He said, "I am a Christian." And to every question they put, he gave but this one answer, "I am a Christian. I am a Christian." All the wealth and all the glory of this world are nothing compared with the glory that comes to the very meanest man who is really allied to Christ and can truly be called a Christian! Lift up your heads, you poor and needy! Rejoice, you downtrodden and oppressed, you toiling workers, you forgotten ones among the sons of men, for if your destiny is linked with the Person of the once crucified, but now exalted Savior, you shall partake of His Glory in the day of His appearing and forever be sharers of the splendor which eternally shall surround your Lord!

Here, then, is much to comfort us. He upon whom we depend is divinely appointed, divinely sustained, and all His Glory He sheds on us! But now, pass on and note that—

III. THE CHRISTIAN'S WHOLE DEPENDENCE IS PLACED UPON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST as declared in the 24th verse. The metaphor is this—There is a pin in a palace and upon this there may be hung up suits of armor, or whatever else the owner of the palace chooses to put there. But instead of that, there are hung golden wine cups and goblets. Some of them are small vessels of not much capacity. Others of them are great flagons adapted to hold large quantities, but they are all hanging upon this bracket—all suspended there as trophies. If the nail is taken out, the smaller vessels fall, and so do the larger ones, too, for they all equally and alike hang on that nail. Their only support from falling and being bruised upon the floor is that one pin which holds them all. Such is Christ to all His people! All Christians are not alike capacious vessels of Grace. Some can receive much—they are full of knowledge, zeal, hope, joy, faith. Others will never be anything but little vessels. They have believed, but their faith is mixed with unbelief. They "can do but little, they have but few talents, their knowledge is obscured, their progress in the Divine Life is but small. Still, for all that, they rest on nothing less than Christ. They need not rest on anything more and the great ones depend on nothing less than Christ, nor can they rest on anything more. The little cup is quite as safe, for it hangs on the nail as the flagon does. Truly, one might be ambitious to be a flagon, to hold a deeper draught for its Lord's pleasure, but the littleness of the tiniest vessel does not affect its safety. The safety of all that hang there lies in the fastness of the pin, the strength and security of the nail. Not in the littleness of the one, nor the greatness of the other is there either safety or danger, but all rest on that pin. So is it with the whole Church of God. We are all hanging upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. If we have served Him well and served Him long, yet we have nothing whereof to glory, but we cast all aside, and rest, as helpless sinners upon the blessed Savior! If we have but just be-

gun to serve Him, and so are babes in Grace, we rest entirely upon Him. If we have fallen into sin and have been backsliders, yet still we come again and look to His merits that we may be restored. Or if we have lived a blameless life through His abundant Grace, yet still, for all that, we have no other dependence than the rest of the saints, but entirely, solely rest in Jesus! This is very simple Doctrine, expressed in very simple talk, but I do wish that somebody had told me this years before I heard it, for I always had the notion that I was to be saved by something I did, and something I felt. I supposed it was a great mystery, a matter that took months and years to solve, and that even then, it was attended with imminent risk and that the dreary search for this inestimable prize might end in disappointment. Oh, I wish I had been told earlier that there was nothing whatever for me to do of myself, but simply to come, just as I was, and cast myself upon what Christ had done for me, and for sinners like me, and that if I rested wholly upon Him, I would be saved from my sins and from the tendency to sin—and be made holy in Christ Jesus! Now I feel inclined to state, whenever I am talking of it, into the simplest language and the shortest sentences, in order that if there should be a lad here, a child here, that is seeking salvation, he may not be kept in darkness, as I was, month after month, and year after year, trying to know what to do to be saved! Man, woman—whoever you may be—what is to save you is done! Christ has done it all! The robe you have got to wear in Heaven is already spun—you have not got to sit at the loom, working away and making a garment with which to cover your sins! The fountain in which you have to be washed you have not got to fill, nor even to drop a tear into it to make it perfect! There it is—filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins, and all you have to do is but to step into it by simply trusting it. Trust Christ! Rely on Christ! Depend on Christ and it is done! And you are saved! The flagons and the cups put on the nail are safe there. You that put on Jesus Christ now are safe, now, safe tonight, safe all your life and safe in Glory everlasting!

Now, I should like to ask a question of two or three classes, and then send you home. There are a great many of us here tonight who are teachers of others. Some of you are deacons, Elders, Sunday school teachers, street preachers. I thank God that you are a busy people and you are doing much for Christ. There is a question I want to ask of you, and of myself—Are we who teach others sure that we have believed in Christ, ourselves? Are we quite, quite sure that we are saved? It is well to ask that question! It is a very dangerous thing, indeed, for an unsaved man to begin to work for Christ, for the probabilities are that he will take for granted what he ought diligently to have proved. In many cases he never will seek to be saved, but go on, on, on, never pausing to examine himself and so, while professing to work for God, he may be a stranger to the work of God on himself! There is an old story I recollect reading somewhere of a lunatic in an asylum, who one day saw a very lean cook.

Accosting him, he said, "Cook, do you make good food?" "Yes," said the cook. "Are you sure?" "Yes." "And does anybody get fat on it?" "Yes," again was the reply. "Then," said the man, "you had better mind what you are after, or else when the governor comes round, he will put you in along with me, for if you make good food, and yet are so thin yourself, you must be mad, for you do not eat it, or else you would get fat, too!" There is some sense in that. You teach others, you say you give them spiritual food, but why not feed on it yourselves? Master, what right have you to teach if you will not first learn? Physician, physician, heal yourself! Brother, it will go hard with you and with me if we are lost. What will become of us teachers of others if, after having led others to the river, we never drink—after bringing others the heavenly food, we perish of spiritual famine ourselves? I cannot go round to all the members of this Church and all the workers, and take them by the hand and say, "My dear Brother or Sister, be not deceived and do not go on deceiving us." But I sometimes wish I could do that, and I wish you would take it as done tonight, for there are some awful hypocrites among us! There are some who come in and apparently behave right well, who are nothing better than abominable hypocrites, rotten through and through! And yet in our charity we never suspect them, and if we occasionally discover one, we stand amazed and say, "Lord, shall I be the next to be a Judas and betray my Master?" There never was a Church in which such hypocrites have not at all times been exposed to view unless they were all in the gall of bitterness together, dead in an empty profession. And then it is no marvel that there should be little inclination to exercise discipline. Christ's twelve had a Judas, and all churches must expect to find the chaff that must be driven away into the fire when the wheat is purged by the great Master's fan. I do beseech you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, let not membership with this Church, or any other Church, assist you in self-delusion, but do—oh, how shall I put it, how shall I put it?—do, before you think about the conversion of other people, see to it that your own conversion is accomplished! Count yourself no way safe till you hang on that nail! You need not talk to others about trusting in Christ till you have first trusted yourselves!

Out of the many hearers who have listened to me so long, may there not be a great number who though taught in the Doctrine of the Word have never yet been obedient to it? For a man to perish before knowing the Gospel will be a dreary thing. But for him to die when he knows the Gospel is something horrible—to be drowned with the life belt within reach! To perish in the dark, when the light is to be had! To die of famine, like Tantalus, with the golden apples close to one's lips! To perish of thirst with the water gurgling at one's throat! Oh, it will forever be a sound of horror in the lost ones' ears when they shall hear the echo of the Sabbath bells—if such sounds can penetrate the murky regions where lost spirits dwell—the sound, I say, of the Sabbath bells reminding them of Lord's-Days wasted and neglected! The sound familiar to them

when on earth of the preacher's voice as he pleaded, entreated, thundered, threatened, wept, begged men to be saved! If there could be silence, there, and all could be forgotten, there might be a lull in the fierce hail-storm of Almighty Wrath! But they can never forget, for it is said, "Son, remember. Son, remember"—and they shall remember that they were called, but would not come, that they were invited, but declined the feast, that they were instructed, but shut their eyes—that they were wooed, but they hardened their necks and chose their own delusions! Oh, by the mercy of the blessed God, write not your names, my Hearers, among the guilty and terrible multitude!

And may there not be some who come merely as casual hearers now and then, who, instead of gleaning anything that is good out of what we have tried to say, only remember our mistakes, our mannerisms, our faults of gesture or of style? It may be sport to some of you to sit and hear, but it is awful as death for us to stand and preach. I mean, it is no child's play for a man to feel, "I stand in God's place to that people this night, and as though God did beseech them by me, I am to pray them, as in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God." He that can toy with his ministry and count it to be like a trade, or like any other profession, was never called of God! But he that has a charge pressing on his heart and a woe ringing in his ears, and preaches as though he heard the cries of Hell behind him, and saw his God looking down upon him—oh, how that man entreats the Lord that his hearers may not hear in vain! Yet, alas, alas, by how many who come to hear, all that is good is forgotten, and only some worthless thing is treasured up? As among those who go to the goldsmith's shop, while one is looking at a pearl, and another admires a ruby, and another would gladly purchase a diamond, there may be an idiot who picks up a coal from the floor and thinks that shall be his—takes it home with him and blackens his fingers with it, and then goes his way and finds fault with the jeweler who dropped it—so are you foolish people and unwise who are attracted by nothing that is precious in the Gospel, but are diligent to collect any refuse that drops in the pulpit! Oh, Sirs, if you must find fault with us, do so, and welcome, as much as ever you will, but do not forget that there is the Truth of God in the sentence that if you are to be saved, you must rest alone upon the work of Jesus! You need saving! You need it tonight! There may never be another occasion on which you may have an opportunity of finding salvation! The opportunity is given to you now. May the Holy Spirit give you the will as well as the occasion, and may you now say—

***"I'll go to Jesus though my sins,
Have like a mountain rose!
I know His courts, I'll enter in
Whatever may oppose.
Prostrate I'll lie before His Throne
And there my sins confess.
I'll tell Him I'm a wretch undone***

Without His Sovereign Grace.”

God bless these words for Jesus' sake.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 41:1-18.**

God enters into a controversy with those who had fallen into the worship of idols.

Verse 1. *Keep silence before Me, O islands, and let the people renew their strength. Let them come near, then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment.* He challenges them to a debate. He gives them breathing time—bids them prepare themselves and come with the best arguments that their minds could find.

2, 3. *Who raised up the righteous man from the east? Who called him to his feet, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? Who gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow? He pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet.* Who was it that raised up Cyrus and who made him strong to defeat the foe? Did the false gods do it? Could they claim any share therein? He puts it to them.

4. *Who has worked and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last, I am He.* Long before Cyrus was born, God thus spoke of him! It is declared what work he should do. What better proof could there be that God is God? Do the false gods foretell the future? Are their oracles to be depended upon? Yet the Lord's Word is true and stands fast forever. "I Jehovah, the first, and with the last, I am He."

5, 6. *The isles saw it, and feared: the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near and came. They helped, everyone, his neighbor; and everyone said to his brother, Be of good courage.* When men fight against God, they get united. What a very sad thing it is that God's children should ever fall out. There is one sin that I never heard charged upon the devils—the sin of disunity. Of all the evil things we have heard, I have never heard that among the principalities of the Pit there has ever been any division into sects and parties. Oh, sad that in this respect we should fall short of them! The enemies of God helped everyone, his neighbor, "and everyone said to his brother, Be of good courage."

7. *So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smoothes with the hammer, him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering. And he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved.* What a sarcastic description of god-making this is! There is the carpenter and then the goldsmith to spread the plates of gold over the wood. And then it is soldered and it has to be fastened with nails. The simple facts about the making of gods are sufficient to pour ridicule upon idolatry! God deliver us from idolatry of any shape or form, whether it comes from Rome or Canterbury! May we have no symbol—no visible object of worship,

whatever—but get rid of all that and before the great invisible Spirit let us bow, worshipping Him in spirit and in truth! For the least touch of the symbolic soon lends on to the idolatrous! And what at the first seemed harmless, soon comes to be so harmful that well does the Law say, “You shall not make unto you any graven image for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.” Oh, to keep clear of this great and heinous sin!

8, 9. *But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen. The seed of Abraham, My friend. You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called you from the chief men thereof, and said unto you, You are My servant: I have chosen you, and not cast you away.* The people of Israel were reserved by God that they might worship Him. While other nations went to their idols, the Israelites were to be His servants, chaste in heart towards Him. It is so with the Lord’s believing people. You are elected and selected, chosen and ordained, and set apart. You may fear the Lord and not give your hearts to any other. May God grant that we may be true to this, our sacred trust. Notice how very sweetly in this text the Lord alludes to His friendship to Abraham, “The seed of Abraham, *My friend.*” When the Lord makes a friend of a man, He means it, and He keeps up that friendship to His children and His children’s children! Happy are they who have a father who is a friend of God! Just as David did good to Mephibosheth for the sake of Jonathan, so, doubtless, many blessings come to the children for the sake of their parents. The Lord keeps mercy to the third and fourth generation, yes, and throughout all generations to them that keep His Covenant.

10. *Fear you not, for I am with you.* What cause for fear now? If I am with You, you need not fear all the men on earth, nor all the demons of the Pit! Fear you not, for I am with you.”

10. *Be not dismayed: for I am your God.* “Your God.” Lay the stress there if you will, or, “your God, therefore your All-Sufficient Helper—your Immutable, Faithful, everlasting Friend.”

10-12. *I will strengthen you: yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness. Behold all they that were incensed against you shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with you shall perish. You shall seek them and shall not find them, even them that contended with you. They that war against you shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nothing.* Go on, then, child of God! All your foes that resist your salvation shall disappear before your onward march. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Advance to meet your cares and God shall take your cares away. Only be you strong and of a good courage, and rest in the everlasting arm, and you shall be more than a conqueror!

13, 14. *For I, the Lord, your God, will hold your right hand, saying unto you, Fear not: I will help you. Fear not, you worm, Jacob.* Poor worm! How can it take care of itself? Even a bird can destroy it. “Fear not, you worm, Jacob.” You know what a worm does for its defense. It is all that it can

do—it hides itself in the earth. Hide yourself in your God! Get you into the rock and there be hidden till the danger is past. “Fear not, you worm, Jacob.”

14. *And you men of Israel: I will help you, says the Lord and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.* How many times the Lord puts it, “I will help you”! How again and again He says, “Fear not”! For despondency is deeply engraved in some spirits. There are some minds that seem to gravitate that way, again and again, and again—and even the Divine assurances have to be given repeatedly before they feel comfort! Have any of you been troubled because your children do not learn the first time you teach them? See how you are towards your heavenly Father! How many times He has to teach you, line upon line, precept upon precept—here a little and there a little—and if He has patience with our infirmities, we may very readily have patience with the infirmities of our little ones!

15. *Behold, I will make you a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth.* He will make poor feeble worms to be like that great corn-drag which they were accustomed to draw over the straw to bruise out the wheat.

15, 16. *You shall thresh the mountains and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff. You shall fan them and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them. And you shall rejoice in the LORD, and shall glory in the Holy One of Israel.* Truly, when mountains are beaten into chaff and blown away with the winnowing fan, there is room for rejoicing and magnifying God! If there were no difficulties, there would be no victories! If we had no trials, we should have no tests of Jehovah’s strength! But out of our afflictions we get our joys. The deeper our sorrows, the higher our exultations when God helps us through them.

17 *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I, the LORD, will hear them. I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.* What a blessed promise that is! God thinks of poor and needy men. When they are in their greatest extremity, with nothing to quench their thirst, and they are ready to die, then He is pleased to make the rocks run with rivers in order that they may be supplied.

18. *I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.*

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

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

GOOD CHEER FOR CHRISTMAS

NO. 846

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 20, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all
people a feast of fat things,
a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow,
of wines on the lees well-refined.”
Isaiah 25:6.*

WE have nearly arrived at the great merry-making season of the year. On Christmas Day we shall find all the world in England enjoying themselves with all the good cheer which they can afford. Servants of God, you who have the largest share in the Person of Him who was born at Bethlehem, I invite you to the best of all Christmas fare—to nobler food than makes the table groan—bread from Heaven, food for your spirit! Behold how rich and how abundant are the provisions which God has made for the high festival which He would have His servants keep, not now and then, but all the days of their lives!

God, in the verse before us, has been pleased to describe the provisions of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Although many other interpretations have been suggested for this verse, they are all stale and utterly unworthy of such expressions as those before us. When we behold the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose flesh is meat, indeed, and whose blood is drink, indeed—when we see Him offered up upon the chosen mountain—we then discover a fullness of meaning in these gracious words of sacred hospitality, “The Lord shall make a feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow.”

Our Lord Himself was very fond of describing His Gospel under the same image as that which is here employed. He spoke of the marriage supper of the king, who said, “My oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready.” And it did not seem as if He could even complete the beauty of the parable of the prodigal son without the killing of the fat calf and feasting and music and dancing! As a festival on earth is looked forward to and looked back upon as an oasis and a desert of time, so the Gospel of Jesus Christ is to the soul its sweet release from bondage and distress—its mirth and joy!

Upon this subject we intend to speak this morning, hoping to be helped by the great Master of the feast. Our first head will be the feast. The second will be the banqueting hall in this mountain. The third will be the Host—“The Lord shall make a feast.” And the fourth head shall be the guests—He shall make it “unto all people.”

I. First, then, we have to consider THE FEAST. It is described as consisting of viands of the best, no, of the best of the best! They are fat things, but they are also fat things full of marrow. Wines are provided of the most delicious and invigorating kind—wines on the lees, which retain their aroma, their strength, and their flavor—but these are most ancient and rare, having been so long kept that they have become well-refined. By long standing they have purified and clarified themselves—and brought themselves to the highest degree of brightness and excellence. The best of the best God has provided in the Gospel for the sons of men!

Let us attentively survey the blessings of the Gospel and observe that they are fat things, and fat things full of marrow. One of the first Gospel blessings is that of complete justification. A sinner, though guilty in himself, no sooner believes in Jesus than all his sins are pardoned! The righteousness of Christ becomes *his* righteousness, and he is accepted in the Beloved. Now, this is a delicious dish, indeed! Here is something for the soul to feed upon! To think that I, though a deeply guilty sinner, am absolved of God and set free from the bondage of the Law! To think that I, though once an heir of wrath, am now as accepted before God as Adam was when he walked in the Garden without a sin! No, *more* accepted, still, for the Divine righteousness of Christ belongs to me, and I stand complete in Him—beloved in the Beloved—and accepted in Him, too!

Beloved, this is such a precious Truth of God, that when the soul feeds on it, it experiences a quiet peace—a deep and heavenly calm to be found nowhere on earth! This is a kind of honey which never sours—to be assured by the Word of God and by the witness of the Holy Spirit within you—that you are reconciled and brought near by the blood and the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This is a choice mercy! This is a fat thing, indeed! But this is not all, it is a fat thing full of marrow! There is an inner lusciousness in it when you reach the heart and soul of the matter, transcendent in richness! Remember that this righteousness, this acceptance, this *justification* becomes ours in a perfectly legal way—one against which Satan, himself, cannot raise an objection—for our Substitute has paid our debt, therefore we are righteously discharged. Christ has fulfilled the Law, and made it honorable for us. Therefore are we justly accepted and Beloved.

Here is marrow, indeed, when we perceive the truth and reality of the Substitution of Jesus, and grasp with heart and soul the fact of our great Surety standing in our place at the bar of justice that we might stand in His place—in the place of honor and love! What bliss it is to cry with the Apostle, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” Come here, all you whose spiritual tastes are purified

by Divine Grace, and feed upon this choice provision which shall be sweet to your taste, sweeter, also, than honey and the honeycomb!

Meditate upon a second blessing of the Covenant of Grace, namely, that of *adoption*. It is plainly revealed to us that as many as have believed in Christ Jesus unto the salvation of their souls, they are the sons of God. “Beloved, now we are the sons of God.” Here, indeed, is a fat thing! What? Shall a worm of the dust become a child of God? A rebel be adopted into the heavenly family? A condemned criminal not only forgiven, but actually made a *child* of God? Wonder of wonders! “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God!” “To which of the kings and princes of this earth did He ever say, You are My Son”?

He has not spoken, thus, to the great ones and to the mighty, but God has chosen the base things of this world and things that are despised, yes, and things that are not, and made these to be of the seed royal! The wise and prudent are passed over, but babes receive the revelation of His love. Lord, why me? What am I and what is my father’s house that you should speak of making *me* Your child? This gloriously fat thing is also “full of marrow.” There is an inner richness in adoption, for, “if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.”

Well does the Apostle remind us that if children, then heirs, for we are thus assured of our blessed heritage. “All things are yours. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come, all are yours. And you are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?” Here are royal dainties of which the Word has said most truly, “They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Your house.”

Passing on from the blessing of adoption, let us remember that every child of God is the object of eternal love without beginning and without end. This is one of the fat things full of marrow. Is it so, that I, a believer in Jesus, unworthy as I am, am the object of the *eternal* love of God? What transport lies in that thought! Long before the Lord began to create the world He had thought of *me*! Long before Adam fell or Christ was born and the angels sung their first choral over Bethlehem’s miracle, the eyes and the heart of God were towards His elect people! He never *began* to love them—they were always “a people near unto Him.”

Is it not so written, “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn you”? Some kick at the doctrine of election, but they are ill advised since they labor to overturn one of the noblest dishes of the feast! They would dam up one of the coolest streams that flow from Lebanon! They would cover over with rubbish one of the richest veins of golden ore that make the people of God rich! This doctrine

of a love that has no commencement is the best wine of our Beloved, and “that goes down sweetly, causing the lips of them that are asleep to speak.” How joyously does the heart exult and leap for very joy when this Truth of God is brought home by the witness of the Spirit of God! Then the soul is satisfied with favor and full with the blessing of the Lord!

Equally delightful is the corresponding reflection that this love which had no beginning shall have no end. He is a God that changes not. “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” When He has once set His heart of love upon a man, He never turns away from doing him good. He says by the mouth of His servant the Prophet, that He hates putting away. Though we sin against Him often, and provoke Him to jealousy, yet, as the waters of Noah, so is His Covenant to us. For as the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so He swears that He will not be angry with us nor rebuke us.

“The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you.” “I am the Lord, I change not, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me.”

Why, Beloved, this, indeed, is a fat thing! And I may add that it is full of marrow when you remember that not merely has the Lord *thought* of you from everlasting, but *loved* you. Oh, the depth of that word, “love,” as it applies to the Infinite Jehovah, whose name, whose Essence, whose Nature is love! He has loved you with all the immutable intensity of His heart—never more and never less—loved you so much that He gave His only begotten Son for you! He has loved you so well that nothing could content Him but making you to be conformed into the image of His dear Son, and causing you to partake of His glory that you may be with Him where He is! Come, feed on this, you heirs of eternal life, for here are fat things full of marrow!

We should not, Beloved, have completed this list if we had omitted one precious doctrine which needs a refined taste, perhaps, but which, when a man has once learned to feed on it, seems to him to be best of all—I mean the great Truth of *union* to Christ. We are plainly taught in the Word of God that as many as have believed are *one with Christ*—they are married to Him—there is a conjugal union based upon mutual affection. The union is closer, still, for there is a vital union between Christ and His saints. They are in Him as the branches are in the vine. They are members of the body of which He is the Head. They are one with Jesus in such a true and real sense that with Him they died, with Him they have been buried, with

Him they are risen, with Him they are raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places.

There is an indissoluble union between Christ and all His people: "I in them and they in Me." Thus the union may be described—Christ is in His people the hope of Glory, and they are dead and their life is hid with Christ in God. This is a union of the most wonderful kind, which figures may faintly set forth, but which it were impossible for language completely to explain. Oneness to Jesus is one of the fat things full of marrow. For if it is so, indeed, that we are one with Christ—then because He lives we must live also! Because He was punished for sin, we also have borne the wrath of God in Him. Because He was justified by His Resurrection, we also are justified in Him. Because He is rewarded and forever sits down at His Father's right hand, we, also, have obtained the inheritance in Him—and by faith grasp it now, and enjoy its earnest.

Oh, can it be that this aching head already has a right to a celestial crown? That this palpitating heart has a claim to the rest which remains for the people of God? That these weary feet have a title to tread the sacred halls of the New Jerusalem? It is so, for if we are one with Christ, then all He has belongs to us, and it is but a matter of time and of gracious arrangement when we shall come into the full enjoyment! Truly, in meditation upon this topic, we may, each of us, exclaim, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips."

I cannot bring forth all the courses of my Lord's banquet. One serving man cannot bear before you the riches of such a surpassing feast! But I would remind you of one more, and that is the doctrine of Resurrection and Everlasting Life. This poor world dimly guessed at the immortality of the soul, but it knew nothing of the resurrection of the body—the Gospel of Jesus has brought life and immortality to light and Jesus Himself has declared to us that he that believes in Him shall never die. "He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet should he live."

Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life! Not the soul only, but the *body* also shall partake of immortality, for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed! We expect to die, but we are assured of living again. If the Lord comes not, we know that our bodies shall see corruption. But here is our comfort—we dread no annihilation—that dark shadow never crosses our spirits! We dread no Hell, no "purgatory," no judgment—Christ has perfected forever them that are set apart—none can condemn whom He absolves. The saints shall judge the angels, and sit with their Lord in the day of the great assize!

To us the coming of Christ will be a day of joy and of rejoicing—we shall be caught up together with Him. His reign shall be our reign, His glory our glory! Comfort one another with these words, and as you see your Brothers and Sisters departing one by one from among you, sorrow not as those

that are without hope, but say unto each other, “They are not lost, but they have gone before us,” for, “blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.” Here are fat things full of marrow, for ours is a glorious hope and full of immortality!

Our expected immortality is not that of mere existence, it is not the barren privilege of life without bliss, existence without happiness—it is full of glory! “We shall be like He when we shall see Him as He is.” We shall be with *God*, at whose right hand there is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore! He shall make us to drink of the river of His pleasures! Songs and everlasting joy shall be upon our heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away!—

***“Oh, for the no more weeping,
Within that land of love!
The endless joy of keeping
The bridal feast above!
Oh, for the hour of seeing
My Savior face to face!
The hope of ever being
In that sweet meeting place.”***

Thus I have set before you a few of the fat things full of marrow which the King of kings has set before His guests at the wedding feast of His love.

Changing the run of the thought, and yet really keeping to the same subject, let me now bring before you the goblets of wine. “Wines on the lees—wines on the lees well-refined.” These we shall consider as symbolizing the joys of the Gospel. What are these? I can only speak of those which I have, myself, been permitted to sip. One of the dearest joys of the Christian life is a sense of perfect peace with God. Oh, I tell you when one is quiet for awhile, and the din and noise of business is out of one’s ears, it is one of the most delicious things in all the world to meditate upon God and to feel He is no enemy to me, and I am no enemy to Him!

It is beyond comparison, to feel I love Him! If there is anything that I can do to serve Him, I will do it. If there is any suffering which would honor Him, if He would give me the strength to endure it, it should be my happiness though it caused me to die a martyr’s death a thousand times. If I could but honor my God, my Father, and my Friend, all should be acceptable to me! There is nothing between the Lord and me by way of difference or alienation. I am brought near through the blood of His dear and only begotten Son. He is my God, my Father, and my All. And I am His child!

Some of us have tried the imaginary happiness of laughter—we have mixed with the giddy throng and tasted the wines of the house of carnal merriment—but our honest experience is that one single draught from the cup of *salvation* is worth rivers of worldly mirth—

***“Solid joys and lasting pleasures
Only Zion’s children know.”***

A quiet heart, resting in the love of God, dwelling in perfect peace, has a royalty about it which cannot, for a moment, be matched by the fleeting joys of this world! Our joy sometimes flashes with a brighter light, but even then it is not less pure and safe. You may look upon this wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it moves itself aright, for there is no woe, no redness of the eyes reserved for those who drink even to inebriation of this sacred wine! This sacred exhilaration is caused by a sense of *security*.

A child of God, when he has looked well to his Redeemer and seen the merit of the precious blood, and the power of the never-ceasing plea, feels himself safe, perfectly safe. I do not understand the child of God reading his Bible and yet being afraid of being cast into Hell. I can understand that the fear may cross his mind lest, after all, he should prove a castaway—but as he approaches, once again to the foot of the Cross and looks up to Jesus, he feels that it cannot be. None were ever cast away who stood at the foot of the Cross! It is written, “Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out.” A child of God, with no hope but what he finds in Christ, has no cause to think his eternal state to be insecure! All are safe who are in Christ, even as all were safe who were in Noah’s ark. No flood, no storm could hurt the man of whom it was said, “The Lord shut him in.”

The Lord has shut in all His people in Christ, and they are eternally safe in Christ! When the spirit knows that, “there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” then is it replenished with delight. When one feels that live or die, work or suffer, all is well, how free from care is the heart! How Divinely joyful to know that if one should lose all his earthly substance, the Lord will provide! That if one should be tempted, tempted greatly, yet with the temptation the way of escape shall be made! Here is assurance rich with consolation! When one feels that all is safe, all safe *eternally*, for life or death all secured, I tell you that this is wine on the lees—wine on the lees well-refined—and he who wins a draught need not envy the angels their celestial banquets!

This joy of ours will sometimes rise to an elevation yet more sublime when it is caused by communion with God. Believers, while engaged in prayer and praise, in service and in suffering, are enabled by the Holy Spirit to hold high converse with their Lord. Do not imagine that Abraham’s speech with God was an unusual privilege. The father of the faithful did but enjoy what all the faithful ones participate in according to the Divine Grace given them. We tell God our griefs—discoursing upon our sorrows not in fiction, but declaring them in real conversation as when a man speaks with his neighbor—meanwhile the Lord’s Spirit whispers to us with the still small voice of the promise such words as calm our minds and guide our feet.

Yes, and when our Beloved takes us into the banqueting house of real conscious fellowship with Himself and waves the love-banner over us, our

holy joy is as much superior to all merely human mirth as the heavens are above the earth! Then do we speak and sing with sacred zest, and feel as if we could weep for very joy of heart, for our Beloved is ours and we are His! His left hand is under our head and His right hand does embrace us, and our only fear is lest anything should grieve our Beloved and cause Him to withdraw Himself from us—for it is Heaven on earth, and the fair foretaste of Heaven above to see His face, to taste His love. Communion with Christ is as the wine on the lees well-refined.

We will place on the table one more goblet of which you may drink as much as you will. We have provided for us the pleasures of hope, a hope most sure and steadfast, most bright and glorious—the hope that what we know today shall be outdone by what we shall know tomorrow—the hope that by-and-by what we now see, as in a glass darkly, shall be seen face to face. We shall say, in Heaven, as the Queen of Sheba did in Jerusalem, “The half has not been told us.” We are looking forward to a speedy day when we shall be unburdened of this creaking tabernacle—and being absent from the body shall be present with the Lord!

Our hope of future bliss is elevated and confident. Oh, the vision of His face! Oh, the sight of Jesus in His exaltation! Oh, the kiss of His lips—the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant,” from that dear mouth and then forever to lie in His bosom! Begone, you cares! Begone, you sorrows! If Heaven is so near, you shall not molest us. The inn may be a rough and poverty-stricken one, but we are only *travelers*, not tenants upon lease. This is not our place of resting! We are on our journey Home! Beloved, in the prospect of the quiet resting places in the land which flows with milk and honey, you have wines on the lees well-refined!

If we were not limited to time this morning, as, alas, we are, I should have reminded you that these joys of the Believer are ancient in their origin, for that is shown in the text. Old wines are intended by “wines well-refined.” They have stood long on the lees, have drawn out all the virtue from them and have been cleared of all the coarser material. In the East, wine will be improved by keeping even more than the wines of the West! And even so the mercies of God are the sweeter to our meditations because of their antiquity. From old eternity—before ever the earth was—the Covenant engagements of everlasting love have been resting like wines on the lees, and today they bring to us the utmost riches of all the attributes of God!

I should also have reminded you of the fatness of their *excellence*, because the wine on the lees holds its flavor and retains its aroma. And there is a fullness and richness about the blessings of Divine Grace which endears them to our hearts. The joys of Grace are not fantastical emotions, or transient flashes of a meteoric excitement—they are based on substantial Truths of God—they are reasonable, fit, and proper. They belong not to the superficial and frothy emotions of mere feeling, but are

deep, solemn, earnest motions justified by the clearest judgment. Our bliss is not of the foam and the surge—it dwells in the innermost caverns of our heart.

I would also remind you of their refined nature. No sin is mingled with the joys of the Gospel and the delights of communion—they are well-refined. Gospel joys are elevating—they make men like angels! As *in* the Gospel, God comes down to men, so *by* the Gospel men go up to God! I might also have shown you how absolutely peerless are the provisions of Divine Grace. There is no feast like that of the Gospel, no meat like the flesh of Jesus, no drink like His blood, no joys like that which crowns the Gospel feast!

II. I can say no more. The table is before you and now we must pass on with great brevity to notice THE BANQUETING HALL. “In this mountain.” There is a reference here to three things—the same symbol bearing three interpretations. First, *literally*, the mountain upon which Jerusalem is built. I do not doubt that the reference is here to the hill of the Lord upon which Jerusalem stood. The great transaction which was fulfilled at Jerusalem upon Calvary has made to all nations a great feast. It was there where that center Cross bore upon it One who joined earth and Heaven in mysterious union. It was there where amidst thick darkness the Son of God was made a curse for men. It was there where sorrow culminated and joy was consummated.

On that very mountain where Jews and Gentiles met together, and with clamorous wrath cried, “Let Him be crucified,” it was there in the giving up of the Only-Begotten, whose flesh is meat, indeed, and whose blood is drink, indeed, that the Lord made a feast of things. Everything I have spoken of this morning is found in Christ! *He* is the Resurrection and the Life—in Him we are justified, adopted, and made secure. Every drop of joy we drink streams from His flowing veins.

A second meaning is the Church. Frequently Jerusalem is used as the symbol of the Church of God, and it is within the pale of the Church that the great feast of the Lord is made unto all nations. I am, in the truest sense, a very sound churchman. I am, indeed, a *high* churchman—a most determined stickler for the Church. I do not believe in salvation outside of the pale of the Church. I believe that the salvation of God is confined to the Church, and to the Church alone. “But,” says one, “what Church?”

Yes! That’s the question! God forbid I should mean by that either the Baptist Church, or the Independent Church, or the Episcopalian Church, or the Presbyterian, or any other—I mean the *Church of Jesus Christ*—the company of God’s chosen, the fellowship of the blood-bought, the family of Believers! Be they where they may, for *them* is provided the feast of fat things! Whatever outward and visible Church they may have associated themselves with, they shall drink of the wines on the lees well-refined. But the feast is only to be found where they are found who put their trust in

Jesus. There is but one Church in Heaven and earth—composed of men called by the Holy Spirit, and made to live anew by His quickening power—and it is through the ministry of *this* Church that an abundant feast is spread for all nations—a feast to which the nations are summoned by chosen herald, whom God calls to proclaim the good news of salvation by Jesus Christ!

But, Brothers and Sisters, the mountain sometimes means the Church of God exalted to its latter-day glory. This mountain is to be exalted above the hills and all nations shall flow unto it. This text will have its grandest fulfillment in the day of the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Then shall the glory of the Gospel be unveiled more clearly than at this present time. Men shall have a fuller perception of the glory of the Lord, and a deeper enjoyment of His Grace while happiness and peace shall reign with unmolested quiet. Soon shall come the golden age, which has been so long foretold, for which we cry with unceasing expectation! The Lord send it speedily, and His be the praise!

III. Thirdly, let us think of THE HOST of the feast. “In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things.” Mark well the Truth of God that in the Gospel banquet there is not a single dish brought by *man*. The Lord makes it, and He makes it *all*. I know some would like to bring a little with them to the banquet—something, at least, by way of trimming and adornment—so that they might have a share of the honor. But it must not be! The Lord of hosts makes the feast and He will not even permit the guests to bring their own wedding garments—they must stop at the door and put on the robe which the Lord has provided, for salvation is all Divine Grace from first to last, and all of Him who is wondrous in working, and who does all things according to the counsels of His will.

Out of all the precious Truths of God which I spoke of at the beginning of this sermon, there is not one which comes from any source but a Divine one! And of all the joys which I tried feebly to picture there is not one which takes its rise from earth’s springs—they all flow from the Eternal Fount. The Lord makes the feast, and, observe, He does it, too, as Lord of hosts, as a Sovereign, as a Ruler doing as He wills among the sons of men—preparing what He wills for the good of His creatures—and constraining whom He wills to come to the marriage feast. The Lord provides sovereignly as Lord of hosts, and all-sufficiently as Jehovah.

It needed the all-sufficiency of God to provide a feast for hungry sinners. No other than the infinite “I AM” could provide a feast substantial enough to supply the needs of immortal spirits—but HE has done it, and you may guess of the value of the viands by the nature of our Entertainer. If God spread the feast it is not to be despised. If the Lord has put forth all the Omnipotence of His eternal power and Godhead in preparing the banquet for the multitude of the sons of men, then depend upon it, it is a

banquet worthy of Him! It is one to which we may come with confidence, for it must be such a banquet as our souls require, and such as the world never saw before.

O my Soul, rejoice in your God and King! If He provides the feast, let Him have all the glory of it. "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory." O King immortal, eternal, invisible, you fed Your children in the wilderness with manna which dropped from Heaven, and with water that flowed out of the flinty rock, and they gave thanks unto Your name! But now You fill us with *nobler* food. They did eat manna and are dead—but we live on the *immortal* Bread, even Jesus, and therefore we can never die! They drank of the water which flowed from the rock, and yet they thirsted again. But we shall never thirst, but forever abide near to Yourself, while the Lamb that is in the midst of the Throne shall feed us, and lead us unto living fountains of water! Therefore, blessed be Your name, yes, a thousand times blessed be Your name, O Most High! Let all Heaven say, "Amen," to the praises of our hearts, and let the multitude of Your children here on earth, for whom this feast is spread, laud and magnify and bless Your name from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same.

IV. Lastly, a word or two upon THE GUESTS. The Lord has made this banquet, "for all people." What a precious word this is! "For all people." Then this includes not merely the chosen people, the Jews, whose were the oracles, but it encompasses the poor uncircumcised Gentiles who, by Jesus, are brought near! The barbarian is invited to this feast! The Scythian is not rejected. The polished Greek finds an open door! The hardy Roman shall meet with an equal welcome! Caesar's household, if they come, shall receive a portion, and so shall the beggar's kin!

Blessed be God for that word, "unto all people," for it permits missionary enterprise in every land! However degraded a race may be, we have here provision made for it. This feast of fat things is made as much for the Sudra as for the Brahmin! The Gospel is as much to be preached to the degraded Bushman as to the civilized Chinese. Dwell on that word, "all people," and you will see it includes the rich—for there is a feast of fat things for them such as their gold could never buy! And it includes the *poor*, for they, being rich in faith, shall have fellowship with God! "All people." This takes in the man of enlarged intelligence and extensive knowledge—but it equally encompasses the illiterate man who cannot read.

The Lord makes this feast "for all people." For you old people. If you come to Jesus you shall find that He is suitable for you. For you young men and maidens, and you little children—if you put your trust in God's appointed Savior there shall be much joy and happiness for you. "For all people"! I think, if I were now seeking and had not laid hold on Christ, this word, "all people," would be a great comfort to me because it gives hope to all who desire to come! None have ever been rejected of all who

have ever come to Christ and asked for mercy. It is still true, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

Some very odd people have come to Him. Some very wicked people, some very hardened people. And the door was never closed in anyone’s face. Why should Jesus begin hard dealings with *you*? He cannot, because He cannot change! If He says, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out,” be one of the “hims” that come, and He cannot cast you out! There is another thought, namely, that between the covers of the Bible there is no mention made of one person who may *not* come. There is no description given of a person who is forbidden to trust Christ. I should like you to look the Bible through, you who dream that Jesus will reject you, and find where it is said, “Such a one I will reject. Such a one I will refuse.”

When you find such a rejecting clause, then you will have a right to be unbelieving—but till you do, I beseech you do not needlessly torment yourself! Why needlessly sow doubts and fears? There will be enough of them without your making them for yourself. Do not limit what the Lord does not limit. I know He has an elect people. I rejoice in it—I hope you will rejoice in it, too, one day! And I know that His people have this marrow and fatness provided for them and for them, alone—but still, this does not at all conflict with the other precious Truth of God that whoever believes in the Son of God has everlasting life!

If you believe in Jesus Christ, all these things are yours! Come, poor Trembler, the silver trumpet sounds, and this is the note it rings, “Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come and welcome!” The harsher trumpet of the Law, which waxed exceedingly loud and long at Sinai had *this* for its note, “Set bounds about the mount—let none touch it lest they die.” But the trumpet for Calvary sounds with the opposite note! It is, “Come and welcome! Come and welcome, Sinner, come! Come as you are! Come as sinful as you are, hardened as you are, careless as you think you are—and having no good thing whatever, come to your God in Christ!”

O may you come to Him who gave His Son to bleed in the sinner’s place—and casting yourself on what Christ has done, may you resolve, “If I perish, I will trust in Him. If I am cast away, I will rely on Him.” You shall not perish, but for you there shall be the feast of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well-refined! The Lord bless you very richly, for His name’s sake. Amen.

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GOOD ADVICE FOR TROUBLOUS TIMES NO. 2387

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
NOVEMBER 18, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 9, 1888.**

***“Come, My people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you: hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past.”
Isaiah 26:20.***

THE Lord has a very peculiar care for His own people. He is their Shepherd and He feeds them like a flock. He is their Father and He guards them as His own dear children. Whenever times of great trouble come, He thinks especially of them. He drowned the antediluvian world, but not till Noah was safely in the ark. He burned Sodom and Gomorrah, but not till Lot had escaped to the little city called Zoar. In all His judgments He remembers His mercy towards His believing people—He does not suffer them to be destroyed even in the day of the destruction of the ungodly. Child of God, your Father's eyes are lovingly fixed upon you. His heart cares for you every moment. Unhappy are the men and women of whom we cannot say this! Unhappy are you who have never trusted and never loved your God, your Maker, and your best Friend! But thrice happy is the poorest and most tried among us who knows that the Lord is his refuge, his castle and high tower, his Defender and Provider, his God and his All!

Whenever there is any evil to come upon the land, God knows all about it, for He knows everything. He foresees all that is going to happen. He sometimes gives foresight to men, as in the case of His Prophets and, I do not doubt that even now, believing men, when they live very near to God, see farther into the future than others can. There were several occasions, in the life of John Linox, when he expressly foretold the deaths of certain men, and similar power has been given to other eminent saints who have walked on the hilltop with God. They have looked much farther than the dwellers in the plain, who forget God, have ever seen! But, whether we can see into the future, or not, is of little consequence, for the Lord can see! If the father of the family knows what is to occur, his children will not be without due warning and, therefore, God, when He foresees that His judgments will be abroad in the earth, takes care to forewarn His children. and when any great calamity is coming, He provides a shelter for them in the time of storm. Let us thank God for this.

O you who have no God to go to, the future must often look very dark to some of you, especially that blackest spot of all, where rolls the chilly stream of the river of death! When you come *there*, you will have to take a plunge in the dark! But the heir of Heaven knows that whatever lies before him, all is ordained and fixed, arranged and settled, by the Infinite Wisdom and Love of God, and he can trust himself without fear to the Lord's preserving mercy! Without wishing to pry into the future, he leaves himself entirely in the hands of God.

I began by saying that Believers are the objects of God's special care and, next, that God has a foresight which He exercises on their behalf. Now, further, the advice which our careful and foreseeing God gives us is sure to be wise. We should, all of us, be wise if we could do before an event what we would wish to do after it. Unfortunately, we are often wise when it is too late. I do not know a better definition of a fool than that he is a man who is wise too late. But God will make us wise in time if we are willing to take His advice. If we will do what He bids us, we shall do the right thing. Listen, then, to the advice that God here gives us when times of trouble come—and they will come—and before times of trouble come, when we foresee them. The proper and wise course for us is plainly marked out in our text—"Come, My people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you: hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past."

I. My first observation upon these words shall be that BEFORE OR IN TIMES OF TROUBLE, IT IS WELL TO DRAW NEAR TO GOD.

Is not that a sweet call from God, "Come, My people. Come, My people"? As the hen gives her peculiar "cluck" when the hawk is in the air, to bid her chicks come and hide under her wings, so does God, here, give a gentle loving note of alarm and a gracious call of invitation, as He says, "Come, My people." "No, do not go, My people, scattered here and there by the approach of danger, but, come, My people. Be not driven from Me by affliction, but be driven to Me by adversity. Come, My people." How sweet the words sound to me! If I had the voice of an angel, I should hardly be able to bring out all their sweetness—"Come, My people. Come, My people. The clouds are in the sky; the first flash of lightning has seemed to split the ebon darkness of Nature. Come, My people, hasten home, be quick about it, come, My people. No, linger not. Halt not through fear, be not paralyzed with apprehension! Come, My people; come to Me, come to your God, come to your Father, come to your Friend."

For what purpose should we come to the Lord? I think that in times of trouble, or when we are apprehending trial, we should come to spread our case before God. You fear that you are going to be very ill, or that your dear wife is likely to die. You are afraid that your property will be taken from you, or that something else that is dreadful will happen. Then come, and—

"Tell it all to Jesus, comfort or complaint."

Remember how Hezekiah acted when he received that abominable letter from Rabshakeh? He took it and spread it before the Lord. Now, do the same with any trouble of yours, present or impending, come and tell it all to Jesus! You were just going across the road to consult a neighbor, were you? I do not forbid you to do that, by-and-by, but *first* listen to this electric bell—"Come, My people! Come, My people!" It calls you to your God, first! Go and tell Him all about it. He will patiently hear your story, He will listen without weariness and He will efficiently help you! Therefore spread the case before Him.

The next thing you should do in coming to God is to consider His mind about such a case. Have you ever done that? When we consult a counsel, it is because we need to have his judgment upon some difficult point of law. We expect that he has had to decide something like it before. He knows the precedents that bear upon the case and we, therefore, ask his judgment. I love to see a man turning to his Bible, when a trouble is coming, to see what God has to say about such a case as his. If I am going to be bereaved, or if I am already bereaved, I wish to know how Jesus comforted those who lost their loved ones. If I am ill, I ask, "What do the Scriptures say to the sick?" If I am going down in the world, I want to learn what is God's direction to the man who is falling into poverty. Let me come and hear what God has to say about the matter! I believe that if we acted in that fashion, we should be much more calm than we are under surprising sadnesses, for we should say to ourselves, "My main question is not, 'How can I get out of this trouble?' But, 'How should I behave myself in it? What ought a man of God to do under the trying circumstances which have now come upon me?'" Does not God bid you, first of all, to consider what will be for His Glory, and afterwards to consult your own comfort? "Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness," and so the lesson of your trouble shall be shown to you. "Come, My people, then, tell me your anxiety, and ask what My will is about it."

"Come, My people," means, next, come to your God, in times of trouble, to make sure of the greatest matters. You are going to lose your little money, are you? Well, well, that is bad enough, but you have some jewels which you are not going to lose. You remember Little-Faith being robbed down Dead-Man's Lane? Bunyan says that when the three sturdy rogues, Faint-Heart, Mistrust, and Guilt, fell upon him, they robbed him of most of his spending money, but he had certain jewels that they never found and of which, therefore, they could not rob him. So, the world may come and take away many of our external and temporary comforts, but we have a treasure that *it* never gave us and *cannot* take away from us!

No, my Brother, you did not gain that treasure by keeping shop, and you will not lose it by keeping shop. If you have true religion, you did not buy it and you shall never sell it! It is yours forever, an inheritance that never can be alienated from you! Now that you have lost so much and suffered so much, I want you to come to God and just think of what you still have—God as your Father, Jesus as your Brother, the Holy Spirit as your Comforter—you still have all the resources of Providence, all the

riches of the promises, all the superabundance of the Covenant of Grace! Well then, you have not lost much, after all, have you?

I think I have told you before of a friend of mine who went to the Bank of England and came away to his business with a couple of hundred pounds in his pocket. As he passed down the Borough, he was robbed. His wife looked very white when he said that he had been robbed. "Yes," he said, "my Dear, I have been robbed of my pocket-handkerchief." Then the good man smiled—what did he care about his pocket-handkerchief so long as the hundreds of pounds were safe? So, if you only have to say, "My Lord, I have lost this little, and that little," so long as your *soul* is safe, your eternal welfare is safe, your Heaven is safe, why, surely, you will thus be helped to bear without murmuring those ills which are common to men!

Once more, "Come, My people," means that having made sure of the great things, you may leave all the little things with God. I was thinking, the other day, suppose any one of us had power over the weather, to make it rain or make it shine, just as we pleased, and I thought I should not like to be that individual because I should have people at me from morning to night, tearing me to pieces, one wanting rain, and another wanting sunshine! I would rather not have any such power! But if God gave me the control over winds and waves, and clouds and rain, if I had it tonight, the first thing I would do when I reached home would be to go upstairs and say, "Lord, You have given me power over the wind and the rain, but I know that I shall make all manner of mistakes with it. I have not the wit to manage these matters. O Lord, graciously tell me what to do." If you do like that, is it not much the same thing as if you had not any power and left it to God altogether? You may have just as much rest as that and even more, for, to be without the power is to be without the responsibility! So, Beloved, when you go to God in times of trouble, say, "Do what You will, Lord. I desire to leave the care and burden of all this trial to You. I am too foolish and too weak to deal with it, therefore, undertake for me and henceforth, having left it entirely in Your hands, I will be quiet, even as a weaned child, and say, 'Whatever happens, it is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him.'"

I will just ring that little silver bell and then leave this point. "Come, My people. Come, My people. Come and tell Me your trouble. Come and study My mind about your trouble. Come and make sure of the greatest matters. Come and leave your little matters with Me. Come My people, draw near to Me in times of trouble."

This is the first division of my subject.

II. The second is that IT IS WISE TO ENTER INTO THE CHAMBERS OF SECURITY WHICH GOD HAS PROVIDED FOR US. "Come, My people, enter your chambers." My business, in this second part of my discourse, is to bring a candle and to show you the way along the passages leading to the rooms provided for you—"Enter your chambers." It is a time of trouble with you—"Enter your chambers." "What chambers?" you ask. I

am going to show you. Here is the candle to light your way, take it and follow me—"Come into your chambers."

One of the rooms into which a man should enter in times of trouble is *the storeroom of Divine Power*. God is able to bear you through every trial. God is able to bring good out of all evil. God is able to comfort you. God is able either to prevent the trouble, or to make you strong enough to bear it! Nothing can happen to you which will be beyond the power of God and, according to His mighty power, He will certainly deliver you. He will show Himself strong on your behalf, if you do but trust Him, and you shall be able to sing, "The Lord is my Shepherd and my Shield." "Come, My people," get into this chamber, this well-guarded room of the Lord. Of what are you afraid? Afraid of the devil? God is stronger than Satan! Afraid of death? God is stronger than death! Afraid of poverty? Christ is stronger than poverty! Afraid of sickness? The power of God will sustain you while suffering from the most terrible disease that can possibly come to your mortal frame! "Come, My people." Hide away in this chamber of the Divine Omnipotence. You will never be afraid, surely, after that invitation, for the almighty God shall be your defense!

May I take you into another chamber, which will, perhaps, suit you better? That shall be *the council chamber of Divine Wisdom*. So you are in trouble, now, and you are a great deal perplexed—but God is not perplexed or troubled. He sees the end from the beginning! He has all means at His disposal—there are no entanglements and knots to Him, He has the clue to every labyrinth—and He can guide you into the center of joy. Be not afraid, though you are, yourself, utterly undone, though you see no way of escape—the Lord can see where you cannot! There are no such things as darkness and night to the eyes of Him who perceives all things. Oh, I delight to know that God is infinitely wise! I, a poor fool, have done this and that, and nothing comes of it, so it seems. I have tried to do right, but apparently without success. What then? There is a higher wisdom than any man's, and that Divine Wisdom is at work on behalf of the heirs of Heaven! "Come, My people," enter into this bright room and take a delightful rest in this council chamber of Divine Wisdom.

Let me show you into another chamber. Possibly some of you will feel more at home there, for it is *the drawing-room of Divine Love*. This is the state chamber of the palace—"Come, My people," and enter into it. Think of this wondrous Truth of God, that God loves you. Whether He strikes you or strokes you, the Lord loves you! Whether He chastens you or caresses you, He loves you! He loved you from before the foundation of the world and He will love you when the world's foundations shall be overthrown! He loves you without beginning, without measure, without change, without end! He has betrothed you to Himself in bonds of everlasting love. Come into this chamber with its golden hangings! Come to this couch that is softer than down and rest here! Let earth be all in arms abroad, there is perfect peace for the man who enters into this chamber of Divine Love!

But if these three chambers are not enough for your protection and comfort, may I take you to *the room of Divine Faithfulness*? This is a wonderful chamber! God is true. God is faithful. God keeps His promises. My dear Friends, do you study the promises recorded in the Bible? If you do not, I am sorry for you. The promises of God should be the constant subject of study by the child of God, because, when you get a hold of a promise from God, it is as good as the thing itself! God's promise to pay is always at par with those who trust Him—they need no discount on a Divine Promise—it is as good as the thing, itself, to their believing hearts! Oh, what an innumerable company of promises there is in this blessed Book! We need never be downhearted if we would but study this wonderful Book of God which has a promise to meet every trial and sorrow! And all the promises of God in Christ Jesus “are yes and Amen, unto the Glory of God by us.” You are going into trouble—did you say that you are suffering from cancer? Oh, come into this chamber of the faithful promises! You have need to come. Did you say that your trouble is a bankruptcy caused entirely through misfortune? Come, then, into this chamber! Look at the motto hanging on the walls, “Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.” Believe it! You shall have bread and water as long as there is any beneath the cope of Heaven! God will never fail you, therefore trust Him! Be not dismayed. “Come, My people, enter your chambers.”

There is one chamber into which I am very fond of entering, that is, the *strong room of Divine Immutability*. This is the one into which God took His servant Moses before He sent him down to Egypt. Moses asked the Lord what His name was, and He answered, “I AM THAT I AM.” The children of Israel were not able to comprehend that glorious name of Jehovah, so the Lord gave them a shorter one, instead, “I AM.” But to the full-grown child of God, this is the name in which he delights, “I AM THAT I AM,” the same Immutable Jehovah, never altering, with “no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Oh, how my soul delights in the Lord's Immutability! We change like the weather glass. We never are at “Set Fair,” or, if ever we do get to “Set Fair,” it is sure to rain, as I notice that it generally does when the weather glass is at that point. But, dear Friends, God is always the same! We wax and wane, like the moon. God is the sun, without parallax or tropic! Blessed is the Immutability of God! What a chamber to get into! When I enter it, I feel like a man in the strong room of the Bank of England. I hear a voice saying, “I am the Lord, I change not, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.”

There is only one more room which I will mention at this time, though I could have described many more, and that is, the *best chamber of Divine Salvation*. Look at the scarlet curtains dyed in the precious blood of Jesus! What a chamber this is for a man to dwell in, where his pardon was bought for him by the death of his Lord, where the new life is given to him by the life of his Lord, and where a throne and crown in Heaven are promised to him through the victories of his Lord! “Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.” What a restful chamber does this salva-

tion make! “Come, My people. Come, My people. Come, My people. Enter into your chambers.”

I have rung the silver bell. I have given you your candles. Now go and enter into your chambers and rest in Divine Power, Wisdom, Love, Faithfulness, Immutability and Salvation!

III. But now comes one thing more. God gives us, in the third place, further good advice. WHEN WE ENTER THOSE CHAMBERS, IT IS NECESSARY TO SHUT THE DOOR. Listen—“Enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you.” If you go into a room and leave the door open, you have not hidden yourself, much, and you have not gained any protection by entering the chamber. I earnestly invite the people of God to enter the chambers I have pointed out—but I would also persuade them to shut the doors of those rooms. What for?

First, to shut out all doubt. You have entered the chamber of Divine Power. Now, do not doubt your God. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” Shut the door. Shut the door! You have come into the chamber of Divine Wisdom. Do not doubt your God. Do not say, “This is a mistake. Surely I have been led in the wrong way. Providence has erred.” Shut that door. Shut that door! We cannot let any drafts come in to blow upon our trust in the Infinite Wisdom of God! And if you have entered into the chamber of Divine Love, how blessed it is to feel, “He has loved me from before the foundation of the world.” Does there come in an, “if”? Shut that door! There is no rest or comfort till we shut out all doubt! We must know for certain that the Lord loved us or we cannot have any enjoyment in His love.

And suppose that it is the chamber of Divine Faithfulness into which we have entered? We must have no doubt about that—we must not say to ourselves, “God may forget His promise. Perhaps He will break His Word.” Oh, shut that door, and lock it, and bolt and bar it! Say, “That door can never be opened any more! We cannot have any doubt about God’s faithfulness—He cannot lie! Is He the Lord and shall His love grow feeble to His saints? Is He God and shall He turn aside from His Word and break His Covenant and oath?” Shut that door! Let not *anything* come in that way to disturb our peace! And as to the Divine Immutability, we cannot allow the door to be open to let even the *supposition* of change come in! “Oh, God loved me,” says one, “twenty years ago!” And do you think that He does not love you *now*? “Oh, but He helped me so graciously then!” Will He not help you *now*? What? Has He changed? You are blaspheming God by the very *thought* of such a thing!—

**“Whom once He loves, He never leaves,
But loves them to the end.”**

Do you believe this? Whenever there comes a doubt that He has cast you away, shut that door and drive a nail through it, that it may never be opened again, for the Lord cannot change! If He is God, He must forever be the same! “Come, My people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you.”

I think that we must first shut the doors to shut out all doubts.

But we must also shut the doors to shut ourselves in, to shut ourselves in with God. Now, my Lord, a great storm is coming, but I am shut in with You. I trust Your power; I trust Your wisdom; I trust Your love; I trust Your faithfulness; I trust Your immutability; I trust Your salvation. I trust nothing else, but I repose wholly in You. You must often have noticed what our Savior did in the storm on the Sea of Galilee. He knew that a great tempest was coming on and He looked about Him—for what? For a pillow! What? For a pillow? Why, if you and I had been there, we would have looked round for a hencoop or a spar! But Jesus looked round for a pillow—not for a life-belt, but for a pillow—and when He found the pillow, what did He do? He went to the stern of the ship, stretched Himself out, and went to sleep! Why did He so act? Because He felt that He was perfectly safe in His Father’s hands!

And there were His poor disciples wide awake, fretting and worrying! Did they stop the wind by fuming? Did they calm the waves by complaining? No, no. They tramped up and down the little vessel, but the sea did not take any notice of them. At last they went to wake their Master. He was so soundly sleeping that they could not get Him awake as soon as they wished, so they cried, “Master, cares You not that we perish?” O faithless disciples, your Master was doing the grandest thing that He could do! He was leaving the vessel in the hands of God and He, Himself, going to sleep! Brothers and Sisters, sometimes, when you get into a great deal of trouble, may I be allowed to be your solicitor and give you a piece of advice? Go to bed and go to sleep! “Oh, but I need to be doing *something!*” Yes, I know you do. And you will make a mess of it! Go to bed. Look for a pillow and go to sleep. Nine times out of ten, when we worry and fret, we undo what we try to do! To sit still would be a far wiser thing. Come, my people, hurry not into the market! Worry not in the shop! “Come, My people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you.” Rest in God and wait patiently for Him, for He can do all things, and winds and waves shall be quiet at His bidding!

I wish that I could talk like this to you all, but I must not. Some of you have no chambers to go to—you who are out of Christ have no place to rest. Oh, that you had! God grant that you may have before tomorrow’s sun has risen! May you believe in Jesus this very night! Then you shall have God for your Friend forever and ever, and all these chambers that I have mentioned shall be at your disposal.

IV. I finish up with this last remark, borrowed from the text. IT IS DELIGHTFUL TO THINK THAT THE TROUBLE WILL NOT LAST LONG. Let me read the text again. “Come, My people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you: hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past.”

Is not that a wonderful expression—“a little moment”? A moment is but the tick of the clock, but here it is, “a little moment”—a *little* moment. Ah, me, we do not think so when the trouble comes! Perhaps it is some disease. Possibly it is incipient consumption. You have been coughing a great deal. Ah, my dear Friend, come and tell your God about it! It will

only last a little moment and then you will be where you shall cough no more—but you shall sing God’s praises, world without end! “But it is the commencement of a cancer.” I know, and that is an awful thing. But, my dear Sister, go to God, get into these blessed chambers of Divine Power, Wisdom, Love and so on, and you will hear Him say, “It is only for a little moment.” “Ah,” says one, “but I am hopelessly poor, and have been so for a long time, and I expect that I shall be so till I die.” Well, if so, it will be but for a little moment, and then you will be rich forever!

I am not an old man, yet, though I am not young, but I am obliged to tell you that years are much shorter to me than they used to be 20 years ago. And weeks—why, they seem to fly! I never get to Sunday night without seeming to have another Sunday morning close on my heels. Do you not find it so? When Jacob said that his days were few, why did he so speak? Because he was an old man! If he had been a man of 25, he would not have said that! He would have thought that he had lived a good long while, but when he got to be over a 100, then his days seemed very few. After all, what is the longest life? Suppose that you should live to be 70 or eighty? We who are over 50 feel that it hardly needs an effort of mind to project ourselves through the next 25 years and find ourselves old and gray-headed, and ready to depart—and we shall depart in due season. It is only for a little moment that we are to be here. The cup is very bitter, but then there is not much in it! Let us take it all down at a draught. These pills are too small for us to make two bites at them. Besides, to chew them is to get their bitterness—to swallow them is to know nothing about it. So, do the same with the troubles of this life! Take them as they come, cheerfully and contentedly, thankfully praising God that there is good in the evil and sweetness in the bitter. Take it all. It will not last long—

***“A scrip on my back, and a staff in my hand,
I march on in haste through an enemy’s land.
The road may be rough, but it cannot be long,
And I’ll smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song.”***

Get into the chambers that the Lord has prepared for you and hide yourselves “for a little moment, until the indignation is past.”

Here I stand, on this 9th of September, in the year of Grace, 1888, still preaching to you. But there will come a time when there will be no voice of mine from this pulpit, and no glance of your eyes towards the minister here. We shall be in the world to come and then, in a short time, we shall all appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ. If we have never hidden in these chambers. If we have never fled to Christ, ah, then will come the time of woe, a darksome time, indeed! Sorrows without a shore, griefs without a terminus, a bitterness that must be everlasting! God help us to drink ten thousand cups of bitterness, here, rather than have to drink that cup of wormwood and gall forever! Come, fly to Christ tonight! The Lord help you to do so! Believe in Him, trust in Him, that you may never know His indignation, but, having hidden, for a small moment from the present trouble, you shall wake up to endless joy at God’s right hand, forever and ever. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
*Psalm 73.***

The Psalmist here works out the problem of the prosperity of the wicked. He was troubled in his own mind about it. He knew that he feared God, but he also knew that he was greatly tried, whereas he saw many who had no fear of God before their eyes, who seemed to be always prospering. Their flourishing condition was a puzzle to him, but he examined the problem and unraveled the mystery. I think I have told you before, as a little exercise for your memory, that the 73rd Psalm and the 37th Psalm are both on the same subject. You can easily remember this, as the same figures are used in each instance, only they are turned the two ways, 73 and 37.

Verse 1. *Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.* The Psalmist knows that it must be so. He cannot doubt it. He lays it down as a proposition not to be disputed. Assuredly, “Truly, God is good to Israel.”

2. *But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-near slipped.* “I was almost seduced to sin. I seemed as if I must fall into iniquity.”

3. *For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.* It really looked as if the big rogues did prosper, as if the great infidels were happy, as if, after all, religion brought trouble and irreligion brought pleasure!

4. *For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm.* Some of them so stifle conscience that they even die stupefied, with no sense of the dreadful wrath that is coming upon them—“There are no bands in their death.”

5. *They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.* They do not seem to have the afflictions of God’s people, and certainly they are not plagued with soul-conflict such as Christians have—they seem to make themselves very merry at all times.

6. *Therefore pride accompanies them about as a chain.* They wear it as my Lord Mayor wears his collar, for a badge of honor!

6. *Violence covers them as a garment.* They are not a bit ashamed of it! They put it on as if it were their workday dress.

7, 8. *Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily.* What big words they utter! How they boast! How they despise the poor! How they sneer at religion! It is dreadful to hear them and, for a child of God, who is conscious of doing right, and of suffering for it, it is a hard task to hear them talk thus.

9. *They set their mouth against the heavens.* As if this earth did not contain room enough for their malice, “They set their mouth against the heavens.”

9. *And their tongue walks through the earth.* Leaving nobody alone, having a hard word for everybody except their own chosen group.

10, 11. *Therefore his people return here: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, "How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?"* They pretend that God is, as it were, only like King Log, taking no account of what is done by the sons of men. "He does not notice our feasts, or listen to our blasphemies." So they say.

12. *Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.* And yet why do we wonder at this? The bullock that is intended to be killed is the first to be fatted and he that is doomed to destruction will often be allowed to prosper! Would you not let them have as much pleasure as they can have in this life, for they will have none in the next? Oh, envy them not their short-lived joys! Yet the Psalmist did so when he was down in the dumps and in an evil humor. He said, "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches."

13. *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence.* "Surely," he said "my holy life, my desire to be right with God and man, is a good-for-nothing thing! I do not prosper. I do not increase in riches, but it is the very reverse with me."

14. *For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.* Cannot you imagine a son of very wise parents, and very loving parents, saying, "Why, look at that boy in the street! He has no father to flog him, no mother to scold him, he can do just as he likes! But, as for me, if I do a little wrong, I am whipped for it"? Ah, my lad! The day will come when you will not envy the street-boy and you will be thankful, then, that you were not in his position! The child of God, if he sins, will have to smart for it—but there is nothing more dreadful than to be allowed to sin without being made to suffer! God save us from being given up to such a state as that!

15. *If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of Your children.* Do not always speak what you think. "But if you think it, you may as well say it," says one. Oh, no! There may be an evil spirit in yonder bottle, but nobody will get drunk upon it if you keep the cork in! So there may be evil thoughts in your hearts, but they will not injure other people if you do not, as it were, draw the cork by uttering them! It is always well to think twice before you speak once. "So," said the Psalmist, "I cannot speak thus, because such talk would grieve God's people."

16. *When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.* It was too painful for the Psalmist to think of it, too painful to speak of it—and yet too painful for him to hold his tongue!

17. *Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.* When he came near to his God, when he went into the Holy Place, and communed with the Lord, then he saw what would be the end of the wicked. Ah, what a difference it makes when we look at the ungodly from the right standpoint! "Then understood I their end."

18. *Surely you did set them in slippery places.* Up there ever so high.

18. *You cast them down into destruction.* When the time comes, down they are hurled from those slippery heights into the awful depths below!

19. *Now are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.* When the ungodly reach the next world, where are their riches, where are their feasts, where are their merry jokes, where are their lofty words? Listen—“How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.”

20. *As a dream when one awakens, so, O Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image.* When a man wakes, his dream is over and gone. When God awakes to judgment and comes to deal with ungodly men, then all those who prospered in wickedness shall melt away, like the baseless fabric of a dream.

21, 22. *Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You.* For the beast only measures by the day and the hour, as far as its eyes can see. Give it a meadow deep with grass and it is perfectly happy, but when good men get measuring by the day and by the hour, and by the lifetime here below, they are foolish—and like brute beasts.

23. *Nevertheless I am continually with You.* Oh, what a mercy this is for Believers! If we are ever so poor, we are continually with God! What if we are chastened every morning? It is clear that we must be with God, then, for a chastening God must be near!

23. *You have held me by my right hand.* “Even when You did whip me. *Everywhere* You have a grip of me. You hold me with Your right hand.” The Psalmist does not envy the wicked, now—he has risen a stage higher than he was a little while ago!

24, 25. *You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory. Whom have I in Heaven but You, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside You.* Now he finds in God his riches, his joy, his prosperity, his portion!

26, 27. *My flesh and my heart fails: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. For, lo, they that are far from You shall perish: You have destroyed all them that go a whoring from You.* To love the world, to love riches, to love sin, to love self—this is to be unfaithful to our Marriage Covenant with God—let such conduct never be ours.

28. *But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all Your works.* Thus, you see, the Psalmist went down to the depths, but he came up, again, all right, and his heart was made glad in the Lord, his God! So may it be with any of us who, like he, has been envious of the foolish, when we have seen the prosperity of the wicked.

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—
91 (SONG I), 726, 23 (VERSION III).**

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THE SONG OF A CITY AND THE PEARL OF PEACE NO. 1818

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 4, 1885,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed
on You: because he trusts in You.”
Isaiah 26:3.*

THIS is no dry, didactic statement, but a verse from a song. We are among the poets of revelation who did not compose ballads for the passing hour, but made sonnets for the people of God to sing in later days. I quote to you a stanza from, “the song of a city.” Judah has not, before, thus chanted before her God, but she has much to learn—and one day she shall learn this Psalm, also—“We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.” Into the open country the adversary easily advances, but walled cities are a check upon the invading foe. Those people who had been hurried to and fro as captives and had frequently been robbed of their property by invaders, were glad when they saw built among them a city, a well-defended city, which would be the center of their race and the shield of their nation.

This song of a city may, however, belong to *us* as much as to the men of Judah. And we may throw into it a deeper sense of which they were not aware. We were once unguarded from spiritual evil and we spent our days in constant fear, but the Lord has found for us a city of defense, a castle of refuge. We have a township in the new Jerusalem which is the mother of us all—and within that strong city we dwell securely. Let us sing this morning, “We have a strong city.” The man that has come into fellowship with God through the atoning Sacrifice has gotten into a place of perfect safety where he may dwell, yes, dwell *forever*, without fear of assault. We are no longer hunted by hosts of fears and trod down by dark despairs but, “We have a strong city” which overawes the foe and quiets ourselves. Our Gospel hymns are the songs of men who, in the truest spiritual sense, have seen an end of alarm by accepting God’s provision against trouble of heart.

Observe how the song goes on to dilate upon the city's strength. "Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." Our refuge will repay a close examination. We are doubly defended! Its lofty walls are the mainstay of a city's security. When they are strong and high, they keep out the foe, whether he assails by scaling ladder, or battering engine. Outside the wall, on the other side of the moat, lies what is called the bulwark—the earthwork where, in times of peace, the citizens delight to take their walks. The bulwark of their confidence is the *boulevard* of their communion. The Lord our God has set ring upon ring, defense upon defense, around His people. All the powers of Providence and of Grace protect the saints. Material and spiritual forces, alike, surround her. The Lord keeps His people doubly fenced by walls and bulwarks and, therefore, He speaks of a double peace. "You will keep Him in peace, peace," says the Hebrew. God does nothing by halves, but everything by doubles. His salvation is decreed and appointed—and this is made the basis for the unbroken serenity of all His chosen.

The song, however, does not end with verses concerning the city, but it conducts us within its walls. "Open the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in." Entrance into this Grace, where we stand, is a choice privilege. The greatest joy of true godliness lies in our being able to enter into it. If the City of God were shut against us, it were sad, indeed, for us! If, today, you and I were outside of her, of what value would her walls and bulwarks be to us? Whatever God has done for His people, it is just so much additional sorrow rather than increased joy to ourselves if we are not partakers therein. That there should be a Christ and that I should be Christless. That there should be a cleansing and I should remain foul. That there should be a Father's love and I should be an alien—that there should be a Heaven and I should be cast into Hell—is grief embittered, sorrow aggravated! Come, then, let us sing of *personal* entrance into the City of God! The music and the feasting are not outside the door—to enjoy them we must enter in. Our citizenship is now in Heaven. Nothing is barred against us, for the Son of David has set before us an open door and no man can shut it! Let us not neglect our opportunities. Let it not be said, "They could not enter in because of unbelief." No, let it be ours to sing of salvation because we enjoy it to the fullest! Let our music never cease.

Now, when we get as far as this—a strong city and a city into which we have entered—we are still further glad to learn who the keeper and garrison of that city may be, for a city needs to be kept while there are so many foes abroad. To render all secure, there needs to be some leader and commander for the people who has strength with which to man the

walls and drive off besiegers! Our text tells us how securely this strong city will be held—so securely that none of her citizens shall ever be disturbed in heart—“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You.”

Permit me to remind you, again, that my text is the verse of a *song*. I earnestly desire you to feel like singing all the time while I am preaching—and let the words of the text ring in your heart with deep mysterious chimes, as of a land beyond these clouds and tempests—“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You.” I do not want you to be thinking, “I wish that the Lord would keep me in peace.” I would have you *now* enter into rest before the Lord. Do not say, “I am fretting and worrying because I cannot reach this peace.” But pray to enjoy it this morning! O Lord and Giver of peace, vouchsafe it to our faith at once! O you trustful ones, enter at once into the opened gates of the City of Peace and then bless God that you cannot be driven out, again, for the Lord promises to be your garrison and safeguard! May the Holy Spirit, who is the Comforter, and whose fruit is peace, now work peace in each of us!

I. First, we are going to answer this question as best we can—WHAT IS THIS PERFECT PEACE? The text in the original, as I have told you, is—“You will keep him in peace, peace.” It is the Hebrew way of expressing *emphatic* peace—true and real peace—double peace, peace of great depth and vast extent. Many of you know what it is and you will probably think my answer a very poor one. I shall do the best I can, I can do no more, and if you try to make up for my deficiencies, our Brothers and Sisters will be gainers. I confess that I cannot, to the full, describe the peace that may be enjoyed if our faith is strong and our confidence in God has reached its appropriate height. We are not limited as to quality or measure of this precious thing. Peace is a jewel of so rare a price that he only has valued it aright who has sold all that he has to buy it. Describe it? No, verily, there we fail.

This “peace, peace” means, I think, *an absence of all war and of all alarm of war*. You who can imagine the full meaning of siege, storm, sack and pillage, can also guess the happier state of things when a city hears no longer the tramp of armies—when from her ramparts and towers no sign of adversary can be discovered—and all is peace. That is very much the condition of the people of God when the Lord keeps them in peace. God, Himself, at one time, seemed to be against us—the 10 great canons of His Law were turned against our walls! All Heaven and earth mustered for battle. God Himself was against us, at least, so Conscience reported from her lookout. But now, at this moment, having believed in

Jesus Christ, we have entered into rest and we have perfect peace as to our former sins. Who is he that can harm you, O you that are reconciled to God? “If God is for us, who can be against us?” “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?”

We have, by faith, arrived at a state of perfect reconciliation with God. The Divine Fatherhood has covered us. We inherit the spirit of children, the spirit of love and of unquestioning confidence. Everything is quiet, for we dwell in our Father’s house! Look upward and you will perceive no seat of fiery wrath to shoot devouring flames! Look downward and you discover no Hell, for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus! Look back and sin is blotted out! Look around and all things work together for good to them that love God! Look beyond and Glory shines through the veil of the future, like the sun through a morning’s mist. Look outward and the stones of the field and the beasts of the field are at peace with us. Look inward and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keeps our hearts and minds by Christ Jesus. The Lord leads us by still waters at such happy times, along that road of which we read, “No lion shall be there.” If you who are believers in Jesus do not usually enjoy this peace, the blame must be laid to your own door—you make your own disquietude—for God says to you, “Peace, peace,” and He will keep you there if your mind is stayed on Him. Happy is he whose conflict is ended and whose warfare is accomplished by faith in Christ Jesus!

Further, *this perfect peace reigns over all things within its circle*. Not only is no enemy near, but the inhabitants of the city are all at rest and all their affairs are happy. No man can be said to be at *perfect* peace who has any cause of disquietude at all. Yet the child of God has this perfect peace according to our Lord’s own statement and, therefore, it must be true that the Believer is raised above all disquietude. “What?” you ask, “has he not an evil heart of unbelief?” Yes, and that demands his *watchfulness*, but should not create in him any kind of *terror*, for, “God is greater than our hearts,” and where sin abounded, Grace does much more abound. The flesh has received its death warrant and *unbelief* is but a *part* of the flesh doomed to die! The holy life within us must triumph. “If we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself.” Though we are, as yet, like the smoking flax, we shall soon shine forth and He will bring forth judgment unto victory.

“Ah,” says one, “but I have disquietude in my family: I have a wild, unruly son.” Or, “I have a sick, pining child who will soon be taken away from me by consumption!” Yes, Friend, but if your mind is stayed on God and you can trust God with such matters, you should not lose your per-

fect peace even through this. What if your heart is troubled? Will that make the consumptive child any stronger? Or will your melancholy be likely to restrain your rebellious son? No, but, “The just shall live by faith”—and shall triumph by faith, too! It shall be your strength to bring your sick and lay them at Jesus’ feet! It shall be your hope to bring your unruly one and say, “Lord, cast out the devil from my child and let him live unto You.” Nothing ought to avail to break the peace of the Believer—the shield of *faith* should quench every fiery dart—remember that your sins are forgiven you for Christ’s sake and that is done once and for all. Remember that Christ has taken possession of you and you are His—neither will He lose you, but He will hold you single-handed against the world, death and Hell!

Remember, too, that your heavenly Father rules in Providence, giving you what you need, for He has said, “No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly.” He reigns in power, anticipating every danger, for He has declared, “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn.” God’s peace covers the whole extent of the territory! Proclaim it through every street of Mansoul that the Prince Emmanuel has come! And proclaim to every creature within the city walls the peace of God is granted to be possessed with gladness and delight!

We are getting some idea, I trust, of this peace, though words cannot fully convey it—we must know it for ourselves. Yet it is pleasant to note that this peace is deeply real and true. No perfect peace can be enjoyed unless *every secret cause of fear is met and removed*. Whisper it at the gates and in the hostelrys, that the city might be taken by surprise, and that spies have been seen in the meadows, down by the East Gate, and straightway the city would be in a ferment! No, peace cannot breathe while suspicion haunts the streets. Our peace may be a false peace, a fool’s peace—we may be lulled into a carnal security. Politically, nations have become self-confident, have dreamed of peace when the forges were ringing with the hammers of war—and so catastrophe has happened to them. Spiritually, there are multitudes of persons who think that all is right with their souls, when, indeed, all is wrong for eternity! It is to be feared that some have received a “strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.”

Now, we cannot call that peace, perfect, which lies only on the surface and will not bear to be looked into. We desire a peace which sits in open court and neither blindfolds nor muzzles ambassadors. The peace which requires that there should be a hushing-up of this and of that is an evil thing! Such is the direct opposite of the peace of God. If there is any

charge against God's people, men are challenged to bring it—"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" The pardon which God gives us is not a smothering of our sins, nor a blinding of justice. God is as just in His pardons as in His punishments. It shall be seen at the last, when Believers enter into their Glory, that they rise there by the Law, just as surely as the lost sink down to Hell by Law—that is to say that the Lord Jesus Christ has rendered to the Law of God such recompense by His perfect obedience and His matchless Atonement, that it shall be as just on God's part to save His elect as to condemn the unbelieving world. We claim that our peace is just and right. It may be examined and tested, for here we have NO FICTION. If truth is to be found beneath the stars, it is in the peace which comes through the precious blood of the Son of God! The peace which God gives goes to the very bottom of things and brings us into the eternal harmonies.

We may gaze upon this Truth of God with the most attentive eye, but we shall see only the more clearly that He that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has salvation for walls and bulwarks. Under any light, Believers in Jesus are secure! You may be put in circumstances of a very trying kind—you may especially be brought to the brink of death and near to the bar of God—and yet, dear Friend, the God in whom you trust will not fail you! Your heart rests on His promises and faithfulness—and there is no reason why its peace should be broken.

Is not this a perfect peace? If I stood here to preach up a sort of enthusiastic confidence which would not bear the test, I would be ashamed of myself. But in preaching this peace of God, which passes all understanding, which has no back-reckonings to disturb it, which has nothing behind that can ultimately come in to break it up, I preach something worth having! I desire and pray that every man and woman here may know it as I know it, for I have peace with God and, therefore, my heart is glad. Oh that all of you here present might now believe God and stay yourselves upon Him! Then would you hear the Lord say "Peace! Peace!"

One thing more, *peace in a city would not be consistent with the stoppage of commerce*. During perfect peace, commerce goes on with all surrounding places and the city, by its trade, is enriched. Where there is perfect peace with God, commerce prospers between the soul and Heaven. Good men commune with the good and, therefore, their sense of peace increases. If you have perfect peace, you have fellowship with all the saints—personal jealousies, sectarian bitterness and unholy emulations are all laid aside. Oh, it is a happy state of mind when we have no prejudices which can keep an heir of Heaven out of our heart, no peculiarities which can wall out the godly from fellowship with us! Oh, how

blessed to say spontaneously, "If he is a child of God, I love him! If he is a member of the heavenly family, he is my Brother, and I welcome him!" When we are at one with all the people of God, we are quit of a world of wars.

Better still, there is a sweet peace between the heart and its God when, from day to day, by prayer and praise, we commune with the Most High. Any peace that is linked with forgetfulness of God is a horrible thing—it is the peace of the plague which is brooding in quietness before it strikes with the arrow of death—it is that dead calm which precedes the cyclone or the earthquake. The perfect peace which God gives, suns itself in the Presence of God! It is a tropical flower which lives in the flaming sunlight—a bird with rainbow-wings which is at home in the high-noon of Heaven's summer! God give us to know more and more of this perfect peace by enabling us to plunge more and more completely into His own Self! One with God in Christ Jesus, we have reached everlasting peace!

Let me speak further upon this peace that God gives to us. It consists in *rest of the soul*. You know how the body casts all the limbs upon the bed and they lie at ease—so does our *spiritual* nature stretch itself at ease. The heart reclines upon God's love and the judgment leans on His wisdom. The desires recline, the hopes repose, the expectations rest, the soul throws all its weight and all its weariness upon the Lord—and then a perfect peace follows. To this absolute recumbency add a *perfect resignation to the Divine will*. If you quarrel with God, your peace is at an end, but when you say, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him," you have obtained one of the main elements of perfect peace. When the Lord's will is acknowledged and loved, all ground for quarrel is over and the peace will be deep. It consists, also, in *sweet confidence in God*, when there is not the shadow of doubt about anything God does, for you are sure of this, if nothing else, that He must be true, that He must be right, kind and in all things better to you than you are to yourself! Then to leave everything with God, trusting in Him forever because in Him there is everlasting strength—this is peace!

It means, in fact, the swallowing up of self in the great sea of God, the giving up of all we are and all we have, so entirely to God that we cannot be troubled, or be disturbed because that which could make trouble is already bound over to keep the peace! Then comes a *blessed contentment*—we need no more—we have enough. "The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in Him." Having Him, my desires all stay at home with Him. Let me but know Him better and I shall grow even *more* satisfied with unutterable beauties and His indescribable perfections!

I hope you know this peace. And if you do, I need not tell you it means *freedom from everything like despondency*. The mind cannot yield to mistrust, for the Lord's peace keeps it. The compass on board an iron steam vessel is placed aloft, so that it may not be so much influenced by the metal of the ship. Though surrounded by that which would put it out of place, the needle faithfully adheres to the pole because it is set *above* the misleading influence. So with the child of God, when the Lord has given him peace—he is lifted beyond the supremacy of his sorrowful surroundings and his heart is delivered from its sad surroundings.

Thus we are *kept from everything like rashness*. Resting in God, we are not in sinful haste—we can wait on God's time to deliver us, knowing that there is love in every second of the delay. We do not kick, as the untutored bullock kicks against the goad, but we push on, the more eagerly, with our furrow, toiling on to the end, till God shall appear for us. Thus we are saved from the temptations which come with our trials. We get the smelting of the furnace without its smut! We endure the sorrow, but escape the sin—and this is joy enough for a pilgrim in this vale of tears!

O Friends, he that has this perfect peace is the richest man in the world! What are broad acres if you have a troubled spirit? What are millions in gold, laid by in the bank, if you have no God to go to in the hour of distress? What would it be to be a prince, a king, an emperor, if you still had no hope for the hereafter, no treasure of eternal love? I, therefore, charge you to get and keep this "peace"—this perfect peace.

II. May the Lord strengthen me, in this time of painful weakness, while I speak upon another question. WHO ALONE CAN GIVE US THIS PEACE AND PRESERVE IT IN US? The answer is in the words of the song, "You will keep him in perfect peace." See, it is God, Himself, that can give us this peace and keep us in it! The answer is one and indivisible. I know that while I was speaking some of you were saying, "The pastor is setting forth a high style of living—how can we reach it?" But if peace is *God's* gift and if the Lord, Himself, is to keep us in it, how easily can we attain it by putting ourselves into His hands! To be striving after peace is hard work, for by our very anxiety to find it we miss its trail. How differently does the matter appear when we read, "You will keep him in perfect peace!"

How does the Lord keep His people in peace? I answer, first, *by a special operation upon the mind in the time of its trial*. We read in the 12th verse, "Lord, You will ordain peace for us: for You, also, have worked all our works in us." If this is so, we can understand how the Lord can work peace in us among all the other works. There is an operation of God

upon the human mind, mysterious and inscrutable, of which the effects are manifest enough. And among those effects is this—a quiet of heart, a calm of spirit which never comes in any other way. “You will keep him in perfect peace.” The Creator of our mind knows how to operate upon it by His Holy Spirit! Let the heart and will be allowed to be as free as you choose, yet is the Lord free to act upon them! As we can tune the strings of a harp, so can the Lord adjust the chords of our heart to joyous serenity.

Not only by the Word of God and by our meditation thereon, but by His own direct operation, the Lord can create peace within the land-locked sea of the human spirit. The Lord can get at men and influence them for the highest ends apart from outward means. I have noticed that, altogether apart from the subjects of my reflections, I have, on a sudden, received a singular calm and peace of spirit directly from God. I can remember occasions when I had been hurried through broken water—the winds were wild and my little vessel was at one instant lifted out of the water—and at the next beat under the waves! Then, in a moment, everything was calm as a summer’s evening, quiet as when the hush of Sabbath falls on a hamlet in the lone Highlands. My heart was royally glad, for it had entered into *perfect peace*! I think you must have noticed such matters in your own case. Generally, I grant you, we are led into this peace by the consideration of the promises of God. But sometimes, apart from that, without our knowing why or from where, we have, all of a sudden glided from darkness into light by the distinct operation of the Spirit of God upon the mind.

But usually the Lord keeps His people in perfect peace *by the operation of certain considerations, intended by His infinite Wisdom, to work in that manner*. For instance, if sin is before the mind, it may well disquiet us, but when a man considers that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, he has that before him which relieves the disquietude. When he considers that in dying, the Lord Jesus rendered unto God a full and satisfactory Atonement for all the sins of all His believing people, then the man is at once, by that consideration, brought into perfect peace. Or suppose that a temporal trial ruffles the mind? The uneasy one turns to Scripture and he finds that affliction is not sent as a legal *punishment*, but only as a fatherly *chastisement of love*—then is the bitterness of it passed away.

Let a man understand that all his trials work together for his good, and every sufficient reason for discontent is removed. The man notes that there is good in the evil which surrounds him—indeed, he perceives the Lord to be at work everywhere and, therefore, he accepts the ar-

rangements of Providence without mistrust and his heart is at peace! Depend upon it, dear Friend, if you are tossed up and down like the locust, you will only find peace by flying to the fields of Scripture! In this garden of the Lord, flowers are blooming which yield a balm for every wound of the heart. Never was there a lock of soul-trouble yet, but what there was a key to open it in the Word of God! For our pain, here is an anesthetic; for our darkness, a lamp; for our loneliness, a Friend! It is like the Garden of Eden—a double river of peace glides through it. Turn, then, to the Lord's Word, to communion with His people, to prayer, to praise, or some form of holy service and God will thus keep you in perfect peace.

I believe, also, that the Lord keeps His people in perfect peace *by the distinct operations of His Providence*. When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. By secret workings He can quiet foes so that they are as still as a stone till His people pass over. When one Providence apparently fights against you, another will come in to deliver you. The Lord's thoughts towards His people are thoughts of good and not of evil—and they shall see it to be so! Either the afflicted shall reach a place of rest, or else double strength shall be given for the double trial. God will allow no war in His Kingdom against His own child—all must be for you there. If you are God's Jonah, and are thrown into the sea, a whale must wait upon you. And if you are God's servant and are brought into the lowest dungeon in Egypt, Pharaoh, himself, must send and fetch you out of it to sit upon a throne! Lift now your eyes, O you that crouch among the ashes because of your daily fret! No longer grovel in the dust! The Lord is your King—nothing can break your peace! The Creator of yon stars and clouds, Lord of the universe, Monarch of all nature—do you think that *He* cannot speedily send you deliverance? All these ages has He loved you—can you mistrust Him? Know you not that He feeds the sparrows? Yes, and the fish of the sea, and the myriads of living creatures which only His eyes can see! There is no limit to His stores, nor bounds to His power! Can you not trust in Him, that He will help you through and give you rest?

Thus, you see, our peace comes from God in some way or other and I, therefore, the more earnestly ask you never to seek peace elsewhere. Do not seek peace by praying for the absence of trial. You may be just as happy *in* affliction as out of it, if the Lord is with you. Do not seek peace by cultivating hardness of heart and indifference of spirit. No, when you are afflicted, you ought to feel it—God means you should and you must learn to feel it—and yet be fully at peace. Do not imagine you can get peace by philosophy, or by considerations derived from reason, or by

knowledge fetched from experience. There is but one well from which you can draw the sweet waters of perfect peace—and it bears about its rim this dainty inscription—“You will keep him in perfect peace, O Jehovah.” Such peace as God gives makes us like to God—it fills us with His love—it sets us acting according to His holiness! And, meanwhile, it prepares us for His palace, where everlasting peace perfumes every chamber and covers the whole fabric with Glory!

III. I have to answer another question, this morning, and that is—WHO SHALL OBTAIN THIS PEACE? “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You.” The Hebrew is very involved and difficult to understand, but we shall not err if we permit it to teach us this—that *the whole of our being is stayed upon God in order to have this peace*. The word for, “mind,” is very vague, but it must include our *thoughts*. If your thoughts are stayed on God, you will have perfect peace—our misery comes from stray, vagabond, unsettled thoughts. If you will think of nothing except in connection with God. If you will only think of your sins in connection with a merciful God. If you will only think of tribulation in connection with a faithful God. If you will set the Lord always before you, so that He is at your right hand, you shall not be moved, but you certainly cannot be perfectly at peace till each thought, being held captive, learns to stay itself on Him.

This includes the imagination. The imaginations are most untamable wild beasts and cause a world of terror in timid minds. Oh for Grace to fasten up imagination in the Lord’s own cage! We must not imagine anything to be possible which would make the Lord appear to be unkind or untrue. Pray that your imagination may be stayed on God, that you may never again imagine anything contrary to the Grace, goodness and love of your heavenly Father! What peace would rule if this were the case! I think our text especially includes the *desires*. Desires are very grasping things. It is utterly impossible to satisfy a worldly man’s heart—if he had all he now wishes for, he would be sure, then, to enlarge his desires and ask for more. But you, dear Friend, must stay your desires at some bound or other, and what more fit than to stay them upon God? Say, “I need nothing but what God wills to give me. I desire to have nothing but what He thinks is for His Glory and for my profit.” When you once come to this point—when your imaginations and desires all pitch their tents within the compass of God, Himself, who is your heavenly portion—*then* you will be kept in perfect peace!

What else is meant by being stayed? Does it not mean rested? When your thoughts recline at their ease in God’s revealed will, that is staying upon God! When your desires are filled and no longer open their greedy

mouths for more, because God has filled them, that is staying! Does it not mean stopping there? We speak of staying at a place. Well, when our minds are stayed on God, we just stop at God—we do not propose any further journeying—we do not wish to push on in advance of where He leads the way. Our heart is rooted and grounded in the great Father's love and so we stay our souls on Him!

Staying means upholding. We speak of a stay, and of a mainstay—it is something upon which we are depending. Such a person is the stay of the house—its chief upholder and support. See, then, what it is to stay your souls on God and mind that you carry it out daily. Some are staying themselves upon a friend. Others are staying themselves upon their own ability. But blessed is the man who stays himself on God! We are to have no confidence except in the Almighty arm; our reliance must be placed only there. When we live in our God and move, and have our being, this is the crowning condition of a creature. Oh, to feel to the utmost that we are wholly the Lord's and that whether His will appoints us joy or woe, we shall be equally satisfied, for we have come to lie down on His will and go no further! I like staid persons—you know what they are and where they are. They are not easily put about, neither do they readily forsake a cause which they have espoused. He that is stayed upon God is the most staid person in the world! He is steadfast, grounded, settled and he cannot be removed from the blessed hope of the Gospel. He that is fully staid is the man that shall have perfect peace. Oh, where away, you undecided ones! Oh, where away, poor hearts! Will you wander over every mountain? Will you never take up a lodging with your God and dwell at ease in Him? Of this be you well assured—your souls are on the wing and are bound to fly on and on *forever* unless they make bold to settle down upon the Lord their God! In God is rest, but in none else. All earth and Heaven, time and eternity, cannot make up a peace for a bruised spirit—and yet a Word from the Lord bestows it beyond recall!

Observe, it says, “stayed *on You*.” Dwell with emphasis upon that, for there are many ways of staying yourself, but you must mind that all your staying is on God—on your heavenly Father who will withhold no good thing from you. On your Divine Savior who pleads for you at the right hand of God. And on the Holy Spirit who dwells in you—on the Triune God who has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” Now, instead of saying more, I should like, if God the Holy Spirit would help us, for each one to go through the mental act of rolling our cares upon the Lord. Let us commit ourselves, all that we are, all that we have, all that we have to do and all that we have to suffer, to the guardian care of our loving God, casting all our cares upon Him, for He cares for us. Here we are

in God and here we mean to abide! We are not regretting the Grace of yesterday, nor sighing for the Grace of tomorrow. We stay where we are—at home with God. Our anchor is down and we do not mean to draw it up again. “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.”

“Oh,” says one, “you do not know *my* troubles!” No, but I remember the story of a poor Methodist at the battle of Fontenoy. He had both his legs shot away and when the surgeon came to attend to him, he was evidently bleeding to death, but he cried, “I am as happy as I can be out of Paradise!” Well, if in the very article of death and suffering as he was, he could overflow with happiness, surely you and I can rejoice in perfect peace! I want you all to be like Dr. Watts, who said that for many years he went to his bed without the slightest care as to whether he should wake up in this world, or in the next. To rest in God’s Word, to rejoice in God’s Covenant, to trust in the Divine Sacrifice, to be conformed to God’s will, to delight in God’s self—this is to stay yourself upon God—and the consequence of it is perfect peace!

IV. WHY IS IT THAT THE LORD WILL KEEP THAT MAN IN PERFECT PEACE WHO STAYS HIMSELF ON HIM? The answer is, “Because he trusts in You.” Dear Friends, that means surely this, that *in faith there is a tendency to create and nourish peace*. In all other ways of trying to live before God, there is a tendency to produce uneasiness. But he that *believes* shall rest. Faith lays a cool hand upon a burning brow and removes the fever of the fearful heart. Faith has a voice of silver, wherewith she whispers, “Peace, be still.” Nothing can conduce so much to a quiet life as a firm, unwavering confidence in the faithfulness of God’s promise and in the fact that what He has promised, He is able to perform!

Further, the text means this, that when a man stays himself upon God, it is not only his faith that brings him peace, but *his faith is rewarded by peace* which the Lord gives him as a token of approval. A kind of discipline is going on in our heavenly Father’s family—not rewards and punishments such as judges award to criminals—but such as fathers give to their children. By this we are being trained for the many mansions in the Father’s house above. If we will stay ourselves on God, we shall have peace. If we will *not* do so, we shall have no rest, but shall be in sore disquietude. “Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me.”

The pressure of the trouble comes with the decline of faith. If you believe more, it may not make you richer, but you will not feel your poverty so keenly. If you believe more, it may not make you healthy in body, but you shall not fret because of your sickness. If you believe more, it will not

give you back your buried ones, but it shall fill your heart with a still higher love. "All things are possible to him that believes," and peace—peace is among those possibilities! But if you will not believe, neither shall you be established—your unbelief will be a rod for your own back, a bitter for your own cup. If you will not trust your God, you shall wander into a weary land, seeking rest and finding none. Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us fly from such a fate and win perfect peace as the reward of perfect confidence!

I think, lastly, this peace comes out of faith because *it is faith's way of proclaiming herself*. If God gives you perfect peace, you will not need, when you go home, to shout to your friends, "I am a Believer!" They will soon see it. You have lost one that was very dear to you and, instead of fretting and repining, you kiss the hand of God and go about your daily duties with patience. That is a very wonderful fruit of the Spirit, worked by faith, and thus faith is *seen*. A man has had a fire, or some other form of loss, and his comforts are destroyed. If he is an unbeliever, we do not wonder that he tears his hair, curses God and rages and fumes. But if he has stayed himself on God, he will be at peace and he will say, "The Lord has done it. It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him." By this will you be known to be the disciples of Christ, when in patience you possess your souls.

Faith which only operates when all goes well is the mockery of faith—the love that praises God when God gives you according to your desire is no more than the love of some dogs to their masters—who care just as much for them as the number of the scraps may be. Will you have such a cupboard love as that? It were far better to get to this state, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." If you have *that* faith within you, then shall your peace be like a river. The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your heart and mind by Christ Jesus!

I am very much concerned in leaving you, that you, dear Friends, should aim much at the possession of this peace. It is a mode of propagating the Gospel never to be despised. Multitudes of people have been converted by seeing the holy patience of God's people—they have been impressed by it and have said, "There must be something in a religion that can give such a peace as this." When you are fretting and worrying, you are undoing your minister's work! When the people of God are over and above troubled—when they count life to be a burden to them because things are not as they would wish them to be—they are really slandering their heavenly Father and they are preventing the wandering from coming back! The unconverted say, "Why should we go to God to be made miserable?"

O you banished seed, be glad! O you troubled ones, rejoice! Though now, for a season, if necessary, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations, yet lift up your heads, for your redemption draws near! Within a short time you shall put on the garments of your excellency and beauty—and the weeds of your mourning shall be laid aside. Therefore play the man! Better, still, play the Christian and let all men know that where God is, and where the Lord rules the heart, there is, there must be, a deep and profound peace! May God bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Isaiah 26.*
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—46, 738, 552.**

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

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

“PEACE! PERFECT PEACE!”

NO. 3175

**AN ADDRESS
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1909.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
IN A SICK-ROOM AT MENTONE.**

***“You will keep him in perfect peace (Margin: peace, peace),
whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You.
Isaiah 26:3.***

[This Address is an interesting souvenir of an afternoon visit paid by Mr. Spurgeon to an invalid at Mentone, the late Giles Shaw, Esq., of Bewdley—brother-in-law of Miss Frances Ridley Havergal. The Address was delivered without preparation and followed immediately the singing of the hymn upon which it is based.]

[A Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon Isaiah 26:3 is #1818, Volume 31—THE SONG OF A CITY AND THE PEARL OF PEACE. Expositions of the whole Chapter are included with Sermons #2430, Volume 41—CHRISTIANS AND THEIR COMMUNION WITH GOD and #2713, Volume 47—WALKING IN THE LIGHT OF THE LORD—
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .]

AS WE have met together in this sick-chamber and you all wish me to talk with you, we will thoughtfully run over the hymn which you have just been singing. It is No. 730 in *Sacred Songs and Solos*, or No. 7 in *The Christian Choir*. May the Divine Teacher lead us into mines of the Truth of God and show us the deep things of God!—

***“Peace! Perfect peace! In this dark world of sin?
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.”***

Peace, yes, perfect peace! What a Heaven lies within! Peace gleaming with a heavenly light even in the midnight of this world of care. We cannot enjoy true peace as long as sin remains upon the conscience. As well might the ocean be quiet while a tempest is raging, or the sea bird rest on the wave when the storm is mixing earth and sky! The more the conscience is enlightened, the more surely will it forbid peace as long as sin remains, for its honest verdict is that sin deserves God’s wrath and must be punished. Every upright understanding assents to the justice of that dispensation by which “every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.” To me, when convinced of sin, it seemed that God could not be God if He did not punish me for my sins. Because of this deep-seated conviction, that great Gospel Truth, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin,” became a heavenly message,

sweeter than the music of angels’ harps! Then I saw, with glad surprise, that God in Christ Jesus is just and the Justifier of him whom believes.” To me, the glorious Doctrine of Substitution was a well in the desert and it is still so. I believe it with my whole soul. An honest man, if he is in debt, will always be in trouble until the liability is removed. But when his debt is paid, he leaps into liberty and gladness! When I learned that my enormous debt of sin had been fully discharged by the Lord Jesus Christ, who did this for all Believers, then was my heart at peace! How much I wish that all of you may join me and Bishop Bickersteth in singing with emphasis—

***“Peace perfect peace! In this dark world of sin?
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within!”***

The second verse goes on to speak of—

***“Peace! Perfect peace! By thronging duties pressed?
To do the will of Jesus, this is rest.”***

This peace is a present possession and may be enjoyed in the ordinary circumstances of life. Everyone who keeps house, every busy housewife, every man who is much occupied with his business, needs this verse—

“Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties pressed.”

To be closely pressed by a crowd of duties does not tend to peace of spirit. You do not know how to act through all you have to do and there seems so much to be done all at once. If the duties would come in regular order and you could take them as they come, you might be at peace, even though incessantly occupied. But when they come rushing in, helter-skelter—not only one thing, but 20 other things, all claiming to be done at once—then is the anxious soul apt to be disquieted! We are first wearied and then worried. To be perfectly at peace amid the hurry-burly of invading cares is a very blessed condition of soul—and the only way to reach it is described in the next line of the hymn—

“To do the will of Jesus, this is rest.”

To be sure that what you are doing is what Jesus would have you do is peace! Happy soul that is doing what Jesus would have it do! I put up this little question in the Orphanage, for the children to read—“What would Jesus do?” This, if we have spiritual minds, will be one of the best guides for us when we are in difficulty as to what is the next thing for us to do. We would do good, but too many good things are present with us—which is to be first? To know the will of Jesus, and to do it, is to abide in the peace of God! What we cannot do, we shall leave to Him, being assured that our duty does not lie in the region of the absolutely impossible—

***“When obstacles and trials seem
Like prison walls to be,***

***I do the little I can do,
And leave the rest to Thee.***

God comes in with His Grace where the impossible shuts us out. There are two things we need never worry about—what we can do and what we cannot do. What remains?

The next verse is very sweet—

***“Peace, perfect peace! With sorrows surging round?
On Jesus’ bosom nothing but calm is found.”***

Oh, those sorrows! Sorrows of sickness in ourselves and others. Bereavements, losses and crosses in daily life. Inabilities to succor and depressions of spirit. These last two are at times the worst of all, for then the sorrow gets right into the heart and becomes sorrow, indeed! All the waters in the ocean are as nothing to the vessel so long as they are kept outside—but when they break into the cabin of the heart’s assurance and begin to fill the hold of the heart—then are we in peril—

“Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round.”

This is the finger of God. It is not according to Nature for a man to be just as happy when he is in adversity as in prosperity. Even when “sorrowful” to be “always rejoicing” is a paradox realized only by one who knows that next line—

“On Jesus’ bosom nothing but calm is found.”

Wonderful position! We cease to marvel at the deep calm which comes of it. I have sometimes noticed very little chicks nestling under their mother’s wings, thrusting out their little heads from under her feathers, looking so warm and cozy that they did not seem to know that it was cold in the big world outside! Near their mother’s bosom they chirped quite happily and were altogether unaffected by the frosts of the night or the chills of the day. So we read, “He shall cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust—His Truth shall be your shield and buckler.” We get to Jesus and we find shelter and safety in Him, even as the little chicks beneath their mother’s wings. Is it so with each one of you? A present salvation should yield you present consolation and it will do so if you act up to your position and privilege. Tell your sorrow to Jesus! Leave your sorrow with Jesus! Bear your sorrow *for* Him. Bear your sorrow *with* Him and then see what peace, what perfect peace, you will enjoy, even “with sorrows surging round!”

The next verse will suit us who are, for a while, a thousand miles from home—

***“Peace! Perfect peace! With loved ones far away?
In Jesus’ keeping we are safe, and they.”***

Yes, the dear wife is at home. We do not know how things are going there with the children, and the servants, and the workpeople. All sorts

of things are left as burdens upon the beloved ones at home. We leave our beloved with our God and commend the household far away to God, who is present everywhere. A wandering son, a wayward daughter—we leave them all with Jesus. It is ordained by the Providence of God that these loved ones should be far away and, therefore, it is right it should be so. Yes, that which God appoints is right—and *must be right*. Distance ordained of Heaven is better than nearness of our own choosing! How sweet that line—

“In Jesus’ keeping we are safe, and they!”

They are safe, too! It is all well with them. We cannot see them, but they are under the eyes of Jesus. They are as near to Him as we are and, in His keeping they are as safe as we are. When I was a very little child, I lived so long with my grandfather that he became everything to me. And when I left him, it seemed like going among strangers. And I remember that Grandfather tried to comfort me by saying, “Ah, Child! You are going away from Stambourne; but the same moon will shine where you are going! It will always be the same moon.” Often I looked at the moon and remembered that Grandfather was looking at it, too, and we were not so very far away from one another. It is a sweet comfort to think that there is the same Providence watching over the loved ones far away on the other side of the globe, in Australia, as there is watching over us who are gathered here. The absence of friends must not break our inward peace.

Some are naturally anxious and fretful and this comes out most in their thoughts of those who are away. I was just now talking to a friend who tries to leave her troubles with the Savior, but very soon takes them up again and bears them on her own back. She casts her burdens on the Lord and then bows her own weary shoulders to the load. This, she confessed, she had done many times. I said to her, “Do you keep your money in a bank?” “Yes,” she replied. “Then,” I said, “it is well for both of us that I am not your banker.” “Why?” she asked. “Why,” I replied, “if you were to place £100 with me, and then come back in five minutes and ask whether your money was safe, I should have to assure you that it could not be safer. Then you would probably want to see it and I would say, ‘There is your money. You can draw it out at once.’ I would not be best pleased if the next day you came again and repeated your question, and made a personal inspection. I am afraid I would say to you, ‘You had better take your money and look after it yourself, for it is evident that you have little or no confidence in me.’” At any rate, however I might take it, it would be very provoking conduct. We must not talk of confidence in our Lord Jesus and then withdraw at the first sign of trouble or difficulty! “We are

safe, and they.” Will not an assured conviction of this Truth bathe us in seas of heavenly peace? The Lord make it so with us all!

Now for verse five—

**“Peace! Perfect peace! Our future all unknown?
Jesus we know, and He is on the Throne.”**

That is the end of all doubts about the future, “He is on the throne.” His hand is on the helm to steer the ship. He is in the place of sovereign government—nothing can happen but what He ordains or permits. Ah, dear Friends! Some of us have need to remember such a verse as this! We went home one year from this place, two of us, as happy as birds could be; and within a very few days one had lost his wife, and the other one dear friend, and then another. We will not try to peer through that telescope which would unveil the future. It may be that dark scenes will startle us before we reach the eternal light. We do not know, and need not wish to know, what is appointed for us—but this great and comfortable Truth of God meets it all—

“Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.”

We can very well leave all things with our crowned Head! I suppose none of us would wish to contradict *Him*, nor to have anything arranged otherwise than His loving mind appoints. If He stood by us this afternoon, and said to any one of us, “My Child, I have arranged your way in tender love and wisdom,” no one of us would wish it to be otherwise. If He said to us, “I have appointed such-and-such,” would we say to Him, as Joseph said to Jacob, “Not so, my Father,” and would we wish Him to uncross the hands which He guides so wisely? Would we not ask for the cross-handed blessing? Let the King be a king, and do what seems good to Him! May we not only say that, but stand to it in the trying hour—

**“Peace! Perfect peace! Death shadowing us and ours?
Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers.”**

Death is the last enemy, but more—he is “the last enemy that *shall be destroyed*.” He cannot touch a child of God! Only his shadow may fall upon us. How small a thing is this! The shadow of a sword cannot kill, the shadow of a dog cannot bite, the shadow of a lion cannot rend and the shadow of death cannot destroy!—

“Death shadowing us and ours.”

Well, well, we are not silly babies that can be frightened at a shadow, for—

“Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers.”

He did it by His own death and Resurrection! That Resurrection transformed death into quite another thing from what it was before. Death used to be as a black cavern in the mountains. Men said that many were the footsteps into it, but that there were none *from* it. It was an awful,

all-devouring cavern, but Jesus has, by passing through it, turned the cavern into a tunnel! He went in at the gloomy side, but He remained not in the heart of the earth—He re-appeared at the other side. So that, death is now all on the way to Heaven and immortality!

I have heard of an aged Christian Sister at Plymouth who had been for many years troubled with the fear of death, but she got over it and was very happy and very cheerful when speaking about her departure. She lived in a room of her own and one night she said to the friends in the house, “I believe I shall see the Lord tomorrow.” It was on a Saturday night she spoke thus and, according to her wish, they did not disturb her in the morning. But as they did not hear anything from her as the day passed on, they went to her room about mid-day and, sure enough, she was with her Lord! On a piece of paper which lay on her bed, they found these lines written—

**“Since Jesus is mine, I’ll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off these garments of clay.
To die in the Lord is a Covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to Glory through death led the way.”**

That is the way to look at it!—

**“Peace, perfect peace, death shadowing us and ours?
Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers.”**

Then comes the last verse—

**“It is enough! Earth’s struggles soon shall cease,
And Jesus calls us to Heaven’s perfect peace.”**

Dear Friends, it is very essential that we, as Christian people, should not only talk about this peace and believe in it, but that we should enjoy it and exhibit it! I believe that to some of you, the best way in which you can honor God and win others to Christ is by exhibiting a quiet, cheerful frame of mind, especially in sickness. Nothing is so convincing to ungodly men as to see Christians very calm in time of danger, very resigned in the hour of affliction, very patient under provocation and taking things altogether, as Christians should take them, as from the hand of God! They are struck with it, for it is so different from what they feel within themselves! When their earth shakes, when their foundations are removed, when their health is gone, when their earthly comforts are taken away—what have they left? But you and I have just as much left when all these things are gone as we had before! While we have earthly comforts, we have learned to see God in them all. And when they are taken away, we see them all in God. But the ungodly have not that wonderful sense of the full possession of all things which is the peculiar delight of the heirs of salvation!

You and I are like Jacob. The Lord said to Him, “The land whereon you lie, to you will I give it.” You have only to lie down upon a promise and you may claim it for yourself—it is yours by the Magna Charta of faith! Go to the Bible and whatever promise you find there addressed to a child of God, stretch yourself upon it and so make it your own—and it will be so! Remember how the Lord spoke to Abraham, “Lift up, now, your eyes, and look from the place where you are, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which you see, to you will I give it.” Let us believe that God has given us all things in giving us His Son—

**“This world is ours, and worlds to come,
Earth is our lodge, and Heaven our home.”**

We must get this perfect peace of which we have now been singing and speaking. I admire in certain of the saints their self-command, their great quiet and deep restfulness of spirit. It is not everything, but it is a very great deal. It is all the more necessary just now because the world is in such a hurry. It is necessary to us when we are weak and suffering, and when we are surrounded by cares and sorrows. Yet it is quite as valuable when we are strong and young and comfort would tempt us aside. Oh, that the world may see that we have a peace that cannot be taken away from us by force or fraud! I do not quite like that saying of Addison, “Come here, young man, and see how a Christian can die.” It looks too theatrical. But I should like it to be so with us that men might turn aside to see how a Christian can live! O Lord and Giver of peace, grant us Your peace, and Grace to keep it, even to the end!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: HOSEA 14.

Verse 1. *O Israel, return unto the LORD your God,* [See Sermon #2192, Volume 37—THE JOYOUS RETURN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] “Bless His name that He is still your God! However much you may have backslidden, you have not lost your right to claim Him as your God, for He is yours eternally by a fixed promise. And because He is still your God, let His everlasting kindness entice you to come back to Him.”

1. *For you have fallen by your iniquity.* “You have lost your comforts, you have become a poor despicable creature. You have fallen by your iniquity—this is the eve of all the mischief—your sin is the seed of all your ruin! Get rid of that and you shall soon have your comforts back again.”

2. *Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto Him.* See, He puts the words into your mouth, as if He felt persuaded that you would

say, “Lord, I cannot pray an acceptable prayer,” He makes one for you, so that you who have backslidden the most and have gone the farthest astray, may have no excuse—“Turn to the Lord: say unto Him.”

2. *Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.* “Our thankfulness shall give You such hearty praise that it shall not be like the Jew’s slender sacrifice, when he offered the turtle-doves or the young pigeons, but we will give You of our praise as hearty a sacrifice as when the devout Israelite brought the young bullock, the very best of his beasts to be offered upon the altar of his God. So we will offer to You the calves of our lips.”

3. *Asshur shall not save us.* Backslider, have you been putting your trust anywhere but in God, hoping to find comfort in the world and in sin? Then make this confession—“Asshur shall not save us.”

3. *We will not ride upon horses.* These were the confidence of the Egyptians—and the Israelites vainly tried to imitate their powerful and rich neighbors. So we will not put our confidence in the strength of cavalry.

3. *Neither will we say anymore to the work of our hands, You are our gods.* Happy is that man who turns aside from every idol and trusts in God alone! It is a mark of very black backsliding when we begin to make our business, our families, our pleasures and our bodily health the objects of such tender consideration that we virtually say to them, “You are our gods.”

3, 4. *For in You the fatherless finds mercy. I will heal their backsliding I will love them freely: for My anger is turned away from him.* [See Sermons #501, Volume 9—GRACE ABOUNDING and #920, Volume 16—BACKSLIDING HEALED—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Everlastingly turned away through the complete and satisfactory Atonement of Jesus Christ!

5. *I will be as the dew unto Israel.* The dew is God’s gift and so is Divine Grace! The dew falls silently, yet copiously, and bedews both the leaf and the root sufficiently. “I will be as the dew unto Israel,” is a promise to the man of faith, the man of prayer, the man who can endure trial—“I will be as the dew unto Israel.”

5. *He shall grow as the lily.* It is “the daffodil” in the original, the yellow daffodil in the East springs up after a shower where you could not have perceived anything before. Yet there is the idea of frailness in that simile, so it is balanced by the next one.

5. *And cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* After you have grown upward, you must grow downward—and growing downward, though it may not be so pleasant—is quite as excellent as growing upward, so the promise to you is, “He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.”

6. *His branches shall spread.* This is growing sideways. So the Believer spreads his branches by public profession and testimony after having become deeply rooted in the faith and having grown up in love to God! Then He begins to spread his shadow over the sons of men by telling—

**“To sinners round,
What a dear Savior he has found.”**

6. *And his beauty shall be as the olive tree.* Which largely consists in its fruitfulness. That is always the most beautiful olive which bears the most fruit. So the fruitful Christian shall have the beauty of the olive tree. Besides, the olive is an evergreen and the Christian’s beauty is of a kind that shall never fade. There is an old saying, “Beauty soon fades,” but that does not mean the Christian’s beauty, for that shall *never* fade, neither in life, nor in death, nor in eternity!

6. *And His smell as Lebanon.* That is, the holy influence of his life and conversation shall be as fragrant to God and men as are the perfumes exhaled by the sweet flowers upon the side of Mount Lebanon.

7. *They that dwell under his shadow shall return.* His children, his servants, his congregation shall be blessed by his gracious influence. As the Upas tree drops with deadly poison, so the tree of Grace in a Christian drops living drops to fall on dead souls!

7. *They shall revive as the corn.* Which suddenly springs up in the East after rain falls.

7. *And grow as the vine.* The branches shall in their turn become fruitful.

7. *The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.* Our families and households should be so well-ordered that not only we ourselves, personally, but all in our household should have a heavenly influence, a blessed savor upon all around us.

8. *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols?* [See Sermons #1339, Volume 23—IDOLS ABOLISHED and #2474, Volume 42—THE GREAT CHANGE—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Let that question also go round our ranks, “What have I to do anymore with idols? I, who am bought with the precious blood of Jesus? I, who am named by the name of Jesus? I, who have been baptized into the Sacred Trinity—what have I to do anymore with idols?” You may make an idol of that boy or girl of yours. You may make an idol of that house or garden of yours. You may make an idol of that business or profession of yours. Do not do it, I entreat you, but rather say, “What have I to do anymore with idols?”

8. *I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree.* That is what Ephraim says, and this is what God says.

8. *From Me is your fruit found.* [See Sermon #557, Volume 10—WHERE TO FIND FRUIT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] We are never so fruitful as when we get all our fruit from God! We always shine in borrowed light and we are always fruitful in borrowed fruitfulness.

9. *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? Prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the LORD are right.* Did your murmuring spirit say that they were not right? Because you have had some sore trial, did your repining spirit say that they were not right? They are certainly right and you shall see that it is so one day! “The ways of the Lord are right.”

9. *And the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.* Even in God’s good ways, transgressors cannot stand—they fall even when they try to praise God, or to pray to Him—and this is a sad proof of man’s deep depravity, that even when he is engaged in the worship of God, the thing which is, in itself, good, becomes obnoxious to God by reason of the sin which is certain to be mingled with it!

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

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

CHRISTIANS, AND THEIR COMMUNION WITH GOD

NO. 2430

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 15, 1887.

*“Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O LORD have we waited for You,
the desire of our soul is for Your name, and for the
remembrance of You. With my soul have I desired You in the night;
yes, by my spirit within me will I seek You early.”*
Isaiah 26:8, 9.

IT is something when a man truly knows that there is a God. Behind the doubt of the existence of God, many men shield themselves and permit themselves to indulge in iniquities of which they might be ashamed if they did not make a cloak of their atheism. I would have no man live doubting the existence of God—such a doubt cannot help him to live better—it may cause him to live much worse.

It is a great deal more, however, when men so think of God as to fear Him. We say, concerning criminals—it is customary to say in *legal* terms—“not having the fear of God before their eyes.” There is a fear of God which, though it is a spirit of bondage, is, nevertheless, salutary, and works well for the common good. There are men, doubtless, who are restrained from excess of iniquity by the belief that God has judgments by which He can overthrow them and, that at the end they will have to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. It will be a sad day for this world when that fear ceases to operate upon men!

But, Beloved, it is something infinitely higher and pertaining to quite a different sphere when we come truly to know God—when we have not merely a belief in His existence, but a distinct consciousness and realization of it—when we can speak of God, not as of some personage far away, but as of One with whom we are intimately acquainted, One who has been a Friend to us, One who has even communed with us as a man talks with his friend. Some of you cannot possibly reach to that point as you are, for God is a Spirit, and only spiritual men can discern Him—and as yet you are not partakers of the Spirit of God. Some of you here present are still carnally minded and the carnal mind cannot perceive spiritual things. Least of all can it perceive that highest spiritual object, the ever-blessed God! “You must be born again,” for, “except a man is born again (from above), he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” We may set it out before your eyes in glorious light, but it is not light that the blind man needs, it is *eyes*! And eyes must be given to you who are spiritually blind if you are ever to see God. There is One who has come on purpose to open the eyes of the blind and if your eyes are opened by Him, then shall

you see God and truly begin to know Him! This spiritual vision makes a grave distinction between those who know God and those who do not know Him. And it is produced by a wondrous change called regeneration, in which darkness passes away and the true Light of God dawns upon the spirit.

I. Now, coming to our text, I shall have to say, first, that THERE IS, IN THE PEOPLE OF GOD, A PRINCIPLE OF COMMUNION WITH GOD.

For, first, *this is where their spiritual life begins*. “I will arise and go to my father,” was the proof that the prodigal was really restored in heart. When he cleansed himself, touched himself up and joined himself to a citizen of that country and began to work instead of wasting his substance in riotous living, it was a considerable improvement. It is always a good thing for a man to work rather than to waste his time in the indulgence of his vices. But he had not, *then*, begun to live spiritually. It was when he remembered his father and the cry of his spirit was, “I will arise and go to my father,” that the gracious work was begun in his soul!

Beloved, if any of you are seeking after righteousness by your own works, or by your prayers, I do not know that this is a token of a new life. It may be that you are even in the dark seeking after God if, perhaps, you may find Him there, but when there rises in your spirit this thought, “I must find God, I must come to God, I must confess my sin unto the Lord, I must lay myself at the Lord’s feet, I must meet with Him,” *then* we hope the best things for you! So long as you are content with ministers, priests, sacraments, books, prayers and all that *you can do*, you are satisfied with the mere shell! But when there awakens in your spirit this desire, “It is God whom I have offended; unto God will I make my confession. It is from God that I need pardon, oh, that I knew where I might find Him! I would come even to His seat.” When there is formed within your spirit this resolve, “I will seek the Lord’s face until He turns to me in love and accepts me as His child”—*then* it is that spiritual life begins. Your first true dealings with God, after a spiritual fashion, are infinitely more important than all the outward forms of religion, whatever they may be! I am not judging one form more than another, but, if you are content with the externals and do not come to the *internals*. If you do not come to close grips with God and humble yourself before Him, you know not, as yet, what spiritual life really means! This, then, is where spiritual life begins—with coming into communion with God.

And, Beloved, *this is where the life of the real Christian grows and makes advances*. We behold the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and that gives us hope. That gives us peace. That gives us rests and in proportion as we know more of God, as He reveals Himself in the Person of His dear Son, our Graces grow. Faith has for its meat and its drink the knowledge of God. Knowing Him, and His exceedingly great and precious promises, we come to rest in Him more fully. Ignorance is the enemy of faith, but a knowledge of God greatly strengthens and increases our confidence in Him. You do not grow in Grace, my Brothers and Sisters, by listening to fine oratory, even though it is of a sacred kind. The real growth comes to you when God the Holy Spirit, Himself, dwells with you. It is not when you have been so many minutes on your knees, or have

read so many chapters in the Bible, that you necessarily grow—it is when you have spoken with God, and God has spoken with you—when He who is the Alpha of your spiritual life is all the letters of it right up to the Omega! He has worked all our works in us, and without Him we can do nothing. He is the truly strong man who lives near to God. That man can do anything who throws Himself back on the all sufficiency of the Most High. Rest upon yourself, or trust in anything below the stars, and you will dwindle and decay. But rest in God, and come into close contact with the Divine Invisible—let your rock and refuge be His throne—and you will go from strength to strength by the power of God the Holy Spirit that shall dwell in you!

Next, beloved Friends, *it becomes to the Believer the tenor of his life to please God*. That is a beautiful testimony that is borne concerning Enoch—“Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” There are many who have not yet even *thought* of doing such a thing as this, and there are some who may have thought of it who, perhaps, have not yet attained to it. But what a blessed thing it is for a man to be brought to trust in the Lord Jesus and to seek the Glory of the Savior and to yield *his* will to *God’s* will! And to feel that God is his All and in all that He does, he strives to please God! You know what it is to be pleased with your child and pleased with what he has done. It is not perfect—from your standpoint you can see many imperfections—but still, it is most acceptable as coming from your child. He has done it with all his heart and you are well pleased with him.

Well now, that should be the tenor, and it *is* the tenor of the life of every man who has really been renewed in the spirit of his mind by the work of the Spirit of God! Jesus could truly say of His Father, “I always do those things that please Him.” And in proportion as we grow like Jesus, this becomes a true description of our lives—they are well pleasing unto God. What a contrast there is between the man who pleases God and the ungodly man! The ungodly man does what pleases himself, or what pleases his wife, or what will please his neighbors. But the Christian man, although he is willing to please his neighbor for his good to edification, yet aims *first* at this mark—not to please men, but to please God. This makes his life altogether different from the life of the man who has not God in all his thoughts.

Again, Beloved, *this principle of communion with God becomes the very flower of our lives*. When are we happiest? There is no room for question here—every Believer knows that he is happiest when nearest to his God. I hope that for the most part we enjoy such full communion with God that our peace is like a river. But there *are* times of great tidal waves of fellowship when we get nearer to God than at other seasons. We have our Tabors and our transfiguration glories. We can sometimes say, “Whether in the body, or out of the body, we cannot tell: God knows.” And we then know nothing else but God—we seem wrapped up in Him! I am not speaking of any mysticism, although it does happen that among the mystical writers this experience is most often spoken of. This is a joy which belongs to all Believers when they enter into the secret place of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty!

The Christian man is not at his best when he is healthiest, or when he is wealthiest, or when he has been most successful, or when he has had the praise of men. No, the day in which the flower of his life has come to the climax of its beauty and pours out its sweetest perfumes—the day in which his life is life, life indeed, is when he is drinking in that loving kindness of God which is better, even, than life itself! See, then, as the worldling finds his highest enjoyment here or there, the Christian finds the summit of his joy in fellowship with his God!

I must not leave this point till I have said one other thing about this principle of communion with God—*this is the hunger and this is the thirst of the Christian*. “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” To get near to God is the great passion of our spirit. To accomplish this to the fullest, we would face grim Death in his den! Yes, sometimes we could almost use the extravagant language of Rutherford, when he declared that if God were on the other side, to get at Him he would swim through seven Hells, for nothing can keep back the impetuosity of a heart that is all aflame with love to God and feels that all its Heaven lies in communion with Him!

Well now, dear Friends, if you and I are conscious that this is true, that there is in us a principle of fellowship with God, then notice that *this proves that there has been a Divine renewal worked in us*. It was not so once. Alas, it was very much otherwise! If news could have been truly proclaimed that God was dead, some of you would have been very happy to hear it, for you would have been no more worried with thoughts of eternity and of the Day of Judgement! But now, what an awful thing it would be for you if, even for a moment, you indulged the thought that there was no God! Why, you would have lost everything! All joy would have vanished from you in an instant if God were not real to you! Then what a change is this, a radical change, one which could only have been worked by supernatural power—as great a change as when the dead rise from their corruption and come forth into newness of life!

This proves your sonship, too, for no man cries after God and longs for fellowship with Him, except it is upon the principle of, “Abba, Father.” Slaves do not crave the presence of their masters! It is *sons* who long to be with their father. You are a true son of the Highest if you hunger and thirst after God!

This proves your holiness, too, in a measure, for like will to like and if your heart pants after God, you have been made a partaker of the Divine Nature so far, at least, that you are now striving after holiness, or else I am sure you would not be seeking after God. Unholy hearts feel a repulsion to the holy God and seek to fly from Him. But the holy soul longs for communion with the holy God. That is a clear proof that you have had implanted within you a spiritual nature! There is within you, now, a new heart and a right spirit! You have passed into the higher life. You have become a spiritual man, otherwise you would not long for this spiritual God!

This proves your heavenliness, too, for that same desire which draws you to God is drawing you to Heaven. What is Heaven but to be with God? And He who now is drawing you with cords of a man and with

bands of love, to His own glorious self, is by that very process drawing you towards the place where He reveals His face! And He is also making you fit for that Beatific Vision which shall be your everlasting happiness!

II. Now, secondly—and I must be brief on many points here—THIS PRINCIPLE DISPLAYS ITSELF AND WORKS IN VARIOUS WAYS.

Begin the text—“Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O Lord, have we waited for You.” We are longing for God and it is dark and cloudy—what shall we do? Why, *wait for Him*. Instead of impatiently complaining of His Providential dispensations which would be flying off at a tangent from Him, we stand still that we may see the salvation of God! We have come to our Red Sea and we can go no farther. And now our love to God, our fellowship with Him makes us just abide where we are until He says, “Go forward.” And then we march through the sea, dry-shod. Waiting is often a very heavenly experience. You will find it a difficult thing to do if you doubt. He that doubts, hurries and worries, but he that believes does not make haste through cowardly fear! He waits and sings to himself, “My Soul, wait you only upon God; for my expectation is from Him.”

This waiting is expectation. It means, “I cannot see the way out of this difficulty, but I *shall* see it. I do not yet perceive God’s plan for my deliverance. but I *shall* be delivered. I do not know how bread shall be given me, but I *shall* have it even if God has to send ravens with it, or to rend Heaven, itself, in two! I shall have His promises fulfilled and I will wait His time.” This patiently waiting upon God is one of the blessed displays of a spirit that is at perfect peace with God and longs to keep in fellowship with Him.

“Yes,” says the text, “in the way of Your judgments, O Lord, have we waited for You.” Sometimes, the way of God’s judgments may mean the appointed way, the regular way. I believe that God’s people love prayer because it is one of the ways in which God meets with them. You love the House of Prayer and the hearing of the Gospel because it is in the sanctuary and in the preaching of the Gospel that God has often met with you. We have had many happy Sabbaths, here, and on these little Sabbaths in the middle of the week, as I often call our Thursday night services, the Lord has manifested Himself to us as He does not unto the world and we have waited for Him expecting to meet Him in His house. These Believers waited upon God until the ordained time for deliverance from His judgments. Perhaps the husband or the child was dead, or, possibly, the judgments were of another kind. Famine desolated the land—the water in the brooks was dried up. Enemies were all over the country ravaging with their sword and their bow—blood flowed freely and then God’s servants waited for God. They expected that He would come at such a time of need and display Himself in some unusual manner. My Brother, my Sister, whenever you have a great trouble, expect a great mercy! You will find it the path of wisdom when you have a great joy, to be afraid, but when you have a great sorrow, then have a high anticipation of blessing! That big wave is washing up some jewel that lay deep down at the bottom of the sea—it would never have come to your feet if it had not been for the storm that washed it where you can now find it!

Sometimes the Lord comes with spiritual judgments to His people. He blights and blasts and withers all their hopes and they are ready to despair. Yet they must not despair, but each one must say, "Lord, show me why You contend with me. Now come in and deal with me in mercy. When You have stripped me, when You have scourged me, yes, when You have slain me, then come and fulfill Your Word, 'Your dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.'" Beloved, see what it is to wait upon God in His judgments! You know how hypocrites do—they wait upon God, cap in hand, while His service *pays* them—but as soon as ever the Lord begins to try them, or somebody laughs at them, or their religion seems to injure their business, then good-bye to religion! But they are the true men who can truthfully say, "In the way of Your judgments, O Lord, have we waited for You."

You can tell a good dog when you see him follow his master. Though somebody who wants to steal him offers him a dainty bone, he will have nothing to do with him, but he will keep close to his master's heels. And the true Believer follows God when he seems to get nothing by it—even when he appears to be a loser by it. He loves not God with a cupboard love, for what he gets from Him in this world, but with a child's love, which says, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." So, you see, this communion with God leads to waiting for Him.

Sometimes we do not seem as if we could get quite as far as that, and then *this communion leads to desiring*—"The desire of our soul is to Your name." We want to know the Character of God which is set forth in His name. We love that Character! We desire to have it and to reflect it in our own lives. Our desire is to God's name which signifies not only His Character, but His honor and His Glory. We desire to see Him glorified! Our heart is glad when Christ is glorified and our spirit is sad when His name is dishonored.

Surely, this name means the Word of God, for the Word of God is God's name written large, and we have a desire towards God's Word! O Beloved, the longer one lives upon God's Word, the more he feels that he cannot endure anything which is other than God's Word! There is a great difference between the largest words of men and the very smallest words of God, if such there are. I have heard of a certain Divine who preached a sermon and afterwards asked an aged man what he thought of it. This was a very foolish thing for him to do. The old man answered, "Well, I have not much to say." "But," enquired the minister, "did you not think that there were capital divisions and wonderful distinctions in the sermon?" He said, "Yes; but there was one distinction you seemed to me to forget in your sermon." "What was that?" "The distinction between meat and bone—you gave us a large quantity of bone, but I did not perceive that I had any meat—and there is a vast distinction there." When a man once gets to feed upon the Word of God, all the rest is bones, and he lets the dogs have them. But as for himself, he needs spiritual meat and he must have it! Cannot many of you say that you desire to know the Character of God and to reflect it—that you desire to spread the Glory of God and that you desire to feed upon the Word of God? Your desire is to His name!

And, once more, your desire is to *remember the Lord*—“And to the remembrance of You.” I wish that I had a memory that was so narrow that it could only hold the things of God! Do you not sometimes find that if you hear a bad thing, it sticks in your memory? Oh, what an abominable memory that is which lays hold of all the draft of Sodom and cannot get rid of it, while the timbers that come floating down from Lebanon are often allowed to go by! But our desire is to the remembrance of God—I am sure that it is. Oh, that I did always remember Him when I wake and until I sleep—and in my dreams still remember Him and if I wake in the night be still with Him! This is what we want! Our fellowship with God is such that if we do not always remember Him, yet our desire is still towards the remembrance of Him, and we desire to see repeated what we remember of Him. If He has drawn us a thousand times, we desire that He would draw us yet again. And for the great world and the one Church of Christ in it, our cry is, “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord! Awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Are You not He that has cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?” Our desire is that we might see Him again as we have seen Him in the sanctuary—and see Him as His goings were of old when He showed Himself mighty in the deliverance of His people! I, for one, can say that my soul desires this beyond *anything*. Oh, that He would do, again, what He did in our fathers’ days! He can do it and He will! This is the desire of His people. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, we beseech You!

Then, again, observe that this principle of communion shows itself *in a personal yearning*. Did you notice, as we read the chapter, that the eighth verse is in the plural and the ninth verse is in the singular? “Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O Lord, have we waited for You; the desire of our soul is to Your name and to the remembrance of You. With *my* soul have I desired you in the night.” O Brothers and Sisters, this lonely, personal desire of the Believer after God, is another form of fellowship with Him! Sometimes, we feel as if we were in the darkness of night, all alone—there is nobody to speak with us, or to speak for us. Then what a blessing it is if we can say, “With my soul have I desired You in the night”! Then have I needed no other candle for my darkened chamber, no other sun to make my day, but my Lord and His sweet Presence! I will not dwell on this experience because I think that many of you can say that it is so with you, also. It has been very dark with you. You have had a world of inward trouble, but still, above it all, there has been this desire after God, for you could not do without Him. You have said concerning your choicest earthly comforts—

***“If you should take them all away,
Yet would I not repine.
If you, my God, will but come to me,
Let them all go, for I have all
I need when I have Thee.”***

This principle of communion takes one other form, that of personal seeking—“Yes, with my spirit within me will I seek You early”—seek You with my spirit, not with lip-service or head-service, but with heart-service, with my spirit within me! There is a great deal to be done indoors, Brothers and Sisters, and there are some who are so busy outside

that they do not attend to anything inside. But it is a blessed thing when the soul in its inward parts is all alive in seeking after God—"With my spirit within me will I seek You." And notice that it is, "I will seek You *early*." I will be out on time. I will waste not a moment, I will not delay. I will seek You and I will seek You now.

I have a wish springing up in my heart that some here present would begin to seek the Lord now. But if any of you have sought Him and have known Him and you have lost communion with Him, seek the renewal of that communion at once! Do not think that it will take weeks for you to get back where you once were. Conversion may take place in a second of time and so may restoration! It is not always so—it may be a long process—but it is sometimes very speedy. "Before I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." I think that some of us have known what it is to feel as dull and stupid as a silly sheep. But while we have been in the House of God, or while we have been alone, suddenly the Spirit of the Lord has visited us and we have taken the wings of eagles and have been up and away! And we wondered what had happened to us, for we had been turned from a deadly state into one of life and vigor!

Listen to this text and see how short a business this heart-reviving is. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." What is needed? "If any man hears My voice and opens the door." It does not take long to open a door, does it? Yet that is all Christ asks of us! He does not say, "If anybody sweeps the house and gets the supper ready, I will come and partake of it." No, but, "If any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Dear Heart, you know your Lord—you know His voice and the very sound of His fingers on the door! Open to Him! Say, "Come in, my Lord. If I have kept You out, my Dearly-Beloved. If I have kept You out till Your head is wet with dew and Your locks with the drops of the night, I beg ten thousand pardons of You! Come in, I beseech You, and sup with me, that I also may sup with You." It can soon be done and I pray that it may be. At any rate, this is how God's child often has to cry—"Come to me, Lord! With my spirit within me will I seek You early."

Perhaps somebody says, "Well, I have been praying the Lord to come to me, but I have not at once had His company." How did you expect Him to come? "I thought I would be made glad," you say. Yes, but the Lord sometimes comes to His people and *humbles* them—and when your soul is humbled in the dust, it may be certain that the Lord is with you—quite as certain as if you were full of joy! Sometimes He comes to us with the spirit of chastisement and rebuke. Well, do not pick and choose—so long as He comes! Seek Him early, for He comes for your good and He will come and bless you.

III. I was to have said, thirdly, that THE LORD TAKES PLEASURE IN THIS COMMUNION WITH HIS PEOPLE, but I must not detain you.

I will just point out that the next to the last verse in this chapter shows how the Lord loves the fellowship of His people. He invites them to commune with Him—"Come, My people." He points out the way to fellowship—"Enter you into your chambers, and shut your doors about you." That is, get alone with your God. Then He provides for this communion—

Christ is our hiding place and He, Himself comes to meet us—“Come My people.” I invite you, Beloved, tonight if you can, or as soon as you can, to have a special season given up to nothing else but fellowship with God, that you may now begin, again, a fellowship which afterwards shall not easily be broken. Pray! If you feel that you cannot pray, read. Let God speak to you. Get into conversation with Him, somehow. A conversation, you know, needs two to engage in it. Hear what God says to you, read a passage from His Word. And then pray. If you find you cannot pray, praise! Say something to Him and then read, again, and let Him speak to you. But come not away until He has spoken to you and you have very distinctly spoken with Him. Let this be the burden of your prayer, “Lord, I want to come to You; I want, through Jesus Christ, my Mediator, to have fellowship with You, and to abide in Him in nearness to You.” May the Lord help you in this matter, for truly there is no life like it!

I wish that I could invite all here present to such a life as that, but there is, as I have told you before, the previous step. There *must be the new birth*—there must be faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the Gospel which we have continually to preach to you, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” And then you shall know that there is a God! Then you shall have fellowship with God and then your life shall be, in its measure, like the life of those in Heaven who behold the Lord’s face and serve Him day and night in His Temple.

May the Lord bless these words to all of us, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ISAIAH 26.

Verse 1. *In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah.* God would have His people to be a singing people! They often sigh—they should more often sing. God makes their songs and appoints the song for the day, and so helps them to cheer the darkest day with some melodious music.

1. *We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.* Jerusalem may fall, her walls may be destroyed till not one stone is left upon another, but still, “we have a strong city.” In the salvation of God we live and are safe. Our place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks. The eternal purposes of God shall guard the safety of His people.

2. *Open you the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps the Truth of God may enter in.* This city is for the righteous, for those who keep the Truth of God. They are to dwell in this city—not fighting in the open, not wandering in the plains—but dwelling at ease behind the massive walls and bulwarks which God Himself has appointed in His salvation.

3. *You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You.* This is our city. By faith, we enter into the purposes and promises of God and there we dwell in perfect peace! The adversary may thunder outside the walls, but what of that? He may threaten that He will capture the city, but how can he do so when the Lord is there? This is a sweet, sweet verse—may you all get the very mar-

row of it! “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You.”

4. *Trust you in the LORD forever.* Not sometimes, but always. Not for a certain number of days during your season of trial, but if the trial should last a lifetime, “trust you in the Lord forever.”

4. *For in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.* If He could fail you, you would do well to be looking out for another shelter. But since His strength is everlasting, let your faith also be everlasting. Lives there a man who has fully trusted in God and yet has been confused? Is there one *anywhere* who has really relied upon the invisible power of Jehovah and yet has found Him fail in the hour of need? It cannot and it shall not be!

5, 6. *For He brings down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, He lays it low; He lays it low, even to the ground; He brings it even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy.* This is always God’s way—overturning the great and the proud and casting down the mighty works of men, so that he who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm soon finds himself in a pitiful condition. All the proud, who glory in their own power, shall be as when a city is battered down and the very dust is trodden by “the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy.”

7. *The way of the just is uprightness: You, Most Upright, do weigh the path of the just.* God makes a plain path for His own people and He, knowing their way, forms a right estimate of it. Let them never fear for a moment that He will condemn them because of the condemnation of their fellow men! He takes care, Himself, to weigh the path of the just and His scales cannot err.

8, 9. *Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O LORD, have we waited for You; the desire of our soul is to Your name, and to the remembrance of You. With my soul have I desired You in the night; yes, with my spirit within and will I seek You early: for when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.* You notice that the song given to us in this chapter is all concerning God. We are bid to trust in Him, we are told how safe are they that do so, we are shown how futile is all strength apart from Him and now the desire of His saints is set forth as being toward Him, and toward Him alone.

10. *Let favor be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD.* Until men are changed in heart, and renewed in nature, they will not see God. If you could transport them to the land of uprightness, where there would be no sin to tempt them, yet even *then* they would not know the Lord! Still is our Savior’s message true, “You must be born again.” O unconverted men and women, we look upon you through our tears because you are incapable of everything that is good and right until the Lord, in Covenant mercy, renews your hearts and brings you to know Him! Of the ungodly man it is truly declared, “In the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord.”

11. *LORD, when Your hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yes, the fire of Your enemies shall devour them.* There are some people who will not see and, as the old proverb has it, there are none so blind as those that will not see. But they will one day be *made* to see, if not to their salvation, then to their everlasting shame and confusion! They shall be made to see that, after all, there is a God and that He is strong to punish the ungodly, and to overthrow His adversaries! I pray that no one of you may refuse to see by the light of the Gospel until he is forced to see by the blaze of the Judgment Day. Yet, alas, there will be such!

12. *LORD, You will ordain peace for us: for You have also worked all our works in us.* That is a delightful verse! An ordination is spoken of here, for God has ordained peace for His people and they must have it—and they shall have it! On the other hand, His people ordain glory for Him, for they declare, “You have also worked all our works in us.” Thus we also sing—

**“And every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are His alone.”**

13. *O LORD our God, other lords beside You have had dominion over us: but by You only will we make mention of Your name.* “O Lord, how sadly, how long, how grievously did those other lords domineer over us! But from this time forth we will know no name but Yours and, when we mention it, it shall be by Your Grace, and by Your power, alone, that we even put our trust in Your wondrous name!

14. *They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore have You visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.* Yes, our lusts are all dead! They will never live again, thank God! The Sword of the Spirit has slain them—“they are deceased.” We want to have nothing more to do with them, we desire that the very memory of them should perish.

15. *You have increased the nation, O LORD, You have increased the nation: You are glorified.* God is always glorified in the increase of His people. Therefore we should, above all other reasons, pray for the increase of the Church because God will thereby be glorified.

15, 16. *You had removed it far unto all the ends of the earth. LORD, in trouble have they visited You, they poured out a prayer when Your chastening was upon them.* That is true of hypocrites! But it is also sweetly true of some whom God is bringing to Himself. Child after child has died, loss after loss has broken down the business. Now they turn to God. Oh, it is a blessed loss that makes us find our God! What we gain is infinitely more than what we have lost. What a mercy that God is willing to hear us in the time of trouble, that all our putting off and rejection of Him do not make Him put us off! I remember one who wished to hire a horse and buggy to go to a certain town and he went to the place where he could hire it, and asked the price. He thought that it was too much, so he went round the town to other people and found that he could not get it any cheaper. But when he came back to the place first visited, the owner said to him, “Oh, no, no! I will not let my horses to you. You have been round

to everybody else, and now you come back to me because you cannot get what you want elsewhere. I will have nothing to do with you.” That is *man’s* way of dealing with his fellow man, but it is not the Lord’s method of dealing with us! When you and I have gone round to everybody else, the Lord still welcomes us when we come back to Him! Yes, just as harbors of refuge are meant for ships in distress that would not have put in there except for the storm and danger, such is the mercy of the Lord God in Jesus Christ. If you are forced to accept it, you are still welcome to it! If you are driven to it by stress of weather, you may come in, for the harbor was made for just such as you are.

17, 18. *Like as a woman with child, that draws near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and cries out in her pangs, so have we been in Your sight O LORD. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have, as it were, brought forth wind; we have not worked any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.* Ah, no, all the agonies of a mind, all the troubles of a soul cannot save it! This is the work of Grace. This is the gift of God! What a mercy it is that such a cheering promise as this next verse contains comes in just here

19. *Your dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.* That note of resurrection comes in as a word of comfort to the most dispirited, the most despairing. As the dead shall live because of Christ, even so is there hope for you who are driven to a very death of despair! You cannot live by your own power. Your hopes are all gone, dead and buried, and you lie helpless and lost—but as the Lord will raise the dead from their graves—so will He give you hope and bless and save you, if you come and trust in Him.

19-21. *Awake and sing, you that dwell in dust: for your dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, My people, enter into your chambers and shut your doors about you: hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past. For, behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.* The blood of the murdered shall cry to God from the ground, as did Abel’s. The slain in battle shall not be forgotten. God will come and punish the earth for its iniquities. Blessed are they that hide themselves in Christ, till the indignations are past.

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

THE DESIRE OF THE SOUL IN SPIRITUAL DARKNESS NO. 31

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 24, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL.**

*“With my soul have I desired You in the night.”
Isaiah 26:9*

NIGHT appears to be a time peculiarly favorable to devotion. Its solemn stillness helps to free the mind from that perpetual din which the cares of the world will bring around it. And the stars looking down from Heaven upon us shine as if they would attract us up to God. I know not how you may be affected by the solemnities of midnight, but when I have sat alone musing on the great God and the mighty universe, I have felt that, indeed, I could worship Him, for night seemed to be spread abroad as a very temple for adoration, while the moon walked as high priest amid the stars! The worshippers and I, myself, joined in that silent song which they sang unto God—“Great are You, O God! Great in Your works. When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have ordained, what is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him?” I find that this sense of the power of midnight not only acts upon religious men but there is a certain poet, whose character—a man very far from understanding true religion—one whom I may, I suppose, justly style an infidel, a libertine of the worst order and yet he says concerning night in one of his poems—

*“Tis midnight on the mountains’ brown,
The cold round moon shines deeply down.
Blue roll the waters, blue the sky
Spreads like an ocean hung on high,
Bespangled with those isles of light,
So wildly, spiritually bright.
Who ever gazed upon them shining,
And turning to earth without repining,
Nor wish’d for wings to flee away,
And mix with their eternal ray?”*

Even with the most irreligious person, a man farthest from spiritual thought, it seems that there is some power in the grandeur and stillness of night to draw him up to God. I trust many of us can say, like David, “I have thought upon You continually, I have mused upon Your name in the night watches and with desire have I desired You in the night.” But I leave that thought altogether. I shall not speak of natural night at all, although there may be a great deal of room for poetic thought and expression. I shall address myself to two orders of persons and shall endeavor to show what I conceive to be the meaning of the text. May God make it useful to you both. First, I shall speak to *confirmed Christians*. And from

this text I shall bring one or two remarks to bear upon their case, if they are in darkness. Second, I shall speak to *newly awakened souls* and try, if I can, to find some of them who can say, "With my soul have I desired You in the night."

I. I am about to address this text to the more confirmed Believer. And the first fact I shall educe from it—the Truth of which I am sure he will very readily admit—is THE CHRISTIAN HAS NOT ALWAYS A BRIGHT SHINING SUN—that *he has seasons of darkness and of light*. True, it is written in God's Word, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace." And it is a great Truth that religion—the true religion of the living God—is calculated to give a man happiness below as well as bliss above. But, notwithstanding, experience tells us that if the course of the just is "as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day," yet sometimes that light is eclipsed. At certain periods clouds and darkness cover the sun and he beholds no clear shining of the daylight but walks in darkness and sees no light. Now there are many who have rejoiced in the Presence of God for a season. They have basked in the sunshine God has been pleased to give them in the earlier stages of their Christian career. They have walked along the "green pastures" by the side of the "still waters" and suddenly—in a month or two—they find that glorious sky is clouded—instead of "green pastures" they have to tread the sandy desert. In the place of "still waters" they find streams brackish to their taste and bitter to their spirits. They say, "Surely, if I were a child of God, this would not happen." Oh, say not so, you who are walking in darkness! The best of God's saints have their nights. The dearest of His children have to walk through a weary wilderness. There is not a Christian who has enjoyed perpetual happiness—there is no Believer who can always sing a song of joy! It is not every lark that can always carol. It is not every star that can always be seen. And not every Christian is always happy. Perhaps the King of Saints gave you a season of great joy at first because you were a raw recruit and He would not put you into the roughest part of the battle when you had first enlisted. You were a tender plant and He nursed you in the hothouse till you could stand severe weather. You were a young child and therefore He wrapped you in furs and clothed you in the softest mantle. But now you have become strong and the case is different. Capuano holidays do not suit Roman soldiers. And they would not agree with Christians. We need clouds and darkness to exercise our faith, to cut off self-dependence and make us put more faith in Christ—and less in evidence, less in experience, less in frames and feelings. The best of God's children—I repeat it again for the comfort of those who are suffering depression of spirits—have their nights! Sometimes it is a night over the whole Church at once. And I fear we have very much of that night now. There are times when Zion is under a cloud, when the whole fine gold becomes dim and the glory of Zion is departed. There are seasons when we do not hear the clear preaching of the Word. When the Doctrines are withheld. When the Glory of the Lord God of Jacob is dim. When His name is not exalted.

When the traditions of men are taught instead of the Inspirations of the Holy Spirit. And such a season is that when the whole Church is dark. Of course each Christian participates in it. He goes about and weeps and cries, "O God, how long shall poor Zion be depressed? How long shall her shepherds be 'dumb dogs that cannot bark?' Shall her watchmen be always blind? Shall the silver trumpet sound no more? Shall not the voice of the Gospel be heard in her streets?" Oh, there are seasons of darkness for the entire Church! God grant we may not have to pass through another! But that starting from this period on, the sun may rise never to set, till, like a sea of glory, the light of brilliance shall spread from pole to pole!

At other times, this darkness over the soul of the Christian rises from *temporal distresses*. He may have had a "misfortune" as it is called—something has gone wrong in his business, or an enemy has done something against him. Perhaps death has struck down a favorite child—bereavement has snatched away the darling of his bosom—or the crops are blighted. The winds refuse to bear his ships homeward. A vessel strikes upon a rock, another founders, all goes ill with him and, like a gentleman who called to see me this week, he may be able to say, "Sir, I prospered far more when I was a worldly man than I have done since I have become a Christian—for, since then, everything has appeared to go wrong with me. I thought," he said, "that religion had the promise of this life as well as of that which is to come." I told him, Yes, it had. And so it should be in the end. But he must remember there was one great legacy which Christ left His people. And I was glad he had come in for a share of it—"In the world you shall have tribulation. In Me you shall have peace." Yes! You may be troubled about this, you may be saying, "Look at So-and-So—see how he spreads himself like a green bay tree. He is an extortioner and wicked man, yet everything he does prospers." You may even observe his death and say, "there are no bands in his death." They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. Ah, Beloved! You are come into the sanctuary of God this morning and now shall you understand their end! God has set them in slippery places and He casts them down to destruction! Better to have a Christian's days of sorrow than a worldling's days of mirth. Better to have a Christian's sorrows than a worldling's joys. Ah, happier to be chained in a dungeon with a Paul than reign in the palace with an Ahab. Better to be a child of God in poverty than a child of Satan in riches. Cheer up, then, you downcast spirit, if this is your trial. Remember that many saints have passed through the same. And the best and most eminent Believers have had their nights.

"But oh," says another, "you have not described my night, Sir. I have not much amiss in business. And I would not care if I had—but I have a night in my spirit. O Sir," says one, "I have not a single evidence of my Christianity! I was a child of God, I know. But something tells me that I am none of His, now. There was a season when I flattered myself that I knew something about godliness and God. But now I doubt whether I

have any part or lot in the matter. Satan suggests that I must dwell in endless flames. I see no hope for me. I am afraid I am an hypocrite. I think I have imposed on the Church and upon myself also. I fear I am none of His. When I turn over God's Scriptures there is no promise. When I look within, corruption is black before me. Then while others are commending me, I am accusing myself of all manner of sin and corruption. I could not have thought that I was half so bad. I am afraid there cannot have been a work of Divine Grace in my heart, or else I should not have so many corrupt imaginations, filthy desires, hard thoughts of God—so much pride, so much selfishness and self-will. I am afraid I am none of His!" Now, that is the very reason why you *are* one of His, that you are able to say that—for God's people pass through the night. They have their nights of sorrow. I love to hear a man talk like that. I would not have him do so always. He ought at times to enter into "the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free." But I know that frequently bondage will get hold of the spirit. But you say, "Surely no one ever suffers like that!" I confess I do, myself, constantly—and very often there are times when I could not prove my Election in Jesus Christ, nor my Adoption, though I rejoice that for the most part I can cry—

***"A debtor to mercy alone
Of Covenant mercy I sing."***

Yet at other seasons I am sure the meanest lamb in Jesus' fold I reckon ten thousand times more in advance than myself! And if I might but sit down on the meanest bench in the Kingdom of Heaven and did but know I was in, I would barter everything I had—and I do not believe there ever existed a Christian yet who did not now and then doubt his interest in Jesus. I think, when a man says, "I never doubt," it is quite time for us to doubt *him*. It is quite time for us to begin to say, "Ah, poor Soul, I am afraid you are not on the road at all, for if you were, you would see so many things in yourself and so much Glory in Christ more than you deserve, that you would be so much ashamed of yourself, as even to say, 'It is too good to be true.'"

2. The first part, then, is fully established by *experience* that Christians very frequently have their nights. But the second thing here is that *a Christian's religion will keep its color in the night*. "With my soul have I desired You in the night." What a mighty deal of silver-slipper religion we have in this world. Men will follow Christ when everyone cries "Hosanna! Hosanna!" The multitude will crowd around the Man, then, and they will take Him by force and make Him a king when the sun shines, when the soft wind blows. They are like the plants upon the rock which sprang up and for a little while were green—but when the sun had risen with fervent heat they straightway withered away. Demas and Mr. Hold-the-World and a great many others are very pious people in easy times. They will always go with Christ by daylight and will keep in company so long as fashion gives religion the doubtful benefit of its patronage. But they will not go with Him in the night! There are some goods whose color you can only see by daylight—and there are many professors, the color of

whom you can only see by daylight. If they were in the night of trouble and persecution you would find that there was very little in them. They are good by daylight but they are bad by night! But, Beloved, do you not know that the best test of a Christian is the night? The nightingale, if she would sing by day when every goose is cackling, would be reckoned no better a musician than the wren. A Christian, if he only remained steadfast by daylight when every coward is bold, what would he be? There would be no beauty in his courage, no glory in his bravery. But it is because he can sing at night—sing in trouble—sing when he is driven well near to despair—it is *this* which proves his sincerity! It has its glory in the night. The stars are not visible by daylight, but they become apparent when the sun is set. There is full many a Christian whose piety did not burn much when he was in prosperity. But it will be known in adversity. I have marked it in some of my Brothers and Sisters now present, when they were in deep trial not long ago. I had not heard them discourse much about Christ before, but when God's hand had robbed them of their comfort, I remember that I could discern their religion infinitely better than I could before. Nothing can bring our religion out better than that. Grind the diamond a little and you shall see it glisten. Do but put a trouble on the Christian and his endurance of it will prove him to be of the true seed of Israel!

3. A third remark from this to the confirmed Christian is—*all that the Christian needs in the night is his God*. “With desire have I desired You in the night.” By day there are many things that a Christian will desire besides his Lord. But in the night he needs nothing but his God. I cannot understand how it is unless it is to be accounted for by the corruption of our spirit, that when everything goes well with us we are setting our affection, first on this object and then on another and then on another. And that desire which is as insatiable as death and as deep as Hell never rests satisfied. We are always wanting something, always desiring something else. But if you place a Christian in trouble, you will find that he does not need gold, then—that he does not need carnal honor, then—he wants his God! I suppose he is like the sailor—when he sails along smoothly, he loves to have fair weather and wants this and that to amuse himself with on deck. But when the winds blow, all that he needs is the haven! He does not desire anything else. The biscuit may be moldy, but he does not care. The water may be brackish, but he does not care. He does not think of it in the storm. He only thinks about the haven! It is just so with the Christian—when he is going along smoothly, he wants this and that comfort. He is aspiring after this position, or is wanting to obtain this and that elevation. But let him once doubt his interest in Christ—let him once get into some soul-distress and trouble, so that it is very dark—and all he will feel then is, “With desire have I desired You in the night.” When the child is put upstairs to bed, it may lie while the light is there and look at the trees that shake against the window and admire the stars that are coming out. But when it gets dark and the child is still awake, it cries for its parent. It cannot be amused by any-

thing else. So in daylight will the Christian look at anything. He will cast his eyes round on this pleasure and on that! But, when the darkness gathers, it is, "My God! My God! Why have You forsaken me? O why are You so far from me and from the word of my roaring?" Then it is—

***"Give me Christ or else I die!
These can never satisfy."***

4. But now one more remark before I leave my address to confirmed saints. *There are times when all the saints can do is to desire.* We have a vast number of evidences of piety—some are practical, some are experimental, some are doctrinal. And the more evidences a man has of his piety, the better, of course. We like a number of signatures to make a deed more valid, if possible. We like to invest property in a great number of trustees in order that it may be all the safer and so we love to have many evidences. Many witnesses will carry our case at the bar better than a few—and so it is well to have many witnesses to testify to our piety. But there are seasons when a Christian cannot get any. He can get scarcely one witness to come and attest his godliness. He asks for good works to come and speak for him. But there will be such a cloud of darkness about him that his good works will appear so black that he will not dare to think of their evidences. He will say, "True, I hope this is the right fruit. I hope I have served God, but I dare not plead these works as evidences." He will have lost assurance and with it his enjoyment of communion with God. "I have had that fellowship with Him," perhaps he will say and he will summon that communion to come and be an evidence. But he has forgotten it and it does not come and Satan whispers it is a fancy. And the poor evidence of communion has its mouth gagged so that it cannot speak. But there is one witness that very seldom is gagged and one that I trust the people of God can always apply, even in the night. And that is, "I have *desired* You—I have desired You in the night." "Yes, Lord, if I have not believed in You, I have *desired* You. And if I have not spent and been spent in Your service, yet one thing I know and the devil cannot beat me out of it, I have *desired* You—that I do know—and I have desired You in the night, too, when no one saw me, when troubles were round about me."

Now, my Beloved, I hope there are many of you here this morning who are strong in faith. You do not, perhaps, need what I have said. But I will advise you to take this cordial and if you do not need to drink it now, put it up in a small vial and carry it about with you till you do. You do not know how long it may be before you are faint. And as Mr. Great-Heart gave Christiana a bottle of wine to take with her, that she might drink when she was fatigued, so you take this and do not laugh at a poor despised Believer because he is not so strong as yourself. You may need this yourself some day. I tell you there are times when a Christian will be ready to creep into a mouse hole if he might but get into Heaven—when he would be glad to throw anything away to get into the smallest crevice to escape from his fears. There are times when the meanest evidence seems more precious than gold. When the very least ray of sunlight is worth all the

riches of Peru. And when a drop of comfort is more sweet than a whole Heaven may have been at other seasons. You may be brought into the same condition, so take this passage with you and have it ready—have it ready to plead at the Throne—“With desire have I desired You in the night.”

II. The second part of my sermon is to be occupied by speaking to NEWLY AWAKENED SOULS. And as I have made four remarks to confirmed Christians, I will now endeavor to answer three questions to those who are newly awakened.

The first question they would ask me is this—*How am I to know that my desires are proofs of a work of Grace in my soul?* Some of you may say, “I think I can go so far as the text—I have desired God. I know I have desired to be saved. I have desired to have an interest in the blood of Jesus, but how am I to know that it is a desire sent of God and how can I tell whether it will end in conversion?” Hear me, then, while I offer one or two tests.

1. First, you may tell whether your desires are of God by their *constancy*. Many a man, when he hears a stirring sermon, has a very strong desire to be saved. But he goes home and forgets it. He is as a man who sees his face in a glass, goes away and straightway forgets what manner of man he is. He returns again—once more the arrow sticks hard in the heart of the King’s enemy. He goes home, only to extract the arrow and his goodness is as the morning cloud. And as the early dew, it passes away. Has it been so with you? Have you had such a desire? Will tomorrow’s business take it away? Are you wanting Christ today? But will you despise Him tomorrow? Then I am afraid your desires are not of God. They are merely the desires of a naturally awakened conscience, just the stirrings of mere nature and they will go as far as nature can go and no farther. But if your desires are constant ones, take comfort. How long have they lasted? Have you been desiring Christ this last month or these last three or four months? Have you been seeking Him in prayer for a long season? And do you find that you are anxious after Christ on the Monday as well as on the Sunday? Do you desire Him in the shop when the intervals of business allow you to do so? Do you seek Him in the night—in the solemn loneliness, when no minister’s voice breaks on your ears—when no Truth is smiting your conscience? Is it but the hectic flush of the consumption that has come upon your cheek? Which is not the mark of health. Or is it the real heat of a true desire which marks a healthy soul? Are you desiring God constantly? I admit there will be variations even to our more sincere desires, but a certain measure of constancy is essential to their real value as evidences of a Divine work.

2. Again—you may discern whether they are right or wrong by their *efficacy*. Some persons desire Heaven very earnestly but they do not desire to leave off drunkenness—they desire to be saved but they do not desire salvation enough to shut their shops up on Sunday morning. Or to bridle their tongues and leave off speaking ill of their neighbors. They desire salvation, but they do not desire it enough to come, sometimes, on the

weekday to hear the Gospel. You may tell the truthfulness of your desires by their efficacy. If your desires lead you into real “works meet for repentance,” then they come from God. Wishes, you know, are nothing unless they are carried out. “Many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able” “Strive to enter in at the strait gate.” Seeking will not do—there must be *striving*. Our Prophet here informs us that while he desired God in the night, that desire was very efficacious. For, in the 8th verse he declares, “In the way of Your judgments, O Lord, we have waited for You.” This desire made me wait for Your judgments. How many do I hear say I am waiting for God, it is all I do—there I lie at the pool of Bethesda and one of these days an angel will come and stir the pool. Stop! How do you know you are not deceiving yourself? There is a friend waiting for me to tea—I will step into the room. There is no kettle on the fire—there is not a bit for me to eat. “Sir, we have been waiting for you.” But there is nothing ready in the house! I do not believe them. They could not have been waiting for me, or else they would have been ready! And waiting for God always implies being *ready*. Says a man, “I am waiting for God.” But he is not ready for God at all—he still keeps on his drunkenness—the house is still not swept! He is as worldly as ever. He is waiting—yes—but waiting implies being ready. And nobody is waiting that is not ready. You are not waiting for the coach until you have your coat and hat on and are looking out the door for it. And you are not waiting for God until you are ready to go with God. No man ought to say, I am waiting for God. No, Beloved, it is generally God who is waiting for us, rather than any of us waiting for Him! No sinner can be beforehand with Him. But the Prophet waited “in the way of God’s judgments”—that is, waited in the right place—waited in the House of God—waited under the sound of the Gospel. And then this desire led him to seek. “With my spirit within me will I seek You.” It led him to seek after God. Oh, the poor pitiful desires of some of you are very little good. An old writer says, “Hell is paved with good intentions.” I was not aware that there was any pavement at all—because it has no bottom—but at the same time I believe that the sides of the pit are hung round with good intentions. And men will feel themselves pricked and goaded from side to side with good designs that they once formed but never carried out—children that were strangled at birth—desires that never were brought into living acts—desires that sprang up like the mushroom in the night and like the fungus, were swept away! Like smoke from the chimney that stopped as soon as the fire had gone out. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, if these are your desires, they are not practical, they do not come of God. But if your desires have made you give up your drunkenness—have compelled you to renounce your theater-going—have compelled you to seek God with full purpose of heart—have brought you to give up one lust and another—take comfort, you are in the right road if your desires are practical desires!

3. Again—you can tell these desires by their *urgency*. Ah, you want to be saved, some of you, but it must be this day next week. But when the

Holy Spirit speaks, He says, “*Today* if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” It must be now or never! “*Today* give me Grace. *Today* give me mercy. *Today* give me pardon.” Some of you hope to be saved before you die, before the pit of Hell closes on you. You hope Jesus Christ will look down upon you in some years to come. You have not set down how many years, I suppose. But it is always in the distant hazy future. But the true desire is *now*. Does the poor man who stands upon the scaffold with a rope round his neck say, “Pardon me in a year’s time?” No, he is afraid he shall the next minute be launched into eternity! He who feels his danger will cry, “Now!” He who wants Christ, really, will cry, “Now!” He who is spiritually awakened will cry out, “Now or never!” What? Sinner, will it do to postpone salvation? Does your heart tell you it will do by-and-by? What? When the fire is just coming through the boards of your little chamber? What? When your ship has struck upon the rock and is filling? Yes, she is filling, while the fire at the other end is rushing up. And fire and water together are seeking your destruction. Will you say, “Tomorrow”? Why, you may be dead before tomorrow’s sun has risen! Tomorrow? Where is it? In the devil’s calendar? It is not written in any book on earth. Tomorrow? It is some fancied islet in the far off sea that the mariner has never reached. Tomorrow? It is the fool’s desire—which he never shall gain. Like a will-o-wisp it dances before him, but only lands him in the marshes of distress. Tomorrow? There is no such thing! It is God’s. If there is such a day, ours it cannot be. Tillotson well remarks—“To be always intending to live a new life but never to find time to set about it—this is as if a man should put off eating and drinking and sleeping, from one day and night to another, till he is starved and destroyed.” But you say, “If I have desired God, why have I not obtained my desire before now? Why has not God granted my request?”

In the first place, *you have hardly a right to ask the question*. For God has a right to grant your petition or not as He pleases! And far be it from man to say to God, “What are You doing?” He is Sovereign and has power to do what He wills. But since your anxiety has dictated the question, let my anxiety attempt to answer it. Perhaps God has not granted your desire because He wishes your own profit thereby. He designs to show you more of the desperate wickedness of your heart, that in future you may fear to trust it. He wants you to see more of the blackness of darkness and of the horrible pit of sin—that like a burnt child you may shun the fire forever. He lets you go down into the dungeon that you may prize liberty the better when it comes. And He is keeping you waiting, moreover, that your longings may be quickened. He knows that delay will fan the desire and that if He keeps you waiting, it will not be a loss to you, but will gain you much because you will see your necessity more clearly, seek Him more earnestly, cry more bitterly and your heart will be more in earnest after Him! Besides, poor Soul, God keeps you waiting, perhaps, in order that He may display the riches of His Grace more fully to you at the last. I believe that some of us who were kept by God a long while before we found Him, loved Him better, perhaps, than we would have done

if we had received Him directly. And we can preach better to others, we can speak more of His loving kindness and tender mercy. John Bunyan could not have written as he did if he had not been dragged about by the devil for many years. Ah, I love that picture of dear old Christian! When I first read that book and saw the old woodcut in it of Christian carrying the burden on his back, I felt so interested for the poor fellow that I thought I should jump with joy when, after the poor creature had carried his burden so long, he at last got rid of it! Ah, Beloved, God may make you and me carry the burden for a long time till He takes it off that we may leap all the higher with joy when we do get deliverance! For depend upon it, there is no poor penitent who loves mercy so well as he who has been ferrying for it for a season. Perhaps that is the reason why God keeps you waiting.

One more thought here. *Perhaps it has already come.* I think some of you are pardoned and you do not know it. I think some of you are forgiven, though you are expecting something wonderful as a sign which you will never receive. Persons have got the strangest notions in the world about conversion. I have heard persons tell the strangest tales you could imagine about how they were converted—though, of course, I did not believe them! And I fancy some of you think you will have a kind of electric shock—that a sort of galvanism, or something or other, will pass through you, such as you never had before. Do not be expecting any miracles! If you will not think you are pardoned till you get a vision, you will have to wait many a year! Some people fancy they are not pardoned because they have never heard a voice in their ears. I would be very sorry to have my salvation dependent on a text of Scripture applied to my heart. I would be afraid that the devil had applied it, or that it was the wind whistling behind me. I want something more sure than that! Perhaps you are forgiven and you do not yet know it. God has spoken the tidings of mercy to your spirit and you have not yet heard it, because you are saying, “It cannot be that.” If you could but sit down and think of this—“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief,” I think you would find that you, after all, are not excluded! There is no great need for any of these miraculous things that you are reckoning upon. God may have given them to some of His people, but He has never *promised* them. Perhaps, then, the question may be answered by saying, “The pardon is there, but you do not know it.” Oh, May God speak loudly in your soul, that you may know really and certainly that He has forgiven you!

But there is one more serious enquiry—and it is, “*Will God grant my desire at last?*” Yes, poor Soul, verily He will. It is quite impossible that you should have desired God and should be lost, if you have desired Him with the desire I have described. Suppose that you should go down into the chambers of the lost with the desire still in your spirit—when you entered within the gates you would have to say, “I desired mercy of God and He would not give it to me—I sought Grace at the hands of Jesus and He would not give it.” You know what would be said at once? Satan would be

so pleased. "Ah," he would say, "here is a sinner that perished praying—God has not kept His promise, for He said, 'Whosoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved'—and here is one that did it and he is lost!"

Ah, how they would howl for joy in Hell! They would sing a blasphemous song against the Almighty God—that one poor desiring soul should be there! I tell you one thing—I have heard many wicked things in my life—I have heard many men swear and blaspheme God. I have trembled at their speech but there is one thing I never did hear a man say yet and I think God would scarcely permit any man to perpetrate such a lie—I never heard even a drunken man say, "I sincerely sought God with full purpose of heart and yet He has not heard me and will not answer me, but has cast me away." I scarcely think it possible—although I know that men can be infinitely wicked—that any man could utter such an abominable lie as that! At any rate, I can say I never heard it. And I believe there are some of you who can say, "I have been young and now am old, yet have I never seen one penitent sinner who could say, in despair, 'I am not saved. I have sought God and He will not hear me, He has cast me away from His face and will not give me mercy.'" And, I think, as long as you live you will not meet a case. Then why should *you* be the first? Why, poor Penitent, should *you* be the first? Do you think you are a chosen mark for all the arrows of the Almighty? Has He set you for a butt against which He will direct all the thunderbolts of His vengeance? Are you to be the first instance in which mercy fails? Are you to be the one who shall first out-do the infinity of love? Oh, say not so! Despair is mad. But for one instant, gather up your reason, you despairing one. Would God wish to see you damned? Has He not said, "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but would rather that he should turn to Me and live"? Do you think it would be a pleasure to the Almighty to have your blood? Oh, far be it from you to conceive it! Do you not think that He loves to pardon? Has he not said, Himself, He delights in mercy? And is it not written, "As the heavens are higher than the earth so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts"? What advantage would it be for God to destroy your soul? Would it not be more to His honor to save you? Ah, assuredly—because you would sing His praise in Heaven, would you not? Yes, but remember, the best argument I can use with you is this—Do you suppose that God would give His Son to die for sinners and yet would not save sinners? It is written in the Scriptures that, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," and you are a sinner. You feel that you are a sinner—you know it. Then He came to save you! Only believe that. As a poor penitent you have a right to believe it. If you were a Pharisee, you would not have that right. But as a penitent, humble, contrite soul—you have a right to believe in Jesus! The Pharisee has none, for it is never written that he came to save the righteous. And if he believed he did he would believe a lie.

But every man and woman who is a sinner, every man and woman who lays claim to that title, also has a right to believe that Christ died for

them! And not only so but it is true. He came into the world for a certain purpose and what He came for He will do. He came into the world to save sinners and now it is written, "Whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. He who believes not shall be damned." When, last Friday, I had the honor of preaching to many a thousand persons in the open air—such an assembly as I never dreamed of seeing and such a vast number as I could scarcely have fancied would have met for any religious purpose—I noticed a most singularly powerful echo, constantly taking up the last words of my sentences and sending them back, as if some great giant voice had spoken to confirm what I had said. When I had repeated the words, "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved," my echo said, "Saved!" And when I proceeded, "he that believes not shall be damned," I heard the echo gently say, "Damned!" I think this morning I hear that echo—"he that believes and is baptized shall be saved." And the saints above cry, "Saved!" Hark! How they sing before the Throne of God! Hark! How your glorified parents and your immortalized relatives, cry, "Saved!" Hear you not the echo, as it echoes from the blue sky of heavens—"Saved!"?

But, oh, doleful thought, when I utter those words, "he that believes not shall be damned," there comes up that dread word—"Damned!"—from the place where there are "hollow groans and sullen moans and shrieks of tortured ghosts." God grant that you may never know what it is to be damned! God give you Grace to believe now! Remember, "today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

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

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

“READY, YES, READY!”

NO. 2868

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 1904.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1861-2.**

“Ready to perish.” “Ready to forgive.” “The graves are ready for me.”
Isaiah 27:13. Psalm 86:5. Job 17:1.

WHEN attempting to prepare for this service, I found it impossible to fix my mind upon any one subject. This afternoon I had to take rather a long journey to visit a friend who is sick unto death. And at his bedside I trust I have learned some lessons of encouragement and have been animated by witnessing the joy and peace which God grants to His children in their declining hours. Finding that I could not fix upon any one subject, I thought that I would have three. It may be that out of the three, there will be one intended by Divine Grace for a third of the audience, the second for another third and the other for the rest, so that there will be a portion of meat in due season for all. You know, dear Friends, that the motto of our navy is, “Ready, yes, ready!” That is something like my present subject, for I have three texts in which the word, “Ready,” occurs, each time in a different connection.

I. The first text will be especially addressed to those who are under concern of soul, having been led, by the enlightening influence of the Divine Spirit, to see their state by nature and to tremble in the prospect of their deserved doom. The text which will suit their case is in Isaiah 27:13—“READY TO PERISH.” “They shall come which were ready to perish.”

By nature, all men, whether they know it or not, are ready to perish. Human nature is, like a blind man, always in danger. No, worse than that, it is like a blind man upon the verge of a tremendous cliff, ready to take the fatal step which will lead to his destruction. The most callous and proud, the most careless and profane cannot, by their indifference or their boasting, altogether evade the apprehension that their state, by nature, is alarming and defenseless. They may try to laugh it away from their minds, but they cannot laugh away the fact. They may shut their eyes to it, but they shall no more escape, by shutting their eyes, than does the silly ostrich escape from the hunter by thrusting its head into the sand. Whether you will have it so, or not, fast young man in the dawn of your days—whether you will have it so, or not, blustering merchant in the prime of your age—whether you will have it so, or not, har-

dened old man in the petrified state of your moral conscience—it is so—you are ready to perish!

Your jeers cannot deliver you. Your sarcasms about eternal wrath cannot quench it. And all your contemptuous scorn and your arrogant pride cannot evade your doom—they do but hasten it. There are some persons, however, who are aware of their danger—to them I speak. They are fitly described by the Spirit of God in these words of the Prophet—"The great trumpet shall be blown and they shall come which were ready to perish." Having passed through this anguish, myself, I think I can describe, from experience, what some of you are now suffering.

You are ready to perish, in the first place, because *you feel sure that you will perish*. You did not think so once, but you do now. Once you could afford to put away the thought, with a laugh, as a matter which might, or might not, be true, but, anyway, it did not much concern you. But now you feel that you will be lost as surely as if it could be demonstrated to you by logic. In fact, the Divine logic of the Law of God has thundered it into your soul and you know it. You feel it to be certain that you shall, before long, be driven from the Presence of God with that terrible sentence, "Depart, you cursed." If any unbeliever should tell you that there is no wrath to come, you would reply, "There is, for I feel it is due me. My conscience tells me that I am already condemned and before long I am quite certain to drink of the wormwood and the gall of the wrath of God."

You have signed your own death warrant, you have put on the black cap and condemned yourself. Or, rather, you have pleaded guilty before your Judge—you have said, "Guilty, my Lord," and now you think you see before your eyes the scaffold and yourself ready to be executed. You feel it to be so sure that you even anticipate the Judgment Day—you dreamed of it, the other night, and you thought you heard the trumpet of the archangel opening all the graves and wakening all the dead. You have already, in imagination, stood before the bar of God! You feel your sentence to be so certain that conscience has read it over in your hearing and anticipated its terrors. You are among those who are ready to perish, so permit me to say that I am glad you have come here, for this is the very spot where God delights to display His pardoning Grace! He is ready to save those who are thus ready to perish. Those who write themselves down as lost are the special objects of our Savior's mission of mercy, for, "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

You are ready to perish, in another sense, for *you feel as if your perishing was very near*. You are like the dying man who gasps for breath and thinks that each gasp will be his last—his pulse is feeble, his tongue is dry with feverish heat, the clammy sweat is on his brow. The Valley of the Shadow of Death casts its gloomy shade on his pale cheeks and he feels that he will soon die. Is it not thus that some of you feel just now? You feel that you are coming near to the wrath of God. I have known the day when, as I lay down to rest, I dreaded the thought that, perhaps, I should never awake in this world, or, at mid-day I have walked in the

fields and wondered that the earth did not open and swallow me up! A terrible noise was in my ears—my soul was tossed to and fro—I longed to find a refuge, but there seemed to be none, while always ringing in my ears were the words, “The wrath to come!” “The wrath to come!” “The wrath to come!”

Oh, how vividly is the wrath to come pictured before the eyes of the awakened sinner! He does not look upon it as a thing that is to come in ten, twelve, or 20 years, but as a thing that may be before long, yes, even today! He looks upon himself as ready to perish because his final overthrow appears to be so close. I am glad if any of you are in this plight, for God does not thus alarm men unless He has purposes of mercy concerning them and designs for their good! He has made you fear you are perishing that you may have no perishing to fear! He has brought it home to you in this life that He may remove it forever from you in the life that is to come! He has made you tremble now, that you may not tremble then. He has put before you these dreadful things that, as with a fiery finger, they may point you to Christ, the only Refuge and, as with a thundering voice, they may cry to you, as the angels cried to Lot, “Escape for your life, look not behind you, neither stay you in all the plain! Escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed!”

It may be that I am also addressing some who not only realize the sureness and the nearness of their destruction, but *they have begun to feel it*. “Begun to feel it,” asks someone, “is that possible?” Yes, that it is. When day and night God’s hand is heavy upon us and our moisture is turned into the drought of summer, we begin to know something of what a sinner feels when Justice and the Law are let loose upon him. Did you ever read John Bunyan’s, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*? There was a man who had, even here, foretastes of the miseries of the lost. And there are some of us who can, even now, hardly look back to the time of our conviction without a shudder. I hope there is not a creature alive who has had deeper convictions than I had, or five years of more intolerable agony than those which crushed the very life out of my youthful spirit. But this I can say—that terror of conscience, that alarm about the wrath of God, that intense hatred of past sin and yet consciousness of my inability to avoid it in the future were such combinations of thought that I can only describe them in George Herbert’s words—

***“My thoughts are all a case of knives
Breaking my poor heart.”***

Oh, the tortures of the man who feels his guilt, but does not know the remedy for it! To look leprosy in the face, but not to know that it may be healed! To walk the hospital and hear that there is no physician there! To see the flame, but not to know that it can be quenched! To be in the dungeon, but never to know the rescue and deliverance! O you that are ready to perish, I sympathize with you in your present sufferings, but I do not lament them! This is the way in which God begins with those whom He intends to bless—not to the same degree in all, but yet after the same kind. He destroys our confidence in our own works and then gives us confidence in Christ’s work. You know how Bunyan describes

Christian as being much tumbled up and down in his mind. And when his wife and children came round about him, he could only tell them that the city in which they lived was to be destroyed—and though his easy-going neighbors told him not to believe it and not to make such a fuss about it, the truth had come home to him with too much power to be put away. An atheist might say it was all a lie and Pliable might give slight heed to it and pretend to believe it for a season, but Christian knew it to be true, so he ran to the wicket gate, and the Cross, that he might escape from the wrath to come. To the careless, these words, “Ready to perish,” should sound an alarm. May God the Holy Spirit, while I preach upon the second text, enable me to blow the great trumpet of the jubilee! May the gladsome sound reach the heart of him that is ready to perish! May he know that Divine Mercy brought him here that he might find a God ready to pardon!

II. My second text is in Psalm 86:5—“READY TO FORGIVE.” Does not that ring like a silver bell? The other was a doleful note, like that of St. Sepulcher’s bell when it tolls the knell of a criminal about to be executed—“Ready to perish.” But this rings like a marriage peal—“Ready to forgive. Ready to forgive.” What does it mean when it says that God is ready to forgive?

“Ready” means, as you all know, *prepared*. A man is not ready to go by railway until his trunk is packed and he is about to start. A man cannot be said to be ready to emigrate till he has the means to pay his passage and the different things needed for his transit, and for his settling down when he gets to his destination. No road is ready till it is cleared. Nothing is ready, in fact, till it is prepared. Sinner, God is ready to forgive—that is, everything is prepared by which you may be forgiven! The road used to be blocked up but Jesus Christ has, with His Cross, tunneled every mountain, filled every valley and bridged every chasm so that the way of pardon is now fully prepared. There is no need for God to say, “I would pardon this sinner, but how shall My justice be honored?” Sinner, God’s justice has been satisfied, the sin of all who believe, or who ever will believe, was laid upon Christ when He died upon the tree! If you believe in Him, your sin was punished upon Him and it was forever put away by the great Atonement which He offered, so that, now, the righteous God can come out of the ivory palace of His mercy, stretch out His hands of love and say, “Sinner, I am reconciled to you. Be you reconciled to Me.”—

**“Sprinkled now with blood, the Throne,
Why beneath your burdens groan?
All the wrath on Him was laid
Justice owns the ransom paid.”**

In the case of the ancient Israelites, it was necessary that the sacrifice should be slain and be burned upon the altar. So, the Divine Victim has been slain upon Calvary. Once and for all, the Sacrifice for sin has been offered by Jesus, accepted by the Father and witnessed by the Holy Spirit. God is ready—that is to say, He is prepared—to forgive all who will believe in Jesus Christ! You think that much preparation is needed on your part, but you are greatly mistaken. All things are ready! The oxen

and the fatlings are killed, the feast is spread, the servants are sent with the invitations to the banquet—all you have to do, poor Penitent, is to come and sit down and eat with thankfulness to the great Giver of the feast! The bath is filled, O black Sinner, so come and wash! The garment is woven from the top throughout, O you naked, so come and put it on! The price is paid, O you ransomed ones, so take your blood-bought liberty! All is done. "It is finished," rings from Calvary's summit! God is ready to forgive!

But the word, "ready," means something more than prepared. We sometimes use the term to indicate that *a thing can be easily done*. We ask, "Can you do such-and-such a thing?" "Oh, yes!" you reply, "readily." Or perhaps we remind you of a promise you have given and ask if you can carry it out. And you say, "Oh, yes! I am quite ready to fulfill my engagement." Sinner, it is an easy thing for God to forgive you! "Indeed," you say, "but you don't know where I was last night." No, and I don't want to know. But it is easy for God to pardon anybody who is not in Hell. But you ask, "How can He do it? "He speaks and it is done! He has but to say to you, "Your sins which are many, are all forgiven," and it is done! Pardon is an instantaneous work! Justification is rapid as a lightning flash. You may be black one moment and as white as alabaster the next! Guilty—absolved! Condemned—Acquitted! Lost—found! Dead—made alive! It takes the Lord no time to do this—He does it easily.

O Brothers and Sisters, if He could make a world with a word. If He could say, "Let there be light," and there was light—surely, now that Christ has offered up Himself as a bleeding Sacrifice for sin, God has but to speak and the pardon is given! As soon as He says, "I will. Be you clean," the most leprous sinner is perfectly cleansed! O Sinner, will you not offer the prayer, "Save, Lord, or I perish?" Will you not ask the Lord to forgive you? Since He can so readily forgive, will you not cry, "Jesus, save me, or I die"? Stretch forth your hand, poor trembling woman up yonder, and touch the hem of His garment and you shall be made whole, for He is ready to forgive—that is, He can do it with ease!

Again, the word, "ready," frequently means *promptly or quickly*. In this sense, also, God is ready to forgive. I know that some of you imagine that you must endure months of sorrow before you can be forgiven. There is no necessity that you should wait even another hour for this great blessing! After what I have been saying concerning the experience through which others have passed, some of you may fancy that you must be for four or five years floundering about in the Slough of Despond, but there is no need for you to do that. The plan of salvation is this—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Let me give you a picture. Paul and Silas have been thrust into the inner prison at Philippi and their feet made fast in the stocks. Though they have been brutally beaten, they are singing at midnight—singing of pardon bought with blood, singing of the dying and risen Lamb of God and, as they sing—suddenly there is an earthquake. The foundations of the prison shake, the doors fly open and the jailer, fearing that his prisoners have escaped,

leaps out, draws his sword and is about to kill himself! But he hears a voice crying, “Do yourself no harm! We are all here.”

He calls for a light, springs in and falls tremblingly at his prisoners’ feet and says, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” What would some of you have said in reply to that question? “Well, you must first believe the guilt of your sin more than you do at present—you had better go home and pray about the matter.” That was not Paul’s answer. He said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.” And, to prove that he was saved, the Apostle baptized him and all his, straightway, and we are expressly told that *they all believed*. What do you say to that, you old deacons who say, as many country deacons still do, that the young converts ought to be “summered and wintered” before they are baptized? I have known scores of good old souls in the country who have said, “We must not take Mrs. So-and-So into the church. We have not had time to prove her enough.” But the Apostle knew that as they had believed, they were fit to be baptized because they were pardoned—

**“The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in His crucified God,
His pardon at once He receives,
Redemption in full through His blood.”**

If the Lord wills, you may be pardoned this very moment. Jehovah needs not months and years in which to write out the charter of your forgiveness and put the great seal of Heaven to it. He can speak the word and swifter than the lightning flash, the message shall come to you, “Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven.” And you shall say, “I’m forgiven—

**“A monument of Grace
A sinner saved by blood!
The streams of love I trace
Up to the Fountain, God
And in His sacred bosom see
Eternal thoughts of love to me.”**

The word, “ready,” is also frequently used to signify *cheerfulness*. When a person says to you, “Will you give me your help?” you say, “Oh, certainly, with readiness!” That means with cheerfulness. The Lord loves a cheerful giver and I am sure that He is, Himself, a cheerful Giver. You do not know, poor Soul, how glad God is when He forgives a soul. The angels sang when God made the world, but we do not read that He sang. Yet, in the last chapter of the prophecy of Zephaniah, we read, “The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing.” Only think of it—the Triune God singing! What a thought—the Deity bursting out into song! And what is this about? It is over His pardoned people, His blood-bought chosen ones! O Soul, you think, perhaps, that God will be hard to be entreated and that He will give His mercy grudgingly! But the mercy of the Lord is as free as the air we breathe. When the sun shines, it shines freely, otherwise it were not the sun. And when God forgives, He forgives freely, else He were not God! Never did water

leap from the crystal fountain with half such freeness and generous liberality as Grace flows from the heart of God! He gives forth love, joy, peace and pardon—and He gives them as a king gives to a king! You cannot empty His treasury, for it is inexhaustible. He is not enriched by withholding, nor is He impoverished by bestowing!

Soul, you do libel Him when you think that He is unwilling to forgive you. I once had, as you now have, that hard thought of my loving Lord, that He would not forgive me. I thought He might, perhaps, do so one day, yet I could hardly think so well of Him as to believe that He would. I came to His feet very timidly and said, “Surely, He will spurn me.” I supposed that He would say to me, “Get you gone, you dog of a sinner, for you have doubted My love.” But it was not so. Ah, you should see with what a smile He received the prodigal, with what fond tenderness He clasped him to His breast, with what glad eyes He led him to His house and with what a radiant Countenance He set him by His side, at the head of the table, and said, “Let us eat, and be merry: for this My son was dead, and is alive again: he was lost, and is found.”

I would that I could write upon every heart here and engrave upon every memory those sweet words, “Ready to forgive.” Are there any of you who do not want to be forgiven? The day will come when you will want this blessing. Sailor, are you in this building? Within a little while you may be out upon the lonely sea, the waves may have swallowed up your vessel and you may be clinging to just an oar. When the waters surge around you, how gladly you will remember that God is ready to forgive—but how much better it would be to trust your soul to Him now! Some, whom I am now addressing, will probably die this week. I am not making a rash assertion—my statement is based upon the statistics of mortality. O Soul, you say that it is nothing to you now, but when you are in the article of death—and that may be before another Sabbath’s sun shall rise—how might this note ring like music in your dying ears, “Ready to forgive”!

Am I speaking to some abandoned woman who thinks that she will destroy herself? See you do it not, for God is ready to forgive! Am I addressing some man who is cast out of society as a reprobate for whom nobody cares? Soul, give not up hope, for God is ready to forgive! Though your father has shut the door against you and your mother and sister shun you because of your vices and sins, yet God is ready to forgive you if you will repent and turn from your iniquity! Turn you, turn you—’tis a brother’s voice that entreats you to turn! By the love with which He pardoned me. By the mercy which made Him pass by my innumerable transgressions, I beg you to turn, no, more, linking my arm in yours, I say to you, “Come, and let us return unto the Lord and let us say unto Him, ‘Receive us graciously, and love us freely, so will we render unto You the calves of our lips.’” Ready to perish are you, but ready to forgive is He! Blessed be His holy name!

III. My third text is intended as a hammer to drive home the last nail. This sentence, in Job 17:1, is most solemnly true of each one of us—**THE GRAVES ARE READY FOR ME.**

About three years ago I gazed into the eternal world. It then pleased God to stretch me upon a bed of the most agonizing pain and my life hung in jeopardy, not merely every hour, but every moment. Eternal realities were vivid enough before my eyes, but it pleased God, for some purpose which is known to Him, to spare my life and I went to spend a little season, that I might fully recover, with a beloved friend who seemed, then, far more likely to live than I was. This day, it is his turn to lie upon the borders of the grave and mine to stand by his bedside. The grave then seemed ready for me—it now seems ready for him. As I stood talking to him this afternoon, he said with greater force than Addison, "See how a Christian can die." When I asked him about his worldly goods and possessions, he said that he had been content to leave them all, some time ago. "And what about your wife and your little ones?" I asked. And he replied, "I have left them all with God." "And how about eternal things?" I enquired. "Oh," said he, "you know that God's love is everlasting and His Grace is unchanging, so why should we fear?"

He had no doubt about his acceptance in the Beloved, or about the power of Christ to carry him through his dying moments. When I said, "The battle's fought, the victory's won forever," I saw his eyes sparkle as though he heard the melodious voice of the great Captain of our salvation saying to him, "Well done! Enter into your rest." I never saw a bride at her marriage look more happy than this man upon the eve of death. I never saw a saint more peaceful, when retiring at eventide, than he was when about to undress himself that he might stand before his God. "Ah," he exclaimed, "remember what you said to me, 'Sudden death, sudden glory!'" and his eyes sparkled again at the prospect of soon beholding his Lord—

"One gentle sigh, the fetter breaks"—

and you are gone, O earth, and my soul is in Heaven! One gasp and you have melted, O shadowy Time, and I have come to you, you welcome substance of Eternity! Blessed be God that the graves are ready for us! Christian, does the idea of a long life charm you? Do you want to remain long in this prison? Would you cling to these rags of mortality, to this vile body, whose breath is corrupt, whose face is so often marred with weeping and upon whose eyelids hangs the shadow of death? Would you long to creep up and down this dunghill world, like some poor worm that always leaves a slimy track behind it? Or would you not rather—

***"Stretch your wings, O Soul, and fly
Straight to yonder world of joy"?***

Were we wise, we would—

***"Long for evening, to undress,
That we might rest with God."***

"The graves are ready for me." Young men and young women, and all of you who are here, can you look upon the grave which is ready for you with as much complacency as my friend did this afternoon? O Death,

you do not need to furbish up your darts, or whet your scythe! You are always ready to slaughter the sons of men. O Eternity, your gates need not to be unlocked and thrown back on their hinges with long and tedious toil, for they are always open! O world to come, you do not need long intervals to make yourself ready to receive the pilgrims who have finished their journey! You are an inn whose doors are always open—you are whose gates are never closed! Our grave is ready for us. The tree is grown that shall make our coffin—perhaps the fabric that shall make our winding sheet is already woven and they, who will carry us to our last home, are ready and waiting for us!

“The graves are ready for us.” Are we ready for the graves? Are we prepared to die—prepared to rise again—prepared to be judged—prepared to plead the blood and righteousness of Christ as our ground of acceptance before the eternal Throne of God? What is your answer, my Hearer? Do you reply, in the words I quoted at the beginning of my discourse, “Ready, yes, ready!”? Did you say Death, that I was wanted? Here I am, for you did call me! Did you say, O Heaven, that you need to receive another blood-bought one? “Ready, yes, ready!” O Christian, always keep your houses in such good order that you will always be “Ready, yes, ready!” Always keep your heart in such a state, your soul so near to Christ and your faith so fully fixed on Him, that, if you should drop dead in the street, or some Providence should take away your life, you would be able to cheerfully say, “Ready, yes, ready! Ready for you, O Death! Ready to triumph over you and to pluck away your sting! Ready for you, O Grave, for where is now your victory? Ready for you, O Heaven, for, with your wedding garment on, we are ready, yes, ready!” The Lord make us ready, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 8:1-27.**

Verse 1, 2. *When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And, behold, there came a leper.* You see that particular mention is made of this one special case and, in any congregation, while it may be recorded that so many people came together, the special case that will be noted by the recording angel will be that of anyone who comes to Christ with his own personal distresses and who thereby obtains relief from them—“Behold, there came a leper.”

2, 3. *And worshipped Him, saying, Lord if you will, you can make me clean. And Jesus put forth His hand and touched him, saying, I will; be you clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* His faith was not as strong as it might have been. There was an, “if,” in it, but still, it was genuine faith and our loving Lord fixed His eye upon the faith rather than upon the flaw that was in it. And if He sees in you, dear Friend, even a trembling faith, He will rejoice in it and bless you because of it. He will not withhold His blessing because you are not as strong in faith as you should be. Probably you would have a greater blessing if you had

greater faith, but even little faith gets great blessings from Christ! The leper said to Him, “If you will, you can make me clean.” So Christ answered to the faith that he did possess, “and touched him, saying, I will; be you clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”

4-7. *And Jesus said unto him, See you tell no man; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lies at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus said unto him, I will come and heal him.* He had not asked Christ to “come and heal him.” He wished his servant to be healed, but he considered that it was too great an honor for Christ to come to him. I am not sure, but I think that this man’s judgment is correct—that for Christ to come to a man is better than for healing to come to him. Indeed, Brothers and Sisters, all the gifts of Christ fall far short of Himself! If He will but come and abide with us, that means more than all else that He can bestow upon us.

8, 9. *The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof: but only speak the word and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it.* From his own power over his soldiers and servants, he argued that Christ must have at least equal power over all the forces of Nature and, as a centurion did not need to go and do everything himself, but gave his orders to his servant and he did it, so, surely, there could be no need for the great Commander, to whom he was speaking, to honor the sick man with His own personal Presence. He had simply to utter the command and it would be obeyed, and the centurion’s servant would be healed. Do you think this is an ingenious argument? It is so, certainly, but it is also a very plain and very forcible one. I have read or heard many ingenious arguments for unbelief and I have often wished that half the ingenuity thus vainly spent could be exercised in discovering reasons for believing—so I am pleased to notice that this commander of a hundred Roman soldiers did but argue from his own position—and so worked in his mind still greater confidence in Christ’s power to heal his sick servant. Is there not something about yourself, from which, if you would look at it in the right light, you might gather arguments concerning the power of the Lord Jesus Christ?

10. *When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel.* “Not in Israel”—where the Light of God and the knowledge were, there was not such faith as this centurion possessed! This Roman soldier, rough by training and experience, who was more familiar with stern fighting men than with those who could instruct him concerning Christ—had more faith than Jesus had so far found “in Israel.”

11, 12. *And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into*

outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is a strange thing, yet it is continually happening, despite its strangeness, that the persons who are placed in such positions of privilege, that you naturally expect that they would become Believers, remain unbelievers, while others, who are placed at a terrible disadvantage, nevertheless often come right out from sin and right away from ignorance and become believers in Christ! Oh, that none of us who sit under the sound of the Gospel from Sabbath to Sabbath, might be sad illustrations of this Truth of God, while others, unaccustomed to listen to the Word, may be happy instances of the way in which the Lord still takes strangers and adopts them into His family!

13. *And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go your way; and as you have believed, so be it done unto you. And his servant was healed in the same hour.* Jesus will treat all alike according to this rule—“As you have believed, so be it done unto you.” If you can believe great things of Him, you shall receive great things from Him. If you think Him good, great and mighty, you shall find Him to be so. If you can conceive greater things of Him than anyone else has ever done, you shall find Him equal to all your conceptions and your greatest faith shall be surpassed! It is a Law of His Kingdom, from which Christ never swerves—“According to your faith, be it unto you.”

14, 15. *And when Jesus was come into Peter’s house, He saw his wife’s mother lying sick of a fever, and He touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose and ministered unto them.* That was, perhaps, the most remarkable thing of all, for, when a fever is cured, it usually leaves great weakness behind it. Persons recovered of fever cannot immediately leave their bed and begin at once to attend to household matters! But Peter’s wife’s mother did this. Learn, therefore, that the Lord Jesus can not only take away from us the disease of sin, but all the effects of it as well! He can make the man who has been worn out in the service of Satan, to become young again in the service of the Lord. And when it seems as if we never, even if converted, could be of any use to Him, He can take away the consequences of evil habits and make us into bright and sanctified Believers. What is there that is impossible to Him? In the olden time, kings claimed to have the power of healing with a touch. That was a superstition. But this King can do it—all glory to His blessed name! May He lay His gracious hand upon many of you, for, if it could heal before it was pierced, much more can it now heal every sin-stricken soul it touches!

16-18. *When the evening was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses. Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side. For He neither loved nor courted popularity, but did His utmost to shun it. It followed Him like His shadow but He always went before it. He never followed it, or sought*

after it—“When Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side.”

19. *And a certain scribe came and said unto Him, Master, I will follow You wherever You go.* How bold he is with his boasting! But Jesus knows that the fastest professors are often just as fast deserters, so He tests him before He takes him into the band of His followers.

20. *And Jesus said unto him, The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head.* Christ means—“Can you follow the Son of Man when there is no reward except Himself—not even a place for your head to rest upon, or a home wherein you may find comfort? Can you cleave to Him when the lone mountain-side shall be the place where He spends whole nights in prayer while the dews falls heavily upon Him? Can you follow Him then?” This is a test of love which makes many to be “found wanting.”

21, 22. *And another of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead.* It must be Christ, first, and father afterwards. We pay no disrespect to our dearest relatives and friends when we put them after Christ—that is their proper place. To put them before Christ—to prefer the creature to the Creator—is to be traitors to the King of kings. Whoever may come next, Christ must be first.

23-26. *And when He was entered into a boat, His disciples followed Him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but He was asleep. And His disciples came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And He said unto them, Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? Then He arose, and rebuked the winds; and the sea; and there was a great calm.* Probably no calm is so profound as that which follows the tempest of the soul which Jesus stills by His peace-speaking word. The calm of Nature, the calm of long-continued prosperity, the calm of an easy temper—these are all deceitful and are apt to be broken by sudden and furious tempests. But, after the soul has been rent to its foundations—after the awful groundswell and the Atlantic billows of deep temptation—when Jesus gives peace, there is “a great calm.”

27. *And the men marvelled, saying, What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?* We have often marvelled in the same way, but we know that it is not any “manner of Man” alone, but it was He who was truly Man, who was also “very God of very God,” the God-Man, the Man Christ Jesus, the Mediator between God and men!

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

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

A REFRESHING PROMISE

NO. 1464

BY C. H. SPURGEON.

*“I will water it every moment,”
Isaiah 27:3.*

WHEN the Lord is most intent on justice He is, at the same time, earnest in His love. The day of vengeance of our God is also the acceptable year of the Lord. In the Scripture before us, the Prophet says, “Behold, the Lord comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity,” (Isa. 26:21), and he foretells that the Lord will come forth as one armed with a great and strong sword to smite the fiercest of His enemies with a deadly wound (Isa. 27:1). Yet before He had bared His arm for the battle, He prepared chambers of refuge for His people that they might dwell as within closed doors until the tempest of indignation was past (Isa. 26:20). The shouts of war did not prevent the Lord from remembering His beloved and His song of love concerning her, for He says, “In that day sing you unto her, a vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment.”

Happy people, who even in the day of wrath are satisfied with favor! Blessed heirs of Grace who hear the just and terrible Avenger say concerning them, “Fury is not in Me” (v. 4). The love of the Lord towards His whole Church goes forth to each individual member—the care which He displays towards the vineyard is exercised upon each vine which He has planted. So, then, we may without hesitation believe that the Lord will do for us, personally, that which He promises to do for His people as a whole! Or else there would have been exceptions stated and the Word of God would have run thus—I will water a part of My vineyard, but a portion of the plants shall be left to be dried up.” The Lord’s Word is so truthful that it would never raise ungrounded expectations by general statements if there were, indeed, cases not included therein.

We are always safe in concluding that if the Lord had meant to shut out *one* believing soul from a privilege, He would have mentioned it, for He has not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth, anything which would deny the happiness of any one of His people. This, then, beloved Friends, is the pledge of love concerning the spiritual life of my soul and yours—and the soul of every humble Believer in Jesus—“I will water it every moment.” This is a precious promise and the more we meditate

upon it, the more rich it will appear. May we now be watered by the Holy Spirit while we meditate upon this promised watering!

In warm climates irrigation is essential to fertility, therefore travelers see on all sides, pools and watercourses, wheels, cisterns and channels for the water to flow in. The watering arises from necessity and it is carefully attended to because otherwise the farmer or gardener would look in vain for fruit. I remarked to a gardener in the South of France that the weather was bad, but he replied that it was good for the garden, for the rain gave plenty of water and that was the chief thing. In Paradise it was no mean advantage to its verdant bowers that a fourfold river pursued its course through its midst and that before the rain had fallen upon the earth there went up a mist from the earth and watered the face of the ground.

From the necessity and value of water to the plants of the earth, the Lord would teach us our own need of His Grace and the preciousness of that Grace—and render His promise of supply the more delightful to our souls. That we may prize the goodness of the Lord in the promises before us, we shall consider *the necessity* of our being watered; *the manner* in which the Lord promises to supply our need and *the certainty* that He will do so. O for a living meditation, not upon the *letter* of the Word, only, but upon its innermost *teaching*!

I. There is a great NECESSITY for the watering promised in the text. This we might conclude from the promise itself, since there is not one superfluous Word of promise in the whole Scriptures! It becomes more evident when we reflect that *all creature life is dependent upon the perpetual outgoing of Divine power*. Existence is a continued creation, for the creatures have no power within themselves to preserve their own being—even the solid rocks and the great mountains would reek away as so many shadows if eternal Omnipotence did not, every moment, keep them in being. The world is not like a wheel, which, having received a great push from a strong hand, continues to revolve long after the hand is withdrawn, but, Divine energy goes forth continually to uphold all things which God has made.

Now, the same law holds good in the more choice and illustrious works of God in the kingdom of Grace and multitudes of illustrations of this are to be found in Holy Writ. Believers are stones, but their upholding comes continually from the foundation—they are branches perpetually sucking nourishment from the stem—members of the body always deriving life from the Head. Towards God we are streams and not fountains; rays of light, not suns; lamps which must be trimmed and nourished with oil; sheep which need unceasing care and feeding. The inner life cannot live upon itself! It is one mark of its presence that the Believer is not only de-

pendent as a creature, but feels it as a living, sensible, instructed and trustful creature. The Christian has no quarrel with the hint of utter weakness which is implied in the text, for he is well aware that he must be watered, each moment, or he will dry up from the root and cease to be.

Moreover, the Truth of God is specially certain as touching the Believer, for *a multitude of agencies are at work to dry up the moisture of His soul*. As far as this world is concerned, he is planted in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. His sorrows tend to parch him like a hot wind from the desert and earthly joys are still more like a sirocco which burns as an oven. Satan's temptations scorch and wither our hearts unless the Water of Life is abundantly laid at our root—and the men of the world act after the same manner. If we trusted in ourselves, we should soon be as the heath in the desert, or as the grass upon the housetops. Indwelling sin is especially a devouring blast and would, if it acted without check and counterbalance, turn the garden of the soul into a desolate wilderness. We are as plants set in the blaze of a tropical sun upon which a burning oven pours forth its tremendous heat. One *moment* without Divine watering and shade would dry us up root and branch.

Neither have we any other source of supply but the living God. "All my springs are in You." We have the ordinances and means of Grace, but we cannot, of ourselves, fetch a blessing from them. The Spirit of God is as the dew and the rain, but we cannot *command* His influences—these lie altogether at the Sovereign disposal of the Lord. To convince us of our utter impotence in the matter, the Lord asks us in the Book of Job, "Can you lift up your voice to the clouds that abundance of water may cover you?" No, the bottles of Heaven drop at *Jehovah's* bidding and unless His good pleasure gives the land its refreshment, "the dust grows into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together," the brooks are dried up and the springs of water fail. None can afford us a drop of spiritual water unless the infinite depths of Divine Grace overflow to us and the Lord visits the heart and waters it from the river of God which is full of water. Therefore the need that we cry with David, "I stretch forth my hands unto You: my soul thirsts after You, as a thirsty land."

Remember, also, that our need of Divine watering is clearly seen when we consider *what drought, barrenness and death would come upon us if His hand were withdrawn*. Then would be fulfilled in us the prophecy of Jeremiah, "Their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads. Because the ground is chapped, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads." Then would our leaf wither and our root fail. As for fruit—there would be none and we should

be only fit for burning! Without watering every moment, the most faithful among us would be cast forth and be only fit for the fire—every Prophet would become a Balaam, every Apostle a Judas, every disciple a Demas! We must be watered and watered every moment, or we die! Lord, save us, or we perish! Look down from Heaven and behold and visit this vine and the vineyard which Your right hand has planted.

II. This point is clear and our experience daily brings it under our notice. Let us now carefully regard THE MANNER in which the Lord promises to water His people—“I will water it every moment.” Our first thought is excited by *the perpetual act*—“every moment” the Lord will water the vineyard! There is never a moment in which it ceases to need it and, therefore, the supply is as constant as the demand. He further says, “Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day,” so that at all hours of the night, as well as of the day, the Lord’s care is over His people! Mercy knows no pause! Grace has no canonical hours, or rather all hours are alike canonical—yes, and all moments, too.

We may stop our asking, but God does not stop His giving! We may not perceive the flowing of His Grace and yet they are never suspended, no, not for a moment, or else it were not true—“I will water it every moment.” This leads us to rest assured of our final perseverance, since His perseverance in watering will produce our perseverance in budding, leafing and fruit-bearing, else His watering were in vain, His Grace ineffectual, His purpose defeated and it would not be true that none had hurt the vineyard. Glory be to the great Keeper of the vines, He will give a good account of His charge, saying, “Of all that You gave Me, I have lost none.” Between here and Heaven there will never be a moment in which the Lord will not water His people and, therefore, never a moment in which they will be dried up and left to perish. Let faith lay hold of this and gather strength from it.

Nor is this all—the Lord’s watering is *a renewed act*. He does not water us once in great abundance and then leave us to live upon what He has already poured out. He does not cause so much rain to fall in one day as may water the earth for seven years, or there could not, then, be a daily dependence upon Him for rain and dew! Neither does He give Grace enough to His servants at any one time to serve them for a month, or a week, or a day, or even an hour—He waters them “every moment” that they may know that at no one instant of time can they do without Him. He placed the whole fountain of Living Water in His Son, for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. But in our case He releases His showers that we may seek and obtain new out-flowing of the Eternal Life and every moment come under new debts to His infinite love.

It is very sweet to have it so, for thus we have, each moment, a reason for coming to Him, inasmuch as every moment He has something to impart to us. If we are conscious at this moment of our poverty, we need not despair, nor even hang our heads, for the next moment has its appointed watering and before the clock has ticked, faith may receive a flood of Grace, according to the promise, “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground.” Attention should be gratefully directed to the fact that the watering promised by the Lord *is a personal act*—“I will water it.” Apollos waters, but he cannot do it of himself, nor can he do it every moment, nor at all except as an instrument in the hands of God! The Lord does His work effectually—as in Creation He spoke not in vain, but He spoke and it was done. So in Grace He waters and we are watered, indeed!

Sweet is the Truth of God that we are not left to second causes or agents—these might fail us in the hour of need, yes, they must prove liars if we depended on them—for it would be impossible for any of them, or all of them put together to water us every moment! But the all-sufficient God, out of the measureless stores of Grace, can and will, in His own Person, supply all His saints forever, giving them to be filled with His fullness and never to know a need. Not even to angels has He left the care of His saints, but He, Himself, through the mediation of His dear Son, does every moment keep and water us by His effectual Grace! How condescending is this on the Lord’s part! He who leads forth the stars by their armies, bows the heavens to visit your soul and mine, taking care that there shall be a channel for the Water of Life to flow to the poorest and meanest of His people!

How near this brings the Lord to us and what an idea it gives us of His perpetual active Presence. As the gardener stands over the plant, gently pouring the water all around it and upon it so as to feed the roots and wash the leaves, even so does the Lord, as it were, stand over His people, watching over them for good and dispensing His Grace with all wisdom and prudence as they are able to receive it. Our need calls for His abiding Presence and His love vouchsafes it. Every moment is the Lord near us, for every moment He waters us. Every moment does He love us because His love is actively demonstrating itself in condescending actions.

His love suggests the watering and the watering proves His love. He is never weary of the work which He has, Himself, undertaken in love and which He will not delegate to others because He is so well pleased with doing it Himself.

III. This much suffices to fill our slender space—let us now, in the third place, consider THE CERTAINTY that the Lord will water every plant that His own right hand has planted. Here a vast number of arguments sug-

gest themselves, but we will content ourselves with the one ground of confidence which is found in the Lord Himself and His previous deeds of love. The Lord our God is true and cannot lie and, therefore, if He says, "I will water it," we need no further guarantee that it will be done. "Has He said, and shall He not do it?" Has He ever broken the Word which has once gone out of His mouth? Assuredly not!

The Lord is mighty and cannot, therefore, leave His promise unfulfilled from lack of power to make it good. He may safely say, "I will," because nothing is impossible with Him! Man's, "I will," is often an empty boast. Never is it so with the Lord of Hosts! Our souls need supplies so great as to drain rivers of Grace, but the all-sufficient God is able to meet the largest demands of the innumerable company of His people and He will meet them to His own honor and Glory forever. Here, then, we see His truth, His power and His all-sufficiency all pledged to provide for His chosen and we may be sure that the guarantee will stand. The Immutability and Omnipresence of God both speak to the same effect. The Lord has watered His people up to now and, as He cannot change, they may expect the same treatment at His hands. He will neither revoke His promise nor cease from fulfilling it.

Moreover, He can be with His needy servants every moment as His promise implies, for it will never be said of Him, "Perhaps He is pursuing, or He is on a journey, or He sleeps and must be awakened." While He is working in Heaven and on earth and in all deep places, yet can His gracious hand be busy among the tender plants of His Grace and that at all times, yes every moment! If we needed further confirmation we might well remember that the Lord has already watered His vineyard in a far more costly manner than it will ever need again. The Lord Jesus has watered it with a sweat of blood and can it be supposed that He will leave it now? Gethsemane worked for the Church much beyond any future need which can possibly arise to her—He who spared not His own blood will not withhold watering from those He has redeemed!

Dear Friend, you and I have already cost the Savior so much that there is no fear of His parting with us, or losing His reward in us by giving us over to barrenness! Jesus has already fulfilled, on our behalf, a weightier engagement than that which is contained in the text. He said, "I will redeem it," and He has kept His Word—and now, if He declares, "I will water it," it would be a superfluity of unbelief to distrust Him! Up to now the sacred promise has been fully kept, for we have been graciously preserved in spiritual life. Times of drought have befallen us and yet our soul has not been suffered to famish! Why, then, should we question the goodness of the Lord as to years to come?

His delight is in us as much as ever, because Jesus, in whom He beholds us, is as fair and lovely as ever! And therefore we may expect the same kindness from the same loving heart. He has not only pledged Himself to water His people, but again and again He has spoken to the same effect. Hear how Isaiah speaks by the Holy Spirit—“And the Lord shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones: and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.”

Jeremiah also speaks to the same effect in his 31st chapter at the 12th verse. Shall the Lord run back from His Covenant? Shall we so much blaspheme His name as to suppose that He will be false to His engagements? Unbelief, hide your guilty head! Doubting one, be comforted—He who said, “I will water it every moment,” must not be dishonored by your guilty suspicions, for He will do even as He has said! It is true your heart is, by nature, barren and dry, but what has that to do with the promise of Free Grace so as to render it of no effect? Is not your parched and desolate condition rather to be viewed as a reason why the Lord should open the windows of Heaven above you and pour out His blessing?

One thing is never to be forgotten—we are the Lord’s. Therefore, if He does not water us, He will, Himself, be the loser. An owner of vineyards, if he should allow them to be parched with the drought, would derive nothing from his estate. The vineyard would be dried up and he would receive no clusters. With reverence it is spoken—Our Lord Himself will never see the travail of His soul in untended vines, nor in hearts unsanctified and unrenewed, nor in men whose Graces droop and die for lack of Divine refreshing! The Lord *must* carry the work through or lose what He has done—and that would not be consistent with the foresight of His wisdom or the purpose of His heart!

He chose us. He bought us. He delights in us. He put His very Glory in pawn concerning us and we may, therefore, be sure beyond all doubt that he will water us to the end. Does He water us every moment? Then let His praise continually be in our mouths. Does He thus care for us? Let us, then, watch for the advance of His cause, the extension of His kingdom, the good of His people. He who is thus watered should water others! If the Lord puts within us a well of Living Water through His Divine watering, then let us give forth to others rivers of Living Water! Yet let not this be our first thought, but rather let us go away crying, “Lord, make my soul as a watered garden! Saturate my fleece! Fill my vessel to the brim and keep it full forever! Fulfill this Word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope, and water me every moment, even me.”

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

THE KEEPER OF THE VINEYARD

NO. 2391

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
DECEMBER 16, 1894.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 5, 1863.

*"I the LORD keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it,
I will keep it night and day."
Isaiah 27:3.*

MY discourse this evening can hardly be called a sermon. It will be just a simple talk about a few experimental Truths of God, but I trust that it will be useful to some of the Lord's people.

The text follows a terrible verse in which the Lord's enemies are threatened with "His sore and great and strong sword." But even when God has the most anger against His adversaries, He is still full of love for His people. The Church of God is here compared to a vineyard. The vine is a tender plant, needing continual care, and if the vineyard is not well fenced and guarded, the enemies of the vine are sure to get in and destroy it. The Church is called "a vineyard of red wine," because the red grape happened to be the best kind grown in Palestine and, in like manner, God's Church is, to Him, the best of the best, the excellent of the earth, in whom is all His delight! But what is true of the whole Church is also true of every member—the same God who keeps the vineyard also protects every vine, no, not only so, but His care extends to every little branch, to every spreading leaf and to every clinging tendril of that vine which He undertakes to keep night and day. Well did Toplady sing—

*"Upon my leaf, when parched with heat,
Refreshing dew shall drop.
The plant which Your right hand has set,
Shall never be rooted up.
Each moment watered by Your care,
And fenced with power Divine,
Fruit to eternal life shall bear
The feeblest branch of Thine."*

Our text mentions two much-needed mercies and upon each of these I will speak briefly. We find in the text, first, *continual keeping*. And then, secondly, *continual watering*. In these gracious Words of the Lord, we have a promise that we shall be kept from foes without and from foes within. God is both a wall and a well to His people—a wall to guard them from their adversaries—and a well to supply all their needs out of His ever living, over-flowing fullness.

I. First, then, concerning the CONTINUAL KEEPING which the Lord promises to His vineyard—"I, the Lord, keep it...lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." I will talk of that keeping in an experimental way,

putting the subject before you in the form of questions which may be applied either to the Church as a whole, or to each individual Believer.

The first will be, “*Do I need keeping?*” I trust I have been called by God’s Grace, that I have been washed in Jesus’ blood and that I have been made one of the Lord’s children—do I need keeping?” Ah, if I know anything of myself, I shall be compelled to answer that I do, for my foes are innumerable and I, like the vine, am subject to all sorts of perils and dangers! Brothers and Sisters there is the arch-enemy—how he longs to lay the axe to the roots of God’s vines! If we were in *his* power, you and I would not have a grain of faith or a spark of love left! He is desirous to have us, not only that he may sift us as wheat, but that he may burn us as chaff! When we think of his malice and cunning, we may well pray, “Deliver us not over unto the will of our enemy.” When God’s people have met Satan in a hand-to-hand conflict, they have always found it a stern and difficult struggle, for he is ferocious, malicious and powerful—and he comes against us, not only to worry us—but seeking whom he may devour! We need keeping, then, if it were only because of that one adversary who would make a speedy end of us if we were left in his grip even for an hour!

Like the vine, too, we have not only to dread him who would cut us down, but there is a wild boar of the woods that would gladly tear us up by the roots! I mean that wild boar of *unbelief* that is constantly prowling around us. How does it seek with its sharp tusks to tear our vines and fig trees! You know, dear Friends, how unbelief takes away your comforts, how it destroys your strength and how it mars your usefulness. Perhaps some of you, at times, hardly know whether you are the Lord’s people or whether you are not His. Our friend, who addressed us last ordinance Sabbath, said that God’s people ought never to have doubts and fears. I quite admit that they ought not to have them—but that they really *do* have them is quite as certain! I like that good old hymn of Dr. Watts and sing it as I find it—

**“When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies
I bid farewell to every fear
And wipe my weeping eyes.”**

I am afraid, dear Brothers and Sisters, you and I cannot travel the same road if you are always confident and if you never have reason to look back and cry because you have lost your evidences. This I know—there are seasons with me when I do not doubt my Lord and Master, but I do doubt my interest in Him—and I have to come to Him just as I came at first, as an empty-handed sinner and accept His Grace as He freely presents it. Yes, if the Lord did not keep us, the wild boar of unbelief would soon tear us to pieces, and we would have no Grace left, but would become useless forever!

Then, you know, the vine is often subject to injury from various kinds of insects. Almost all plants of any value are attacked, at times, by a peculiar kind of fly which devours the leaves and prevents fruit-bearing. And the vine is specially liable to attacks of this sort. So is it with Christians—we have the fly of *pride*. If the great enemy never came to knock us down and unbelief never tried to root us up, the very quietude of the

atmosphere and the calmness of the soft summertime would begin to breed that deadly fly which goes before destruction! I think we have even more cause to fear the effects of carnal security, self-confidence and pride than the assaults of Satan, himself! I do not know how it is with you, my Brothers and Sisters, but at times I feel so dead that I would almost welcome a temptation from Satan, so that I might feel a little spiritual life stirring within me in opposition to it!

There have been dark times in our experience which have caused us great sorrow of heart and yet we have come to look back upon those sad seasons almost with a sort of envy—and we have wished that we might have them over, again, so that we might feel at least *some* pulsing, some palpitations of the new life within us! Oh, that dreadful fly of pride! John Bunyan tells us, in his *Holy War*, that it was Mr. Carnal-Security who drove Emmanuel from the town of Mansoul. He would have always stayed there and have given Mansoul high holiday, but that Diabolonian, Mr. Carnal-Security, whose father was Mr. Self-Conceit, and whose mother was Lady Fear-Nothing, filled the townspeople with such high notions of their greatness that the blessed Prince went His way in sorrow and anger!

Alas for us when we say, “My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved.” For we are then in direst peril! That cankerworm of conceit, that caterpillar of pride, that locust of carnal security would soon destroy God’s vineyard if it were not written, “I the Lord keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” This promise assures us that the Lord will preserve us from the assaults of pride as well as from the attacks of unbelief and from the malice of the great adversary of our souls!

Then, dear Friends, beside the enemies I have mentioned, the vine is subject to the attacks of the little foxes that Solomon speaks of in the Canticles—“Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines.” There are plenty of little foxes of all sorts about, nowadays. I mean false doctrine and skeptical teaching. Some of these crafty foxes come nibbling at us, trying to make us doubt the Inspiration of Scripture. Some of them even dare to try to root up and destroy our confidence in the Divinity of Christ! Others of these little foxes are still more insidious—they seek to tempt us away from the outward means of Grace and aim at making us forsake the assemblies of God’s saints. Men pour into our ears all sorts of heresies and lies till our souls scarcely know the Truth of God from error and we are carried to and fro, and have a hard battle to fight! Ah, if the Lord did not keep His Church, she would soon become a prey to the graft of her adversaries! But He *does* preserve His vineyard from the little foxes and from the great foxes, too! His vines have tender grapes and the foxes would devour them if they could, but, blessed be the Lord, they are unable to do so! Our Lord preserves us and protects us from all the craft and cunning of our adversaries!

Besides, dear Friends, when we have a few grapes that are beginning to ripen, there are the birds that come and try to pick the fruit—those dark-winged thoughts of worldliness and selfishness which come to us all. We begin to say, “Well done!” to ourselves and then it is always ill-

done. The Prophet Habakkuk tells us of those who “sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag.” And if we ascribe our success to our own perseverance, our own zeal and so forth, we shall be like the birds which steal the fruit that belongs to the master, or like dishonest workmen who are set to till the garden and rob their employer of the produce. Let us never try to get our Master’s money, to put it out to usury, and then, when the interest comes in, spend it on ourselves! The temptation to selfishness—to live for this world alone—or to seek to bring forth fruit merely for our own aggrandizement, is so strong and comes so easily upon us, that if the Lord did not keep us, we would, none of us, retain our Christianity for a single hour—but would be wholly given up to worldliness, selfishness and every other form of sin!

I ask again the question with which I began and I pray you, each one, to ask it yourself—“Do I need keeping?” Oh, my Heart, never did the tender vine so much need the gardener’s care as you need to be kept by your Lord! You are like an infant suffering from a thousand diseases and unable to cure itself of any *one* of them! You are helplessly weak and if your Father, God, should leave you, there is nothing for you but to die in despair! Dear Brothers and Sisters, let us have a deep consciousness of the dangers to which we are exposed—not that we may live trembling lives—but that we may be weaned from all trust in *self* and may be driven nearer to God and always seek to live under His Divine protection!

Another question may occur to someone here—“Even if I have to face all these dangers, *can I not keep myself* if I am very watchful and very prayerful? May I not by my own power and vigilance keep off these adversaries?” Ah, there is something wrong in the very question, itself, for who is to keep me watchful? Who is to make me prayerful? If my watchfulness and prayerfulness depended upon *myself*, I might slumber, and so I would, very soon, be destroyed! Brethren, it is a great mercy that the text puts it not that *we* must keep the vineyard *ourselves*, but, “I, the Lord keep it.” Watchfulness is our duty—it is our privilege to abide much in earnest, wrestling prayer—but still, to keep up the watchfulness and the prayerfulness, there must constantly be the secret incoming of Divine Strength! Our watchfulness and prayerfulness are proofs of God’s gracious working! The real cause of the vineyard of the Church and each individual vine being preserved must always be found in this blessed assurance—“I, the Lord keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.”

What did you say—“Cannot I keep myself?” Alas, you are your own worst enemy! Augustine was known to say, “Lord, save me from that evil man, myself!” And you and I have good reason to pray the same prayer. We can very soon *destroy* ourselves, but we can never *save* ourselves. I bless the Lord that there is not even a semblance of truth in that verse in Wesley’s hymn book—

**“A charge to keep I have
A God to glorify!
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.”**

It is the *Lord who saves the souls of His people*, and it is the Lord who fits them for the sky! If they had to do it, themselves, not a solitary soul

among them would ever see His face with acceptance, or stand with joy before His Throne! “I, the Lord keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” It is always so put and for us to entirely get rid of all idea of carnal strength is both right and safe! It is well for us to feel that, in ourselves, we are as weak as water and as insignificant as the insects that die in a day—and that for all true strength we must look to God, and to God alone! Rest assured that you and I are never so weak as when we fancy that we are strong, and that we are never so strong as when we are conscious of our greatest weakness! This is an enigma, but our experience has often proved it to be true. Our supposed riches are generally the marks of deep spiritual poverty, while conscious poverty is an indication of the unsearchable riches which faith is enjoying. Learn to live every day, dear Brothers and Sisters, in Jesus, as having nothing, yet possessing all things!

This is how God would have you live, trusting Him for all the Grace you continually need. When you wake in the morning, you are to look forward to temptations and trials, but you are to cry to the Lord for deliverance from them—and not to think of keeping yourselves during the day, but to place yourselves, again, in the hands of God—to be kept and preserved by Him who has said of the vineyard of His Church, “I, the Lord keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” Then, when the day is over, let this be your evening song—

**“Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,
I lay me down to rest,
As in the embraces of my God,
Or on my Savior’s breast.”**

I will mention only one other question and then we will leave this part of the subject—“*Do I enjoy this keeping?*” This is a question that must make you search your heart. Do you enjoy this keeping? Is it your habit and mine, every day, to look to God to keep us? When we wake in the morning, is this our first desire, “Lord, keep me this day beneath the shadow of Your wings”? When we go out to business, or on our Lord’s service, are we conscious that we are still under the Lord’s eyes and protected by the Lord’s power? When, at any time, we have slipped and erred, do we bitterly repent that we could have acted so wrongly as to wander away from the Good Shepherd? And at night, when we look back upon the engagements of the day, are we in the habit of blessing God for as His unseen mercies? Have we learned to bless Him for preserving us from all the mysterious spiritual dangers by which we are surrounded? Has it, in fact, become our practice to make this text experimentally our *own*, “I, the Lord keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day”?

Beloved, do you not think that we often live all day long as if there were no God? Do you not, sometimes, find yourselves going about the world as if God and you were strangers to each other? Do you not, at least now and then, venture upon the stormy sea of another day without getting your Pilot on board? And do you not think that, at night, when you come to the temporary haven of your chamber, you may often have cause to say to the Lord, “Alas! Alas! My God, I have lived this day and

You have protected me, I doubt not, but still, I have not been mindful of You, I have not looked up to You, I have not been hanging on Your breast, I have not been nestling under Your wings as the chick hides itself under the hen”? I would that, as Church members, you and I, all of us, would learn the blessed lesson of this text, “I, the Lord, keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. During My people’s nights of adversity and during their days of prosperity, in their nights of soul-sorrow and in their days of hallowed rejoicing, in the nights when their spirit lies slumbering, and in the days when the sunlight of My Countenance shines upon them, and they go forth strong to labor and to do My will, I will keep them under all circumstances. I will never leave them, I will never, no never, forsake them.”

I am always afraid, whenever I preach about the security of God’s people, lest you should grow carnally secure, that is to say, lest, instead of realizing the preciousness of the doctrine and its practical bearing, you should merely be satisfied with the *outward shell of it*. I want you not only to know that God keeps you, but to feel the power of that blessed Truth in your inmost soul—to enjoy it and to live upon it. You know that it is one thing to look at honey and to be told that it is sweet to the taste. But it is a very different thing to eat of it and to prove its sweetness for yourself! Be it yours, like Jonathan, to dip your rod into the honey of this text and to eat of it abundantly, for so shall your eyes be enlightened and every day you shall be able to say, “The Lord is my Keeper: the Lord is my Shade upon my right hand: the Lord is my Helper; I will not fear what man or even the devil, himself, may try to do to me.”

II. Now, with greater brevity, let me talk to you upon the second part of the subject, the Lord’s CONTINUAL WATERING. He that keeps, waters—“I the Lord keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.”

I was rather struck, the other day, by this remark of a somewhat eminent horticulturist—“Depend upon it,” he said, “that watering is a very essential part of a gardener’s business.” It is especially so in hot weather, for there is little doubt that if the flowers are to be kept constantly in bloom, and if the beds are to look fresh and beautiful, the watering pot must be in frequent use. In the summer, how very soon the grass looks brown and how very speedily the flowers begin to droop their heads and shrivel up their leaves, all for lack of watering! Well, now, we have this gracious provision in the text to meet the needs of the Lord’s vines, the Keeper of the vineyard, Himself, says, “I will water it every moment.”

We will handle this part of the subject as we did the other portion, in the form of questions, and the first enquiry shall be, “*Do I need watering within as well as keeping without?*” The answer that must be given is—Yes, that I do, for there is not a single Grace I have that can live an hour without being Divinely watered! Have I not seen many a professor come forward to join the Church full of faith of a certain sort and full of zeal after a fashion? But, after a few months—and there are some hypocrites who hold out even for years—they begin to falter! They do not care for the House of God as much as they did. They grow worldly and careless and, at last, they give up their profession altogether! What is the reason of

their failure? Just this, they were not watered—they never had the living sap to nourish their roots—they never sucked up the Living Water of God's Grace and so, having no watering from the Most High, their flowers all withered, drooped their heads and died. There is no wonder at this result, for he who has only the strength that is within himself will be like snow that melts and passes away! It is only the man who derives His strength from God who will be like the sun that shines brighter and brighter unto the perfect day! There is no Grace I have, then, which does not need watering from above!

Beside that, the soil in which I am planted is very dry. Ask any Christian whether he ever gets any real good out of the world. Do you not find it a very dry soil where you go to business? The other day you said that you would change your employment—you would be a fool if you did—it would only be a change of troubles! The God who gave you your present set of trials knew that they were the best for you. If all the crosses in the world could be laid in a heap and I were told to take my pick of them, I would choose those that I have right now, for I know what they are, and God fits my back to them! But I do not know what the others are and I have no proof that I could bear them. You had better not take *my* troubles, for they might crush you, while I can bear them through the Divine Strength that is given to me. But if I had yours, they might crush me, while you can patiently endure them through God's Grace. This earth, however, is no very genial soil for a Christian's growth. Worldlings may flourish in it, but if the Christian would have Living Water, he must get it from some other place than this earth, for, spiritually, it is a dry and thirsty land where there is no water!

Then, again, the atmosphere that is round about us does not naturally yield us any water. The means of Grace, which are like clouds hovering over our heads, are often nothing but clouds—they come and they go—but we receive no rain from them. The other day we looked up and we said that it would rain, directly, but lo, the one black cloud was soon gone! So, you sometimes go up to the House of God and you say to yourselves, "Our minister has often cheered and comforted us, perhaps he will have a good word for us today." And when the text is announced and the sermon is begun, you think, "Here is a cloud, there will be some rain, presently," but, whether it is your fault or the minister's, we will not say, often there is not a drop of moisture to refresh your spirit! The reason is that the Lord will have you know that He, and He, alone, must water you if you are to be effectually revived! He will teach you that you need watering, that all your Graces constantly require fresh supplies of Divine Grace, and that you must have them directly and only from Him.

The beauty of the text seems to me to lie in the last two words—"I will water it *every moment*." There is no plant except a plant of Grace that needs to be watered every moment—but we do. I do not know to what object I can compare a Christian better than to one of those gas lights yonder. The Believer is not a candle, for a candle can burn of itself when it is once lighted because it carries its own burning materials. Neither is he a lamp that is supplied with a store of oil, except in a certain sense, but he is just like one of these gas lights. Turn the tap, cut off the connection

with the gas meter, and out goes the light at once! There must be a stream of gas continually flowing to keep up the burning—and so is it with the Christian's spiritual life—it must be perpetually streaming in from his Lord! He cannot live even a tithe of a second unless life flows to him from God! Look at your hand. I suspect that if, for a moment, you could altogether suspend the circulation of your blood. If you could utterly cut off the life floods so as to dissever your hand from the rest of your body, though it were but for a second, yet vitality would be gone! And so, if the Christian could be for one instant without union to Christ, without receiving supplies of Divine Grace, he would at once expire!

I will not talk to you much longer, for we need to gather around the Communion Table, but I will just put this one question—“*Have we all realized, as a matter of experience, that the Lord waters us every moment?*” Brothers and Sisters, I am very much afraid that there are but few of us who have ever learned the full meaning of this gracious promise. You can, perhaps, say, “The Lord waters me every Sabbath and on Monday and Thursday nights.” Possibly you can go even farther, and say, “He waters me every morning, and every evening,” but to be watered every *moment*—to have continually such a conscious connection with Christ as to be really receiving His Grace—you ask, “Is this experience attainable? It may be possible for a minister, for he has time to think of these things, but it is not possible for us working people who have to earn our bread by the sweat of our brows! Nor for us business men who have to be all day long occupied with accounts.”

Oh, but, Beloved, there are some of the Lord's people who have proved that this blessing *can* be obtained and that it is possible to be in the world and yet to be living near God, and every moment to be watered by Him! Have you never heard of that poor servant girl who expounded the meaning of the passage, “Pray without ceasing”? Some person could not understand how anyone could pray without ceasing, but Mary said, “Why, when I dress myself in the morning, my heart prays that I may be robed in my Savior's righteousness. When I light the fire, I pray the Holy Spirit to kindle a flame of sacred love in my heart. When I spread the cloth for breakfast, I ask God to feed me with the Bread of Heaven and whatever I do, all day long, I try to turn it into something that will make me live near to my God!” Do you not see, dear Friends, that a stirring life may yet be a *spiritual* life? There are some people, you know, who, when they get hold of some hobby, can attend to business and yet ride their hobby as well. It may be that they have taken to working out some mathematical problem—if so, you will see them attending to the shop, but all the while they are thinking about that problem—and the first opportunity they get, they begin figuring away on a scrap of paper, trying to work it out. Whatever takes place during the day, the man is always thinking of that problem! And when he is on his way home, as he is riding along, he is still thinking of that one thing because his heart is full of it. Thus it may be with you, so that while you are engaged in business and in the lawful affairs of your daily life, your heart may still be always going out towards God.

I was struck by a remark of a dear friend, the other day, who said that Mr. So-and-So was so fond of everything Gothic that he had his chairs Gothic, his bedstead Gothic and all the furniture of his house Gothic. I think that a Christian should have everything full of Christ, so that whether he eats, or drinks, or whatever he does, he does all to the Glory of God! It was said of Ambrose that he used to eat, drink and sleep eternal life—so may it be said of each of us! Why, sometimes, when we have some dear one upon our hearts, we may go and attend to fifty thousand things, but we do not forget that beloved object of our affection! A mother may have to go on an errand and she may be compelled to stay away a long while, but her sick child at home is on her heart all the time! So I want that we should have Christ and have the Holy Spirit, and have our Father who is in Heaven continually upon our minds! And in that way shall we learn the meaning of this passage, “I, the Lord keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.”

Now, as I close my discourse, I fear that there are some of you who are not saved—and to you I have to put a personal question—“*Why should not this night be the time of your salvation?*” Why did you come into the Tabernacle tonight? Some of you have been inconvenienced, for you have had to stand all through the service. I hope you have not come here for nothing. I trust that the Lord meant to bless you when He induced you to come up those steps and between those pillars. Remember that the righteous God must punish sin, but that His Son, Jesus Christ, was punished in the place of all those who will believe on Him! To believe on Him is to trust Him. Have you done that? Then, though your sins were as scarlet, they are now whiter than snow! If you have trusted Jesus, your iniquities, which were like a black cloud, have all been rolled away and you are so completely saved that there is, now, no condemnation to you, for you are in Christ Jesus! God bring you to trust in Christ, for believing in Him, you are saved!

May we, who are about to gather around the Communion Table, have our Master’s special Presence and blessing! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *Isaiah 64.*

Verse 1. *Oh that You would rend the heavens.* God’s ancient people were in great trouble and the Prophet saw no way out of their perplexity. But God can make a way of escape where there is not one, He can rend even Heaven, itself, if need be, in order to deliver His saints. Therefore, the Prophet, or the people, pray, “Oh that You would rend the heavens”—

1. *That You would come down.* “Come down, Yourself, great God, in all the majesty of Your Glory! Burst through the firmament and appear in Divine splendor!”

1. *That the mountains might bow down at Your Presence.* The eternal hills are made to melt at the touch of God’s feet. Mountains are the things that are last to move, but God moves them when He once comes near! How often we forget Omnipotence! That is a factor we are too apt to leave out of our calculations and yet, my Brothers and Sisters, Omnipotent

tence is at the back of all our feebleness when that feebleness is with the truth and the right, and is engaged in the service of God! If the Lord's Presence is manifested, even the mountains will flow down, as we read in Micah's prophecy, "For, behold, the Lord comes forth out of His place and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under Him and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place."

2, 3. *As when the melting fire burns, the fire causes the waters to boil, to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your Presence! When You did terrible things which we looked not for, You came down, the mountains flowed down at Your Presence.* Where God is, everything begins to melt. He touches the mountains and makes them boil over with lava, like volcanoes in action! At His touch the very sea begins to boil with the fervent heat of Divine Power. Then, when these wonderful results are perceived, even God's enemies are compelled to say, "This is the finger of God," and they tremble at His Presence. We never know, Brothers and Sisters, what great things God will do, as we do not know all that He *can* do, but we do believe that all things are possible to the Omnipotent Jehovah! When He brings His reserve forces into the field, the battle is a short one. "When You did terrible things which we looked not for, You came down, the mountains flowed down at Your Presence."

It was so when Sennacherib, in Isaiah's day, besieged the city of Jerusalem. There was, apparently, no way of escape from the stupendous hordes of the mighty monarch, but the Angel of the Lord killed a 185,000 of them in one night and utterly overthrew them! God has but to appear in His terrible power and His adversaries tremble at His Presence, or are destroyed in an instant!

4. *For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither has the eye seen, O God, beside You, what He has prepared for him that waits for Him.* The unexpected is always happening! God interposes in a way which we never thought of. Even if we have been listening for His footstep, we have not heard the sound of it—if we have been watching for His coming, we have not seen His approach. God alone knows all that He will do—

"He in the thickest darkness dwells,"

but out of that darkness He brings forth purposes of light and brightness to completely amaze His servants. "Ah," says one, "but is He not long in doing it?" No, no, it is *our impatience* that makes us think so, but the Lord never really delays.

5. *You meet him that rejoices and works righteousness.* God comes to meet us before we get to Him and then there is a blessed meeting. "You meet him that rejoices and works righteousness." If you do right, God will meet you. But He will meet you much sooner if you can rejoice at the same time, for there is no service for God that is so acceptable to Him as the service that is done with delight! "You meet him that rejoices and works righteousness." When we are glad to serve God. When we take a delight in suffering for His name's sake, then God will come and meet us for certain. We need not think that, under such circumstances, He will

let us stand alone—"You meet him that rejoices and works righteousness."

5. *Those that remember You in Your ways.* If you remember God, He will certainly remember you! The fact that you are thinking of Him is proof positive that the Lord has thoughts of love towards you!

5. *Behold, You are angry; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.* God's wrath has no continuance in it towards His own people. He soon makes it to pass away from them. His anger may endure for a night, but His mercy comes in the morning. His own Word is, "For a small moment have I forsaken you, but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord, Your Redeemer." The Lord has a rod in His hand, but the scourging of His own children does not last long. It is a rod, mark you, not an *axe that brings death*. But His mercy, His goodness, the purposes of His Grace are perpetual—"In those is continuance, and we shall be saved." Now comes a very mournful passage. You have read some of the lamentations of Jeremiah. Here is one of the lamentations of Isaiah. He lived to see his country in a very sad condition. Perhaps this was the state of affairs when Sennacherib invaded the land.

6. *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags.* If this is true of our righteousnesses, what must our sins be? If even our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, where shall we find a metaphor to describe our sins?

6. *And we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.* This does not allude to our mortality, but to our sin—"We all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." We are not like the green leaf on the tree—we may seem to be so for a moment, but very soon our righteousness fades like a withered leaf and, in consequence, our iniquities, like the wind which bears the withered leaves from the bough, carry us away. This is what we all are by nature. This is what the people were in Isaiah's day—the whole nation seemed to be unholy—its outwardly righteous men were not really righteous, its ministers were not truthful, its magistrates were not honest and even the professors of purity were, at heart, immoral!

7. *And there is none that calls upon Your name, that stirs up himself to take hold of You.* We have not come quite to that condition, yet. There are still some who stir themselves up to take hold upon God and who call upon His name. We are not left in so sad a state as the favored nation was in in Isaiah's days. It is a terrible thing when intercession fails! Perhaps the dark day that will mark the world's final doom will be a day unwhitened by prayer. Certainly, while prayer remains, the world is blessed, but when prayer shall cease, when that Divine disinfectant is taken away from this poor leper house, then the pestilence of sin will rage and destroy most terribly! It was so in the Prophet's day—"There is none that calls upon Your name, that stirs up himself to take hold of You."

7, 8. *For You have hid Your face from us, and have consumed us, because of our iniquities. But now, O LORD, You are our Father.* The Prophet,

himself, begins to plead with God. Jehovah was known as the God of the children of Abraham. He was not recognized as the God of the Assyrian, Sennacherib worshipped Nisroch as his God—"But now, O Jehovah, You are our Father."

8, 9. *We are the clay, and You our potter; and we all are the work of Your hands. Do not be furious, O LORD, neither remember iniquity forever! Behold, see, we beseech You, we are all Your people.* Isaiah could plead that, in a certain way, they were nominally the people of God. But if we can plead this truly and spiritually on the behalf of any man. If we can plead it for ourselves, what a mighty plea it is! "Lord, You have made us. You have new-made us and You can keep us. We are the clay and You are our potter; we belong to You. Oh, break not the vessels that You have made! Cast not away the people You have chosen. Be merciful to us, O God, for we are Your people!" Then the Prophet gives a pitiful description of the condition unto which the land of Judah was reduced.

10, 11. *Your holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised You, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste.* Their houses and God's House went together to destruction. When their houses were burnt, God's House did not escape. This is the most bitter part of the trial to a genuine Believer—when his own estate is impoverished, he can bear it, but when the Kingdom of God suffers damage—this cuts him to the quick! God's House is our house, the Prophet thus speaks of it—"Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised You, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste."

12. *Will you refrain Yourself for these things, O LORD?* "Can You stand still and see all this?" This is the kind of pleading for the people of God to use when sin abounds. When the Truth of God is trampled like mire in the street, we may come before the Lord and say, "Will You refrain Yourself for these things, O Jehovah?"

12. *Will You hold Your peace and afflict us very severely?* May God teach us how to plead for His people and make us great intercessors on behalf of His Church and His cause in these evil days! Amen.

Special notice—The sermon to be issued next week is the one preached by MR. SPURGEON forty years ago, but not published in the *New Park Street Pulpit*. The text is Isaiah 7:14, 15, and the title, *The Birth of Christ*. It would make an appropriate Christmas present to anyone who is not a regular reader of the sermons. [Sermon #2392, Volume 40—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .]

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
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REJECTERS OF THE GOSPEL ADMONISHED

NO. 1593

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 17, 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“To whom He said, This is the rest with which you may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.”
Isaiah 28:12.***

ASSUREDLY Isaiah was one of the most eloquent of preachers and yet he could not win the ears and hearts of those to whom he spoke, for it is written, “they would not hear.” Beyond all question he was thoroughly evangelical, for, as Dr. Watts truly says, he spoke more of Jesus Christ than all the rest of the Prophets and yet the message of love was treated as though it were an idle tale. His doctrine was clear as daylight and yet men would not see it, so that he had to ask with sorrow, “Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” It was not the fault of the preacher that Israel rejected his warnings—all the fault lay with that disobedient and gainsaying nation.

The people to whom he spoke so earnestly were drunken in a double sense. They were overcome with wine and so general was this vice that Isaiah says, “But they also have erred through wine and through strong drink are out of the way. The priest and the Prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink. They err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.”

What can be conceived of more potent to blunt the point of Gospel Truth than intoxication or excess? When a man is given to wine, how can the Spirit of God dwell in him? How is it likely that the Truth of God shall enter an ear which has been rendered deaf by this degrading vice? How is the Word of God likely to operate upon a conscience that has been drenched and drowned by strong drink? I charge you, if any of you are given to drunkenness, flee from this destroyer before your bonds are made strong and you are hopelessly fettered by the habit! It is small wonder that the preacher is defeated if his ardent zeal has to compete with ardent spirits! When Bacchus rolls the wine cask against the door, it is hard to force an entrance even though we demand it in the name of King Jesus. Men are in an evil state for hearing when the barrel and the bottle are their idols. It is not at all marvelous that the Gospel should be neglected by men who have put an enemy into their mouths to steal away their brains.

The people to whom Isaiah spoke were also drunken in another sense, namely, intoxicated with pride. Their country was fruitful and its major city, Samaria, stood on the hilltop like a diadem of beauty crowning the land—and they delighted in the glorious beauty which is on the head of the fat valley. They, themselves, were brave and among them were many champions whose strength sufficed to turn the battle to the gate. There-

fore they hoped to resist every invader and so their hearts were lifted up. Moreover, they said—"We are an intelligent people! We need no teaching, or if, indeed, we endure instruction, it must be of a high class! We are men of cultured intellect, instructed scribes and we do not need persons like Isaiah to weary us with their ding-dong of 'precept upon precept, line upon line,' as if we were mere children at school. Besides, we are good enough. Do we not worship our god under the form of the golden calves of Belial? Do we not respect the sacrifices and the holy days?"

So spoke the more religious of them, while the rest gloried in their shame. Being intoxicated with pride, it was not likely that they would hear the message of the Prophet who bade them turn from their evil ways. Even so, he that is righteous in his own esteem is never likely to accept the righteousness of Christ. He who boasts that he can see, will never ask to have his eyes opened. He who claims that he was born free and was never in bondage unto any man is not likely to accept the liberty of Christ. Pride is the devil's dragnet in which he takes more fish than in any other except *procrastination*. The destruction of those who are proud is certain—for who can help the man that refuses to be helped—and where is the likelihood that there shall be either repentance for his sin or faith in Christ in the man who does not know that he has sinned and who believes that if he *has* done so, he can easily wipe away the stain?

The two forms of drunkenness are equally destructive and I beg to call your attention to this fact. Whether body or soul is intoxicated, mischief will surely come of it. Many are pleased if I speak against drunkenness of the *body* and I feel bound to speak as earnestly as I possibly can, for it is a monster evil. But I beseech you who are sober and, perhaps, total abstainers, to dread the *other* intoxication—for if any one of us should be intoxicated with pride on account of our own sobriety—it will be ruinous to our souls! What if we are temperate and self-denying—there is nothing in this in which to glory—we ought to be greatly ashamed of ourselves if we were *not* so. Let us not get drunk with pride because we are not drunkards, for if we are so vain and foolish, we shall as certainly perish by pride as we should have done by drink.

I am, indeed, rejoiced when a man gives up his cups, but I am far happier when, at the same time, he renounces his self-confidence, for, if not, he may still remain so besotted as to refuse the Gospel and perish by his own willful rejection of mercy. May the Holy Spirit deliver us all from such a sad condition! I confess I feel encouraged, this morning, by Isaiah's need of success. When he says, "They would not hear," I comfort myself concerning those who pay no heed to *my* exhortations—perhaps it is no more my fault than it was Isaiah's. At any rate, if Isaiah still went on speaking, even when he cried, "Who has believed our report?" much more may I, who am so much inferior to him, be willing to persevere in telling out my Master's message as long as my tongue will move!

Perhaps God may grant repentance to the obstinate and ears may yet be unstopped and hearts may yet be softened! Therefore, let us try again and once more publish the glad tidings of peace. If the blessed Spirit is with us, we shall not give the Gospel call in vain, but men will fly to Jesus as doves to their windows! First, I wish to speak, this morning, upon the

excellence of the Gospel. Secondly, upon the objections taken to it. And thirdly, upon the Divine counterattack of these objections.

I. Let us consider THE EXCELLENCE OF THE GOSPEL as it is set forth in the passage before us. This Scripture does not allude to the Gospel, primarily, but to the message which Isaiah had to deliver which was, in part, the command of the Law and in part the promise of Grace. But the same rule holds good of all the Words of the Lord and, indeed, any excellence which was found in the Prophet's message is found yet more abundantly in the fuller testimony of the Gospel in Christ Jesus. Using the passage for ourselves and referring it to the Gospel ministry in this day, the excellence of that Gospel lies, first, in its objective—it is excellent in its design, for it is a revelation of *rest*.

We, as Christ's ambassadors, are sent to proclaim to you that which shall give you ease, peace, quiet, rest. It is true we have to begin with certain Truths of God that disturb and distress, but our goal is to dig out the foundation into which may be laid the stones of restfulness. The message of the Gospel which fell from the mouth of its own Author is this—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Over Bethlehem the angels sang, "Peace on earth, goodwill toward men." The objective of the Gospel is not to make men anxious, but to calm their anxieties. It is not to fill them with endless controversy, but to lead them into all the Truths of God.

The Gospel gives rest of *conscience* by the complete forgiveness of sin through the atoning blood of Christ. It gives rest of *heart* by supplying an Object for the affections worthy of their love and it gives rest of the *intellect* by teaching it certainties which can be accepted without question. Our message does not consist of things guessed at by wit, nor evolved out of man's inner consciousness by study, nor developed by argument through human reason—it treats of revealed certainties, absolutely and Infallibly true upon which the understanding may rest itself as thoroughly as a building rests upon a foundation of rock.

The Word of the Lord comes to give believing men rest about the *present* by telling them that God orders all things for their good. And as for the future, it brightens all coming time and eternity with promises. It rolls away the stone from the door of the sepulcher, annihilates destruction and reveals resurrection, immortality and eternal life through Jesus Christ, the Savior! The man who will hear the Gospel message and receive it into his soul shall know the peace of God which passes all understanding—which shall keep his heart and mind by Jesus Christ. The believer of this Gospel shall not make haste by reason of fear. He shall not be ashamed nor confused world without end. It is true that after being a Believer he may, at times, be disturbed in mind, yet this shall not be the result of the *Gospel*, but of that in him which the Gospel promises to remove!

He shall have rest in Christ, even "quietness and assurance forever." It is written, "for this Man shall be the peace." "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." This message, which Isaiah had to deliver, saying, "This is the rest and this is the refreshing," is the glad tidings which we are taught to deliver in still clearer

words, saying to you that in Christ Jesus, in the atoning Sacrifice, in the great plan of Grace through the Mediator there is rest for the weary, sweet rest for burdened souls, rest for you if you come and cast yourself at the feet of the blessed Savior! Our authorized message from the Lord God is a Revelation of rest. The Lord has promised to obedient minds that they shall dwell in quiet resting places.

More than that, it is the *cause* of rest—"This is the rest with which you may cause the weary to rest." The Gospel of our salvation is not only a command to rest, but it brings the gift of rest within itself. Our Lord says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls." Let the Gospel be admitted into the heart and it will create a profound calm, hushing all the tumult and strife of conscience, removing all apprehensions of Divine wrath, stilling all rebellion against the Supreme will and so working in the spirit, by the energy of the Holy Spirit, a deep and blessed peace. Oh that we may know and possess this peace of God!

The Gospel, then, is a message which *speaks* of peace and also *creates* peace. He who sends it is "the Lord and Giver of peace" and His effectual power goes with the message where it is faithfully delivered and honestly accepted, creating peace within the secret chambers of the soul. This rest is especially meant for the weary. "This is the rest with which you may cause the weary to rest." If you have been trying to find peace for years and cannot find it, here is the goodly pearl you have been seeking! If you have been laboring and toiling to keep the Law and have failed, here is more than the righteousness that your conscience has been craving! In Jesus Crucified you will find all things, for "He is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption!"

Oh you that are weary with the round of worldly pleasure—satiated, nauseated with the vanities and delusions of the carnal mind—come here and find true joy! O you that are worn with ambition, fretted with disappointment, embittered by the faithlessness of those you trusted in, come and confide in Jesus and be at rest! Weary, weary, weary ones—here is the rest, here is the refreshing! Jesus expressly puts it, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If your backs are breaking; if your hearts are breaking; if your eyes are failing through weary watching and waiting, come to the Savior just as you are, for He will be your rest! Despondent and despairing, condemned and, in your own conscience, cast out to the gates of Hell—yet look to Jesus and rest shall be yours! You cannot be too far gone for the Mighty Redeemer! You cannot be too lost for the Savior to find; too black for His blood to cleanse; too dead for the Spirit to quicken!

This is the rest with which He makes the weary to rest. Oh, it is a blessed, blessed message that God has sent to the sons of men! How is it that they refuse it? In addition to bringing us rest, the message of mercy points us to a refreshing—"This is the rest with which you may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing." If the rested one should grow weary, again, the Good Shepherd will give him refreshing. If he wanders, the Lord will restore him. If he grows faint, He will revive him! Yes, He has

begun His gracious work of renewing and He will continue it by renewing the heart from day to day, blending the will with His own and making the whole man more and more to rejoice in Him.

I know there are some of God's people here who are faint and thirsty. You are specially invited, as well as those who never came before, for this is the rest for the weary! This also is the refreshing for the fainting and if the *sinner* may come and find peace in Christ, much more may *you*, who though you have wandered from Him like lost sheep, have not forgotten His Commandments. Come, you desponding ones, come back to Jesus, for this is the rest and this is the refreshing!

Now note with peculiar joy that Isaiah did not come to these people to talk about rest in dubious terms and say, "There is no doubt a rest to be found somewhere in that goodness of God of which it is reasonable to conjecture." No! He puts his finger right down on the Truth of God and he says, "This is the rest, and this is the refreshing." Even so, we, at this day, when we come to you with a message from God, come with definite teaching! Laying our hand upon the slaughtered Lamb of God, we cry, "This is the rest and this is the refreshing." We speak of Substitution, of Christ's dying in the sinner's place! We speak of a vicarious Sacrifice, of Christ's being numbered with the transgressors and of our sin laid upon our Surety and borne by Him and put away from us by Him so as never to be mentioned against us any more forever! And we proclaim in the name of God that whoever believes in Christ Jesus has everlasting life—this is the rest and this is the refreshing!

It was said of a certain preacher of the modern school that he taught that our Lord Jesus Christ did something or other which in some way or other was connected with the pardon of sin—this is the preaching of a great number of our intellectual divines! But we have not so learned Christ, neither is this the doctrine by which we have obtained rest to our souls. God has revealed fixed and positive Truths and it is ours to state them clearly and without hesitation. Our cry is, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners! This is the rest and this is the refreshing!" Isaiah had to preach to the people something definite, something positive and yet they would not hear.

Perhaps if he had prophesied conjectures and dreams, they would have listened. Nor did he preach a rest of a selfish character. They say we teach men to get peace and rest for themselves and make themselves comfortable, whatever becomes of others. How these men lie in their throats—they know better and they forge these lies because their heart is false! Are we not always bidding men look out from themselves and love others even as Christ has loved them? Our words and acts for the good of others prove that we do not delight in selfishness! We abhor the idea that personal safety is the consummation of a religious man's desires, for we believe that the Life of Grace is the death of selfishness! This is one of the glories of the Gospel—"this is the rest with which you may cause the weary to rest."

Get rest, yourself, and you will soon cause other weary minds to rest. As soon as you have learned the Divine secret, it will become in your

hands a blessed charm with which you, too, by God's Grace, may become givers of rest! With this lamp you may enlighten all that are in the dark as God shall help you. That secret something which your own heart possesses shall enable you to communicate good cheer to many a weary heart and hope to many a desponding mind. "This is the rest with which *you* shall cause the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing." But this is true of the Gospel and of that only. If you get away from Jesus Christ and His Atonement and God's great plan of Grace, you can cause no rest to others—and there is none for *you*, either. This, then, is the excellency of the Gospel, that it propounds to men a blessed rest.

The other excellency of the Gospel, of which I shall speak at this time, lies in its manner. First, I count it a great excellency of the Gospel that it comes with authority. Read the 9th verse. Even the quibblers acknowledged its authority, for they called the Prophet's message, "knowledge" and, "doctrine." The Gospel does not pretend to be a speculative scheme or a theory of philosophy which will suit the 19th Century but will be exploded in the Twentieth. No, we speak what we do know, not what we dream nor imagine, but what we know!

If, my Brothers and Sisters, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not a fact, I dare not ask you to believe it, but if it is a fact it is not my "opinion," not, "my views," as men are always saying—it is the great fact of time and of eternity which is and must be true forever! Christ stood in the place of men and has become God's Salvation for the sons of men—this is the witness of God! We do not make guesses, we utter knowledge! The Word of God, which is, in this place, translated, "doctrine," is, in the Hebrew, "message." And it is the same which is used in the passage, "Who has believed our report?" which should better run, "Who has believed our *message*?"

The Gospel comes to men as a message from God and he that speaks it aright does not speak it as a thinker uttering his *own* thoughts—he utters what he has learned and acts as God's tongue—repeating what he finds in God's Word by the power of God's Spirit. The Gospel that I have thought out may not be half as good as one which you have thought out and your understanding and mine and all the rest of the produce of thinkers put together, may only be fit to make a fire and a smoke in the garden with the rest of the weeds. But if we receive and accept a message direct from *God*, then this is its main excellence! I pray you delight in the Gospel because it comes from God to us and tells us unmixed Truth with absolute certainty. If we believe it, we shall be saved and he that believes not well deserves the damnation which is pronounced against him. There is no hope nor help for it—this is the inevitable alternative—believe the Gospel and live, refuse it and be destroyed!

Another excellence of the Gospel as to its manner was that it was delivered with great simplicity. Isaiah came with it, "Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little." It is the glory of the Gospel that it is so plain. If it were so mysterious that nobody could understand it but doctors of divinity—I do not know how many there may be here this morning, I do not suppose above a dozen or so—what a sorry case the rest of us would be in! If it were so profound that we must take a degree at a uni-

versity before we could comprehend it, what a miserable Gospel it would be for mocking the world! But it is divinely sublime in its simplicity and, therefore, the common people hear it gladly.

As the verse seems to imply, it is fit for those who are weaned from the breast—those who are little more than babes may yet drink this unadulterated milk of the Word of God! Many a little child has comprehended the salvation of Jesus Christ sufficiently to rejoice in it and there are those in Heaven not much above two or three years of age, who, before they went there, bore good witness for Christ to those who loved them and marveled at their words. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings has God ordained strength! Christianity has been called the religion of children and its Founder said that none could receive it except as a little child.

I bless God for a simple Gospel, for it suits me and thousands of others whose minds cannot boast of greatness or genius. It equally suits men of intellect and it is only quarreled with by pretenders. The man who lacks breadth of mind and depth of thought is the man to quibble at the Wisdom of God. An affected creature who is little above an idiot will brush his hair backwards, put on his spectacles, wrinkle his brows and amend the Infallible Word of God, but a man who really has a spacious mind is usually childlike and, like Sir Isaac Newton, is glad to sit at Jesus' feet! Great minds love the simple Gospel of God, for they find rest in it from all the worry and the weariness of questions and doubts.

It is an excellent thing that the Gospel is taught us by degrees. It is not forced home upon men's minds all at once, but it comes thus, "Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little." God does not flash the everlasting daylight on weak eyes in one blaze of glory—but there is, at first, a dim dawn and the soft incoming of a tender light for tender eyes—and so by degrees we see. The Gospel is repeated—if we do not see it at once, it comes again to us—for it is "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little."

From morning to morning, from Sunday to Sunday, by Book after Book, by text after text, by spiritual impression after spiritual impression, the Divine gentleness makes us wise unto salvation. This is a grand excellence of the Gospel method. It is brought down to us and brought home to us in ways suitable to our capacity. It is told to us, as it were, with stammering lips (see verse 11), just as mothers teach their little children in a language all their own. I should not like to speak from the pulpit as mothers talk to their babies, yet they use the best language for the baby, the very words for a little child to understand. Even so, in much of the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, we see how God condescends to lay aside His own speech and talk the language of men.

I know not with what language the Father converses with His Son, but to us He speaks after our own fashion. "As the heavens are high above the earth, so are His thoughts above our thoughts," but He bows to us and tells us His mind in types and ordinances which are a sort of child language fitted for our capacity. In the Gospel of John, what child language, what depth! What love! If you, my Hearer, do not understand the Word of God, it is not because He does not put the words plainly, but because of the blindness of your hearts and the besotted condition of your spirit.

Take heed that you are not drunk with the wine of pride, but be willing to learn, for God, Himself, has not darkened counsel by mysterious words, but He has put His mind before you as plainly as the sun in the heavens. "Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little."

II. Alas, my time is nearly gone and I need much more space in which to do justice to my subject. I have now, in the second place, to notice THE OBJECTIONS WHICH ARE TAKEN TO THE GOSPEL. First, let me say that they are most wanton. For men to object to the Gospel is a piece of wanton foolishness because they object to that which promises them rest! Above all the things in the world, this is what our troubled spirits need—rest is our heart's craving—and the Gospel comes and says, "I will give you rest." And do men reject that blessing? This is lamentable, indeed! What? Were you ill and did you insult the only physician that could cure you? Why were you so foolish?

What? Were you in debt and did you actually refuse help from a generous friend who would have given you all you needed? "No," you say, "we are not so foolish." But oh, the intense folly, the desperate insanity of men that when the Gospel sets rest before them, they will not hear it, but turn upon their heels! There is no system of doctrine under Heaven that can give quiet to the conscience of men—quiet that is worth having—except the Gospel of Jesus Christ! And there are thousands of us who bear witness that we live in the daily enjoyment of peace through believing in Jesus and yet our honest report is not believed, no, they will not hear the Truth of God!

Now, if God came demanding something of you, I could understand your refusing. I have heard of a poor woman who locked her door and when she heard a rap did not answer it, behaving as though she was not at home. Her minister saw her a day or two after he had called and he said, "I called to see you the other day. I wanted to give you help, for I knew that you were very poor. But no one answered to my knocking." "Oh," she said, "I am very sorry, but I thought it was the landlord calling for the rent." She shut out her benefactor through mistaking him for her creditor! The Lord is not calling in the Gospel for that which is due to Him, nor asking anything of you—He approaches you with perfect rest in His hands—the very thing you need and yet you shut the door of your heart against Him. O do not do so! Be wise and play not the fool any longer! May God help you to be wise for your own eternal good. Admit your God with all His heavenly gifts!

Next, objections against the Gospel are willful, even as it is here said, "This is the refreshing, yet they would not hear." When men say that they cannot believe the Gospel, ask them whether they will patiently hear it in all its simplicity. No, they say, they do not want to hear it. The Gospel is so difficult to believe, so they say. Will they come and hear it preached in its fullness? Will they carefully read the Gospels for themselves? Oh, no, they cannot take the time! Just so. But a man who does not want to be convinced, must not blame anybody if he remains in error. He that will not hear what the Gospel has to say needs not wonder that objections swarm in his mind.

The Gospel asks of men a fair hearing. The Lord says, "Incline your ears and come unto Me; hear and your soul shall live," for, "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." How sad that they will not even hear God's message of love! It is a willful objection to the Gospel, then, when men refuse, even, to hear what the Gospel has to say, or if they hear it with the outward ear, but will not give hearty attention to its Truths. Such objections are wicked because they are *rebellion* against God and an insult to His Truths and mercy. If this Gospel is of God, I am bound to receive it—I have no right to cavil at it, nor raise questions, philosophical or otherwise! It is mine to say, "Does God say this and that? Then it is true and I yield to it. Does the Lord thus set before me a way of salvation? I will run in it with delight."

But these people raised objections that were the outgrowth of their pride. They objected to the simplicity of Isaiah's preaching. They said, "Who is he? You should not go to hear *him*—he talks to us as if we were children. Go hear the learned Rabbi over there who is refined and cultured. As for this man, he is not fit to teach any but those who are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts, for with him, it is, 'precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little.' He is so very homely that his sermons may be OK for servant girls and old women and so on, but they are not to be endured by intellectual people. Besides, it is the same thing over and over again. You may go when you like, he is always on the same string."

They say this very savagely, too, for as old Trapp says, "The duller the brains, the sharper the teeth with which to rend the preacher." Have you not heard folks say in these days concerning a true Gospel preacher that he is always preaching about Sovereign Grace or the blood of Christ, or crying out, "Believe, believe and you shall be saved"? They sneer and say, "It is the old ditty over and over again." I am not a Hebrew scholar, but those who are, tell us that the passage translated, "precept upon precept, line upon line," was uttered in ridicule and sounded like a ding dong rhyme with which they mocked Isaiah. You would smile if I read you the Hebrew according to the sound with which, in all probability, it was pronounced.

They said, "This is the way Isaiah preaches—I Tzav latzav, tzav latzav; kav lakav, kav lakav: zeeir sham, zeeir sham." The words were intended to caricature the preacher, though they do not suggest the idea when translated—"precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line"—but they do suggest it, readily enough, in the Hebrew. There are people now living who, when the Gospel is plainly and simply preached, exclaim, "We want progressive thought, we want ____"—they do not quite know what they want. They are something like the congregation who, when a certain Bishop of London was preaching to them, were utterly inattentive. Whereupon the good man took up his Hebrew Bible and read them five or six verses in the Hebrew tongue—and at once they were all awake! Then he rebuked them by saying, "Verily, I perceive that when I preach you good doctrine you do not care about it, but when I read to you in a tongue which you do not comprehend, straightway you open your ears."

An affectation of special refinement is supported by listening to talk which is incomprehensible. Too many wish for a map to Heaven so mysteriously drawn that they may be excused from following it. Multitudes delight in prayers in the Latin tongue and others prefer them in no tongue at all, but intoned through the nose! Music and millinery, processions and pomposities are preferred by thousands because they prefer sensuous enjoyment to spiritual instruction. We know those who prefer the Gospel shrouded in a mist—they love to see the wisdom of man shut out the wisdom of God! This was the style of objection current in Isaiah's day and it is still fashionable.

Did I hear someone remark—"Why you, yourself, preach nothing but faith, Atonement, Free Grace, and so on. We want novelties and will go elsewhere for them!"? So you may if you like—I shall not change my tune while God preserves me!

III. The third point will be a warning to those who have no relish for the Truth of God—let us consider THE DIVINE COUNTERATTACK OF THESE OBJECTORS. The Lord threatens them, first, with the loss of that which they despised. He has sent them a message of rest and they will not have it and, therefore, in the 20th verse, He warns them that they shall have no rest from now on: "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." All those who willfully reject the Gospel and take up with philosophies and speculations will be rewarded with inward discontent. Ask them, "Have you found rest?" "Oh, no," they say, "we are further off than ever." "But you hoped that if you listened to this philosophical doctrine you would then be happy." They reply, "Oh, no, we are still seeking."

Ask the preachers of that kind of doctrine whether they, themselves, have found an anchorage and, as a rule, they will answer, "No, no, we are in pursuit of truth; we are hunting it, but we have not reached it yet." They are never likely to reach it, for they are on the wrong track! The Gospel was made to rest conscience, soul, heart, will, memory, hope, fear—yes, the entire man—but when men laugh at the Truth of God, how can they be rested? Dear Friend, if you have not found rest, you have not yet grasped the simple Gospel and you have need to go back to the fundamental principle of faith in Jesus, for this is the rest and this is the refreshing.

This is the condemnation of the unbeliever, that he shall never find a settlement, but like the wandering Jew shall roam forever. Leave the Cross and you have left the hinge of all things and neglected the one sure Cornerstone and fixed Foundation and, from now on you shall be as a rolling thing before the whirlwind. "There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked." "The wicked is like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Furthermore the Lord threatens them that they shall be punished by a gradual hardening of heart. Read the 13th verse. They said that Isaiah's message was "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little," and justice answers them, "Even so it shall be to you, a thing despised and ridiculed, so that you will go further away from it; you will fall backward and be broken, and snared and taken."

See verse thirteen. A fall backward is the worst kind of fall! If a man falls forward, he may somewhat save himself and rise again. But if he falls backward, he falls with all his weight and is helpless. Those who stumble at Christ, the sure Foundation Stone, shall be broken! When opposers hope to retrieve their position, they find themselves snared by their habits, entangled in the net of the great fowler and taken by the Destroyer. This downward course is followed, full often, by those who begin caviling at a simple Gospel—they cavil more and more and become its open enemies to their eternal ruin! If men will not have the Gospel of rest as the Lord has appointed it, He will not alter it to their tastes, but permit it to exercise its inevitable influence upon opposers by its being a savor of death unto death.

If they dislike it today, they shall dislike it *more* tomorrow. If they refuse to feel its energy today, they shall refuse yet more obstinately as time rolls on and its power shall not go forth to enlighten or impress or comfort their hearts. This is a terrible thing, but what is still worse, if worse it can be, is this to be followed by a growing inability to understand—“For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.” Since they would not hear plain speech, God will make simplicity, itself, to seem like stammering to them. Men that cannot endure simple language shall, at last, become unable to understand it!

You know, my Brothers and Sisters, how large a body of mankind are, at this day, unable to understand the Savior. The Savior said, “This is My body” and straightway they conclude that a piece of *bread* is transformed into the flesh of Christ! The Savior commands Believers to be baptized into His death and straightway they proclaim that the water of Baptism regenerates children! They will not understand what is clear as the sun. They take our Lord’s illustrations *literally* and when He speaks literally they dream that He is using metaphors! If men will not understand, they shall not understand! A man may shut his eyes so long that he cannot open them. In India many devotees have held up their arms so long that they can never take them down, again. Beware lest an utter imbecility of heart come upon those of you who refuse the Gospel.

If you charge God’s Word with being childish, you shall grow childish yourselves, as many great philosophers of our day have done. If you say that it is simple and refuse it because of its plainness, you will become simpletons yourselves. If you say it is beneath you, it will turn out that you will be beneath it and it will grind you to powder! Lastly, this warning is given to those who object to the Gospel that whatever refuge they choose for themselves shall utterly fail them. Thus says the Lord—“Judgment will I also lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.”

Down come the great hailstones, dashing everything to shivers—the threats of God’s Word breaking to pieces all the false and flattering hopes of the ungodly! Then comes the active wrath of God like an overwhelming flood to sweep away everything on which the sinner stood and he, in his obstinate unbelief, is carried away as with a flood into that utter destruc-

tion—that everlasting misery which God has declared shall be the lot of all those who refuse the living Jesus Christ! Beware, you despisers! Beware!

I have earnestly tried, at this time, in simple language, to set before you the wickedness of refusing the Gospel of rest. May the Spirit of God grant that any here who have, up to now, neglected it may, at once, accept it! Try it, weary heart! Try it, despondent spirit! Try what faith in Jesus can do! Come and trust in Jesus and see if it does not bring peace to your soul. If Jesus fails you, let me know, for I will never preach again if He breaks His promises! He can never cast off or cast away a believing heart! Oh, if there is sweet peace, calm, joyful hope, gladness, strength and life to be had by childlike faith in God's testimony concerning His dear Son, I pray God that you may obtain it at once!

If you feel an objection to the preacher who now addresses you, pray God that he may preach better. And if you have done so and he is still distasteful to you, go and hear somebody who will not be personally objectionable, for it would be a grief of heart to me to stand in the way of even one anxious heart! I fear that you stand in your own light. O Man, act like a man and hear the Gospel candidly. O Self! Will you destroy yourself? O Pride! Lower your crest. O Drunkenness! Quit your cups. O hardened Sinner! God help you to leave your sin! Come and trust Jesus this day. May God enable you to do so by His Holy Spirit, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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REFUGES OF LIES AND WHAT WILL BECOME OF THEM

NO. 1501

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 26, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.”
Isaiah 28:17.*

OVER against amazing mercy, the Holy Spirit sets awakening judgment. The acceptable year of the Lord is also the day of vengeance of our God and the sentence which shall confirm the righteous in his righteousness is attended by another which says, “He that is unjust let him be unjust still.” When the Lord shall come to be glorified in His saints, He will, at the same time, take vengeance in flaming fire upon those that know Him not. In the present instance, in the 16th verse of this chapter, the Lord declares “Behold *I lay* in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone” and then, immediately in our text, He speaks of another laying—“Judgment also *will I lay* to the line, and righteousness to the plummet.”

Upon the roses of Grace grow the thorns of Justice. Whenever the Lord bares His arm for mercy towards Believers, He gives a backstroke to His enemies. Therefore, even the activity of love wears a threatening aspect to those who live impenitent, wedded to their sins, since it is accompanied by an energetic display of justice. Take care that you remember this, you who are unbelievers and yet dream of some millennial benediction, or latter day glory which may bring salvation to you. Is it not written, “Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! To what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness and not light”?

Whatever good may be in store for Believers there is none for you! The pillar of fire which will give light to the Lord's Israel will be darkness to you, O you Egyptians! To those who are out of Christ, even the greatest triumphs of Divine love will be terrible—they shall behold and wonder and perish—they shall see the plentiful goodness of the Lord but they shall not eat thereof, but die in the gate. These are heavy tidings for you who love not the Lord, but they are as true as they are heavy—as certainly as Mercy lays her Foundation, as surely will Judgment sweep away those who reject it and build upon another. Nor shall there be long space between the rejection of the blessing and the execution of the curse. Long-suffering will have an end and then the swift-footed executioner shall overtake the sinner and woe shall be unto the hairy scalp of him that goes on in his iniquities.

Another great Truth of God should never be forgotten—it is this—a great privilege involves a great responsibility. It is a great privilege to hear the Gospel, but woe unto those who shut their ears to its warnings and invitations, for it shall ring out their death-knell. It is a very high favor to see the Foundation which God has laid in Zion and to be exhorted to build

upon it. But of those who reject that Foundation, vengeance will be exacted. Upon whomever this Stone shall fall, it shall grind them to powder! In proportion to the love which gave the Only Begotten to be the Foundation of a sinner's hope will be the Divine indignation against those who reject Him.

You who see Jesus set forth before you as the Cornerstone of the Lord's own choosing and yet perversely turn aside to prepare false refuges of your own will have to answer to God for this insult to His Son, this despite to His Spirit! Every hour in which you make lies your refuge and hide yourselves under falsehood, you increase your guilt. O that you would consider this! But I hear one say, "We have no refuge or hiding place and do not feel that we need any." I answer that this very self-conceit of yours is your refuge! Every man knows in his own conscience that he needs a shelter of some sort to screen himself from stern Justice. He supplies his conscience with something in the form of a shield because he inwardly knows that he is not able to appear before God without some sort of apology, or attempt at justification.

Let him cripple his conscience as much as he pleases, there is a something within him which tells him that everything is not right. He may brag as he likes, but he has at least a *suspicion* of danger, a fear of coming judgment! Even as a man needs the shelter of a cave, a hut, or a house for his body, so he needs a refuge for his soul. And when he rejects the solid Refuge which the mercy of God has provided in Christ Jesus, he sets to work to build another shelter and to lay for himself another foundation where he may repose.

Our desire this morning is anxiously and solemnly to warn men of what will come of their willfulness and to lead them to look a little before them and spy out, through the telescope of Scripture, the sure future of their ungrounded hopes. Thus I trust they may be led to abandon all false refuges and may be guided by the Spirit of God to accept the sure Foundation which God has laid for His believing people. O how I long that you may, all of you, be right for eternity! I would not have one of you perish, any more than I would wish to perish myself. O Holy Spirit, bless my feeble words to the good of these, my beloved people! May my weakness of thought and speech never hinder You from working, but rather, in this hour of my infirmity, You speak, Blessed Spirit, with greater power!

First, *let us see the Lord judging false refuges*. Secondly, *let us picture their destruction*. And thirdly, *let us take the warning* which such a subject should convey to every thoughtful mind.

I. LET US SEE THE LORD JUDGING MAN'S REFUGES. He says, "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet." Observe that however carelessly we may judge ourselves, God will not so judge us. We may take things at second hand and view them very lightly, but God makes personal observation and takes a careful survey. We may foolishly say, "Do not let us trouble ourselves too much or become too anxious, things will no doubt get right one of these days," but God is in earnest and there is no trifling with Him. Observe that His survey is performed with the utmost accuracy. He will not judge according to the sight of the eyes or the hearing of the ears, but He will go into matters and make a thorough search.

An ordinary builder sent to examine a house would probably content himself with hastily looking to see whether the walls were perpendicular and whether the work was of the quantity and quality specified in the contract. He could tell this pretty nearly with his eyes, or by measuring with his feet. But if a very careful and scientific survey were needed, he would then produce his plummet and his line and try everything by the regular accepted tests of builder's work. And hence our text describes the Lord as laying judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet—that is to say, He makes a deliberate trial of our confidences, compares our hopes with our conduct, our beliefs with His Truth—and our expectations with the facts of the case. He measures and gauges and gives an accurate estimate of what we are and where we are.

O that we might have Grace to invite such a test at once by praying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts!" If the Lord will help us to know ourselves, now, it will save us from a sad discovery at the last. Let us examine ourselves, because God will examine us on the Judgment Day! Let us come to the plummet and to the measuring line and give up random hopes and hasty confidences. Better the distress of honest anxiety than the presumption of foolhardy rashness! It is much better to be afraid where there is no cause for fear than to be at ease where there is no ground for confidence. Well did Cowper say—

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

He who takes things for granted may find himself to be a fool in that day when folly will never again have opportunities for wisdom. All things will, in the end, be put into the scales and weighed—and Infallible Justice shall give its final decision! It is wise to anticipate that final and irreversible verdict by a present and honest searching of the grounds of our hope. According to the connection of our text, there are three ways by which we may, all of us, judge whether our confidences are refuges of lies or not. For, first, if they are safe hiding places, such as will bear the brunt of the coming storm, they are founded upon Christ. "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation."

Now examine, my dear Friend, *your* hope for eternity. Is it the hope which God has set forth in Scripture? Is it based and bottomed upon the work of the Lord Jesus? For if not, as the Lord my God lives and as your soul lives, it will fail you in the day of trial! If God laid the Foundation and you accept it, you may feel quite sure about it, for God never yet laid down a fiction as the groundwork of faith. He never mocked human reliance, yet, and never will! If the Lord laid the Foundation you need not hesitate to build on it, for the responsibility of its security is with the Lord and not with us. We may fairly put it thus with our hearts in hours when all things are questioned—if our faith is vain, at least we have grounded it where Divine Revelation commanded us to ground it! If there is a failure, it is not ours only, but a failure on the part of Him who laid the Foundation for us!

But such a thing shall never be—the Christ of God never fails! We shall find Jesus to be what the Father declares Him to be, a sure Foundation which shall support us in life, bear us up in death and sustain us throughout eternity. Come, search yourselves, and try your hopes by this

test! Hang this plummet against your wall—do you stand even with it? Is Jesus Christ All in All to you? Do you rest on Him and on Him alone? If so, you are surely saved! But if not, you have made lies your refuge! He then gives us a second test and that is if our confidence is a right one, it comes to us through faith, for it is written in the 16th verse, “He that believes shall not make haste.” He shall not be confused. He shall not run away in trepidation and alarm. He shall not be in a hurry to anticipate the day of blessing, nor be in distress about the hour of trial. “He that believes” is the man whose soul is fixed on the sure Foundation and, therefore, abides in peace.

Now, my Hearers, do you *believe* for your salvation, or do you look to your own feelings and doings? If your hope is grounded upon sight, or feeling, or working—it will one day fail you. Do you rest on ceremonies, upon something performed by a priest or a minister, or are you resting upon outward religiousness, upon attending the means of Grace and bowing, kneeling and standing like Christians? Then I warn you that these sandy foundations will be washed away when the floods come! Have you faith in Jesus Christ? Do you believe the Infallible Word of God and do you confide in His Infallible Son? If you do this, Heaven and earth shall pass away, but never shall your Foundation be moved! Your hope shall stand firm as the Throne of God!

Judge yourselves, then, by this—bring this plummet and this line to bear upon the building that you have been erecting for years—and remember that if it is not of *faith* it is all in vain! Salvation is of Grace through faith! By faith the sinner is justified and the just lives by faith! Without faith it is impossible to please God, therefore see to it that you have the faith of God’s elect or your hope is vanity! A third test seems to me to be proposed in my text, “Judgment will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet.” Here, then, is the test of righteousness. If our hope is sound, it is a holy, sanctifying hope which purges us from sin and breeds in us all that is true and good.

This is a test which some do not like to apply. They are wonderfully pleased when we are preaching the Gospel of believing, but when it comes to *fruit*—to the declaration that true faith works by love—they fight shy of it. But I beseech you, my Brothers and Sisters, be not like these foolish persons! Court those tests which are the most searching and thorough, that you may make sure work for eternity. Exercise a loving severity toward your own soul. Be lenient to every other person, but be sternly severe to your own case. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Have you this holiness? The faith that is without works is dead, being alone. Have you the works which prove the sincerity of faith? If the Grace of God does not change your character; if it does not make you hate sin and strive after that which is right, just and good, then it is not the Grace of God at all! You have but the *form* and are without the *power* of it. Is this the case with you? Come, do not flinch, but go through with it and deal fairly with your own soul!

We shall now apply these tests to certain refuges which I am sure will turn out to be refuges of lies. A few of these we will mention at length. The first is *the hope which some men ground upon their own moral goodness*. “It will be all right with me,” says one, “for I have not done anything much amiss. If I have been faulty, we are poor, imperfect creatures and we can-

not help it. On the whole my aims and objectives have been greatly superior to those of the bulk of mankind. I do not think I can have incurred much wrath from God, or that I need be under any apprehension as to being judged of Him at the Last Great Day.”

Alas, my Friend, yours must be a refuge of lies, for it will not stand trial by the first plummet! It is not based upon the Foundation which God has laid! Your hope has *nothing* to do with Christ, that precious Cornerstone. It is evident that you do not want Him, or His blood, or His righteousness, for you are altogether independent of such help. Why should God have taken the trouble to lay a foundation in the blood of His own Son when it is evidently quite a superfluity, since you can save *yourself*? Do you not see that, inasmuch as you rely upon your own moral goodness, you as good as tell the Lord that the gift of His dear Son and His death on Calvary were all a mistake, a Savior was not required and an Atonement was not needed? If you can save yourself, so can others, and the whole plan of Grace becomes an absurdity. I feel sure that since you cannot stand this first test your refuge is a false one.

Now, try the second touchstone as to faith. You have no faith in God. *Your* hope is not based on faith in Jesus—you have no faith except faith in *yourself*. You are trusting to the works of the Law, but do you not know what the Scripture says, “By the works of the Law there shall be no flesh justified in His sight”? You are opposing the Revelation of God—He declares that men are not saved by works, but by Grace, and you, on the other hand, claim salvation by your own works! You are under a gross delusion and your trust is a refuge of lies! Moreover, my gentle boaster, is not this plea of moral goodness a lie from top to bottom? In the calmness of your mind can you prove this excellency of yours? Your outward life may have been comparatively pure, but I am not sure of that if all were known.

Look back and see whether there are not more stains than you thought, more grave faults than you would like to confess. You have a very flattering memory, which obliges you by *forgetting* things which it would be inconvenient to remember. Your righteousness is little better than a house of cards and if you ever blow upon it with anxious breath it will come tumbling down! I call upon you to put away such folly and to open your eyes to facts. Please remember that even if your outward life may have been correct, God regards the *heart* and takes account of the *inner* life. Your *thoughts*, have they not gone after evil? Your *imagination*, has it never delighted in sin? Have there been no corrupt *desires*, no selfish *ambitions*? Have you come up to the standard of God’s perfection? I will ask you no more questions—I know you have not, for the testimony of the Searcher of all hearts is this, “There is none that does good, no, not one.”

Therefore I know that you have not done good. You, like your fellow men, are a sinner and condemned! I beseech you put away this vain glorying and seek a better refuge. A spider’s web is not slighter than this confidence of yours! A bubble is not more frail, or a breath more unsubstantial. If this is your shelter, it is worse than no shelter! The fig leaves of our first parents, when they were all dry and shriveled, were a better covering than our poor merits. If we were not maddened by our sins, we should never be so insane as to dream of pleading our own excellence before God! If we had any just idea of what holiness is, we should confess our iniquity

and then close our mouth in the silence of self-condemnation. Lay but justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet and our personal moral excellence is seen to be as a bowing wall and as a tottering fence.

I have noticed, however, in the second place, that a number of persons make a refuge for themselves out of *the notion of fate*. They say, "Everything is settled and determined and ordained and, therefore, if I am to be saved, I shall be saved. And if I am to be lost I shall be lost. After all, we are creatures of circumstances and are like the fish of the sea taken in a net, or sea birds caught in the wind, driven, we scarcely know where. Let us hope that all may come right at last, but we cannot help it whatever may occur." I have no hesitation in saying that this refuge is a refuge of lies. It would not endure one of the tests and assuredly not the last, for its tendency is to deny all moral obligation and, therefore, it is no friend to holiness. It deliberately charges God with the creature's sin and makes out the sinner to be the injured person and clear of the guilt of his own acts.

Many persuade themselves that they believe it, but it is such a poor, paltry shelter that I wonder they are not ashamed to mention it! In the bottom of their hearts those who urge it know better. Look here, good Sir, and see your own inconsistency. Why did you punish your boy this morning for willful disobedience? Why did you not say to him, "I will not chide with you, my Son, nor chasten you, though you provoked me, for you cannot help it, you are ordained to it"? The thief that broke into your house the other day, did you lie still and let him take your silver? If he was ordained to have it, he would have it—why did you open the window and cry for help? When the thief was taken, did you say to the magistrate, "Do not punish him, he could not help it. No doubt some Divine decree led him here"?

The scoundrel that called you, "liar," the other day, and knocked you down in the street—did you rise up and with a quiet smile thank him for it, for he could not help it, he was only the agent of a Divine purpose and the instrument of an Omnipotent Predestination which he could not resist? You never thought of such folly! You feel that those who injure you are responsible and you treat them accordingly. Now mark—*you* are responsible, too. It is a Truth of God that all things are fixed, but it is not a Truth that, therefore, men may live in sin and lay the blame upon God! Whatever foreordination and predestination may be or may *not* be, they leave men free agents and responsible being, or else both Law and Gospel are absurdities and the Bible is ill written.

In other matters men do not act on the supposed inferences of fate, but on the evident necessities of everyday life—why not in religion? It may be true that everything is fixed and doubtless so it is, but because it is fixed, whether I shall live or not, do I, therefore, refuse to eat? Because it is fixed whether I shall sleep or not, do I refuse to undress and get into my bed? Because it is predestinated whether I shall be rich or not, do I leave my shop and get away and leave my goods to sell themselves? No, verily, predestination or *no* predestination, you are all eager to get gain! Men are not such idiots in other things as they pretend to be in the things of God! The plea of fate is a fool's refuge worthy only of a brainless sot!

Since it will not stand even my feeble brush, you may be sure that it will all dissolve beneath the iron rod of the Prince of Truth! It is in vain for

you to say, "We were delivered to work this iniquity," for you know that you sin willingly and you refuse Christ deliberately. You choose the evil and turn your backs on the good and, therefore, your ruin must be laid at your own doors. Cease, then, from the vain endeavor to justify yourselves and seek unto the Lord and His Christ!

The third shelter of lies which many fly to is *a hope based upon novel doctrines*. Each age would gladly have its own Gospel and the present is not behind hand in the desire to be its own prophet. Many are ready to help in this presumptuous design. Certain Divines attain to eminence by undermining the Gospel they pretend to defend and forging new theories upon the anvils of their own fancy. Men who would never have been known if they had acted honestly, have gained a cheap notoriety by vending heresy and yet wearing the garb and eating the bread of orthodoxy! The most fashionable form of this evil, just now, is the production of novelties with regard to the future punishment of the wicked.

False Prophets prophesy smooth things and talk of a larger hope, which, being interpreted, is this—that men may live very much as they like but some time or other, and somehow or other, character will cease to operate upon destiny and the righteous and the wicked will stand on a par. This is the old doctrine of falsehood with which the sinner blesses himself in his heart, saying, "I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart."

The punishment of sin has been doubted from the very beginning. The chief of all subtle thinkers said in the garden of Eden, "You shall not surely die!" By this larger hope, insinuated rather than boldly stated, the serpentine philosopher tempted the woman and ruined our race. Pleased with his success, he continues to use the same artifice, asserting either that sin is trivial, or that penance can remove it, or that Hell is temporary, or that the soul will be annihilated, or some other form of the same radical lie. His perpetual cry is, "You shall not surely suffer what God threatens! You may sin and yet there is a hope larger than the Revelation of Jesus Christ, wider than the Savior has proclaimed."

In this refuge there is no Christ and no faith in Him—and assuredly there is nothing in it that conduces to holiness. Mark its influence wherever it is received. When any of our friends embrace the novel theology, do they become more devout, more earnest, more gracious, more holy as the result of it? I think not. Are these the persons who make our Prayer Meetings a power? Are these the winners of souls? Are these the men who speak much of Jesus and live in daily fellowship with Him? Do we see them more careful to avoid conformity to the world? Our witness is that the consequences are the reverse. Did you ever hear of a man who was converted from vice by hearing that sin would be lightly punished and who, in proportion as he grew purer in life, grew more heterodox in his views?

Such an instance would be a rarity, if, indeed, it ever existed! But when a man who holds orthodox doctrine, backslides and declines, as a general rule he finds it convenient to adopt some novel hypothesis in order that he may feel comfortable in his sin. Is it not so? So far as my observation goes, these modern notions go with looseness of life, with worldliness of heart, with decay of prayerfulness and with backsliding from the living God. And as you lay this line and plummet to them, it will soon be seen

that they are refuges of lies. At any rate, Sirs, suppose your larger hope should turn out to be correct? In what respect will the orthodox be the losers? But suppose your larger hope should turn out to be a mere delusion? What will become of you who venture your all upon it?

We are, in any case, upon the safe side of the hedge and this is no small advantage when the weightiest interests are at stake. Suppose there shall be no Hell? If I am a believer in Christ, it matters not to me. But suppose there is—and there is—then you who are unbelievers are in an evil plight! If you do not catch this will-o'-the-wisp of a larger hope, as I believe you never will, then where are you? It behoves every man not only to make sure, but to make doubly sure! About the soul we need the utmost certainty. I would counsel you to dig deep and see what you are resting on. I would have you make sure that you do not permit a falsehood to lie like a worm at the root of your hope! Seek to know the reason for your building on Christ and when you have ascertained that, then look for God's guarantee for placing stone upon stone in the building up—and without this do not rest!

Nothing but Divine authority ought to content you in the business of eternity. The views and hypotheses of the learned Dr. Somebody are of no value to me, for I can theorize for myself if I have a mind to. I need facts and certainties, for I dread every refuge of lies. Alas, we have another brood of men whose refuge is that they make *a profession of religion*. "I am always at a place of worship," says one. "I am never absent from a single service and, what is more, I joined the Church some years ago and I have kept up my membership. I have been baptized and I come to the Lord's Table with great regularity. I feel a good deal of pleasure in religious exercises. I am not sure that I was ever born again. I am not sure that I ever repented of sin. I am not sure that I try to live a holy life, but still I am a member of a Church and that is a great comfort to me."

Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, this will not do! Unless this membership of yours with a visible Church is backed up by holy living and unless there is an inward resting upon Jesus Christ and a vital faith whereby you hold fast to Him, your name may be on the Church roll, but it will not be found written in the Lamb's Book of Life! And this profession of yours, instead of blessing you, will curse you! If you are not savingly converted, you are guilty of a daily hypocrisy and chargeable with sacrilege for appropriating sacred things to which you have no right! Unconverted one, you are an intruder into the family of Christ; an interloper at the feast of the King of kings! Search yourselves lest, being found at the bridal feast without a wedding garment, you should be cast out into outer darkness!

You need not be hurt by the exhortation, for those of us who speak to you are often forced to carry out a severe search within our own hearts. How often I put myself through my paces with many an anxious question! I have taught others, but do I know the Truth for myself? I have brought others to Christ, but have I come to Christ myself? What if, after having preached to others, I, myself, should be a castaway? What the Lord's ministers feel bound to do to *themselves*, surely you need not be too proud to endure! If you are doing very little for your Lord and Master compared with others, you may well be very anxious and careful, for the doom of unprofitable servants is not a light one and barren trees are not always allowed to stand. "Oh," says one, "but I do not like heart-searching." Then I

am afraid for you. You who do not examine yourselves; you who are not willing to be tested and tried by the Word of God, you cause us serious suspicion lest you may have built very rapidly with wood, hay, stubble and yet your whole structure will be consumed in the last great fire!

Let me speak a word concerning certain ones who have *a hope of being saved which does not sanctify them*, for there are professors who feel sure they are Christians and will go to Heaven and yet they show no sign of being prepared for it. They live as others live and yet imagine that they shall not die as others die! They have an outward film of morality upon their lives, but underneath it there is worldliness and love of sinful pleasure. How dare they hope? If they sow iniquity shall they reap perfection? Can a man go to Heaven who is not heavenly? Can lovers of worldly pleasure enter into the dwellings of the perfect? O Sirs, if your hope does not lead you to follow after holiness, away with it! God help you to away with it at once and to begin aright. Above all things dread an empty, baseless hope of Heaven, for it will make Hell all the more terrible!

Some, too, make a refuge of their *old experience*. Now, an old experience which is all old is a manifest deception. A true experience continues and grows day by day. Not with one even pace each day, but still, as a whole, the Divine life goes forward to perfection—but where it does not do so, but comes to an end—it is not the Divine life at all. Have you never heard of the man who wrote down his experiences of religion when a young man so that he might fall back upon it in later years? He lived in neglect of all godliness but, having already experienced religion, as he said, and having made a record of it and put it away with the title deeds of his farm, he dreamed that when he came to die he might fetch it out and comfort himself with his evidences of salvation!

His daughter went to the drawer and found that the mice had eaten it. Ah, dear me, it was not much loss, for that hope which is grounded on a musty experience which is not supported by a present love of God, present prayer, present fellowship and present striving against sin, is a lie! It is all in vain to say, "I know I did experience such-and-such a thing a dozen years ago when I joined the Church." What of that? If a man is alive, now, he does not need to prove it by going back to the records of his youth! Present life is its own evidence. If you are not living to God, today, I care not a button what you profess to have done 20 years ago! If you had a true faith then, you have it now—and if you have no faith *now*, you are in the gall of bitterness.

It is true that he that believes in Christ is saved, but we must have proof of it in the consequent life. If the man is not saved from living in sin, we infer that he has not believed. And if he does not persevere to the end, we are sure that he is not one of the Lord's own—"for if any man draw back," says the Lord, "my soul shall have no pleasure in him." This is the test of true faith. Those who have really believed do not draw back unto perdition, for they have believed unto the salvation of their souls. Oh, then, I pray you, if your imaginary experience in former times has dissolved into present carelessness and sin, do not attempt to hide behind it! It will not endure the line and the plummet, therefore put it away and seek God this day that He may begin a sound work of Grace upon your souls.

I hope I have said enough by way of laying the line and the plummet to false refuges. May the Lord awaken the carnally secure and lead them to forsake their useless hiding places and shelter themselves in Christ.

II. Very briefly let us, in the second place, PICTURE THE DESTRUCTION OF THESE REFUGES OF LIES. A man has been very comfortable in one or other of these refuges for a good number of years, but at last he is getting old and is laid aside to think. Infirmities are increasing, death is drawing near and he takes a look into the dark future. He finds himself facing an eternal state and he has need of all his confidences and hopes to sustain him. Now, what happens? His spirit undergoes a great storm and what is the result? Does he dwell in a fortress which defies the hurricane? No, his shelter is so frail that, according to the text, “the hail shall sweep away the refuges of lies.”

A cold, hard Truth of God falls from Heaven like a hailstone and crashes right through the glass roof of his false confidence! He looks up astonished and, lo, another and another forgotten Truth descends with the same violence and crushes through all opposition till it smites his soul. He had always hoped, good, easy man, that sunshine and quiet would last forever and then his glass house would have been all he needed. He never reckoned on these hailstones! Great Truths of God which he forgot, neglected and despised, come rattling down upon him from Heaven in awful earnest and with deadly aim. He must think and he has much to think of—but no means of forgetting any of it. His conscience, which he tried to smother, awakes, and as it awakes the big hailstones of Truth come through his roof faster and faster.

Down falls all his comfort and peace of mind as hailstone after hailstone pounds all his hope to pieces! “After all, I never was born again and the Scripture has well said, ‘You must be born again.’ I never yielded up my selfishness and I cannot be saved unless Christ is my King. I did not really close in with Christ and cast my naked soul on Him—I trusted in something else and I am lost forever!” Great hailstones thus follow each other and against them the deceived heart has no defense. Presently the storm comes up with tremendous wind and the hailstones are hurled forward like terrible artillery and the naked soul finds its refuge utterly swept away—not a thread of it remains! His refuge fails the man and his soul, unhoused, unsheltered, starts back in horror!

It starts back in vain! God has now to be met and the soul has no hiding place! The fire eyes of the Most High are burning the heart through and through and rocks and hills refuse a shelter. God grant that this may not be your case and that it may not be mine. May it never be said of us, “When they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” Let us fly to Jesus at once! Let us most solemnly exercise faith in Him now! I pause while this is done. Is it so? Have you rested upon the Son of God for everything? Then you may go forward and neither fear hailstones nor coals of fire, for he that believes in Him shall never be confounded!

Another impressive picture is set before us in the text. “The waters shall overflow the hiding place.” Imagine one who, in the time of Noah’s flood, does not choose to enter into the ark for he does not care to be tied down to God’s way of deliverance. Salvation by an ark is too simple, too

childish—he wants a more philosophic way. Besides, he does not care to be cooped up with Noah and a handful of narrow-minded people who shut them in and shut everybody else out. He has broader views and, therefore, he has found a shelter on the side of the hill—in a great cave where thousands can assemble and enjoy a liberty denied them within the pale of the ark! It is utterly preposterous to suppose the flood will ever reach so high as this elevated cave! It is *hundreds* of feet above the plain and, in the judgment of the wisest men, it is more than safe.

After a day or two of extraordinary rain the man would look down from his hiding place and see the waters covering all the lower area and creeping up the valleys foot by foot. And he would remark upon the abundance of rain, but scoff at the idea of a general deluge. He would be easy, hoping that the rain would cease, but as it continued he would begin to think, “I may not be quite so safe after all.” Imagine his horror when the flood, at last, fills up the ravine and creeps up the rocky steep. With cruel lips, seeking his destruction, the water threatens the cave in which he thought to dwell so safely. At last it penetrates his hiding place! It climbs to the very roof! It sweeps over his head and his false confidence has proved his ruin. Such will be the end of all that hide themselves, but hide not in Christ!

I will tell you in what fashion this overthrow will come. First, the mirth of the mind is damped with doubt. The man does not feel so easy as he used to be. He is afraid that God’s Word may be true and that things will go amiss with him. Soon the doubt has oozed into his refuge and become a pool of fear—the man is sadly afraid and the dread saturates and dissolves all his joy. The Truth of God’s Word still further comes home to his conscience and he begins to be more and more alarmed. Nor does he continue long in one place, for he is growingly distressed—the waters are evidently advancing upon him and he cannot escape.

He has come to be altogether dismayed. He hardly knows what will become of him and within a little while, unless God’s mercy shall prevent and enable him to find the true shelter, he will be drenched in despair and washed away in terror. At last he cannot believe that there is any salvation possible for him. He hears death and Hell approaching and his flesh creeps with horror. Let him alone and you will find him filled with terror. If his conscience is really awake, he will dread to go to sleep at night lest he should never wake again! I have seen such in their dying moments afraid of everything, fearing alike to live or to die.

At last the man is taken away and where is he? Lost, lost, lost! The hail has swept away his refuge and the flood has overwhelmed his hiding place. He has perished forever from the Presence of the Lord and from the Glory of His power. None can find a ransom for him. He rejected the Foundation which God laid and sought to find a refuge for himself—and he has been taken away in his presumption.

III. Time fails us, but I want you TO LEARN THE LESSON OF WARNING which I have just strength enough to indicate in a few words. May the Holy Spirit bless it, though I am scarcely able to express my thoughts. The first lesson of warning is *let us build on God’s Foundation*. He knows better than we do what is right and safe. Come, you wise people, be as children and believe your God! Come, you who like something of your own imagining, and for once yield your own fancies. Indulge your whims upon some

common business, but in this matter it will be safer to believe God's Word than to continue dreaming and devising for yourself.

You may be a very intelligent person, but will you compete in intelligence with God? Very likely you may know a hundred times more than I do. You may know a thousand times more if you choose to think so, but you cannot have a better *hope* than mine, for I rest on Jesus Christ alone! You may have what hope you like, but I would not change with you for all your learning. My hope lies in simply coming to Jesus and depending upon Him and learning how to love Him. I recommend the same to you. Come, and from the love of Jesus learn how to be a Christian! Learn to be holy! Learn to be unselfish! Learn to live according to God's Word.

There is a power about faith in Christ to give a man the mastery over himself—a power to be found nowhere else. I have seen the drunk, the thief, the harlot believe in Jesus Christ and become converted—and from that very day they have become gracious, godly, pure-minded people! I have never seen anything else make such a change in men as faith does! We may surely speak as we find and use a remedy of which we see the cure. We have, moreover, tried it ourselves and, therefore, we speak what we know. Therefore come and rest in Jesus and when you come to die you will at least be able to feel, "I have God's sanction for the Foundation I have built upon and therefore it cannot fail." O may the Holy Spirit bring you to this!

Again, let your refuge be wholly built up of Divine Truths. Do not try to comfort yourself with a lie. Dear Friend, let the Truth of God be all in all to you! Counterfeit coin enriches no man. Have nothing to do with false and flattering teachings. If your hope is not built on solid, substantial matters of *fact*, give it up and get one that is! If your hope of being saved depends on a dream, or a voice you thought you heard in the air, or some other such nonsense, put it away! Build upon your Lord's life, death and resurrection—build upon God's promises—build by the work of the Holy Spirit with faith and you shall have the reward of eternal life!

In a word, rest on Jesus, the eternal Son of God made flesh and bleeding to death for man! Build on His complete work and there only—and then if winds blow and waters rage you shall be safe, safe forever! God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE BED AND ITS COVERING

NO. 244

**DELIVERED OF SABBATH EVENING, JANUARY 9, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself—and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself.”
Isaiah 28:20.***

GOD has so made men that there are two things essential for their comfort, if not for their very existence, namely, sleep and clothing. Had God so pleased it, He might have made man an everlasting watcher, upon whose eyes the mists of night never should descend and upon whose eyelids the fingers of sleep never should be placed. Perhaps angelic spirits never sleep. Day without night they circle God's Throne rejoicing and ceaselessly they chant His praise. Perhaps their unflagging wings are always stretched for duty and their untiring voices are ever occupied with song. But manifestly it is not so with man. We need “kind nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep.” If we could not sleep, should we not even wish for death? Let sleep be long from our eyelids, if we had no other disease our strength must become prostrate and the fire of life would smolder into the ashes of death.

Sleep, therefore, is essential even to the very existence of our bodies on earth. Clothing, also, is needful for our comfort and, at least in some climates, absolutely necessary for our very existence. God has made the animal creation of such a kind that they grow their clothing upon their own backs. For the horse and for the sheep no loom works, nor does the shuttle hasten in its course. Their backs are their own webs and they fashion their own garments, as if to teach us that man alone is imperfect and needs to look beyond himself. Other creatures can readily find their own habitations and produce for themselves out of themselves. But man feels his nakedness and must either seek for the fig leaf of his own righteousness, or else the Lord God must make for him clothing with which he may array himself and stand completely covered. Dress, I say, is essential to man—dress and sleep.

Now, I think it may be readily granted that man's body is, after all, only a picture of his inner being—what the body needs materially—the soul needs spiritually. The soul, then, needs two things. It requires rest, which is pictured to us in sleep. The soul needs a bed upon which it may repose

quietly and take its ease. And, again, the soul needs covering, for as a naked body would be both uncomfortable, unseemly and dangerous—much more would the naked soul be unhappy—noxious to the eye of God and utterly miserable in itself.

Now our text tells us that men have sought for rest and for clothing where they are not to be found. That they have gone about to make a bed for themselves which is shorter than that they can stretch themselves. And that they have also sought to make coverings for themselves which have turned out to be narrower than that they can wrap themselves.

We shall speak, first, of what man has done and of his vain and futile attempts to find rest and clothing for his soul. Afterward, we shall briefly attempt to show how God has accomplished this and has given to the Believer a couch upon which he can stretch to his utmost length and yet find that the bed is long enough, and has given him a garment in which he may grow, and always find that, broad as he shall become in the magnitude of his experience or of his sin, this covering shall always be broad enough to cover him.

I. Well, then, let us take the first figure. The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself. **MEN TRY, THEN, TO MAKE BEDS ON WHICH THEIR SOULS MAY REST.** One of the most uncomfortable things in the world, I should think, would be a *short* bed—a bed so short that a man should not have room to stretch himself on. I cannot conceive how miserable a poor wretch must be who would be condemned to seek an uneasy rest, an uneasy ease on a couch shorter than his body. But that is just the condition of all men while they are seeking a rest anywhere else but in the “rest that remains for the people of God.” With reference to a man’s present aims and present attainments, all that he can ever get on earth is a bed shorter than that he can stretch himself.

Then, in the next place, we shall notice as to the future world, that all man can do if we come to consider it, is too little to give ease to the heart. First, then, as to the present world—how many beds are there of man’s own invention? One man has made himself a bedstead of gold. The pillars are of silver, the covering is of Tyrian purple, the pillows are filled with down such as only much fine gold could buy him. The hangings he has embroidered with threads of gold and silver and the curtains are drawn upon rings of ivory. Lo, this man has ransacked creation for luxuries and invented to himself all manner of sumptuous delights. He gets unto himself broad acres and many lands. He adds house to house and field to field. He digs, he toils, he labors. He is in hopes that he shall get enough, a sufficiency, a satisfactory inheritance. He proceeds from enterprise to enterprise. He invests his money in one sphere of labor and then another. He attempts to multiply his gold until it gets beyond all reckoning. He be-

comes a merchant prince, a millionaire, and he says unto himself—"Soul, take your ease. Eat, drink and be merry. You have much goods laid up for many years."

Do you not envy this man his bed? Are there not some of you whose only object in life is to get such a couch for yourselves? You say, "He has feathered his nest well—would to God that I could do the same for myself!" Ah, but do you know that this bed is shorter than that he can stretch himself? If you cast yourself upon it for a moment, the bed is long enough for *you*, but it is not long enough for *him*. I have often thought that many a man's riches would be sufficient for me, but they are not sufficient for him. If he makes them his God and seeks in them his happiness, you never find the man has money enough—his lands are still too narrow and his estate too small. When he begins to stretch himself, he finds there is something wanted. If the bed could only be made a little longer—then, he thinks—he could be quiet and have room enough.

But when the bed is lengthened, he finds he has grown longer, too, and when his fortune has grown as big as the bedstead of Og, king of Bashan, even then he finds he cannot lie upon it easily. No, we read of one man who stretched himself along the whole world which he had conquered. But he found there was no room and he began to weep because there were no other worlds to conquer. One would have thought a little province would have been enough for him to rest in. Oh, no—so big is man when he stretches himself, that the whole world does not suffice him. No, if God should give to the avaricious all the mines of Peru, all the glittering diamonds of Golconda, all the wealth of worlds and if He were then to transmute the stars into gold and silver and make us emperors of an entire universe till we should talk of constellations as men talk of hundreds, yes, and talk of universes as others talk of thousands, even *then* the bed would not be long enough whereon we might stretch our ever-lengthening desires.

The soul is wider than creation, broader than space—give it all, it would be still unsatisfied and man would not find rest. You say, "That is strange—if I had a little more I should be very well satisfied." You make a mistake—if you are not content with what you have you would not be satisfied if it were doubled. "No," says one, "I should be." You do not know yourself. If you have fixed your affection on the things of this world, that affection is like a horseleech. It cries, "Give! Give!" It will suck, suck, suck to all eternity and still cry, "Give, give!" And though you give it all, it has not enough. The bed, in fact, "is shorter than that a man can stretch himself."

Let us look in another direction. Other men have said. "Well, I do not care for gold and silver—thank God I have no avarice." But they have been

ambitious. “Oh,” says one, “if I might be famous, what would I not do? Oh, if my name might be handed down to posterity, as having done something and having been somebody, a man of note, how satisfied would I be!” And the man has so acted that he has at last made for himself a bed of honor. He has become famous. There is scarce a newspaper which does not record his name. His name is become a household word—nations listen to his voice. Thousands of trumpets proclaim his deeds. He is a man and the world knows it and stamps him with the adjective “great.” He is called “a great man.” See how soft and downy is his bed. What would some of you give to rest upon it! He is fanned to sleep by the breath of fame and the incense of applause smokes in his chamber. The world waits to refresh him with renewed flattery.

Oh, would you not give your ears and eyes if you might have a bed like that to rest upon? But did you ever read the history of famous men, or hear them tell their tale in secret? “Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown,” even though it is the laurel coronet of honor. When the man is known, it is not enough. He asks for wider praise. There was a time when the approbation of a couple old women was fame to him. Now the approbation of ten thousand is nothing. He talks of men as if they were but flocks of wild asses and what he looked up to once as a high pinnacle is now beneath his feet. He must go higher and higher and higher—though his head is reeling, though his brain is whirling, though his feet are slipping—he must go higher. He has done a great thing. He must do more. He seems to stride across the world. He must leap further yet, for the world will never believe a man famous unless he constantly outdoes himself.

He must not only do a great thing today, but he must do a greater thing tomorrow, the next day a greater still and pile his mountains one upon another until he mounts the very Olympus of the demigods. But suppose he gets there, what does he say? “Oh, that I could go back to my cottage, that I might be all unknown, that I might have rest with my family and be quiet. Popularity is a care which I never endured until now, a trouble that I never guessed. Let me lose it all. Let me go back.” He is sick of it. For the fact is, that man never can be satisfied with anything less than the approbation of Heaven. And until conscience gets that, all the applause of senators and of listening princes would be a bed shorter than a man could stretch himself.

There is another bed on which man thinks he could rest. There is a witch, a painted harlot who wears the richest gems in her ears and a necklace of precious things about her neck. She is an old deceiver. She was old and shriveled in the days of Bunyan. She painted herself then, she paints, now and paint she will as long as the world endures. And she gads forth and men think her young and fair and lovely and desirable—

her name is Madam Wanton. She keeps a house wherein. she feasts men and makes them drunk with the wine of Pleasure, which is as honey to the taste, but is venom to the soul. This witch, when she can, entices men into her bed. “There,” she says, “there, how daintily have I spread it!” It is a bed, the pillars whereof are pleasure—above is the purple of rapture and beneath is the soft repose of luxurious voluptuousness—oh, what a bed is this!

Solomon once laid in it and many since his time have sought their rest there. They have said, “Away with your gold and silver—let me spend it, that I may eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow I die. Tell me not of fame, I care not for it. I would sooner have the pleasures of life, or the joys of Bacchus, than the laurel of fame. Let me give myself up to the intoxication of this world’s delights, let me be drowned in the butt of Burgundy of this world’s joys.” Have you ever seen such men as that? I have seen many and wept over them and I know some now—they are stretching themselves on that bed and trying to make themselves happy. Byron is just a picture of such men, though he outdid others. What a bed was that he stretched for himself. Was ever libertine more free in his vices? Was ever sinner more wild in his blasphemy? Was ever poet more daring in his flights of thought? Was ever man more injurious to his fellows than he? And yet what did Byron say? There is a verse which just tells you what he felt in his heart. The man had all that he wanted of sinful pleasure, but here is his confession—

***“I fly like a bird of the air,
In search of a home and a rest.
A balm for the sickness of care,
A bliss for a bosom unblest.”***

And yet he found it not. He had no rest in God. He tried pleasure till his eyes were red with it. He tried vice till his body was sick. And he descended into his grave a premature old man. If you had asked him and he had spoken honestly, he would have said the bed was shorter than he could stretch himself. No, young man, you may have all the vices and all the pleasure and mirth of this metropolis and there is much to be found of which I make no mention here and when you have it all, you will find it does not equal your expectation nor satisfy your desires. When the devil is bringing you one cup of spiced wine, you will be asking him next time to spice it higher. And he will flavor it to your fiery taste, but you will be dissatisfied still, until at last, if he were to bring you a cup hot as damnation, it would fall tasteless on your palate. You would say, “Even this is tasteless to me, except in the gall and bitter wormwood and fire that it brings.”

It is so with all worldly pleasure—there is no end to it. It is a perpetual thirst. It is like the opium eater. He eats a little and he dreams such

strange wonders. And he wakes and where are they? Such dreamers, when awake, look like dead men, with just animation enough to enable them to crawl along. The next time, to get to their Elysium, they must take more opium and the next time more and more and all the while they are gradually going down an inclined plane into their graves. That is just the effect of human pleasure and all worldly sensual delights. They only end is destruction. And even while they last, they are not wide enough for our desire—they are not large enough for our expectations—“for the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself.”

Now think, for a moment, of the Christian and see the picture reversed. I will suppose the Christian at his very worst state, though there is no reason why I should do so. The Christian is not necessarily poor. He may be rich. Suppose him poor. He has not a foot of land to call his own. He lives by the day and he lives well, for his Master keeps a good cupboard for him and furnishes him with all he requires. He has nothing in this world except the promise of God with regard to the future. The worldly man laughs at the promise and says it is good for nothing. Now look at the Christian. He says—

***“There’s nothing round this spacious globe,
Which suits my large desires,
To nobler joys than nature give,
Your servant, Lord, aspires.”***

What, poor man, are you perfectly content? “Yes,” says he, “it is my Father’s will that I should live in poverty. I am perfectly content.” “Well, but is there nothing else you wish for?” “Nothing,” says he, “I have the presence of God. I have delight in communion with Christ. I know that there is laid up for me a crown of life that fades not away and more I cannot want. I am perfectly content. My soul is at rest.”

In the Christian religion there is a rest that no one can enjoy elsewhere. Oh, I can say as in the sight of God, my soul is perfectly at rest. “I know that my Redeemer lives and that He shall stand at the latter-day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” I know that my sins are forgiven, that I am accepted in the Beloved. I know there is nothing more that I want except what I have already, for Christ is All and more than All. What can my soul more desire? As for temporal things, I can leave them in my Father’s hands. As for spirituals I can leave them also with Him. “My soul is even as a wearied child,” resting on its mother’s breast. Nothing more I can ask. And now let me stretch myself upon this bed. Let me think of the largest desire that heart ever had and I find it not at all greater than this bed.

What do I ask for? I ask for immortality, I have it here. What do I pant for? I pant for ceaseless, boundless bliss, I have it here. I pant to be God’s

child, I have it here. I pant to be rich to all intents of bliss, I have the promise here and I shall have the fruition of it hereafter. I long for perfection. Is that a stretch indeed? And that I have, "perfect in Christ Jesus." I have the promise that "the Lord will perfect that which concerns me." Oh, I wish you would try and stretch yourselves a moment. Come, let your spirits stretch themselves with all their might. Put out your hands till they grasp the east and west and let your head and feet lie at either pole of this round world and is there not room for you in the promise, room in the Gospel? No, reach into the far-off eternity and let your soul desire the utmost it can conceive and still the bed is long enough—"He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what you can ask or even think." Now, try and think your best and He shall exceed it. Come and ask your most and God shall give you more.

Oh, blessed is the sleep of the Christian. He sleeps in a bed supported by the everlasting arms of the Savior. He sleeps there fanned by the breath of the Spirit and knowing that when he wakes up he shall wake up in the likeness of his Savior, in the likeness of his God. Thus, I think I have given you some idea of the meaning of this text, "The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself." Now, just for a moment think of this bed in the sense of another world. And here we may say of all the sinner's hope, that it is a bed shorter than that he can stretch himself. Sinner, you that are without God and without Christ, ask yourself this question, What is your bed for eternity? What is your rest in another world? Perhaps that is a question you have never asked yourself. Ask it now. "Oh," says one, "I am no worse than my neighbors." Is that bed long enough for eternity? No, assuredly not. "No," says one, "I care not how I shall fare, I shall take my fate."

And is that long enough for eternity? You cannot draw any consolation from that when you stand at God's bar. "No," says another, "I won't think about it." And is that long enough for eternity? "Ah," cries another, "I go to Church and Chapel and so forth and that will do." Is that long enough for eternity? You have now to stretch yourself. Let conscience strain you, let death put you on the rack and pull you out a little and the bed is not long enough for you. You are obliged to feel that you are uneasy. No, there is not a man out of Christ that is not uneasy at times. Harden your conscience as you may, sometimes it will arouse you. Put Mr. Conscience down in a back street, so that the daylight cannot come to him, but you cannot silence him. He has a voice as loud as thunder and sometimes he will awaken you. I do not care who the infidel is, or what he says—it is mere brag, there is nothing in it.

Men who cannot fight are always very big before they come to the battle. So it is with the Infidel, the Atheist, the Socinian. They are very great

men when they talk to us, but they know they have none of the greatness that they pretend to. They have none, really, for their own consciences cannot rest. I do affirm, again, that there is no man who has a solid peace, a perfect satisfaction in his own mind, but the man who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, trusts Him entirely for his soul's salvation and puts his hopes and his expectations only in the Lord his God. That man has a bed that is large enough—though he were himself as tall as the heavens and as broad as the earth.

II. Now for the second part of my text. MAN MUST HAVE A COVERING. And here we are told that there are some people who make a covering but it is narrower than they can wrap themselves. There is one garment, Friends, that never is too narrow, though the sinner is the biggest sinner that ever trod this earth—that is the garment of the perfect righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Besides that, there is none other long enough or broad enough.

Now, there are some sinners that think they have clothed themselves when they have only made for themselves a nightcap. Don't smile—that's a fact. There are spiritual nightcaps to be bought in London. "What is that?" says one. Well it is woven in the loom of hyper-Calvinism. It is high doctrine cut off from God's Word, taken away from its connection, taken altogether away from that part of Divine Truth with which we have most to do as sinners and it is made into an antidote for all the twitching of man's conscience and into a soporific whereby souls are sent to sleep, preparatory to their being cast into the arms of Satan. Men get into their heads a doctrinal opinion. That opinion is right, true, good—I will preach that opinion against any man.

But men forget that *opinions* are not evidences of salvation if the walk and conversation are not right. They read, for instance, such a passage as this—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Well, they say, "I am in Christ Jesus. There is no condemnation for me!" They put that on their heads, they go to sleep in it and they think they are covered, because they have simply wrapped this false covering about their heads. They have a blindfold about their eyes and they cannot see their nakedness. They think there is no such thing. Oh, I am grieved to think that there are men who flatter that craving of corrupt nature after something that is not salvation by Christ.

You may as easily be destroyed by trusting in good doctrine as by trusting in good works. For remember, Beloved, that *believing* right, will no more save you, (if it is only believing right doctrine) than *doing* right will save you. It is believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and receiving His Spirit and being made like unto He which is the only salvation that will stand the test of the Day of Judgment. I used to have a man sitting in front of

the gallery, (not in this Chapel,) but he used always to nod his head when I was preaching a doctrine. And I remember once I thought I would cure that old gentleman of nodding his head, for he was about as bad a rascal as ever lived. Whenever I preached about justification, down went his head. Whenever I preached about imputed righteousness, down went his head. I was a dear man, no doubt about that.

And so I thought I would cure him and make his head keep still for once. So I remarked “there is a great deal of difference between God electing you and your electing yourself, a vast deal of difference between God justifying you by His spirit and your justifying yourself by a belief that you are justified when you are not. And this is the difference”—said I to the old man, who then put me down for a rank Arminian, “You who have elected yourselves and justified yourselves, you have no marks of the Spirit. You have no evidence of piety. You are not holy. You live in sin. You can walk as sinners walk. You have the image of the devil upon you and yet you think you are the children of God.” And, now, I say to any here present who are indulging in the same abominable hypocrisy, this is a spiritual delusion whereby many believe a lie. And the time will come when some of us will have to speak as sharply against men who preach doctrine without practice, as we have to preach against those who preach not the doctrine of free, sovereign, distinguishing Grace. High doctrine will never cover you. It will only cover your head. It is a logical covering, made of the right sort of stuff. But it is only a headpiece and that is not a complete covering for the naked man.

Now, again—there are some other people who are not content with that. They do not care particularly about this covering for the head—they think they will get a pair of slippers and thus cover their nakedness. “What do you mean by that?” says one. Well, good works. “Ah,” they say, “those doctrinal people, they look to the head. I don’t care about the head, I shall look to the feet.” And so they look to the feet and they make themselves very decent sort of people, too. They keep the Sabbath, they frequent the House of God, they read the Bible, they say a form of prayer and they try to be honest, sober and so forth. Very right.

I do not say a word against slippers, only that they are not a good covering for the whole man. I do not say a word against good slippers—good works are very well—but they are not sufficient. Good works are like a pair of shoes, but do not let a man think a pair of shoes can become wide enough to cover his whole body. Such men are deluded. They think if their outward walks and conversation is good and right and proper, that their whole nakedness is covered. Oh, never delude yourselves into such an idea as that. Though you walk in the commandments of the Lord, blameless in the eyes of all men, yet so long as sin is in your heart and the past

sin of your life is unforgiven, you stand helpless, unclothed souls, in the estimation of God—and your garment is too narrow that you may wrap yourself.

I have seen some poor souls trying to wrap themselves up in good works and they were not long enough. “Oh,” says one, “come here and I will tie on a bit for you.” And so he brings out a yard of good old stuff that is called “Baptism,” and he tags on that. “Stop,” he says, by-and-by, “I will bring out something else made by a Bishop, called “Confirmation,” and another yard is put on. “Wait awhile,” says the man, “you shall have a yard of something else.” And then there is a yard of what is called “Communion,” or “Sacrament,” put on. “Now, hold hard. You know the Catechism and say it often. You know the prayers proper to be used at sea, on land, and the prayers for weddings, Baptisms and Churching. And now,” say they, “by degrees the garment will be made long enough to go round you.” I have seen the poor souls tug and pull it, to make both ends meet, but they could not.

I could tell you the experience of a member of this Church. She says, “I attended a place of worship regularly and tried to work out a righteousness for myself. I could not do it, At last I took to attending daily service in the Puseyite Church. I became the most righteous over-much that you could suppose a person to be. I was never satisfied. I tried sacraments, fasting, private prayer—never good enough. I never could get up to the mark. I never felt that the garment was broad enough in which I could wrap myself.” No and you never will. All the good works in the world and all the ceremonies and all the praises of men and all the almsgiving cannot make a covering broad enough in which to wrap yourself.

Shall I tell you what is sufficient? It is the garment that is “without seam, woven from the top throughout.” A garment woven by the bleeding hands of Jesus and then dyed in His own blood. If by faith you can put this garment on, it is broad enough to cover you. Though you were wide as giant Goliath and though your head reached to the very clouds, it should be long enough for all your needs. So you see that these coverings which men have sought for are not sufficient.

Now, there are some people who are not very particular about the head, or the feet, but they come nearer the mark—they have been more particular about the loins. They gird themselves with a little garment. Their religion is to think they like to sit at home and think over the Scripture, to think over certain doctrinal particulars and meditate upon them. They think, for instance, one Church is not right and they leave that and join another. But they find that is not right. They tithe the mint there, but they do not tithe the cummin. And they go to another, where they tithe the cummin, but where they do not fast six days in the week. The religion of

such a person as this is the religion of picking holes in other people's religion. Do you say, "Are there any people of that sort?" Yes, I know several of them. They are very good souls, if you estimate them by their own opinion, but if you estimate them by the Law and by the statutes of God, you will find them different. They think that all they need to do is simply to *feel* that they are conscientious in what they are doing. It is very proper and right that they should be conscientious. I am not going to speak against the garments round the loins, they are very good. I only speak against a man thinking that is *enough*.

I do not speak against their nightcaps or slippers, or against the garment round the loins—they are all good in their places. I only speak of putting these instead of the *complete* raiment of Christ. You may be baptized and re-baptized. You may go from one sect to another and secede and secede and you will be none the better unless you are clothed in the matchless, spotless, seamless righteousness of the Lord. Now, let us bring forth that robe and let us stand in that. What Jesus did and what Jesus suffered, is the inheritance of the Believer. Now, let the Believer be ever so full of sin, what Jesus suffered covers all his sin. Let him be ever so full of want, the fullness of Jesus supplies it all. Let him be ever so loathsome in his own sight, the beauty of Christ makes him comely. Let him be cast down in his own experience, the exaltation of Christ makes him to sit together with Him in heavenly places.

There are times when the convicted sinner grows great in sin. He feels as if he were bloated with iniquity. But even then the garment of Christ is wide enough to wrap him about. Sometimes he grows so tall in his sin he feels as if he were proud as Lucifer. He casts the hood of the Savior's righteousness over his head and it covers him even then. His feet sometimes seem to tread the very bottom of the ocean, but the long robe of the Savior's righteousness sweeps the bottom of the sea when the feet of the Believer are standing there. All is longer, all is higher, all is broader than all the height, depth and length and breadth of our backslidings, our iniquities and sins.

What a glorious thing, then, it is to be a Christian—to have faith in Christ, to have the Isaac born in our hearts—the new nature put there. Come, my Soul, take your rest, the great High Priest has made full atonement. You have much goods laid up, not for many years, but for *eternity*—take your ease—eat spiritual things—drink wine on the lees and be merry. For it cannot be said of you, "tomorrow you shall die." You shall never die. "Your life is hid with Christ in God." You are no fool to take your ease and rest—for this is legitimate ease and rest—the rest which the God of Sabbath has provided for all his people.

And then, O Christian, march boldly to the river of death, march calmly up to the throne of judgment—enter placidly and joyfully into the inheritance of your Lord—for you have about you an armor that can keep you from the arrows of death, a wedding garment that makes you fit to sit down at the banquet of the Lord. You have about you a royal robe that makes you a fit companion even for Jesus, the King of kings, when He shall admit you into His secret chambers and permit you to hold holy and close fellowship with Him. I cannot resist quoting that verse of the hymn—

***“With your Savior’s garment on,
You are holy as the Holy One.”***

That is the sum and substance of it all. And on this bed let us take our rest and during this week let us make Christ’s work our only garment and we shall find it long enough and broad enough for us to wrap ourselves up in it.

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THE PLOWMAN

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*“Does the plowman plow all day to sow?”
Isaiah 28:24.*

UNLESS they are cultivated, fields yield us nothing but briars and thistles. In this we may see ourselves. Unless the great Husbandman shall till us by His Grace, we shall produce nothing that is good, but everything that is evil. If one of these days I shall hear that a country has been discovered where wheat grows without the work of the farmer, I may then, perhaps, hope to find one of our race who will bring forth holiness without the Grace of God. Up to this day, all land on which the foot of man has trodden has needed labor and care. And even so among men, the need of gracious tillage is universal! Jesus says to all of us, “You must be born-again.” Unless God the Holy Spirit breaks up the heart with the plow of the Law and sows it with the Seed of the Gospel, not a single ear of holiness will any of us produce, even though we may be children of godly parents and may be regarded as excellent moral people by those with whom we live!

Yes, and the plow is needed not only to produce that which is good, but to destroy that which is evil! There are diseases which, in the course of ages, wear themselves out and do not appear again among men. And there may be forms of vice which, under changed circumstances, do not so much abound as they used to do—but human nature will always remain the same and, therefore, there will always be plentiful crops of the weeds of sin in man’s fields—and nothing can keep these under but spiritual husbandry carried on by the Spirit of God. You cannot destroy weeds by exhortations, nor can you tear out the roots of sin from the soul by moral persuasion. Something sharper and more effectual must be brought to bear upon them. God must put His own right hand to the plow, or the hemlock of sin will never give place to the corn of holiness! Good is never spontaneous in unrenewed humanity! And evil is never cut up till the plow of Almighty Grace is driven through it.

The text leads our thoughts in this direction and gives us practical guidance through asking the simple question, “Does the plowman plow all day to sow?” *This question may be answered in the affirmative, “Yes, in the proper season he does plow all day to sow.”* And, secondly, *this text may more properly be answered in the negative, “No, the plowman does*

not plow every day to sow—he has other work to do according to the season.” Our text may be—

I. ANSWERED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE—“Yes, the plowman does plow all day to sow.” When it is plowing time, he keeps at it till his work is done. If it requires one day, or two days, or 20 days to finish his fields, he continues at his task while the weather permits. The perseverance of the plowman is instructive and it teaches us a double lesson. When the Lord comes to plow the heart of man, He plows all day—herein is His patience. And, secondly, so ought the Lord’s servants to labor all day with men’s hearts—herein is our perseverance.

“Does the plowman plow all day?” *So does God plow the heart of man, and herein is His patience.* The team was in the field, in the case of some of us, very early in the morning, for our first recollections have to do with conscience and the furrows of pain which it made in our youthful mind. When we were little children, we woke in the night under a sense of sin. Our father’s teaching and our mother’s prayers made deep and painful impressions upon us—and though we did not then yield our hearts to God, we were greatly stirred and all indifference to religion was made impossible. When we were boys at school, the reading of a Chapter in the Word of God, or the death of a playmate, or an address at a Bible class, or a solemn sermon so affected us that we were uneasy for weeks! The strivings of the Spirit of God within urged us to think of higher and better things. Though we quenched the Spirit. Though we stifled conviction, yet we bore the marks of the plowshare—furrows were made in the soul and certain foul weeds of evil were cut up by the roots, although no Seed of Grace was as yet sown in our hearts. Some have continued in this state for many years—plowed, but not sown. But, blessed be God, it was not so with others of us, for we had not left boyhood before the good Seed of the Gospel fell upon our heart! Alas, there are many who do not thus yield to Grace, and with them the Plowman plows all day to sow. I have seen the young man coming to London in his youth, yielding to its temptations, drinking in its poisoned sweets, violating his conscience and yet continuing unhappy in it all—fearful, unrestful, stirred about even as the soil is agitated by the plow! In how many cases has this kind of work gone on for years and all to no avail? Ah, and I have known the man come to middle life and still he has not received the good Seed, neither has the ground of his hard heart been thoroughly broken up! He has gone on in business without God—day after day he has risen and gone to bed again with no more religion than his horses—and yet all this while there have been ringing in his ears warnings of judgment to come and chidings of conscience so that he has not been at peace. After a powerful sermon he has not enjoyed his meals, or been able to sleep, for he has asked himself, “What shall I do in the end thereof?” The Plowman has plowed all day, till the evening shadows have lengthened and the day has faded to a close. What a mercy it is when the furrows are at last made

ready and the good Seed is cast in—to be received, nurtured and multiplied a hundredfold!

It is mournful to remember that we have seen this plowing continue till the sun has touched the horizon and the night dews have begun to fall. Even then the long-suffering God has followed up His work—plowing, plowing, plowing, plowing till darkness ended all! Do I address any aged ones whose lease must soon run out? I would affectionately beseech them to consider their position. What? Three score years old and yet unsaved? Forty years did God allow the manners of Israel in the wilderness, but He has borne with you for 60 years! Seventy years old and yet unregenerated? Ah, my Friend, you will have but little time in which to serve your Savior before you go to Heaven. But will you go there at all? Is it not growing dreadfully likely that you will die in your sins and perish forever? How happy are those who are brought to Christ in early life! But still remember—

***“While the lamp continues to burn,
The vilest sinner may return.”***

It is late, it is very late, but it is not too late. The Plowman plows all day and the Lord waits that He may be gracious to you. I have seen many aged persons converted and, therefore, I would encourage other old folks to believe in Jesus. I once read a sermon in which a minister asserted that he had seldom known any converted who were over 40 years of age if they had been hearers of the Gospel all their lives. There is certainly much need to caution those who are guilty of delay, but there must be no manufacturing of facts! Whatever that minister might think, or even observe, my own observation leads me to believe that about as many people are converted to God at one age as at another, taking into consideration the fact that the young are much more numerous than the old. It is a dreadful thing to have remained an unbeliever all these years, but yet the Grace of God does not stop short at a certain age—those who enter the vineyard at the 11th hour shall have their penny and Grace shall be glorified in the old as well as in the young! Come along, old Friend, Jesus Christ invites you to come to Him even now, though you have stayed away so long! You have been a sadly tough piece of ground—and the Plowman has plowed all day—but if at last the sods are turned and the heart is lying in ridges, there is hope for you yet!

“Does the Plowman plow all day?” I answer—Yes, however long the day may be, God, in mercy still plows! He is long-suffering, full of tenderness, mercy and Grace. Do not spurn such patience, but yield to the Lord who has acted towards you with so much gentle love!

The text, however, not only sets forth patience on God’s part, but it teaches *perseverance on our part*. “Does the Plowman plow all day?” Yes, He does. Then if I am seeking Christ, ought I to be discouraged because I do not immediately find Him? The promise is, “He that asks, receives, and he that seeks, finds, and to him that knocks, it shall be opened.”

There may be reasons why the door is not opened at our first knock. What then? “Does the Plowman plow all day?” Then I will knock all day! It may be at the first seeking I may not find—what then? “Does the Plowman plow all day?” Then I will seek all day. It may happen that at my first asking I shall not receive—what then? “Does the Plowman plow all day?” Then will I ask all day. Friends, if you have begun to seek the Lord, the short way is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” Do that at once! In the name of God, do it at once and you are saved at once! May the Spirit of God bring you to faith in Jesus—and you are at once in the Kingdom of Christ! But if, perhaps, in seeking the Lord, you are ignorant of this, or do not see your way, never give up seeking! Get to the foot of the Cross, lay hold of it and cry, “If I perish, I will perish here! Lord, I come to You in Jesus Christ for mercy, but if You are not pleased to look at me immediately and forgive my sins, I will cry to You till You do.” When God’s Holy Spirit brings a man to downright earnest prayer, which will not take a denial, he is not far from peace! Careless indifference and shilly-shallying with God hold men in bondage. They find peace when their hearts are awakened to strong resolve to seek until they find! I like to see men search the Scriptures till they learn the way of salvation and hear the Gospel till their souls live by it! If they are resolved to drive the plow through doubts, fears and difficulties, till they come to salvation, they shall soon come to it by the Grace of God!

The same is true in seeking the salvation of others. “Does the plowman plow all day?” Yes, when it is plowing time. Then, so will I work on, and on, and on. I will pray and preach, or pray and teach, however long the day may be that God shall appoint me, for—

***“Tis all my business here below
The precious Gospel Seed to sow.”***

Brother worker, are you getting a little weary? Never mind, wake yourself and plow on for the love of Jesus and dying men! Our day of work has in it only the appointed hours—and while they last, let us fulfill our task. Plowing is hard work, but as there will be no harvest without it, let us put forth all our strength and never flag till we have performed our Lord’s will and His Holy Spirit has worked conviction in men’s souls! Some soils are very stiff and cling together and the labor is heart-breaking. Others are like the unreclaimed waste, full of roots and tangled bramble—they need a steam plow and we must pray the Lord to make us such, for we cannot leave them untilled and, therefore, we must put forth more strength that the labor may be done.

I heard some time ago of a minister who called to see a poor man who was dying, but he was not able to gain admittance. He called the next morning and some idle excuse was made so that he could not see him. He called again the next morning, but he was still refused. He went on till he called 20 times in vain, but on the 21st occasion he was permitted to see the sufferer and, by God’s Grace, he saved a soul from death! “Why do you tell your child a thing 20 times?” asked someone of a mother.

“Because,” she said, “I find 19 times is not enough.” Now, when a soul is to be plowed, it may so happen that hundreds of furrows will not do it. What then? Why, plow all day till the work is done! Whether you are ministers, missionaries, teachers, or private soul-winners, never grow weary, for your work is noble and the reward of it is infinite! The Grace of God is seen in our being permitted to engage in such holy service—it is greatly magnified in sustaining us in it and it will be pre-eminently conspicuous in enabling us to hold out till we can say, “I have finished the work which You gave me to do.”

We prize that which costs us labor and service—and we shall set all the higher value upon the saved ones when the Lord grants them to our efforts! It is good for us to learn the value of our sheaves by going forth weeping to the sowing. When you think of the plowman’s plowing all day, be moved to plod on in earnest efforts to win souls. Seek—

***“With cries, entreaties, tears to save
And snatch them from the fiery wave.”***

Does the plowman plow all day for a little bit of oats or barley, and will not you plow all day for souls that shall live forever, if saved, to adore the Grace of God, or shall live forever, if unsaved, in outer darkness and woe? Oh, by the terrors of the wrath to come and the glory that is to be revealed, gird up your loins and plow all day!

I would beg all the members of our Churches to keep their hands on the Gospel plow and their eyes straight before them. “Does the plowman plow all day?” Let Christians do the same! Start close to the hedge and go right down to the bottom of the field. Plow as close to the ditch as you can and leave small headlands. What though there are fallen women, thieves and drunks in the slums around you, do not neglect any of them! For if you leave a stretch of land to the weeds, they will soon spread among the wheat. When you have gone right to the end of the field once, what shall you do next? Why, just turn around and make for the place you started from! And when you have thus been up and down, what next? Why, up and down again! And what next? Why, up and down again! You have visited that district with tracts—do it again—fifty-two times in the year multiply your furrows! We must learn how to continue in well-doing. Your eternal destiny is to go on doing good forever and ever—and it is well to go through a rehearsal here. So just plow on, plow on and look for results as the reward of continued perseverance! Plowing is not done with a skip and a jump—the plowman plows all day. Dash and flash are all very fine in some things, but not in plowing! There the work must be steady, persistent, regular. Certain persons soon give it up—it wears out their gloves, blisters their soft hands, tires their bones and makes them eat their bread rather more in the sweat of their face than they care for! Those whom the Lord fills with His Grace will keep to their plowing year after year, and verily I say unto you, they shall have their reward. “Does the plowman plow all day?” Then let us do the same, being

assured that one day every hill and valley shall be tilled and sown—and every desert and wilderness shall yield a harvest for our Lord—and the angel reapers shall descend and the shouts of the harvest home shall fill both earth and Heaven! But, now, somewhat briefly—

II. THE TEXT MAY BE ANSWERED IN THE NEGATIVE. “Does the plowman plow all day to sow?” No, he does not always plow. After he has plowed, he breaks the clods, sows, reaps and threshes. In the Chapter before us you will see that other works of husbandry are mentioned. The plowman has many other things to do beside plowing. There is an advance in what he does—this teaches us that there is the same on God’s part and should be the same on ours.

First, *on God’s part there is an advance in what He does.* “Does the plowman plow all day?” No, he goes forward to other matters. It may be that in the case of some of you, the Lord has been using certain painful agencies to plow you. You are feeling the terrors of the Law, the bitterness of sin, the holiness of God, the weakness of the flesh and the shadow of the wrath to come. Is this going to last forever? Will it continue till the spirit fails and the soul expires? Listen—“Does the plowman plow all day?” No, he is preparing for something else—he plows to sow. Thus does the Lord deal with you! Therefore be of good courage, there is an end to the wounding and slaying—and better things are in store for you. You are poor and needy and you seek water, but there is none and your tongue fails for thirst. But the Lord will hear you and deliver you! He will not contend forever, neither will He always be angry. He will turn again and He will have compassion upon us. He will not always make furrows by His chiding. He will come and cast in the precious corn of consolation and water it with the dews of Heaven and smile upon it with the sunlight of His Grace—and there shall soon be in you, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear—and in due season you shall joy as with the joy of harvest! O you who are sorely wounded in the place of dragons, I hear you cry! Does God always send terror and conviction of sin? Listen to this—“If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.” And what is the call of God to the willing and obedient but this, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved”? You shall be saved now, find peace now if you will have done with yourself and all looking to your own good works to save you—and will turn to Him who paid the ransom for you upon the Cross! The Lord is gentle and tender, and full of compassion. He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever.

Many of your doubts and fears come from unbelief, or of Satan, or of the flesh—and are not of God at all! Blame Him not for what He does not send and does not wish you to suffer! His mind is for your peace, not for your distress, for thus He speaks, “Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.” “I have

blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you.” He has smitten, but He will smile! He has wounded, but He will heal! He has slain, but He will make alive! Therefore turn unto Him at once and receive comfort at His hands. The plowman does not plow forever, else would he reap no harvest. And God is not always breaking hearts— He also draws near on heart-healing errands!

You see, then, that the Great Husbandman advances from painful agencies, and I want you to mark that He goes on to *productive work* in the hearts of His people. He will take away the furrows, you shall not see them, for the corn will cover them with beauty. As she that was in travail remembers no more her sorrow for joy that a man is born into the world, so shall you, who are under the legal rod, remember no more the misery of conviction, for God will sow you with Grace, and make your soul, even your poor, barren soul, to bring forth fruit unto His praise and Glory! “Oh,” says one, “I wish that would come true to me.” It will. “Does the plowman plow all day to sow?” You expect, by-and-by, to see plowed fields clothed with springing corn—and you may look to see repentant hearts gladdened with forgiveness! Therefore, be of good courage.

You shall advance, also, to a *joyful experience*. See that plowman? He whistles as he plows. He does not own much of this world’s goods, but yet he is merry! He looks forward to the day when he will be on the top of the big wagon, joining in the shout of the harvest home—and so he plows in hope, expecting a crop. And, dear Soul, God will yet joy and rejoice over you when you believe in Jesus Christ and you, too, shall be full of joy! Be of good cheer, the better portion is yet to come! Press forward to it. Gospel sorrowing leads on to Gospel hoping, believing, rejoicing—and the rejoicing knows no end! God will not chasten all day, but He will lead you on from strength to strength, from glory unto glory, till you shall be like He! This, then, is the advance that there is in God’s work among men, from painful agencies to productive work and joyful experience!

But what if the plowing should never lead to sowing? What if you should be disturbed in conscience and should go on to resist it all? Then God will make another advance, but it will be to put up the plow and to command the clouds that they rain no rain upon the land—and then its end is to be burned. Oh, Man, there is nothing more awful than for your soul to be left to go out of cultivation—God Himself giving you up! Surely that is Hell. He that is unholy will be unholy still. The law of fixed character will operate eternally and no hand of the Merciful One shall come near to till the soul again! What worse than this can happen?

We conclude by saying that *this advance is a lesson to us*, for we, too, are to go forward. “Does the plowman plow all day?” No, he plows to sow, and in due time he sows. Some Churches seem to think that all they have to do is to plow—at least all they attempt is a kind of scratching of the soil and talking of what they are going to do. It is fine talk, certainly,

but does the plowman plow all day? You may draw up a large program and promise great things, but pray do not stop there! Don't be making furrows all day—get to your sowing! I fancy that those who promise most, perform the least. Men who do much in the world have no program at first—their course works itself out by its own inner force by the Grace of God—they do not propose, but perform! They do not plow all day to sow, but they are like our Lord's servant in the parable, of whom He says, "The sower went forth to sow."

Let the ministers of Christ also follow the rule of advance. *Let us go from preaching the Law to preaching the Gospel.* "Does the plowman plow all day?" He does plow—he would not sow in hope if he had not first prepared the ground. Robbie Flockart, who preached for years in the Edinburgh streets, says, "It is in vain to sew with the silk thread of the Gospel unless you use the sharp needle of the Law." Some of my Brothers do not care to preach eternal wrath and its terrors. This is a cruel mercy, for they ruin souls by hiding from them their ruin! If they need try to sew without a needle, I cannot help it, but I do not mean to be so foolish myself! My needle may be old-fashioned, but it is sharp and when it carries with it the silken thread of the Gospel, I am sure good work is done by it! You cannot get a harvest if you are afraid of disturbing the soil, nor can you save souls if you never warn them of Hell fire. We must tell the sinner what God has revealed about sin, righteousness and judgment to come. Still, Brothers, we must not plow all day. No, no! The preaching of the Law is only preparatory to the preaching of the Gospel! The stress of our business lies in proclaiming glad tidings. We are not followers of John the Baptist, but of Jesus Christ! We are not rugged Prophets of woe, but joyful heralds of Grace. Be not satisfied with revival services and stirring appeals, but preach the Doctrines of Grace so as to bring out the full compass of Covenant Truth. Plowing has had its turn, now for planting and watering! Reproof may now give place to consolation. We are first to make disciples of men and then to teach them to observe all things whatever Jesus has commanded us. We must pass on from the rudiments to the higher Truths of God, from laying foundations to further building!

And now, another lesson to those of you who are as yet hearers and nothing more. I want you to go from plowing to something better, namely, *from hearing and fearing to believing.* How many years some of you have been hearing the Gospel! Do you mean to continue in that state forever? Will you never believe in Him of whom you hear so much? You have been stirred up a good deal—the other night you went home almost brokenhearted! I should think you are plowed enough by this time, and yet you have not received the Seed of eternal life, for you have not believed in the Lord Jesus! It is dreadful to be always on the brink of everlasting life and yet never to be alive. It will be an awful thing to be almost in Heaven and yet forever shut out! It is a wretched thing to rush into a railway sta-

tion just in time to see the train steaming out—I had much rather be half an hour behind time! To lose a train by half a second is most annoying. Alas, if you go on as you have done for years, you will have your hand on the latch of Heaven and yet be shut out! You will be within a hair's breadth of Glory and yet be covered with eternal shame! Oh, beware of being so near to the Kingdom of God and yet lost—almost, but not altogether saved! God grant that you may not be among those who are plowed and plowed, and plowed, and yet never sown! It will be of no avail at the last to cry, “Lord, we have eaten and drunk in Your Presence and You have taught in our streets. We had a seat at the Chapel. We attended the services on weeknights as well as on Sundays! We went to Prayer Meetings, we joined a Bible class, we distributed tracts, we subscribed our guinea to the funds! We gave up every open sin, we used a form of prayer and read a Chapter of the Bible every day.” All these things may be done and yet there may be no saving faith in the Lord Jesus! Take heed lest your Lord should answer, “With all this, your heart never came to Me. Therefore, depart from Me! I never knew you.” If Jesus once knows a man, He always knows him. He can never say to me, “I never knew you,” for He has known me as His poor dependent, a beggar for years at His door! Some of you have been all that is good, except that you never came into contact with Christ, never trusted Him, never knew Him. Ah, me, how sad your state! Will it always be so?

Lastly, I would say to you who are being plowed and are agitated about your souls, go at once to the next stage of believing. Oh, if people did but know how simple a thing believing is, surely they would believe! Alas, they do not know it, and it becomes all the more difficult to them because in itself it is so easy! The difficulty of believing lies in there being no difficulty in it! “If the Prophet had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it?” Oh, yes, you would have done it and you would have thought it easy, too! But when he simply says, “Wash, and be clean,” there is a difficulty with pride and self. If you can truly say that you are willing to abase your pride and do anything which the Lord bids you, then I pray you understand that there is no further preparation required—believe in Jesus at once! May the Holy Spirit make you sick of self and ready to accept the Gospel! The Word is near you, let it be believed! It is in your mouth, let it be swallowed! It is in your heart, let it be trusted! With your heart believe in Jesus and with your mouth make confession of Him and you shall be saved! A main part of faith lies in the giving up of all other confidences. Oh, give up at once every false hope! I tried once to show what faith was by quoting Dr. Watts' lines—

***“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Your kind arms I fall.
Be You my strength, and righteousness,
My Jesus and my All.”***

I tried to represent faith as falling into Christ's arms and I thought I made it so plain that the wayfaring man could not err therein. When I had finished preaching, a young man came to me and said, "But, Sir, I cannot fall upon Christ's arms." I replied at once, "Tumble into them anyway you can! Faint away into Christ's arms, or die in Christ's arms, so long as you get there." Many talk of what they can do and what they cannot do, and I fear they miss the vital point. Faith is leaving off "can-ing" and "cannot-ing," and leaving it all to Christ, for He can do all things, though you can do nothing! "Does the plowman plow all day to sow?" No, he makes progress and goes from plowing to sowing. Go, and do you likewise—sow unto the Spirit the precious Seed of faith in Christ—and the Lord will give you a joyous harvest!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 10:16-33.**

Verses 16-25. *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be you therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And you shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak. For it is not you that speaks, but the Spirit of Your Father which speaks in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And you shall be hated of all men for My name's sake; but he that endures to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee you into another: for verily I say unto you, you shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man is come. The disciple is not above his master, nor his servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he is as his master, and the servant as his lord. It is more than enough, for the disciple might expect to fare worse than his master, and the servant to have less comfort than the lord. So it is in worldly things—that our Lord and Master has such fellowship with His people that He does not put it so, but He says, "It is enough for the disciple that he is as his master, and the servant as his Lord."*

25. *If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?* But they cannot call them any more or any worse. They have given our Master the blackest of all the epithet and any hard and opprobrious titles that can ever be applied to us must fall short of these which were applied to Him. Surely we ought not to wince—not for a single moment!

26. *Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.* They may cover your name

and character with temporary dishonor, but the covering will soon break off. Like fire hidden under autumn leaves, it will burn up, by-and-by, and there will be a resurrection of reputations, as well as of persons! And what a wondrous resurrection that will be for those who are cast out as the offscouring of all things, when they shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father!

27. *What I tell you in darkness, that speak you in light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach you upon the housetops.* There is a secret learning, but there must be a public teaching. Christ takes us aside to reveal Himself, that afterwards we may boldly go forth to others and tell them what we have learned in private. Oh, child of God, if you have a sweet morsel in the chamber by yourself, do not be so selfish as to keep it to yourself! Go and tell your Brothers and Sisters, and your house, and of the same place, the things which you have learned. If any of you have had a very choice experience, and a more than usual manifestation of Divine Love, be sure to let others be enriched with your riches. Have you found honey? Eat it not all yourself, but, like Samson, when he found it in the carcass of the lion, go to father and mother, and friends with your hands full of the secret, and let them eat it also.

28. *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.* Oh, fearful destruction! This is what we may well fear—both body and soul to undergo everlasting ruin, broken in pieces and destroyed as to all excellency, happiness and peace. This we may fear.

29. *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.* He rules over all things, the least as well as the greatest! We see His hand in the tempest and we look at the black wing of the storm and see that God rides it. But the wing of the tiny sparrows, so insignificant in value, is equally directed by His power and wisdom!

30. *But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.* Minute is the Providence of God, taking care of you, even as to that part of your person which is not vital and without which you could still live on. “The very hairs of your head are all numbered.” The tiniest and most insignificant benefits are all ordered by His eternal purpose.

31-33. *Fear you not, therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows. Whoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father who is in Heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men—*And you see from the connection, that here the denying means not confessing. “Whoever shall deny Me before men.”

33. *Him will I also deny before My Father who is in Heaven.* The attempt, therefore, to avoid all publicity in religion—to endeavor to slink into Heaven by the back gate—to somehow or other find an underground road to salvation, is a futile attempt! Christ requires that we should acknowledge Him, seeing that He so graciously acknowledges us. He puts it

as a solemn command—and I would press it upon the conscience of any Believer here who has never confessed his faith. You miss, at any rate, the promise here—but you miss some others besides. You are walking in the path of disobedience. You are, to some extent, guilty of putting Christ to shame, for if others see that you are ashamed of Him, they conclude that there is something to be ashamed of in Him. Your practice dishonors Him. Why should you hold back? Are you not going to take your place among His people? You tell me that they have many faults. Have they more than you? If you never join a Church till you find a perfect one, you will never join one this side of Heaven! And if the Church were perfect when you joined it, it would certainly cease to be so then—for you would bring your shortcomings and imperfections into it! I have lived among the people of God now these many years and I, as pastor of this Church, have had to mourn over many and many for its faults, but still, there is no people like God's people, and of His House I will say—

***“Here my best friends—my kindred—dwell.
Here God my Savior reigns!”***

Some of the best and noblest spirits that ever lived have not been ashamed to associate with their fellow Christians, though they perceived their errors. They have rather cast in their lot with them, poor and despised as they were, and have accounted it even their honor if they might but be numbered with the redeemed among men.

34. *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword.* The ultimate result of Christ's mission will be peace. Swords shall be broken into plowshares, and the spears into pruning hooks, but on the way to peace there will be war. On the way to universal peace there will be a general confusion. When true religion comes into a man's heart, it at once makes him a warrior. He begins to contend against evil—to contend against contention. He fights for peace, though it may seem strange that it should be so.

35, 36. *For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.* They will drive us back when they perceive that our face is set towards Heaven. When you see a fish swimming with the stream, it is almost always a dead one. The living fish goes *against* the stream—and the true child of God has to go against the current of mankind, and oftentimes the hardest push in life is to go against father, mother, brother, sister, for Christ's sake and the Gospel.

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

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

THE PRINCIPAL WHEAT

NO. 1626

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 25, 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“The principal wheat.”
Isaiah 28:25.*

THE whole passage runs on this wise—“Give you ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech. Does the plowman plow all day to sow? Does he open and break the clods of his ground? When he has made plain the face thereof, does he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the spelt in its place? For his God does instruct him to discretion, and does teach him. For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. This also comes forth from the Lord of Hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.”

The Prophet, inspired of God, shows that the farmer is wise and skillful in the management of his farm, in plowing, sowing, threshing and in all the processes of farming. He asserts that this skill has been taught him of his God. I suppose that this is set before us, not as poetry, but as fact. The wisdom of earth is a reflection of the light of Heaven. Have you not read—“And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship”?

God is the great teacher of agriculture as well as of handicrafts. If there had not been some information concerning farming conveyed to our first parent when he left the Garden of Eden, he would not have known how to till the soil and produce a harvest—and before he had discovered it, by experience, he would have died of starvation and the race would have ended with him. The 26th verse says, “His God does instruct him to discretion, and does teach him.” Yes, God has taught men the rudiments of farming and I conclude, therefore, that if God gives men instruction so that they are able to cultivate the land and produce a harvest of many different kinds of seed, He will much more instruct us if we wait upon Him as to the tillage of our lives so that we may not sow to the flesh and reap

corruption, but may learn how to sow to the Spirit, and may, of the Spirit, reap life everlasting!

We are, all of us, farmers. Some of us may be wicked farmers who slay the heir; or slothful farmers who suffer hemlock and darnel to come up where there should be wheat and barley; or fickle farmers who, having put our hand to the plow, have looked back. But we all have fields to till and work to do for the great Landlord to whom all things belong. If any of us wish to be true farmers and sow and reap as to be found accepted of our great Lord—and to produce a harvest unto His Glory—then we had better go to Him for instruction and ask Him to teach us knowledge and guide us in the way of wisdom. Breathe that prayer to God, now, and may He hear it on behalf of every one of us by sending us His Holy Spirit!

I. There is one point which the Prophet mentions as a matter of wisdom on the part of the farmer. It is this—that HE KNOWS WHAT IS THE PRINCIPLE SEED TO CULTIVATE and makes it his principal objective. My text is, “Does not the farmer cast in the principal wheat?” He does not set to work at haphazard without thought and go to the granary and take out wheat, cummin, barley and rye and fling these about right and left! No, he estimates the value of each grain and arranges them in his mind according to their proportionate values. He does not think that cummin, dill and caraway, which he merely grows to give a flavor to his dish on the table, is at all of such importance as the wheat. And, though rye and barley have their values, yet he does not reckon that even these are equal to the corn which he calls “the principal wheat.”

He is a man of discretion. He arranges things and he places the most important thing in the front rank and spends upon it the most care. Herein I would have you learn of the farmer. Keep things distinct in your minds—not mixed and muddled by careless thoughtlessness. Do not live a huddled life, without care and discretion, running all things into one, but sort them out and divide and distinguish between the precious and the vile. See what this is worth and what the other is worth—and set your matters in rank and order, making some of them principal, and others inferior. I suggest to you young people, especially, that, in starting life, you say to yourselves, “What shall we seek?” For he that seeks, finds. “What shall we sow?” “For whatever a man sows that shall he also reap.”

The little things of this life are to be attended to—as a man may sow cummin and fitches, there are some inferior things that ought not to be left undone—as a man should sow rye and barley in their appointed place. Still, there is some principal thing—some master thing—some chief thing for which we ought to live—and what shall that be? What ought to be the principal crop that we shall endeavor to cultivate in our hearts and lives? Have you turned that over? Have you really put the problem before you? Or have you gone at it hit or miss, as if it did not matter? Remember, the eye is a most important part of the body. How shall a man direct his steps if he cannot see? And the *motive* is the eye. What have you an eye to? What are you living for?

What is the principal aim with you? Is it going to be that of the old gentleman satirized in Horace who said to his son—"Get money: get it honestly, if you can; but, by all means, get money"? Is money-getting to be the principal wheat with you? Or will you choose a life of pleasure—"a short life and a merry one"—as so many fools have said, to their great sorrow? Is it in dissipation that your life is to be spent? Are thistles to be your principal crop? Because there is a pleasure in looking at a Scot thistle, do you intend to grow acres of pleasurable vices? And will you make your bed upon them when you come to die? Oh, look and see what is worthy of being the principal objective in life! And, when you have found that out, then pray God, of His Holy Spirit, to help you to choose that one thing and to give all your powers and faculties to the cultivation of it!

The farmer, who finds that wheat ought to be his principal crop, makes it so, and lays himself out with that end in view. He looks around and says, "What is the best thing for me to produce?" And when he has found it out, he calls it his principal thing. Dear Friends, do, I pray you, remember that true *godliness* is the principal thing! Therefore get it and prize it above all things! Now, mark that this farmer was wise because he counted that to be principal which was most necessary. His family could do without cummin, which was but a flavoring. Even the fitches are thought to have been a plant which yielded a grain used in giving a taste to bread, but they were not a valuable crop. The family could do without cummin and fitches.

Perhaps the mistress might complain, or the cook might grumble, but that did not matter as much as it would if the children cried for bread! They certainly could not do without wheat, for bread is the staff of life. It is bread that strengthens man's heart and, therefore, the Eastern farmer must grow bread if he does not grow anything else. That which is most necessary he makes to be the principal thing. Is not this commonsense? If we were wisely to sit down and estimate, should we not say, "To be forgiven my sin; to be right with God; to be holy; to be fit to live eternally in Heaven is the greatest, the most necessary thing for me and, therefore, I will make it the principal objective of my pursuit"? To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever is the most necessary thing for a creature—for a creature cannot be satisfied unless he is answering the end for which he was created.

And it is the end of every intelligent creature, first, that he may *glorify* God and, next, that he may *enjoy* God. What a bliss it must be to enjoy God, Himself, forever and ever! Other things may be desirable, but this thing is necessary. A certain competence, a measure of esteem among men, a degree of health—all these are the flavoring of life—but to be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation—this is life itself! This is the bread by which our soul's best life is to be sustained! Oh, that we were all wise enough to feel that to be one with Christ is the one thing necessary—that to be at peace with God is the principal thing—that to be brought into harmony with the Most High is the true music of life! The moralities and courtesies of life, like the minor seeds, may take their place in due order

upon our farm, but the fear of the Lord is the principal wheat and we must cultivate it with our whole heart!

This farmer was wise because he made that to be the principal thing which was the most fit to be so. Of course, barley is very useful as food. Nations have lived on barley bread and lived healthily, too. And rye has been the nutriment of whole nations—neither have men starved when restricted to oats and other grains. Still, for all in all, give me good wheat flour! I know our Scot friends like oat-cake, better, but I hardly think that we shall all come to their mind while wheat flour is at a reasonable price! We still like a piece of wheat bread and look upon it as being the best staff of life. The oat is rather a knotty staff, but wheat is a fair good walking cane with which a man may go through life right merrily. Only give men enough bread and why should they complain? Though I suppose they would, for even when the Israelites had manna in the wilderness, they complained and that was angels' food—they called it light bread.

Brothers and Sisters, the Eastern farmer knew that wheat was the most fitting food for man and so he did not put the inferior grain, which might act as a substitute, into the prominent place. He planted the most fitting thing, namely, the wheat, in the most prominent position. He did not speak of "the principal barley," or "the principal rye," much less "the principal cummin," or "the principal fitches," but "the principal wheat." And what is there, Brethren, that is so fit for the heart, the mind, the soul of man as to know God and His Christ? Other mental foods, such as the fruits of knowledge and the dainties of science, excellent though they may be, are inferior nutriment and unsuitable to build up the entire structure of our manhood!

If I can get my God, my Savior, I find my Heaven and my all. My soul sits down to a crumb of Truth concerning the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—and finds the greatest satisfaction in living upon it! The more we can know God, enjoy God and become like God—and the more Christ is our daily Bread—the more do we perceive the fitness of all this to the new-born soul. O Beloved, make that your principal thing which is the fittest theme for an immortal mind—

***"Religion is the chief concern
Of mortals here below.
May I, its great importance learn,
Its sovereign virtue know!
More needful this than glittering wealth,
Or anything the world bestows.
Not reputation, food, or health,
Can give us such repose."***

Moreover, this farmer was wise because he made the principal thing that which was the most profitable. Under certain circumstances, in our own country, wheat is not the most profitable thing which a man can grow. But, ordinarily, wheat is the best crop that the earth yields for general consumption and, therefore, the text speaks of "the principal wheat."

Our grandfathers used to rely upon the wheat stack to pay the rent. They looked to their corn as the arm of their strength and though it is not

so, now, yet it was always so of old and, perhaps, it may yet be so again. Anyway, the figure is just as good with regard to true religion—to fear the Lord is the most profitable thing. I am told that rich men at the present time find it hard to get hold of anything which yields five per cent. Oh, but this blessed fear of the Lord is an extraordinarily profitable kind of business, for it brings in far more than a hundred per cent or a thousand per cent! In this business, a man begins without any capital! In fact, he begins head over ears in debt and yet he makes a fortune such as misers never dream of!

You will say it is a strange way of starting in business—but the believing sinner does so. When he comes to God, he is penniless and as much in debt as he can be. The Lord discharges his heavy arrears of sin and then the Believer rises in riches by sinking more deeply into debt of another kind—not of sin, but of gratitude! He owes his great Lord more and more, till he is quite unable, even, to *imagine* the depth of his obligation! Neither does this grieve him—he comes to love the poverty which enables him to avail himself of the heavenly treasury. He even aspires to be more and more deeply in debt to the sovereign Grace of God! His ambition is to increase his obligations which even now overwhelm him. He grows richer as he feels himself poorer and he is stronger as he knows more of his personal infirmity.

It is a wonderful business, this, in which bankrupts make fortunes, in which beggars rise to sit among princes!—

***“Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large;
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge.
But let our debts be what they may,
However great or small,
As soon as we have naught to pay,
Our Lord forgives us all.”***

Being freely discharged of our sins, we are, by overflowing Grace, greatly enriched, so that we number among our possessions Heaven itself, Christ Himself, God Himself! All things are ours! Oh, what a blessed trade it is to enter upon! There never was such a transaction as this, for when an *empty* sinner trades with a *full* Savior, he is, himself, filled with all the fullness of God! Assuredly this soul-enriching communion with Christ ought to be first upon our thoughts!

Then let godliness be the principal wheat, for there is nothing so profitable! Godliness is profitable for the life that now is and for that which is to come. Godliness is a blessing to a man’s body—it keeps him from drunkenness and vice. It is a blessing to his soul—it makes it sweet and pure. It is a blessing to him in every way. If I had to die like a dog, I would like to *live* like a Christian. If there were no hereafter, yet still, for comfort and for joy, give me the life of one that lives like Christ, or strives to do so! There is a practical everyday truth in the verse—

***“Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live.***

***'Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die.'***

Only that religion must not be of the common sort—it must not be a vain profession—it must have for its root a hearty faith in Jesus Christ. See you to it. Religion must be either everything or nothing, either first or nowhere. Make it the principal thing and it will fill your soul with treasure. Thus, you see, the farmer was right in having a principal crop and in selecting the right seed to be his principal care.

I do not suppose that he ever entered into any dispute upon the matter. He felt sure that wheat must be his principal produce and he gave his thoughts to it~ I cannot bear to hear people disputing as to whether it is worth while to give their heart to Christ. The people who question the value of faith have never tried it. Whenever you observe some conceited creature writing an essay against true religion and putting it into one of our precious "reviews," do not be carried away by hearing people say that it is mightily clever. If you read it, say to yourselves, "Certainly, this is a clever thing, for here is a blind man writing upon the harmony of colors! Look what learned observations he makes upon scarlet and blue, which, *he* says, are precisely the *same* and only some narrow-minded folks insist upon their being different."

You may regard the wise remarks of an unregenerate philosopher as a very fine essay by a deaf man upon music. Can a horse write about angels? He does not know anything about the subject, nor does the unrenewed man understand the regenerate man! He has not the powers and faculties that would enable him to know, for the carnal man knows not the things that are of God—they are spiritually discerned and as he has not the Spirit, he cannot discern them. Until he is born again, he has no spiritual knowledge or judgment. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." "You must be born again." We are willing to take the evidence of scientific men upon the science that they have mastered, but we care nothing for their opinion upon a matter which is quite out of their range.

Who shall tell me that there is no sweetness in honey? I do not accept the verdict of one who asserts it to be as tasteless as the white of an egg, but I wonder at the palate which can so deceive a man! Has a man lost the power of taste? What is his judgment worth? I put a piece of honeycomb into my mouth and my experience of sweetness is a complete deliverance from all infidelity in that direction. When a man tells me that there is no sweetness in godliness, I smile for myself and drop a tear for him—and tasting yet, more and more, the deliciousness of godliness—I smile *again* to think that he should talk so fast about a thing of which he knows nothing! Oh, yes, we have made up our minds long ago—we are not going to argue about it any more—godliness is the principal wheat to us!

We know it by experience. We have tasted and handled the good Word of Life. As the Eastern farmer was quite sure that the wheat was the principal thing, so are we quite sure of it and, from now on, God helping us, we shall sow the principal wheat and leave others to sow tares or darnel if

they will! Thus have I said enough upon our first observation—the farmer is a lesson to us because he knows what is the principal thing.

II. Secondly, he is a lesson to us because HE GIVES THIS PRINCIPAL THING THE PRINCIPAL PLACE. I find that the Hebrew is rendered by some eminent scholars, “He puts the wheat into the principal place.” That little handful of cummin, for the wife to flavor the cakes with, he grows in a corner. And the various herbs he plants in their proper borders. The barley he puts in its place and the rye in its acre. But if there is a good bit of rich soil—the best he has—he says to his men, “That is for the wheat.” The principal place is for the principal crop. He gives his choicest fields to that which is to be the main means of his living.

Now, here is a lesson for you and for me. Let us give to true godliness our principal powers and abilities. Let us give to the things of God our best, our ripest, our most careful, our most intense thought. I pray you, do not take religion at second hand from what I tell you, or somebody else tells you, but think it over and give it your principal thoughts. Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the Word of God! The thoughtful Christian is the growing Christian. Remember, the service of God deserves our very best consideration and endeavor. We are poor things at our best, but we ought to give the Lord nothing short of our principal powers. God would not have us serve Him heedlessly, but He would have us use all the brain and intellect and mind that we have in studying and practicing the things of God.

“Acquaint, now, yourself with God, and be at peace.” “Meditate upon these things. Give yourself wholly to them.” If ever your mind is more clear and active at one time than at another, then sow the principal wheat of godly contemplation and gracious devotion. If you feel more fresh and more inclined to think at one time of the day than at another, let your whole mind at once go forth towards the best things. Be sure, also, to yield to this subject your most earnest love. The best field in the little estate of manhood is not so much the intellect as the affections—sow the principal wheat there. Oh, to have true religion in the heart! To love what we know—intensely to love it! To hold it fast as with the grip of life and death—never to let it go!

The Lord says, “My son, give Me your heart,” and He will not be content with anything less than your heart! When your zeal is most burning and your love is most fervent, let the warmth and the fervency all go towards the Lord your God and to the service of Him who has redeemed you with His precious blood! Let the principal wheat have the principal part of your nature. Towards God and His Christ, also turn your strongest, heartiest and most fervent desires. When you enlarge your desire, desire Christ! When you become ambitious, let your ambition be all for God! Let your hunger and your thirst be after righteousness! Let your aspirations and your longings be all towards holiness and the things that shall make you like Christ. Give to this principal wheat your principal desires.

Then let the Lord also have, always, the attentive respect of your life. Let the principal wheat be sown in every action of life. I think if we are

truly Christians, we must, of necessity, be as much Christians outside the Church as in it. We shall try to make our eating and our drinking, and everything we do, tend to the Glory of God. Draw no line between the secular and the religious part of your conduct, but let the secular be made religious by a devout desire to glorify God in the one as much as in the other! Let us worship God in the most common duties of life, even as they do who stand before His Throne and serve Him day and night. Pray daily, "Your will be done in earth as it is done in Heaven." Let us sow the principal wheat in all the fields of our life. May we each one feel, "For me to live is Christ." I cannot live without Christ, I would not live forgetting Christ, I could not live for anything but Christ. Let your whole nature yield to Jesus and to none else.

We should give to this principal wheat our most earnest labors. I mean for the spread of the Gospel. A man ought to consecrate himself to the utmost in the matter of holy work for Jesus. I dread to see a professing man zealous in politics, and lukewarm in devotion—all on fire in the parish vestry—but chill as winter when he comes to a Prayer Meeting! Some fly like eagles when they are serving the *world*, but they have a broken wing when they come into the worship of God! This should not be! If anything could awaken us up and make the lion within us roar in his strength, it should be when we confront the foes of Jesus, or fight for His cause! Our Lord's service is the principal wheat—let us labor most in connection with it. Lay all your talents under tribute to King Jesus. No, lay out your whole body, soul and spirit for God who is your All in All. Spend and be spent, that this highest, noblest objective of your life may be achieved—if you spend all and win Christ you will be a glorious gainer!

This should also take possession of us so as to lead us to our greatest sacrifices. The love of Christ ought to be so strong as to swallow up self and make sacrifice our daily joy. For Christ's name's sake we should be willing to endure poverty, reproach, slander, exile, death—and count them all joy! Nothing should be precious to a Christian in comparison with Christ, who is preciousness to them that believe. I will put it to you whether it is so with you or not. Is the love of Jesus the principal wheat with you? Are you giving your religion the chief place or not? I am afraid that some people treat religion as certain gentlemen treat a part of their estate. They have a farm away from their dwelling which they call an off-hand farm—they put a bailiff into it and only give an eye to it now and then. Some people hold their religion as an off-hand farm—their *minister* is the bailiff—who has to see to it for them.

I am sure such spiritual farming never pays. They have religion? Certainly. Yes. Oh, certainly—yes. But I am afraid they are like the man of whom the child spoke at the Sunday school. "Is your father a Christian?" asked the teacher. "Yes," said the child, "but he has not worked much at it lately." I could point out several of this sort who are sowing their wheat very sparingly and choosing the most barren patch to sow it in! They profess to be Christians, but religion is a tenth-rate article on their farm. Some have a large acreage for the world and a poor little plot for Christ.

They are great growers of worldly pleasure and self-indulgence—and they sow a little religion by the roadside for appearance sake. They spend more time at billiards than at prayers!

This will not do! God will not thus be mocked! If we despise Him and His Truth, we shall be lightly esteemed. O come, let us give our principal time, talent, thought, effort to that which is the chief concern of immortal spirits! May God help us to do so. May we imitate the farmer who gives the principal wheat the principal place on his farm.

III. Let us learn a third lesson. THE FARMER SELECTS THE PRINCIPAL WHEAT OR THE BEST SEED WHEN HE IS SOWING HIS FIELDS. That is another meaning of the text, namely, when a farmer is setting aside wheat for sowing, he does not choose the tail corn and all the worst of his produce. If he is a sensible man, he likes to sow the best grains that he can get. Many farmers search the country round for a good sample of wheat for sowing, for they do not expect to get a good harvest out of a bad sowing. The farmer is taught of God to put into the ground the principal wheat—the selected kernels.

If I am going to sow to the Lord and to be a Christian, I should sow the purest form of our holy religion. And I should try to do this, first, by believing the weightiest doctrines. I would like to believe, not this “ism,” nor that, but the unadulterated Truth of God which Jesus taught! If I want to produce in my soul a holy character, it will come by the Spirit of God out of true doctrine. Falsehood always breeds sin—the Truth of God begets and fosters holiness. You and I, therefore, ought to pick over all our seed carefully, judge and decide between the Truth of God and error, and not let our soul receive anything but what is according to the Word of the Lord. We ought to choose the most important Truths, for I have known people attach the chief importance to the smallest things—and this is an error in judgment.

I know a denomination which has differences among itself such as no ordinary person could understand, but the members make no end of warfare over them! They even exclude one another for not being exclusive enough—and if by vehement effort they all reach one point of exclusiveness—they spy out another hopeful reason for quarreling and commence to exclude again! Some microscopic point of doctrine or ritual suffices for the creation of party upon party! They are like mercury—pour it on a table and watch how it divides into tiny globules! It splits and splits again. They, no doubt, are persons of great precision and discernment, but it were well if their tithing of mint and anise led them to attend to the weightier matters of brotherly love and Christian unity! They fight over the fitches and leave the wheat to the crows. I am not at all of their mind. Those who will, may dispute over vials and trumpets—I shall mainly preach the doctrine of the precious blood and the glorious Truths of God of Substitution and Atonement! These doctrines are the principal wheat and, therefore, these shall fall into our furrows.

Next to that, we ought to sow the noblest examples. Many men are dwarfed because they choose a bad model to start with. They imitate dear

old Mr. So-and-So till they grow wonderfully like he is, only the best of him is left out! One minister happens to be of a gloomy turn of mind and he preaches the deep experience of the children of God—and in consequence a band of good people think it to be their duty to be melancholy. How unwise! We should never copy any! To be like Peter, we need not be rash! If you copy any good man, there is a point at which you ought to stop short. Yet, if I must have a human model, I would like to have one of the bravest of the saints of God. But, oh, how much better to imitate that perfect pattern which you have in Christ Jesus! Thus when you are sowing the wheat of holy living, sow the best seed you can, by having Christ Jesus, Himself, as the example by which you shape your life.

We shall sow the best wheat by seeing that we have the purest spirit. But, alas, how soon do spirits become soiled by self, or pride, or despondency, or sloth, or some other earthly taint! But what a grand thing it is to try and live to God in the spirit of Christ Jesus. May we be humble, lowly, bold, self-sacrificing, pure, chaste and holy—this can only be produced by the Holy Spirit. And then there is one more mode of sowing selected seed. We should endeavor to live in the closest communion with God. One dear Brother prayed in our little meeting before the present service that we might have as much Grace as we were capable of receiving and that God would work in us all that He willed to work in us and bring us into such a state that we might not hinder Him in any good thing which He willed to do by us.

This is to be our desire—we should rise to the highest form of spiritual life! If you sow the principal wheat, get the best sort of wheat. There is religion and there is religion. There is a spirit and a spirit—and there is a system of divinity and another system of divinity. The best is always good enough for me! I exhort you not to rest content with anything short of the best that can be had. O young men, if you mean to follow Christianity, go in for it thoroughly! If you mean to serve the devil, serve him. He is a pretty master! Remember his wages! But if you wish to serve Christ, do not go sneaking through the world as if you were ashamed of your Lord! If you are Christ's, show yourself! If you are worthy of so great a Captain, put on your uniform! Rally to His banner, gather to His trumpet call and then stand up, stand up for Jesus! If there is any manhood in you, this great cause calls for it all! Exhibit it and may the Spirit of God help you to do so.

IV. Fourthly, THE FARMER ATTENDS TO THE PRINCIPAL CROP WITH THE PRINCIPAL CARE. This Hebrew language always astonishes me, for it conveys such a mint of meaning! Sometimes when I study a verse, I find that the critics say that it means this, that and the other, until I have thought, "This language is miraculous, so full, so deep: very different from our poor English tongue." It teaches us many Truths of God in a few words and, like a diamond, it has a hundred facets, each flashing forth a distinct ray of light. This plenitude of meaning leads us to reflect upon a far more weighty matter. It is wonderful how much God can put into a

word. Why, He put Himself into one! The name of our Divine Lord is, "The Word of God."

Some critics insist that the proper translation of our text is that the farmer plants his wheat in rows. I do not know whether our farmers often plant wheat. They sow the seed in due order, but I do not hear much of *planting* it. It is said that the large crops in Palestine in old time were due to the fact that they *planted* the wheat, absolutely putting it in, root by root, so that there might be no more wheat in a row than there ought to be. And they set it in lines so that it was not checked or suffocated by its being too thick in one place and neither was there any fear of its being too thin in another. The wheat was planted and then streams of water were turned by the foot to each particular plant of wheat. No wonder, therefore, that the land brought forth abundantly!

We give our principal care to the principal thing. Our godliness should be carried out with earnest thought—our service for God should be performed with great care. Brothers and Sisters, are we careful enough as to our religious walk? Have you ever searched to the bottom of your profession? Have you ever enquired into the reason of your belonging to your present denomination? Why do you happen to be members of a certain Church? Your mother was? Well, there is some good in that reason, but not enough to justify you in the sight of God! Why do you happen to profess, as you do, such-and-such a form of Christianity? Did you ever look into it? I pray you judge your standing! If any Christian minister is afraid to urge you to this duty, I should stand in doubt of him. I am not at all afraid!

I wish you to examine all that I teach you. I beg you to do it, for I would not like to be responsible for another man's creed. Like the Bereans, search and see whether these things are according to Scripture or not. One of the greatest blessings that can come upon the Church would be a searching spirit which would refer everything to the Holy Scriptures. If they speak not according to this Word of God, it is because there is no Light of God in them! Therefore try the spirits by this infallible test! In all things render service to God as carefully as the Eastern farmer planted his wheat. You serve a precise God, therefore be precise in His service. He is a jealous God, therefore be jealous of the least taint of error or mistake in anything that you do for Him.

Take care, also, that you nourish every part of your religion with prayer, even as the farmer watered each plant. Pray for Grace from on high that your soul may never be parched and dried up. Perform to your faith, to your hope, to your love and to all the Graces that are in your soul every necessary service which the farmer renders to his wheat. Watch, weed, guard and water every gracious principle—give your Divine Graces your principal care, for they are to yield your principal harvest.

V. With one more lesson I close. Do this, because FROM YOUR PRINCIPAL CARE YOU MAY EXPECT YOUR PRINCIPAL CROP. If religion is the principal thing, you may look to religion for your principal reward. The harvest will come to you in various ways. For instance, you will make the

greatest success in life if you wholly live to the Glory of God. Success or failure must much depend upon the suitability of the endeavor. I shall never be able to conduct a choir, but I may succeed in preaching, for that is my proper work. Now you, Christian man, if you try to live to the *world* you will not succeed, for you are not fitted for it. Grace has spoiled you for sin. If you live to God with all your heart, you will succeed in it, for God has made you for a holy sphere on purpose.

As He made the fish for the water and the birds for the air, so He has made the Believer for holiness and for the service of God! And you will be out of your element—you will be a fish out of water, or a bird in the stream—if you leave the service of God. The Eastern farmer's prosperity hinges on his wheat and yours upon devotion to God! It is to your faith and love that you must look for your joy. Is there any bliss like the bliss of knowing that you are in Christ and are the beloved of the Lord? It is to your *religion* that you must look for comfort on a sick and dying bed—and you may be there very soon. "Yes, and the sooner the better," you may say, if you have grown this principal wheat and have sown to the Spirit that you may reap life everlasting!

In the world to come what a crop, what a harvest will come of serving the Lord! What will come out of all else? Nothing but vanity of vanity! A man has made millions and he is dead. What is he the better for his gold? A warrior becomes an emperor—his fame rings throughout all the earth! He dies. What has he of all his honors? What will any of you have at the last if you live to the world? To live to the world is like playing with boys in the street for halfpence, or entertaining yourself as children do with bits of platter and oyster shells. Only a life devoted unto God yields real and substantial results—all else is waste.

Let us think so and gird up our loins to serve the Lord! May the Divine Spirit help us to sow the principal wheat and live in joyful expectation of reaping a joyous harvest in due season, according to the promise, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." That which was the cause of our principal anxiety, here, shall be the source of our endless felicity hereafter!

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SOUL-THRESHING

NO. 3388

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“For the black cummin are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cartwheel turned about upon the cummin, but the black cummin are beaten out with a stick and the cummin with a rod. Bread flour must be ground; therefore he does not thresh it forever, nor break it with his cartwheel, nor bruise it with his horsemen.”
Isaiah 28:27, 28.***

The art of farming was taught to man by God. He would have starved while he was discovering it, so the Lord, when He sent him out of the Garden of Eden, gave him a measure of elementary instruction in agriculture, even as the Prophet puts it, “His God did instruct him to discretion and did teach him.” God has taught man to plow, to break the clods, to sow the different kinds of grain and to thresh out the different orders of seeds.

The Eastern farmer could not thresh by machinery as we do, but still, he was ingenious and discreet in that operation. Sometimes a heavy instrument was dragged over the corn to tear out the grain. This is what is intended in the first clause by the “threshing instrument,” as also in that passage, “I have made you a sharp threshing instrument having teeth.” When the corn-drag was not used, they often turned the heavy solid wheel of a country cart over the straw. This is alluded to in the next sentence—“Neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin.” They also had flails not very unlike our own, and then for still smaller seeds, such as dill and cummin, they used a simple staff or a slender switch. “The black cummin are beaten out with a stick and the cummin with a rod.”

This is not the time or place to give a dissertation upon threshing. We find every information upon that subject in proper books, but the meaning of the illustration is this—that as God has taught farmers to distinguish between different kinds of grain in the threshing, so does He, in His Infinite Wisdom, deal discreetly with different sorts of men. He does not try us all alike, seeing we are differently constituted. He does not pass us all through the same agony of conviction—we are not all, to the same extent, threshed with terrors. He does not give us all to endure the same family or bodily affliction. One escapes with only being beaten with a rod, while another feels as it were the feet of horses in his heavy tribulations!

Our subject is just this. *Threshing*. All kinds of seeds need it. *All sorts of men need it*. Secondly, *the threshing is done with discretion*. And third-

ly, *the threshing will not last forever*, for so the second verse of the text says, “Bread flour must be ground and, therefore, he does not thresh it forever, nor break it with the his cartwheel, nor bruise it with his horse-men.” First then—

I. WE ALL NEED THRESHING.

Some have a foolish conceit of themselves that they have no sin—but they deceive themselves and the Truth of God is not in them. The best of men are men at the best and, being men, they are not perfect but are still compassed about with infirmity. What is the object of threshing the grain? Is it not to separate it from the straw and the chaff?

About the best of men there is still a measure of chaff. All is not grain that lies upon the threshing floor. All is not grain even in those golden sheaves which have so joyfully been brought into our garner. Even the wheat is joined to the straw which was necessary to it at one time. About the kernel of the wheat, the husk is wrapped and this still clings to it even when it lies upon the threshing floor. About the holiest of men there is something superfluous, something which must be removed. We either sin by omission or by trespass. Either in spirit, or motive, or lack of zeal, or want of discretion we are faulty. If we escape one error, we usually glide into its opposite. If before an action we are right, we err in the doing of it—or if not, we become proud after it is over. If sin is shut out at the front door, it tries the back gate, or climbs in at the window, or comes down the chimney. Those who cannot perceive it in themselves are frequently blinded by its smoke. They are so thoroughly in the water that they do not know that it rains. So far as my own observation goes, I have found no man whom the old divines would have called perfectly perfect—the absolutely all-round man is a being whom I expect to see in Heaven, but not in this poor fallen world! We all need such cleansing and purging as the threshing floor is intended to work for us.

Now, *threshing is useful in loosening the connection between the good corn and the husk.* Of course, if it would slip out easily from its husk, the corn would only need to be shaken. There would be no necessity for a staff or a rod, much less for the feet of horses or the wheel of a cart to separate it. But there’s the rub—our soul not only lies in the dust, but “cleaves” to it. There is a fearful intimacy between fallen human nature and the evil which is in the world—and this compact is not soon broken. In our hearts we hate every false way and yet we sorrowfully confess, “When I would do good, evil is present with me.” Sometimes when our spirit cries out most ardently after God, a holy will is present with us, but how to perform that which is good we find not! Flesh and blood have tendencies and weaknesses which if not sinful in themselves, yet run in that direction. Appetites need but slight excitement to germinate into lusts. It is not easy for us to forget our own kindred and our father’s house even when the king does most greatly desire our beauty. Our alien nature remembers Egypt and the flesh-pots while yet the manna is in our mouths! We were all born in the house of evil and some of us were nursed upon the lap of iniquity so that our first companionships were among the heirs of wrath! That which was bred in the bone is hard to get

out of the flesh. Threshing is used to loosen our hold of earthly things and break us away from evil. This needs a Divine hand and nothing but the Grace of God can make the threshing effectual. Something is done by threshing when the soul ceases to be bound up with its sin and sin is no longer pleasurable or satisfactory. Still, as the work of threshing is never done till the corn is separated together from the husk, so chastening and discipline have never accomplished their design till God's people give up every form of evil and abhor all iniquity. When we shake right out of the straw and have nothing further to do with sin, then the flail will lie quiet. It has taken a good deal of threshing to bring some of us anywhere near that mark! And I am afraid many more heavy blows will be struck before we shall reach the total separation! From a certain sort of sins we are very easily separated by the Grace of God early in our spiritual life, but when those are gone, another layer of evils comes into sight and the work has to be repeated. The complete removal of our connection with sin is a work demanding the Divine skill and power of the Holy Spirit and by Him only will it be accomplished.

Threshing becomes necessary for the sake of our usefulness, for the wheat must come out of the husk to be of service. We can only honor God and bless men by being holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. O corn of the Lord's threshing floor, you must be beaten and bruised, or perish as a worthless heap! Eminent usefulness usually necessitates eminent affliction.

Unless thus severed from sin, we cannot be gathered into the garner. God's pure wheat must not be defiled by an admixture of chaff. There shall in no wise enter into Heaven anything that defiles, therefore every sort of imperfection must come away from us by some means or other before we can enter into the state of eternal blessedness and perfection. Yes, even here we cannot have true fellowship with the Father unless we are daily delivered from sin.

Perhaps some of us today are lying up on the threshing floor suffering from the blows of chastisement. What then? Why, let us rejoice therein, for *this testifies to our value in the sight of God*. If the wheat were to cry out and say, "The great drag has gone over me and, therefore, the farmer has no care for me, " we should instantly reply, "The farmer does not pass the corn-drag over the garner or the nettles—it is only over the precious wheat that he turns his cartwheel or the feet of his oxen. Because he esteems the wheat, therefore he deals sternly with it and spares it not." Judge not, O Believer, that God hates you because He afflicts you! But interpret truly and see that He honors you by every stroke which He lays upon you. Thus says the Lord, "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Because a full Atonement has been made by the Lord Jesus for all His people's sins, therefore He will not punish us as a *judge*—but because we are His dear children—therefore He will chastise us as a father! In love He corrects His own children that He may perfect them in His own image and make them partakers of His holiness. Is it not written, "I will bring

them under the rod of the Covenant”? Has He not said, “I have refined you, but not with silver. I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction”? Therefore do not judge according to the sight of the eyes or the feeling of the flesh, but judge according to faith—and understand that as threshing is a testimony to the value of the wheat, so affliction is a token of God’s delight in His people!

Remember, however, that as threshing is a sign of the impurity of the wheat, so is *affliction an indication of the present imperfection of the Christian*. If you were no more connected with evil, you would be no more corrected with sorrow. The sound of a flail is never heard in Heaven, for it is not the threshing floor of the imperfect, but the garner of the completely sanctified. The threshing instrument is, therefore, a humbling token and, as long as we feel it, we should humble ourselves under the hand of God, for it is clear that we are not yet free from the straw and the chaff of fallen nature.

On the other hand, the threshing instrument is *a prophecy of our future perfection*. We are undergoing from the hand of God a discipline which will not fail—we shall, by His prudence and wisdom, be delivered from the husk of sin. We are feeling the blows of the staff, but we are being effectually separated from the evil which has so long surrounded us and, for certain we shall one day be pure and perfect! Every tendency to sin shall be beaten off. “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.” If we, being evil, yet succeed with our children by our poor, imperfect chastening, how much more shall the Father of Spirits cause us to live unto Himself by His holy discipline? If the corn could know the necessary uses of the flail, it would invite the thresher to his work! And since we know whereunto tribulation tends, let us glory in it and yield ourselves with cheerfulness to its processes! We need threshing—the threshing proves our value in God’s sight! And while it marks our imperfection, it secures our ultimate cleansing! In the next place I would remark that—

II. GOD’S THRESHING IS DONE WITH GREAT DISCRETION, “for the black cummin are not threshed with a threshing instrument.” The poor little black cummin, a kind of small seed used for flavoring cakes, were not crushed out with a heavy drag, for by such rough usage they would have been broken up and spoiled. “Neither is a cartwheel turned about upon the cummin.” This little seed, perhaps the caraway, would have been ground by so great a weight—it would have been preposterous to treat it in that rough manner! The black cummin were soon removed from the stalks by being “beaten out with a staff.” And the cummin needed nothing but a touch of a rod. For tender seeds, the farmer uses gentle means, but for the hardier grains he reserves the sterner processes. Let us think of this as it conveys a valuable spiritual lesson.

Reflect, my Brothers and Sisters, that your threshing and mine *are in God’s hands*. Our chastening is not left to servants. much less to enemies—“we’re chastened by the Lord!” The Great Farmer, Himself, personally bids the laborers do this and that, for they know not the time or the way except as Divine Wisdom shall direct—they would turn the wheel

upon the cummin, or attempt to thresh wheat with a stick! I have seen God's servants trying both these follies—they have crushed the weak and tender and they have dealt with partiality and softness with those who needed to be sternly rebuked! How roughly some ministers, some Elders, some good men and women will go to work with timid, tender souls! Yet we need not fear that they will destroy the true-hearted, for however much they may vex them, the Lord will not leave His chosen in their hands, but will overrule their mistaken severity and preserve His own from being destroyed thereby! How glad I am of this, for there are many, nowadays, who would grind the tender ones to powder if they could!

As the Lord has not left us in the power of man, so also He has not left us in the power of the devil. Satan may sift us as wheat, but he shall not thresh us as black cummin. He may blow away the chaff from us even with his foul breath, but he shall not have the management of the Lord's corn—"the Lord preserves the righteous." Not a stroke in Providence is left to chance—the Lord ordains it and arranges the time, the force and the place of it. The Divine Decree leaves nothing uncertain! The jurisdiction of supreme love occupies itself with the smallest events of our daily lives! Whether we bear the teeth of the corn-drag, or men ride over our heads, or we endure the gentler touches of the Divine hand—everything is by appointment and the appointment is fixed by Infallible Wisdom! Let this be a mine of comfort to the afflicted.

Next, remark that *the instruments used for our threshing are also chosen by the Great Farmer*. The Eastern farmer, according to the text, has several instruments—and so has our God. No form of threshing is pleasant to the seed which bears it. Indeed, each one seems to the sufferer to be peculiarly objectionable. We say, "I think I could bear anything but this sad trouble." We cry, "It was not an enemy! Then I could have borne it," and so on. Perhaps the tender cummin foolishly fancies that the horse hoofs would be a less terrible ordeal than the rod—and the black cummin might even prefer the wheel to the staff—but happily the matter is left to the choice of One who judges unerringly! What do you know about it, poor sufferer? How can you judge of what is good for you? "Ah," cries a mother, "I would not mind poverty, but to lose my darling child is too terrible!" Another laments, "I could have parted with all my wealth, but to be slandered cuts me to the quick." There is no pleasing us in the matter of chastisement. When I was at school with my uncle, for master, it often happened that he would send me out to find a cane for him. It was not a very pleasant task and I noticed that I never once succeeded in selecting a stick which was liked by the boy who had to feel it! Either it was too thin or too stout and, in consequence, I was threatened by the sufferers with punishment if I did not do better next time! I learned from that experience never to expect God's children to like the particular rod with which they are chastened. You smile at my simile but you may also smile at yourself when you find yourself crying, "Any trouble but *this*, Lord! Any affliction but *this*!" How idle it is to expect a pleasant trial, for it would then be no trial at all! Almost every really useful medicine is un-

pleasant. Almost all effectual surgery is painful. No trial for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous, yet it is the right trial and, none the less right because it is bitter!

Notice, too, that God not only selects the instruments, but *He chooses the place*. Farmers in the East have large threshing floors upon which they throw the sheaves of corn or barley—and upon these they turn horses and drags—but near the house door I have often noticed in Italy a much smaller circle of hardened clay or cement—and here I have seen the peasants beating out their garden seeds in a more careful manner than would naturally be used towards the greater heaps upon the larger area. Some saints are not afflicted in the common affairs of life, but they have peculiar sorrow in their innermost spirits. They are beaten on the smaller and more private threshing floor, but the process is none the less effectual. How foolish are we when we rebel against our Lord's appointment and speak as if we had a right to choose our own afflictions! "Should it be according to your mind?" Should a child select the rod? Should the grain appoint its own thresher? Are not these things to be left to a higher wisdom? Some complain of the time of their trial—it is hard to be crippled in youth or to be poor in age or to be widowed when your children are young. Yet in all this there is wisdom! A part of the skill of the physician may lie not only in writing a prescription but in arranging the hours at which the medicine shall be taken. One draught may be most useful in the morning and another may be more beneficial in the evening—and so the Lord knows when it is best for us to drink of the cup which He has prepared for us. I know a dear child of God who is enduring a severe trial in his old age and I would gladly screen him from it because of his feebleness, but our heavenly Father knows best and there we must leave it. The instrument of the threshing, the place, the measure, the time, the end are all appointed by Infallible Love!

It is interesting to notice in the text the limit of this threshing. The farmer is zealous to beat out the seed, but he is careful not to break it in pieces by too severe a process. His wheel is not to grind, but to thresh. The horses' feet are not to break, but to separate. He intends to get the cummin out of its husk, but he will not turn a heavy drag upon it utterly to smash it up and destroy it. In the same way the Lord has a measure in all His chastening. Courage, tried Friend, you shall be afflicted as you need, but not as you deserve! Tribulation shall come as you are able to bear it. As is the strength, such shall the affliction be—the wheat may feel the wheel, but the black cummin shall bear nothing heavier than a staff. No saint shall be tempted beyond the proper measure—and the limit is fixed by a tenderness which never deals a needless stroke!

It is very easy to talk like this in cool blood, but quite another thing to remember it when the flail is hammering you! Yet I have personally realized this Truth upon the bed of pain and in the furnace of mental distress. I thank God at every remembrance of my afflictions. I did not doubt His wisdom, then, nor have I had any reason to question it since. Our Great Farmer understands how to divide us from the husk and He goes about His work in a way for which He deserves to be adored forever!

It is a pleasant thought that God's limit is one beyond which trials never go—

***“If trials six are fixed for men
They shall not suffer seven.
If God appoints afflictions ten
They never can be eleven.”***

The old Law ordained forty stripes save one, and in all our scourges there always comes in that, “save one.” When the Lord multiplies our sorrows up to a hundred, it is because 99 failed to effect His purpose, but all the powers of earth and Hell cannot give us one blow above the settled number! We shall never endure a superfluity of threshing. The Lord never sports with the feelings of His saints. “He does not afflict willingly” and so we may be sure He never gives an unnecessary blow.

The wisdom of the farmer in limiting his threshing is far exceeded in the wisdom of God by which He sets a limit to our griefs. Some escape with little trouble and, perhaps, it is because they are frail and sensitive. The little garden seeds must not be beaten too heavily lest they be injured—those saints who bear about with them a delicate body must not be roughly handled nor shall they be. Possibly they also have a feeble mind and that which others would laugh at would be death to them—they shall be kept as the apple of the eye!

If you are free from tribulation, never ask for it! That would be a great folly. I met with a Brother a little while ago who said that he was much perplexed because he had no trouble. I said, “Do not worry about *that*, but be happy while you may.” Only a very strange child would beg to be flogged! Certain sweet and shining saints are of such a gentle spirit that the Lord does not expose them to the same treatment as He metes out to others—they do not need it and they could not bear it—why should they wish for it?

Others, again, are very heavily pressed, but what of that if they are a superior grain—a seed of larger usefulness intended for higher purposes? Let not such regret that they have to endure a heavier threshing since their use is greater. It is the bread corn that must go under the feet of the horseman and must feel the wheel of the cart—and so the most useful have to pass through the sternest processes. There is not one among us but what would say, “I could wish that I were Martin Luther, or that I could play as noble a part as he did.” Yes, but in addition to the outward perils of his life, the inward experiences of that remarkable man were such as none of us would wish to feel! He was frequently tormented with Satanic temptations and driven to the verge of despair. At one hour he rode the whirlwind and the storm, master of all the world, and then after days of fighting with the pope and the devil, he would go home to his bed and lie there broken-down and trembling! You see God's heroes only in the pulpit or in other public places—you know not what they are before God in secret. You do not know their inner life, otherwise you might discover that the bread corn is bruised and that those who are most useful in comforting others have to endure frequent sorrow, themselves! Envy

no man, for you do not know how he may have to be threshed to make him right and keep him so.

Brothers and Sisters, we see that our God uses discretion in the chastisement of His people! Let us use a loving prudence when we have to deal with others in that way. Be gentle as well as firm with your children and if you have to rebuke your Brother or Sister in Christ, do it very tenderly. Do not drive your horses over the tender seed. Recollect that the cummin is beaten out with a stick and not crushed out with a wheel. Take a very light rod. Perhaps it would be as well if you had no rod at all, but left that work to wiser hands. Go and sow and leave your Elders to thresh!

Next, let us firmly believe in God's discretion and be sure that He is doing the right thing by us. Let us not be anxious to be screened from affliction. When we ask that the cup may pass from us, let it be with a, "nevertheless not as I will." Best of all, let us freely part with our chaff. The likeliest way to escape the flail is to separate from the husk as quickly as possible. "Come you out from among them." Separate yourselves from sin and sinners, from the world and worldliness—and the process of threshing will all the sooner be completed! God make us wise in this matter! A word or two is all we can afford upon the third head, which is—

III. THE THRESHING WILL NOT LAST FOREVER.

The threshing will not last all our days even here—"Bread flour must be ground, but He will not always be threshing it." Oh, no! "For a small moment have I forsaken you, but with great mercies will I gather you." "He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." Rejoice, you daughters of sorrow! Be comforted, you sons of grief! Have hope in God, for you shall yet praise Him who is the health of your countenance! The rain does not always fall, nor will the clouds always return. Sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Threshing is not an operation which the corn requires all the year round—for the most part the flail is idle. Bless the Lord O my Soul! The Lord will yet bring home His banished ones.

Above all, tribulation will not last forever, for we shall soon be gone to another and better world. We shall soon be carried to the land where there are neither threshing floors nor corn-drags. I sometimes think I hear the herald calling me. His trumpet sounds, "Up and away! Boot and saddle! Up and away! Leave the camp and the battle and return in triumph." The night is far spent with some of you, but the morning comes. The daylight breaks above yon hills. The day is coming—the day that shall go no more down forever! Come eat your bread with joy and march onward with a merry heart, for the land which flows with milk and honey is but a little distance before you. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, abide the Great Farmer's will, and may the Lord glorify Himself in you. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 90; 119:21-32.
"The prayer of Moses, the man of God."**

I think this Psalm has been very much misunderstood because the title has been forgotten. It is not a Psalm for us in its entirety—it cannot be read by the Christian and taken as it stands. It is a Psalm of Moses as far as Moses can get. It goes a long way, but there was a Joshua that lead the people into the promised land—and there is a Jesus who has “brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel.” That light shines through the gloomy haze of this dark Psalm. Please remember that Moses was a man peculiarly tried. We have never duly given weight to the afflictions of Moses. All the people that he brought out of Egypt, with two exceptions, died. And he saw most of them die—himself having the sentence of death in himself that he, like the rest, must not cross into the Land of Promise. So that with two millions or more of people round about him, that forty years he stood in the Valley of the Shadow of Death—and with all the mercies that surrounded him, yet still he must have had continual sorrow of heart—all his old friends and companions passing away, one by one. It is a brave Psalm if you read it in that light—it is a grand specimen of heroic faith!

Verse 1. *Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. All Your saints abide in You. Your fiery cloudy pillar covers and protects us.*

2. *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. Oh, that is grand to feel that there is something stable—there is a Rock that never crumbles—God from everlasting to everlasting the same! As for us, what are we?*

3. *You turn man to destruction and say, Return you children of men. A breath gave them life—a word makes them die.*

4-6. *For a thousand years in Your sight are but as yesterday when it is past and as a watch in the night. You carry them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which grows up. In the morning it flourishes and grows up. In the evening it is cut down and withers. We have seen this over and over again, as we shall see it yet again this year in the flourishing and the cutting down of the grass. But we forget it for ourselves. Too often we forget it for our companions—we think that they are immortal where all are mortal. Let us correct our estimate that we may somewhat correct our sorrows.*

7. *For we are consumed by Your anger and by Your wrath are we troubled. Which was true of that generation. They died because of God’s anger, but we bless God—as many of us as have believed in Christ Jesus are not under the Divine anger—it is taken away. When it does fall upon us, it is as a father is angry with his children. It troubles and consumes us, but blessed be God, we usually walk in the light of His Countenance and joy and rejoice therein. Let us value His mercy as we see the misery of His wrath!*

8. *You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your Countenance. That is true of you that know not God! Your sins are always before His face, but it is not true of Believers. You have cast all*

their sins behind Your back. God has forgotten the sins of His chosen according to His own promise, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more forever.” O blessed Gospel! Moses cannot reach to that.

9. *For all our days are passed away in Your wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.* “For all our days are passed away in Your wrath.” So it was with those that were round about Moses, but our days are passed in God’s goodness! They shall pass away in Infinite Love! “We spend our years as a tale that is told.”

10. *The days of our years are three-score years and ten; and if by reason of strength they are fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away.* Speaking of the mass of men, this is all that can be said of them. But as for the godly, where do they fly? They fly into His bosom who has loved them with an everlasting love! What is death but an open cage to bid us fly and build our happy nests on high? Blessed be God that we do fly away! Have not we often wished for it and said, “O that I had the wings of a dove that I might fly away and be at rest”—that will come, by-and-by!

11. *Who knows the power of Your anger? Even according to Your fear, so is Your wrath.* As He is greatly to be revered, so is He greatly to be feared. But the Lord has said of His people, “As I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more cover the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.” Blessed be His name.

12-14. *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Return, O LORD, how long? And let it repent You concerning Your servants. O satisfy us early with Your mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.* Poor Israel was greatly afflicted. Those deaths in the wilderness made her a perpetual mourner! But Moses asks that God will return to His people cheer and encourage them and let the few days they have to live be bright with His Presence.

15-17. *Make us glad according to the days wherein You have afflicted us and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let Your work appear unto Your servants and Your Glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish You the work of our hands upon us; yes the work of our hands establish it.*

PSALM 119:21-32.

21. *You have rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from Your commandments.* Wherever there is pride in the heart, there is sure to be error in the life. A proud man is wrong to begin with and as long as he continues proud, he must be wrong. It is not possible for him to be right. God has rebuked him and God has cursed him. How wise it would be of him to be humble! Remember we shall have either to be humble or to be humbled—and it is much better to be humble than to have to come under the humbling dispensations of God’s hand!

22. *Remove from me reproach and contempt: for I have kept Your testimonies.* O Lord, do not suffer men to believe lies and slanders against me, or if they do, let my conscience sustain my courage by the consciousness that I have kept Your testimonies.

23. *Princes also did sit and speak against me.* Had they nothing else to do but talk against God's servants? No, they sat down to do it with deliberation. "Princes also did sit and speak against me."

23. *But Your servant did—*"Go to law with them?" No, not so here. "But your servant got in the face and defended himself?" No, no! Look, you will not read those words. But, "Your servant was brokenhearted about it to have the great men of the earth speaking against him?" No, it is not so either. "But your servant did"—

23. *Meditate in Your statutes.* Is not that a very blessed and admirable way of enduring slander—simply to take your Bible and read a little more than usual? You will cure it so.

24. *Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors.* Because I love them and delight in them. I submit my life to their guidance. I go to Your Book to ask what I shall do. I consult it as the Oracle of God. I take my doubts and difficulties and dilemmas there and I find that they are all met. "Your testimonies are my delight and my counselors."

25. *My soul cleaves unto the dust: quicken You me according to Your Word.* Ah, there is a note of sadness here. The Psalmist complains of himself. He found himself very sorrowful and he could not get out of the sorrow. Or he found himself very full of business cares and he could not get rid of them. "My soul cleaves to the dust"—as though it was stuck to the dust and the dust to it and could not rise. Then how sweet the prayer, "Quicken You me." "Did You not first make me of dust and will You not, at the last, quicken my mortal body out of the dust? Then, now, my Lord, quicken You me according to Your Word." See, here is an evil complained of. He finds himself cleaving to the dust. Here is a remedy sought, "Quicken You me." And here is an argument pleaded with God—"according to Your Word." There is a promise for it. Lord, fulfill Your Word!

26. *I have declared my ways and You heard me: teach me Your statutes.* A confession had been made—"I have declared my ways." That confession had been accepted—"You heard me." Then a petition is offered—"Teach me Your statutes." "You see that I confess how wrong I was. Now give me Grace that I may not go wrong again." May that be our spirit always!

27, 28. *Make me to understand the way of Your precepts: so shall I talk of Your wondrous works. My soul melts for heaviness: strengthen You me according unto Your Word.* "I am poured out like water" says the Savior. "My heart is like wax. It is melted." It is the greatness of pain, the greatness of fear, the greatness of sorrow, till He seems to melt away in the fire like wax. "For heaviness" says He, "my soul melts. Then strengthen You, Me." Oh it is so sweet to turn to God when your soul is burdened—to look to Him and say—not, "deliver me." Observe that—the child of God is not so anxious to get rid of trouble as he is to know how to behave worthily under it! "Strengthen You, me, according to Your Word." How he harps on that, "*according to Your Word.*" The child of God does not expect God to do otherwise than He has promised to do. And he

is quite content if the Lord will act according to His Word, for well does our poet put it—

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

In this book dear Brothers and Sisters, whatever your trouble, there is a promise to meet it! If you lose a key and you send for the locksmith, as a general rule, somewhere in that bunch of keys, he has a key that will fit your lock. And so here is a bunch of keys and there is a key, here, that will exactly fit the lock of your trouble whatever it may be for God fore-saw the circumstances of all His people and prepared a promise for every circumstance!

29. *Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me Your Law graciously.* “Take away the evil, give me the good.” “The way of lying.” Oh it is a dreadful thing to get into that! There are some that have a way of doing it—some that do it naturally. Some that do it by implication. Some think it shrewd to deceive. “Remove from me the way of lying.” If truth should be banished from all the world, it ought to find a shelter in the breasts of Christians! The Christian is forbidden to take an oath because there should never be any necessity for it. His word—his, “Yes yes”—his, “No no,” should always be sufficient. Thank God it is where the Grace of God is!

30, 31. *have chosen the way of truth: Your judgments have I laid before me. I have stuck into Your testimonies: O LORD put me not to shame.* Here is, first, choice—“I have chosen the way of truth.” Here is his practically carrying it out—“Your judgments have I laid before me.” Here is his perseverance in it—“I have stuck into Your testimonies.” And then there is his prayer about it, “O Lord, put me not to shame.” And it is a prayer which is sure to be answered! “Truth may be blamed but it cannot be shamed.” Truth is God’s daughter and He will take care of her. If you have chosen the way of truth, it is a way in which though some may censure and slander, your righteousness shall come forth in due time as the noonday!

32. *I will run the way of Your commandments when You shall enlarge my heart.* “When I get liberty of heart, then will I take as my choice Your ways.” The Christian is never so much at liberty as when he is under law to Christ. He knows the difference between license and liberty. He has a liberty to do as he wills because he wills to do as God wills him to do—and herein lies the only freedom which we desire!

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

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

A FEAST FOR FAITH

NO. 711

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 16, 1866
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“This also comes forth from the Lord of hosts, Who
is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.”
Isaiah 28:29.*

ISAIAH admired the farmer’s skill in his calling. He mentions with admiration the various methods adopted by the farmer in the rotation of crops, in the choice of different soils for certain seeds, in the methods of binding up and stowing away his produce. And he enlarges especially upon the different methods of threshing which were used by the Orientals, some tender grain being threshed out by a staff in a man’s hand, and others being dragged out of the husk by coarser means, such as by being trampled upon by the feet of oxen, pressed by the turning of a cart wheel upon them, or by the dragging them through a sharp threshing instrument having teeth. He considered, I suppose, that the art of agriculture was in a high state of perfection.

I wonder what he would say if he could observe it now, and see the wonderful machines which no sooner go into a field or a brickyard than they accomplish with ease in a few hours that which was once the labor of days or even weeks! Certainly he would exclaim with even greater emphasis than he did concerning the agriculture of his own day—“This also comes forth from the Lord of hosts.” The sentiment of the text on its surface is that the art, and science, and skill of man, are the gifts of God. The Prophet instances only agriculture, but the same principle applies to all the arts and manufacturing, and in a higher degree, still, to those more sublime sciences which elevate the human mind and make us acquainted with the majestic and mysterious powers of Nature.

We are bound to trace human wisdom up to Divine wisdom, even in those things which have no relation to the eternal interests of men, but which have a beneficial influence upon their present state. We read of Bezalel, the son of Uri, that the Lord said, “I have filled him with the spirit of God in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship. To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.” Then it is added, “and in the hearts of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom.”

We are to ascribe the thoughtful, inventive mind, and the dexterous, clever hand, to Him who is the great Instructor of man. We trace directly to God the marvelous philosophy of Newton, and the skill of Watt and Stevenson, because the very slightest consideration shows us that there was originally a peculiarity in the constitution and formation of such minds as theirs. The most of us could have done nothing of the kind if we had tried all our days. There may be men of inventive genius here, but I suppose

that nine out of ten of us can make no pretense to the possession of anything of the sort, and therefore we are led to ask, "Where did the faculty come from?"

Surely the fertile brain of invention must be the Creator's gift! And Providence has also a hand in the business, for many men whose minds would naturally have gone in the direction of invention are turned into quite another course by the force of circumstances—

***"Chill penury repressed their noble rage,
And chilled the genial current of their soul."***

It was surely God's Providence, which in other cases found a channel for the natural passion, and allowed the soul to flow as it willed. And how often, too, some of the greatest inventions have been due to the simplest incidents! The puffing of steam from a kettle, or the falling of an apple from a tree have led thoughtful minds to discover great and important truths—and who shall attribute these circumstances to any but to Him, who "works all things according to the counsel of His will"—and who gives wisdom to the wisest of the sons of men?

Let us adore the Mighty God, not only as we read our Bibles, but as we traverse the halls of art and science, and visit the exhibitions which in these days of ours are being reared on every side. Let us make man's skill speak to us of God's Glory, and as we look upon them, instead of saying, "Great are you, O man! And great are the marvels of your genius," let us say, "Great are You, O God, in thus instructing man, and guiding him to those principles and properties of matter, by the knowledge of which his mortal existence is cheered and brightened." The drift of the writer of the text is this—if God thus instructs man in wisdom—how wise must He be Himself! If the mere rays which come from Him convey to us so much light that we are perfectly astonished at what man can do, what must be the infinite wisdom in counsel, and the excellence of works which are to be discovered in God Himself!

If the human mind at last has linked two far-divided continents together, and annihilated space and time, and even made the old ocean to be the *preserver* rather than the destroyer of the slender line along which the fluid lightning flashes at man's bidding. If man has bridged the mightiest rivers, and has forced his roads through pathless forests and rocky mountains—being taught to do so by God—then what cannot God do? If the pupil, the poor puny pupil, can accomplish these marvels, what cannot the Master perform? Must He not be wonderful in His counsel? Must He not be excellent in His works?

Thus the Prophet conducts our mind from man to God. I wish that all teachers did the same! But how many there are whose main business appears to be to divert the mind *from* God, and to ignore His Existence! There are two things which shall occupy our attention this morning. The first is the vision of God which the text presents to us, and the second is the lesson which such a vision is calculated to teach us.

I. First, let us behold THE VISION OF GOD WHICH IS PRESENTED TO US IN THE TEXT. The Lord of hosts is seen by the enlightened eye, first of all, in His council-chamber, and then in His great workshop. And in both He is the subject of prophetic admiration. He is "wonderful in counsel." He is "excellent in working." Let us remark at the outset that it is clear from

the text that God does not work without a *plan*. God has *not* left the world to *chance*.

There are some men who are always kicking against the doctrine of an eternal purpose, and who grow angry if you assert that God has settled what shall occur. It is by the consent of all agreed that man is foolish if he works without a plan, and yet they cry out when we insist that God also, in all His working, is fulfilling a well-arranged design! Depend upon it, however—let men rebel against this Truth of God as they will—that God has determined the end from the beginning. He has left no screw loose in the machine! He has left nothing to chance or accident. Nothing with God is the subject of an “if” or a “perhaps,” but even the agency of man, free as it is—as untouched and undisturbed as if there were no God—even *this* is guided by His mysterious power, and works out thoroughly His own purpose in every jot and tittle!

He wings the thunderbolt and shall He not guide the most passionate spirit? He puts a bit into the mouth of the whirlwind and shall He not control the most ambitious will? He takes care that even the sea shall come no farther than He bids it and shall not the heart of man be equally subject to the Divine purpose? Yielding to man his free agency, giving to him his responsibility, leaving him as free as if there were no purpose and no decree, yet the eternal Jehovah works out His plans, and achieves His purpose to the praise of His Glory!

The great principle of the text is that God has a plan—and that this plan is wonderful in itself, and is found to be excellent when it is carried out. This may be illustrated in many ways, and let us remark at once that it is illustrated in Nature. All creation is full of traces of design. It is true that the Lord took no counsel with His angels, nor sought direction from any beings. “With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him?” He alone meted out the heavens with a span, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance. But they *were* weighed and measured, and nothing was made without the most accurate calculation!

Even that which appears to us to be irregular in the Divine work is only undiscovered order. The stars seem cast about upon the floor of Heaven as men might fling gold dust from their hands! Yet there is not a single star whose place might be altered without mischief to the whole arrangement. Who has studied astronomy that does not know that the size of every planet—its place in the solar system, the density of its matter, the length of its year, and everything connected with it—is arranged upon a scale so accurate that they can be calculated by the mathematician with the utmost nicety? Such is the wisdom manifested in the arrangement of those ponderous orbs of Heaven! And here on earth is it not one of the clearest arguments for Godhead that design is visible everywhere?

Take the meanest animal, or the most minute insect, and you will find in it the most admirable contrivances to suit the habits of the creature and to make it happy in its condition. No, these creatures not only *show* design, but supply proof that the design is excellent in its working, for every fish that passes through the paths of the sea declares in its easy and graceful motion that the plan of its formation works admirably, and so with every bird and beast. No creature has to go to its Creator and

complain, "There is a defect in my structure. I cannot carry out the end for which I was designed." Our own bodies, too, so curiously worked, full of nerves and muscles, the matchless needlework of God's patient fingers, have about them, if we did but observe them, ten thousand proofs of the surpassing foresight and masterly art of the great Maker.

Oh that being so wondrously made by God we might feel bound to show forth His praise! Beloved Friends, a second illustration of this Truth of God may very easily be drawn from Providence. The great Providential operations of God are all the result of His fore-determined purpose and decree. From the first moment when Hiddekel and Euphrates, with their silvery flood, rolled joyously through the midst of Paradise rippling over sands of gold, down to the Last Great Day when the mighty angel shall stand upon the sea and upon the earth, and swear by Him that lives forever and ever that time shall be no longer—everything that has moved or shall move in Heaven, and, earth, and Hell, has been, is, and shall be according to the counsel and foreknowledge of God—fulfilling a purpose holy, just, wise, and unalterable!

The whole poem of Providence, when it shall be read in the light of eternity, shall be found worthy of the Infinite Mind. Even that part of human history which has been already written, though it may appear unintelligible at first sight, when it comes to be thoroughly studied, has an explanation very near at hand. Did not God, age by age, prepare the world for the coming of the Lord Jesus in the flesh? And is He not now preparing it for His second coming in His Glory? All the way up till now every lover of the Lord will see that the awful wheels of Providence have worked with excellent regularity. Empires have fallen, but the Truth of God has risen! Dynasties have perished, but immortal principles have conquered!

Slaughter has sown her seed in crimson furrows, but Liberty has ultimately reaped the golden harvest. Famine and Pestilence have made the earth to quake beneath their terrible footsteps when they came as messengers of the avenging God, but flowers of goodness have sprung up in their awful tracks. The most fearful calamities have hidden us beneath their wings from calamities yet greater. The mischief of a day has begotten for us blessings which have endured for ages! God has shown in Providence, even until now, that He is wonderful in design and excellent in working.

But, Believer, perhaps you will be more interested if I say that your own *personal* experience of that Providence goes to prove this with equal clearness. Oh, how wondrous in design has God been in His dealings with you! You have felt many trials, and you are not able to understand the reason of it all. You have been sitting down by the side of the vast sea of Providence and you have been asking, Why this? And, Why that? And trying to fathom the mystery with the shallow line of your own judgment. But depend upon it that the need for all that you have suffered has been most accurately determined by God! You must have seen that He overrules all things for your good.

Have you not to thank God today, you gray-headed saints, for the afflictions of your youth? And as to the trials of your riper years, can you not say of them, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept

Your Word”? You lost a friend once, but you never knew how much you gained by that loss, nor how much misery that trial spared you. Some of you might never have been saved at all were it not that, like Manasseh, you were taken among the thorns. You had determined to live and die a worldling, and if the house in which you lived so comfortably had not been consumed with fire you would have dwelt there still!

But now you are a stranger and a sojourner, and are looking for “a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.” Happily for you, you did not see the plan of your life when you commenced it—but equally happy for you is it that there *was* such a plan—that your life has been arranged on the best possible principles so that if you had been gifted with unerring wisdom, you must have arranged a life for yourselves exactly similar to the one through which you have passed! I know you will say, “Well, to begin with, I would not have been born a child of poverty if I could have helped it. I would have prospered in business if I could have had my own way. I would have been in quite another locality from that in which I now reside if I could have had my own choosing.”

Yet, be persuaded that in every deviation from your past lot, you would have been rushing into peril! And the happy results of which you will have to sing in Heaven might have been prevented had there been an alteration in any degree in God’s dealings with you. Many of you will be more pleased with another illustration. The wondrous planning of the excellent Worker is plainly seen in the great economy of *Redemption*. Well may angels desire to look into the scheme by which God ordained that fallen man should rise by his Fall, and should rise by a means similar to that by which he fell! While God should be glorified even more than if sin had never entered, Redemption is the most Divine of God’s thoughts.

It is marvelous that He should give His own Son to be Incarnate for the sake of His creatures! That God the mighty Maker should appear in human flesh and become a Man, so that fallen, sinful, and miserable man might be lifted up, and become the son of God! What a dream was that of Jacob when he saw the ladder, the foot of which rested upon the earth, and the top reached up to the seventh Heaven! That dream is more than realized when I see the foot of the ladder in the humanity of Christ, fixed in Bethlehem’s manger, or if you will, at Calvary’s Cross. And then behold the top of that ladder reaching up to the Eternal Throne, where He reigns as “God over all, blessed forever,” who was also “the Son of Man.”

When I look at each of the rungs of that ladder, and see the proofs of Divine love in the Savior’s sighs and tears, and bloody sweat, and passion, and death, I am lost in wonder! Truly it is a matchless scheme by which Justice has its due, and Mercy has its sway—by which Vengeance is satisfied, Holiness is gratified, and yet Love and Mercy, uncontrolled and unlimited—sway their silver scepter among the sons of men! When I see this great sight, those words of Isaiah’s ring with a bell—like music in my ears, “He is wonderful in counsel.”

But, Beloved, when you see Redemption worked out, and when you think that God really gave His only Son and that this Son actually did come to Bethlehem—really lived among the sons of men, bowed His neck to the yoke of obedience, and gave His hands to the nails, and His side to

the spear—you see His death was no fiction, but a grand reality! When you see that Redemption completed by the resurrection of the Master and hear the angelic shouts as He ascends on high, leading captivity captive, and see Heaven lit up with a supernal splendor as He mounts to His well-earned throne, you then find that He is as wonderful in the carrying out of Redemption as He is in the proposing of it! You see, then, He is wonderful in counsel, and that He is also excellent in working.

Then, Brethren, turning from Redemption itself, look at the Gospel, and see how wonderful in counsel God was in that matter. If we were to hold a parliament of the wise men of England to settle the Gospel, I will undertake to declare now what the Gospel would be. I am sure as to the result—the majority of the members would decide that the Gospel to be preached should be this—That men should be exhorted to do their best to “live righteously, honestly, and soberly in this present evil world.” And then, through the merits of Christ, God would accept their lives, and they would be saved. Now, that happens NOT to be the Gospel, but the Law—or rather it is neither Law nor Gospel, but a mixture of both, which God despises! It is neither hot nor cold, and He spits it out of His mouth as an abhorred thing.

The Apostle Paul peremptorily, over and over again, tells us that salvation is not by works. No, he tells us that it is not by works and Divine Grace put together, either! He testifies that the two principles neutralize and kill each other, and that a man must either be saved wholly as the result of God’s favor, or else he must be saved altogether as the result of his own merit—for the two principles cannot in any way be combined. The Gospel which we have to preach is just the reverse of what human wisdom would advise. It is not, “do and live,” but “believe and live.”

Now I will show you in a moment that the Gospel, which the world would propose, would be a most absurd Gospel, because it would be of no service to the very persons who need it the most. Those who walk righteously, honestly, and soberly, may be put down as those who “have no need of a physician.” Why, then, prescribe a medicine for them? Where would the Gospel be for the sick? As for the men who feel their guilt before God, and their inability to conquer sin, what am I to say to them if the world’s Gospel is the true one? I can say nothing at all to them upon this supposition, but must leave them to their destruction!

If I find them lying upon the bed dying, or if I meet with them in the hour of extremity, I can have no word of comfort to whisper in their ear at all, but can only remind them that if they had lived righteously, honestly, and soberly, things would have been different with them—which is not good news but a rebuke! But now I can come to all men, whoever they may be, sunken in degradation and steeped in vice, and say to them, “In the name of God trust Christ, and you shall be saved! The past shall be forgiven you, and as you trust Christ there shall come flashing into your soul a new life which shall make you hate the sins which have been your ruin, and make you love the ways of truth and righteousness! You shall be saved as the result of God’s free favor, and the proof of it shall be that you shall be saved from the power of sin and purified from your iniquities.”

This Gospel seems to me to be wonderful in its counsel because it is suited to the most abject and the most depraved. And I am a witness, among ten thousand others, that it is excellent in its working. The other system I spoke of would be bad in its working. Many preachers have had to confess the uselessness of mere moral preaching. One of them said he preached up honesty till his parish swarmed with thieves. There is no instance, I believe, on record where the mere preaching of the Law made a man love God, or where the heart ever was, or ever could be, renewed by inculcating good works. As well hope to make a Blackamoor white by pelting him with snowballs.

And if it were right to do so, we could point out cases in this house this morning by *scores*, where the preaching of the Savior's love and the testimony of a free salvation for the undeserving has melted the heart, has changed the morals, has, in fact, produced such an effect that the drunkard loves sobriety, that the harlot has become chaste, and that the most abandoned are saved. The Gospel plan is excellent in its working. The other plan, which looks as if it would repress vice, pulls up the very flood-gates of it, for what you command a man not to do, that he will do! But when you come to him, not with a command, but with a sweet invitation of love, and with wooing words of comfort, bidding him look to Jesus and live, then the command which was irksome and impossible before becomes an easy yoke.

I must hardly tarry longer to illustrate this great principle, or otherwise I might have spoken upon God's plan and God's work in inward experience. The experience of every Christian is, in some respects, different from the experience of every other, but it is still the result of God's plan. Your being led through a certain state of deep depression and of severe mental exercise is down in the book—and as for my Brother yonder—his being led through a state of exultation and rapturous delight is down in the plan, too. And it is right, that in one case you should have defeat, and that in the other case you should enjoy triumph.

My Brother shall be made a perfect man in Christ Jesus by his joys—some excellencies will be in him which nothing but joy could have fostered. You also shall be brought to spiritual development by your sorrows, and some powers shall be in you which nothing but sorrow ever could have educated in your case. The experiences of God's servants are very like the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness—they were led here, and there, and round about—and yet their road was the best way to Canaan. Sometimes a straight line is not the shortest distance between two places. It is in mathematics, but it is not in *experience*, for there may be something between through which a straight line could not be drawn. There may be something in you which renders it necessary that God should not lead you in a straight line, and it may be best for you to avoid insuperable obstacles by going round about.

Another illustration will be found in the use of instrumentality. It is a wonderful design of God to use one man to be the means of the conversion of another, because the man who does the work is as much benefited as the man upon whom the work is done. It is a great means of Divine Grace to the minister to be allowed to *preach*, as well as a great means of

Grace to the hearers to be able to *hear*. The Sunday school teacher is as much benefited as are his scholars, and all of you who are watering others shall be watered yourselves. It is a wise thing on the part of God to use the Christian for the good of others because it tends to edification.

And then how excellent it is in working! I am sure there is nothing more excellent than when a Church is all at work. Then you see the excellencies of instrumentality—no quarrellings, no bickering, no jealousies—all are active. But let the same Christians have nothing to do and straightway they meet with that black master who is said always to find work for idle people! They begin snarling. They become cantankerous and full of bitterness. They find fault, first with all the world in general, and then with their Brethren in particular, and lastly with themselves! No man is so near to the utmost extremity of misery as that man who has nothing to do. “How died so and so?” said one. “He died of having nothing to do,” was the answer. “Ah,” said the other, “that is enough to kill any of us!” And so it is. Let us escape from such a calamity.

It is wise in God’s counsel to use instrumentality, and it is excellent in working when it comes to be carried out. I must not, however, weary you with these illustrations. I will only say that the best illustration of all will be when, at the last, God’s counsels shall be perfectly fulfilled! The end is coming. Although the ages may appear to drag their weary length along, yet he who looks upon them after God’s fashion considers them to be but as a watch in the night. In a few more days the whole of God’s purposes, with regard to the race of men here below, will be fulfilled. The last messenger of Mercy will have delivered his message, and the last elect soul will have received it. The time shall come when the last vessel of mercy shall be taken out from among the ruins of the Fall, and set in its place where Jesus dwells.

Then comes the end, and when that end comes, we shall read, as far as may be, the whole of God’s purpose as one grand poem! And there will not be one verse in it that has a syllable too much, or a word too little. There will not be one stanza or canto redundant, much less one that is erased—but from beginning to end we shall see the master pen and the master-mind drawing forth the glorious array of majestic thoughts! And with angels, seraphs, principalities, and powers, we shall burst forth into one mighty song, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! The Lord God Omnipotent reigns!”

We shall see how, from the first even to the last, the King has been sitting upon the floods and ruling all things according to His own will. “From seeming evil still educing good, and better still, and better still in infinite progression,” to the praise of His own Glory forever and ever.

II. This being the doctrine of the text, I now want, as God shall help me, to give you SOME OF THE LESSONS FROM IT. Believe me, I have not laid down this doctrine in order that it may be a bed for you to stretch yourselves upon, nor even that it may be a coverlet for you to wrap yourselves in it—but I have done it with a practical purpose in view!

First, I have a word to say to those unconverted persons who have some desire after salvation. Dear Hearers, I would to God that, seeing His counsel is so wondrous, you would agree to it. It is in His counsel that

sinner shall be saved by Grace through believing in Christ. You have been setting up your own notion. You say that sinners should be saved by getting themselves into a state of gloominess. That sinners should be saved by humbling their minds. At least that is what I suppose you are saying, for you say you cannot be saved because you do not *feel* enough—that is to say, *your* plan is that you should be saved as sinners, *prepared* to be saved—and God’s plan is that you should be saved just as you are.

He wills to deal with you just where you now are, in your spiritual blindness, ignorance, hardness of heart, or whatever else may be the form of your spiritual malady. His plan is that you should look to Jesus as you are, and that looking, you should live! You will find this plan of God’s not only wise in counsel, but also excellent in working. I have tried it and therefore I can speak experimentally. It is a blessed way of salvation, that way of, “Look and live.” But the blessedness of it must be felt to be understood. I looked to Him and was lightened, and many, many, many around me have done the same and could rise up now and sing the hymn—

**“I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad.
I found in Him a resting place,
And He has made me glad.”**

You gave your mental assent to the principle which I laid down, that God is wonderful in His design, and excellent in working out His design. Oh that you might give your heart’s consent to this Truth of God, and say, “Yes, Lord, it is a good way of salvation. I yield myself to it. Lord, work salvation in me. I will from now on have nothing to do with my own merit and strength. I will be dead, Lord, that You may live in me. I will be nothing, that You may be my All in All.” Oh, I am happy, I am thrice happy, if a soul is now agreeing to that! O Heart! You shall see His face, for when you accept Him it is a clear proof that He has long ago loved you! And when you are agreed with Him it is because He determined that you should be a sheep of His pasture.

Another word, and this is *not* to the sinner, but to you, the people of God. You believe that God is wise in His counsel, and excellent in His working, and you did not kick against the Truth as I laid it down, did you? Now I want you to agree to this in your own particular case. I know there are some of you here who, when it comes to the point, believe it as a *doctrine*, but you do not believe it in your own case. You say, “I cannot understand God’s dealings with me.” As if it were expected that you should! But you also add, “I cannot believe that God has good designs in it.” My dear Friend, you must believe it, or else—what? Shall I dare to say it? Yes, I will say it—John said that if a man did not believe God, he made God a *liar*, and so you who do not believe in God’s wisdom make Him a fool!

Do you not shrink from that? I know you must! You do in effect, when you doubt the wisdom of Providence—make God out to be a blunderer—or else to be unkind! Would you do either? No, your heart is shocked at the idea! It is all right, then, my Sister. It is all right, my Brother. There cannot be a doubt of it, can there? If our business is in His hands, it will all come right. You cannot get the rudder round—the vessel will go on the wrong tack. But He can do it. He knows how to get to the point that you

are aiming at, and that He is aiming at, and He will get you there even as sailors get their vessels to where they want to go by tacking about.

So will it be with you. Your course is all mapped out by your Lord. Nothing will take Him by surprise. There will be no novelties to Him. There will be no occurrences which He did not ordain, and for which, therefore, He has not provided. He has arranged all, and you have but to patiently wait and you shall sing a song of deliverance. But these are not the lessons I wanted to teach. They are both valuable, but I now desire to speak to those of my Brothers and Sisters who are my fellow workers. The workers and the sufferers are the cream of the Church. Workers, here is a lesson for you. I will try to learn it myself. It is this—when we are going to work for God do not let us be in such a mighty hurry. I know our slow-going friends will like *that* advice, but I do not mean what they think I do!

Do not let us seem to encourage them in their laziness by making blunders through being hasty, for they will be sure to say, “Ah, you should have been as slow as we are, and you would not have fallen into these errors.” Just so, but it is better to do good and blunder than to lie and rot in idleness. Brother workers, let us have a well-formed plan, and let it be God’s plan. Very frequently I am afraid that we sketch out our plan ourselves, and if we do that without waiting upon God we are not walking in the path of faith—we are not bringing in Him who is “wonderful in counsel” to our help. And we must not, therefore, expect to have Him who is “excellent in working” for our assistance. We must do God’s work in His own way.

Sitting with Mary at the Master’s feet is the very best preparation for doing the work which Martha did without being “cumbered” by it. Oh, when I know that I am *following* and not leading—that I am not running before God’s cloud, and like a fool, hunting out my own way in the wilderness—but I see that I have His footsteps before me—it is happy and safe walking! Friends may say, “Ah, rash young man, you are risking so much,” and Unbelief may cry, “Let me see the pounds, shillings, and pence and we can go on!” But Faith cries, “If it is God’s way. I know I am no fool! I know I am safe.”—

**“Tis safer, Lord, to trust in You,
And on Your care depend,
Than trust in men of high degree,
Or even have kings our friend.”**

God never fails the man who, in simple, child-like faith, rests entirely upon Him. Have you never noticed that when you are content to wait for God’s plan it opens up to you very wonderfully? *You* could not have opened it up. You did not understand it, but He cleared the way. Instead of laying awake all night, how much better to go to sleep and wake up in the morning and find that God has done all for you. Faith goes forward in the name of God, and the gates of iron open to her through Divine strength. Let not your wisdom misguide you—your folly will not if your wisdom does not. Let not your strength make you weak, and then your weakness will be no hindrance. Do not imagine, when you have learned God’s plan, that you will comprehend it—for it was not meant for you to comprehend.

I do not suppose that the most of the bricklayers who are employed by our great builders understand at all what the house which they are building is to be like. Very likely nine out of ten of those who go up the ladder with the troughs of mortar, or stand on the scaffolding with their trowels at work have no idea as to whether the building is to come out Gothic or Grecian. They have nothing to do with that! They have merely to carry their mortar and to lay the bricks and do their day's work.

This is just what you and I have to do. Whether the Lord may leave me to carry out the work, or whether He may take me off and put others to accomplish His design should be the same to me. I have but to do my daily work, and to trust the great Architect who is, "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working," that though I may not know it, He will most certainly bring out the best results from the accumulated labors of all His servants. Again, when we do know God's plan, we must remember to carry it out, for that same God who is "wonderful in counsel" is also "excellent in working."

Do not sit down and be so pleased with the plan that you never try it! I must confess that I like to see a well-thumbed Bible better than more dainty copies because I see that it has been used. When you see a plan in an architect's office that is very new and very pretty to look at, you say, "Ah, nothing has been done with it." But when you see a plan that is smudgy, and torn, and almost broken through where it has been folded, you know that the man has done something with it. Now, do not fall in love with the *plan*, and think it is very pretty but never carry it out! When Dr. Guthrie wanted his Ragged-schools founded, he called on a certain minister, who said, "Well you know, Mr. Guthrie, there is nothing very new in your scheme. I and Mr. So-and-So have been thinking over a plan similar to yours for the last twenty years." "Oh, yes," said Dr. Guthrie, "I dare say. But you have never carried it out." So some people are always thinking over some very fine plan of their own—but while the grass grows the steed starves.

Now the God who *plans* also *works*. Let us believe this. Christian, God has planned to divide the Red Sea, and He says, "Go forward!" Are you going to sit still till the sea is divided for you? No, in God's name, Man, go forward, and the sea will be divided when you need it to be divided, but not before. What use would there be in having the Red Sea out of its normal condition, and its bed laid dry for hours before the hosts are to walk through it? You shall have God's help when you need it, and you are not to expect that God will minister to the cravings of your unbelief. No! Trust in Him and you shall see wonders!

I may not often quote my own life as an example except to you who are my friends and fellow workers, and to whom my life is but your own brought out in public. You know how we, as a Church, have been led to see mysteriously the hand of God. I remember one night, when we resolved to build this House of Prayer, we knew that we were poor, much too poor ever to be able to raise so large a sum as this house would cost—especially when the vow was registered that it should never be built with borrowed money—but should either be paid for or else not built at all.

I remember preaching that evening from the text, “And the iron did swim,” and saying that the building of this house seemed as likely a thing to happen as if the iron should swim. But I said I was glad it was twenty-five thousand pounds which we wanted, for if it had been only five thousand pounds, or ten thousand pounds, we might feel able to raise it. But twenty-five thousand pounds was impossible—only I believed that God could do impossibilities! It was one of the most singular things that ever occurred, when a friend at a distance whom I never saw but once in my life—and who had no connection with us—put down five thousand pounds himself toward it!

We were encouraged. We went to work, and the thing was done and as it went on, more and more singular helps were sent! When the College of which I am president had been commenced, for a year or so, all my means were spent. My purse was dried up and I had no other means of carrying it on. I was in this very House of Prayer one Sunday evening after I had spent all I had for the support of my young men for the ministry. There is a dear friend now sitting behind me who knows the truth of what I am saying. I said to him, “There is nothing left whatever.” He said, “You have a good Banker, Sir.” “Yes,” I said, “and I should like to draw upon Him now, for I have nothing.” “Well,” he said, “how do you know? Have you prayed about it?” “Yes, I have.” “Well, then, leave it with Him. Have you opened your letters?” “No, I do not open my letters on Sundays.”

“Well,” he said, “open them for once.” I did so, and in the first one I opened there was a banker’s letter to this effect—“Dear Sir, We beg to inform you that a lady, totally unknown to us, has left with us two hundred pounds for you to use in the education of young men.” Such a sum has never come since, and it never came before! And I have no more idea than the dead in their graves how it came then, nor who it came from! But to me it seemed that it came directly from God.

We have gone on successfully ever since with that work, and are resolved to launch out into others. And I believe that we only need as a Church, and your pastor only needs as your pastor, to have faith in God, and we shall find Him “wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.”

Wherever there is the hand of a true man there is the wing of an angel! Wherever there is the working of the sword of Joshua and the prayer of Moses, the almighty arm of the God of Israel is present! You have but to believe, and to go forward, leaning upon Him who made Heaven and earth, and all will be well.

Let us pluck up courage, and from this very morning let us feel that we are not to be guided by the dogmas of carnal prudence but by the dictates of FAITH IN THE INVISIBLE GOD. Let us no longer measure *means*, and calculate *possibilities*, but let us go to Him who cannot be measured or limited. Let us *trust* Him where we cannot *trace* Him. Let us serve Him with might and main, and, to use the words of Gerhard—

**“Let us in life and death
His steadfast Truths declare,
And publish with our latest breath,
His love and guardian care!”**

MESSAGES TO SINNERS AND SAINTS NO. 2985

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 10, 1875.

*“For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, In returning
and rest shall you be saved; in quietness and in confidence
shall be your strength. But you would not.”
Isaiah 30:15.*

THIS message related to the invasion of the land of Judah by Sennacherib. The approach of the enormous hosts of the Assyrian king put almost the whole nation into a state of great alarm. They wanted to make an immediate alliance with the king of Egypt and to ask that mighty monarch to send his forces to drive back the army of Sennacherib. But Isaiah the Prophet was sent to warn them of the folly and sin of such an alliance and to tell them that their strength was to sit still. They were to confide alone in the Most High and not to look for any other helper, but to cast themselves upon the faithfulness of the God who had never failed them. If they did so, they would suffer no harm—but just in proportion as they turned away from the unseen Jehovah and began to rely upon an army of flesh—they would be sure to find trouble.

We might have supposed that these people would have gladly accepted the very cheering message. Surely it was a good thing for them not to have to go to war with the Assyrians and not to need to despoil themselves and their Temple in order to send gold to the king of Egypt, but simply to rest in God who had promised to be a wall of fire round about them and the Glory in the midst of them. But, Brothers and Sisters, faith is an exotic in any heart where it is made to flourish—it does not grow there by nature—it must be planted by Grace. We are, all of us, idolaters by nature. We need something to look at in our worship even though God has forbidden it to us in the strongest terms. And as to our life, we are always pining for the arm of flesh, needing to rely upon something tangible and visible. We cannot, except as God's Grace enables us to do so, cast ourselves absolutely upon the unseen and trust ourselves to a God whose way we cannot trace! Yet, when His gracious Spirit teaches us this sacred art, it is well with us. The soul is elevated above gross materialism, above selfishness and self-confidence, above fear, alarm and trepidation—and brought into a condition of strength, power and peace. This is what the text tells us—that in returning and rest we shall be saved, and in quietness and confidence shall be our strength! As it was with God's ancient people in the days of Sennacherib,

so is it with us. This principle holds good all along—the faith that relies upon God will bring to us both salvation and strength.

I purpose to take my text out of its context and to address two different classes of hearers, using one of the sentences of my text *as a message concerning the salvation of sinners*. And using another sentence *as a message concerning the strength of saints*.

I. First, then, here is A MESSAGE CONCERNING THE SALVATION OF SINNERS—“In returning and rest shall you be saved.”

Dealing, first, with the matter of *returning to God*, let me ask you a few questions. Have you played the prodigal? Have you got far away from your father’s house. Have your joyous days all ended? Is your money all spent? Is your strength all but gone? Have your so-called “friends” forsaken you? Are you brought very low? Is there a mighty famine in the land and have you begun to be in need? There is but one thing for you to do—and that is to return. There is nothing more required of you than that you should return to God and rest in Him. Returning, however, is your first business. I would that you would say, as the prodigal in his hunger said, “I will arise and go to my father.” You will never get right till you get back to God. You cannot do without the God who made you. You may try to do so as much as you will, but a creature apart from the Creator is nothing but vanity, a man apart from his Maker is in utter misery! You never will rest—it is impossible that you should do so—till you rest on the Rock of Ages, you will be continually tossed about and disquieted until you come there.

Possibly you say to me, “But how am I to return? How can I come back to God?” There is a way made for you. He has filled up the valleys and cut down the mountains! Christ is the way of approach to the Father and the only way, for no man comes to the Father but by Him. And along that way innumerable pilgrims have traveled and they have reached God through Jesus Christ. Behold before you the ladder which Jacob saw in his dream—the foot rests just where you are, but its top reaches to the Covenant God in Heaven! It is by the way of the Person, work and merits of the Incarnate Son of God that you must climb into His Father’s bosom! By the way of His shameful Cross, by the way of His death and burial, and Resurrection, you must come back to God. Again I remind you that this is the only way! There is no other entrance to Heaven and to the heart of God!

“I know that,” says one, “yet I still feel as if I could not return.” Why not? “My sin lies heavy upon me. I would that I could shake it off and *then* return.” Ah, my Friend, that is not the way to return to God! If you were to come back to God having somehow got rid of your sin by your own efforts, you would come self-righteously and boastfully—but the right way to get back to Him is the way the prodigal took when the first words he uttered were these, “Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in your slight, and am no more worthy to be called your son.” Come back to God with a full confession of your sin! Whisper into His august but condescending ear the sad story of the many transgressions of the days

that are past—sins against His Law, sins against His Gospel, sins against the Light of God, sins of ignorance, sins against Him, against His Son and sins against His Spirit. Come back to God, laden with guilt, full of woe and confess all before Him, through Jesus Christ, His Son—and forgiveness shall be yours, for it is written in His Word, “He that covers his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy.”

“Yes,” says one, “but that is my difficulty, for I observe that I am to forsake my sin as well as to confess it.” It is truly so, my Hearer. If you will come back to God through Jesus Christ, who is the only way to the Father, He will enable you to forsake your sin. Before our Savior’s birth, the angel said to Joseph, “You shall call His name, Jesus: for He shall save His people *from* their sins.” The salvation which Jesus gives is salvation from unbelief, salvation from a seared conscience, salvation from pride, from lust, from malice, from envy, from evil of every kind! Which of your sins do you wish to keep? Is there one so fair that you have the desire to spare it? Come, Brother, let us take these sins of yours, one by one, and let us ask the Lord to lend us the sword of Divine Justice that we may slay them and hang them up before the Lord, for they are accursed things! Be not tender of heart concerning any one of them, even though, like another Agag, it comes to you delicately and says, “Surely the bitterness of death is past.” Put the sword to the throat of every sin! Though each one should be like a prince, yet slay it and hang it up upon the Cross. There stands the gallows whereon they hanged your Lord, so hang up the traitor sins there and let them all die. I think I hear you say, with good Dr. Watts—

***“’Twas for my sins my dearest
Lord hung on the cursed tree,
And groaned away a dying life
For thee, my Soul, for thee!
Oh, how I hate those lusts of mine
That crucified my God!
Those sins that pierced and nailed His flesh
Fast to the fatal wood!
Yes, my Redeemer, they shall die—
My heart has so decreed!
Nor will I spare the guilty things
That made my Savior bleed.”***

Remember that if you do not kill them, they will kill you! Returning to God includes turning from sin. Do you think that the prodigal, when he came back to his father, brought his dice in one hand and some other implement of sin in the other? He may come foul with the filth of the wine. He may come wretched through hunger and famine. But he must leave his riotous living, his wine-cup, his debauchery in the far country—these cannot be tolerated in his father’s house! Neither can he receive the kiss of forgiveness till he has said, “Father, I have sinned.” And the fact that he stands before his father, separated from his former sins, proves that he has forsaken them!

“Well,” says one, “I have yet another difficulty. I have confessed my sin to God and I have resolved, by His Grace, to forsake it. But how can I get rid of the guilt of my past sin?” I will tell that directly, but, for the present, my text says, “Return.” In returning to God you shall be saved and you may return to Him, now, by simply trusting Him. Come, Man, the cause of all your sin is that you do not trust Him! If you did trust Him, you would obey Him and you would prove that happiness comes through obedience to Him! You did not believe that this was true and, therefore, you have gone away into disobedience under the mistaken notion that you could find greater happiness. But even now, if you will believe, all things are possible unto you if you will do God the bare justice of believing that in this quarrel between you and Him, He is right and you are wrong! If you will capitulate to Him, yielding up your weapons of rebellion and say, “Tis all ended, good Lord. I do believe that You are just, and true, and gracious. I know not how You can be just and yet pardon me, but, anyhow, I come to You and I rest myself upon You—I dare not be Your adversary any longer. Should You give me Heaven, itself, I could not be content with it unless I were reconciled to You, my God, my Creator, my Preserver, my Father, my All-in-All. My heart longs to come to You. I cannot rest till I am with You. I seek You with my whole soul.” There lies the way of salvation! No, dear Heart, if what I have been saying for you is really true, your salvation is already assured, for he who longs after God is no more God’s adversary! God’s Grace has already been operating upon you and it is even now drawing you to Him—or else those ardent pangs of strong desire would never possess your soul.

Now turning to the second half of this portion of my text, let me speak of *resting in the Lord*, as well as returning to Him, for His declaration is, “In returning and rest shall you be saved.” What you need, in returning to God, is to rest in Him. Here is the answer to the question which we asked just now concerning your sin. “Listen,” says God, “do not let your past sin keep you back from Me, for I laid My sin upon the shoulders of My Son. I allowed Him to be scourged as though He had been the guilty one. I gave Him up to the executioners as though He had been a malefactor. I even drew My own sword from its scabbard and smote My well-beloved Son with it. While He was bearing your sin, I left Him alone till He cried, in His anguish, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’ I gave Him up to endure the bitter pangs of death that He might bear the wrath that was due to you. Now, then, as He has borne the punishment for all your sin, come unto Me and rest in Me.

My dear Hearers, I shall be very unhappy if while I am preaching to you, some of you are not following me and doing just what I am urging you to do. I am hoping that while I am speaking many of you are returning to your God, drawn by the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit. If you are returning to Him and are still troubled by the remembrance of your past sin, rest in what He has done on behalf of just such sinners as you are! He has set forth Christ to be a Propitiation for sin. Therefore,

rest in Him. Say, however timidly you may utter the words, “I do trust alone to the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus, and for all my guilt I rest my soul on Him.” This is how you will be saved—not by your works, not by your weeping, not even by your praying, but by thus resting on the Lord! It is true that you *will* work and you *will* weep. And you will pray and holy deeds will, I trust, be abundant in your life. But, in order to be saved you have simply to come to Jesus and to rest on Him! Can you not do that? If you cannot, I will tell you why. It is not because you are too weak, but because you are too strong! It is strength that keeps a man from resting! It is weariness that makes him recline. The more faint and feeble he is, the more readily does he lean upon another. It is your strength that will destroy you—it is your supposed goodness that will ruin you—it is your own works that will be your destruction! Come now, and lean wholly and alone upon that almighty Savior whose heart was pierced for you, and then it shall be well with you! After you are saved, you will labor for the Lord with a mighty God-given force, but just now, return to the Lord and rest in Him, for “in returning and rest shall you be saved.”

“Yes, but my present state is so bad,” says one, “I am not so much troubled over my past sin, because I believe that God has forgiven it—but I grieve over my present hardness of heart and distance from God.” Come along, my Brother, come speak to the Lord, for your heart will never get any softer through staying away from Him! How many hundreds of times have I said from the pulpit that if you cannot come to Christ with a broken heart, come to Him *for* a broken heart! If you cannot come as you should, come anyway that you can, in order that you may be taught to come as you ought! It is quite true that your condition is bad, but then Christ “came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Those open sores and bleeding wounds of yours only prove that you need the care and skill of a wise physician. Do not stay away from Him till you are cured, but come to Him *to be cured*, and come to Him now! And when you do come to Jesus, just leave your case—past, present and future—in His hands. Rest on Him! Say, “I believe that as He is able to forgive my past sin, so is He able to remove my present hardness of heart—to take away the heart of stone out of my flesh and to give me a heart of flesh.”

“It is the *future* that troubles me,” says another. “I am anxious to return to the Lord and to rest in Him, but I am afraid that I shall sin in days to come. I cannot feel sure that I shall not go back to my old life, even if I try to leave it.” It is a good thing, my Friend, when you realize that you can no longer trust in yourself—and that is the very reason why you should put your trust in One who can never fail you! Therefore, come to the Lord Jesus Christ and rest in Him concerning the future, as well as the past and the present. Did you never hear those words that Paul wrote to Timothy, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day?” This is what you have to do, then—commit yourself to Christ for all

the future, with all its temptation and its trials, its sorrows and its sins—and rest there.

Here is salvation for the past, the present and the future! Here is complete salvation, and the way to get it is to return to God and rest in Him! Oh, that the Holy Spirit would graciously lead many of you to do this! I feel that I must keep on preaching the Gospel to you very simply. God forbid that I should ever try to bring before you any other theme, or even seek for goodly words in which to tell forth that theme! No, I feel that I must keep on telling you—

“The old, old story of Jesus and His love.”

After this morning’s service, I looked upon the corpse of a beloved friend who was with us a little while ago, who died yesterday afternoon. As I knelt by his bed, with his mourning wife and brother, I could not help feeling that there was a loud call to me, from those silent lips, to keep on preaching Christ and nothing else but Christ as long as I live! My friend, who has been thus suddenly called Home, was in the very prime of life and his death has quite stunned me. As I gazed at him, I could hardly believe that his lips were really silent and that his eyes would never be opened any more in this world. If this summons had come for any of you who have not believed in Jesus, it would have been a still more bitter sorrow for us to know that you were dead in trespasses and sins when you were taken from us—and so must perish forever and ever. Now, Soul, will you have Christ as your Savior, or will you not have Him? If this were a thing which required hard tugging and toiling, it would be well worth the effort. But when the Gospel message is simply, “Believe and live,” and when Christ is willing, if you will only trust Him, to give you a force with which you shall be able to shape a new and nobler life—a Divine Power by which you shall rise superior to sin and be, in His good time, made like unto Himself, will you refuse these great blessings? Will you despise the heavenly banquet and stay outside and starve? Then, if so, your blood will be upon your own head! But may God, in His Infinite mercy, prevent you from that which would be spiritual suicide and save you, by His Grace—and He shall have the praise for it world without end.

I have read of a great man who was once taken around the French galleys. He was an ambassador from a foreign country and the French king wished to do him honor, so he told him that when he went to the galleys, he might set free any one of the convicts whom he pleased. So the ambassador took the following method of finding out to whom he would give this free pardon. He began by asking the first man, “How came you here?” The man said that he had done wrong, but that he had been entirely led into it by other people and they were to blame more than he was. So the ambassador went on to another man, who said that he was perfectly innocent. He had never committed any crime at all, but he had been condemned through perjured witnesses and so on. The ambassador found quite a number of “innocent” men of that sort, but, at last, he came to a man who frankly confessed that he deserved to be

there. What had he done? Well, he had committed such crimes that he was ashamed to mention them. But, in answer to many questions, he did mention them and he said, "I very richly deserve all that I have to suffer here, and I think myself happy that I was not condemned to die, for I well deserved it." "Well," said the ambassador, "you are evidently too bad a fellow to be here with all these 'innocent' men, so I shall give you a free pardon." He had the right to give it to whomever he pleased and he made his choice in that way. And when the Lord, who has the right to give pardon to whom He pleases, gives it to anybody, if there is any choice, it generally is given to the man who feels that he does not deserve it, but admits that he deserves the wrath of God. "Ah," says the Lord, "you are the man who shall receive the free pardon which you admit that you do not deserve."

II. Now I want, for a little while, to speak to God's people and to give them THE MESSAGE OF THE TEXT TO THE CHILDREN OF GOD—"In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." O Beloved, what a blessed message is this!

This is true concerning all the trials and troubles of this mortal life—"In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength! I will suppose that you are passing through some business trouble. There are many tremors in the commercial world just now. Perhaps they are causing some of you to shake and tremble. But if so, be not too easily carried away by secondary matters—be not either excited or depressed by them. Sit loosely by all worldly things, but take a firm grip of the unseen God! You will get no good by fretting, worrying and hurrying. Be calm and quiet, for all will yet be well with you if you are the Lord's children! Perhaps your trial takes the form of personal sickness. If so, nothing can be better for you than quietness and confidence. The doctor will tell you that you will make a good patient if he can keep your mind quiet and restful. All the worrying in the world will not make you well, though worrying will help to keep you ill. You will be ill just as long as God appoints, but if anything could help to heal you, it would be quietness and confidence of heart. Have you lost a friend? Is there a great sorrow at home? Have you, in the cemetery, some loved one lying in a newly-made grave? Well, my Brother, or my Sister, you cannot bring the dear one back and you ought not to wish to do so! It is wise to submit to the inevitable. It is gracious to bow to the will of your ever-gracious God. You cannot do anything that will be so helpful to your own sorrowing spirit as to exercise quietness and confidence. It will, indeed, be your strength.

Have you what I think is a sorrow fully equal to that of bereavement? Have you a loved one who daily suffers? Have you one who seems, week after week, to be lying upon the brink of the grave? Is that the kind of living cross that you have to carry? Well, Brother, it is no use fretting over it and it can do you no good to rebel against it. Let us not only submit to the will of the Lord, but let us ask Him to grant us Grace to acquiesce in it, for in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength.

We often want to do too much and we often really *do* too much—and so we spoil everything! We fret and we worry, but nothing good ever comes of all our fretting and worrying. But if we would learn to wait upon the Lord, we would renew our strength—we would mount up with wings as eagles! We would run and not be weary! We would walk and not faint. I am addressing God's tried children just now and whatever their condition may be, I press the message of the text upon their most earnest consideration.

Fretting is weakening. Whoever gathered an atom of strength by fretting and fuming, plotting and planning, or doing this and that in haste and confusion? You must have noticed, in reading the Book of Genesis, what a great descent there was from Abraham to Jacob. What a grand man Abraham was! He was every inch a king—no, kings were but dwarfs in comparison with the Patriarch who was so great because He believed God! But look at Jacob—a pettifogging, bargaining man, constantly cheating or being cheated! Jacob might be regarded by some people as by far the better man of business—such a keen, shrewd man. Yes, he was a cunning man and very crafty, but Abraham had that kind of wisdom which is better than craft and cunning! He was so trustful that he never thought of chaffering and bargaining with his God as Jacob did. Quiet majesty is the characteristic of the man of faith, just as unquiet weakness is the characteristic of the unbeliever. May God make you strong, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, by taking from you the fret and the worry in which you have too long indulged—and by giving to you the quietness and confidence which shall be your strength for the future!

Moreover, fretting and worrying distract us, but quietness and confidence help us in many an emergency. I have known a merchant who was losing money, feel very agitated and restless. The perspiration was upon his brow and if he had gone on much longer in that fashion, he would have lost a great deal more money. But I have known that same man pull up in an instant, slip aside into some quiet corner, breathe a brief, earnest prayer to God and then go back to his post feeling "I am ready for any of you"—cool, calm, quiet. While he was forgetting his God, he was distracted, and all about him were his masters, but when he had told the Lord about his troubles, he came back, not self-reliant, but God-reliant, which is a very different thing and a much better thing! There he was, cool, calm, with all his wits about him, ready to meet those who, a little while before, would have been more than a match for him. Trust in God, Beloved, for faith in Him will keep your vision clear and your judgment sound. Trust in God and then, in the day of stern conflict, there shall be no man's arms that shall be as strong as yours. "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

Besides, this quietness and confidence often prevent us from wasting our strength in efforts which might end in failure. Oh, the fussy efforts many of us have made! I know that I have and I will make the confession. I have had various matters to put right and I have tried, and tried, and tried, but all my trying has only made them get worse and worse. They

are like our good Sister's thread that was in a tangle, the other day, and she was in such haste to get it disentangled that she got it into a mass of knots that nobody in this world could untie! But another time when there was a tangle, she just took it calmly and quietly—and slipped this thread through here—and that thread through there and it was all unsnarled very speedily! Her quietness helped her to see the way out of the difficulty! But we are often in such a hurry to get things done that it takes us three times as long to undo the mischief that we worked in our haste as it would have taken us if we had, in the first place, asked God to help us to do the thing properly!

I know that the Grace of God is needed to bring us into this state of quietness and confidence, but, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, when you are brought into it, I pray you to keep in it and to walk so close to God as never to lose the consciousness of it. I always admire the spirit which is characteristic of the Society of Friends. As a general rule, the spirit of the Quaker is calm, quiet, deliberate. That kind of spirit is not absolutely perfect. I can see something that is lacking from it. Still, that sort of spirit is a long way ahead of that which is manifested by some of my friends whom I might easily name. I wish that we all had more of that spirit—calm, quiet, self-possessed or, rather, *God-possessed*. I believe that is the best spirit for preachers to have. We can do most by way of moving others when we ourselves are firmly fixed upon a solid base. You need not fluster yourself, young man, in the way that you often do. You will not save souls by stamping your foot, thumping your Bible and shouting at the top of your voice. From the very bottom of your heart, in an earnest Spirit, tell your hearers something that is worth their hearing and pray God to put His blessing upon it! You will find, even in preaching, that in confidence and quietness shall be your strength. Thunder is not lightning and you may make a great noise and yet not do much good. But if you calmly, yet earnestly, proclaim the Truth of God, and with sober sense press it upon men's consciences, you may reasonably hope that God will send a blessing upon your message.

I believe that the rule laid down in our text applies not only to the trials and troubles of life, but that it holds good with regard to many other matters. "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" *when you are involved in discussion and meet with opposition*. Some of us are often obliged to bring forth arguments in favor of what we believe to be the Truth of God—and there is one thing at which I always aim when I take part in a discussion—and that is to never let my opponent cause me to lose my temper. I know that in proportion as I get excited and angry, I am losing strength. I must seek to overcome my adversary by the power of the Truth of God, but, let him say what he will, I must not let him make me feel annoyed. For if he does, then to that extent he has conquered me. You may make this a rule in all your conversations with the ungodly. If you are a Christian woman and your husband is unconverted, when he speaks to you in angry tones, do not answer him

in the same style, but remember that “in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.” If sometimes his words seem to stagger you and you fear that you will fall, clutch at this precious Truth—lay hold of Christ, rely upon the almighty Grace of God—but do not reply. Be quiet. You know the old proverb about “a still tongue.” I will turn it around, for I am not sure that “a still tongue makes a wise head,” but I am quite sure that a wise head makes a still tongue, especially in family masters! You Christian wives and Christian husbands may do a heap of mischief if, as you think, you get angry for Christ’s sake. It will be far better if, for Christ’s sake, you bear quietly and calmly all that you have to endure! You should also do this for the sake of the one who vexes you, for how do you know, O wife, but that you may be the means of saving your unbelieving husband, and that you, O husband, may be the means of bringing to Christ your unbelieving wife by Christian quietness like that which Christ Himself manifested when He was upon the earth?

There is a woman here—I do not know just where she is, but she is here—and her husband has complained to me that she not only comes here twice on the Sabbath, but that she is also here at all the weeknight services, neglecting her husband and family and home duties as no Christian woman ought to do. “Oh,” says someone, “I wonder who that woman is?” Well, there may be more than one to whom that description applies, and if the cap fits you, I hope you will wear it. But I beg you not to let your Christianity become a needless cause of offense to others. Do try to so adapt your mode of life to those who are around you that no unconverted person shall be able to truly say, “My life is made utterly miserable because my wife is a Christian,” or, “because my husband is a Christian.” Try to make your husband twice as happy as he would be with an unconverted partner and then, after a while, he will be obliged to say, “My wife is a strange woman to be so fond of going to listen to preaching, but, bless her, she does make our home a happy one! Nobody else would ever look after the children as she does.” If you are a Christian husband, you may win your wife. If you are a Christian father, you may win your child. Or if you are a Christian child, you may win your father by that quietness and consistency of behavior which shall tell in the long run. “In quietness and in confidence”—not by bitterness of speech, not by “nagging” and wrangling—but “in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.”

Lastly, in all Christian labor, and in all Christian conflict, quietness and confidence will be our strength. When we go forth seeking to win souls for the Lord Jesus Christ, let us not go as if we were poachers creeping on the sly on somebody else’s ground to steal his game. No, my Friends, “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof,” and when God calls us to go anywhere for Him, let us not go as if we were trespassers, for every part of the earth belongs to Christ! When you go to that lodging house to preach or speak to the residents, do not go as if you had to ask leave to live, but deliver your message courageously, as becomes a man who is sent to be an ambassador for Christ! As for that ungodly man whom you

heard swear the other day, speak to him when a notable opportunity presents itself—not intrusively, but modestly, yet not slavishly as though you begged his pardon for talking to him in God’s name. We must take high ground here—we who love the Lord and whom He sends forth on His missions of mercy—as He does send forth everyone of us who has heard the Gospel call, for He has said, “Let Him that hears say, Come.” Go then, and say to the people, “Come to Jesus” and, being sent to them by Christ, who is Lord of All, do not approach them on bended knee!

Many years ago, the Emperor of China insisted that all ambassadors who approached his majesty should crouch on the ground before him. One of our admirers happened to have a little business with him which would require a few gunboats in order to settle it. And when he had an interview with the Emperor, he told him that an Englishman would not crouch down before him. So, when you go into the world—you young men, especially—do not go sneaking into the shop as though you were ashamed of your religion. If anybody has cause to be ashamed, it is the man who has not any religion! Make him feel that it is so, or, at any rate, do not let him make you feel that you have any reason to be ashamed that you are a Christian! If you were the son of a lord, I do not suppose that you would be anxious to conceal your pedigree and afraid to have it known. So, if you are a child of God, do not wish to conceal that blessed fact. You need not be ostentatious in displaying your religion, but, at the same time, do not be slavishly afraid to confess that Christ is your Lord and Savior! Speak out for God with a holy boldness, yet with due humility of spirit giving to Him all the glory for the Grace which He has bestowed upon you!

Life’s labor will soon be over and life’s warfare, too. In due season we shall die unless our Lord shall first return. The appointed hour for each of us is drawing near—what shall we do then? Why, then, Beloved, trusting in Jesus, quietness and confidence will *still* be our strength! We shall not send our friends running to fetch a “priest” to perform some mysterious ceremony over us. Christ is all we need and as we have Him, we can die any day with perfect serenity! I love to see a Christian die a calm serene death. The idea of Bengel, the expositor, the author of “*The Gnomon*,” concerning death, always strikes me as being very beautiful. He said, “I do not think there ought to be any scare-making about death. We ought to so live and to so die daily, that when death comes, it will be only a part of life—not a flourish of trumpets at the finish, but just a natural closing of the whole scene.” He also said, “I should like to die just as I might retire from this room when, being engaged with company, a message is brought to me saying that I am needed and I go out quietly and say nothing about it—and my friends presently discover that I have gone.” That was precisely how he died. Finishing the proof sheets of the last page that he wrote of his exposition, he was suddenly gone from earth and present with the Lord whom he loved. Oh, blessed way of dying!

I have often told you what my dear old grandfather said, not long before he died. My uncle James began quoting to him that hymn by Dr. Watts—

***“Firm as the earth Your Gospel stands,
My Lord, my hope, my trust.”***

“Ah, James!” he said, “that verse won’t do for me now, for the earth is not firm at all! I find it slipping away from beneath my feet. And now that I am about to depart and to meet my God, I need something firmer than the earth to rest upon. Yes, James,” he added, “I like the good old doctor better when he says—

***“Firm as His Throne His promise stands,
And He can well secure
What I’ve committed to His hands,
Till the decisive hour.”***

“That is it, James,” he said, “there you have Divine Sovereignty and Sovereign Grace! That kind of doctrine will do to rest your soul upon, my son, both in life and in death.” Calmly uttering such words as those, full of restful confidence in the faithful, Immutable God he had so long served, he closed his eyes and went Home, like a laboring man does when his day’s work is done—just as you and I, Beloved, will soon go home. I do not know how long we may remain here—some of you may go very soon, and so may I—it does not much matter when we do go so long as we are ready. When I said, the other day, “So-and-So has gone Home,” a dear old friend said to me, “Where could he go better?” Ah, just so! Where could he go better than go Home to his father and his God? Well, I trust that in those last days we shall neither fret, nor worry, nor trouble, nor question, nor doubt, nor fear—but in quietness and confidence shall be our strength! The Lord grant that it may be so, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—746, 699.
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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

A WAITING GOD AND A WAITING PEOPLE NO. 1766

A SERMON PREACHED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 17, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you and, therefore, will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for Him.”
Isaiah 30:18.*

The people were in a great hurry to be delivered from their enemies. The Assyrians had come up in great force and were covering the land with their armies. They had already devastated the neighboring kingdom of Israel and, therefore, the men of Judah were afraid that they would be swallowed up quickly, even as dry stubble is devoured by fire. The Prophet bade the inhabitants of Jerusalem remain where they were, adding, “For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest shall you be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.” But they would not listen to the counsel of wisdom—they preferred to follow the suggestion of their fears and go down into Egypt for shelter.

They were impatient because they were unbelieving. They were slow to obey, but they were swift to rebel and, therefore, the Lord cries to them by His Prophet—“Woe to the rebellious children that take counsel, but not of Me.” They sent their princes as ambassadors to Zoan to entreat aid from the Egyptian king! Yes, they sent a great treasure upon camels as a bribe to Pharaoh to espouse their cause against Assyria. They would not rely upon their God and so they looked to the land of the viper and the fiery flying serpent—and were stung with bitter disappointment—for vapor and emptiness were the help of Egypt.

It seemed as if the motto of the people then was, “We will flee upon horses; we will ride upon the swift.” Again and again Isaiah urged them to be quiet, saying, “Your strength is to sit still,” but they would not learn that rash haste is but ill-speed. They could not be quiet by reason of their fear and folly. But the Lord waited and turned not from His long-enduring patience. In the words of our text, He showed that if mortals could not wait, yet their Maker could—“Therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you”—and He assured them, yet again, that if they would learn to wait, they would find it their wisdom and happiness, for, “Blessed are all they that wait for Him.”

Here is the subject of this morning's discourse. Certain of God's people are in trouble and distress and they are eager for immediate rescue. They cannot wait on God's time, nor exercise submission to His will. He will surely deliver them in due season, but they cannot tarry till the hour comes. Like children, they snatch at unripe fruit. “To everything there is a

season, and a time to every purpose under the Heaven,” but their one season is the present—they cannot—they *will not* wait. They must have their desire instantaneously fulfilled or else they are ready to take wrong means of attaining it. If in poverty, they are in haste to be rich—and they shall not long be innocent.

If under reproach, their heart ferments towards revenge. They would sooner rush under the guidance of Satan into some questionable policy than, in childlike simplicity, trust in the Lord and do good. It must not be so with you, my Brothers and Sisters—you must learn a better way. I hope that the sermon of this morning may go some way, by God’s Spirit, towards instructing you in the holy art of waiting for the Lord. “Those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth.” The text divides itself into two parts—first, it introduces us to *a waiting God*. And secondly, it speaks of *a waiting people*.

I. First, we have here A WAITING GOD. I shall not confine our illustration of this waiting on the part of God to the case of the men of Judah described in the text, but I shall come home to your own experience and speak of how the Lord has waited that He might be gracious *to you*. Let us behold His long-suffering towards ourselves. In so doing we shall not be leaving the Scripture, for the text as truly describes our own experience as that of the men of Isaiah’s day.

The Word of the Lord which is now to be considered opens, first, with a *wonderful reason for waiting*—“And therefore will the Lord wait.” “Therefore”—mark that word! The Lord Jehovah does as He wills both in Heaven and earth and His ways are past finding out, but He never acts unreasonably. He does not tell us His reasons, but He has them, for He acts, “according to *the counsel* of His will.” God has His “therefore,” and these are of the most forcible kind! Full often His “therefore” are the very reverse of ours—that which is an argument with us may be no argument with God—and that which is a reason with Him might seem to be a reason in the opposite direction to us.

For what is there in this chapter that can be made into a “therefore”? “Therefore will the Lord wait.” From where does He derive the argument? Assuredly it is a reason based on His own Grace and not on the merit of man! The chapter contains a denunciation of the false confidences of the people and, because of these, one might have concluded that the Lord would cast them off forever. If they will have Egypt to lean upon, let them lean on Egypt till, like a spear, it pierces their side! God might well say, “Let them alone; they are given to their idols!” But instead, He cries, “Therefore will the Lord wait.” He will let them see the result of their carnal confidences—He will allow them time in which to test and try Egypt and see whether Egypt is not a boaster whose help is to no purpose.

Do you not remember when it was so with you? Perhaps you began your religious life with the great mistake of hoping to find salvation in your own goodness. You looked to your feelings, prayers, works and professions for safety. You thought that your deliverance must come from *yourself* and so you sought to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”—without remembering—“it is God that works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure.” You knew nothing of God’s Grace—you

thought too much of your own good works! So many prayers and tears; so many Church-goings or Chapel-goings; so much of sacraments, almsgivings and the like—you thought this would make up a sweet-smelling sacrifice, acceptable to God!

Blessed be the Lord who had great patience with you! He had told you plainly enough, beforehand, that by the works of the Law there should no flesh be justified in His sight—and you ought not to have tried that forbidden way—but as you would try it, He suffered you to run therein till a gulf opened before you. You worked out a plan of self-salvation and the net result was bitter disappointment, for you saw that you could not keep the Law and you felt, also, that if you *did* keep it your obedience would make no recompense for the sins of the past! You perceived that the wrath of God was your righteous due! An abyss yawned before you! You dared not go further; neither could you trust the sandy ground upon which you stood. You were in great distress of mind, but it was for this that the Lord had, in mercy, waited.

I heard, some time ago, of a man who rented horses and carriages. A person wished to hire and, having heard the price, he went round the little town to all other persons in that line of business to get something cheaper, but, as he did not succeed, he returned to the first person and said he would hire his horse and carriage. “No,” said the other, “I am not going to let you have it. I know why you have come to me—you have been round everywhere else and if you could have saved a shilling you would not have come back to me.” I do not commend the tradesman, but I do not much wonder at his conduct. See how much more patience there is in God than in man—we refuse His free salvation and go round by way of our own merits and everywhere else to try and find some other ground of confidence. And then at last, when everything has broken down, we come back to God and to salvation through Jesus Christ! And yet we find the Lord lovingly waiting, graciously waiting—a God ready to pardon!

Further, these people were rebels against God, and the Lord was waiting to let them fully manifest their rebellious spirit and be made ashamed of it. The chapter begins that way—“Woe to the rebellious children.” Further on He calls them, “a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the Law of the Lord”—was that a reason for waiting to be gracious? Yes, with the Lord, sin shows the need of Grace and so becomes a reason for Grace. The Lord allowed the people to show their rebellious character—to let all mankind know what kind of people God had to deal with—and that they might, in later days, have the higher admiration of His long-suffering and of His Grace.

I think the Lord permits many sinners to go to the full length of their tether in order that they may know, in the future, what stuff they are made of, and may never trust in themselves. Those who, from their youth up, have been under restraint do not know the evil of their own hearts and are apt to think that they can scarcely be heirs of wrath even as others. But those who have developed their innate depravity by actual sin dare not dream such proud falsehoods, for their actual sins would cry them down if they did so! When the Lord leaves us to ourselves, awhile, and just stands back and lets us have our spin, what pretty creatures we

are! Ah me, it makes us blush to remember all! In later years we have to bemoan and distrust ourselves—and admire the measureless bounty of the Grace which chose us—and would not alter its choice notwithstanding all our untowardness! A strange “therefore” is God’s, “therefore”—“therefore will the Lord wait that He may be gracious”—that the abundant display of the sin within the man may lead to a more thorough and hearty confession of his fault and to a greater admiration of the splendor of the Grace which puts that sin away.

The Lord would wait, again, for yet another reason, namely, to let them suffer somewhat of the effect of their sin. He permitted them to send their ambassadors to Egypt that they might come back disappointed. And He allowed the Assyrians to devastate the land that they might feel the pinch of famine and learn that it is an evil and a bitter thought to forsake the living God. It has a purifying effect upon men to let them bathe in the bitter waters which flow from the foul fountain of their iniquity! It is well that they should see what kind of serpent is hatched from the egg of evil.

Perhaps some of us were left in the same way and we shall never forget what we thus learned—we were allowed to go on in sin and we did so until we began to feel the result of it! And now we flee from it with horror. We put our hand into the fire until it was burned—and now we dread the fire. The quittance of self, the abhorrence of sin, the clinging to the Lord which come out of our miseries, are all precious and, therefore, does the Lord wait to be gracious—wait until we set a just value upon that Grace—and have a due horror of the sin from which it delivers us.

Once more, I do not doubt that the Lord waited in this case to be gracious until the people should begin to pray, for that seems to be the turning point in this affair. The Prophet says, “He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer you.” The Lord is listening for the sinner’s prayer! How is it that you have not prayed long ago, O troubled spirit? Why have those lips been dumb for years? What? With all your sense of sin and with a clear idea of the misery that will come of it, do you still refuse to pray? Then you may well wonder that the Lord should wait! It is a marvel that He should have any patience with a prayerless soul! The open display of His Grace in your soul in the form of pardoned sin will not appear to you until it is said, “Behold, he prays!”

Why, then, are you so slow to cry to Him? If mercy is to be had for the asking, what shall become of the man who never asks? If God says, “Only acknowledge your transgressions,” what must be the fate of him who will *not* acknowledge his transgressions? If the Lord sets Mercy’s door before us, and writes over it, “Knock, and it shall be opened unto you,” how can we be excused if we do not knock at once? And yet such was *my* condition once—and such was yours, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ! We did not feel the guilt of our sin! We would not acknowledge that we had erred! We did not recognize the misery that sin brought upon us! We did not pray! We did not seek the Lord through Jesus Christ! Yet all that long while the Lord of Mercy waited that He might be gracious to us! The reason why He should have exercised such forbearance and long-suffering is hard to see until we look into the goodness of His heart—until we see in the heart of

His compassion, the deep fountains of love from which rivers of mercy flow. Behold how the heart of God yearns towards His people! Was it ever more clearly seen than in His long forbearance, His waiting to be gracious unto us?

This leads us to notice, in the second place, *the singular patience of God in that waiting*. What does it mean when we are told that the Lord waits that He may have mercy upon us? It means that He kept back the sword of Justice! It is inevitable that where there is evil, God shall be angered with it. It is not a matter of arbitrariness with Him, but it is inevitable that the Judge of all the earth should take vengeance upon evil and wrong. God must punish sin! This is one of the fixed and settled principles of His very existence! Here, the attribute of long-suffering patience comes in and spares the guilty from time to time, giving space for repentance. Justice waits awhile, that Love may try her hand and bring the rebel to a better mind. With some of us, the Lord must have drawn the sword right out of the scabbard! And yet He put it back, again, into the sheath, bidding it be quiet a little longer. With some of us the Lord must have lifted up the axe to cut us down, for we have been such cumberers of the ground—and yet His mercy has stayed His justice and the axe has been laid by for mercy's sake.

Because of the intercession of the Lord Jesus, the Lord has put the lifted thunderbolt down—and here we are, still the living—the living, I trust, to adore our long-suffering God! There are some dear friends before me who must forever highly honor the forbearance of God in sparing them through so many years of sin till, at last, their gray heads bowed before His Grace! It could have been easy enough for God to have destroyed them when they were running riot in their youth! Yes, easier to destroy them than to spare them! Have not some of you been in positions where, if you had been killed, it would have seemed only according to the order of Nature that you should be? But your being spared was a miracle of Providence! A special interposition of goodness! The brand in the fire will be consumed by being left alone. And if it is to escape, it must be plucked from the burning. Well, then, bless that God who waited and held back the punishment that was due to you! Bless the Judge who was so slow to call you to account, who postponed the day of trial! Yes, and issued a reprieve to let you live when you were already condemned!

This patience of God signifies more, however, than delay in punishment—it means *the continuance of privileges*, for the Lord told these people that although He might give them the bread of adversity and the water of affliction on account of their sins—yet He would not take away their teachers from them! They would still be instructed, warned and invited to come to Him. Now, if God were to send a word of mercy to a man, once, and that man willfully refused His message, it would be perfectly just on God's part if He said, "I will never send another ambassador! It was condescension on My part to invite this rebel to be at peace with Me and since he declines to do so, he has made his choice of war—and surely I will contend with him. As he has made his bed, so shall he lie in it! As he prefers to be My enemy, so let him be, to his own destruction."

Ah me, how long does Mercy linger! How earnestly she pleads with men to be kind to themselves! Instead of hasty wrath against His people when they rejected His Word, the Lord sent Prophet after Prophet to them. And when they stoned one and slew another, He even sent His own Son, saying, "They will reverence My Son." Still did the heralds of salvation cry, "Turn you, turn you, why will you die?" Has it not been so with some of us? We heard the Gospel when we were quite young and we have continued to hear it till we are quite old, so patient is the Lord! It may be that I speak to some who have continued to hear that Gospel every Sabbath and have determinedly refused it throughout a long life. Shall it continue to be so? Dare we always provoke the Lord?

Still the white flag is hung out and the silver trumpet knows no note but, "Mercy, mercy, mercy!" Oh that man would hear that note and turn to the Lord! O my Brethren, the man who loves not the Lord Jesus is already "Anathema Maranatha!" All holy intelligences say, "Amen" to his being held accursed and yet the Lord permits him to tread His courts and hear His Word—and gives him space in which to repent of his evil deeds! He waits that He may be gracious unto you, therefore He bids His ministers wait upon you in hope and proclaim to you, over and over again, the loving-kindness of the Lord! So singular was God's patience that He even *increased His holy agencies* to lead the people to Himself. He says—"Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, This is the way, walk you in it."

Do we not remember how, when their public ministry seemed to miss us, we began to be bothered by an inward force more powerful than visible ministries? Conscience cried aloud and accused us from within doors. I remember well when it dogged my heels wherever I went—it would not be at peace with me until I was at peace with God! Do you not remember in your own case when it began to be very hard to sin? The drags were clapped on and you could not gallop down the hill as you wished to do? You found it hard to kick with naked feet against the sharp pricks of conscience! You found it difficult to go to Hell—you had to leap fence and rail and ditch—and you were tired of such steeple-chasing. The voice of Jesus from without seemed echoed from within! You could hardly tell where the voice came, but it was always following and crying, "This is the way, walk you in it."

O the devices of infinite Love! What patience was shown by the Lord to send this inward monitor! Why did He not say, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them"? Though we had Moses and the Prophets, the Scriptures to read and the Gospel to hear, yet He added to all this the still small voice! In addition to a summons from without, He added a pleader within! Did we contend against even this? Alas, we did, for we seemed determined to destroy ourselves! Behold, what manner of patience the Lord has exercised towards us according to the abundance of His Grace.

No, this is not all, for all this while God was *passing by our rejections of Him*, blotting out our sinful refusals and insulting despising of His goodness. You know how it would be, even with your own child, if you were to say to him, "My Child, I am ready to forgive you if you will confess your fault." If he would not acknowledge that he was wrong, but held out stub-

bornly, you might have considerable patience, but I question if that patience would last for days and weeks. Your rod would soon be spoken with. Men that have been very famous for bearing insults have, at last, been compelled, in vindication of their own honor, to put an end to the provocation. How grievously far have you and I carried our insults of God!

Do I not speak to some who are carrying the provocation a long way even now? You will not accept the Son of God by whom alone you can be saved! To save you it was necessary that Jesus should die, but you trample on His blood! It was not possible for you to enter Heaven unless the Lord Jesus should be your Substitute and bear your sin—and you have heard all about that wonderful Truth of God—and have yet acted as if it were nothing to you. You have not believed on Jesus! You have rejected the Father's testimony concerning Him and resisted the witness of the Spirit of God! This you have done for many a day. The tears have started in your eyes, but you have wiped them away and they have gone as the dew of the morning disappears in the heat of the sun. You have, at times, been driven to your chamber and to your knees, but you have forgotten your hurried prayers and, again, the dog has returned to his vomit and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire! This cannot always last—men cannot always thrust their fingers into God's eyes at this rate! The wonder is that it has lasted so long.

Please remember that all this while God has been waiting and *everything has been ready*, ready for the sinner to come to Him. Listen to the Divine Words—"My oxen and My fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." Alas, they would not come! So it was with us who are now brought in to enjoy the provisions of Grace—and so it is with many who are still outside the banquet hall—they do despite unto the love and mercy of God and the provision of His boundless Grace. Of multitudes Jesus says sorrowfully, "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." I wish I could better set forth the singular waiting of the Lord that He may have mercy upon us, but I pray the Holy Spirit to bless my feeble utterances to all that hear me this day.

I must now notice *a most remarkable action which follows upon the waiting*. After the Lord had displayed His patience to His people, He resolved to go further, and He proceeded to a most notable matter which is thus described—"Therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you." You and I would have turned the text round the other way and said—"Therefore will He have mercy upon you, that He may be exalted"—that would be true, but it is not the Truth here taught. The picture represents the Lord, as it were, as sitting still and allowing His people, through their sin, to bring suffering upon themselves. But now, after long patience, He awakens Himself to action. I think I hear Him say, "They will not come to Me. They refuse all My messengers. They plunge deeper and deeper into sin, now will I see what My Grace can do!"

He rises as one who means to put forth His power. He stands ready for action. And now, as if that were not enough, He says to Himself, "I will be exalted. I will go up to My Throne that I may have mercy upon them. I will manifest My power. I will take the ensigns of My dominion into My hands and act as a Sovereign. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy—and

where sin abounded shall much more Grace abound.” Oh, how I love to speak of the Lord exalted in Christ Jesus upon the Throne of Grace! Glory be to His name! Do you see what a wonderful thing is the work of Grace in saving men—“Therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you.” He will take to Himself an absolute Sovereignty, mount to the Throne, and display His reigning Grace! Where else is there any hope for men?

It also bears this meaning. When a man is about to deal a heavy stroke, he lifts himself up to give the blow—he exalts himself to bring down the scourge more heavily upon the shoulder. Even so the Lord seems to say, “I will put forth all My might. I will exercise all My skill. I will display all My attributes up to their greatest height, that I may have mercy upon these hardened, stiff-necked sinners—I will be exalted that I may have mercy upon them.” As if He would, in some way, make His greatness to be more illustrious than it had ever been seen before, by doing the most splendid act He had ever done, namely, by having mercy upon these provoking sinners for whom He had been waiting so long! Oh, but this is a surpassingly glorious text!

I remember thinking, “Surely, if God saves me, He will be a God, indeed!” He did save me because He is a God, indeed. Here is the proof of it—“Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God.” Because He is God, He saves those who look to Him! Somebody here says, “Well truly, if the Lord were to crown His patience by bringing *me* to Himself I should think more of His glorious Grace than ever I have done before.” Just so, and He means to make you think after that manner! Our Lord intends to make you stand at His feet weeping, as that woman did who had been a sinner and who so loved Him that she washed His feet with tears—and wiped them with the hair of her head because she had sinned much and much had been forgiven. Jesus loves to make converts like these. “Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together!” is a fit speech for a great sinner!

But how can we magnify the Lord? He is already infinitely great—how can we magnify Him or make Him great? We can do it by our *thoughts*—we can greatness Him in our own esteem and in the esteem of our fellow men. We can cry out in wonder at His exceeding mercy—“Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?” We never cry out, “Who is a God like unto You?” until we see Him forgiving sin! Then is He robed in an excellent and surpassing Glory! The Lord is exalted when He has mercy upon sinners in Christ Jesus because by this deed of Grace He glorifies every attribute, reveals His wisdom, displays His power, honors His justice and displays His love! His power is more resplendent in saving souls than in making worlds! His justice is more honored in the Sacrifice of Christ than in sending offenders to Hell! And His love is more resplendent than is all the gifts of His Providence!

If you would see the Sun of Righteousness at seven times its ordinary strength—behold it shining with Grace and the Truth of God upon men who deserve to be thrust into outer darkness—if God has magnified His own name in our salvation, let us magnify it, too! O you saints of His, re-

member forever those words, “His Glory is great in your salvation: honor and majesty have you laid upon Him.” One thing more before I leave this waiting God and that is, *there is a final success to all this waiting*. When the waiting turns to a glorious transaction of Grace upon the sinner’s heart and conscience, then the time of love has come. Observe that it is written, “He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry.” When God has waited for the soul—that soul is brought to wait on Him. God’s patience is not in vain towards His chosen. When God deals with His redeemed, He does not deal in vain! The Almighty is not defeated. Jehovah is an Omnipotent God—He works out His own pleasure upon men and we see Him, by His patience and Grace, causing men to pray—yes, and to weep!

That is implied in the 19th verse—“They shall weep no more”—then they *did weep* till He forgave! Their tears and prayers are flowing, for He declares, “He will be very gracious unto you at the *voice* of your cry.” Now, also, they listen eagerly to the Gospel, for they count it a privilege that “their teachers shall not be removed into a corner any more.” They value their ministers and look at them with careful love, as it is here written—“Your eyes shall see your teachers.” Those whom they formerly despised, they now esteem and delight in! They begin, also, to obey the voice of the Lord, for they hear the voice behind them saying, “This is the way.” This great change comes to transgressors when God deals with them in His own effectual manner—then they mourn for sin, pray for mercy, listen with attentive ears to the message of love—and then they bow themselves down before the present God and desire nothing so much as to lie at peace with Him.

Meanwhile, one of the chief and most evident tokens of their change is their casting away of the sin they formerly loved. “You shall defile, also, the covering of your graven images of silver and the ornament of your molten images of gold: you shall cast them away as a menstrual cloth. You shall say unto it, Get you hence.” See what free Grace can do? It is no *enemy* of holiness, but the direct *cause* of it! The love of God reigning in the heart makes a man hate his sin! God never forgives sin without making us forsake sin. When *He* casts our sins into the depths of the sea, He causes us to do the same. When the Lord says to our sin, “Be gone from My memory,” we say to it, “Be gone from my heart.” Repentance, faith, holiness and zeal all follow upon the effectual working of Divine Grace. Oh, that all of you were under its power! Forever blessed be the Lord who waits to be gracious! And then, being gracious unto us, makes us gracious and causes us to bring forth the fruits of righteousness to His honor and praise.

II. Now learn the lesson of the whole subject. Under our second head we have A WAITING PEOPLE—“Blessed are all they that wait for Him.” God’s waiting people wait *only upon God*. They are not trusting to the arm of flesh, nor looking to the changeable creature. They do not rely upon themselves, nor depend upon their own experiences, or their mental acquirements. Here is their song—

***“My spirit looks to God alone
My rock and refuge is His throne!
In all my fears, in all my straits,***

My soul on His salvation waits.

Dear Friends, you can judge whether you are the people of God or not by this—Can you say, “My Soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him”? “Trust you in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” God’s waiting people *wait upon God expectantly*. They are looking for everything from Him, for He is their All in All. They have had a great deal from God, but they expect more from Him. They already swim in a river of Grace and they are floating on to an ocean of Glory! They know that they have nothing in themselves and they rejoice that they have everything in their God. Every morning they see that the light of the day comes from above and so, for spiritual things, they lift up their eyes to the hills, where comes their help! They are not waiting in despair, nor even in hesitation—they are waiting in *hope*—a joyous and assured hope of blessedness in reserve. They confidently expect to find their way in the Lord grow brighter and brighter and still brighter—from the twilight of the morning to the shining of the perfect day. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, let us wait and watch, even as men look for the dawn because they know that it will not fail them.

“But,” you ask, “*what are they waiting for?*” I answer, God’s people are waiting upon Him patiently for many things. Sometimes they wait for the tokens of His Grace—they are believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and yet they may not, for the moment, enjoy the peace and comfort which are theirs by faith. If they had more faith their peace would at once be as a river, but it is well if they have faith enough to wait for that peace. At times faith may be very weak and then it is well if it clings and abides in its place. A man may believe and be saved and yet he may not be sure of his own salvation, nor discern the safety and blessedness of his condition in Christ Jesus. Oh Soul, if you cannot get *out* of the dark, believe *in* the dark! If you have light enough just to look to Christ by faith, though you cannot perceive all His beauties and His glories, yet remember you are bid to look and are *saved* by looking, however dim the light may be!

If you can but look to the Cross so as to trust wholly to the Lamb of God, He has taken away your sin! All the joy of the Lord and all the peace and all the rest that come of faith do not come at once—you must wait for them. These are the ripe ears of corn and you must plow in hope and sow in faith before these can be reaped. The Graces of the Christian character—the assurance of faith, the strength of courage, the mellowness of experience—all these are peaceable fruits of righteousness which will come in their season and not before. Surely some of the Lord’s people appear to attain to joy and peace at once and keep it all their days. These are favored, indeed! I wish that we were in the same case, but if we are not, let us not despair, but still trust in the Lord our Righteousness—

***“And when your eyes of faith are dim,
Still trust in Jesus—sink or swim!
When darkness fills your inmost soul,
Still all your griefs on Jesus roll.”***

If He has never yet given you a comfortable word, still cling to Him as she did whom He likened to the dogs, but who yet replied, “Truth, Lord. Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” It is yours to *look* to Christ—it is *His* to give you the Light of God! If your face,

as yet, is not lightened, yet keep it towards the sun, even Jesus the Lord. "Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness and has no light? Let Him trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon His God." It must, in the end, be well with the man who trusts in God and waits for Him! Yes, it is already well, for the Lord in our text pronounces all such to be *blessed*, and blessed they are! Let us wait for those spiritual delights and inward joys which are the portion of Believers. And if they come not immediately, let us solace ourselves with this present benediction—"Blessed are all they that wait for Him."

You have read of those charming seasons which are enjoyed by choice saints in communion with Jesus. And you have said, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" Trust you well and wait, for the Lord will reveal Himself to you. Possibly you are looking back to your own past history and sighing—

***"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!"***

Those years which the locust has eaten shall be restored to you—only be you hopeful, trustful and obedient. Lean heavily upon your God! It is a poor faith which only believes as far as the eyes can see. Believe that your Lord loves you when He smites you! Believe that He loves you though He slay you! Do not doubt the Lord nor limit Him. He cannot change! Hang on His arm even when He lifts it to chasten you. If you cannot rejoice in the light of His Countenance, yet rest in the shadow of His wings.

Yes, we must be a waiting people and, assuredly, we may not complain, for we caused the Lord to wait for us many a day. What patience He has had! Cannot *we* be patient? Sometimes God's people have to wait for the fulfillment of His promises. Every promise will be kept, but not today nor tomorrow. God's Word has its due season and His times are the best times. We may also have to wait for answers to our prayers. Prayer will be heard—yes, it *is* heard the moment it is uttered—but it may not be answered just yet. The bread cast on the waters of prayer will be found again, but it may not be till after many days. Watch unto prayer, if it is long that you have sought a favor from your God. Wait upon the Lord and so renew your strength.

There is a benefit even about hungering and thirsting when it is for the bread of Heaven and the wine of the kingdom. Pray on! Wait on! Knock! And if the door is not opened, knock again! And if the door is still closed, knock again with greater earnestness than before! "Men ought always to pray and not to faint." If your importunity is worked up to the pitch of enthusiasm, it shall be well with you, for "the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force." Frequently we may have to wait for temporal blessings. It may not be safe for us to obtain the desires of our heart because our heart is, as yet, too much occupied with the world and the things thereof. We may have to wait for deliverance from trouble, for, as yet, the furnace may not have accomplished its refining work. You may be ill, and you may pray God to make you well, but He may still allow His Beloved to be sick—to you, sickness may be healthier than health!

You are very poor and you would like to struggle out of abject penury. By all means struggle on, but do not murmur if you should not be successful. Poverty may be a richer state for you than wealth! There may be

something in your character which cannot be perfected except by suffering and labor—and it is better that your character be perfected than your substance increased. None of us can come to the highest maturity without enduring the summer heat of trials. As the sycamore fig never ripens if it is not bruised; as the corn does not leave the husk without threshing; and as wheat makes no fine flour till it is ground, so are we of little use till we are afflicted! Why should we be so eager to escape such benefits? We shall have to wait with patience, saying, “The will of the Lord be done.”

He waited to give Grace to us! Let us wait to give glory to Him! Brothers and Sisters, wait cheerfully. If God sees fit to say, “Wait,” do not be angry with Him. Why give way to hurry and worry? O rest in the Lord! Your strength is to sit still. One of the most lovely flowers of the new creation is entire submission to the Divine Will—he who has it is not far from Heaven. Yet you will have to wait, a little, for Glory which is yours by a Covenant of salt. Do you not, at times, suffer a heavenly homesickness? Do you not grow weary of these wildernesses and long for the mountains of spices and the gardens of the blessed? Do you not long for the wings of a dove? I am afraid you would not manage them if you had them—dove’s wings would hardly suit this cumbrous clay!

It is not easy to long for Heaven and yet to wait! Yet we are better where we are waiting than attempting to fly where the Lord has not called us. Wait, for there is yet more business to be done for your Master. Would you go to your rest before your day’s work is fairly finished? Wait, for it is necessary for others, if not for yourself. Wait and work on! How many years were wasted before you came into the vineyard? How little have you accomplished since? Wait! For the vision of Glory is sure—as sure as though it were tomorrow, or today at this very hour!—

***“Heaven is nearing! How much further?
Count the milestones one by one!
No, no counting—only waiting
Till the glory has begun.”***

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 30:1-26.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—27, 218, 590.**

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ENCOURAGEMENT TO TRUST AND PRAY

NO. 1419

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 16, 1878,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry;
when He shall hear it, He will answer you.”
Isaiah 30:19.***

THE great sin of man is his alienation from God. He has said in his heart, “No God,” and in his life he labors to escape from the Divine Presence. The journey into the far country is not only made for the sake of the riotous living, but that he may get away from the Father’s house. One would have thought man would turn unto the Lord in the day of trouble, even as Hosea said, “In their affliction they will seek Me early.” But this, alas, is not in truth and sincerity, for too often the sinner follows the example of Ahaz, of whom it is written, “In the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord: this is that King Ahaz.”

All the trials and troubles in the world will not, of themselves, drive a man to God, but will rather hurry him into rebellion, despair and hardness of heart! Man will look in all directions sooner than look to God. He will sooner, like Saul, seek the help of a witch or a devil than seek the living God. He will rather make a league with death and a covenant with Hell than turn his heart towards his best Friend and Helper. It is written, “Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord!”

Vain is the warning, for man still leans upon an arm of flesh and counts it a foolish and fanciful thing to rely upon the almighty God. Man shifts his ground of trust full often and now depends on this, then on that—and in due course upon a score of equally unreliable confidences. Very early he is deceived. The staff of the broken reed upon which he chose to lean pierces his hand. He smarts and bleeds. He repents of his folly in one direction and *repeats* it in another! He cries in the pride and stoutness of his heart, “The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars.” Though again and again deceived by his false confidences, he returns to them like a dog to his vomit. He chooses his own delusions and attempts, again, to build upon that sandy foundation which the tide has already shifted so many times.

Nor is it only when he is deceived that he persists in his folly, for he continues in it when he knows that he has paid heavily for his folly and has been impoverished by spending his money for that which is not bread. Egypt has drained his treasure and has yielded him no assistance—and yet he sends more treasure to the same market only to be, again, ashamed of a people that could not profit him. He exercises painful

thoughts. He spends his mental force. He schemes. He frets. He worries himself to find, in his carnal confidences, some little consolation. And so he wastes his life and dries up the very marrow of his bones in seeking for that in the creature which might so readily be found in the Creator! He rises up early, he sits up late and he eats the bread of carefulness—but he will not turn unto the Lord who alone gives His Beloved sleep.

Even when impoverished and worn out with unbelief, man will not look to the Lord! Even then he dotes upon some new thing which promises him assistance. He seems anxious to be duped and willing to be deluded! If, at last, all carnal trust is excluded by sheer failure of every hope, he will lie down and *die* sooner than seek the Lord! He suffers, ah, how cruelly, from the vain joys in which he trusted, yet would he still pursue them if he could. He faints, pines, is ready to die, for he cannot fill his belly with the husks the swine eat but yet he will not, until almighty Grace causes him, turn his face toward the house where there is bread enough and to spare! He will sooner perish with hunger than confess his sin against Heaven and begin to live by faith in God!

This is the fruit of the Fall, the black evidence of our depravity, the fruitful mother of destruction—"the carnal mind is enmity against God." We must have something to rely upon which we can see with our eyes and touch with our hands—the invisible Jehovah we cannot trust and yet He, alone, is the living and true God! Oh that we were wise, that we would understand this and say within our hearts, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord, for He has torn, and He will heal us. He has smitten and He will bind us up." Now all this time, while man is struggling to get away from God, the Lord is willing enough to receive him, to forgive him, to bless him and to enrich him with every joy! Nor is He merely willing, but He is *able*, fully able to assist the troubled heart in every difficulty and to comfort under every distress.

Therefore does the Lord wait that He may be gracious and He is exalted that He may show mercy. If the unwillingness were on God's part, we might very readily understand and, in a measure, justify the unwillingness of man to turn unto God. But when the Lord bids man return, invites him, reasons with him, entreats him and makes every preparation for his reception, why is it that man refuses? His Lord has given rich promises of every help that he can desire and it is inexcusable ingratitude and wicked obstinacy on the part of man that he still persists in keeping aloof from his Creator! He chooses to perish forever, sooner than trust his God! Is not this the case of some who hear these, my words?

I desire at this time to set forth the graciousness of God and His readiness to listen to the cry of the needy, with the hope that some here present who may have forgotten this, to whom it may be a time of need, may hear it and be encouraged to say, "I will arise and go to my Father." It is joy to me to hope that it will be so, but I remember, with sadness, that if I should be helped to set this forth clearly and if any of you who are in trouble should afterwards refuse to trust in the Lord, your alienation will be aggravated and your sin will become still more trying.

He who will not trust when he knows that the Lord will be gracious to him, sins against his own soul and plunges himself in sevenfold wrath! If

the Lord says that He will be very gracious at the voice of your cry, what must be your doom if you will not cry?

I. In trying to set forth the overflowing Grace of the Lord our God, I shall first of all speak upon the fact that THIS ASSURANCE IS PARTICULARLY SUITABLE TO CERTAIN CHARACTERS. "He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer you." This is applicable and comfortable to all afflicted people! To such I speak. You are depressed at this time by heavy grief. Things have gone amiss with you—you do not prosper in business, or you are sickening in body—or a dear one lies at home pining away. We do not wonder that you feel exceedingly burdened in spirit! At the same time, you are ill at ease as to your own state. The iron is entering into your soul.

While passing through this thick darkness you will be strongly tempted to think harshly of God and to blame Him for the troubles which now surround you! Yet this will only make matters worse and increase your sin and your sorrow! Perhaps, also, you will be ready to despair and say, "There is no hope, I am taken as in a net and there is no escape for me." Though if you knew all, you would chase away despair as your greatest enemy! Possibly you will be ready to try some wrong method by way of helping yourself out of present straits. Satan will suggest to you dishonest, impure, or reckless courses which hold out some shadow of relief. This is your danger at this time and, in pity to you, the Lord bids us assure you that there is a far wiser course open to you, namely, to turn to Him, for He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry—and when He hears it, He will answer you!

There is help in God for your present trial, whatever form it assumes. Infinite wisdom understands it and infinite power can help you through it. God can remove from you that which you are suffering, or He can prevent the occurrence of that which you dread. Or, if, in His Divine wisdom, He shall see fit to lay the rod upon you, He can enable you to bear it and make it to turn to your everlasting good! Be well assured that He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men out of any delight in their sorrows. He pities those who are afflicted, for He is very tender and full of compassion. And He is ever swift to succor the suffering. There is a reason for the heavy trial which now bows you down—depend upon that and do not complain.

The Lord is not now visiting you in wrath, but there is kindness in His severity. Can you not believe this? It is really so and your strength, your comfort, your ultimate deliverance out of it all will come through your knowing this to be true and acting accordingly! By yielding yourself to God and trusting Him in this, your evil plight, you will obtain deliverance. "For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: in returning and rest shall you be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

In so large a congregation as this, there must be some with broken hearts on account of their temporal trials. I am persuaded that I am speaking to some of the sons and daughters of woe. Go, you sorrowing ones! Turn unto the hand that smites you! Kiss the rod and Him that has appointed it and let your confidence henceforth be in the Lord, for He is God and besides Him there is none else! Say, "From this time, my Father,

I will seek You and You shall be my Guide. Through Jesus Christ, Your Son, I will approach You, trusting in His precious blood. Help me and deliver me." You shall find Him ready to pardon and rescue you and you shall live to sing of Him whose "mercy endures forever." Let me whisper in your ears the sweet assurance of the text—"He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer you."

A second class of persons to whom the text will be very applicable consists of those who are troubled on account of sin—sinners who are beginning to feel the iniquity of their sins compassing them about. You are at this time overthrown with a sense of guilt and with the fear of punishment. You cannot well be smarting under severer blows than the Law of God can give when it begins to smite the conscience and the heart! Now, in order to escape from sin and punishment, the very first thing with you is to come back to your God whom you have offended, since He alone can pardon you. There must be a turning of the face in repentance and a looking of the eyes by faith unto God in Christ Jesus, or you will die in your sins.

The natural tendency of your heart, even when under a sense of sin, will be to stay away from the Lord. Alas, you will look at your sin again and again and again, till you are ready to pine away in despair—but you will not look to Christ Jesus and be saved! A terrible sound is in your ears as of an approaching judgment and you listen both to it and to the howls of the dog of Hell—but you refuse to hear the loving voice of compassion which tells of pardon bought with blood, freely given to all who trust their Savior God! Possibly you may conclude that there is no hope for you in better things and, therefore, you had better enjoy such pleasures as may be found in sin and take your swing while you may.

Now, do not believe this lie of Satan! There is hope! You are still in the land of mercy! Poor guilty Sinner, you are where pardons are commonly given, where God is gracious to all them that seek Him! You have not yet come to the Judgment Seat and to the voice of a trumpet waxing exceedingly loud and long. Calvary is before you with dying love, not Sinai with consuming fire! Today is the day of salvation! The hour of vengeance is not yet come! God wills not your death, nor takes delight in your suffering, but desires that you turn to Him and live, for He delights in mercy!

A joyful acceptance awaits you if you return to your Father's house—He will not upbraid you for your wandering, but He will take off your rags and put on the best robe of Christ's righteousness! He will fill the house with music concerning you and He, Himself, will rejoice over you. You need do nothing to make the Lord propitious, He is love already! You need not undergo penance, nor pass through grievous anguish of spirit in order to render God more merciful, for His Grace abounds! In Christ Jesus the stream of Divine Love flows freely, swiftly, richly to the worst of men! Only return unto God against whom you have transgressed, acknowledge your transgression and put your trust in Him through Jesus Christ, His Son, and, "He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer you."

Equally sweet will the assurance of our text be to backsliders filled with their own ways, who are alarmed and distressed at their grievous depar-

tures from their God. It is true, my dear Friend, that you have very greatly transgressed in becoming a backslider. You have sinned against much light, against much love and this makes sin exceedingly sinful. What peaceful hours you once enjoyed when you had communion with your Savior and your God! You have sinned against those sweet enjoyments and against the condescending endearments of eternal love. You have done despite to the Spirit of God and crucified the Son of God afresh! You were taught of the Lord in the deep things of His Word and the secret of His Covenant was opened up to you. You had an experimental acquaintance with the Divine life and you entered into the joys of sacred fellowship.

And yet you have turned aside from the way of the Lord and been unfaithful to all your vows. You have left the cold flowing waters which come from the Rock of Ages to drink of the muddy pools of earth! You have turned away from the living God to live upon the beggarly elements of the world. You have bowed down before the golden calf, or some other image of jealousy! You have gone far astray from the Most High, defiled the chastity of your soul and provoked the Lord exceedingly. Moreover, you may well be grieved, for you have done much dishonor to the name of God among the ungodly—you have pierced His saints with many sorrows—and you have made His ministers to go as with broken bones. You and such as you are our shame and our anguish! If you were cast off forever as a traitor and left to die as a son of perdition what could be said but that you were reaping the fruit of your own ways?

Yet the text rings in your ears at this time like a clear silver bell and its one note is Grace—"He will be very gracious unto you." "Turn, O backsliding children, for I am married unto you, says the Lord." Return, return! It is your Bridegroom's voice that calls you! With what sweeter notes would you be wooed? "O Israel, return unto the Lord your God, for you have fallen by your iniquity." O beloved Friend, hear the exhortation and let your heart say, "I will return unto my first husband, for it was better with me, then, than now." He has not shut up the heart of His compassion, but He cries in the greatness of His love, "Go and proclaim these words toward the north and say, Return, backsliding Israel, says the Lord; and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever."

He has chastened you sorely, but He has not given you over unto death! He hears your groaning at this time and His soul pities you. Behold, He cries, "How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger. I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God and not man." Listen to me, O wanderer! Let a Brother softly whisper it in your ear and may the Holy Spirit speak it to your heart—"He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer you."

We are sure that a fourth class of persons will be very glad of the text, namely, all Believers in Christ who are at all exercised in heart and we are all in that condition at times. We do not always dwell upon the Mount of

Transfiguration nor sit at the festival of love in rapturous fellowship. At times we are thrust into the furnace of soul-trouble and our faces become black as a coal through grief of heart! We find it hard, even, to retain a spark of faith. We even question whether we are the Lord's, though we resolve to battle on in His name, come what may! Even when by full assurance we can read our title clear, we are apt to look forward and there comes over us the fear that we shall yet fall by the hand of the enemy! If trials multiply, how will faith be able to stand? When the days of weakness arrive, what shall we do in our old age?

Behind all stands the skeleton form of death! What shall we do in the swellings of Jordan? We remember how we ran with the footmen in our former trials and they wearied us. And we ask ourselves, "How shall we contend with horsemen?" When eternity is close in view and when within a few hours we shall be made to confront the Judgment Seat, shall we bear it? Will our religion, then, prove to be a reality, or will our hope dissolve like a dream? Such questions torment our souls. Now, Brothers and Sisters, it will not do to try and answer these questions by taking counsel with the *flesh*. If you consult your own strength, it is clear that you cannot win the battle of life! What is your strength but perfect weakness?

If you look to your own wisdom, it is evident that you cannot guide your own way across the pathless desert of life. What is your wisdom but the essence of folly? Come back, then, in childlike confidence, to God and go no more from Him. Come to the very spot where your spiritual life commenced and find strength, wisdom, rest and all in the living God! Let this verse smile on you and beckon you to God—"He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer you." No trial shall happen to you but such as is common to man and when the temptation comes, the way of escape shall come with it! The burden shall always find your back strengthened to bear it, or else if your back is weak, the burden shall not be laid upon you.

The whole of your future history, though unknown to yourself, is spread out like a map before the eyes of your great Leader and Guide! Follow where Jesus leads you and know that He cannot forsake you! He will make you to lie down in green pastures and His goodness and His mercy will follow you all your days. Be careful for nothing! Be prayerful for everything! Commit your way unto the Lord—trust, also, in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your judgment as the light and your righteousness as the noonday. Go to His Mercy Seat in every time of trial, for He will be very gracious to you! Pour out your heart before Him and you shall have an answer of peace from the God of your salvation!

Now, I think those four cases include the bulk of us and, therefore, I would pray the Holy Spirit to speak the words of the text to everyone here present. May we feel them dropping into our hearts like a soft saturating rain—"He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer you."

II. Now we will make a second observation and dwell upon it for awhile. It is this—THE ASSURANCE HERE GIVEN IS VERY FIRMLY BASED. The words of our text are no old wives' fable, they are not such a pretty tale as mothers sometimes tell their children—a story made to please them, but

not actually true. Our text is no fiction, it is a faithful saying from the mouth of God. "He will be very gracious unto you." What, then, is the ground of this assurance? And first I would say, the ground of our comfort is found in the plain *promise of God* as given in the text and in many similar declarations which are scattered all over the Scriptures.

I have repeated this text a great many times in my sermon, because it is far better than anything which can be spoken by man. Let me read it again. You want to know why we should turn to God and trust Him? It is because thus says the Lord who can neither lie nor change—"He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer you." This is a portion of His Infallible Word, is it not? It is true, then—you have no doubt about its being so! Come, then, with your Bible open, put your finger upon the Words and say, "I believe that God is here declaring His readiness to be very gracious to me and to hear my prayer." Now, what more do you need? Does a child need any better assurance than his father's word? Does a true disciple ask any stronger evidence than his Master's promise?

"It is written." Is not that enough for you? Go on your knees and plead this Word of God at once! If your friend had said, "I will grant your request," would you not believe him? Doubt not, then, your God, your Father! He has never given you cause to mistrust His Word. Are not all His promises faithful? Come, then, the assurance is well-grounded. If there were only this *one* promise, it ought to be enough, but see how many there are! The gracious promises of God's Word are as many as the stars which brighten the midnight sky. "I will never leave you nor forsake you." "My Grace is sufficient for you." "Fear not, I will help you." "He that believes shall not be confounded." "Trust in the Lord and do good, so shall you dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed." I need not quote them, for you know them well and their number is very great. But they are all made to *faith* and none of them to unbelief! Have faith in them and believe your God and His Words shall be fulfilled in your happy experience!

A second ground upon which this assurance is built is the gracious Nature of God. The text intimates this. "He will be very gracious unto you." It is the Nature of God, the God of Israel, to be very generous in His dealings! He opens His hands and supplies the needs of every living thing. He is the God of bounty! Nor does He stop there, for while He is bountiful to His needy creatures, He is also merciful to His sinful creatures! Judgment is His strange work, but He delights in *mercy*! Nothing pleases Him more than to pass by transgression, iniquity and sin. That He might indulge His attribute of mercy He sacrificed the darling of His soul, even His Son, Jesus! He loved His Son, but He loved His mercy so greatly and He loved sinful man so heartily that, "He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all"—that He might have mercy upon our guilty race.

See, then, what a merciful God He is! Nor does He end even here, for to those whom He has forgiven He is rich in loving kindnesses. His love is very wonderful—deeper than the abyss, higher than the heavens—broader than the sea! Well, now, what is your trouble? Trust your merciful God to help you. What is your sin? Trust your merciful God to forgive you. What are your backslidings? Trust your merciful God to restore you! What are

the trials you are expecting? Rely upon your merciful God to bear you through. If He were a tyrant you might well flee from Him, but as His mercy endures forever, it will be your wisdom to turn to Him! Come, let us all together go, by an act of faith, this moment, and cast ourselves at Jehovah's feet and, though we see Him not, yet let us henceforth trust Him as He has revealed Himself in Christ Jesus and so shall we be at peace with Him and good shall come unto us.

It is certain from the Character of God, which abounds in love, Grace and mercy, that He will be gracious to those who seek Him. Let us seek Him at once, every one of us! The text says not, "He will be gracious," but, "He will be *very* gracious." I love to see Grace thus decorated with expressive words! It refreshes my mind to think that very frequently, when we read of the mercy of God in Scripture, there is some word with it by way of intimating its greatness, its freeness, or its excellence. "God who is *rich* in mercy." "You, Lord, are *plenteous* in mercy." "The Lord is good, His mercy is *everlasting*." "The *tender* mercy of our God." "His mercy endures *forever*." "His *merciful* kindness is great toward us." "According to His *abundant* mercy He has begotten us, again, unto a lively hope." "According to the multitude of His *tender* mercies." See what great words go with the mention of the Lord's mercy! There is no fear of exaggerating it, for all language falls short!

In the text we have the word, "very." "He will be *very* gracious unto you." Do you need special comfort? You shall have it! Do you need great help? You shall have it! Come, you grievous Sinner, here is plenty forgiveness! Come, you sorely afflicted one, here is rich consolation! Come, you weary wanderer, here is complete restoration! Come you impoverished and needy one, here are abounding supplies!—

**"Rivers of love and mercy here,
In a rich ocean join.
Salvation in abundance flows,
Like floods of milk and wine."**

The assurance of the text is grounded upon the merciful Nature of God and may be relied upon without hesitation! And next it is based upon the grand fact of the prevalence of *prayer*. "He will be very gracious to you at the *voice* of your cry." Is it not an amazing thing that God permits men to pray? It is a more amazing thing that they do *not* pray when He permits them!

It is marvelous that *God* should listen to the voice of a *man*! This has been so astonishing to mere thinkers that they cannot admit it to be true and, consequently, they have asserted that there could be no actual power in prayer to move the heart of God. I do not wonder that they should have thought so, for though this surprising Truth of God is not contrary to reason, it is certainly far above reason! Now, we know, for we have tried it, that God hears prayer! Therefore we say to you, go to Him and test Him, for He will be gracious to the voice of your cry! God has been pleased to set up a Mercy Seat! Answer me, O doubting one, would there be a Divinely-appointed Mercy Seat for the presentation of prayer if the Lord did not intend to hear prayer? He has sprinkled that Mercy Seat with the blood of His only-begotten Son, that through that Atonement the guilty

might approach Him. Would He shed that matchless blood and yet reject the sinner who comes trusting there?

In addition to all this, He has promised to give the Holy Spirit to assist in prayer, helping our infirmities because we know not what we should pray for as we ought. Would He give that Holy Spirit and still suffer prayer to be ineffectual? It is not conceivable! It delights God to listen to the cries of His creatures! Your voice may be very cracked and inharmonious and your prayer may be like an infant's wailing, or like the cry of a young bird in its nest when it is hungry—but He who hears the young ravens when they cry will hear your inarticulate, discordant utterances—therefore pour out your heart before Him! He will answer you, too, and that very quickly. “When He *hears* your prayer, He will answer you”—so says the text! Has He not said, “Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear”?

Where there is true prayer for Grace in the heart, the prayer is heard before it is offered! For it is Grace that makes us pray in such a fashion! He who sincerely asks for Grace, has Grace already, in a measure, or else he would not be inclined to ask for more! Let this encourage us. Since God waits to be gracious and has in wondrous condescension endowed prayer with such privileges in His sacred courts, who among us will not turn to Him *now*, with all our heart, and cry to Him, “My Father, save and help me!”? I am pleading for my God and I know that I am advocating the best of causes, but my tongue and my mind fall short in the argument. I do not, however, much regret my need of eloquence in this matter, for it is better that the theme should plead for itself. May the Lord, by His Eternal Spirit, make the reasonableness and the blessedness of the claim to appeal to your conscience and your heart—and instead of searching elsewhere for succor—may you now turn to your God in loving trustfulness.

If you required further confirmation of your faith beyond the three truths which I have laid before you, namely, the *promise* itself, the *Nature* of God, and the *efficacy* of prayer, I could ask many in this house, today, to give their personal testimony as to the result of faith in God and supplication to Him. We can speak positively, for we speak from actual trial of faith and prayer. I have now reached middle life and, having known the Lord from my youth up, I can speak from 28 years' experience. Through the favor of God I have led a very happy life by faith in His name. I have not been without many trials, sicknesses and difficulties—and some of these are daily with me—but in all things faith sustains me. I bear my witness that confidence in man is utter folly and brings sorrow to the soul! But I am more than ever certain that confidence in God is always wise, never leads to disappointment and never causes regret.

I mourn that I have not trusted my Lord more fully and I lament that I have not attempted greater things in reliance upon His Word. But I have no question that faith is right and I am sure that it will always be justified by results. Speaking deliberately, as though I were bearing witness concerning my fellow man in a court of justice, I have no word to say by way of questioning the faithfulness, goodness and truthfulness of my Lord! I am bound to declare that He has heard my prayers, not once or twice, but *always* and has been gracious to the voice of my cry! Why do I speak

thus? Why must the objectionable, “I,” be introduced? Because I cannot ask anyone else in the audience to stand up and speak without disturbing the order of our service! But if I could do so, my Brothers and Sisters here by the hundreds would each one offer similar testimony!

Dear Friends, your troubles have been different from mine. You have tested God in other directions than I have done, but you have equally found Him true, have you not? Is not His Word like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times? Some of you are older than I. The snows of many a winter whiten your brows, but in no one day of all those 70 years has the Lord been unfaithful to you! Are you verging upon fourscore? Still in that long period there has not been a single breach of the Covenant on the part of your Lord! Your last days are freer from doubt than your former years! Though your spirits are by no means so elastic, your peace is less disturbed. Each year of your life trust in God grows easier, for facts prove the reality of His working and fellowship with your invisible Friend makes His influence over you to be more constant and powerful! The path of faith increases in brightness—every hour accumulates evidence for its support. We know and are persuaded of the love which God has towards us! Verily He is gracious and inclines His ear to His people.

III. There I leave this matter and I close by the third observation, which is this—THE ASSURANCE OF THE TEXT BEING SO WELL CONFIRMED, IT SHOULD BE PRACTICALLY ACCEPTED AT ONCE. If God will be gracious to the voice of our cry and when He hears it will answer us, let us renounce, at once, all earthly confidences! Let us defile the covering of our graven images and cast them away and say unto our false confidence, “Get away from me!” “We have done so,” says one. Do it *again*, Brother, for the tendency of your heart is still to rest in that which is *seen* rather than in the invisible Jehovah! Idolatry is bound up in our hearts! Cast out the idols again and again!

Alas, some of you have never done so. Your carnal hope still usurps the place of God. Let me put it to you. What is your confidence for life? You all have some confidence or other. What is yours, young man? What is your reliance, O man in middle life? Especially, O graybeard, what is your confidence? You have good reason to examine it, for soon you will *need* it—and woe to you if it is found to fail! What is your confidence, my brother? Is it your wealth? Is it your strong common sense? Is it your stalwart frame—that strong pair of arms which up to now have enabled you to stem the current? What are you relying upon? Will it support you in *death*? Will it stand you in good stead in eternity?

I know it will not if it is anything short of the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord! Come, let us flee from all creature confidence as from a filthy thing, for it is base to the last degree for a creature to be trusting in another creature and putting that creature into the place of its Creator! Let us abhor such idolatrous trust! Let us shun it, also, as a vexing and deceitful thing, for it is treacherous as the smooth, deceitful sea and it mocks us as the mirage of the desert mocks the thirsty traveler. Let us flee from vain confidence in self or in man, for it is a poisonous thing! The

fiery flying serpent of Egypt was not more deadly than confidence in an arm of flesh! Let us flee from it and never return.

O you who trust only in that which is *seen*, leave your idols, cast them to the moles and to the bats, even the dearest of them all! If your confidence is in yourself, flee from yourself, for you have no worse enemy! Flee from unbelief and carnal trust and provoke not the Lord to jealousy by setting up another God, for there is no other. "Once have I spoken, yes, twice have I heard this, that power belongs unto God." Trust not, then, where there is no power, but set all your confidence upon the Almighty. If this is done and you flee away from other trusts, then let me commend you at the same time to refuse despair. When a man sees that his confidences are broken up like a potter's vessel till, to use the expressive figure of the Prophet, there is not a piece left large enough to take fire from the hearth, or to take water out of the pit, then he is apt to exclaim, "Now it is all over with me, and I must perish."

You loved your wife. She was all the world to you. But, alas, she is dead and you cry, "Let me die also!" You hugged your wealth. It has melted—that speculation has dissolved it and left you a beggar—and now you cry, "What is there worth living for?" Beware of dark thoughts which may beset you just now. In your worst moment, should Satan whisper in your ear a suggestion concerning rope, or knife, or poison bowl, or sullen stream, flee from it with all your soul! Obey the Apostolic word, "Do yourself no harm." Nothing could be worse for you than to break the Law which says expressly, "You shall do no murder." Self-destruction, if done by a man in his senses, is a daring defiance of God and the sealing of *damnation*! This is to leap from measured trouble into infinite woe—the depth of which none can guess!

Why should you do this? Turn to your God! That is a wiser thing for a man to do than to destroy his own life! Yes, there is something braver for a man to do than to rush upon the pikes of the foe because the battle is too hot for him! Go to your great Captain, even to Him whom God has given to be a Witness to the people—a Leader and Commander to the people—and He will make you *more* than a conqueror! There are brighter days in store for you! Yes, there are days to come which shall never end of everlasting life and blessedness if you will but, now, in your distress, cast yourself upon the covenanted mercies of God in Christ Jesus His Son!

It is grand to spring up from despair into the fullness of delight and many a man has done this in an instant! This earth moves by slow degrees from the frosts of winter into the bright days of June, but God can make our souls to pass out of the deepest despair into the brightest hope in a single moment—and if we do but trust and rest in Him it shall be done! I know some who do not trust their all with God because they have picked a quarrel with Him. They resemble a little child I have heard of who one night would not say his prayers. His fond mother said to him, "Dear child, why do you not pray?" "Mother," said he, "I shall not say my prayers to God any more because he let my little bird die." Do not some people talk thus against God? They have a quarrel about their dead child, or their lost property.

Now, if you get into such a state of sullenness it will go hard with you! It would be far better if you would bow to the Divine decision and believe that God means your good. Oh, believe the words of my text! May His Holy Spirit lead you to believe them. "He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry." Those two counsels being followed, namely, the renunciation of carnal hope and, at the same time, the determination not to despair, there remains only this, that we now try the power of prayer and childlike confidence in God. "But," you cry, "there is no hope for me!" Have you ever sought for mercy? "I do not think I should be heard." Have you ever *tried*? Dear Heart, have you ever gone into your chamber, shut your door, opened the Word of God and discovered a gracious promise? And then have you ever said, "Lord, fulfill this promise to me. For Christ's sake be gracious to me. I trust You, and expect You to be gracious to me"?

If any one of you has tried this and it has failed, please let me know, for I am in the habit of continually saying that, "Him that comes to Christ, He will in no wise cast out," and I do not want to spread a lie! If you find that Jesus casts *you* out, let me know, for I would not like to go about telling lies! I have asked others and I have tried for myself, but I have never found any exception to the rule—"He that believes in Him shall not be ashamed nor confounded." Nor of that other rule—"Everyone that asks, receives, and he that seeks, finds, and to him that knocks, it shall be opened." If I can have evidence, true and certain, that God does not honor faith and does not hear prayer, I must revise my convictions, contradict my statements and disbelieve my own consciousness!

Have you ever tried believing prayer? Most of the people who disbelieve the Bible have never read it with care and attention. Those who doubt the faithfulness of God have never tried it! And those who deride prayer have never practiced it! But, mind you, I am speaking of *real* prayer, not of repeating certain good words! I am not talking of *formal* prayer, but of going, with your *heart*, to the unseen God and telling Him what you feel and what you need—and trusting Him to supply your needs and help you. Have you done this? Go and try prayer at once, I beseech you!

Divine Spirit, help these poor souls to pray this day! If you pray and trust this day, it shall be unto you as the beginning of days—and from now on you shall delight yourselves in the abundance of peace! O Believer, it shall be true of you, "His soul shall dwell at ease and his seed shall inherit the earth"! From the Lord's good Spirit there shall come to you such Grace that you shall be blessed and become a blessing to others! You shall walk happily before the Lord in this land of the dying and then shall abide with Him forever, above, in the land of the living! God bless you all for His name's sake. Amen.

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THE VOICE BEHIND YOU

NO. 1672

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 23, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, This is the way, walk you in it, when you turn to the right hand, and when you turn to the left.”
Isaiah 30:21.

ON the Sabbath before last we spoke concerning “the still small voice.” After the thunder and the fire and the earthquake had passed away, for the Lord was not in them, there came a still small voice unto Elijah which reached the Prophet’s heart and brought him back to his former condition of communion with God. This hopeful morning we shall hear that same “still small voice” actually speaking a warning and teaching the Word of God. And we shall see how it operates upon the sinner, reaching both his ears and his heart. God calls to the rebellious and, by His gentle word they are brought to His feet with repentance, turned from their evil wandering and led in the way of obedience.

The word behind us which is spoken of in the text is mentioned as one among other Covenant blessings. No “if” or “but” is joined to it. It is one of those gracious, *unconditional* promises upon which the salvation of the guilty depends. There are many comforts of the new life which depend upon our own action and behavior—these come to us with “ifs”—but those which are vital and essential are secured to the chosen of God without, “but,” or, “perhaps.” It shall be so—God declares it shall and He has power to carry out every jot and tittle of every promise that He makes to His people!

I shall ask you at this good hour to mainly admire the free and Sovereign Grace of God in making such a promise as this to anybody and especially in making it to a people whom He speaks of as “a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the Law of the Lord.” He severely upbraids them and, then, in great patience, He says to them, even to them, “Your ears shall hear a word behind you.” God’s Grace is marvelous in itself, but its most marvelous point is the singular channel in which it chooses to flow—it runs down into the Dead Sea of sin and makes the waters pure!

I. I invite you to notice, first of all, THE POSITION OF THE WANDERER to whom this special blessing comes. How does God find men when He declares that they shall hear a word *behind* them? First, He finds them with their backs turned to Him. This is clear enough, if you remember that the word is to be heard “behind” them. The sinner has gone away from God and God calls after him from behind! He has turned his back upon his true Friend, his best Friend, his only capable Friend, but that Friend does not, therefore, change His temper and resent the insult. No,

He is provoked to a love more pleading and persuasive than ever and calls to him to come into the right way!

After having transgressed willfully and wickedly, the rebel now distinctly turns his back on God and His Truth. According to the Lord's complaint, "they have turned unto Me the back, and not the face." He turns his back on the Law, on the Gospel, on mercy, on eternal life. He turns his back on the adoption of the great Father, on pardon bought with the blood of Jesus, on regeneration which can, alone, be worked by the Holy Spirit. He turns his back upon holiness, happiness and Heaven. He turns away from sunlight and wanders down into deeper and yet deeper night, striving to get away from God and holy influences.

Yet the Lord follows him and with a voice of touching love and tender compassion, He calls to him, "This is the way, walk you in it." The word of warning, instruction and entreaty follows the wanderer—and with ever-increasing pathos beseeches him to turn and live. Again and again the wise, earnest, personal voice assails his ears, as if love resolved that he should not perish if wooing could win him to life. The wanderer seeks not God, but His God seeks him! Man turns from the God of Love, but the love of God turns not away from him. What matchless Grace is this, that God should thus call after sinners when they openly renounce His rule and flee from His mercy!

Oh, if the Lord had turned His back on us, where had we been? If He had given us up to our own devices and left us to ourselves, then our eternal ruin would need but a few more days and months to consummate itself—and we should be driven forever from the Presence of the Lord and from the Glory of His power. Have we not said unto God, "Depart from us! We desire not the knowledge of Your ways"? If He had replied to us, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in Hell," it had only been the echo of our own words! When we said to Him, "Depart," suppose He had turned round and said, "Depart? Depart yourselves"? But instead of that, while we turn ourselves deliberately away from God, He still calls after us. He will not let us go!

We have a freedom of will, but it is by that freedom of will that men are damned, since they will not come unto Christ that they might have life, but they will to follow the devices and desires of their own hearts. Free will, thus held in chains by evil lusts, becomes the most destructive agency in the world! But, blessed be God, *He* has freedom of will, too, and that freedom of Sovereign Grace will not have its hands bound nor its lips closed, but it will act and speak in Omnipotent Love! So when the Lord sees us in the wantonness of our wickedness, dead in trespasses and sins, His great love with which He loves us seeks us out and from the lips of that love come tender accents bidding us return to God, saying, "This is the way, walk you in it."

Observe that these persons had not only turned their backs on God, but they were going further and further away from Him. Of course, when you have once turned your back upon the right, the further you travel, the more wrong you become. They were not content to be near to God, even with their backs to Him, but they hastened away. They are eager and quick to escape from their own mercy! Like the prodigal, they are not sat-

isfied till they get into “a far country.” They cannot rest in the same land with their God. They journey with all speed away from the Lord and the greater the distance that they can set between themselves and their Father, the more are they at ease. In forgetting God they find a horrible peace—the peace of death—a peace which will stupefy them into eternal destruction!

Now, it is while they are thus going hot foot away from God, further and further every day, madly rushing along the downward road, never satisfied with the sin to which they have attained, flying from God as if He were their terror and would be their destroyer—it is even then that the word sounds behind them and they are startled into thought. They have a powerful voice pleading with them thus—“Turn you, turn you; why will you die, O house of Israel? This is the way, walk you in it. The way you are now pursuing is not the way to peace and safety; return at once, for this is the way, walk you in it.”

Here, again, I admire the overflowing riches of the Grace of God, that He should call men to Himself when they are altogether taken up with other things—when every thought, every word, every act is in rebellion against Him! Paul says, “Does God care for oxen?” But here is a far greater wonder, “Does God care for worthless rebels?” When a chosen man is desperately set on mischief, determined to destroy himself, God is yet more determined to save him! The two determinations meet and we shall see which of the two will prove itself the stronger one! We soon find that the determination of God overcomes the determination of man. The iron breaks the northern iron and the steel. “Thus says the Lord; your covenant with death is broken, and your league with Hell is disannulled,” for there was a prior Covenant, a Covenant of Grace made by God, Himself, which stands fast forever.

And there was a prior league which God made with His Son on our behalf—and that league shall overthrow our league with death and Hell. Glory be to God that even when the sinner is still rebellious and shows no signs of repentance, nor is conscious of any wish to turn from the error of his ways, even then—while his heart is black as night and his spirit is choke-full with rebellion, God calls to him—“Return, O backsliding children.” “They shall hear a voice behind them, saying, This is the way.” More than this, however, is true—they had turned their backs on God and were going further from Him, though they were warned not to do so, and they were pursuing their course in spite of warning.

Read the 20th verse—“Your eyes shall see your teachers”—there they stood, good men, right in the way, entreating their hearers to cease from provoking their God and destroying their own souls. Hear them cry, “Turn you from your iniquities, for this way leads to death: turn you, turn you!” They can see their teachers stretching out their hands with eager importunity, pleading even unto boiling tears, persuading them to turn from the way and the wages of sin. Still they push on, as if eternal destruction were a prize to be sought rather than a doom to be dreaded!

Was it not so with many of us in the days of our unregeneracy? Mother and father endeavored to block up the evil road—in them our eyes beheld our teachers. How they taught us! How they prayed with us! How they la-

bored, if possible, to turn us from the error of our ways! But we persevered with obstinate resolve. It is hard going to Hell over a pleading mother and equally hard to destroy one's self by pushing aside an earnest father's good advice. But we seemed resolved to do so. Then, perhaps, followed Sunday school teachers, full of intense love to us, and how they pleaded! How wisely they set the case before us and how tenderly they pleaded—our eyes did see our teachers, but still our eyes would not see the right way, nor would our hearts desire it—we were determined that we would, by hook or by crook, land ourselves in Hell!

Our soul was given to her idols and after those idols we resolved to go. We loved the wages of iniquity, the pleasures of the flesh, the pride of life, the conceit of self-salvation—we loved *anything* better than our God. And though our teachers were before us, ready to help and eager to teach, we made small account of them. Later in life it may be our teachers were earnest pastors who would not preach dull, dead sermons and would not suffer us to sleep ourselves into perdition. They cried aloud and spared not! They were in anguish about us! They gave themselves no rest until we would turn from our iniquities! We could see our teachers, and we had a loving respect for them, too, yet we cast their words behind our back. It was of no use to us—we loved iniquity and that way we would go, come what might of it.

Yet even then, when we were despising God's Prophets and paying no regard to all the words of warning, the Lord was still loving us, looking after us and crying after us and saying, "This is the way; this is the way: walk you in it. Come back, come back, come back! You are destroying yourselves! Return unto your Father and your God." Why did He not throw the reins on our necks, and say, "Let them alone, they are given unto idols: I have hewed them with the Prophets, I have plowed them with men of God, but all has come to nothing; they have stiffened their necks, they have hardened their hearts, they have made their forehead like unto an adamant stone; therefore let them reap the result of their transgressions"? But it was not so, for God had made this word an unconditional promise of His Covenant, "They shall hear a voice behind them."

One more mark of the ungodly condition of those whom God would call was this, that they had many ways in which to wander. Sometimes they roamed to the right hand; at other times they wandered to the left, but they never turned their faces about. Hear you the way to Heaven—it is right about face, then keep straight on to Glory! No, but we will turn this way, we will turn that way—we will turn any way except to God. Some men have right-hand sins, respectable iniquities which challenge little censure from their fellows. Not black, but whitewashed sins. Such men are not thieves, they are not licentious, they are not drunks—their sins take a quieter form—they mock God with their self-righteousness and insult Him with their prayers, which are not prayers, but only pretences and fictions. They are not the real prayers of God's elect ones.

Others have left-hand sins. They plunge into the sins of the flesh; no vice is too black for them. Only propose to have a little pleasure and they will plunge into any vice to gain it! Yes, and almost without pleasure, altogether without present profit, they will sin as if for sin's own sake. When

they have burned their finger in the candle, they will, after that, hold their *arm* in the fire. When they have brought disease into their bodies by sin, they will return to the evil which caused it. When they have beggared their purse by their extravagant lusts, still they will go on playing the profligate. When they have filled themselves with despair till they are as a bucket running with gall and wormwood—and this has been emptied out for them by God's Grace—they will fill it up again, for they are infatuated with sin! They find a delight in it and they will not, they *cannot* give it up. Shall the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may they, that have been accustomed to do evil, learn to do well! Alas, such a miracle has not happened to them. They choose all shapes of evil, but the good they will not have.

I say their right-hand sins, their left-hand sins, sins of their life, sins of their heart—they will follow all these eagerly, but unless God, by His own Omnipotent Voice shall call them back, they will not come to Him, to Jesus, to Grace, to holiness, and Heaven. Tell it, tell it, tell it! Sound it forth beneath the sky forever and ever, that the Lord does call to Himself such wanton wanderers! "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, says the Lord: Turn, O backsliding children; for I am married unto you." Oh, the pity of God, not only for the miserable, but for the wicked—it surpasses thought!

"In due time Christ died for the ungodly." Favor to the guilty is the choicest of favor! We come not to preach salvation to the righteous—for where shall we find them?—but we proclaim it to the *unrighteous* and to the *ungodly*. "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." And Christ has come after the sick, calling not the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Oh, if anything will touch the heart, it should be this word of Free Grace, this fact that God does bid men return to Him! Mercy is full of patience. It bears and forbears, and still it cries, "This is the way, walk you in it." Oh, who would be so cruelly ungrateful as to close his ears against its pleadings? Thus I have spoken sufficiently upon the position of the wanderer.

II. Now, for a little while, we will dwell upon THE CALL OF MERCY. "Your ears shall hear a word behind you." Notice, it is a call that is altogether undesired and comes unsought to the man who has gone astray. He hears the inward call whose voice is, "Return." He looks, for a moment, and then puts his foot down to pursue his journey. "Never," he says, "will I alter my course," and he boldly hastens on, though before him lie death and Hell! As he is persevering in his ruinous course, the same word again bids him, "Return." He hears the admonition, but still he pushes on. He must not and will not return from the way of evil.

If he could reach a spot where such disturbing voices would never trouble him, how gladly would he hasten towards it. Hence so many altogether forsake the place of worship—they prefer the stagnant pool of stupid obstinacy to the sweet river of the Water of Life. So far from desiring to be warned, if they could voyage to a distant Tarshish, where voices of warning would never reach them, it would be a delightful journey! And if a ship could be taken, they would, like Jonah, pay the fare to the shipmaster and secure a berth in the next vessel. I have heard of one in the back-

woods of America who was unloading his furniture, and while doing so, up rode a Methodist minister. "Confound you," said he, "I have moved half-a-dozen times to get away from you Methodist fellows! I am never comfortable where you are. I will put the things on the cart, again, and find a spot where I shall be free from you."

On they went to another clearing, but when they reached it, the first thing that happened, before the man took up his lodging, was the appearance of a Methodist minister. "Where shall I go to get away from you Methodist preachers?" "There is nowhere I know of," said the minister, "that you can go, for I am afraid if you go to Hell you will find some of us *there*, for preachers have been lost. The very best thing you can do is to yield at once and let me hold a service to-night in your camp." That was sound advice and so some of you will be pestered and worried as long as you live if you will not come to Christ! Omnipotence has servants everywhere and these are all charged to warn you of your peril.

I knew one who would not go to a place of worship. He threw every Bible out of his house, but found a copy of the holy Book in his house and as he cursed and swore, he learned that it was the property of a daughter whom he loved too much to scold and he was obliged to let the sacred volume rest where she had placed it. A Bible in a house where it is forbidden to be read is a splendid power for good, as he soon discovered. In a house where it is outwardly honored, the Bible may have little influence, but if it gets where it must not be allowed, everybody reads it! If you can make God's Word to be forbidden fruit, Eve will feed on it and Adam will follow her. Thus the Grace of God came into the house, and it would never be expelled.

Down by Mitcham, when the lavender is growing, if you take a house, there, you will discern a smell of lavender. You may shut the windows and close the doors, but when any persons enter, a whiff of lavender enters with them! You cannot help it. And if you live where the Gospel is preached at all, you will be sure to hear it, and be made to know of it. It is God's intention that you should! It is a voice that comes unasked and undesired, but come it does! "A word behind you." It is the voice of an unseen Caller whose existence has been almost forgotten. It is not the teachers that speak in this powerful way. The teachers you have seen with your eyes and they have done you no good. But Someone calls whom you never saw and never will see till He sits on the Throne of Judgment at the Last Great Day! But still He utters a word which cannot be kept out of your ears. It will come to you mysteriously, at all sorts of hours, crying, "Return, return, return."

It will sound, often, in the dead of night, and make the chambers of conscience ring with its notes. I have known it to wake a man out of his slumber! I have known it sound in his dreams till he dreamed of Hell and woke up and felt the torment in his own conscience! Though he has done all he could, has been off to the theater, to the gay party, to the entertainment, to deeper sin, still, even there, the word has haunted him! I remember one who in this very city plunged into all manner of gaiety to try to get rid of this word, yet God met him in a play! Words were used in the performance which touched his conscience and he fled from the play-

house as from a burning building, fell on his knees, and sought and found the Savior! This call of mercy is the word of a hidden One—you cannot see who it is that speaks, yet you cannot shut your ears to His admonitions nor refuse reverence to His warnings. This voice pursues and overtakes the sinner.

Do you see him running? With all his might he is rushing to his own destruction! The word comes, at first, rather feebly—"Return." He scarcely looks back, but on he flies. Lo, the voice follows. He runs faster from it to show his determination to carry out his own will. The voice still follows him, saying, "Return." Then he stops a minute, but being desperately enamored of his transgressions, he again takes to his heels to flee away from God. Still the word pursues his footsteps and, in pleading accents cries—"Return, return, return, return," till, at last, he is constrained to sit down and listen to the word which comes from, he knows not where. He cannot understand how and why it comes so home to him, but it is a fulfillment of the promise—it is the word behind him saying, "This is the way, walk you in it."

That voice, when it comes to sinners, is generally most opportune, for, according to the text, they are to hear this voice behind them when they turn to the right hand or to the left. A man may go steadily plodding on in his course of ungodliness and hear no such word of pleading, but often it has happened that there has been a temptation of a more than usually forceful character and the traveler was about to turn to the right, and then, at that precise moment, he has heard the Word of God behind him giving him warning. His feet had almost gone! His steps had well-near slipped, but the Word of the Lord upheld him and he went not into the deadly sin!

Or it may be it is what I have described as a left-handed sin—the man was carried on to an action which, if he had actually performed it, would have involved his sure destruction—but just as he was about to turn down Deadman's Lane, there came a voice behind him, "Return, return." Often it is so and even if the man does not return and seek the right way, but keeps steadily on as carelessly as ever, still, he is slackening his speed and he dares not take that left-hand turning into gross sin which he would have followed if the word had not checked him. Even where the Spirit of God does not save a man, it keeps him from many a sin. And when men rebel against the Light of God and will not yield to it, yet still that Light has a restraining influence over them of which they may be unconscious.

Those who watch them know that if that bit and bridle had not been supplied by the Word of God, they would have gone to an excess of riot which would have been dangerous to others as well as totally destructive to themselves. Blessed be God for the Word of Mercy. Men delay to come, but God does not delay to call. And you see, to close this second point, that it is absolutely necessary that the potent Word of God should be spoken and should be heard. For the man had seen his teachers, but they had not done him any good. How often the Lord seems to put us ministers right up in the corner with our faces to the wall till we are little in the eyes of our hearers and little in our own eyes. He does so with me and while I

can glorify His name and bless Him abundantly for the many that are brought to Christ, yet I never take the slightest congratulation to myself about it, for what am I but the driest and most barren stick that there is in all my Master's garden, apart from His watering?

If sinners had nothing to save them but us poor preachers, not one of them would be brought up from death and Hell! Sinners would laugh at us as simpletons if God were not with us—they do so, as it is, and I do not wonder at it because there is enough in us that deserves to be laughed at. They are ready to despise us and we cannot be broken-hearted if they do, for we, ourselves, used to, in former days, despise the servants of God! And if we do not do so now, it is because the Grace of God has made a change in us. We cannot expect better treatment than we, ourselves, rendered to better men when they pleaded with us! The word behind *us* is necessary—that “still small voice” which no mortal man can speak, but only God, Himself—that inward monition of the conscience, that touching language of the heart which is as much beyond the power of man as to make a world or breath life into an image of clay!

Therefore pray mightily to the blessed Spirit that He may breathe on men and save them and that the Word of God may still follow and pursue them till they turn from the way of transgression. I leave that point. You have seen the position of the rambler and the Grace of God in the call of mercy.

III. But what was THE WORD OF THAT CALL? It is stated at full length, “This is the way, walk you in it.” That is the word of the call. It contains within itself, first, specific *instruction*. “This is the way.” There is a kind of preaching which has nothing specific, definite and positive in it—it is a bit of cloud-land and you may make what you like out of it—God's Grace or man's merit, faith in Christ or faith in self. You need to be your own instructor and then, like the child looking into the fire, you will see whatever your own eyes choose to create. Too much preaching is of a kind so mixed that it reminds me of the showman when his visitors asked, “Which is Wellington and which is Napoleon?” “Whichever you please,” he said. “You have paid your money and you may take your choice.”

So it seems to be with many preachers as to doctrine. You may have what kind of doctrine you like so long as you pay your pew-rent. “Cleverly put,” cries one, when he had heard a smart sermon, “Is not that enough?” I answer, it is *not* enough—we need the sure testimony of Revelation, sealed in the heart by the Holy Spirit! Cleverness is not God's way of blessing men. Conjectures and loose opinions are not worth the breath which is expended in expressing them. The Lord lays down a definite pathway and He says, “This is the way.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” “This is the way.” “Repent and be converted, every one of you. This is the way.” “To leave sin, to quit self, to trust in Christ—this is the way.”

Something definite is laid down before those who desire to be taught of God and they are told what is to be done, what is to be received, what is to be given up. “This is the way.” Definite instruction is given! This may not suit the Broad School, but it is exactly what the anxious seeker needs. This definite instruction may also be said to be a special correction. When

the voice behind says, "This is the way," it does as good as say that the *opposite* path is *not* the way, for there is only one way to Heaven and there never will be two. And when men hear a voice saying, "This is the way," it does, in effect, remind them that the opposite is not the way. If you are going the reverse of the right way, turn from it and you shall live.

How much we ought to bless God that the Gospel comes in as a corrective, kills the false and introduces us to the true. May falsehood be slain within us and the Truth of God reign there forever! May we leave all other roads, since the Lord has said of one road, only, "This is the way." It is also a word of sure confirmation. "This is the way." When that is heard many times—"This is the way." "This is the way." "This is the way." When, according to our hymn—

**"We hear our Savior say,
'Come here, soul, I am the Way,'"**

if we have already believed it to be the way, we are strengthened in that conviction. Hearing the mysterious word declared again and again, "This is the way," men grow to believe the Truth of God's Word, and out of that, by-and-by, there is begotten a living faith in a living Savior. Oh, this is a great mercy, to hear the same thing many times, to hear the voice proclaim again and again and again, "This is the way," "This is the way." "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ, the Righteous." May the repetitions of the Spirit effectually preserve us from the deadly shadow of doubt and fix us as a nail in a sure place!

This is followed up by a word of personal direction. "Walk you in it." Do not merely *hear* about it, but "*walk* you in it." Be not content to be critics, thinkers and considerers, but become *doers* of the Word of God. "This is the way"—here is the doctrine—"Walk you in it" There is the practice! Well is it when the Lord, by His Spirit, speaks to the runaway sinner and tells him what he is to do and to believe. Then He makes the way and the walk to be vividly present—"This is the way, walk you in it" without delay. This takes the form of encouraging permission. Some think they may not come to Christ. They actually ask the question, "May I believe in Him? Is there salvation for me?" The says text, "This is the way." Do not sit *looking* at it—"walk you in it." "But I am so big a sinner." "Christ is the way; walk you in it." There is room enough for big sinners in Jesus!

"But I have been so long coming." Never mind. This is the way, "walk you in it." Never mind if you have been 70 years coming if you have at last come to the way, "Walk you in it." "But I am afraid my feet are so polluted that I shall stain the way." "This is the way, walk you in it." You are not told to stand on one side and wait till something shall happen to you which shall persuade you to come, but here is the king's highway, walk you in it! Walking is the simplest of all exercises! There is no great artistic skill required in order to walk, but walking is all that is needed. Come to Christ—come to Him, now. Oh soul, *tumble* to Him! Trust Him as best you can and if you cannot do it without question, trust Him because you *must* trust Him, since you have nobody else to trust! Throw yourself into Jesus' arms! Swoon away on the bosom of Christ! It is the essence of faith, to die into the life of God in Christ Jesus! This is the message which comes behind many a runaway sinner—"This is the way, walk you in it."

IV. According to our text, success is promised to the word. “Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, This is the way, walk you in it.” Notice, THE SUCCESS OF THE WORD—your *ears* shall hear. God not only gives us *something* to hear, but He gives us ears to hear with! Oh, the mercy of God! He spreads the table and then He gives the appetite! He furnishes the garments and He gives us the sense of nakedness—and so leads us to put them on! Everything that is needed to bear a man from the gates of Hell to the gates of Heaven, Free Grace provides! Nothing is left out—the catalog is complete—He that sends the tidings also opens the ears!

“Your ears shall hear.” This is Effectual Grace! Teachers cannot make men hear. They can appeal to the external ear and after that, they have no more that they can do. But God can make men hear! Without violating the freedom of their wills, He can get at their hearts, at their consciences, at their understandings and He can press His Truth home to their souls. When the Lord does it, it is done! When *we* do it, it is often so done that afterwards it is undone, but verily, I know that what God does, shall be forever! All that is of Nature’s spinning will be unraveled one day, but when God spins, it will last throughout eternity!

I take it when we read here, “Your ears shall hear,” it means, first, that the message of Divine Love shall come to the man’s mind so as to create uneasiness in it. He is jauntily traversing the road to destruction. He has chosen the path and he delights in it. It often looks to him to be a flowery way, a pleasant road. So he walks on and he would be very happy but for that word behind him crying, “Turn you! Turn you! Turn you!” Just as he was turning down that glade in the wood to the right, where all the flowers of spring are found in profusion, that call troubled him, again! He would sooner have seen a serpent hissing in the pathway, or heard a lion roar from the thicket, than have heard that Word of God! The man says, “I never can be quiet. I can see other people going to amusements and pleasures and they heartily enjoy themselves. But the fact is, the more amusement I have, the less I am amused, and I am never more miserable than when everybody else is laughing. Why am I thus?”

He thinks he is harshly treated and is the special object of God’s hatred. Everybody else is jolly, but he is gloomy. They can look on the wine when it is red, when it moves itself aright, when it gives its color in the cup—and so could he, once, look into the rosy depths, but now he sees that serpent at the bottom of it and he is afraid to touch it lest the draught should turn to venom in his veins! He almost curses the arrangements of Heaven which have made him so ill at ease! He wishes he had never heard the parson preach the sermon which bothered him so. He wishes he had never had a godly mother at all, that he might have gone straight away into sin and have been as merry as a cricket. But now there is that voice, again, behind him, boring its way into his tingling ears! For a moment he had forgotten it, but here it comes again—“Turn! Turn! Turn! Turn!” He covers his ears, but it bombards his soul with worse than cannonballs, as if the Word of God pounded him with shells. He hears the thunders of the cannonade—“Return! Return! Return!” What can he do?

He longs to escape from the Divine rebuke. The word has made him quiver and quake!

So far so good. We shall see, next, what will happen to him. After a while there gets to be a desire in his heart. It is only a faint and spasmodic desire—nothing very strong or constant—but there it is and it cannot be quenched. “I wish I could get right, somehow, for in my present condition I am in an evil case. I am sailing in the wrong boat. I wish I could land somewhere and take the return boat and get to my home. I do not feel at all easy. I wish I knew what to do to be saved. I do know it, somehow, for I have heard it every Sabbath, but yet I do not understand it. I cannot get hold of it. I wish I could, for I am anxious to be forgiven, to be renewed in the spirit of my mind, to be made a new creature in Christ Jesus.”

“Do you know,” he says to someone, “that voice I could not bear, that used to wake me up at nights, that kept me out of pleasure? There is a kind of music in it now! I like to hear it! I wish I heard it so that it had an effect upon me, for I am afraid I shall go down to the Pit and be lost under accumulated responsibilities for having neglected the call of Divine Love. Oh, help me to come to Christ, for I am anxious to reach Him, but I feel as if I cannot come. I do not feel as I ought. I am told to believe, but I do not know what it means, or I cannot do it—

**“I would but can’t believe,
Then all would easy be.
I would but cannot,
Lord, relieve—
My help must come from Thee.”**

He is getting on all right, Friends! We shall have a better bulletin concerning him, directly! He is wonderfully improving—a great deal of the fever of pride has gone out of the man—we shall have him, yet, in perfect health!

He could not rest because he heard too much of the word behind him and now he cannot rest because he cannot hear enough of it! He desires that it may penetrate his soul and change him from darkness to light. What shall happen next? As that voice continues to sound, it pulls him up and leads to resolve. The Word of the Lord has put a bit into his mouth and a bridle between his jaws. He does not dare go any further. He sits down to consider. I think I saw him on his knees, too, and he is resolved if Heaven is to be had, he will have it! If mercy is to be found, he will find it. He will rake the world over, but he will gain the pearl of great price. I think I heard him say he would not go to sleep till he found Jesus. I am glad he has come to that pass.

Friend, you are just like the prodigal when he said, “I will arise and go to my father.” Only take care you do not end in *resolutions*. Let it be said of *you* as of that same prodigal, “He arose, and came to his father.” For all our resolutions are not worth the making unless they are most earnestly and speedily carried into effect. Observe the effect of the word behind the wanderer. Cannot you see the man who was running so fast? He has pulled up. He sees a line drawn across his path and he must not go over it. He feels that if he goes further, he may never have another call of mercy and this makes him pause. Did not we sing this morning—

“Soon that voice will cease its calling”?

The man is anxious to obey while he may. He is not yet resolved to go back, but he dares not go further. Watch him, for the voice is calling, again, and he is, every now and then, turning his ear round as if he wanted to hear it.

“Return, return, return.” He smites upon his breast and cries, “Would God I could return! I will return, for I cannot perish! I cannot let things go as once I did! I cannot leave everything to take its own way while I take my chance. No, I must have Christ or else I die and I must have Him soon, or else I shall seal my eternal destiny and prove a castaway forever! O God, call again, call again! Keep on calling, till I come, for lo, my spirit answers, ‘Draw me, and I will run after You.’ When You said unto me, ‘Seek you My face,’ my heart said unto You, ‘Your face, Lord, will I seek.’”

What will be the last stage of this inner work? Since the man dares not go any further in this wrong way, what is he to do? He cannot turn to the right or to the left, for God has hedged up his way with thorns. Now, listen to what he will say, “I will return unto my first husband, for it was better with me then than now.” This poor soul looks on Him whom he pierced. He did not know he was piercing his Redeemer, but now he sees it all. And while his eyes begin to stream with tears, he turns unto this Christ upon the Cross, and finds life while looking at Him! See him get up and feel as if he did not know what to do with himself as he cries—

**“Blest Cross; blest sepulcher; blest rather be
The man that here did shed His blood for me.”**

Now he enquires, “Which is my way? Speak, sweet voice! Speak, sweet voice! Tell me which is my way.” And now the Voice moves and speaks in *front* of him, for shepherds go before their sheep! The man looks and sees the Crucified One with pierced hands and feet leading the way and he delights to follow Him—yes, and he shall follow Him until, at the last, he shall see His face in Glory everlasting! Redeemed by blood and rescued by eternal power and brought home to the great Shepherd’s fold—to go no more out forever—the sinner shall be filled with gladness! Listen, then, listen, you that have turned your backs on God! Infinite mercy woos you! Boundless compassion entreats you to be saved!

Turn you! Turn as you are, all black and filthy and bemired—tarry not to mend or wash, but come to Jesus all unholy and unclean, without a single sound speck upon your leprous frame, utterly lost and ruined! Christ died for such as you! I say again, tarry not to improve yourselves, but come *now*, while Mercy’s voice incites you—while the Holy Spirit not only entreats, but sweetly constrains! Come and welcome, Sinners, come! The Lord bless you. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 30.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—909, 496, 497.**

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RIVERS OF WATER IN A DRY PLACE

NO. 1243

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 11, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“As rivers of water in a dry place.”
Isaiah 32:2.*

I SUPPOSE it must be conceded that the surface sense of this passage refers to Hezekiah and to other good kings who were the means of great blessings to the declining kingdom of Judah. We can scarcely be thankful enough for a righteous government. If, for a few years, we could feel the yoke of despotism, we should better appreciate the joys of freedom. In the prophecy before us, very much is said in praise of a king who shall reign in righteousness and princes who shall rule in judgment. Such men are the protectors of the State, enriching it by commerce and blessing it with peace. They deserve honor and the Word of God renders it to them.

But I cannot bring my mind to believe that these expressions were intended by the Holy Spirit to have no other and higher reference. They appear to me to be far too full of meaning to be primarily or solely intended for Hezekiah or any other mere *man*. When the Holy Spirit declared, by the mouth of the Prophet, “A man shall be as a hiding place from the wind and a cover from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of great rock in a weary land,” it can scarcely be conceived that he referred only to Hezekiah and his princes.

It cannot be that the Church of God has erred these many years in not applying such a passage as this to the Lord Jesus Christ. Surely the words are not only applicable to Him, but can never be fully understood until they are applied to His ever blessed and adorable Person. At any rate, this much is sure, that if a king who rules in righteousness brings so much blessing on his people, then Jesus, who is peculiarly the King of Righteousness, “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords,” must bring these blessings in the highest conceivable degree and, therefore, these expressions are, beyond all possibility of exaggeration, applicable in their widest sense to Him whom this day we delight to hail as Lord of All!

Applying the language of the whole verse to the Lord Jesus Christ, the King in Zion, we are struck with the number of the metaphors. He is not merely a hiding place and a cover, and a river, but He is a shadow of a great rock. Yes, my Brothers and Sisters, if we attempt to set forth our Lord's glories by earthly analogies we shall need a host of them, for no one can set Him forth to perfection! Each one has some deficiency and even all together they are insufficient to display His loveliness! We need a thou-

sand types and images to depict the varied beauties of His Character, the manifold excellencies of His offices, the merit of His suffering, the glory of His triumphs and the innumerable blessings which He bestows on the sons of men!

Should you focus all the rays of nature's sun, you could not equal a solitary beam of His splendor—

***“Nor earth, nor sea, nor sun, nor stars,
Nor Heaven His full resemblance bears;
His beauties you can never trace
Till you behold Him face to face.”***

It is very pleasant to see that our Beloved is such a many-sided Christ. From all points of view He is admirable and He is supremely precious in so many different ways—for we have so many and so varied needs and our circumstances are so continually changing—and the incessant cravings of our spirit are so constantly taking fresh turns. Blessed be His name, these changes of ours, and needs of ours, and cravings of ours shall only put us in fresh positions in which to see, more fully, His surpassing excellencies, His superlative fullness and how completely He is adapted to meet the needs of our nature in every conceivable condition!

Blessed be the name of the Lord Jesus that while He is One, He is many! While He is altogether lovely, He is also loveliness combined! While He is perfect under one aspect, He is equally complete under every other. The point to note in the text, applying it to Christ, is this, that it is *a Man* who is to be as rivers of water in a dry place. Note that—*a Man*! We glory in the Godhead of Jesus Christ—about that we entertain no question. This is not the place in which to attempt to prove it, for we are all persuaded of it, and we know Him to be Divine by personal dealings with Him. We have found Him to be the Son of the Highest and He ever must be so to us—“Very God of very God.”

Yet, none the less, but all the more, do we tenaciously hold to the Truth of God of the true and proper Manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is as *God* in human flesh that He is to us as rivers of water in a dry place. Think of it for a minute. If God loves us so much as to become Man, then the blessings which He intends to bestow must be incalculable! The Incarnation is, in itself, a promise big with untold blessing. Gaze upon the Son of God in Bethlehem's manger and you feel sure that if the Infinite has assumed the form of an Infant, His Incarnation betokens Infinite Love, foreshadows intimate communion, and foretells unbounded blessedness for the sons of Adam!

If Jehovah, Himself, in human flesh walks over the acres of Judea. If He bears human sicknesses and sorrows. If He, in human form, gives His hands to the nails and His heart to the spear, there must be boundless affection in His heart towards the seed chosen from among men! What rivers of blessings must come to us if God Himself comes to us and comes in such a fashion and in such a spirit? What does the union of Godhead with humanity mean but this, that though He was rich, yet, for our sakes, He

became poor? And what can His purpose be but, “that we, through His poverty, might be made rich”? Rich with riches as vast as those which He renounced in order to espouse our nature in all its poverty and degradation!

Let us, at this time, joy and rejoice in the Son of Mary, the Son of Man, who is also the Son of God! Let us exult, today, as we believe that Jesus is as truly Man as He is truly God—

**“Oh joy! There sits in our flesh,
Upon a throne of lights
One of a human mother born,
In perfect Godhead bright!”**

This is the source, the channel and the stream, bringing to us and containing within itself all the blessings with which God has enriched us! This is that river of God which is full of water! Let us come, then, with this as our guide, to *study the metaphor of our text*. When we have done so for a little, we shall *remark upon a special excellence which is indicated*. And, having so done, we shall *close by gathering up the practical lessons of the whole*.

I. As setting forth the benedictions which come to us through the Incarnate God, LET US STUDY THE METAPHOR of rivers of water in a dry place. This means, first, *great excellence* of blessing. A river is the fit emblem of very great benefits, for it is of the utmost value to the land through which it flows. A river, in its own way, creates life wherever it flows—grass, reeds and rushes are sure to spring up—and willows fringe the water courses. The water of the river fosters and nourishes the vegetation along its banks and sustains an infinite number of fish and creeping things. The silver stream lights up the landscape with its brightness!

“The joyous and abounding river” is the theme of song and a song in itself. It is a glad sight to trace the winding line of silver light among green fields. Who can refuse to render thanks to the God who thus visits the earth and waters it? Now, what the river is to the land, that the Lord Jesus Christ is to us. He is the spring and source of spiritual life and where He comes, Divine Life springs up and flourishes like a tree by the rivers of water whose leaf never withers. The Life which He bestows, He also nourishes, watering it every moment. Nourishing it, He makes it fruitful. Making it fruitful, He causes it to be fair to look upon and brings it to perfection. Vegetation owes much to the river which waters it. What were the meads without the streams? What were the saints without the Savior! What were the villages without their springs and brooks? What were Believers without the Covenant blessings which are given us in Christ Jesus?

The analogy is so very obvious that I need not pursue it. The place of broad rivers and streams is the place where plentiful good things are looked for and not in vain shall we look for good things in our Lord Jesus. He is that river the streams whereof make glad the city of God! Of Him it may be truly said that, “everything that lives which moves, where ever the

rivers shall come, shall live.” Because the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, therefore do rivers of mercy flow to many and, we who believe shall be made to drink of the river of His pleasures.

Here, my Heart, is reason for adoration! I need not see any difficulty in it. Having believed the testimony of the Lord, all difficulty has vanished. “The Word was God,” and the Word was also “made flesh and dwelt among us,” and through being made flesh and dwelling among us, He has opened rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of the valleys. God has come down to man that man may go up to God! God has veiled Himself in an Infant’s form that babes may learn His love! The Christ has grown in stature from Childhood to Manhood that we, also, may grow up into Him in all things! He has been perfect Man that we, also, may come unto the fullness of the stature of men in Christ Jesus! Christ the Man, the God, connects man with God—the river flows directly from the Throne of God to the hearts of mortals and brings God, Himself to us to fill us with all fullness. Observe the excellence of the Lord Jesus and meditate upon it!

The metaphor chiefly implies, in the second place, *abundance*. Jesus is as rivers of water because He is full of Grace and truth. It would be a very difficult thing to calculate the body of water to be found in the Thames, but in rivers such as our American friends are favored with, it must be almost beyond the power of mind to conceive the mass of water that must come rolling down into the sea! Gallons and hogsheads seem quite ridiculous by the side of the Mississippi and the St. Lawrence! I always feel very fidgety when theologians begin making calculations about the Lord Jesus. There used to be a very strong contention about Particular Redemption and general redemption and though I confess myself to be to the very backbone a believer in Calvinistic doctrine, I never felt at home in such discussions.

It is one thing to believe in the Doctrines of Grace, but quite another thing to accept all the encrustations which have formed upon those doctrines and also a very different matter to agree with the spirit which is apparent in some who profess to propagate the pure Truth of God. I can have nothing to do with calculating the *value* of the Atonement of Christ. I see clearly the specialty of the purpose and intent of Christ in presenting His expiatory Sacrifice, but I cannot see a limit to its preciousness and I dare not enter into computations as to its value or possible efficacy. Appraisals and estimate of values are out of place here.

Sirs, I would like to see you with your slates and pencils calculating the cubical contents of the Amazon! I would be pleased to see you sitting down and estimating the quantity of fluid in the Ganges, the Indus, and the Orinoco! But when you have done so and summed up all the rivers of this earth, I will tell you that your task was only fit for school boys and that you are not at the beginning of that arithmetic which can sum up the fullness of Christ—for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bod-

ily! His merit, His power, His love, His Grace surpass all knowledge and, consequently, all estimate!

Limits are not to be found, neither shore nor bottom are discoverable. Instead of coldly calculating, with a view to systematize our doctrines, let us joyfully sing with the poet of the sanctuary—

***“Rivers of love and mercy here
In a rich ocean join;
Salvation in abundance flows,
Like floods of milk and wine.”***

All idea of stint or insufficiency is out of place in reference to the Lord Jesus! When any man enquires, “Is there enough merit in the Savior’s death to make atonement for *my* sin?” The answer is, “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” When any say, “Perhaps I may not taste His love and believe on His name,” the reply is, “Whoever will, let him take of the Water of Life freely.” Oh, Sirs, would you measure the air? Could you calculate the contents of the atmosphere which surrounds the globe? Yes, that might be done. Would you measure space? I suppose that, also, might be accomplished.

Will you measure *eternity*? Will you calculate *infinity*? You must begin by problems like these before you can discover a sum to that abundant Grace which comes to sinners through God in human flesh, who bore human sin and gave up His life, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God! Anything approaching to a narrow spirit is unseemly in connection with the merits of our Redeemer! Stinginess at an imperial banquet is no more out of place than an ungenerous spirit in a Christian! Our Lord does things upon such a royal scale that we ought to be of a kingly spirit, also. Saint and bigot are a strange mixture—saint and miser *cannot* agree!

I remember hearing of a man who used to go out preaching and happened to have a well upon his premises, to which his neighbors came more frequently than he liked. He, therefore, put up a notice that trespassers would be prosecuted. It was not at all surprising that a witty friend soon adorned the preacher’s residence with a bill in prominent capitals, bearing these words, “*Come to Jesus, but you must not take water out of my well.*” In a great many other ways the same remark might be applied. Come to Jesus, but do not crowd me up in my pew! Come to Jesus, but do not ask me for a shilling! Certain people are very free with the Gospel, for it costs them nothing—very free, indeed, with the tracts which are given them to distribute, but they hang back when the hungry need feeding or the naked need clothing. Do you think such churls any credit to the Gospel?

Yes, and are there not preachers who appear to be half afraid that some poor non-elect sinner may get into Heaven by accident? Hear how they define, distinguish and denounce! I confess I have no sympathy with those who would drive men back. Far rather would I draw them forward. When one once gets to know that Jesus is as rivers of water, a large-hearted loving spirit seems to spring up in the soul as a matter of course. The Holy

Spirit enlarges the heart by revealing to us the glorious fullness of our Lord. I pray, my Brothers and Sisters, you may be all enlarged and that none of you may ever slander the Lord Jesus Christ by bearing a narrow, contracted testimony concerning Him. Never may you help to straiten other people's apprehensions of what the Gospel is by depicting your Lord as if He were some cramped up straight-lined canal with locks, pumps and measured wharfs—for He is as rivers of water!

There is, in Christ Jesus, such an abundance that if you come, O great Sinner, there is enough mercy in Christ for you! Yes, if the teeming myriads of the human race should all come rushing to this river to drink, they could not drain it dry—no, it should seem all the fuller and the lands should be made all the gladder as the undiminished stream flowed on! In a river we see not only excellence and abundance, but *freshness*. A pool is the same thing over again and gradually it becomes a stagnant pond, breeding corrupt life and pestilential gases. A river is always the same, yet never the same! It is always in its place, yet always moving on. Filled to the brim with living water, even as in ages long gone by, and yet flowing fresh from the spring, it is an ancient novelty.

We call our own beautiful river, "Father Thames," yet he wears no furrows on his brows, but leaps in all the freshness of youth. You shall live by the banks of a river for years and yet each morning its stream shall be as fresh as though its fountain had been unsealed but an hour ago when the birds began to awake the morning and the sun to sip the dew. Is it not so with our Lord Jesus Christ? Is He not evermore as bright and fresh as when first you met with Him? I remember when first I knew Him, and my soul was married to Him. I had a blessed honeymoon in dearest fellowship! That sweet communion is not over yet, no, it is deeper, nearer, more constant than ever! He is as good a Christ to me now as at first—I may not say that He is better, but I must confess that I *know* Him better. I love Him more fervently and prize Him more highly.

If you serve a master 20 years I should not wonder but what you know a lot about him by that time. Some of you have served the Lord Jesus these 40 years, and what do you think of Him? You have found out a lot about Him by this time and you may, without fear, tell all that you have discovered. Do not words fail you to express His excellence? All others become stale, but Jesus has the dew of His youth! These fine ribbons and bits of color which are attracting the people to certain Episcopal Churches for a time will soon fade. They tell us that such-and-such a Church is quite full because they have a surpliced choir, pretty processions, tasteful banners and many other childish toys which turn their churches into dolls' houses!

But let them not *dream* that these trinkets will draw the people for long. Go into the Popish churches on the continent and you will see, in some cases, fine marble and gems. and in others two-penny and half-penny artificial flowers and daubs of paint—but where are the people?

Rarely enough do you see a crowd. In general you only spy out a few women, dupes of the priests! The manhood of the nation is not to be entrapped by such transparent tomfooleries! These things grow old and efete, but the Gospel does not! Centuries ago Wickliffe preached the Gospel of Christ beneath an oak in Surrey and crowds assembled. Not long ago I preached beneath the same old tree, the same Gospel, and its attractive power was none the less!

Even so, in the ages yet to come, others will arise with the same message on their tongues and the people will gather to hear them, and discover the Gospel's power. Some will come to find fault and will gnash their teeth with rage, but they *must* come and hear it! It is impossible for them to do otherwise, for the novelty of the Gospel will always attract. Is it not always new? And is not a new thing ever sought after? Does a man need something new? Tell him "the old, old story." Our naked fathers crossed the Thames in their coracles and we sail upon it in our steamships! But it is the same glad river and when it first flowed it was not more fresh and sparkling than it is today. It is ever changing, ever fresh, ever new, yet ever the sane. And so is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Again, Jesus Christ may well be compared to a river, from His *freeness*. We cannot say this of all the rivers on earth, for men generally manage to claim the banks and shores, the fisheries and water powers. I sometimes wonder why our great men do not map out the stars. Will no duke claim the Pole star, and no earl monopolize Castor and Pollex? Could we not have an Enclosure Act for the Zodiac, or at least for some of the brighter constellations? Well is it written, "The Heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth has He given to the children of men."

Yet rivers can scarcely be parceled out—they refuse to become private property. See how freely the creatures approach the banks! I enjoyed, the other day, watching cattle come to the river to drink. They sought out a sloping place and then stood knee deep in the stream and drank and drank again! I thought of Behemoth, who trusted he could snuff up Jordan at a draught. He drank so heartily, and no one said to him, "No," or measured out the draught. A dog, as he ran along, lapped eagerly and no tax was demanded of him! The swan was free to plunge her long neck into the flood, and the swallow to touch the surface with its wing. To ox and fly, and bird, and fish, and *man*, the river was, alike, free!

So you ox of a sinner with your great thirst, come and drink! And you dog of a sinner, who thinks yourself unworthy, even, of a drop of Grace, yet come and drink! I read near one of our public ponds a notice, "Nobody is allowed to wash dogs here." That is right enough, for a pond, but it would be quite needless for a river. In a river the foulest may bathe to his heart's content! The fact of its fullness creates a freeness which none restrict. How I delight to talk about this, for I remember when I thought that the Lord Jesus was not free to me! I dreamed that I wanted Him and He

would not have me, whereas it was all the other way—He was willing enough, but I was unwilling. Oh, poor Sinner, there is nothing so free in all the world as Christ is! To all who pant after Him, desire Him, and need Him, He is free as the air you breathe!

Christ is like a river for *constancy*, too. Pools and cisterns dry up, but the river's song is—

***“Men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.”***

So is it with Jesus. The Grace to pardon and the power to heal are not a spasmodic force in Him—they abide in Him always. He saved a thousand years ago, He still saves. He saves all day long and all night long. Whether we sleep or wake, the river still flows on, sounding no trumpet, but steadily pursuing its course. And so the pardoning Grace of God is flowing all day and all night long, all the year round, quietly blessing thousands. Blessed be God for this! Today is Sunday and to me it seems as if the river widened out and poured its bounty over a greater area! Oh that you would drink of it, poor Sinner, today! It still flows, whether you refuse it or accept it. Oh suffer it not to flow in vain for you!

The text speaks of rivers, which implies both *variety and unity*—upon this we cannot enlarge, but must dwell upon the idea of *force*. Nothing is stronger than a river. It cuts its own way and will not be hindered in its course. Who shall dam up the Mississippi? Who shall enchain the Amazon? They roll where they will, following the course which Infinite Sovereignty marked out for them. If the rock is in the river's way it will wear it down. If the cliff intrudes, it must fall—being undermined by the current and falling—it must disappear. The river waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men, but follows its predestined course.

Glory be to God! Christ Jesus will accomplish the Divine purposes! The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand! None can stay His course—winding this way and that, He must go to this sinner and the other—He cleanses a dying thief and waters some of “Caesar's household.” Between the high hills of proud opposition He speeds His way and makes glad the lowly valleys of the contrite in heart! Neither death nor Hell can stay His course. He sweeps away all opponents even as that mighty river, the river Lisbon, swept away the armies of Jabin. And when it seems as if there is no longer a channel for the Gospel, the Truth of God leaps down the precipice in some great reformation or revival like a glorious Niagara—and the wonders of Divine power are seen more clearly—the Lord making bare His arm in the eyes of all the people. Flow on, O river of God, forevermore!

II. Secondly, WE WILL CONSIDER A SPECIAL EXCELLENCE which the text mentions. “Rivers of water *in a dry place.*” I cannot tell you how I leaped at that word on my own account. In this country we do not value rivers so much because we have springs and wells in all our villages and hamlets. But in the country where Isaiah lived, the land is parched and burnt up without rivers. You can trace the Jordan and the other streams

by the fringe of vegetation skirting their banks and, consequently a river is greatly prized in a dry place.

Ah, my Brethren, when the Man Jesus Christ came here with blessings from God, He brought rivers into the dry place of our humanity! When He came down among Abraham's race, He brought rivers of water into the dry old stock of Jesse. When Judah had lost her king, He came to renew the royalty of the house of David and today, we Gentiles, who had been cut off from all Covenant blessings and left like the desert while Israel was like a garden—we have Jesus Christ coming among us as rivers of water in a dry place!

Jesus has come to you, my Brothers and Sisters, and what a dry place your heart was by nature. Ah, think how dry it was before Christ came and caused springs of life to water your soul. As I think of my own state by nature, I can only compare it to a howling wilderness waste, "a salt land and not inhabited," in which there was great drought—a dry and thirsty land where no water was. The Sahara is not more destitute of water brooks than is human nature of anything that is good, and yet Jesus Christ has come into your human nature and into mine and made the dry land springs of water!

O Brethren, what a dry place our nature would still be at this very moment if it were not for the Presence of Jesus as the river of the Water of Life! We have grown older, but our nature has not improved. Years have gone over us but not even a cloud the size of a man's hand has come to us by Nature's energy. Our only watering has been through our interceding Savior! So far as the flesh is concerned, I see myself more prone to sin than ever, weaker than ever for all good things, more consciously dead and withered apart from Christ. If you have found springs in the waste places of your nature, I confess I have not—my nature is, indeed, still a dry place.

Emptiness, oh, that is hardly the word for it—one feels worse than empty! Dead, oh how dead! Even those of us who try to live near to God have cold seasons. I suppose perfect people have no such confessions to make, but I am not one of them. I mourn over seasons in which I cannot pray as I would, and rise groaning from my knees. I suffer from temptations without and fighting within, and I cannot always, alike, rejoice in God, although I know He is always worthy of all my joy. I lament that it is so, but so it is with me. There may be persons who can always glide along like a tram-car on the rails without a solitary jerk, but I find that I have a vile nature to contend with and spiritual life is a struggle with me.

I have to fight from day to day with inbred corruption, coldness, deadness, barrenness! And if it were not for my Lord Jesus Christ, my heart would be as dry as the heart of the damned, and have no more life, or light, or goodness in it than Hell itself. This, however, I can say, I value His fullness all the more because I am so empty, and I prize His power the more because I am so weak. I find I cannot speak or think well enough of

my Lord, nor ill enough of myself. Nothingness and emptiness, vanity and sin are my sole and only heritage by nature. All my fullness lies in Christ and every excellence I can ever claim must come from Him and Him alone.

Do not many of you find your outward circumstances very dry places? Are you rich? Ah, my Brethren, wealthy society is generally as dry a place as the granite hills. "Gold and the Gospel seldom agree." Are you poor? Poverty is a dry place to those who are not rich in faith. Are you engaged in business from day to day? How often do its cares parch the soul, like the heat of the desert? To rise up early and to toil late amid losses and crosses is to dwell in a dry place. Oh, to feel the love of Christ flowing, then! This is to have rivers of water! To have Christ near when you are losing your money, when bills are being dishonored and commercial houses falling—this is true religion!

To rejoice in Christ when you are out of work, poor man—to have Christ when the wife is sick, Christ when the darling child has to be buried, Christ when the head is aching, Christ when the poor body is half starved—this is sweetness! Ah, you will never know the sweetness of Christ till you know the bitterness of trial. You cannot know His fullness till you see your emptiness! I pray that it may be our experience to always feel ourselves going down and Christ going up, ourselves getting poorer and poorer apart from Him, while we know more and more of the priceless blessings which are ours in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The point then, of the whole, seems to me to be this—that Christ is a river of abounding Grace, but He is most so to those who are most dry. Alms are only sought by the poor, the physician is only esteemed by the sick, the lifeboat is only valued by the man that is drowning! So, my Brothers and Sisters, Christ will be dearer and dearer to you just in proportion as you have less and less esteem of yourself. "Rivers of water in a dry place."

III. Now, WE CLOSE WITH THE PRACTICAL LESSON from it all. First, *see the goings out of God's heart to man, and man's way of communing with God.* Other rivers rise in small springs and many tributaries combine to swell them, but the river I have been preaching about rises in full force from the Throne of God. It is as great a river at its source as in its after course.

Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, whenever you stoop down to drink of the mercy which comes to you by Jesus Christ you are having fellowship with God, for what you drink comes direct from God Himself! Think of this, now. You desire to have a communication established between you and God, and the Lord says, "Here am I coming to you, coming in a great river of blessedness. Take of Me. Accept what comes to you through Jesus Christ. Every drop of it has come from My Throne and is full of the love which is My essence."

Oh, poor Sinner, do you see this? What a simple, what a safe, what a suitable way God has prepared to bring you into communion with Himself! You are to be the receiver, and He the Giver! He the everlasting Source of all your supplies, and you simply the partaker of His benefits. Ask what God is, and the answer is, God is a river of goodness streaming down to men through the Person of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, *see what a misery it is that men should be perishing and dying of soul-thirst when there is this river so near.* That men should die of thirst would be horrible, but that such deaths should happen all along the banks of a river is shocking, indeed. What ails them? Have they never heard of it? Dear Brethren, let the thought press heavily on you that millions of our race have never heard of Jesus! In China, in parts of India, in Africa, in large tracts of the country, myriads live and die without having heard the sweet name of Jesus!

Are we doing all we can for missions, do you think? Are we all sure that we give as much as we should, and pray as we should, and work as we should for missions? It is a sad thing that Christ has come into the world and yet men perish by millions. Ah, yet there is a sadder thought, still, for millions of men know all about this river and yet do not drink! Many of our own fellow citizens know the plan of salvation by Jesus Christ, but they are struck with a strange insanity—they would sooner die of thirst than drink of God's own river! O God, we sometimes say, "Have pity," but You have had pity and, therefore, we had better to pray, "Teach men to have pity upon themselves."

Another lesson is, *let us learn if we have any straitness, where it must lie.* It cannot be in Christ, because He is as rivers of water. So the next time we feel that we are straitened, that we have little Grace, little power, little joy, let us know where the fault lies. Our cup is small, but the river is not! If you have not, Brethren, it is not because God does not give—it is because you are not open to receive. "You have not because you ask not, or because you ask amiss." O Church of God, if you are weak, it is not because God is weak! If you cannot get at sinners it is not because God cannot reach them! You are not straitened in Him, you are straitened in your own heart!

Is Christ a river, then, last of all, *drink of Him*, all of you. To be carried along on the surface of Christianity, like a man in a boat, is not enough—you must drink or die. Many are influenced by the externals of religion, but Christ is not in them. They are on the water, but the water is not in them. And if they continue as they are, they will be lost. A man may be in a boat on a river and yet die of thirst if he refuses to drink. And so may you be carried along and excited by a revival, but unless you receive the Lord Jesus into your soul by faith, you will perish after all. Faith is as simple a thing as drinking, but you must have it—you must believe or die!

If a man were set up to his neck in water like Tantalus, and if all the rivers in the world flowed by him, he would expire in the pangs of thirst if

he did not drink. Some of you have been up to your neck in the river for years. As I look at those pews I cannot but remember that rivers of Love and Mercy have been flowing right up to your lips—and yet you have not drunk! He who dies so deserves to die! He who perishes of thirst in such a condition must perish with a sevenfold emphasis. God help you! I know not what more I can ask Him to do for you. Has He not done enough in giving rivers of Mercy to you in Christ?

And if you have drunk of this stream, the next thing I say is, *live near it*. We read of Isaac that he dwelt by the well. It is good to live hard by an inexhaustible spring. Commune with Christ and get nearer to Him each day. Wade into this river, as you have done, till the water is up to your ankles! Go on till it is up to your knees! Go on till it washes your heart and lungs—yes, go on till you find it a river to swim in! I should like to say, last of all, if Christ is like a river, let us be like the fishes that *live in it*.

I sat under a beech tree some months ago in the New Forest. I gazed up into it, measured it, and marked the architecture of its branches, but suddenly I saw a little squirrel leap from branch to branch, and I thought, “After all, this beech tree is far more to you than to me, for you live in it. It delights me, it instructs me and it affords me shade, but you live in it and upon it.” So we know something about rivers and they are very useful to us, but to the *fish* the river is its element, its life, its all.

So, my Brothers and Sisters, let us not merely read about Christ and think of Him, and speak of Him—but let us live *on* Him, and *in* Him as the squirrel in the tree and the fish in the river. Live *by* Him, and live *for* Him—you will do both if you live *in* Him—

**“Roll over me, You heavenly stream,
I find my element in Thee.
This my true life and bliss I desire,
In Christ, my Lord, absorbed to be.**

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 32.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—170, 541, 488.**

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OUR HIDING PLACE

NO. 2856

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 11, 1877.

[When the Tabernacle was thrown open to all comers.]

*“And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind,
and a cover from the tempest.”*
Isaiah 32:2.

ONE who is really worthy to be called “a man” is a rare creature. There are great numbers of human beings who come under the generic name, “men,” who do not possess those noble, manly characteristics which would entitle us truly to speak of any one of them as “a man.” When God gives “a man” to any nation, it is a grand gift. There are many names in history which remind us how much blessing may be conferred upon a race and upon an age by the raising up of one man.

It is possible that in the first instance my text refers to Hezekiah the king of Judah. The Assyrians had invaded the land and the army and the nation were powerless to defend their territory. It seemed as though the homes of the people would be utterly destroyed by fire and that the inhabitants would be either slain by the sword or carried away into captivity. But there was one man, named Hezekiah, who, though he had not a great army, had great faith in the power of prayer to God. And so he took Rab-Shakeh's blasphemous letter and spread it before the Lord in earnest supplication. He sent word to another true man, the Prophet Isaiah, begging him to also lift up his prayer to God—and the Prophet sent to the king the cheering intelligence that the Assyrian monarch would not be able to enter Jerusalem, but would be driven back to his own city of Nineveh—and should be slain by the sword in his own land! Hezekiah and Isaiah were, for Judea, a hiding place from the wind and a cover from the tempest in that time of stress and storm.

Nor is it only in sacred story that we find illustrations of such an experience as my text describes. I might remind you of some of our kings and other great men who have been a hiding place and a cover to our own land in the day of danger and of distress. The name of Alfred the Great will always shine brightly in our national history and, much later, there was “a man” who wore no regal crown, but who was the greatest and best

of all the kings. Oliver Cromwell was a real hiding place and cover to this land in the days when the crowned king was unworthy to rule. In him, God raised up “a man” who risked everything in defense of the liberties which we still enjoy. What a hiding place from the wind and what a cover from the tempest he was to the little company of persecuted saints in the valleys of Piedmont! The Duke of Savoy had determined to extirpate the Protestants, but Cromwell heard of his cruelties and resolved that he would do all that he could to rescue them from their persecutor’s power.

He sent for the French ambassador and told him to let his master know that he must have those persecutions stopped immediately. His majesty replied that Savoy did not belong to him and that he could not interfere with the Duke. “Nevertheless,” replied Cromwell, “if you tell the Duke that you will go to war with him if he does not cease persecuting the Protestants, he will soon stop his butcheries. If you will not do that, I will go to war with you, for, in the name of the Lord of Hosts, I will defend His persecuted people!” Of course such a brave message as that speedily took effect. Oh, that, in every age, in every land—whenever and wherever there is oppression or persecution to be rebuked and tyranny to be overthrown—God may always find “a man” who shall come boldly to the front and speak and act for truth and righteousness, and so become “a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest,” to the people whom he has the honor to protect in such a time as that!

I have no more to say upon that view of our subject except to pray God to make us all manly in that sense, so that all of us may, through His Grace, take our proper place in the battle for the right and the true against the wrong and the false.

I have, however, to speak of another Man to whom this text more especially refers. It is the Messiah, the Man Christ Jesus, the Mediator between God and men—God’s greatest gift to men, the Nazarene, Jesus Christ of the house of David—who is the true Hiding Place from the wind, and Cover from the tempest to all who take shelter in Him. If my lips are Divinely helped to extol Him and if your hearts are Divinely taught to rejoice in Him, we shall all be blessed! In speaking about my text, I want to show you, first, that *this life is very liable to storm*. Secondly, that *from all these storms, the Man Christ Jesus is our Hiding Place*. And that, thirdly, *our wisdom is to shelter in that Hiding Place*.

I. First, then, THIS LIFE IS LIABLE TO MANY STORMS.

He that reckons upon a calm from his cradle to his grave reckons altogether amiss. You may set sail upon a sea as smooth as glass, but I doubt not that, before your voyage is completed, you will often have to reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man—and be at your wits’ end by reason of the fury of the storm!

We are subject to great *mental storms*. No man can be a true thinker without finding his mind occasionally storm-tossed. A rushing mighty wind of doubt seems to come sweeping down from the mountains of speculation, driving everything before it. Anchors begin to drag and firm-

ly moored beliefs are driven headlong towards the rocks of destruction. We have known what it is, sometimes, to have such a terrible cyclone of doubt and questioning raging around us that we have hardly felt our own existence to be a fact and have had grave questions concerning our own inner consciousness. When we have these stormy winds and tempests howling within the little world of our souls, we appreciate the promise of the text—"A man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest."

At other times, the stormy winds take another shape, namely, that of *outward trial and trouble*. "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." Doubtless, there is a skeleton in every house—some cause of sorrow in every family. A man may have a flourishing business, but there may come serious losses. Or he may have the flush of health upon his cheeks and may suddenly begin to lose his vigor. The little ones around him who are his joy, may sicken and he may have to follow his loved ones to the grave. The wife of his youth may be taken away from him or the friend of his middle age may suddenly be smitten down. The world is full of what we sometimes call, "accidents," though we know that they are Providences—Providences of a sad and mournful character to us. God will not let us, who are His songbirds, build our nests here. He will send a rough wind through the forest which will make the limb on which we try to build rock to and fro in the storm till we are obliged to take to our wings again, for there is no resting place for us upon any of the trees in this world! Many of you only too well know that there are rough winds of outward trial and trouble. I do not doubt that many a stormy blast has swept across your heart, in your families, or in yourselves, or in your estates. Some way or other, you have realized your need of "a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest."

Then there is a wind which sometimes blows upon men—a penetrating, searching, cutting wind—which may bring good with it, but which, at the time it is blowing, is a truly terrible wind to endure! I mean that of *spiritual distress on account of discovered sin* when, looking into your soul, you have spied out what you could not have believed was there. Sins and iniquities which had long hidden their heads, have suddenly appeared before you and you have been almost swept off your feet as by a tornado! I recollect when that wind blew through and through my soul. No comfort could I get by day or by night. My transgressions haunted and hunted me. I had not been worse than other young men, nor as bad as many whom I knew, but I seemed so to myself. It appeared to me as if I had become the very chief of sinners and the most surely condemned of all who ever lived! Remembering the experience I then passed through, I can truly say that I know of no pain that can be felt by the body which is comparable to the terrible pangs of conscience when the searching breath of the Eternal Spirit goes through the soul and withers up all the comeliness of our own righteousness and spoils all the supposed beauty

of our own good works! That is a wind which I trust we all have felt, or shall yet feel, but, still, while it blows, it is dreadful to endure.

There is another wind which follows upon this and of which this is the prelude unless Infinite Grace shall interpose, that is, *the awful wind of the Infinite Wrath of God*. When that mighty blast begins to blow upon men, it makes their beauty to consume like the moth. When they first realize that “God is angry with the wicked every day,” they tremble in His Presence! But what will their terror be when that wind is let loose upon them in all its fury? When God’s right arm shall be bared for war and thunders shall clothe His cloudy car, and He shall come forth armed with sword and buckler to confront His foes, saying “I will ease Me of My adversaries”—who shall be able to stand before Him? Good Mr. Whitefield used to cry, “Oh, the wrath to come! The wrath to come!” And, verily, I know not what he could have said about it except to utter the exclamation—and there to leave it—for that wrath to come must surpass all human language or imagination! Sometimes it blows upon men before they leave the body—they begin to be caught by the eternal whirlwind before they have quite got clear of the shores of time and mortal life. And some of them have let us know, by their terrible terror as they have died, a little of what that awful blast must mean to those who are swept away by it.

I will mention but one other wind and that is one to which the best of men, as well as the worst, are exposed—namely, *the sudden and mysterious temptations of the devil*. He knows how to take us unawares and he finds in our natural depravity, an ally, so that when he comes and knocks at the door of our heart, the sin that is within arises and opens to him. And then he comes in and terrible is his entrance into the soul! I have known a young man who appeared to be upright and honest, suddenly decoyed into an act of theft by the temptation of the Evil One. I have seen those who have been, apparently, pure in mind and heart and who, at any rate in their youth, dreaded every thought of immorality—all of a sudden cast down into the very depths of filthiness by a strong Satanic temptation which has assailed them. There is no man living who can truly say, “I am secure against the devil’s assaults.” You may resolve as you please, but Satan is older and more cunning than you are, and he knows your weak points and how he can most easily cast you down. He is the prince of the power of the air, and he can bring with him such a wind as shall smite the four corners of the human house at once and level it to the ground. Woe to the man who is tempted by the devil in such a way as that, unless he has a hiding place wherein to shelter himself in the stormy and dark day!

I hope I have said enough upon this point. If I go on in this strain, you will think that my sermon is like the roll of the Prophet, written within and without with lamentations and woe.

II. Now, in the second place, blessed be God that I can tell you that FROM ALL THESE STORMS THE MAN CHRIST JESUS IS OUR HIDING

PLACE. I have to try to set Him before you by the help of His Holy Spirit. "A man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest." It is to Him we sing—

***"The tempests awful voice was heard—
O Christ, it broke on You!
Your open bosom was my ward,
It braved the storm for me.
Your form was scarred, Your visage marred—
Now cloudless peace for me."***

"A man"—yet *One who is more than a man*—a Man of whom it is written, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." It is the Man Christ Jesus who is, nevertheless, to be adored as "over all God, blessed forever," reigning, as He now does, in the highest heavens, crowned with glory and honor. I invite all of you who are afraid of the storms of doubt, or trial, or temptation, or of the wrath of God, to put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, because, being God, He is Omnipotent and, therefore, nothing can be too difficult for Him. Once enclosed within His hands, where is the power that can reach you there, or pluck you from them? If your shield shall be the Almighty One, Himself, then are you secure from all hurt or harm!

Yet, as the text says, "a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest," I remark that *Christ is truly a Man*. Oh, how often, in the thought of Christ's real Humanity, has my soul found a hiding place from all manner of storms! "God"—the word is great! "God"—the idea is sublime! The great Eternal Jehovah who made the heavens and the earth and who bears them up by His unaided power, who rides upon the stormy sky and puts a bit into the mouth of the raging tempest, how shall I, a poor worm of the dust, draw near to such a God as this? The answer quickly comes, "He has been pleased to reveal Himself in the Man, Christ Jesus." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." God deigned to take upon Himself the nature of man! There He lies in the manger, the Infinite, yet an Infant, Omnipotent, yet swaddled by a woman and hanging as though helpless at her breast. Let Bethlehem always tell the matchless mystery of godliness—God manifest in human flesh! Why should I dread to appear before God, now that, in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ, there is a link between my manhood and His Deity?

The awful gulf that sin had made is bridged and now I perceive how near God comes down to man and how closely He lifts up man to Himself. Jesus Christ was truly Man! With the exception of being free from sin, He was in no respect different from ourselves. And at this moment, though He occupies the very Throne of God in Glory, His sympathies run towards us—

***"He knows what sore temptations mean.
For He has felt the same."***

He is ready to succor us, for His delights are still with the sons of men. He became a Man because He loved men. God has such affection for our

race that He has married our nature to Himself. Oh, what joy there ought to be in our hearts because of this! Whenever the thought of the greatness, the holiness and the terrible majesty of God oppresses anyone of us, let him say, with good Dr. Watts—

***“Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find.
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind.
But if Immanuel’s face appears,
My hope, my joy begins!
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His Grace removes my sins.”***

The very fact that God has become Incarnate makes Him to be a Hiding Place from the wind and a Cover from the tempest.

Further, *Christ is the substitutionary Man*, for He stood forward as the Man to die instead of guilty men. Have you not often heard this life called a state of probation? That is a most incorrect term, for our probationary period passed away long ago. There was a man, the first of men, Adam—and the whole human race was put upon probation in him. If he had obeyed his Maker’s command, all his seed would have lived by virtue of his obedience. But as he disobeyed, his entire race has suffered. He could not endure the test applied to him, for he ate of the forbidden fruit and so fell from his high estate. And, in his fall, you, and I, and all mankind fell down. We fell in another—we had nothing to do with the matter, for it all happened thousands of years before we were born. Some have questioned the justice of this arrangement. If you have done so, I pray you to lay aside all such questions, for this is the door of hope for you! Because our fall was caused by another, there remained the possibility—on the same plan of representation and substitution—of our being lifted up by Another and saved by Another! So, in the fullness of time there came a second Man, the Lord from Heaven, and stood in our place. Did He obey the Law of God? For 30 years and more He was upon His trial, but He never failed. “In Him was no sin.”

But man was under condemnation because of his guilt—will Jesus Christ, as the great Substitute for sinners—bear upon Himself the punishment due to human guilt? He could not have borne it if He had not been God as well as Man! Being the God-Man, He said that He would bear sin’s penalty, that all who would put their trust in Him might forever go free! It was a wondrous sight, when, on that awful night in dark Gethsemane, He began to bear His people’s guilt and so was made to sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground while His soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.

I hope you all know the sad yet glad story. I expect most of you have often heard it, how Jesus bore that tremendous load of our guilt upon His own shoulders though His back was bleeding from Pilate’s cruel scourging. How He bore it though they nailed His hands and feet to the accursed tree. How He bore it though the sun refused to look upon Him

and traveled on in tenfold night. How He bore it though Jehovah, Himself, forsook Him while He was bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, so that He was compelled to cry, "My God, My God why have You forsaken Me!" He bore that terrible burden right to the end! And on the Cross He cried, "It is finished," before He gave up the ghost. This is the Man who is the Hiding Place from the storm, and the Cover from the tempest, the substitutionary Man, the surety Man who stood in the place of guilty man—the just Man bearing, instead of unjust man—the deserved wrath of God!

If you, my dear Friends, will only put your trust in Him, you will find Him to be a blessed Cover from the storm that is now threatening you. How can God's wrath touch you if Christ has borne it all in your place? A hiding place shelters a man because it bears the full force of the storm while he is protected from it fury. Because Christ died for us, therefore we, who take shelter in Him, shall not die! Our debt is paid, Justice is satisfied, Mercy triumphs and we go free! This is the Man, the substitutionary Man, who is "as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest," to all who put their trust in Him!

That is not all, however, for this substitutionary Man remains *the representative Man*. And if you are Believers in Him, He represents you in everything. He died, but He also rose again—what a shelter from all tempestuous thoughts of death there is in that glorious Truth! For—

***"As the Lord our Savior rose,
So all His followers must."***

The wind howls sadly out yonder among the tombs in the cemetery. One would scarcely choose to spend a night there, alone, among the dead, but even that mournful wind, when it is heard by the ear of faith, has music in it. That ancient message is yet to be fulfilled, "Your dead men shall live, together with My dead body shall they arise." This is what Christ says to us, so we need not stand by the pious dead and weep as those without hope, but we may already begin to anticipate the dawning of that glorious morning when, at the summons of the descending Savior, "the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we always be with the Lord."

Jesus, therefore, as our Representative, is a Hiding Place to us from all the winds which would come to us by the way of the sepulcher. We are not afraid to die, for Jesus lives. And He said to His disciples, "Because I live, you shall live, also." He has also gone up into Heaven. In His glorified body He ascended up on high, there to appear in the Presence of God for us. So, whenever you have any dread about the future, remember that you will be where He is. If you are a Believer in Him, you must ascend to Heaven even as He has done and, as He sits upon His Throne, even so shall you! And as He is perfected in Glory, even so must you be! Between the Man, Christ Jesus, and all Believers in Him, there is such unity that wherever He is, there must His people also be. This is what He

rightfully demands on their behalf, by virtue of His atoning Sacrifice—“Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” If you hide behind this rampart of stupendous Rock, this mighty mound of Divine Consolation, it matters not what winds may rage, or what storms may roar—you may rest in security and serenity behind the great representative Man who is “as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest.”

We also have to bless the name of our Lord Jesus that He is the ever-living Man, who is, at all times, a shelter from the wind to those who trust in Him. Our earthly friends may die, but we shall never lose our Best Friend. All merely human comforters will fail us sooner or later, but He will always abide true and steadfast to all who rely upon Him—

“He lives, the great Redeemer lives,”

so His cause is always safe and our safety is always secured in Him. Hide yourself, therefore, in the ever-living Man, for there you need not fear any change that the rolling ages may bring.

Blessed be the name of Jesus! He is also the interceding Man, for at this very moment He is pleading for His people before His Father’s Throne. We cannot see Him, yet sometimes when our faith is in lively exercise, we can almost behold Him and can all but hear Him presenting His almighty pleas on behalf of all those who have entrusted their case into His hands. O Beloved—

***“In every dark distressful hour
When sin and Satan join their power,
Let this dear hope repel the dart,
That Jesus bears us on His heart.”***

If nobody else remembers us, He does—and He spreads His wounded hands in powerful, prevalent intercession on our behalf. And our comfort is that “He is also able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them.”

It is true that He is a Man, but He is a Man clothed with Infinite Power. So think no longer of the Christ as “despised and rejected of men: a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief,” for He has done with all that! He has ascended from His Cross to His Throne—

***“The highest place that Heaven affords
Is His, is His by right!
The King of kings, and Lord of lords,
And Heaven’s eternal Light.”***

Do not look at crucifixes, or any such representations of Christ for He in whom you trust is neither upon the Cross nor in the tomb for He is risen! “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” But do not forget to look up to the place where He now sits, for, “this Man, after He had offered one Sacrifice for sins, forever, sat down at the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool.” Before He ascended, He said to His disciples, “All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go you, therefore, and teach (or, make disciples of) all na-

tions, baptizing them (those who are made disciples) in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” We serve the Christ whom all His creatures must obey—angels fly at His bidding and devils tremble at His frown. He allows the kings of the earth to sway their mimic scepters for a time, but all the while He is King of kings and Lord of lords! For our Lord Jesus Christ, we claim a universal monarchy! He sits enthroned upon the circle of the heavens, and the nations of the earth are but as grasshoppers before Him—

***“Sweet majesty and awful love
Sit smiling on His brow,
And all the glorious ranks above
At humble distance bow.
This is the Man, the exalted Man,
Whom we unseen adore!
But when our eyes behold His face,
Our hearts shall love Him more!”***

I close my description of this wondrous Man by reminding you that He is the coming Man. It is but a little while and He that shall come will come. The great drama of this world’s history draws towards its close. We know not when it will end, for it is not for us “to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in His own power.” But there comes to us, as a clear, ringing message out of the deep mystery of the future, the voice of our Savior, saying, “Surely I come quickly,” to which our glad response is, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

I cannot foretell to what a state of anarchy or of despotism this world may yet come. I cannot forecast the ultimate issues of great wars and conflicts between divers nations. But the saints of God shall always have a Hiding Place from every stormy wind that shall ever blow. “The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.” “He comes to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His Truth.” There shall come a day when that ancient prophecy shall be fulfilled, “He shall live, and to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for Him continually, and daily shall He be praised.” There shall yet come a halcyon period when they shall hang the useless helmet high and study war no more—but the silver trumpet of the blessed Jubilee shall sound aloud for Christ, the great Prince of Peace shall then have returned to reign and His unsuffering Kingdom shall know no end! This is the world’s hope, that the people’s Christ, the Man chosen out of the people, the Lover of mankind, the great Philanthropist, the Divine Man—He shall come and reign among His loyal subjects and be to them “as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest.”

To sum all up, Beloved, I do not know what your storms, inwardly or outwardly, may be, or what may be your special dread or terror; but if you hide away in the Man Christ Jesus, you will find that He will afford you shelter from every trouble that can possibly befall you!

III. So I close my discourse by saying to you, AS THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS SUCH A HIDING PLACE AS THIS, LET US RUN TO HIM FOR SHELTER.

First, let *us stand behind Him whenever we approach God*. I can imagine someone saying, "I want to pray, but I am afraid to appear before the Lord, for, if His eyes of fire shall look upon me, they may utterly consume me. What shall I do?" Why, stand behind His Son and say unto Him—

***"Him, and then the sinner see—
Look through Jesus' wounds on me."***

Come not to God yourself directly, but come unto Him through Jesus Christ the Mediator and Intercessor! Then His wrath cannot reach you, for Christ, your Hiding Place will stand between you, the offender and the God whom you have offended. This seems to me to be very simple. If there are any here who have never acted thus, I entreat the Lord to lead them to do so now. Come, poor Soul, you know that you cannot keep the Law and that you cannot bear the punishment due to sin! Well, then, will you not trust the Lord Jesus Christ to stand in your place and to suffer instead of you? If you do, all is done that is necessary. You are in the Shelter, so the wind cannot blow upon you.

Even when you have done that, there are the storms of this life still to be met, so *get behind Christ by following Him in the path of duty*. If you never go anywhere but where Christ leads the way, you need not be afraid of storms, for they will beat upon Him more than upon you. When I was quite a young man, I was greatly reviled for preaching the Gospel and, sometimes, my heart would sink a little under the cruel slanders that many uttered. But I often used to go upstairs to my room and, after a season of sweet fellowship with my Lord, I would come down singing—

***"If on my face for Your dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,
All hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If You remember me."***

Whenever there is a cross to be carried by any of Christ's followers, He always bears the heavy end on His own shoulders! He always takes the bleak side of the hill, Himself, and His disciples may be well content to follow when they have so good a Master to lead the way! Yes, Beloved, whenever any of the troubles of life come upon you, get near to Jesus and shelter behind Him. When John the Baptist was put to death, his disciples took up his body and went and told Jesus. That was the best thing they could have done. When the little baby dies, dear Mother, take up its body and go and tell Jesus. When you are out of employment, Man, and the supply of bread is short in the home, go and tell Jesus. He will sympathize with you, for He also was hungry. And when others of the trials of life come upon any of you, do not hesitate as to what you will do, but, if you have hidden behind Him on account of sin, go and hide *in Him* on account of sorrow, for this Man shall always be a Hiding Place

from every stormy wind that blows if you but know how to go and trust in Him.

Come to my Lord Jesus Christ, my dear fellow men, because *He is an effectual Hiding Place*. Many of us have tried Him and proved that He is all that I have said. There have been millions upon millions of His saints, in all ages, who have cast upon Him their entire life-burden and He has never failed to relieve any of them yet. I have stood by the bedside of many dying Christians, but, to this moment, I have never heard one of them say that Christ had played him false. There are hosts of biographies of Christians published—did you ever find, in any of them, a single instance in which a Believer in Christ found Himself deserted and forsaken by his Savior? No, but on the contrary, the testimonies are heaped up far beyond any evidence that ever could be demanded in a court of law—and they prove, beyond all question, that Christ helps His children in all their emergencies and delivers them in every time of trouble!

I appeal to any of you who have had godly parents. What your father tried and your mother tried, young man, I ask you to try! Where your gracious grandmother rested all her hope and you know that, poor simple woman as she was, she died triumphantly—be not you so unwise as to refuse to rest your hope! I like things that have been tried and proved! The new-fangled notions of this modern age may do for lackadaisical gentlemen who seem to scarcely know whether they have a soul to lose, but I know that I have one, and I cannot afford to risk it on speculations and novelties! That Gospel which has saved the saints for nearly two thousand years is good enough for me—so I trust myself in this ancient Hiding Place of God's people, the refuge which they have found to be safe in all generations! And I invite all of you, by a simple act of faith in Jesus Christ, to do the same.

“But,” says someone, “there are so many sinners in the world! If they were all to come at once into this Hiding Place, would there be room for them?” Oh, yes! For, as the caverns of Engedi could hold all David's men, and Saul's men, too, and yet they scarcely came near each other, so, in the secret caverns of Almighty Love, in the Person of the Man, Christ Jesus, there is room enough and to spare for all the sinners who ever lived on the face of the earth! It will never be truly said, “The salvation of God is worn out. The pasture has been fed upon by too many sheep, so it is all gone. The Great Supper has been all consumed because there were too many guests.” Never, never shall this happen! There is room in Christ Jesus for every soul that shall ever come to Him. God help you all to come at once!—

**“Come, sinner, to the Gospel feast!
Oh, come without delay!
For there is room in Jesus' breast
For all who will obey.”**

Lastly, this is *an available Hiding Place*. I think I read, some time ago, of a ship caught in a storm which might not have been lost but that the

port it was trying to reach could only be entered at high tide. As the tide was low, the poor vessel had to stay outside to be dashed to pieces within sight of the harbor. My Lord's love is never like that harbor—it is always at flood-tide. Now, poor weather-beaten vessel, almost ready to go down, steer straight for the harbor mouth between the two red lights! There is water enough for you, though you may be so deeply laden a sinner that you seem to draw a thousand fathoms. The Infinite Love of Jesus Christ is bottomless, so there is room enough in it for you and millions more! Steer for it at once by simply saying, "I will believe in Jesus. I will take Him to be my Substitute and Representative—the appointed Man who died instead of me."

If you come to Him thus, you shall certainly find that He will accept you. Your salvation will not depend upon who or what you are, but only upon your Hiding Place. Here is a sinner, almost as big as Giant Goliath, going into this Hiding Place and it completely shields him from the stormy blast! Here is a little tot—is the Hiding Place safe for such a tiny child as he is? Yes, it is quite as safe for him as for the giant if he does but come into it. You who know that you have been big sinners, if you get into this Hiding Place, will be secure! And you who feel yourselves very weak and insignificant—you young children who may be here—if you come to Christ and trust Him, you will be just as safe as the oldest saints—

***"Only trust Him, only trust Him,
Only trust Him now!
He will save you, He will save you,
He will save you now!"***

That is the way into this Hiding Place—trust in the Lord Jesus Christ! Depend upon Christ for the pardon of your sin and for everything you need for time and for eternity, and you shall find Him shield you from every storm henceforth and forever! The Lord bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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

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

“THE SHADOW OF A GREAT ROCK”

NO. 3031

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 1907.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JULY 18, 1869.**

***“A man shall be as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”
Isaiah 32:2.***

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon on previous portions of this verse, are as follows—
No. 2856, Volume 49—OUR HIDING PLACE and No. 1243, Volume 21—RIVERS OF WATER IN A DRY
PLACE—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

EVEN in our usually temperate climate, we sometimes complain of the great heat, which is coolness itself compared with the terrible burning of Oriental lands. A journey through the Sahara Desert might make us long for even the heat of our hottest summer, unbearable though it seems to us to be. With the hot sand beneath his feet from day to day, with not a tree and scarcely so much as a bush within sight. With the sun pouring down torrents of heat as though he were full of wrath against the wayfarer, with water exceedingly scarce and what is to be obtained about as nauseous as one can conceive, the traveler through the wilderness finds it to be a “weary land,” indeed, and longs for the time when he shall once again see the cultivated fields and the lands that flow with brooks and rivers!

Travelers tell us that when the heat has become so intense that every living creature seems to be exhausted—when birds, if there are any, droop their wings, and beasts lie down and pant out their very life—at such times they have been glad to see great rocks right in the center of the barren plain. And, creeping under their shadow, they have left it on record that they have found most refreshing coolness and have lifted up their hands in gratitude to God for the blessing of “the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” Though I have never experienced to the same degree what these travelers report, I remember one hot day in Northern Italy, when riding over a dry plain where the only living creatures seemed to be the lizards and the abundant flies which they were pursuing, and the myriads of mosquitoes that stung one almost to madness—a great rock was really a source of solid comfort. Though we could afford time to rest only for a little while beneath its shadow, we gratefully remembered it all day long and wished that we could have stayed until nightfall beneath the shadow of that “great rock in a weary land.”

Writing under Divine Inspiration, the Prophet Isaiah describes the Lord Jesus Christ, in His Manhood, as being comparable to this great rock. In this wilderness life of ours, this wretched life apart from Him—to us pilgrims through this desert to the better land beyond—Christ is a great Rock and He casts a blessed shadow across our path in which we refresh ourselves and renew our strength to go on our way rejoicing.

I shall try to bring out the meaning of the text by noticing, first, *why our Lord may thus be compared to the shadow of a great rock*. Secondly, I shall show *when He is especially refreshing to us and*, thirdly, and practically, I shall ask, *what is our business with regard to Him?*

I. First, then, WHY MAY OUR LORD BE SAID TO BE A GREAT ROCK IN A WEARY LAND CASTING A REFRESHING SHADOW?

We may remember concerning Him, in the first place, that, *like a rock, He is always in the same place*. There are some shadows which you can create artificially and carry with you. There have been shadows which have been cast by great trees, but those trees have been removed. And if the traveler, in passing over the same route, should expect to enjoy their cooling shade, he would be disappointed. But, the great rock remains just where it was when Abraham, Isaac and Jacob sheltered beneath it—and the traveler, today, may do the same. It is just so with our Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be His name, He has not shifted His position! If any poor soul here wants to find Him, He is just where He used to be—that is, He is waiting at the Mercy Seat to receive every soul that will come and trust Him. Jesus Christ is not far away from any of you—He is so near that a prayer will reach Him, a sigh will find Him and a tear will get at His heart! Only turn your desires towards Him! Only say to Him, now, in the silence of your spirit, “Jesus, Master, cast Your shadow over my sin-burdened head. Protect my soul from the wrath of God and from the fierce heat of Hell!” Only ask this and it shall be given you, for Jesus is still waiting to be gracious and ready to bless you even now!

He is like a rock, too, *because His shadow is always there as well as Himself*. Wherever the sun and a rock are, there is sure to be a shadow. So, whenever God pours out the fierce beams of His wrath upon a sinner, let that sinner fly to Christ and he shall find a shelter from that wrath! Whenever conscience oppresses you and reminds you of your guilt, depend upon it that Christ has not lost His power to quiet conscience and to calm your fears. Sometimes a sinner fears that it is too late for him to find peace in Christ, or, possibly, he thinks it is too soon, or that he has sinned away his day of grace. Ah, poor Soul, all these suggestions are Satan’s lies! If you really desire to have Christ’s love shed abroad in your heart, that is a proof that Christ has already fixed His love upon you! If your head is now beaten upon by the fierce sunlight of God’s wrath, you may come and find a shelter in the great rock of Christ’s atoning Sacrifice! If you will trust in Jesus, you shall have the peace which only He can give—the peace which passes understanding. We rightly sing—

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

and they are not all saved yet—there are still some to be gathered and, therefore, Christ’s blood has not yet lost its power to cleanse from sin! And Christ, as a rock, casts His welcome shade over all who come to Him to be thus refreshed!

Our Lord may also be compared to the shadow of a great rock *because the shadow of a great rock is broad*. I remember the time when, after a long, hot and dusty walk, I found myself at the top of a considerable elevation where there is neither shrub nor tree—but a huge cross which someone has erected there. And I remember well how my friend and I tried to get under the shelter of that cross, but there was only room enough in the shadow for one of us. We both tried to get under the shadow, for it was terribly hot in the sunshine, but the cross could not give shelter to the two of us, so we had to take turns as long as we waited on the hillside. But it is not so in the case of a great rock! The shadow there is sometimes so wide that if a whole caravan shall wish to rest there free from the sun’s heat, they may all come and shelter under it—travelers, camels and all! So is it with my Master. He is no little Savior! He has already saved millions, but He is just as able to save unnumbered millions more! If the shadow of His Cross could only screen one sinner, what a scramble many of you would make in order to be that one. Yet I fear that the very freeness of the Divine Mercy makes many despise it, though it should not do so. If the whole of us felt the heat of the sun of God’s wrath in our conscience and we were all to come crowding to Jesus, we would not hear Him say, “I cannot receive you all. I have not room for you all.” If there were room in Christ for all but one, I should hear a cry from somewhere in this place, “O God, shut me not out, but receive me, even me!” Yet many of you are content not to get under the shadow of Christ though there is room there for you! There is room in Christ for the biggest sinner out of Hell! There is room for ten thousand times ten thousand sinners! There will be room for all of Adam’s race who are ever led to come and put their trust in Him! It is the shadow of a Great Rock and, therefore, it is a broad shadow!

Further, *the shadow of a rock is free to all*. Nobody thinks of paying for a seat in the shadow of a rock, and nobody would wait to be asked to come under that shadow. No one would dream of needing preparation before sitting on the shady side of a great rock. Everybody who is weary seeks the shelter—every man who is wiping the hot sweat from his brow comes and stretches himself to rest beneath that genial shade even without an invitation! In like manner, Jesus Christ is as free as the air to all who will trust in Him! You do not need to make any preparation for coming to Him and although many invitations are given to you to come to Christ, this is because of your unwillingness to come to Him—not

because there are any hindrances on His part! When a soul is once brought to long for Christ, that soul may at once have Christ. The great difficulty is to make sinners feel their need of a Savior—they think that they do not need Him. They stand in the blazing sunshine and imagine that they will never faint beneath that fierce heat. But when their strength begins to depart, they are willing to come under the shadow of the Great Rock and there it stands, just as it always did, and they are invited to come to it, after all their neglect of it, and find a refreshing shelter there. Does not this Truth of God comfort some poor soul in my audience? Are there not some of you who have made the great mistake of supposing that you had to grow better, or to do some good thing in order to get to Christ? Well, then, let me assure you that as free as is the water in the drinking-fountain at the street corner, as free as is the air which enters into your lungs, so free is the ever-gracious Savior to every guilty sinner who will but come and seek a shelter beneath this “shadow of a Great Rock in a weary land!”

Once again, our Lord is like a rock *because His shadow is most refreshing*. I do not know how true they are, but there are some old country notions that certain trees give an unhealthy shade. I have been sometimes warned not to sit under such-and-such a tree—if I did so, I would have a headache and I know not what evil besides! But this I do know—the shadow of Christ never hurts anyone, but uniformly blesses in a thousand ways! When a man does but come and rest in Jesus, headaches and heartaches, as far as they have to do with moral and spiritual disorders, pass away. The believing man realizes that he is forgiven and, oh, what a blessed realization is that! Hear him sing—

**“Now, oh joy! My sins are pardoned,
Now I can, and do believe!”**

And with that sense of pardoned sin comes a sense of perfect peace with God! The forgiven man feels a joy which he never knew before—not the wild joy in which he once delighted, which first intoxicated him and then left him depressed and heart-broken, but a joy like the course of a great river, increasing as it flows, widening and deepening as months and years roll on!

It is a blessed thing to get under the shadow of Christ. I cannot tell you all the happiness I have personally felt since I first believed in Jesus, many years ago. Amidst many struggles, and wars, and fights, I can bear my testimony that there is no life like the life of one who trusts in Jesus! There is no happiness this side the grave that is comparable with the happiness of living by faith upon the Crucified Redeemer! I do but speak what I know to be true when I recommend all young people to come beneath the shadow of this Great Rock in the early part of their lives, that ever afterwards, even until life’s latest hour, they may have the shelter which that Rock will surely bring! Never did I meet a Christian who repented of having trusted in Christ! And never have I heard of one who, in his old age, said that he had made a mistake in relying upon

Christ as his Savior. Never have I sat by the bedside of the dying to receive the recantation of a saint who told me that salvation by Grace, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, was all a deception, all a delusion! But often have these ears of mine heard expiring songs as full of melody as the songs of angels, and heard declarations of peace and joy from departing Believers that have made my heart leap and my eyes flash with joy at the very hearing! So much more deep and profound have been the joy of those who uttered such words of holy exultation and delight!

I have just one more observation to make upon this part of our subject—our Lord is like “a great rock in a weary land” because, *though it gives shade to others, that is because it bears the heat of the sun itself*. The rock is the interposing medium between the burning sunbeams and the weary traveler. Here is a delightful picture of the mediatorial work of Christ. He puts Himself between the wrath of God and us. The awful beams that streamed from the meridian sunshine of inflexible Justice concentrated all their fierce heat upon Christ and because they fell upon Him and were absorbed by Him, He now presents a cool and refreshing shade to all who come and trust in Him! Jesus suffered that we may not suffer. Jesus died that we may live. He was punished in order that we may be forgiven. He was crushed to death beneath the heel of Divine Vengeance against sin in order that we may be lifted up to Heaven by the hands of Infinite Mercy. Here, then, is the Gospel in miniature set before you! You can, in your mind’s eye, see the Great Rock and its welcome shadow, the sun shining on the rock and the traveler protected by the rock. Oh, that all of you who know not the Lord Jesus Christ would come to Him now! As you seek a shade from the sun when his beams are too hot for you to bear, so seek a shelter from the fierce rays of the sun of God’s wrath! There is no shelter but in Christ, but there is perfect protection in Him. To come to Him needs no long pilgrimage, no elaborate ceremonies—you can sit in your pew and trust in Jesus. There is life in a single look at Him! As soon as you trust in Him—

“The great transaction’s done!”

And beneath the shadow of that Rock your spirit is secure forever!

II. But we must now pass on to notice that THERE ARE CERTAIN TIMES WHEN OUR LORD, LIKE THE SHADOW OF A GREAT ROCK, IS PECULIARLY REFRESHING.

Unto them that believe, Jesus is always precious, but there are times when He is peculiarly so. This was the case with them *when they were under conviction of sin*. What memories that expression awakens in some of us—“conviction of sin!” Why, it was to some of us a very martyrdom! I think it would have been less painful to have been burned alive at the stake than to have passed through those horrors and depressions of spirit which some of us passed through while we were seeking pardon, but seeking it in the wrong way. When God makes the conscience a target for His sharp arrows. When the ten great guns of the Law are all

fired at the sinner’s soul. When shot after shot goes tearing through the man’s false peace, blowing his self-confidence to pieces and leaving him wounded, mangled and maimed. When the man cries out in his agony, “What shall I do to find salvation? How shall I get rid of sin? God is righteously angry with me, how shall I appease His wrath? I fear that Hell will be my everlasting portion, how can I escape that awful doom?”—it is then that Christ becomes “the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” Sinners will never come to Jesus while they have anything of their own to rely upon—so may the lord strip us and bring us down to absolute bankruptcy and beggary as far as everything of our own is concerned! For then we shall look to Jesus and find everything in Him! So, in the time of conviction of sin, when the ten-thonged whip of the Law falls upon a man’s conscience, Christ is indeed precious!

So too, dear Friends, *in times of trial* Believers find the shadow of this Great Rock to be most delightful and refreshing. I suppose that most of us, if not all, have had our trials. The dear child whom we loved so fondly has sickened and died. The husband or the wife, the delight of our eyes, has been borne away to the silent tomb. Possibly we were slandered by a cruel enemy, or forsaken by a false friend in whom we had implicitly trusted. It may be that our house was burned, or our business proved a failure and that losses followed on the heels of losses like Job’s messengers with evil tidings. Yes, but, beloved Believer, in all these times of trial you have found Christ to be a blessed Comforter! And I will venture to say that the sharper your affliction has been, the sweeter has Christ been to you. I wonder how some people who have many troubles can get on without Christ? I marvel at you, consumptive young woman, and you, hard-working man with a growing family, trying to do without the consolations of our blessed Savior! I know that some people have the notion that religion is not meant for the poorest of the poor, but if there are any people whom it suits best, surely it is these! If it does not fill the cupboard, it makes the heart content with what it has! If it does not put broadcloth on the back, it makes the wearer satisfied with fustian! There is no one like Christ for the poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the sorrowing. He is, indeed, as “the shadow of a great rock in a weary land” to all such poor tried souls.

Let me also remind you that *we shall know more about the refreshing shade of Christ when we come to die*. Not many weeks hence some of us must die. When there is such a large number of people gathered together, some of them must soon die. But all of us must, before long, gather up our feet in the bed and die—

“Our fathers’ God to meet.”

What must it be to die without a Savior? A shiver runs through my frame as I think of it. To die without a hope, how sad! But to die trusting in Christ, how blessed! I remember standing in the pulpit one sultry summer’s afternoon, preaching of the joys of Heaven and there was one woman’s eyes that specially caught mine as I was preaching. I knew not

why it was, but it seemed to fascinate me. And as I spoke of Heaven, she seemed to drink in every word, and her eyes flashed back again the thoughts I uttered. She seemed to lead me on to speak more and more of the streets of gold and the gates of pearl till, suddenly, her eyes appeared to me to be too fixed—and at last it struck me that while I had been talking of Heaven, *she had gone there*. I paused and asked if someone in the pew would kindly see whether the friend sitting there was not dead and, in a moment, her husband said, “She is dead, Sir.” I had known her long as a consistent Christian woman and, as I stood there, I half wished that I could have changed places with her! There was not a sigh, nor a tear. She seemed to drink in the thoughts of Heaven and then straightway to go and enjoy it! If such a sudden departure is not ours, it will be much like it—we shall close our eyes on earth and open them in Heaven beneath the shadow of that Great Rock! In Heaven, they sit beneath Christ’s shadow, and on earth we will do the same. So we will still sing—

**“Where is the shadow of that Rock
That from the sun defends Your flock?
Gladly would I feed among Your sheep,
Among them rest, among them sleep.”**

But, my dear Hearers, *what will it be to have the shelter of Christ in the Day of Judgment?* We can never form right ideas of what that Day of Judgment will be—

**“That day of wrath, that dreadful day
When Heaven and earth shall pass away”—**

and weeping and wailing shall be the prelude to the sitting of the Judge upon the Great White Throne! Then, when every eye shall see Him and they, also, who pierced Him, it will be a blessed thing to have Him as the Rock of Ages to hide us from the wrath of that tremendous day—

**“Day of judgment, day of wonders!
Hark, the trumpet’s awful sound,
Louder than a thousand thunders,
Shakes the vast creation round!
How the summons
Will the sinner’s heart confound!
See the Judge our nature wearing,
Clothed in majesty Divine!
You who long for His appearing,
Then shall say, ‘This God is mine!’
Gracious Savior!
Own me in that day for Thine!”**

III. Now lastly, if these things are so, and they are so, WHAT IS OUR BUSINESS?

Our business is *to get under this shadow if we are not already under it*. What is the use of a shadow to those who stand in the blazing sunshine? There is many a soul that stands in the sunshine longer than it needs and so feels faint and weary. And there are some who have thus got such a sunstroke as they will never lose this side of Heaven. I mean that they

have to go doubting and fearing all their spiritual life because they were so long before they trusted in Christ. I know that only the Holy Spirit can bring a sinner under this blessed shadow, but how base must be the human heart when it will not come and take what Christ so freely provides! Why will you die? Why will you perish when you need not? There is a shadow—why will you stand in the fierce light of the sun? All the bells of Heaven are ringing out, “Come and welcome!” All the angels of God are singing, “Come and welcome! Come and welcome!” From this open Book, from the Gospel preached by one of God’s ministers tonight, there sounds this message, “Come and trust in the Incarnate Son of God!” I wish I knew how to put it in more melting tones, but it needs the Holy Spirit to bring it home to your hearts. Dear trembler, waverer, halting between two opinions, you who have so long put off coming to Christ, come now! I ask again, why do you continue to stand beneath the wrath of God when you need not linger there a moment longer?

**“Come to Jesus,
Come to Jesus, Sinner, come!”**

And when you have come, *take care to tell others what you have discovered.* Do not let any poor soul be without the knowledge of the way of salvation so far as you can tell it. Tell to those who are round about you, your experience of the comforts of true religion! This is the way to gather jewels for the Redeemer’s crown. If you find that Christ deceives you, let us know, for, as honest men, we would not like to go on telling an idle tale. But if you find Him true. If He comforts you, and blesses you, do bear your testimony to others, for then, perhaps your child, your wife, your brother, your neighbor may come and trust Him too! I will be bound for Him that He will reject none of you who come to Him and I will be a bondsman for Him for another thing, that if you once have Him as your Savior, you will never grow weary of Him! You will say that it was the best day that ever dawned upon you when you gave your heart to the Crucified Christ, who, on Calvary’s Cross, made the one Sacrifice for sin forever! Oh, yield your heart to Him! I see Him standing there with those pierced hands of His! He knocks softly at your heart’s door—

**“Admit Him, for the human breast
Never entertained so kind a guest
Admit Him, before His anger burns,
His feet depart, and never returns!
Admit Him, or the hour’s at hand
When at His door denied you’ll stand.”**

By the love of God in Christ Jesus, hold out no longer! Young man, I beseech you by the precious blood of Christ, give yourself to Him! Have you done it? Do you trust Him wholly? Then, rejoice and sing, you seraphs, and let Heaven be glad, for Christ sees the reward of His soul-travail, for a child is born in His House tonight that shall live to praise Him, both here and throughout eternity!

May the Lord bless everyone here, and His shall be the glory forever. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 5:17-48.**

Verse 17. *Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.* The life-work and words of Christ are not an improvement of the Old Testament, or a doing away of it. It stands fast and firm, fulfilled, carried to perfection, filled to the fullest in Christ!

18, 19. *For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the Law till all is fulfilled. Whoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven: but whoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.* It is vain to teach the commandments without first doing them. The doing must always precede the teaching. If a man's example cannot be safely followed, it will be unsafe to trust his words.

20. *For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* The scribes and Pharisees were supposed to be righteous beyond all others. “No,” says Christ, “you must go beyond them.” They were, after all, superficial, flimsy, pretentious, unreal in their righteousness—and we must have a far nobler character than they ever attained, or we “shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.”

21. *You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not kill; and whoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.* This is a proof that Christ did not come to abolish the Law, or to abate its demands in any degree whatever.

22. *But I say unto you.* Oh, what Divine dignity there is in this majestic Person whose *ipse dixit* is to shift all the sayings of the ages! He claims authority to speak, even though He should contradict all the Rabbis and all the learned men that went before Him—“I say unto you.”

22. *That whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whoever shall say, You fool, shall be in danger of Hell fire.* Christ here shows us that the commandment, “You shall not kill,” deals with anger, with angry words, with words of cursing, with words of derision—for all these are killing things, hurting and wounding things—and the passion of anger is forbidden under the command, “You shall not kill.” Men have not thought so, but it really is so, for he who is angry with his brother is a murderer! There is the spirit, the essence of that which leads to murder in the passion which breeds malice and revenge. The Law of God is spiritual—it touches the emotions, the thoughts, the desires as well as the words and actions of men. If I desire ill for a man, I have within me that which would desire his death—

and what is that, after all, but murder in the heart? How strict is this Law, and yet how just and right!

23, 24. *Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has anything against you; leave there your gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.* It is said that in India there is a complete divorce of religion from morality, so that a man may be supposed to be eminently religious even while living in the utmost filthiness and vice. But it must never be so among us. We must never imagine that God can accept an offering from us while we harbor any enmity in our hearts. Perhaps, after reading this passage, you say, “If I had anything against my brother, I would go to him at once, and seek to be reconciled to him.” That would be quite right, but you must go further than that, for Christ says, “If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that *your brother has anything against you.*” It is much more easy to go to the man who has wronged you than to the one whom you have wronged. Yet the second is evidently the clearer duty, and should be attended to at once—neither can we expect the Lord to attend to us unless we attend to this duty.

25, 26. *Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver you to the judge, and the judge deliver you to the officer, and you be cast into prison. Verily I say unto you, You shall by no means come out till you have paid the uttermost farthing.* There is nothing like ending disputes at once, before the rancor grows and your adversary becomes determined to push you to extremes. Oh, for more of that spirit of yielding! You know how people say, “If you tread on a worm: it will turn.” But, Brothers and Sisters, a worm is not an example for a Christian, even if the poor wounded creature does turn toward you in its agony. If you turn, turn to kiss the hand that smites you, and to do good to them that evilly treat you!

27, 28. *You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.* So that the unholy desire, the lascivious glance, everything that approximates towards licentiousness is here condemned—and Christ is proved to be not the Destroyer of the Law, but the Confirmer of it! See how He shows that the commandment is exceedingly broad, wide as the canopy of Heaven, all-embracing. How sternly it condemns us all and how well it becomes us to fall down at the feet of the God of Infinite Mercy and seek His forgiveness—

**“Tis mercy—mercy we implore,
We would Your pity move—
Your Grace is an exhaustless store,
And You, Yourself, are Love.”**

29, 30. *And if your right eye offends you, pluck it out, and cast it from you: for it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish, and not that your whole body should be cast into Hell. And if your right hand*

offends you, cut it off, and cast it from you: for it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish, and not that your whole body should be cast into Hell. Give up the dearest, choicest and apparently most necessary thing if it leads you into sin. The same rule that bids you avoid sin, bids you also avoid all that *leads to sin*. If adultery is forbidden, so also is that glance with which the sin usually begins. We are to turn away our eyes from beholding that which leads towards sin and we are not to touch or taste that which would readily lead us into iniquity. Oh, that we had sufficient decision of character to make short work of everything which tends towards evil! Many persons, when their right eye offends them, put a green shade over it. And when their right hand offends them, they tie it up in a sling. But that is not obeying the command of Christ. He charges you to get rid of everything that would lead you wrong—make a clean sweep of it. You are wrong enough at your best, so do not permit anything to appertain to you which would lead you still further astray,

31, 32. *It has been said, Whoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, That whoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication.* Which is a sufficient and justifiable reason for divorce.

32. *Causes her to commit adultery: and whoever shall marry her that is divorced.* That is to say, who is divorced without sufficient cause.

32. *Commits adultery.* Among the Jews, divorce was the easiest thing in the world. A man might, in a pet, utter words which would divorce his wife. The Savior abolished that evil once and for all and made divorce a crime, as it always is “saving for the cause of fornication.”

33, 34. *Again, you have heard that it has been said by them of old time, You shall not forswear yourself, but shall perform unto the Lord your oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all.* Christ thus abolishes the whole system of swearing, as it ought to be abolished in every place. And He goes on to show that He did not mean merely unclean, false oaths, or oaths taken as some men take them blasphemously, but every form and kind of oath, for He says, “Swear not at all.”

34-37. *Neither by Heaven; for it is God’s Throne: nor by the earth; for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yes, yes. No, no: for whatever is more than these comes of evil.* If words mean anything, this command of Christ is an utter abolishment of oaths taken before magistrates as well as everywhere else. I can make nothing else out of it—indeed, it must mean that because Christ contrasts His teaching with that of former ages—“It has been said by them of old time, You shall not forswear yourself, but shall perform unto the Lord your oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all.” A man who cannot be believed upon his word, certainly cannot be believed upon his oath and, usually, when a

man tells a lie, the next thing he does is swear to it. When Peter denied his Master, the next thing he did was to curse and to swear, because he thought it likely that they would not imagine that he was a follower of Christ if he did curse and swear. So he gave that as a pretty clear proof that he had not been with Christ and was not one of His disciples. Alas, that we should need anything beside “Yes, yes,” and, “No, no!”

38-43. *You have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That you resist not evil: but whoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue you at the Law, and take away your coat, let him have your cloak also. And whoever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him two. Give to him that asks you, and from him that would borrow of you turn not you away. You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy. There are many who do the second of those two things, but not the first.*

44, 45. *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven: for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. God constantly does that which many people regard almost as a crime, namely, doing good to the undeserving. It is the very genius of Christianity to help those who are utterly unworthy—to be kind and generous even to those who are pretty certain to repay us with ingratitude and malice.*

46-48. *For if you love them which love you, what reward have you? Do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect. Stretch towards the highest conceivable standard and be not satisfied till you reach it.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—708, 808.

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

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

THE ROCKY FORTRESS AND ITS INHABITANT NO. 1764

**A SERMON PREACHED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 3, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly; he that despises the gain of oppressions, that shakes his hands from holding of bribes, that stops his ears from hearing of blood, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil, he shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.”
Isaiah 33:15, 16.*

THERE were terrible times in Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah. The Assyrian power was exceedingly formidable and it was ferocious to the last degree. Woe to the unhappy land which fell under the power of this spoiler! Assyria knew not the meaning of “mercy.” It came down “like a wolf on the fold,” tearing and devouring without pity. The armies of Sennacherib were ravaging the kingdom of Judah and they had brought it into such a state that the Prophet cried, “The earth mourns and languishes: Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down: Sharon is like a wilderness and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits.” Before the invaders the land was a garden and behind them it was a desolate wilderness.

Yet the Lord had given a promise to His people in Jerusalem on this wise—“therefore thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, he shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, says the Lord.” Notwithstanding Rabshakeh’s blasphemous letter and all his foul reviling, those who trusted in Jehovah were not dismayed, for the Lord had promised to defend the city for His own name’s sake.

There *were* godly men in the city, though I fear they were not many, who rested content with the sure promise of God and went about their daily business feeling perfectly safe. They would have felt secure if the whole land had swarmed with Assyrians as the fields with locusts, for they believed the Word of the Lord. Their trust was in the living God and therefore, they feared not the multitude of the enemy! But the whole of the inhabitants of Jerusalem were not of this brave order—the unholy were afraid and fearfulness surprised the hypocrites. Their sin and their deceit made cowards of them! They would all be destroyed, they would all perish by the Assyrians!

Who was to save them? What power could resist the conqueror of nations? Where were the gods of Hamath and Arphad? The people of those cities had trusted in their gods and yet none of them had been delivered

out of the hands of the invaders! How could Jehovah turn back the fierce tyrant, now that he had come upon the land like a flood? The sinners and the hypocrites in the time of trial were discovered—the sinners showed their fear and the hypocrites manifested their unbelief. They began to flee *before* they were pursued! They trembled though no enemy could be seen from the walls. God in vengeance was near to the city! The land smoked with all-consuming fire! The flame of the Lord's indignation burned perpetually—how could these men hope to live in such times? As well hope to live amid devouring fires and everlasting burnings!

Alas, there are many who dwell among God's people at this time and have a name and a place among them who are sinners and not saints—hypocrites and not Believers—and these will, before long, be discovered and dismayed. While all goes well with the Church of God, you cannot separate the vile from the precious, nor pluck up the tares from among the wheat, nor cast out the bad fish from among the good which are enclosed in the same net. But trying times come and days of adversity—and then the false brethren are discerned! When persecution arises, the hypocrites are offended! When affliction rushes like a torrent, the sand-founded houses fall! And especially shall it be so when, amid the terrors of the Last Tremendous Day, every secret thing shall be revealed—and hypocrites and sinners shall appear in their true colors!

Fearfulness will leap unexpectedly upon the hypocrites to their intense surprise, for they will see how impossible it is for them to dwell with God and to abide in His holy Presence. Oh, dear Brothers and Sisters, let us not be satisfied with being *in Zion*, or *in the Church*. Let us not rest till we are quite sure that we are not *sinners* in it, that we are not *hypocrites* in it, for, mark you, if our religion is not sanctifying and true, it will fail us in the hour of trial! If our confidence in God does not make us calm and hopeful in the time of temptation and sorrow, what is the use of it? Yet it is certain that no man shall find his profession to be of use to him in testing times but he that is true in it; he that is thorough in it; he that is neither a sinner nor a hypocrite in the sense in which those words are here used.

Safety in Zion belongs to those born in her by *regeneration*, reared in her by *sanctification*, enfranchised in her by *faith* in the Son of God, settled in her by fixed *principles*, confirmed in her by *obedience* to her laws and bound to her by intense *love* of her King and her citizens. Such “shall dwell on high” secure from danger—and only such—the aliens and foreigners within her gates shall, before long, be driven forth with shame! We are going to look, this morning, at these favored people. First, to *note their character*. Secondly, to *observe their security*. And to finish, thirdly, by calling up all present to *seek their felicity*. Oh, for the aid of the Holy Spirit all the sermon through!

I. First, let us NOTE THEIR CHARACTER. They are described, in part, in the words of our text, but I am obliged to go a little further afield for one essential part of their character. The true people of God, who, in the time of danger will be preserved are a people *who display a humble, patient, present faith in God*. They reveal their character in the second verse of the chapter before us when they pray—“O Lord, be gracious unto us;

we have waited for You: be You our arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.” They humbly cry, “O Lord, be gracious unto us.” They are a *praying* people who make their appeal to God under a sense of need—they are not fatalists, for they pray. Neither are they self-sufficient, for they seek help from God.

They beseech the Lord to bless them, not according to their own merit, but according to His Grace. Though their outward life has been cleansed and their hearts are renewed, yet they do not imagine that they have any claim upon God. Their appeal is to His free favor—“O Lord, be gracious unto us.” They are not a people who think that God will be necessarily gracious and that, therefore, they need not pray for mercy, for they are found crying to Him in earnest prayer. They are, you see, a trustful people who feel that they have need—and that their need can only be fulfilled by the Sovereign Grace of God, to whom they make supplication. Those who dwell on high with God are always lovers of Grace—it is the top and bottom of their hope!

Furthermore, they are a waiting people—“We have waited for You.” If the Lord does not seem to hear their prayer at once, they nevertheless expect that He will do so and, therefore, they wait expectantly. If at once they have not all the comfort and joy they would desire, they wait on God’s pleasure, not rushing into sin to snatch a hasty rescue, nor running away at the first rebuff and saying, “What profit is there if we wait upon Him?” Quite certain that the Lord *does* hear prayer and that He waits to be gracious, they hopefully wait His time, for His appointments are always wise. They are a people who have a present faith which they exercise every day, saying, “Be You our arm every morning!” They do not imagine that by having trusted in God years ago and having obtained salvation, they may, therefore, now live without faith—they believe today as they believed from the beginning of their Christian life and so prove it true that, “the just shall live by his faith.”

Every step they are depending. Every morning they are looking up to the hills from where their help comes. These are the *true* people of God and the *only* people of God—trusting, hoping, expecting, relying and resting upon the Lord their God! The fear of the Lord is their treasure and they cry with exultation in the language of the 22nd verse, “The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King; He will save us.” The description in our actual text is the portrait of their *outer* life, but a living faith is the secret basis and foundation of it all. This being understood, our text gives a description of these people, setting out their various features.

It first describes *their feet*, or how they walk—“He who walks righteously.” Faith has an effect upon our entire manhood. When a man believes, his faith affects every part of him. It operates upon his actions, thoughts, wishes and designs. And it affects both his private and public life. One of the first evidences of a true belief in God is that a man walks righteously. He tries to act rightly towards his God and towards his fellow men—and thus he is led to be devout before the Lord and upright among men. The rule of right is the rule for him—not policy, nor the hope of gain, nor the desire to please—much less the lust of the flesh and the pride of

life. By the Grace of God he labors above all things to walk in the narrow way of true holiness.

I want you to notice this, because the promise I am going to speak about belongs only to the people who answer to this description—therefore, see you to it—that you do not take the comfort of the promise if you come not under the character to whom that comfort is given! The man who does not walk righteously shall not dwell on high! There shall be no place of defense for him. If we depart from the ways of righteousness and run in the paths of the wicked, we shall meet with the same fate as they. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.” Where the Grace of God truly dwells and a living faith is in exercise, the man becomes righteous in his walk and conversation—and his course is more and more conformed to the will of the Lord.

I deny that a man is a believer in the Lord Jesus if he remains a dishonest man. I deny that he has real faith in Jesus Christ if he is rotten in heart, unjust in business and untrue in life. He knows not Christ who delights in iniquity! So you see that the first description of this blessed man who is to dwell on high is very searching, for it does not relate to his *profession*, but to his *walk* and *conversation* from day to day. It is not talk, but action that we have here. Here is no room for the fiction of formality! All is fact, fact of daily life.

The next feature that is described is *his tongue*—“He speaks uprightly.” No description of a man’s character can be perfect which does not include his speech. A man who lies, or who talks obscenely or profanely, is a bad man! A man whose words are arrogant and boastful, cruel and slanderous, unreliable and deceptive, unchaste and impure, is no child of God! The Grace of God very speedily sweetens a man’s tongue and, if his religion does not operate upon his speech, it is surely not the religion of the pure and holy God. “By your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.” If the tongue is set on the fire of Hell, the heart is not on fire with Grace from Heaven!

The doctor says, “Stick out your tongue,” and he judges the symptoms of health or disease thereby. Assuredly, there is no better test of the inward character than the condition of the tongue. “Out of your own mouth will I judge you” is a fair decision. If, then, our lips do not speak uprightly, that is, speak truthfully and justly—if our tongue is not salted and sanctified by the Grace of God—then we cannot claim any of the privileges which are described in our text! God grant that we may prove by our conversation that the Lord has rewoven us in our inner man. The next feature is *the heart*—“He that despises the gain of oppressions.” Not only does he not oppress any man—nor wish to gain anything by extortion or by grinding the faces of the poor, or by any act of unrighteousness—he thinks such gain as might be made in that fashion to be utterly contemptible!

He desires gain if it may come cleanly to him. Prosperity is as welcome to him as to another man, for he has his own needs and the needs of his household for which he is bound to provide. But if any should say to him that there is gold to be had through pinching the laborer in his wages, or through grasping by law that which is not morally his own, he abhors the

thought! He says of such gain, "I would not win it if I could. I would not put such evil money among my honest earnings—it would pollute all the rest of my substance." A good man is jealous lest he should seem to receive the wages of unrighteousness. He desires to receive his goods as blessings at the hands of God and not to win them as a spoil from the oppressed.

A true Christian would not bring into his house a thing over which he could not seek the blessing of God—he would count it a thing accursed like Achan's wedge of gold. Many ways of making money which are tolerated, nowadays, would be loathsome to a right-minded man. Though unrighteous practices should promise to fill his house with silver and gold, he would not follow them. He could not sell his Lord for pieces of silver! He despises the gain of oppression! It is as the mire of the streets to him. He looks down upon it with utter contempt. Dear Friends, it little matters what our outward life may be, or even what our speech may be, if our *heart* is not affected by our religion! If Grace only lies skin-deep in you, it has only saved your skin, but not your soul!

Until Grace touches the mainspring, it has done nothing! The heart must despise evil as well as the lips denounce it! Until the wellhead is sweetened, the streams are foul. Not only must I do right, but *love* right! Not only must I avoid wrong, but I must *hate* wrong! Not only must I refuse unrighteous gain, but I must utterly despise it! See, my Brothers and Sisters, how much is necessary before any one of us can claim the choice blessings which are spread before us in the second part of our text? The portrait does not omit *the hands*, those important members of the body—those prominent actors both for good and for evil. In Isaiah's day, bribery was connected with every government office high and low—but the good man "shakes his hands from holding of bribes." If money was slipped into his hand before he was aware of it, he shook it off with indignation. He would not take what was offered or keep what was given.

There is still much bribery abroad in indirect ways. Men are offered advantages if they will wink at evil, or frown on good. Satan tempts young and old with the old insinuation, "All these things will I give you if you will fall down and worship me." The Destroyer still makes merchandise of souls! Oh, for Grace to shake off every sort of bribe from our hands as men shake off dust from their feet with utter abhorrence when their indignation is awakened! Clean hands are as necessary as renewed hearts. If your hands clutch the reward of a sinful trade, or a dishonest transaction. Or if you hold a profit by countenancing wrong, or forbearing from right, you are not among the people whom the Lord has sworn to guard with His own right hand!

Thus we have described the feet, the tongue, the heart and the hands. Now comes *the ear*—"that stops his ears from hearing of blood." Men who delighted in war, in olden times, were apt to boast to one another of their cruel deeds—whom they slew and how they slew them—they rolled the dainty morsels of cruelty under their tongues. In Hezekiah's time, I guarantee, blood-red tales were told with horror that would have made our ears tingle—but these were greedily listened to by those of a coarse spirit. But the good man in Jerusalem would not hear them. When a man

boasted of having slain such an enemy, the godly man said, "Go tell your tale somewhere else, lest I bring you before the judge. I will not hear of your wicked doings. I cannot endure your brutal talk." He shut his ears. He drew back from the discussion. It was sickening to him.

Now, it is not the hearing of blood, alone, that you and I must avoid, but the hearing of *anything* that is tainted, prurient, skeptical, depraving. This has much to do with the health of a genuine Christian's soul—that he puts an embargo upon unclean conversation, counts it contraband and will not allow it to enter his soul by the gate of the ear. He wisely shuts the gate, lets down the iron gate and pulls up the drawbridge, so that no filthy communication may come in by Ear-Gate! The same sacred prudence prevents our reading books which are corrupt, or false. As soon as we reach a page which has an ill savor about it, we drop the volume and return it to its owner. Or, if it is our own, we cast it into the fire that it may do no harm to others. The righteous man "stops his ears."

He will not be interested in that which cannot subserve his highest interest. He is not willing to be like the king in the story, poisoned through the ear. He knows that an evil tale cannot injure him if he never hears it and, therefore, he denies his curiosity that he may preserve his memory undefiled. He is deaf to news about which a good man would be dumb. He has the blood upon his ear to signify that his Lord has bought him with a price in that member, as well as in every other. Yes, his ear is bored to the doorpost of the Truth of God, that he may hear it, and it only, with full intent of heart.

The picture is complete when *the eyes* are mentioned—"and shuts his eyes from seeing evil." He cannot help seeing it as he goes along his pilgrimage through life, but he seeks not such sights and, as much as he can, he avoids it. He takes no pleasure in the most brilliant displays of folly. Vain pomps and glories charm him not. He does not seek his amusement in gazing upon bedizened wickedness. If there is a turmoil in the streets, he is not the man that will be called as a witness to it, for he discreetly walks the other way, leaving off strife before it is meddled with. He is one that does not leap into the ditch in the hope that he may come out of it without being covered with mire—he chooses the clean path and keeps out of harm's way.

When others crave to see life, he judges such life to be death and pursues a nobler path. He wishes to see only that which is good, true and helpful to his progress to Heaven. Opened eyes and ears are good, but sometimes closed eyes and stopped ears are better. You know the old classic story of how Ulysses caused his sailors to pass the rocks of the Sirens in safety. The sweet enchanting song of the fatal sisters would have fascinated the mariners and drawn them upon the rocks and so the crafty Ulysses sealed the ears of all his mariners with wax, lest the sweet deluders should destroy them—

***"Then every ear I barred against the strain,
And from access of frenzy locked the brain."***

To be blind and deaf and dumb in some places would be far better than to hear and see and speak to our own condemnation—it is infinitely better to enter into life halt or blind or deaf, than, having all our powers, to use them for sinful purposes and fall into the fires of Hell at the last!

Shortly, the text means just this, that a true Believer is a man who has himself well in hand, having mastery over his whole manhood. He has a bit in the mouth of all the steeds which draw the chariot of life and he holds them under due control. He will not let his ears or his eyes delude his fancy, nor his feet or hands deface his conduct, nor his heart or tongue betray his spirit. He will have nothing to do with evil! He has no fellowship with it. His spirit is redeemed, regenerated, renewed. He will not be flattered into pride, nor bribed into deceit, nor allured into unholliness. The Holy Spirit has worked in him holiness—and integrity and uprightness preserve him. The true Christian is a man who keeps himself clear of the common sins of the arts and the popular vices which flourish uncondemned.

The sins mentioned in the text were those current in Jerusalem—there they oppressed the poor, they ground them down in their rents, in their wages, in the price of food, in the usury demanded for loans—there they took bribes and sold justice! But the good man did not because of the fear of the Lord. In Jerusalem men-at-arms gained wealth by deeds of blood and violence. They devoured widows' houses and ate up the inheritances of the fatherless! But the child of God did not.

Gainful sins were to him most accursed. He would rather suffer wrong than inflict it. David sketched this man in his 24th Psalm and with this I give a finishing stroke to the portrait—"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His holy place? He that has clean hands, and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation."

II. We have reached our second head. I ask you to follow me while, concerning these godly men, WE OBSERVE THEIR SECURITY. Observe it, first, *as it is pictorially described* in the text. The times are those of war—the battle rages in the plains, but, "he shall dwell on high"—aloft upon the craggy rocks shall be his citadel. In times of invasion men resorted to the highest mountains and rocks, that there they might be sheltered among the lofty fastnesses. While others flee, this man shall dwell—dwell at ease, in permanent peace—and that dwelling shall be on the heights, far beyond the reach of the invader. Is not this glorious?

The bands of robbers ravage all around, but they cannot plunder *him*—he looks down upon them and defies their power. There upon the inaccessible rock stands the City of Peace, its quiet walls gleaming in the sunlight and flashing back a calm defiance to the foe. "Mark you well her bulwarks." A Believer dwells on the heights—his life is hid with Christ in God—he cannot be reached by the darts of the adversary. "Yet," says one, "though he dwells on high, the enemy may reach him by scaling-ladders, or by some other means of assault." By no means shall they smite him, for he shall have a "place of defense." Is it not written, "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence: and His children shall have a place of refuge"? "Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks."

As a castle prepared for war, as "the tower of David built for an armory," so shall the Lord be unto His people! The adversary shall rage in vain, dashing himself against ramparts which he cannot shake. He shall

go round the city like a dog, but find no entrance, for the Lord is there. "Yet," says one, "these walls may be dashed down, or may fall into decay." Not so, for, "His place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks." Stupendous rocks—firm, massive, enormous—shall furnish him a hiding place! Immutable strength shall gird him around both day and by night forever and ever! "His place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks."

Not one fortification, but *many* shall make up his stronghold—mountains shall be round about him—the solid foundations of the earth shall stand between him and the enemy and nothing shall, by any means, hurt him—

***"Mountains of stupendous rock
His dwelling place shall be!
There might his soul without a shock
The wreck of Nature see."***

"Yet," says one, "the enemy may starve a man out of his citadel—rock cities have been captured, at last, because the inhabitants have been pinched with hunger. There has been nothing for the men-at-arms to eat and, therefore they have sold their castle for bread." But this is also provided for—"bread shall be given him." God will take care that the godly shall not want. As the Lord's chosen cannot be driven out, so they shall not be starved out. The Believer shall hold the fort till Christ shall come, for the bread of angels shall be rained upon him sooner than he shall lack!

"Ah, well," says one, "but even if bread could be conveyed into the fortress, yet you know these elevated positions cannot be readily supplied with *water*—and by *thirst* they may be forced to yield." The Promiser has thought of that, also, for it is written, "his waters shall be sure." The well within the gate shall never fail! The hidden springs shall never be dried up and the people of the city shall drink and drink as much as they will—and yet the supply shall never be exhausted. O you enemy, let your hopeless warfare end! Give up the conflict, for vainly do you beleaguer the City of God! The chosen of the Lord shall never be conquered by the foe, for his God has taken measures to garrison him against all assaults and to deliver him in all straits!

Do you remind me that all this is poetry? I answer, It is a poetical description, but it is true in every jot and tittle, and so I ask you to accompany me while we consider this thing *as it may be actually experienced*. It is a matter of fact that the man who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and lives as a Christian should live, dwells on the heights. His mind is lifted up above the common cares, worries and vexations of life. The Holy Spirit has begotten him, again, unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and, therefore, his conversation is in Heaven, from where he looks for his Savior, the Lord Jesus. I am sure that many of you know what it is to ride on the high places of the earth and to look down upon the world as a poor, paltry thing.

You have walked with God in His Light, even as He is in the Light, and then you have been filled with a joy which no man takes from you and you have trod the world beneath your feet—and all that earth calls good or great. Thus has it been true of you, "he shall dwell on high." You have also found that you have had a place of defense in time of trouble. Though of-

ten assailed, you have never been really injured. Unto this day the rage of man has caused you no real loss. You can understand, today, the meaning of that Word, "Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass?" Even Satan, himself, has not been able to overthrow you—you have trod upon the lion and the dragon! In the name of the Lord you have resisted the devil and he has fled from you.

Tell it out this day to all the sons of men, that the Lord your God has been a wall of fire round about you! I, also, will join you in this glorying. "O my Soul, you have trod down strength!" All things have worked together for good to us up till now and we know it—we have had a place of defense—and in this we will rejoice and be glad! And do you not know today how secure, how immutable is your defense? Even as the eagle on the rock cannot be reached by the fowler, so are you secure. Look! You have God's promise—"I will never leave you nor forsake you!" "No good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly."

These promises are the munitions of rocks behind which you are sheltered—the sure Words of an unchanging God are your bulwarks! You also have the oath of God as your high tower, for He has sworn by Himself because He could swear by no greater! There stands His Covenant made up of promises, secured by oath and ratified by blood—who shall break within that line of defense? What munitions of rock can be compared with these things in which it is "impossible for God to lie"—these pledges which God can never dishonor—these guarantees of everlasting faithfulness that can never be questioned. Oh, the blessed security of a child of God!

At this present moment, O child of God, you are dwelling where you must be safe for, first, you were chosen before the foundation of the world and God will not lose His choice, nor shall His decree be frustrated! Next, you have been bought with the precious blood of the Son of God, Himself, and He will never lose what He has dearly bought. You have been quickened by the Holy Spirit and such a life can never die! You know who has said, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." You have been taken into the family of God and made His child—and will your Father now disown you, or remove your name out of the family register?

You are also joined unto Christ in one spirit, you are a "member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones," and shall Christ be dismembered and the Son of God be torn in two? Believing in my Lord, this morning, I stand where the devils of Hell cannot reach me and where the angels of God might envy me, for I can exclaim in your name and in my own, "Who shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" We challenge earth and Hell, time and eternity, to dissolve the blessed union between Christ and His people! Who is he that can harm you if you are followers of that which is good? If your confidence is in the living God, who shall put you to shame?

I must not fail to notice that the poetic utterance, "Your bread shall be given you," is also literally true. It has been true to you, my Brothers and Sisters, concerning your daily bread. That Word of God is true, "Trust in The Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall

be fed.” At times there has been little on the table, but AllSufficiency has still filled the storehouse. When God multiplied the oil and the meal of the poor women at Sarepta, I do not believe that at any one moment she ever had more than sufficed for a single meal. Every day that Elijah lived with her she had to scrape the bottom of the barrel, for she had never more than a handful of meal and a little oil. We are not told that either the barrel or the cruse were filled up, but we read—“the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail.”

You may frequently reach the end of your provisions, but you can never exhaust your Provider! The meal may come by handfuls and the oil may only drip out, drop by drop, but what does that matter? Was not the manna from Heaven a small round thing and did it not fall morning by morning? If you have earthly provision as you need it, should it not suffice you? If you get as much as you need for this meal and as much as you need for the next meal, is it not well? Are not the loaves of heavenly bread all the better for being fresh? The manna would not keep, but bred worms—who wants such unsavory food? There is nothing like living from hand to mouth when it is from God’s hand to faith’s mouth! Daily bread promotes daily gratitude and from God’s hand hourly Providence brings multiplied tokens of love and is a surer sign of remembrance than if we could have life’s mercies all in a lump.

“Bread shall be given him” refers, also, to heavenly bread which we have even more cause to think about than about the bread which perishes—this, also, shall be given us. If we are driven away from a faithful ministry. If we move to the utmost ends of the earth where we miss the means of Grace, yet the Lord will feed our souls. If His ministers do not feed us, He will, Himself, minister to us. The Word of the Lord shall not cease to nourish us. “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” As for the waters, the living waters of Grace and of the Holy Spirit—these shall always flow—in summer and winter shall the still waters be found at your side! Yes, they shall be within you “a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.”

Words cannot tell the privilege of the man who lives in God and lives with God! He need not shiver in the damps of earth—he lives on high! He need not fear the fury of the enemy, for he has a place of defense! He need not dread the lapse of time—his munitions are of rock! He need not tremble at famine and drought—his needs shall all be met by the care of Heaven! The man who knows His sins are forgiven, who is covered with the righteousness of Christ, who is in vital union with the Lord Jesus, who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit—that man, I say, need not desire to be any other than he is, but may give himself up to blessing and praising and magnifying the Most High every moment of his life till he is caught up to the highest Heaven, to dwell where enemies cannot threaten nor necessities arise!

III. So this brings me to close by urging you, dear Friends, to SEEK THEIR FELICITY. First, shall I need to say, “Do not try to obtain it by hypocrisy”? Since they are so happy, whom God favors, do not think that by getting your name into their Church book you will necessarily be favored, too. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, be *true* Believers and not make-believers!

Do not pretend to be what you are not. Sinners in Zion are still sinners and they will, one day, be afraid. Hypocrites, though joined with the people of God, are still hypocrites, and will, before long, be surprised with fearfulness. Do not hope by a mere empty profession to win the blessedness of God's people, for by such means you will win a curse rather than a blessing.

Secondly, do not hope to win the bliss of the righteous by self-righteousness, for although we have been describing righteous men this morning, yet we have not been describing self-righteous men! The self-righteous is not righteous—the two things are wide apart as the poles. These very people whom God favored had sinned, for we read in the 24th verse of the chapter, "The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." The blessing is not to the man who glories in his *innocence*, but, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." These favored people cried, "O Lord, be gracious unto us." They knew their need of Grace. Do not hope that God will favor you when you neither confess your sin nor seek His Grace. Self-righteousness damns! It is only the righteousness of God that saves.

Seek the character and the privilege of the saints as a gift of Divine Grace. Gladly would I drop into your hearts and mouths that prayer of the second verse—"O Lord, be gracious unto us." I commend it to you! Go to your homes and in your silent chamber pour out your hearts with cries and tears, saying, "O Lord, be gracious unto us! We cannot walk in Your ways and keep our tongue and eyes and ears as we desire to do unless we are renewed and preserved by Your Grace. Be gracious in forgiving the past and in helping us for the future to live in Your fear and service. Do this through Christ Jesus our Lord, we implore You." Your prayer shall be heard and these blessings shall be yours—but see to it that you seek unto the Lord by a sincere faith. Again, use the second verse as your guide and cry, "Be You our arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble." Commit yourself to the guardian care of the Lord each day and especially fly to Him in the hour of trouble! Then will He create righteousness in you and cause you in every good word to do His will. Go, I say, and seek unto the Strong for strength and to the Righteous One for righteousness—and the blessings of the dweller upon the heights shall be yours.

As for you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, who are really walking before the Lord aright, straining with your utmost endeavors to do only that which is just and true, at the same time trusting alone in Jesus for your salvation, I would charge you to rejoice exceedingly! If this text is true—that we dwell on high and that our place of defense is the munitions of rocks—and that our bread shall be given us and our waters shall be sure, let us be glad! What a happy people we ought to be! We ought, every one of us, to have a beaming face, flashing eyes, an elastic step, a singing life, a courageous heart! All men should be made to feel that the chosen of the Lord are a happy people. It is our privilege beyond that of all other men to go through the world with Heaven about our steps. It is not ours to be clad in the weeds of sorrow, for the Bridegroom is with us! We are not commanded to complain, but to rejoice!

I leave to others the task of showing the beauty of groaning, or the delightfulness of murmuring—it is mine to urge you to shake yourselves from the dust and put on your beautiful garments! Why are you so cast down? Dear people of God, you go out in the streets in rags and yet you have royal robes provided for you—why do you not put them on? “Oh,” you, say “but I have great sorrow.” Yes, but it is written, “As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.” Why tell everybody of your grief? Is there any good to be done in that? What does our Lord say? “But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face that you appear not unto men to fast.” It is a Christian’s duty to be happy! What a blessed religion is that in which joy is a matter of precept—“Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.”

I have been so long away from England that I do not know where our Queen is residing just now, but if I had the wings of a dove and could mount into the upper air, I would soon find out! I should look for the Royal Standard. I should see it floating over Windsor or Osborne and, by this token, I should spy the royal abode. Fling out the banner to the breeze when the King is within! Is the King at home with you, dear Brothers and Sisters? Do not forget to display the standard of holy joy! Hoist it up and keep it flying! When the Bridegroom is not with us, we will mourn. But so long as we see His face, no man can make us fast. Rejoice, and yet again, rejoice, and thus let the Royal Standard fly at the top of the tower—the King is within us! The Prince of Peace is enthroned in our hearts!

The Lord is exalted, for He dwells on high and we dwell on high with Him! Glory be unto His name! Ring the joy-bells! With clamor of united joy let us shout unto our God who makes us to ride upon the high places of the earth! Let it be known abroad that there is no God like our God and no people like His people! Under Heaven there are none so joyous as the Lord’s afflicted saints, none so rich as the Lord’s poor, none so honored in Heaven as those that are despised of men for Christ’s sake, none so worthy to be envied as those who, today, are ridiculed for their faith in God! The Lord be with you and bless every one of you with the full enjoyment of this majestic text, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 33.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—103, VERSION 2; 18, VERSION 2.**

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A VISION OF THE KING

NO. 3238

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1911.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 4, 1863.

“Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.”
Isaiah 33:17.

This morning [See Sermon #533, Volume 9—THE QUEEN OF THE SOUTH, OR, THE EARNEST ENQUIRER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] I spoke to you concerning the visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon and tried to use it as illustration of the spirit in which sinners should come to Him who is far wiser and greater than Solomon. This evening I am going to continue in much the same strain while I try to speak to you, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, from the well-known words which I have just read in your hearing. This passage is a rather difficult one to explain—at least certain expositors have done their best to make it appear to be so! They imagine that we have here a threat that the Jews should be carried away to Nineveh as captives and that in that far-off land they should see the Assyrian “king in his beauty.” But I venture to say that if you read our text in its context, you will see that a threat would be altogether out of place here in the midst of so many precious promises to the people of God! There is nothing but love and kindness for them—where there *are* threats, they are for their enemies!

It is possible that the historical setting of the text is this—that the Jews who had seen their king, Hezekiah, in his “day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy”—when Sennacherib’s vile letter had been brought to him, should live to see that same “king in his beauty” when the angel of the Lord had so mysteriously smitten the great host in the camp of the Assyrians and Hezekiah had gone up to the House of the Lord to return public thanks for the miraculous deliverance which had been worked in answer to prayer and in accordance with Isaiah’s prophecy. But all students of Scripture must agree that “the King” here mentioned is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ—and that the promise of the text relates partly to the latter-day Glory, and more fully and more gloriously to the saint’s experience in Heaven—“Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.”

Without any further preface, I will try to direct your thoughts to these four things. First, *a King pre-eminent*. Secondly, *a vision predicted*. Thirdly, *a peculiar beauty*. And, fourthly, *a land possessed*.

I. First, dear Friends, we have plainly enough in the text, A KING PRE-EMINENT—"Your eyes shall see *the King*." No name is given and no name is needed. It is here as it was when the spouse began the Canticles by singing, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." There was no need to say to whom she was referring, for the chaste bride wanted no kisses from anyone but her Beloved!

I am speaking to those who know the Lord and, therefore, I say to them—You know, Beloved, that our Lord Jesus is King by Divine right. He is the brightness of His Father's Glory and the express Image of His Person. God has appointed Him heir of all things, and by Him God made the worlds. "For by Him were all things created that are in Heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." He "is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." Well did the inspired Prophet write concerning Him, "The government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end." It is by His permission that other kings reign! And when He pleases, He can in a moment remove the mightiest monarchs from their throne! He is the only Sovereign who is King by Divine right—the absolute Disposer of all events, to whom all power in Heaven and earth has been given by His Father—in whose hands are the issues of life and death, and at whose belt hang the keys of the unseen world!

You remember too, Beloved, that *our Lord Jesus Christ was a King even when He was upon the earth as a Man*. He ruled over all the forces of Nature. Stormy winds were hushed to sleep by His commanding word, "Peace! Be still." All diseases fled at His approach and the very demons proved that they, too, were under the control of His Sovereign Power! Even the king of terrors, Death, himself, had to openly acknowledge the sway of the far mightier King of kings and to yield up at His bidding those who had passed beneath the grim portals of his dread domains! Yet how shamefully wicked men maltreated this mighty Monarch, before whom the holy angels had bowed in lowly obeisance, or waited on poised wings ready to fly on any errand on which He might deign to send them! You know the sad, sad story of the shameful indignities to which our King was subjected. They hung a soldier's coat around His shoulders in mockery of the imperial purple. They thrust a reed into His hand as a sham scepter. And for a crown, they twisted cruel thorns that pierced His blessed brow as they smote Him again and yet again, and bowed the knee before Him in the mere semblance of adoration. Yet there was a regal majesty about Him even when He was thus crowned King of Grief. When Pilate asked Him the direct question, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He did not deny it. And even when He hung upon the Cross as a condemned criminal, the official title set up above His head in Hebrew, Greek and Latin was, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." He was much

more than that, for He was Lord of *all men and all angels, too*, and He could, in an instant, have summoned all the shining legions above to come to His relief! But He resolved to go through to the bitter end with the great work He had undertaken—and to be both Prince and Savior to give repentance and remission of sins to all for whom, as the great Kingly Substitute, He was laying down His life—

***“To the shameful Cross they nailed Him,
And that Cross became His throne.
In the tomb they laid and sealed Him;
Lo the Savior bursts the stone
And ascending,
Claims all empire as His own!”***

This same Jesus is now King in Heaven. After His degradation came His exaltation. When He ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, He was welcomed back to His Throne with royal honors. The 24th Psalm gives a graphic and poetic description of the royal reception accorded to Him—“Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O you gates; even lift them up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.” This glorious King and Lord is also the Ruler in Providence—nothing can happen without His knowledge and permission! It is true that His universal Sovereignty is not yet recognized and that this Divine King is still “despised and rejected of men.” But the day is coming when He shall appear again upon this earth. And at the hour decreed from all eternity, He shall be acclaimed as “King of kings, and Lord of lords,” when “the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ: and He shall reign forever and ever.” What “His beauty” is now, and ever shall be, mortal mind cannot conceive and mortal tongue can never tell. When John saw Him, as the “Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last,” he fell at His feet as dead! And when Paul “was caught up into Paradise,” he “heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful (or possible) for a man to utter.” Probably we can best express our anticipation of seeing our “King in His beauty” by singing, with Dr. Watts—

***“There, where my blessed Jesus reigns,
In Heaven’s unmeasured space,
I’ll spend a long eternity
In pleasure and in praise!
Millions of years my wondering eyes
Shall over Your beauties rove;
And endless ages I’ll adore
The glories of Your love.”***

I must not forget to remind you that *our Lord Jesus Christ is still King in His Church on earth*. That is the true Established Church, for it is founded upon the Rock and it is so firmly established that “the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.” Christ’s Church is a royal Church, for it

has a King—no, more—the “King of kings” “at the head of it. “The Lord reigns” everywhere, but let us who are His loyal subjects especially set Him on high upon the throne of our hearts and—

**“Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all!”**

II. Now, secondly, we have A VISION PREDICTED—“Your eyes shall see the King.”

Mark well that this is not a vision to be seen by you who have never looked to Christ by faith and who have never trusted to His precious blood to cleanse you from your sin! The sight of the glorified Savior is only for those who have looked upon the dishonored Savior hanging on the Cross of Calvary—it is *their* eyes that “shall see the King in His beauty.”

And, first, *this will be a near sight*. By faith we have had, as it were, a telescopic view of Christ, but we are yet to see Him face to face, and to talk with Him as we talk with a dear familiar friend. Even a distant sight of Him ravishes the heart, but oh, what must it be to see Him without a veil between us? We need not envy John who leaned his head upon his Master’s bosom, for we shall have closer communion with our glorified Lord than even the beloved Apostle enjoyed while here below!

Then, changing only one consonant, *it will be a dear sight*, as well as a near sight! We shall look upon our heavenly Bridegroom with eyes shining with sinless love and we shall rejoice that He is our Husband, our Beloved, our All-in-All! I must leave your sanctified imagination to conceive what this sight must be, for I cannot possibly picture it for you. I look upon a child and see some comeliness in it, but the child’s mother can see beauties that no stranger can perceive—the love of the heart adds to the appreciation of the eyes. So is it with this near and dear vision of our King that is promised to the Believer—“your eyes shall see the King in His beauty.”—

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

And further, as it will be a near and dear sight, *so will it also be an assured sight*. We often fancy that we see certain things, but we are not sure that we really see them. There is much here that tends to cheat the eyes and pervert the vision, but when we see Jesus as He is, it will be an assured sight about which there will be no possible question. No one of us will then have to ask—

**“Do I love the Lord, or no,
Am I His, or am I not?”**

We shall not then have to search and see whether our spot is the spot of God’s children, for we shall know even as we are known! And the King Himself shall say to us, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

And then, Beloved, *it will be a satisfying sight*. There is no solid satisfaction in anything that the eye can see in this world. People say, “See Naples and die,” but I have met many who have seen even that fair city

and they have all wanted to live to see something more! Even Naples could not satisfy them. The most charming vision that sea, or land, or even the starry sky can give, can never satisfy an immortal spirit! But the Believer in Jesus says with David, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness." When my "eyes shall see the King in His beauty," my soul will exclaim, "It is enough, my Lord! My eyes have at last found the one Object upon which they can rest forever! I am perfectly satisfied with You."

Yet even the word, *satisfying*, cannot fully express all that this vision of the King will be, for *it will be a ravishing sight*, a rapturous, ecstatic, entrancing, transporting vision! I cannot find words that are adequate to describe this sight! One must see it to know how glorious it is. Heaven will be a place of many surprises, but the vision of our glorified King will astonish us forever! We shall be amazed to all eternity that such a wondrous Being as God's eternal Son could ever have loved such worthless worms as we are—that so glorious a King could have stooped so low as to take up for Himself our nature—and then that He should have been willing to endure for our sakes the death of the Cross! That will be a marvel that we shall never be able to understand! We shall also be surprised that we did not know Him more fervently and that we did not do, and dare, and even die for Him who had loved us so much that He did die for us! Perhaps some of us, now and then, have had such rapturous experiences that we have felt like the Apostle Paul when he wrote, "whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell." But the extraordinary seasons have never been permanent with any of us, and usually they have been very transient. Yet, up yonder it will be our normal ambition to be lost and swallowed up in a never-ending ravishing vision of our glorious and beauteous King!

I must not omit to remind you that *this will be an assimilating sight*. I don't like that long word, but I mean that it will be a sight that will make us like He, upon whom we shall then be gazing! "We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." It is looking by faith to Christ that gives us any likeness to Him which we possess even now—but a clear view of our gracious "King in His beauty" shall transform us into a perfect likeness to Him. "In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren—and His brethren shall, ultimately, in all things be made like unto Him!

I will add only one more characteristic of this vision of Christ—*it will be an everlasting sight*. When our Sabbath services are over, some of you go out of the Tabernacle with heavy hearts. You have to go home to a sick household, perhaps to a persecuting husband or an ungodly wife. You are coming with us to the Communion Table and when you leave the assembly of the saints, you will have to go where you will cry with the Psalmist, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" I do not wonder that you sang with such heartiness just now—

**"Oh when, you city of my God,
Shall I, your courts ascend**

***Where congregations never break up,
And Sabbaths have no end?"***

Ah, well, that everlasting *Sabbatismos*—that eternal keeping of Sabbath may be nearer than you think! And when once you enter into that blessed state, you will remain in it forever. “Your eyes,” my poor Brother or Sister, “shall see the King in His beauty,” and you shall never lose that rapturous vision!

III. Time fails me, so I must go on to the third point, A PECULIAR BEAUTY—“Your eyes shall see *the King in His beauty.*”

Now, the “beauty” of a king consists, first, *in his person*, so you shall see the beauty of Christ’s Person. It is delightful to think of the priestly, prophetic and royal offices of our Lord Jesus Christ, but our choicest meditations must ever cluster around His blessed Person. All His garments smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia. His name is as ointment poured forth, but He, Himself, is “altogether lovely.” It is no phantom, no shadow at which we are to look, but we are to see the King, Himself—that King who once was the Babe in Bethlehem, the Carpenter at Nazareth—who went about doing good, preaching the Gospel, healing the sick, raising the dead, feeding the fainting multitudes—that same Jesus who agonized in Gethsemane and died on Calvary—this is the King whom we are to see in all the Glory of His combined Deity and Humanity, very God of very God, yet just as truly Man!

The “beauty” of a king also consists in part in the glory of his official robes and jewels and ornaments. “Your eyes shall see the king in His beauty—not as men saw Him when His ruby robe was formed from His own blood, when His only diamonds were His tears or the flashing of His eyes in pity for His foes—and who the only crown He wore was made of thorns. Pilate mockingly said to the Jews, “Behold your king!” But the heavenly heralds, with sound of trumpet, will cry to the saints in a far different fashion, “Behold your King!” and they shall behold Him “crowned with Glory and honor.” On His head shall be many crowns—the crowns which His Father has given Him, the crowns which He has won from His enemies, the crowns which shall be cast at His feet to tell of His universal Sovereignty—and they shall see Him “clothed with a vesture dipped in blood...and on His vesture and on His thigh a name written—King of kings, and Lord of lords.”—

***“Sinners in decision crowned Him,
Mocking thus the Savior’s claim;
Saints and angels crowd around Him,
Own His title, praise His name;
Crown Him, Crown Him;
Spread abroad the Victor’s fame.
Hark! Those bursts of acclamation!
Hark! Those loud triumphant chords!
Jesus takes the highest station:
Oh what joy the sight affords!
Crown Him, crown Him,
‘King of kings, and Lord of lords.’”***

Again, a king's "beauty" consists *in the trophies that tell of his triumphs*. When kings return from their wars, they delight in displaying the flags that have been captured from their foes, or the prisoners and other tokens of victory by which they are surrounded. In the olden days, the great warrior kings would have their stricken foes chained to their triumphal chariots, or marching as slaves in the victor's possession. And the Lord has given to Christ the necks of His enemies and they will gladly grace His triumphal procession, for they are captives who have been made willing in the day of His power and who, strangely enough, share in the Glory of His triumph, for they are now His friends, His brethren with whom He delights to divide all that He has!

Further, the "beauty" of a king sometimes consists *in the splendor of his court and the excellence of his courtiers*, and our eyes are to see our King in His beauty surrounded by "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues...clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands," crying with a loud voice, "Salvation to our God who sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb." "These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Beside these sinners saved by Grace, there will be the innumerable host of holy angels who have never sinned and who all yield unfaltering obedience to our great Lord and King. What a sublime spectacle it will be when the great Commander-in-Chief shall have the whole army of the redeemed gathered before Him for the final review—not one soldier of the Cross missing, not one dead, or wounded, or captured by the enemy, but all of them more than conquerors through Him that has loved them! May you and I, Beloved, be among them!—

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

IV. Now I close with but a brief mention of A LAND POSSESSED.

Read the text thus, "the land that is very far off" *from sinners*. They look upon this world as something that is present to their senses, but they regard the world to come as so "very far off" that it hardly seems to concern them at all! They take no more interest in the "Land that is very far off" than a poor farmer in a country village takes in some Republic in South America of which he has only heard the name. They know no more about Heaven than swine know about the stars in the firmament, perhaps not as much, for the swine can see the stars, but Heaven is "very far off" from sinners so long as they remain in their sins! Yet if they will but leave their sins and look to Jesus in all the beauty of His substitutionary Sacrifice for the guilty, that far-off land shall be brought very near to them and, in God's good time, they shall enter it and abide there forever and ever!

Sometimes, Heaven is "the land that is very far off" *from the doubting Christian*, so that he fears that he shall never get there. He dreams of a rough road that has no end, or cries out that he has no hope of escaping from the Slough of Despond. Yet, to a Believer in Jesus, Heaven is not

“very far off.” No, it is so near that he may be there before I have finished my sermon, or even before I have finished this sentence—

***‘One gentle sigh, the fetter breaks:
We scarcely can say, ‘He’s gone!’
Before the willing spirit takes
Her mansion near the Throne!’***

Do not fret about tomorrow! You may be in Heaven before tomorrow. Even if we have to abide here a while—

***“Though in a foreign land,
We are not far from home;
And nearer to our house above
We every moment come.”***

I find that the marginal reading is “the land of far distances.” Heaven is a land of magnificent distances where there shall be abundant room for the multitude that no man can number and where in all things, even in the number of the saved, Christ shall have the pre-eminence. Shall Satan capture the most of men? I do not believe that he will—if he could do so, he would have the pre-eminence, but that can never be! Christ “shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” But do you think that a small number of souls saved would satisfy Him? Would that be a fitting sequel to His soul-travail? Oh, no! I believe in a great Heaven and a great multitude of great sinners saved by the great Sacrifice of the great Savior, who shall bring great Glory to His great name and the great Grace of the great Father, Son and Spirit forever and ever! But, my dear Hearer, however great it all is, of what use will it be to you if you do not have a share in it? My text says, “Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.” That applies to every Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ! Is that what *you* are? If so, my text is a promise to you as surely as if your own name had been mentioned in it! If you will now believe in Jesus, if you will trust Him, if you will rely upon Him—it all means the same thing—this promise is for you and it shall be fulfilled in your experience in God’s own time! May God the Holy Spirit give you the Grace to turn your eyes by faith to the Lamb of God who died for sinners upon the Cross of Calvary! And then to you, even to you, I can repeat the promise of the text, “Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land of far distances.” The Lord grant it, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
REVELATION 7:9-17; ISAIAH 49.**

Revelation 7:9. *After this.* I thought I would read this familiar and very precious passage once more as so many of our number have gone home to Heaven during the past few weeks. There has been a great flight of the Lord’s doves upward to the heavenly dove-cotes lately. We will think of them as we read these well-known words—“After this”—

9. *I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, stood before the*

Throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. Their purity is indicated by the white robes in which they were clothed and possibly, also, their royal priesthood, while their victory over all their foes is typified by the palms which they held in their hands. Montgomery was right when he wrote—

***“Palms of Glory, raiment bright,
Crowns that never fade away,
Gird and deck the saints in light,
Priests, and kings, and conquerors they.”***

10. *And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the Throne and unto the Lamb.* They all sing one song and it is the same song that we sing on earth, “Salvation to our God.” They know nothing up in Heaven of any salvation by the works of the Law or by human merits. Oh, no! They sing, “Salvation to our God which sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb.”

11, 12. *And all the angels stood round about the Throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the Throne on their faces, and worshipped God saying, Amen: Blessing, and Glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen.* You see that all the Glory is given to God—man is lost sight of—humanitarianism has no place of honor in Heaven, though many, nowadays, make so much of it here on earth. It is unto Father, Son and Spirit—unto the one and only Creator, Savior, Inspirer that the angels ascribe “blessing, and Glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might...forever and ever.”

13-17. *And one of the elders answered saying unto me, Who are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir you know. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* [See Sermon #1316, Volume 22—WHY THE HEAVENLY ROBES ARE WHITE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *Therefore are they before the Throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His Temple—and He that sits on the Throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountain of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.* [See Sermons #643, Volume 11—NO TEARS IN HEAVEN; #1800, Volume 30—HEAVEN BELOW and #2128, Volume 36—HEAVEN ABOVE AND HEAVEN BELOW—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] This is a vision of the heavenly life above. I want you to keep the last two verses in your minds, for we shall presently meet with very similar expressions in a place where, perhaps, you would scarcely have expected to find them—and there you will see that those expressions are used concerning the heavenly life below as here they are used concerning the heavenly life above. Turn to the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, the 49th Chapter, and there you will read a passage which brings us back to earth. It takes us from the Lamb in the midst of the Throne in

Heaven to the Lamb amidst the despising and rejecting sons of men. It is our Lord Jesus Christ who is here speaking—

Isaiah 49:1-3. *Listen, O isle, unto Me, and hearken, you people from far; The LORD has called Me from the womb, from the matrix of My mother has He made mention of My name. And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand has He hid Me, and made Me a polished shaft; in His quiver has He hid Me and said unto Me, You are My Servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.* Our Lord became, by His Incarnation—by His very birth so marvelous and mysterious—He became that Servant of Jehovah by whom God would be glorified! He was, as it were, hidden away, like a sword in its master's scabbard—concealed and protected like an arrow hidden in its owner's quiver—until the time came for God to use Him. And then God did use Him both as a sharp sword and as a polished shaft.

4. *Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing, and in vain: yet surely My judgment is with the LORD, and My work with My God.* The Jews, as a nation, were not gathered unto Christ. The highly favored people, as a whole, did not believe in Him. He was expressly sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet John was obliged to write, "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." So few became His personal followers that it really appeared as if His life-work had been a failure—but He did what all God's true servants must do—He referred His work to the Lord. He said, "Surely My judgment is with the Lord, and My work (or My record) with My God." If we are faithful, that is all that our gracious Master requires of us—we are, none of us, bound to be successful! If we bear our sincere testimony to the Truth of God and everybody rejects it, our reward will be none the less in the day when the Lord calls us to give an account of our stewardship. If you, my Brother or my Sister, are loyal and true to Him whose servant you are, when your Lord comes again, He will say to you, "Well done, you good and faithful servant...enter you into the joy of your Lord."

5, 6. *And now, says the LORD that formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, Though Israel is not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and My God shall be My strength. And He said, It is a light thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribe of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give You for a Light to the Gentiles, that You may be My salvation unto the end of the earth.* Though Jesus seemed to fail with the Jews, He has succeeded in a far greater measure with the Gentiles, for great multitudes of them have gladly accepted Him as their Savior!

7, 8. *Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One, to Him whom man despises, to Him whom the nation abhors, to the Servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and He shall choose You. Thus says the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard You, and in a day of salvation have I helped You.* Jehovah will bless His Anointed! He will accomplish His great purposes of love and mercy through Him.

8, 9. *And I will preserve You, and give You for a Covenant of the people,* [See Sermon #103, Volume 2—CHRIST IN THE COVENANT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages, that You may say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves.* [See Sermon #2397, Volume 41—“OUT OF DARKNESS INTO LIGHT”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] This is Christ’s work today, to call out the forgotten ones who are hidden away in the dungeons of the Bastille of Despair. He comes and calls them, “Go forth...show yourselves.” And at His bidding they appear, even as Lazarus came forth from the grave at His command. Now listen—this is what becomes of those who come out of sin’s prison at Christ’s call! They become His sheep—

9. *They shall feed in the ways*—On their way to the one great fold on the hilltops of Glory, they shall find suitable and sufficient pasture—“They shall feed in the ways.”

9, 10. *And their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for He that has mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them.* Now recall those verses from the Revelation that we read just now and note what blessings the good Shepherd has prepared for His sheep even while they are upon this earth!

11-13. *And I will make all My mountain a way, and My highways shall be exalted. Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim. Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD has comforted His people.* [See Sermon #3012, Volume 52—GOD COMFORTING HIS PEOPLE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Well may Heaven and Earth and mountains sing when they have such a theme for their songs as this!

13, 14. *And will have mercy upon His afflicted. But Zion said, The LORD has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me. Zion said so, but it was not true! Hear what the Lord says—*

15, 16. *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.* [See Sermons #512, Volume 9—A PRECIOUS DROP OF HONEY and #2672, Volume 46—NEITHER FORSAKEN NOR FORGOTTEN—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] However unnatural an earthly mother may prove to be, God will never forsake or forget one of His children—

**“Yet,’ says the Lord, ‘should Nature change
And mothers, monsters prove,
Sion still dwells upon the heart
Of everlasting love.”**

16-21. *Your walls are continually before Me. Your children shall make haste, your destroyer and they that make you waste shall go forth from you. Lift up your eyes round about, and behold: all that gather themselves together, and come to you. As I live, says the LORD, you shall surely clothe yourselves with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on you, as*

a bride does. For your waste and your desolate places, and the land of your destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed you up shall be far away. The children which you shall have, after you have lost the other, shall say again in your ears, The place is too strait for me, give place to me that I may dwell. Then shall you say in your heart, Who has begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive and moving to and fro? And who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been? [See Sermons #2692, Volume 46—CHURCH INCREASE and #2776, Volume 48—THE CHURCH A MOTHER—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Oh, that we might often have such a glad surprise as this and be made to marvel at the Lord's gracious dealings with us!

22-26. *Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up My hand to the Gentiles, and set up My standard to the people: and they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be your nursing fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers: they shall bow down to you with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of your feet, and you shall know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me. Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus says the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contends with you, and I will save your children. And I will feed them that oppress you with their own flesh; and they shall be drunk with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. The enemies of the Lord's people are His enemies, too, and He will overthrow them in His own good time—and make the whole world know that He is their Savior and Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob!*

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

A PRECIOUS PROMISE FOR A PURE PEOPLE NO. 3542

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1916.**

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

***“Your eyes will see the King in His beauty.”
Isaiah 33:17.***

No doubt these words originally had a timely and strictly literal meaning for the people of Jerusalem. When the city was besieged by Sennacherib, the inhabitants saw Hezekiah in garb of mourning. How had he torn his clothes in sorrow! But the day would come, according to prophecy, when Sennacherib must fall. Those who counted the resources and estimated the strength or the weakness of the city would be far away—and then there would be times of liberty. The people would be able to travel to the utmost ends of Palestine, so they would see the land that is very far off. Hezekiah, himself, would come out in his robes of excellence and majesty on a joyful occasion to praise the Lord, and thus would the people's eyes see the king in his beauty. The passage, however, has been frequently used with quite another import, and that properly enough if it is thoroughly understood that it is by way of accommodation we take it, and that it is typically we trace it out. Have we not by faith seen our King in His robes of mourning? Have we not seen Jesus in the sorrowful weeds of affliction and humiliation while here below? Our faith has gazed upon Him in the torn garments of His Passion. We have beheld Him in His agony and bloody sweat, in His Crucifixion and His death. Well, now, another and a brighter view awaits us! Our eyes will one day see the King in a more glorious array! We will behold Him as John saw Him on Patmos. We will behold the King in His beauty and then we shall enter and enjoy the land which is at present very far off.

I think it meet and right to take such a word as this, tonight, when there are so many in our midst who are seeking and finding the Savior, because it is very certain that not long after their conversion, they will have to encounter some of the difficulties of the way. Sometimes within a few hours of their starting on pilgrimage, they are met by some of the

dragons, or they fall into some Slough of Despond, or they are surprised by some Hill Difficulty! Therefore, they ought to be stimulated with encouragements—they need to be cheered and consoled by the prospect which lies before them. You will recollect how Christian is represented by Bunyan in his famous allegory to be reading in his book, as he went along, concerning the blessed country, the celestial land where their eyes should behold the King in His beauty—this beguiled the roughness of the road and made the pilgrim hasten on with more alacrity and less weariness. Now I am going to turn over one of the elementary pages of this Book. I want to show the young convert a vision pleasing and profitable for all Christians, young or old, the Glory that awaits him, the rest which is secured by the promise of God to every pilgrim who continues in the blessed road, and holds on, and holds out to the end! Your eyes, Beloved, you who have lately been converted to God—if by Divine Grace your conversion proves genuine—your eyes shall one day behold the King in His beauty! This may well inspire you with courage and encourage you to endure with patience all the difficulties of the way. When God brought His servant, Abraham, into the separated position of a stranger in a strange land, it was not long before He said to him, “Lift up, now, your eyes, and look to the north, and to the south, and to the east, and to the west, for all this land will I give to you and to your seed forever,” as if to solace and cheer him in the place of his sojourn by the picture and the promise that greeted him. In like manner, you children of faithful Abraham, you who have left all for Christ’s sake, look upon your future heritage from the spot of your present exile—and your hearts will exceedingly rejoice!

We shall notice, first, the object to be seen—*the King in His beauty!* Then, secondly, *the nature of this vision*, for our eyes shall see the admirable spectacle. And, thirdly, we shall draw your attention *to those to whom this favor will be granted*. The context will help us to discover of whom it is the Lord speaks when He says, “Your eyes will see the King in His beauty.” Not all eyes, but your eyes shall see the King in His beauty. What is this vision which is here promised to God’s people? They are to see the King. They are to see—

I. THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY.

THE KING—a sweet title which belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ as His exclusive prerogative, crowned with the crown of thorns once, but now wearing the diadem of universal monarchy! Other kings there are, but theirs is only a temporary title to temporal precedence among the sons of men. I had almost said theirs was a mimic sovereignty. He is the real King—the King of Kings—the King that reigns forever and forever! He

is King, for He is God. Jehovah reigns. The Maker of the earth must be her King. He in whose hands are the deep places of the earth and the strength of the hills—He by whom all things exist and all things consist—He must of necessity reign! The government shall be upon His shoulders. His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God. From the very fact that He is the Son of God, the express Image of His Father's Glory, He must be King! Because He condescended to veil Himself in our flesh, He derives a second title to the Kingdom—He is King now by His merits. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth! For the suffering of death, He was made, for a little while, lower than the angels, but now, seeing He has been obedient even unto death, even the death of the Cross, He has obtained a more excellent name than the angels and He is crowned with glory and honor. He is Head over all things now. In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. We rejoice to reflect upon Him as King by nature and then as King by due desert over a Kingdom which He has inherited by Divine right. He is King at this time by virtue of the conquests He has made, having spoiled the principalities and powers of darkness. In this world He fought the battle and so bravely did He fight it out that He could say, "It is finished." He made an end of sin! He made reconciliation for iniquity! He trampled death and Hell beneath His feet, and now He is King by force of arms. He entered into the strong man's house, wrestled with him and vanquished him, for He is stronger than he. He has led captivity captive and He has ascended upon high—King of kings and Lord of lords. Moreover He reigns supremely in some of our hearts. We have yielded to the sway of His love. We rejoice to crown Him. We never feel happier than when our hearts and tongues are singing—

***"Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown Him Lord of All."***

I trust there are many more among you who have not yet yielded, who will yet yield your hearts to His power. Fresh provinces shall be added to His empire. New cities of Mansoul will open their gates that the Prince Emanuel may ride in and may sit in triumph there. Oh, that it may be so, for a multitude that no man can number shall cheerfully, joyfully acknowledge His sway and kiss the Son lest He be angry. But mark, the limit of His power is not according to the will of man, for where He does not reign by the joyful consent of His people and the mighty conquest of His love, He still exercises absolute dominion! Even the wicked are His servants! They shall be made in some way or other to subserve His glory,

for He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The King is anointed upon God's holy hill of Zion. King He is. He has a bit in the mouth of His most violent adversaries and He turns them about according to His own will. What though with mingled cruelty and rage men attack the Gospel of Christ, they strive in vain to thwart the Divine Decree! In ways mysterious and unknown to us, the Lord asserts His own supremacy. He reigns even where the rulers conspire and the people rebel against Him!

Beloved, the Sovereignty of our Lord Jesus Christ, to which He is entitled by inheritance, is due to Him for His merits and in the equitable claim of His conquests—this reign of Christ extends over all things. He is the universal Lord. In this world He is Regent everywhere. By Him all things exist and consist. When I think of Him, it seems to me that the sea roars to His praise and the trees of the forests rejoice in His Presence. There is not a dewdrop that twinkles on the flower at sunrise but reflects His bounty. There is not an avalanche that falls from its Alp with thundering crash but resounds with tokens of His Power. The Great Shepherd reigns! The Lord is King! As Joseph was made ruler over all the land of Egypt, even so, according unto the word of Jesus, all the people are ruled. He has all things put under His feet, for it was of Him the Prophet sang of old, “You have made Him a little”—(or as the margin has it, *a little while*)—“lower than the angels, and have crowned Him with glory and honor. You have put all things under His feet, all sheep and oxen, yes, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, the fish of the sea and whatever passes through the paths of the seas.” Though we see not yet all things put under man, yet we see Jesus, who, for the suffering of death was made, for a little while, lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor. At this hour He rules on earth. Death and Hell are under His scepter. Satan, and the spirits that have followed his leadership, bite their iron bonds while they confess the power of the Divine Lord to be paramount. He can crush His enemies and break them with a rod of iron as a potter's vessel. His mighty power is felt and feared. But, oh, up yonder in Heaven, where the full beams of His Glory are unveiled, He reigns in matchless splendor! The angels worshipped Him when He was brought forth as the Only-Begotten into the world. So spoke the oracle, “Let all the angels of God worship Him.” Seraphim and cherubim, are they not His messengers? He makes them like flames of fire. The redeemed by blood, what could they do? What is their joy, their occupation, their delight, but to sing forever, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honor, and glory and dominion, and power”? Oh, tell us not of emperors—there is but One Imperial brow! Tell us not of monarchs, for

the crown belongs to the blessed and only Potentate! He alone is King. As such, we think of Him and long for His appearing, when we shall hail Him the King in His beauty! I love to see His courtiers. That is a happy hour in which I can talk with one who has my Master's ear. I love to see the skirts of His garment as I come in fellowship with Him to His Table. I love to tread His courts. I love to hear His voice, even though I cannot yet see the face of Him that speaks with me! But to see the King—to see the King, Himself! Oh, joy unspeakable! It is worth worlds, even, to have a good hope of beholding a sight so resplendent with the Glory of God!

Note well the promise, "Your eyes shall see the King in His *beauty*." Does not this suggest to us that the King has been seen, though not in His beauty? He was seen on earth as the Prophet foretold, "despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." And as seen then, we are told there is no beauty that we should desire Him. There was a time when many were astonished at Him. His visage was more marred than any man, and His form more than the sons of men—that was in the day of His humiliation.

But we are yet to see the King in His beauty, and I know, Beloved, that in part that vision does beam, even now, upon spirits before the Throne of God. I would not exactly say that they have eyes, for they have left these organs of sense behind them. They have not received the fullness of this promise—yet in a measure they see the beauty of the King, that beauty which His Father has put upon Him, now that He has ascended up on high and returned to the Father, having obeyed all His precepts and fulfilled all His will. His Father has already rewarded Him. He sits enthroned at the right hand of the Majesty on high—He is adored and worshipped! It is no small sight for our spirits to behold Him and adore. But remember the spirits in Heaven, without us, cannot be made perfect, so says the Apostle. They are waiting for the adoption—to wit, the redemption of the body—waiting for the trumpet of Resurrection. It is *then*, I think, that this blessed hope will be fully verified, "Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty." As Job puts it, "I know that my Redeemer lives and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes will behold, and not another." Our bodies shall be raised from the dead—

***"These eyes shall see Him in that day,
The God that died for me—
And all my rising bones shall say—
Lord, who is like to Thee?"***

From the dark chambers of the grave we shall come forth with all the blood-bought company of the faithful. Then we shall see the King in His

beauty! What beauty that will be! We steadfastly look for His appearing when He shall come the second time! This personal manifestation must be welcome to the saints. To see Him *then* must be to see His beauty! Our senses, relieved of infirmity, will be endowed with full capacity! Our Graces, being increased, our spirits will be lively and vigorous to appreciate His wonderful Person! As God and Man we do now believe in Him, but how little can our faith anticipate the vision! We acknowledge the mystery which is as yet unveiled. How little are we affected by the wonderful information which must astonish angels—that the Infinite can be joined with the finite, that the Godhead can be in perfect union with the manhood—the bush of the manhood burning with the glow of the Godhead, yet not thereby consumed! 'Tis matchless that the Eternal should link Himself with finite flesh! That He should hang upon His mother's breast who bears up the columns of the universe! Strange conjunction! Till we wake up in His likeness, we shall never thoroughly understand it. Oh, how amazement will resolve itself into admiration as we gaze upon Him who has a Nature that we have been familiar with and yet the proper Divinity which no man has seen or can see! What grandeur to behold! What rapture to experience when our eyes see the King in His beauty! The sight will overwhelm us. But in other respects than that which is essential to His Kingly dignity, the spectacle will be illustrious. In the hour of conquest He will take possession of a Throne which no rival dare dispute. Judas will be there, but he will not think of betraying Him. Pilate will be there, but he will not think of questioning Him. The Jews will be there, but they will not cry, "Crucify Him." The Romans will be there, but they will not think of hauling Him away to execution. His enemies in that day shall lick the dust! They shall be like chaff before the whirlwind in the day of His coming! And what will be the splendor of His Glory when He shall be proclaimed King of Kings in His beauty, with all the insignia of His royal power!

He will have the beauty of state pageant, too, for He will assume office as Judge of the quick and the dead. Then will the trumpet sound and all the solemn pomp of the Great Assize will encircle Him round about. The vivid lightning will flash through the universe and the roar of His thunder shall awake the dead, while an irresistible summons shall compel them to appear before His dread tribunal! From His searching gaze no creature shall be hid, and every eye shall see Him. They, also, who pierced Him, and all the kindreds of the earth, shall weep and wail because of Him. But to us, that awful pomp will not be appalling, but a fit accessory on which His royal beauty is displayed! We shall admire the hand that holds the scepter, for we shall recognize it as the same hand

that was once pierced for us. We shall admire the voice that condemns the wicked, and bids them, “*Depart!*” for that voice shall pronounce our welcome, saying, “*Come, you blessed.*” We shall admire the Shepherd’s crook with which He shall separate the sheep and the goats, for it will apportion us to eternal bliss, though it shall dismiss the goats to their eternal doom! Thrice happy and most blessed shall we be in that day! Terror and trouble shall be the lot of the world—trust and triumph shall then be the portion of the saints! He shall be admired in all them that believed! And when that final judgment shall have fulfilled its destined purpose, He shall be in His beauty seen as the Conqueror of all evil, the Conqueror of sin, of death and Hell. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death. How shall we see Him in His beauty when Death, itself, shall die! I cannot attempt to describe that beauty. It is far too dazzling for me to picture. I have dreamed of it sometimes in sacred soliloquies. My faith has tried to realize the facts which are revealed unto us by His Spirit. Still, the tongue cannot tell so much as the heart has conceived. There are unspeakable words which greet us in seasons of rapture which it is not lawful to utter. Whenever we are caught up to the third Heaven in rapturous meditation, we have but small news to tell men. But how inconceivable to us, now, is the Glory of Christ as it shall be when all His people are present with Him in Heaven!

I have not touched upon the millennial age or the latter-day Glory. Your thoughts can fill up the vacancy. But what will be the beauty of Christ in Heaven in that day “when He shall make up His jewels”? What are the jewels of our King but His redeemed people? What will be the ornaments of His state but those for whom He shed His blood? And when they are all there, then we shall see the King in His beauty with all His jewels. Beauty! A shepherd’s beauty lies much in his simple garb. A mother’s beauty—very much of it is to be seen as she appears in the center of a happy and lovely family. So, beyond all doubt, the beauty of Christ will be most conspicuous when all His saints are with Him! I was in company with some good people lately, who were discussing the question whether we should see the saints in Heaven. I do not know whether they settled the question to their satisfaction, but I settled it very well to mine. I expect to see and know all the saints, to recognize them and rejoice with them—and that without the slightest prejudice to my being wholly absorbed in the sight of my Lord! Let me explain to you how this can be. When I went, the other day, into a friend’s drawing room, I observed that on all sides there were mirrors. The whole of the walls were covered with glass—and everywhere I looked I kept seeing my friend. It was not necessary that I should fix my eyes upon him, for all the mirrors reflected him.

Thus, Brothers and Sisters, it seems to me that every saint in Heaven will be a mirror of Christ, and that as we look upon all the loved ones, gazing round upon them all, we shall see Christ in everyone of them, so we shall still be seeing the Master in the servants, seeing the Head in all the members! It is I in them, and they in me. Is it not so? It will be all the Master. This is the sum total of Heaven—"Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty"—and they shall see the beauty of the King in all His people! Nor does it appear that the manifestation shall be ever withdrawn, or that we shall ever leave off seeing the beauty of our King. There is the mercy. "Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty," on and on, and on still, and on, forever on, discerning more and more of the beauty, the inexhaustible beauty and splendor of the Sun of Righteousness, world without end! The theme grows upon us. We must curb ourselves. We can but skim the surface as the swallow does the brook. Now, as to—

II. THE NATURE OF THIS VISION, we know *it is in the future*. "Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty." You poor sinners must be content with seeing the King in His majesty. Happy souls who come to see Jesus on the Cross! Oh, it is joy for them to look unto Him and be saved! Behold the Lamb of God! Behold the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world! Poor sin-sick Soul, are you looking to Jesus to be saved? If it is so in the present, then in the future you shall see Him in His beauty! It will be a vision for all. Their natural sense shall discern the real Savior, "Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty." It is not merely your spiritual perception, but your natural eyes. Does not Job express this conviction "whom my eyes shall see"? Oh, yes, not as it now is with this flesh and blood, but still with this body! I call you a vile body sometimes, my poor flesh and blood, and so you are. Yet in your origin there was something good and in your destiny there is something better, "Bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh." Born of a woman as you were, and fed on bread as you must be, and though the worms devour you, yet shall you rise again! Oh, body, you are even now the temple of God! Know you not that your *bodies* are the members of Christ? Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? These eyes shall see Him! They may be weeping eyes, aching eyes, weary eyes and sleepy eyes, yes, or even blind eyes, or your failing eyes on which the curtain is being drawn about you—your eyes shall see the King! When Heaven is in sight there will be no need for glasses to assist your vision. Your eyes, all strengthened to bear the light, as the eagle's eyes when the sun shines in its strength—"Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty." *It will be a personal vision.* "Whom my eyes shall see, and not another." It shall not be somebody else repeating another's testimony, "Yes, I see Him." I like to hear what

John saw, but I like better to have John's privilege! We shall be like John and shall, ourselves, behold Him. Can you realize it? You recollect in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* how Mercy laughed in her sleep, and Christiana asked her what made her laugh so. Mercy replied that she had seen a beautiful vision. Is it not enough to make us laugh in our sleep, to think that "your eyes shall see the King in His beauty"? To think that this head shall wear a crown! That these hands shall grasp the palms. That these feet shall stand on the transfigured globe. That these ears shall hear the symphonies of eternity and that this tongue shall help to swell the everlasting chorus! Oh, who would not rejoice? This is the wine which, as it goes down, makes the lips of him who drinks to speak. Oh, that we may all have a personal sight of the King in His beauty!

And *it will be a near sight*, because it will be clear and distinct. "Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty." This does not imply a distant view of a remote object—a dim vision of the dazzling splendor—but you will behold Him in such close proximity that you can discern every feature of His Person, every phase of His comeliness! You shall discern all the insignia of His offices, His conquests, His titles, His dominion and His Glory! Now you only see a picture of Him reflected as in a glass, darkly—then you shall see Him face to face! Oh, that the curtain might be drawn up, the veil rent, the vision unfolded! It will be a delightful sight. When He shall appear in His beauty, we cannot wear the vestments of our mourning and sorrow. As He is, so are we in this world. As He shall be revealed, so shall we be, also, in that world! "It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." Thus we shall be beautiful when we shall see Him in His beauty! He shall say to us, "You are all fair, My love; there is not a spot in you." Oh, the delight, the pure unclouded joy, reflective as the light of Heaven! What an introduction to eternal happiness this will be when your eyes shall see the King in His beauty! There is no period, no finale, no end put to it. This is no transient spectacle. His beauty never fades. Our festival can never terminate. As long as He appears in His beauty we shall see Him and be enamored of His loveliness! Is it not written, "Because I live, you shall live also"? Without His people, without the complement of His saints with Him, He would not be a full Christ at any time. "Know you not that the Church is the fullness of Him who fills all in all?" So all His disciples must be forever with Him, and they must forever see His face, and be partakers of His Glory!

III. TO WHOM IS THIS VISION GIVEN?

We find a remarkably full description of these people. Read the 15th verse. Their ordinary gait distinguishes them. "*He who walks righteous-*

ly.” “The pure in heart shall see God.” But if your deportment disgraces you, how deep will be your dishonor? Unholy creatures will never see a holy God! It is not possible! Oh, Sinners, what do you think of this? You must be changed! You must be cleansed! You must be converted! The Holy Spirit must regenerate you! You must be born-again! Otherwise you cannot walk uprightly or stand in the Presence of the King in His beauty!

Next to this they are known by their tongues, “*and speaks uprightly.*” No liar shall enter into Heaven. Those who talk lasciviously, those who swear profanely, the singers of idle songs, those who lend their lips to slander, backbite their neighbors and circulate evil reports in malice—these and such as these can have no inheritance in the Kingdom of God! Oh, may the Lord wash your tongues, rinse your mouths and make them sweet and clean—otherwise you will never sing the songs of Heaven. “He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly” is so far approved. But let him take heed to his commercial character, for it is further said, “*He that despises the gain of oppressions,*” or, as the margin has it, of *deceit*. A man that gets money by squeezing others, by oppressing the poor by hard bargains, shall not enjoy the Beatific Vision. If you buy and sell, and get gain by lying, by false pretences, by tricks of the trade—yes, even by the customs that are commonly allowed, though they would look fraudulent if thoroughly exposed—you shall have no inheritance in the Kingdom of God! How can you be gracious when you are not honest? He that is not able to hold the scales lightly, measure out an even yard, or make out a bill equitably, may well tremble at being poised in the balances of the sanctuary! When such as these are weighed, they will be found wanting. Thorough integrity must stand the test of disinterestedness. “*He that shakes his hands from holding of bribes.*” Some men cannot help preferring coin to conscience. This is the way of bribery. Palm oil was largely used when Isaiah wrote. It is still much in vogue—perhaps not so much in this country as in others—but there are plenty of ways of receiving bribes besides selling one’s vote at the polling booth. How many men are bribed by a smile or a crown—bribed to Sabbath-breaking—bribed to the follies of the world—bribed to I know not what of error! But drop a shilling into a conscientious man’s hand and he shakes it from his hand! He does not like the feel of it. He is like Paul, who shook off the viper into the fire. So the man who is to see the King in His beauty shakes his hand from holding bribes. Moreover, “*He stops his ears from hearing of blood.*” He does not like to hear of cruelty, of outrage, or wantonly causing pain. He stops his ears—he will not listen to any proposal either to gratify a resentment or to seek a personal advantage whereby his neighbor would be injured. In this wicked world it is often wise to

stop one's ears. A deaf ear is a great blessing when there is base conversation in the neighborhood.

The good man who thus keeps guard over his hands and his feet, his tongue and his ears, is likewise known by his eyes. "*He shuts his eyes from seeing evil.*" He shuns the temptations to which a vain curiosity would expose him. Oh, if only our mother Eve had shut her eyes when the serpent pointed out yon rosy apple on the tree! Oh, that she had shut her eyes to it! Oh, that she had said, "No, I will not even look at it." Looking leads to longing and longing leads to sin. Do you say, "There can be no harm in looking, just to see for yourself—are we not told to prove all things?" "Just come here, young man," says the tempter, "you do not know what life is! One evening will suffice to show you a little gaiety and let you see how the frolic is carried on. You need not share in it, you know. You may learn a thing or two you never dreamed of before. Surely a man is not to go through the world a baby—just come for an hour or two and look on!" "Ah, no," says the man whose eyes are to see the King in His beauty—"the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil never brought any man good, yet, so please leave me alone! I shut my eyes from the sight of it. I do not want to participate, even as a spectator. I do not care to look upon that which God will not look upon without abhorrence! I know that His love has put my sins behind His back—what, then, He puts behind His back, shall I put before my face? That were ingratitude, indeed!" Perhaps you say, "Well, if this is the character of such as shall see the King in His beauty, I shall never come up to the standard." "No, but you must, otherwise *you* will never enjoy the Beatific Vision." "But I cannot convert myself after this fashion." I know you cannot, but there is One who can! Has not Jesus Christ come into the world to make us new creatures? It is His objective and intent—"Behold, I make all things new." He changes a man, gives him new desires, new longings and new hopes.

And He can change you! Let me ask you, have you ever seen, by faith, the King? Have you ever looked to Jesus on the Cross and did you ever recognize that Jesus Christ, if He is to be your Savior, must be your King? You say you have believed in Jesus. Yes, but did you take Him to be your King? Did you mean to *obey* Him as well as to trust Him? Did you intend to *serve* Him as well as to lean upon Him? Remember, you cannot have a half of Christ. You cannot have Him as your Redeemer, but not as your Ruler! You must take Him as He is. He is a Savior, but He saves His people from their sins. Now, if you have ever seen Christ as your Savior, you have seen beauty in Him. He is lovely in your eyes, for the loveliest sight in the world to a sinner is His Savior! "What is the latest news," said a certain squire to a companion, accustomed to hunt

with him, who had come up to the Metropolis—“what is the latest news you have heard in London?” “The latest news, and the best news I have ever heard,” was the quick reply, “is that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” “Tom,” he said, “I do think you are mad!” “William,” said Tom, “I *know you are*. I only wish you were cured of your insanity as, by the Grace of God, I have been!”

Oh, that we did but all of us know Jesus Christ in His beauty and could, every one of us, rejoice in Him as those do who are charmed by the sight! If you have not your eyes opened, you cannot see the King in His beauty. But if they are opened, now, so that you greet Jesus as your King and see beauty in Him, then, whatever your former life may have been, its sins are forgiven—they are blotted out! Your Savior’s Sacrifice that offered such satisfaction to God for your sins shall give sweet solace to your conscience. By the gracious help of the Holy Spirit, you shall start a fresh career and begin a new life! Be it so and you will henceforth shut your eyes from seeing, stop your ears from hearing, shake your hands from all iniquity, and turn aside your feet from it to live the life you live in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God, to His honor and Glory! So shall your eyes, poor Sinner—weeping, sorrowing, mournful eyes as they may now be—your eyes shall see the King in His beauty! The Lord grant that we, all of us, may have a present earnest and a future fruition of this delightful promise, for His name’s sake. Amen.

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

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

THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY

NO. 752

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 26, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they
shall behold the land that is very far off.”
Isaiah 33:17.***

WHEN the Assyrians had invaded Judea with an immense army and were about to attack Jerusalem, Rabshakeh was sent with a railing message to the king and his people. When Hezekiah heard of the blasphemies of the proud Assyrian, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and went into the house of the Lord and sent the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to consult with Isaiah the Prophet. The people of Jerusalem, therefore, had seen their king in most mournful array, wearing the garments of sorrow and the weeds of mourning. They were, however, cheered by the promise that there should be so complete a defeat of Sennacherib that the king should again adorn himself with the robes of state and appear with a smiling countenance in all the beauty of joy.

Moreover, through the invasion of Sennacherib, the people had not been able to travel. They had been cooped up within the walls of Jerusalem like prisoners. No journeys had been made, either in the direction of Dan or Beersheba. Even the nearest villages could not be reached—but the promise is given that so completely should the country be rid of the enemy that wayfarers should be able to see the whole of their territory—even that part of the land which was very far off. It would be safe for them to make long voyages—they would no longer be afraid of the oppressor, but should find the highways, which once lay waste, to be again open and safe for traffic.

In these days of Gospel Truth, dear Friends, we see in this text a meaning far surpassing that which gladdened the citizens of Zion. We have a nobler King than Hezekiah! He is the King of kings and Lord of lords! We have seen our well-beloved Monarch, in the days of His flesh, humiliated and sorely vexed, for He was “despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” He whose brightness is as the morning wore the sackcloth of sorrow as His *daily* dress. Shame was His mantle, and reproach was His vesture. None was more afflicted and sorrowful than He. Yet now, inasmuch as He has triumphed over all the powers of darkness upon the bloody tree, our faith beholds our King in His beauty, returning with dyed garments from Edom, robed in the splendor of victory!

No longer does He wear the purple robe of mockery, but He is clothed with a garment down to the feet, and gird about the paps with a golden girdle. We, also, His joyful subjects who were once shut up and could not come forth, are now possessed of boundless Gospel liberty. Now that we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor, we freely possess to its utmost bounds the Covenant blessings which He has given to us. We rejoice that if the land of happiness should sometimes seem very far off, it is nevertheless our own and we shall stand in our lot in the end of the days. The Savior highly exalted—and ourselves at a happy liberty—these are two rich themes for thought! May God the Holy Spirit grant that we may find wines on the lees well refined stored in the text.

I. Proceeding, without further preface, to the text itself, we remark that WE HAIL THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AS OUR KING. We—I must not speak for you all—I wish I could, but there are *some* here, at any rate, who have bowed the knee to that great Son of David who is the Son of God. There are *some* here who delight to feel that Jesus is their heart's Lord, the unrivalled Master of their affections. I speak of such—we hail Immanuel as King!

His right to royalty lies first in His exalted Nature as the Son of God. Who should be king but Jehovah? And, inasmuch as Jesus Christ is very God of very God, let Him reign! Let His kingdom come! Let Him in all things have the pre-eminence. Bow down, you creatures of His hand, and do Him homage for the Lord is King forever and ever! Hallelujah! Let His opposers tremble at the unchangeable decree, for the Son of God must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet! It is not to be endured that God should not be King in His own world! Neither will it forever be allowed that God, in the earth which He has fashioned, should be forgotten or blasphemed.

He who is God over all, blessed forever, shall yet be worshipped by every knee, and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord! Jesus has a right to reign because He is the Creator. "Without Him was not anything made that was made." Shall not the Potter exercise lordship over His own clay? If the Son of God has made and formed us, shall He not command us? Who are the potsherd that shall set themselves in array against Him? Surely He shall break them as with a rod of iron and dash them into shivers!

Besides this, the Lord Jesus is the Preserver of all men, for by Him all things consist. It is by virtue of His intercession that the barren trees are not cut down. By the force of His tender love sinners are spared upon the earth. Should He not reign? If the breath of our nostrils is in His keeping and we are, ourselves, the sheep of His pasture, should we not cheerfully yield to His generous rule? Besides this, and over and above the natural rights of Christ to reign, He governs by virtue of His Headship of the mediatorial kingdom. He is not merely King because He is God, but He is King in His complex Nature as God and Man.

Here He has the rights of Divine delegation, for God has made Him King. Some of the worst of tyrants have delighted to call themselves kings by Divine right. Emperors by the *will* of God. Monarchs by the *Grace* of God, and the like. It may be so. I doubt not many of earth's tyrants require much Grace, lest their crimes should bring them to speedy ruin! And doubtless it is sometimes the will of God to inflict great scourges upon guilty nations! But, my Brothers and Sisters, Jesus Christ is no despotic claimant of Divine right—He is really and truly the Lord's Anointed! "It has pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell."

God has given to Him all power and all authority. As the Son of Man, He is now head over all things to His Church, and He reigns over Heaven, and earth, and Hell with the keys of life and death at His side. "The government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." We recognize Him as King by Divine right. We see in Him most clearly that true Deity which "does hedge a king," and we meekly bow before Him whom God has "appointed to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance and remission of sins."

Certain princes have delighted to call themselves kings by the popular will, and certainly our Lord Jesus Christ is such in His Church. If it could be put to the vote whether He should be King in the Church, every believing heart would crown Him. O that we could crown Him more gloriously than we do! We should count no expense to be wasted that could glorify Christ! Suffering would be pleasure and loss would be gain if thereby we could surround His brow with brighter crowns and make Him more glorious in the eyes of men and angels. Yes, He shall reign! Long live the King! All hail to You, King Jesus! Go forth, you virgin souls who love your Lord! Bow at His feet! Strew His way with lilies of your love and the roses of your gratitude! "Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all."

Moreover, our Lord Jesus is King in Zion by right of conquest. He has taken and carried by storm the hearts of His people and has slain their enemies who held them in cruel bondage. In the Red Sea of His own blood, our Redeemer has drowned the Pharaoh of our sins—shall He not be King in Jeshurun? He has delivered us from the iron yoke and heavy curse of the Law—shall not the Liberator be crowned? We are His portion whom He has taken out of the hand of the Amorite with His sword and with His bow—who shall snatch His conquest from His hand? All the rights of conquest support the Throne of the Lord's Anointed, for God has declared that He will give Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong.

We are that spoil! We are trophies of His victory! We are the treasure for which He laid down His life that He might redeem us unto Himself! We, therefore, who have believed in Him, accept Him to be King and do not, for a moment, question His right. We see Him to be established upon the Throne of His Father, and rejoice that though the people rage, and the

kings of the earth take counsel together, yet has the Lord set His King upon His holy hill of Zion, and said: "You are My Son. This day have I begotten You." All hail, Jesus, King of our souls!

Now, my Brethren, in this great kingdom of our Lord Jesus, it behooves us, since we thus verbally acknowledge Him to be King, to distinctly understand what this involves. We look upon the Lord Jesus as being to us the Fountain of all spiritual legislation. He is a King in His own right—no limited monarch—but an autocrat in the midst of His Church, and in the Church all laws proceed from Christ and Christ only. As for us, His people, we reject with scorn and disdain all the spiritual legislation of kings and parliaments, of bishops and councils!

We are loyal subjects of political rulers in political things and none honor the king more than we do! In whatever State the Christian is cast, he counts it to be his Christian duty to submit himself to the powers that be. But, within the Church of God we know no royal sway of Caesar! We have another King, one Jesus! Let Caesar mind his own, and never venture to touch the crown-right of Jesus. Away with that base Erastianism which has laid the Church of God at the foot of kings and princes, so that they, indeed, can put their feet upon the neck of the free bride of our Lord Jesus Christ! We deny that either king or parliament can legislate for Christ's Church! For Thomas Cranmer's church they may if they please, but for Christ's Church, never!

In the midst of those Churches which are true to Christ's authority, the Bible is the only statute book, and the living Jesus the only Lawgiver! As Christ alone is the Fountain of all spiritual legislation, so He alone gives authority to that legislation. If we are commanded to baptize, we baptize not because we have been authorized by a consistory, or have been licensed by a bishop or a presbytery, but we baptize because Christ has said, "Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

If we come together to break bread, it is not in the name of a denomination or a court, but in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! If you rest any church practice upon the authority of Augustine, Chrysostom, or Calvin, or Luther, or base your faith upon some living preacher and depend upon the force of his oratory, or upon the cogency of his argument, you put Christ out of His proper place. The reason why we should believe revealed Truth of God is because Jesus has borne witness to it. His *ipse dixit* is the great ground of all our theology, for He is "the Word of God," and His regal supremacy is the argument for obedience to His commands.

Where you have no command from *Christ*, your teaching is nothing. Stand away, Sir! You have no place here! Where you have no teaching of *Christ* at your back, your word is the word of *man*, and nothing more! It is not a word before which the subjects of King Jesus can bow themselves. If Christ is King, we receive both laws from Him and the force which makes the law—its dominion over our consciences. If He is King, my Brethren, it

should be our joy to obey Him. We have nothing to do with setting up *our* opinions and views, and thoughts and tastes where He alone is supreme. When we turn to this good and blessed old statute Book, we must do what He bids us do in it. We are not to cut, and pick, and choose, and take this and leave the other—for the royal imprimatur is put upon every page of the Bible, and it is our part, like little children, obedient to a gentle parent, to subject our wills at once. We should, like Mary, sit at Jesus' feet to learn, and then rise and carry into practice what we have learned in so good a school.

Once more, if Jesus is King, then He is the Captain in all our warfare. When we fight, my Brothers and Sisters, if we contend after our own ways, with our own weapons, and not under the guidance of Christ, we may expect defeat! But if we follow Christ, believing the Truth of God because He has revealed it, and contending for the Truth as *His Truth*—careless of man's esteem, and only caring for the esteem of Christ—then we shall be honored of Him in the day when He shall put the laurel upon the head of the conquerors. May God grant us Divine Grace to be such!

I am afraid that many Christians do not understand the mediatorial royalty of Christ in the Church. I see so many of them acting as if they were not subjects of a King at all, but were mere bandits fighting on their own account, doing just according to their own judgment. I hear so many professors quoting *this* man's authority, and *that* man's that I am of the same mind as the Apostle who spoke of some of whom he said he feared lest their faith should stand in the wisdom of *man*, and not in the power of God! If it does so, you forget that your faith and everything else must stand in *Christ*, and that Christ must in all your Graces and in all your actions be acknowledged as Head over all things to His Church, which is His body, or else you err, not holding the Head.

We are the spouse, He is the Husband. He loves and cares for us, but the wife's business is to be *obedient* to her lord. Let us not prove unfaithful to the marriage bond and violate the conjugal vow by being unkind, unfaithful, and disobedient to our Husband. But by His Grace let us watch to know His will, make haste to do it when it is known—and ever ask Him to teach us His way and guide us in His paths till He takes us to His rest. We sincerely and cheerfully acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ to be a King—*our* King.

II. Secondly, WE DELIGHT TO KNOW THAT OUR KING POSSESSES SUPERLATIVE BEAUTY. There is a natural beauty which belongs to our Beloved. Who can be more beautiful than God, who is “glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders”? There is a natural beauty in the Character of Christ. Indeed, so beautiful is that Character that those who have railed most against Christianity have scarcely had the heart to say a word against Christ—and they have first been compelled to belie the narrative of His life before they could raise objections against Him. Perfect in

love, goodness, and truth—never spoke man like this Man! Never was there a character which could rival His inimitable excellence.

But the beauty intended in the text is not that of His Nature and His Character, but the beauty of *position*. As I told you in regard to Tiezekiah, the people could see his beauty and character as well when in sackcloth as in cloth of gold. But the beauty they were to see was the public state of royalty and happiness—and such is the beauty which we believe our Lord Jesus now has. He had this glory *originally*. He speaks of the glory which He had with His Father before the world was. From of old He was inconceivably great. The cherubim and seraphim hastened to obey Him who sat upon a throne, high and lifted up, whose train filled the temple. Who is like unto You, O Lord? Among the gods, who is like unto You?

He was the express image of His Father's Person, and the brightness of His Father's glory. And you know how He came from Heaven, undressing all the way—taking off robe after robe, and jewel after jewel—till here He wrapped His Godhead in a veil of our inferior clay! He cast off even the beauty which naturally belonged to His Manhood, and though He was fairer than any of the children of men, yet His visage became more marred than that of any man. You know at last how, having given His back to the scourgers, and His cheek to them that plucked off the hair—hiding not His face from shame and spitting—He at last consented that the cold seal of death should be set upon His blessed visage. And though He saw no corruption, yet did He sleep in the somber depths of the tomb. Here was His humiliation.

But, Beloved, our King is now in His *beauty*. He was in His beauty at the moment of the Resurrection, when the watchmen, in terror, fled far away, or, fainting, became as dead men. He somewhat hid His Resurrection splendor when He sojourned for forty days below. Yet it must have been a lovely sight to see Him at Emmaus when He was known of the disciples in breaking of bread. Or, again, when He took a piece of a fish and a part of a honeycomb, and did eat before them. Oh, happy was Thomas, though to be chided for his unbelief, he was privileged to put his finger into the print of the nails, and to thrust his hand into the wound of that blessed body!

How that body must have sparkled with glory in the eyes of seraphs when a cloud received Him out of mortal sight, and He ascended up to Heaven! Brothers and Sisters, it is yonder that the King is in His beauty! He is now crowned with the crown which God has given Him as a reward for His tremendous labors and His terrible sufferings. Now He wears the glory which He had with God before the earth existed, and yet another glory above all—that which He has well earned in the fight against sin, death, and Hell.

Hark how the song swells high! It is a new and sweeter song—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, for He has redeemed us unto God by His blood!" Hark how the hallelujah, which went up before of old time, has a

sweeter note to it, when they sing, "For you were slain." More deep and more melodious are the harpings of the harpers, and the swells of that song which is comparable to great thunders, and to the mighty waves of the sea—

***"Worthy is He that once was slain,
The Prince of Peace that groaned and died.
Worthy to rise, and live, and reign
At His Almighty Father's side."***

The King this day wears the beauty of an intercessor who can never fail, of a prince who can never be defeated, of a conqueror who has vanquished every foe, of a Lord who has the heart's allegiance of every subject, of a well-beloved who is adored in the depths of all regenerate hearts.

Jesus wears all the beauty which the pomp of Heaven can bestow upon Him, all the glory which 10,000 times 10,000 angels can minister to Him. The chariots of the Lord are 20,000, even thousands of angels! Jesus is in the midst of them as in the Holy Place. You cannot, with your utmost stretch of imagination, conceive the beauty which now adorns our King! Yet, Brethren, there will be a further revelation of it when He shall appear on earth in His glory, for He is yet to descend from Heaven in great power. "We believe that You shall shortly come to be our Judge." We expect to see the King on earth again. It may be as a King to rule over all the nations. It may be, it *must* be, as a Judge to separate the people as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats.

Oh, the splendor of that glory! It will ravish His people's hearts! But those who in derision crowned Him, mocking, thus, His gracious claim, shall weep and wail because of Him when they shall look on Him whom they have pierced but find no salvation, seeing they rejected Him in the day of Grace. Amid the splendors of that day it shall be the joy of the Christian to see the King in His beauty! Nor is this the end, for *eternity* shall sound His praise: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever!" Forever shall Christ be fair and lovely in the esteem of His Father, in the sight of all intelligent spirits, lovely to the ends of the universe, lovely while the cycles of ages shall roll, chief among 10,000, and altogether lovely! Thus Beloved, the King is arrayed in rarest beauty.

III. Furthermore, THERE ARE SEASONS WHEN WE SEE THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY. We see the King in His beauty at this moment, not with *these* eyes, but with the far clearer *spiritual* eye of *faith*. Eyes are impediments to spiritual sight! Faith is the true eyeball of the soul. Confidence in God substantiates the things that are not seen—gives solid form and shape to that which eye has not beheld.

Let me tell you briefly when some of us have seen the King in His beauty. We saw Him in that day when He pardoned us of all our sins. You remember it! That day when Jesus met you and you were able to cast all your sins on Him and see them all forgiven! Did you ever see such a lovely sight before? Well do I recollect that day! Well will some of you remember the time when you laid your sins on Jesus, the appointed Lamb of God.

You had had many friends but never such a friend as He. You had derived much comfort at different times, but never such comfort as He gave you. Oh, those dear wounds, that crown of thorns on His head, that blood-sprinkled Person!

How you could have kissed those feet! With what alacrity would you have broken the alabaster box of precious ointment, to have poured it on His head, if you could have done so! He was precious to you. He is precious now at the bare recollection of that happy day. When the king writes the felon's pardon, how fair is his handwriting! When the King says, "I have blotted out your sins like a cloud," even the weak and bloodshot eyes of a penitent sinner can discern the inexpressible loveliness of such a gracious Lord. But, dear Brethren, Jesus Christ was seen by us in His beauty more fully when, after being pardoned, we found how much He had done for us!

You had no idea, when you were first saved, that there was so much in store for you. You conceived that if your sins were forgiven it would be all you wanted. But lo, you found you were made a *child of God*, introduced into the family of the Most High! You discovered that you were covered with a robe of righteousness, that your feet were set upon the Rock of Ages, that a new song was put into your mouth, and that you had a portion in the skies! Do you remember, some of you, when, first of all, you learned the doctrine of Jesus Christ's eternal love to you? I know it came to my mind, when first I understood it, like a new discovery! Columbus, when he discovered America, could not have been so overjoyed as my heart was when I learned the lesson of those words, "Yea, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you."

Oh, you saw the King in His beauty when you discovered that not only had He loved you with an everlasting love, but *always* would He do so! That from His bosom He never could or would divorce you! That you were His in time and would be His in *eternity*. Do you remember when you could grasp that glorious Truth of God—

***"Immutable His will,
Though dark may be my frame,
His loving heart is still
Eternally the same:
My soul through many changes goes,
His love no variation knows."***

Let me say to you, Beloved, the more you know about Christ, the less you are satisfied with superficial views of Him. And the more deeply you study His transactions in the Everlasting Covenant, His engagements on your behalf as the eternal Surety, and the fullness of His Grace which shines in all His offices, the more will you be seeing the King in His beauty. Be much in such outlooks! Long more and more to see Jesus!

There are times also, when, in our contemplations, we see His beauty. Meditation and contemplation are often like windows of agate and gates of carbuncle through which we see the Redeemer. Meditation puts the tele-

scope to the eye, and enables us to see Jesus after a better sort than we could have seen Him if we had lived in the days of His flesh. For now we see not only Jesus in the flesh, but the *spiritual* Jesus. We see the spirit of Jesus, the core and essence of Jesus, the very soul of the Savior. O happy are you that spend much time in contemplations! I wish that we had less to do, that we might do more of this heavenly work. Would that our conversation were more in Heaven and that we were more taken up with the Person, the work, the beauty of our Incarnate Lord. More meditation, and you would see the King in his beauty better.

Beloved, it is very probable that we shall have such a sight of our glorious King as we never had before when we come to die. Many saints, in dying, have looked up from amid the stormy waters and have seen Jesus walking on the waves of the sea and heard Him say, "It is I, be not afraid." I have heard expressions from some dying men and women that I never read in the best written book. They have seemed to me as if they knew more about my Master than I had ever learned, or than the old Divines, or the best of writers had ever been able to communicate. Ah, yes! When the tenement begins to shake, and the clay falls away, we see Christ through the rifts, and between the rafters the sunlight of Heaven comes streaming through!

But, Brethren, if we want to see the King in His beauty we must go to Heaven for it, or the King must come here in His Person. It may be He will spare us till He comes. But, just as likely is it that He will take us away to see Him where He is. Do you ever long for Him? Do you ever grow weary of this prison? Do you ever pant to see your Beloved? Those sweet words of our hymn, do they ever come across your mind?—

***"My heart is with Him on His Throne,
And ill can brook delay.
Each moment listening for the voice,
'Rise up, and come away.'"***

He is our Husband, and we are widowed by His absence! He is our Brother sweet and fair, and we are lonely without Him! Thick veils and clouds hang between our souls and their true life—when shall the day break and the shadows flee away? When shall the veil be torn again and the glory of God be seen? When shall we leave these childish things, leave the glass in which we see our Beloved darkly—and see Him face to face? Oh, long-expected day *begin!* My eyes shall see the King in His beauty.

As I pause over this verse, I would like to ask every hearer here whether he expects to see the King with joy? You never will unless you see Him here on earth as your Savior. You must see Him by faith in His sufferings or else you will never see Him by sight in His beauty. Let the question go along these seats, "Shall my eyes see the King in His beauty, or, must I say with Balaam, 'I shall see Him, but not near. I shall behold Him, but not now. I shall see Him as a Judge, but His beauties shall increase my alarm. I shall flee from Him and say to the rocks and to the hills, hide me from the face of Him that sits on the throne.'"

Dear Hearer, I hope that will not be your dreadful lot! Look to Him this morning by faith, for He is still able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him! Cast your spirits upon His finished work this moment, and then joyfully sing—

***“There shall my disimprisoned soul
Behold Him and adore,
Be with His likeness satisfied,
And grieve and sin no more.
Shall see Him wear that very flesh
On which my guilt was lain;
His love intense, His merit fresh,
As though but newly slain.
These eyes shall see Him in that day,
The God that died for me;
And all my rising bones shall say,
Lord, who is like to You?”***

IV. THE EXCEEDING GLORY OF THIS SIGHT may well detain us for a minute or two. I shall set out this exceeding glory to you by way of contrast. What a sight that was which Abraham beheld one morning when he lifted up his eyes “and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.”

I think I see the Prophet all alone, gazing upon the dreadful sight. He had interceded and wrestled with God with arguments, and yet Sodom and the cities of the plain are all gone! A fire-shower has destroyed them, and their smoke darkens the sky. Can you put yourself in such a position and on a far more terrible scale look at the judgments of the lost, of which we are told in the book of the Revelation—“their smoke goes up forever and ever”? What a vision! And you would have been there, not as a spectator, but yourself dwelling with everlasting burnings unless love had delivered you!

Contrast what you *deserve* with what Divine Grace has prepared for you! O Believer in Christ, no smoke of furnace, no terrors of devouring flame, but for you the promise—“Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty.” Glory be to super abounding Grace, that, “where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound.” Contrast this again with another sight. The prophet Ezekiel was taken to the temple and after seeing the image of jealousy set up, he was shown yet greater abominations. Behold, there was a hole in the wall, and within were all forms of creeping things and abominable beasts, and a voice said to the Prophet, “I will show you greater abominations than these,” and he saw yet filthier and fouler forms of idolatry.

You and I have been like that Prophet—we have had to gaze into our own hearts, and we have seen the idols there! And as we have looked longer, we have seen worse idols than we had seen before. And if your daily experience is like mine, you have often heard that mysterious voice, “Son of man, I will show you greater abominations than these.” Yet, al-

though all this inbred sin was within us—and some of it is still there—yet our eyes shall see the King in His beauty! What a change from fighting with corruption to full communion with Christ! What an exchange from a sense of sin to the perfect image of our best Beloved! Rejoice, then, dear Brothers and Sisters, exceedingly, when you look at the contrast!

Again, let me try to show you the great beauty of this sight by comparison. Our Lord had a very remarkable sight when He was taken up to an exceedingly high mountain and He was shown all the kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof by the Evil Spirit. A fair sight—you and I might be glad of the vision—though not of the temptation which followed it. But among all that was to be seen from this mount of temptation, there is nothing to equal the sight of the King in His beauty! Verily I say unto you that all the kings of the earth, in all their splendor, with all their hosts and armies in their glittering array are not to be compared to Him who is altogether lovely!

Compare yourself, again, with the queen of Sheba. She came from afar to see the wisdom of Solomon, but, behold, a *greater* than Solomon is to be seen by *you*! When she saw the king's riches, and his servants, and his pomp, no heart was left in her. But Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like the Savior of men! He was not worthy to be a waiting footman at the table of our great King! Even the sight that Moses saw hardly bears comparison. He looked from Pisgah upon the land that flowed with milk and honey and he tracked the land from Lebanon's snow-crested peaks far away to the blue sea, and to the tawny desert that goes down to Egypt.

With joyful eyes he beheld the cities where the tribes would dwell and saw the hills which are round about Jerusalem. But he died and entered not into the land. You and I see Jesus! And in that day we enter fully into possession of Him! All the milk and honey that ever flowed in Sharon's plains, or Eshcol's valleys never could be compared for a single second to the everlasting joy and beatific blessedness that are to be found in a sight of Christ! I think our sight of Christ will be even nearer and clearer than that of John in Patmos, though that is the nearest approach to it. John saw his Master but for a season—we shall behold Him *forever* and see the Savior in His own Person—not a mere picture upon the camera of the imagination.

V. Lastly. From the text it appears that THIS SIGHT OF CHRIST EMINENTLY AFFORDS LIBERTY TO THE SOUL. When we see not Christ, we cannot receive the possessions of the Covenant. But when we get a view of the King in His beauty, then we see the land that is very far off. A sight of Christ gives us a view of the dim past—a view of electing love we sweetly enjoy when we see the King in His beauty. And the future, which is dark with excessive brightness—that we *also* see when we see Jesus and know that we shall be like He when we see Him as He is.

If we live near to Jesus we shall count no Covenant mercy too great for Him to bestow. "He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him

up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Do any of you want to enjoy the high doctrine of eternal love? Do you desire liberty in very close communion with God? Do you long to understand mysteries? Do you aspire to know the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths? Then, Beloved, you must get to see the King in His beauty! He who understands Christ receives an anointing from the Holy One by which he knows all things.

Christ is the great master key of all the chambers of God. There is no treasure house of God which will not open and yield up all its wealth to the soul that lives near to Jesus! O that He would dwell in my bosom! Would that He would make my heart to be His house, His dwelling place forever! Open the door, beloved Hearers, and He will come into your souls. He has long been knocking and it is this which He has wanted—that He may sup with you—and you with Him. He sups with you because you have the house or the heart, and you with Him because He brings the provision. He could not sup with you if it were not in your *heart*, you finding the house. Nor could you sup with Him, for you have a bare cupboard and He must bring the provision with Him.

Fling wide, then, the portals of your soul! He will come with that love which you long to feel! He will come with that joy with which you cannot work your poor depressed spirit! He will bring you joy which now you have not! He will come with His flagons of wine and sweet apples and cheer you till you shall have no other sickness but that of love over-powering, love Divine! Only open the door, then, and have no other sickness than that of love. Only open the door, then, to Him! Drive out His enemies! Give Him the keys of your heart and He will dwell there forever—and your eyes shall see the King in His beauty!

May the Lord give His blessing to these few remarks of mine and cause them to live in His people's souls so that they may live near to Him and dwell in Him. You who never knew the Lord, take my word for it, you do not know what happiness is! If you have never seen my Lord, you have never seen anything worth seeing! If you have never rested in Him you have not cast your anchor where it will hold. O hunger after Jesus! Long for Jesus! Never rest till you win Him! He is waiting to receive you—He has a great heart to receive sinners—

***“He sits on Zion’s hill,
And receives poor sinners still.”***

Do but come to Him. As for your sin and your righteousness—throw both of those away—come to Him as you are—He will never reject the soul that longs to be saved entirely by Him. May God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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BROAD RIVERS AND STREAMS

NO. 489

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 18, 1863,
 BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: your eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down. Not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King. He will save us. Your tackling is loosed, they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail: then is the prey of a great spoil divided, the lame take the prey.”
Isaiah 33:20-23.

THIS prophecy was uttered when the city of Jerusalem was reduced to the direst extremity. The Assyrian hosts threatened the city with utter destruction. Rabshakeh, a fitting herald for his tyrannical master, had advanced to inspect the walls while Sennacherib tarried at Lachish. False to all treaties, the heavy sum paid down by Hezekiah could not ensure the promised mercy from the ferocious despot. The treasuries of the city were exhausted, and therefore no further attempt in that direction could be made. No help could be looked for from any other nation. Even Egypt was in deadly fear of the great power of Nineveh.

The Assyrians were strong as lions, and cruel as evening wolves. No nation had ever equaled them in remorseless and wanton cruelty. Punishments the most horrible were constantly executed upon those whom they vanquished. Impalement, flaying alive, and piercing out the eyes were their ordinary amusements after the close of battle. Look at the stones disinterred from Nineveh, and you will see engraved there by themselves memorials of the horrible barbarities which they constantly perpetrated. Sennacherib's army was exceedingly great. It had already stormed many cities.

Arphad and Sepharvaim, Hamath and Samaria had fallen an easy spoil—cities that were surrounded by rivers had been defeated by diverting the current and so drying up the streams. Or else by using galleys with oars, the Assyrian monarch had reached the walls and applied the scaling ladders. The army was so well equipped, so numerous, and so thoroughly well supplied with all munitions of war, that there was not the slightest hope of the escape of Jerusalem except by Divine power. Yet the Assyrians did not shoot an arrow there, nor did they cast up a mound against it, for at nightfall the angel of the Lord went forth and slew a hundred and forty thousand men, and Sennacherib hastened back to his own land.

Brethren, you know the analogy here, how the Church of Christ is every day surrounded by the most ferocious adversaries. She is like Jerusalem. All round about her the dogs of Hell are yelping for her as their prey. Satan has multitudes of faithful servants too glad to engage in battle against the Lord's Anointed, and against the Church which He has redeemed by His own blood. They are well armed with an infernal protection. They are very skillful, determined and resolute. Not a stone will be left unturned to blot out the remembrance of Christ's kingdom from under Heaven.

But rejoice! Even if the dark day should come, be not dismayed! God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. The Church is not in danger. She is impregnably garrisoned. The gates of Hell shall not prevail against her, and she shall abide in her place until He shall come who has made her beautiful for the situation, the joy of the whole earth. He shall come to translate her to the skies, to be the New Jerusalem—the Bride, the Lamb's wife—to glitter forever in the brightness which far outshines the light of the sun.

Let us now with profound attention meditate upon our text, and notice that, as the existence of Jerusalem was imperiled, the first promise of Isaiah was *that Jerusalem should still exist*—"Your eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation," and so on. But, further, inasmuch as during the siege many unbelieving persons had found fault with the position of Jerusalem, because it was not surrounded by a river, the promise is given *that she shall have a glorious position*—"There the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams."

No, more than this, as a climax of blessing, *she is promised perpetual triumph over all her enemies*, since in her streams, "shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby." Or, if they come, they shall prove a wreck—"Your tacklings are loosed. They could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail."

I. The first promise made to the Church of God in our text is one SECURING TO HER AN EVERLASTING EXISTENCE. The Church is not a temporary institution—it shall never be removed, but abide forever.

1. From the words of the text I gather that the Jerusalem of God *shall exist as she is*. What was she in those days? She was the city of solemnities. She was the place where prayer and praise were custom to be made. So is she to continue throughout all generations. The Church of God is in this world the city of all true solemnities. Any prayer and praise that are not offered by the chosen of the Lord, who constitute the true and invisible Church of God, are but vain oblations.

Zion—the chosen Church, redeemed by blood, called by the Spirit, and preserved by Divine Grace—Zion is the one consecrated enclosure in which sacrifices of righteousness can be acceptably offered. This hallowed temple shall stand forever as the Lord's chosen dwelling place. Beloved, the day shall never come when the Church shall cease to be the *temple of prayer*. The fire upon this altar shall never be quenched day nor night—

***"To Him shall constant prayer be made,
And princes throng to crown His head.
His name like sweet perfume shall rise
With every morning's sacrifice."***

There shall never lack a man in our Israel to hold up holy hands, like Moses, upon the mountain, that the hosts of God may prevail in the plain below. Elijahs may be taken away, but Elishas shall follow. Apostles may cease their perpetual supplications, but a train of intercessors shall follow in their footsteps. While earth brings forth her harvests, the Church shall yield her sheaves of prayer. Nor shall *praise* ever cease. The hallowed hymn, the psalm of victory, the hallelujah of triumphant joy—these shall never be suspended in the worst days of the Church. Even when she assembled in the catacombs and gathered her sons for worship in the caves of the earth—even then she had her hymns of praise—even then they sang of Christ ascended and about to come.

The roaring of the sea may cease, the thunders may be hushed, and the spheres may end their songs, but the redeemed of the Lord must praise the name of Jehovah world without end. Neither shall the Church ever cease to be *the fountain of ministry*. The ministration of the Word is a part of our solemnities. There shall never come a time when the Prophet's voice shall be stilled. Our Lord will still raise pastors after His own heart, and teachers anointed for His work. The living waters shall ever gush from the foot of Mount Zion, and the stream which welled up when Jesus sent forth His twelve disciples shall flow on, ever widening, ever deepening, "Till, like a sea of glory, it spreads from pole to pole."

City of our solemnities! We delight to behold the feet of the ambassadors of the Lord. They are beautiful upon the mountains, for they proclaim to us glad tidings. How greatly do we rejoice that we shall never lack the messenger sent from Heaven, nor shall the candlestick be removed out of its place. Moreover, Beloved, the ordinances of God's house, *such as Baptism and the Sacred Supper*, these shall never cease. There was a day when Baptism was hardly known in the Christian Church, save only among a persecuted few who were called heretics.

Nevertheless, the hallowed stream has always been stirred by some who, "faithful to their Master found," were buried with Him in Baptism unto death, and gave in Baptism the answer of a good conscience towards God. And the Lord's Supper, too, had almost ceased from the Christian Church. The "mass," of course, continued, but what of that? Is that the Lord's Supper? No, verily, but a profane prostitution of the simplicity of God, a silly mystery more fitted to be styled the incantation of a haggard witch, than to be called the Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But still, there were a faithful few, called heretics, who met together and broke bread in remembrance of their Lord and Master. And so, Brothers and Sisters, while seedtime and harvest, summer and winter shall continue, until He comes, we will show forth His death, we will set forth His burial, celebrating, according to His own will, the commands and ordinances which He Himself has given us. City of our solemnities, methinks I see you now in vision! You are the place where God dwells between the curtains, hidden from the gaze of unhallowed eyes, seen only by those whom Christ has made kings and priests unto God!

Never, never, never from you, O Church of God, shall the presence of the Holy One depart! No rushing of wings shall be heard, as in the siege of Jerusalem. No mysterious voice shall thunder, "Arise, let us go from here." "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," secures to you, O Zion, the Presence of your Lord and Master forever. Methinks I see your

altar—on it smokes the Lamb that has just been slain—still acceptable before the Lord, and ever to remain the finished sacrifice—

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

Hallowed courts, you shall never be desecrated! Sacred rites, you shall never cease! The Lord has said it, and it must be! His Church abides—though the mountains depart, and the hills be removed, yet shall not His Covenant of love depart from her—nor shall her safety ever be imperiled, even unto the world’s end.

2. Further, my Brothers and Sisters, it appears to me that the city is to exist, not only as the city of our solemnities, which it is, but as *a quiet habitation* which we would desire it to be. The Church of God is always a quiet habitation, *even when her enemies surround her*. Some of you may have seen, some months ago in the Exhibition, a Belgian picture representing the reading of the statute of the Duke of Alva in the Flemish Towns, establishing the Inquisition. Godly merchants are listening in deep solemnity of sorrow. The young maiden weeps upon her sister’s bosom, the aged woman turns her streaming eyes to Heaven.

All this the painter could depict, but he could not paint the deep Heaven-born peace which still possessed the souls of the threatened ones—who for the Master’s sake could suffer all worldly loss. That peace of God which passes all understanding, lives even in the day of trial. You know what Martin Luther said, whenever any trouble came, “Come, let us go in and sing the forty-sixth Psalm, and defy the devil.” And oh, how grandly that old Psalm would swell from the deep bass voices of the Reformer and his companions—“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.”

With all her foes about her, I say, the Church of God is evermore a quiet habitation. But how quiet is she, Beloved, *when her enemies are not allowed to prey upon her!* “Then had the Churches rest,” says the Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles, and verily, the text applies to us now. We sit, every man, under his own vine, and under his own fig tree, none making us afraid. And besides the quiet we enjoy politically, I thank God that in this Church, at least, we know what quiet means in *our communion with one another*. Where ever the Holy Spirit dwells, there will be quietness. The Holy Spirit, you know, is represented to us as a dove—doves love not the storm, and the Spirit of God abides not where there is noise, strife, controversy and division. No. There must be peace and quietness.

And you, my beloved Friends, who are really in the Church of Christ—mark, you may be in our Church, and not in the Church of Christ—you may make a profession of being in the Church and not be in the invisible, mysterious, secret body of the faithful. But if you really are among that chosen number, you will enjoy great quietness, you will be able to say with the Apostle, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” You will get a hold of the Psalmist’s meaning when he said, “So He gives His beloved sleep.” You will rest in God’s love even as God rests in it.

Happy day! Happy day! For those who, by the eye of faith, can look into the future after Christ shall come, who can behold the glad millennial age—they shall understand yet more fully the meaning of this prophecy, “Your eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation.” When everywhere Christ shall be known. When in every land the fifth and last empire shall rule. Then, as in the days of Solomon, there shall be no war, but peace, peace forever. Till then the God of all peace is with us and we may be sure that all is well.

Our quietness must continue, for the Church nestles under the wings of God. How can she be disquieted? The mountains of His power are round about her. How can she be carried by storm? Her Lord is a wall of fire encircling her. Who can touch her? He is the glory in the midst of her. How can she fear? He is All in All to her. He wears her on His breast, He has written her name on His hands. She is the jewel of His crown and the bracelet of His arm. Oh, how blessed must she be!

3. But, further, our text seems to indicate that there were some persons who doubted all this and said, “Well, but you speak of this city as though it could stand an attack. It cannot—it is such a feeble place, it is like a tent, it can soon be stormed—a gust of wind can blow it over.” The Lord anticipates this difficulty and shows *that the feebleness of Jerusalem should be no reason why she should not still continue to exist*. She is a tabernacle—a mere tent—but she is a tabernacle that shall not be taken down.

It is true that to human eyes she seems to have no huge stones, no gates of brass, no bulwarks of solid masonry. But though she has nothing but cords and stakes, yet her stakes shall not be loosed, nor shall her cords be snapped. Oh, Beloved, one delights to think of the feebleness of the Church, as magnifying the power of Him who keeps her! What can be more feeble than the Church of God? She has no carnal weapons. “My kingdom is not of this world, else would My servants fight.” The true Church has no great riches. The most of her followers are poor. She has no wisdom. They who use logic and cunning can soon overthrow her disciples and ridicule her advocates.

She understands not the wisdom of human speech, or, rather, she renounces it and speaks with simplicity, as she ought to speak. Philosophers laugh at her. Kings hardly take her into account. They think the Church so insignificant that they can put out her candle when they will. But, ah, not so. The Church is still secure, despite her feebleness. It is wonderful, how during these last nineteen centuries, God has been pleased to keep that spark alive. All the devils in Hell have been spitting at this candle, but it burns still—they have sought to throw the whole of the floods of evil upon the Heaven-kindled spark, but the spark still lives.

They have tried to stamp it out, but it has blazed the more. The Church’s feebleness, because it drives her to God, is the Church’s strength. I pray God that our Church may never confide in wisdom, or wit, or eloquence, or riches, or rank, or fame. No, Lord, You are the reinforced pillar of Your Church’s sure support, and if we rest on You, we are secure. But if once we depend elsewhere, we fall to our confusion.

4. Further, complete this part of the promise, the city, notwithstanding all her feebleness, *is to be forever complete*. If I understand the last two sentences—“Not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither

shall any of the cords thereof be broken,” we learn here *that all the true members of the Church are safe*. Some of them may be driven into the earth as the stakes are driven, with a heavy mallet—but the strokes of tribulation shall only give them a better hold and minister stability to the whole structure.

Satan may seek to pull them up, and the winds may blow on the tent enough to tear up the stakes that hold it, but no hurricane or raging typhoon shall cast down the Divine habitation. Cords are apt to be snapped, and if they are long used, the strands at last may rot and new cords and new stakes may be required—but not so with the Church of God. If you are one of the cords or the stakes of the Church, you shall never be cast away, the Lord will take care, not only to preserve the Church as a whole, but each individual part of it.

I need not enlarge here, for you are all sound in your belief of final perseverance. What should we do without that precious doctrine! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, if one cord could be snapped, surely it were myself! If one stake could be removed, I think I hear you say, “It must be I. I must be moved, I must be cast away.” But not one shall be. Just as the stones were taken out of the quarry and all shaped, to be put in their own position in Solomon’s temple, and no one stone could take another stone’s niche, so you have your place appointed you. And you are being quarried today to be made into the right shape for it, and you, and no one but you, can occupy that place in the temple of God in Heaven. And you shall shine there as a polished stone forever.

But I think, dear Friends, that this also relates *to the doctrines of the Gospel*. Every day produces some improved divinity. Every now and then, to suit the times, a new edition of the Gospel is issued. Young gentlemen at college are taught not to preach the common ordinary doctrines, such as John Calvin, St. Augustine, and the Apostle Paul preached. They must go to Germany and muddle their own heads, and then come forth to muddle other people’s. They must have some philosophical divinity, some novelty, something more refined than that which would attract the mob and gather together the common people.

Thinking people must be cared for. Sermons must be full of intellectual matter. The old Apostles were but fishermen, and of course they could not preach more than fishermen’s education would enable them to comprehend. But these gentlemen have taken their degrees, and can climb to far greater heights, and descend into far more profound depths than plain Peter or illiterate John. Well, dear Friends, *we* are content with the old wine since it is the best. Christ’s Gospel is no new Gospel.

And moreover, we are old-fashioned enough to believe that not one doctrine is to be altered, nor half a doctrine, nor the thousandth part of a doctrine! No, nor yet the *form* of a doctrine. We would “hold fast the form of sound words”—not only the principle, mark—but the *words*. And not only the words, but the very *form in* which the words were molded. “Words, words, words,” says somebody, “what is the use of words, and forms, and creeds? Why, these are old musty, crusty documents, only sectarians care about them.”

Yes, then let us be sectarians. Let us hold with force and strength of mind the very form of sound words which have been delivered unto us. Not one of the stakes shall be removed, nor one of the cords be loosened.

So with *the ordinances*. We do not believe, for instance, that we have any power to change the *immersion*, which was practiced by the Apostles, into *sprinkling*—nor take infants instead of Believers. We think that not one of the cords can be removed, nor one of the stakes be taken out of its place. We do not think we have any right to change the breaking of bread and the drinking of wine into a “mass,” and thus make a new ceremony, instead of perpetuating that which was delivered unto us.

No, let the old Gospel be the old Gospel. “To the Law and to the Testimony, if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.” We must keep to the same practices and believe the same Truths of God even unto the end. Alas for you, you cities of earth, you have tottered to your fall! A heap of sand, a mountain of ruin is to be found where once Babylon lifted her proud head, and where Nineveh exalted her brazen brow! Even old Rome has crumbled, and her pillars lie prostrate! Her theatres are but a place of emptiness, and her temples but deserted fanes.

But you, O Church of God, you still exist! Not one of your pillars has been shaken! Not a column has left its base or lost its capital. Riveted and held fast by more than iron bands, the whole of your fabric is as unmoved as the pillars of the universe. Every stone is as new and strong as when first Jehovah dug your deep foundations, and laid your stones in the fair red cement of Jesus’ precious blood!

Still do your pinnacles glisten in the sun, O you bejeweled city! No change has tarnished you. Time has no tooth to devour the glories, no foot to trample on your joys. You are the Eternal City and all things else are but shadow, mist and dream. Like the God that made you, you are immortal, invisible, the only true Church, as He is the only true God. Unto Him that built you, and that dwells in you, be glory both now and forever. Amen.

II. The second part of our subject is THE PREEMINENT POSITION. It was a cause of lamenting to many of the sinners in Zion that Jerusalem was not better defended. The most approved method of ancient defense was to surround the city by a broad moat. Joab thought it no mean achievement when he took the “city of waters.” Hence, God here meets all the wishes of His people by telling them that He will be to them all that broad rivers and streams could possibly be.

Jerusalem had nothing but its little brook Kedron, which was not worth the mentioning, for it could be no means of defense at all in a day of siege. But He, even Jehovah, will be to them all that broad rivers and streams would by comparison suggest. At the meaning of this promise I must now very hastily glance. First I think it means *fertility*. Understand that especially in the East broad rivers and streams are very necessary to fertilize the earth. Egypt owed all her harvests to the Nile.

And the great plain of Mesopotamia, in which Nineveh and Babylon were situated, was watered by two great rivers—the Tigris and the Euphrates—and by innumerable streams which intersected the intervening country. The whole land was irrigated by canals and little brooks. It is now a desert because there is no irrigation, but then it was the most fertile part of the world. We are told in the first chapters of Genesis concerning Eden, that there went a river through it. It had not been Eden without its Hiddekel.

Well, now, Jerusalem had none of these broad rivers or streams, but her God is to be all that to her. O, Beloved, how fertile God makes His Church! Let but the Lord Jehovah come among His people, and there are many conversions. Her sons and daughters are as many as the sand of the sea, and her offspring like the gravel thereof. Only let the Lord be with the minister, and with the Church, and we shall have to say—"Who are these that fly as a cloud and like doves to their windows?"

Moreover, in your heart and mine, if we have Jehovah there, He will be to us a place of broad rivers and streams, and we shall be fertile in all Divine Graces. Perhaps this morning you feel like a desert, bringing forth no fruit. Ah, but think of your glorious Lord! Think of the glory of all His attributes—especially think of the glory of His Grace, the glory of His finished work for you, the glory of His Cross, and of His Throne. You will find that He will give you fertility—your faith shall grow and all your graces shall flourish! The glorious Lord can make us like a tree planted by the rivers of water so that we shall bring forth our fruit in our season.

And as for good works, which are the true fruit of such as the Lord loves, let but Jehovah dwell in us, let His Spirit abide in us, let Christ be in constant fellowship with our souls, and we shall abound in every good work to the glory of God. We want no Tigris. We need no Euphrates. We seek no Nile—Jehovah is to us a place of broad rivers and streams. Our fruit surely blossoms and ripens in its time when God, the glorious Lord, is with us.

Broad rivers signify not only fertile soil, but *abundance to the inhabitants*. Places near broad rivers produce a great variety of plants. We know that the children of Israel regretted that they had left the leeks, garlic, onions, cucumbers and melons of Egypt—plants that grew by the rivers. Besides, where there are rivers there is an abundance of fish of all kinds, and in the fat pastures, such as Goshen, which was well watered by the Nile, abundance of cattle are reared. And the abundant harvests which are produced there through the admirable irrigation, make that land blessed which has broad rivers and streams.

Well now, our God is all this to His Church. Having God, she has abundance. What can she ask for that He will not give her? What want can she have which He will not supply? Oh, you citizens of Zion, what are your wants this morning? My Master sends me out like a herald from a king, and He bids me cry in the streets of this Zion, "Ho, you that have any need, come to your king and He will supply you." Want you the Bread of Life? It drops like manna from the sky. Want you refreshing streams? The Rock follows you, and that Rock is Christ.

"In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." If you have any want, it is your own fault! If you are straitened, you are not straitened in Him, but in your own heart.

Broad rivers and streams in like manner point to *commerce*. We know that in Holland, especially the broad rivers and streams make that nation what it is. The harbors are so safe, the rivers so broad, and the canals so innumerable, that commerce is easy in every place, and the ends of the earth are linked to the nation by its broad rivers and streams. In that country we find curious importations hardly known to any other people,

because they have gathered up the treasures of the far-off lands. There was a time when their broad rivers and streams enabled them to engross the mercantile power of the whole universe.

Well, Beloved, our *glorious* Lord—keep the adjective as well as the noun—our glorious Lord is to be to us a place of commerce. Through God we have commerce with the past. The riches of Calvary, the riches of the Covenant, the riches of the old age of election, the riches of eternity—all come to us down the broad stream of our gracious Lord. We have commerce, too, with the future. What galleys, laden to the water's edge, come to us from the millennium! What visions we have of the days of Heaven upon earth.

Through our glorious Lord we have commerce with angels, commerce with the bright spirits washed in blood that sing before the Truth of God—no, better still, we have commerce with the Infinite One, with eternity, with self-existence, with Immutability, with Omnipotence, with Omniscience—for our glorious Lord is to us a place of broad rivers and streams. I wonder how Unitarians find comfort, since they have no glorious Lord—they have an inglorious Lord. And I think I may say of Unitarianism as our Prophet here says concerning Assyria, that, having no glorious Lord, “their tackling is loosed, they cannot well strengthen their mast, they cannot spread the sail. There is the prey of a great spoil taken from them, the lame take the prey.” But we who have a glorious Lord, an Incarnate God, God in Christ Jesus, we, I say, have commerce with Heaven.

Finally, broad rivers and streams are specially intended to set forth *security*. We have already alluded to our own happy island. Dr. Watts has said of it—

**“Oh, Britain, praise your mighty God,
And make His honors known abroad.
He bade the ocean round you flow,
Not bars of brass could guard you so.”**

In the memorable '88, when the Spanish Armada, as the old Divines of that age said, “turreted the seas” till the high prows of the vessels hid the waves of the ocean, God blew with His winds and all Spain's mighty hosts were broken, and God's favored isle was free.

We were doubtless spared the horrors of war under the first Napoleon through our narrow sea. It was especially so in the old times of ancient warfare. Then a narrow trench was almost as useful as a broad channel would be now, for they had no ready means of crossing so well. Although on old Assyrian sculptures we see galleys with oars crossing over rivers and we have one or two sculptures, I believe, in the British Museum, of the Assyrian king turning the river into another channel so that he might the more easily take the city.

But still, rivers were for a defense. Oh, Beloved, what a defense is God to His Church! Ah, the devil cannot cross this broad river of God. Between me and you, O fiend of Hell, is my God. Do remember this, Christian, between you and your archenemy is your God. Satan has to stand on the other side and oh, how he wishes he could dry up that stream, but God is Omnipotent. How Satan wishes he could change the current, but fear not, for God abides Immutably the same.

How Satan wishes he could get at you and me—but only once let us get safely in Zion—we may look over its walls, across the broad rivers and

streams, and remember that we are out of gunshot of the enemy so far as our spiritual existence is concerned. He cannot destroy us! Worry us, he may—for we are such timid souls—but kill he cannot, for God, even our mighty God, keeps us safe beyond all possibility of destruction.

III. We come now to offer one or two words on the last point, upon which we have already entrenched. The last point is ETERNAL SAFETY. I have already said that these broad rivers did not always answer the purpose of defending the city, because the Assyrian king carried galleys with him overland, and thus took the city. But concerning this broad river it is written, “There shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby,” to come up to the walls to attack the bulwarks.

Our text teaches us *that to the eye of faith the Church has no enemies at all.* “Wherein shall go no galley with oars.” “No enemies at all.” “But,” says one, “there are enemies to the Truth of God everywhere! We see the enemies of God creeping in everywhere. The whole world is in arms against us.” But faith so clearly perceives the feebleness and the frailty of man that, like her Lord, she takes up all the nations as a very little thing and counts all her adversaries to be but as a drop in the bucket. You ramble in your garden, perhaps, in the summer time, and a spider has spun its stoutest web across your path. You walk along and you never think that there is anything to hinder you, and yet there are those spiders’ strong webs, which would have caught a thousand flies, but they do not impede you.

So is it with God’s glorious Church—there are barriers across her path, but they are only spider’s webs. On she walks—she has no adversaries, for she counts her adversaries to be nothing. “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that rises against you in judgment you shall condemn.” This is the heritage of the people of the Lord. “They that war against us shall be as nothing and as a thing of nothing.” Thus says the Lord.

Further, mark, dear Friends, that when we are compelled to see that the Church has adversaries, yet, according to the promise, *those adversaries shall be put to confusion.* They have launched the ship. The galley with oars is on the sea. The text does not say that no galley with oars shall ever be there, but “no galley with oars shall go there.” Now, in order to make it “go” they must fix the mast. They must gird the tackling, or how shall they spread the sail, and how shall they proceed on their way? Ah, but they cannot, they cannot strengthen their mast. Their tackling is loosed.

They are like mariners reeling to and fro. They stagger like drunken men. They are at their wit’s end. They know not how to make the mast stand in its socket. It was shaped and fashioned at Nineveh. It has been used in other sieges and it answered well. But this time it will not fit into its socket. The wind blows furiously. They cannot fasten the tackling in their proper places. They know not where to find the ropes and spars. They cannot strengthen the mast nor spread the sail! Oh, how glorious it is to see the confusion of God’s enemies!

Some say the devil is wise, but he is a fool, and has been a fool from the very beginning. All he has ever done has been to throw stones in the sky which have fallen down upon his own head. He always shoots his arrows the wrong end foremost, and then they come back again with their points toward him. Somehow or other the crafty old fox, when undermin-

ing the Church's fall, manages to cover himself with filth. When the whole of this world's drama shall come to an end, there will be one tremendous laugh from earth and Heaven against the devil, for they will say, "Aha! Aha! Aha! He has been God's slave all the while.

"He has been but God's dupe, working out God's Glory. He thought he was having his own way and doing his own will, but he has been but a pitiful slave to carry the materials out of which God shall bring forth triumphs that shall shine throughout eternity." O Beloved, we need not be afraid! Our enemies are in confusion. They do not know how to attack us.

And then, faith not only sees the confusion of her adversaries, but she also believes *they are so utterly destroyed that she may go out and spoil them*. They could not spread the sails. They could not fix the mast. Look! The wind has driven them on yonder rock! How the ship breaks. How she splits. There, now, she divides in pieces, and her cargo is drifted on the shore—and the men and the women and lame men are leaning on their staves. And little children all run down to the beach and gather the spoil from the wrecked ship. So it always has been in every attack that has been made on the Church—we have always seen the wreck of our adversaries and gathered spoils from them.

I see the ship launched once again. She has had her name altered. She has sailed from a distant port—not quite from the land from where Solomon derived his apes and peacocks, but almost as far. She has a proud helmsman, who wears a miter on his head. This time there are terrible expectations that Zion's city will be taken and destroyed. What will be the result, do you suppose, of the recent attack upon Christianity? Why, the result of it will be that we shall have the richest spoil we have had for years!

The Pentateuch, the blessed old Pentateuch, which was the only Bible, you remember, David ever had to read—the Book which David used to spell over and say blessed was the man who searched it day and night—that old-fashioned Pentateuch—why, we had almost forgotten it! People said, "Ah, yes, all very well to preach on the Gospels and sometimes on the Epistles, but the Pentateuch is an old-fashioned book of little importance." Consequently there are very few comments upon the Pentateuch, which is, perhaps, the most neglected part of all Inspired Writ.

And what will be the effect of this new galley with oars? Why, we shall all read the Pentateuch more. I believe that the Pentateuch is the text of all the Bible, that the Pentateuch is the Law, the statute, *the Book*. And if any part of Scripture has the preeminence, it is the five books of Moses. We shall look over those five books again. "In His Law we will begin to meditate both day and night." And then there will be comments written, there will be sermons preached, and even those who are the feeblest in our Zion, even the little children, will get some of the spoil. We shall gather some of the rich and rare treasures that have been hidden in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Numbers.

We shall have to say, "Thank God that ever the galley with oars came here, for the spoil is very great, and we are all made rich thereby." I wish they would attack some other part of Scripture. Let some other portion of Scripture be attacked, and as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times, so shall the Word of God be. Wherever I see the devil's black finger I am obliged to him, for I feel inclined to think there must be some-

thing there that is good, or else he would not have pointed it out as an object of attack to his followers. Let us rest assured, dearly Beloved, that the spoil shall surely come in, and that we shall not be destroyed.

And what is to be the end of it all? Our text *ascribes glory to a Triune God*. The Church is, after all her attacks, and all her salvations, to ascribe glory to the Three-in-One Jehovah. Read the verse, dear Friends, “For the Lord is our Judge. The Lord is our Lawgiver. The Lord is our King”—Three, yet One. O Lord, be You exalted! Our Father which are in Heaven, You sit on the Throne and You are Judge! Jesus, son of Mary, and Son of God, You, by Your holy life, have set us such an example that You are our Lawgiver! And you, indwelling Spirit, You are with us, and therefore the shout of a King is in the midst of our camps.

Instead of doubting, fearing, and trembling, let us betake ourselves to song. The hope of the Church does not rest in her ministers, but in her God. Not in her wisdom, but in Him. Not in her eloquence, but in His promise. Not in her might or in her numbers, but in His great strength, and in the multitude of His loving kindnesses. Dear Friends, let us roll all our cares on God this morning. Look up to God alone. Remember, you are saved. Do not believe Satan’s lies. Hold fast to God’s Truth. He is on your side. You have trusted yourselves in your Redeemer’s hand. You are a Believer in Christ. You are, therefore, saved.

Being saved, expect to see every temptation minister to your growth. Expect that every trial shall make you richer in Divine Grace. And go home and keep your heart in tune, singing unto God, praising and blessing and magnifying His name. Oh, I wish we were all citizens of Zion! I wish we were all members and had rights of citizenship in this blessed city! The gates are open and aliens who enter become citizens at once.

To become a citizen all that is needed is to be *nothing*, and to let Christ be everything. Trust Christ and you are enrolled a free man—and then from that day all the glorious things that are spoken of Zion are spoken of you! You shall share her blessedness on earth and her triumph above. The Lord now seal these words with His own Spirit for His own sake. Amen.

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HEALING AND PARDON

NO. 1905

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 20, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell in it shall be forgiven their iniquity.”
Isaiah 33:24.***

This whole chapter was a gracious message from God to a people who were *in extremis*. They were made to drink the foulest dregs of sorrow through the invasion of the Assyrians. The highways were waste, the way-farer ceased. The earth mourned and languished. Lebanon was ashamed and hewn down. Sharon was like a wilderness and Bashan and Carmel shook off their fruits. Then did God arise. When the worst had come to the worst, He laid bare His arm and brought deliverance for His people! Is not this a general rule with God? Is it not a Truth of God fraught with comfort to any of you whose day has darkened down into a seven-fold midnight? When nothing else is left you, God remains and God appears! When all your own strength fails you, your strength shall be to sit still while God arises and becomes your arm every morning, your salvation in the time of trouble!

I would encourage all who are in spiritual distress to gather hope from this chapter, since it is addressed to Zion in her sore affliction. If it is really so, that the joys and blessings which are described in the passage before us come to a people who are driven to the last extremity, why should not such blessings come to you? We have often noted how the Lord delights to look upon the poor and needy and comes with succor to those who are in distress. It is the way of the Lord to look in pity upon those who are cast down. Lift up your heart to Him and cry unto Him out of the depth! Let your prayer rise to His Throne out of the low dungeon. Expect that He will be very pitiful and will have compassion upon you in your misery. Jerusalem was on the brink of destruction when the Lord answered the prayer of Hezekiah and smote the vast host of Assyria. The peril of Jerusalem serves as a dark background to bring out the brightness of my text. The city might have been destroyed by pestilence through its sins, but the Lord says, “The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell in it shall be forgiven their iniquity.”

The great result of God's gracious dealings with His afflicted people is that they glorify His holy name. Observe how in this chapter God is spoken of as being “exalted, for He dwells on high.” He is called, “the glorious Lord.” Truly our Lord never appears more glorious than in the eyes of those who are brought low and humbled in their own esteem. Their distresses, out of which they are graciously delivered, call upon them to exalt

their Savior! They hear a voice saying, "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He has broken the gates of brass and cut the bars of iron in sunder." Our God gets little praise in this fair world which is a master-piece of His skill, for man *refuses* to adore. Creation ought to make our voices ring out perpetual Psalms, for it is full of wonders! Providence ought, also, to keep us always making music upon an instrument of 10 strings, but, alas, we yield our praises to inferior workers. We are always backward and slow in the praises of the Lord.

Will a man rob God? Yet we rob Him of His Glory. And so He brings us into straits, that He may display the majesty of His Grace and the infinity of His power in rescuing us. Then are we moved to astonishment and adoration! Then we burst forth into a song as we abundantly utter the memory of His great goodness! At sight of His amazing love, we magnify the Lord and ask others to magnify Him with us, that we may exalt His name together. This is as it should be—let it be so now. Oh, you that have tasted of the Lord's rich Grace in the hour of trouble, praise Him at this good hour! Let the hallelujahs of your soul go up to Him in the courts of the Lord's House. If you cannot speak out your praise, let it wait for God in Zion and unto Him let the vow be performed. Let your expressive silence mean the praise which you cannot sound forth with your tongue. The Holy Spirit who makes intercession in us with groans that cannot be uttered will also put into us praises inexpressible by words!

As we saw in the reading of this chapter, the Prophet seems to take wing as he proceeds. He rises from note to note, as if, like David, he said, "Selah"—lift up the strain! He makes each note more high, more sweet, more loud than those which preceded it, for he sings unto Him that does great things for His people. The climax is in this verse—"The people that dwell in it shall be forgiven their iniquity." One of the highest notes of praise is in the 103rd Psalm—"Bless the Lord, O my Soul; who has forgiven all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases." Our text is another form of that verse—"The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell in it shall be forgiven their iniquity." Healing and forgiveness are placed in happy conjunction and both bestowed on the Lord's people when they looked not for them.

I shall speak upon our text thus, if the Holy Spirit will help me. First, *there is such a thing as present forgiveness*—"The people that dwell in it shall be forgiven their iniquity." Secondly, *with this forgiveness there comes the removal of the consequences of sin*—"The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." And, thirdly, *this makes a remarkable change in the language of the favored people*—"The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." They shall be so greatly blessed that their language shall lose its complaining tone! They shall no longer sigh and lament. They shall now have other things to talk about than their own infirmities and sufferings. "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick, the people that dwell in it shall be forgiven their iniquity."

I. First, then, Beloved, I introduce to you a topic upon which I am sure you have no question, but still, it may do you good to be confirmed in the acknowledged Truth of God. THERE IS SUCH A THING AS THE PRESENT

FORGIVENESS OF SIN. “The people that dwell in it shall be forgiven their iniquity.”

There must be a present conscious enjoyable pardon of sin, *otherwise there would be no joy in the world for thoughtful minds.* To the thoughtless and careless, there might be a flash in the pan, a noisy mirth as the crackling of thorns under a pot, but to the penitent, to the serious, to the careful, where could there be a spark of joy if sin were unforgiven? When we once begin to feel what sin is, to discern its true nature and to understand the just punishment which must follow upon it, we cannot rest under its condemnation. Though God should give us dainties from day to day, clothe us in scarlet and fine linen and set us among the princes of the earth, we would be restless—we would be wretched as long as sin preyed upon our heart. Sin—this casts darkness upon the sun, eclipsing its meridian light. Sin is the blast which withers all the flowers of life. Sin is the gall of bitterness—a drop of it would turn an ocean of pleasure into wormwood! Sin would again blight the Garden, could it be restored. Yes, it would turn Heaven into Hell could it enter there! Sin is a burden which an awakened conscience cannot bear. It crushes the spirit into the dust and threatens further to bear it down, even to the lowest Hell.

But when sin is pardoned, then our hymn which we have just now been singing leaps joyfully to our lips—

“Now, oh joy! My sins are pardoned.”

Is not this a necessary ingredient in that overflowing cup which the Lord puts to the lips of His redeemed ones? “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” But without that justification there can be no peace and no enjoyment of life. Believers are spoken of as a blessed people who joy in God—they are bid to always rejoice! The Apostle says, “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.” Such rejoicing would be impossible if sin were not pardoned and, therefore, we conclude that sin may be pardoned, that it may be pardoned *now* and that we may know it! If forgiveness is essential to a state of mind which we are exhorted to exhibit, then forgiveness may be enjoyed at this present hour!

Further, dear Brothers and Sisters, there must be forgiveness of sin, *otherwise the main motive and fountain of love would be dried up.* Forgiveness begets gratitude, gratitude creates love and love brings forth holiness. She that washed the Savior’s feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head—would she have done it if she had not loved much because she felt that much had been forgiven her? The motive power of action to a believing man lies hard by the realization that God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven his iniquities. When I see my Lord, His own Self, bearing my sins in His own body on the Cross and blotting out my faults forever by His death, then my spirit glows with love, my eyes stream with tears, my heart dedicates itself wholly to Jesus and my life begins to show the effect of my inward emotion!

Sin forgiven leads to sin forsaken. Is it not so? Doubt whether you are forgiven and what can you do? Can you preach a Gospel which has not brought you pardon? Can you go into the Sunday school to try and bring little children to a Christ who has not forgiven you *your* sins? But under-

stand that through the one great Sacrifice your iniquities are forever pardoned and then you must love the great Sacrifice and you must praise the Lord who gave Him to die for your sins! Is not this the song of the perfected—"Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, unto Him be Glory forever and ever"? There must be a consciousness of forgiveness, or our lives will be limp, weak, purposeless.

It must be so, that sin can be pardoned and that we can know it, *otherwise we would be always in bondage through fear of death*. In what jeopardy would we stand every hour, since we might at once sink into Hell! The prospect of death—how terrible would it be to us if sin still accused us unto God! Many of us now contemplate the approach of death with a calm, quiet patience of hope. As our years advance, we are not distressed with the thought that the time of our departure daily draws nearer. This world is not our rest and we do not desire to always live! We anticipate the hour when we shall—

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

But how could this be if we enjoyed no sense of pardoned sin? It has been my intense delight to be with many members of this Church in the hour of their departure and I have invariably found them rejoicing in hope! I have sometimes heard them sing and I have joined in their holy hymns. More often I have heard their steady calm acknowledgement of their joy in the prospect of being "forever with the Lord." But how could this have been if sin had not been pardoned? Is not this true which we sing—

***"If sin is pardoned, I'm secure,
Death has no sting beside!
The law gives sin its damning power;
But Christ, my Ransom, died"?***

"The sting of death is sin" and you cannot take away the sting of death if sin is not taken away! There could be no looking forward with expectancy if there were no acceptance in Christ! It would be impossible to be in a strait, as Paul was, when he said, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." To be willing to be offered up and joyfully to say, "The time of my departure is at hand," would be utterly impossible if Believers did not know and, know of a certainty, that their sins are all forgiven! Once we cried, "Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow!" We were not in error in that prayer and now, that we have been washed and have heard our Master say, "You are clean every whit," we are not deluded! "We have joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have received the atonement." We say at this hour, "O Lord, I will praise You! Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away and You comforted me." Has not the Lord declared, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake and will not remember your sins"? Yes, great Lord, it is even so! "There is forgiveness with You that You may be feared." There is a city whose inhabitants are forgiven their iniquities! Blessed be the Lord who passes by the trespasses of His people!

Once more—there must be forgiveness, for *otherwise the whole system of Grace would be a dead letter* and its glorious privileges would be mere shells without a kernel. Where would be salvation, itself, without pardon?

How could we be saved from our sins if not forgiven? What glorious Gospel could there be if sin could not be cancelled? We read of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, "to as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." But how can we be sons under condemnation? How shall I reckon myself to be a beloved child if my Father is still my Judge and holds over me the sword of Justice? "Your sins which are many are forgiven you," is necessary before the spirit of adoption can enter, to make us cry, "Abba, Father!" There is certainly no possibility of acceptance or justification while sin is unforgiven! I have already shown you that there is no motive to seek sanctification if we are hopelessly condemned for sin. What is even the gift of Christ, Himself, if He does not put away our sin? The whole of the blessings of the Gospel seem to me to have lost their charm unless, first of all, there is cleansing from all iniquity.

Let us now bend our thoughts to a consideration of this great blessing as it is treated of in this chapter. *It is plainly promised* in the text, "The people that dwell in it shall be forgiven their iniquity." Nor is this a lone word—the same is often declared. I will not occupy your time by quoting the many passages of Scripture in which the pardon of sin is expressly promised. Is it not in the Covenant, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more"? "He that believes is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the Law of Moses." Pardon is a promised blessing. It is God's prerogative to forgive and He delights to exercise it. He says expressly, "I will pardon them whom I reserve." He has pardoned, He does pardon, He will pardon. So stands the Covenant of Love!

If we wish to obtain this free pardon, *it will be granted in answer to prayer*. Read the second verse, "O Lord, be gracious unto us." This is short, but full. There is sound doctrine in that cry. "The people that dwell in it shall be forgiven their iniquity" is a suitable answer to that petition. If you want pardon of Him who is waiting to be gracious, seek it! It is to be had without money and without price by the man who will stretch out his empty hand to take it. It is all of Grace. If you will have it, God is ready to grant it in answer to your humble cry. "Where sin abounded, Grace does much more abound." The Lord Jesus is exalted on high "to give repentance and remission of sins." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Go to your knees and see if the Lord will not be gracious to you!

Pardon is given in connection with the exaltation of God. Read the fifth verse—"The Lord is exalted." He does not grant this forgiveness until we begin to recognize that He is a great God and a Savior. We must see that He is great in justice and we must bow in penitence and honor that justice! And then we must get some thought of the greatness of His love in giving His Son to die that He might justly forgive us. The greatness of our Lord's compassion in passing by iniquity, transgression and sin must be confessed or we shall never find pardon. Friend, you will never get mercy for your great sin from a little God! He must be a great God to you, or you will never receive the great mercy you need. You must learn to say of Him, "Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity and passes by trans-

gression?” Low thoughts of God create doubts of pardon and doubt holds us in bondage under sin. But high thoughts of God beget hope in the soul and hope leads to confidence—and confidence brings assurance of forgiveness.

God grants pardon when men are humbled. See the seventh verse—“Their valiant ones shall cry without: the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly.” Crying and weeping are good preparations for pardon. In the dust of self-abasement is the place for hope. Jeremiah says of the afflicted, “He puts his mouth in the dust; if so there may be hope.” God never pardons the proud—He knows them “afar off,” and has enough of them at a distance. With the humble and contrite He dwells, delighting to hear them honor His Law by bemoaning their breaches of it. When you say, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” though you dare not lift up your eyes to Heaven, the eyes of Heaven look down on you. You shall go to your house justified if, in God’s Grace, you have confessed yourself to be condemned. God also grants this pardon when the heart is searched. Read the 14th verse—“The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?” When we begin to examine ourselves, to fear because of sin and to turn from all hypocrisy, then the Lord will accept us. There must be a laying aside of all insincerity, a dealing with God in truth, before the gracious God can put away our iniquity. Sincerity is indispensable to mercy. How can the Lord be other than a devouring fire to hypocrites?

God will also pardon us when He is acknowledged to be our Ruler and Lord. Look at the 22nd verse—“The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King.” Will you have God to reign over you? If so, He will forgive you, but if you will continue to rebel, His wrath shall abide upon you. How can you receive the kiss of love if you do not give the kiss of allegiance? “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry.” Accept His rule and He will accept your prayer. We must love His Law or we cannot be discharged from its curse. Be willing to obey and He is ready to forgive.

He will also forgive us when we put our trust in Him. Read the last clause of the 22nd verse—“He will save us.” Faith must look for salvation only from the Lord and then salvation will come to it. Oh, how I wish that some poor heart here present would cry this morning, “He will save me! I will take Him to be my King and my Lawgiver, and I will believe for myself that He will have me!” It is that touch of personal faith which brings peace to the soul. If you will not trust God, neither shall you have peace. But if you will come now, just as you are, and believe that He is able to forgive you and trust Him to do so, then you shall have this promise verified in your experience—“The people that dwell in it shall be forgiven their iniquity.”

Is not this a large promise? One might descant upon it by the week together and, indeed, one might rejoice in it to all eternity! I leave it to your quiet musings. If the Prophet says, “Your heart shall meditate terror,” viewing it as past and gone, how much more may you muse on mercy, world without end, viewing it as forever your own?

II. Now, with extreme brevity, I want, in the second place, to say that WHEN SIN IS PARDONED, THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN ARE ALSO

REMOVED. Sin had made these people sick as Isaiah says in his first chapter—"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." But when iniquity is forgiven, then, "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." Special chastisement is usually removed when any peculiar sin is forgiven. God, under a former age, very manifestly visited sin with chastisement in this life and when He forgave it, He removed the weight of His hand from the offender. Read the history of Israel and see a host of instances. There are still instances in which personal chastisement does follow personal sin in this life, especially among Believers and especially among Believers in Church fellowship. We read of the Corinthians, when they misbehaved themselves, "For this cause some are sickly among you, and many sleep." Within the chosen family there are chastisements unknown to the outside world. But when we go with our confession and find pardon of the Lord, the temporal chastisement is usually removed, or else it is so changed in its purpose as to become quite another thing. Oftentimes, also, great sinners who have, by their gross misconduct, brought themselves into grievous trouble, have found no way of escape from it till their evil ways have been forsaken. The valley of Achor has been their door of hope. Where they have bewailed their fault, they have received deliverance. When the root of bitterness is taken away, the evil which grows out of it has also been removed. When Nineveh repented, its threatened destruction was averted.

But, further, when I speak of the consequences of sin being taken away, this is very apparent in respect of certain sins. A man being a drunk brings himself to poverty—he asks forgiveness for the drunkenness and he ceases from it. By honest industry his abject poverty is soon ended. Within a few weeks you see a difference in the very aspect of the man. Oftentimes when, by some sin of impurity, a sinner weakens his body and injures his health, his cure is much helped by his repenting and forsaking his uncleanness. It may not be so with some great transgressions, for they may leave scars which cannot be healed in *this* life, but true repentance will turn even these into a means of humiliation and make them serve as safeguards against any return to folly. When sins are frankly confessed and forsaken, then the gracious message comes—"The Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die."

Further, in the case of Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, if some of the temporal results of sin do not cease, yet it is only in appearance that they remain, or rather they remain for other purposes, benign and useful—not as wrathful inflictions. If by past sin one has brought himself into a state of sickness, or poverty, or depression, these may leave their traces upon him, but from the day in which he finds pardon, these will not be punishments inflicted by a Judge, but chastisements lovingly appointed by a Father. A *father* may chasten his child very severely, but this is not the same as pain inflicted by the sentence of a *judge*. It is one thing for a parent to shut his child in a room because he has done wrong, but it is quite another thing for a magistrate to send him to prison for a crime! The act may seem the same, but the feeling of the authority commanding the chastisement is very different. Believers do not escape the sorrows of this life, but then, no sorrow that comes to a Christian is sent as a penal in-

fliction. It is not sent as a vindication of Law, but as a tender parental discipline. Vast is the difference between the chastisement of love and the infliction of justice. To the forgiven man, “all things work together for good,” yes, even those things which naturally follow upon the sin which is now forgiven. The curse is turned into a blessing! The poison acts as a medicine! That which kills the impenitent helps the cure of a Believer!

Yes, look at death itself. Do Christians die as a punishment for sin? God forbid! God lays no punishment on those who have accepted Jesus as their Substitute, for He has borne the whole of their punishment and it is not possible that God should exact punishment twice—first at the hands of their Surety—and then again at their own. Death is no punishment to the Believer—it is the gate of endless joy! It is not death to die, now that Jesus has died, yes, rather, has risen and gone into Glory on our behalf! We thank God that the bitterness of death is past. Death itself is mentioned in the list of our *possessions*—“All things are yours, whether life or death.” Maybe we shall not die at all, for our Lord may come all of a sudden and if He comes while we are alive and remain we shall not sleep, though we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. Rest assured, Believer, that since God has forgiven your sins, He has dried up the well of bitterness and you shall drink no more of it. Or, if it seems to come to your lips, it shall be so changed in its character that it shall be a healing draught!

Believe, once more, that all the eternal penal consequences are gone from the forgiven man. For him there can be no condemnation at the Day of Judgement! For him there can be no, “Depart, you cursed!” For him there is no blackness of darkness forever! For him no worm that dies not, no fire that never can be quenched! In Christ Jesus he stands before God as if he had never sinned! Yes, he wears the perfect righteousness of Christ and, arrayed in that precious robe, he can face the terrors of the last tremendous day without alarm! “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” Sin gone, the root of all evil is gone! “Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she has received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.”

III. The specialty of what I want to say lies in my last point—that THE LORD EVEN CHANGES THE TONE OF HIS PEOPLE’S SPEECH. “The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick.” That is the point! Why shall they not say, “I am sick”?

First, *they have no need to say it* when the Lord comes and dwells with them, for the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon them with healing in His wings. When Jesus healed the sick of the palsy, He said to him, “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.” Pardon and healing were one! Spiritually the pardoned one shall not need to say, “I am sick,” because his soul diseases then receive a healing medicine.

All spiritual disease receives its deathblow when sin is forgiven. Sin is crucified by the same Cross which brings Atonement. You may have to

struggle with it, for the corruption of the flesh still remains, but “sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not under the Law, but under Grace.” The Lord’s name, to the forgiven one, is Jehovah-Rophi—“The Lord Who Heals You.” Albeit, you may feel full of distempers, any one of which might be fatal to you if left alone, yet in the reception of pardon, there comes to you a new life which will conquer all those distempers. “Whoever is born of God, sins not.” The *new nature* sins not. John says, “Whoever is born of God does not commit sin,” that is to say he cannot sin as others do—it is not the rule and drift of his life. There is a change worked in the Believer of the most wonderful kind, as it is written, “A new heart, also, will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them. I will put My fear in their heart, and they shall not depart from Me.” Now though we can say that the old nature is sick and sick to death, so that the sooner it is utterly destroyed the better, yet speaking of ourselves as renewed by the Holy Spirit we delight in the Law of God after the inward man. God has made us to be holy in our desires and aspirations—and has renewed the image of His own perfect Self within us, so that we have no longer need to say, “I am sick.”

Here, also, is a very wonderful point in the passage before us concerning danger averted, for you know that when a city is besieged, one of the most certain consequences in old times was the plague. The inhabitants could not get out to receive fresh air. They were denied necessary provisions and so they became faint and ready to be preyed upon by pestilence. Yet the Lord promised that when He worked deliverance for the cooped up inhabitants of Jerusalem they should not say, as other besieged citizens do, “I am sick.” I will take up my parable and show the *spiritual* parallel to this. God will avert the pestilence of sin from pardoned men. They shall be preserved from those moral pests which slay their thousands. You were once the victim of every fever of sin, but now your sin is forgiven. You pass unharmed through the temptations which surround you. God will preserve the true Believer from the malaria of corruption which is in the world through lust. He shall be “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” You shall not be obliged to say, “I am sick,” because others are so, for the Lord shall keep you from the pestilence that walks in darkness, even from insidious and deceitful errors and sins. Remember that marvelous promise, “The Lord shall preserve you from all evil: He shall preserve your soul.” The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in. In answer to your morning prayer, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One,” you shall be preserved in purity and uprightness and from all the devices of the devil, for “that Evil One touches you not.”

Here, again, is another point. The inhabitant could not say, “I am sick,” and yet the Assyrians died in a single night. They laid themselves down to slumber in their tents, expecting speedily to divide the spoil—

***“But the angel of death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed.
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved and forever grew still.”***

The Lord, in this case, put a difference between His people and their enemies. Multitudes died outside, but inside the city, where you might have expected things to be much worse, the inhabitant did not say, "I am sick." Today we live in an age when sin abounds—a moral pestilence is slaying its thousands. I dare not describe what is going on in the camp beyond, into which we have no desire to enter, but the Lord is a wall of fire around His people! If your sin is forgiven, the plague of deadly sin shall not come near your dwelling! Even to the end shall the Lord watch over you, so that, preserved in moral sanity, you shall not have need to say, "I am sick." On the contrary, you shall sing, "He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

Next, *they shall have no thought of saying, "I am sick."* He that feels the joy of pardoned sin forgets all his pains and griefs. In my own body I know what it is to be vexed with sore pains and yet to feel such rest of heart that I have felt no desire to complain. When we rejoice in Divine love we make small account of our bodily condition! If deaf, blind, or otherwise full of infirmities of the flesh, we make small reckoning of the whole when we know the joy of pardoned sin. The inhabitant shall not say, "I am sick," because he says, "I am forgiven." The Lord gives to His people, at times, such peace and joy in believing that though they are poor, they do not say, "I am poor," but sing, "I am forgiven, I am forgiven!" A Brother had grievously offended and had been put out from Church fellowship for his sin. He so behaved that his pastor thought of him with pain and was glad to avoid an interview with him, for it only produced a sad attempt at self-justification. At length the Lord brought him to a better mind. He sought his pastor and said, with tears, "Will you shake hands with me?" The pastor replied, "Right gladly. I rejoice to feel that the past is all forgiven. How are you?" The repentant one made this reply, "I am quite well, now that you restore me to your esteem." The poor man was extremely ill, but the joy of being once more in his old place in his friend's thoughts made him refuse to say, "I am sick." The news of victory has made lame men leap. How much more shall it be so when the Lord Jesus manifests His power to save and the Holy Spirit assures the heart of blood-bought pardon? Then, indeed, "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick."

Many a child of God, when weary, has renewed his strength at the remembrance of pardoning mercy. Though almost spent, the assured Believer has gone on preaching, or visiting the sick, or conducting his Bible class, because he has felt under such obligations to his Lord that he could go on till he dropped. When a torrent of joy streams through the soul, it bears it right over all hindrances caused by weakness or weariness. Since Jesus has saved us, we ask no discharge from His service because we are sick—our love to Him acts as a tonic and strengthens us. We keep our name on the muster-roll, take our place in the ranks and feel that till we die we will not ask to be excused so long as we can creep out at our Master's call!

I find some read this sentence in the *past tense*—"The inhabitant shall not say, I have been sick." The joy of pardon makes us ignore the sorrow of the past. "You shall not remember the reproach of your widowhood any more." Since their enemies were all gone, the citizens of Jerusalem re-

joiced in their safety and said nothing about what they *had* suffered. Many of the sick left their couches, crowded the battlements and looked out with pleasure towards the quarter where the foe had been. The Assyrian power was broken—the great king had fled! The men of Jerusalem forgot they had been half-starved and that the plague had been among them. The inhabitant did not say, “I am sick.” Their misery was swallowed up in victory. Glory be to God for such mercy as this! When God changes our estate from condemnation to acceptance, then is our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing because “the Lord has done great things for us, of which we are glad.”

Again, these people did not say they were sick *since they had a motive for not saying so*. You remember a late sermon upon the four lepers who went out and divided the spoil? [Sermon #1908, *Who Found It Out?*] They did not say, “We are lepers”—that was forgotten and they entered tents as if they had been in health. They went into one pavilion and ate and drank. And then they went into another. Men free from leprosy could not have made themselves more at home! They took away gold and silver and hid it, though they were lepers. So, when the Lord pardons our sin, there is a prey to be taken—riches of Grace are at our disposal. Notice the verse that comes before the text, “The lame take the prey.” Doubtless, this was literally true—numbers of persons in Jerusalem were scarcely able to get about, for some had rheumatism and others had broken bones, so that they could hardly limp along the public way. But when it was announced that the rich camp of the Assyrians was to be spoiled, the lame made a shift to be there! Old women quite decrepit and men who had long kept their beds suddenly rose to activity and none of them said, “I am sick.” They had a motive for getting well, directly, for great wealth was to be had by the gatherer! From a pardoning God there are such mercies and such blessings to be received that we who have little faith and are weak in heart, suddenly find our spirits revive and we gather our share of Divine gifts! A sense of pardon strengthens the weak hands and confirms the feeble knees and we become mighty to lay hold upon the benefits of the Covenant!

The inhabitant did not say, “I am sick,” for the time was come for glorifying the God of Israel! Everybody was shouting, “Hallelujah!” up and down the streets of Jerusalem—who could say, “I am sick”? Children were singing and young men and maidens were dancing because Judah was free from her foe! And even the sick folk merged their sighs and groans in songs and Psalms. Jehovah had triumphed! His people were free and it seemed to be with the people of Jerusalem as it was with Israel in Egypt—“there was not one feeble person in all their tribes.” When the Lord pardons our sin, the weakest, the feeblest, the most despondent, the most despairing among us will not say, “We are sick,” but our soul shall magnify the Lord! Pardon impels us to duty and stimulates us to praise! We no longer mourn and murmur, but we sing because the might of the enemy has melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

Yet once again, and I have done. Pardoned people shall not say they are sick, for *by a little anticipation they shall declare the very contrary*. In a little time—how little a time none of us can tell—we shall be where the in-

habitant shall never be sick again! The Lord has begun to heal us and the healing virtue which His Grace has infused into us will work us health and cure till we shall be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing! His salvation will also perfectly heal our bodies. Today the body is dead because of sin, though the spirit is life because of righteousness. The regeneration of the body takes place at the Resurrection and when we shall rise again, it will be in the image of the Lord Jesus! It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power! We shall not rise with dim eyes, dull ears, deformed limbs, or feeble frames. Having eaten the leaves of the Tree of Life, we shall be healed of all that ailed us here below! We are on our way to eternal health! We have the life within us which is to be perfect forever and ever!

Why should we, then, say, "I am sick"? If a man could be quite sure that he would be in perfect health, tomorrow, he would say little about the sickness of an hour. A blind man who will see, tomorrow, hardly numbers himself with the blind! Before another Sabbath comes round, some of you may be with the angels, yes, before tomorrow's sun shall rise you may be where they "need no candle, neither light of the sun." Happy men to be so nearly well—so nearly Home! Happy beings who shall so soon be—

***"Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in!"***

Then shall you realize the fullest meaning of these words, "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell in it shall be forgiven their iniquity."

Who comes this way? Who comes this way? Welcome, Brothers and Sisters, to pardon and healing through our Lord Jesus. Who is going the other way? Let such a sad wanderer consider his way, retrace his steps and seek his God who, in Christ Jesus, can heal him! O you who are now sick unto death, ask to be forgiven and healing will come from the pardoning hand. God bless you! Amen.

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WEAK HANDS AND FEEBLE KNEES

NO. 243

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 20, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS**

***“Strengthen you the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees.”
Isaiah 35:3.***

IT is the duty of all men to be careful of the sons of sorrow. There are some who from their very birth are marked by melancholy as her own. The silent shades of sorrow are their congenial haunts, the glades of the forest of grief are the only places where their leaf can flourish. Others there are who through some crushing misfortune are brought so low that they never hold up their heads again, but go from that time forth mourning to their graves. Some there are, again, who, disappointed in their early youth, either in some fond object of their affections, or else in some project of their young ambition, never can dare to face the world, but shrink from contact with their fellows, even as the sensitive plant curls up its tendrils at the touch.

In all flocks there must be lambs and weak and wounded sheep. And among the flock of men, it seems that there must necessarily be some who should more than others prove the truth of Job's declaration, "man is born to trouble even as the sparks fly upwards." It is the duty, then, of those of us who are more free than others from despondency of spirit, to be very tender to these weak ones. Far be it from the man of courageous disposition, of stern resolve and of unbending purpose, to be hard towards those who are timid and despairing. If we have a lion-like spirit, let us not imitate the king of beasts in his cruelty to those timid fallow deer that fly before him, but let us place our strength at their service for their help and protection. Let us with downy fingers bind up the wounded heart—with oil and wine let us nourish their fainting spirits.

In this battle of life, let the unwounded warriors bear their injured comrades to the rear, bathe their wounds and cover them from the storm of war. Be gentle with those that are desponding. Alas, it is not every man that has learned this lesson. There are some who deal with others with rough-handed thoughtlessness. "Ah," they say, "if such an one is so foolish as to be sensitive let him be." O speak not thus. To be sensitive, timid and desponding, is ill enough in itself without our being hard and cruel towards those who are so afflicted. Go forth and do to others as you would that they should do to you. And as you would that others should in your hours of despondency deal with you tenderly and comfortably, so deal tenderly and comfortably with them.

But my text, especially commands the minister to deal tenderly with those of Christ's people who are in such a condition and these are not a

few, for although religion changes the moral temperament of men it does not change the physical. A man who is weak in health before conversion will probably be as weak afterwards and many a spirit that has a tendency to despondency, has exhibited that tendency after conversion. We do not profess that the religion of Christ will so thoroughly change a man as to take away from him all his natural tendencies. It will give the despairing something that will alleviate that despondency, but as long as that is caused by a low state of body, or a diseased mind, we do not profess that the religion of Christ will totally remove it. No, we do see every day that among the best of God's servants, there are those who are always doubting, always looking to the dark side of every Providence. They look at the threat more than at the promise and are ready to write bitter things against themselves and often put the bitter for sweet and the sweet for bitter. They err against their own spirits and robbing themselves of comforts which they might enjoy. To those then, I shall have to speak this morning in the words of our text, "Strengthen you the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees."

There is a figure used in the text and I shall keep to it. First, I shall attempt to show the importance of hands and knees in going to Heaven. In the second place, I shall observe the ill effect of having weak hands and feeble knees—shall note the causes of those weak hands and feeble knees—and in so doing I hope I shall be able to apply a cure.

I. And, now, first, we find in our text hands and knees mentioned. We may be quite sure that **THEY ARE VERY IMPORTANT IN GETTING TO HEAVEN**. The hands and knees, we must remember, are those parts of the body in which the effects of fear are the most easily seen. Of course the root of despondency and fear must lie in the heart. It is that which is first moved with terror. But afterwards these extremities, these limbs of action, these modes of expressing the will of the heart begin to feel the weakness also. The hands hang down in terror and the knees begin to tremble. We are always accustomed to describe a man when he is in a great fright, when some overwhelming damper appalls him, as hanging down his hands or wringing them in despair and as feeling his knees knocking together in the moment of his terror.

Just so the Prophet means, that wherever the Christian displays most his timidity and his dismay there we must be careful to apply the remedy of comfort. Now, it is the fact that when the Christian's heart begins to tremble, his hands of action grow weak and his knees of prayer begin to tremble also. He becomes unable to *do* and unable to *pray*. He is weak in active service and he becomes weak also in wrestling with his God. Hands and knees are the exhibitors of inward power. Now, there are some men whose fears are so great that they have become visible and can no longer be concealed. There was a time when these sons of mourning were able to mask their sorrow with an outward cheerfulness, but now they cannot. The fear of the heart has glided into their hands and descended into their knees. And we see them hiding from us, as the hind, when smitten by the

arrow, retires from the herd to bleed alone. To such as these, you sons of consolation, are you sent with words of pity and deeds of love.

But, note, the hands and knees are of the first importance because they represent active duty and supplication. The way to Heaven is through faith in Christ. But after we have believed in Christ the legitimate tendency of faith is active service. Although the Christian shall go to Heaven through the blood of Christ, yet as a pilgrim he must *walk* there—and although he overcomes through the blood of the Lamb, yet as a warrior he must *fight* if he would reign. Active service is expected of every Christian. Christ does not put His children on a bed and then carry them to Heaven along a lazy road. He gives them life and bids that life develop itself. He gives them strength and commands them to use the strength in working out their own salvation. While He works in them, they are passive, but He then bids them be active and work out what He has beforehand worked in them. He is no Christian who does not seek to serve his God. The very motto of the Christian should be “I serve.” Christ’s people are Christ’s servants and as the angels in Heaven delight to fly at God’s behests, so do the children of God delight to run in the way of His commands.

Therefore, if the knees are weak and the hands are weak, it is little that we can do. We cannot run with weak knees. We cannot labor with weak hands. How can we, the servants of Christ—how can you lift the heavy burdens which you have to carry—if your hands are weak and your knees totter? How can you pull down the walls of your enemies if your hands tremble? How can you smite your foemen with the sword of faith if your arms are weak? Look well, then, to this, for herein you suffer great loss, if in active service you lose power and strength.

Again—the knees may signify *prayer*. When a man becomes timid and desponding, his closet very soon becomes the chamber of woe. Our closets are either Bethels or Bochims—the House of God or else the house of weeping. Let a man become timid, distrustful, doubting, fearing, trembling—what little power has he when he comes before the Mercy Seat! He would believe in God, but he cannot appropriate the promise. He would lay hold of the angel, but all his sinews shrink and he cannot wrestle. He would plead the promise, but his hand refuses to clutch it with an iron grasp. And he goes away crying, “Oh that I could pray! Oh that I could believe in God! Oh, that I could succeed with God in prayer and become as a prevailing prince. Alas, I am as weak as water and I can do nothing.” Herein lies the importance of having strong hands that we may serve God and of having strong knees that we may wrestle with Him in prayer and get the blessing from Him.

Note again, that we may readily see what the Prophet means by hands and knees if we observe that a Christian, although his hopes are in Heaven, stands upon the earth. It is with the hands of faith that the Christian lays hold upon that which is not seen and endeavors to climb upwards to the skies. It is with his feet that he spurns the earth and all that it calls good or great. Let the Christian’s feet be weak and he cannot then despise the things that are seen—but he will be fixing his affection

on things on earth and not on things above. Let his hands of faith, on the other hand, grow weak and he cannot lay hold of the things that are in Heaven. He will find it difficult to fix his hold above the stars and feel that he is surely anchored and very hard to climb the ladder Jacob saw. The feet represent the manner in which we deal with earth, we tread upon it boldly and courageously, despising its threats, contemning its riches, contemning its honors. Weak knees cannot do this—we are then apt to bend and cringe and fawn before a wicked world to be slaves, where we ought to be freemen and vile where we ought to be noble. Here again we see the importance of the hands and the knees.

But you will remember also that there are certain parts of the spiritual pilgrimage where hands and knees are absolutely required. John Bunyan represents Christian as coming to the foot of Hill Difficulty and he says, "I looked then after Christian, to see him go up the hill, where I perceived he fell from running to going and from going to clambering upon his hands and knees, because of the steepness of the place." Many such a place you and I have had to pass Christians. Once we could run along the walls of salvation with triumphant faith. At other times we could walk even through the valley of the shadow of death with quiet confidence—but we have also come to a place of trial and of extraordinary difficulty, where all speed failed us and strength did not suffice. Then, always on our knees in agony of prayer and always on our hands in simplicity of faith, we climbed our weary way, often fearing lest we should fall backward to our destruction, but crying out, "Lord, let my knees find a resting place, let my hands lay hold on some projecting crag of promise, that there I may get a fast hold, lest I totter and fall. I can but ascend slowly. My heart follows hard after You, my spirit cries after You, Lord, help me! Help me to climb this weary way, for back I cannot go."

Every Christian who knows much about Divine experience will understand what this means. He will often be brought into such a position that he can make but little progress and he must think it quite enough if he can hold his ground against the desperate difficulties of his path. Hands and knees, then, in many ways, are essential for a Christian's comfort, his help and his advance in the road to Heaven.

II. Now, I shall have in the second place to show THE ILL EFFECTS OF WEAK HANDS AND KNEES.

And, first, we have already hinted that one ill fruit of a Christian having weak hands and knees is this—that he will not himself be able to make much progress in the Divine life. Christian men have never attained to what they are to be. They have only started on their pilgrimage and after they have gone their furthest, there is yet more which they must press with earnest heart, though with weary footsteps. How is it that some of you have made but little progress on the road to Heaven? In looking back on your lives, some of you must acknowledge that you do not know much more about Christ now than you did six years ago. You do not enjoy greater nearness of access to Him now than you did then. You are not more diligent in His service, or more fearless in His defense, than you

were at a period which has long since elapsed. Perhaps you are compelled to feel that you have made no advance, or even have gone backward.

Why is this? Is it not because your hands have become weak, your knees have become feeble? You have neglected prayer—you have forsaken your closets, you have not poured out your hearts before God with that frequency which once distinguished you—and you have not the faith you once possessed. You have not believed the promise as you ought to have done. You have not taken God at His naked Word and trusted to Him as He deserved. And do you expect ever to make any progress in the road to Heaven if you doubt your God? Do you imagine that you shall ever go far along in the heavenly pilgrimage if you neglect prayer? As well could you expect a plant to grow without air and water as to expect your heart to grow without prayer and faith. A poor blanched thing may be produced in a dark cellar. And so may you maintain a poor blanched miserable existence, if you live absent from your God and apart from that strength which faith can give you, but you can never attain the healthy verdure of grace. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, if you would grow in grace, if you would comprehend with all the saints what are the heights and depths and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, look well to your knees that they be strong, look well to your hands that they hang not down.

The Christians of this age seem to me to be content with themselves, though there are infinite reasons for the reverse. When I sit down and read the biographies of saints who have gone to Heaven, I am astonished at myself and I can only weep to think how far I am behind these men and then how much further I must be behind my Divine Master. Surely the examples of eminent saints should spur us onward. If Henry Martin could unreservedly devote his life and energies to Christ's service why may not we? If Martin Luther with holy boldness could face danger, why should not we? If Calvin with clear and eagle eye could read the doctrines of the Gospel amid the mists of error, why should not we? If men of more modern times have been able to endure opprobrium and disgrace for Christ's sake, or if they in private have been able to reach to the seventh Heaven of communion with God and have lived on earth as if they were in Paradise, why should not we?

There is no reason why the least saint in God's family should not outrun the greatest. Why look upon the saints of olden time as if they were so far above us that we can never equal them? Oh, dream not so! What Abraham was *you* may be. What the mightiest saint of that former life was—that ought you to be. You should never rest satisfied until you labor to surpass them all—yes, not even then, for you have not yet attained to the perfection which is in Christ. I know this age is one which is always satisfied if it gets barely enough to carry it to Heaven. Where is that holy ambition which ought to stir the Christian soul to noble deeds? But few of us have felt it. We are driveling dwarfs, content with the small height to which we have attained, forgetful of the steeps which tower above our heads. Up! Christian, up! The mount of holiness may be steep to climb, but, Man, the hill of God is a high hill, even as the hill of Bashan. Up! Up!

For it is only on its summit that the calm air of Heaven can be breathed and the mists of earth entirely swept away. Weak hands and feeble knees, I know, in this age, are the reasons why so few Christians attain to any eminence in the ways and works of God.

Again—weak hands and feeble knees have another ill effect. They prevent our doing any great wonder for the good of the world. Oh, what work there is to do in this poor world of ours. Imagine the first colonist landing in Australia. If it had been revealed to him in a vision that, in process of time, the whole of that huge island should be plowed and sown and built upon and inhabited, he would have said, “How is this to be done? How can it ever be effected?” And, even now, great as has been the progress in that country, if we were assured that in a few short years the whole of it would be brought under tillage, we should be apt to ask, but how shall it be done? We should, however very readily perceive that there must be strong knees to dig and strong hands to delve and plow, or else the work never could be accomplished. Many there must be and the many must be strong, else the work cannot be done.

And now, lift up your eyes, this day! Behold, the whole world lies before you like one huge untilled country. Who is to drive the plowshare of Divine Grace through all the continents of this world? Who is to make this desert blossom like the rose? Who shall sow it with the good seed corn of the kingdom of God? Where are the laborers who shall afterwards reap the whitening fields? Not weak hands and feeble knees. They cannot do it. Our knees must be strong and our sinews must be well braced, or else so great a work can never be accomplished. I believe one reason why the religion of Christ makes such little progress at this time is because most of us are so weak. We find, a few centuries after Christ’s death, His name was preached in every land. There was not one region of the known globe which had not heard the marvelous story of the Cross. But, then, the followers of Christ were men who knew not what it was to tremble. They counted not their lives dear unto them. But leaving houses and land and families, for His name’s sake, they went everywhere preaching the Word.

But at this day we are not strong. We must all be assured of a livelihood before we will go forth to preach the Word. And, even then, if no one smiles on us, how soon we cease the work. We commence an enterprise, and little difficulties appall us. How many does the pastor have to see, of little men and little women who come creeping to him and whining because they find difficulties in serving Christ? Is not this because you have weak hands and feeble knees? If you had the strong knees of the Apostles and the mighty hands of the ancient martyrs nothing could stand against you. Let God’s children once become strong and woe unto you, Babylon, woe unto you, O Rome—down must you fall, you castles of the enemy. The weakness of God’s children is your hope, but their strength is your despair. Let them once believe firmly, let them pray earnestly and behold Victory waits upon their banners and dismay will seize your hearts, you enemies of Christ.

We are at this time blessing God that great doors have been opened for the spread of the Gospel. Hindustan, China, Japan—many lands we hope shall soon be visited by the Christian missionary. But are we not conscious that our opportunities are greater than our strength? Must not the Christian Church confess that she has now a greater field, but she has, perhaps, fewer laborers than ever? The harvest is greater, but the laborers are fewer. Why? It comes from this fact, that through the Church of Christ the weak hand and the feeble knee have become the general rule. “Oh,” says one, “but surely there might be found some men to go out.” And so say others as well as you, why are *you* not the man to go? You say others should be thrust into the vineyard and why stand back yourself?

That torpor which seizes upon us, has seized upon others, too. Let us not be hasty in condemning the rest of the Church, till we have first tested ourselves. Do we not owe our all to Christ? Are we not personally His debtors? If we felt this debt, if we felt the value of souls, should not each of us give more towards the spread of this Gospel? Should we not pray more agonizingly? And should there not be found many of us ready to labor more indefatigably? If the minister of Christ is weak, rest assured it is because the Church itself is not strong. The ministry is but the index of the Church. If we often fail in our pulpits, because they are not filled with fervent men, we may reply to you, if the pews were fervent, the pulpit would catch the flame. I am not speaking of water. I know that water runs down hill. But I am now speaking of fire and fire ascends. Let the fire begin with *you*, be *you* in earnest, supplicating, striving and wrestling with God in prayer and the fire shall ascend to the pulpit and we too, shall become as earnest as yourselves.

Let us use no mutual recriminations. The whole Church is alike at this present moment. It is all weak. There are but few and noble exceptions, but few who are strong in prayer, who are mighty in serving their God. And hence it is that Satan still retains his throne, still darkness broods over the nations and still men are not saved. May God strengthen us, or what shall become of the world we know not.

Again—weak hands and feeble knees very much dishonor Christ. I would say nothing to grieve the heart of any weak Believer here present this morning, but still we must speak the Truth of God. Want of faith and weakness in prayer dishonors Christ. Suppose you have a friend and you say to him, “My Friend, I have such confidence in you that I will trust you with the title-deeds of my estate and with all I have. No, more. I will trust you with my health, I will trust you with my life. Do what you will with me—I have such faith in your goodness and your wisdom that I am sure you will not be unkind and will not err. I trust you.”

There is something honorable in faith to the object in whom it is reposed. Now, if you are able, with the strong hands of faith, to bring all you have and give it entirely unto God and say, “There, Lord, I surrender all to You—do with me as You will and with mine, too. Take what You will away—give me what You please, or withhold what You choose. I leave all in Your hand, I can trust You entirely. I know You will make no mistake, I

know You will not treat me harshly. I leave all to You—without word, or thought, or wish, I surrender all.” If you can do this, then Christ is glorified. But if your hands are weak and you are hiding away some choice thing that you cannot give up to Him, if you do not stand fully to the surrender, but keep back something from Him, then those weak hands bring dishonor upon God.

So also do feeble knees. Someone has given you a promise that if you are in need and go to him, he will give whatever you want. You go up to his door, you knock timidly. And when he comes to meet you, you rush into the street and hide yourself, for you are ashamed that he should see you. Driven by necessity, however, you knock again. At last he comes and you stand trembling before him. “Well,” says he, “what do you want?” “You have given me a promise, Sir, that when I am in need you will do so-and-so for me and I really do not believe it—I have no confidence in you and I do not like to ask.” There would be nothing honorable in that to any man.

How far different was the example of Alexander’s courtier. The king said to him, “I will give to you whatever you request.” And the man asked such a gift as almost emptied Alexander’s coffers. “Yes,” says the monarch, “it was a great thing for him to ask, but it is only a little thing for Alexander to give. I like the man’s confidence in me, in using my word to its fullest extent.” Now when the Believer goes to his closet and bows there with his feeble knees and asks God to bless him and does not half believe that He will, he dishonors God. But, when a man goes up to his chamber, saying in his heart, “There is something that I want and I am going to get it,” and he falls on his knees and cries, “Lord, You know all things—You know that such a thing is necessary for me. There is Your promise. Do as you have said, Lord. I know You will give it to me.” And when he rises from his knees and goes down and says to his friend, “The blessing will come. I have asked for it. I have prayed the prayer of faith and God will hear me,” why, such a man honors God.

I would remind you again of a great proof of all this. Look at Mr. Muller, at Ashleydown, near Bristol. Could he have built that house for orphans if he had weak hands and feeble knees? No. But he had strong hands. He meant to serve his God by feeding and clothing orphans. On the other hand he had strong knees. “Lord,” he said, “I will do this enterprise—give me the means to do it.” And he went to God and did not doubt that He would do it. And, lo, thousands have rolled into his treasury and he has never known lack. And now, seven hundred children live under his care and are fed and clothed to the *honor of God*. Let us also seek to have strong hands and mighty knees and so shall we honor God. If we do not build an orphan house to His name, yet shall we raise our Ebenezer and leave some trophy to the honor of His Grace. These are some reasons why we should look well to hands and knees.

III. And, now, the last point was this—THERE ARE CERTAIN CAUSES OF WEAK HANDS AND FEEBLE KNEES and in mentioning them, I shall endeavor to correct them.

Some Christians have weak hands and feeble knees because they are only infants. They are young Christians—they have not been converted long. God's family is like every other family. We do not expect the newborn convert to run alone at first. Perhaps, it will be months, say sometimes years, before he will be able to feel his feet. We thank God that there is a very comfortable promise for those who are babes in Christ and cannot run alone—"He shall carry the lambs in His bosom." "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms," says God, by the Prophet Hosea. So you, just born to God, must not despair because you cannot as yet play the man with the promise. If you cannot now wrestle with the angel, remember, God does not require wrestling from infants. He will not overdrive His lambs. He does not expect long marches from feeble feet. As you are but weak, you shall have lighter duties. As you are at present but tender and young, you shall not have heavy labors to perform. But seek to grow in grace. Feed upon the unadulterated milk of the Word of God and pray that He would bring you up from babes into young men and born young men into perfect men in Christ Jesus.

A more frequent cause, however, of weak hands and feeble knees, is starvation, absolute starvation. Is there such a thing known in England as starvation? Yes, there is of a *spiritual* kind. There are many houses which are dedicated to the worship of God that certainly never were dedicated to the profit of man. There are places into which a Christian might enter all the year round without ever getting any understanding of the doctrines of God at all. Many a minister, in these days of fine language and of polished rounded periods, resembles Nero, who when the city of Rome was starving, sent his galleys to Alexandria to bring back sand for the wrestlers, but not corn for hungry mouths. We have heard many a discourse that has been very fine indeed, as a moral essay, but it has had no food in it for the poor hungry mouths of God's people. One has but very little opinion of the present race of professing Christians as you see their frequent changes. I know men at this day who hear an Arminian with the greatest possible delight—"Such a dear, good, earnest man!" And if a Calvinist preaches the next Sunday, who contradicts every word the other man said—"Oh he is such a precious creature!" because he happens to have a great flow of words.

And then comes another who happens to be a hyper-Calvinist and who says most extraordinary things—"He is a precious child of God, he preaches admirably!" And then there comes afterwards a Pelagian, or almost an Arian and it is just the same—they take it all in and delight in it. The reason is because these people never taste the Word of God at all. They look at it, but so long as they do not taste it and feed on it they know nothing of it. If they fed on the Word, they would have their senses exercised by reason of the use and they would be able to discern between the good and the evil, the precious and the vile. Many of our Calvinistic preachers do not feed God's people. They believe in election, but they do not preach it. They think particular redemption true, but they lock it up in the chest of their creed and never bring it out in their ministry. They

hold final perseverance, but they persevere in keeping quiet about it. They think there is such a thing as effectual calling, but they do not think they are called effectually to preach it.

The great fault we find with many is that they do not speak right out what they do believe. You could not know if you heard them fifty times what were the doctrines of the Gospel, or what was their system of salvation. And hence God's people get starved. And all the while the only remedy they have for the poor, weak, starving child of God, is a long whip. They are always cracking this whip with the loud sound of "do this! Do that! And do the other!" If they would put the whip in the manger and feed God's people, then they would be able run the heavenly race. But now it is all whip and no corn and no creature can subsist upon that. No child of God can ever grow strong in Grace with mere exhortation, if it is not associated with good old-fashioned doctrine.

I should like to hear all our pulpits sounding with the old-fashioned doctrine of John Owen and of such men as Bunyan and Charnock—and Goodwin and those men of olden time who knew the Truth of God and dared to preach it fully. There were giants in those days. In every parish Church in the city of London and in this borough, too, you might have found men who were no children in Divinity, but masterly men, each of them able to declare the word of God with the authority of a master in Israel. Now where do we find such? We labor and we strive, we dig, we toil, we seek to be something and we end in being nothing. And so it must be as long as hands are weak and knees are feeble and so also must this be as long as good doctrine is denied us and the Truth of God is kept back in the ministry. Feed God's children well—give them comfort—give them much to feed upon of the sweet things of the kingdom of God. And then they will grow strong, then they will begin to work.

But, again, fear is the great weakness of men's knees, doubt and distrust are the great relaxers of the strength of men's hands. He that has faith in God is almost omnipotent. He that has might in prayer (through the Holy Spirit), is quite so. He that believes God with all his heart, there is none in the world that can match him. And he that prays to God with all fervency of soul, may overcome the Divine Omnipotence itself and move the arm that moves the world. Give a man faith and he is in the midst of his enemies like a lion amid a herd of dogs—he sweeps them away with what an easy motion of his gigantic strength he rips them open and lays them dead. Nothing can stand against the man who believes. He plants his standard in the midst of rocks—he stands up to it and draws his sword and cries, "Come one, come all—this rock shall fly from its firm base soon! I am a match for you—I believe and therefore have I spoken. I believe still and therefore do I speak again. And I will not move though Hell and earth come against me,"

But when a man becomes doubting and timid, where is his strength? The moment you doubt, away goes your might. Strong feet make a man mighty, but strong knees make him mightier still. Christ's soldiers always win their battles on their knees. On their feet they may be conquered, but

on their knees they are invincible. The praying legion is the thundering legion. Napoleon sent out his old guard in the last extremity of the battle of Waterloo. They had always carried victory with them, but they were at last defeated. But the old guard of the Church of Christ is the legion of prayer. The men that are mighty on their knees, these never have been defeated. When they march on in steady phalanx, they are mightier than the push of bayonet, though British arms and British hearts should drive the bayonet home.

Nothing can stand against the men that pray. Let the Church but once fall on its knees and it shall have might to make the enemy fall on ITS knees—not in prayer, but in terror and dismay. Other warriors say, “Up, guards and at them!” Our cry is, “Down, guards, on your knees and at them!” There, on your knees you become mighty, you draw near to the great seat of God and then you draw near to the fountain of your strength and of your triumph. Fear, then, must be got rid of. We must labor with God, that He would be pleased to give us strong faith, that we may not doubt the Word of God, nor doubt our interest, nor doubt his love, nor doubt our perseverance, but may believe and become mighty, having no longer weak hands and feeble knees.

Let me add one more thought only—namely this—that sloth may make a man weak in his hands and in his feet. Arms become strong by using them. The blacksmith gets a brawny hand by constantly using his hammer. He who climbs the mountain, or walks many a mile a day, becomes strong in his feet. Those who sit still and walk but a little while are wearied with a few miles. But those who have tramped through continents are not speedily to be wearied. Use makes us strong, but sloth enfeebles us. There are many of you who might be stronger if you labored more. What a lazy corporation the Church of Christ is! Taking it all round there must be, I think, more lazy people in the Church of Christ than there is to be found in any other body of men. There are some that do valiantly and serve God, but how many of you there are who are quite content to occupy your seats and hear sermons without doing anything for God’s cause? I do not hesitate to say that I believe there are many of you here who never won a soul to Christ in your lives and scarcely ever tried to do so.

You never lay poor souls to heart. You never go to God in heart and prayer for your poor perishing neighbors. Now and then, if you see a drunk man, you say “it is a great pity.” And if you hear of a murder, you say “it is a dreadful thing.” But you care very little about it. You do not agonize and cry for the iniquity of this land. What do you do? You put a sixpence in the plate now and then and that is your gift to God’s cause. You sing a hymn or join in prayer and that is your service to God. The custom with our religious people is they pay their seat rent, they attend the Chapel and then they have done their duty. And even in the ministry itself you hear of a clergyman speaking of doing his duty when he reads his prayer and when he has done his preaching.

But we want to have warmer hearts and more active lives! Oh, that everyone of you would think you had something to do for Christ in this life

and that you must do it! If your knees are feeble, serve God the best you can with them. If your hands hang down, then do the best you can with the hands hanging down and pray God to strengthen them, until you become mighty and then you will be able to do more. But do *something*, everyone of you. If England expects everyone to do his duty, how much more may the Church demand of every professor that he should be doing something for his Master. Do not think it is enough to *get* good—*do* good. The candle must soon be extinguished that is shut up without fresh air. Give your light plenty of air and it will burn all the brighter. And others seeing your light will be able to rejoice in it.

You are not to eat your morsel alone. If you do, you will become weak, for God has so ordained it—that if we keep our religion to ourselves it will become feeble. The man who hoards his gold grows no richer, but he who puts it out to usury, will grow richer himself and help to enrich other men. Do so with your religion—put it out to usury and you will grow richer. Water men's souls and you shall be watered. The most practical way for religious people is to do something—visit the sick, help the poor, teach the ignorant, succor the distressed and in all these ways you will find that God will bless you and your hands shall become strong and your knees shall not totter. Above all, cry for the Holy Spirit to strengthen you, for without Him all is in vain.

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GOOD CHEER FOR MANY THAT FEAR NO. 2815

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY, 25, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1861.

*“Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not.”
Isaiah 35:4.*

THIS is an exhortation which is addressed, not to one person, but to several. In the third verse you can see that the message runs, “Strengthen you the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.” What, Lord? Is not one man sufficient for this task? Will not one of Your servants, when he repeats Your precious promises, be able to drive away the fears of Your people? Will not half a word be enough to put to rout their foolish, groundless suspicions and suppositions? No, they have need of many comforters. It is not enough, O Lord, that one should come and speak in Your name? No, “for precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.” We are a people of a stubborn will and of a wayward heart, O God. Too often do we wander from Your ways! It is well, therefore, that God has spoken thus, not simply to one of His servants, but to all those who love His appearing and rejoice in the certainty of His promises—“Say you, all of you”—for I may rightly supply the pronoun here—“say you to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not.”

Let me observe that in the original, the word for, “fearful,” is, “hasty.” Now, a hasty man is never a wise man. And equally true is it that a “fearful” man is never prudent. Fearful men are always hasty—they jump at conclusions. They say, with Jacob, “All these things are against me,” because they cannot see to the end of the Lord’s dispensations. They forget that He is full of pity and full of compassion. Circumstance or expediency is their guiding star. They seek to follow the track of the meteors which fly here and there across the midnight sky—they forget the pole-star of God’s Truth and faithfulness. They go to sea without chart or compass and they are driven backwards and forwards by contrary winds! And even when there is no wind, they know not how to steer their ship. As you know, even in this world’s affairs, a hasty man is constantly getting himself into trouble. He speculates in certain stocks and shares because some con man has told him that he can gain by doing so. And soon he hears quite a different story, some great disaster is about to come—he hastily believes the lie and is again deceived!

So is it with fearful souls—they are always doing this or that on the hasty impulse of an ill-drawn conclusion. Thus they are constantly misjudging their God, misusing His Word, misdirecting their own steps, bringing a world of trouble upon themselves and dishonor upon the name of their God! Fearful souls are hasty souls. They judge the Lord by feeble sense, by the bitterness of the bud and not by the sweetness of the flower. They judge by the clouds of the morning, forgetting that the clouds may soon be scattered and that the sun may shine out brightly again. To them, then, that are of a hasty heart—to those who condemn themselves unjustly, who think that all things are against them and so become exceedingly fearful, say, “Be strong, fear not.”

I am going, first of all, to mention some of the spiritual fears which have vexed the people of God at all times—*fears from without which are associated with a belief of the Truth of God*. Secondly, I will mention some *fears from the feelings within*. Then, thirdly, I shall try to *excite you to get beyond these fearful things* and to come up to the place of strength—the place of confidence and of full assurance.

I. First, then, I am to mention SOME OF THE GREAT TRUTHS CONCERNING WHICH THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE OFTEN FEARFUL.

How many there are, babes in Grace, who are troubled about *election*. “Are we among the Lord’s chosen ones?” is a question that they often ask. They would be glad enough if an angel could fly down from Heaven and make a solemn affirmation that he had read their names written in the golden page of the Lamb’s Book of Life, but, since they cannot have this assurance, they question, and question, and question yet again! “Suppose I have not been chosen unto eternal life? What if my name was never engraved upon the hands or upon the heart of Christ? When the muster-roll of the redeemed is read at the Last Great Day, if my name should not be found on it, how can I bear that piercing thought? The dread surmise fills me with dismay!”

Now, to you who are trusting in Jesus, yet who have fears about your election, let me say, in God’s name, “Be strong, fear not.” That very Doctrine of Election which now appears to you to be like a lion in your way, shall prove, by-and-by, to be, indeed, a lion upon which you shall ride in glorious triumph! It is no enemy. Come and look it in the face and you shall find it to be your richest, dearest friend. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are as certainly elected as ever Peter and Paul were! If, as an empty sinner, Christ is all your fullness. If, as a naked soul, Christ’s righteousness is your glorious dress—then be you assured of this—you would never have had the stream if you had not had an interest in the Fountain! You could never have had the fruit if you had not had a part in the Root! Inasmuch as you have the blessing of God’s elect and the faith which is the common mark of them all, do not any longer question your election, but be bold to enter into this solemn mystery! Venture, now, to the heart of Christ. Trace the streams of Divine Love up to the eternal Fountain from which they spring, and say, with John Kent—

**“A monument of Grace,
A sinner saved by blood—**

***The streams of love I trace
Up to the Fountain, God,
And in His sacred bosom see
Eternal thoughts of love to me!***

Again, there are many of God's people who are disquieted concerning their *redemption*. They want to know whether they were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. According to some theories, nobody need ever be perplexed about this matter. The Arminian says, "Christ died for *all men*." Some go so far as to say, "He died for *all alike*." According to them, He died as much for Judas as He did for Peter, and as much for those who were damned in Hell before He laid down His life as for those who were saved in Heaven before He came into the world! Now, I do not hesitate to say that such a redemption as that is a redemption that does not redeem! It is not worth the expense of paper and ink to write about it. It is not worthwhile to open one's mouth to speak of it. A redemption which pays a price, but does not ensure that which is purchased. A redemption which calls Christ a Substitute for the sinner, but yet which allows the person for whom He was substituted to suffer is altogether unworthy of our apprehensions of Almighty God! It offers no homage to His wisdom and does despite to His covenant faithfulness. We could not and we would not receive such a travesty of Divine Truth as that would be! There is no ground for any comfort whatever in it.

We believe that by His atoning Sacrifice, Christ bought some good things for all men and all good things for some men. And that when He died, He had a definite purpose in dying and that His purpose will certainly be effected. Those who are saved owe their security to what His Redemption has accomplished and we fully believe that the accomplishment will be just as great as was the intent and purpose. Not, my Brothers and Sisters, that Christ's blood was less than Infinite in its value—less than Infinite it could never be! The question is not concerning the *value* of it, but the *purpose* of it. If God had willed it, there was enough efficacy in the blood of Christ to have redeemed ten thousand worlds. We have, however, not to speak of the efficacy that *might have been in it*, but of the efficacy that *is in it* according to the good pleasure which God has purposed in Himself. This doctrine of a special and particular intention in the Atonement of Christ has often troubled Believers in Jesus. But it never ought to. Do you believe in Him? Is He all your salvation and all your desire? Has His precious blood been applied by the Spirit to your heart and conscience? Has He purged you with hyssop? Then you are clean and that hyssop cannot have been applied to you in a wrong way. Being pardoned, you have the fruit of Redemption, so Redemption is certainly yours! Jesus came into the world to redeem you unto Himself. You are His and you have a clear and proper right to share in the efficacy of His blood and the power of His Atonement. Therefore, I say unto you who, on this account, are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, fear not."

There are many, also, who are troubled about their *effectual calling*. "Oh," says one, "if I had heard the Master say to me, as He said to Zacchaeus, 'Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down, for today I must abide at your house,' then I would know that I was called by Him. Or if He had

said to me, 'Mary,' and I had said, 'Rabboni,' I should know that He had called me. But, oh, Sir, I have come to Christ, yet I sometimes fear that He has never called me. He knows that He is my All-in-All. Other refuge have I none, but I am half-afraid that I have got into this refuge without any right—that I crept up to the foot of the Cross without being called—and that I have taken to myself a confidence which has no sure ground." O child of God, dismiss all those fears! You could not have come to Christ unless He had first come to you! If you have but come behind Him in the crowd and only touched the hem of His garment, you are cured and you shall never again suffer from that disease! That poor woman was not called by Christ's voice, yet I will venture to say that there was a secret call, within her heart, that moved her. Touch the hem of His garment! You may never know exactly how you were first convinced of sin, nor how you were quickened by the Holy Spirit—but if you have really come to Christ, that is enough, for you would never have come to Him unless He had drawn you! He has secretly put the bands of His love about your heart and you have turned to Him as the needle turns to the magnet! The proof that you have been called by Christ is that you have come to Him!

I have frequently noticed that those persons who think that they have had some special and particular call, have been no better, in regard to their evidences and, sometimes they have been much worse than those who have come to Christ in the more ordinary way. I would not say this to the disparagement of any man's conversion, for God works as He wills. But I recollect, and my eyes are just now fixed upon the very place where there once sat a man who presented a Bible to me, (I have it at home now), in which are written these words, "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down, for today I must abide at your house.' Dear Sir, When you pronounced these words last Sabbath morning, I heard a call from God to my soul and I am sure that I came down and that Christ did abide at my house."

That man joined us in Church fellowship. I shall not mention his name, but some of you may remember how sadly he dishonored the name of Christ. He went out from us because he was not of us, for, if he had been of us, doubtless he would have continued with us. It is very easy for us to imagine that we have received some special call of this sort—and then to build our confidence upon it—but if we have not something better than this to rest upon, woe was the day to us! I would far rather, my dear Friends, come to Christ and never know that I had been called except from the fact that I had come, than have some vision or audible words and yet, after all, cease to stand as a simple soul covered with the righteousness of Christ! Well do I know that there is a temptation to look back to the day and to the hour when we had some special manifestation—rather than to look only to the Cross and to the blood—and to calculate that we are converted because we felt this or that extraordinary emotion, instead of still coming, as we always must come, crying to our dear Lord and Savior—

***"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling!"***

Another fear, arising from the great and precious Doctrine of *Final Perseverance*, has troubled many a true Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. "How shall I hold on and persevere unto the end?" is a question that often causes great anxiety even to a genuine child of God. The best of things, when corrupted, become the most corrupt. The sweetest of comforts, when not believed in, become the bitterest of discomforts. I think that the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the saints is one of those that are most plainly taught in the Scriptures. If I found any difficulty, at any time, in defending against its assailants, the Doctrine of Particular Redemption, I should certainly never find any difficulty in defending the Doctrine of Final Perseverance! Those who oppose it have an irresistible array of passages of Scripture to contend with—they have, indeed, when they attack this Truth of God—to leap into a lion's den! It is strange that so many of the Lord's people should have been troubled concerning this precious Doctrine which is so clearly revealed in the Word of God. "How shall I endure unto the end? How shall I stand fast in the hour of trial? If my temptations are multiplied, if my pains are increased, if my bereavements should follow one upon another, if I should be called to a position of great responsibility, or if I should be cast down into the depths of adversity, how shall I endure it? How shall I be kept steadfast, year after year, and be brought safely home at last? Amid so many rocks and quicksands, storms and hurricanes, how shall my poor water-logged vessel ever enter the port?"

O Believer, if you are really called by Grace, you shall certainly persevere! He who set your feet a-running in His ways will never let you stop till you have come to your journey's end! Christ's promise to all His people is, "Because I live, you shall live also." Your perseverance does not rest with *you*, otherwise you were indeed an undone wretch! But it rests with your Lord and Savior—and He will preserve you even unto the end! "As your days, so shall your strength be." With the temptation, He will make a way of escape that you shall be able to bear it. So again I say to you who are troubled about your ultimate salvation, "Be strong, fear not." He who has begun the good work in you will carry it on and finish it in righteousness! He will not leave you, for His promise to everyone who believes in Him is, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

II. I have thus dealt with some fears from without. Now I am going, for a only few minutes, to speak upon SOME OF THE FEARS WHICH COME FROM WITHIN.

Multitudes of Believers are of a fearful heart *because they have not the joys and comforts with which some Christians are favored*. God has some of His people who live very near to Himself and who, therefore, partake of the richest things upon His banqueting table. These privileged saints tell of their joys, but certain desponding Christians who have backslidden from God and who, therefore, have not of late tasted of these dainties, cry out, "We cannot be the Lord's people, for we have no such joys as these." As well might the plant in the corner say that it was not planted at all because it did not stand in the front row of the bed! As well might some small tree in the forest say that it did not live because it did not tower

aloft, like some mighty cedar of Lebanon! Because I am not the fairest rose, but only a humble violet hidden among the green leaves, am I to conclude that I am not a flower at all? Oh, no, no! We are not saved by our comforts! They are given to us after we are saved, but we are saved without them. Many a soul has gone to Hell singing, while others have gone to Heaven sighing. It is not right that God's people should hang their harps upon the willows, but far better is it for us to hang our harps upon the willows than, like Haman, to be hanged upon the gallows that, in his pride and malice, he had erected for his enemy, Mordecai! Because we have not all the comforts which some Christians have, let us not be fretful and repine—that is the way to prevent ourselves from ever having them. I would say of the comforts of religion as Christ said of the comforts of this world, "Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Seek Christ first! Have simple faith in Him and then the ecstasies, the raptures, the enjoyments, the uplifting which some of His people have, shall be added unto you if the Lord sees that it is well for you to have them! But if you seek those things *first*, you shall neither have them nor any other sort of comfort whatever.

Full many there are, also, who are greatly cast down *because of the conflict within*. As soon as there are wars and fights between the two men—the old man and the new man—they at once conclude that it is all over with them. Foolish conclusion, indeed, since, if there were no wars it would be a proof that there was no life! If there were no conflicts it would be an evidence that there was but one power within—and that power the evil one! Draw not, from your internal commotions, from the temptation which assails you and the force with which it acts against your inward principles—draw not the inference that, therefore, you are a castaway of God! This is rather a reason why you should cry, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And, by faith should shout, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Very many have come across my path, too, who are of a fearful heart *because they have such little faith* and they fear that their little faith will not be sufficient. Ah, Believer, your true riches do not depend upon the amount of your spending money! The Lord sometimes keeps His children rather short of pocket money, but, still, the whole of His riches belongs to them all the while. The unsearchable riches of Christ are the measure of our true wealth—not that portion which we can manage to lay hold of by the hand of faith. If I have, in my hand, but one farthing of faith's wealth, that is a proof that *all the riches of Christ belong to me*. If I have but faith as a grain of mustard seed—so small that it looks as though the first bird of the air that came my way might carry it away, yet, inasmuch as there is life hidden within that tiny mustard seed—a life which only needs the Grace of God to expand and develop it—I am saved, though my faith is but small!

A few, too, I have known, who are troubled with doubts and fears *because they do not understand as much as they would like to*. They cannot read books of divinity, or, if they do read them, they get lost amid the

maze of difficult theological terms. They cannot reconcile certain Truths of God, the one with the other. But this is no ground for fear, for the Gospel is so simple that it is adapted even for those who are all but idiots! I have read some extraordinary instances—facts that no one can dispute—of persons scarcely a degree above sheer idiocy who have, nevertheless, believed in Christ, yes, and whose sayings have had about them certain flashes of a superlative simplicity and supernatural wisdom—and whose words, when they were sifted and carefully examined, were found to read rather like the mind of the Spirit than like the utterances of a poor creature whose mind was almost gone! Think not, dear Friend, that your ignorance can push you out of the family of God! Little children cannot read Greek and Latin, but they can say, “Abba, Father,” and that is all they need to say. If you cannot read books of deep theological lore, yet, if Jesus Christ is yours—if you are trusting in Him—even the imperfect knowledge that you have of Him proves that you are His! And He will never leave you, nor forsake you.

I have met with some, too, who were of a fearful heart, afraid that they would be lost *because they felt that they had, at some period of their lives, neglected Christian duty*. This is an old temptation that Satan often casts in the way of godly people. You remember how John Bunyan represents Apollyon as charging poor Christian with being unfaithful—“You did faint at first setting out, when you were almost choked in the Gulf of Despond. You did attempt wrong ways, to be rid of your burden, whereas you should have stayed till your Prince had taken it off! You did sinfully sleep and lose your choice thing; you were also almost persuaded to go back at the sight of the lions. And when you talk of your journey and of what you have heard and seen, you are inwardly desirous of vain-glory in all that you say or do.” Now, if any of you should be troubled by similar accusations of the adversary, recollect that since Christ did not love you for your good works, *they are not the cause of His beginning to love you*—and so He does not love you for your good works even now—and they are not the cause of His continuing to love you! He loves you because He will love you. What He approves in you now is that which He has, Himself, given to you! That is always the same—it *always* abides as it was. The life of God is always within you. Jesus has not turned away His heart from you, nor has the flame of His love decreased in the smallest degree. Therefore, faint Heart, “fear not, be strong.”

III. I might go on to deal with other fears of God’s people, but, instead of doing so, I want TO EXCITE YOU TO GET BEYOND THESE FEARS. In the words of my text, to exhort you to “fear not,” but to “be strong.”

Some few Sabbaths ago I told you that I had met with a Christian Brother who had never had a doubt. Lately, in Glasgow, I met with another. Mr. Alexander Macleod, the oldest Baptist minister, I believe, in Scotland, told me that he was converted to God, upon the Calton Hill, under Rowland Hill’s ministry. He is now, I suppose, 82 or 83 years of age and is still a strong man. He has known the Lord for more than 60 years and he says that not once in his life did he ever have a doubt concerning his election, his calling, his interest in Christ, or his final perse-

verance. He said that he once heard a Unitarian minister preach against the Divinity of Christ and his mind was greatly disturbed, but he never went the length of having any doubts either about Christ, or about his own interest in Him. I knew the man to be everywhere revered for his piety and for the holiness and consistency of his life. I could not, therefore, doubt the truth of what he told me. But I was surprised, not at him, but at myself, that I, who have the same God as he has and perhaps have had more mercies than he has received—that I, in the full vigor of early manhood should doubt, while he, in his old age, should be able to truthfully declare that his soul had never wavered in his simple confidence in Jesus. When I expressed my surprise at him, he expressed a great deal more surprise at me! He said that he came to Christ as a poor sinner and trusted Him to be his All-in-All, and he did not mean to alter his belief until he saw good reason for doing so. I hope that you and I, dear Friends, will come to Jesus, yet again, as poor sinners and take Him to be our All-in-All—and never change from that simple faith till we see good reason for doing so—which, I take it, will never be so long as the heart of Christ is full of affections, the arm of Jesus is unpalsied through affliction, and the eyes of Christ are undimmed with age!

I am sure that Satan is very much gratified when he sees that any of us are of a fearful heart. No doubt he chuckles over it and makes as much as he can of his sorry triumph over poor weak mortals. Do not yield to him, Beloved! Draw your swords and strike boldly at him! Believe that you will overcome him, and you will do so. March forward and believe that the land of promise is yours, for it *is* yours and you shall surely go up and possess it! Is it necessary that the children of God should be a doubting people? Is it necessary that they should be continually cast down? By no means! For it is a great and grievous sin for us to distrust our God. Let us trust in Him at all times and even say with Job, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.”

The path of faith is the smoothest path, after all. The road of life will always be rough, but he who walks by faith will find half its roughness removed. The greater part of our sorrows come not from Heaven, nor Hell, nor earth, but from ourselves. We are our own plague-makers and our own tormentors! A man with strong faith is like one who wears a leather glove who can lay hold of thorns and thistles and not be hurt. But the man with weak faith is like one not only with a naked hand, but with the skin off it—everything he touches irritates the tender flesh and even the small grains of dust may fret within the wound and breed ulcers and foul sores. “Be strong.” God is with you, so how dare you be dismayed because of your own weakness? “Fear not.” The Lord is your confidence—it is presumption for you to mistrust Him. “Be strong.” The might of God is engaged by promise and by oath to bring you safely through. “Fear not.” There is no cause for fear—the enemies whom you have seen today, you shall see again no more forever. “Fear not.” Fear weakens you and moreover, it dishonors God and gives cause to the enemy to blaspheme His holy name.

I do not know whether this is a portion of meat to any troubled heart here present. Possibly it may be. If so, poor Soul, feed on it. You have gone to a new situation, have you not, and there are some ungodly young men who revile and ridicule you? Well, then, “fear not, be strong.” Your business does not answer so well as it did and you hardly know what will become of you. “Fear not, be strong.” Commit your cause unto the Lord, lay your case at His feet. Possibly you have sickness in the house and you are half inclined to repine, and to think that there is some anger mingled with the strokes of the rod. “Fear not, be strong.” Either the blow you dread will never be inflicted or it will be a blessed blow! This is but a slight sorrow. Do you think me hard and unfeeling in so describing it? But it may be that this sorrow will be very slight compared with that from which you are spared—if this blow did not fall, it might involve a ten times heavier one!

Perhaps you have been sorely tempted by Satan lately and he says that he shall at last have you. “Be strong, fear not.” Strike him all the harder for telling that lie! Strike at him with all your power, for, in the might of God, you are far mightier than he is and you can prevail over him! And you, young Man, have recently undertaken service for your Savior, but you feel that you have not the strength needed for it and you are inclined to give up. “Fear not, be strong.” He who calls you to His service will support you in it! You and I have to stand like Gideon’s soldiers, with the lamp inside the pitcher—that pitcher needs to be broken before the light of the lamp can be seen. The strength of man is like that earthen pitcher and the light of God cannot shine forth until that pitcher is dashed in pieces!

There is one person I must not forget, perhaps more. There are those who know that they are drawing near unto the grave. The shadows lengthen out and their life becomes like the spider’s web and they are afraid to die. They know the living Savior, but they fear the dying hour. They think Death’s stream is dark, cold and deep—how shall they pass through it to reach the Celestial City? “Fear not, be strong.” Death is the last enemy and he is to be destroyed. Remember that, and be of good cheer! He shall not destroy you. Do not call him Death the Destroyer, but Death the Destroyed! Be certain of victory in your last moments! No, *look forward, even now, with hopeful joy* to that most blessed of all moments when, laying your head upon the death pillow, you shall find that Christ’s bosom is where that pillow lies and you shall breathe your life out there, finding no iron gates, no shadow of dark wings, no horror of darkness, no dying strife—but bliss beginning, bliss increasing, bliss overflowing and running on forever and ever—bliss that shall be yours beyond the hazard of loss!

God grant unto each one of us that we may be strong, and fear not, for Christ’s sake Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 45.**

While we are reading this chapter, and thinking of Cyrus, the Lord's anointed deliverer for Israel, let us not forget the greater Deliverer of whom the hymn writer sings—

***“Thus says God of His Anointed,
He shall let My people go!
'Tis the work for Him appointed,
'Tis the work that He shall do.
And My city
He shall found, and build it, too.”***

Verse 1. *Thus says the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut.* It was thought impossible for any foreign troops to enter Babylon, yet the gates were found open and the army of Cyrus marched in and took possession of the city!

2, 3. *I will go before you, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in piece the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give you the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the LORD, which call you by your name, am the God of Israel.* Whenever God calls a man to do any work, however difficult and even impossible it may seem to be, he will certainly accomplish it because he will have God with him. The Lord will gird his loins and make him strong—and all the forces of Providence shall work towards the accomplishment of the Divine end. Has God given you any work to do? It may be a much easier task than that of Cyrus, so, as the Lord enabled him to succeed in his great enterprise, you may have confidence that His power is sufficient to give success to you, also! It may seem to be presumption for you to undertake such a work, yet, if you are called of God to do it, go on without a shadow of doubt, for He will make the crooked places straight and break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron. We must not forget that whatever God did in relation to Cyrus was done with an eye to the welfare of His own people.

4. *For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name: I have surnamed you, though you have not known Me.* And all the powers and princes that arise in this world, God can use for the good of His Church! All the nations, kingdoms and powers there are, are only like so much scaffolding for the building of God's own house—and He makes use of them as He pleases, though, often, they know not what He is doing with them!

5, 6. *I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God besides Me: I girded you, though you have not known Me: that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.* This was intended to correct the mistake of Cyrus who probably was a fire-worshipper—a believer in the two great forces of good and evil which were supposed to be equally eternal and powerful—which the Persians regarded as the god of good and the god of evil. So the Lord says—

7. *I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.* There are not two distinct principles that

are omnipotent and, though God is not the Author of moral evil, yet whatever there is of evil which causes us pain and loss is under His control. There are not two gods, but only one living and true God.

8-10. *Drop down, you heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together, I the LORD have created it. Woe unto him that strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashions it, What are you making? Or shall your handiwork say, 'He has no hands'? Woe unto him that says unto his father, What are you begetting? Or to the woman, What have you brought forth?* God, on the ground of His being Creator, demands that He shall not be questioned by human wisdom, nor dictated to by human pride. He is the one Supreme Sovereign and Lord of All—and He may do absolutely as He pleases. It is a joy and delight to us that He always wills to do what is just and right. Still, His Divine prerogative must not be abridged in any way whatever. The potsherds that He has made must never question the action of the great Potter who has made them! Has He not power to mold and fashion the clay exactly as He pleases?

11, 12. *Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons and concerning the work of My hands, you command Me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even My hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.* When we think of this, we ought to worship God, alone, and trust Him, alone, and pay all loyal homage to Him. What can there be that is comparable to the Creator of all things? There is not so much as a grain of dust, nor a single fly that is self-created, or man-made—but everything has come from God and exists because He wills it. Therefore, give to the Lord the Glory that is due unto His name and rest in His power, and trust in His might.

13. *I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build My city, and he shall let go My captives, not for price nor reward, says the LORD of Hosts.* And so Cyrus did. It was through him that Jerusalem was rebuilt and the captive Israelites were delivered!

14, 15. *Thus says the LORD, The labor of Egypt, and merchants of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto you, and they shall be yours: they shall come after you; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto you, they shall make supplication unto you, saying, Surely God is in you, and there is none else, there is no other God. Verily You are a God that hides Yourself, O God of Israel, the Savior.* This is a most merciful arrangement, for, if God did not hide Himself, none of us could exist! The full blaze of His Divine Countenance would be our destruction. God said even to Moses, “You cannot see My face: for there shall no man see Me and live.” But it is also partly in judgment that God sometimes hides even that measure of His Presence which, at other times, He reveals in love. But even then, though He is hidden, He is still there. As the blue sky is up yonder, though it is long since you saw it, so is God always present even though we cannot see

Him. The mountains, when hidden in darkness, are as real as they are in the light of day—and God is as truly near to His people, to preserve and succor them when they do not see Him, as when they do.

16-19. *They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols. But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: you shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. For thus says the LORD that created the heavens, God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He has established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, See you Me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.* It is a very consolatory thing for us to be told not only what God has said, but also what He has *not* said. You can be sure of this, that there is nothing in the secret book of God's decrees, and nothing in the sealed book of prophecy which is contrary to the gracious Covenant promises which God has revealed to His people in His Word. He does not say one thing and mean another. You may rest assured that all the revelations that are yet to be given, if there are to be any, (and there are some who are always talking about fresh light breaking from the Word), will never contradict that which has been revealed of old! God did not tell His ancient people anything which contradicts what He has told us. The poorest and meanest of His people who have been able to spell out, in the Word of God, their right and title to the Divine inheritance, may rely upon it that if any wise man comes to them with some wonderful discovery which contradicts the Bible—he simply comes with a lie—for God has nowhere contradicted what He has plainly revealed in the Scriptures!

20, 21. *Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, you that are escaped of the nations. They have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell and bring forth your case; yes, let them take counsel together.* What wooden god has ever foretold the future? What idol of brass or stone had a word to say about the coming of Cyrus? Not one.

21-25. *Who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Have not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me; a just God and a Savior; there is none besides Me. Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by Myself, the word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to Him shall men come, and all that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.*

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

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

THE DUMB SINGING NO. 2625

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING OR LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 4, 1899.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT SHOULDHAM STREET CHAPEL,
ON WEDNESDAY MORNING, APRIL 29, 1857.**

***“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.”
Isaiah 35:5.***

WHAT a difference Divine Grace makes, wherever it enters the heart! In our text we find the blind mentioned, but they are no longer blind when once Grace has touched their eyes! “Then the eyes of the blind” are “opened.” We read also of the deaf, but they are not deaf after Grace has operated upon them! “The ears of the deaf” are “unstopped.” Here are men who have been “lame,” but when once the Omnipotent influence of Divine Grace has come upon them, they leap like a hart! And those who used to be speechless, so far from being dumb any longer, have experienced a change that must be radical, for its effects are surprising. “The tongue of the dumb” not only speaks, but it sings! Divine Grace makes a great difference in a man when it enters into him.

How vain, then, are the boasts and professions of some persons who declare themselves to be the children of God and yet continue to live in sin! There is no perceivable difference in their conduct from what it formerly was—they are still what they used to be before their pretended conversion—they are not changed in their acts, even in the least degree. And yet they most positively affirm that they are the called and living children of God, although they are entirely unchanged! Let such people know that their pretensions are lies and that falsehood is the only groundwork they have for their hopes, for wherever the Grace of God comes, it makes men to differ from what they were before. A graceless man is not like a gracious man, and gracious men are not like graceless ones—we are “new creatures in Christ Jesus.” When God looks upon us with the eyes of love and works in us conversion and regeneration, He makes us as opposite from what we were before as light is from darkness, and as Heaven, itself, is from Hell! He works in man a change so great that no mere reformation can even imitate it—it is an *entire* change—a change of the will, of the affections, of the desires, of the dislikes and of the likes. The man becomes, in every respect, new, when Divine Grace enters his heart. Yet you say of yourself, “I am converted,” and remain just as you were I tell you once again to your face, that you

say what is not true—you have no ground for saying it! If grace permits you to sin as you were known to do, then that grace is not Divine Grace! That grace is not worth having which permits a man to be, after he receives it, what he was before. No, Beloved, we must always hold and teach the great Doctrine of Sanctification. Where God truly justifies, He also really sanctifies. And where there is the remission of sin, there is also the forsaking of it! Where God has blotted out transgression, He also removes our love of it, makes us seek after holiness and walk in the ways of the Lord. I think we may fairly infer this from the text as a prelude to the observations I have to make concerning it.

I want you, first of all, to notice *the sort of people whom God has chosen to sing His praises and to sing them eternally*. Then, in the second place, I shall enter into *a fuller description of the dumb people here mentioned*. Then, thirdly, I shall try to mention *certain special times and seasons when those dumb people sing more sweetly than at others*.

I. First, then, THE PERSONS WHOM GOD HAS CHOSEN TO SING HIS PRAISES FOREVER. “The tongue of the *dumb* shall sing.”

I ask you, first, to note that *there is no difference, by nature, between the elect and others*. Those who are now glorified in Heaven and who walk the golden streets clad in robes of purity, were, by nature as unholy, defiled and as far from original righteousness as those who, by their own rejection of Christ and by their love of sin, have brought themselves into the pit of eternal torment as punishment for their iniquities! The only reason why there is a difference between those who are in Heaven and those who are in Hell is because of Divine Grace, and Divine Grace alone. Those in Heaven would have been cast away had not everlasting mercy stretched out its hand and rescued them. They were, by nature, not one whit superior to others! They would as certainly have rejected Christ and have trod under foot the blood of Jesus as did those who were cast away if Grace, Free Grace, had not prevented them from committing that sin! The reason why they are Christians is not because they did naturally will to be so, nor because they did, by nature, desire to know Christ, or to be found of Him—they are now saints simply because God made them so! He gave them the desire to be saved. He put into them the will to seek after Him. He helped them in their seeking and afterwards brought them to feel that peace which is the fruit of justification! But, by nature, they were just the same as others, and if there is any difference, we are obliged to say that the difference does not lie in their favor. In very many cases, those who now “rejoice in hope of the glory of God” were the very worst of men! There are multitudes who now bless God for their redemption who once blasphemed Him—who, as frequently as they dared to do so, implored that the curse of God might rest upon their fellows and upon themselves! Many of the Lord’s anointed were once the very castaways of Satan, the sweepings of society, the refuse of the earth! They were those whom no man cared for, who were called outcasts, but whom God has now called desired ones, seeing that He has loved them!

I am led to these thoughts from the fact that we are told here that *those who sing were dumb by nature*. Their singing does not come natu-

rally from themselves—they were not born songsters. No, they were dumb ones whom God would have to sing His praises. It does not say the tongue of the stammerer, or the tongue of him who blasphemed, or of him who misused his tongue, but, “the tongue of the dumb”—those who have gone furthest from any thought of singing, those who have no power or will to sing—the tongue of such as these shall yet be made to sing God’s praises! It is a strange choice that God has made. Strange for its graciousness, strangely manifesting the Sovereignty of His will. When God resolved to build for Himself a palace in Heaven of living stones, where did He get them? Did He go to look for the richest and purest marble in the quarries of earthly perfection? No, you saints, “Look unto the rock from which you are hewn, and to the hole of the pit from where you were dug.” So far from being stones that were white with purity, you were black with defilement, seemingly utterly unfit to be built into the spiritual temple which would be the dwelling place of the Most High!

Yet He chose you to be trophies of His Grace and of His power to save! Goldsmiths make exquisite forms from precious material. They fashion the bracelet and the ring from gold, but God makes His precious things out of base material. From among the black pebbles of the muddy pond He has taken up stones which He has set in the golden ring of His Immutable Love, to make them into gems to sparkle on His finger forever! He has not selected the best, but apparently the worst of men, to be the monuments of His Grace! And when He would have a choir in Heaven that would, with harmonious tongues, sing His praises—a chorus that would forever chant hallelujahs louder than the noise of many waters and, like great thunders—He did not send Mercy down to seek earth’s songsters and call from us those who have the sweetest voices! No, but He said, “Go, Mercy, and find out the dumb, and touch their lips, and make them sing. The virgin tongues that never sang My praises, before, that have been silent until now, shall break forth in sublime rhapsodies and they shall lead the song—even angels shall but attend behind and catch the notes from the lips of those who once were dumb.”

Oh, *what a fountain of consolation this opens for you and for me!* Yes, Beloved, if God did not choose the base things of this world, He would never have chosen us! If He had regard unto the countenances of men. If He were a respecter of persons, where would you and I be this day? We would had never been the subjects of His love and mercy! No, as we look upon ourselves, now, and remember what we once were, we are often obliged to ask our Lord—

***“Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter while there’s room
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?”***

And we have no difficulty in finding the right answer in the next verse of the hymn—

***“’Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced us in,
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin.”***

Grace is always Grace, but it never seems so gracious as when we see it brought to our unworthy selves. Yes, my Friends, you may be Arminians in your doctrine, but you can never be Arminians in your feelings—you are obliged to confess that salvation is all of Grace and to cast away the thought that the Lord chose you because of your foreseen faith or good works! We are obliged to come to this point—to feel and know that it must have been of mercy, free mercy, and of that, alone—that we were not capable of doing good works without His Grace enabling us to do them and, therefore, they never could have been the motive for the Lord's love, nor the reason why it flowed towards us! O you unworthy ones, you saints that feel your deep natural depravity and mourn over your ruin by the fall of Adam, lift up your hearts to God! He has delivered you from all the impediments which Adam cast upon you! Your tongue is now loosed—Adam made it dumb, but God has loosed it! Your eyes, which were blinded by Adam's fall, are now opened by Him who has lifted you up from the horrible pit and the miry clay! What Adam lost for us, Christ has regained for us. He has set our feet upon a rock and established our goings—and He has put a new song into our mouth, even praise unto our God!

Before I leave this point, I must remind you *how this ought to give you encouragement in seeking to do good to others*. Why, my Brothers and Sisters, I can never think any man too far gone for God's mercy since I know that He saved me! Whenever I have felt despondent about any of my hearers who have, for a long time, persevered in guilt, I have only had to reach down my own biography from the shelves of my memory and think what I was till Divine Grace rescued me and brought me to my Savior's feet. And then I have said, "It will be no wonder if that man is saved—after what the Lord has done for me, I can believe anything of my Master! If He has blotted out *my* transgressions. If He has put away *my* sins, then I can never despair of any of my fellow creatures. They may be dumb, now, but He can make them sing."

Your son John is a sad reprobate—keep on praying for him, mother—God can change his very nature. Your daughter's heart seems hard as adamant, but He who makes the dumb sing can cause even that rock to melt! Believe in God for your children, as well as for yourselves! Take their cases before His Throne of Grace! Rely upon Him to save them and believe that in answer to earnest prayer, He will do so. And if you have neighbors who are full of the pestilence of sin, whose vices come up before you as a stench in your nostrils, yet fear not to carry the Gospel to them! Though they are harlots, drunks, swearers, be not afraid to tell them of the Savior's dying love. He makes the dumb sing—He does not ask for even a voice to begin with—they are dumb and He does not ask of them even the power of speech, but He *gives* them the power! If you have neighbors who keep not the Sabbath, love not God and are not willing to come to His House—and even despise Christ—if you find them as far gone as they can be, remember, He makes the dumb to sing and, therefore, He can make them live!

He needs no goodness in them to begin with—all He needs is the rough, raw material, uncut, unpolished—and He does not even need good material! Bad as the material may be, He can make it into something inestimably precious, something that is worthy of His precious blood! Go on with your work for Christ, dear Friends, and fear not concerning the worst of men and women—if the dumb can be made to sing, then surely you can never say that any man need be cast away because Christ cannot save them!

II. I am now to enter into A FULLER DESCRIPTION OF THESE DUMB PEOPLE. Who are they?

Sometimes I get a good thought out of *Cruden's Concordance*. I believe that is the best commentary to the Bible and I like to study it. I opened it lately at the word, "dumb," and I found Master Cruden describing five different kinds of dumb people, but I shall name only four of them. The first dumb people he mentions are those who *cannot* speak. Then, secondly, those who *will not* speak. Thirdly, those who *dare not* speak and, fourthly, those who have *nothing* to say and, therefore, are dumb.

Among the dumb people who shall sing are, first, *those who cannot speak*. That is the usual meaning of the word, *dumb*. The others are, of course, only figurative applications of the term. We call a man dumb when he cannot speak. Now, *spiritually*, the man who is still in trespasses and sins is dumb, for he is dead and there is none so dumb as a dead man! We used to hear, in our childhood, that they buried none but deaf and dumb persons in certain churchyards! That saying was intended to tickle our childish fancies and it misled us a little, but the meaning was that none but dead people were buried there. The Word of God assures us that unregenerate men are spiritually dead. It follows, then, that they must be spiritually dumb. They cannot sing God's praises. They know Him not and, therefore, they cannot exalt His glorious name. They cannot, in their natural state, confess their sins. They may utter the words of confession, but they cannot really confess, for they do not know the evil of sin, nor have they been taught to feel what a bitter thing it is. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit," and these people cannot truly do so. It may be they can talk well of the Doctrines of Grace, but they cannot speak of them out of the fullness of their hearts, as living and vital principles which they possess in themselves. They cannot join in the songs, nor can they take part in the conversation of Christians. If they sit for a while with the saints, perhaps they let it be known that they have culled a few phrases which they use and apply to certain things about which they know nothing. They talk a language the meaning of which they do not comprehend—like Milton's daughters reading to their father strange tongues which they did not understand. So far as the essence of the matter is concerned, these spiritually dead people are dumb. But, hail to Sovereign Grace! "The tongue of the dumb shall sing!" God will have His darlings made what they should be. They are dumb by nature, but He will not leave them so. They cannot now sing His praises, but they shall do it! They do not now confess their sins, but He will yet bring them to their knees and make them pour out

their hearts before Him! They cannot now talk the tongue of Canaan, or speak the language of Zion, but they shall do it soon! Grace, Omnipotent Grace, will have its way with them! They shall be taught to pray! Their eyes shall be made to flow with tears of penitence and then, after that, their lips shall sing to the praise of Sovereign Grace!

I need not dwell upon this point because there are many here who once were dumb, who can bless God that they now can sing. Does it not sometimes seem to you, Beloved, a very strange thing that you are what you are? I should think it must be one of the strangest things in the world for a dumb man to speak—because he has no idea how a man feels when he is speaking, he has no notion of the thing at all! A man, blind from his birth, has no idea what kind of a thing sight can be. I have heard of a blind man who supposed that the color scarlet must be very much like the sound of a trumpet. He knew no other way of describing it. So, the dumb man has no notion of the way to talk. Do you not think it is a strange thing that you are what you are? You said once, “I will never be one of those canting Methodists. Do you think I shall ever make a profession of religion? What? I attend a Prayer Meeting? It is not likely!” And you went along the streets in all your gaiety of mirth and said, “What? I become a little child and give up my mind to simple faith, and not reason at all? What? Am I to abandon all argument about things and simply take them for granted because God has said them? No, that never can be!” Yet that is what *has* happened and I will be bound to say it will be a wonder to you, as long as you are here, that you are a child of God! And even in Heaven, itself, your greatest wonder will be that you were ever brought to know the Savior!

But there are, next, *some dumb people who will not speak*. They are mentioned by Isaiah. He said some of the watchmen in his day were “dumb dogs.” I bless God that we have not so many of these dumb people as we used to have. God has raised up, of late, especially in the Church of England, a large number of thoroughly Evangelical men who are not afraid to declare the whole counsel of God. There are many such faithful preachers of the Gospel to be found. [Stated in 1882.] There is no reason why the Church of England should not be thoroughly Evangelical. If it keeps to its Articles, it ought to be! It is the most inconsistent church in all the world if it is not Calvinistic—and it will be inconsistent unless it keeps to those grand fundamental Truths of God which are written in its Articles and which are a code of faith to be received by all Believers!

But, oh, there are a great many preachers among Dissenters and in the Church of England, too, that are “dumb dogs.” There are still plenty who hardly know anything about the Gospel! They preach about a great many things, but little or nothing about Jesus Christ! They buy their sermons cheaply and preach them at their ease. They ask God to teach them what to say and then pull their manuscripts out of their pockets! We have had to mourn, especially in years gone by, that we could look from parish to parish and find only “dumb dogs” in the pulpits. And some men who might have spoken with a little earnestness, if they had liked, let the people slumber under them instead of preaching the Word

with true fidelity, remembering that they will have to give account to God at the last! My aged grandfather tells a story which I believe he could verify, of a person who once resided near him and called himself a preacher of the Gospel. He was visited by a poor woman who asked him what was the meaning of the new birth, and he replied, "My good woman, why do you come to me about that matter? Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, was a wise man, yet he did not understand about the new birth—how do you think I should?" And she had to go away with only that answer.

The time was when such an answer as that might have been given by a great many who were reckoned to be the authorized teachers of religion, but who really knew nothing about the matter. They understood a great deal more about fox-hunting than about preaching—and more about farming their land than about the spiritual husbandry of God's Church! But we bless God that there are not so many of that sort, now, and we pray that the race may become quite extinct—and that every pulpit may be filled with a man who has a tongue of fire and a heart of flame and who shuns not to declare the whole counsel of God, neither seeking the smiles of men nor dreading their frowns!

We have, in our text, a promise that it shall be so. "The tongue of the dumb shall sing." And ah, when God makes them sing, they sing well! You remember Rowland Hill's story, in "*The Village Dialogues*" about Mr. Merriman? He was a sad scapegrace of a parson and was to be seen at every fair and revel, and was seldom to be found in his pulpit when he should have been. But when, by God's Grace, he was converted, he began to preach with tears running down his face! The Church soon became crowded, but the squire would not go—he even locked up his pew. So Mr. Merriman had a little ladder made outside the door, as he did not wish to break it open, and the people used to sit on the steps, up one side and down the other, so that there was twice as much room as there was before!

No people make such good preachers as those who were once dumb! If the Lord opens their mouths, they will think they cannot preach often enough, or earnestly enough to make up for the mischief they did before! Chalmers himself might never have been so eloquent a preacher had he not been, for a long time, a dumb dog! He preached morality, he said, till he made all the people in his parish immoral! He kept on urging them to keep God's Law till he made them break it! But when he turned round and began to preach Christ's Gospel, then the dumb began to sing! Oh, may God work this change in every one of us! If we are dumb as professed ministers, may He open our mouths and force us to speak forth His Word, lest, at the Last Day, the blood of our hearers' souls should be found upon our garments and we should be cast away as unfaithful stewards!

I now introduce you to a third sort of dumb people. They are dumb because *they dare not speak*. They are good people, blessed souls. Listen to one of them—"I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because You did it." Ah, it is blessed to be dumb in that fashion! The Lord's servant will often have to be dumb under trials and troubles. When Satan tempts him to

repine, he will put his finger to his lips and say, "Hush, murmuring heart! Be still!" "Why does a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" Even the child of God will sometimes do as Job did when he sat down upon the ground for seven days and seven nights and said not a word, for he felt that his trouble was so heavy that he could say nothing. It would have been as well if he had kept his mouth shut for the next few days—silence would not have been so bad as some things that he uttered! There are times when you and I, Beloved, are obliged to keep the bridle on our tongues lest we should murmur against God. We are in evil company. Perhaps our spirit is hot within us and we want to take vengeance for the Lord. We are like the friends of David who would have slain Shimei. "Let us cut off this dead dog's head," we say, and then Jesus tells us to put our sword into its scabbard, for, "the servant of the Lord must not strive." How often have we thus been dumb!

Sometimes, when there have been slanders against our character and men have maligned us, oh, how our fingers have itched to be at them! But we have said, "No. Our Master did not answer His accusers and He has left us an example that we should follow His steps." The chief priests accused Him of many things, but, "He answered them not a word." We have found it difficult to be dumb, like the sheep when it is brought to the shearer, or the lamb when it is in the slaughterhouse. We could scarcely keep quiet. When we have been upon our beds in sickness we have tried to quench every murmuring word. We have not let a sentence escape our lips when we could possibly avoid it, but, notwithstanding all that, we have found it hard work to keep dumb—though it is blessed work when we are enabled to do it.

Now, you who have been dumb under great sorrow. You whose songs have been suspended because you dare not open your lips lest sighs should usurp the place of praise, come, listen to this promise—"The tongue of the dumb shall sing." Yes, though you are now in the deepest trouble and are obliged to be silent, you shall yet sing! Though, like Jonah, you are in the belly of Hell, as he called it—though the earth with her bars seems to be about you forever, and the weeds are wrapped about your head—yet you shall look again towards His holy Temple! Though you have hung your harp upon the willows, bless God that you have not broken it. You will have farther use for it, by-and-by, and you shall take it down from its resting place and—

***"Loud to the praise of Love Divine,
Bid every string awake!"***

If you have no songs in the night, yet the Lord shall compass you about with songs of deliverance! If you cannot sing His praises now, you shall do so, by-and-by, when greater Grace shall have been poured into your heart, or when delivering mercy shall be the subject of your song in better days that are yet to come! But, blessed be God, we are not always to be silent in affliction. We are bound to sing. Though we are dumb as to murmuring, we ought to sing God's praises! An old Puritan said, "God's people are like certain birds—they sing best in cages." He meant, "God's people often sing the best when they are in the deepest trouble." Said old Master Brooks, "The deeper the flood was, the higher the ark went up

toward Heaven.” So is it with the child of God—the deeper his troubles, the nearer to Heaven he rises if he lives close to his Master. Troubles are called weights and weights, you know, generally clog us and keep us down to the earth. But there are ways, by the use of the laws of mechanics, by which you can make a weight *lift* you—and so it is possible to make your troubles lift you nearer Heaven instead of letting them sink you! God has sometimes opened our mouth when we were dumb—when we were ungrateful and did not praise Him. He has opened our mouth by a trial and though, when we had a thousand mercies, we did not praise Him, yet when He sent a sharp affliction, then we began to do so! He has thus made the tongue of the dumb to sing.

I will mention one more kind of dumb people and then I shall have done with this part of my subject. There are *those who have nothing to say* and, therefore, they are dumb. I will give you an instance. Solomon says, in the Proverbs, “Open your mouth for the dumb” and he shows, by the context, that he means those who, in the court of judgment, have nothing to plead for themselves and must stand dumb before the bar. Like that man of old who, when the king came in to see the guests, had not on a wedding garment—and when the king said, “Friend, how came you in here not having a wedding garment?” He stood speechless, not because he could not speak, but because he had nothing to say! Have not you and I been dumb? Are we not now dumb when we stand on *law* terms with God, when we forget that Jesus Christ and His blood and righteousness were our full acquittal?

Are we not obliged to be dumb when the Commandments are laid bare before us and when the Law of God is brought home to our conscience? There was a time with each of us, and not long ago with some here present, when we stood before Moses’ seat and heard the Commandments read. And when we were asked, “Sinner, can you claim to have kept those Commandments?” we were dumb. Then we were asked, “Sinner, can you give any atonement for the breach of those Commandments?” And we were dumb. We were asked, “Sinner, can you, by a future obedience, wipe out your past sins?” We knew it was impossible and we were dumb. Then we were asked, “Can you endure the penalty? Can you bear to suffer forever in the flames of Hell? Can you endure torments that shall never cease? Can you dwell with everlasting burnings and abide with eternal fires?” And we were dumb.

Then we were asked the question, “Prisoner at the bar, have you any reason to plead why you should not be condemned?” And we were dumb. And we were asked, “Prisoner, have you any helper? Have you anyone who can deliver you?” And we stood dumb, for we had nothing to say. Yes, but blessed be God, the tongue of the dumb can now sing! And shall I tell you what we can sing? Why, we can sing this, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” Not God, for He has justified us! “Who is he that condemns?” Not Christ, for “it is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” We who had not a word to say for ourselves, can now say everything! We can say to our Lord—

“Bold shall I stand in that great day,

***For who anything to my charge shall lay?
While through Your blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame?"***

Yes, the dumb ones can sing! So shall you, poor dumb one, if God has made you dumb by taking away all the names of Baal out of your mouth—if He has taken away all your self-righteousness and all your trust in yourself—as truly as ever He has shut your mouth, He will open it! If God has killed your self-righteousness, He will give you a better one! If He has knocked down all your refuges of lies, He will build you up a good refuge! He has not come to destroy you. He has shut your mouth that He may fill it with His praise. Be of good cheer! Cast your eyes to the Cross! Look to Jesus! Put your confidence in Him and even you, who think yourself a castaway—even you, poor weeping Mary—even you shall yet sing of redeeming Grace and dying love!

III. Now I have to conclude by noticing THE OCCASIONS WHEN THE TONGUE OF THESE DUMB PEOPLE SINGS THE BEST.

When does the tongue of the dumb sing? Why, I think it sings always, little or much! If it is once set at liberty, it will never leave off singing. There are some of you people who say that this world is a howling wilderness. Well, if so, you are the howlers, you make all the howling! If you choose to howl, I cannot help it, but I prefer the promise of my text, "Then shall the tongue of the dumb," *not howl*, but, "sing!" Yes, they sing always, little or much! Sometimes it is in a low note. Sometimes they have to go rather deep in the bass, but there are other times when they can mount to the highest notes of all. They have special times of singing. *When they lost their burden at the foot of the Cross*—that is the time when they begin to sing! Never did a harp of Heaven sound so sweetly as when touched by the finger of some returning prodigal! Not even the songs of the angels seem to me to be so sweet as that first song of rapture which rushes forth from the inmost soul of the forgiven child of God! You know how John Bunyan describes it. He says when poor Christian lost his burden at the Cross, he gave three great leaps and went on his way singing! We have not forgotten those three great leaps—they were great leaps of praise! We have leaped many times since then with joy and gratitude, but we think we never leaped so high as we did at the time when we saw our many sins all gone and our transgressions covered up in the tomb of the Savior! So you see, dear Friends, that is one time when we can sing—when we lose our burden at the Cross.

And after that, do God's people sing? Yes, they have sweet singing times *in their hours of communion*. Oh, the music of that word, "communion," when it is heard in the soul—communion with Jesus, fellowship with Jesus—whether in His sufferings or in His glories! These are singing times, when the heart is lifted up to feel its oneness with Christ, and its vital union with Him, and is enabled to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," through communion with the Savior!

Have you not had some precious singing times at the Lord's Table? Ah, when the bread has been broken, and the wine poured out, how often has it been to me a time of song when the people have all joined in singing—

**“Gethsemane, can I forget?
Or there Your conflict see
Your agony and bloody sweat,
And not remember Thee?
When to the Cross I turn my eyes,
And rest on Calvary,
O Lamb of God! My Sacrifice!
I must remember Thee.”**

I am in the House of God, I think—every day. I believe that David could not have asked for more than I have received when he prayed that he might dwell in the House of the Lord forever, for I spend more of my time in the House of God than I do anywhere else. But my best moments are at the Lord’s Table. I rejoice then, when I have no thought of what I have to say to others, but simply sit down among the Lord’s family and taste my morsel of bread, and have my sip of the wine. Oh, it is then that the soul finds its Savior precious! I look forward for every month to come when I may once more sit at the table of my Master and spiritually eat His flesh and drink His blood, and feel that I have, indeed, life in Him because I am in true union with Him. Ah, these are singing times to the family of God! And so, sometimes, are *preaching times and hearing times*. *Prayer Meetings are often special singing times—in fact, all the means of Grace will very frequently be blessed of God to be to us the occasions of song!*

But, lastly, my dear Friends, for I cannot stop to mention all these singing times, the best we shall have will be when we come to die! Ah, there are some of you who will be like what is fabled of the swan. The ancients said that the swan never sang in his lifetime, but always sang as he was about to die. Now, there are many of God’s desponding children who seem to go live their life under a cloud, but they get a swan’s song before they die. The river of their life comes running down, perhaps, black and miry with troubles—and when it begins to touch the white foam of the sea, there comes a little glistening in its waters. So, Beloved, though we may have been very much dispirited by reason of the burden of the way, when we get to the end we shall have sweet songs! Are you afraid of dying? Oh, never be afraid of that! Be afraid of living! Living is the only thing which can do us mischief—dying never can hurt a Christian! Afraid of the grave? It is like the bath of Esther in which she lay for a time, to purify herself with spices. The grave fits the body for Heaven. There it lies and corruption, earth, and worms do but refine and purify our flesh!

Be not afraid of dying—it does not take any time at all. Death is emancipation, deliverance, Heaven’s bliss to a child of God! Never fear it—it will be a singing time. You are afraid of dying, you say, because of the pains of death. No, they are the pains of *life*—of life struggling to continue. Death has no pain—death, itself, is but one gentle sigh—the fetter is broken and the spirit released. The best moment of a Christian’s life is his last one because it is the one that is nearest Heaven—and then it is that he begins to strike the keynote of the song which he shall sing to all eternity! Oh, what a song will that be! It is a poor noise we make, now,

when we join the song here. Perhaps we are almost ashamed to sing! But up there our voices shall be clear and good! And there—

***“Loudest of the crowd we’ll sing,
While Heaven’s resounding mansions ring
With shouts of Sovereign Grace!”***

The thought struck me, the other day, that the Lord will have in Heaven some of those very big sinners—ones who have gone further astray than anybody else that ever lived—just to make the melody complete by singing some of those alto notes we sometimes hear which you and I, because we have not gone so far astray, will never be able to utter! I wonder whether one has stepped into this Chapel, this morning, whom God has selected to take some of those alto notes in the scale of praise? Perhaps there is one such here. Oh, how loudly will he sing, if Grace, Free Grace, shall have mercy upon him!

And now, farewell, with just this parting word. My Brothers and Sisters, members of this Church, strive together in your prayers, that God may bless you. Be not content with what you are, however prosperous you may be, but seek to increase more and more. Pray that you and your children may be added to the Church of Christ, here, and may live to see others added, too. Do not neglect your Prayer Meetings. Christmas Evans gives us a good idea about prayer. He says, “Prayer is the rope in the belfry. We pull it and it rings the bell up in Heaven.” And so it is. Mind you keep that bell going! Pull it often at home and come up to the Prayer Meetings and keep on pulling it! And though the bell is up so high that you cannot hear it ring, depend upon it, it can be heard in the tower of Heaven and it is ringing before the Throne of God, who will give you answers of peace according to your faith. May your faith be large and plentiful, and so will be the answers! Amen.

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

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

THE DUMB BECOME SINGERS

NO. 3332

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1912.**

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

***“Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing,
for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.”
Isaiah 35:6.***

WHAT a difference Divine Grace makes whenever it enters the heart! We find here the blind, but they are not blind in one sense—Grace has touched their eyes and the eyes of the blind are opened! Men are said to be deaf—but they are not deaf after Grace has operated upon them—the ears of the deaf are unstopped! They have been lame before, but when once the Omnipotent influence has come upon them, they leap like a hart! And the dumb, so far from being dumb, have a change that must be radical, for its effects are surprising—the tongue of the dumb not simply speaks, but it sings! Grace makes a great difference in man when it enters into him. How vain, then, are the boasts and professions of some persons who assert themselves to be the children of God and yet live in sin! There is no perceivable difference in their conduct—they are just what they used to be before their pretended conversion. They are not changed in their actions, even in the least degree, and yet they do most positively affirm that they are the called and living children of God! Let such know that their professions are lies, that falsehood is the only groundwork that they have for their hopes, for wherever the Grace of God is, it makes a difference! A graceless man is not like a gracious man and a gracious man is not like a graceless one—we are “new creatures in Christ Jesus.” When God looks upon us with the eyes of love in Conversion and Regeneration, He makes us as opposite from what we were before as light is from darkness—as Heaven, itself, is from Hell! God works in man a change so great that no reformation can even so much as thoroughly imitate it. It is an entire change—a change of the will, of the being, of the desires, of the hates, of the dislikes and of the likes. In every respect the man becomes new when Divine Grace enters into his heart. And yet you say of yourself, “I am converted,” and remain what you were! I tell you once again to your face—you say an empty thing—you have no grounds for saying it! If Grace permits you to sin as you were known to do, then that grace is no Grace at all! That grace were not worth the having which permits a man to be, after he receives it, what he was before! No, we must always hold fast to the great Doctrine of Sanctification. Where God really justifies, He really sanctifies, too! And where there is a remission of

sin, there is also the forsaking of it. Where God has blotted out transgression, He also removes the love of it, and makes us seek after holiness and walk in the ways of the Lord. We think we might fairly infer this from the text as a prelude to the observations we have to make concerning it.

And now we shall want you, first of all, to notice the sort of people God has chosen to sing His praises and to sing them eternally. Then, in the second place, I shall enter into a more full description of the dumb people here described. Then I shall try to notice certain special times and seasons when those dumb people sing more sweetly than at others.

First, then—**I. THE TONGUE OF THE DUMB SHALL SING.** We make this the first point.

Note the persons whom God has chosen to sing His songs forever. There is no difference, by nature, between the elect and others—those who are now glorified in Heaven and who walk the golden streets clad with robes of purity were by nature as unholy and defiled—and as far from original righteousness as those who by their own rejection of Christ and by their love of sin, have brought themselves into the Pit of eternal torment as a punishment for their sins. The only reason why there is a difference between those who are in Heaven and those who are in Hell rests with Divine Grace and with Divine Grace alone! Those in Heaven would inevitably have been cast away had not Everlasting Mercy stretched out its hand and redeemed them. They were by nature not one whit superior to others. They would as certainly have rejected Christ and have trodden underfoot the blood of Jesus as did those who were cast away, if Grace, Free Grace, had not prevented them from committing this sin! The reason why they are Christians is not because they did naturally will to be so, nor because they did by nature desire to know Christ, or to be found of Him—but they are now saints simply because Christ made them so! He gave them the desire to be saved! He put into them the will to seek after God! He helped them in their seeking and afterwards brought them to feel the peace of God which is the fruit of Justification. But, by nature, they were just the same as others—and if there is any difference, we are obliged to say that the difference lies on the wrong side of the question. In very many cases, we who now “rejoice in the hope of the Glory of God,” were the worst of men!

There are some here that now bless God for their Redemption who once cursed Him. Who implored, as frequently as they dared to do, with oaths and swearing, that the curse of God might rest upon their fellows and upon themselves. Many of the Lord’s anointed were once the very castaways of Satan, the sweepings of society, the refuse of the earth—those whom no man cared for, called outcasts, whom God has now called desired ones, seeing He has loved them! I am led to these thoughts from the fact that we are told, here, that those who sing were dumb. Their singing does not come naturally from themselves—they were not born songsters. No, they were dumb ones, those whom God would have to sing His praises. It does not say the tongue of the stammerer, or the tongue of

him that blasphemed, or the tongue of him that misused his tongue, but the tongue of the dumb—of those who have gone farthest from any thought of singing—of those who have no power of will to sing. The tongue of such as these shall yet be made to sing God's praises! Strange choice that God has made. Strange for its graciousness. Strangely manifesting the Sovereignty of His will! God would build for Himself a palace in Heaven of living stones. Where did He get them? Did He go to the quarries of Paros? Has He brought forth the richest and the purest marble from the quarries of perfection? No, you saints, look to "the hole of the pit from where you were dug," and to the quarry from which you were hewn! You were full of sin—so far from being stones that were white with purity, you were black with defilement, seemingly utterly unfit to be made stones in the spiritual Temple which should be the dwelling place of the Most High! And yet He chose you to be trophies of His Grace and of His power to save!

When Solomon built for himself a palace, he built it of cedar. But when God would build for Himself a dwelling forever, He cut not down the goodly cedars, but He dwelt in a bush and has preserved it as His memorial forever, "The God that dwelt in the bush." Goldsmiths make exquisite forms from precious material. They fashion the bracelet and the ring from gold. God makes His precious things out of base material—from the black pebbles of the defiling brooks He has taken up stones which He has set in the golden ring of His Immutable Love, to make them gems to sparkle on His finger forever! He has not selected the best, but, apparently, the *worst of men* to be the monuments of His Grace! And when He would have a choir in Heaven that should with tongues harmoniously sing His praise. When He would have a chorus that should forever chant the hallelujahs louder than the sound of many waters and like great thunders, He did not send Mercy down to seek earth's songsters and cull from us those who have the sweetest voices. He said, "Go, Mercy, and find the dumb and touch their lips and make them sing! The virgin tongues that never sang My praise before, that have been silent up till now, shall break forth in sublime rhapsodies and they shall lead the song—even angels shall but attend behind and catch the notes from the lips of those who once were dumb!" "The tongue of the dumb shall sing" His praises hereafter!

Oh, what a fountain of consolation this opens for you and for me! Yes, Beloved, if God did not choose the base things of this world, He would never have chosen us! If He had respect unto the countenance of men. If God were a respecter of persons, where had you and I been this day? We had never been instances of His love and mercy! No, as we look upon ourselves, now, and remember what we once were, we are often obliged to say—

***"Depths of mercy can there be,
Mercy still reserved for me?"***

How many times we have sung at the Lord's Table—the sacramental supper of our Master—

***“Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter while there's room,
While others make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?”***

And we have joined in singing—

***“’Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That gently forced us in!
Else we had still refused to take,
And perished in our sin.”***

Grace is always Grace, but it never seems so gracious as when we see it brought to our unworthy selves. You are obliged to confess that it is of Grace, then, and cast away the thoughts that it was of your foreseen faith, or of your foreseen good works, that the Lord chose you. We are obliged to come to this, to feel and know that it must have been of mercy, free mercy and of that alone—that we were not capable of doing good works without His Grace preventing us before good works, and without His Grace, also, in good works—enabling us to do them and, therefore, they never could have been the motive to Divine Love nor the reason why it flowed towards us! Oh, you unworthy ones, you saints that feel your deep natural depravity and mourn over your ruin by the Fall of Adam, lift up your hearts to God! He has delivered you from all impediments which Adam cast upon you! Your tongue is loosed! It is loose now! Adam made it dumb, but God has loosened it! Your eyes that were blinded by Adam's Fall are now opened. He has lifted you from the miry clay! What Adam lost for us, Christ has regained for us—He has plucked us out of the Pit and “set us upon a rock, and established our goings, and has put a new song in our mouth, even praise forevermore.” Yes, “the tongue of the dumb shall sing.”

Just another hint here before I leave this point. How this ought to give you encouragement in seeking to do good to others! Why, my Brothers and Sisters, I can never think any man too far gone for Divine Mercy to save since I know that God saved me! Whenever I have felt desponding about any of my hearers who have for a long time persevered in guilt, I have only had to reach down my own biography from the shelves of my memory and just think what I, too, was till Grace redeemed me and brought me to my Savior's feet! And then I have said, “It will be no wonder if that man is saved—after what He has done for me, I can believe anything of my Master! If He has blotted out *my* transgressions. If He has clean melted away *my* sin, then I can never despair of any of my fellow creatures! I may for myself, but I cannot for them.” Remember, they may be dumb, now, but He can make them sing! Your son John is a sad reprobate—keep on praying for him, mother! God can change his heart. Your daughter's heart is hard as adamant—He who makes the dumb sing can make rocks melt! Believe in God for your children as well as for yourselves. Trust Him! Take their cases before the Throne—rely upon

Him that He can do it—and believe that in answer to earnest prayer He also will do it. And if you have neighbors that are full of the pestilence of sin, whose vices come up before you as a stench in your nostrils, yet fear not to carry the Gospel to them! Though they are harlots, drunkards, swearers, be not afraid to tell them of the Savior's dying love. He makes the dumb sing! He does not ask even a voice of them to begin with—they are dumb—and He does not ask of them even the power of speech, but He gives them the power! Oh if you have neighbors who are haters of the Sabbath, haters of God, unwilling to come to the House of God, despising Christ—if you find them as far gone as you can find them, remember He makes the dumb sing and, therefore, He can make them live! He needs no goodness in them to begin with—all He needs is just the rough, raw material—unhewn, uncut, unpolished. And He does not need even good material—bad as the material may be, He can make it into something inestimably precious, something that is worthy of the Savior's blood! Go on—fear not! If the dumb can sing, then surely you can never say that any man need be a castaway! Now I am to enter into some rather more clear description of these dumb people.

II. WHO ARE THESE DUMB ONES?

Well, sometimes I get a good thought out of old Master Cruden's Concordance. I believe that is the best commentary to the Bible and I like to study it. I opened it at this passage and I found Master Cruden describing different kinds of dumb people. He says there are four or five different sorts, but I shall name only four of them. The first sort of dumb people he mentions are those that *cannot* speak. The second sort are those that *won't* speak. The third sort are those that *dare not* speak and the fourth sort are those that have got *nothing to say* and, therefore, are dumb.

The first sort of people who shall sing are those who *cannot* speak—that is the usual acceptation of the word, dumb—the others are, of course, only figurative applications of the term. We call a man dumb when he cannot speak. Now, spiritually, the man who is still in his trespasses and sins is dumb and I will prove that. He is dead and there is none as dumb as a dead man! "Shall the dead arise and praise You? Shall Your loving kindness be declared in the grave, or Your faithfulness in destruction?" The Word of God assures us that men are spiritually dead. It follows, then, that they must be spiritually dumb. They cannot sing God's praises. They know Him not and, therefore, they cannot exalt His glorious name. They cannot confess their sins. They can utter the mere words of confession, but they cannot really confess, for they do not know the evil of sin, nor have they been taught to feel what a bitter thing it is and to know themselves as sinners. But "no man can call Jesus, Lord, except by the Holy Spirit," and these people truly cannot do so. Perhaps it may be they can talk well of the Doctrines, but they cannot speak them out of the fullness of their hearts, as living and vital principles which they know in themselves. They cannot join in the songs, nor

can they take part in the conversation of a Christian. If they sit down with the saints, perhaps they have culled a few phrases from the garden of the Lord which they use and apply to certain things of which they do not know anything. They talk a language, the meaning of which they do not comprehend—like Milton's daughters reading a language to their father which they did not understand—still, so far as the essence of the matter is concerned, they are dumb. But, hail to Sovereign Grace! "The tongue of the dumb shall sing!" God will have His darlings made what they should be! They are dumb by nature, but He will not leave them so. They cannot now sing His praises, but they shall yet do it. They will not now confess their sins, but He will yet bring them to their knees and make them pour out their hearts before Him! They cannot now talk the speech of Canaan and utter the language of Zion, but they shall do it soon. Grace, Omnipotent Grace, will have its way with them! They shall be taught to pray! Their eyes shall be made to flow with tears of penitence and then, after that, their lips shall be made to sing to the praise of Sovereign Grace!

I need not dwell upon that point because I have many here who once were dumb ones, who can bless God that they can now sing. And does it not sometimes seem to you, Beloved, a very strange thing that you are what you are? I should think it must be the strangest thing in the world for a dumb man to speak, because he has no idea how a man feels when he is speaking—he has no notion of the thing at all. Like a man blind from birth, he has no idea what kind of a thing sight can be. We have heard of a blind man who supposed that the color scarlet must be very much like the sound of a trumpet—he had no other way of comparing it. So the dumb man has no notion of the way to talk. Do you not think that it is a strange thing that you are what you are? You said once, "I will never be one of those canting Methodists. Do you think I shall ever make a profession of religion? What? I attend a Prayer Meeting? No." And you went along the streets in all your gaiety of mirth and said, "What? I become a little child and give up my mind to simple faith and not reason at all? What? Am I to give up all argument about things? And simply take them for granted because God has said them? No, that can never, be!" I will be bound to say it will be a wonder to you as long as you are here, that you are the children of God! And even in Heaven, itself, the greatest wonder you will know will be that you were brought to know the Savior!

But there is a sort of dumb *people that will not speak*. They are mentioned by Isaiah. He said of preachers in his day, they were "dumb dogs that would not bark." I bless God we are not now quite so much inundated by this kind of dumb people as we used to be. We have had to mourn, especially in years gone by, that we could look from parish to parish and find nobody but a dumb dog in the Church—and in the pulpits of Dissenters, too! And some men who might have spoken with a little earnestness if they liked, let the people slumber under them instead of preaching the Word of God with true fidelity, as they would if they re-

remembered that they would have to give an account to God at the last. My grandfather used to tell a story of a person who once resided near him and called himself a preacher of the Gospel. He was visited by a poor woman who asked him what was the meaning of the “new birth.” To which he replied, “My good Woman, what do you come to me about that for? Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, did not know! He was a wise man and how do you think I should know?” So she had to go away with only that answer. Time was when such an answer might have been given by a great many who were reckoned to be the authorized teachers of religion, but knew nothing at all about the matter. They understood a great deal more about fox-hunting than about preaching—and more about farming their land than about the spiritual farming of God’s Church! But we bless God that there are not so many of that sort, now, and we pray that the race may become thoroughly extinct—that every pulpit and every place of worship may be filled with a man who has a tongue of fire and a heart of flame, and shuns not to declare the whole counsel of God, neither seeking the smile of men, nor dreading their frown! We have a promise that it shall be so—“The tongue of the dumb shall sing.” And, ah, they do sing well, too, when God makes them sing!

You remember Rowland Hill’s story in *The Village Dialogs* about Mr. Merriman? Mr. Merriman was a sad scapegrace of a preacher. He was to be seen at every fair and revel but used to be seldom found in his pulpit when he should have been. But when he was converted, he began to preach with tears running down his face—and how the Church began to be crowded! The squire would not go and hear any of that stuff and locked up his pew—so Mr. Merriman had a little ladder made outside the door, as he did not wish to break the door open, and the people used to sit on the steps, up one side and down the other—and that made twice as much room as there was before! No people make such good preachers as those who were once dumb! If the Lord opens their mouths, they will think they cannot preach often enough and earnestly enough to make up for the mischief they did before! Chalmers, himself, might never have been so eloquent a preacher had he not been for a long time a dumb dog! He preached morality—he said till he made all his parish immoral! He kept on urging the people to keep God’s Law till he made them break it! But when he turned round and began to preach God’s Gospel, then the dumb began to sing! Oh, may God bring this about in everyone of us! If we are dumb as professed ministers, may he open our mouths and force us to speak forth His Word lest at the Last Day the blood of our hearers’ souls should be found upon our skirt—and we should be cast away as unfaithful stewards of the Gospel of Christ!

I will now introduce you to a third sort of dumb people. They are *dumb because they dare not speak*—and they are good people, blessed souls. Here is one of them—“I was dumb with silence. I opened not my mouth because You did it.” And it is so blessed to be dumb in that fashion. The

Lord's servant will often have to be dumb under trial and troubles. When Satan tempts him to repine, he will put his finger to his lips and say, "Hush murmuring, be still! Shall a living man complain of the punishment of his sins?" Even the child of God will do like Job did, who sat down for seven days and nights and said not a word, for he felt that his trouble was heavy and he could say nothing. It would have been as well if Job had kept his mouth shut for the next few days—he would not have said so much amiss as he did in many things that he uttered. Oh, there are times when you and I, Beloved, are obliged to keep the bridle on our tongue, lest we should murmur against God! We are in evil company, perhaps. Our spirits are hot within us and we want to take vengeance for the Lord! We are like the friends of David who wanted to take away the head of Shimei. "Let us take this dead dog's head," we say—and then our Jesus tells us to put our sword into its scabbard—"the servant of the Lord must not strive." How often have we been dumb! And sometimes when there have been slanders against our character and men have slandered us, oh how our fingers have itched to be at them! We have wanted to see who was the stronger of the two. But we have said, "No, our Master did not answer, and He left us an example that we should follow in His steps." The chief priests accused Him of many things, but He "answered them not a word." Well, we have sometimes found it hard to be dumb like the sheep when it is brought to the shearer, or the lamb when it is in the slaughterhouse—we could not keep quiet. And when we have been upon our beds in sickness, we have tried to quench every murmuring word. We have not let a sentence escape our lips when we could possibly avoid it, but notwithstanding all that, we have found it hard work to keep dumb—though it is blessed work when we are enabled to do it!

Now, you who have been dumb under great weights of sorrow. You whose songs have been suspended because you dare not open your lips lest sighs should usurp the place of praise—come, listen to this promise—"the tongue of the dumb shall sing." Yes, though you are in the deepest trouble, now, and are obliged to be silent, you shall yet sing! Though like Jonah you are in the whale's belly, carried down, as he called it, to the lowest Hell—though the earth with her bars is about you forever, and the weeds are wrapped about your head—yet you "shall look again towards His holy Temple." Though you have laid your harp upon the willows—bless God you have not broken it—you will have use for it, by-and-by—you shall take it from its resting place and—

***"Loud to the praise of Sovereign Grace
Bid every string awake."***

If you have no "songs in the night," yet He shall "compass you about with songs of deliverance." If you cannot sing His praises now, yet you shall do so, by-and-by, when greater Grace shall have come into your heart, or when delivering Mercy shall be the subject of your song in better days that are yet to come! But, blessed be God, we are not always to be silent

with affliction—we are bound to sing. And I think we ought to sing even when we ought to be dumb! Though we are dumb as to murmuring, we ought to sing God's praises. An old Puritan said, "God's people are like birds—they sing best in cages." He said, "God's people sing best when in the deepest trouble." Said old Master Brooks, "The deeper the flood was, the higher the ark went up to Heaven." So it is with the child of God—the deeper his troubles, the nearer to Heaven he goes, if he lives close to his Master. Troubles are called weights and a weight, you know, generally clogs and keeps down to the earth. But there are ways, by the use of the laws of mechanics, by which you can make a weight lift you! And so it is possible to make your troubles lift you nearer Heaven instead of making them sink you! Ah, we thank our God He has sometimes opened our mouth when we were dumb, when we were ungrateful and did not praise Him. He has opened our mouth by a trial and though when we had a thousand mercies we did not bless Him, when He sent a sharp affliction, then we began to bless Him! He has thus made the tongue of the dumb to sing.

We have one more kind of dumb people. There are *those who have nothing to say, therefore they are dumb*. I will give you an instance. Solomon says in the Proverbs, "Open your mouth for the dumb," and he shows by the context that he means those who in the court of judgment have nothing to plead for themselves and have to stand dumb before the bar. Like that man of old, who, when the king came in to see the guests, had not on a wedding garment. And when the king said, "Friend, how came you in here?" he stood speechless—speechless not because he could not speak—but because he had nothing to say! Have not you and I been dumb and are we not now, when we stand on Law terms with God, when we forget that Jesus Christ and His blood and righteousness were our full acquittal? Are we not obliged to be dumb when the Commandments are made bare before us and when the Law of God is brought home to the conscience? There was a time with each of us—and not long ago with some here present—when we stood before Moses' seat and heard the Commandments read and we were asked, "Sinner can you claim to have kept those Commandments?" And we were dumb. Then we were asked, Sinner, can you give any atonement for the breach of these Commandments?" And we were dumb. We were asked, "Sinner, can you, by a future obedience, wipe out your past sin?" We knew it was impossible and we were dumb. Then we were asked, Can you endure the penalty? Can you dwell with everlasting burnings and abide with eternal fires?" And we were dumb. And then we were asked the question, "Prisoner at the bar, have you any reason to plead why you should not be condemned?" And we were dumb. And we were asked, "Prisoner, have you any helper? Have you anyone that can deliver you?" And we were dumb, for we had nothing to say. Yes, but, blessed be God, "the tongue of the dumb shall now sing." And shall I tell you what we can sing? Why,

we can sing this—“Who shall lay anything to the charge of the Lord’s elect?” “Not God, for He has justified.” “Who is he that condemns?” “Not Christ, He has died, yes, rather has risen again, who is also at the right hand of God, and makes intercession for us.” We who had not a word to say for ourselves, can now say everything!

If God has made you dumb. If He has taken away all your self-righteousness, as truly as ever He has shut your mouth, He will open it! If God has killed your self-righteousness, He will give you a better righteousness. If He has knocked down all your refuges of lies, He will build you up a good refuge. He has not come to destroy you, He has shut your mouth to fill it with His praise! Be of good cheer! Look to Jesus! Cast your eyes on the Cross! Put your confidence in Him and then you who think yourself a castaway, even you, poor weeping Mary, shall yet sing of redeeming, undying love!

And now I have to conclude, by noticing—

III. THE OCCASIONS WHEN THE TONGUES OF THESE DUMB PEOPLE SING THE BEST.

When does the tongue of the dumb sing? Why, I think it sings always, little or much. If it is once set at liberty, it will never leave off singing. There are some of you people who say this world is a howling wilderness—well, you are the howlers who make all the howling! If you choose to howl, I cannot help it. I shall prefer the matter of my text, “Then shall the tongue of the dumb,” not howl, but, “sing!” Yes, they sing always, little or much. Sometimes it is in a low note. Sometimes they have to go rather deep in the bass, but there are other times when they can mount to the highest notes of all. They have special times of singing. They first begin to sing *when they lose their burden at the foot of the Cross*—that is a time of singing! You know how John Bunyan describes it. He says when poor Pilgrim lost his burden at the Cross, he gave three great leaps, and went on his way singing! We have not forgotten those three great leaps—we have leaped many times since then with joy and gratitude—but we think we never leaped so high as we did at the time when we saw our sins all gone and our transgressions covered up in the tomb of the Savior!

By the way, let me tell you a little story about John Bunyan. I am a great lover of John Bunyan, but I do not believe him infallible, for I met with a story the other day which I think is very good one. There was a young man in Edinburgh who wished to be a missionary. He was a wise young man. He thought, “Well, if I am to be a missionary, there is no need for me to transport myself far away from home—I may as well be a missionary in Edinburgh.” (That’s a hint to some of you ladies who give away tracts in your district and never give your servant, Mary, one)!

Well, this young man began determined to speak to the first person he met. He met one of those old fishwives. Those of us who have seen them, can never forget them—they are extraordinary women, indeed! So, stepping up to her, he said, “Here you are, coming with your burden on your

back. Let me ask you if you have got another burden—a spiritual burden?” “What?” she said, “Do you mean that burden in John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*? Because if you do, young man, I have got rid of that many years ago, before you were born! But I went a better way to work than the pilgrim did. The evangelist that John Bunyan talks about was one of your parsons that do not preach the Gospel, for he said, Keep that light in your eye and run to the wicket gate. Why, man alive, that was not the place for him to run to! He should have said, ‘Do you see that Cross? Run there at once!’ But instead of that, he sent the poor pilgrim to the wicket gate first. And much good he got by going there! He got tumbling into the slough, and was like to have been killed by it.” “But did you,” the young man asked, “go through any slough of despond?” “Yes, young man, I did. But I found it a great deal easier going through with my burden off, than with it on my back.”

The old woman was quite right. We must not say to the sinner, “Now, Sinner, if you will be saved, go to the baptismal pool—go to the wicket gate—go to the church—do this or that.” No, the Cross should be right in front of the wicket gate and we should say to the sinner, “Throw yourself there and you are safe! But you are not safe till you can cast off your burden and lie at the foot of the Cross and find peace in Jesus.” Well, that is a singing time with God’s children!

And after that, do God’s people sing? Yes, they have sweet *singing times in their hours of communion*. Oh, the music of that word, “communion,” when it is heard in the soul—communion with Jesus, fellowship with Jesus, whether in His sufferings or in His glories! Those are singing times, when the heart is lifted up to feel its oneness to Christ and its vital union with Him—and is enabled to “rejoice in hope of the Glory of God.”

Have you not had some precious singing times, too, *at the Lord’s Table*? Ah, when the bread has been broken and the wine poured out, how often have I had a song when the people have all joined in singing—

**“Gethsemane, can I forget,
Or there the conflict see,
Your agony and bloody sweet,
And not remember Thee?
When to the Cross
I turn my eyes,
And rest on Calvary,
Oh, Lamb of God, my Sacrifice,
I must remember Thee.”**

But lastly, my dear Friends, the best singing time we shall have will be *when you and I come to die*. Ah, there are some of you that are like what is fabled of the swan. The ancients said the swan never sang in his life-time, but always sang just when he died. Now, there are many of God’s desponding children who seem to go all their life under a cloud, but they get a swan’s song before they die. The river of your life comes running down, perhaps black and miry with troubles, and when it begins to touch the white foam of the sea, there comes a little glistening in its waters. So,

Beloved, though we may have been very much dispirited by reason of the burden of the way, when we get to the last, we shall find swan songs! Are you afraid of dying? Oh, never be afraid of that—be afraid of living! Living is the only thing that can do any mischief! Dying never can hurt a Christian! Afraid of the grave? It is like the bath of Esther in which she lay for a time, to purify herself with spices that she might be fit for her lord. You are afraid of dying, you say, because of the pains of death. No, they are the pains of *life*—of life struggling to continue! Death has no pain—death itself is but one gentle sigh—the fetter is broken and the spirit fled. The best moment of a Christian's life is his last one, because it is the one that is nearest Heaven! And then it is that he begins to strike the keynote of the song which he shall sing to all eternity. Oh, what a song will that be! It is a poor song we make now. When we join the song—perhaps we are almost ashamed to sing—but up there our voices shall be clear and good! And there—

***“Loudest of the crowd we'll sing
While Heaven's resounding mansions ring
With shouts of Sovereign Grace!”***

The thought struck me the other day that the Lord will have in Heaven some of those very big sinners that have gone further astray than anybody that ever lived—the most extraordinary extravaganzas of vice—just to make the melody complete by singing some of those soprano notes which you and I, because we have not gone so far astray, will never be able to utter. I wonder whether one has stepped in here who God has selected to take some of those alto notes in the scale of praise? Perhaps there is one such here! Oh, how will such a one sing, if Grace—Free Grace—shall have mercy upon him! May there be many such. Amen!

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

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

THE HOLY ROAD

NO. 1912

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 1, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err in it.”
Isaiah 35:8.***

TWICE has Israel come back from captivity—once when the tribes came out of Egypt and the Lord led them through the wilderness—and again when they returned from banishment in Babylon and the Lord restored them to their land. A third return some of us believe still awaits the chosen people. In the day when the Grace of God shall change the heart of Israel, the seed of Abraham shall again return into the land which God gave to their fathers by a Covenant of Salt. I think our text looks forward to a future age when the reproach shall be rolled away from Palestine and her deserts shall be made to blossom as the rose. Of these future glories we say but little, for little is known by the most of us. The prophecy is, however, sufficiently clear to make us expect that the Lord will make a way for the return of His ancient people and will restore unto them the joy of His salvation. I forbear all theories of prophecy just now, for I feel it more than ever necessary in this evil time to keep close to the simplicities of the Gospel, following for the present distress, the beaten road of the first principles of the faith. I shall not use the telescope to look into the starry future, but rather the chart and compass with which to direct our present way. I shall regard the text as having received one fulfillment in the way of salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. If this is not the literal fulfillment of the prophecy, yet certainly it is its spiritual fulfillment and, for the moment, this is the most vital matter to us. As the Savior spoke at Nazareth, so say I now, “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.” Hear it, and discern its Divine teaching.

As the Holy Spirit shall help me, I shall speak at this time upon the way to the heavenly Zion and *our duty with regard to that way.*

I. First, then, THE WAY to the heavenly Zion, to the dwelling place of God. Zion of old was the place of the one altar of sacrifice and the one Mercy Seat where the Lord, in *manifest* Glory, communed with His Covenant people. There the tribes went up to offer their national prayer and praise to Jehovah, the God of Israel. Pilgrimage to the holy place was an important part of Israel's religious life. During the invasions of the land and especially during the captivity, the solemn festivals were neglected and there seemed to be no way up to the house of God. Then godly men

sighed for the tabernacles of God, saying, "When shall I come and appear before God?" As they could not go there in body, they sent their hearts and their eyes in that direction, as, like Daniel, they prayed with their windows open towards Jerusalem. How much they longed for a highway by which they could march to Zion! We, my Brothers and Sisters, speak of another Jerusalem which is above and of the Throne of God, the Most High, to which we are wending our way. Our desire is for the city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. Who will bring us there? Who will point out the road?

It is with great joy that we learn from Holy Scripture the great Truth set forth in the text, *that there is a way to God and Heaven*. "And an highway shall be there, and a way." This way from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City is still open and still traversed by companies of pilgrims!

It is noteworthy that this road is one, an highway and a way—not two highways, nor two ways. Many roads lead to ruin, but only one to salvation! So many men, so many minds—but if we are men of God, all our minds are one as to the one way which leads to God. We trust in the same Savior and are quickened by the same Spirit and, as a consequence, our experience has a vital unity in it. Years ago, at the University of Utrecht, several Christian students met together from various nations and, on one occasion, it was agreed that four persons, representing Europe, Asia, Africa and America, should describe the work of Grace upon their hearts. The earnest Brother from New England, the friend from the Cape of Good Hope and the missionary student from India, all found that their stories agreed with that of a young nobleman of Holland. Scenes and circumstances widely differed, but the joys and sorrows, the struggles and the victories of each were the same—and one hope filled every heart! It was a delightful occasion and left upon the minds of those present a very vivid impression of the unity of the Divine way, Truth and Life, as these are seen in Believers.

We differ in the pace with which we traverse the way, but the way, itself, is one. Today, if Believers in this audience were to rise, one by one, although we are a singularly mixed assembly, our religious testimony would be one—in each case Christ would be All and in all! John Newton tells us of a meeting which he had with one Occam, an Indian preacher, who could not have borrowed his story from books, but yet, when Newton and he compared notes concerning sin and the Savior, they were the counterparts of each other! There is but one right way. Let us not be deceived about it—there are no two roads to Heaven! If any tell you that there are two gospels, you may remind them of Paul's words—"Another gospel, which is not another; but there are some that trouble you and would pervert the Gospel of Christ."

What that "way" is, we learn from John 14, which we have just now read in your hearing. Jesus says, "I am the way. No man comes unto the Father but by Me." Believing in Jesus, we enter upon the way—receiving His Spirit into our hearts, we stand in the way. Following our Redeemer's footsteps, we walk in the way, and holding fast to His leadership, we reach the end of the way. When we find Jesus, we find the way of Truth, the way

of life, the way of peace, the way of holiness! He is not only the way but the end to all those who put their trust in Him. The only way of salvation is by the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ—and all the discoveries of modern thought upon this matter are sheer delusion! “There is a way which seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” If any take you off from the old paths, they take you off from safety. What says the Scripture?—“Stand you in the way and see, and ask for the old path, which is the good way, and walk in it, and you shall find rest for your souls.” Go wherever you may, though men or angels lead you, they do but deceive you with vain words! There is but one Christ and, therefore, but one way of salvation! He is the same yesterday, today and forever—and those who pretend that He changes with the centuries talk as idle dreamers, knowing nothing of the matter! God has given us a way to Himself in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ—why should He give us another? What other can there be?

This way, you will note, is made through the wilderness—“an highway shall be *there*”—through the deserts where the sand is always shifting—where, if the traveler once loses his bearings, he is doomed to certain death with the vulture’s stomach his only sepulcher. Brothers and Sisters, a way is made for us through the deserts of sin and the wildernesses of sorrow—over hills of doubt and mountains of fear! That way runs close at your feet, poor wanderer, though you are now lost amid the habitation of the dragons of despair. The King’s Highway is made through the wilderness—every valley is exalted and every mountain and hill is laid low. Oh, you who are so faint that you lie down to die in despair, lift up your eyes and see the door of hope! You think it not possible that there can be an open road for you to travel to God, peace and Heaven—but there *is* such a road, for our text says—“an highway shall be there.” I am comforted concerning those who have wandered furthest into error, vice and hardness of heart, or into the gloomy valley of despondency, for even there, this highway runs in a straight line! God, who makes rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of deserts, has built up a royal road by which the Lord’s banished may return to Him! From death’s dark door up to Heaven’s pearly gate, the line is unbroken, for Jesus Christ our Savior has borne our death and brought us life and immortality!

We might gather from our text that this way was cast up at great expense, for road-making over a long and rugged country is a costly business. It might be read, “a causeway shall be there”—it is a way thrown up and raised by art. Engineering has done much to tunnel mountains and bridge abysses, but the greatest triumph of engineering is that which made a way from sin to holiness, from death to life, from condemnation to perfection! Who could make a road over the mountains of our iniquities but Almighty God? None but the Lord of Love would have wished it! None but the God of Wisdom could have devised it! None but the God of Power could have carried it out! It cost the great God the Jewel of Heaven—He emptied out the treasury of His own heart—for He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all! In the life and death of the Well-Beloved, Infinite Wisdom laid a firm foundation for the road by which

sinners in all ages may journey Home to God! The Highway of our God is such a masterpiece that even those who travel it every day often stand and wonder and ask how such a way could have been planned and constructed! Verily that prophecy is fulfilled to the letter—"I will even make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honor Me, the dragons and the owls."

This road has lasted now, these thousands of years. It is still in good traveling condition, nor will it ever be closed till all the chosen wayfarers shall have reached the many mansions of the Father's House. Conspicuous to all beholders, the everlasting causeway remains unbroken and unaltered—and fresh caravans of pilgrims continually traverse it.

This way, being made by Divine power, is appointed by Divine authority to be the King's highway. Whoever travels by this road is under the protection of the King of Kings! You can be sure it leads to the right end and runs in the best direction, for the Lord never made an error and never failed in what He attempted. This is no roundabout way, nor broken route, nor blind alley. Let your faith abide in it and it shall receive its reward! When I preach Jesus Christ as the way of Life, I always feel that I take no responsibility upon myself at all—I am only publishing a proclamation for which the King, Himself, is responsible. We deliver a royal message when we teach the Doctrine of the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, for it is He "whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood." When we tell of the way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, we are not planning a track, or making a road, but pointing you to one which has long been used. If it were a highway of our own making, you might criticize it, but as it is a way of God's making, you are commanded to walk in it. To quit this road for another is to despise the Wisdom and Grace of God in Christ Jesus, and to prefer the idle inventions of man—this cannot lead to any good—either in this life or the next!

This highway has already conducted many to God. It is said to be "an highway and a way"—it is not only a highway by appointment, but it is a way by use and traffic. It is trodden hard by 10,000 times 10,000 feet which have joyfully and safely traversed it from end to end. Behold the cloud of witnesses in Glory who will all tell you that Jesus was their way to victory, their one and only way to life eternal! Thousands of us are still on the road and we can speak well of it. Yes, we can sing in the ways of the Lord! Though we at times faint in the way, we find no fault with the road. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace." It is our joy and our delight to walk where our Savior led the way and where Prophets and Apostles are our fellow-travelers. We delight to look forward to its end—how glorious the prospect! But we are not ashamed to look backward and admire the path of Grace in the years which are past. We glory in the fact that we are on our way to God and shall soon behold Him whom, not having seen, we love, and in whom believing, we even now rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

This, then, is the sum of what I have spoken—there is a way to God and to Heaven. Even for you who as yet have not trodden the path of peace, the way yet lies open. Will you not enter upon it at once? Let the

glad tidings be reported everywhere—there is a way to God. Let no one say, “I cannot possibly reach a home with God in Heaven.” Wherever you may be, “an highway shall be there”—even where you now are, a way is made by which you may at once proceed to reconciliation, peace, purity, salvation! Oh that you may at once ask the way to Zion with your faces facing there!

But now, secondly, *our text also tells us the name of this way*—“It shall be called The way of Holiness.” The way to God by Jesus Christ is the Via Sacra, the Holy Road. The way of faith is not contrary to holiness, but it is the way of holiness! There is no Way to Heaven but by holiness. We have need to insist much upon this in these days, for together with laxity of thought and dubiousness of doctrinal teaching, there has come into vogue great looseness of morals. I say nothing as to the outside world, but I dread this declension in the Church. Professing Christians are becoming less and less strict as to their amusements. We hear of Christian ministers doing that which those who formerly occupied their pulpits never dreamed of doing nor countenancing in others. Is there to be an open door from the pulpit to the theater? Are men to go from exercising the sacred ministry to the playhouse? Time was when this would have seemed utterly incredible! God help His Church when the leaders of religion come to this! As Paul says of another matter, so say we of this—“We have no such custom, neither the Churches of God.” I fear that this is not a singular fault, though it is a glaring one—everywhere I see professing Christians doing what our Nonconformist ancestors would have viewed with holy indignation! In doctrine many are hastening to Socinianism and in conduct towards worldliness and worse. God have mercy upon us if this thing is to go much further!

The Way to Heaven, if it is anything, is a way of holiness, and if the way we follow is not a holy way and a separated way, it is not God’s way! If we follow not the way of distinction from the world, we are not following Christ. He that is not holy on the way, will not come to that holy end where the thrice Holy God reveals Himself in His Glory. Brothers and Sisters, if you are ever in a doubt about which is the right path, remember those words of the Savior—“Strait is the gate and narrow is the way, and few there are that find it. “Prefer strictness to laxity. Do not mistake me, I wish to be understood, even if I am charged with censoriousness and bigotry. We need to pull up, every now and then, and say to ourselves, “Which out of these two courses is the right way?” for in these times, exceedingly clever men are crying up new roads and extolling them after some such fashion as this—“Here you have a road worthy of the period. None of your narrow ways! Be liberal, be broad—this is the road for the cultured and advanced.” Your Savior lifts His warning hand as He cries, “Broad is the way which leads to destruction and many there are that go in there.” Be it yours and mine, even if charged with bigotry and illiberality, to still select that way which the saints of old have chosen, unpleasing to the flesh, but pleasing to God—the strait and narrow road which leads to life eternal!

God's way is the way of holiness, for He has founded it upon holy Truth. He is not unholy in the saving of any sinner. No sinner is saved without justice being executed to the fullest in the great expiation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Eternal principles forbade a righteous God to wink at sin and He has not done so. Justice is as much vindicated by the redemption of Christ as if it had poured all its vials of wrath upon the sinner.

Those who follow that road do so by a holy trust. If we would be saved, we must have a holy faith in a holy Savior, from whom we look for holy blessings. We must not believe that Christ will save us *in* our sins—that would be unholy faith—we must look to Him to save us *from* our sins, for that is holy faith. We must trust in Him that He will cast the evil out of us and that He will purify us to Himself, to be a people zealous of good works. We preach no faith without works for that is a dead faith! Although we speak the word, "Grace," and never stammer as we speak it, yet we also assert that the Grace which does not lead to holiness is not the Grace of God at all, nor do they that receive it prove themselves to be God's elect. The way of those who are saved is the way of holy trust.

It is also the way of holy living. The man who really believes in Jesus Christ will be found purging himself from the ways of sinners—he will be holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners! He will pant and aspire after perfect holiness and if he does not immediately attain it, he will still groan towards it, still longing to be made like Christ. The Way to Heaven is not only a holy way, but, according to the text, it is to be called so by those who speak of it. The way which God has marked out for His people to follow is a conspicuously holy and Godlike way. Let us keep to it.

Thirdly, passing on, and further dwelling on our text, *this way is a select way*. It is written, "The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others." The unclean are excluded. Literally this may mean, "The uncircumcised and the unclean." These were excluded from the House of the Lord and here they are excluded from the sacred way of Israel—of this, the *spiritual* meaning is that unless we are washed in the blood of Christ and renewed in the spirit of our minds by the Holy Spirit—we are not in the way of God. "Alas," says one, "I am unclean and, therefore, the text shuts me out of the way of holiness." This is true, but it does not, therefore, exclude you from the *possibility* of salvation, for there are ways by which the unclean can be made pure. You cannot enter on this way of life except by being cleansed by the Atonement and then renewed by the Holy Spirit. By the way of Atonement, you can pass into this way, for the Lord waits to be gracious to you and to wash you clean. Pardon and regeneration are freely given to all who desire them and you must have both of them or you cannot tread the sacred way, for the unclean shall not pass over it.

It is a select way, for it is reserved for a select people—"it shall be for others." "Others"—who are they? Well, look backward and you will read of some who make the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad. You read of some whose blind eyes were opened, whose deaf ears were unstopped. You read of the lame men who were made to leap as an hart and of dumb men who began to sing. This highway is reserved for those upon whom a

miracle of Grace has been performed, for those on whom the Messiah has laid His healing hand, for those who love and delight in holy things! Though often of a fearful heart, they are bold to hold on in the sacred way and they shall never be driven from it. The pure in heart shall see God and travel the way to God—"it shall be for others."

Especially, at the end of our text, we read that this way is for the ransomed—"the redeemed of the Lord shall walk there." If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have been redeemed with His precious blood and the way of Grace is yours. Is the blood-mark on you? Do you look only to Him who poured out His soul unto death on your behalf? If so, Beloved, you are in the way and you may walk there without any fear of ever being driven out of it! He that once comes into this way, Christ will in no wise cast him out, and He is Lord of the way. You shall walk in it till, with joy, you shall see His face! This way, though open to all who come with willing hearts, is a select way which no impenitent soul can walk in.

Another fact makes it very select. You that can look in the margin of your Revised Old Testaments, or, indeed, in the margins of the old Bibles, will find that this clause may be read thus—"He shall be with them," that is, God shall be with them. This way of holiness is a way in which God walks with His people, revealing Himself to them, drawing them nearer and nearer to Himself and keeping them in happy union with Himself. It is a blessed thing to think of Heaven at the end, but it is an almost equally blessed thing to think of God with us on the way! Do we Christian people often enough consider the blessedness of the Way to Heaven? Even to be on the way, there is a marvel of Grace. Such stores of Covenant blessings are provided and distributed by the way that even as pilgrims we are a blessed people. The Presence of God with us on our journey is our choicest joy. If, after all, there should be no hereafter, my present life has been rendered happy by walking in the way of faith and obedience to God. Godliness has the promise of the life that now is—and that promise never fails. We have such joy and peace in walking with God that we can bear witness that in keeping God's Commandments there is great reward.

I must pass on, for time flies so swiftly, to notice one more matter about this way and that is, that *the way which God has appointed is a plain way*. We are bound to be thankful for a way which is suitable for common and unlearned people. You would think, from some people's talk, that religion is a very difficult thing—only to be understood by the cultured few. You must be a learned scientist, or a scholarly critic before you can understand the modern gospel! It is not so with the Gospel of Jesus! Oftentimes, learned men miss this way altogether, while simple people perceive it and walk in it. I remember the story of a Swedish king in years gone by who, when he was ill, was greatly concerned about his eternal state. There chanced to come to the palace an old farmer, known to his majesty for his piety. The king called him to his bedside and said, "Tell me, what is the faith that saves the soul?" The peasant explained it out of his heart in plain language, much to the king's comfort.

The king remained ill for months and again fell into doubt and fear. Those about him urged him to send for the Archbishop of Upsala, as a

learned prelate who could allay his fears. The bishop came to the royal couch and gave his majesty a logical and theological definition of faith in most proper terms. When he was gone the king said, "It was very learned, no doubt, and very ingenious, but there was no comfort in it for me. The peasant's faith is the faith that can save my soul." It is so. The simple Truth of God is necessary for dying men and women! I do not wonder that Dr. Guthrie, when he was nearing death, asked to have "a bairn's hymn" sung to him! The Gospel which suits little children is that which saves souls! The Gospel of the common people is the only Gospel! The most educated must find their wisdom in the Cross or die fools! In times of trial, men cannot endure speculations, mystifications and refining—they need the sure and plain Truth of God to build their hopes upon!

The taste of the present period is all for that which is novel, singular, original and pretended profound. Give me my daily bread and who will, may have the junkets! Give me bread such as Jesus divided among the men, women and children and I will leave the stones of philosophy to those who care to try their teeth on them! Good Mr. Romaine, when he used to preach over yonder at St. Ann's, Blackfriars, was asked by certain of his educated hearers to introduce a little more learning into his discourses. Hearing their request, he promised to fulfill it. So on the following Sunday he read the text in Hebrew—and when he had read it he said, "I suppose very few of you now understand it. Perhaps I had better quote it from the Septuagint in Greek." When he had read the Greek, he said, "Even now I fear that no great number can understand the text. It is a pity that more should not be able to receive the Word of God and so I will give it to you in Latin." When the Vulgate version had been heard, he saw them smile and he said, "Even now I fear that hardly a score of you are much edified and I think you all agree that, after all, we may as well drop our learning and give you the words from our own English Bible."

Brothers and Sisters, had we been there we would have seen the point of the whole business and we would have agreed with the congregation that not the most learned, but the most *plain*, is the best!

The Gospel of God needs no wisdom of words to commend it and, therefore, our Apostle says, "We use great plainness of speech." The true Gospel is as plain as a pike-staff. What says the text? "Wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err in it." Nobody will err about the way to God if he really resolves to follow that way! The Spirit of God will guide those whose hearts are set upon coming to God! It is the wayfaring man who does not err—your critic will be sure to err! Your trifler cannot help erring, but the true pilgrim, the wayfaring man who is actually traveling, he shall not err! If you want to go to Heaven, the way is laid down in the Scriptures, so that little children may find it! But if you only want to talk about the road and about the stumbles of travelers in it, why, then, the way is difficult, indeed! If you choose to puzzle yourselves about His Gospel, God will give you over to be puzzled. He who must be wiser than God shall end in being more brutish than any man!

If you wish to find the Way to Heaven, there it is—"Behold the Lamb of God." Believe in Jesus and be saved! That Jesus is the way to peace and

holiness is as plain in Scripture as the nose on your face. What more teaching do you need? What more assurance do you require? If your heart is inclined to see, there is light enough—and the Cross is clear enough—look and live! Those who will to see shall see, but those who shut their eyes do but prove the truth of the old proverb—“There are none so blind as those who do not wish to see.” He who says, “I will arise and go unto my Father” shall not miss the way! He who has, from the Lord, *received the will* shall, by the Lord, perceive the way. “The wayfaring man shall not err.” That wayfaring man may be a great fool in other matters, but he shall be no fool upon *this* matter! He may be very stupid about science, politics and business, but if the Lord has made him willing to be a wayfaring man, with his face to Zion, he shall make no mistakes in his journey along the holy way. God will instruct him in vital points. The main thing is to know the most necessary Truth and practice it. Our Lord said, “One thing is necessary.”

A gentleman riding on the box seat of a coach that was going to Bath in the old times asked the driver, “Who lives at yonder mansion?” The answer was short, if not sweet. “I don’t know, Sir.” The gentleman traveled on a little further and then inquired, “Where does that canal run to?” “Don’t know, Sir.” Again the passenger sought information and asked, “Where does Squire So-and-So live?” “I don’t know, Sir.” “Why, good man,” said the gentleman, “what *do* you know?” The reply was final—“I know how to drive you to Bath, Sir.” Surely, that was the principal business of a coachman! Even thus with regard to spiritual things, the chief thing is to know how sin is pardoned, how a sinner is justified and sanctified! There are a thousand things which a man may not know and he may not be much the worse for not knowing them! But not to know the Lord Jesus is to be ignorant of the path of life! If a man knows the Lord Christ, he knows the way to eternal happiness and he may bless God all the day for such knowledge!

Let every man gain all the instruction he can, but let him not think that mere knowledge will be of great value to him in heavenly things, for the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil worked no good to our race. How often have I wished that I could forget many things which once I thought it necessary to know! I would resolve with Paul to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. There, let the bubbles burst and the scum be blown away! Let fire consume the guilt and tinsel! What are these when weighed with one ingot of the real gold of the knowledge of Him that loved us and gave Himself for us? Let us choose the right way. Let us look up to God and say, “You will show me the path of life.” Then let us despise the pedantry of the age and take to that path wherein “wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err.”

The last word of our text teaches us that it is a safe way. Of this I will speak more fully another time. “No lion shall be there.” Plenty of lions prowl up and down the side of the road, but they cannot “go up there.” He who keeps the crown of the causeway, though he may hear the lion roar, shall not meet it in the way. No ravenous beasts shall be found there, for the way is not to their mind. Reptiles cannot live in Ireland, nor lions on

the holy way. There is one lion which those who make Jesus their way need never be afraid of—that is the lion of unpardoned sin. If you are believing in Jesus Christ, your iniquities are forgiven you for His name's sake. Another lion also roars upon us, but cannot devour us, namely, temptation. You shall not be tempted above what you are able to bear. We read of some who followed their own way, that the Lord sent lions among them, but He drives away the lions from those who keep the right way. Lions are afraid of fire and the Lord is a wall of fire round about His people!

As for that grim lion of death of which some speak, it does not exist! This is a fabulous monster—death to a Believer is rather an angel than a lion. The valley through which we are to pass is not the valley of *death*, but of the *shadow* of death. For the Believer, there is no substance in death—it is only a shadow! Brothers and Sisters, you shall soon pass from under that temporary shade and no ill shall come of it. The shadow of a dog cannot bite, the shadow of a sword cannot wound and the shadow of death cannot destroy! Go onward without fearing any evil, for the Lord is with you! His rod and His staff are your comfort. No ravenous beast can harm you, for it is written, “There shall no evil befall you.” Walk with God and “you shall tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shall you trample under feet.” To be safe we must be holy—to be holy we must trust in Christ Jesus the Lord!

II. Only two or three minutes remain, in which I will speak of OUR DUTY IN CONNECTION WITH THIS WAY OF HOLINESS. If there is such a road, let us not neglect it lest we perish from the way when the king's wrath is kindled but a little.

The first thing is to *carefully discriminate* in these days between road and road. Beware of false prophets. “Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.” Put on your considering caps and when you see a road which looks broad, smooth, pleasant and well bordered with flowers, say to yourself, “There are many ways, but since only one of them leads to eternal life, I must be careful. I will pray, ‘Lord, be my Guide, even unto death.’” Then make the inquiry, “Is this The Way of Holiness? For if it is not the holy way, it is not the road which I dare to follow.” O my dear Hearers, believe the Truth of God and follow the Truth of God! Do not believe that sincerity is enough—you need the Truth of God as well.

“If we are sincere in our religion,” says one, “it will be all right with us, whatever that religion may be.” Nonsense! You know better. If you *sincerely* mistake the road and go northward, you will not get to Brighton. If you *sincerely* drink poison, it will kill you! If you *sincerely* cut your throat, you will die! If you sincerely believe a lie, you will suffer the consequences. You must not only be sincere, but you must be right! Therefore, submit your judgment to the Word of the Lord. This Infallible Book is given to you and the Infallible Spirit waits to instruct you as to its meaning. Cry unto the Wise One for wisdom! Yield your minds to the teaching of Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life—and so shall you not be deceived, but shall attain unto holiness and bliss.

The next thing is that when you know the road, you should *scrupulously stay in it*, for many ways branch from it. Let no man draw you aside from it. It is one straight line. Keep to it, even as the stars keep in their courses. Gird up the loins of your mind; be sober and hope to the end. May the Holy Spirit so rest upon you that you may have no wish to leave the strait and narrow way—no desire to start aside from it, even for a moment! He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved. Temporizers who begin for a little season and run well, and then are hindered, what shall become of them? Why this—that it were better for them not to have known the Way of Righteousness than to turn from it after they have known it. To the end! To the end, Man! Hold on and hold out, or your faith will prove to be a thing of nothing.

Once more—are we in the way? Then let us *be very earnest in telling other people of it*. Traveling, the other day, by a country road, the traveler wished to know the way to a certain spot. He inquired of one who sat by the roadside, but all the answer he got from him was a vacant stare and a shake of the head. A little time later he found that the poor man was deaf and dumb. I am afraid there are many such Christians nowadays—they are spiritually deaf to the woes of others—and dumb as to giving them either instruction or encouragement. All they seem to do is to shake their wise heads, as if they knew a great deal more than they meant to tell. “Oh,” you say, “*we* are not deaf and dumb.” Then why do you not talk of Jesus, the Way? Why do you not tell others the way to Heaven? Why do you not hear the cry that is going up to God everywhere for spiritual instruction?

How is it that so many Christians are content to occupy their pews, but never go forth to declare what they have found in Jesus? I’ll tell you why—I fear that some professors cannot tell the way because they do not know it. I asked a person the other day, the road to a certain place, and in the politest possible manner he answered, “I beg your pardon, but I am quite a stranger in these parts.” That was a very sufficient reason for not directing me. He could not tell what he did not know. If any of you do not know the way and are strangers in these parts, do not tell anybody—but let this mournful reflection go home to your consciences—“I cannot tell another the Way to Heaven because I am a stranger in these parts.” God grant that we may never stretch the arm of our testimony beyond the sleeve of our experience! It shall be well for any minister if it may be written upon his tombstone, “He never preached what he did not practice.”

May you Christian people who are busy at Mission Rooms and Sunday schools, and so forth, so live what you teach that you may teach what you live! It is a horrible thing to stand like a signpost by the way, to point to the road, but never to run in that road, yourself. It would be well if we were always ready to tell the Way to Heaven to everybody, whether they want to know it or not! Possibly the men we are most likely to bless are those who at this present do not desire to know the Gospel. If we point out the way to them, God may ordain that our describing the path may be an effectual influence for leading them into it! There are two occasions in which we ought to point out the way to all around, namely, in season and

out of season. We shall be clear of the blood of men if we show them the way and entreat them to walk in it. If we do not, they may perish for lack of knowing the road and then their blood may be required at our hands.

Finally, what ought we to do in connection with this way? I would say, beloved Friend, if you are not in the road, may the Lord help you to *get into it this morning*. “What is to be done to reach the heavenly city?” asks one. A notable Divine once gave this direction—“The Way to Heaven is, turn to the right, and keep straight on.” I would add, turn when you come to the Cross—only one turn is needed—but that must be a thorough turn and one in which you persevere. Keep straight on till you come to Glory. Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and you have eternal life!

“But,” says one, “I have begun to trust Christ, but I am always afraid of myself, lest I should go back, after all.” This is by no means an unhealthy fear when you consider the matter in reference to your own strength, but there is another light in which to regard it. Trust in the Lord for final perseverance and He will give it to you. One thing I would earnestly recommend to you who are afraid of backsliding and apostasy—say to yourself, “Whether or not, whether I get to Canaan or not, I will never go back to Egypt! I will die with my face toward God and holiness.” The soul that can keep this solemn resolve never to return to the country from where he came out, will surely reach the promised rest! Your carcass will not fall in the wilderness if your face is towards the Lord Jesus, His promise and His Throne!

No, never will we love this evil world, nor bow before its idols—we have lifted our hands to the Lord and we cannot go back. If God has brought you only a little out of your sins, I pray that you may press forward. But if He has clean delivered you, you must do so! Lord God, if I am cast away. If You never give me joy, again, yet I will never cease to look to Your mercy in Christ Jesus, for there, only, have I hope! By Your Grace I will die with my face to the Cross!

Did you ever hear of anybody who perished in that posture? No, it shall never be reported in Heaven above, nor in Hell beneath, that a soul died in the Way—Christ being that Way. No soul can perish whose eyes look towards the five wounds of Jesus Crucified. He is the Way, the living Way, the only Way, the sure Way—follow Him. O poor Sinner! Do as the blind man did who followed Jesus in the Way—rise this morning, for He calls you. Before you leave your pew, look to Jesus! Flee along this road of refuge, this way of Grace. May God the Holy Spirit help you to take to the Way at once, without delay! Unto you shall be salvation and unto the Lord of the Way shall be Glory forever and ever. Amen.

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IN WHOM ARE YOU TRUSTING?

NO. 646

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

*“Now in whom do you trust?”
Isaiah 36:5.*

THAT question may not be without importance in matters of ordinary life. We have all to trust our fellows, more or less, and I suppose we have all had to smart in some degree, as the result of it. We may trust the mass of men in trifles without any serious consequences. But when it comes to large sums—when the whole of a man’s fortune, for instance—is staked upon the character and reputation of someone else, then it is not altogether an unimportant question, “On whom do you trust?” Oh, many have rested on some choice friend and found him play the Judas! How often have our dearest counselors turned away from us as Ahithophel did from David? How frequently have we confidently rested upon the integrity, friendship and fidelity of some person whom we thought we knew and could trust, only to find that, “Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.”

Be cautious, my Brothers and Sisters—perhaps you need not that I should say this to you—but use discretion in all your transactions in life, as to how far you will trust the sons of men. Or else this may be whispered in your ear and may send you to your bed with a heavy heart, “Now in whom do you trust?” But, surely, if this is important in temporal matters, it is overwhelmingly so in regard to *spiritual* things. If I become bankrupt in trade, I may yet set up in business and retrieve my fortune. But in soul-matters if I once make bankruptcy in the commerce of life, there is no hope of my receiving a fresh certificate and attempting to retrieve my losses.

Here, if a general is defeated in some great battle, he may yet possibly retreat in such good order and again get together his troops so as to win another battle and turn the current of the campaign. But once beaten in the great life-struggle—once feel that sin has utterly got the mastery over you—and there is no hope here and you will die so. And there is no more possible contest—you are vanquished. The battle is fought and the victory is lost forever. Let us, then, be very much concerned, dear Friends, to enquire and to give an honest answer to the question, “In whom do you trust?”

First, let us go round the congregation and collect a little bundle of answers. Then, secondly, let us hear the Christian’s answer. And when we have listened to it, let us give the Christian some few words of advice with regard to what his line of action ought to be, seeing he has such an One to trust.

I. First, then, let us put this question and collect, I say, A LITTLE BUNDLE OF ANSWERS, "In whom do you trust?" I think I hear some answer, "I do not know that I have thought about the matter at all. You ask me, 'In whom do you trust?' I shall have to say I have left the matter of dying and of eternity and of judgment out of my consideration. I hope it is a long time before I shall die and there is no need to trouble myself before it is necessary. Therefore I put the matter off. I feel it is an unpleasant task to make too much enquiry and, therefore, I have just left well enough alone. I cannot give you an answer, for I have not considered the matter."

My dear Friend, don't you think that you are very foolish? Do you forget that you may die this very moment—that there are more gates to death than you dream of—that there is a gate to death, yes, and to Hell, too, from the place where you are now sitting? Have you never heard of persons falling dead in the street, of bowing down as Sisera did, of whom it is said, "Where he bowed himself there he fell down dead"? Have you a lease of your life? Are you certain that death is so far off? Have not you walked with dying men? I have. I have talked with them one day and I have heard the next that they were in eternity.

We shall hear the same of you. And is it wise to be trifling with these things as though you knew that you had fifty or sixty more years to live? And suppose you were sure of a long life, would you wish to delay being happy? Do you desire to postpone being made supremely comfortable? Remember that to have your soul affairs set right in a proper manner is to obtain present joy and happiness. I do not think that young people ever say, "We are too young to enjoy ourselves. Let us wait till we grow older and then let us be happy." And yet to be saved is to enjoy yourselves in the most emphatic sense of that term and to find Christ precious is to be happy beyond all expression!

Why postpone that which is more pleasant than pleasure itself and more sweet than honey dropping from the honeycomb? I pray, dear Friends, think of this matter *now*, because you may have to think of it when it will only bring you bitterness and grief! That is a dreadful verse, where Christ says of the rich man in Hell, "He lift up his eyes." Poor Soul, why did you not lift up your eyes before? It is too late, for ah, you can see as you look up, Lazarus in Abraham's bosom and yourself with a great gulf fixed, dividing you from him. It is too late for you to look about you then, for there is nothing to see but the consuming flames and the tormentors who are to be your perpetual companions—with that dark despair, which, like a great gravestone—is to be forever on your heart!

O, why did you not lift up your eyes before? Surely the only answer I can get from this poor wretch is, "Tell my brethren lest they come into this place of torment! Ask them to lift up their eyes *now*, and to begin *now* to consider what shall be their confidence and what the ground of their hope with regard to eternal things." Careless Sinner, I wish that those few words might be blessed to *you*. I would look you in the face and evoke you by the living God, by life, by death, by judgment, by eternity, by Heaven, by Hell—by everything that has power to move a rational being—set your

house in order and consider your latter end! And if you have no trust as yet, God help you to find one.

Well, we will try again and put the question to another. "In whom do you trust?" And I hear one stand up and say, "I thank God I am about as good as most people. I do not know that I have any particular cause to worry myself. If everybody's life had been like mine, Sir, it would be much better for their day and generation. I have never been a gross and open sinner. I have been a man who has set a good example to his family and brought them up well. When the hospital wanted a guinea, I put my hand into my pocket and did not bring it out empty! When my poor neighbors have needed charity, they have never found a churl in me! I hope I can say it will go well with me and if it does not, Sir, it will go badly with a good many."

My Friend, with that *last* sentence I perfectly agree—I am afraid it will go badly with a great many! But I do not see what consolation you ought to get out of *that*, for company in being ruined will not *decrease*, but rather *increase* the catastrophe! Let me say to you that it proves that the sum and the substance of your confidence is that you are trusting in *yourself*. Now, do you really and honestly think that you are, of yourself, sufficient to carry your soul through all the pangs and terrors of death and to bring yourself, by your own merit, safe to God's right hand? I think your conscience can remind you of some slips and some flaws—your memory must tell you of some sins, if they are not of the grosser kind—yet of some sins!

And let me say to you remember that God has revealed in His own Word this Truth—if any man will be saved by his own works there is one condition which cannot be altered—namely, that he must be an *absolutely perfect man*! He must *never* have even sinned so much as once! He must never have had a sinful *thought* in his heart, or *word* on his tongue, or *act* in his entire life, or else he is guilty of a breach of the whole Law! Now what do you say to that? This is no mere assertion of *mine*—this is God's own Word! And let me give you another passage, "By the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified."

O proud man, woman—do you think there was any need for Christ to die to save us if we could save ourselves? What? Do you think that God's servants have to say, "The righteous are scarcely saved," and do you who believe in no Savior think it such a simple thing to get to Heaven that you are going there by your own good deeds? I counsel you, (I pray you would take my advice), do with your good works just as the Ephesians did with their magical books—bring them out and burn all of them! They will never do you any good and they may do you infinite mischief. Come, my good Friends, come as you are to that Savior who has opened a new and living way by His own precious blood and who can do for you what these fine boastings of yours can only pretend to accomplish! Only He can save your guilty soul from the wrath to come!

I do not suppose that I should get from anybody present the answer which has come, no doubt, from the lips of very many—"In whom do I trust? Why, I trust in my priest! He has been regularly ordained! He be-

longs to an Apostolic Church! He tells me that *he* will forgive my sins if I confess them to him, and that when I come to die *he* will give me my viaticum—he will grease my boots for the last journey and send me off in such a state that the devil himself cannot hold me with this anointing oil upon me! If I cannot trust to a *priest*, where *can* I fix my confidence?” I can give you an answer to that last enquiry, where can you trust—but let me appeal to any man of sense who is here tonight and who may have been relying upon a priest:

What is there in any *man*, though he is six foot of clay, that you should put your trust in him? No doubt there have been some mystical incantations performed upon him, but in this nineteenth century are you such a fool as to believe that he has any grace to spare for you? If you would read the Scriptures, dear Friend—only your priest does not care that you should do this, except it be his own version which he has well doctored before you get it—if you read the Bible, you will find that if you are a follower of Christ, *you* are as much a priest as he can be! You will find that one man is as much a priest as another when he believes in Jesus—for, according to Scripture—*all* saints are a “royal priesthood.”

As for myself, though I preach in this place the Word of God, I hate the very thought and name of *priest* and I wonder how it can be that persons calling themselves Evangelical clergymen can talk of themselves as priests. Priests, indeed! I fear many of them are, but I wonder at the effrontery which should make them take the name and wear it. Priests? Great God! There is but one Priest before Your Throne who can offer acceptable sacrifice and that is Your dear Son who offers Himself forever as a great Sacrifice unto You! And as for us, we are but secondary priests under Him, and here none of us has any superiority over his brother, for all the saints are made in Christ Jesus kings and priests unto God and they shall reign with Him forever and ever! Do not be misled, dear Friend—your priest might as well trust in you as you trust in him!

But it is probable, very probable, that I should get another answer if I were to put this question round. Perhaps a considerable number of people would say, “Well, God is merciful. He is not so severe as to be unkind towards us and we dare say, though we may have a good many faults, yet as He is a very good and a very gracious God, He will forgive us our sins and accept us.” Then it seems, dear Friends, that you are trusting in the *mercy* of God. Let me say to you that as you state it, you are trusting in what you will never find!

Let us suppose you are very generous and there are a number of poor people in the city who you are determined to feed with bread. Let us suppose that you, therefore, issued an order that they were all to call at your son’s house and that there they might have as much bread as they pleased. If they all declared that they would have nothing to do with your son, would not go to his house, and would sooner starve than go—and if they all came clamoring to *your* door—what would you say to them?

You would say, “There is bread enough and to spare. I have provided it. My son will give it to you, but if you insult me to my face by telling me that you will not have what I freely give to you because of the way in

which I present it, you may go without it.” And this certainly is how God will deal with you! He has treasured up all His mercy in the Person of His own dear Son—and there it is—come and welcome! And it is said, that “Whoever comes” to Jesus Christ, He “shall in no wise cast out.”

But if you go to God out of Christ you will find Him to be a consuming fire! And instead of mercy you shall receive justice—and that justice will smite you to the lowest Hell! What? Shall the King of Heaven leave His Throne and lay aside His crown! Shall He take off His azure mantle, put on the garments of a *man*—become poor and needy, live in poverty and die in shame—and yet will you not take Divine Grace through such a channel as this? Shall God ordain this better than golden pipe through which the crystal stream of love and mercy shall run, and do you disdain this pipe? Shall God say that He has treasured up in Christ Jesus all the fullness of the Godhead and will you turn from Christ and say, “We will not have this Man to reign over us”?

Then know this, that the King sits upon His holy hill of Zion and He will dash you in pieces like a potter’s vessel, because you said, “Let us break His bonds asunder and cast His cords from us.” Rather let me bid you bow the knee and kiss the Son. Cling to Jesus and then—

“Come and welcome, Sinner, come.”

Come through Jesus, for in God there is no mercy to those who come leaving Christ behind them. There is only one other answer which I think it is likely I should get tonight, and it might be this—“Well, Sir, I do not say that I can trust to my works, but I am a good-hearted man. I am a man of good intentions and though I have a great many faults—still, Sir, I am good-hearted at bottom—and I think God will look at my heart and He will put me right at the end, notwithstanding my slips and wanderings by the way.”

Well, my dear Friend, it is very well for you to say you have got a good heart, you know. But we have nobody to prove it except yourself. That is a very silly thing which people say of men when they die, “Oh, he was rather bad in his life and loose in his morals, but he was a good-hearted man at bottom.” It reminds me of Rowland Hill’s saying, “Yes, but when you go to market to buy apples and you see a number of rotten ones at the top, if the market woman says, ‘Oh, never mind, it is only the rotten apples at the top! They are very good at bottom,’ you will say to her, ‘My good Soul, I will be bound to say the best are on the top and they will not improve as you go down, for generally they will get far worse.’ ”

And so if a man is rotten at the top, bad on the surface, I cannot tell how much worse he may be down below. It is said there was a man who used to swear and drink, who, nevertheless, applied for membership with Mr. Hill and gave this reason for it, that though he did drink occasionally and frequently swear, yet he was good at bottom. Mr. Hill said, “Then you think I am going groveling down through the dirty foul filth of your life to get the little good that is somewhere at the bottom of you! Why, Sir,” he said, “it will not pay for the risk of digging out and I am not going to do it.” And there is much truth in that saying, “If it is bad at top it is worse at

bottom and if it is not good on the surface it will never pay for getting at it.”

It will turn out, I am afraid, to be a delusion and a snare. Do not rest in that. If you will not be angry, I will tell you what your heart is. Your heart—you that have such good hearts—your heart, I say, is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked! In your breast there are what you little think of—envy, lust, enmities and murders. All manner of unclean things are housed and caged within your breast. Do not talk about its goodness any more, for when you do, you call God a liar, and how can you expect to go to the Heaven where God is, when you are thus insulting Him all the while?

II. Well, we have done with these poor answers and we will come now to THE CHRISTIAN'S ANSWER. “In whom do you trust?” “I trust,” says the Christian, “a triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I trust the Father, believing that He has chosen me from before the foundations of the world. I trust Him as my father to care for me, to provide for me in Providence. To teach me, to guide me, to feed me, to correct me if need be and to bring me home to His own house where the many mansions are.

“I trust the Son. Very God of very God is He—the Man Christ Jesus. I trust in Him to take away all my sins, for He suffered their penalty upon the Cross. I trust Him to put all those sins away forever by His own Sacrifice. I trust Him to wrap me about with His perfect righteousness and to adorn me with all His excellencies. I know Him to be my Intercessor—so often as I pray to present my prayers and desires before His Father's Throne. I believe Him to be my resurrection and my life, that, though I die, yet I may live again!

“I expect Him to be my Advocate at the last great assize, to plead my cause and to stand there to justify me. I trust Him with all that I have, having no merit of my own—no confidence in my own tears, or prayers, or preaching, or willings, or doings, or believing—I trust Him for what He is, what He has done, what He has promised yet to do—I rely on Him, the incarnate Son of God.”

“And next,” says the Christian, “I trust the Holy Spirit. He has begun to save me from my inbred sins. I trust Him to drive them all out. I trust Him to curb my temper, to subdue my will, to enlighten my understanding, to check my passions, to comfort my despondence, to help my weakness, to illuminate my darkness. I trust the Holy Spirit to dwell in me as my Life, to reign in me as my King, to sanctify me wholly—spirit, soul and body—and then to take me up to dwell with the saints in light forever! Thus I trust a triune God through the Man-Mediator, Christ Jesus.”

And now, dear Friends, there is much difference between the Christian's trust, you will plainly see, and the trust of other men. But to some men this does not look like a real trust. “Why, we cannot see God,” says one. “How do we know all this about the Trinity? We can neither see, nor hear, nor feel God. Is this a real trust?” Cannot you trust in a thousand things you have never seen or heard? You take, I believe, bank notes and yet you never saw the person who signed them or who issued them. There

are a thousands things in this world which are real grounds of confidence and yet you never saw them!

Some of you, perhaps, may be earning your living by electricity. You are engaged in telegraphic operations and you believe in electricity, but you never saw it. Every builder trusts in gravity! Every engineer in the world has to put his confidence in the law of gravitation, and yet nobody ever saw this mighty power! But the thing is just as true as though one could see it. Those that have trusted in God find Him to be as real as if they could see Him! Though unperceived by sense, they find that when they get to Him, whom they cannot see, they get to One who is more substantial than things which are seen—which are temporal—for the things which are not seen are eternal!

Some have said, "But does God interfere to help His people? Is the trust you impose in Him so really recognized by Him that you can distinctly prove that He helps you?" Yes, we can, though God has never worked a miracle for *me*, yet He has done what I thought only a miracle could accomplish and He has worked it in the common order of Providence. And *you* shall find the same if you trust Him with all your heart! He will hear your prayer and listen to your cry and deliver you out of deep waters and from bitter anguish.

And though the depths will not be divided, fire will not cease to burn, nor will lion's mouths be closed, yet you shall be as well delivered as if miracles were still the order of the day! A Christian is sometimes asked whether he has a right to trust God. I have no business to rely upon one of you to do something for me merely because I choose to trust you to do it. I must have your promise before I am wise in my confidence. Now, the Christian has God's promise for it. He believes that Bible to be God's Book and, therefore, when he finds God saying anything in that Book to him, he believes it to be true and he even finds it to be so!

God has promised His people that if they trust Him they shall lack no good thing. He invites them to trust—no—He *commands* them to trust. And, therefore, Brethren, the Christian is justified in venturing to put His confidence in His God. But the worldling wants to know whether God is worthy to be trusted. And the Christian can say, "Yes, that He is. Our fathers trusted in Him and they were not confounded. We have trusted in Him and we have never found Him to fail." If I knew anything amiss of my God tonight, I would honestly tell it. But I know nothing but this—that He is faithful and true. I rest with my whole soul upon the finished work of Christ and I have not found anything yet that leads me to suspect I am resting where I shall meet with a failure.

No, the older one grows, the more one is convinced that he who leans by faith on Christ, rests where he never needs to be afraid! He may go and return in peace and confidence, for the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but God shall not change and His purpose shall not cease to stand. Yes, God is worthy of our confidence! And I think we can say, also, by way of commending our God to others, that we feel we can rest upon Him for the *future*. We have been in strange places and in very peculiar conditions in the *past*, but we never were thrown where we could

not find in God all we needed. And we are therefore encouraged to believe that when death's dark night shall come with all its gathering of terror, we shall fear no evil, for the same God will be with us to be our succor and our stay.

The Isle of Man has for its coat of arms three legs, and turn them which way you will, you know they always stand. And such is the Believer—throw him which way you will—he finds something to stand on! Throw him into death, or into life. Into the lion's den, or into the whale's belly—cast him into fire, or into water—the Christian still trusts in his God and finds Him a very present help in time of trouble. “In whom do you trust?” We can answer boldly, “We trust in Him whose power will never be exhausted, whose love will never cease, whose kindness will never change, whose faithfulness will never be sullied, whose wisdom will never be non-plussed and whose perfect goodness never can know a reduction.”

III. Well now, if this is true, I am to close with SOME WORDS OF ADVICE TO THOSE WHO ARE SO TRUSTING. They are, first of all, drive out all unbelief! Dear Brothers and Sisters, if we have such a God to trust, let us trust with all our might and let us endeavor to get rid of those horrible doubts and fears which so much mar our comfort. Why should we fear, my Brethren? “Oh, you of little faith, why do you doubt?”

“Oh,” says one, “I do doubt, but I can hardly tell why.” Well, if your God is such an One as He really is, it is an insult to Him to doubt Him! We say of a rogue, we will trust him as far as we can throw him, and some people hardly give their God better measure than that! We never ought to count a man dishonest till we find him in some trick. Now you have never found your God to be untrue. Then do not doubt Him till you have! Give Him your trust till He proves unworthy of it! Let us repent for our harsh thoughts of God. I know you said you would be starved, but you are not starved yet. You said you should go to the poorhouse, but you are not there yet! You said you should die of a broken heart, but you have not died yet—you have a smiling face tonight.

You told your friend you could never get through that trouble, yet you have got through it and fifty worse troubles than that! You said you would rather die than live, yet you did live—you have not died and you do not want to die. Now why give God a bad name? When the devil calls God a liar, I can understand it. But it is hard of a man's own child to think ill of his father. I think it would cut me to the heart if my child could not trust me. And oh, how ungenerous, how unkind on your part—no, I will say on *my* part, on *our* part—that we cannot put more confidence in this kind, generous Father of ours who has never failed us and who never will!

Come, let us not doubt Him again! David does not appear to have made any very lengthy trial of the mighty sword of the giant Goliath, and yet he said, “There is none like it.” He had tried it once in the hour of his youthful victory and it had proved itself to be of the right metal, and therefore he is able to praise it forever after! He has no doubt about the keenness of the edge, or fineness of the tempering. Even so, my Brethren, let us speak well of our God—there is none like He in the heavens above or the earth beneath! “To whom can you liken Me, or shall I be equal says the Lord.”

You may search the world around and you will find that there is no rock like the Rock of Jacob—our enemies themselves being judges.

So far from suffering any doubt to live in our hearts, we will take them all, as Elijah did the prophets of Baal, and slay them over the brook! And as our stream to kill them at we will select the sacred torrent which wells forth from our Savior's wounded side. My Brethren, we are truly guilty in speaking harsh things of our God! When the children of Israel came to the borders of the promised land they sent out spies to search it and see what the prospect was and how to prepare for the future occupation of it. Ten of the men on their return gave an ill report of the country which God had sworn to give to His people.

Now, what was the punishment which was inflicted on them for this evil speech concerning God's gift? Why, they died by the plague before the Lord and thus God proved His anger and wrath against their sin! Happy is it for us that He does not thus visit our evil words and harsh thoughts concerning Himself. We have often brought up an ill report of our God when we ought to have praised Him without ceasing for all His loving kindness towards us, the sons of men. Brethren, let us give up all repining and fretful speaking—

***“Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To Heaven in supplication sent,
Our cheerful song would oftener be,
‘Hear what the Lord has done for me.’ ”***

Try this plan of turning all your complaints into prayers and soon we shall hear you singing—

***“O magnify the Lord with me,
With me exalt His name!
When in distress, to Him I called,
He to my rescue came.
O make but trial of His love.
Experience will decide,
How blest are they and only they,
Who in His Truth confide.”***

And then, Brothers and Sisters, let us seek the Holy Spirit's help in this matter. We have often said we would not doubt again, yet we have. Let us ask to be strengthened. We often forget that the Author of our faith must be the Finisher of it, also. It is well to keep in mind the fact that our faith is like the lamp which was burning in the temple and never allowed to go out—but it had to be daily replenished with fresh oil. Our faith is an immortal flame, but only so because God keeps it burning. He expects us to feed the flame by all possible means—and above all to ask Him to give it the oil of Divine Grace through the means we employ for that purpose. Foolish virgins we shall be if we do not secure this needed sustenance for our lamps.

I am sure that many Christians are to blame for their own trials and afflictions of spirit through dark doubts and unbelief. I know that there is a devil, and that he will seek to flood your fields and make the fair garden a desolation and a mass of mud and corruption. But I know, also, that many Christians leave open the sluice gates themselves and let in their own deluge through carelessness and lack of prayer to God to guard and

protect them. I know that Satan will try to keep your soul in darkness and gloom, but it is very often your own fault if he succeeds. Walk out into the beams which come from the Sun of Righteousness! Stand in the light of God's reconciled Countenance! Come to the brightness of the Shekinah which covers the Mercy Seat and all the powers of darkness, led on by the master Fiend of Hell, cannot cast a cloud or shadow over the joy and peace of your believing!

Of course you will feel the shafts of the foe if you forsake the shelter of the high tower into which the righteous run and are safe. Confide, then, the custody of your soul to the good Spirit who is the Comforter and who will preserve you from those evils which will arise if you think that you can be your own keeper. Furthermore, let us try to bring others to trust where we have trusted. When a man finds something that is good and safe, he likes to recommend it to his friends—let us speak well of God to all our neighbors! Let us tell them, whenever we get an opportunity, that God does not leave His people—that He is not a wilderness unto His chosen and it may be that God will bless our testimony to the bringing in of others.

I have often mused on that account of our Lord's first disciples, where it is written that Jesus welcomed to His house two of John's disciples and, "One of the two which heard John speak and followed Jesus, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first finds his own brother, Simon, and says unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus." Then further on, we find our Lord saying to Philip, "Follow Me." What was the result? "Philip finds Nathanael and says unto him, We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

No sooner do these men truly believe in Christ as the long-promised Messiah than they call others to Christ, that they may also believe upon Him and become His disciples! So also with the woman of Samaria. She leaves her water pot and goes into the city and says, "Come, see a Man that told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?" Now, with the same spirit we should be moved to go and proclaim to others the Grace and goodness of the Lord our God!

When men engage in that perilous and foolhardy amusement of scaling the summits of ice-covered mountains for no other reason than to be able to say that no one ever risked breaking his neck on that spot of the universe before, they were foolish enough to lead the way! How do they climb up these almost inaccessible peaks? Why, one man cuts the steps first with his axe, and, mounting up, gives a hand to the next. And he puts his feet where the other has trod and so they aid each other.

And thus it is that we should ascend heavenward! Mount higher and higher *yourself*—ascending daily—and as you ascend, cut steps for others and help them up, that together you may mount to the skies! If you were overtaken by a deluge, as sometimes happens in the lowlands of Australia, what should you think of doing first of all? Would you not make for the nearest hill and climb to the summit and get your family and goods, if possible, safe out of the waters onto that hilltop, by your side? Yes, but if

you are a *man*—in the highest meaning of the word—you would not rest content with that! You would try to rescue your neighbor and his family and cattle. Yes, everything that was in danger or within reach of the flood, would be, if possible, saved by you and landed in safety by the side of your own property.

Such is life! A flood of *unbelief* is abroad—“get up into the high mountain”—and lift up your voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid! “Cry aloud and spare not,” but proclaim far and wide that there is a Refuge here for all who wish to flee from the wrath to come. I think many of us, when we first were seeking the face of an offended God, vowed that if ever we were saved we would seek to warn others, also, and save them from being lost. Did we not say—

***“Then will I tell to sinners round,
What a dear Savior I have found!
I’ll point to His redeeming blood,
And cry, ‘Behold, the way to God’ ”?***

Begin now, then, to keep your promise! Warn all men and say to each with all your heart and soul—

***“O, be earnest, do not stay!
You may perish even today!
Rise, you lost one, rise and flee!
Lo! Your Savior waits for you.”***

And if, again, we are trusting in God, let us love Him who thus gives Himself to be trusted by us. No man can truly trust God who does not love Him. The sister Graces ever live together. They have but one address, for they all live in one home. Whenever there is *faith*, there *love* also dwells and each Grace takes up its residence likewise. Some are packed away into cellars or up in attics by many Christians so that they are often not seen and you would fancy that they were not at home when you called.

I know that the chain of Graces is unbroken even when some links are unseen. God has sown the seeds of all the Graces and they will eventually, in the garden of the heart, all spring up and be to the glory of His name. What I want is that you should stir up the good thing which is in you. Bring it out to the front and make it appear. Show your love! If it is as a spark hidden in the midst of a heap of refuse, clear out the evil matter, fan the spark into a flame, add fuel to it till you shall be all ablaze with love to God! Nothing short of this will satisfy God. Anything else is wrong and should not, for one moment, be tolerated by us.

What? Shall I hope for a Heaven through the Grace of God in Christ? Am I expecting deliverance from ten thousand ills here and from Hell hereafter? Do I trust the Most High for all temporal and spiritual good, and am I aware that I deserve not the least of all the many mercies I am receiving today and hope to receive in days to come? Do I nevertheless cultivate no love to this loving God, this bounteous Benefactor? Then I am one of the basest and most sinful of men because of my heartlessness and vile ingratitude!—

***“A very wretch, Lord, I should prove
Had I no love for You!
Rather than not my Savior love,
Oh let me cease to be.”***

And yet another thought before I conclude—We must *prove* our faith by our *works*. We must labor for the Lord in whom we are trusting—all must see that this is only right and fitting. What have we received and why have we been made the recipients of these mercies? Is it not that we may go and do for others as God has done for us? O God, do You carry my burden and shall I not carry Yours? O Christ, do You not carry the Cross for me and shall I not carry the Cross for You? O my Father, do You, as it were, lay Yourself down and become a stone for me to build on, and shall not I desire to be built on You that I may help others to rest on You, too?

Christian Brothers and Sisters, let us do more for God! As we find Him more and more worthy of our trust, let us launch out into fresh fields of labor! Let us seek each day to labor for God, as the poet says—

“No day without a deed.”

So let us have no day without doing something by which we may advance the honor of the glorious name of our God! We are bound to leave our affairs in God’s hands, and then, instead of being idlers and loiterers, we are to go and *work* in His vineyard as long as it is called today.

In this way we can prove our love and show our gratitude—but here let me also call your attention to what is one sure way of augmenting your faith and increasing your spiritual health. It is this—constant hard working for the Lord your God! Cease working and you will soon cease believing. You will best secure the constant joy and peace of believing by living near to God and, like the Savior when on earth, always being “about your Father’s business.” Love Him as you trust Him! Work for Him as you love Him! Grow like He as you work for Him and you shall soon come to be with Him as you are like He and His shall be the glory, forever and ever. Amen.—

***“Though faint, yet pursuing, we go on our way,
The Lord is our Leader, His Word is our stay.
Though suffering and sorrow and trial are near,
Our God is our Refuge and whom can we fear?
He raises the fallen, He cheers the faint;
The weak and oppressed—
He will hear their complaint.
The way may be weary and thorny the road,
But how can we falter? Our help is in God!
Though clouds may surround us, our God is our light!
Though storms rage around us, our God is our might.
So faint, yet pursuing, still onward we come
The Lord is our Leader and Heaven is our home!”***

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LANDLORD AND TENANT

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“Set your house in order; for you shall die, and not live.”
Isaiah 38:1.

NOTWITHSTANDING that a thousand voices proclaim our mortality, we are all too apt to put aside the contemplation of it. Since we cannot escape from death, we endeavor to shut our eyes to it, although there is no subject whose consideration would be more beneficial to us. Altering one word of the poet's line, I may say—

“Tis greatly wise to talk with our last hours.”

To be familiar with the grave is prudence. To prepare for death it is well to commune with death. A thoughtful walk in the cemetery is good for our soul's health. As Jeremy Taylor well observes, “Since a man stands perpetually at the door of eternity and, as did John the Almoner, every day is building his sepulcher, and every night one day of our life is gone and passed into the possession of death, it will concern us to take care that the door leading to Hell does not open upon us, that we are not crushed to ruin by the stones of our grave and that our death become not a consignment of us to a sad eternity.” The most of men prefer to cultivate less fruitful fields and turn their thoughts and meditations to subjects trivial for the present—and useless for the future. “O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!”

Knowing this general aversion to my theme, I shall not treat it in a gloomy and heavy manner, but shall try to allure you to it by the use of pleasant and interesting similitudes. The subject shall supply the solemnity and I hope the metaphor will secure your interest. Forgive me, you spiritual, if I seem too flippant—my words are not for you, but for a class whose souls I trust you love—who cannot, as yet, bear the more serious thoughts of wisdom unless they are clothed in parable and picture.

OUR BODY, OUR PROPERTY, OUR FAMILY, THIS PRESENT LIFE AND ALL ITS SURROUNDINGS ARE, IN THE TEXT, DESCRIBED AS A HOUSE. This simile is not at all unusual either in the Old or the new Testaments. The Apostle Paul tells us that “Moses was faithful in all his *house*,” that is to say, in his lifelong charge and duty. Our Lord said of the Pharisees that they devoured widow's *houses*, meaning their estates. And Paul, referring to his body, said, “We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an *house* not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” We will see what instruction we can find in this most simple but comprehensive comparison.

I. This mortal life and its surroundings are likened to a house and the first point of the similitude will be seen if we enquire, WHO IS THE LANDLORD?

The first answer is *that certainly we are not*. To all men, it may be truthfully said, "You are not your own." We are tenants, but not freeholders. We are mere tenants at will without a lease. The earthly house of this tabernacle belongs to Him who built it. He who sustains it keeps the title deeds in His own possession. *Our house belongs to God*. Dear Friend, do you ever think of this? Do you remember, as a matter of fact, that *you and yours are God's property*? He created you and created you for His own Glory. Your soul was spoken into existence by Him. Your bodily powers were all bestowed by His hand. You are the creature of the Almighty! In every vein, sinew and nerve of your body there are traces of the Divine Embroiderer's skill. You are God's in all the most secret goings and issues of your life, for you owe the continued possession of your existence every day to Him. Your breath is in your nostrils, but He keeps it there. He has but to will it and the atoms composing your body, which He now keeps apart from their fellows, would return to the bosom of the earth. You are but a walking heap of dust and the cohesion of the various particles is maintained by the hand of Omnipotence. Let the sustaining power of God be withdrawn and your bodily house would fall in the ruin of death and the utterly dissolution of corruption! All that you have around you is in the same predicament, for food and clothes, house and goods, are God's gifts to you. The strength of hand or the nimbleness of brain that has enabled you to accumulate wealth, or to live in comfort has all come from Him! Day by day you are a commoner at the table of Divine bounty, a pensioner, hour by hour, upon the Infinite Mercy of God. You have nothing and are nothing but as God pleases! You owe all you have and all you are to Him.

It is most useful for each of us to know *what are the rights of God towards us*. Even if we do not acknowledge them, yet candor demands that at least we hear them defined. Sad is the reflection, however, that when we learn these rights, if we resist them, we become willful robbers and so increase our guilt! If we will not have God to reign over us. If, in our spirits we say, like Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord, that we should obey His voice?" it will go harder with us at the last than if we had never heard the claims of God proclaimed. Men and women, how is it that God has made you and yet so many of you never think of Him? Shall I bring against you the accusation which the Prophet of old brought against his people? "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider." Who among you would retain in your house a tool or a piece of furniture which was of no use or value to you? Who among you would keep so much as an ox or an ass if it rendered you no service? How much less would you nurture it if, instead

thereof, it did you harm—if it had a spite against you and lifted up its heels against you?

And yet, are there not some here who have been forgetful of their obligations to their Maker, who have never been of any service to Him, have never praised Him, have never desired to advance His Glory? And who, on the contrary, have even spoken high and haughty thingy things against Him and it may be words of profanity and blasphemy? O God, how are You ill treated in the very world which is full of Your goodness! How do the creatures of Your hand render unto You evil for good! Your house, which You have let out to man, is made into a castle for Your foes, a temple for idols, a den of thieves, a nest of unclean birds! You are ill requited at the hands of Your unworthy tenants! You Best of beings, you Fountain of love and mercy, what do You receive from many of Your creatures but forgetfulness and disdain?

Bear this in mind, therefore, that the house in which we dwell, in this life, has God for its Landlord, and that we are only tenants.

II. The simile runs further. WHAT IS MAN'S LEASE?

One would imagine, from the way in which some men talk, that we were freeholders, or at least had a lease for 999 years! The truth is, *we are but tenants at will*. We may possess the tenement in which our soul now finds a house for itself, together with its appurtenances and out-houses, for the term of 70 years and the tenure may even be prolonged to 80 years, or even to a longer period in rare cases, but, at no one time is the tenure altered! We always occupy from moment to moment. Our lease is not for three, seven, 14, or 21 years, nor is it even from day to day, or from hour to hour—but from second to second we hold precarious possession! We are tenants at the absolute will of God. The commencement of a day never secures the ending of it to us alive and the striking of the clock, as the commencement of the hour, is no guarantee that we shall hear it strike again. Every second we hold our lives, and goods, and chattels upon the sole tenure of the Divine Will of God! God has but to say to us, "Return, you children of men," and we return to the dust. Flowers are not more frail, moths more fragile, bubbles more unsubstantial, or meteors more fleeting than man's life! What transient things we are! I said, *We are*, but I made a mistake—we are *not*. We but begin to be and before we are, we are not! It is God alone who can say, "I AM." None of the human race should dare to pronounce those words!

Yet how many live as if their tenant rights of this mortal life, and all its goods, were a fixed tenure and entailed upon themselves, irrespective of assigns, or heirs, or superior lord of the manor or freeholder of the soil! "Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue forever and their dwelling places to all generations. They call their lands after their own names." To such people as these, the words of the Apostle James are very applicable, "Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such-and-such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow.

For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.”

Yet how often we fall into the same error! Have not some of you, my Friends, been laying out your plans for months and even years to come? You have considered where you will spend the summer and where you will live when you retire from your business. Ah, boast not yourselves of tomorrow, much less of summer or of autumn, for you know not what a day, or even an hour may bring forth! O man born of dying woman, ask of God to give you, day by day, your daily bread and let your living and your planning be after the fashion of day by day, for when you begin to reckon for far-off time, it looks as if you had never prayed, “So teach me to number my days that I may apply my heart unto wisdom.” O you young ones, say not, “We will give the first and best of our days to the flesh, and offer God the rest.” You may have no remaining years to offer! You may be consumed in the morning of your lives! Say not, you men who are in the midst of the world’s business, “We will retire soon and in the cool of our age we will think upon the things of God.” You may have no evening of old age! Your sun may go down at noon! You may be called from the counting house while yet the ink upon the pages of the ledger is wet and the Bible, as yet unstudied!

Set your house in order, for your Great Landlord may serve an ejection notice upon you and there will be no hope of resisting it, though the wisest of physicians should seek to bar the door! Here is the writ and these are the express words—“You shall die, and not live.” Even the most aged presume that they shall live yet longer and the traditions of Jenkyns and of Old Parr, I doubt not, have tempted hundreds to imagine, even when they have been verging upon 80 or 90 that they may still live a few years longer in quiet possession of their tottering tenement whose pillars are shaken, whose windows are darkened and whose very foundations are decaying! We cling with dreadful tenacity to this poor life and the little which we foolishly call our all! It were well if we could cling with such fast hold to the life *that is to come*—for that, alone, is worth clinging to since it is forever—whereas this life is to be but for a little time even at the longest!

What a reflection it is that within a hundred years everyone in our most crowded audiences (unless the Lord shall come), will be soundly sleeping amid the clods of the valley—and not one of all the present armies of men that populate our cities will be in possession of his house and lands, or will know of anything that is done under the sun! We shall have gone over to “the great majority.” We shall be, perhaps, remembered, perhaps forgotten, but, at any rate, we ourselves shall mingle no more with our fellows in the market, the street, the places of worship or the haunts of pleasure. We shall depart from sea and land, from city and village, from earth and all that is thereon. Where will our immortal natures be? Where will our spirits be? Shall we be communing among the blessed harpers whose every note is bliss, or shall we be forever gnashing our teeth in remorse among the castaways who would not receive the

mercy of God? We hold our house, then, on no time or tenure than from moment to moment! Remember this, you dwellers in these houses of clay!

There is this clause in the lease, which I am afraid some have never observed, namely, that *the Landlord has at all times the right to enter and leave His own property*. I thank God that some of us have yielded to the Lord this right and now our prayer often is that He would come into our house, search us, try us, know our ways and see if there is any evil way in us—and lead us in the way everlasting. Time was when the last thing we wished for was the Presence of God, when we said to Him, “Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Your ways.” But now, being renewed by His Spirit, we say to Him, “Abide with us.” Beloved Friend, are you always ready to open the doors of your heart to God’s inspection? Do you delight in heavenly communion? Do you constantly invite the Lord Jesus to come in and sup with you, and you with Him? If not, you are forgetting one great clause in your lease and, let me also say, you are forgetting the greatest privilege that men can enjoy beneath the stars!

It is well for me to recall to your memories that, according to our tenure, *our Great Landlord permits us to call upon Him to execute all repairs*. Our circumstances are apt to grow straitened and He it is who gives us power to get wealth. He daily loads us with benefits. When our bodily tabernacle is shaken, He it is who heals all our diseases. When our sorrows and needs multiply, He it is who satisfies our mouth with good things, so that our youth is renewed like the eagle’s. It is well, no doubt, when we are sick, to seek direction from the physician, but it is a Christian action to resort *first* to Jehovah-Rophi, The Lord That Heals Us. “Is any sick among you?” What said the Apostle? Does he say, “Let him use no medicine,” as some “Peculiar People” say? No! Does he say, “Use medicine and nothing else,” as the most of professors do? No such thing! Does he say, “Let him lie in bed and expect his minister to come and see him,” as though ministers, elders and deacons were Omniscient? No such thing!

“Is any sick among you? Let him call”—*that is his duty*—let him call for the elders of the church.” And then, as the form of medicine then in vogue was that of anointing the body with oil, “let them pray over him,” and let them use the ordinary means, “anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.” Have your medicine by all means, or whatever may seem best, but, *beside that*, make *prayer* your main confidence, for it is the Lord that heals us! Jesus is the Beloved Physician. If we had more faith in God and resorted more often to Him by prayer and faith, the prescriptions of the pharmacist might be more often wise and his medicines more frequently useful. The Lord, who made our house, best knows how to repair the tenement and He permits us to resort to Him! When you are sick, my Friend, remember this, and practice it.

III. Thus have we spoken of the Landlord and the lease. Now, thirdly, we come to THE RENT THAT IS TO BE PAID.

We occupy a house which is evidently not our own and, therefore, there must be some rent to pay. What is it? The rent that God asks of His tenants is *that they should praise Him as long as they live*. “Oh!” you say, “that is but little.” I grant you that it is. It is but a peppercorn, a mere acknowledgment, but yet there are millions who never pay even that! They offer the Lord no thanks, no love, no service. For the benefits they receive, they make no return, or, rather, they make an evil recompense. The breath that He gives them is never turned to song. The food they eat is not sanctified with gratitude. The goods that He bestows are not tithed, nor are the first fruits of their increase offered to the Lord. Their hearts do not love Him. Their faith does not trust in His dear Son—their lips do not speak of Him and magnify His glorious name. This is most unrighteous and ungenerous. For us to praise God is not a costly or painful business. The heart that praises God finds a sweet return in the exercise, itself. In Heaven, it is the Heaven of perfect spirits to praise the Lord. And on earth we are nearest Heaven when we are fullest of the praises of Jehovah! But how ungrateful are those who are tenants in God’s house and yet refuse the little tribute which He asks of them!

The question is raised, *how often ought the rent to be paid?* You know, in law, the time when the rent of a house is due always bears a relation to the tenure upon which it is held. If a man takes a house by the year, he pays his rent by the year. If he takes it by the quarter, he pays by the quarter. And if we hold our house by the *moment*, we are bound to pay by the moment.

So, then, it was but simple justice when David said, “I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.” To live in the perpetual exercise of praise to God is, at once, the Christian’s duty and delight. “No,” says one, “but we cannot do *that*, we have other things to think of.” But remember, when the praises of God are not on our lips, they should be in our hearts. The incense was in the censer even when it was not smoking—our praise should abide with us till opportunity permits the holy fire to be applied. Besides, I believe that our God is best praised in common things. He who mends a shoe with a right motive is praising God as much as the seraph who pours forth his celestial sonnet. You in your workshops, you in your families, you on your sickbeds, you anywhere according to your avocations—if you offer, through Jesus the Mediator, the love of your hearts—you are paying the rent of praise unto God Most High! Oh, to be continually doing this!

But, Brothers and Sisters, *I am afraid that we are in arrears*. Those of us who have paid the most rent are still far behind! Yes, you were grumbling this morning—that was not rendering a worthy recompense for benefits received. Shall a living man complain? There are some who do little else but complain. They complain of the times, of the weather, of the government, of their families, of their trade. If, for once, they would complain of themselves, they might have a more deserving subject for fault-finding! The Lord is good and does good—let His name be blessed! Let us, as His people, avow that, though He slays us, yet we will trust in Him.

And if He make us groan under His heavy hand, we will even weep out His praises and our expiring sigh shall be but a note of our life's Psalm which we hope to exchange full soon for the song of the celestial host above! Praising and blessing God in life, practically by obedience, and heartily with gratitude—this is the rent which is due for the house in which we dwell.

Are there not some of you who have not even recognized that you belong to God at all and who, up till now, have been paying rent and rendering service to another master? I am often amazed in my soul at what men will do for that black master, the devil! Why, Sirs, the devil will sometimes summon men to one of his meetings at the street corner where the gas is flaming, and they will cheerfully obey the summons. They will meet in such places with companions who are rude, boisterous, selfish, vulgar and everything else that is undesirable and call them "jolly good fellows." If the devil would pick out some fine brave spirits for them to meet—men of wit, genius and information—one would not wonder so much at the readiness with which the dupes assemble, but the congregations of Satan are usually made up of men and women of the lowest and most degraded kind and you people know it! When they are beckoned off to the assembly of the scorners, they go with the greatest readiness. And what is done at this gathering of the foolish? Well, they commune together in stupidities at which it must be hard to laugh and, meanwhile, they pass round the cup of liquid fire out of which they cheerfully drink and drink, and drink again, though each successive goblet is filled with deeper damnation! These willing slaves drink at their master's bidding though the cup makes their brain reel, sets their heart on flame and makes them unable to keep their feet! Yes, and when he still cries, "Drink, yes, drink abundantly," these faithful servants swallow down the poison till they lie down like logs, or roar like demons! They will keep putting the cup of death to their lips till delirium tremens comes upon them and possesses them as with Hell itself! Thousands obediently render homage to Satan by drinking away their lives and ruining their souls.

How much further they go in serving their master than we do in following ours! Into Hell itself they follow their accursed leader! They pay him his revenues without arrears and yet his taxes are heavy and his exactions are most oppressive. Why, we have seen great lords hand all their estates over to Beelzebub! And when he has set up before them an image in the shape of a horse with a blue ribbon, they have bowed down and worshipped it and offered their all at his shrine! I wish we could meet with some who would do as much for Christ as these have done for the devil. Any kind of fashion which may rule the hour draws a mad crowd after it. No matter how absurd or ridiculous the mania, the worshippers of fashion cry, "These are your gods, O Israel." Yes, Satan is marvelously well obeyed by his servants. His rent is regularly paid and yet he is not the rightful owner and has no title to the house of manhood! Yes, men will even run after him to offer their homage. They will throw down their lives before his Juggernaut car of profligacy and cast themselves beneath

its wheels, while the golden chariot of Christ, paved with love for men traverses their streets! And they have not a word of acclamation or of praise for that Prince of Peace. O come, you servants of Jesus, and be ashamed of this! Come and render to your Lord your full service! Throw your hearts' enthusiasm into your religion! Be at least as earnest for God as others are for the devil! Be at least as self-denying and self-sacrificing as they are who run the mad career of sin! Pay your rent to the great Landlord and let the arrears be made up!

IV. But I must not linger. The next point to be considered is MAN'S DUTY WITH REGARD TO THIS HOUSE OF WHICH HE IS THE TENANT.

The text says, "Set your house in order." This shows that *we are not to destroy it, nor to injure it*. Our body should be the temple of the Holy Spirit. Nothing should be done by us that may injure our body, for, in the case of the Believer, it is a precious thing, ordained to rise, again, at the Last Day, since Christ Jesus has bought it, as well as the soul which it contains, with His own blood! Nor are we to waste our substance, for this is the accusation which, of old, was brought against the unjust steward, that he had wasted his master's goods.

We are to set our house in order, that is, *our own house*. Some persons are very busy setting other people's houses in order and oh, how fast their tongues will go when they are sweeping out their neighbor's kitchen, or dusting his cupboard! *Set your own houses in order*, Sirs, before you attempt to arrange the affairs of other people!

Again, the tenant himself must do it. "Set your house in order." You must not leave it to a priest. You must not ask your fellow man to become responsible for you. You must make personal application to Him who can set all in order for you, even to Him who came into the world and died for this very purpose. If you need oil for your lamps, you must go to them that sell and buy for yourselves, for your fellow virgins can give you none of their oil. Set your own house in order. This is the chief business of every living man as a tenant under God.

What kind of order is my house to be set in? My conscience will help to tell me that. An enlightened conscience tells us in what kind of order our heart, our family and our business should be. By its teachings, we may learn how all the departments of the house should be ordered. It cannot be right that the body should be master over the soul—conscience tells us that. It cannot be right that the memory should retain only that which is evil. It cannot be right that the affections should grovel in the mire. It cannot be right that the judgment should put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Conscience says that the heart is never right till the whole man is in Christ—till, by a living faith, we have embraced Jesus as our full salvation and have received the Holy Spirit as our Sanctifier. We are never right till we are right with conscience and conscience tells us that we are never right till we are right with God! "Set your house in order." Obey the inward monitor, listen to the still small voice and prepare to meet your God!

Do you ask, “*What is God’s order?*” You can see by reading the 20th chapter of the Book of Exodus what His thought of order was when He wrote the Ten Commandments. You can learn what His order is under the Gospel, for we read that a new Commandment has Christ given to us, that we love one another. And yet again, “This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ.” Dear Friend, is your house, in this sense, right with God? If, at this moment, you had to surrender possession, is everything ordered as you would wish it to be? If the arrow of death should now fly through this sanctuary and find a target in your heart at this moment, is it all right, *is it all right*, IS IT ALL RIGHT, as you would wish to have it when God’s eyes shall look upon you in the Day of Judgment? What if in a single moment we should see the heavens on a blaze and the earth should rock beneath our feet, and the dead should rise from their sepulchres? What if, instead of this Tabernacle and its gathered crowd, we should now suddenly see the King, Himself, upon the Great White Throne and hear the archangel’s trumpet ringing out the notes, “Awake, you dead, and come to judgment!” Is everything with us as we should like to have it for the blaze of that tremendous day and the inspection of that awful Judge? Happy is that man who can say, “I have committed all to Christ—my body, soul and spirit—all my powers and all my affections! I have committed all to Him by faith and prayer, so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly for it is all right even now.” “Set your house in order.” Then conscience and God’s Word will be your guides as to what is needed.

But I am afraid that in you, my Friend, *very many things need careful attention and rearrangement*. Oh, that every day each of us lived a Christ-filled life, for then we should not need to be told to set our house in order! I, as pastor of this Church, though I trust I am not an idler, have never been able to look upon my own work with any sort of satisfaction. I am obliged to stand where the publican stood with the prayer, “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” upon my lips, for my work is too vast and I am too feeble! Is there any man here who can say that he fills his sphere to the full without an omission or transgression? If you can say so, my Brother, I envy you, for it is not long before you will be in Heaven! If that is not a self-righteous estimate, or a vainglorious opinion of yourself, inasmuch as you are so meet for Heaven, you will soon be there—depend upon that!

But, whatever there may be about us now, dear Friends, which is not what we feel it ought to be, let the call come to each one of us at this moment, “Set your house in order.” The vain regrets in which we sometimes indulge, we often mistake for true repentance, but let us remember that—

**“Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve
By doing so no more.”**

As believers in Jesus Christ, if there is anything deficient in us, if there is anything excessive in us, if there is anything that is contrary to the

Lord's mind and will, may the Holy Spirit come and correct it all, so that our house may be set in order!

Thus have I shown you in what manner our houses should be kept. But I am afraid that many of your houses need a great deal of setting in order. *Some of your houses need sweeping.* The dust and filth of sin are lying all over the floors! You need the precious blood to be sprinkled, or else if the Lord begins to sweep with the bosom of the Law of God, it will happen, as Bunyan tells us, that the dust will be enough to choke your prayers, or blind the eyes of your faith! May the Gospel come and sprinkle the water of Divine Grace and then may Christ come in and sweep your house! But you need more than *sweeping—your house needs washing.* Every floor needs cleansing and there is no one but the Lord Jesus Christ who can do this. Nothing can make you clean but His blood! In many of your houses the windows are very filthy and the light of the glorious Gospel cannot enter so as to bring with it an intelligent conception of the things of God. Oh, that this may be set right! The very drainage in some men's houses is neglected. Many a foul thing stagnates, ferments and pollutes their souls. Ah, what is there that is in order in the unregenerate man? To everyone in that state, the text calls loudly, "Set your house in order." But, Sirs, unless Christ comes to help you, it is a hopeless task! Unless Christ and His Holy Spirit come to the rescue, your houses will remain out of order—everything filthy and everything disarranged—and when the great King shall come and find it so, woe unto you, woe unto you, in the day of His appearing!

V. We shall close with the last thought, which is this, WE ARE BID TO SET OUR HOUSE IN ORDER BECAUSE WE ARE SERVED WITH A NOTICE TO QUIT. "Set your house in order; *for you shall die, and not live.*"

This is not a reason for setting a house in order which bad tenants would care to consider—they wish to leave the house in as dilapidated a state as possible. But a just tenant desires to restore to his landlord his property unhurt. So is it with the man who is right with God. He wishes that when he dies, he may leave here on earth no trace of injury done to God, but many memorials of service rendered. He does not wish to leave the house as Satan left the poor possessed demoniac, rending and tearing him because he was coming out of him, having great wrath because his time was short. No, the honest man who loves his God desires to leave everything behind him that shall honor God and nothing that shall dishonor Him. Whitefield used to tell a story of a young man who could not live in the house where his old father had dwelt, because, he said, "every chair in it smelt of piety." He was a wicked, godless, rebellious man without Christ and he could not stay where his father's holiness would force itself upon his memory and rebuke him. Oh, I would like to make every chair in my house like that, so that when my boy comes into possession of it, he will think, "Why, there my father sat to study God's Word. And there he used to kneel in prayer. And now I have his house, I must imitate his ways."

A dear man of God, who has now gone to Heaven, took me into his study, one day, and said to me, "You see that spot?" "Yes." "Well, that is the place where my dear wife used to kneel to pray and that is where, one morning, when I came to look for her, as she did not come down to breakfast, I found her dead." "Oh," he said, "that is holy ground!" And so it was, for she was a very gracious woman. Oh, that we may so live that everything we leave behind us may be like Abel's blood that cried from the ground! May our habits and manners be such that, after our death, everything associated with us may be perfumed with holy memories! God make it so! God make it so! Are you sure it will be so? I must appeal to some of you Christian people—are you not too negligent? Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God? Might there not be much amiss with you if you were now called away? I beseech you, set your house in order!

Beloved Friend in Christ, do try that everything may be in order for your dying, and everything now prepared for your departure if it should happen tonight. *Do it for the Church's sake.* So live that when the church misses you, there shall be left behind you your gracious memory and your holy example to inspire those who will mourn your departure. So live that *the world* may miss your zealous efforts for its good. May all be so ordered in your life that you may never lead others astray by your example, but bequeath it as a legacy of encouragement to your successors! Order all things well *for your children's sake.* They will be pretty much what their parents were. Sovereign Grace may interpose, but, ordinarily, the mother shapes the child's life. May your life be such that it shall be a fair mold for your child's future existence!

Set your house in order, my dear Brothers and Sisters, even though you are leaving it, *because you are going to a better one if you are a Believer in Christ.* The old clay shed will be taken down and you shall dwell in marble halls! You shall leave the hovel for the mansion! The traveler's tent shall be rolled up and put away in the tomb to be exchanged for "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Oh, let it not be said that you were so bad a tenant, in the first house, that you could not be trusted with a second, but may Divine Grace cause you so to set this house in order that you may leave it without reluctance, and enter into the next with joy, leaving your first house behind you without shame, in sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection! May you cheerfully leave the first house and joyfully surrender the key to the Great Landlord because you know that, go where He will in all its rooms, He will see the remembrances of His own Grace, the marks of His own workmanship, the beauties and adornments of His own Holy Spirit! Then, conveyed by ministering spirits to a better country, you shall become possessors of a heritage undefiled which fades not away!

I desire, in closing, that all of us may offer the key of our house to the Great Landlord and acknowledge that we live on sufferance as His tenants. A dear Brother told us, the other day, when he was speaking of his being over 70 years of age, that his lease had run out and that he

was now living by the day. Let us each, in all things, carry out his remark and live by the day! Let us remember that “now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” Let us not act as if we expected to remain long in these lowlands. It is a dreadful thing to see men who profess to be Christians, unwilling to die! Should it be so that when we feel ourselves ill, and likely to die, we should have a host of matters to arrange and many regrets to express? Dear Brothers and Sisters, begin your regrets earlier, while there is time to retrieve the past! Regret now, and ask for Grace, now, to do all that is in you for Him who loved you and bought you with His blood!

As for you who have no redeeming blood upon you, I do not marvel that you live to yourselves. O you who despise Christ, I do not wonder if you despise yourselves so much as to be the slaves of pleasure! But you who are the elect of God, who are bought by the blood of Jesus, who are called by His Spirit, who profess to be His people—you have nobler things to live for! I pray you, make us not to be ashamed of you by living as if you were mere worldlings who have their portion in this life. Live for eternity! Live for Christ’s Glory! Live to win souls! Behave as occupiers under a Royal Owner should behave. With such a Landlord, the best in the whole universe, be also the best of tenants and always be mindful of the time of your removal to another land! Let my last words remain with you, and that they may, I will quote them from a book in which wisdom is set forth in goodly sentences.

***“Gird up your mind to contemplation, trembling inhabitant of the earth.
Tenant of a hovel for a day, you are heir of the universe forever!
For neither congealing of the grave, nor gushing waters of the firmament,
Nor expansive airs of Heaven, nor dissipative fires of Gehenna,
Nor rust of rest, nor wear, nor waste, nor loss, nor chance, nor change
Shall avail to quench or overwhelm the spark of soul within you!
“Look to your soul, O man, for none can be surety for his brother:
Behold, for Heaven—or for Hell—you cannot escape from Immortality!”***

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

CONSOLATION FOR POOR PETITIONERS NO. 3468

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 22, 1915.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 10, 1870.

*“Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: my eyes fail with looking upward. O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me.”
Isaiah 38:14.*

HEZEKIAH finds fault with his prayers, but he did pray. God’s children cannot at all times speak distinctly, but they all cry. There is no true child of God that is possessed of a dumb spirit. “Behold he prays” may be said of each of the Divine family—and place them in what circumstances you will, you might sooner call a man, living, and prevent his breathing, than call a man, Christian, and prevent his praying! If he is living, he must breathe—if he is a Christian, he must pray! And observe further as Hezekiah, with all the faults that he finds with his prayers, did pray, so equally certain is it that he did prevail with those imperfect prayers! He may call those prayers chattering—I have no doubt he felt them to be so—but, after all, he has an answer to his prayers—he had 15 years added to his life and, therefore, his chatter were marvelously successful. From which I gather that those prayers we think the worst, may turn out to be the best. And those prayers which, judged by human judgments, might be considered unworthy of the name of prayer, may, nevertheless, be so acceptable to the Most High that they shall throughout life become the fountain of our praise!

I purpose this evening to speak to you, believing that many of you have passed through the same experience as Hezekiah with regard to your prayers. I shall speak to you about his estimation, *his own estimation of his prayers*. Then we shall turn to consider *the real value of those prayers*. And then, thirdly, we shall notice *what there is that may afford us plentiful consolation* if we find the same fault with our petitions as Hezekiah did with his. First, then, let us look at—

I. HEZEKIAH’S ESTIMATE OF HIS PRAYERS, for our estimate of our petitions has often been the same. He compares his prayers to the chattering of a swallow. If we had time to spare, we might go into the question of the exact meaning, but I am content with believing that this translation will do. You know the crane makes a harsh, unmelodious, discordant sound, and when cranes are flying by night in great companies in the air, the rustic cannot see them—does not know there are any birds there and he often hears the most extraordinary sounds which he cannot account for—and he goes home and fills the whole parish with a

story of ghosts which he has seen and strange, unearthly sounds which he has heard! The crane makes a very unmusical, harsh, discordant, grating kind of noise, and the swallow makes a kind of chattering. You know the shrill, sharp shriek, piercing like sharp needles, which the swallows make when they are going over your head towards the end of summer—not a tune, nothing very musical, but just a sharp, shrill, piercing note. Now such, Hezekiah says, his prayers were, but, in addition, they were as mournful as the constant cooing of the dove. Turtle-doves sometimes, if they are listened to long, are enough to make a man feel wretched to hear them—their sound is the very embodiment of the utterance of sorrow! “I did mourn,” he said, “like a dove,” and then he declares that his prayers were long, that he grew weary, that his prayers and his eyes failed with looking upwards for an answer.

Now let us put all these things together, and I gather from them that Hezekiah, first of all, in his sickness prayed often and much, *but his prayers seemed to himself to be quite meaningless*—as if they had no meaning to him and no meaning to God. You who have suffered from certain kinds of disorders will know how you tried to pray again and again, and again, but you cannot tell, yourself, what it is you were asking for, and when you look back in the evening at a day in which you have prayed a thousand times, perhaps, it seems to you as if you had not prayed at all! The thoughts are so tossed up and down, the mind is so incapable of its proper action, that although the prayer is genuine enough, yet to you, when you look back upon it, it seems to have no meaning in it whatever! Better to be compared to the involuntary cry of a wounded beast or bird than to anything like a reasonable, intelligent utterance of a soul that is pleading with God! I do know—I speak from my inmost heart—what it is, day after day, to pray no better prayers than just that—not because I would not, but because I *could* not! When the head has been aching, when the bones seemed to be crushed with pain, then the soul turns to God in her bitterness and she feels as if she did not pray at all—the utterances seem to have no meaning to herself, and she fears they have no meaning to God. Meaningless, then, Hezekiah thought his prayers to be.

Next, *he knew them to be disconnected*. The cry of the crane is no continuous song. You cannot make anything of it—chatter, chatter, chatter, chatter, and that is all. In the song of some birds there is a regular cadence, the note rises or falls, and you can almost commit it to paper. In fact, bird music *can* be committed to paper and imitated—but with the mere chattering of cranes and swallows there is no connection between one note and another, none whatever! And oh, how many of God’s people’s prayers are to themselves and, perhaps, really are, very disconnected, indeed! They need one mercy, but before they have definitely asked for that, their needs rush in so upon them that they ask not only for that, but another, and another, and hardly know what it is that they ask for! They seem to have so much distress, so much sorrow, so much need that their troubles come in troops. “Gad,” they say, “a troop comes,”

and they know not how to order their prayer before the Lord, and set it out, item by item, and plead for this and that, and the next, and the next mercy as they did, perhaps, in brighter days when their mind was more at home and their thoughts more under their control. Hezekiah means his prayers were disconnected as well as meaningless.

And further, does not he mean that those *were very inharmonious and discordant*, just like the crane's chattering or the swallow's screams? Now sometimes when you hear a Brother pray who has a great gift and at the same time has an unction of Divine Grace, how delightful prayer is to the Christian ear! I think I have enjoyed the prayers of some of God's people—I can say even intellectually, more than I have some of the best effusions of poetry—and spiritually they have been intensely musical to my soul's ears! I believe that the harps of Heaven will be sweeter than the prayers of God's people on earth, but then they must be very, very sweet, indeed, for a prayer that comes to the living soul in the power of the Holy Spirit has an element of Divinity about it! The human is there, but there is something of the Divine, also, and very, very delightful is it to the Christian to hear his Brother pray. But ah, there are times with us when our prayers seem to have no sweetness whatever. There is all the human—and that is jarring. There is all the mortal—and that sets our teeth on edge. Every single thought we have seems to be out of order, and every word seems to be unfitted! And all that we can do is to pour out our heart, like water as in a tumult bubbling forth without order, shape, or form, without anything beautiful in it that could attract the eyes of God! This is what Hezekiah thought of his prayer—it was disconnected and discordant.

But further, I think that he meant that *his supplications were clamorous*, for the crane's voice is heard afar and the shrill scream of the swallow must pierce the ears—and such were his prayers. If not sweet, yet they were cutting. If not delightful to the ears, yet they must be heard. He would be heard of God—he cried so out of his inmost soul with such fervor, such intensity, that it was clamorous before the Throne of God. He seems to look upon it, however, not as having the orderly force that should be of importunity, but rather the clamorous power which forgets order and decorum and only remembers the impulse of the sorrow within! Well, though we may find fault with prayer when we feel as if we clamored to God, as if we had been rough and rude before the august Majesty and had forgotten to take off our shoes, it may sometimes happen that where we think we have been irreverent, we have been most reverent of all! And where we can come back from our prayers and feel, "I have expressed myself as I ought not to have done in the bitterness and anguish of my spirit," it may be said that the Lord has most accepted the honest outpouring of our soul! However, to Hezekiah, his prayer seemed inharmonious and clamorous.

Again, I think I see in this description *an idea of its being repetitious*—like the crane that goes on, chatter, chatter, chatter, chatter. Like the swallow that uses the same note. It is one of the marks of deep anguish

in prayer that you use the same word. Our Lord Himself did it when three times He prayed using the same words. Repetition in prayer is to be avoided—it doubtless wearies those whom we expect to unite with us—but in our private supplications, when the heart feels she has a wish—one wish, but very, very few words—she may even repeat herself again and again in the very same words and tone, and yet not come under the condemnation of using vain repetitions, like the heathen do, for it is not vain repetition that makes the soul cry out before the Lord with the same note when her mind is too distracted to find a variety of notes! Now, you have made your prayers often, no doubt, just like that. You have said, “Oh, I have prayed over and over and over again the same thing. I wish I could pray like Brother So-and-So at the Prayer Meeting, with such choice expressions and such a wonderful variety! But I, alas, when I come before the Lord, I am so bowed down that just a few words and many tears, and that is all I can get out, and it is a broken prayer—there does not seem to be anything at all in it. When God Himself looks upon it, only His Omniscience can spy out some little meaning, but I, alas, seem as if I had no meaning at all in what I had said before the Throne of God.”

If you look at the text again, you will see that in Hezekiah’s mind there was also the idea that his prayer was *quite unworthy of anybody’s attention*, for when a crane chatters, or when a swallow makes its twittering, nobody is expected to stand still and listen. Nobody who is going to his business would have thought of standing to enquire what the swallow means. It matters not what these birds mean by their cry, and so he seems to say, “My God, my God, You are governing the world! You are reigning in Heaven! You are listening to the praise of angels! You have within Your mind grand, incomprehensible designs. You are fulfilling Your marvelous decrees. What can it be to You that a poor man, a worm like myself, should lie on the bed and toss to and fro, and pour out such utter chattering as my prayers are? That You should have heard Elijah upon Carmel I can understand, for his was mighty prayer. That You should have heard David when he cried to You in such language as he had written in the Psalms, I can understand, for these were prayers that had Divine Inspiration in them. That you should listen to our fathers and hear their groans—that I believe, and I think I can see a reason for it. But that You should listen to *me*—Lord, I might as well stand and listen to a chattering crane as expect You to stop and listen to me. Have you ever thought that about your prayers? Perhaps tonight there is some poor sinner here who thinks that of his prayers. Ah, Soul, God does listen to the chattering of cranes! I know He does, for I have read in His Word what is tantamount to that in the text, “He hears the young ravens when they cry.” And surely if He hears a raven’s cry, if not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father, your prayer, though it may be very indistinct and the language, itself, may be very unworthy of the Divine ear, yet it shall command an audience and will bring down a blessing from above!

If I do not weary you in looking at this prayer, I think I am holding up a mirror for your own memory. I would note that Hezekiah meant in the next sentence that *his prayer was very dolorous and very mournful*. “I mourned. I did mourn as a dove. My God! My prayer once was cheerful. I dropped a tear, but then I lifted a note of praise. I confessed my sin but then I thanked You for Your forgiving love. But now it is all sorrow! I harp on one string, and that string is all out of tune. I can do nothing but sob, and sigh, and confess my broken-heartedness, my misery, my hopelessness.”

And then he closes the description of his prayer by saying that *he was getting weary of it*. He looked up in prayer till his eyes had grown weak and failing, and he could hardly look up again. His voice was failing so that he chattered like a crane, instead of speaking like a man. His heart was failing and so, instead of hoping with the eagle’s eye that looks up and sees into the heart of God’s love, he had got the dove’s heart that was failing—and now he was led almost to give it up! It seemed to be of little use to pray. The heavens were as brass—no answer came from God. He waited—he had waited long and was still waiting—but as yet no blessing seemed to come. Do not some of us know what this lesson means? We remember it, when we were seeking our own salvation, how we seemed to seek in vain and now, today, we are seeking some special gift from God. It may be He has delayed to answer us and we are beginning to think He will not answer us, forgetting that that sentence, *God never is before His time, but He never is behind* is most true. Thus I give you Hezekiah’s estimate of his own prayer. Now, secondly, let us dwell for a minute upon—

II. THE REAL VALUE OF OUR PRAYERS IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.

I think we can spy a little of that out for ourselves. First of all, it is quite certain that *Hezekiah’s prayers were unaffected*, for when the crane chatters, it is never hypocritical. It chatters thus because that is the way the cranes talk. And so with the swallow—it does not try to imitate the tones of the nightingale or catch the sound of the eagle—no, it is a swallow and it makes the sound of a swallow! And so with Hezekiah. It was a strange prayer, but it was his own prayer. It might be to anybody else very wild and mystical, but to himself it was the natural effusion of his own soul—it was the truthful exposition of the state of his own heart—and that is always a mark in prayer. Oh, one loathes to hear people get up and pray—pray on stilts. I have heard such prayer. If a man is a plowman, let him pray like a plowman, and he will pray well. If a man is a scholar, let him pray like a scholar. If a man is unlettered, let him pray what he knows and not copy somebody else’s prayer. It must be the soul running out in its own language! God abhors, I believe, artificialities in prayer! They are sickly to us who hear them from our fellow mortals—but what must they be to God when men trick, and toy, and adorn themselves with tinsel, gewgaws and a sort of spiritual rhetoric in the Presence of the eternal God—what must that be? I can scarcely tell. Certainly there was nothing of that in Hezekiah’s prayer. Whatever there was

in it was real. It might be very strangely shaped, but it was of the right sort—it was Hezekiah's own, whatever it was—not a borrowed prayer, or anything fetched out from borrowed experience. There was something good about it.

In the next place, it might have had many imperfections, but *it certainly was intense*, for though he chatters like a crane or a swallow, yet his whole heart was in it. The sound might have no charm, but the prayer had a deep sense in it and though, to himself, there was no connected meaning, yet his heart was in the little brief parentheses of meaning! The little scraps and flashes of meaning that were there were sincere meanings and not false. And so here was another virtue in it—it was an intense prayer, a burning, fervent prayer that pierced its way even to the ears of God!

Certainly, again, as we look at it, *it was a persevering prayer*, for when he said his eyes failed, he was incidentally saying that he had looked until they failed, and that he had not left off looking, though he feared he almost would leave off looking, and he considered it would be a calamity to leave off looking up. I think there was a stern resolution in the good man's soul. He did not leave off prayer—there was this golden, this diamond element in him that he continued in prayer—that he was importunate in prayer.

And further, if we take the last sentence of the verse as a specimen of the prayer, as the condensed essence of the prayer, as I think it is, what *a grand kind of praying it was, after all*. I wish our grand prayers were half as good as Hezekiah's chattering if this was the style of it, "I am oppressed; undertake for me." Why is that prayer so admirable? It is as full as it needs to be, it is brief—and that is often a virtue, but it is very full. He states his case. He pleads with God. O Jehovah, I am oppressed! Undertake for me! You alone can deliver me. Look at my sin and undertake to bring me out of it. Hezekiah is so reliant—he seems to feel that if God does but undertake it, it is all he needs. He needs nothing—no one—only his God. "Undertake for me," and the word is, "Be Surety for me—give me a promise, enter into suretyship engagement with me." Do but say it shall be so, and I will be content, even though I wait the fulfillment for a while. It is a reliant prayer.

And observe further, *it is an acquiescent prayer*. He does not put stipulations before God, but he says, "Lord, undertake for me. That is my case, only carry it through. There let it end as You will. I will give it up to You. I, a poor oppressed soul, oppressed by sickness, put my double plight of misery into Your hands and say, 'Do with me as You will, and I will be content.'"

Moreover, if I may say so, this prayer is such *an undiluted prayer*. So many people's prayers are mixed up with dependence upon something else, or with secondary seeking. There are some back reckonings with God, but this is all clear and straightforward. Lord, I ask no one else for help. I would not look within for help, but to You I come. I am afraid, but

You, O You undertake for me! There is my hope, and there alone. From You comes my salvation. "Undertake for me."

And once again, *the prayer might well be prevalent*, as it was. With all the faults Hezekiah had to find with his prayers—though he chattered like a crane, he won 15 years of life by his chattering! His prayers were disconnected and they were discordant, and they were all the various things I have said, but for all that, in answer to these prayers, he was delivered from the gates of the grave and he went up to the home of God with joyful songs because the Lord had heard his prayers! Oh, it is wonderful what weak prayers can do—what imperfect prayers can do! What prayers that need to be prayed over again can do when they are washed with the precious blood of Jesus and come up with a sweet perfume of Him that is a Surety for the oppressed and undertakes for us! Oh, what prevalence there is in Heaven in the prayer that comes up from a sincere soul burdened here below!

Thus I have very briefly hinted at the value of the prayer which Hezekiah thought so little of. And now supposing you and I are in this state that our prayers seem to be a very poor sort of thing, I am sure they are very good.

And now let us turn to another line of teaching that is here, and ask—
III. WHAT IS THERE TO COMFORT US?

Why, there are several considerations which I will give you briefly. And, first, you find it is *nowhere said that prayer will not be heard unless it is perfect*. And it is *nowhere said that prayer, when it is imperfect, will be rejected*. Suppose my prayer is disconnected, did the Lord ever say that it must be connected, or else He would not hear it? Suppose my prayer is discordant, does He ever look for music in His people's cries? I dare say He finds it, for a father hears music in his baby's cries, and so may God hear music in His children's cries! But it is not there—it is only in His ears that the music is—the love of God puts it there. What is my crime, if my prayer is clamorous? Did the Lord ever say He would not hear a clamorous prayer? Has not He rather told us a parable in which the woman gained by clamor from the unjust judge the vindication of her rights? What if my prayer is repetitious? Did He ever say He would not hear me because I had no variety of expression? Oh, I must not condemn what God has not condemned! What He calls clean, let me not call common. If my prayer is sincere, then if He does not say I shall not succeed, let me hold on! And if my imperfections do not shut out my prayer according to His Word, why should I raise up a fancied reason why they should? Remember, Brothers and Sisters, when we cannot pray in our hearts as we would, there are still some promises on record that we may still plead before God—such as this, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." My Lord has not said, "I will never leave you while your prayers are connected and full of harmony and power." If He had, then my soul might have despaired, but He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you—never." Then let not the imperfections of my prayer drive me away! And if I do chatter, You will not say, "I cannot bear that chattering." No,

but You will still stop and listen, for You have said, I will never leave you." Oh, Your promises, then, shall comfort and sustain me!

Moreover, Brothers and Sisters, *there are many instances in Scripture of prayers which are said to be prevalent with God* that do not appear to have any of the excellencies about them that we think there ought to be in our prayers to God. Take Moses' prayer to God at the Red Sea—I do not find that he said a word, and yet the Lord said, "Why do you cry unto Me?" I dare say he was much disturbed in spirit—he had not time and opportunity in such a plight as that to pour out many sentences. But God heard it! And there was poor Hannah when she went up to the Temple. You know her prayer was such—she only moved her lips—and I am sure she must have been in a very disturbed state of mind, for Eli thought that she was drunk! He rebuked her for being drunk and she said, "O my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit," and God heard Hannah's prayer. David often in the Psalms speaks of himself as roaring. He declares he could not look up and he pictures himself as very far gone in sorrow. But the Lord heard him! O Brothers and Sisters, you have cases upon cases in the Word of God and many all down the ages in the history of the Church showing that the Lord hears His children's broken prayers! Perhaps you have sometimes experienced it. Oh, I have, and I bear witness—prayers that I would have flung on a dunghill—He has answered them! I know the reason—it was not because the prayers had anything in them, but He has answered me as if they had been prayers of the greatest of the saints. Has not it been so with you—your groans have come back to you in songs, and your tears drop back on you in showers of mercy, and your biggest bursts of agony have yet been returned to you in gracious words of promise from the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, Himself?

Now these things may help to cheer and comfort you. And I want to mention these points, and one or two others, and I have done.

The next is this—we never need be discouraged about the brokenness of our prayers when we recollect this, "The Spirit makes intercession for us with groans that cannot be uttered." It seems, then, that when I have got right out of words and cannot pray in words—when I have such great meaning that I do not find language can help me—such awful meanings that I have come to the deeps and, "Deep called unto deep at the noise of God's waterspout," and if I speak, I speak in language which seems to be the language of the waves and billows, the deep, hollow, solemn, sounding foam, for I can say nothing else—then I am getting near the Spirit's praying—my soul is getting tuned to its matchless intercession! The groans we cannot utter—He can utter—and when we scarcely know our own meaning, He can translate for us. He makes intercession for us according to the will of God!

The next sweet reflection is that *our prayers have to deal with the heart of a Father*. Now a little child—let us alter the illustration but in one small particular—a little child needs something and I am in the room and have no idea of what the child wants. I am rather vexed to hear its cry and, perhaps, it disturbs me. But there is one in the room that knows

exactly what the child means as well as if it had put it into speech, though it cannot talk a note! It is the mother who loves so much, and her love translates the indistinct language of the cry. Now, like as a father pities his child, so the Lord pities them that fear Him. "As one whom his mother comforts," so He comforts us! And when He hears us cry, His love is more intense to us than that of the mother to her babe, and He reads our meaning. Oh, He needs not words! He is a Spirit. He needs not sounds, as though He heard with ears—He hears the Spirit's sounds and the deep groan is often the very thunder of the Spirit when the soul's best word may be nothing better than the Spirit's whisper!

Lastly, and this, perhaps, is the most full of comfort, *Christ pleads for us*. He is at the Father's side—the Man of Love, the Crucified. We have not only the Spirit that searches—the Spirit that knows our mind and God's mind, and the Father's love that reads our heart so that He knows the things we have need of before we ask Him, but we have the Man, Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who in His measure feels afresh what every member bears—like ourselves, a Man and, therefore, moved with every feeling of human sympathy! He has gone through this brokenness of prayer, Himself! He prayed like that, Himself, when He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto death," and He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. His cries on the Cross, also—what are they but broken prayers, fragmentary prayers? He knows what sore temptation means, for He has felt the same, and He knows what these griefs and inward anguishes of prayer mean, for He has passed through them all! Come, come, then, disconsolate to the Mercy Seat, though your eyes still fail, yet keep them upwards! Though you have no comfortable answer just yet, tarry at the posts of your Master's door! Wait, for the day dawns. When the night grows darkest, the day draws near. Wait still, and cry on, still, for He hears you! To Him there is music in a sigh and beauty in a tear! The humble suppliant cannot fail. "He that asks receives; he that seeks finds; to him that knocks, it shall be opened."

Now do you not perceive that while very much of this discourse must belong to the child of God, yet there is a sidelight in it for the poor sinner whose prayer is of this sort? You hardly dare come even into this Tabernacle—and when you have got a seat, and the hymn is being sung, you feel you dare not sing—you cannot sing it. And if there is a promise being read out of the Bible, you say, "I cannot take it, it is not mine. I am not worthy." Yes, but I know what you did when nobody looked on—you said, "God be merciful unto me a sinner." Your Father heard you! Your Father will answer you! He sets before you, tonight, the atoning Sacrifice of His dear Son. Jesus loves sinners! He died for sinners! He pleads for sinners! Trust Him and your sins, which are many, are forgiven you, and though you chatter like a crane or a swallow, yet shall you go your way in peace, justified far rather than the man whose long prayer is a pretence, and whose speech is but the coverlet for a hypocritical heart. God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 77; REVELATION 1:15-20.**

PSALM 77.

Verse 1. *I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and He gave ear unto me.* The writer was in very deep trouble. The trouble forced from him a loud and bitter cry. His heart was wrung with anguish, but the cry which was the weakness of the flesh was, by Divine Grace, turned upward, and so became the strength of his Grace. He cried, but it was to God, not to men, as many of us do. "Unto God," he says twice over, "did I cry." But God hears when others hear not and, blessed be His name, He answers when others cannot! There are so many instances in which God has heard the prayer of persons in deep trouble, that the most troubled of all men ought to be encouraged to pray! Did not Jonah pray, even out of the belly of the whale, and God delivered him? Did not Manasseh pray out of the low dungeon? Great sinner as he was, God delivered him—oh, let us believe that there is power in prayer, for God listens to the request of those that seek His face!

2. *In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted.* He would not take the common comfort which friendly words would have yielded him—his case was so desperate that he must have Divine Comfort, and nothing else. I will not be comforted till Jesus comfort me, and this is a very good and holy resolution. I wish that some who snatch at comfort—unhealthy comfort—too soon, would resolve upon this, "My cry shall go to God, and God only, and I will take no comfort till God the Holy Spirit brings it to me."

3. *I remembered God, and was troubled.* Yet it was the right thing to do to remember God—the most comfortable thing in the world! And though it failed at first, it did not fail in the long run.

3. *I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.* It is no new thing, then, for the best of God's people to be in the deepest trouble. The path which you are traveling, O Mourner, is well marked with footprints!

3-5. *Selah. You hold my eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.* Turned over the experience of Your people written in Your Word to see if You ever did forsake one of them.

6. *I call to remembrance my song in the night.* To see whether You did forsake me in days gone by—marked my past experience of Your faithfulness.

6-9. *I commune with my own heart: and my spirit made diligent search. Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone forever? Does His promise fail forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Will He be favorable no more? Very proper questions to put. They answer themselves when we put them plainly, but while they lie festering in our spirits—misshapen things like ghosts that haunt our hearts—then they*

alarm us. It is well to come to plain dealings with our soul and to say, "Why are you cast down, O my Soul; why are you disquieted within me?"

9, 10. *Selah. And I said.* When I came to reckon all up, and make a righteous judgment. When I bid my fears lie still awhile and let me listen to reason, I said—

10. *This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.* I will remember God's faithfulness in the past, in years when I lived at His right hand and basked in the sunlight of His love—I will snatch firebrands from the altars of the past to light up the fires of today!

11-13. *I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember your wonders of old. I will meditate also on all Your work, and talk of Your doings. Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary.* Or better, "Your way is in holiness." What You do is right, my God. I feared and trembled, but now I know it is so.

13, 14. *Who is so great a God as our God? You are the God who does wonders: You have declared Your strength among the people.* Oh, if we could all proclaim what God has done for us, we could prove it true that God has declared His strength among us! The might of His Grace has He displayed in our case.

15. *You have with Your arm redeemed Your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph.* Saints in the olden times were very fond of falling back upon the redemption of Israel out of Egypt. It was a favorite subject of their contemplation—it yielded them great comfort, and very, very frequently they turned it into sacred song. Now in Heaven we shall do the same, for we shall sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Let not the Church in modern times forget to draw consolation out of that well! Here the Psalmist gives us a description, as I think it is, of the passage of the Red Sea—giving it as a sort of type of the way in which God will always deliver His people to the world's end.

16-20. *The waters saw You, O God, the waters saw You; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: Your arrows also went abroad. The voice of Your thunder was in the Heaven: the lightning lighted the world: the earth trembled and shook. Your way is in the sea, and Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps are not known. You lead Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.* For one moment just look at this picture. You will be delivered and God will be glorified in your deliverance just as He was in the coming out of Egypt, but it will be by a mysterious way, perhaps a way little guessed at by you. God's path will be in the great waters. You will see the power, but before you see it, you will little guess how it will be displayed. Only follow where He leads, for as amidst the thunder and the lightning, He led His people as calmly on as a shepherd leads his flock. So shall you, whatever happens, with Jehovah for Your Shepherd, be led safely on till you come to the Celestial City! Let us sing the song of the Red Sea.

REVELATION 1:15-20.

In the first 14 verses (see Exposition—Sermon #3467, Volume 61—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at www.spurgeongems.org) we have given to us part of the glowing description of the Glories of the ascended Christ, and here it is completed.

15. *And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters.* Seas lashed to tempests, cataracts leaping from their stupendous heights—such was the voice of Christ!

16. *And He had in His right hand seven stars. And out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.* For His Word is a killing thing.

16. *And His countenance was as the sun shines in its strength.* What magnificent figures put together! We are well prepared to find that John could not long endure this majestic representation of the Lord.

17. *And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.* He was not only brought to the posture of reverence, but he was so overawed that he became unconscious! It is the same Person upon whose breast John had laid his head, yet now He is represented as John had never seen Him before! He was not so at the Last Supper. He was not so upon the Cross. He was not so on the Mount of Transfiguration. He was not so even when He had risen from the dead, and, perhaps, He will not be so when we see Him in His Glory. This was a specially instructive representation of Christ, and it was too much even for the trained and educated spirit of John the Divine.

17, 18. *And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the First and the Last: I am He that lives, and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen. And I have the keys of Hell and of death.* This is the great consolation of the people of God when they are brought very low—that Jesus lives, that Jesus reigns, that Jesus still comforts us and draws near to us in all the majesty of His power!

19, 20. *Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter. The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which you saw are the seven churches.*

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

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

MIRACLES OF LOVE

NO. 1110

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 4, 1873,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“You have loved my soul out of the pit of corruption.”
Isaiah 38:17 (Marginal reading).***

THE means used for the restoration of Hezekiah's body to health was a lump of figs laid as a plaster upon the boil, but the means used for the renewal of his soul from the disease of despondency was something equally effectual and far sweeter—what if I say that the Lord laid to the sore of Hezekiah's heart some of the leaves of the Tree of Life which are for the healing of the nations? The fact is that Hezekiah, under such a mass of troubles, had sunk very low in doubts, fears and dark forebodings until he almost despaired and, therefore, the Lord shed abroad in his heart a sense of Divine love—deep, true and mighty—and as Hezekiah's body recovered, so Hezekiah's spirits also rose. And instead of chattering like a crane, he began to sing the praises of the Host High. The remedy for his soul's sickness was *love*. His heart was fetched up from the grave of its despair by love—love was the hand of power that drew him up and love the cords by which he was lifted.

Now, what was true of Hezekiah with regard to his sickness and depression is true in the fullest sense of all Believers. See, dear Brethren, where we lay by nature—in the grave of death. Yes, and more—in the pit of corruption. We were so destroyed by sin that we were like men who had rotted in a pit and were corrupt, for sin is a foul putrefaction of our nature and it has worked in us to the most dreadful degree. We are like the slain upon the battlefield, rotting with foul decay—obnoxious to God, corrupt and abominable. At this present moment, by Sovereign Grace, those of us who have believed in Jesus have been brought up out of the horrible pit. Our standing, now, is a blessed one, for our feet are upon the Rock of Ages—immutable promises and eternal purposes are now the bases of our confidence.

Now shall our head be lifted up above our enemies round about us and, therefore, with joy will we offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy! We will sing, yes, we will sing praises unto the Lord! It is hardly necessary that I remind you that it was the love of God which moved Him to have compassion upon us when we were in the pit of corruption. The Lord loved us even when we were in that loathsome condition. This is a deep mystery of love. Well does the Apostle speak of “His great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins.” To love us when there was no good in us, but every evil in us—to love us when we were unlov-

able and even hateful—this is not after the manner of man, but is worthy of the infinite heart of God.

Now we know that this ancient, primeval love which had no cause except itself, devised the way of lifting us up out of the pit. We were to be brought up by Substitution, by the sacrifice of Another in our place. We were to be brought up by the operations of the Divine energy—that same power which brought our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead was to bring us up from our death in sin. Love planned this admirable method of mercy and we are equally ready to admit, this morning, and to exult as we admit it, that it was love which supplied all the provisions necessary for carrying out the plan. Love brought the Savior to the Cross. Love made Him bear our sins in His own body on the tree. Love led Him to give up His precious life on our behalf and to become a hostage in the tomb. Love sent the Holy Spirit to quicken us, to illuminate us, to strengthen us and to dwell in us forever. Love found the materials for our redemption and love applied the redemption when it was completed. Love led us to the Savior's Cross. Love regenerated us. Love has supported us till this day and will keep us to the end.

I shall not, however, call your attention to this great Truth of God, but to one of the same order. The text sets forth a charming fact which I desire to insist upon as God's Spirit shall help me. It is this—not merely that love desired our salvation, planned it, provided it, and so on—but that the *instrument* which love has used has been love. In order to get us out of the pit we have not been drawn out of it by power, nor driven out of it by terror, but we have been *loved* out of it. "You have loved my soul out of the pit of corruption." The other Sunday morning [DIVINE LOVE AND ITS GIFTS NO. 1096] I spoke to you upon our loving souls into Christ and tried to show in a few sentences the power of love to lead sinners to Jesus. Now that is what the text means—that God's love has loved us out of the pit of corruption—it has been the energetic means which has brought the saved ones to be what they are.

This subject has carried my own soul away in my private contemplations, but I fear I cannot set it forth to you as I would wish. I am like the child which said to its mother, "Mother, I will bring the sea to you," and the little one went down to the shore and filled its little palm with the water, but before it reached its mother it had spilt ten times as much as it had carried and if it had carried all it had taken up, it would only have brought a few drops and left behind it the great and wide sea altogether undiminished. I am hopeless of being able to convey to your souls a tenth of what I feel! I could have danced with David before the ark while I was drinking the new wine out of the golden cup of the text. I am hopeless of transferring my joy to you and if I could succeed in it, I should have accomplished little compared with the glory of the text before me.

I pray that many of you may, however, get enough out of this sermon to make you sing—

***“In the heavenly Lamb
Thrice happy I am,
And my heart it does dance
At the sound of His name.”***

May the Spirit of God love you, this morning, into a sense of the Savior’s love—love you into a ravishing enjoyment of the love of God. We shall consider, first of all, that we were loved into an entrance into Grace. Secondly, we are loved into advance in Grace and thirdly we shall be loved from Grace into Glory.

I. We were, in the beginning, LOVED INTO GRACE. What brought us to be converted men and women? We know it was the power of the Holy Spirit, but of that we shall not now speak. Our question is—what *instrumentality* did the Spirit use? The answer is, in most cases—in mine, certainly, and I do not doubt in the case of you all, in some degree—love was the constraining power. The love of Christ to sinners was the topic which arrested our solemn attention to the Gospel. That Jesus Christ should die, “the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God,” is a thought which commands attention and compels men to hear. As the ancient mariner laid hold upon the wedding guest and held him spell-bound by his strange story, so have myriads of men been held fast by the wondrous news of the love of God in Christ Jesus.

If we desire attention from sinners we must preach Christ to them—all else will be flat and mindless compared with Christ Crucified. The first missionaries to Greenland thought that the natives were too debased to understand at once the doctrine of Atonement. Therefore they began to tell them of the existence of a God and so on. The effect produced stale information, but when translating the chapter of John in which the passage occurs, “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” a Greenlander said, “Is that true?” When the missionary affirmed that it was, “Why then,” said he, “did you not tell us that at first, for that is good news, indeed!”

That there is a God the heavens are telling us! That God will punish injustice and wrong, conscience affirms. The visible creation and the inner consciousness of man sufficiently declare that there is a God and that He is just. But that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them—this is a novelty, a thing which never was spelt out yet by the wisdom of human nature! And so, if attention is to be arrested, it must be through the news, the blessed news, of redeeming love! It was so with many of us. We were loved out of indifference, loved into attentive hearing—Love won our ears to her sweet tale.

Having come to listen with interest, we were, nevertheless, but little anxious to become doers of the Word of God. To be saved did not seem to us to be very important. But when we heard, again and again, from our minister and from our Bibles of the “great love wherewith He loved us,” we began to feel awakened. Love touched our hearts as well as our ears!

When the sun visits the flowers which have hid themselves away in the cold earth to escape from hungry winter, he begins to call them out of their hiding places by shining upon them. And then by-and-by they say unto themselves, "Let us break our bands of sleep! Let us lift up the mold which covers us and let us peep forth that we may see the blessed sun, for full surely he is calling us."

Even so, when the warm beams of Love began to fall upon us in the form of invitations, exhortations, entreaties, and instructions, we felt their sweet influence and at last we said, "We will arise and seek Him who loves our souls, if haply we may be saved by Him." The Lord loved us out of our neglect of salvation! Our face was set towards sin and our back was towards Him, but He loved us right round till we could not help turning our faces towards Jesus and our backs upon our sins. Do you remember, Brothers and Sisters, when you began to seek the Lord? Love had brought you as far as that, but you were hampered with the idea that it was of no use to hope for mercy—doubt hung like a head shroud upon you—you sat in the region of the shadow of death and you would have remained there had you not been loved into faith!

You were bid to believe in Jesus—it was the Gospel's standing message—"Believe and you shall be saved." But how did you come to believe, my Brother? I know your answer will be, "He loved me into faith." As for myself I saw the great Lover of men hanging on a tree in agony and blood—they told me it was love to miserable sinners, love to those who hated Him, love to His murderers which made Him bleed—and as I understood that it was *God* who hung there to die a felon's death for unworthy men—I know not how it was, my Brothers and Sisters, but all of a sudden I felt that I could not help believing! Love compelled me to believe!

Unbelief in the presence of a dying Savior, if that dying Savior's love is really understood, must surely be impossible. He, the Lord of Heaven, without whom was not anything made that is made, humbling Himself to become a Servant unto God and man—and then laying down His life a Substitute for the ungodly—and all out of love! What a miracle is here! Who can disbelieve in the presence of such love? Savior, we must believe You! It is inevitable that we do so! Your love has loved us into faith and at the foot of the Cross we hope and trust in You. At the time when faith came into our hearts, there came with it the sister Grace which always attends it, namely, repentance.

Beloved, you must remember, I think, the days of your hardness of heart. Some of us were very hard—adamant itself is wax compared with what our nature was. A mother's tears could not melt us, nor a father's careful anxiety. How could we repent of sin? How could a millstone feel, or a flint weep? Why, when we heard the Gospel say to us, "Repent, and be converted," that command might as well have been spoken to dry bones or to marble statues! We could not repent. We were in love with our sins! We

thought them sweet—we could not turn from them. But, oh, do you remember when you did repent? Can you tell how it was brought about?

I remember when my soul was like the rock in Horeb, for it gushed with living streams. Yet it was not because Moses' rod had struck it, but because Christ's voice of love spoke to it and the rock dissolved into floods at once! See the summer's sun assail and vanquish the iceberg which has floated from its northern home! Winter's rudest storms could not dissolve the monstrous mountain of ice, nor could a thousand hurricanes and storms break it in pieces—but the sun shot a strange tremor through its heart as soon as he smiled on it and every beam that fell from the fair orb of day shot through it like a dart, till at last, yielding to the mysterious glow, the iceberg lost its hardness of heart, bowed itself from its chilly loftiness, fell into the warm gulf stream and was no more to be found!

Was it not so with you when the eyes of Jesus darted love into your heart? How irresistible were His blissful arrows! How deadly to your sins! How mortal to your pride! You were soon vanquished! Well does John Newton describe our case in his hymn—

***“Lord, You have won, at length I yield.
My heart, by mighty grace compelled,
Surrenders all to You.
Against Your terrors long I strove
But who can stand against Your love?
Love conquered even me!
If You had bid Your thunders roll,
And lightning flash, to blast my soul,
I still had stubborn been.
But mercy has my heart subdued,
A bleeding Savior I have viewed,
And now I hate my sin.”***

Truly we were loved into repentance! There were other agents used, of course. The Law thundered and conscience smote us, but still the master weapon in all the armory of God against our unregenerate hearts was love. We admit that it is more than a match for us—we confess that we are conquered by its might! The Lord has loved our souls out of the pit of corruption into that state of salvation in which we are now found!

II. Secondly, let us consider that we have been LOVED INTO GROWTH IN GRACE. The great motive power urging us onward has always been the same love of God. Let us turn aside for a few minutes to meditate upon the love of God to us. Our hearts will burn within us while we think upon it. It is quite certain, my dear Brethren, that you who believe in Jesus are personally the objects of the love of the Triune Jehovah. You are loved as much as you love your children, or as the bridegroom loves his bride—no, those are very feeble images—for you are loved by God *infinitely*. The heart of God never does anything weakly—His love is strong and powerful, for it is the affection of an Omnipotent Spirit.

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus—“As the Father has loved Me even so have I loved you.” Do you know how much the Father loves His

Son? Can you form any conception? Are you not baffled in the attempt? “Even so,” says Jesus, “have I loved you.” There is another text from which I never expect to preach till I get to Heaven, and I would like to preach from it there if a pulpit might be had. It is this—“That the love wherewith you have loved Me may be in them and I in them.” O, you are not dealing with trifles when you are dealing with the love of God to you! It is not a spare corner of the heart of God that He gives to you—as you may give a little love to the poor Arabs in the street or the criminals in the jails—the great, inconceivably vast heart of God belongs as much to every Christian as if there were not another being in the world for God to love! Even as Jehovah loves His Only-Begotten, so does He love each one of His children.

Remember, too, for this is sweet to think of, the Lord always *did* love you. It is no novelty for God to love His people. He loved you before you were born—in the glass of His purposes He saw you—in His book all your members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there were none of them. Is it not written, “The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love”? Divine love had no beginning! Yon stars are babes whose eyes but yesterday were opened to the light and yonder mountains are infants newly born! But as for God’s love, it is coeval with His own Existence and the objects of it are always the same.

Beloved, the love of God to you has never changed! He could not love you more. He will not love you less. The Lord’s love will never vary. O, believe it, my Brothers and Sisters, it is still the same! Whatever may happen to you, or through whatever trials you may pass, with the same love while He has loved you He will love you world without end! In life, in death and in eternity you are the beloved of the Lord who changes not! That same love which had no beginning shall never know an end! If it were in my power only to make my Brethren realize the fact that they are thus loved, it would elevate them, comfort them and set them all in a blaze with love to God! Think it over, and then say, each one to himself, “Jehovah, the Eternal, Self-Existent One loves me. Jesus, the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, The Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace loves me! The Holy Spirit, The Wonderworker, The Comforter, The Illuminator loves me! What bliss is this!” O, you would not need a sermon if you realized this—you would far rather need a place to weep and to sing, and mix tears and songs together as you bathed in unspeakable delight!

Having thus brought the love of God to your remembrance, I want to come back to the text and consider, again, that a sense of this love has up to now been the cause of all our advances in the Divine life, for first, after we were saved, we were still in the pit of corruption in the sense that our natural depravity struggled with us for the mastery. It would have made us captives to the love of sin if Divine Grace had not stepped in. Our

hearts were tempted by vanity and wantonness and the pleasures of sin, like Sirens, tried to fascinate us to our sure destruction. Have you never been in such a condition as a Christian that you were compelled to doubt whether you were a Christian at all because of the seething and raging of your innate depravity?

It may be you have never looked, yet, into the crater of that volcano of sin which, believe me, is not extinct in any one of us—but if you have ever peered into its horrid depths and seen the blackness, and heard the boiling up of murders, envy, and lusts, you have said—“O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?” Now, I ask you, how have you, up to now, escaped from the love of sin and its enchantments? I think I can tell you. God has loved you out of them—loved you right away from sin’s beauties and temptations! When the dear love of God comes into the soul, the man has no more heart for sin—“Sin! How can I love you? I cannot endure you, you hateful thing! My God, I want perfection! I pine after holiness now that I know that I am Your child, Your blood-bought one, a member of the body of Your dear Son, as dear to You as He is—I feel that I hate every false way. Away sins! I cry revenge against you! I would gladly slaughter you all!”—

***“When the wounds of Christ exploring
Sin does like itself appear.”***

Sin becomes black and hideous and abhorred in proportion as Jesus becomes lovely in our eyes. If you love sin, it is because you do not feel the love of God, for when that love fills your soul you must hate sin. Thus the Lord loves you out of that love to sin. Again, we get into the pit of corruption through the tendency of our souls to go after idols. Who among us has not been tempted to idolatry? It may be the partner of our bosom or a dear child has engrossed our hearts. Sometimes our life’s ambition or the pursuit of our business has almost become our God. Our feet have almost gone—we have set up Dagon or Mammon in our heart. It is not easy to live in this world—especially to enjoy prosperity—and yet be clear from worshipping idols. How have you and I been saved from idols? Not always by having them broken—that is a remedy which God is slow to use though He will use it if we are obstinate.

The most effectual, as well as the most delicious medicine to cure idolatry is to have the love of God shed abroad in the heart by Jesus Christ! Get a sight of the Glory of God in the face of Christ and then you will say—

***“Farewell all you mean creatures
For in Him is every store.
Wealth, or friends, or darling beauty,
Shall not draw me any more.
In my Savior I have found a glorious whole.”***

“He is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.” We cannot see the stars when the sun is shining. Our dear ones are dear still, but Christ is far dearer. I am not afraid for you, dear Brothers, that you

will get worldly if you know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. I am not afraid for you, dear Sister, that the marriage bond will lead you away from holiness or that your maternal love will ever rival your love to Jesus if you know how sweet and dear He is. Relationships are precious things, but they are nothing compared with Him! We love them, but as compared with Him we could hate father and mother, and sister and brother for His name's sake.

When a certain martyr was about to be burned, they brought out his wife and his 11 little children and bade them kneel in one long row to ask their father, for their sakes, to consent to deny the faith and live. But as he kissed them one by one and lingered longest over the dear mother of them all, he said, "I would do anything for your sakes, my dear Ones, that I might live with you. But since it is for Christ, my Lord's sake, I must tear myself away even from you." When Jesus is in the soul, the idols leave their thrones. He loves us out of the pit of idolatry! There is another pit of corruption into which children of God sometimes fall, namely, that of sluggishness. We do not always feel equally alive towards the Lord and Divine things. Indifference is very apt to steal over us.

There is a portion of the road to Heaven which John Bunyan describes as the Enchanted Ground, where a tendency to sleep is very strong upon all pilgrims. Some pilgrims of my acquaintance are pretty constantly traversing that part of the road and are never quite awake. Very few Christians are quickened into diligence and fervor by the scourge! I do a little bit of whipping, sometimes, and I think I do right, for my Master would not clear me if I suffered Believers to sleep without waking them. But I am certain that the only effectual cure for a slumbering Christian is to let him have the love of Christ shed abroad in his heart—and here I speak by experience—for I have found that it is the only thing which can quicken me. I think over my duties, but I am none the more in love with them. I look over my responsibilities, but I am scarcely the more impressed by them. But when I feel that my Lord has chosen me from before the foundation of the world, loved me and given Himself for me, then am I awakened!

When I have a sight of His thorn-crowned brow. When I see His majesty of misery. When He shows me His hands and feet and side, and says, "I have done all this for you and I am prepared to do yet more, for you shall be with Me where I am, that you may share My Glory"—then I need neither scourge nor spur to awake me—then for the love I bear His name my heart becomes like the chariots of Amminadib, swift in duty, with axles red hot with fervor! Then my soul would fly like the chariot of God when He rides on the wings of the wind! Have you not felt it? What blessed preaching it is when the heart glows with a sense of love! What happy Sunday school teaching it is when you know that Jesus loved you! What a delightful thing it is to make sacrifices, to give your substance, to bear and to suffer if once you feel the love of Christ burning within your soul!

The same is true of that abominable pit of selfishness, self-esteem, pride and self-seeking into which our feet so easily glide. Beloved, we are always something when Christ is nothing. We are always nothing when Christ is All-in-All to us. We cannot do Christ's work when our base hearts are puffed up with conceit! But when we once see His beauty, then we feel that the laces of His shoes we are not worthy to unloose. We know right well that we have no business to be proud nor to shirk hard work and seek our own ease. We know that and we condemn ourselves for this wrong—but we go on with it till the moment the love of God enters the soul—and then we are rid of it! Then we do, indeed, hate ourselves for ever having imagined that anything that could be done for Christ was difficult.

I am ashamed to be speaking to you coolly on a theme which is like fire within my own bones. I pray the Master, however, to make it like fire in your souls, also. The love of Christ is the very best cure for selfishness. And it is equally a cure for despondency and unbelief. What a pit of corruption unbelief is—a pit in which we hear strange noises of terrors to come, while unseen fears as to the present rush to and fro with horrible sounds. "I cannot believe, I cannot trust," says the man, but when God's love is shed abroad in his heart it is easy enough to believe. He asks himself, "How can I distrust? I know what Jesus did for me upon the Cross—how can I doubt? The Lord cannot be unkind to me in Providence, for it is impossible that He can forsake those whose names are engraved upon the palms of His hands."

God does not chide His people out of their unbelief, but *loves* them out of it! He indulges them with such sweet festivals in the banqueting house of communion—He does so sweetly stay them with flagons and comfort them with apples that they soon shake off the sickness of unbelief. Many a child of God can bear witness that the Lord has loved him out of his impatience. When he has been full of pain he has thought that God dealt harshly with him—but when Love has told him that all things work together for his good, he has endured pain with cheerfulness and gloried in his infirmities! In one word, are any of you suffering today under any spiritual malady? Is any sin too strong for you? Does any virtue appear to be so high that you cannot attain to it?

Behold I will be a guide to you this morning and point you out a path by which you may escape from your sin and rise to the greatest heights of Grace! Do you see that narrow line, that blessed pathway? It is a path which Love has made. Follow it and you shall come where you should be. Not there, not there where Moses says you go! Not there, not there where fear says if you do not you will be destroyed! Not there where conscience alarms and terrifies! But *here* where Jesus shows Himself to you and says, "I am married to you. You are My spouse, you are all My own. I love you better than I love Myself, for I did not spare Myself—but I died for you. I will love you whatever your infirmity and sin may be. I will love you till I

have washed you and made you clean. And then I will present you to Myself without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. I am drawing you, but you do not come as you should. However, I will still draw you till I have drawn you away from yourself, your sin and your folly. I will draw you, and draw you, and draw you till I draw you up to My right hand and there you shall be with Me forever!”

Beloved, you can do anything when you feel this! You can do *nothing* if you do not feel it. Lose your sense of Jesus’ love and the power of your religion is gone. You have stolen the life if you have taken away the love. Oh, believe it! Know it! Pray for it! Spirit of God, make them feel it and anything shall be possible, whether of sin slain or duty worked! I have often felt myself to be a mere expanse of foulness, like the mudflats by the seashore when the tide is out. As far as the eye can see is a continent of mud, with black rocks, rotting seaweed, pieces of wreck, creeping things innumerable and such foul matters as the eye might never wish to see again. What is to be done with this dismal region? Here lie the fisher boats embedded in the mud, what shall float them? It would be impossible to drag them down to the sea—must they lie there and decay? What is to be done with this mud and weed?

Wait and lo, at the appointed time, the sea advances from its bed! Ripple by ripple, wave by wave it rises, spreading out itself like a molten looking glass, where just now all was foul. And lo, yonder ships are lifted—they walk the waters like things of life—while all that rotted in the noonday sun is forgotten and the waves follow each other with continuous flashes of silver sheen! O Lord, You are that sea of love—Your mercies are Your waves of lovingkindness! Let them come up and flood my soul! With infinite power of love, arise and cover all my nature. I hope the Lord will deal so with all of you, if not by means of this sermon, yet by some other agency. Never rest until you enjoy this love, and when you do enjoy it, keep it.

If you find my Beloved, hold Him and do not let Him go till you bring Him into His mother’s house among His brethren. When it is well with you, I pray you speak for me to the King, that He would keep me, His servant, for the sake of His people to whom I minister, living ever in the light of His countenance, for there is strength and there is power for ministry and everything else beside.

III. That love which loved us out of nature into Grace has yet another work to do. The Lord will LOVE US OUT OF GRACE INTO GLORY. I know what troubles you in your quiet moments. You are thinking about the passage of that “narrow stream of death,” as we call it in our hymn. You are advanced in years and you know that death must come very soon. The thought of death depresses you and you need not be surprised that it should, for God has planted a Law of self-preservation in us all which makes us love life. Nature shudders at the grave, but whenever your nature starts back from dying, think of your faithful God and be assured

that He will love you through death. You shall be carried through it by the force of love.

One of the points about death which alarms you is this—you dread pain. Now, remember there is no pain in death—the pain is in *life*—when a man dies there is an end of life's pain! Death is the pain killer, not the pain maker! Do you fear the pains associated with death? Have you not already endured pain and been made to forget it through being divinely sustained by love? The love of God, I do avow it, has often acted as a Sovereign remedy for anguish. The bitter has been forgotten in the sweetness of fellowship with God. Who says that there is no God, no Christ, no Heaven? We have seen them all! Our eyes have seen them—not these poor optics which were only meant to spy out a few things in this dark world—but our *inner* eyes which see best in the blessed sunlight of eternity! With those eyes we have seen God and the enjoyment of the ravishing vision has subdued all the feebleness of the flesh and removed the pangs of the body.

Now Christian, that is what God will do with you when you come to die—He will bear you up on eagles' wings, so that you will say with one of the old saints, "Is this dying? Why it is worth while to live only to enjoy the pleasure of such a death as this," and yet he was not free from pain—he was loved *above* pain. But you say, "My trouble is about parting from dear friends." You think it will be a very sharp pinch to be separated from the wife and from your friends. So it would be—but when Jesus shall stand at your bedside and reveal Himself in a more apparent manner than He has ever done before—you will turn away from wife and children and friends and say, "O Lord, let me be with You where You are, for my soul is taken up with You rather than with these."

You had a little medicine to give your boy the other night and it had a bad flavor, but you mixed it with some sweet confection and he never tasted the bitter. Thus the pangs of separation will be mixed up with the sweetness of seeing Christ, so that you will not mourn. That is a blessed passage, "Death is swallowed up in victory," as though it were dropped like one black, cruel drop into the cup and then Victory was poured in as generous wine—and you drank the bitter drop right up before you knew it! Saints shall not know that they die, but only that they have gained the victory! "O, but I am afraid of death, itself," says one, "it is not parting with friends, or the pain, but I dread death, itself." O, Soul, when Jesus comes to meet you, you will know nothing at all about death. He will love you into Heaven! In a moment He will embrace you and you shall be with Him!

Those dear lips which are like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh shall kiss you away and you will be among the songs of angels in an instant! You shall not see death—you shall only see your Master! There shall be no skeleton with a scythe to cut you down—but a dear hand of love to gather you and place you in the Father's bosom—

***“One gentle sigh, the fetter breaks,
We scarce can say he’s gone,
Before the ransomed spirit takes
Its mansion near the throne.”***

The Rabbis say that God took Moses’ soul away with a kiss. So it was I doubt not, for so He does with all His saints—He kisses them into Heaven. “You have loved my soul out of the pit of corruption.” Now, when you and I stand in Heaven, with these poor heads enriched with the crown and waving the palm branch in these hands, what bliss will be ours! Here, let us stand upon this crystal rock a moment and gaze adown the precipice of light. There, lean over, my Brother spirit, and look steadily down.

See where stars and suns are glistering like glow-worms far below? How small their grandeur compared with ours in these sublime abodes! Look further down and peer into that awful darkness, that profound abyss, across which flash the flames of infinite wrath, kindling evermore afresh the fires of punishment. Oh, as we stand upon these heavenly heights and gaze upon the Eternal without fear—and then see far below us the outer darkness and the unquenchable fire, shall we not sing aloud unto Him who has “loved our soul from the pit of corruption”? Yes, we will sing louder and louder and louder and louder, and no cherubim or seraphim shall ever excel us in the fullness of our grateful praise! Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him whose name is Love, who has poured forth all His love upon us, His chosen, and saved us from the abyss of woe!

To His name be praise forever and ever! O, Sirs, will you all know this love? Will you all sing of it? Will you all be able to say, “He loved me out of the pit of corruption”? You may say it—you shall say it if you believe in Jesus! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 38.

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LOVE'S MEDICINES AND MIRACLES

NO. 1337

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 21, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but You have, in love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption: for You have cast all my sins behind Your back”
Isaiah 38:17.

HEZEKIAH'S recovery is a notable encouragement to prayer. If ever there was a case in the world where it seemed impossible that prayer could be of any use, it was that of Hezekiah. It was perceivable by everybody around him that he was sick unto death. Why, then, think of *prayer*? The case was fatal. Would it not expose prayer to derision if such a matter were taken before the Mercy Seat? Moreover, God's own Word, spoken by His servant the Prophet, had been given—“Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live.” What could be the use of prayer after *that*? Might it not be regarded as an impertinent interference with the known will of the Lord?

Yet, Brothers and Sisters, the proverb says that hunger breaks through stone walls—and so the desire to live, on the king's part—drove him to pray! Through all arguments and reasonings did Hezekiah's prayer break its way to the Throne of God. He turned his face to the wall in more than one sense on that occasion, for it seemed as if a wall stood in the front of him and shut out all hope of life. Yet he turned his face to it and prayed his way through it! Mark well his success. Fifteen years longer did he live in answer to his entreaties!

Brothers and Sisters, pray if you are between the jaws of death and Hell! Pray, Brothers and Sisters, if all hope seems to be utterly slain! Yes, and if you can put your finger on passages of God's own Word which apparently condemn you, still pray! Whether your fears have contorted those threatening passages or not, though many of them frown upon you, still pray! Perish with your hands on the horn of the altar even if you must perish! Never believe your case to be utterly hopeless so long as you can plead with God! There can be no hurt come of your supplication, but good must come of it in some form or other.

If God does not prolong life in answer to prayer, as He often may not or nobody would ever die, yet still He may give a greater blessing than continued earthly existence! And if it is a greater blessing, in God's judgment, it is better for us to receive it than to have the precise thing we have craved! In all cases, “pray without ceasing.” The Mercy Seat once stood within the veil where none could approach it except at one set season in the year—but now the veil is torn from top to bottom and you may come to it when you will! Therefore I charge you come boldly unto the Throne of the heavenly Grace in every time of need!

Yes, draw near in the darkest night and in the most wintry season! Draw near when God seems to have forgotten to be gracious and when you think He will no more be favorable. "Men ought always to pray and not to faint." Pray in the teeth of difficulty. Pray though impossibility seems to stand in the way. Pray against death and the devil. Pray like Manasseh in the low dungeon and like Jonah out of the belly of the whale! Pray against conscience and carnal reason—I was going to say even pray against your terrifying interpretation of God's Word, itself—for you must surely have misread it if you have thought that it forbids you to pray!

It cannot be so, since Jehovah's glorious memorial is that He is the God that hears prayer! He has never said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek you My face in vain." He may say and He knows His own meaning when He says it, "You shall die, and not live," and yet He may afterwards declare, "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears: behold, I will add unto your days 15 years." He will be favorable unto the voice of your supplication! That lesson having been learned, we shall now proceed to consider Hezekiah's prayer in detail. God grant that from his experience we may derive instruction and, if in its bitterness we have already had fellowship with the royal supplicant, may the Lord grant unto us to have communion with him in the sweeter part of it, so that we, also, may feel our souls brought up from the pit of corruption to celebrate the praises of our pardoning God!

I see in the text three things to think about at this time—the first is a healthy bitterness—"Behold, for peace I had great bitterness." The second is delivering love—"But You have in love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption." And the third is absolute pardon—"You have cast all my sins behind Your back."

Before, however, I divided my text, I ought to have given you another translation of it. Not that I would readily find fault with our version at any time, for it is, as a rule, marvelously correct and singularly forcible. But I am afraid when the new translation of the Bible comes out, it will be better to light our fires with it than to give up the old version, which is so dear to us and so interwoven into all our religious life. I trust our grandfather's Bible will maintain its hold on the mind of the English public against all comers, for it is so simple and yet so sublime, so homely and yet so heavenly in style.

The translation which I shall now submit to you is, however, more exactly literal according to the Hebrew—"Behold, to peace my bitter bitterness," or, "Marah, Marah," "and You have loved my soul from the pit of destruction, because You have cast all my sins behind Your back."

I. Our first head is HEALTHFUL BITTERNESS and you have it in the first sentence, which runs in Hebrew very nearly as follows—"Behold, to peace (or to health) my bitter bitterness." Our translators have given us, as it were, an *interpretation* of it rather than a translation. I do not dispute their interpretation, but yet it does not embrace all the meaning which the words convey to the instructed reader. The Hebrew is abrupt, sententious, and full of teaching—"Behold, to peace my bitter bitterness."

This means, first, that he underwent a great, sad and unexpected change. His peace, according to our version, was taken away and for it he

had great bitterness. The city of Jerusalem had been surrounded by Rabshakeh's armies. Sennacherib had sent his lieutenant to demand immediate surrender and that commander had written a letter full of blasphemy and contempt. Hezekiah, having but little faith, was terribly cast down. But though he had not sufficient Grace to be at ease in his mind, he had wisdom enough to go to his God in prayer. He spread the letter of Rabshakeh before the Lord and, in due season, he obtained an answer which more than satisfied him!

"The king of Assyria shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor build a siege mound against it." The angel of the Lord smote the armed men of the king of Assyria in their thousands! And the tyrant, hearing a rumor, fled to his own capital, where his sons killed him with the sword. That was the end of Sennacherib—and one would have said, and doubtless Hezekiah did say—"Now I shall have a long season of quiet. I shall reign in power over my country, watch over its interests, promote the happiness of my people, discharge justice, build up an empire and then, by-and-by, when I grow gray in years, in the fullness of time, I shall be gathered to my fathers in peace, as a shock of corn comes in its season."

Instead of this, while he was in the meridian of his age and had, as yet, no heir to his crown, he finds himself smitten with a painful, debilitating and depressing disease—and he understands that he must die! Hear him as, to the music of sighs and groans, he sings a mournful song—"I shall go to the gates of the grave, I am deprived of the residue of my years." Ah, Brothers and Sisters, let us never boast ourselves of tomorrow, for we know not what a day may bring forth! The promises of the opening morning are not often fulfilled—clouds gather and the sun which rose in splendor sets in showers. We reckon that now we have made our nest as downy as it can be and we who ought to know better, yet we say, "Soul, take your ease: my mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved."

But ah, how soon the mountain shakes, the nest is filled with thorns and the joy vanishes! The great Master of the feast comes in, clears the tables, takes away the fat things full of marrow and the wines on the lees well-refined! And instead, thereof, bids His servitors bring forth the wine of astonishment and the bread of sorrow! Ah, what changes may come! What changes have come to some here present! You have gained the object of your life and then have been disappointed in it! You have, after many a struggle, reached the position you sought for so eagerly, but now you find it a hard, uncomfortable ledge of rock overhung with thorns and briars!

You thought that when a certain trial was surmounted—the one which had so long been the "hill difficulty" of your way—you would come to a level plain where your willing feet should joyfully trip towards Heaven. But now fresh mountains rise before you! Unexpected Alps lift up their frowning battlements and your spirit is filled with heaviness at the dreary prospect—for peace you have great bitterness. Now, if this is so with you, count it no strange thing and do not imagine that an uncommon experience has happened to you. It was so with Hezekiah and has been so with tens of thousands of others whom the Lord has loved!

Notice, further, that Hezekiah's condition was one of emphatic sorrow, for he says, "Behold to peace, Marah Marah—bitter bitter," or "bitter bitterness." We read that when the children of Israel came to Marah they could not drink of the waters, for they were bitter. Nobody knows, unless they have experienced it, what parching thirst is and how cruel is the disappointment when, seeing water before you, you discover it to be so brackish that you cannot drink it. It tantalizes a man when he is least able to exhibit patience and so it intensifies the previous pain of the thirst. Marah was a notable spot in the journeys of the children of Israel and Hezekiah had come spiritually to a double Marah, a Marah Marah.

Have you, dear Friends, ever passed that way and drank of double bitterness—the wormwood and the gall? Beloved, some of us know what it means, for we have had, at the same time, a body racked with pain and a soul full of heaviness. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Perhaps the double Marah has come in another form—it is a time of severe trouble and just then the friend in whom you trusted has forsaken you—this is sorrow upon sorrow. Or perhaps you are in temporal difficulties and, at the same time, in great spiritual straits. Here, also, is Marah, Marah! The flying fish is pursued by a fierce enemy in the sea and when it flies into the air, birds of prey are eager after it. In like manner both in temporal and spiritual things we are assailed.

Paul notes in his famous voyage that he came to a place where two seas met—have you ever sailed through such a dangerous part of the sea? I doubt not that you have and have, at the same time, found both trouble and sorrow. Well, then, again I say unto you, count it not strange concerning the fiery trial, as though some strange thing had happened to you—for the like affliction has happened to many of your Brethren—yes, it has so often happened as to become a proverb that, "ill things seldom come alone."

Lo, on the heels of the first of Job's messengers there hastens another! If the Sabeans have taken away the oxen and the asses, we may be sure that the fire of God will be upon the sheep and the Chaldeans are already after the camels! No, do not wonder if the wind from the wilderness has smitten the four corners of the house and buried the children in the ruins, for adversities usually hunt in packs! Deep calls unto deep! Like countless birds which fly over our heads, migrating to distant lands, so do trials pass over us in clouds and we are startled as we hear strange and mysterious voices threatening grievous ills.

Now, notice, that the meaning of our verse is not at all exhausted by this explanation. We find in it a better meaning by far. "Behold to peace bitter bitterness," that is to say, the king's double bitterness worked his peace and health. Take the word in the sense of health, first. The illustration of the text is well known. Many a time, when a man has been exceedingly ill, the medicine which has met his case has been intensely disagreeable to the taste. It has been as gall to his palate, but it has operated as a strengthening tonic—it has chased out the fever and purged away the cause of the malady—and the man has recovered. Hezekiah bore witness

that God had sanctified his bodily sickness and his mental sorrow to his spiritual health.

Is it not often so with us? "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word." Hezekiah had time, during his sickness, to consider his disorderly house. While he lay with his face to the wall, he read a great deal upon that wall which he had seen nowhere else. A handwriting flamed forth in burning letters before his conscience and this was the interpretation—"Set your house in order." This writing would remain before his eyes even after he was respited. The death warrant was cancelled, but the mandate was not retracted—"Set your house in order." It *needed* setting in order and his first order of business was to look into home affairs, uncover family abuses and search into personal errors.

In his quiet chamber, the king would look over the administration of his kingdom and note the many mistakes he had made, the wrong acts which he had permitted in his subordinates, and all the abuses of the times. Among the rest, his own personal unbelief would rise before him. He would remember his fear and distrust and he would mourn over them. He had evidently been far more daunted by Rabshakeh, at the first, than he ought to have been, for Isaiah, to comfort him, said, "Be not afraid of the words which you have heard." He would think his whole life over and, beginning with himself, would search out all errors of the State and of the Church.

Self-examination is a great benefit to us, Brothers and Sisters, and anything which brings us to it does us real service. Brother, go over the whole of your spiritual farm, be diligent to know the state of your flocks and look well to your herds. Break up the fallow ground and clear out the thorns. Take the little foxes which spoil the vines and chase away the birds which devour the seed. Let all things be in the best condition—thus will your sickness work your health by discovering the secret source of your malady. The king's bitterness of soul then led him to repent of his wrongdoing, as he saw where he had sinned. He mourned His folly before God and humbled himself because of the inward sinfulness of nature out of which the outward transgression had come.

I am sure that very often sickness reveals a man to himself. We seldom see ourselves till sorrow holds up the glass before our eyes. Self is an unpleasant subject for study! Anatomy is nothing to it—to dissect a corpse is not half so disagreeable as to examine your own character! Have you ever laid yourself upon the table, cut deep with the dissecting knife, laid bare the inward parts and opened up the hidden things of the heart? Have you taken yourself to pieces, bone by bone? When you have got as far as your heart, have you not earnestly wished that you could avoid making any pre-mortem examination of that desperately diseased organ?

Ah, me! What a humiliating piece of business is the anatomizing of the natural heart—that heart which is deceitful above all things and out of which come envy and murder! We flinch from this till sickness and dependency strap us down and work away with the surgical knife. And yet this is one of the most beneficial of operations, for, "by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of our spirit." Ah, this bitter bitterness which makes us look within and see ourselves in our true colors is of

far more use to us than those dainty repasts which make us like the Israelites with the heathens, full of meat but also are cursing!

I can well imagine that this bitter bitterness made Hezekiah see the need of his God more than ever he had seen it before. He knew in whose hands his breath was and felt his entire dependence upon the Divine will. He saw himself to be absolutely in God's power as much as the thread is under the hand of the weaver who breaks it whenever he pleases! Or as the prey is under the power of the lion who can break all its bones! Now he learned to cling to the Lord his God and to cry, "O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me." Now he knew that the Lord was ready to save him and, while his heart was filled with joy because of the promise of prolonged life, he was also full of shame that he had ever doubted the power and Grace of God in his hour of trouble!

He would, from now on, feel that the Almighty Lord who could bring back the shadow upon the sundial ten degrees could as readily check the wrath and power of the most terrible invader! He who could deliver him from the gates of the grave could assuredly save him from the rage of mortal man! And He who used a poor lump of figs to disappoint death of its prey could also employ the weakest means to overthrow the most potent foe of Israel! From now on he would lean upon the Eternal and bid the virgin daughter of Zion despise her adversary and laugh him to scorn! After that schooling, Hezekiah would exhibit greater spiritual strength, more confidence in the promises, more power with God, more zeal in the Divine service and his peace would come back to him and would be even deeper than at the first.

That joy which had fled because of sin and God's visitation on account of it, returned to him once more! He felt himself happier because he was holier. He felt himself strengthened because the blessed purgative, though bitter, had removed a constant source of weakness. And he rose from his bed, not merely a new man in bodily health, but a renewed man as to his entire spiritual nature! How sweet are the uses of adversity when the Holy Spirit uses His sacred art upon the soul and turns the brine of tears into a sacred salt to season the spirit!

Before I leave this point I would express my prayerful desire that this may be the result of every drop of bitter which any of you may ever taste throughout your future lives. If you are not the Lord's people, your bitterness has no blessing in it. On the contrary, you may look upon it as a foretaste of that endless Marah by whose brackish fountain the impenitent must sit and weep forever! But if you are the Lord's child, believing in Christ Jesus, all is well, "for we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose."

II. Now we come to the second part of our text, which is peculiarly sweet to our souls, for it sets forth **LOVING DELIVERANCE**. The original runs thus—"And You have loved my soul from the pit of destruction." Taken in its first sense, the king ascribes to the love of God his deliverance from death and the grave. And he praises God for his restoration to the land of the living. But the words of inspired men frequently have a deeper significance than appears upon the surface and, indeed, they often

conceal an inner sense which, perhaps, they themselves did not perceive and, therefore, the king's words are as dark sayings upon a harp full of meaning within meaning.

At any rate, taking the language out of the mouth of Hezekiah, we will use it for expressing our own emotions and give it a wider sense if such is not the original range of its meaning. Let us notice three things. First the deed of Grace, "You have brought my soul from the pit of corruption." Secondly, the power by which it was performed, "You have loved my soul out of the pit of corruption." And thirdly, the *modus operandi*, which is indicated by another and equally good translation, "You have embraced my soul from the pit of corruption."

First, then, the deed of Grace of which you and I can sing. "The Lord delivered us from the pit of corruption." First, from the pit of Hell. Ah, there I should have gone long, long ago if mercy had not interposed. "A platitude," says one. Ah, Brother, God save you from thinking the acknowledgment of God's choicest mercies to be a platitude! I reckon that those in Hell would think it no platitude for us to bless God that we are not in their torments! Our sins, like millstones about our neck, might have sunk us in the sea of Divine wrath 20 years ago. And is it not a thing to be spoken of again and again, a mercy to bless God for, that we are not in the abode of condemned souls? Is it not even more a reason for gratitude that we shall *never* be there?

Believing in Jesus Christ and resting in the atoning blood, "there is therefore now no damnation," as the older version used to run, "to them that are in Christ Jesus." "Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that has risen again." The dreadful gates of Hell shall never be passed by a soul that believes in Christ Jesus! For us there is no undying worm! For us no unquenchable fire! For us no wrath to come! Glory be to God for this amazing Grace! But next, He has also delivered us from the pit of sinfulness which is, to my mind, as horrible a pit as Hell, itself! Indeed, under some aspects it is the same thing, for sinfulness *is* Hell—and to live under the power of sin is to be condemned.

Well, Brothers and Sisters, years ago sinfulness was our master and we loved it! We hated the ways of God and loved the wages of unrighteousness. But at this present moment, although we mourn because we are not perfectly rid of sin, yet sin shall not have dominion over us! We see sin in our nature, but we loathe it. It is no more a home-born citizen of our soul, but an alien to be expelled, an outlaw to be hunted down! No more do we consent to sin—"It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me." Blessed be God, although we are, sometimes, brought into captivity to the body of this death, yet He gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord. We are driving out the Canaanites of sin, little by little, by force of arms and by the might of Grace. And soon, by God's Grace, shall every Jericho fall flat to the ground and every Amorite be slain! Let us rejoice in being delivered from this pit of corruption!

Equally has the Lord delivered us, at this time, from the awful consciousness of wrath under which we once groaned. Brothers and Sisters, you have not forgotten, have you, the time when you felt the hand of God heavy upon you under conviction of sin? I do not know what the pangs of

damned souls may be, but I think I have been almost able to guess their horror in my hours of deep distress, when my soul chose strangling rather than life because of my misery, for I was drunk with wormwood and filled with sore anguish! This I know, that if my horror could have been greater, my life must have expired!

It is not always that awakened souls suffer so much, but any man who has felt his own sinfulness has seen that which might make every individual hair upon His head stand upright with horror, since to be a sinner is the most dreadful thing conceivable. To have God's wrath revealed in the spirit is to have a seething Hell within one's conscience! But, blessed be His name, He has loved us out of that pit of despair! No longer are we burdened with a sense of sin, for we are pardoned! Our conscience is purged from dead works. The precious blood has made us happy in God. We are reconciled to Him by the death of His Son and all our trespasses are forgiven forever! Therefore our heart is glad in the Lord and to Him will we sing our songs upon our stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord—

***“In a dungeon deep He found me,
Without water, without light,
Bound in chains of horrid darkness,
Gloomy, thick, Egyptian night!
He recovered there my soul with price immense.
And for this let men and angels,
All the heavenly hosts above,
Choirs of seraphim elected,
With their golden harps of love,
Praise and worship,
My Redeemer without end.”***

Since that first dark hour of conviction, I dare say you have passed through other fearful depressions of spirit, very similar to this which is recorded of Hezekiah. You have not descended quite so deep into the pit as you did at first, but yet you have known bitter sorrows and have been delivered from them. Are you, this morning happy in the Lord? Are you again rejoicing? Then say with the king—“You have in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption. The Lord was ready to save me, therefore we will sing my songs on the stringed instruments in the house of the Lord.” There comes speedily a time when we shall sing this song more sweetly in a better land than this, where there shall be none of these mists to hang about us, but changeless, everlasting noonday without a cloud!

In Heaven how sweetly shall we sing this song upon our stringed instruments—when there shall be no corruption left in us—but we shall be pure as the soul of God, Himself, perfect as Christ our Redeemer! What hymns of gratitude shall we chant before the Throne of God when, standing on the heights of Heaven, we gaze into the deeps of Hell! How grateful we will be, when, from our perfection, we remember the Fall and all the ruin of it from which almighty Grace lifted us up! Glory be unto the Lord forever, for, “In love to my soul You have delivered it from the pit of corruption.” Hallelujah! This is the deed which Grace has done!

Now, we have to notice the power which performed it. To my mind the Truth of God herein set forth is the delicious food for meditation, but it is not readily to be brought forth in preaching. Listen to the words—"You have loved my soul out of the pit of corruption." Love worked the rescue. Love did it all! Let Love wear the crown! I was asleep in my sin, but you, O Love, did awaken me with a kiss. Only when I began to hear that Jesus loved poor souls unto the death and, therefore, came to seek and save sinners, did I begin to wake from my deadly lethargy. Do you, my Brothers and Sisters, remember when the first thought entered into your minds that, after all, there was hope, for God was full of love?

Did not that thought bestir you? Did not the Lord love you out of the sleep of sin? Moreover, you loved sin and the wages of it—and the world looked very pleasantly upon you while it enthralled you. At last you came to know that the love of God was far sweeter than the love of sin. You had a glimpse of Jesus' dear marred visage, all bedewed with spit and with blood—and He appeared so much more fair and lovely than your sin, that you began to feel that sin and you must part. Thus the Lord loved you out of your love of sin! His sweet love made sin nauseous to you! You were weary of it and would have no more of it.

Do you remember that when you fell into despair and said, "I have been such a sinner that I must die in my sin," you were lifted up from the pit of unbelief? I know that I was borne out of it upon the eagle wings of Love! The Lord loved me out of it! He shed abroad such love in my soul that I could not be an unbeliever any longer. Just as an iceberg must surely melt when once it is borne along by the Gulf Stream, so my unbelief was compelled to dissolve in the warm stream of His dear love! Believe Him? How could I disbelieve Him when I saw His love to sinners and heard of His death for the very chief of them, even for such as I was! He *loved* me out of my unbelief!

But then I felt so weak I could do nothing. I was afraid to unite with His people and afraid to make confession of my faith for fear I should dishonor Him. Then He came and loved me out of my anxiety! He shed His love abroad in my heart so powerfully that I became strong with strength of His giving and knew myself to be safe because I was in His keeping. Then did I come forward and confess His name and unite with His saints, for I felt that I could trust my Lord to keep me even unto the end, for His love had loved me out of my weakness. I am telling the story as though it were about myself, but, Brothers and Sisters, I mean it about you, as well.

You have wandered, sometimes, since then. You have gone away from your Lord into worldliness and much that you unfeignedly deplore. And who is it that has led you back to peace and holiness? Who has been the Good Shepherd and restored your soul? My loving Lord has driven me back, sometimes, with sharp words of rebuke, but more often He has *loved* me back with attractive tenderness. What a wonderful magnet love is! It draws our iron hearts to itself. Its sway is kindly but irresistible! We wander here and there, in the instability of our minds, till a memory of the days of love comes over our spirit, and straightway we can rest no longer in the things of earth after which we have so wickedly gone astray, but we

say, "I will return unto my first husband, for it was better with me than now."

A moment's memory of the days of our espousals makes the heart sick with longings to return to her home in the bosom of Jesus. He loves us out of our backslidings! Perhaps you have fallen into lukewarmness and are chilly and lifeless. And what is the way to raise you out of that horrible state? Is it not a way of love? When the Laodicean Church was neither cold nor hot, and even her Beloved was ready to spew her out of His mouth, how was she bid to rise out of her condition? Did not the Lord say, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Christ's coming to commune with the Church was the cure of her indifference!

When the love of God is shed abroad in the soul you feel no longer sleepy and indifferent, but your spirit girds herself with zeal as with a cloak and your heart glows with vehement flames of affection. How truly does our poet sing—

***"O Jesus, King most wonderful,
You Conqueror renowned,
You sweetness most ineffable,
In whom all joys are found!
When once You visit the heart,
Then truth begins to shine,
Then earthly vanities depart,
Then kindles love Divine."***

The ever-gracious Lord means to perfect that which concerns you by the action of this same love. His gentleness has made you great and His love will make you glorious! Divine love is the most sanctifying agency in the world—it is that which checked us before we knew the Lord when we ran so greedily after sin. And it is that which constrains us now that we live unto His name, for, "the love of Christ constrains us ." Behold, then, the love of the Spirit! Is not this most blessed medicine?

We spoke of bitter draughts under our first head, and truly these have their virtue, but here the Lord's love uses medicine like itself! Yes, it becomes, itself, the medicine and the Lord seems to say, "Here is My dear child, sick, and I will restore him by giving him more love." Divine love is a catholicon, a universal medicine. No spiritual disease can resist its healing power. The love and blood of Jesus, applied by the Holy Spirit, will raise up the saints from pining sickness and restore them from the gates of the grave. No heart, however like granite it becomes, can long resist almighty love. The rebel may stand up in bold defiance and stand out in daring obstinacy, but when he begins to feel God loves him he cries—

***"Lord, You have won. At last I yield!
My heart, by mighty Grace compelled
Surrenders all to You!
Against Your terrors long I strove,
But who can stand against Your love?
Love conquers even me!
If You had bid Your thunders roll,
And lightning flash, to blast my soul,
I still had stubborn been.
But mercy has my heart subdued,
A bleeding Savior I have viewed,
And now I hate my sin."***

We must briefly notice the *modus operandi* of this love. "You have embraced my soul out of the pit of corruption." Yonder is the child in the pit and the father, wishing to save it, goes down into the pit and embraces his beloved one and so brings him up to life and safety. After this manner did Jesus save us! He embraced us by taking our nature and so becoming one with us. It is by embraces that He regenerates converts and sanctifies us, for He comes into union with us by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! All our lives He communes with us and embraces us with arms of mighty love and so lifts us up from the pit of corruption.

In this way, also, He will bring us right up out of our fallen state into perfection of holiness, by continuing the Divine embrace, pressing us nearer and nearer, and nearer, still, to His dear, loving heart till all sin shall be pressed out of us! He will by one eternal embrace of unchanging love lift us out of the pit of corruption into a state of absolute perfection where we shall dwell with Him forever! Glory be unto God for all this! He who has tasted of this cannot but sing as Hezekiah did upon his stringed instruments all the days of his life in the house of the Lord!

III. We have now, with much delight, to consider the promise of ABSOLUTE PARDON. "For you have cast all my sins behind Your back." This, King Hezekiah mentions as the *cause* of his restored peace and health. He could not be healed and cheered till the cause of disease was gone—and that was sin. Sin was the foreign element in his spiritual constitution and as long as it was there it caused fret and worry and spiritual disease. But when the sin was gone, health and peace came back. Now let me take the words before us and set them forth in a few brief sentences and bid you notice, first, the burden—sin. A heavy load, a weighty curse.

Observe the owner of this burden—Hezekiah says not sin, only, but *my* sin. If any sins in the world are heavier than others they are mine. Brothers and Sisters, you feel yours to be so, do you not? Then take the next word, which is a word of multitude and note the comprehensiveness of that burden. All my sins! "You have cast all my sins." Let us spell that word, ALL my sins. What a row of figures it would take to number them all! As to the record of them, surely it would reach round the sky—all my sins! In what balance shall they be weighed? What must the wrath be which is due to me on account of them? Think long and humbly of the words—*all my sins*.

Now, see the Lord comes to deal with them! He takes them all and what does He do? He casts them. "You have cast all my sins." What a deed of Omnipotence! What a Divine cast! None but Jehovah Jesus, Himself, could ever have lifted all my sins, but He did lift them and, like another Atlas, He bore them upon His shoulders! And having done that, even till He sweat great drops of blood and bled to death, He then took the whole mass of my sins and cast them as far as the east is from the west! No, more! He cast them behind Jehovah's back. Where is that? Behind God's back? Where can that be?

Men throw things behind their back when they cannot bear the sight of them. Our sin is loathsome and abominable to God. He will not look upon it and so He casts it behind His back! But then He is a just God and He must punish iniquity! It must come before the eyes of His Holiness to be

avenged. We have not, therefore, seen, as yet, the full meaning of the passage. No, it means that the Lord becomes oblivious of His people's sins. Somebody said, the other day, concerning a certain piece of business, "I shall never think of it again. It is gone as though it had never been." The Lord means all that concerning His people's sins—"I shall never think of them again. They are quite gone as far as I am concerned, I have thrown them where I shall never see them again. Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

What a gracious mode of pardoning sin! God Himself passes an act of oblivion and declares, "I will not remember their sins." He looks upon His people who have been so provoking and are still so prone to sin, and yet He beholds no iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel! He sees His people washed in the blood of the Lamb, robed in the righteousness which is in God by faith—and He beholds in them neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing—for He has cast their sins so far away that they are out of sight of Omniscience and out of mind of Omnipresence!

Again, I would remind you of the words, "behind Your back." Where is that? All things are before God's face—He looks on all the works of His hands and He sees all things that exist. Behind His back! It must mean annihilation, non-existence and non-entity! O my Soul, your God has flung your sins into non-entity and effectually made an end of them! He treats you as though they never existed and, as far as His justice is concerned, through the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, they are to the Lord as though we had never transgressed at all! "You have cast all my sins behind Your back." I do not think I need preach any longer upon this subject. Go home and turn it over in quiet meditation under the overshadowing of the Divine Spirit. Dear child of God, endeavor to get a grip of this great privilege of perfect pardon and never let it go! May the Holy Spirit seal it home to you.

You are right in bringing your sins before your own face and mourning over them. That is where they should be, but do not, at the same time, forget that they are *forgiven*. When a man casts his sins behind his back, God will put them before His face—but when, in penitence, a Believer sets his sins before his own face to mourn over them, then the Lord, in mercy, declares that He will cast them behind His back. Oh Believer in Jesus, Your sins are gone forever! Be restful, happy, secure, for you are accepted in the Beloved! Your sin has ceased to be! The longest lines can never reach the bottom of that sea into whose depths Jehovah has cast them!

The utmost industry of the devil can never travel into that land which does not exist, even the land which lies behind Jehovah's back into which He has cast Your sins! Who would not be a Believer in Jesus? Even if he were sorely sick and had to lie like Hezekiah, on the bed of death, who would not be a Believer? Even though he had to cry out, "Marah, Marah, bitterness twice over," who would not be a Believer and be embraced out of his misery by that mighty Love which abolishes the sin of the penitent?

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, O Sinner, and this shall be your portion, also, by God's abundant mercy. Amen.

A SENSE OF PARDONED SIN

NO. 316

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 20, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER, HALL, STRAND.**

***“You have cast all my sins behind Your back.”
Isaiah 38:17.***

HEZEKIAH here speaks positively on a matter concerning which he had not the remotest shadow of a doubt. He had trusted his God. He had cast himself upon the merit of the promised Messiah—and as the result of that faith, assurance had been granted to him and he now sings with unfaltering tongue, “You,” even You, O God, Most High and Most Just, “You have cast all my sins,” great and innumerable though they are, you have cast them all “behind Your back.” Oh, what a joyous thing it is to have a ray of heavenly sunlight in the soul and to hear the very voice of God as He walks in the garden of our souls in the cool of the day, saying to us, “Son, your sins which are many, are all forgiven you.”

The whisper of that heavenly voice may raise our heart to bliss almost Divine. It confers a joy that is not to be squalled by all the corn and the wine and all the pleasures which the riches and the enjoyments of this world can afford. To have the Divine kiss of acceptance. To be robed in the best robe. To have the ring on the hand and the shoes on the feet. To hear the heavenly music and dancing with which the returning prodigals are returned to their Father’s house—this, indeed, is a bliss worth worlds.

My dear Brethren, there are some who choose to dwell to a very large degree in their ministry upon such enjoyments as these which concern the experience of the child of God. But I fear they make it the main object of their preaching, to advance a system of frames and feelings. On the other hand there are other Brethren who constantly insist upon the doctrine of salvation by faith and by faith alone, but almost forget to testify to the experience which is the result of faith. Now, both of these men are well-meant, nevertheless, their error is founded upon a conscientious desire to advance the Truth of God.

The Brother who preaches experience and insists upon it is afraid lest any should possess a fictitious faith which is not the faith of God’s elect. He therefore preaches *experience* as a test and a touchstone by which he may try the spirits whether they be of God. On the other hand, our other Brother who deals with faith and not with experience, is afraid lest men should make a God of their feelings and lest they should rest in their experience and not in the Cross of Christ. He is so anxious to maintain in its clearness the fact that we are saved by what *Christ* felt and not by what *we* feel. He wishes to expound the great Truth of God that we are redeemed by Christ’s most precious blood and not by any experience of our

own, that perhaps he overshoots the mark. He forgets that where there is faith there will be experience and where there is a true experience there must have been a real faith.

Permit me, then, just to spend one moment in trying to show how these two truths really meet—a Divine experience and a single faith—necessary and joyous feelings and a yet more necessary and unalloyed confidence in Christ. The fact is that we are saved by faith and not by feeling. “We walk by faith and not by sight.” Yet there is as much connection between faith and hallowed feelings as there is between the root and the flower. Faith is permanent, just as the root is ever in the ground. Feeling is casual and has its seasons, just as the bulb does not always shoot up the green stem. Far less is it always crowned with the many, many-colored flower.

Faith is the tree, the essential tree. Our feelings are like the appearance of that tree during the different seasons of the year. Sometimes our soul is full of blooms and the bees hum pleasantly and gather honey within our hearts. It is then that our feelings bear witness to the life of our faith, just as the buds of spring bear witness to the life of the tree. Then our feelings gather still greater vigor and if we come to the summer of our delights, again, perhaps, we begin to wither into the sere and yellow leaf of autumn. No, sometimes the winter of our despondency and despair will strip away every leaf from the tree and our poor faith stands like a blasted stem without a sign of verdure.

And yet, my Brethren, so long as the tree of faith is there we are saved. Whether faith blossom or not, whether it brings forth joyous fruit in our experience or not—so long as it is there in all its permanence—we are saved. Yet we should have the gravest reason to distrust the life of our faith, if it did not sometimes blossom with joy and often bring forth fruit unto holiness. Experience, if I may so speak, is like a sundial. When I wish to know the time of day with my spirit, I look upon it. But then there must be the sun shining, or else I cannot tell by my sundial what and where I am. If a cloud passes before the face of the sun, my dial is of little service to me. But then my faith comes out in all its excellency, for my faith pierces the cloud and reads the state of my soul—not by the sunshade on the dial, but by the position of the sun in the heavens themselves. Faith is a greater and grander thing than all experience, less fickle, more stable. It is the root of grace and these are but the flowers, the germs, the buds.

Yet let us not speak against experiences. Let us value them—for it is a grand thing to sit in the sunshine of God’s presence. It is a noble thing to eat the grapes of Eshcol, even while we are in the wilderness. It is true there is a greater grandeur in believing Heaven to be mine when I can see no evidence. Yet it is a sweeter thing—

***“To read my title clear
To mansions in the skies.”***

I shall now turn to the one point of experience which seems to be brought out prominently in our text—that blessed experience of a consciousness of pardon—a sense of pardoning love shed abroad in the soul. I shall view my text in two ways. There are two sorts of pardon which God

gives and it is very needful to distinguish between them. First, I shall speak of a consciousness of pardon enjoyed by a man as a forgiven sinner. When I have so done, I shall speak of that other consciousness of pardon, more true to my text, more intimately connected with it—a sense of forgiveness enjoyed by man, not as a sinner, but as a child. A pardoned child knows he has already been forgiven by the Judge, but who now smiles to know that he is pardoned also by the Father.

I. First, then, let me speak of A SENSE OF PARDON AS GIVEN BY GOD TO THE SINNER.

We are not to wait for this sense of pardon before we come to Christ. The soul beholding itself lost, ruined and naked, is commanded in the Word of God to trust itself, *just as it is*, in the hands of Christ. Faith obeys that command and without one glimpse of joy within, commits the soul, all trembling and quivering with fear, into the hand of Christ, as into the hand of an all-loving and all-powerful Redeemer. I repeat it, we are not to stop for a sense of pardon until we do this. Faith is our *duty* and the sense of pardon is our *privilege*. We must first *obey* and then receive the reward.

I, feeling that I am utterly undone and that there is no reason in myself why I should have saved, cast myself at the foot of Christ's Cross and trust Him with myself eternally. As the result of that, God afterwards, of His own Free Grace, by His Spirit, sheds abroad in my soul an infallible witness which proves to me that I was forgiven in that very hour when I closed in with Christ and trusted my soul in His hands.

Now this consciousness of pardon includes many things, although it is not alike comprehensive in all souls. With some uninstructed persons, who know too little of Scripture, all the consciousness they enjoy is this—that sin is forgiven. They feel in their souls that every sin that ever stood on record in the book of God has been blotted out once and for all. Joined with this they are released from the terror and dread which once weighed upon their spirits. The nightmare has departed. That huge apparition which haunted them—a consciousness of their guilt—is gone and laid in the Red Sea of Jesus' blood forever.

But, being ignorant and uninstructed, they are not conscious of more than this—the sum total of their joys lies here—that sin is forgiven—that the wrath of God is turned away and that they shall not now go into the pit of Hell. If the Holy Spirit, however, is pleased to show them more at this time, they have a consciousness that God loves them. They are sure that Jehovah looks upon them as His favorites, as those to whom He has given a special grace with love. They, then, at that very moment, begin to read their title to the blessings of the Covenant. They see that all things are theirs because they are Christ's and that since there is no condemnation, there must be every blessing vouchsafed by the very act which took away the condemning sentence.

It sometimes happens, too, that this sense of pardon swells till it exceeds the narrow bounds of time—till the spirit is not only sure that it is reconciled to God and that its life is now secure—it sees Heaven itself as

at a little distance. It begins to realize its own title to the inheritance of the saints in light—no, in the hour of pardon I have sometimes known the emancipated spirit by faith—walk the golden streets, and lay its finger on the strings of the glorious harp of heavenly praise. There is no telling how comprehensive at times this sense of pardon may become. It may embrace a past eternity—receiving its election, an eternity to come—beholding its glory.

It may go into the depths of Hell and see the fires forever quenched, or mount to the glories of Heaven and see all these splendors given to it to be its own. And, yet, as I have said before, it is not so in all cases. With many uninstructed minds the only sense of pardon they get, is a removal of terror and an assured conviction that their sins are all forgiven.

But, says one, “How does this sense of pardon come? In what manner and form?” We answer, it comes in different ways and forms. Many men receive their consciousness of pardon in an instant. They were reading the Word of God, perhaps, and some one text seemed as if it rose up from its fellows, illuminated with heavenly fire and they saw that text printed on their own hearts. Such a one as this—“Come now and let us reason together. Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they are red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow.” Or, such another as this—“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”

The man was doubting before, full of gloom and despondency. In a minute all is light and life and joy in his heart. If he could have passed from Hell to Heaven by a single step, the change in his soul could not have been more manifest and clear. From being heavily burdened, he has suddenly become light of soul. From being sin-black from head to foot, he comes to view himself washed completely white and standing in the snowy garment of the Savior’s righteousness. With others this sense of pardon is of slower growth. It begins with a faint gleam of hope, another ray and yet another, till at last the morning star arises in their souls. The light increases still, till at last the morning star of hope gives way to the Sun of Righteousness Himself, risen with healing beneath His wings.

I have known some obtain peace in an instant and others have been months, if not years, before they could walk with a steady and firm foot-step and say with unquivering lip—“I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.” This conviction is sometimes conveyed to us in the most extraordinary manner. I have known it brought home to the soul by some singular saying of a minister, by some saying so appropriate to one’s own case, that we were compelled to say—“That is not the voice of man, but the voice of God, for man could not know my heart. That sentence is surely spoken by one who tries the heart and searches the reins.”

At other times some strange Providence has been the singular means of giving joy and relief. The strangest story I ever remembered to have read, with regard to peace given after a long season of despondency, was the case of Mrs. Honeywood, whom you may have read of. Living in Puritanic

times, she had been accustomed to hear the most thundering of its preachers. She became so thoroughly broken in peace with the consciousness of sin, that for, I think, some ten years, if not twenty years, the poor woman was given up to despair—she was absolutely certain that there was no hope for her.

It seemed that in her case a kind of miracle must be worked to give her peace of mind. One day an eminent minister of Christ, conversing with her, told her there yet was hope that Jesus Christ was able to save to the uttermost, them that come unto God by Him. Grasping a Venice glass that stood on the table, made of the thinnest material that can be conceived, the woman dashed it down on the ground and said—"I am lost, as sure as that glass is broken into a thousand pieces." To her infinite surprise, the glass suffered no damage whatever—remained without a crack. From that instant she believed that God had spoken to her. She opened her ears to hear the words of the minister and peace poured into her spirit. I mention that as an extraordinary and singular instance—perhaps the like is not to be found on record anywhere else. But God has His ways and means. He will by some means—by every means, by the strangest and most miraculous means—bring His people to a sense of pardon. If they reject all other ways, He will sooner work a miracle than that His banished ones shall not be brought Home.

Permit me to dwell for another minute or two upon the joy which this sense of pardon creates. I speak now from experience. That happy day when my soul first found a Savior and learned to cling to His dear feet was a day never to be forgotten by me. An obscure child, unknown, unheard of, I sat and listened to the Word of God. And that precious text, "Look unto Me and be you saved all you ends of the earth," lead me to the Cross of Christ. I can testify that the joy of that day is utterly indescribable. I could have leaped, I could have danced! There was no expression, however fanatical, which would have been out of keeping with the joy of my spirit at that hour!

Many days have passed, since then, of Christian experience, but there has never been a day which has had that full exhilaration—that sparkling delight which that first day had. I thought I could have sprang from the seat on which I sat and have called out with the wildest of those Methodist Brethren who were present, "I am forgiven! I am forgiven! A monument of grace! A sinner saved by blood!" Concerning that day all other occurrences are dim in my remembrance. I know nothing of what was said to me, or of what happened, but just this—that my spirit saw its chains broken to pieces and that I walked an emancipated man, an heir of Heaven, a forgiven one—accepted in Christ Jesus, plucked out of the miry clay and out of the horrible pit, with my feet set upon a Rock and my goings established.

The joy of the heart, when it receives pardon, may be *imagined* by some of you who have never tasted it. But if you ever come to *know* it, you will say with the queen of Sheba, "the half has not been told me." Men, when they are in this delightful state, are very communicative. They cannot hold

themselves in. They are like John Bunyan who wanted to tell the crows on the plowed land about it. They speak to the very trees. They think the world is in harmony with themselves. They go forth with joy and they are led forth with peace. The mountains and the hills break forth before them into singing and the trees of the fields clap their hands—the birds sing, to be in tune with their hearts—the sun shines more brightly that day than he ever did before.

Or if the rain descends, it is but the very emblem of those showers of mercy which have made glad the spirit. On that day, at least, if never before, the man becomes the world's great priest. He stands in the midst of all his fellow priests the great high priest of the world's universe. He walks in his white garments. He wears about him the belle of the music of praise. He offers the sacrifice which is acceptable to God and his own heart is the chief offering which he presents. Oh, on that day the world seems to be a great organ and the fingers of the pardoned man run along the keys and wake the music even to thunder—till the eternal sonnets of the ages long past dwindle into mere silence before the hallelujahs of that acclaim of praise, to which the pardoned sinner wakes the worlds.

Do not think I am fanatical in this—I speak but sober sense. In fact, I fall *short* in my descriptions of the joy of the spirit in which God has shed abroad a glimpse of His love and a token of His grace. Do I hear some Friend whisper that such feelings are fanatical. Ah, my Friend if It were so, it were a fanaticism devoutly to be sought for. It were one for which the most sober mind might strain itself forever. But you tell us this is fanaticism, for a man to be sure that he is pardoned? But pause awhile. Will you venture to say that this book is itself fanatical, that the Bible is a book full of enthusiasm and vain conceits? Oh, no, you believe this to be a book written in sober earnest.

Well, then, the feelings of a pardoned man are but the necessary and natural consequence of the truths of this book. Is there such a thing as pardon taught here? Are there not such words as these?—"Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven"?—"Blessed is he to whom the Lord imputes not his iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile"?—"You have cast all my sins behind Your back"? Are there not words here which tell us that Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save that which is lost? That there is such a thing as salvation, such a thing as regeneration, such a thing as passing out of darkness into marvelous light? Such a thing as being transplanted from the kingdom of darkness and taken into the kingdom of God's dear Son?

If the Bible teaches us that there are such things and if such things are realities in the experience of Christian men—it were a libel upon that book if men were not happy when they received them! In fact, if the experience of a Christian at the time of his conversion were not singularly, no—excessively joyful—it might be a contradiction to the teaching of this Word. But I say it, and say it boldly, all the transports that the most joyous spirit ever knew in the hour of its pardon are warranted by this Word.

No, not only warranted, but they fall short of what the Bible would warrant us in receiving.

“But,” says one, “I cannot understand that a man can be sure that he is pardoned.” That great and excellent man, Dr. Johnson, used to hold the opinion that no man ever could know that he was pardoned—that there was no such thing as assurance of faith. Perhaps if Dr. Johnson had studied his Bible a little more and had had a little more of the enlightenment of the Spirit, he, too, might have come to know his own pardon. Certainly he was not a very excellent judge of theology—no more than he was of porcelain—which he once attempted to make and never succeeded. I think both in theology and porcelain his opinion is of little value.

You say, how can a man know that he is pardoned? There is a text which says—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ—is it irrational to believe that I am saved? “He that believes has eternal life,” says Christ, in John’s Gospel. I believe in Christ—am I absurd in believing that I have eternal life? I find the Apostle Paul speaking by the Holy Spirit and saying—“There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Being justified by faith we have peace with God.” If I know that my trust is fixed on Jesus only and that I have faith in Him, were it not ten thousand times more absurd for me *not* to be at peace than for me to be filled with my unspeakable joy? It is but taking God at His word, when the soul knows as a necessary consequence of its faith, that it is saved.

But, besides that, suppose it should be true that God Himself, stepping as you think out of the order of nature, absolutely speaks to every individual man and seals on their hearts the witness that they are forgiven. Suppose it to be so, however hard you think the supposition to be—would it be unnatural then, that the spirit should rejoice? Now, such is just the fact, literally and positively. For the Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are born of God. And I will tell you this, though I am censured for fanaticism in it, there are times with every child of God when he could not doubt of his acceptance with Christ—when his being saved is a more palpable and sure truth than even the fact that he is in existence.

All the arguments you could possibly bring could not shake him, because he has the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit that he is born of God. Have you ever seen some poor servant girl accosted by a clever infidel, who begins to cut her down in all her principles and laugh at her and tells her she is a poor deluded thing? She answers him, bears with him, answers him again and again in her own simple style. You can see that her arguments are not conclusive or logical.

But wait till she gets to the end and you hear her say—“Well, Sir, you know a great deal more than I do and I am not able to speak as you can. I do not wish to think as you think. But, Sir, if what you have said is true, you cannot disprove what I feel in here. I feel that I am a child of God. I know I am and you may as soon reason me out of the fact that what I see does exist and what I feel has a real cause, as reason me out of this fact,

which I know in my inmost soul, namely, that I have passed from death unto life and am a child of God.”

Come here, blind man! His eyes are opened. Now try and convince that man he does not see. “No,” says he, “that is one thing I know. Other things I may be mistaken about. But one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.” Here, bring up that sick man who has been in bed this last fifteen years a cripple. A miracle is worked, he is restored and he begins to leap. Bring up our friend of the academy and let him argue against him—“Your leg is not in a sound state. I tell you, you are not well, you are not cured. You don’t feel happy, you don’t feel restored and recruited in strength.”

“Oh,” says he, “I don’t care for all your arguments, nor for all the Latin phrases that you use. I am cured, that is a matter of consciousness with me and I am not to be beaten out of it.” So it is with the Christian. There are times when he can say—“I am saved, I am forgiven.” The Lord has said to him—“I am your salvation,” and no reasoning, however sophisticated—no argument, however omnipotent it may seem to be, can shake him, or make him renounce his “which has great recompense of reward.”

And, now, my dear Hearers, before I leave this point, to dwell for a few minutes on the second part of my subject, I want to ask you a question or two. Have you ever had this consciousness of pardon in your lives? “No,” says one, “I never had. I wish I had. I mean to wait for it.” You may wait till you are lost before you will ever have it by waiting for it. Your business is to go to Christ as you are and trust Him and you shall have it. To sit still and not to obey that great commandment, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” is the very way to make your damnation doubly sure. I doubt that you will find this precious pearl unless you sell all that you have and buy that Divine field, Christ Jesus, and there find this pearl of great price.

“Yes, but” says another, “I feel I have never had it and I don’t want it.” Mark this, my Hearer—as God’s witness I speak to you today, and if you reject my warning now, in that hour when you lie quivering on a dying bed perhaps this uplifted finger and these eyes may be a vision for you then. If you shall never have in your soul a consciousness of pardon on this side of the grave, I fear that you shall come to your grave full of sin and after death shall be the *judgment* and after the judgment the wrath to come. This which you think to be enthusiasm and fanatical is essential to your soul’s salvation. Oh, put it not from you. Despise it not. Long for it. Cry for it. Pant after it.

And may the Lord God grant you to know that you are His child and that you are passed from death unto life! A better wish no heart can wish you. A larger benediction than that no minister’s lips could pronounce on you. God bring you out of your state of lethargy and slumber and darkness and bring you to seek and find the Savior—whom to know is to receive pardon in the conscience—and joy in the soul!

II. And now I shall want your patient attention but for a few moments while I take the second part of my subject and dwell upon it briefly. I have sometimes heard uninstructed Christians ask how it is that when a man

is once pardoned he is nevertheless to ask every day that his sins may be forgiven. We teach and we are bold to affirm it again and again and confess the teaching, that the moment a sinner believes, all his sins are put away—past, present and to come. They are all gone so far as God the Judge is concerned. There is not left one sin against any of His people, nor shall there be. “He sees no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel.”

And yet our Master tells us to bow our knee and say, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.” How can we ask for that we already possess? Why seek a pardon which we already enjoy? The difficulty lies in a forgetfulness of the relationship which Christians sustain to God. As a sinner I come to Christ and trust Him. God is then a Judge. He takes the great book of the court, strikes out my sins and acquits me. At the same moment, out of His great love, He adopts me into His family. Now I stand in quite a different relationship to Him from what I ever did before. I am not so much His subject as His child. He is no longer to me a Judge but has become to me a Father.

And now I have new rules, new laws. Now I have a new discipline. Now I have new treatment. Now I have new obedience. I go and do wrong. What then? Does the Judge come and at once summon me before His Throne? No, I have no Judge. He is a Father and that Father brings me up before His face and frowns on me—no, takes the rod and begins to scourge me. He never scourged me when He was a Judge. Then, He only threatened to use the axe. But He has buried the axe, now. Now that I am His child, He has no axe to put me to death with—He cannot destroy His own children. But He uses the rod upon me. If I do that which is wrong, as I am doing every day towards Him as a father, I am bound to go to Him as to a father on a child’s knees and say, “Our Father which are in Heaven, forgive me these trespasses as I forgive them that trespass against me.”

As each day you and I, if we are children of God, are continually sinning, not against Him as Judge, but against Him as Father, it behooves us to seek daily pardon. If we do not obtain that pardon daily, at last the Father lays on the rod, as He did in Hezekiah’s case. He smote Hezekiah till he was sick even to death. Hezekiah repented. The rod was taken away. And then Hezekiah felt in his soul, “You have cast all my sins behind Your back.” This was David’s case. David’s sin with Bathsheba had been forgiven years ago and put away, through the expected blood of Christ. But when he sinned it, God put him away for awhile—took away His Presence from him—as a father angry against his child. When David, however, repented, after he had been smitten, the Father took him again to His bosom and David could sing once again, “You have cast my sins behind Your back.”

Now notice that this pardon differs from the first. The first was the pardon of a Judge—this is the pardon of a father. The first quenched the flames of Hell—this only removes the paternal rod. The first made the rebel into a pardoned criminal and reversed the sentence—the second receives the erring child more tenderly to a Father’s breast. There are essential differences, because the pardon of the second does not relate so much

to the punishment and the guilt, as it does to the root of iniquity within and the removing of that from which was only cast upon us in order to make us sick of self and fond of Christ.

But when this sense of pardon is obtained by the Christian, it gives him a joy. Not so tumultuous as the first one he had. But still, and deep, and unruffled, and calm. He does not, perhaps, partake of that roaring sea of rapturous delight on which he sailed when first he was forgiven. But his peace is liken to a river and his righteousness like the waves of the sea. And this peace produces in him the most blessed and salutary effects. He becomes grateful to God for the chastisement he has received, which taught him his need of Jesus afresh. He henceforth avoids the sins which made him grieve his God. He walks more cautiously and tenderly than he did before—lives nearer to God—cultivates greater acquaintance with the Holy Spirit. He is more in prayer, more humble—and yet at the same time—more confident than he was before.

The light was withdrawn that he might receive a double portion of it by-and-by. The joy was taken away that his holiness might be increased. Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, are you laboring this morning under desertion of soul? Was there a time when you could read your title clear? Have clouds and darkness beset you? Do not doubt your Father's love for all that. Do not distrust Him. Do not go creeping on your knees as you did when you first went, as one who had never received pardon. Come boldly, yet humbly, to your God. Plead His promise. Rely upon the precious blood of Christ and look up and say, "My Father, my Father, restore unto me the joy of Your salvation and uphold me with Your free Spirit"

And you shall have back the confidence of your youth and you shall again feel that the Holy Spirit dwells within you. You shall once again mount above the trials and troubles of this mortal life and begin to enter into the rest which remains for the people of God.

One solitary sentence or so and I will dismiss the present congregation. Have I a man here who declares that he is pardoned and yet indulges in the sins which he pretends are forgiven? Sir, you have either deceived yourself, or else you are uttering what you know is untrue. He who is forgiven hates sin. We cannot be washed clean if we still persist in living up to our neck in filth. It cannot be possible that a man is pardoned while he still continues to wallow in abominable sin. "O yes," but he says, "I am no legalist. I believe the grace of God has made me clean, though I do go on in sin." Sir, it is clear you *are* a legalist, but I will tell you what else you are—you are no child of God, you are no Christian. For the Christian is a man who uniformly hates sin.

There never was a Believer who loved iniquity—such a strange thing as a pardoned sinner who still loves to be in rebellion against his God. "Yes," but I hear another say, "Sir, that may be true. But I do not profess to be pardoned in any such way as you speak of. I believe my sins to be so small and little, that I have no need to go seeking mercy. Or if I seek it I do not expect that I shall find it here. I dare say I shall fare as well as the best when I go into another world." Poor fool! Poor fool! You are con-

demned already. The sentence of God has gone out against you, "Whoever believes not on the Son of God is condemned because he believes not." And yet you, when your sentence is written out and your death-knell perhaps tolling now, say your sins are little? They are so great, Sir, that the fires of Hell shall never expiate them and your own misery, in soul and body forever, shall never be a full equivalent for the iniquity you have committed against God.

And so you don't want to know that you are forgiven, you are consent to take your chance with the rest? A chance, indeed, it is! But know, Sir, I feel so differently in my heart from you in that respect, that had I a doubt at this time about my sins being forgiven, I could not give sleep to my eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids, till I was assured that I had received God's love in my heart. If at any time a doubt crosses my soul, I am the most wretched of beings. For sure, this is like light to the eyes, like friendship to the spirit, like drink to the thirsty and bread to the hungry—to know one's self forgiven.

Go out of this hall and say, "I am walking over the mouth of Hell and may slip in at any moment, I am hanging over perdition by a single hair and into a flame may be speedily hurled, yet I do not care whether I am damned or not." Say it right out in broad English—say you are in doubt as to whether you shall go to Heaven or Hell—say, if you must go home today and in your upper chamber lie down on your narrow bed to die—say you are not sure whether you shall see the face of your God with acceptance and yet you are content. Speak like an honest man and like a fool, for such language is only the raving of a madman and a fool.

Oh, I beseech you, never be content until you have sought and found a Savior. Yes and until you are sure you have found Him, do not be happy with a "perhaps," or a "perchance." Do not rest your soul on chances, but make sure work for eternity. I bid you, Sirs, by the solemnities of eternity, by the fires of Hell, and by the joys of Heaven—get your foot on a Rock and know it is there. Do not make guesswork of it. Put it beyond all chance. O dying Sinner! Do not let it be a question with you whether you shall be saved or whether you shall be damned. O frail Man, tottering on the brink of the grave—do not let it be a matter of uncertainty as to whether Heaven shall receive you, or Hell engulf you. Be sure of it one way or the other. If you can make your bed in Hell, if you can endure the everlasting burning, if you can suffer the anger of God when He shall rend you in pieces like a lion, then go on in your folly.

But if you would have a portion among them that are sanctified. If you would see the face of Christ and walk the golden streets—be sure that you are in Christ—be certain that you are trusting Him and be not satisfied till that is put beyond all question, beyond all argument and contention.

The Lord add His blessing to my feeble words, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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NO. 221

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, SEPTEMBER 21, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God.”
Isaiah 40:1.***

WHAT a sweet title—“My people!” What a cheering revelation—“Your God!” How much of meaning is couched in those two words, “My people!” Here is specialty. The whole world is God’s. The Heaven, even the Heaven of heavens is the Lord’s and He reigns among the children of men. But He says of a certain number, “*My people.*” Of those whom He has chosen, whom He has purchased to Himself, He says what He says not of others. While nations and kindreds are passed by as being simply nations, He says of *them*, “My people.” In this word there is the idea of proprietorship to teach us that we are the property of God. In some special manner the “Lord’s portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance.” All the nations upon earth are His. He takes up the isles as a very little thing. The whole world is in His power. Yet are His people, His chosen favored people, more especially His possession. For He has done more for them than others. He has bought them with His blood. He has brought them near to Himself. He has set His great heart upon them. He has loved them with an everlasting love, a love which many waters cannot quench and which the revolutions of time shall never suffice in the least degree to diminish.

“My people”! O my Hearers, can you by faith put yourselves in that number who believe that God says of them, “My people”? Can you look up to Heaven tonight and say, “My Lord and my God—mine by that sweet relationship which entitles me to call You Father. Mine by that hallowed fellowship which I delight to hold with You when You are pleased to manifest Yourself unto me as You do not unto the world”? Can you, Beloved, put your hand into your heart and find there the indentures of your salvation? Can you read your title writ in precious blood? Can you by humble faith lay hold of Jesus’ garments and say, “*My Christ*”? If you can, then God says of you, “*My people.*” For if God is your God and Christ your Christ, the Lord has a special, peculiar favor to you. You are the object of His choice and you shall be accepted, at last, in His beloved Son. How careful God is of His people—those of whom He says, “My people.” Mark, how

anxious He is concerning them, not only for their life, but for their comfort.

He does not say, “strengthen you, strengthen you My people.” He does not say to the angel, “protect My people.” He does not say to the heavens, “drop down manna to feed My people”—all that and more His tender regard secures to them. But on this occasion, to show us that He is not only mindful of our interests, but also of our superfluities, He says, “Comfort you, comfort you My people.” He would not only have us His living people, His preserved people, but He would have us be His happy people, too. He likes His people to be fed, but what is more, He likes to give them “wines on the lees well-refined,” to make glad their hearts.

He will not only give them bread, but He will give them honey, too. He will not simply give them milk, but He will give them wine and milk and all the sweet things which their hearts can desire. “Comfort you, comfort you My people.” It is the Father’s yearning heart, careful even for the little things of His people. “Comfort you, comfort you”—that one with a tearful eye. “Comfort you, comfort you”—yonder child of Mine with an aching heart. “Comfort you”—that poor bemoaning one. “Comfort you, comfort you—My people,” says your God.

Now tonight we shall notice the *parties to whom the command is addressed*. Secondly, *the reason for it*. And thirdly, *the means for carrying it out*.

I. First then, TO WHOM IS THIS COMMAND ADDRESSED? You know, Beloved, the Holy Spirit is the great Comforter and He it is who alone can solace the saints if their hearts are really cheered. But He uses instruments to relieve His children in their distress and to lift up their hearts from desperation. To whom, then, is this command addressed? I believe it is addressed to *angels* and to *men*.

To *angels* first of all I believe this command is addressed—“Comfort you, comfort you My people.” You often talk about the insinuations of the devil. I frequently hear you bemoaning yourselves because you have been attacked by Apollyon and have had a hard struggle with Beelzebub. You have found it hard to resist his desperate thrusts which he made against you and you are always talking about him. Allow me to remind you that there is another side of that question, for if evil spirits assault us, doubtless good spirits guard us. And if Satan can cast us down, doubtless it is true God gives His angels charge over us, to keep us in all our ways and they shall bear us up in their hands lest at anytime we dash our feet against a stone. It is my firm belief that angels are often employed by God to throw into the hearts of His people comforting thoughts. There are many sweet thoughts which we have by the way, when we sit down and when we rise up, which we scarcely dare attribute immediately to the Holy

Spirit, but which are still beautiful and calm, lovely and fair and consoling. And we attribute them to the ministry of angels.

Angels came and ministered unto Jesus and I doubt not that they minister unto us. Few of us have enough belief in the existence of spirits. I like that saying of Milton's, "Millions of spiritual creatures walk this earth both when we sleep and when we wake." And if our minds were opened, if our ears were attentive, we might hold fellowship with spirits that flit through the air every moment. Around the deathbed of saints angels hover. By the side of every struggling warrior for Christ the angels stand. In the day of battle we hear in the air the neighing of their steeds. Hark, how softly do they ride to help the elect of God while in the stern conflict for the right and for the Truth of God. When they would have been cast down, some angel whispers, "Courage Brother, courage, I would I could stand by your side, shoulder to shoulder and foot to foot, to fight the battle, but I must not. It is left for men. Courage, then Brother, because angels watch over you!"

It is a good wish of ours, when we say at eventide, "Peace be to you Beloved! Good angels guard you! May they spread their wings over you and stand around your bed!" But it is more than a wish, it is a reality. Do you not know it is written, "the angel of the Lord encamps round them that fear Him"? "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them who are heirs of salvation?" This command then, comes to angels—"Comfort you, comfort you My people." Full often the bright winged seraph flaps his wing to earth to comfort some desponding heart. Full often the cherub ceases for a moment his mighty song to go on errands of love—he descends as Gabriel did of old—to cheer the heart of many a struggling man and to stand by the side of those who are in conflict for God and for His Truth. You angels, you bright spirits, "Comfort you, comfort you My people."

But on earth, this is more especially addressed to the Lord's *ministers*. He calls His ministers angels of the Churches, albeit, they should be a great deal more like angels than they are. Ministers are bound to comfort God's people. I am sure, however, they cannot do it unless they preach the good old doctrines of the Truth of God. Except they preach Grace and gracious doctrine, I cannot see how they are to console the minds of the Lord's family. Were I to adopt a lax theology which teaches that God's children may fall away, that although redeemed they may yet be lost, that they may be effectually called and yet slide back to perdition—I want to know how I could carry out this command? I should say, "Brethren, God has told me to comfort you. That is what I have to preach. You must get what comfort you can out of it for I really cannot find much."

I have often marveled how the Arminian can comfort himself, where-with he can light a fire to warm his own heart! What doctrine has he? He believes he is a child of God today and he is taught to believe he is a child of the devil tomorrow. He is now, he says, in the Covenant, but then that Covenant is such an uncertain thing that it may at any time be broken down and he may die beneath its ruins. He knows himself to be redeemed by the blood of Christ, yet he is taught that that will not be sufficient without the concurrence of some good thoughts, good actions, or certainly by some good grace, some faith of his own.

He is led to believe that his standing depends upon his keeping near to God, instead of remembering that his keeping near to God must be by a sweet attraction that proceeds from God Himself. Where, then, comfort is to be procured, I cannot tell. Happy I am I have no such Gospel as that to preach. Let me preach the old Gospel of Chrysostom, the old Gospel of Augustine, the old Gospel of Athanasius and above all the old Gospel of Jesus Christ—the Originator of it. For there I can find something to comfort the child of God, “Comfort you, comfort you My people.” It is our duty to reprove, to exhort, to invite, but it is equally our duty to console.

The minister should ask of God the Spirit that he may be filled with His influence as a comforter, that when he ascends his pulpit on the Sabbath morning his poor, hard-working people, who have been toiling, fretting with care and anxiety all the week, may say, “Here comes our minister—he is sure to have his mouth filled with good things. As soon as he opens his lips he will utter some great and glorious promise from God’s Word. He has little to say himself, but He will be sure to tell us some good old Truths of God with some fresh unction and we shall go away refreshed.” Oh, you sons of toil, some of you understand this. With weary feet you come to God’s House. But oh, how gladly do you sing there and how sweetly does your singing harmonize with your hearts! And when you have heard the Word you go away and say, “Would God it were Sunday all the week! Oh, that I might sit and ever hear the Words of God! Oh, that I might sit and ever drink in such comforts, so should I be satisfied as with marrow and fatness!”

But sometimes you come up and there is a flogging for you just when there needs to be consolation. Or you get some dry hard metaphysical subject that has not any nourishment for your souls in it and you go away half starved. You hear some fine discourse with rounded periods and people say, “Oh, such an oration! Never was English so beautifully spoken by Hall or Chalmers. How admirably it was delivered!” But alas, alas! What of the dish, the porcelain, the knife, the plate, the vase of flowers—where is the *food*? There is none there. You have got the garnishing and you ought

to be thankful and hold your ministers in esteem, even if they withhold from you your necessary bread?

But the child of God won't like that. He says "I am weary of such things, away with these garnishing, give it to me in plain rough Saxon if you will, but give me the Gospel! Cut it up in any fashion you like, but give me something to feed upon." The language may be rough and the style homely, but the heir of Heaven says, "There was 'comfort you My people' in it. And that was what I wanted. Its style, humanly speaking, may not have exactly suited my taste, but it has fed my soul and that will suffice me."

But, my Friends, do not support your ministers as an excuse for the discharge of your own duties—many do so. They think when they have subscribed towards the support of the ministry, it is enough—imagining, as our Roman Catholic friends do, that the priest is to do everything and the people nothing. But that is very wrong. When God said, "Comfort you, comfort you My people," He spoke to all His people to comfort one another. And who is there here that knows the Lord and has tasted of His grace who cannot comfort his Brethren? There is my strong friend who is on the mount feasting on dying love. He is the subject of rhapsodies and high excitement. His soul is like the chariot of Amminadib. It is on fire with his Master's presence. He is living near to God and drinking in fullness of joy.

Oh, my Brother, go and tell others of your joy, for you know not what sorrow there is upon the earth. When you are happy, remember there is sure to be someone else sad. When your cup runs over, find an empty cup to catch the drops that overflow. When your soul is full of joy, go, if you can, and find a mourner and let him hear your song, or sit down by his side and tell him how glad you are and maybe his poor heart may be warmed by your sweet cheering words. But are you weak? Are you sad, yourself? Then go to Him who is the great Comforter and ask Him to relieve your distresses and after that go out yourself and comfort others. There are none so good to comfort others as those who once were comfortless. If I were an orphan now and needed a helper, I would seek one who had been an orphan in his youth, that he might sympathize with me. Were I houseless and poor, I would not go to the man who has rolled in wealth from earliest youth, but I would seek out the man who, like myself, has trod with bare feet the cold pavement of the street at midnight.

I would seek out the man who, penniless and poor, has begged his way from town to town and then, by God's Providence, has worked himself up. For I could believe that such an one would have a heart to sympathize with me. Go, you poor, tried one, go you weather-beaten soul, if you can, and call to your mate, who is just out at sea with you and tell him to be of

good cheer. You who are in the valley of the shadow of death, sing, “Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” And maybe some Brother far behind you will hear the song and will take heart—

***“Lives of great men all remind us,
We can make our lives sublime,
And departing, leave behind us,
Footprints on the sands of time.
Footprints that, perhaps, another,
Sailing over life’s solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, may take heart again.”***

Go and when you have found any good, strive to perpetuate it by communicating it to others. When your foot is on the rock show others how to put their feet there. When you are glad, tell others how you were made glad and the same cordial which cheered you may cheer them likewise. “Comfort you, comfort you My people.”

Now why do we not enjoy this a little more? I believe one reason is because we are most of us rather too proud to tread in our Master’s footsteps. We like not to say with Him, “I am not come to be ministered unto, but to minister.” “Comfort you, comfort you My people” is a sublime admonition, but never surely intended for the meager sympathy of fashion—for a lady who can ride in her carriage and send her card up when she calls to inquire for a friend who is sick. But were I to press home the duty and tell her that “My people” includes the poorest of God’s flock, the weakest and the mean, she would think me a rude and vulgar young man unacquainted with the etiquette of genteel society. Comfort the poor!—why should she? “The lower classes expect a great deal too much of the upper, I shall not demean myself by stooping to them.” This kind of feeling many professing Christians have—they talk with a fine lisp, they deem it enough to say, “Poor creature, I pity your case, I am sorry for you!” But the heir of Heaven reads “Comfort you, comfort you My people.”

There is a poor man in the streets who has just come begging a crust at your door and you can see by what he says that there is something of God’s grace in his heart—then comfort him. There is another up the creaking staircase in that back alley. You never went up there, you might be afraid to go. But if you hear of a child of God there, do not shrink back. God’s diamonds may be often found among heaps of rags and tatters, in the very outskirts of the city, the abodes of haggard poverty—so go after them. Whenever you hear of a child of God, go and find him out, for this command, “Comfort you, comfort you My people,” never ought to be put aside by our pride. Why, you go to your Churches and Chapels sometimes and sit in your pews without even a thought of speaking to your

neighbors. Some men will go to a Chapel seven years and scarcely know the name of the next seat-holder. Is that right? Many will sit at the Lord's Table, too, and not speak to each other.

That is not the fashion of communion as I understand it—it is not the fashion of the Gospel either. When I was but a youth, the smallest boy almost that ever joined a Church, I remember I thought that everybody believed what he said and when I heard the minister say Brother, I thought I must be his brother, for I was admitted into the Church. I once sat next to a gentleman in a pew and we received the bread and wine together. He called me "Brother," and as I thought he meant it, I afterwards acted upon it. I had no friend in the town of Cambridge, where I was. And one day when walking out, I saw this same gentleman and I said to myself, "Well now, he called me Brother, I know he is a great deal better off than I am, but I don't care for that. I will go and speak to him." So I went and said, "How do you do, Brother." "I have not the pleasure of knowing you," was his reply. I said, "I sat next to you at the Lord's Table last Sabbath, Sir, and you called me 'Brother' when you passed the cup to me and I was sure you meant it." "There now," said he, "it is worth while seeing someone who believes a little with sincerity in these times, come in with me."

And we have been the nearest and dearest bosom friends ever since, just because he saw I took him at his word, that he meant what he said. But nowadays profession has become a pretense and a sham. People sit down at Church together, as though they were Brethren. The minister calls you Brethren, but he won't speak to you, or own you as such. His people are his Brethren, no doubt, but then it is in such a mysterious sense that you will have to read some German theologian in order to comprehend it. That person is "your very dear Brother," or "your very dear Sister." But if you are in distress, go to them and see if they will assist you. I do not believe in such a religion as that. I would have those who profess to be Brethren, believe that, "Comfort you, comfort you My people," applies to every member of Christ's Church and that they all ought to carry it out to the utmost of their abilities.

II. Secondly, WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR THIS COMMAND? Why does God say "Comfort you, comfort you My people!"

The first reason is because *God loves to see His people look happy*. The Roman Catholic supposes that God is pleased with a man if he whips himself, walks barefooted for many miles and torments his body. I am certain if I were to see anyone do that I should say, "Poor soul, give him a pair of shoes. Take that whip from him, I cannot bear to see him so." And as I believe that God is infinitely more benevolent than I am, I cannot suppose that He would take pleasure in seeing blood run down a man's

back, or blisters rising on his feet. If a man would please God he had better make himself as happy as he can. When I am by the seaside and the tide is coming in, I see what appears to be a little fringe, looking almost like a mist. And I ask a fisherman what it is. He tells me there is no mist there. And that what I see are all little shrimps dancing in ecstasy, throwing themselves in convulsions and contortions of delight.

I think within myself, "Does God make those creatures happy and did He make me to be miserable? Can it ever be a religious thing to be unhappy?" No—true religion is in harmony with the whole world. It is in harmony with the sun and moon and stars. And the sun shines and the stars twinkle. It is in harmony with all the world and the world has flowers in it and leaping hills and caroling birds. It has joys in it. So I believe religion was meant to have joys in it and I hold it to be an irreligious thing to go moping miserably through God's creation. You cannot help it sometimes, just as sins will overtake you, but happiness is a very virtue. "Go your way, eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God now accepts your works," which means not so much eating and drinking, as the living with a joyous countenance and walking before God, believing in His love and rejoicing in His grace.

Again—"Comfort you, comfort you My people." Because *uncomfortable Christians often dishonor religion*. Look at my Friend who has come here tonight with such a sorrowful countenance. Yesterday he had a new servant in his house and when she went down into the kitchen she said to her fellow servant, "Is not our master a pious man?" "Yes, surely." "I thought so because he looks so miserable." Now that is a disgrace to religion. Whenever a Christian man sinks under affliction. When he does not seek grace from God to battle manfully with his sea of troubles. When he does not ask his Father to give him a great weight of consolation whereby he shall be able to endure in the evil day, we may say he does dishonor to the high and mighty and noble principles of Christianity which are fitted to bear a man up in times of the very deepest affliction.

It is the boast of the Gospel that it lifts men above trouble. It is one of the glories of our Christianity that it makes us say, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labor of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." But when the Christian gets sad and miserable, run to him, Brothers and Sisters, wipe that tear from his eye, tell him to cheer up, or at least if he is sad, not to let the world see it. If he fasts, let him anoint his head and wash his face, that he appear not unto men to fast. Let his garments be always white and let his head lack no oil. Let him be happy. For so he gives credit to religion.

Again—"Comfort you, comfort you My people"—because *a Christian in an uncomfortable state cannot work much for God*. Break a poor man's heart and let him come on this platform with a grieved and agonizing spirit and oh, what a want of power there will be in him! He wants all his time for his own sighs and groans and will have none to spend upon God's people. We have seen broken-hearted ministers who have sadly lamented that when in trouble they have found themselves unable to declare God's Truth as they would wish. It is when the mind is happy that it can be laborious. Nothing hurts the man while he can keep all right with Heaven and feel it so. While he can say that God is his own God he can work night and day and scarcely feel fatigued. But take away his comforts and his joys and then one day's labor distracts his nerves and shatters all his mind. Then comfort God's people, because bruised reeds give little music and the smoking flax makes little fire. "Comfort you, comfort you" the saints, for they will work ten times better when their minds have once been made comfortable.

Again—"Comfort you" God's people, because *you profess to love them*. You call that poor aged cripple, loitering home tonight, leaning on her crutch, your Sister. Do you know that she will go to bed tonight without supper? Only once has she tasted food today and that was dry bread. Did you know that? And is she your Sister? Let your heart speak—would you allow your *sister* to eat dry bread once a day and have nothing else? No—out of love to her as your relation, you would go and comfort her. There is another poor Brother who will pass you on the road home, not poor in bodily things, but poor in soul, distressed in spirits. Don't do as that person has just done—he has quickened his pace—because he says that old man makes him miserable and it makes him melancholy to talk with him.

No—just go to him and say, "Brother, I hear you are in the valley of Baca. Well, it is written, they that pass through the valley of Baca make it a well, the rain also fills the pools." Join yourself to him, for it is written, "Comfort you, comfort you My people." "No, Sir," you say, "I intend to go tonight with one or two very good people and we shall enjoy ourselves together and be very glad tonight." Yes, but if they are glad you cannot comfort them, so go and seek out some broken-hearted one if you can, some poor, sad, mourning one and say, "The Lord has appeared to you of old, saying, 'I have loved you with an everlasting love.' God's mercies have not failed and therefore, we are not consumed."

Go and cheer him. What? Are there no families near you where the head has lately been removed by death? Have you no bereaved friends? Have you no poor in your streets, no distressed, no desponding ones? If you have not, then yonder Scripture might be torn out of the Bible for it would be useless. But because I am sure you have such, I bid you, in God

Almighty's name, to go and seek out the needy, the distressed and the poor and send them portions of meat. "Comfort you, comfort you My people."

III. In the last place. God never gives His children a duty to do without giving them THE MEANS TO DO IT. He never bids them make bricks without straw and when He tells us to comfort God's people, we may be certain there are many means whereby they may be comforted. Let me just hint at those things in the everlasting Gospel which have a tendency to comfort the saints. What? Child of God! Are you at a loss for a topic to comfort the aching heart? Go tell, then, of the ancient things of former days! Whisper in the mourner's ear electing grace and redeeming mercy and dying love. When you find a troubled one, tell him of the Covenant, in all things ordered well, signed, sealed and ratified. Tell him what the Lord has done in former days, how He cut Rahab and wounded the dragon. Tell him the wondrous story of God's dealings with His people. Tell him that God who divided the Red Sea can make a highway for His people through the deep waters of affliction. That He who appeared in the burning bush which was not consumed, will support Him in the furnace of tribulation.

Tell him of the marvelous things which God has worked for His chosen people—surely there is enough there to comfort him! Tell him that God watches the furnace as the goldsmith the refining pot—

***"Your days of trial, then,
Are all ordained by Heaven.
If He appoint the number 'ten,'
You never shall have eleven."***

If that does not suffice, tell him of His present mercies, tell him that He has much left though much is gone. Tell him there is "now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Tell him that now he is accepted in the Beloved. Tell him that he is now adopted and that his standing is safe. Tell him that Jesus is above, wearing the breastplate, pleading his cause. Tell him that though earth's pillars shake, God is a refuge for us. Tell the mourner that the everlasting God fails not, neither is weary. Let present facts suffice you to cheer him.

But if this is not enough, tell him of the future. Whisper to him that there is Heaven with pearly gates and golden streets. Tell him that—

***"A few more rolling suns at most
Will land him on fair Canaan's coast,"***

and therefore he may well bear his sorrows. Tell him that Christ is coming and that His sign is in the heavens. His advent is near. He will soon appear to judge the earth with equity and His people in righteousness. And if that suffices not, tell him all about that God who lived and died. Take him to Calvary, picture to him the bleeding hands and side and feet. Tell him of the crown of thorns. Tell him of the mighty Monarch of woe and blood

who wore the scarlet of mockery which was yet the purple of the empire of grief. Tell him that He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree. And if I have not said enough, go to your Bible, read its pages, bend your knee and ask for guidance and then tell him some great and precious promise that so you may accomplish your mission and comfort one of God's people.

I have but a few words to say to some who I grieve to think *want no comfort*. They want something else before they can be comforted. Some of my hearers are not God's people. They have never believed in Christ, nor fled to Him for refuge. Now I will tell you briefly and plainly the way of salvation. Sinner, know that you are in God's sight guilty, that God is just and that He will punish you for your sins. Listen, then. There is only one way by which you can escape and it is this—Christ must be your Substitute. Either you must die, or Christ must die for you. Your only refuge is faith in Jesus Christ who did really and actually shed His blood for you. And if you are able to believe that Christ died for you, I know it will cause you to hate sin, to seek Christ and to love and serve Him world without end.

May God bless us all, forgive us our sins and accept our souls for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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A SUNDAY SCHOOL SERMON NO. 1381

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 28, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom.”
Isaiah 40:11.***

MINISTERS all over England have been specially requested to assist in exciting a spirit of prayer in connection with Sunday schools, today, and I feel that the training of the young is so important a part of Church work that it would be almost sinful to decline the seasonable request of the Sunday school Union. Therefore have I selected this subject this morning in the hope that God the Holy Spirit may bless it, not only to those who are teachers, but to those who ought to be, and afterwards to those of us who may be otherwise occupied in the Master's vineyard, that we, also, may be led more earnestly to pray for our Brothers and Sisters who are watching over the lambs of the flock.

The words of our text are spoken of One who is, in the 10th verse, called, “The Lord God with a strong hand,” and of whom we are asked, in verse 12, “Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out Heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?” It is a wonderful proof of the tenderness of God that very generally, when He is spoken of by His glorious titles and is described in the infinity of His power, we are, before long, assured of His great gentleness by having some special deed of kindness ascribed to Him.

He is the Lord God with a strong hand and a ruling arm, but He carries the lambs in His *bosom*. He brings out the starry hosts by number. He calls them all by names in the greatness of His might and yet He “does gently lead those that are with young.” How condescending it is on the part of the great Lord that He should come to shepherd men! How marvelous that it should be said of the Almighty God, “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd”—shall act the Shepherd towards His chosen among the sons of men—guiding, feeding, protecting, nourishing and healing them. It is Jehovah Jesus, who, though He accounted it not robbery to be equal with God, yet came down to earth that He might be the Shepherd of men!

A shepherd bears among his flock, in wonderful conjunction, the offices of ruler and of servant. He rules and guides and controls his flock, but at the same time he waits upon them as the servant of all. Behold, in the Lord Jesus you see One who was justly recognized by His disciples as their Master and Lord and yet, as the servant of servants, He washed the feet of His disciples! He came as God to be a Prince and a Savior, but He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a Servant. He bowed Himself to save His people, to help their infirmities, to sympathize with their sorrows and even to suffer for their sins. Behold

what manner of love the Great Shepherd of the sheep has manifested towards us!

It is notable that to accomplish this work the Lord is represented as coming with strength. "Behold the Lord God will come with a strong hand and His arm shall rule for Him." From which I gather that the work of saving men is one which requires the putting forth of strength, even when He who undertakes it is Divine. He is mighty to save, for it requires might to save a soul! If you and I, under God, are called to attempt the work of saving souls, we must certainly borrow Divine strength if we are to succeed, for what power to save can dwell in an arm of *flesh*? Nor must we ever treat the work of caring for the souls of men with indifference, nor go about it with carelessness.

It is not a secondary work to be pursued at leisure as a species of amusement. It filled the Savior's heart and hands, so that the zeal of it ate Him up—and unless you have the same power resting upon you which, also, dwelt in Him, and something of the same fervor, you will never be able to perform it rightly. O servant of the living God, see that your loins are girt with Omnipotence for such a task as this, for to save the soul of the smallest child in the Sunday school will need the same power that raised Christ from the dead!

The Lord would, also, have you feel that soul-winning can only be done in earnest—it requires energy and fervency. We must exercise every faculty, use all our intellect, awaken all our affection and continue laboring with unbounded perseverance if, by any means, we may save some. When I behold the Lord coming forth to save, even the Lord who made the heavens and the earth, I know what a work it must be! And when I see Him coming with a strong hand, making His arm to rule for Him, I comprehend that it is not child's play to be a soul-winner! If God Himself puts on strength, then you and I must ask for power beyond our own that we may be useful in this heavenly service.

Beautifully does our text set forth not only the great power exerted by our Lord Jesus, but, also His tender love, for not only does He come forth to care for men as His sheep, but He undertakes work among the *lambs*, among the feeblest, the smallest, the youngest. No part of His work is beneath Him! He does all the work of a good shepherd! It is supposed by some that it needs greater genius and ability to care for the sheep than for the lambs. I have even known preachers speak of bringing their minds *down* to the comprehension of children! They know little of the matter, for to preach a child's sermon or write a really good child's book is a very difficult task and requires the highest ability.

Jesus evidently thinks not lightly of the little ones, nor of the service which they require. His shoulders may suffice for lost sheep, but His bosom is reserved for the lambs—they need and shall have our Lord's best! With Divine sweetness and tenderness the Redeemer carries the lambs in His fond embrace and lends both His heart and His arm to cherish and protect them. We have before us in the text a lovely outline portrait of the Good Shepherd. Let us look at the picture and notice its main beauties. And when we have sufficiently done so, let us see therein an example for the Church and a model for the teacher of the young.

I. We have to examine A PORTRAIT OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD. Let us study it with care. "He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom." What do I see in this picture? First, I see the Lord of angels condescending to personal labor. Jesus Christ, Himself, gathers with His own arm and carries in His own bosom the lambs of His flock! He does not commit this work to an angel, nor does He even leave it to His ministers, but He, Himself, by His Spirit, undertakes it. He cared for the lambs while He was here below. He suffered the little children to come to Him and He took them in His arms and blessed them.

He spoke very plainly, so that the young could understand His words, for He cared for their souls. We have frequent indications that He was often followed by a great company of young people and we know that they were ready to give Him their hosannas with eager enthusiasm. After He had risen from the dead He did not forget the young of the flock, for He said to Peter, "Feed My lambs." He was the holy Child, Jesus, Himself, all His days and He was a dear lover of the little ones, the true "children's Friend." The Spirit of the Lord was upon Him, for the Lord had anointed Him to preach glad tidings to the meek and the poor, who are as lambs in the flock. He condescended to look after the feeble and weak of the flock, Himself, toiling many a weary mile and pleading through many a chilly night on their behalf.

Now, though He reigns in Heaven, His Divine Spirit looks after the young converts and causes them to grow up in His fear. Many are the Timothies taught from their youth to know the Scriptures whom His Grace meets with and saves. And when they are saved, being still His lambs, He watches over them, trains them, instructs them, confirms their faith, guides them in His way and preserves them to the end. All our mercies, as Believers, we owe to our Lord's personal service, "who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." Not by proxy did He save either His sheep or His lambs!

He did not stand and bid others do it and merely give the command, but He, Himself, spent 30 years here below in personal service among the sons of men! At this moment He is *personally* pleading for His own and personally ruling Providence on behalf of His little ones. He still gathers and He still carries. And if, dear Brothers and Sisters, we are to be at all like Jesus, we must not merely write tracts about how Sunday school work is to be done, nor stand in eminence like a commander-in-chief and give orders, but we must each one, *personally*, bend our back and stoop to the lambs! We must put out the strength of our own arms to gather them and then carry the blessed load of infirmity in our own bosom. We must render *personal* service if we are to be like our Lord who gave Himself for us. This first line in the portrait is well drawn and adds much to its manly beauty—He condescended to personal labor.

The second noteworthy line in the portrait seems to me to be that Jesus was earnest to save and earnest to save little ones. The text does not merely say that He carries the lambs in His bosom, but that He *gathers* them. It were great love that He should carry those who come—it is greater love that He gathers those who do *not* come. Constraining Grace goes out into the midst of the world to fetch in the wandering sheep and

lambs—and therein the greatest love is revealed—even the love which puts forth its strength while yet we go astray!

The Good Shepherd sees that even children's hearts are far off from Him and will remain so unless His effectual Grace shall go forth to reclaim them from the error of their natural estate. And, glory be to His love, He still does fetch this one and that one, in early days, to Himself—not waiting till they come, but going after them, even as the parable of the good shepherd sets forth—for there the shepherd leaves the 99 in the wilderness and goes after that which is gone astray until he finds it. Brothers and Sisters, if we are to be like Christ—and I hold the picture up that we may endeavor to copy it—we must not only rejoice when children are saved and encourage them when we see signs of Grace, but we must go after the little tenants of the street, the little disorderly members of our class, the young rebels of our family and “compel them to come in.”

It must be the aim of our teaching that children, as children, should become children of the living God! For this we should pray! For this we should seek to be anointed of the Holy Spirit that we may bring in these lambs from the dark mountains to the green pastures! Whereas they are wayward, inattentive, difficult to rule, forgetful and inept in spiritual things, we must, with great patience, gather them, win their hearts, impress their minds and introduce them, by Divine Grace, into the fold of love! Look at the picture before you and you can see that your Lord is earnest to save. His face, His hands, His feet, His side all prove what an eager Savior He is! He does not tarry at home till wanderers, of their own free will, seek His face, but He goes forth to seek the lambs which lie about neglected in these great wilderness cities! He finds them in the fields of ignorance and under the hedges of vice, pining and perishing for lack of knowledge—and He gathers them with His arm.

Thirdly, a very superficial glance will show us that our Lord is willing to receive. If He is so eager to gather those who do not come, depend upon it, He is willing to receive all who do seek Him. There is never a heart that yearns after Christ, though it is the heart of a little child, but Jesus Christ delights to note those early desires. There is little knowledge, as yet, in the child's heart about the Lord—and little knowledge, as yet, of the evil of sin—but Jesus does not expect much from tender youth. Only a feeble ray of light has gleamed into the soul. Only a gentle breath of the Divine wind has turned the little soul towards Christ—but our Lord perceives it and delights in it. It were well if we could copy this trait in our Lord's Character.

I am afraid we are not very quick to notice the first impressions of boys and girls, or else we harshly judge that such impressions are written in water and, having been frequently disappointed, we have grown incredulous of children's convictions and children's faith. But it should not be so, for if our Lord gathers the lambs, it is clear that He is willing enough to receive those lambs when they come. And if you are to be like your Master, I would exhort each of you to receive with gladness even the least among your scholars when they come to tell you of their newborn faith in Christ. Do not quench the sparks, but fan them to a flame! Never crush the bruised reeds, nor throw them away as useless, for with a little

care they may be so bound up that your Lord may get music out of them to His eternal praise!

Despise not the day of small things! Look not for ripe Graces and mature judgment in the early spring of youth, but rejoice in the buds and blossoms. Receive the lambs as lambs, though they are the weakest and most troublesome of the flock. See what your Lord does. The loving tenderness of Christ and His willingness to receive those who seek Him early should make *our* hearts willing to believe in childish piety, quick to perceive it and ready to rejoice in it! Wisely may we receive those whom Jesus receives! If they are capable of coming to Him and lying in His bosom, they will do no dishonor to the bosom of the Church.

In this portrait I see a fourth beautiful feature, namely, that He is careful to *protect* the feeble lambs. Gathering *graciously* and receiving *kindly*, He next guards *securely*. To this end the Shepherd places the sickly lamb in His flowing garment, close to His bosom, and carries it there. He will not let it try to walk, for it is as yet too weak. He will not even put it in the fold and leave it with the old sheep, but He must, Himself, while it is in a critical state, carry it where it shall be at ease and secure from trial or toil. Here in His bosom it will not be pinched by the frost—His heart will keep it warm. Here it will not die of weakness—His own life will flow into it and fill its little struggling heart with vitality. Here the wolf cannot touch it, for unless the wolf could rend the Shepherd, it certainly could not destroy the beloved burden which He carried on His heart.

How carefully does Christ watch over the lambs! He is lovingly watchful over the entire flock, for not one under His care shall perish—but towards these young ones His tenderness is more manifest, for they need it more. It is with Him even as with a mother who is more anxious concerning her little babe or her sick child than concerning the strong of the family. Where the need is greatest, the love is most fervent. Christ carries the lambs in His bosom because the greatest need requires the most luxurious resting place and the most calm repose.

Beloved Friends, we must be very careful to protect young Christians if we would see them become strong in Christ. We should anxiously endeavor to keep them out of temptation. And since they must be tempted, more or less, we should endeavor to strengthen them to endure the various forms in which it assails the young. Let us lead them away from habits which debase and amusements which degrade. Let us try to keep from them many of those sinful doubts which have perplexed ourselves and those heresies which have been a snare to others. Above all, let us, by a pious example, endeavor to preserve them from the corruption that is in the world through lust, carrying them in our bosoms to the Throne of Grace, to the House of God and to everything which is pure, holy and acceptable to God!

As Mr. Greatheart is described by Bunyan as convoying the women and children to the Celestial City and fighting the giants for them, even so should we. We must, in the name of the Lord, watch for their souls as those that must give account, keeping guard from week to week lest our

hope should be disappointed. Thus shall we be like the Good Shepherd who is ever careful to protect His own—

**“Shepherd of the chosen number,
They are safe whom You keep.
Other shepherds faint and slumber,
And forget to watch the sheep.
Watchful Shepherd!
You do wake while others sleep.”**

But our Lord’s act means more than that, for He might have put the lambs on His shoulders if mere safety were all that He designed. We see by the picture before us that He is tender to cherish the little ones. It is said that He *carries* them—this is mercy! But this is not all, for He carries them in His *bosom*—this is *tender* mercy! To carry is kindness, but to carry in the bosom is loving kindness!

The shoulders are for power and the back for force, but the bosom is the seat of love! Jesus would warm, cheer, comfort and make them happy. The Lord wishes all His people to be happy—“Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God.” It is a worthy object to try and make any Christian happy, but especially a young Believer whose weakness needs great gentleness. To clothe religion with gloom is to slander the name of Christ! We should always be most eager to prevent young Believers from imagining that to follow Christ is to walk in darkness, for, indeed, it is not so. Has He not, Himself, said, “He that follows Me shall not walk in darkness”? Did not the wise man say concerning Wisdom, “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace”? The Good Shepherd looks to the comfort, peace and enjoyment of His lambs—and He carries them where they will be most happy.

If you are to be like your Master, you will try to take away from young Believers’ hearts all temptation to despondency. You will set before them the richness and freeness of the Gospel, the “exceedingly great and precious promises,” the oath and Covenant and the stability of the engagements of God. Yes, you will try to let them see the preciousness of Christ and tell them how exceedingly faithful and true you have found Him to be in your own experience. All this will help them to ride at ease on the breast of Jesus’ love if the Holy Spirit graciously assists your endeavors. Do not sow mistrust in their hopeful nature, nor instruct them to be as unbelieving as their fathers. Do not sternly judge and condemn them. Cruelty to *children* is the *worst* of cruelty—unkind and harsh judgments upon inexperienced Believers are barbarous and unworthy of the Christian name! Endeavor to comfort and not to distress, to cheer and not to censure, to gladden and not to discourage the babes in Grace, for they are dear to the heart of Christ!

Once more, dear Friends, you see in the text that Christ, the Good Shepherd, is loving in His estimate of the lambs. Men carry in their bosoms their gems, their jewels—and so does Christ carry the lambs of the flock, regarding them as His peculiar treasure! He knows that in themselves they are worth nothing, but then He puts an estimate upon them according to His own relationship to them. He prizes them because His Father gave them to Him of old to be His portion. The little child that believes in Christ was given to Christ before the foundations of the world

and, therefore, He looks upon it as a choice treasure and it is exceedingly dear in His eyes. "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me," He says.

He knows, too, what the child cost Him, for to redeem a little child from going down into the Pit, He must bear the penalty due to Justice and suffer even unto death. He sees the purchase of His agonies in every youthful Believer. For him the precious blood flowed from the Redeemer's own heart and bought the child to be His own redeemed forever. He remembers, moreover, what that child will come to if He does not save it by carrying it in His bosom. It has sinned. It has knowingly and willfully sinned and, therefore, it lies under the curse of the Law and Jesus mourns to see a soul in that condition, obnoxious to the wrath of God. A soul is a precious thing to Christ, for He believes in its immortality. We know He does, for He speaks of a place, "where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched," and He told us that the wicked will be driven away into "everlasting punishment."

He values souls at a rate unknown to those who dream that men are mere animals and will one day cease to exist. If they are to pass away and be no more, like things of the dust and of the mist, why should He die for them at all? Why should He care to gather them? But because no diamond can ever equal in value the soul, even of a beggar's child, therefore does Christ carry His little ones in His bosom as exceedingly precious to Him. And He knows, too, what may come of that child if He saves it—for the possibilities of the blessing within one little saved child—who shall estimate but the Lord who knows all things? I read the other day a pleasing anecdote of what one lamb may come to. A ewe brought forth three lambs and the brutal shepherd threw the third into the hedge, that there might be the more milk for the other two.

A poor woman passing by begged for the thrown away lamb, employed her utmost care in nursing it by means of a sucking bottle and reared it till it could eat grass for itself. She turned it upon the common and in due course it produced her twins. By much care she, at length, raised a whole flock of sheep from the single ewe, and in process of time she became a woman of considerable estate. See what one poor half-dead lamb may yet produce? Who knows what one poor trembling soul may yet bring forth? Jesus knows that a boy may be here who will be the spiritual father of scores and hundreds of thousands before he dies! There may be in the congregation of today a Chrysostom or an Augustine!

Among us may sit a little Whitefield, or a young Luther, or some other honorable character who shall lead many to Christ! There was a dreadful snowstorm one Sunday morning when Dr. Tyng, of New York, set out to preach. When He reached the Church there was only one poor little girl there. Most preachers would have gone home when one child made up the whole of the congregation, but Dr. Tyng went through the service as earnestly as if the pews had been crowded. He preached to the little girl and God gave him that girl's soul—and never was he better repaid! To his knowledge she has been the means of bringing some 25 to the Lord Jesus—and among them was one of his own sons!

The greatest orator, the most spiritual teacher, the most useful evangelist may not dare to despise one of Christ's little ones! It were

worthwhile for all the ministers in England to journey round the world to save the soul of a single shoeblack or of one girl in the workhouse! Value the little ones by their possibilities and you will reckon one lamb to be an untold treasure, worthy to be preserved in the jewel case of your loving care! Luther's schoolmaster always used to take off his hat to his boys when he entered the schoolroom, because, he said, he did not know what they might become. Had he known that Martin Luther had been there, he could not have done better than he did! Jesus Christ knows what He can make of little children in Heaven and so He carries them in His bosom because they shall be forever near the Father's Throne to behold His face. He has learned to estimate them at their *eternal* value—a value which His Grace has put upon them and which He never forgets.

Now, if there were time to take my text and handle it in another shape I should divide my subject thus—first, here are two evils about young Believers and young children—*wandering* and *weakness*. They are far away from God by nature and when they are brought near, they are very weak as to Divine things. Secondly, there are two attributes in the Lord Jesus to meet with and overcome the two evils. Here is *strength* to gather the wandering with His arm and here is *love* to cherish weakness till it forgets itself and becomes strong. Thirdly, here are two operations performed by the two attributes to meet the two infirmities—here is *gathering* and here is *carrying*.

It is very delightful to note how our blessed Lord, whose marred face I seem to see at this very moment, does the gathering and the carrying with equal ease. Even now, by faith, I see His pierced feet pursuing the truant lambs, His wounded hands laying hold upon them and His bosom so full of the most Divine Love receiving and bearing them. Do you not hear His sweet voice saying, "Suffer the little children to come to Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven"? He is still gathering and still carrying by His Word and Spirit! And so will He do until He shall come. God help us in this to imitate Him to the end.

II. Let us now remember in our text we have AN EXAMPLE FOR THE CHURCH. There are two great things which a Church ought always to have, namely, an arm to gather with and a bosom to carry in. I need to speak to you members of the Church, now, not merely about the Sunday school, but concerning every other part of our soul-seeking and soul-saving work. I want you all to try, in the name of God and in the energy of the Holy Spirit, to be the arm to gather with. "He gathers the lambs with His arm." They are scattered now, the blood-bought—the ordained of God unto eternal life—are scattered here and there and know not the Lord.

We are bound to gather them from all places into which they have wandered. They will not come of themselves. The mass of them despise, even, the outward means of Grace. We need a strong arm to gather with so that they may be compelled to come in. The Church's arm is partly the ministry of the Word in her midst. Preaching should be attractive enough to gather the people together, for how shall they believe on Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear if they will not gather around the preacher? Though certain wise persons pretend to despise the power to gather the multitudes to hear the Word, you and I need not mind

their decrying it since we shrewdly suspect that their depreciation of the *gift* is caused by their not possessing it themselves—the grapes are always sour if they hang above our reach.

But we know who has told us that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. If it is the *Gospel* that is preached, we should rejoice that by any means the people can be gathered to hear it—and it is plain as a pikestaff that a part of the preacher's aim should be to preach so that men may be gathered to the hearing of it, for if he preaches and none gather to hear, to what end does he preach? He might as well get away to the woods or to the wilderness and repeat the Gospel to himself in solitude if he has no desire that men should listen to him. The preacher's voice is to gather, but amid such teeming multitudes as those of London, so few preachers can never be expected to be the arm of the Lord to gather alone!

We must gather the young by Sunday schools and endeavor to retain them when they grow up! We must gather them by the distribution and sale of good books and other pure literature! The bookseller has, in this respect, his work to do to gather in the villages and hamlets. We must gather them by visiting from house to house—you tract distributors, you city missionaries, you Bible women—you must be the arm of the Church to gather many! But still, the work will not be done unless we have more help than these. *Every Christian* must be a gatherer! Each one must gather his one! In the power of the Holy Spirit we must all seek out the wanderers. If you cannot bring sheaves, you must glean ear by ear! If you cannot preach to hundreds, you must endeavor to gather individuals by your holy conversation, by your pious lives, by the orderly ruling of your family and by using every occasion that God gives you to speak a good word for Christ.

Gather! I give you this word, all you dear members of the Church, as your watchword! Gather! Gather! Gather the people together! Bring them in where Jesus is uplifted and His Gospel sounded forth! Try and find them in the lonely places where they are scattered in the cloudy and dark day. There are many of you and you can go into all sorts and nooks and corners, for you dwell in all sorts of places. Let no spot be unvisited in your mission of love! Go, you rich, and gather in from the parlor and from the drawing room! Go, you poor, and gather in from the cottages and even from the workhouse! Go, you who labor, and gather among the sons of toil! Go, you that toil not, neither do you spin, and spend your ample leisure in winning souls from among those with whom you associate! So shall the blood-redeemed ones be fetched out and formed into a goodly flock and Christ, by you, shall gather both lambs and sheep with His arm!

But the Church's second work is to carry in her bosom. Those who are brought to Christ need nurture, instruction, example, edification. "Feed My sheep," He says, and yet again, "Feed My lambs." The preacher should try to do this, suiting his discourse to the weakest and feeblest lamb. But since he is but one and takes not upon himself the responsibility of others, the whole Church should try to be a nursing mother unto those who are born unto her. Beloved, *carry* the young converts! Take the convicted of sin and pity them, cheer them, fight against their

despondencies, battle with their doubts, enlighten their ignorance and so bear them in your bosom.

And then, when they begin to grow strong and work for Christ, encourage them, carry them in the bosom of your earnest prayers, asking God to make them workmen not to be ashamed of doing the Master's work right wisely and well. When they succeed in their service, carry them in the bosom of your loving admiration. And when you see them grow in Grace till they are strong, carry them in the bosom of your fellowship, remembering that no child of God can afford to be unloved and lonely. Those who do not need your help will need your love! Those who do not require encouragement will, nevertheless, be glad of your sympathy. Carry all your Brothers and Sisters in your bosom! You will be Christ-like if you do so. It is the Church's work, in this, to imitate her great Lord and let the Beloved of Christ be carried in her bosom of affection.

May your arm always have strength to labor and your heart love with which to cherish! May this Church never lack for arms that shall encompass the neighboring population and never lack for a heart that shall be warm towards those who love our Lord Jesus Christ! Hand and heart must go together—by these two our work must be fully done. May they be both evermore in full activity, even as they are seen in Christ, our blessed Exemplar.

III. We shall close with a practical word or two upon THE MODEL TEACHER. He who gathers the lambs with His arm and carries them in His bosom is the Model for a Sunday school teacher. In what points? First there should be about the teacher attractiveness in order that he may gather. You cannot gather hearts and spirits by force. The Board School may gather its children by law, but you must gather yours by love. You cannot keep a class of children around you by the fear of punishment. It must be by some attraction which will hold them with the cords of love and the bands of a man. Our Lord Jesus gathers with His arm because He is so full of love and of that which wins love. His Character is so amiable that it draws men to it as a loadstone draws the needle. This is the arm with which He gathers. Oh that all teachers had more of it!

A little child, one morning, was eating her breakfast with a spoon and the sun shone in upon her little mess of broth. As she lifted a spoonful to her mouth, she said, "Mother, what do you think? I have eaten a spoonful of sunshine." I recommend that diet to all Sunday school teachers—take a great many spoonfuls of sunshine into your nature and let it shine in your very face and glitter in your talk! Your Master had it! The people loved to listen to Him. They felt, when they drew near to Him, as if they were like a ship that had entered into port and could cast anchor. Even when they did not receive all that He said, there was a charm about His manner, His spirit and His tone. Ask, O you teachers, ask for yourselves that God would give you that holy charm which gathers! Pray that He may deliver you from the angry spirit which scatters. Let your charm be in this, "I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." Carry the love of Christ with you and you will not fail to gather the lambs with your arm!

The next thing is, after you have attracted, lift up. He carries the lambs in His bosom and, therefore, He must lift them up! They were on the

ground till He raised them. Everything about a teacher should tend to raise the children. You are to go down to the child, first, and make yourself understood. But you are *not* to stay down and become, yourself, childish. To tell children a lot of tales merely to amuse them is but to roll in the dust with the lambs and not to *carry* them. You may tell the tale and so come down to the lambs—but it must have its holy lesson with which you *lift* the lamb upward towards better things. Think of this and let your whole life act in that direction. Your example, your temper, your very dress must be a lifting up for the child.

How often, in this evil city, do home influences drag the child downward? The habits, manners and customs with which it is surrounded tend to make it grovel in the earth. You have to lift it up, dear Teacher, as the Great Shepherd of the sheep did—away from its childishness, away from its worldliness, (for it gets to be worldly even while a child)—away from its sin, away from the corruptions of the wicked world. Ask for Grace that every time you see your children you may lift them up and that God, the Holy Spirit, would lift you up all the while. Lift up your heart, or you cannot lift up your child.

The third thing to be noticed is that when He lifted up the lamb, He laid it on His heart. Oh, Sunday school Teacher, this is a very important point with you! If you are to bless the little ones, they must be on your heart! You must make them feel the *life* of your religion—there must be a heart and a bosom to it. Let them know that there is something in your religion which looks towards *them*. Let them know that you love their *souls*, that you sorrow if they neglect the great salvation and that you will rejoice exceedingly if they are brought to Christ! Lift them up and then lay them on your heart and let that heart be warm with holy love!

Next, bear them forward. The lamb is put into the shepherd's bosom, not that he may stand still with it all day long, but because the sheep are going this way and the lambs must go that way, too, and, therefore, he carries it. It is of no use for you to lay a child upon a cold heart—your own heart must be glowing or it will not be a fit candle for a babe in Grace. And then the bosom will be of small service unless the teacher is active as well as affectionate. A child in the bosom of a sluggish teacher will make no progress. You must be always going forward, yourself, if the child is to go forward with you. I do not believe that any preacher will have a growing congregation if he does not grow himself, nor will any teacher have an advancing class if he or she is not advancing, too. Advance in holiness, advance in communion with Christ, advance in perfect consecration to your Lord—and as you do so, the dear little children who are in your bosom will, by God's Grace, be carried with you.

The next word is *guard* the children. Did we not say that Christ placed the lambs in His bosom to protect them? Good Sunday school teachers try to keep the children out of sin and out of harm's way on week days as well as on Sundays. Spiritual teachers of the noblest order need to know what the children do on ordinary days. They try, if they can, to be their guardian angels from the Monday morning to the Saturday night. They never relax their endeavors to lead the children away from the terrible temptations which surround them in this huge Babylon.

The next word is *cheer*. Did I not say that the Good Shepherd laid the lamb in His bosom to keep it warm and cherish it? So should the good teacher always have a smile for the children and a word of encouragement for them in their little battle of life, for to them it is a great one. Beloved, do all that you can to comfort the little hearts of the young converts. Help them to believe as God helps you. By the Divine Spirit try to lead them on in holy joy as the Spirit leads you. So shall you be imitators of “that Great Shepherd of the sheep,” who—

**“Gently leads the wearied lamb,
Gently binds the bruised limb.
And His bosom bears the lamb
Like an infant dear to Him.
He the simplest thoughts instills
He the mildest rules imparts,
Arms with power the weakest wills,
Fills with joy the saddest hearts.”**

And, last of all, *delight* in them. That 10th verse, with which I shall conclude, has a great charm for me. “The Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.” Well, what did He have before Him but the sheep that He went forth to find and the lambs which He gathered and carried in His bosom? They were His work, but they were also His reward! Teachers of Sunday schools, your work is before you in your class—your reward is before you, too! These boys and girls are to cost you service—do not grudge it for they will be your reward! Look them in the face and know that they are immortal and that these are they whom God is able to win for His Son through you, to be the jewels of His diadem and to be your crowns of rejoicing!

The harder and more stubborn a human heart, the more honor it is to win it for the Lord Jesus. The less attention you get at first, the higher will be your reward if, winning the attention, you shall, by-and-by, win the soul! I reckon that your Master will count you to have served Him all the more faithfully if you bring from the ragged school the most degraded, the most ignorant, the least taught and the most depraved! To bring to Christ the children of godly parents is a thing worthy of anyone’s ambition, but to gather to Him the children of the back slums, the children of the debauched and the depraved—this seems, to me, to be a more illustrious ambition!

Therefore do I say to you as you traverse these streets of London—Christian men and women, your work is before you! Your reward is before you! The teeming masses are at once your sphere of labor and your recompense. There is the soil you have to sow and there is the harvest which you have to reap. The fields are white, but they are white for the harvest! God give you faith in the Gospel that you teach, faith in your Master who taught it *before* you and faith in your Master who teaches it *with* you! Now, go forth, one and all, each one according to his or her ability and calling—and gather with your arms and carry in your bosom those for whom Christ died. Amen.

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THE LAMBS AND THEIR SHEPHERD

NO. 540

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 15, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“He shall gather the lambs with His arm and
carry them in His bosom.”
Isaiah 40:11.*

THE people of God are most fitly compared to sheep. The excellencies of their moral and spiritual character furnish one side of the picture, for like sheep they are gentle in their lives and are well accepted, whether living or dying, as a sacrifice unto God. Their frailties and weaknesses complete the likeness, for they are prone to wander—full of wants, powerless in self-defense, and not able to escape from their enemies by rapid flight. No creature has less power to take care of itself than sheep. Even the tiny ant with its foresight can provide for the evil day, but this poor creature must be tended by man or else perish. Such are the people of God—timid, weak, defenseless—unable to provide for themselves and compelled to depend for everything upon Him whose name is, “That great Shepherd of the sheep.”

As the people of God individually are comparable to sheep, so the Church as a whole finds a very fit representative in a flock. A flock is a multitude. Diversities of character, of state, of age, of condition are always to be found in a flock. Yet, while a multitude, it is but one. One in *association*—they journey or lie down together—in the same pasture they rest. They are led beside the same still waters. They are one in *nature*—they are equally sheep and, however much they may differ, their diversity is not half so great as their agreement. Two Believers may greatly differ. But only let me be assured that they are both sheep of the Lord’s pasture, and I will find ten points of likeness for one of difference.

They are one, moreover, in *property*—they are the property of one Owner, being bought with one price in one great transaction, when their one great Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep. The saints are intimately and truly united. Even now they are *secretly* one in their absent Head but they shall soon be *visibly* one in their glorious Lord when He comes in the glory of His Father and all His holy angels with Him. Then He shall place the sheep at His right hand forever. In all flocks, unless they are cursed by barrenness, there will be lambs and these will make up a very important part of the community.

In all healthy Churches, those Believers who are comparable to lambs make up the major part. And though in our own we have many strong ones who are fit to lead the way and not a few competent to bear the burden well, yet the majority, I suppose, are the little ones of the flock. Mr. Ready-to-Halt, on his crutches, is the commander of quite a regiment, distinguished as Mr. Fearing, Mr. Little-Faith, Mr. Feeble-Mind, Miss Much-

Afraid and the like, who are slender in knowledge, shallow in experience, and weak in faith. It is, therefore, with great delight we find our gracious Lord executing the office of Shepherd in a peculiarly tender manner towards the lambs.

Special need has here its own appropriate promise—great weakness is met by great consolation. The best place is found for those in the worst circumstances, and the most loving care bestowed on those most exposed to danger. “He shall gather the lambs with His arms and carry them in His bosom.”

First, let us *describe the lambs*. Secondly, let us *express our fears about them*. Thirdly, let us *rejoice in the tenderness of the great Shepherd over them*. And, fourthly, let us *hear that great Shepherd’s voice*.

I. First LET ME ENDEAVOR TO DESCRIBE THE LAMBS. Our first word concerning them is that *they are truly sheep*. They are not sheep in maturity, but they are sheep to a certainty. Leave them to their good Shepherd’s care. Let them continue to lie down in the green pastures and feed beside the still waters, and they will become as fully developed as yonder ewes of the flock. It is true that not a bone in them is of full size, nor a muscle of full strength. Still, who shall dare to exclude them from the fold?

The newborn convert is possessed of the true nature and life of faith, even as the life of a babe is the same life as that which is found in perfection in the full grown man. Every member is there, but it is in miniature. The vital processes are the same, although upon a smaller scale. Indeed, the whole man is in the child and so the whole life of God is in the feeblest Believer. If you will mark the signs of a sheep, you shall see them more or less distinctly in every one of the lambs. The sheep of God are *harmless*, “Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” They can bear, but they cannot revenge. They have neither power nor will to hurt others.

They would sooner be cheated a thousand times than wrong their fellow men. They may sometimes be “wise as serpents”—they are commanded to be so. But then they blend with this the obedience to the precept, “Be you harmless as doves.” If I see any man injuring his fellows—tearing, rending, fighting, quarrelling—if I see him blustering and proud, I discern at once that he is no sheep of God. For this is the mark of the Lord’s people—that they, when reviled, revile not again—but have put on as the elect of God, a heart of compassion, kindness and long-suffering. You will find this holy non-resistance of evil even more in the lambs than in some of the sheep, for worldly influences frequently wear off this beautiful bloom from older professors.

The sheep goes further than the non-inflicting of evil, it *bears evil without complaint*. They are led to the slaughter and they are silent. They are thrown down by the shearer, but they are dumb. There is nothing revolting in the sight of the slaughter of a lamb even by our ordinary butchery, for the gentle creature is so passive and silent that with scarcely a struggle its life oozes forth from it. Long before the knife is at their throats, the

swine awaken all the neighborhood, fitly teaching us how rebellious are the wicked under their trials and how horribly they are afraid of death.

But in the case of the lamb there is so little to shock or disgust, that the most delicate might have stood in the tabernacle of old and seen the multitudes of lambs slaughtered without feeling any other emotion than a hallowed awe at the sinfulness of sin and the value of the Atonement by which it is put away. The extraordinary patience of the sheep is seen in God's people when they joyously endure a weight of affliction and pass through the valley of death with composure. Whether it is to the knife of death or to the shears of his persecutors, the faithful is alike patient and the lambs of the flock partake of the same endurance.

Sheep, again, are *clean* creatures—clean in their feeding—carrion never tempts them—clean in their habits. The sow may revel in her wallowing in the mire, but sheep love the green pastures. And if it dirties itself it is not easy till it has cleaned itself as best it may. So God's people are holy. Be specially mindful of holiness, my beloved Friends, for when men begin to despise holiness, they lose one of the most prominent marks of a child of God. Now the lambs may not have all the excellencies of the sheep, but they quite as earnestly pant after holiness. Their daily prayer is—

**“Teach me to run in Your commands,
It is a delightful road.
Nor let my head, nor heart, nor hands,
Offend against my God.”**

They pant to be perfect in their obedience to God, and sigh and cry when they find, by daily experience, that the flesh lusts for evil and that the tendency of the heart is to go astray. Furthermore the sheep is *guileless*. You see the lion creeping through the thicket full of cunning. But sheep have none. “Poor, simple sheep,” we say. And God's people are a simple people. Like Nathaniel of old, we may say of them, “Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile.” Those who are crafty and cunning betray but very little of the spirit of Jesus. Jesus was no dupe for knaves, but at the same time, a fool was safe in His hands.

And so with the Christian, he is not to be so foolish as to be the prey of every deceiver, but he is to be so generous that the most foolish shall never be wronged, or have advantage taken of them by him. The lambs bear this character as well as the sheep—they, too, know no guile. Again, sheep are *tractable*. When a man tames a lion so that he may sport with it, he gets the name of lion-tamer. Nobody is renowned for taming a sheep, for it has a tractable disposition. And so all the elect of God, when they have been renewed by Divine Grace, have an obedient and yielding spirit. They are willing to follow their great Protector at His will. “Not my will, but Yours be done,” is the constant bleat of every sheep and every lamb of the flock when it is in a right state of heart. The lambs, then, are truly sheep in all the essential points.

Do not forget, dear Friends, that the lambs are *truly* CHRIST'S *sheep*. They are as dearly bought with His blood. They are as surely objects of His care. They are as manifestly illustrations of His power. They shall as certainly be proofs of His faithfulness, as the strongest of the flock. When you look upon a child of God who has only known his Lord for the last few

days, you must not despise him, for he is as dear to the Savior's heart as the most advanced Believer. He was as much loved in all eternity as you were, and will be as much loved in the eternity to come as you can be.

Well, but if they are truly sheep and truly Christ's sheep, why are they lambs? And in what way are they distinguished? Some of them are lambs *for age*, though not all. For there are some young Christians who are full grown, and there are others very aged who remain to be lambs, still. Growth in Divine Grace does not coincide with progress in human stature. Many men are seventy years old and are, nevertheless, little children in Grace. And, on the other hand, there are a few who at twenty are as solid and profound and spiritual as veterans of eighty. It is not a man's *age* alone, yet for the most part the young in years are also *children* in the Divine family.

The distinguishing mark lies rather in spiritual deficiencies—they are but children in *knowledge*. Many in the Church do not as yet understand the loftier doctrines of Revelation. They know Christ. They know themselves, somewhat, but they cannot “comprehend with all saints, what are the lengths and breadths.” As yet they have not taken a high degree in Christ's school. They sit at His feet with Mary, but they have not come to lean their heads upon His bosom with John. Some doctrines greatly puzzle them. They are the subjects of many doubts and fears under which they would not suffer if they knew more. They are easily put out by those who oppose themselves against the Word of God because they are not established in what they know. They have not yet come to know the arguments which prove a doctrine. They believe, but scarcely know *why* they believe—and in this respect they are but lambs of the flock.

They are immature also in *experience*. They know that they have an evil heart, but they have not *felt* all its evil yet—they know not the plague within as they will when God permits the fountains of the great deep to be broken up. Their heavy trials are yet to come. They have not yet felt the foot of Satan upon their necks in the valley of humiliation, nor trod the dark places of the Valley of Death. They have not tried and proved this wicked world—they are consequently too trustful of men. They have not yet proved the promises of God and their veracity. They have not as yet passed through the deep waters supported by an Almighty arm.

They have not forded the floods of flame, protected by Omnipotent love. They are shallow in the inner life, their experience is only up to their ankles. They have not learned to swim in the stream. Their little boats keep near the shore. They have not passed the great and deep sea. They are raw recruits in the army and have not yet seen the garments rolled in blood. So are they lambs in *tenderness of feeling*. They are too susceptible, and therefore acutely feel the unkindness of the world. If anyone speaks evil of them, they fret over it. If their conduct is misconstrued by the wicked, they are greatly troubled.

They have sleepless nights as the results of a slander which stronger saints would smile at. They have not as yet acquired that hardness to which the Christian soldier attains by enduring hardness. Young Believers

cry out where advanced Believers would hardly wince. An ounce is more to them than a pound to the strong man. They cannot bear the brunt of the battle or the storm—they need seasoning for the strife. They are lambs for tenderness.

Then, again, they are *timid and trembling*, and dare not courageously proclaim themselves at all times on the Lord's side. To give a reason of the hope that is in them with meekness and fear is a great trial to them. Coming before the Church was a very blessed lesson to them—it braced their nerves and exercised their courage. They need a few more such exercises, for they are still very retiring and love most the rear of the army. They can hardly pray in public. If they were asked to say a few words even to five or six children in a Sunday school class, they would quake for fear. It will be some time before they can be compared to lions for boldness. They have need of more Divine Grace lest they fail to avow their Lord in the hour of persecution. They are poor timid lambs still.

Perhaps, too, they are subject to melancholy, to doubts and fears and distresses of mind. They cannot mount up as on the wings of eagles, but their wings are so broken that they lie on the ground and flutter. They are the subjects of very great questioning. They sing that hymn which just expresses the groanings of doubting babes—

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

When any trial assails them, how difficult it is for them! When a temptation assaults them, they do not yield to it, but it gives them very grievous pain and costs them many struggles. They cannot even think of meeting Apollyon without feeling the blood fly from their cheeks for very fright.

I might continue thus to describe the various weaknesses and infirmities of the lambs, but I must stop. Suffice it to say that everything which is wanted to make them perfect Christians they already have. But they have it as yet in an immature and undeveloped state. Everything is there. But it is feeble. Their faith is yet a sapling and not a tree. Their love is a spark, not a fire. Their hope is a fledgling and not a full grown bird. In all respects they are immature—weak eyes, hands hanging down, feeble knees and stammering tongue—all show their need of more Grace.

I will give you a picture of some of them, to bring them more before your mind. There is one dear lamb—a boy of thirteen or fourteen. A pious mother has made that child the object of her constant prayers. He comes to a Sunday school class. He sits in the Tabernacle—it always gives me great joy to see so many lads and children come here—and I frequently notice that many of them are as attentive during the preaching of the Word as any of the elder folks. Well, the Lord blesses the Word to that child while but thirteen or fourteen. You know we have had the happiness of receiving several such into our Church.

Now, as you look upon that curly-headed young soldier, you cannot but think of all the trouble which may befall him and temptations that may assail him. I am sure there are neither mothers nor fathers in the whole Tabernacle who do not feel the tears welling up into their eyes. We begin

to pray, "Lord, keep that lamb. Preserve it safely." We think—I am afraid there is a little self-conceit about it—that a child is more in danger than we are. And our heart is moved to anxious prayer for it. What more melting sight than a child baptized into Jesus upon profession of its faith? May many such lambs be found among us!

Picture another. There are many such here, and thank God there is a dear mother in connection with this Church who nurses and nourishes them. I refer to the case of a young woman—father and mother are ungodly. She is out in a situation. She works and honorably toils. The Grace of God has entered her heart and there is something inexpressibly beautiful about her young piety—for she has had to forsake fond associations for Christ's sake. In the workroom they point at her as a religious girl—they give her a name of scorn. She bears it—she bears it cheerfully. But when we think of how she has to suffer every day, we may well be anxious. Perhaps there is poverty mingled with her other trials. And poverty has its temptations and some of these are of the severest character.

When we see these young women, and young men, too, thus exposed to perilous persecutions and cruel mockings, we number them with the lambs and our heart is very anxious for them. We are glad to see them brought into the fold, but we rejoice with trembling. These are our jewels. These are the sheaves that we reap in our Master's fields. But when we recollect the temptations to which they are exposed, we look with pity upon these poor tempted ones and thank our loving Jesus that there is a promise on purpose for them.

I might single out too, as another specimen, yonder aged woman. She has lived for seventy years without God and without Christ, knowing nothing beyond a formal religion—bearing "a name to live"—but being truly "dead." And now, at last, in her old age, when the body is tottering and the faculties feeble, she has found Christ and she has come forward to be baptized. It has been our joy to receive some into Church fellowship who have passed the threescore years and ten allotted to human life and have gone trembling down into the baptismal pool in obedience to their Lord.

Seeing their infirmities and the fact that much of the intellect is weakened—the eyes have become dim so that they cannot read, and the memory has become frail so that sermons do not profit them as they do younger persons—we look upon these as lambs, needing as they do so much of the gathering arm and the nourishing bosom of the great Bishop and Shepherd of souls.

Shall I pause to describe one other? You know her well. She is a member of the Church, but she thinks she ought not to be in her fit of grief. She even writes to the pastor to tell him that she wishes he would put her out, for she is not a Christian. And yet, in a few days, she retracts the note and begs him to forget it. She very seldom can read her title clear—in fact, she never did but once or twice—and that was on very bright sunshiny days when her soul was exceedingly glad. She is like Mrs. Much-Afraid in the castle—Giant Despair has shut her up in one of his dark

dungeons and frequently uses the crab-tree cudgel upon her until she has grown a sorrowful creature, indeed. We have a few Brothers and Sisters of the same spirit. They go limping and halting. We number these, too, among the lambs of the flock.

I have given a too lengthy description, but you will not fail, from this time on, very readily to recognize the lambs. You will see that in all Christian Churches they make up a large proportion.

II. Let us come then, in the second place, to EXPRESS OUR FEARS CONCERNING THESE LAMBS OF THE FLOCK. We are afraid for them, *because of the howling wolves there are about*. Some of us can bear to be laughed at. We have grown so used to it that it has become the atmosphere which we breathe. But we do pity these new beginners. We know the cruel mockings, which if they break not the bones, yet often break the heart—and we are afraid lest these lambs should turn back, lest they should say, “I cannot endure this,” and so seek the warm side of the hedge and forsake their Lord and Master.

Yet more, we are afraid of another order of wolves—*the wolves in sheep’s clothing*—those hypocrites, who by their bad living cause the poor lambs to stumble and make them think that surely, religion must be a deception and a lie. And those other wolves—*doctrinal wolves*—full of all manner of error. We have them always prowling round our Churches. There is the Antinomian, too glad to get hold of any young lamb he can seduce with his fawning pretences to love a Free Grace Gospel and the freewill wolf, which drags some away from the Truth of God. And wolves of all sorts that are continually trying to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect.

We are afraid for these young ones, knowing how easily they are carried about by every wind of doctrine. We are equally alarmed, too, because of their association with *the goats*. There is *another* flock in the world—the devil’s flock. It is not easy for a Christian man to associate with the world without feeling the influence of it. We are afraid for some of the young ones, when they have to mingle in their work and in their family associations with the baser sort. The worst form of ill association is an ungodly marriage. I do not know anything that gives me more satisfaction than to see our Brothers and Sisters, who have walked in the faith of God, united in marriage—the husband and the wife both fearing and loving God.

It is a delightful spectacle and is the best means of building up the Church with a generation which shall fear the Lord. But a very fruitful source of ruin to Church members is that of a young man or a young woman choosing an ungodly partner in life. They never can expect God’s blessing upon it. They tell you, sometimes, they hope to be the means of their friend’s conversion. They have no right to hope such a thing. It so seldom occurs. The much more likely thing is that the ungodly one will drag the other down to his level than that the godly one shall pull the other up.

We are fearful, I say, for the lambs—for we have marked some of them that were as earnest as they well could be and apparently as loving to their Lord and Master—but another love came across their path and

where are they now? Perhaps the House of God sees them no longer and the theater or the ball room is now their delight. When we think of some cases of this kind that have occurred we do tremble for the lambs. And we lift up our hearts in prayer to God for them, that they may be kept, as kept they will be, if they are truly the Lord's.

Then we are jealous over the lambs, *because of the old lion*. We have some of us had to meet him face to face, and I do assure you I had sooner suffer any temptation that the world or the flesh can bring than to be tempted of the devil. For when Apollyon meets Christian in the valley, it is no child's play. A man needs to be the master of every heavenly weapon to get the victory there. Better to go twenty miles round, over hedge and ditch, than to have one conflict with Satan. There is nothing gained by it. Even should we overcome, we shall be wounded and to our dying day will bear the scars of the terrible conflict.

I can now remember one or two instances in which I have had to stand foot to foot with that arch-Fiend. And though my soul has held her own through Divine Grace, I look back upon those days of trial with sorrow still, for there were blasphemous thoughts injected which I never can forget. They were fiery darts thrown at me, and though the barbed shafts have been drawn out, the wounds are still there. Would God it had been possible to have gone that road without contending with the Fiend! We are afraid for you, young Lambs, when we think of the lion.

We are even more concerned *when we think of the bear*. A flattering world hugs tightly. The lion tears and rends and rages—but the world—when it takes to loving, speaks, oh, so gently! And puts the thing so nicely! It loves the Christian—so it says. It is fashionable to be religious. It is a creditable thing to be a professor and then the world says, "Come to my arms. I love you. Come and be one with me and be a Christian, too! Be not so Puritanical as to thrust me away." We are more afraid of the hugs of the bear than of the teeth of the lion.

When we put all these dangers together, we add to them the fact that lambs are subject to the same diseases which are incident to all sheep. They, too, get the foot-rot of weariness in the ways of God. They begin to be slothful and sluggish in the cause of God. They, too, suffer from coldness of heart, have a tendency to wander and catch the stiff neck of pride. Dear Lambs of the flock! Those who have to see after you and are God's under-shepherds may well offer no apology when they say they tremble for you and put up earnest prayers on your behalf!

III. In the third place, let us REJOICE IN THE GOOD SHEPHERD. "He shall gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom." *Who* is He of whom such gracious words are spoken? *Who* is He that cares so tenderly for lambs? Listen! These are the words of Isaiah—"Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hands and His arms shall rule for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him and His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd." So, then, it is the Lord Jehovah who comes forth to bless His people in this fashion!

What condescension is here! The Lord God, the Eternal and Infinite, acts the part of a Shepherd. But let us read on. The words which follow the text may well astound you, when you see how our great God stoops from His loftiness to carry lambs in His bosom. "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand and meted out Heaven with the span and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counselor has taught him?...Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket and are counted as the small dust of the balance. Behold, He takes up the isles as a very little thing."

And yet this same God who does all these things gathers lambs in His arms and carries them in His bosom! I am sure we are not sufficiently sensible of the infinite love of God in stooping to consider us. Alas, that such condescension should be so unregarded! Remember, I pray you, that infinite power engages to protect you, that inimitable affection sets itself on you, that wisdom which cannot err watches for your good, and that which never can be turned aside pledges itself to bless you. Why, that God should provide for such creatures as we are is some condescension! That He should think of them with a Father's heart is marvelous.

"What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You visit him?" That He should carry man, no, the *weakest* of such men, the lambs among this flock—that He should carry them in His arms! What shall I say to this? I will be silent on a theme which needs a more eloquent tongue than mine. Blessed be the name of such a gracious God. Brethren, rejoice in this tender Shepherd. Be confident, be grateful, be joyful, be thankful, be of good cheer evermore, for He it is that carries you is Jesus Christ!

But *why? Why* does He carry lambs in His bosom? First, because *He has a tender heart and any weakness at once melts Him*. If He sees a lamb He stops as you would do if you are gentle of spirit. If He hears your sigh, your groan, or marks your ignorance or your feebleness—the very tenderness of His mind, even if there were nothing else—would constrain Him to look upon you. But more, *it is His office* to consider the weak. For this it is that He was made a faithful High Priest—that He might have compassion on the ignorant. For this it is that He became the Mediator. He were nothing if He had not this—I mean to say that His office would be a mere sinecure, but a nominal thing, if there were no weak and feeble ones for Him to care for.

Remember, too, that *He was a Lamb Himself* once. What a mysterious fact! If a man could have been a lamb and known a lamb's weakness, how would he sympathize with it! Our Jesus was and is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. He knows what strong temptations mean for He has felt the same. Do you enquire for more reasons why He carries them in His bosom? He *purchased them with blood*. He sees the marks of His passion upon each of them, and therefore He prizes them and will not suffer them to perish. *They are His property*. He is their Proprietor. Another man's lamb He might not so carefully carry. But His own lamb, the

gift of His Father, the purchase of His blood, the heritage of His reward—He must and will care for that.

Moreover, remember, *He is responsible for that lamb*. At Jacob's hand Laban required all the sheep. And at Jesus' hand every elect one will be required at the last. He is the Surety of the Everlasting Covenant, and He is bound by Covenant engagements to bring the many sons home to Glory and not to suffer one whom His Father has given Him to perish by the way. Nor will He fail in His Covenant, my Beloved. He will be true to His pledge and say at the last, "Here am I, and the flock committed to My care."

Moreover, *they are all a part of His Glory*. This flock will be as the jewels of His crown. If He lost one of them He would lose a part of His fullness, a part of His reward of His soul's travail. Therefore will He never turn away His eyes from them, or His hands from doing them good, but He will preserve them to the end.

But *what* does He say He will do? He says, "He will *carry* them." How does He do that—how does Jesus carry weak saints? Sometimes He carries them by *not permitting them to endure much trouble*. "He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." He takes them up in the arms of Providence and carries them where there is no trouble. At other times they are carried in His arms by having some tender, *loving person* to take care of them. He carries them instrumentally. As Christians and the other women had Mr. Great-Heart to kill the giants for them, so many saints are carried in the bosom of Christ Jesus by the loving care of some godly relative, or friend, or pastor.

At other times, such lambs are carried by having an *unusual degree of love* given them, and consequently a large amount of joy, so that they bear up and stand fast. Though their knowledge may not be deep, they have great sweetness in what they do know. They may have but little to feed on, but that little is great from its nutritive power, and they have strong digestive powers given them by which they may even suck honey out of a rock, and oil out of a flinty rock. The little becomes much. The barley loaves and few small fishes are sufficient for the thousands of their necessities.

Sometimes He carries them by giving them *a very simple faith*. Their faith may not be very strong, but it is very simple. And after all, I do not know whether I would not almost as soon have a *simple* faith as a strong faith, if the two could be divided. That simple faith which takes the promise just as it stands—may not comprehend its meaning fully—yet it believes it and runs straight to Jesus with every trouble. That is very beautiful in a child. The child has no great extent of knowledge and is not strong enough to defend itself, but what does it say when mistreated in the street? "I will tell Father." And so simple souls will go and tell their Father. They run to their big Brother, the great Savior. And so the simplicity of their faith gives them an unusual degree of confidence and they are carried in Jesus' bosom.

But to close this point. *How does He carry them?* He carries them in *His bosom*—not on His back. That is how He carries *stray* sheep—He flings

them over His shoulders rejoicing, but *they* do not rejoice, mind you. They will not rejoice, for they have wandered. They must be made to feel the weight of the crook and they must pray, "Make the bones which you have broken to rejoice." But, "He carries *the lambs in His bosom.*" Here is put forth, Brothers and Sisters, *boundless affection.* Could He put them in His bosom if He did not love them much? Where does the Father place the Son? He is in the bosom of the Father. Where did Abraham carry Lazarus? In his bosom. Where did Naomi bear her young grandson Obed? He was in her bosom. Where did the man in the parable put his little ewe lamb? In his bosom. Christ is boundless in His affection.

Then there is *tender nearness.* How near to a man is that which is in His bosom! Here you see the Lord Jesus Christ does not put His people at a distance from Himself so that He has to stretch out His hands for them, but He keeps them near. He needs not stretch out His hands at all. So near are they that they could not possibly be nearer. Then it is a *hallowed familiarity.* Lambs, when put into the bosom, having no intellect, cannot therefore learn anything. But the lambs of Christ's flock, whenever they ride in Christ's bosom, talk with Him. They tell Him all their secrets and He tells them His. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. And He will show them His Covenant."

Oh, there are some precious love passages between Christ and His weak ones when they are snugly housed in His bosom! It is almost profanity to talk of the union and communion, the fellowship and converse, the delightful interchange of everything that is sweet and loving between Christ and His chosen ones in His bosom! And then, dear Friends, you must not fail to remember that there is *perfect safety.* The dear ones in His bosom—what can hurt them? They must hurt the Shepherd first. How can they get the lamb out of the Shepherd's arms? Must they not cut off the Shepherd's arms before they can hurt the lamb? Must they not smite Him through His body before they can kill the creature whom He embraces?

How safe are you, O weak Believers! You are borne up on eagles' wings. The shot must pierce the parent bird before it can reach you. The devil must destroy your Shepherd before he can slay you. Here is comfort! Oh, what a soft place to ride! How warm! Oh, how the warmth of the Shepherd's heart cheers His lambs! The warmth of Jesus and the delightful comfort of His Presence shall be enjoyed by you—the very weakest of you in answer to the supplications we put up for you—and as a result of your faith in Jesus.

I do not know what you think after reading this promise, but I think I should like to be a lamb again. Some of us have outgrown our times of doubts, and fearfulness, and so on. We have to take the *work* of a shepherd. I love to be a shepherd under my Master. But there is many a time I envy you. I would delight to sit in the pew and hear a sermon instead of preaching, sometimes—to be fed—instead of feeding you. Some of you have grown to be strong men and are engaged in looking after others. You now look back, not with sorrow, exactly, but with some regret upon the

sweetness of your young days—when you were so little in Israel—but were so daintily fed, so wondrously cared for.

You remember what the shepherds did with Mr. Great-Heart and all the company when they came to the Delectable Mountains. The shepherds said, “Come in, Mr. Ready-to-Halt, come in, Mr. Fearing, come in, Mrs. Much-Afraid.” *But they never said, “Come in, Mr. Great-Heart.”* We look after the feeble. As to you that are strong, we know you will take the comforts to yourselves. Ah, but the strongest sometimes get very weak. And those that do exploits for God at times feel as if they could creep into a mouse-hole and hide their heads anywhere among the very feeblest of the Lord’s people if they could but enjoy the comforts which He is pleased to give them.

IV. And now, to conclude, LET US HEAR THE SHEPHERD’S VOICE. If you are the lambs, hear the Shepherd’s voice which says, “*Follow Me.*” You that are weak and feeble and young in the Divine life, keep close to Jesus. Imitate the example of Caleb, of whom we spoke a Sunday or two ago, and follow the Lord fully. Be obedient to all His commands and let His faintest wish be your Law. Keeping close to Jesus, you shall realize the sweetness of the text.

To you that are not lambs, and as yet are not brought openly into His fold, hear His words, “*Come unto Me.*” That gentle Shepherd who condescends to carry the lambs may well entice you to Himself. Come, guilty Souls, and flee away to Him who will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. Take His yoke upon you and learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls. No domineering Lord commands you to crouch as a slave at His feet. The generous Jesus says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” By His love and by His pity, by His deep compassion and His infinite love, I beseech you, come to Him!

Then, too, those of us who are His sheep, let us hear the Shepherd’s voice, saying, “*Feed My lambs.*” If at any time we have offended, and like Peter, backslidden, let this be the token of our love—this the seal by which we show to Him how true is our repentance—let us feed the lambs. O matrons and strong men—mothers in Israel and princes in our host—look well to your sons and daughters! See well to your little ones! Train them up for Jesus! Where you see the Divine spark, blow them with your warm breath. Watch for the feeble.

“Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably” unto the tender ones. Lay yourselves out, Beloved, to do good to these weak ones. Spend and be spent. Bear their burdens, and so fulfill the Law of Christ. And the Lord accept and bless you all, whether sheep or lambs, for His dear sake. Amen.

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JESUS THE SHEPHERD

NO. 652

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 1, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He shall feed His flock like a shepherd.”
Isaiah 40:11.***

OUR Lord Jesus is very frequently described as the Shepherd of His people. The figure is inexhaustible, but it has been so often handled that I suppose it would be difficult to say anything fresh upon it. We all know and are very glad and comforted in the knowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ, as our Shepherd, exercises towards us all the kind and necessary offices which a shepherd performs towards his sheep. With gentle sway He rules us for our good—“Let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for He is our God and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.”

He guides us—“And when He puts forth His own sheep He goes before them and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice.” He provides for us—“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters.” He protects us from all forms of evil. Therefore, “though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil, for He is with us: His rod and His staff, they comfort us.” If we wander, He seeks us out and brings us back. “He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.”

If we are broken, He binds us up. If we are wounded, He heals according to His own Word, “I will bind up that which was broken and will strengthen that which was sick.” The sheep is an animal of many diseases and many needs and so the Christian is an individual of many sins and many infirmities. But as the shepherd endeavors to meet all the needs of his flock, so our Lord Jesus succors all the blood-bought company in all their needs. We propose to illustrate the great doctrine of the text in a Scriptural, and therefore we hope in an interesting, manner. First, we shall consider in connection with the text, Old Testament illustrations. In the second place, New Testament descriptions. And, in the third place, impressive applications.

I. We commence with OLD TESTAMENT ILLUSTRATIONS of the manner in which the Lord Jesus Christ discharges the office of feeding His flock like a shepherd. Out of five great types we begin with Abel, the shepherd *slain*. The second man who was born into the world was a shepherd and was, in many respects, typical of our Good Shepherd. “Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.” Abel was a type of the Savior in that, being a shepherd, he sanctified his work to the glory of God and he offered sacrifice of blood upon the altar of the Lord. The Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering.

This early type of our Lord is not very full and comprehensive, but it is exceedingly clear and distinct. Like the first streak of light which tinges

the east at sunrise, it does not reveal everything—but it clearly manifests the great fact that the sun is coming. Abel is nothing like so complete and perfect a portrait of our own Lord Jesus as other shepherds of whom we have to speak—but as we see him standing as a shepherd and yet a sacrificing priest offering upon the altar a sacrifice of sweet smell unto God—we discern there, at once, the picture of our Lord, who brings before His Father a sacrifice of precious blood, to which Jehovah ever has respect.

Abel, the sacrificing shepherd, was hated by his brother—hated without a cause. And even so was the Savior—the spirit of *this* world, the natural and carnal man—hated the better Man, the accepted Man in whom the Spirit of Grace was found. And the man of the world rested not until His blood had been shed. Abel fell and sprinkled his own altar and his sacrifice with his own blood. And he must be blind, indeed who cannot behold the Lord Jesus slain by the enmity of man while serving as a priest before the Lord.

Abel is the type of Jesus the *slain* shepherd. Let us attentively consider him. We have been reading in the tenth chapter of John, this morning, that the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep—let us weep over Him as we view Him stretched upon the ground by the hatred of mankind at the foot of His own altar of sacrifice, pouring out His blood. We read of Abel's blood, in the New Testament, that it speaks. "He being dead yet speaks." "The Lord said unto Cain, The voice of your brother's blood cries unto Me from the ground."

Herein we have a blessed type of the Lord—His blood had a mighty tongue and the import of its prevailing cry is not vengeance but *mercy*—

***"The rich blood of Jesus slain
Speaks peace as loud from every vein."***

It is precious beyond all preciousness to stand at Jesus Christ's altar and to see Him, Himself, offered there as a whole burnt-offering acceptable unto God! To see Him lying bleeding there as the slaughtered Priest and then to hear the voice of His blood speaking peace in our consciences, peace in the Church of God, peace between Jew and Gentile, peace between man and his offended Maker—speaking peace all down the ages of eternity for blood-washed man! Abel is first in order of time and Jesus first in order of excellence.

The earth opened her mouth to receive Abel's blood and Jesus' sacrifice has blessed this poor, sin-ruined world. Abel received Divine witness to his righteousness and Jesus obtained the same in the day of His Resurrection—but fullness of other matters forbid us to linger.

Further down the page of sacred history we find another shepherd. He is a more instructive type of the Savior, perhaps, than the first. But in Abel we discover a Truth of God which is absent in all the others. Abel is the only one of the typical shepherds who dies at the foot of the altar. He is the only *sacrificing* shepherd. And here you see Jesus Christ in the very earliest ages set forth to mankind as the slaughtered Victim—that whatever else the early saints might *not* see—yet they might know that the Seed of the woman would shed His precious blood. This most vital Truth is not withheld even for a little season.

Now we turn to Jacob, the *toiling* shepherd. Here is a type of the Good Shepherd not as dying, but as keeping sheep with a view to get unto Himself a spouse and a flock. Jacob left his father's house. He departed from

all the joy and comfort of the house in which he was the recognized heir both by his own purchase and his Father's promise. Our Lord Jesus Christ, out of the love which He bore us, left His Father's house above and came down to tabernacle among men. Jacob repaired to his mother's brethren.

And even so our Lord, on the mother's side, counts men His brethren. "He came unto His own." That vision which Jacob saw the first night after he had left his father's house seems to me to be a representation of the great object which our Lord had set before Him as the intent of His mission here below. Jacob slept and dreamed that he saw a ladder, the foot of which stood upon the earth, while the top reached to Heaven, from where a Covenant God spoke to His chosen servant.

And so, before the Savior's eyes, as the great reward of all His life's travail, He saw a ladder set up by which earth should be connected with Heaven. He saw fallen man at the foot of it, but He beheld a Covenant God at the top while the angels of God ascending and descending upon His own Person, as upon the Divine road of communication by which prayer mounts and mercy descends. As soon as Jacob arrived at the house of his mother's brethren, he began to work out of the love he bore to Rachel.

And Jesus Christ no sooner descended upon this lower earth than He began at once to labor to win His spouse. Now there were in the house of manhood two daughters to both of whom Jesus must be affianced. There was first of all the Jewish Church, which was in His eyes His Rachel—His dearly beloved—and He toiled for her. But in the days of His flesh His own received Him not. Though while He was here below He declared that He was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet Israel was not gathered. But Jesus did not lose His reward, for the Gentile Church, the tender-eyed Leah, was His reward.

"Though Israel is not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord and My God shall be My strength. And He said, It is a light thing that You should be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give You for a Light to the Gentiles, that You may be My salvation unto the end of the earth." Leah, the Gentile Church, is far more fruitful unto Christ in spiritual children than the Rachel for whom He served in the days of His flesh!

But the day comes when Rachel shall be more fully increased—when the fullness of the Gentiles having been gathered in—the Jew shall recognize Messiah and the Jewish people shall acknowledge their King. We understand from Jacob's own description of his toil that his labor, in order to get to himself his spouse, was of the most arduous character. And it will be well for the intelligent Christian to see Jesus Christ in just such toil—seeking to redeem unto Himself His own beloved—that they might forever be one with Himself in His own Glory.

In the thirty-first chapter of Genesis, at the thirty-eighth verse, Jacob, while expostulating with Laban, thus describes his own toil—"These twenty years have I been with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried their young and I have not eaten the rams of your flock. That which was torn by beasts I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it. You did require it from my hand, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. There I was! In the day the drought consumed me and the frost by

night, and my sleep departed from my eyes. Thus I have been in your house twenty years. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times.”

Even more toilsome than this was the life of our Savior here below. He watched over all His sheep till He could give as His last account, “Of all those whom You have given Me I have lost none but the son of perdition, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.” His hair was wet with dew and His locks with the drops of the night. Sleep departed from His eyes, for all night He was in prayer wrestling with God. One night it is Peter who must be pleaded for. Another time another claims His tearful intercession. No shepherd sitting beneath the cold skies, looking up to the stars, could ever utter such complaints because of the hardness of his toil as Jesus Christ might have uttered, if He had chosen to do so, because of the sternness of His service in order to gather unto Himself His people—

**“Cold mountains and the midnight air,
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer.
The desert His temptation knew,
His conflict and His victory, too.”**

It is sweet to dwell upon the spiritual parallel of Laban having required all the sheep at Jacob’s hand. If they were torn of beasts he must make it good. If any of them died, he must stand as surety for the whole. And did not the Savior stand just so while He was here below? Was not His toil for His Church just the toil of one who felt that he was under suretyship obligations to bring every one of them safe to the hand of him who had committed them to his charge? Look upon toiling Jacob and you see a representation of Him of whom the text says, “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd.”

One other point of resemblance there is here, namely, that when Jacob had thus purchased to himself his spouse and had received a reward for all his toil out of the flock which he himself tended, he then conducted both his family and his flock away from Laban. This is a point never to be forgotten! Shouldering His Cross, Jesus went *outside* the camp! And in so doing He speaks to each of us! “Let us, therefore, go forth outside the camp, bearing His reproach.”

He went to His mother’s brethren that He might fetch out His chosen from among men and His voice to His spouse is, “Hearken, O daughter and consider: forget also your own people and your father’s house. So shall the King greatly desire your beauty: for He is your Lord. And worship you Him.” Jacob coming back from Laban to the Promised Land is a true picture of Jesus Christ coming up from the world, followed by His Church, to enter upon that better Canaan which has been given to us by a covenant of salt forever.

The toiling shepherd never ceased his work till he had bid farewell to Laban once and for all and had come to dwell in tents where Abraham and Isaac had dwelt before him. And Christ’s work is not accomplished in us till He has made us, like Himself, holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners! Although these types are very full, I choose rather to give them to you as suggestions to think out for yourselves than to enlarge upon them myself.

Joseph is a type of Jesus, reigning in the Egypt of this world for the good of his own people, while they are here below. Remember Joseph’s

history. We find that he kept his father's flock with his brethren. So did our Savior when He began to teach and to preach. In the midst of the envious Scribes and Pharisees He kept His Father's flock. They could not, however, tolerate Him in whom they discerned a royalty not in themselves. As Joseph wore a coat of many colors, indicative of princely rank and of his father's love, even so, Jesus Christ, in the perfections of His Nature, being something more than ordinary man, was soon spied out by envious shepherds as anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows.

Then they began to find fault with Joseph's words. He had seen a dream in which the sun and moon and the eleven stars were made obeisance unto him. And as the envious Scribes and Pharisees listened to the word of the Savior and heard Him claim that He was the Son of God, and that He came down from Heaven, they thought that He dreamed. They charged Him with blasphemy and straightway their hearts were set against Him and they were determined upon His destruction. They sold Him for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave.

So our Joseph was sold into Egypt to the powers of evil. There He was falsely accused, though in Him was no sin. Our Joseph, our blessed Shepherd, was cast into the prison of the grave and there He abode for awhile, but by-and-by He came out of prison and Joseph/Jesus—it matters not which word I use—Joseph was made ruler over all the land of Egypt. That same Shepherd of ours who was sold by His envious brethren and who went down into the prison-tomb, is now exalted high above all principalities and powers and every name that is named!

And even here, in this Egypt, where His people now dwell, Jesus Christ is King. Not a dog dare move his tongue in all the land of Egypt without the permission of Joseph and surely no enemy can forge a weapon against Christ's Church here on earth—

***“He overrules all mortal things,
And manages our mean affairs.”***

The Father has committed all power unto His Son. Jesus Christ is King over Egypt's realm. Now observe the likeness between Joseph and Jesus in this respect. Joseph was of very singular advantage to the Egyptians. They would have starved in the years of famine if his prescient eye had not foreseen the famine and stored up the plenty of the seven previous years.

And Jesus Christ is of great service even to this wicked world. It is by Him that it is preserved. The barren fig tree was spared because the farmer pleaded for it and the intercession of Jesus Christ spares the lives of the unregenerate. And though they will be swept away with the broom of destruction when their iniquity is fully ripe, yet meanwhile they are spared because of the mediatorial sovereignty of the great Shepherd. Jesus Christ, like Joseph, rules over the land of Egypt—but Joseph ruled for a special purpose. God had sent Joseph to Egypt, but not mainly for the sake of the Egyptians. “God has sent me here to save your souls alive.” This was Joseph's own testimony.

Jesus Christ now has power over all flesh—why? “That He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.” The universal reign of Christ, in which respect His redemption comes to all the sons of men, has for its object that *special* redemption in which respect it comes only to His own people who are His sheep. Perhaps some of you may wonder how I

venture to call Joseph a shepherd. You grant me that in his early days he kept his father's flock, but was he a shepherd while he was in Egypt?

You will believe the dying words of his father Jacob, will you not? His father Jacob, when speaking of him said, "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall. The archers have sorely grieved him and shot at him and hated him. But his bow abode in strength and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." Then there comes a sentence between brackets—"for there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel." Joseph is here called the Shepherd and the Stone. I could not make out, in meditation, why he should be both a shepherd and a stone, but you remember that Jesus Christ was at once the Shepherd and the Stone which the builders refused, which afterwards became the headstone of the corner.

And so Joseph, in being a shepherd of his people, and in having been the cornerstone of the Israelites while they were in Egypt, was both the Shepherd and the Stone of Israel. Beloved, it seems to me to be such a delightful thought to think that Jesus Christ is King today in the world. The Lord reigns—let the earth rejoice! Jesus Christ wears the crown of universal monarchy this day! "The Lord said unto my lord, sit You on My right hand until Your enemies are made Your footstool," so that nothing happens now, but that which Jesus permits, ordains and overrules. Let empires go to pieces—it is Christ who breaks them with a rod of iron and shivers them like potters' vessels!

Let conflagrations burn down cities and let diseases devastate nations! Let war succeed war and pestilence famine—yet still our Joseph rules all things well and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, that are called according to His purpose. The saints are in the world, but Christ reigns over the world for His Church, that it may be kept and preserved in the midst of an evil generation.

You remember that remarkable saying, "Now every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians"—a strange thing and yet Egypt found their shelter in the shepherds! Now every Christian is an abomination to the world, and yet it is in this world that at the present time we dwell in so much temporal comfort, under such excellent government, with so little disturbance. To what can we attribute it to but this, that Jesus sits upon the Throne and rules Egypt for the good of Israel! And the world is made subservient to the blessedness of the Church of God! I must not tarry any longer, though it is a very tempting theme, but I want to take you on to the next shepherd.

Jesus Christ will be represented to you in quite a different character under the next illustration. Moses was not a ruler in Egypt, but quite a distinct character. Moses, when he kept sheep, kept them in the wilderness, far away from all other flocks. And when he became a shepherd over God's people Israel, his business was not to preserve them in Egypt, but to conduct them out of it.

Here, then, is a representation of Jesus Christ as the Shepherd of a separated people, called from among men and made to be a distinguished nation, not numbered among the people. Jesus, like Moses, might have been a king. The devil said to Him, "All these things will I give You if You will fall down and worship me." The people would have taken Him, we

read, and made Him a king, for He was naturally of royal race, but He refused. As Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, so Jesus Christ said, "Get you behind Me, Satan," to all the pomp and glory of this present world and preferred to take part with His poor, despised people who were crushed down by the reigning powers in the Egypt of His days.

Moses began his mission, you remember, by going to Pharaoh and saying, "Thus says the Lord, Let My people go, that they may serve Me." Jesus Christ begins as the Shepherd of the separate ones by demanding that they should be let go from the bondage of their natural estate. With a high hand and with an outstretched arm Moses fetches out his people from among the Egyptians. He works plagues and marvels, but he brings them all out. "Not a hoof shall be left behind." Not one child of God, not one sheep of His pasture shall be left in the Egypt of sin and death. They shall all be made to go outside the camp—leaving even Goshen to go into a wilderness because they must be alone with God and they cannot worship Him in a land full of idols.

I might dwell for a long time on all the transactions of Moses in Egypt and especially upon the paschal supper, all of which was doubtless typical of Him of whom the text says, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd." Our main point is the great exodus of Moses, who at the head of all the tribes goes forth to Succoth. There they pitch their tents. By-and-by they advance to Pi-hahiroth with the Red Sea before them. With Moses' staff to lead the van they pass through the sea dry shod and come absolutely into the wilderness of separation, as, Beloved, every heir of Heaven is brought right out of Egypt, led through the Red Sea of Jesus Christ's blood, baptized into Jesus and brought out into the separated position in the wilderness.

Now it is easy to see how Moses was a shepherd to the people while in the wilderness. He led them in all their wanderings. He was King in Jeshurun over the people whom God had given to him. When they needed food, his prayer brought down the manna or the quail. When they needed water, it was his voice that made the rock burst forth with floods, or his rod that smote and lo, the flinty rock gushed with torrents! If there were Amalekites to fight, the uplifted arm of Moses did more than the sharp sword of Joshua. They sometimes received chastisement from him. He ground the golden calf to pieces and threw the powder on water and made them drink it.

They were equally dependent upon him for comfort, too. His speech distilled as the dew and dropped as the rain, the small rain upon the tender herbs. Moses, like a shepherd, had to carry all the people in his bosom as God's appointed Messenger and often did he find it a very weary load, so that he said, "I cannot bear the burden of this great people alone." You have here a suggestive type of Jesus Christ, the leader of the separated Church. Brethren, I think we may, all of us, not only catch the idea but live it out—the Church is in the desert *now*. We have left the world, we have left its maxims, its customs, its religion.

We hate the world's religion as much as we do its irreligion. We have forsaken it for good, never to go back again. And though the flesh sometimes falls to lusting and would desire go back to the old bondage, yet,

under the guidance of our Great Shepherd who leads His people far away from Mizraim's polluted shore, we march onward by devious ways to the promised rest.

The last type I mean to give you is David. This shepherd represents Jesus Christ, not at all as the others, but as King in the midst of His Church. David, like Jesus Christ, begins his life with trials. He is anointed and straightway he begins to suffer. The world's king recognizes him, fixes his eyes upon him, hurls the javelin at him, hunts him like a partridge on the mountains and rests not till he himself is slain. Poor David is the apt picture of Jesus Christ in the days of His flesh—hunted by the world's king who would desire to put Him down and crush out His spark. David, at last, mounts to his throne. Quietly and in peace he sits in Jerusalem as king over Israel and Judah.

And even at this day, though the kings of the earth set themselves against Him and their rulers take counsel together, yet this is the decree concerning our Lord: "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." That same Shepherd who of old snatched the lamb out of the jaw of the lion and delivered His sheep from the paw of the bear—that same Shepherd who, in pangs of death, took the lion of Hell by the beard and slew him—that same Shepherd sits as King in the Jerusalem above and all His saints delight to do Him homage!

All hail You, Son of David! Reign forever! Hosanna unto You! Your enemies cannot dispossess You! You have smitten them terribly and they shall yet feel the terror of Your arm. The Shepherd reigns, Jesus Christ is King of God's Church and one of these days the reign of David will blossom into the reign of Solomon. We shall see Jesus Christ under a yet more glorious type, for He shall reign from the river even unto the ends of the earth. There shall be no war with the Ammonites, no war anywhere!

All enemies shall have been put beneath His feet and the kings of the nations shall bow before Him and they that dwell in the wilderness shall lick the dust. May that millennial splendor soon dawn, when the Son of David shall be King forever and ever as the great Shepherd, reigning over all lands. Think these five illustrations over, and there will be much instruction here concerning Him who feeds His flock like a shepherd.

II. Now let the Christian who is not weary follow me in three NEW TESTAMENT DESCRIPTIONS. Jesus Christ the Shepherd, is described in the New Testament, as I dare say you all remember, in three ways. He is first of all spoken of as the Good Shepherd. Next, as the Great Shepherd, and thirdly, as the Chief Shepherd. I do not know that any other adjective is appended to His name of Shepherd.

First, turn to the tenth of John, there you find Him described as the Good Shepherd. "The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep." Goodness is the special excellence which seems to gleam in the Character of our Lord in His earthly life and in His passion for the sons of men. As I look upon my Lord and Master here, despised and rejected of men, I know He is the Great Shepherd. But His greatness does not strike me because His flock is so few. We read in the Acts that, "the number of the names together were about one hundred and twenty."

"Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay My head." Herein is goodness, but the *great-*

ness is concealed. When He saw the multitude He had compassion upon them, for they were as sheep having no shepherd. Here is the Good Shepherd—He healed their sicknesses and wept over their sins. Here is goodness, indeed. When it was time for Him to die, He crossed the brook Kidron and suffered till He sweat great drops in the garden. He went to trial and condemnation and then to the mount of doom to suffer, bleed and die. Here is the Good Shepherd—the Good Shepherd bleeding for the sheep.

Can you tell me how good a Shepherd Jesus was? Can you measure the height and depth of the extraordinary goodness that dwelt in Him? So good that He saved others, Himself He could not save. So good that when He rendered in His account, He could say, “I have lost none.” He had kept them all safely, though He Himself had bowed His head and given up the ghost. You will find in Hebrews 13:20, that He is called the Great Shepherd. Does that refer to his life on earth and to His death? Not at all! Kindly observe the connection. “Now the God of peace which brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will.”

Do you understand? He is not the Great Shepherd when He dies—He is the Good Shepherd. But He is the Great Shepherd when He is brought again from the dead. In the Resurrection you perceive His greatness! He lies in the grave slumbering. He is the Good Shepherd then, having laid down His life for the sheep. Life appears again in Him—the stone is rolled away, the watchmen are seized with terror and He stands out the Risen One—no more dying! Now He is the Great Shepherd!

He manifests Himself for forty days among His own disciples and then, at last, taking them to the hill of Galilee a cloud receives Him out of their sight and up He mounts as the Great Shepherd. When he has told them to go to Jerusalem, they sit waiting till the time of the fullness is come and suddenly there is heard the sound of a rushing mighty wind and fiery tongues sit upon all of them. Who has given this gift to each? Who is it? This is the Great Shepherd! He has ascended on high and has received gifts for men.

The Shepherd, still, you see, but now he is the GREAT Shepherd, the Shepherd riding in triumphal state through the midst of New Jerusalem, amidst the acclamations of angels and sending to His sheep down below the precious gift of Apostles and ministers of various orders, according to His own will. He was the Good Shepherd before—He is the Good Shepherd now—but He is also pre-eminently the Great Shepherd. Let us delight to think of this greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ! Let us extol and bless Him!

Observe, carefully, that while the Good Shepherd lays down His life that you may have life and have it more abundantly, He is the Great Shepherd for another purpose. What does it say? “Make you perfect in every good work to do His will.” Yes, He dies to wash away your sins, but He rises for your *justification* and your complete *sanctification*, that as the Lord left His grave clothes behind Him, you may leave your sins behind you! And as He left the tomb behind Him, never to reenter it, you may

leave the old dead world in which you once lived and live in newness of life!

We have a third text remaining—the first Epistle of Peter, fifth chapter and fourth verse. Here you have the Savior called the Chief Shepherd. When is this? In Peter He is not the Good Shepherd—He is not the Great Shepherd—He is all that, but He is a great deal more—He is the CHIEF Shepherd. When will He wear this title? Do you notice, Beloved, this one thing? Let me have your hearts here. While He is the Good Shepherd He is all alone—no other mentioned. While He is the Great Shepherd He is still alone and only a bare hint of others.

But when He is the *Chief* Shepherd, it is implied that there are others among whom He is chief. Notice, then, that in the Atonement Jesus is alone—there is no one with the good Shepherd. In the Resurrection for our justification He is alone—no one aids the Great Shepherd. But at the Second Advent He will be with His people, Chief among many. Read the verse—“And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away.” So you see Christ is the Chief Shepherd at the Second Advent.

Then shall the world be astonished to find that though alone in Atonement and alone in Justification, He is not alone in service or in Glory. Then every minister who has fed His sheep, every teacher who has fed His lambs—all of you, holy men and women who have in any way whatever contributed under Him towards the guidance and the government and the feeding and the protection of His dear, blood-bought flock—you shall appear! He has no crown, you perceive, as the Good Shepherd. We do not read of a crown for Him as the Great Shepherd. But when He comes with the crown with which His mother crowned Him, then shall you also appear with Him in Glory, having the crown of life that fades not away.

I do not know whether this peculiar circumstance interests you, but it did me when I observed it—Good in His dying, Great in His rising, Chief in His coming! It seems to me to gather such force—Good to me as a sinner—Great to me as a saint—Chief to me as one with Him in His glorious reign! I pass, as it were, through three stages—a sinner—then I look to the Good Shepherd laying down His life for the sheep. I reach higher ground and I am a saint—I look to the Great Shepherd to make me perfect in every good work to do His will. I mount higher still—I die, I rise again, I walk in resurrection life—and now I look to the Chief Shepherd and hope to receive at His hands the crown of life which He shall give to me and not to me only, but unto all them that love His appearing—the Good, Great, Chief Shepherd!

May God give us Grace, meditating upon these things, to know them and enter into them.

III. In conclusion I promised one or two IMPRESSIVE APPLICATIONS. The first application is one of comfort and satisfaction to you who are poor, needy, weary and troubled lambs or sheep of the flock. Our own text runs thus, “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd.” What next? “He shall gather the lambs with His arms and carry them in His bosom and shall gently lead those that are with young.”

The lambs have not the value of mature sheep, yet they are the most thought of under the Good Shepherd. They might fetch the least price in

the market, but they have the greatest portion of His heart. You needy, troubled ones, I want you to look here and note down in your memories that though there are promises for all saints, there are special promises for *you*. Jesus Christ will take care that the lambs and those who are with young shall be specially housed.

Notice this in Jacob, whom I introduced to you as the toiling shepherd—when he met with Esau, Esau wanted him to accept a guard to go with him. But Jacob said, “My lord knows that the children are tender and the flocks and herds with young are with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die.”

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will not travel at such a rate as to overdrive the lambs. He has tender consideration for the poor and needy. Kings usually look to the interests of the great and the rich, but in the kingdom of our Good Shepherd, He cares most for the poor. “He shall judge the poor of the people.” The weaklings and the sickly of the flock are the special objects of the Savior’s care. A proof of this you find at the thirty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel, sixteenth verse, “I will seek that which was lost and bring again that which was driven away. And I will bind up that which was broken and I will strengthen that which was sick.”

Inexpressibly comforting words to the broken, sick, needy, Christian! You think, dear Heart, that you are forgotten because of your nothingness and weakness and poverty? This is the very reason why you are remembered! There is a mother here this morning—she has seven children. I know what child she has been thinking of while we have been preaching. She has not been thinking of John, who is married and away, nor of Mary who is in health, nor of Thomas who is sitting by her side. She has been thinking of the poor little one at home in bed and she has wondered whether it has had any sleep this morning and whether it has been well taken care of. You know that my guess is correct.

Now Jesus Christ, our loving Shepherd, if He should forget those of us who are strong and in sound health, will be sure to recollect the sickly ones! He shall feed His flock like a shepherd. He shall gather the lambs with His arms and carry them in His bosom. He shall gently lead those that are with young.

A second application containing comfort and warning, too. Sinner, to you our Lord Jesus Christ now represents Himself as being a Shepherd who is come to seek and to save that which was lost. Here are his own words—“What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me for I have found the sheep which was lost.”

Such is Jesus now, looking after stray sheep. Where are you? Where are you this morning? The Great Shepherd comes after you, and oh, what joy will be in His heart—what joy there will be in Heaven when the Great Shepherd shall throw you on His shoulders and bring you home! But hark! Did you ever notice that the same Shepherd who saves the lost will curse the finally impenitent? He shall separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then shall He say unto them on the left hand, "Depart you cursed!" What lips are those which pronounce those dreadful words? The Shepherd's lips! The lips of that same Shepherd who flies over the mountains to the lost sheep—of whom, I trust, it will yet be said, "We were as sheep going astray, but we have now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls." That same Seeker of the lost and Gatherer together of them that are scattered, will say, Depart you cursed, into everlasting fire in Hell prepared for the devil and his angels.

Oh, Sinner, may you know the Shepherd as binding up your broken bones and healing your wounds and rejoicing over your saved soul! For if you do not, you will have to know Him in another and more terrible Character, when He shall curse you, separating you from His own sheep as the Shepherd divides the sheep from the goats! So we shall conclude with these words, which may be for both saint and sinner. Let it never be forgotten, that in all we have said about Jesus Christ, still, as a Shepherd, He is pre-eminently to be preached as the Suffering One.

I began with Abel and I must conclude with Abel. Zechariah has recorded these remarkable words of Jehovah, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd and against the Man that is My Fellow, says the Lord. Smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." O Sinner, you have most of all to do today with the Abel-shepherd—with the Shepherd dead at the altar! With the Shepherd with His blood crying up to Heaven, with the sword of Jehovah in His heart! You shall know about the toiling-shepherd by-and-by.

The Shepherd reigning in Egypt, the Joseph you shall know soon. The Shepherd of the separated flock you shall follow before long. The Shepherd reigning in Jerusalem, the David you shall rejoice to serve! But now you have to do with the Shepherd bleeding and dying! Hark to these words and I have done—"All we, like sheep, have gone astray. We have turned, everyone, to his own way and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." In this is Jesus to be seen—suffering, bleeding, dying—on yonder accursed tree!

He is there, the Shepherd to whom if we look we shall live and live forever! God enable you to turn those poor eyes of yours which have been red with weeping over sin, or red with the drunkenness of wickedness and see in Jesus Christ your iniquity put away, Jehovah reconciled, and your souls eternally saved. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 10—1-18;24-29.

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JESUS AND THE LAMBS

NO. 794

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 9, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom.”
Isaiah 40:11.*

IN the chapter before us our Savior is described as Jehovah God. He is spoken of as clothed with irresistible power: “He shall come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him,” but, as if to soften a glory far too bright for the weak eyes of the trembling, the Prophet introduces the delightful words of the text: “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.” Here is Divinity! Not Jehovah, the Man of War, but Jehovah the Shepherd of Israel! Here is the fire of Deity, but its gentle, warming influence is felt and the consuming force is veiled. Greatness in league with gentleness, and power linked with affection now pass before us.

Loving-kindness and tender mercy are drawn in their golden chariot by the noble steeds of Omnipotence and Wisdom. Heroes who have been most distinguished for fury in the fight have been tender of heart as little children—sharp were their swords to the foe—but gentle their hands towards the weak. It is the index of a noble nature that it can be majestic as a lion in the midst of the fray and roar like a young lion on the scene of conflict—and yet have a dove’s eye and a maiden’s heart. Such is our Lord Jesus Christ! He is the conquering Captain of salvation but He is meek and lowly of heart.

This morning, in considering the text, we have a special eye to these who are the weaklings among us. Our desire is, as an under-shepherd, to administer consolation to those who are distressed in spirit and feeble in mind, hoping that while we speak, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, may speak effectually to them.

I. Our first consideration, this morning, will be the enquiry, WHO ARE THE LAMBS WHICH OUR BLESSED LORD IS SAID TO GATHER AND TO CARRY IN HIS BOSOM? In a certain sense we may affirm that *all* His people are lambs. In so far as they exhibit the Christian spirit, they are lamb-like. Jesus sends them forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. They are a little flock, a guileless people. Just as the lamb was clean and acceptable to God, so is every Christian. As the lamb might be presented in sacrifice, so does every Believer present his body as a living sacrifice unto God. As the lamb was the symbol of innocence, so should the Believer be holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.

And as the lamb fights not, and has no weapon of offense, so the Believer is no brawler, striker, or man of strife. Wars and fighting he hates, and follows peace with all men. When he is fully conformed to his Master’s

will he resists not evil, but is patient, turning the other cheek when he is struck. He knows that vengeance is God's prerogative and therefore is slow to retort upon a railing adversary, remembering that Michael the archangel only replied to the adversary, "The Lord rebuke you."

A lamb is so guileless and unsuspecting that it licks the butcher's hand and those who seek to destroy it find it easy work. So have the saints been killed all the daylong—they are accounted as sheep for the slaughter, and the accusation of James is true—"You have condemned and killed the just, and he does not resist you." Those who are of a meek and lamb-like spirit are precisely such as become lovers of the gentle Prophet of Nazareth. Like attracts its like. He is meek and lowly in heart and therefore those who are like He is, come to Him. The power of His Gospel, wherever it is exerted, produces men of such character. Those who came to Christ when He was upon earth may have been boisterous enough in their natural dispositions, but after they had received the baptism of His Spirit, they were an inoffensive race.

They proclaimed the Gospel with boldness and for their Master they were very valiant, but they rose not in arms against Caesar. They headed no rebellions. They were not competitors in the race for power. They shed no blood even to win their liberties. They were examples of suffering, affliction and of patience—they were ready to live or to die for the truth, but that truth was love to God and man. Self pride, greed, wrath as works of the old nature they sought to mortify, and it was their daily desire to do good unto all men as they had opportunity. Jesus will always gather such lambs. The world hates them and scatters them! The world ridicules and despises them but Jesus makes them His bosom friends.

The world of old hounded them to death—made them pine in the damp of the catacombs of Rome, or perish among the snows of the Alps—but their glorified Lord gathered them by tens of thousands from the prison, the amphitheater, the stake, the bloody scaffold—and in His blessed bosom they rest in congenial company forever! As the Lord's lambs they are glorified with the Lamb of God.

Still, this is not the precise meaning of the text. The word "lamb" frequently signifies the *young*, and our Lord Jesus Christ graciously receives many young persons into His bosom. The ancient teachers of the Jewish Law invited no children to gather around them. I suppose there was not a Rabbi in all Jerusalem who would have desired a child to listen to him, and if it had been said of anyone of the Sanhedrim, "that man teaches so as to be understood by a child," he would have thought himself insulted by such a description. But not so our Master! He always had children among His audience—they are often mentioned. In the enumeration of those whom He miraculously fed, we read, "beside women and children."

His triumphant entry into Jerusalem included among the most conspicuous of the jubilant throng those children who were heard crying, "Hosanna," in the temple. When Jesus took a little child and set him in the midst, He had not to go far for the living illustration, for the little children were always near "the holy Child Jesus," the great Child-Man. Our Lord Jesus was so guileless, so gentle, He wore His heart so manifestly

upon His sleeve, that though a man in all things masculine and dignified, the childlike nature was eminently conspicuous in Him and attracted the little ones to itself. We shall never forget the voice of the blessed Savior, the Lord of angels, as He cries, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

Some in our day mistrust youthful piety, but our Savior lends no countenance to such suspicions. Some cautiously whisper, "Let the pious youth be tried awhile before we believe in his religion. Let him be tempted—let him bear the frosts of the world—perhaps the blossoms will drop away and disappoint us." Such was not my Master's way. Cautious, no doubt He was prudent beyond all human wisdom, but yet ever full of love and generousness, and therefore we find Him receiving children, as He has received us, into His kingdom—into the best place in His kingdom—into His loving bosom.

Ah, dear Children, since you are not too young to die and to be judged for your idle words and disobedient actions, it is a delightful thing for you that you are not too young to believe in Jesus, nor too young to be saved by His Grace! Dear Children, I would have you completely saved today, for your tender age is no hindrance to you being forgiven and justified. If you have trusted the great Savior, I tenderly invite you to declare your faith in the Lord Jesus, and to come forward and be joined to the Church of Jesus. If, indeed, you are converted, we dare not refuse you! I hope the Church of Jesus will no more think of refusing you than would our Lord Himself.

Were Jesus here this morning, He would say, "Suffer the little ones to come unto Me," and I hope you will be led by the Holy Spirit to come at His call. Only let your youthful hearts be given to Jesus, let your confidence be fixed alone upon what He suffered for sinners upon the Cross of Calvary, and you need not be afraid. There is the same Christ for you as for the gray heads. The promises are as much yours as your fathers' and the comforts of the Holy Spirit shall flow as sweetly into the little vessels of your hearts as into the hearts of those who have known the Savior these 50 years. Hear the words of the Good Shepherd, "I love them that love Me, and they that seek Me early shall find Me."

But, again, by lambs we may quite as properly understand *young converts*—those who begin to have religious impressions—those who but of late have repented of sin and been driven from all confidence in their own good works. They are not yet established in the faith. They only know, perhaps, one or two great doctrines. They are very far from being able to teach others. They need to sit at the feet of Jesus rather than to serve Him in activities requiring talent and knowledge. Their faith is very apt to waver. Poor things, if they are assailed by arguments they are soon perplexed, and though they cling to the Truth of God, yet it is a hard struggle for them.

They cannot give a reason for the hope that is in them, though they are not deficient in meekness and fear. Our Lord Jesus Christ never discarded a single follower on account of his being juvenile in the faith. Far from it! He has been pleased, in His infinite tenderness, to look especially after

these. A young man came to Him who was not then converted—probably never was—and yet though the good work in him was so immature that it may have been compared to the morning cloud and the morning dew which pass away, yet our Savior, looking upon him, loved him! For He delights to see the hopeful token, however slender. He quenches not the smoking flax, and breaks not the bruised reed. He did not repulse the self-righteous youth. He was ignorant of the very first principle of the Gospel, namely, justification by faith and not by works, yet, since he desired to do right and was evidently sincere, our Lord Jesus Christ further instructed Him.

I earnestly pray Christians to imitate my Master in this. Where you see anything of Christ, encourage it. You may observe much that you lament, but, I pray you, do not kill the child because its face is black. Do not cut down the trees because in spring they have no fruit upon them. Be thankful that they make a show of buds which may come to fruit by-and-by. It is not policy in the Christian Church to be severe upon those who are in *any* measure inclined towards Christ! It is inhumanity, it is worse cruelty than the sea monsters, for even they draw out the breasts to their young—but some men seem determined to crush all the hopes of the babes in Divine Grace. Because they grow not at *once* to the full stature of men, therefore they say, “Away with them! They are not fit to be received into the Church of Christ.”

My dear Friends, if there are any of you weak and doubtful, just struggling into life, who have only for the last few days known anything at all concerning the love of Christ. If there are in you any good thing towards the Lord God of Israel—a desire, an earnest longing, or a little faith—my Master will not be unkind to you, for “He gathers the lambs in His arm, and carries them in His bosom.”

Furthermore, we feel sure that we shall not strain the text if we say that the lambs in the flock are those who are naturally of a weak, timid and trembling disposition. There are many persons who, if they were kept constantly in the hothouse of Christian encouragement, would still feel themselves frostbitten, for their minds are naturally heavy and forlorn. If they make music at all, they dwell evermore upon the bass and keep not their harps long from the willows. When the promise comes with power to their souls and they enjoy a few bright sunshiny days, they are very happy in their own quiet way, like the man in the valley of humiliation, singing, “He that is down need fear no fall.” But they never climb the mountains of joy, or lift up their voice with exultation! They have a humble hope and a gracious reliance and they are often, in practical Christianity, among the best in the Church. And yet, alas for them, their days of mirth are few! Like the elder brother in the parable, their father has never given them a kid that they may make merry with their friends.

Now such persons make but poor company, and yet every Christian ought to seek their society, for there is something to be learned from them. And, moreover, their needs demand our sympathetic attention. Do not think that Jesus seeks out the strong saints to be His companions to

the neglect of the little ones. Ah, no! "He shall gather the lambs in His arm, and carry them in His bosom."

Once more, the lambs are those who know but little of the things of God. This class is not so much desponding as ignorant—ignorant after a world of teaching! When we meet with persons who do not understand the Doctrines of Grace, after we have done our best to instruct them, we must not feel vexed with them. Reflect that our Master said to Philip, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?" He was a much better teacher than we shall ever be, and therefore if He was gentle with His dull scholars, we must not be harsh. Some Believers, after years of scriptural teaching, get nothing into their heads except a mass of confusion. They are in a fog, poor souls—they mean right enough—but they do not know how to put their meaning in order.

Oftentimes you will find our friends confounding things that differ, mingling justification with sanctification, or the fruits of the Spirit with the foundation of their confidence. This is the result of an uneducated understanding. Such persons are to be pitied because they become very readily the victims of designing men who lead them into error. But they are not to be *shunned*! They are not to be scolded! They are not to be denounced! Proud men may do so, for they are short-tempered, but the large-hearted Son of God declares that to them He will act as a shepherd and will gather them in His arms.

If Thomas will not learn by any other means, Jesus will condescend to his childish foibles and let him put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into the wounded side. As a nurse is tender with her children, and as a good schoolmaster will teach his child the same thing 20 times if he has not learnt it at the 19th lesson, so Jesus will do! Jesus will add precept upon precept—here a little and there a little—that we may be nurtured and nourished in the faith once delivered to the saints. To whichever class any of you may belong, let my text be sweet to your taste and may the Holy Spirit cheer you by it.

II. But we must now pass on. How DOES JESUS SHOW THIS SPECIAL CARE FOR THE WEAK ONES? He does this, according to the text, in two ways. First, by *gathering* them. At the season of the year when the little lambs are born it is interesting to observe the shepherd's careful watch. When he finds the little ones in the cold frost, almost ready to die, how tender he is! Why, the shepherd's kitchen fireside is, for a time, the lamb's own nursery! Wife and children are put aside for awhile, and the warm place is all given up to the little lambs! There they lie in the warmth till they have strength enough to return to their mothers!

So when a man is spiritually born unto God—he is frequently so desponding, his faith is so weak, and he is altogether so ready to die—that he needs the tender mercy from on high to visit him. There may be one here who has been converted to God during the last week but no kind Christian knows of it. Nobody has spoken to him to gather him up. Lonely one, be not dismayed, Jesus will come to you! He will be a present help in this, your hour of trouble. Now that you are like a new lit candle which is easily blown out, He will shield you from the breath of evil. When the flock

is on the march, it will happen, unless the shepherd is very watchful, that the lambs will lag behind. Those great Syrian flocks which feed in the plains of Palestine have to be driven many miles because the grass is scant, and the flocks are numerous. And in long journeys the lambs drop one by one for weariness, and then the shepherds carry them.

So it is in the progress of the great Christian Church. Persecuted often, always more or less molested by the outside world, there are some who lag—they cannot keep up the pace—the spiritual warfare is too severe for them. They love their Lord. They would, if they could, be among the foremost. But, through the cares of this world, through weakness of mind, through a lack of spiritual vigor they become lame and are ready to perish. Such faint hearts are the peculiar care of their tender Lord.

At other times the lambs do *worse* than this. They are of a skittish nature, and feeling the natural vigor of new-born life they are not content to keep within bounds as the older sheep do. They betake themselves to wandering so that at the close of the day the lambs cost the shepherd much trouble. “Where are those lambs?” he says. “Where are they? The sheep are right enough, but where are the lambs?” What will the good man do? Leave them, and say, “They have worn out my patience”? No—he will *gather* them. So are there many immature Christians whose minds are hung loosely, and are unstable as water. What a trouble some of you are to those who love you! When you rise to a little faith, you sink into unbelief before the next day! You shift your opinions as often as the moon changes, and are of one mind never longer than a week. You follow everybody who chooses to put up his finger to beckon you away. You leave the good old paths to seek other pastures.

Sometimes you are with the so-called Brethren. The next day the Church of England. Next, the Dissenters, and, perhaps, if the Roman Catholics were to try you, you would be ready to go with them in the hope of finding comfort. It is the nature of the lambs that they should do so. But will the Good Shepherd be angry with you and cast you off? Not at all, for Jesus gathers the lambs, and when He puts His great loving arm over them, they cannot wander any more! When His love constrains them and they come to the full enjoyment of His Gospel Truth, then they are content to remain near His blessed Person.

When the text says, “He gathers the lambs,” does it mean that Jesus gathers poor tremblers to His precious blood, and washes them and gives them peace? Does it mean that He gathers them to His precious Truth and illuminates their minds, and instructs their understanding? Is it not meant He gathers them to Himself and unites them to His glorious Person, making them members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones? Oh, this is a delightful gathering! His Word cannot do it alone. His ministers cannot do it, but *His arm* can! The power and energy of the Holy Spirit, which is like the right arm of the Good Shepherd, gathers together these weakest and most wandering ones and puts them safe into the blessed pavilion of His bosom!

But the text says after He gathers them, He carries them in His bosom. That is, first of all, the safest place, for the wolf cannot get them there.

Furious and impertinent as Hell always is, yet who can hope to take His bosom treasure away from Jesus? You weak ones, how secure you are in Him, though so exposed to danger in yourselves! The *bosom*—why that is the most tender place—where we should put a poor creature that had a broken bone and could not bear to be roughly touched. The bosom, that is the *easiest* place. It makes one wish to always be a lamb, if one could always ride in that chariot! Delightful is the weakness which casts us upon such gracious strength. “He carries the lambs in His bosom.” Why, that is the most *honorable* place. We would not put into our bosom that which was despised! We should not think of carrying there anything which was not choice and dear and exceedingly precious.

So, you weak ones, though you think yourself to be less than nothing, and *are* nothing in yourself, yet you shall have all the security which the heart of Deity can give you! You shall have all the comfort that the love of Christ can pour upon you! All the honor and dignity which nearness, and fellowship, and dearness of love can bestow upon a poor mortal, you shall have! Rejoice, you lambs, that you have such a Shepherd to carry you near His heart!

To enlarge upon this, let me observe that our Lord shows His care for the lambs in His teachings which are very simple, mostly in parables, full of winning illustrations, but always plain.

The Gospel is a poor man’s Gospel. You need not be a Plato, or a Socrates to understand it. The peasant is as readily saved as the philosopher. He that has but a small amount of brains may understand that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and that whoever believes in Him is not condemned. If Christ had not cared for the weak ones, He would not have come with so plain a message, for He comprehends all mysteries and knows the deep things of God. Moreover, He is pleased to reveal His teachings *gradually*. He did not tell His disciples all the Truths of God at once because they were not able to bear it. He led them from one Truth to another.

He brings forth milk before He offers strong meat. Some of you weak ones are very stupid. You want to begin with the hard Truths first. You long to comprehend *election* before you understand that Jesus Christ came into the world to save *sinners*. But you should not do so, for our Lord would have you begin with these lessons, “I am a sinner. Christ stood in the sinner’s place. I trust Him, I am saved.” After you have learned this first alphabet of the Gospel you shall learn the rest. It is a token of the Lord’s love to the weak that He does not hang our salvation upon *our* understanding *mysteries*!

He does not rest our ground of confidence upon our orthodoxy, or our knowledge of the more sublime Truths of God, but if we know the power of His precious blood—whether we understand His electing love or not—we are saved! It is well to learn all that we can, but here is a fair display of Christ’s love—that if we do but *trust* in Him, although we may be much in the dark—we are nevertheless secure. The Lord’s gentleness to the lambs is shown in this, that His experimental teachings are all by degrees, too. He does not teach the young beginner all the depravity of his heart which

he will have to feel in after life. He does not allow the young convert to be molested by Satanic insinuations as he may be when he becomes stronger. Nor does He usually suffer temporal trouble to befall so heavily on those who are but fledglings in the nest.

He always suits the trial to the strength, and the burden to the back. I am quite certain if my Master had allotted me some of my present trials 15 years ago, I should have been ready to despair, and yet at the present I am supplied with strength enough to bear them, though I have none to spare. Blessed be the Lord Jesus for His kind consideration of our many infirmities. He never overdrives His lambs. Though a certain form of experience is very useful, yet He does not send it to us while by reason of backwardness in Grace we are unable to bear it. The Divine gentleness of our Master has been shown in the solemn curses with which He effectually guarded the little ones. Observe how sharp they are! "But whoso shall offend one of those little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

To offend is to put a stumbling block in the way. How solemn is that warning, "Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones!" He must have loved them or He would not have set such a hedge of fire around them. How many of the promises are made on purpose for the weak? I encourage you to make your own study of them, and so I shall not repeat them this morning. The precious Word of God will show you how the gracious Word is framed to the peculiar condition of distress and weakness under which the lambs are suffering. The Holy Spirit, with Divine art, brings home to the heart promises which had never else appeared to be so full of Grace. Brethren, the Lord Jesus Christ's tenderness to His people is further shown in this, that what He requires of them is *easy*. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light." He does not command the babes to preach. He does not send the weak Believers to the forefront of the battle, as David did Uriah, that they may be slain. He gives them no other burden than this—that they will trust Him and give Him all their heart. A yoke so easy!

He shows His gentleness, moreover, in that He accepts the least service that these little ones may offer. A faint prayer, a sigh, a tear—He will receive all these as much as the most eloquent pleadings of an Elijah. The broken alabaster box and the ointment poured out shall be received though they come from one who has no former character with which to back the gift. And the two mites that make a farthing shall not be disowned. The best work sincerely done out of love to Jesus—in dependence upon Him—He accepts most cheerfully, and thus shows to us His real tenderness for the lambs. He has bid His ministers to be careful of the little ones. "Feed My lambs," He said to Peter, because He would have all His ministers do so. Those shall find themselves winning their Master's frown who despise the weaklings, but those shall have a smile from His face who, with tender care, shall nurture them.

Jesus, my Lord, speaks to the desponding and timid ones this morning, and He cries—

***“Trust Me, and fear not; your life is secure;
My wisdom is perfect, supreme is My power;
In love I correct you, your soul to refine,
To make you at length in My likeness to shine.
The foolish, the fearful, the weak are My care,
The helpless, the homeless, I hear their sad prayer:
From all their afflictions My glory shall spring,
And the deeper their sorrows, the louder they’ll sing.”***

I have thus shown to you, as well as I am able, the tender heart of my Lord towards the lambs.

III. In the third place, let us answer this question, WHY THIS CARE OF CHRIST TOWARDS THE LAMBS OF THE FLOCK? They need Him and He loves them is the answer, and therefore shall they receive according to their necessities. But why is He so particularly anxious to succor them? Surely if He lost a lamb or two, it would be no loss among so many! And if one of the feeble minds should perish it would be no great consequence when a multitude that no man can number shall be saved! The answer is plain—the weak are as much redeemed by the blood of Christ as the strong. When the redemption money was paid by the Jews, it was said, “The rich shall give no more, and the poor shall give no less because every man’s soul is of equal value before the eternal God.”

The meanest child of God has been as truly bought with the blood of Christ and cost the Lord as much to buy him as the brightest of Apostles, or the boldest of confessors. A man will not lose a thing which cost him his blood. The soul of a beggar, if it were put into the scale, would outweigh ten thousand worlds—and when that beggar’s soul has been redeemed by the wounds of Jesus, depend upon it—Jesus Christ will not lose it. In the newborn child of God there are peculiar beauties which are not so apparent in others. It is a matter of taste, I suppose, which is the more beautiful, the lamb or the sheep. But I think the most of us would select the lamb. There is a charm in young creatures, and so there are traits of character in weak and young Believers which are extremely delightful.

You miss in after-life the first love of the beginner in the heavenly pilgrimage. True, there are other and more substantial beauties, but the first blushes and smiles are gone. Have you not, when you have grown older, wished that you possessed the same tenderness of conscience which you had at first, that you had felt the same simplicity of faith? Have you not desired to enjoy that same intense delight in the service of God’s House which you enjoyed during the first few months after your new birth? You have other Graces now. You have virtues more useful in the battle of life, but yet there were beauties, then, which Jesus Christ admired and which He would not suffer to be soiled.

Jesus has such care for the weak ones, because they will become strong one day. All great Graces were once little Graces. All great faith must have once been little faith. It is always first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. Mountain-moving faith was once a trembling thing. Kill the lambs? Then where will the *sheep* be? Slaughter the innocents? Then where shall Bethlehem find her men? Destroy the chil-

dren? Then from where shall the warriors come who march in ranks to the battle? Jesus sees the weak ones not as they *are*, but as they are to be! He discerns the *complete* man in the babe of Grace.

Moreover, my Brothers and Sisters, our Lord Jesus Christ's suretyship engagements require that He should preserve the weakest as well as the strongest. God will require at Christ's hand every one of the elect. "Yours they were, and You gave them to Me," said our Lord. He is to present them faultless before His Presence with exceedingly great joy. Just as Laban required every sheep from Jacob's hand, or else Jacob must bear the loss forever, so will God require at our Shepherd's hand every sheep, or He must forever dishonor His suretyship engagement. But it shall never be! He will be true to His Word, and say, "Of all that You have given Me have I lost none."

When a secretary delivers up his accounts, he is very pleased if it can be said by the auditors, "We have found them correct to a single farthing." But suppose he had said, "Well, there are slight errors, for I never took notice of the pence, I thought them such trifles that if I looked to the pounds it was quite enough." What would be thought of him? Who would trust him? It is the type of an honest man that he is correct to a farthing. If Jesus should bring to eternal glory all who are great in Grace, but neglect the weakest it would dishonor His great name! His honor is pledged to preserve the very weakest of the flock—

***"Shepherd of the chosen number,
They are safe whom You do keep.
Other shepherds faint and slumber,
And forget to watch the sheep.
Watchful Shepherd!
You do wake while others sleep."***

Besides His suretyship engagements, there are His promises. He has declared that whoever believes in Him shall never perish but have everlasting life. That promise is not to the strong only, but to the weak also. He has said, "None shall pluck them out of My hand." Now, He does not say, "None shall pluck the *great ones*, but *may* pluck the little ones." No, "None shall pluck *them*," that is, any of them! They are all saved, and all *equally* saved, because their safety does not depend upon *their* growth or *their* vigor—it depends on the strength of *His* arm and the infallibility of *His* purpose. The sick and sorrowful inhabitants of Jerusalem are secured by the munitions of Divine strength and the bastions of everlasting love as much shelter the little child in the streets as the men that go forth to war!

We may be quite sure the tender Savior will take care of the lambs because compassion argues that if any should be watched it should be these. Cast away His people because they are timid, and trembling and fearful? God forbid! Yonder is a mother who has a numerous family of children. My dear Mother, may I argue with you? If you must neglect one of your children, shall I tell you which it should be? It should be that one which is lame in the feet and has always been so sickly. Why, I think I see the mother looking at me angrily—"Stop," she says, "such shameful talk! That very one I look after with the most anxiety. If I did neglect one, it would be the big boy, grown up, and able to take care of himself, but that

poor little dear! I could not forsake him, I carry him in my bosom from morning to night. If there is one that I am most tender over, it is just that very one.”

The instincts of our nature tell us that. The beatings of Jesus’ heart are towards the trembling ones. When should a man forget or forsake his spouse? Never under any conceivable circumstances, but certainly not when she is sick or sorrowful! Shall he sue in the Divorce Court against her because she is afflicted and full of pains and griefs? Is she to be cast out of doors because her spirits are broken? Only villainy, alone, could dictate such an argument, and rest assured, Beloved, such an argument should have no tolerance with the Well-Beloved! If you are in Jesus Christ rest assured that His love will not desert you. It would be a very deplorable thing for every Believer in the whole world if it were announced that the least Believer should perish. If it should be proclaimed by sound of trumpet by some angelic messenger that the Good Shepherd intended to cast off one of the least of His flock, though it were but *one*, I do not know what conclusion *you* would draw from it, my dear Hearer, but mine would be this, “Then He will cast off *me*.”

I should feel at once that all the grounds of my security were gone—that *I* might be the castaway. Even if but one, why not I? Would not you feel the same, and where would any of us have any room for comfort? After the one announcement, so contrary to the promise, we might expect another, because in weakness, or in ignorance—if anything in the lamb-like nature is to destroy one of us—then of course, the next, and the next, and the next, and the next may perish. If a man has many creditors, and he says, “I will not pay *this* one,” we all think perhaps he will not pay the next, and the next, and the next. And if God does not keep His promise to the very least, then not to the one next above the least, and so on to none at all.

In fact, the whole blood-bought Church of God may go to perdition if but one goes there! And if the most wandering and backsliding shall be cast into Hell, then the whole will go. If the ship goes down enough to drown one man on board, she would drown the whole company. There is no safety for any of the ship’s company unless there is safety for *all* on board. So, heir of Heaven, looking at the consequences that would come from the ruin of the least, believe firmly that the Keeper of Israel will gather you with His arm and carry you in His bosom.

IV. We shall conclude when we have made a PRACTICAL CONCLUSION. What then? Why, first of all, let us gather the lambs for Christ. I am persuaded there are many who are not in Church fellowship who ought to be, but who, perhaps, will never come forward unless they receive an encouraging word from some of their Christian friends. It is of the first importance that they should be gathered to Christ—*He* has done that for them. It is in the next degree important that they should be gathered into His *Church*. May I, therefore, ask all of you who owe anything to my Lord to make some kind of acknowledgment of your debt by looking after those who need a helping hand?

The Lord, speaking of His people says, “I taught Israel to go, taking him by the arms.” You know what that means—you have done that with your children when you taught them to walk—holding them up by the arms. Do the same for your Master’s little ones! Teach some of these beginners to go, holding them up by encouragements. Did not someone do as much for you once? Do you not remember a kind friend who cheered and instructed you? Return your obligation to the Christian Church by doing the same. I earnestly pray to see, during the next few months, a very large ingathering into our Church of such as shall be saved. We do not want those who are *unconverted* to be added to the Church—there is a step *before* that—they must first *give themselves* to Christ. And we *do* want as many as really belong to our Lord and Master to come into the fellowship of the faithful and to share in the privileges of the Church of God.

Next, let us learn from the text to carry in our bosoms those who are gathered. We have gathered many together into the Church, but that is not all we must do—that is only the *beginning* of what riper Christians should count it to be their office to do towards the young. Every young Christian is presented to the Christian Church just as Moses was presented to his mother by Pharaoh’s daughter, with this commission, “Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages.” It is not possible that two pastors, or 20 pastors, should be able to visit and instruct all the members of such a Church as this, and the lack must be supplied by you, my Brothers, who have known the Lord these years, and by you, my Sisters, who have become matrons in our Jerusalem.

May I entreat you, by the love of Him who gave Himself for you, by all the tenderness of the heart of Christ—if there are any consolations of the Spirit—seek out your fellow members who may be weak in faith and downcast in mind, and speak comfortably unto them! Tell them that their warfare is accomplished, that their sin is pardoned. Point them to the Lord Jesus! Unveil His beauties to them! Make them, as far as you can, to comprehend with all the saints what are the heights and depths, that they may grow in Divine Grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I trust that this sermon may minister comfort to mourners. But as for those who believe not in Christ at all, I can administer to them no comfort except by reminding them of this one fact—that it is *not too late* for them to trust in Jesus, and if they do so—however long they may have delayed, the door is not closed. May they enter before the Master of the House has risen up and shut the door.

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CAUSES AND CURE OF FAINTING NO. 2812

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 4, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 7, 1877.

*“He gives power to the faint.”
Isaiah 40:29.*

THE connection in which these words stand is very suggestive. The previous verse says, “Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary. There is no searching of His understanding.” He has the perfection of power and also of wisdom. Unbelief is based upon absurdity, but faith rests upon reason and fact. This may not, at first sight, seem to be true, but it really is. To believe in the almighty and all-wise God is the most rational thing in the world—to disbelieve Him is both the most wicked and the most irrational thing. When a child of God begins to distrust his Father, it must be because he doubts either God’s memory or His power. It seems utterly absurd, as well as grievously wrong, to suspect the Lord of fainting or being weary. The moment we give utterance to such a sentiment, we feel as if we must at once withdraw the words. It is so altogether ridiculous and absurd to speak thus of Him who made the heavens and the earth and who supports all things by the word of His power! How can He fail or faint? The Self-Existent One, from whom all the power that ever was, or is, or shall be, and must primarily come—how can He fail or faint? Then would the sun grow dim at noon! Then would earth dissolve and Heaven pass away if once faintness could seize the Deity who supports all things!

We know better and we ought, therefore, to act better. And as we feel that He cannot faint or be weary, we ought not to harbor a single doubt concerning His fainting. How can He faint? It is He that gives power to the faint! When faintness comes anywhere, it does not come to Him—it comes to you who doubt. You are like a reeling man who thinks that it is the earth that reels, or like a person travelling in a train who, for the moment, forgets that he is moving and thinks that the trees and hedges are all swiftly rushing by him! It is not God who changes—it is you who have changed. It is not He that is weary—it is you who are weary. It is not He that is faint—it is you that are fainting. And here comes, in this blessed Truth of God, for your encouragement—that you may be revived from this faintness—instead of Him fainting, God, “gives power to the faint.”

I. First, I will endeavor to answer the question, WHAT MAKES US FAINT?

We will first consider the case of the awakened sinner, the man who does not know that he is saved and who, perhaps, is not yet converted. But he is, to some extent, under the gracious influence of the Spirit of God, for he has been awakened from his sleep of sin and has begun to pray. It very commonly happens that when persons are in this condition, they are seized with faintness. What is it that makes them feel faint?

Well, first, they may very well faint, for *they have made a most alarming discovery*. They were not aware of their true position, but they suddenly find themselves lost. Their own righteousness, which appeared to them to be like fair, white linen, has proven to be only filthy rags. Their own merits, which seemed to them to be a great heap of gold, are shown to be just so much dross. They fancied that they were rich, increased with goods and had need of nothing, but they find themselves wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. They see themselves condemned of God on account of sin and they also see before them, with an awful astonishment, the burning lake of Hell—and they cannot tell whether their next step will not plunge them into the dread abyss from which there will be no escape! Is it amazing that when a man first realizes all this, he is filled with terror, the cold sweat stands on his brow and he is ready to faint? Indeed, if it were not for the goodness of God in only revealing the sinner's danger to him, in a measure, I would not wonder if when men saw themselves in their true state, they were to lose their reason!

It has not seemed at all strange to me that men have gone mad when they have suddenly found out where they were and where they were likely to be in a very short time! I have had to bless God that so few cases of that kind have occurred and I have never wondered when I have seen the horror and distress of mind of persons who have discovered their lost condition. Some of you who are now sitting very comfortably in your seats—if you only knew what it is to be already condemned because you have not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God—if you could but catch the meaning of these words, “He that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.” If you discovered that this was no myth, or fiction, but an awful reality, like a cloud charged with deadly electricity you, also, would be ready to faint!

Sometimes, too, awakened sinners faint for another reason, namely, that *they have tried to escape from their dangerous position, but they have not succeeded*. What long and laborious attempts at self-salvation, awakened souls will make! They will deny themselves many pleasures, they will subject themselves to a great deal of toil, they will resolve, pray, cry and fret—yet it all ends in failure. A man trying to save himself is like a prisoner on the treadmill, perpetually stepping, but never mounting an inch higher. He is like a blind horse in a mill—he goes round, and round, and round, but makes no real advance. What can he do? He is trying to weave a substantial garment out of spiders' webs! He is attempting, with worthless works, to make a perfect righteousness! It was no small blessing for Israel when it could be said of them, “He brought down their heart

with labor; they fell down and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses.” The sooner an end comes to all self-righteous attempts to obtain salvation, the better! Then does the man’s soul faint within him. Then is he like one who is at sea in a storm, who has tugged at the oar, or has tried to use the sail, but can make no headway, or escape the fury of the tempest. “They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit’s end.” Thus are they faint.

We have known some grow so faint through a sense of sin and dread of its punishment—and a consciousness of their own inability to save themselves—that *they have even wished to die*. Yet, when they have looked at their condition aright, they have asked themselves what use death would be to them? It would be as when a man escaped from a lion and a bear slew him. Or as if a weary man leaned upon a wall and a serpent that was hidden in a cranny, bit his hand. For a man, loaded with sin, to die, is for him to be damned! Well might he choose to die if death meant annihilation—but there is that dread of something after death, that appearing before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that terrible sentence from Him that sits upon the Throne of God, “Depart, you cursed!” This is what makes a man faint and causes him to dread both to live and to die. Then does he say, with Job, “My soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life.” Yet he dare not actually choose it, for he dreads what would come after it. So he is faint, and well may he be!

Perhaps also, at such a time, *a sore trouble may happen to the man*, for, in the parable of the prodigal son, it appears that he was quite as much influenced by the peculiar circumstances without as by his sense of sin within. We have often known the soul that has been under distress because of sin, to also fall into distress through temporal trouble. It has seemed as if the hand of God had gone out against him and he cries out in his agony, “You hunt me as with fierce dogs that would gladly tear me to pieces! You make me the target of all Your arrows. You do not give me space in which to swallow my spittle between one trial and another!” Then the troubled soul faints beneath the hand of God who seems to say to him, “You have sinned against Me; and if you faint, now that I have begun to deal with you, what will you do by-and-by? If, in the land of peace, wherein you trust, My hand is too heavy for you, what will you do in the swellings of Jordan? If you faint when I do but come against you with footmen, what will you do when you have to contend with horses—when I put forth My might to punish My rebellious creatures?” When this happens, the soul is utterly brought into the dust of death, ground down, faint and ready to die.”

Now I pass on to another character, namely, the child of God in his fainting fits, but fainting fits of a peculiar class which are especially sinful—for there is a degree of sinfulness about some of these faintings which is not to be found in others. For instance, *sometimes the children of God faint through lack of faith*. David said, “I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.” So, the cure for fainting is *faith*—and, therefore, the best way to prevent fainting

is to believe. He who believes shall not fall into this state of pain, prostration, inaction and similitude of death. Child of God, are you fainting because you do not believe your Father's promises? I must not begin to comfort you until, first of all, I have rebuked you! Why do you doubt your God? On what ground do you distrust His faithfulness? Have you ever had cause to think that He will fail you? Put your finger on anything that He has ever done to you that will give you even a shadow of justification for mistrust of Him! O Man, if unbelief is at the bottom of your faintness, repent of it and pray to be forgiven! Surely the Lord deserves to be trusted by His own children, if not by anybody else! If anyone will persist in distrusting Him, led it be the sinner. But as for you, the chosen people of His love, the favored ones of His heart—will you doubt Him? A man might bear almost anybody's distrust sooner than that of his beloved wife or darling child—and shall the Lord have distrust from you whom He has so highly favored by His own eternal love? Pray Him both to forgive and to banish your unbelief!

Again, some are brought into a state of faintness *through a selfish need of resignation*. A specimen of that kind of character was that strange-tempered old Prophet, Jonah. You remember that “the Lord God prepared a gourd and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceedingly glad of the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day and it struck the gourd that it withered...And the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, so that he fainted and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. And God said to Jonah, Do you well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry even unto death.” It was not only the heat of the sun that caused him to faint—it was also the heat of his temper! Evil tempers inside of us do more to cause us to faint than all the sultry weather outside of us. If we will not let God have His way with us. If we are like children in a tantrum and begin quarrelling with our Father, or with one another. If we try to be masters in God's house and lords over God's heritage, seeking to rule His household according to our own will and way—do you wonder that when we get into the sulks, by-and-by, we begin to faint? Some of those who have lost dear children seem as if they will not forgive God for taking them. They keep on fretting and pining for years after the bereavement. They go to the drawer and take out the little socks and the toys—and weep over them in a fashion which shows that they are not resigned to the will of God. It is not for us to harshly censure them, but I think it is for them to cease from such a rebellious course of action and to ask God that they may not faint through a lack of obedience and resignation to His will.

There are children of God, also, who fall into faintness *through trusting in themselves*. In the chapter from which our text is taken, it is said, “Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall.” Why is that? It is because the youths felt themselves able to do anything! Up or down, mile after mile, they could leap, run and jump, for they were so strong. And then, at last, they fainted, for they had nothing

to sustain them but their own strength. And as for the young men—they said that the boys were always so impetuous and spent their strength too soon, but they, themselves, had staying power—so they felt that they could keep up the pace. But the Prophet says, they “shall utterly fall.” So will it be with any of us who begin to trust in our own strength! Before long we shall come to the end of our force. The strongest sinew in an arm of flesh will crack, sooner or later. The brightest thought of the most brilliant intellect will one day die out in darkness. Being made of clay and being born of woman, we cannot expect that we should last forever. The worst of it is that this faintness will sometimes come to the strong just when they most need all their strength—when they feel, “If ever we needed all our wits about us and all the vigor of our physical frame, it is now.” It is just then that the collapse will probably come, for faintness is sure to follow if we once begin to trust in ourselves!

Then faintness may also arise from another cause which is sinful, namely, *neglect of prayer*. Did not our Savior say that “men ought always to pray, and not to faint”? And did He not imply by that form of expression that if they did *not* pray, they would be sure to faint? We have a choice of these two courses—either to wait upon the Lord and so to renew our strength, or else to be overpowered by faintness. Is the path to your secret place of prayer overgrown? Do you seldom retire for private fellowship with your God? Has your heart forgotten your privilege of momentary, continuous communion with the Most High? Do you live as though you had quarreled with God and would have no more dealings with Him? If so, you will surely faint before long—and it is a blessed thing for you that it should be so, for it would be truly terrible for us to appear to be strong without prayer. It is a sign of something radically rotten within when a man can apparently be just as holy and as earnest without prayer as he is with it. You cannot really know the power of the life of God if you are able to live without prayer, for, just as a man who is unable to breathe, soon faints, so must a person spiritually faint if he does not pray.

Now I am going to mention some other reasons why children of God fall into faintness. And one is *the length of the way*. Some pilgrims faint because the way is so very long. We can do a great deal at a spurt, but we are not able to keep it up. We have a great many people who come among us and who even enter the Church who are splendid fellows for a short time. If they could get to Heaven in a one mile race, they would surely win the prize, but they have no staying power in them. They are like those Galatians to whom the Apostle Paul wrote, “You did run well; who did hinder you that you should not obey the truth?” What is needed is perseverance in well-doing, perseverance under slights, misrepresentations and slanders, perseverance when it means tugging and toiling at the oars, perseverance when there is no smile of recognition, but when there is many a frown from those who misjudge your work. And it is under such difficulties that men are apt to faint. It is not even 10 or 20 years of an unsullied profession that will suffice—our Lord said, “He that endures *to the end* shall be saved.” You would not care to live in your

house if it were only half built—you must go on to the crowning of the edifice if it is to be fit for a habitation. Who that has realized how great are the difficulties of persevering in Divine Grace does not feel that, for this task, we must have Divine power? Otherwise, however far we may have gone, we shall tire, faint and walk the ways of God no more. I know of no doctrine that seems to me to show such a splendor of Divine Grace as the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints, for if the Lord does, indeed, keep His people faithful to the end, as He assuredly will, then is it a veritable marvel of Grace, for, oftentimes, they are ready to faint by the way.

Others are ready to faint *because of the heaviness of their burden*. We are not all burdened alike, but, I daresay, if we could form a right estimate, we should find that we are more equally weighted than we imagine. Sometimes the poor judge that they have a monopoly of trouble, but if they could see how much unhappiness there is in the homes of some of those who are rich, or the lack of health that is the lot of many who live in the midst of abundance, they might be more content to carry their own cross. Yet are there some to whom the burden is peculiarly heavy. Some of God's children seem pressed down under double loads and they are often ready to faint. The remedy for their condition is to get double Grace and double strength from the Lord their God, but, until they do, their soul will feel faint and weary.

Another frequent cause of your faintness is *a sense of your own weakness*. It is not that your burden is really heavier than it was, but you do not feel as if you can carry it any longer. The flesh is weak and the spirit sympathizes with the flesh, and grows weak, too. You cannot do what you did when you were younger. The difficulties which you once smiled at, now oppress you. By reason of the length of your years, the grasshopper has become a burden! Well, then, you must look to the Strong for strength and then no faintness will overpower you—but if you do not, your weakness will soon bring you into a sad state.

Yet another frequent cause of faintness is *the spirit, itself, sinking*. There is a certain condition in which the heart seems to go down, down, down, down, down. I know not how to describe it, but everybody who has ever had that painful experience knows what it is. You can hardly tell why you are so depressed—if you could give a reason for your despondency, you might more easily get over it, but, like David, you cry to your own heart, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me?” You try to argue with yourself to find out the reason why you are so despondent and why you look at the black side of everything and imagine that things will go amiss which will turn out right, after all. Your friends tell you that you are nervous, and there is no doubt that you are, but that does not alter the case. I will not blame you. I will, however, say to myself, and urge you to say to yourself, “Hope you in God: for you shall yet praise Him, who is the health of your countenance and your God.” Better still, I pray our sympathizing Savior will say to you, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in

Me”—and on His loving bosom you will leave all your sorrows and your cares.

There are some children of God who get faint *through lack of spiritual food*. There are some Christians who are so situated that they cannot get proper nourishment for their souls. It is not in every country village or town that Jesus Christ is so preached that the souls of God's people are fed. And among all the troubles a godly man can have, a dreary Sabbath is about the worst—when the sheep look up, but they are not fed—when it is not the Gospel that is preached, but another gospel, which is no Gospel at all—when there are fine words and grand elocution, but nothing for the heart to stay itself upon. In such circumstances it is small wonder if the best of God's children begin to faint! Be thankful, Brothers and Sisters, if you are privileged to enjoy a soul-feeding ministry! And if you are not so favored, try to make up for it by being doubly diligent in searching the Scriptures and feeding upon the Word in private.

Still, at the same time, it is a great deprivation to a child of God if he is not supplied with spiritual food. I thought it was a good prayer of the deacon who thanked God that the minister had put the food down in a low rack where the sheep could get at it. There are some who put the provender in such a high rack that it could only be reached by giraffes! God's children need to have the Bread of Life broken up in small pieces for them, and to have the Truth of God made very simple and plain so that they can understand it. May all of us who teach or preach always try to do that and, remembering the folly of others, let us avoid it ourselves!

Sometimes, God's children also faint *when they are in adversity*. Solomon said, “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.” That is true and our strength is often thus proved to be small. Many a man who thinks that he is rejoicing in the Lord, is really rejoicing in his prosperity—but adversity tries him—it is to him what the fining pot is to silver. Under adversity, we begin to faint and especially if, coupled with that adversity, there is the rebuke of God. Oh, how we faint when we are rebuked of Him! I know of nothing that more readily makes a man faint than that God should look at him with angry eyes. He has trouble in the home and no consolation. He has loss of property, but, above all, loss of fellowship with his God! The promises are no longer sweet to him. Prayer is like a dead letter. Waiting upon God seems to be in vain. The Lord says to those who are in this condition, “I have withdrawn Myself from you. As you have walked contrary to Me, I also will walk contrary to you.” Under such circumstances, it is necessary for the child of God to ask for more Grace and strength so that he may wrestle and pray until he gets a blessing. But the tendency of the poor deserted spirit is to begin to faint because the Lord seems to be favorable no more.

There are some who become faint *through increasing infirmity* which makes them unfit for such service as they formerly rendered. When David, in his later years, went out to battle against the Philistines, we are told that he waxed faint and would have been slain by a giant if Abishai had not succored him. Yet, in former days, he had killed a lion and a bear, and the great Goliath of Gath! It was a dreadful thing for David to

wax faint at such a time as that, just in the middle of the fray, but a like experience has happened to many of the Lord's champions in order to teach His people that the best of men are but men at the best—and that the strongest of them are only strong in God's strength—and that they will be as weak as water if the Lord should leave them to themselves!

II. Now I want to show you how the Lord deals with His fainting people—"He gives power to the faint. I must just briefly mention many points, that you may meditate upon them at your leisure.

See how tenderly the Lord deals with His fainting people. He does not desert them when they are faint, saying, "They are no longer any use to Me. They can do nothing for Me, I will leave them where they are." No, but, "He gives power to the faint." Observe that He does not merely comfort the faint, or rebuke or reprove them. That would not help them much when they were fainting. But He does what we cannot do for fainting people—He *gives them power*. That is the best way to deliver them from their faintness! Even if no cheering word is whispered in your ear, if power is given to you, if your pulse is quickened and your spirit is filled with new energy, your faintness will soon be over. This is what the Lord does for you when "He gives power to the faint."

What sort of power does He give to the faint? Well, you may be sure that *He does not give them any of their own*. That has all gone from them. The very image of death is stamped upon them. See how pale they look! Note how the blood seems to have fled from their faces—their own power has all gone from them. So, my Brothers and Sisters, when the Lord gives power to the faint, it is His own power that He gives to them! What a blessing it is to feel that it is His power that is working in you! To attain such an end as that, a man may well be content to have all his own power bled out of him. Let it run out at every vein till the last drop of it is gone, that I may then be filled with the power of God! He gives His power to the faint because, in their faintness, there is room for the display of His power. Their power has all departed, so now His power comes in.

When God gives power to the faint, you may rest assured that *it will be sufficient for the emergency*, for He has all-sufficient power and He never gives to His people merely half the power or a tenth of the power that they need—He gives them all the power that they require! His promise is, "As your days, so shall your strength be."

The mercy is that the power that God gives is a *power that the devil can neither defeat nor take away*. If He has given you that power, it shall be yours as long as you need it. That power neither man nor devil can take away from you, but, through it, you shall be enabled to tread down all your adversaries and conquer all your difficulties. There is wondrous power in the weakness which leads us to faint away on the bosom of God and so to be made strong in the Lord and, in the power of His might, to swoon into unconsciousness and then to find our all-sufficiency in our God! To get out of life of a carnal kind by swooning into the image of death and then being raised into newness of life by the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus Christ! That is the kind of power which God gives to the faint.

Why is it that He gives this power to the faint? Well, I think it is because in His great goodness *He looks out for those who need it most*. As we, if we are wise, give our alms to the most destitute, God gives His power to those who require it most—those who are fainting for lack of it.

Then, next, He gives it to them because *they will praise Him most for it*. When the fainting ones receive the power that God gives to them, they will say that it is of the Lord and not of themselves.

They will be the people to receive this power because *they will be sure to use it*. I think that when a person who has been faint, receives power from God, he will likely be sympathetic, tender and gentle towards others. At least that is how he should be. If a man is always strong, how can he sympathize with God's weak and afflicted people? I have known a dear Brother who has never had an hour's illness in his life, seek to sympathize with me when I have been in great pain. But it was like an elephant trying to pick up a pin—he cannot do it, it is not in his line. But he who has been faint and *then* has received power from God is the man who knows what faintness means—and so is gentle towards other fainting ones as a nurse is with the little child committed to her charge. Hence the Lord entrusts power to His fainting children because He knows that they will be sympathetic and use it wisely and well.

What, Beloved Friends, is the conclusion that we may draw from our text? Is it not this? If God gives power to the faint, let us be thankful if we have fainted and have been revived by Him. I do not refer to any sinful kind of fainting when I speak thus, but I mean what the Apostle Paul means when he says, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." But let us have done with fainting for the future because, if God gives power to the faint, if He has given us His power, we ought to have no more fainting, now that we have received God's power! So let us henceforth seek to live in the energy of that Divine might above the faintness to which the flesh is prone.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ISAIAH 40.

Verse 1. *Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God.* "They need it, and they shall have it. Mind, O My servants, that you give it to them. Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God."

2. *Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she has received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.* The first meaning of these words was that, as Jerusalem had passed through a time of great tribulation, she should have a season of rest. But the grand Gospel meaning to you and to me is that our Lord Jesus has fought our battle and won the victory for us—that He has paid our debt and given to Divine Justice the double for all our sins and, therefore, our iniquity is pardoned! One would think this is enough to make anyone happy. It is the best thing

that even Isaiah could say, or that God, Himself, could say by the mouth of Isaiah, when his object was to comfort the Lord's tried people.

3, 4. *The voice of him that cries in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.* When God means to come to men, nothing can stop Him or block up His road. He will level mountains and fill up valleys, but He will come to His people somehow or other. And when He comes to them, if He finds many crooked things about them, He will make the crooked straight and the rough places He will make plain.

5. *And the Glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it.* And since He has spoken it, it must come to pass. "Has He said, and shall He not do it?" With Him, to say anything is to will its accomplishment!

6-8. *The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withers, the flower fades: because the Spirit of the LORD blows upon it: surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades: but the word of our God shall stand forever.* Yes, the dearest ones that we have are but flesh, so they wither and pass away like the green herb. Have you been bereaved, my believing Friend? Well, you may still say to your Lord, in the words of our hymn—

**"How can I bereaved be,
Since I cannot part from Thee?"**

The mower with the sharp scythe cuts down the grass, but he cannot touch the secret source of our hope, joy and confidence in God and, above all, he cannot touch the God in whom we confide!

9. *O Zion, that brings good tidings, get you up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that brings good tidings, lift up your voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!* If the chief, the best, the holiest city has found her God. If Jerusalem has been thus favored, let her sing the gladsome tidings over the hilltops to the most distant cities of the land and say to them, "Behold your God!" If you have seen your Lord, Beloved, proclaim the good news to those who have well-nigh forgotten that there is a God. Say to them, "Behold your God! He is still to be seen, by the eye of faith, working graciously in the midst of the earth."

10-11. *Behold, the lord GOD will come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him: behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.* He knows their weakness, their weariness, their pain and how incapable they are of speedy and long travelling. He is very tender and full of pity and He will gently lead them.

12-14. *Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out Heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being His counselor has*

taught Him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding? And yet, Beloved, we sometimes act as if we were God's teachers, as if we had to instruct Him in what He should do! And because we cannot see our way, we almost dream that He cannot. And because we are puzzled, we conceive that Infinite Wisdom must be at a nonplus—but it is not so. He was full of wisdom when there was no one with whom He could take counsel—and He is still wise in the highest degree!

15. *Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket.* Not a bucketful, but just a drop that remains in the bucket after you thought it had been completely emptied.

15. *And are counted as the small dust of the balance.* Remember that this is said of "the nations." China, India, Europe, Africa—with all their teeming multitudes are only like the small dust of the balance that is blown away by the slightest puff of wind!

15, 16. *Behold, He takes up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon.* With all its forests of cedar. "Lebanon"—

16. *Is not sufficient to burn.* Think of all the cedars of Lebanon as being on fire, like some great forest fire, yet not being sufficient to supply the wood for God's altars!

16. *Nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.* Whether it is the wild or the tame beasts that are on the mountain range, they are not sufficient for a burnt offering unto the Most High.

17. *All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity.* As if they were the mere shadow of something and had no more influence over Him than as if they did not exist!

18. *To whom, then, will you liken God?* This is a strong argument against idolatry, against the worship of God under any visible form whatever—"To whom, then, will you liken God?"

18. *Or what likeness will you compare unto Him?* The heathen did make these supposed likenesses of God. Here is a description of the process by which they manufactured their idol gods.

19. *The workman melts an engraved image, and the goldsmith spreads it over with gold.* The rough metal is cast in a certain fashion and then the goldsmith puts on it his thin plates of gold,

19. *And casts silver chains.* To adorn it.

20. *He that is so impoverished that he has no offering.* The poor man who cannot manage to make a god of gold—

20. *Chooses a tree that will not rot.* A good piece of heart of oak or enduring elm.

20. *He seeks unto him a cunning workman to prepare an engraved image, that shall not be moved.* Fix it firmly, drive the post down far into the earth so that it may be an immovable god!

21-26. *Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He that sits upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers, that stretches out the heavens as a curtain,*

and spreads them out as a tent to dwell in: that brings the princess to nothing. He makes the judges of the earth as vanity. Yes, they shall not be planted, yes, they shall not be sown: yes, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and He shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. To whom, then, will you liken Me, or shall I be equal? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high. Suppose it to be night time—"Lift up your eyes on high"—

26. *And behold who has created these things.* These wondrous worlds, these stars that sparkle in the firmament!

26. *That brings out their host by number.* For God knows the number of them all and the name of every separate world that moves in the vast expanse of space!

26. *He calls them all by names. By the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one fails.* They are not propped up with pillars, nor hung upon some mighty ropes, yet they continue to occupy the spheres appointed to them by God. He hangs the world upon nothing and keeps it in its place by the perpetual out-going of His power!

27. *Why say you, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God? What? When He has not forgotten one of all those mighty hosts of stars and when not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice—how can you dream that He has forgotten you, or that your way is hidden from Him?*

28-31. *Have you not known? Have you not heard that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding. He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.*

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

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

RENEWING STRENGTH

NO. 1756

**SUITABLE FOR THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR, DELIVERED
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.”
Isaiah 40:31.***

HUMAN strength is of many kinds, but in any form it will spend itself in due time. God can lend to men immense physical force, but though a man had the strength of a lion and an ox combined, he would one day fail. The force of flesh must fade like the grass to which it is likened. Samson sometimes becomes exhausted and he is likely to die of thirst, though he has slain a thousand men! Yes, more, he must ultimately die and his mighty and tremendous muscles must yield to the worm and return to the dust of death. Since even granite and iron yield to constant wear and tear, assuredly man's frail body cannot long be a thing of strength—

***“Our days a transient period run,
And change with every circling sun.
And while to lengthened years we trust,
Before the moth we sink to dust.”***

Mental strength is a noble possession, but it also fails its owner, for at best it is a finite power. The wisest of men, by-and-by, feel the infirmities of age creeping upon them and frequently present the sad spectacle of second childhood. Death pays no regard to science or eloquence. The fool dies and as surely dies the senator, the philosopher, the Divine. When you take up the skull of a sage, you find no weight of wisdom there, nor trace of all the curious movements of a potent brain. Knowledge, genius, imagination, prophetic fire all depart—even before death they often fail. Baffled by mysteries; balked by prejudice; blinded by pride, the man of great understanding may yet be driven to his wit's end.

So far as even *spiritual* strength is of the man, himself—so far as you can conceive of it apart from the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit—it, also, cannot be depended on. The most devout may grow lukewarm, the strongest Believer may doubt, the most sanctified may backslide! It is a heavenly strength, but so far as it is transfused into our humanity and becomes a part of ourselves, it, also, may wax weak, though, blessed be God, it can never utterly die! Every form of human strength must of necessity spend itself, for the world of which it forms a part decays and, by-and-by, like a worn-out vesture, the heavens and the earth shall be rolled up and put away.

Some signs of age, the creatures show already, but the time will come when their strength shall utterly fail. The reason is that all strength apart from God is derived strength and is, consequently, measurable. Yes, apart from God it is not strength at all and, consequently, must come to an end. The river runs on and the brook fails not because they come from fountains that are not affected by drought—but cisterns are dried and reser-

voirs fail because they have no springing well at the bottom of them—and if the pipes which supply them cease to flow, they are soon left dry as a threshing-floor. Pools which are not self-supplied are always liable to be exhausted as the water is drained from them. Let every man know, therefore, that whatever his strength may be, of body, mind, or spirit—if it is his own, it will one day fail him.

Let him see to it, therefore, that he does not trust it—especially that he does not trust it with eternal hazards or rest upon it for his soul's safety—for which it never can be equal. It will be a horrible thing to be leaning and to find your staff fail you when you are on the edge of a measureless precipice! It will be terrible to be building and to find your foundation washed from under you and all your handiwork carried away by the flood! Yet so it must be if we are depending upon anything that comes of *ourselves*. Our own righteousness, our own thoughts, our own religiousness, our own prayers, resolves, attainments, achievements—*everything* that is of ourselves must sooner or later prove themselves to be but human—and over all things human it is best to write, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!"

Mingled with all things human there are portions of that all-dissolving acid which fell upon man's nature when Infinite Justice said, "Dust you are, and unto dust shall you return." On the other hand, what a contrast there is as to *Divine* strength! That never fails! It seems almost a superfluity to say as much as that—it abides in joyous fullness, never in the least diminished. With God there are no years to make Him decline with age, no labors to tax His powers. With God our lives are but as the swing of the pendulum. A thousand years in His sight are passed away as a watch in the night! Millions of ages are nothing to Him. He was God when as yet this sun, moon and all these stars slept in His thoughts like unborn forests in an acorn! And He will be God when all this brief creation shall melt back to nothing as a moment's foam dissolves into the wave that bore it and is lost forever.

God changes not in any degree whatever—the fountain of His almightiness still overflows. He made this world—no doubt He has made thousands more and has still an undiminished power to create! All the worlds that we can see revolving in yonder sky are, perhaps, as a single chamber in the mansion of creation—they occupy an insignificant corner behind the door—compared to other and vaster worlds that He has made. But the glorious Lord is just as ready to make more! He is still the same forever and forever. In your dire necessity you may draw largely upon Him, but you cannot exhaust Him. You may bring your boundless needs and have them all supplied, but you shall no more diminish His all-sufficiency than when an infant dips his cup into the sea and leaves the sea brimming over upon 10,000 leagues of shore!

Oh, the glory of the strength of God! I cannot speak of it. I will not contrast it with the strength of man. What then? These two things seem very far away—man with his faintness, his strength gradually drying up—God with His eternity and inexhaustible Omnipotence! If we can bring these two together; if by an act of faith you that are human can be linked with the Divine, what a wondrous thing will happen! Then the sacred Words of the text will be fulfilled and your strength will be renewed! Apt as it is to

dry up, it will be renovated, freshened, filled up, increased, established! From the eternal deep that lies under—that deep of which Moses said that it, “couches beneath”—from that measureless fountain shall you draw strength which all eternity will not exhaust!

You are weakness itself, but if you are united to the Divine strength, you shall be infinitely strong. The cipher is nothing, but with a unit before it, becomes ten! A man is nothing, but with God in him, he makes Hell tremble! Now that is just my text, “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.” If they are apart from God, their strength will die out. But when they are linked to God and wait upon God for everything—casting their nothingness upon His Omnipotence—then shall they find their strength renewed. With God in him, though the man were dead, yet shall he live! Job says, “My bow was renewed in my hand.” Grass cut down shall grow again when Heaven’s dew shall quicken it. The brook that was ready to dry up shall flow again when Heaven remembers it and unseals its treasures! The skies that burned like brass shall be cooled, again, with clouds when the Lord thinks upon them. When the heart drinks life from the heart of God and man is at one with his Maker, then all is well—

***“From God, the overflowing spring,
Our souls shall drink a flesh supply;
While those who trust their native strength
Shall melt away and droop and die.”***

I have now to speak from my text, first, upon how a true Church may be described. “They that wait upon the Lord.” Secondly, upon what such a Church needs to renew its strength. And thirdly, how such a Church may renew its strength—by waiting upon the Lord. That which serves as a description of true Believers serves, also, as a *direction* to true Believers—They that wait upon the Lord are the men who may most hopefully be encouraged, still, to wait upon the Lord that their strength may be renewed.

I. First, then, here WE SEE HOW A TRUE CHURCH MAY BE DESCRIBED—“They that wait upon the Lord.” A Church such as a Church ought to be, consists of men who depend only upon the Lord, for waiting signifies dependence. Their hope is in God. They rest in God’s righteousness as their righteousness and they receive the great Sacrifice provided by God to be their atonement and their acceptance. No man is really a Christian who finds his hope and confidence within himself—he must be looking *out* of himself to God in Christ Jesus. It is absolutely essential that it should be so. He that is God’s beloved is a Believer in God, that is to say, a *truster* in God, *waiter* upon God. His one sole confidence is in God His Savior. This being so with each individual, the whole Church can sing—

***“Our spirits look to God alone,
Our rock and refuge is His throne.
In all our fears, in all our straits
Our soul on His salvation waits.”***

If Christians are what they ought to be, they depend upon God alone in their Church capacity. God’s Word is their only creed—they do not add to it anything whatever—no, not a sentence, a gloss, or a thought. They have greatly erred who look upon anything as the authoritative standard of

faith but God's own Word. I hear you say, "Do you not respect the Thirty-Nine Articles?" However much or little I may respect them, it makes no difference to the fact that the Church of God is not bound to any faith but that which God Himself has revealed! "But the Westminster Assembly's Confession?" It must be treated in the same manner. That summary of doctrine is very admirable, but human creeds, as such, have nothing on earth to do with me!

The point I have to make is this, What does God say? What does His Word say? Within the covers of the Bible you find all theology. Nothing outside of this Book is binding on a Christian man as doctrine in the least degree whatever! The Bible and only the Bible is the religion of Christians! "To the Law and to the Testimony! If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." This Word has life within it which rules in the souls of the Lord's elect. Blessed be the Spirit of God who dictated it! We yield implicit faith to all that He has revealed and to nothing else. A true Church of God will say, "We wait upon the Lord for teaching—this Word of the Lord is to us our Infallible source of doctrine—and that alone."

Those who wait upon the Lord for their creed shall never need to give up their faith for something better, but they shall renew their strength. Faithful to her Lord in doctrine, a true Church also waits upon the Lord for Grace and has faith in the Doctrines of Grace as the testimony with which she is to work. What am I to teach to my people if I am a Christian minister? If a Church is rightly constituted, it says to the pastor, "Teach what God has taught. Preach Christ Crucified! Preach not your own thoughts, nor notions of your own inventing, but what is revealed by God! Preach that, for it shall be the power of God unto salvation." I am always sorry when, in order to promote a revival, false doctrine is preached. I will preach no false doctrine if I know it—no, not to save the world!

Of this I am assured—if the Truth of God will not save a man, a lie will not! If the bare unaltered Truth of God will not break a man's heart, then it certainly will not break it when it is rounded and toned down and made to look pretty so as to suit the prevailing taste! No, a Church that waits upon the Lord uses only the Doctrines of Scripture as its battle-ax and weapons of war. A Church that is waiting upon the Lord always knows where its strength lies, namely, in its God. What is the power with which men are to be converted? Some say eloquence. The Church of God says, "Not so! Not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord!"

I solemnly believe that so much of human oratory as there is in a sermon, so much there is of the weakness of the flesh—for all the power must be of God working with the Truth of God through the Holy Spirit. Therefore we should use great plainness of speech and never speak for the sake of the language, but always for the sake of the Truth of God we have to say, that God may bless it to the hearts of men. No man in this world was ever converted except by the Holy Spirit and never will any man be truly converted by any other power. Bang your drums, Brother, and blow your brass instruments, if you like, but neither cornet, flute, harp, sack-but, psaltery, dulcimer, nor any other kind of music will ever save a soul!

Deck your altar out as prettily as you like and burn your most fragrant incense, but no soul ever finds Heaven by the light of candles nor by the scent of censers! The Gospel has salvation in it when the Holy Spirit works by it—and no other doctrine can save. The Spirit of the Lord, alone, must bless the Truth of God, and He will bless only the Truth of God. This is the Church's sole power with souls. Now, you Christian people that are trying to do good and glorify God, I pray you wait upon the Lord and resolve that you will only go to God's work armed with God's Truth and backed up by God's Spirit. Many in these days think that we need a great deal besides the Spirit of God, but they are in error. They think that the world is not to be converted and men saved in the old-fashioned way of preaching the Word of God with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven. But let me assure you that it is to be converted in that way and in no other!

Human agriculture is capable of daily improvement, but as the plans of the great Husbandman are perfect from the first, you may be sure that there will be no change in them! You may go through the world ranting and raving, or you may go arguing and discussing, but you cannot touch a dead heart to make it alive either by excitement or by philosophy. You cannot breathe into the nostrils of a dead soul eternal life, though your winds should blow hot with fanaticism, or chill with rationalism! Spiritual life can only come in God's way and it is God's way by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe! From the Gospel pulpit believing preachers work more miracles than your learned men will ever believe. God's Word will not return to Him void, but man's word is void when it goes forth—and void it remains to the end of the chapter! The magicians and their enchantments cannot compare with the rod of Moses. One Word of the Lord is stronger than all the rage of Hell or the enmity of the world. We mean to, whatever others do, keep to "waiting upon the Lord," going to work in the Lord's way and depending upon the Lord's power and upon Him alone!

But waiting upon God means something more than dependence upon God, so I go a step farther—if we depend upon God, our *expectation* is from Him. We wait upon God as the birds in the nest wait upon the parent bird, expecting from her their food. Before she comes, you hear their cries, but when she comes, if you look into the nest, you will see nothing but so many gaping mouths, all waiting, *expecting* to be filled by the mother bird. Now, that is just what a Church of God ought to be—a company of wide-opened mouths waiting to be filled only by the Lord! "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it," says the Lord. Do you not think that some Churches and some Christians, with very small expectations, have scarcely learned to open their mouths at all?

If the Lord were to convert a soul, now and then, they would be pleased and express a grateful surprise! But do they expect to hear of hundreds added to the Church at a time, or of thousands in a year brought to Christ? No, they think this may be done in some extraordinary instances in very large places, but they do not expect it in *their* gatherings. Oh, Friends, let us expect more of God and we shall receive more! Does He not always come up to our expectations? Does He not amaze us with the

blessings of His goodness? Is He not able to do exceedingly above all that we ask or even think? I find it such a blessing to have expecting people about me, for they make a flourishing Church. Some Brothers and Sisters here at this Tabernacle are men and women of great expectations, for even now while I am preaching, they are planning whereabouts they will be in the aisle to talk with folk going out—they *know* that some will be converted by the Word of God and they are on the look-out to pick them up!

These Brethren are grieved and surprised if, after a service, they do not meet with one or two enquirers or convicted sinners, that they may join with them in tearful prayer! They are believers in the power of the Gospel and they act accordingly. When I fire the gun, they are on the alert to pick up the birds, for they believe in the killing power of the Word of God! They could not be content with ineffectual preaching—they *expect* that the Word will be fruitful and so they bring their basket to put the fruit in! Oh, if a Church would but wait upon God in this sense of expecting great things from Him, it should have them! He will *never* allow His people to complain that He has been a wilderness to them. He will *never* raise their hopes to dash them to the ground.

Is there any man alive who has believed in the Lord too largely, and expected too confidently? Brother ministers, let us begin to expect more—not from our ministry because it is powerful, for it is nothing of the kind by itself—but from *God's* ministry through us, for if He speaks by us, why should not men yield to His voice though they will not yield to ours? If He is with us, can He not make us hammers that shall break the rocks in pieces? Can He not use even us to be as a fire to melt the iron hearts of men? So then, a true Church depends upon God and expects from God—and in this sense answers to the description—“They that wait upon the Lord.”

To make up waiting, I think there is a third thing, and that is patience—to hold out and wait the Lord's time and will. The three together—dependence, expectation, patience—make up waiting upon the Lord. This “patience” is, to the uttermost, desirable in a thousand matters, that we may endure affliction, persevere in holiness, continue in hope and abide in our integrity. Patience is the long life of virtue and sets on its head the crown of experience. It is no child's play to continue to suffer affliction with joyfulness and to remain, for years, perfectly acquiescent in the will of the Lord. But let that be what it may. It needs the eyes of faith to see God in the dark, to believe in His love when He is angry and to rest in His promise when it tarries long. That little word, WAIT, is a word fit for a father in Christ and comes not out of the mouth of a babe in Grace. Let us ask for Grace to pronounce it aright—

**“Wait, my Soul, upon the Lord, to His gracious promise flee,
Laying hold upon His Word, ‘As your day, your strength shall be.’”**

Some of my dear Brothers in Christ are ardent followers of Christ, but they do not seem to have learned the meaning of that word, “patience.” They are working for Christ and they are depending upon the Lord. And they are looking for results—but when they do not quite see them *immediately*—they are at once offended and depressed. They are in such a hurry that they seem half inclined to cry, “Why should I wait for the Lord

any longer?" I daresay that you were much the same when you were children—you wanted everything at once, and waiting was dismal work to you. We are all impatient as long as we are imperfect. It is the mark of the child that he is in a violent hurry where men are steady.

Perhaps our father gave us some seed and we hurried to sow it. We put in a little mustard and cress one morning and then we thought that we would eat it with tea, but as we saw no sign of green, we went and turned over the earth to see if the seed was sprouting! We were greatly surprised to find that it had not grown up green and ready to cut—we did not understand that the farmer waits. We had a little apple tree and we put it in the ground. The planting of that tree was a grand affair and we reckoned upon many puddings being made out of the apples gathered from it next year. We were sadly surprised to see that the apples did not come. Yes, that is the spirit of *children*—their name is Passion—not Patience! They live in the present hour and have no power to extend themselves into days to come.

The Lord sometimes sends us speedy results to our labors. It happens at times that the moment we speak, conversions are worked—but at other times it is not so—the Truth of God works slowly and surely and effects all the more precious results. We must wait for seed to grow and for fruit to ripen. If we really wait upon the Lord, we shall just keep on, resolved to abide in duty, determined to remain in prayer, undaunted in confidence, unmoved in expectation. We shall not fly into a passion with the Lord and refuse to believe Him any more. Neither shall we run off to novelties and fall into the fads and crazes of the day—to try this and to try that—because God's own way, we think, is a failure! No, by God's Grace we shall say, "I have done what God bade me. I have done it in dependence upon His Spirit and I believe that good will come of it. Therefore I shall wait and watch. I shall be found moving when God moves, or sitting still when the Lord tarries. I am sure that He will not fail the soul that waits upon Him—all will be well—the blessing will come."

What a sweet thing is the calm leisure of faith!—"He that believes shall not make haste." Fret and worry, hurry and haste are all slain by the hand of faith! God has plenty of time—no, He fills eternity and, therefore, He can bear with man's waywardness with much long-suffering! You and I are in feverish haste, but when we get to be linked with God, we also, can wait, even as God waits to be gracious and has patient compassion upon men. That is a description of what a Christian ought to be—"waiting upon the Lord"—depending upon God, expecting from God and patiently waiting for God till He shall give the desired blessing.

II. But now, secondly, we see WHAT THE LORD'S WAITING PEOPLE NEED. They need to renew their strength. Even those saints who wait upon God for everything, may grow faint and require reviving. And that is, first, because they are human. As long as you and I are mortal, we shall be mutable—as the world is full of changes, so are we. Some friends never seem to be either high or low in their feelings—their life has neither hills nor valleys in it, but is comparable to an unbroken plain—they traverse a perpetual level. It is not so with others of us—we are all Alps and Andes. These favored pilgrims march steadily and evenly through the world, al-

ways at one pitch and pace, but others of us who mount up into the heavens in burning zeal and holy joy, go low, down very low, into the depths till our soul sinks because of sorrow. The best and bravest of the saints are poor creatures.

Elijah on the top of Carmel, when he has brought fire from Heaven, cries, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." Hear him, as he pleads with God and unlocks the treasury of the rain! See him gird up his loins and run before the chariot of Ahab! There is a man for you! If ever hero-worship might be tolerated, it is in the case of, "this, my lord, Elijah." Look not too closely at the champion, for within 24 hours he is afraid of Jezebel and soon he is whining, "O Lord, take away my life; for I am no better than my fathers." Do you blame him? Do you fail to understand so sad a fall from so great a height? Take heed of censuring a man so greatly approved of God as to be spared the pains of death! If you do as well as Elijah did, perhaps you may hear some nobodies blaming *you* in your hour of exhaustion!

As for me, I cannot censure him, nor can any man who has ever enjoyed the heavenly delirium of high-strung zeal in the Master's service—and having been borne aloft on eagle's wings—at last falls upon the earth in absolute exhaustion. After high excitement, there will come reaction. Creatures whose home is on the earth cannot always live upon the wing—they must feel faint, at times and, therefore, the necessity of this blessed promise—"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." They will rise again! From their deepest depressions they will leap into supreme elevations! They shall dwell on the heights, they shall soar above the clouds! The very depths to which they dive are prophetic of the heights to which they will climb, again, by God's Grace! The Lord has said, "I will bring, again, from the depths of the sea."

They need renewing, also, because in addition to being human, they are imperfect. The sin that dwells in us, drags us down. However high we have ascended, when we have walked in the Light of God, still we have needed that the blood of Christ should cleanse us from all sin. Our natural corruption and the imperfection and infirmity of our flesh are still about us. And these bring us down at times till we say with David, "I am this day weak, though anointed king." What a blessing it is that failing, flagging, fainting, falling spirits, by waiting upon the Lord, shall renew their strength! Even those who actually fall shall be recovered. "Though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord holds him up with His hands." Though our sands run very low, God shall fill the glass, again, and the believing man shall again rejoice in the Lord and have confidence in the God of His salvation!

Because we are human and imperfect, we cannot always be at our best. The sky is not always clear; the sea is not always at flood; the year is not always at summer; the sun is not always in the zenith; the moon is not always at her fullest; the tree is not always adorned with fruit; the vineyard does not always flow with wine; roses do not always blush, nor lilies always bloom! Creatures have their rises and their falls and to us, also, there must be times when we need to renew our strength—and we *shall*

renew it, for here the promise comes—"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

Brothers and Sisters, I will suppose that I am addressing some who have become weak and failing. You must renew your strength. It must be renewed, for otherwise it will decline, still further, and this would be painful, dangerous and dishonoring. The Lord would not have us utterly fail, nor fall prone upon the ground in the heavenly race. Therefore, to those who have no might, He increases strength. We must renew our strength, for it is for our honor, comfort and safety. It is not to a Christian's credit that he should be weak. The glory of a man is his strength and especially is his *spiritual* strength his honor. It is not for your comfort to be weak. When a man is feeble, he becomes a burden to himself—his sadness makes him stoop—he is feeble-minded and ready to halt. "A wounded spirit who can bear?"

It is not for your usefulness that you should be weak. What can you do for others when you, yourself, can hardly stand? It is not for your safety that you should be weak, for you will be liable to many attacks and open to many injuries from sin and extremely likely to be overcome by temptation. Blessed is that man who is "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." To him the joy of the Lord is his strength. The Lord Jehovah is his strength and his song! He also has become his salvation. It is for God's Glory and for our own usefulness that we should be strong—and if we fall into decline and weakness, pray do not let us stop there. Let us try to escape from a spiritual consumption.

If I address Believers who lament that the whole Church with which they are connected is getting weak, I charge them not to suffer it to be so with themselves! Brothers and Sisters, shun a spiritual wasting away! A pining sickness is an awful disease for a Church to die of. Do not linger in such a state. Up with you and cry mightily unto the Lord—and you shall yet be restored, for it is written—"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." At this time I should be very glad if this dear Church, over which the Holy Spirit has made me an overseer, would have its strength renewed. Our ministry needs renewal that it may be more full of power and Grace. How weak it is if God is even a *little* withdrawn!

Our Sunday school work requires constant renewal. Everything around us needs to be renewed, revived and refreshed! And just at this time I wish that it might be laid on the hearts of the members of the Church to pray that we might renew our strength. Your minister grows old—not very old in natural age, it is true—but 30 years of continuous labor in preaching to so vast a congregation has taken much more out of his strength than almost any other form of service would have done. And therefore he needs to be invigorated again—physically, mentally and spiritually. Many of you are in the same condition and need that your strength be renewed like the eagle's. This can be done for us all by that great Master, in whose hand the residue of the Spirit abides! He can lay His hands on us and say, "Be strong. Fear not!"

He can strengthen us to a degree of force far beyond our previous experience! The members of the Church and the officers of the Church all desire, I know, that they should renew their strength just now—it is well

that such a desire is on them. May this desire for renewal become an insatiable craving with those of you who live near to God and have power in prayer—then through your importunate intercessions the Lord may make good His promise that this waiting congregation may renew its strength! After 30 years of unflagging prosperity we are as weak as ever “apart from God, and need constant renewal of strength.” I see many reasons why it is imperative that we should have it at this present time. Join, I pray you, in fervent prayer for it! It is promised and, therefore, if we do not have it, it is our own fault.

God’s promises are our precepts! What He promises to give, it is our duty to seek! And if He promises that we shall renew our strength, why not let us have the promise fulfilled to our faith? I wish that it might come to pass that my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ here—men and women who are working for Him and are a little weary and faint—may be encouraged, cheered, refreshed and led to say, “From this time on we will serve our Lord with all our youthful vigor, and with a great deal more. We will labor in the service of the Lord our God with all our might, not slackening our right hand nor withholding the fullness of our strength but giving our all to God.”

O blessed Spirit, awaken Your children to renewed consecration, renewed zeal, renewed delight in holy service and renewed hope of victory!

III. So I close with the third point, which is this—HOW ARE WE TO RENEW OUR STRENGTH? If we are God’s people, we must renew our strength by continually waiting upon God. When a man needs his bodily strength renewed, his purpose may be effected by eating a good meal. He has grown empty through hunger and there is nothing in him. He must be filled up with substantial nourishment and then the human engine will generate fresh force. Oh, you who are weak in spirit, come and feed upon Christ! They that wait upon the Lord in that way, by feeding upon the body and blood of Christ, shall find Him to be meat, indeed, and drink indeed, and so they shall renew their strength!

Sometimes a man may renew his strength by taking a little rest. He has grown weak through stern labor and long fatigue and he must be quiet and repose till he recovers. Oh, you weary, heavy-laden, where is there rest for you except in the Christ of God? Oh, come to God and rest in Him and wait patiently for Him! Then shall your peace be as a river and then shall your strength be restored right speedily. We have known strength to be restored by a bath. A weary one has plunged himself into cool water and he has risen quite another man. Oh, for a Baptism into the Spirit of God! Oh, to plunge into the Godhead’s deepest sea—to throw one’s self into the might and majesty of God—to swim in love, borne up by Grace!

We have known men’s strength renewed by breathing their native air. They have risen out of a hot atmosphere into the cool breeze of the mountainside and the bracing breeze has made them strong again. Oh, to have the breath of the Spirit blowing upon us once again! By Him we were born; by Him we were quickened; by Him we have been revived from former faintness and it is by breathing His Divine life that we shall be filled with life again! Oh, that at this moment we might each one feel the power of the Lord entering into us! In a word, if a Church needs reviving; if

saints individually need reviving, they must wait upon God! First in prayer. Oh, what a blessing a day's prayer might be! When Archbishop Leighton used to go into his room, his servant said that he would remain there for two or three hours, having locked the door and having nothing with him but his Bible and a candle. Yes, then he came out to speak those gracious words which still linger in his works like the echoes of music. His Bible and candle were the only earthly illumination that he needed, for prayer brought him Divine Light!

Get with God, Brothers and Sisters! Be much with God! I am sure that we, none of us, are alone enough with God. But in prayer, laying hold upon the Invisible, we shall win strength for service. Add to that a re-dedication of ourselves to the Lord who bought us. This often helps us to renew our strength. Go over, again, that blessed covenant which has made you one of the covenanted ones with God. You gave yourself years ago wholly up to your Lord and you sometimes sing—

***“High Heaven that heard that solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear.”***

Let this day hear the renewal of it—let your covenant be solemnly rehearsed. Consecrate yourself anew to God. Then realize, afresh, your entire dependence upon God. Put yourself into the Lord's hands wholeheartedly. Be like the sere leaf that is carried by the breath of the storm.

When you have submitted yourself completely and trusted entirely, setting both your strength and your weakness on one side and giving yourself up for God to use you, oh, then you shall renew your strength! Then go forward to renewed action! In renewing your strength, ask the Lord that you may undertake fresh work and that this work may be done to a nobler tune—that you may have more expectancy, more confidence, more faith, more God-reliance. What things are done by men in common life with self-reliance! But with *God-reliance* we work impossibilities and miracles fly from us like sparks from the anvil of a smith! When a man learns to work with God's strength and with that, alone, he can do all things. So would I stir my Brothers and Sisters up, one by one, and then as a body, to work for God with renewed energy.

I am almost done. I know that there are some here to whom this appears to have very slight reference. Yet if you are an unconverted man, my dear Friend, after all, this is a lesson for you, for the pith of it all is that if ever you are to be saved you must get away from yourself into God—and your confidence must be in Christ, the Son of God, and not in your own strength. One of my greatest delights is to see how our people die. I have never, for years, visited the deathbed of a single member of this Church in which I have seen a shade of doubt, or the least suspicion as to their triumphant entrance into the Kingdom of God! I have been somewhat astonished to find it always so. I just now sat by the bedside of one of our Brothers who is melting away with consumption—and it was sad to see his wife lying by his side almost equally ill.

When I spoke with him who was so soon to be with God, he said, “As for my faith, dear Sir, it never wavers in the least degree. I have my times of depression of spirit, but I take no notice of that. You have told us not to look to feelings, but simply to trust in the Infallible Word of a faithful God.

Fifteen years ago, Sir,” he said, “one Thursday night I dropped into the Tabernacle to hear you preach and, blessed be the day, I looked to Christ and found salvation! I have had plenty of ups and downs, but Jesus has never left me nor forsaken me, and I am not going to think that He will do so now. His Word stands fast forever. My strength is in my God.” He added, “I am not resting upon man in any degree or measure, but wholly upon the faithful promise of God and the precious blood of Christ.”

I wished that I could get into his place and not come here tonight, but just slip off to Heaven as he is doing! It makes one sure of the Gospel when you see men dying so. It gives me courage to come and tell it out, again, to men and women. The Gospel which I preach to you is good to live upon and good to die upon! If you will but trust my Lord, you shall find it a blessed thing to depart out of this world and be forever with the Lord! Death shall lose every air of dread—every ghastly gloom shall be taken from it! It shall be but undressing to go to bed, that you may wake up in the morning in royal robes as a courtier of the King of kings!

Only you must have done with *yourself*, and commit yourself to Christ! Say today, in life, what you will need to say when you come to die—“Father, into *Your* hands I commit my spirit.” That is a Gospel prayer! If you are waiting upon the Lord in the sense of complete reliance upon the merit of Jesus, you shall, in dying, renew your strength and leap out of your frail body into the Presence and Glory of God! In due time, also, you shall re-assume your body—but it shall be made like unto Christ’s glorious body—and in its resurrection you shall emphatically renew your strength!

Blessed be His name that He has taught many of us to wait upon the Lord! May He teach you all to do so, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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

END OF VOLUME 29

**My God, renew my strength for the honor and glory of my Master,
Your Son, Jesus Christ.**

THE UNWEARIED RUNNER

NO. 876

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 15, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*Being the Annual Sermon of the Young Men's Association in
Aid of the Baptist Missionary Society.*

***"They shall run and not be weary."
Isaiah 40:31.***

BEING asked to address myself upon this occasion principally to young people, it occurred to me that running was the young man's pace, the motion of the strong man who in his earliest days rejoices in the race. It is not often that running is taken up by those who are compelled to lean upon a staff, for in the feebler and more mature years of age a quiet pace most accords with the man's ability and best beseems his gravity. When the steeds which draw life's chariot first commence their journey they fly before the wind in excess of rigor—but as they close their course they find it all that they can do to walk steadily to the goal.

To the older Christian, incitements to zeal may be necessary, but to the young I need offer no exhortations to quicken their pace. With overflowing strength and buoyant spirits, the danger is not that young men should not run, but that they should run amiss, or that they should attempt to run in the right road in their *own strength*. My text speaks of running and commends it. No, it promises as a blessing that those of whom it speaks shall run, but then it describes a *character* as well as gives a promise.

There is a chosen band who shall run and not be weary, but these are not those who run in their own strength, as if the Lord took pleasure in the legs of a man or in the energies of unsanctified nature. The untiring runners are described as being such as wait upon the Lord, and so renew their strength. Tonight you are full of energy, my Brothers, and you are resolved to make your lives real and sublime. You have high ambitions within your spirits and far be it from me to repress them. But let me whisper in your ear a word of caution, for if those ambitions should be directed to a wrong object, your life will be a miserable failure.

Or even if you should seek the right thing—yes, seek God Himself—if you go about to serve Him without asking the aid of His Holy Spirit, sure and sorrowful decline will come upon you before long. You shall either become a miserable apostate from that which your heart is set upon, or else you will maintain a hollow name to live while you are dead in the sight of God. May God grant a blessing, this evening, and while we meditate upon the energetic spiritual life described as "running," may we have Divine Grace to learn how to run in a right fashion.

I shall speak tonight, first of all, of *the running*. Then a word or two by way of *commendation of running*. Then thirdly, *the runner's attire*—he

waits upon the Lord. And, lastly, *the runner's staff*—he has the promise that he shall not be weary.

I. First, then, THE RUNNING. There are different paces among the Lord's servants—Ahimaaz is swifter than Cush and John outruns Peter—but he who, by faith, has truly entered upon the road to Heaven, though his march is slow and limping, shall nevertheless ultimately reach his journey's end. Scores of timid Believers creep towards Heaven as the snail crept into the ark and yet, being chosen of God in Christ Jesus, they are safe. However, my Brothers, there is no reason why you should imitate these slowly-moving pilgrims.

If Mephibosheth is lame in both his feet, it is not desirable that you should imitate his limp. Respect for his infirmity must not be made into an excuse for your own sluggishness. Many walk with sacred dignity and consistency in the path of right. Would God their number were multiplied a thousand fold! Walking will always be the general and usual pace of the great host of God's elect—but there are a few chosen men whose hearts have been specially touched—who have learned to outstrip their fellows in their advances towards God and in their zeal for His service. These are the mighties in the hosts of the Son of David—the flower of the Church militant! They are, under God, the strength and hope of the good cause.

These are *runners* rather than walkers. Asahel's light of foot as young roes, swifter than eagles, stronger than lions, filled with the Holy Spirit and very zealous for the Lord of Hosts. I should say of this running, in the first place, if I must describe it, that *running is the pace of energy*. There are men in this world who never do anything with energy, who never under any circumstances throw force into anything they have to do. They walk over the sands of life with a light foot and make no impression. While others, as they tread the pathway which God has allotted for them, take care to bring down their feet with such firmness of purpose and fixedness of resolve that they leave behind them, "footprints on the sands of time," which shall be seen by others after many days.

The puffball is the emblem of many a forceless life. See yonder man with a hammer in his hand—he touches the heads of the nails right daintily, as if he were afraid to hurt them! See another, how heartily he drives them in and gives them yet another blow to clench them and make all sure. Too many play at work, but the earnest man means work when he is working and throws his heart into it. It is dreadful to see some men at their ordinary occupation—I cannot call it labor, one drop of their perspiration must be a very costly thing—as rare as a pearl of the first water. But others throw their soul into whatever they have to do and not only strike while the iron is hot, but make the iron hot by striking. They do not wait for opportunities, but accept the present event as an opportunity. They work with both hands and make the anvil ring again with the music of their hearty blows.

Now, in the service of God we are bound to fulfill our work with the utmost degree of vigor. If the Lord's work is worth doing, it is worth doing well! And as the service of Christ is the highest in which any man can be engaged, the Master ought to be served with body, soul and spirit. All that

is within us should bless His holy name. We should keep our spiritual faculties strained up to the highest possible tension, that all the strength we have may be fully given to Him. Let us serve Christ with all the ability we have—how little it is compared with His work for us! Shall He be put off with our dregs and our dreaming? If we were to live always at the topmost bent of zeal. If we should put on high pressure and should work for Christ to the highest point of spiritual energy yet exhibited by mortal man, yet should we give but a faint return for that agony and bloody sweat, that Cross and passion which have opened the kingdom of Heaven for us!

By running, then, I understand an energetic spiritual life, a life on fire. And I pray that many of us may have Grace in this sense to run the race which is set before us. The ideal I would form of the Christian man raised up to do his Master good service is that of Elijah when he girded up his loins and ran before the chariot of Ahab. Hale old man, see how nimbly he flies along that dusty road! See with what ardent enthusiasm he dashes forward to reach the shelter so soon to be needed, for his faith expects that speedily the heavens, which have gathered blackness, will pour down the needed rain. Be it yours and mine to outstrip the energy of this world and so to run in our Master's ways as to prove that the servants of Christ can render Him more loyal and devoted service than princes win from their favorites and flatterers. Like Gabriel, may we be made to fly very swiftly. Like all the angels of God, may we be as flames of fire.

Running is a pace which indicates *fullness of willingness*. If your servant has an errand to do for you and he creeps along the road, it is probably because he is unwilling. But if he is thoroughly willing, he is usually forward and quick in all his movements. When Abraham saw the three men, strangers, passing by his tent, he said to them, "Turn in, my Lord," and he *ran* and fetched a calf and killed it—the Patriarch showing, by quickening his pace, how welcome they were. When Eleazer came to the well, we find that Rebekah ran and hastened to draw water for him and for the camels—her readiness to do an act of kindness was indicated by the pace which she used. When young Samuel thought that Eli called him by night, he arose and we read he ran to Eli and said, "Here am I, for you did call me."

Now, there ought, in the service of our God, always to be a holy promptness and alacrity. I dare say you have noticed in the Gospel according to Mark, how Mark uses about our Lord so often the words, "straightway," and, "immediately." Mark's is the Gospel descriptive of Christ as a *Servant* and it is one of the attributes of a good servant that he is prompt at once to do his lord's bidding. Our blessed Savior straightway did whatever He had undertaken to do. We ought to be ready in the Master's service and to say at once, without hesitation, "Here am I, send me." Foul scorn is it that soldiers of the Cross should ever require to be flogged to the battle as the Persian monarch's slaves in the days of the invasion of Greece.

Every man among us should be as David, who ran forward to the giant, eager for the fray, or as Elisha, who left the oxen and ran after Elijah, or as Philip, who ran to meet the chariot of the Ethiopian. O to abide like a

ship waiting for orders, with the steam ready, sailors on board, anchor drawn up—only waiting for orders to put out to sea, directly, wherever the great High Admiral of the seas may bid us steer! May the Holy Spirit enable us to wait with our eyes upwards to our great Master as the eyes of handmaidens are to their mistress—and make us quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord, so that the moment we receive the Divine message, our will and ability move spontaneously in cheerful effort. Gird up your loins, young men, you that have the love of God in you! Brace up your loins tonight and pray God to teach you to run—to run, first, with energy and next with sacred forwardness and eagerness—so run that you may obtain. So run that the great cloud of witnesses may applaud. So run that the King may say, “You did run well.”

In the third place, to run is *to be diligent*. We should hardly call that running in which a man starts and stops and starts and stops again. In some Christian works we are painfully conscious that the persons undertaking them, if they ever run, run only for a very short time. Indeed, they do not seem even to have got up to that pace for a time. Alas, for the poor Sunday school teaching that is so wretchedly common. Much of the teaching is a very slovenly make-believe. If it were paid for, smallest coin of the realm might represent its value.

And, oh, the *preaching* that we sometimes hear—droning, cold, lifeless, sleepy, wretched! The preacher does not seem to have any idea that he should deliver himself with force, life and energy. How very common is the humdrum! It is deadly preaching, more fitted to send souls to sleep than to startle them out of their dreams. Would God we had not all of us to accuse ourselves of this in a measure. We dally over our work. We do it superficially. We plow our acre, but it is mere scratching of the topsoil—we do not plow deep. We cover a surface, but we do not perform the work well. If we had such slovenly servants in our houses as God has in His, we should discharge them all. It is infinite mercy, only, that has allowed some of us to remain servants of the Lord at all.

We have need to turn to Him and say: “O Master, teach us to be more diligent. We beseech You, quicken us in Your ways. Help us no longer to crawl and creep upon Your errands, but to quicken our pace and run, putting heart and soul into all that we do. Lead us to persevere in Your fear, not running with, now and then, a spasm of zeal, but with a constant, sacred persistency—a stern and solemn devotion to the work which You have entrusted to our care.” You have need of patience. Patient continuance in well-doing is crowned. He that runs to the goal alone is rewarded.

Running, further, in the fourth place, indicates *thorough-going hearty zeal*. It must have been a noble spectacle to have seen Aaron when the plague broke out among the people, rushing for his censer, putting on the holy fire and the sacred incense and running in between the living and the dead, that the plague might be stopped. He could not have had the honor of being the priest to stand in the gap in the hour of sudden wrath if he had not learned how to run. I suppose he was, at that time, from 120 to 130 years of age—but how nimbly he bestirred himself! The thought of

saving his plague-stricken countrymen put new life into the venerable man.

O Sirs, if anything could make a man run, it should be the fact that men are *dying*—dying without Christ, dying in their sins—to die eternally and perish without hope! Beloved, it is a marvel that we are not more zealous than we are! We who believe in death and judgment to come, and in Hell and in the casting away of the impenitent—how is it we can be so calculating, indifferent, pitiless? How is it we can walk so leisurely when humanity demands that we run? While time runs and never ceases and the sun, the great master and marker of our time, like a giant coming out of his chamber delights to run his race—how is it that with so much work before us for our Master, we dare to loiter as if we were gentlemen at ease?

Christ is dishonored by our heartlessness! The Gospel is derided through our indifference and souls are lost by our sloth! Sound an alarm in Zion! Blow the trumpet in Gibeah, that all the servants of the Lord bestir themselves, for the day of battle is come and the swift and the strong are summoned to the fray! These four notes may suffice to indicate what the running is. I look upon the runner in the road to Heaven as one who has received the inner spiritual life in its highest degree. Luther called it, I think, a second conversion. It is a great thing when a man is not only saved from the sins of the world, but is also saved from the ordinary slothfulness of common Christians—when, to use Apostolic words—he saves himself, by God’s Grace, from this untoward generation.

There is a salvation that God alone can work. There is another salvation which He bids *us* work when He says—“Save yourselves from this generation”—when, by God’s Holy Spirit, we strive to rise out of the lethargy and coldness in which the most of Christians are plunged. There are some who have the Divine Spirit so resting upon them that they could not be negligent in the Master’s work as others are. For them the chill hand of charity must be exchanged for a far more fervid grasp. For them the occasional feeble prayer must give way to long wrestlings with the angel—for they have learned that there is something higher to live for than domestic comfort and personal aggrandizement. They have learned to live for Christ in the spirit of the Apostle, who counted not his life dear unto him.

And they labor to imitate the language and the spirit of him who said, “It is My meat and My drink to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work.” Would God that the young men now present and the young men of all our Churches, were, by God’s Grace, made to be runners!

II. Secondly and very briefly, I shall COMMEND THE RUNNING. Running is most commendable, *because it is a warming pace*. In the depth of winter when a man runs, he seldom complains of the cold. The largest fire of Christmas logs that one can pile upon the hearth will not warm a man so thoroughly as the exertion of running. And the comforts of the Gospel and the Doctrines of Grace do not put men in such a comfortable frame of mind as active exertions in the Master’s cause. Give me two Christians, both truly converted to God, one of them a constant hearer of the Word and a delighter in the sweet things of the Gospel, but not a worker—and

then show me another who hears the Word and loves it, but who besides that is a diligent worker for his Master and I will, without a moment's hesitation, tell you which is the happier man of the two!

The first man, the mere hearer, a consistently moral man and so on, but not a diligent servant of the Lord Jesus, will gradually demand more and more from his minister of *comfortable* preaching, because he will grow more and more selfish, more and more doubting, and more and more unhappy. But the man who, loving the Truth and feeding on it, nevertheless works for the conversion of others, is the man to whom the Lord ministers secret springs of consolation which make his heart glad. In watering others, his own soul is watered. If there are any Christians here who are troubled with doubts, and fears and despondencies and spiritual indigestion in general, let them ask themselves whether, if they instructed the ignorant, fed the poor and cheered the down-trod, they would not find in such a course the way to the most effectual remedy!

Let them resort to the Good Physician and among His Divine prescriptions will be this—"Quicken your spiritual pace. Throw more energy into what you are doing in My cause and the comforts of the Holy Spirit shall abound towards you in a greater measure." Running is a warming pace.

In the next place, *running is a pace that clears the ground*. The more slowly a traveler goes, the more likely will he be to notice the rough places on the way, but when he has quickened his pace, difficulties pass away rapidly. He has cleared that rough piece of shrub on the common. He has leaped that ditch. He has passed that muddy lane. He has climbed that hill. He has descended that valley—while he has been running he has not had time to notice the road—he has been looking towards the finish.

In our more leisurely spiritual life, when the lamp burns dimly and love is cold, we fret over a thousand little things and trouble ourselves about difficulties which would not be difficulties at all if we had more Divine Grace. If we did but run we should leap over troops of obstacles, but as we walk, or creep, or crawl, we discover hundreds of hardships, concerning which we pipe our mournful ditties and hang our harps of joy upon the willows. Pshaw! You have been alarmed, because a fool laughed at you? What must you be yourself? Do you think Anne Askew would have been thus alarmed when she could sit on the floor of her dungeon for two hours together, after they had racked her and stretched every bone from its fellow, and argue with the Popish priests like a heroine though ready to faint and die from pain?

You tell me a deacon has thrown cold water upon your efforts? Cold water! Does that discourage you? Are you in a fluster about that? What would you have done if, like old Latimer, you had been called to take off your garments some cold morning in Smithfield and to be warmed after an awful fashion—by standing on a stake to play the man and light up a candle for your God? The pity that some people sigh for on account of their petty persecutions and troubles—it is a shame to ask and a waste to give. Cannot we suffer for Christ? If we cannot, it must be because we are not runners and scarcely walkers—our spiritual strength must be low and our life unhealthy. O for more love and more faith and more spiritual vigor

in our constitutions, and then we shall clear half our difficulties at a running leap and scarcely call them other than light afflictions which are but for a moment and are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in us!

Running, in the next place, is to be commended *because it is a cheering pace*. While a man advances hesitatingly and leisurely to face a difficulty, doubts and fears have time to work. But when he comes forward at a run, he has not time to be dispirited. It was good policy on David's part to run when he fought with the giant. He threw his stone at Goliath and when the giant fell he ran to finish the monster at once. Why, the lad might have said, "The giant may only have been stunned a little. He will be up again. I had better keep out of the way of that huge arm. Dying bulls gore terribly." But David gave himself no time to conjure up such thoughts as those—he ran and stood on the giant and drew his sword and cut off his head.

Courage maintains itself by its running, as some birds rest on the wing. There is an energy about agility that will often give a man a fortitude which otherwise he might not have possessed. I can understand the gallant regiment at Balaclava riding into the valley of death, but I could scarcely imagine their marching slowly up to the guns, coolly calculating all the deadly odds of the adventure! When the Lord gives His servants Divine Grace to follow out their convictions as soon as they feel them, *then* they act courageously. First thoughts are best in the service of God. Second thoughts often come up timorously and limpingly and incite us to make provision for the flesh. There is nothing like a running pace, for by it courage may be maintained in our Lord and Master's cause.

Running, moreover, is *the winning pace*. "So run that you may obtain." If we are ever to win the crown, it will certainly not be by loitering, but by running with all our might. We are not saved by *works*—we are saved by the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, alone—but yet, being saved, by a work within us we work out our own salvation into our outer lives. Men do not ride to Heaven in carriages. They are not carried there in ambulances. But they toil like pilgrims, and they do not come to their journey's end through sluggishness, but through energy. The righteous scarcely are saved. If we would win a crown that shall sparkle and shine with many jewels of precious souls whom we have brought to Christ, we shall not win such a crown by being negligent—but it will be by putting out all our God-given strength and living with all our might in our Master's service.

Running, again, is *a fitting pace for a Believer*. Jesus Christ deserves that we should run for Him. He has done so much for us that we ought to spend and be spent in His service. For men who have so short a time to live. For men to whom such solemn interests are entrusted. For men who are so indebted to their best Friend. For men who have so long a time before them in which to rest, even forever and ever. For men who expect so bright a reward, there ought to be no arguments needed to urge them to run with diligence the race that is set before them! I am persuaded that those Christians to whom God has given Grace to live highly diligent,

spiritual, useful lives, would, if their humility would permit them, tell you that they have found themselves far above other men in the point of happiness than they were before they fell in love with “life in earnest.”

To live in God’s fear at a low rate is sorrowful work, but to live for God a high and self-denying life—to live in the light of His Countenance, to lean one’s head on Christ’s bosom, to live in singleness of consecration and with fervor of purpose and devotedness of heart—this is to live, as it were, like Milton’s angel, in the very midst of the sun, never lacking for life and heat and light—because dwelling near to God and existing alone for God, in the power of His might! Young men, I commend to you the pace, and I pray for you that you may gird up your loins and maintain this, your running from now on, until you reach your journey’s end.

III. The third meditation concerns THE RUNNER’S ATTIRE. “They that wait upon the Lord shall run and not be weary.” What is it to “*wait upon the Lord*”? This is the *essence* of the running, evidently. They shall not be weary, but all others shall. It is a very sorrowful thing that, under many ministries, which we cannot but admire in other aspects, hundreds are led to start on a sort of running which very soon comes to an end. When I hear it said of such-and-such preachers that they have many converts for a time, but that few of these can be found after a month or two, I am grieved that there should be so much truth in the statement, but I am not at all surprised.

You can go into your garden and see tens of thousands of buds upon the trees in the month of April and yet, in the autumn you shall not find more than one apple for every thousand blossoms. This being the case, is the gardener disappointed? Does he not count the one apple a good percentage on the amount of flowers? Suppose there is but one apple—perhaps there had not been that one if there had not been the thousand blooms. No one expects every bloom to become a fruit and we cannot expect everyone who is impressed under our ministry to become really a living child of God. We are thankful for the bud because of the hope it gives—but we do not reckon every flower to become a lasting fruit.

Let us enquire who they are that last and do not grow weary! They are those that *wait upon the Lord*, and I take it that to wait upon the Lord is, first, *to yield yourselves, by God’s grace, to be His servant*. He is likely to hold on, who is entirely given up to the Lord’s work, and waits on Him as servants wait on their mistress. Some men have never realized that a saved child of God is, from the moment he is saved, a *servant* of God. They talk of being saved and then they serve *self*. They speak about—

**“I do believe, I will believe
That Jesus died for me,”**

and then they live in the world as if making money, or bringing up a family, or indulging in pleasure were to be the object of a saved sinner’s life! Why, my dear Friend, if Christ has saved you, you belong to Him—every hair of your head belongs to Him—and your business is from this day to feel, “Now, Lord, I give myself up to You and from this day forth every day and every hour of the day, I desire to study Your interest, to do Your business, to promote Your honor and to bring Your Gospel fresh renown.”

If you do this, by God's Grace, you shall run and not be weary. But if you join a Christian Church because you were a little excited and thought you were converted, and if you still live a selfish life, seeking your own comfort and not the Glory of God, you will grow weary of religion and very soon you will give it up and you will go back to the world from where you professed to have come. If you do not in heart and soul belong to the Redeemer, you will be like the mixed multitude who went into the wilderness with Israel—who sighed after Egypt because they had the taste of the leeks and the garlic and the onions in their mouths. You must be a *consecrated* servant of God, or you will never keep up the running so as to win the crown.

To wait on the Lord means, in the next place, *to go to Him for all your strength*, to be entirely dependent upon the spiritual power which comes from the Holy Spirit and not at all upon the power which you fancy dwells within yourselves. All the strength that there is in any man by nature is perfect weakness as to *spiritual* things. I like the saying of a man who declared to his minister that God had done His part in his salvation and he had done the rest. "Well," said his minister, "What part did you do?" "Why," said the poor man, "God did it all and I stood in His way." That is about all that you and I shall ever do in our own strength! Human strength only opposes the work of Grace until the Divine strength comes in and sweeps our human strength away and finds in our perfect weakness a reservoir into which the strength of God may pour itself, to fill us with the fullness of God.

Dear Friends, if there is anything you are persuaded you can do and do well without God, I would advise you to cease from it, because it must be in vain. No blessing can rest on it. If any man here imagines that he can preach a Gospel sermon without the help of the Holy Spirit, he had better not try. If there is any man here who thinks he can live a holy life without the constant help of God's Spirit, he will make a very unholy life of it. Yes, and if you say, "Well, at least in one point I can take care of myself—I would never be a drunkard. I could never lie—I cannot bear those two sins. I would never fall into them under any circumstances."

Look out! Mischief is ahead! That very point which you think you may leave unprotected is that in which the enemy will break in to your destruction. Where you are strong, you are weak and where you are weak, you are strong. They that wait upon the Lord and draw all their power and Grace from Him shall never grow weary in their sacred running. Whatever strain your exertions for Christ may make upon your spiritual strength, if you go to God for more, you shall have your power renewed day by day. If you are called to high and lofty enterprises far beyond your strength—if you have faith enough to go onward in the name of God, leaning upon His promise and believing that His mighty arm will not fail you—you shall rejoice in Divine all-sufficiency. And the more you lean on it, the more you shall feel it your pleasure and your wealth to be independent of all but God.

The more you dare for God, the more easy you will find it to dare something yet beyond. The more often you can, like Peter, tread upon the

waves of the sea, trusting in the invisible God, the more easily shall you be able to perform the same exploit yet again. O Christian man, never think you can trust God too much! Never think that faith can go too far! Shun self-confidence, dread the self-reliance which some cry up as a virtue, but which is to the spiritual life the vice most to be dreaded of all. Our description of waiting upon the Lord is not complete unless we add to it the expectancy of *hope*. He that would renew his strength in his running must be looking for fresh supplies from the eternal fountains. You have the promise of it—expect that you will have the fulfillment of the promise.

We often have not from God because we do not believe God. Some bank bills require the signature of the person for whom they are drawn and they would not be payable at the bank, though regularly signed, unless countersigned by the person to whom they are due. Now many of the Lord's promises are drawn in like fashion. Armed with such promises, you go to the bank of prayer and you ask to have them fulfilled—but your petitions are not granted because they need to be countersigned by the belief of your faith in them. And when God has given you Divine Grace to believe His promise, then shall you see the fulfillment of it with your eyes.

Alas, we are poor and miserable when we might be clothed in scarlet and fine linen! It is our unbelief that makes us poor. We are bowed down with infirmities and are lame and halt and I know not what besides and all because we have not confidence in God, though we know He cannot lie, and though we are sure He never did, nor can, fail the soul that puts its trust in Him. O for a higher spiritual life! Where must it begin but in a deeper confidence in God and in a fuller expectation of the fulfillment of His promise? O young men, and to this I think I may call the fathers and the matrons, too, let us ask the Lord, who gave us first the germ of faith, to increase our faith, that from this time forward we may wait at the posts of His doors expecting that His mercy will enrich us. Let us abide patiently at the foot of Jacob's ladder, expecting that the angels will bring us down the blessings which our prayers have sought through Jesus Christ!

Thus, with the three things put together—singleness of eye in serving God, simplicity of dependence upon the Divine power and constant expectation that the power will be given—we shall wait upon the Lord, and we shall run and not be weary.

IV. So I close with the last point, THE RUNNER'S STAFF. The runner's consolation lies in this promise, that *he shall not be weary*. Weariness in the way to Heaven is not at all an uncommon trial. Some of us can say that we are not weary of God's work, although we often grow weary *in* it. It were easy to complete the Christian life if it consisted in half-a-dozen acts of piety and then all were over. But to stand and having done all. To stand to bear the wear and tear of daily temptation. To be roasted, as it were, before the slow fire of constant trials from inward sins and Satanic suggestions. Above all, to pass through that horrible land called the Enchanted Ground and to feel the sleepiness that comes over you there. To keep awake in a sluggish body and to continue persevering against flesh and blood for 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 years, perhaps—why this is a thing impossible to flesh and blood!

It is only possible to God and only as God gives us Grace shall we be able to achieve it. To keep up the running pace through life is an impossibility of impossibilities except much Grace is given—and we have, virtually, the promise that it *shall* be given when we are told that we shall not be weary! How is it that running Christians do not become weary? Answer, first, because they have daily strength given them for all their daily needs. They would be worn out if they had nothing more to rely upon than the first portion they received. God does not allot us a stock of Grace to draw from, and when that is exhausted award us another measure. But as “day by day the manna fell,” so hour by hour fresh Grace streams into our souls!

We are lights, but we are not like the candle that burns supported by its own fat—we are like these gas-lamps—once cut the communication between the jet and the gas meter and at once the light is gone. We only live by fresh communications from the Great Fountainhead of all spiritual life! And no runner can weary while fresh strength is given. He is not weary because as he advances he finds fresh matter to interest him. I heard a gentleman, yesterday, say that he could walk any number of miles when the scenery was good. But, he added, “When it is flat and uninteresting, how one tires!” What scenery it is through which the Christian man walks—the towering mountains of *predestination*, the great sea of Providence, the mighty cliffs of Divine promise, the green fields of Divine Grace, the river that makes glad the city of God—oh, what scenery surrounds the Christian and what fresh discoveries he makes at every step!

The Bible is always a new book. If you want a novel, read your Bible. It is always new. There is not a stale page in the Word of God—it is just as fresh as though the ink were not yet dry but had flowed today from the pen of Inspiration. There have been poets whose sayings startled all England when first their verses were thrown broadcast over the land, but nobody reads their writings now. Yet the pages that were written by David and by Paul are glowing with the radiant Glory which was upon them when long ago the Holy Spirit spoke by them. As we advance in the King’s highway of righteousness, there are such fresh things in the Christian’s experience and in Christian truth that we run and are not weary.

Above all, there is one fact that keeps the Christian from weariness, namely, that he looks to the end, to the recompense of the reward. He longs for the resurrection and he hears the voice that cries, “Therefore, be you steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” When travelers sail near to certain spice islands, they can tell their nearness to the gardens of perfume by the odors wafted to them on the winds. Even so, as the Christian runner advances nearer to Heaven, he enjoys new delights such as celestial spirits rejoice to experience. In proportion as he draws nearer and nearer, the perfume from the many mansions, from the garments of Christ who dwells there and whose garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia—that perfume, I say, comes to him and it quickens his pace. The body may be waxing feeble, but the soul is growing strong. The tabernacle may be falling, but the sacred priestly soul within carries on its de-

votion with greater zest. So, when you would think that the pilgrim's soul must faint, he grows vigorous! When he sinks to the earth, he stretches out his hand and grasps his crown!

I wish I could speak tonight as I desired to do, but I scarcely find ability equal to my task. As God's Holy Spirit speaks by us according as He wills, I submit to deliver myself feebly, if He so permits. Let me conclude with these three or four sentences. If there is any Brother in Christ here who was once a runner, but has begun to slacken his pace, let him beware! It is a business which goes on much faster than we think. I question, my Brother, whether there is an easy stopping place in a downhill life. If you do a little less, you will do still less. If you backslide by little and by little, you shall backslide into a terrible fall.

Keep the pace up, Brother, by the Grace of God, and on your knees tonight. If you have begun to grow cold and chilled, pray Him who washed you years ago in His precious blood, to take you afresh and baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire, that from this time forward you may serve Him better than you ever did in the best part of your previous life. If there is another here who never has served Christ at all, let me ask him, how will he answer the Master in the day when He comes? You have never trusted in Christ? You have never reposed your confidence in Him? How will you face the King when He sits on His Throne, after having rejected Him here, when in loving tones He said, "Come unto Me and I will give you rest"?

You who love not Christ, O that you might be brought to trust Him, and to love Him. And you who love Him, may you love Him better and run and not be weary and walk and not faint—and God's shall be the Glory and yours the comfort. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Corinthians 5.

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THE WITHERING WORK OF THE SPIRIT NO. 999

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 9, 1871,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass,
and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field:
the grass withers, the flower fades: because
the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it surely the people is grass.
The grass withers, the flower fades: but the Word of
our God shall stand forever.”
Isaiah 40:6-8.*

*“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,
by the Word of God, which lives
and abides forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the
flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away:
but the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word
which by the Gospel is preached unto you.”
1 Peter 1:23-25.*

THE passage in Isaiah which I have just read in your hearing may be used as a very eloquent description of our mortality, and if a sermon should be preached from it upon the frailty of human nature, the brevity of life, and the certainty of death, no one could dispute the appropriateness of the text. Yet I venture to question whether such a discourse would strike the central teaching of the Prophet. Something more than the decay of our material flesh is intended here. The *carnal mind*, the flesh in another sense, was intended by the Holy Spirit when He bade His messenger proclaim those words.

It does not seem to me that a mere expression of the mortality of our race was needed in this place by the context. It would hardly keep pace with the sublime Revelations which surround it, and would in some measure be a digression from the subject in hand. The notion that we are here simply reminded of our mortality does not square with the New Testament exposition of it in Peter, which I have also placed before you as a text.

There is another and more *spiritual* meaning here besides and beyond that which would be contained in the great and very obvious Truth of God that all of us must die. Look at the chapter in Isaiah with care. What is the subject of it? It is the Divine consolation of Zion. Zion had been tossed to and fro with conflicts—she had been smarting under the result of sin. The Lord, to remove her sorrow, bids His Prophet announce the coming of the long-expected Deliverer, the end and accomplishment of all her warfare and the pardon of all her iniquity.

There is no doubt that this is the theme of the prophecy. And further, there is no sort of question about the next point—that the Prophet goes on to foretell the coming of John the Baptist as the harbinger of the Messiah. We have no difficulty in the explanation of the passage, “Prepare you the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” For

the New Testament again and again refers this to the Baptist and his ministry. The object of the coming of the Baptist and the mission of the Messiah, whom he heralded, was the manifestation of Divine Glory.

Observe the fifth verse—"The Glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." Well, what next? Was it necessary to mention man's mortality in this connection? We think not. But there is much more appropriateness in the succeeding verses if we see their deeper meaning. Do they not mean this: In order to make room for the display of the Divine Glory in Christ Jesus and His salvation, there would come a withering of all the glory wherein man boasts himself—the flesh should be seen in its true nature as corrupt and dying, and the Grace of God alone should be exalted.

This would be seen under the ministry of John the Baptist first, and should be the preparatory work of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts, in all time, in order that the Glory of the Lord should be revealed and human pride be forever confounded. The Spirit blows upon the flesh, and that which seemed vigorous becomes weak, that which was fair to look upon is smitten with decay. The true nature of the flesh is thus discovered, its deceit is laid bare, its power is destroyed, and there is space for the dispensation of the ever-abiding Word, and for the rule of the Great Shepherd, whose words are Spirit and Life.

There is a withering worked by the Spirit which is the preparation for the sowing and implanting by which salvation is worked. The withering before the sowing was very marvelously fulfilled in the preaching of John the Baptist. Most appropriately he carried on his ministry in the desert, for a spiritual desert was all around him. He was the voice of one crying in the wilderness. It was not his work to plant, but to hew down. The fleshly religion of the Jews was then in its prime. Phariseeism stalked through the streets in all its pomp—men complacently rested in outward ceremonies only—and spiritual religion was at the lowest conceivable ebb.

Here and there might be found a Simeon and an Anna, but for the most part men knew nothing of spiritual religion, but said in their hearts—"We have Abraham as our father," and this is enough. What a stir John made when he called the lordly Pharisees a generation of vipers! How he shook the nation with the declaration, "Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees"! Stern as Elijah, his work was to level the mountains, and lay low every lofty imagination. That word, "Repent," was as a scorching wind to the verdure of self-righteousness—a killing blast for the confidence of ceremonialism.

His food and his dress called for fasting and mourning. The outward token of his ministry declared the death amid which he preached, as he buried in the waters of Jordan those who came to him. "You must die and be buried, even as He who is to come will save by death and burial." This was the meaning of the emblem which he set before the crowd. His typical act was as thorough in its teaching as were His words. And as if that were not enough, he warned them of a yet more searching and trying Baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire, and of the coming of One whose fan was in His hand, thoroughly to purge His floor.

The Spirit in John blew as the rough north wind, searching and withering, and made him to be a destroyer of the vain glorying of a fleshly relig-

ion, that the *spiritual* faith might be established. When our Lord Himself actually appeared, He came into a withered land, whose glories had all departed. Old Jesse's stem was bare, and our Lord was the Branch which grew out of his root. The scepter had departed from Judah, and the law-giver from between his feet, when Shiloh came.

An alien sat on David's throne, and the Roman called the Covenant land his own. The lamp of prophecy burned but dimly, even if it had not utterly gone out. No Isaiah had arisen of late to console them, nor even a Jeremiah to lament their apostasy. The whole economy of Judaism was as a worn-out vesture. It had waxed old, and was ready to vanish away. The priesthood was disarranged. Luke tells us that Annas and Caiaphas were high priests that year—two in a year or at once—a strange setting aside of the laws of Moses. All the dispensation which gathered around the visible, or as Paul calls it, the “worldly” sanctuary, was coming to a close.

And when our Lord had finished His work, the veil of the temple was rent in two, the sacrifices were abolished, the priesthood of Aaron was set aside and carnal ordinances were abrogated—for the Spirit revealed spiritual things. When He came who was made a Priest, “not after the Law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life,” there was, “a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.” Such are the facts of history.

But I am not about to dilate upon *them*—I am coming to your own *personal* histories—to the experience of every child of God. In every one of us it must be fulfilled that all that is of the flesh in us, seeing it is but as grass, must be withered, and the comeliness thereof must be destroyed. The Spirit of God, like the wind, must pass over the field of our souls and cause our beauty to be as a fading flower. He must so convince us of sin, and so reveal ourselves to ourselves, that we shall see that the flesh profits nothing—that our fallen nature is corruption itself—and that “they who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

There must be brought home to us the sentence of death upon our former legal and carnal life so that the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, implanted by the Holy Spirit, may be in us, and abide in us forever. The subject of this morning is the withering work of the Spirit upon the souls of men! And when we have spoken upon it, we shall conclude with a few words upon the implanting work, which always follows where this withering work has been performed.

I. Turning, then, to THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN CAUSING THE GOODLINESS OF THE FLESH TO FADE, let us, first observe that the work of the Holy Spirit upon the soul of man in withering up that which is of the flesh is *very unexpected*. You will observe in our text, that even the speaker himself—though doubtless one taught of God—when he was bid to cry, said, “What shall I cry?” Even he did not know that in order to the comforting of God's people, there must first be experienced a preliminary visitation.

Many preachers of God's Gospel have forgotten that the Law is the schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. They have sown on the unbroken fallow ground and forgotten that the plow must break the clods. We have seen too much of trying to sew without the sharp needle of the Spirit's convicting power. Preachers have labored to make Christ precious to

those who think themselves rich and increased in goods—and it has been labor in vain. It is our duty to preach Jesus Christ even to self-righteous sinners, but it is certain that Jesus Christ will never be accepted by them while they hold themselves in high esteem.

Only the sick will welcome the physician. It is the work of the Spirit of God to convict men of sin, and until they are convicted of sin, they will never be led to seek the righteousness which is of God by Jesus Christ. I am persuaded that wherever there is a real work of Divine Grace in any soul, it begins with a pulling down—the Holy Spirit does *not* build on the old foundation. Wood, hay, and stubble will not do for Him to build upon. He will come as the fire, and cause a conflagration of all proud nature's Babels. He will break our bow and cut our spear in sunder, and burn our chariot in the fire.

When every sandy foundation is gone, then, but not till then, behold He will lay in our souls the great Foundation Stone, chosen of God, and precious. The awakened sinner, when he asks that God would have mercy upon him, is much astonished to find that, instead of enjoying a speedy peace, his soul is bowed down within him under a sense of Divine Wrath. Naturally enough he enquires—"Is this the answer to my prayer? I prayed the Lord to deliver me from sin and self, and is this the way in which He deals with me?"

"I said, 'Hear me,' and behold He *wounds* me with the wounds of a cruel one. I said, 'Clothe me,' and lo, He has torn off from me the few rags which covered me before, and my nakedness stares me in the face. I said, 'Wash me,' and behold He has plunged me in the ditch till my own clothes abhor me. Is this the way of Divine Grace?" Sinner, be not surprised—it is even so. Do you perceive not the cause of it? How can you be healed while the proud flesh is in your wound? It must come out. It is the only way to heal you permanently—it would be folly to film over your sore, or heal your flesh, and leave the leprosy within your bones.

The Great Physician will cut with His sharp knife till the corrupt flesh is removed, for only thus can a sure healing work be worked in you. Do you not see that it is divinely wise that before you are clothed you should be stripped! What? Would you have Christ's lustrous righteousness outside whiter than any fuller can make it, and your own filthy rags concealed within? No, Man! They must be put away! Not a single thread of your own must be left upon you. It cannot be that God should cleanse you until He has made you see *somewhat* of your defilement. For you would never value the precious blood which cleanses us from all sin if you had not first of all been made to mourn that you are altogether an unclean thing.

The convincing work of the Spirit, wherever it comes, is unexpected, and even to the child of God in whom this process has still to go on, it is often startling. We begin again to build that which the Spirit of God had destroyed. Having begun in the Spirit, we act as if we would be made perfect in the flesh. And then, when our mistaken rebuilding has to be leveled with the earth, we are almost as astonished as we were when first the scales fell from our eyes. In some such condition as this was Newton when he wrote—

"I asked the Lord that I might grow

***In faith and love and every Grace,
Might more of His salvation know,
And seek more earnestly His face.
It was He who taught me thus to pray,
And He, I trust, has answered prayer.
But it has been in such a way
As almost drove me to despair.
I hoped that in some favored hour,
At once He'd answer my request,
And by His love's constraining power
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.
Instead of this, He made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart.
And let the angry powers of Hell
Assault my soul in every part."***

Ah, marvel not, for thus the Lord is likely to answer His people. The voice which says, "Comfort you, comfort you My people," achieves its purpose by first making them hear the cry, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field."

2. Furthermore, *this withering is after the usual order of the Divine operation.* If we consider well the way of God, we shall not be astonished that He begins with His people by terrible things in righteousness. Observe the method of creation. I will not venture upon any dogmatic theory of geology, but there seems to be every probability that this world has been fitted up and destroyed, refitted and then destroyed again many times before the last arranging of it for the habitation of men. "In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth." Then came a long interval, and at length, at the appointed time, during six days, the Lord prepared the earth for the human race.

Consider, then, the state of matters when the Great Architect began His work. What was there in the beginning? Originally, nothing. When He commanded the ordering of the earth, how was it? "The earth was without form and void. And darkness was upon the face of the deep." There was no trace of another's plan to interfere with the Great Architect. "With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding?"

He received no contribution of column or pillar towards the temple which He intended to build. The earth was, as the Hebrew puts it, Tohu and Bohu, disorder and confusion—in a word—chaos. So it is in the new creation. When the Lord creates us new, He borrows nothing from the old man, but makes *all* things new. He does not repair and add a new wing to the old house of our depraved nature, but He builds a new temple for His own praise. We are spiritually without form and empty, and darkness is upon the face of our heart, and His Word comes to us, saying, "Light be," and there is light, and before long life and every precious thing.

To take another instance from the ways of God. When man had fallen, when did the Lord bring Him the Gospel? The first whisper of the Gospel, as you know, was, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her Seed. He shall bruise your head." That whisper came to man shivering in the presence of his Maker, having nothing more to say by way of excuse, but standing guilty before the Lord. When did the

Lord God clothe our parents? Not until first of all He had put the question, "Who told you that you were naked?" Not until the fig leaves had utterly failed did the Lord bring in the covering skin of the sacrifice, and wrap them in it.

If you will pursue the meditation upon the acts of God with men, you will constantly see the same thing. God has given us a wonderful type of salvation in Noah's ark. But Noah was saved in that ark in connection with death. He himself, as it were, confined alive in a tomb, and all the world besides left to destruction. All other hope for Noah was gone, and yet the ark rose upon the waters.

Remember the redemption of the children of Israel out of Egypt—it occurred when they were in the saddest plight, and their cry went up to Heaven by reason of their bondage. When no arm brought salvation, then with a high hand and an outstretched arm the Lord brought forth His people. Everywhere before the salvation there comes the humbling of the creature, the overthrow of human hope. As in the backwoods of America before there can be tillage, the planting of cities, the arts of civilization, and the transactions of commerce, the woodman's axe must hack and hew—the stately trees of centuries must fall—the roots must be burned, the odd reign of nature disturbed. The old must go before the new can come.

Even thus the Lord takes away the first, that He may establish the second. The first Heaven and the first earth must pass away, or there cannot be a new Heaven and a new earth. Now, as it has been outwardly, we ought to expect that it would be the same within us. And when these withering and fading occur in our souls, we should only say, "It is the Lord, let Him do as seems Him good."

3. I would have you notice, thirdly, that we are taught in our text *how universal this process is in its range* over the hearts of all those upon whom the Spirit works. The withering is a withering of what? Of part of the flesh and some portion of its tendencies? No, observe, "ALL flesh is grass. And *all* the goodness thereof"—the very choice and pick of it—"is as the flower of the field." And what happens to the grass? Does any of it live? "The grass withers," all of it. The flower, will not that abide? So fair a thing, has not that an immortality? No, it fades—it utterly falls away.

So wherever the Spirit of God breathes on the soul of man, there is a withering of everything that is of the flesh, and it is seen that to be carnally minded is death. Of course we all know and confess that where there is a work of Grace, there must be a destruction of our delight in the pleasures of the flesh. When the Spirit of God breathes on us, that which was sweet becomes bitter. That which was bright becomes dim. A man cannot love sin and yet possess the life of God. If he takes pleasure in fleshly joys in which he once delighted, he is still what he was—he minds the things of the flesh, and therefore he is after the flesh—and he shall die.

The world and the lusts thereof are, to the unregenerate, as beautiful as the meadows in spring, when they are bedecked with flowers—but to the regenerate soul they are a wilderness, a salt land, and not inhabited. Of those very things in which we once took delight we say, "Vanity of vanities. All is vanity." We cry to be delivered from the poisonous joys of

earth—we loathe them—and marvel that we could once riot in them. Beloved Hearers, do you know what this kind of withering means? Have you seen the lusts of the flesh, and the pomps and the pleasures thereof all fade away before your eyes? It must be so, or the Spirit of God has not visited your soul.

But mark, wherever the Spirit of God comes, He destroys the goodliness and flower of the flesh. That is to say, *our* righteousness withers as our sinfulness. Before the Spirit comes we think ourselves as good as the best. We say, “All these commandments have I kept from my youth up,” and we superciliously ask, “What do I lack?” Have we not been moral? No, have we not even been *religious*? We confess that we may have committed faults, but we think them very venial, and we venture, in our wicked pride, to imagine that, after all, we are not so vile as the Word of God would lead us to think.

Ah, my dear Hearer, when the Spirit of God blows on the comeliness of your flesh, its beauty will fade as a leaf, and you will have quite another idea of yourself. You will then find no language too severe in which to describe your past character. Searching deep into your motives, and investigating that which moved you to your actions, you will see so much of evil that you will cry with the publican, “God be merciful to me, a sinner!”

When the Holy Spirit has withered up in us our self-righteousness, He has not half completed His work. There is much more to be destroyed, and among the rest, away must go our boasted power of resolution. Most people conceive that they can turn to God whenever they resolve to do so. “I am a man of such strength of mind,” says one, “that if I made up my mind to be religious, I should be so without difficulty.” “Ah,” says another volatile spirit, “I believe that one of these days I can correct the errors of the past, and commence a new life.”

Ah, dear Hearers, the resolutions of the flesh are goodly flowers, but they must all fade. When visited by the Spirit of God we find that even when the will is present with us—how to perform that which we would, we find not. Yes, and we discover that our will is averse to all that is good, and that naturally we will not come unto Christ that we may have life. What poor frail things resolutions are when seen in the light of God’s Spirit! Still the man will say, “I believe I have, after all, within myself an enlightened conscience and an intelligence that will guide me aright. The light of nature I will use, and I do not doubt that if I wander somewhat I shall find my way back again.”

Ah, Man! Your wisdom, which is the very flower of your nature—what is it but folly—though you know it not? Unconverted and unrenewed, you are in God’s sight no wiser than the wild ass’ colt. I wish you were in your own esteem humbled as a little child at Jesus’ feet, and made to cry, “Teach You me.” When the withering wind of the Spirit moves over the carnal mind it reveals the death of the flesh in all respects, especially in the matter of power towards that which is good. We then learn that Word of our Lord—“Without Me you can do nothing.”

When I was seeking the Lord, I not only believed that I could not pray without Divine help, but I felt in my very soul that I could not. Then I could not even feel aright, or mourn as I would, or groan as I would. I longed to long more after Christ, but, alas, I could not even feel that I

needed Him as I ought to feel it. This heart was then as hard as adamant, as dead as those that rot in their graves. Oh, what would I, at times, have given for a tear! I wanted to repent, but could not! I longed to believe, but could not. I felt bound, hampered, and paralyzed. This is a humbling revelation of God's Holy Spirit, but a necessary one—for the faith of the flesh is not the faith of God's elect.

The faith which justifies the soul is the *gift* of God and not of ourselves. That repentance which is the work of the flesh will need to be repented of. The flower of the flesh must wither—only the seed of the Spirit will produce fruit unto perfection. The heirs of Heaven are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of man, but of GOD. If the work in us is not the Spirit's working, but our own, it will droop and die when most we require its protection. And its end will be as the grass which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven.

4. You see, then, the universality of this withering work within us. But I beg you also to notice *the completeness of it*. The grass, what does it do? Droop? No, wither. The flower of the field—what of that? Does it hang its head a little? No, according to Isaiah it fades. And according to Peter it falls away. There is no reviving it with showers—it has come to its end. Even thus are the awakened led to see that in their flesh there dwells no good thing. What dying and withering work some of God's servants have had in their souls!

Look at John Bunyan, as he describes himself in his, "Grace Abounding"! For how many months and even years was the Spirit engaged in writing death upon all that was the old Bunyan in order that he might become, by Divine Grace, a new man fitted to track the pilgrims along their heavenly way. We have not all endured the ordeal so long, but in every child of God there must be a death to sin, to the Law, and to SELF. And it must be fully accomplished before he is perfected in Christ and taken to Heaven.

Corruption cannot inherit incorruption. It is through the Spirit that we mortify the deeds of the body, and therefore live. But cannot the fleshly mind be improved? By no means. For "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither, indeed, can be." Cannot you improve the old nature? No! "You must be born again." Can it not be taught heavenly things? No. "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

There is nothing to be done with the old nature but to let it be laid in the grave. It must be dead and buried, and when it is so, then the incorruptible seed that lives and abides forever will develop gloriously! The fruit of the new birth will come to maturity and Grace shall be exalted in Glory. The old nature never does improve, it is as earthly, and sensual, and devilish in the saint of eighty years of age as it was when first he came to Christ. It is unimproved and unimprovable. Towards God it is enmity itself—every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is evil, and that continually. The old nature called "the flesh," lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other." Neither can there be peace between them.

5. Let us further notice that all *this withering work in the soul is very painful*. As you read these verses do they not strike you as having a very funereal tone? “All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withers, the flower fades.” This is mournful work, but it must be done. I think those who experience much of it when they first come to Christ have great reason to be thankful. Their course in life will, in all probability, be much brighter and happier. I have noticed that persons who are converted very easily, and come to Christ with but comparatively little knowledge of their own depravity, have to learn it afterwards.

And they remain for a long time babes in Christ, and are perplexed with masters that would not have troubled them if they had experienced a deeper work at first. No, Sir, if Divine Grace has begun to build in your soul and left any of the old walls of self-trust standing, they will have to come down sooner or later. You may congratulate yourself upon their remaining, but it is a false congratulation—your glorying is not good. I am sure of this, that Christ will never put a new piece upon an old garment, or new wine in old bottles—He knows the garment would be worse in the long run, and the bottles would burst.

All that is of nature’s spinning must be unraveled. The natural building must come down, wood and plaster, roof and foundation—and we must have a house not made with hands. It was a great mercy for our city of London that the great fire cleared away all the old buildings which were the lair of the plague. A far healthier city was then built. And it is a great mercy for a man when God sweeps right away all his own righteousness and strength. When He makes him feel that he is *nothing* and can be nothing, and drives him to confess that Christ must be All in All—and that his only strength lies in the eternal might of the ever-blessed Spirit.

Sometimes in a house of business an old system has been going on for years and it has caused much confusion, and allowed much dishonesty. You come in as a new manager and you adopt an entirely new plan. Now, try if you can, and graft your method on to the old system. How it will worry you! Year after year you say to yourself, “I cannot work it—if I had swept the whole away and started afresh, clear from the beginning, it would not have given me one-tenth of the trouble.” God does not intend to graft the system of Grace upon corrupt nature, nor to make the new Adam grow out of the old Adam.

But He intends to teach us this—“You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” Salvation is not of the flesh but of the Lord alone. That which is born of the flesh is only flesh at the best. And only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. It must be the Spirit’s work altogether, or it is not what God will accept. Observe, Brothers and Sisters, that although this is painful *it is inevitable*. I have already entrenched upon this, and shown you how necessary it is that all of the old should be taken away. But let me further remark that it is inevitable that the old should go, because it is, in itself, *corruptible*.

Why does the grass wither? Because it is a withering thing. “Its root is ever in its way, and it must die.” How could it spring out of the earth, and be immortal? It is no amaranth—it blooms not in Paradise—it grows in a soil on which the curse has fallen. Every supposed good thing that grows

out of your own self is like yourself—mortal—and it must die. The seeds of corruption are in all the fruits of manhood's tree. Let them be as fair to look upon as Eden's clusters, they must decay.

Moreover, it would never do, my Brothers and Sisters, that there should be something of the flesh in our salvation and something of the Spirit. For if it were so there would be a division of the honor. Up to now the praises of God—beyond this my own praises—if I were to win Heaven partly through what I had done, and partly through what Christ had done. And if the energy which sanctified me was in a measure my own, and in a measure Divine, they that divide the work shall divide the reward. And the songs of Heaven, while they would be partly to Jehovah, must also be partly to the creature.

But it shall not be. Down, proud flesh! Down, I say. Though you cleanse and purge yourself as you may, you are to the core *corrupt*. Though you labor unto weariness, you build wood that will be burned, and stubble that will be turned to ashes. Give up your own self-confidence and let the work be, and the merit be where the honor shall be, namely, with God alone. It is inevitable, then, that there should be all this withering.

7. This last word by way of comfort to any that are passing through the process we are describing, and I hope some of you are. It gives me great joy when I hear that you unconverted ones are very miserable, for the miseries which the Holy Spirit works are always the prelude to happiness. *It is the Spirit's work to wither.* I rejoice in our translation, "Because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it." It is true the passage may be translated, "The Wind of the Lord blows upon it."

One word, as you know, is used in the Hebrew both for "Wind" and "Spirit," and the same is true of the Greek. But let us retain the old translation here, for I conceive it to be the real meaning of the text. The Spirit of God it is that withers the flesh. It is not the devil that killed my self-righteousness. I might be afraid if it were—nor was it *myself* that humbled myself by a voluntary and needless self-degradation—it was the Spirit of God. Better to be broken in pieces by the Spirit of God, than to be made whole by the flesh! What does the Lord say? "I kill." But what next? "I make alive." He never makes any alive but those He kills.

Blessed be the Holy Spirit when He kills me! When He drives the sword through the very heart of my own merits and my self-confidence, then He makes me alive. "I wound, and I heal." He never heals those whom He has not wounded. Then blessed be the hand that wounds! Let it go on wounding! Let it cut and tear! Let it lay bare to me myself at my very worst, that I may be driven to self-despair and may fall back upon the free mercy of God—and receive it as a poor, guilty, lost, helpless, undone sinner!

May we, by His Grace, cast ourselves into the arms of Sovereign Grace, knowing that God must *give* all, and Christ must *be* all, and the Spirit must *work* all—and man must be as clay in the potter's hands, that the Lord may do with him as seems to Him good. Rejoice, dear Brothers and Sisters, however low you are brought, for if the Spirit humbles you He means no evil, but He intends infinite good to your soul.

II. Now, let us close with a few sentences concerning THE IMPLANTATION. According to Peter, although the flesh withers, and the flower falls

away, yet in the children of God there is an unwithering something of another kind. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever." "The Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you."

Now, the Gospel is of use to us because it is not of human origin. If it were of the flesh, all it could do for us would not land us beyond the flesh. But the Gospel of Jesus Christ is super-human, Divine, and spiritual. In its conception it was of God. Its great Gift, even the Savior, is a Divine Gift. And all its teachings are full of Deity. If you, my Hearer, believe a Gospel which you have thought out for yourself, or a philosophical Gospel which comes from the brain of man, it is of the flesh and will wither—and you will die—and be *lost* through trusting in it. The only word that can bless you and be a seed in your soul must be the Living and Incorruptible Word of the eternal Spirit.

Now this is the incorruptible Word, that, "God was made flesh and dwelt among us." That, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This is the incorruptible Word, that, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." "He that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." "God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."

Now, Brethren, this is the Seed. But before it can grow in your soul, it must be planted there by the Spirit. Do you receive it this morning? Then the Holy Spirit implants it in your soul. Do you leap up to it, and say, "I believe it! I grasp it! On the Incarnate God I fix my hope. The Substitutionary Sacrifice, the complete Atonement of Christ is all my confidence. I am reconciled to God by the blood of Jesus"? Then you possess the living Seed within your soul!

And what is the result of it? Why, then, there comes, according to the text, a new life into us, as the result of the indwelling of the Living Word, and our being born again by it. A new life it is. It is not the old nature putting out its better parts. Not the old Adam refining and purifying itself and rising to something better. No—have we not said aforetime that the flesh withers and the flower thereof fades? It is an entirely *new* life. You are as much new creatures at your regeneration as if you had never existed, and had been for the first time created.

"Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." The child of God is beyond and above other men. Other men do not possess the Life which he has received. They are but duplex—body and soul have they. He is of triple nature—he is *spirit*, soul, and body. A fresh principle, a spark of the Divine Life has dropped into his soul. He is no longer a natural or carnal man, but he has become a *spiritual* man, understanding spiritual things and possessing a life far superior to anything that belongs to the rest of mankind. O that God, who has withered in the souls of any of you that which is of the flesh, may speedily grant you the new birth through the Word.

Now observe, to close, wherever this new life comes through the Word, it is incorruptible, it lives and abides forever. To get the good Seed out of a

true Believer's heart, and to destroy the new nature in him, is a thing attempted by earth and Hell, but never yet achieved. Pluck the sun out of the firmament, and you shall not even, then, be able to pluck Divine Grace out of a regenerate heart. It "lives and abides forever," says the text. It neither can corrupt of itself nor be corrupted. "It sins not, because it is born of God."

"I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." You have a natural life—that will die, it is of the flesh. You have a spiritual life—of that it is written—"Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." You have now within you the noble and true immortality—you must live as God lives, in peace and joy, and happiness.

But oh, remember, dear Hearer, if you have not this you "shall not see life." What then—shall you be annihilated? Ah, no, but, "the wrath of the Lord is upon you." You shall exist, though you shall not live. Of life you shall know nothing, for that is the gift of God in Christ Jesus. But of an everlasting *death*, full of torment and anguish, you shall be the wretched heritor—"the wrath of God abides on him." You shall be cast into "the lake of fire, which is the second death." You shall be one of those whose "worm dies not, and whose fire is not quenched."

May God, the ever-blessed Spirit, visit you! If He is now striving with you, O quench not His Divine flame! Trifle not with any holy thoughts you have. If this morning you must confess that you are not born again, be humbled by it. Go and seek mercy of the Lord! Entreat Him to deal graciously with you and save you. Many who have had nothing but moonlight have prized it, and before long they have had sunlight.

Above all, remember what the quickening Seed is, and reverence it when you hear it preached, "for this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." Respect it, and receive it. Remember that the quickening Seed is all wrapped up in this sentence—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. But he that believes not shall be damned." The Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Isaiah 40:1-11; Luke 3: 1-17; 1 Peter 1:17-25.

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MAN TRANSIENT—GOD'S WORD ETERNAL

NO. 3439

A SERMON
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 26, 1868.**

***“The grass withers, the flower fades; but the Word of our God stands forever.”
Isaiah 40:8.***

A FEW thoughts, first, upon *the things that wither*. Then a word or two upon *that word which endures*. And then the lessons which the *contrast will suggest*.

I. THE THINGS WHICH WITHER.

The things which wither—grass and its flower; man and all that comes of man; the creature and all that springs from the creature. We are apt to think man a long-lived creature, and as we look upon races and nations, we regard the history of mankind as though it were of considerable length. If we could form any idea of eternity, we should ridicule ourselves for thinking a thousand years or six thousand years to be anything at all. They are but as a watch in the night in comparison with the endless ages of the life of God! They are no sooner come than they have gone! We look upon the grass as a short-lived thing, and talk about the frailty as well as the loveliness of the flowers—but is there so great a difference? They have their seasons—we have ours—and the seasons differ not so much after all. What if they last a month, and we last 70 years? Yet when both are withered, what does it signify? He that died but yesterday is as much dead as he that died a thousand years ago! And when the season is over, it comes to pretty much the same thing, whether we count that season by years or count it by hours. After all, the short-lived thing and we are cousins—and, looked at in the light of eternity, we and the insects are things which are and are not, floating for a while in the sunbeam, and then are gone from the land of the living. The voice that cried in the wilderness warned all mankind of that familiar truth, that all men, being but flesh, will as surely pass away as all the grass! Grass, being but grass, will surely, in its season, come to the scythe, or wither where it stands!

But the meaning of the text, as opened by the context, is not only that man is frail and must die, but that everything connected with man is so—everything that man can do, all his surroundings, especially everything in which man glories, as the grass may glory in its flower—

everything of which man boasts about, which he measures and esteems himself, shall also pass away. And I shall remind you of this, dear Friends, that if you are rejoicing in anything which belongs to time and sense, you may decrease what the poet calls, "this brainless ardor," and may set your affections upon something more worthy of an immortal spirit! Remember that *all the hopes of man that have to do with man are but as the flower of grass.*

You are setting *your hopes*, perhaps, upon that dear boy when he shall have grown up and come to maturity. What a comfort and a stay he will be! Or your hope is resting upon that speculation which you trust will turn out successfully, or more solidly, perhaps, upon the gains of perseverance which, if slow, are sure. Set not your hopes on any of these things, for if you do, they may end in disappointment as you grasp them, like the apples of Sodom, which are fair to look upon, but which turn to ashes in the mouth! These hopes may be eggs that never shall be hatched, phantoms that have no reality in them. If your hopes are fixed on God's Word—the Word that endures—be as optimistic as you will, for you shall never be deceived! But if your hopes are earth-born, hear the cry of the Prophet—"All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof as the flower of the field"—your hope will wither as flowers do.

Equally so will it be with *the joys you have already attained*. It may not be altogether hoping with you. You have passed the early morning of life and you have realized something. You are content and that is to be rich. You are thankful that God has smiled upon you in Providence and that He has blessed you in many respects. Yes, but still even contentment may be a sin if it is an *earthly* contentment which checks your aspirations for the skies. If you are content enough to say with the rich man, "Soul, take your ease, you have much goods laid up for many years," then remember that of all the attainments of this world, by way of pleasure, satisfaction and wealth, it may be said, "The goodness thereof is as the flower of the field." You will die and leave these things—and then what pleasure will you have in your garden, in your home, your well-stored chambers and your money? What can all yield you when your eyes shall be glazed in death? Or, before you depart from them, these things may depart from you, for riches have wings and oftentimes but one clap of the hand of Providence and all these birds have flown to nests somewhere else!

But if this is true of common hopes and ordinary attainments, you must not think it is not *true of higher matters*, for in these it is equally the case. Suppose we have been seeking after mental acquisitions, have been great students, have read many books, have tried to be learned? Now, there is something in this far more elevating than in seeking to gather together so many coins of the realm, but still, all the learning that comes of man and that comes in man, is but as the flower of the field

that withers! You shall find, Friends, that, “much study is a weariness of the flesh, and he that increases knowledge increases sorrow unto himself.” The more you know, the more you shall discover of your own ignorance—and as you attain unto what you think to be the light, you shall find the very excess of light causes you a greater sense of the surrounding darkness! And when you come to die, if you have neglected the knowledge of God, how will it avail you to have measured the stars, to have counted those mighty orbs, to have fathomed the depths of oceans, or have soared the heights of the hills? Where are all the philosophies of the man in Hell? Where is all the wisdom of yon corpse that slumbers in the sepulcher, while the spirit is driven from the Presence of God? All such comeliness is but as a withered flower.

Perhaps, however, you are accumulating around you love, which is the richest of treasures, and the best of wisdom. You are living in the affections of your household, and you are grateful to do so—and I honor you for having thought it better to win the love of others than to selfishly amass anything to yourself. But yet, dear Friend, remember that even this must go! There is not a child in the household that is immortal. The fondest object of your affections must certainly, before long, succumb beneath the arrows of death. Insatiable Archer! You carry many arrows and you spare no human hearts! All of woman born must be targets for your shafts! Set not, then, your heart's choice, to be chief affections on those dear ones here, but upon another Husband, another Father, another Brother, another Friend! Let these aspirations of your heart become Immortal, lest in the bitterness of your spirit, you find of all these that “the flower thereof fades away.”

Going a step higher, there is *a kind of spiritual life*, so called, which is not of God, and even this, coming entirely of man, is just as fading as everything else that is human. Beloved, if you and I should seek to obtain a righteousness by exact obedience to the Law of God, by patience under suffering, by zeal in the service of our Master—if we were to be successful in this righteousness and, year after year, by consistency of character and excellence of conduct, should win the esteem of our fellow men and deserve it, yet, mark you—even that righteousness, if not worked in us by the Holy Spirit, but only the fruit of our own resolution, would be only as the flower of grass, and in due time it would wither away! Do you remember when your righteousness did wither? Some of us will never forget when ours did. We prided ourselves much. We supposed—and we were probably not wrong in the supposition—that we were about as good as our neighbors, and we were satisfied with this belief. Indeed, we had some degree of generosity, good feeling and good desire towards God, of a sort, and in all this we wrapped ourselves up and we said, “Surely this will suffice! I may safely venture into eternity with such a preparation as this!” But oh, when the Sun of Righteousness be-

gan to shine into our souls, though He brought healing under His wings to everything that was good within us, He brought death to all this proud righteousness of ours! And how it began to droop, decay and wither—just like a lily that is snapped when the heat of the sun begins to pour on it. Surely, Brothers and Sisters, the best that man can do for himself, with all his diligence and all his care, is but as a fading flower! And when he sits himself down at ease in his contentment and says, “I shall see no sorrow. I have served my Maker. I thank God that I am not as other men,” even then is he naked, and poor and blind and miserable—a blighted, blasted, withered flower, though he thinks “himself to be as a rose of Sharon, or a lily of the valley.”

So, Brothers and Sisters, it is equally true of *everything in the child of God that does not come from God*. Not only is our own righteousness a conceit of righteousness, but all our attainments in the Divine life which are made in our own strength will all wither. Oh, what holy frames of mind we sometimes think we have, and how we are getting on in spirituality! We half believe in attaining to perfection—we mean to get to within an inch or two of it, at any rate. We think the old Adam is dead, and if the devil is not dead, yet we think, at any rate, he is busy somewhere else and he is going to leave us alone. If we are not quite past temptation, yet we think we are such experienced Christians that if temptation shall come, we shall be aware of Satan's devices and be able to escape. But in a moment all this melts away. Some new temptation comes, we are smitten in a place for which we are not provided with any armor—we are wounded and fall down. Oh, the quantity of confectionery sanctification that some of us have made—such gilt gingerbread confectionery, all molded into the most delicate shapes, but somehow or other the stand on which we place these things slips aside and there is such a breaking! There is discovered such foulness and abomination lurking within our hearts that we could not have believed that we could have been such as we turn out to be! We would have said, if we had been told, “Is your servant a dog that he should do this thing?”—but such dogs we, after all, turn out to be! Brothers and Sisters, I am afraid of my good frames! I am afraid of my graces! I am afraid of anything that I begin to think is good in myself, for although sins are dangerous and to be abhorred, yet we generally know what they are, and we watch against them, but under the cover of that which is supposed to be good and excellent, pride creeps in, as does self-sufficiency and carnal security, and so we get many a deadly stab! Believer, remember when you work yourself up into devotedness, when you think you have got a Divine Grace and have not got it, but have only got that which you gave yourself—this is but the flower of the grass and it will wither—it cannot stand.

So do I believe it is *in all religious exercises*. Everything which is got up and worked for by man always comes to an end. Those excitements

which some delight in, I do not think come of the Spirit of God. At least they may come of His work as much as the dust in the road has to do with the progress of a carriage. It is a nuisance that somehow or other is tied to a good thing, but the excitement some people seem to think is the progress, is just as the fly, as he sat on the carriage, thought that he made it roll along the road. But it is not so! It is not so at all! How many churches have been revived into perpetual barrenness! The bladder has been blown till it burst. There has been a pumping and a heaving, and a trusting in the artificial, instead of waiting quietly upon God. People have been driven pretty nearly mad, and this has been thought to be spirituality and the work of the Grace of God! Brother and Sisters, it is only the flower of grass—a very pretty flower—oftentimes a most tempting and fascinating flower—but it will all fail, for nothing will stand but the work of the Holy Spirit! Nothing will endure even the test of time, but the Spirit's own work upon the heart and conscience! Anything that comes of man, and not of God, will as surely disappear as the smoke of the chimney when the wind blows it away, or as the hoar frost of the morning when the sun has fully risen with his fervent heat. Take this, then, as the first Truth of God, that everything in us, or which we glory in, or trust to, or rejoice in, will as certainly pass away as does the grass from the field and the flower which springs of it. But now, in the second place, we have a much more comfortable subject of reflection in the next sentence—

II. THE WORD THAT ENDURES.

“But the Word of our God stands forever.” What “Word” is this? I think the term applies to the Word of God in five different ways. First, it is *the Word of His purpose*. The Word of our God. Has He said it and shall He not do it? Has He purposed and shall it not come to pass? God has, from all eternity, a wondrous plan by which He will manifest all His attributes in the salvation of His people. Now from His plan He will never vary, and in the details of it He will never change. Whatever He has decreed shall most certainly come to pass! And as for the salvation of His elect, all the powers of evil, both of earth and Hell, shall never be able to thwart the Eternal Mind as to the salvation of any of those whom He has predestinated unto eternal life. We do not find ministers often preaching about this Eternal Purpose, but we do find the Apostle Paul often writing about it. And the saints of old were accustomed to dwell upon it with very much delight. Oh, beloved Friends, there is a purpose concerning His people, even their eternal salvation—and that purpose will as surely be fulfilled as God is God—yes, though before conversion they plunge into sin! Yes, and though during their conversion they resist the Spirit of God! Yes, and though after conversion they go astray like lost sheep, yet shall the wondrous power of Sovereign Grace is more than a match for the waywardness of nature—and the will of God shall sweetly lead in Divine captivity the will of man, and though the man resolves on his own de-

struction—God, who ordains salvation, shall accomplish His own purpose, earth and Hell notwithstanding! Oh, precious Truth of God, on which the child of God may fall back in his darkest moments! The grass withers, but the Word of the Divine Purpose stands forever!

This “Word” also refers to *His Word of promise*. Every Word which God has spoken to His people by way of promise is as true today as when it was first uttered by the Prophet who was originally sent with it. And if this world should exist through tens of thousands of years, every promise will still have the raven locks of its youth about it. No promise will grow stale! No Word of God will cease to be of effect. It may have been fulfilled ten thousand times ten thousand times, but it will still be fulfilled. The promise shall be forever a well flowing for thirsty souls to drink of. It shall be a granary forever stored for the hunger of the Lord's people to be supplied from. What a mercy it is for us that the promise cannot be made to fail! Though we believe not, yet He abides faithful. Heaven and earth may pass away, but not a jot or tittle of the promise shall fail—

**“His every Word of Grace is strong,
As that which built the skies—
The voice that rolls the stars along,
Spoke all the promises.”**

The Words spoken to Nature by God when He bade seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, never cease, have all been kept! The promise that the rainbow should be seen in the cloud in the day of rain has not been forgotten—nor shall any one of the promises of the Covenant ordered in all things and sure be forgotten by the God of Grace! Oh, Christian, how you may go, tonight, to your Bible and read out the promise and find it as new to you and as true to you as if an angel came from Heaven to bring it in fresh language from the Divine Throne! You have lost your child. Your husband is gone. Your property has melted. Your health declines. You draw near to death, but the promise, the promise is still yours, “No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” “As your days so shall your strength be.” “I am God, I change not; therefore, you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” The Words of purpose and the Words of promise stand forever!

So, Brothers and Sisters, especially is it *with the Incarnate Word*. We are in the habit of calling the Bible, “the Word of God.” I suppose that is accurate enough, but *the Word of God* is not the Bible—it is Jesus Christ. His name shall be called, “The Word of God.” “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Well now, of this Incarnate Word, this Everlasting Logos, we may say that He stands forever. “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.” When I, a trembling sinner, went to the great High Priest and looked up to Him who wore the miter and the many-jeweled breastplate, looked up to His wounds, saw the blood marks, trusted Him, fell at His feet and

heard Him say, "I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities," how dear He was to my soul that day, how fairer than the sons of men! And *this* day, though years have passed since then, He is the same, and to Him I may come again, tonight, as I did then, and find that He has still the fountain filled with blood and that its efficacy has in no degree been diminished! And so, should I live till gray old age, I shall find that He abides still the same. That precious blood of His—

***"Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God,
Is saved to sin no more."***

Oh, to have a faithful, an unchanging Friend, one that never departs—this is comfort, indeed, regardless of what trouble may come. The Word of our God, Christ Jesus, stands forever!

The fourth signification of the term must be surely *the Word of the Gospel*—the Word of Gospel Truth which we preach, for so says the Apostle as he quotes this passage, "This is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." That Word stands forever! Brothers and Sisters, the old Gospel of the Apostles is the Gospel of today! There has been a notion abroad about discoveries in theology, but recollect that everything that is new in preaching is not true—and everything that is true is not new! We may say, concerning the preaching of the Gospel, "The old is better." Let us keep to the good old ways. You will never advance upon Peter and Paul! If you do, you will have to go back again. All the advances there are, are but running on a fool's errand, running before the clouds, running beyond the Wisdom of God—and he who is wise beyond what is written will only find himself landed in folly. The Gospel was to have been disproved years ago, according to the notion of some. Modern discoveries were to have proved this, that, and the other to have been all a mistake, and we were to have given up this dogma as being a delusion and that other teaching as being a superstition! But it is not so. The Gospel has gone through the furnace and come out like silver, well refined! The Gospel of Jesus Christ has not lost one iota of its glory and perfection. There is not a Doctrine that has been disproved—not one of her Truths has been broken, nor so much as one single pillar of the house been shaken, nor shall it be! There may be atheists and deists, philosophers and skeptics, but when they have done their best, or done their worst, the Gospel shall bestir itself, like Samson, when he had been bound with green withes, and shall snap all their cords and send the Philistines in confusion, flying here and there! Believe in the power of the Gospel, dear Christian Friends, and never be afraid. Do not believe in the wisdom of those who are wiser than God, and do not tremble at all their boasts. Many men open their mouths widest when they have nothing to say, and so may it be with these. They would not brag and boast so much if they

felt secure, but feeling that they have not touched the vitality of our religion, they do but rage and rave.

And fifthly, this term, "The Word of our God" refers to the *inner spiritual life of the Christian*, for remember, you are quickened by the incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever—and that incorruptible Seed is said to be the Word of God. Now, all other seed throughout the world, and that which comes from a mortal source, dies, but the Seed of the Divine Truth, dropped by the Holy Spirit in the heart, is incorruptible and, therefore, it lives and abides forever! What a blessing it is to get the Word of God into the heart, because if God puts it in, none but God can take it out again. If you get a word into your heart from the lip of one man, the lip of another man may drive it out, but if you get living Truth burned into your soul by God, the Holy Spirit, Himself, then you may defy the devil himself to remove the glorious work! Oh, Beloved, remember the Words of Jesus, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." "He that lives and believes in Me," says Christ, "though he were dead, yet shall he live." We do not find our Master speaking of this new life decaying, or of the fountain which He puts into the soul drying up, but He says, "Out of him shall flow rivers of living water." And, "I give unto My sheep, eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." Men may die, but Christians shall not—I mean the natural life expires but the celestial life never dies! Death does not affect the principle which God implants at Regeneration. No, it sets free that principle. It delivers it from the bondage of flesh and blood, from the slavery of corruption and introduces it into liberty, into a region where it can expand and develop, and come to all its glorious perfection! The grass withers, the flower thereof fades away, but the enduring Word of our God neither withers nor fades, but stands fast forever! And now, to close—

III. WHAT ARE THE LESSONS WHICH THIS STRONG CONTRAST OUGHT TO TEACH US?

Everything of the creature dying, everything of the Creator living, everything of man withering, everything of God blooming in eternal youth—what should this say to us? Why, it should say to us, first—*Weave not a chaplet of flowers that shall surely fade for your brow!* Do you seek fame? Let it be the fame that comes from God! Do you seek wealth? Let it be a wealth that will be current in the skies. Do you seek love? Let it be a love which will exist where they marry not, neither are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God. Flowers? Yes, if you will, but gather them in Paradise. Garlands? Yes, if you please, but let them be woven in the King's own gardens, in that land where—

***"Everlasting spring abides,
And never withering flowers."***

You are an immortal, trade for immortality! You shall never die, Christian—there is a new life within you—you shall exist forever! Equal with

the life of God shall be your life. Oh, then, be not gathering trifles—things that melt. Let not your life be as a miser's dream, who dreams he gathers gold and wakes and it is gone. Be not like that foolish Roman Emperor who took his troops to Britain, landed them in full State, bade every man gather a handful of shells and then go back to Rome with great triumph! He had taken Britain, he said—here were the shells from the shore. Oh, never say, "I have conquered life—here is the money! I can say I have lived grandly—here is honor!" Oh, these things are but the broken shells upon the shore. Seek jewels and pearls that shall be jewels and pearls before God, that shall be looked upon by Him as being precious because they last and continue in eternity. Dear Hearer, seek your *soul's* wealth. Seek to have your sins forgiven. Seek to wrap your soul in the righteousness of Christ—that garment which the moth cannot fret! Seek to be one with Jesus! There is nothing beneath the stars worth having if you have not these things! Trust in Him. All else shall be like a bubble on a wave and melt and fly before you, if you have not confidence in Jesus! There stands the first lesson. Since all of earth shall melt and fade away, build not your house with these shadows, but with substantial timbers and hewn stones that shall stand through the lapse of ages and last into eternity.

Another lesson. *If you are on God's side, never be afraid of the mightiest opponent.* What are they? What are they? Grass! Where is the mower? Then he comes, there is an end of them. And what are their boasts, and what are their railings? The flower of grass! Here comes a breeze—the sharp breath of winter, and they are gone! Some people are always afraid of the Pope, and some are dreadfully alarmed at Puseyism, some are shocked at the Broad Church movement. I do not know where we are not going to, Brother and Sisters, according to the accounts we are daily receiving from those who ought to know! We are in a dreadfully bad way and it seems that the Church of God is going to be broken up, sold for old timber, and put an end to! And there will be burnings in Smithfield again, and I do not know what besides! Ah, the Lord knows how to take care of His Church without the help of some of those gentlemen who are so very earnest in taking care of it just lately, and I am pretty sure that if He could not take care of it without them, He won't do much at it with them! But his Truth of God will never shake nor be moved, come what may! You never need be alarmed. If all the kings, and emperors, and cardinals, and popes, and priests, and great men and mighty men, and merchants, and mobs, and crowds should rise against the Lord's Truth and against the Lord's Anointed, what would it matter? Who are you that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and the son of man that is but a worm? The grass in the field—why, let it boast! What cares the King with His army about the grass? "Why," He says, "the steeds of My cavalry shall eat the grass! It shall soon be gone." So God shall overthrow

all their show of strength! In an hour, if so God willed it, He could convert the world! In a single hour, if so it pleased Him, dominant superstitions would be relinquished, and the old systems of idolatry would totter to their fall. Never think of the Church of God as if she were in danger. If you do, you will be like Uzza—you will put forth your hand to steady the Ark and provoke the Lord to anger against you! If it were in danger, I tell you, you could not deliver it! If Christ cannot take care of His Church without you, you cannot do it. Be still, and know that He is God.

Who am I that I should begin to agitate myself about the safety of the Empire of France and should go to Napoleon and should tell him that I was afraid the empire was insecure, and I was come to help him manage the Government? I think I should be sent back about my business. And so, surely, when you begin to say, "The Church is in danger! The Church is in danger!" what is that to you? It stood before you were born—it will stand when you have become worm's meat! Do your duty. Keep in the path of obedience, and fear not. He who made the Church knew through what trials she would have to pass, and He made her so that she can endure the trials and become the richer for it. The enemy is but grass, the Word of the Lord endures forever!

And so, Beloved, *take heed, let each of us take heed that we keep to the enduring Truth of God.* Never let us be tempted by the flash of novelty, or by the attractions of supposed intelligence, to turn aside from the Word of God. "To the Law and the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." If our creed is partly made up of the Word of God, partly of the traditions of the Fathers, partly of the speculations of thinkers, it will be like Nebuchadnezzar's image—part of gold, part of iron and part of clay—and the clay will fly and the iron will be melted. But if we can get a creed that is made up, as far as our poor fallible judgments can enable us, altogether of the Word of God, then we have a creed that we can take with us into eternity! The Word of the Lord endures forever. How I like to get my own thoughts and beliefs put through the fire every now and then. I do not think there is a single Doctrine that I have not doubted. I am happy to have to say that now, painful as the process was. It has been such a blessed thing to have to go to the bottom of it, to get arguments for it, to dig up and see whether the roots were sound and healthy, and oh, what a deal of what we think we know goes to the dogs in the hour of trial! But that which comes to us through the Word, and concerning which we can give a, "Thus says the Lord," that, and only that, will stand with an honest man who subjects himself to a daily examination—and asks the Holy Spirit, like a refiner's fire, to go through and through his soul! I fear there are many who could not abide the day of the coming of this work into their hearts. It acts like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap. It burns up a thousand fancies! It washes away I do not know what of predilection and

of prejudice. It might induce some here to give up some of their most cherished things! It might involve a solemn sacrifice for the future, but I beseech them to do it. Side not with the grass that must wither, for you must wither with it if you take it for your defense. But keep to this grand old Book! Keep the Word of God, for this shall neither wither, nor shall you, if you abide in the living Spirit of God hard and fast by what this Word teaches you.

God grant us this, and His be the praise forever. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:153-174.**

Verse 153. *Consider my affliction and deliver me, for I do not forget Your Law.* As much as if he said, “Lord, I do not forget You—do not forget me.” Your Grace has kept my memory—let your Grace keep me altogether.

154-56. *Plead my cause and deliver me: quicken me according to Your word. Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not Your statutes. Great are Your tender mercies, O LORD, quicken me according to Your judgments.* Oh, how the saints need quickening. They know they do! They feel that they get dull, and they cannot endure it—they are not happy unless they possess vivid Grace and true light!

157-58 *Many are my persecutors and my enemies: yet do I not decline from Your testimonies. I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not Your Word.* The very sight of them gave me sorrow. Even though they tried to be mirthful, I was not amused by them, and beheld them and was grieved, “Because they kept not Your Word.”

159. *Consider how I love Your precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to Your loving kindness.* My heart is right, I do love You, but I feel dull and heavy. Lord, come and quicken me, not according to my love to You, but according to Your loving kindness, come and quicken me. “Your Word is true from the beginning”—from the first page of the Book of Genesis to the very last—true about everything, true from the first moment it began with me! Every promise has been kept. There has not been a falsehood all the way through.

160. *Your Word is true from the beginning: and everyone of your righteous judgments endures forever.* “Princes have persecuted me without a cause.” David was a prince—and a man expects to be fairly dealt with by his peers—but it was not so in his case.

161. *Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart stands in awe of Your Word.* When we are in awe of God's Word, we shall not be in awe of princes. The fear of God is the best cure for the fear of men.

162. *I rejoice at Your Word, as one that finds great spoil.* He had more joy in reading the Scriptures than in winning a great battle, or in being surprised at the finding of a great treasure!

163. *I hate and abhor lying: but Your Law do I love.* Now the Orientals did not hate lying—they generally tried to be proficient at it. The only fault about lying with them is to be discovered—then they think they must have been very unskillful. David, therefore, was far ahead of his time—far ahead of his fellow countrymen.

164. *Seven times a day do I praise You because of Your righteous judgments.* He could not have enough of praise! He did it often, he did it perfectly—seven times a day—and if he praised God seven times a day because of His righteous judgments, how much more ought we to do it because of His abounding Grace! Ah, there is a special cause for thanks.

165-66. *Great peace have they which love Your Law: and nothing shall offend them. LORD, I have hoped for Your salvation, and done Your commandments.* Two good things to put together—hope in God's mercy and obedience to God's will.

167-174. *My soul has kept Your testimonies; and I love them exceedingly. I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies: for all my ways are before You. Let my cry come near before You, O LORD: give me understanding according to Your Word. Let my supplication come before You: deliver me according to Your Word. My lips shall utter praise when You have taught me Your statutes. My tongue shall speak of Your word: for all Your commandments are righteousness. Let Your hand help me, for I have chosen Your precepts. I have longed for Your salvation, O LORD, and Your Law is my delight.* Cannot we say that, dear Friends, this evening? I hope we can—with all our failings and wandering, yet the Law of God is our delight—and if we could have our wish, we would never again go beyond its restraints, nor fall short of its demands!

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

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

END OF VOLUME 60

SOLEMN PLEADINGS FOR REVIVAL NO. 1215

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 3, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Keep silence before Me, O islands; and let the people renew
their strength: let them come near; then let them speak:
let us come near together to judgment.”
Isaiah 41:1.***

THE text is a challenge to the heathen to enter into a debate with the living God. The Lord bids them argue at their best and let the controversy be calmly carried out to its issues, so as to be decided once and for all. He bids them be quiet, reflect and consider, in order that with renewed strength they may come into the discussion and defend their gods if they can. He urges them not to bring flippant arguments, but such as have cost them thought and have weight in them, if such arguments can be. He bids them be quiet till they are prepared to speak and then, when they can produce their strong reasons and set their cause in the best possible light, He challenges them to enter the lists and see if they can maintain, for a moment, that their gods are gods, or anything better than deceit and falsehood.

I am not about to speak of that controversy at this time, but to use the text with quite another view. We, also, who worship the Lord God Most High have a controversy with *Him*. We have not seen His Church and His cause prospering in the world for many a day as we would desire. As yet heathenism is not put to the rout by Christianity, neither does the Truth of God everywhere trample down error. Nations are not born in a day, nor have the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. We desire to reason with God about this and, He, Himself, instructs us how to prepare for this sacred debate.

He bids us be silent. He bids us consider and then draw near to Him with holy boldness and plead with Him. He bids us produce our cause and bring forth our strong reasons. It seems to me that at the beginning of the year I cannot suggest to Christian people a more urgent topic than this, that we should plead with God that He would display among us greater works of Grace than as yet our eyes have seen. We have read of wonderful revivals. History records the prodigies of the Reformation and the marvelous way in which the Gospel was spread during the first two centuries. We pine to see the same, again, or to know the reason why it is not so—and with holy boldness it is our desire to come before the Lord and plead with Him—as a man pleads with his friend. May God help us to do so in the power of the Holy Spirit.

I. First, then, LET US BE SILENT. “Keep silence before me, O islands.” Before the controversy opens, let us be silent with solemn awe, for we have to speak with the Lord God Almighty! Let us not open our mouths to impugn His wisdom, nor allow our hearts to question His love. What if

things do not look as bright as we would wish? The Lord reigns! And what if He seems to delay? Is He not the Lord God with whom a thousand years are as one day, and who is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness?

We are going to be bold to speak with Him, but still, He is the eternal God and we are dust and ashes. Whatever we may say with holy boldness, we would not utter a word in rash familiarity. He is our Father, but He is our Father in Heaven. He is our Friend, but at the same time He is our Judge. We know that whatever He does is best. We would not say unto our Maker, "What have You made?" Nor to our Creator, "What have You done?" Shall the potter give account to the clay for the works of his hands? "It is the lord, let Him do what seems good to Him." When we look at what He does, it may seem to our dim apprehension to be exceedingly strange, and we may fail to read its meaning. But we need not wish to read it. It is the glory of God to conceal a thing and if He chooses to conceal it, let it be concealed!

Truly, God is good to Israel and His mercy endures forever! If this world's history is to drag on through another score of mournful centuries, it will only reveal so much the more matter for praise when the great hallelujahs of the ultimate victory shall peal forth. Our silence of awe should deepen into that of *shame*, for, my Brothers and Sisters, though it is certainly true that the cause of God has not prospered, whose fault is this? If there has been straitening, it has not been in God. Where, then, has it been? If the seed has rotted under the clods, or if the cankerworm has eaten the green shoot so that the reaper has not joyfully filled his arm, from where does it come?

Has there not been sin among us, yes, sin in the Church of God? What if Israel has turned her back in the day of battle? Is there not an accursed thing in the camp and an Achan who has hidden away the goodly Babylonian garment and the shekel of gold? God says, "Is there not a cause? Can two walk together, except they be agreed? If you walk contrary to Me, I also will walk contrary to you." Truly, when I see how God has blessed us, I am not so much astonished that He has not given more as I am amazed that He has given so much! Does He bless such unworthy instruments, such laggards, such slothful workers? Does He do anything by tools so unfit? Does He place any treasure in vessels so impure? This is to be ascribed to His Grace.

But if He does not use us to the highest point, let us take shame and confusion of face to ourselves—and before the Throne of His Glory let us sit down in silence. What, indeed, can we say? We have no charges, no accusations to bring against the Most High, but we must silently confess that we, ourselves, are vile. Unto us belongs shame and confusion of face. Go further than this and keep the silence of *consideration*. This is a noisy age and the Church of Christ, herself, is too noisy. I fear we have very little *silent* worship. I do not so much regret the absence of silence from the public assembly as from our private devotions where it has a sacred hallowing influence, unspeakably valuable.

Let us be silent, now, for a minute, and consider what is it that we desire of the Lord. The conversion of thousands, the overthrow of error, the

spread of the Redeemer's kingdom. Think in your minds what the blessings are which your soul pants after. Get a correct idea of them and then enquire whether you are prepared to receive them. Suppose they were to be now bestowed? Are you ready? If thousands of converts were to be born unto this one Church, are you prepared to teach them, instruct them and comfort them? Are you doing it now, you Christian people? Are you acting in such a way that God knows you to be fit to have the charge of those converts that you are asking for?

You pray for Divine Grace—are you using the Grace you have? You want to see more power—how about the power you have? Are you employing it? If a mighty wave of revival sweeps over London, are your hearts ready? Are your hands ready? Are your purses ready? Are you altogether ready to be carried along on the crest of that blessed wave? Consider. If you reflect, you will see that God is able to give His Church the largest blessing and to give it at any time! Keep silence and consider, and you will see that He can give the blessing by you or by me—He can make any one of us, weak as we are—mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds!

He can make our feeble hands, though we have but a few loaves and fishes, capable of feeding myriads with the Bread of Life. Consider this, and this morning ask yourselves in the quiet of your spirits, what can we do to get the blessing? Are we doing that? What is there in our temper, in our private prayer, in our acts for God which would be likely to bring down the blessing? Do we act as if we were sincere? Have we *really* a desire for these things which we say we desire? Could we give up worldly engagements to attend to the work of God? Could we spare time to look after the Lord's vineyard? Are we willing to do the Lord's work and are we in the state of heart in which we can do it efficiently and acceptably? Keep silence and consider. I would suggest to every Christian that he should sit a while before God, when he reaches his home, and worship with the silence of awe, with the silence of shame—and then with the silence of careful thought concerning these things.

Then we shall pass on to the silence of *attention*. "Keep silence before Me, O islands." Keep silence that God may speak to you. That God's Word may be heard in your soul, not only *parts* of it, but all of it! That God's Spirit may be heard with His gentle monitions warning you. With His blessed enlightenments revealing to you, yourself and your Lord. With His Divine promptings urging you to greater consecration and superior holiness. And with His Divine assistances leading you onward in the path of a higher life than you have yet attained. O, it is well to sit still before the Lord, deaf to every voice but the Divine! We cannot expect him to hear us if we will not hear Him. "I will hear," says the Prophet, "what God the Lord will speak."

Do *you* always do so? If you have heard the Lord speak to you, you will admit that there is no voice like His. Be silent till you hear the Lord's Word slaying all your pride and self-will and self-seeking and proclaiming His sole Glory in every part of your manhood. If you have learned attention, be silent with *submission*. For this you will need the gracious aid of the Holy Spirit. It is not easy to attain to full submission of soul to what-

ever the Lord wills. We are often like hard brass which will not take the impression from the seal. If we were what we should be, we should be as melted wax which at once takes the stamp that is put upon it. O, to have a heart that is quite silent as to any wish or will, or opinion, or judgment of our own, so that God's mind shall be *our* mind, God's will shall be *our* will!

The Church would soon be healed of her sorrows and delivered from her divisions if she would, for a while, be silent. But the voice of a favorite teacher is heard by some, and the voice of another master in Israel is listened to by others—and so God's voice is lost amid the clamor of sects and the uproar of parties. O, that the Church would sit at Jesus' feet, lay aside her prejudices and take the Word in its simplicity and integrity—and accept what God the Lord, and He only, does declare to be the Truth!

I invite the members of this Church and urge the members of all Churches to see to this. See to it that we cry unto the Lord for a blessed silence in His Presence till we sit, like servants, waiting for their Master's word and stand like watchmen waiting for the Master's coming—ourselves quiet, restful, peaceful, resigned—no, acquiescing in the Divine will, all attentive to hear each Word that falls from Him and resolved with humble resolution that whatever the Lord shall speak, that will we do. We will accent His Word as Law, Light and Life to our souls and nothing else! May the Lord send that solemn silence over all His people now!

II. In that silence LET US RENEW OUR STRENGTH. Noise wears us out. Silence feeds us. To run upon the Master's errands is always well. But to sit at the Master's feet is quite as necessary, for, like the angels which excel in strength, our power to do His commandments arises out of our hearkening to the voice of His Word. If even for a human controversy, quiet thought is a fit preparation, how much more is it necessary in solemn pleadings with the Eternal One? Now let the deep springs be unsealed! Let the solemnities of eternity exercise their power while all is still within us.

But how does it happen that such silence renews our strength? It does so, first, by *giving space for the strengthening Word to come into the soul and the energy of the Holy Spirit to be really felt*. Words, words, words! We have so many words and they are but chaff! But where is THE WORD that in the beginning was God and was with God? That Word is the living and incorruptible Seed. "What is the chaff to the wheat? with the Lord." We need less of the words of man and more of Him who is the very Word of God! Be quiet, be quiet and let Jesus speak! Let His wounds speak to you. Let His death speak to you. Let His Resurrection speak to you. Let His Ascension and His subsequent Glory speak to you. And let the trumpet of His Second Advent ring in your ears. You cannot hear the music of these glorious things for the rattle of the wheels of care and the vain jangle of disputatious self-wisdom. Be silent, that you may hear the voice of Jesus, for when He speaks, you will renew your strength.

The eternal Spirit is with His people, but we often miss His power because we give more ear to other voices than to His, and quite as often our own voice is an injury to us, for it is heard when we have received no message from the Lord and, therefore, gives an uncertain sound. If we will

wait upon the blessed Spirit, His mysterious influence will sway us most divinely and we shall be filled with all the fullness of God. Even as we have seen the frost yield suddenly to the influence of the warm south wind, so shall our lethargy melt before His Sovereign energy. How often have I felt, in a moment, my ice-locked spirit yield to the breath of the Holy Spirit!

You have seen a cloud on high flying, as you thought, against the wind, driven on by some upper current of air which you did not feel below. Even thus have we been carried on by upper currents which flesh and blood cannot understand. We sang as Dr. Watts does—

***“Look how we grovel here below,
Fond of these trifling toys.
Our souls can neither fly nor go
To reach eternal joys.”***

But when the Holy Spirit came, the lightning, itself, could not overtake us! We rode upon a cherub and did fly, yes, we did ride upon the wings of the wind, for God, The Everlasting One, had caught us up and filled us with His power! Be silent, then, that the Spirit may thus work upon you. Let other spirits be gone—let the spirit of the world, and the spirit of the flesh, and the spirit of self be banished—and let the Spirit of the Ever Blessed be heard speaking in your soul.

Thus shall you renew your strength. We must be silent to renew our strength, next, by *using silence for consideration as to Who it is that we are dealing with*. We are going to speak with God about the weakness of His Church and the slowness of its progress. Be silent, that you may remember who He is with whom you are expostulating. It is God the Omnipotent, who can make His Church mighty if He will, and that at once! We are coming to plead, now, with One whose arm is not shortened, and whose ear is not heavy. Renew your strength as you think of Him! If you have doubted the ultimate success of Christianity, renew your strength as you remember who it is that has sworn by Himself that surely all flesh shall see the salvation of God!

You are coming to plead with Jesus Christ! Be silent and remember those wounds of His with which He has redeemed mankind! Can these fail of their reward? Shall Jesus be robbed of the power He has so dearly earned? The earth is the Lord's and He will unsheathe her of the mists which dimmed her luster at the Fall. He will make this planet shine as brightly as when she first was rolled from between the palms of the Omnipotent Creator. There shall be a new Heaven and a new earth in which dwells righteousness! Think of that, and renew your strength. Has not the Lord said, concerning His beloved Son, that He shall divide the spoil with the strong, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands? Shall it not be so?

Think, too that you are about to appeal to the Holy Spirit and there, again, you have the same Divine attributes. What cannot the Spirit of God do? He sent the tongues of fire at Pentecost and Parthians, Medes and Elamites, and men of every nation heard the Gospel at once! He turned 3,000 hearts by one sermon to know the Crucified Savior to be the Messiah. He sent the Apostles like flames of fire through the whole earth, till every nation felt their power. He can do the same again! He can bring the

Church out of darkness into noonday! Let us renew our strength as we think of this. The work we are going to plead about is not ours one-half so much as it is God's! It is not in our hands, but in hands that cannot fail! Therefore let us renew our strength as we silently meditate upon the Triune Jehovah with whom we have to speak.

In silence, too, let us renew our strength by *remembering His promises*. We want to see the world converted to God and He has said, "The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." "They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust." "The idols He shall utterly abolish." There are a thousand promises! Let us think of that and however difficult the enterprise may be, and however dark our present prospects, we shall not dare to doubt when Jehovah has spoken and pledged His Word!

Our strength will be renewed, next, if in silence we *yield up to God all our own wisdom and strength*. Brothers and Sisters, I never am so full as when I am empty. I have never been so strong as in the extremity of weakness. The source of our worst weakness is our strength and the source of our worst folly is our personal wisdom. Lord, help us to be still till we have given up ourselves, till we have said, Lord, our ways of working cannot be compared with Your ways of working. Teach us how to work! Lord, our judgments are weak compared with Your perfect judgment. We are fools—be You our Teacher and Guide in all things. Crush out of us our fancied strength and make us like worms, for it is the worm Jacob that You will make into the new sharp threshing instrument which shall thresh the mountain!

After this sort shall you renew your strength. Keep silence, then, you saints, till you have felt your folly and your weakness—and then renew your strength most gloriously *by casting yourselves upon the strength of God*. More than ever before, let your inmost souls be filled with trust in the arm that never fails, the hand that never loses its cunning, the eyes that are never closed, the heart that never wavers. Jehovah works everywhere and all things are His servants. He works in the light and we see His Glory. But He equally works in the darkness, where we cannot perceive Him. His wisdom is too profound to be at all times understood of mortal men. Let us be patient and wait His time, for as surely as God lives, the idols must go down, the crescent of Mohammed must die forever, and the harlot of the Seven Hills must be devoured with fire—the Lord has said it—and so it must be!

Jehovah has declared it, and who shall say He is a liar? With no more doubt of our Father's power than the child at its mother's breast has of its mother's love—with no more doubt than an angel before the Throne can have of Jehovah's majesty—let us commit ourselves, each one after his own fashion, to suffering and to labor for the grand cause of God, feeling well assured that neither labor nor suffering can be in vain in the Lord! Thus much, then, concerning the renewing of our strength. I wish we could have had a quarter of an hour's silence that you might reflect upon

these topics, but I leave them with you, trusting that you will seek that silence at home and so renew your strength.

III. Our text proceeds to add, "Then let them draw near." Beloved, you that know the Lord, I would urge you to DRAW NEAR. You are silent. You have renewed your strength. Now enjoy access with boldness! The condition in which to intercede for others is not that of distance from God, but that of great nearness to Him. Even thus did Abraham draw near when he pleaded for Sodom and Gomorrah. May God the Holy Spirit draw us near even now. Perhaps the following five considerations may help us in so doing.

Let us remember *how near we really are*. We have been washed from every sin in the precious blood of Jesus. We are covered from head to foot, at this moment, with the spotless Righteousness of Immanuel, God with us! We are accepted in the Beloved! Yes, we are, at this moment, one with Christ and members of His body. How could we be nearer? How near is Christ to God? So near are we! Come near, then, in your personal pleadings, for you are near in your Covenant Representative. The Lord Jesus has taken manhood into union with the Divine Nature and now, between God and man, there exists a special and unparalleled relationship, the likes of which the Universe cannot present. No actual blood relationship exists between God and any other creature but man, "for verily He took not up angels, but He took up the seed of Abraham." "Unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My Son; this day have I begotten You"? And yet has He said this first and chiefly to the Lord Jesus Christ!

And next, in a true but secondary sense, to each regenerate one whom He has, of His own will, begotten by the Word of Truth! Come near, then, O you sons of God, come near, for you *are* near! Stand where your sonship places you, where your Representative stands on your behalf. Let the slaves of the flesh and the bondservants of the Law stand afar off from the Lord who speaks to them from Sinai. But as for us, it is our joy to come very near, for the voice of Love calls to us from Calvary!

The next consideration which may help you to draw near is that *you are coming to a Father*. That was a blessed word of our Lord's, "The Father Himself loves you." God forbid I should say a word to make you think less of the splendor and majesty of God! But I pray you remember that, however great and terrible He is, He is our Father! I delight in those words of our poet—

***"The God that rules on high,
And thunders when He please,
That rides upon the stormy sky,
And manages the seas—
This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our love."***

As surely as my earthly father is near akin to me and I may come to him with loving familiarity, so may I approach the Lord who has begotten me again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! And I may say to Him, "Abba," "Father," and He will not disregard the cry. Has He not given us the spirit of adoption? How can He despise that which He gives? Come, then, and speak in your Father's ear. O child of God, you are not talking to a stranger! You are not about to hold a de-

bate with an enemy! You are not seeking to wring a blessing from an unwilling hand! It is to your *Father* that you speak! Come near to Him, I pray you, and plead this day!

Remember next, that *the desire which is in our heart for God's Glory and the extension of His Church, is a desire written there by the Holy Spirit.* Now, if the Holy Spirit, Himself, incites the prayer, and He knows the mind of God. If He makes intercession in our hearts according to the will of God, we need have no hesitation to express our desires because our desires are simply the *shadow* of the eternal purpose! And that which always was in the mind of God to give, the Spirit of God has inclined us to ask! True prayer is the intimation of God to man that He intends to bless Him. It is the herald of mercy. Plead, then, O child of God, for the Spirit of God is pleading in you! Come and speak out that which He speaks within. He Himself helps your infirmities, making intercession in you according to the will of God. When the Spirit prompts, what cause can there be for hesitation? We must speak when He inspires.

Remember next, *that what we ask, if we are now about to plead with God concerning His Kingdom, is according to His own mind.* We are at one with God in this matter. If it were not for God's Glory for sinners to be converted, we would not pray for it. We desire to see thousands of sinners turn to Christ, but it is with this view—that the infinite mercy, wisdom, power and love of God may be manifested towards them—and so God may be praised. Verily, much as our heart is set upon the prosperity of the Church of God, if it were conceivable that such prosperity would not glorify God we would not ask for it! We desire to see not *our* notions, but God's Truth prevail!

I do not want you to believe as I believe except so far as that belief is according to the mind of God. I pray every Believer here to search his heart and see whether his desire is a pure one, having God's Glory as its Alpha and Omega. It is God's Truth, God's Kingdom, God's Glory that we want to see promoted! If this is the case, may we not come very boldly? We have not only the king's ear but His heart, also, and we may open our mouths wide. When we have a question as to the Lord's will, we are bound to go no further than, "nevertheless, not as I will." But when there is no ground for hesitancy, with what sacred ardor may we press our suit!

Moreover, there is this further consideration—*the Lord loves to be pleaded with.* He might have given all the Covenant blessings without prayer—why does He compel us to use entreaties unless it is that He loves to hear the voices of His children? God has given to the Church untold mercies in answer to intercession, for He delights to bless His people at the Mercy Seat. In this, our own beloved Church, prayer has been more glorious and excellent than all mountains of prey. Its bow has not returned empty, neither has its shield been cast away! Prayer has been bolder than the lion, swifter than the eagle, and has overthrown all her adversaries, treading them beneath her feet as straw is trod for the dung-hill! To this day we *live* by prayer!

The Church of God has never gained a victory but in answer to prayer. Her whole history is to the praise of the Glory of a prayer-hearing God! Come, then, Brothers and Sisters, if we have sped so well before, and if

God invites us now, yes, if He *delights* in our petitions, let us not be slack, but enlarge our requests before Him. O, for Grace that we may now, this day, and from now on draw very near to God!

IV. I may need a few minutes over the allotted time this morning while I now come to the fourth and last point, which is, "LET US SPEAK." Be silent, renew your strength, draw near and then speak. What have we to say upon the matter which concerns us? Let us first speak in the spirit of *adoring gratitude*. How sweet to think that there should be a Savior at all! To think that the project of rescuing this poor world from her ruin should ever have been entertained in the courts of Heaven. To think that the Spirit should be given to reside among men, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the rebels to obedience to the Truth! To think that there should be a heavenly kingdom set up, as it is set up—that it should have made such advances as it has made and should still grow mightily is absolutely wonderful!

That Jesus Christ should be seen of angels is put down as a wonder, but it is mentioned, next to it, that He was "believed on in the world." He has been believed on by millions, and, however gloomy the prospects of the Church may appear, the kingdom of Christ is not an insignificant kingdom, even now. Those who deride her laugh too soon. She is in her twilight, as Voltaire said, but it is the twilight of her morning, and not of her evening! Brighter times are coming. But even now, up to this moment, the history of the Church cannot be told without adoring gratitude to God.

She has been foolish and has lost her strength, but, like Samson's, it will return. Deceived and deluded in the days of Constantine, she allowed baptized heathen to proclaim an adulterous connection between the Church and the State—and from that day her glory has departed and her power has fled. When will she repent? The nominal Church goes after her lovers, seeking her corn and her wine at their hands, and she says to kings and queens of the earth, "Be *you* my head, and let your senators rule me."

While she does this God cannot and will not bless her in any great degree. When was the ark taken? Never till it was defended by the carnal sword! When did the ark triumph? Was it not when, left alone in its own glory, it smote Dagon to the ground? When the visible Church gets back to her chastity to Christ, she will say, "We have nothing to do with parliaments and kings, except to convert them! Ours is a spiritual kingdom and Statecraft is foreign to us. We ask not for your endowments! We care not for your persecutions. Let us alone—all we ask is a clear stage and no favor." The bride of Christ comes not into the world to toy with the politics of princes—hers is a higher work. She leans upon the Lord, alone, and yields allegiance to none else. Remove worldliness and you will see bright days.

The grand impediment of the Church, now, is the arm of flesh—the lofty, high-sounding titles of her prelates, the palaces of her bishops—the priestliness of her ministers and the lack of Gospel simplicity! Be amazed, you heavens, that the successors of the Apostles should be owners of palaces! This hampers her, but cut the Church clear of this and God's bare arm will soon win victory unto the Truth in this land. I, for my part, bless

and magnify the Lord that, though a great section of the visible Church has played the harlot so sadly in the midst of the nations, yet He has not quite cast her away. He keeps a chosen company who follow the Lamb where ever He goes—on whose banner is written, “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” And whose watchword is, “One is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren.” As to the world, we will seek its conversion, but we will never enter into alliance with it, much less bow down our necks before its kings and princes! May God grant us Grace as we draw near to Him, to speak out in adoration of Him.

Next, let us speak in *humble expostulation*. I would earnestly urge my Brethren in Christ to reason thus with the Lord. “O Lord, Your Truth does not prosper in the land, yet You have said, ‘My Word shall not return unto Me void.’ Lord, You are every day blasphemed, and yet You have said that Your Glory shall be seen of all flesh. Lord, they set up idols, even in this land, where Your martyrs burned. They are setting up graven images again! Lord, tear them down, for Your name’s sake. For Your honor’s sake, we beseech You, do it! Do You not hear the enemy triumph? They say the Gospel is worn out! They tell us that we are the relics of an antiquated race, that modern progress has swept the old faith away.

“Will You have it so, good Lord? Shall the Gospel be accounted a worn-out almanac and shall they set up their new gospels in its place? Souls are being lost, O God of Mercy! Hell is being filled, O God of Infinite Compassion! Jesus sees but few brought to Himself and washed in His precious blood. Time is flying and every year increases the number of the lost! How long, O God, how long? Why do You tarry?” In this manner order your case before the Lord and He will listen to you. When you have spoken by way of reason, then turn to *pleading*. Plead with all your skill in argument. “There is Your promise, O Jehovah. Will You not keep it? You have said unto Your Son, Ask of Me, and I will give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession!

“We ask in Jesus’ name! Do it for Your promise sake! Lord, You have done great things and unspeakable in times gone by! We have heard with our ears and our fathers have told us the wondrous things which You did in their days and in the old times before them. You are the same Lord, therefore glorify Yourself again! By all the past, we beseech You, reveal Yourself at this present.” Plead with the Lord and lay stress upon His Glory. Tell Him that it glorifies His mercy to save sinners, and glorifies His wisdom and His power, yes, every attribute of His Divine Nature.

Then plead the merit of His Son. O, Brothers and Sisters, plead the blood! Plead the wounds! Plead the bloody sweat in Gethsemane! Plead the Cross! Plead the death and Resurrection! Come not away from the Mercy Seat till with this mighty plea you have won the victory! I scarcely need remind you at how many points you may get a grip of the Covenant Angel, for when wrestling with Him, if you but have the will to do it, you may seize Him anywhere and hold Him fast, and say, “I will not let You go unless You bless me.”

I wish I could preach like John Knox, but I wish 10 times more that I could *pray* like he did—a man who would not take “no” for an answer, but

won Scotland for Christ—and she remains Christ's still, through John Knox's prayers! It is not possible for prelacy to flourish where Knox has prayed! Oh for prayer such as that, again! King of kings, will You not stretch out Your scepter and save men? Will You not pluck Your sword out of its scabbard and strike Your foes? There are some men to whom God would almost say, as He did to Moses, "Let Me alone." They are favored to use such forcible arguments and valid pleas that wrath forbears and mercy yields the blessing. If we can push on as Moses did with renewed pleading and entreaties, the blessing will come! This is what England, yes, the *world*, needs—men who can plead with God—men who can draw near and then speak!

Again, dear Brothers and Sisters, after we have been silent, after we have renewed our strength and after we have drawn near to God, let us speak, today, in the way of *dedication*. Now, here I cannot suggest to any man what he, in particular may speak. I charge you before the living God, do not lie to Him, but if you can say this, I pray you say it—"I give to God this day my whole being, absolutely and forever. My body, my soul, my spirit. I have asked that His Kingdom may come—I pledge myself, in His sight, to extend that Kingdom by every power I possess or may be able to gain, by every opportunity He may put in my way—and by every means which I am able to use." I do not think Jesus ought to have less than that from us, but I know He gets far less.

Perhaps the Lord may move some of you young men to say, "Lord, I want to see Your Kingdom spread and, therefore, I will give myself up to preach the Gospel." Perhaps some of you good women here may say, "I will undertake a work of usefulness of some kind or other for Jesus. I am resolved I will." And you who have this world's goods, I hope you will say, "I know that this good work always needs money. By His Grace I have it—it shall be freely given. When I see that the Gospel does not spread, I will not have the reflection on my mind that it is retarded by deficiency of pecuniary means while I have gold stored up."

I will not suggest to any of you more than this—whatever the Lord moves you to do, do it! But I think when we come to plead with the Lord after this fashion we ought to be able to say, "Lord, spread Your kingdom. It is not my fault if it does not spread. I do for You all I can. I boast not of it, for all I do, I ought to do! I wish I could do a thousand times as much, but still, Lord, during this year of Grace I hope to do much for You which I may have forgotten until this time."

Last of all, Brothers and Sisters, let us speak, still, in the way of *confidence*. However we may complain of the spread of error, the deaths of good men and the fewness of able ministers to take their places. However we may think the times to be dark and dreary, let us never speak as if God were dead. I walked, some time ago, with one of the most earnest Christians I know of, a very devout man, and he told me he was afraid one day the streets of London would run with blood. He was afraid of an educated democracy which, being uneducated in religion in School Board schools, would become clever Atheists and cast off all reverence for God and law. And he gave me an awful picture of what was going to happen.

But I touched him on the arm and said, "There is one thing you have forgotten, dear Friend—God is not yet dead. What you are dreading will never occur in this land, I am sure. We have an open Bible. We still have some who preach the Gospel with all their hearts, and there is still a salt and leaven in the city of London that God will bless to keep down the rotteness and corruption. In spite of all His foes, the Lord reigns."

What, my Friends? The Devil conquer our God? Never! Rome triumphant over Zion? Never! Rome has been very cunning. Satan has done his best in Roman Catholicism. There is no more wisdom left in the Devil than he has put into that concern, and if that is confounded he has lost all. That is his ultimatum, the course of hellish craft can go no further. He has staked all his power in the Church of Rome—and to a certainty she will be driven before the Church of Christ like chaff before the wind! They shall ask and say, "Where is this harlot city that made the nations drunk with the wine of her fornication? That rode upon the scarlet beast up and down upon the earth and had written upon her brow, 'Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots?'"

Vain will it be to ask where she is, for they shall answer, "Did you not hear the splash of the millstone as the angel hurled it into the flood, and said, 'Thus terribly shall Babylon fall, and thus no more be found at all?'" Then shall go up the shout, "Hallelujah, Hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigns." Let us anticipate the hour! Even now let every heart shout, "Hallelujah, Hallelujah," and yet again let us say, "Hallelujah, the Lord reigns, and all must be well."

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THE SWEET HARP OF CONSOLATION NO. 760

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 14, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Fear not, for I am with you.”
Isaiah 41:10.*

WE sometimes speak and think very lightly of doubts and fears, but such is not *God's* estimate of them. Our heavenly Father evidently considers them to be great evils, extremely mischievous to us and exceedingly dishonorable to Himself, for He very frequently forbids our fears, and as often affords us the most potent remedies for them. “Fear not” is a frequent utterance of the Divine mouth. “I am with you” is the fervent, soul-cheering argument to support it. Unless the Lord had judged our fears to be a great evil He would not so often have forbidden them, or have provided such a heavenly quietus for them.

I pray that my dear Brothers and Sisters who are cast down may have Divine Grace to struggle with their despondency and to overcome it. Martin Luther used to say that to comfort a desponding spirit is as difficult as to raise the dead. But then we have a God who both raises the dead from their graves and His people from their despair. “Though you lie down among the pots, yet shall you be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.” “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.”

May the oil of joy be exchanged for mourning by many sorrowing ones this morning! Sometimes my text is a trumpet of alarm, or a trombone of lamentation, but today it is a harp of sweetest sound. Saul was subject to fits of deep despondency, but when David, the skillful harper, laid his hand among the obedient strings, the evil spirit departed, overcome by the subduing power of melody. My text is such a harp, and if the Holy Spirit will but touch its strings, its sweet discourse shall charm away the demon of despair.

“I am with you”—it is a harp of ten strings containing the full chords of consolation. Its notes quiver to the height of ecstasy or descend to the hollow bass of the deepest grief. Let us see if this psaltery will yield us melody today. In the first place we shall note **THE TIMES WHEN ITS SWEET STRAINS ARE MOST NEEDED**. Occasions when comfort is needed are many. There are some, who, like the willow, will only flourish in a soil which is always wet with consolation. These are men and women of a sorrowful spirit. If their mothers did not bear them with sorrow, like Jabez, they commenced very early on their own account to accumulate a heritage of woe.

As John Bunyan would say, they need not be afraid of the Slough of Despond for they carry a slough within their own hearts and are never out

of it or it is never out of them. They are plants which flourish best in shady places among the dampness of sorrow. They scarcely think themselves safe unless they are unhappy. They fear to be joyous—they tremble to be glad.

The high places of the earth do not suit them at all—they delight most to dwell in the Valley of Humiliation. And when they are journeying through that peaceful vale, like Mr. Fearing, they could lie down and kiss the flowers because the place is so suitable to their meek and lowly spirit. There is something sadly weak about this state of experience, though there is also much to admire. These are they whom the Master carries in His bosom and does gently lead. These are the shorn lambs of the flock for whom He tempers the wind—for whose sake He stays His rough wind in the day of His east wind.

Trembling fellow Pilgrims, we would play our harp before you, that, if possible, you may forget your fears awhile! And if you cannot altogether rise superior to your glooms, yet may you, for this hour, at least, take unto yourselves the wings of eagles and mount above the mists of doubt. Brothers and Sisters, more or less all Believers need consolation at all times because their life is a very peculiar one. The walk of faith is one protracted miracle. The life, the conflict, the support, and the triumph of faith are all far above the vision of the eye of sense.

The inner life is a world of mysteries. We see nothing beneath or before us, and yet we stand upon a rock and go from strength to strength. We march onwards unto what seems destruction and find safety blooming beneath our feet. During our whole Christian career the promises of God must be applied to the heart, or else such is the weakness of flesh and blood. We are ready to go back to the flesh pots of the Egypt of carnal sense and leave the delights which faith, alone, can yield us. May the Lord give to His people frequently to hear the transporting notes of the harp of the text, “Fear not, for I am with you.” “Though you cannot see your way, yet your way is safe, for I will go before you. I the Lord will be your rear guard. I am round about you like a wall of fire, and I will be the glory in the midst of your soul.”

Yet there are certain special occasions when the Comforter’s work is needed, and one of these certainly is when we are racked with much physical pain. Many bodily pains can be borne without affecting the mind, but there are certain others whose sharp fangs insinuate themselves into the marrow of our nature, boring their way most horribly through the brain and the spirit—for these much Divine Grace is needed.

When the head is throbbing and the heart is palpitating, and the whole system is disarranged, it is so natural to say with Jacob, “All these things are against me,” and to complain of Providence, and to think that we are the men above all others who have seen affliction. *Then* is the time for the promise to be applied with power. “Fear not, for I am with you.” “I will make all your bed in your sickness.” When bodily pain gives every sign of increasing, or we expect the surgeon with his dreaded knife, then to be sustained under sufferings at the thought of which the flesh shudders we need the upholding gentleness of God. “Fear not, for I am with you,” like the song of the nightingale, is most sweet when heard in the night season.

When the trouble comes in another shape, namely, in our relative sorrows borne personally by those dear to us. When we see them fading gradually by consumption, like lilies snapped at the stalk, or when suddenly they are swept away as the flowers fall beneath the mower's scythe. When we have to visit the grave again and again, and each time leave a part of ourselves behind us. When our garments are the ensigns of our woe and we would gladly sit down in the dust and sprinkle ashes upon our heads because the desire of our eyes is taken from us—then we require the heavenly Comforter.

Then, indeed, the skillful harper is in great demand and sweet to the heart are notes like these, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed for I am your God." Again, when all the currents of Providence run counter to us. When, after taking arms against a sea of trouble we find ourselves unable to stem the boisterous torrent and are being swept down the stream, loss succeeding loss, riches taking to themselves wings and flying away till we see nothing before us but absolute need, and perhaps are brought actually to know what need is—then we require abundant Grace to sustain our spirits.

Ah, it is not so easy to come down with perfect resignation from wealth to penury, from abundance to scant. That is a philosophy to be learned only where Paul was taught it when he said, "I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content." Some of you would find it hard to be content if you were in yon widow's position—with seven children and nothing to maintain them upon but the shameful pittance which is wrung out to her for her labors with her needle—at which she sits, stitch, stitch, stitch, far into the dead of the night, stitching her very soul away.

You might not find it quite so easy to bear poverty if you were shunned by the men who courted you in your prosperity and who now do not know you if they meet you in the street. There are bitternesses about the poor man's lot which are not easily rinsed from his cup—*then* it is that the gracious soul needs the promise, "Fear not, for I am with you." "Your Maker is your husband." A Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widow is God in His holy habitation. If you are brought into this condition, may my Lord and Master say to you, "It is I, be not afraid."

And, my Brethren, some of us know what it is to hear this voice of God in the midst of unusual responsibilities, heavy labors, and great enterprises. Have you been called, by God's Providence, to undertake a work far beyond your own visible power, and have you plunged into it by faith? You have! Then you will not be a stranger to feelings like these—you will say to yourself—"Was I wise in doing this? Other people have attempted great things and failed—may not I fail ridiculously? When the crowds have gathered to see the mountain in labor, may there not be a ridiculous mouse as the only result? May I not, after all, be a mere fanatic, and may not my trust in God be a superstition? Oh, where shall I be if now I should fail?"

You may have been sifted in this sieve again and again, but it is delightful, indeed, when you can feel "God is with me. My responsibilities are overwhelming, but my God is Omnipotent. I could not carry the load, but He can, and by faith I will cast the burden upon the Most High." Were

you ever seeking to win souls, the most blessed of occupations, and have you had to return to your closet saying, "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Then you will begin to question whether you were ever called to an enterprise so high and lofty, and perhaps you will be tempted, like Jonah, to take ship and flee away to Tarshish, that you may escape from a service which brings you no honor.

At such a juncture, what can be more reassuring than the echo of these words, "Fear not, for I am with you"? I am with you even in your non-success, with you in your casting down, with you in those labors which remain unrequited. "Fear not, for I am with you." And the issues must, in the end, all be well! Dear Friend, did you ever stand, as a servant of God, alone in the midst of opposition? Were you ever called to attack some deadly popular error, and, with rough bold hands, like an iconoclast, to dash down the graven images of the age?

Have you heard the clamor of many, some saying this thing, and some the other—some saying, "He is a good man," but others saying, "No, but he deceives the people"? Did you ever see the rancor of the priests of Baal flashing from their faces and foaming from their mouths? Did you ever read their hard expressions, see their misrepresentations of your speech, and of your motives? And did you ever feel the delight of saying, "The best of all is, that God is with us! And, in the name of God, instead of folding up the standard, we will set up our banners. If this is vile, we purpose to be viler still and throw down the gauntlet once more in the name of the God of Truth against the error of the times"?

If you have ever passed through that ordeal, then have you needed the words, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed for I am your God." "Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass?" "I will make you unto this people a fenced bronze wall: and they shall fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you." "Fear not; for you shall not be ashamed."

But, my dear Friends, we shall want this word of comfort most of all when we go down the shelving banks of the black river—when we hear the booming of its waves and feel the chill influence of its dark flood—and cannot see to the other side! When the mists of depression of spirit hide from us "Jerusalem the Golden," and our eyes catch no glimpse of the "land that flows with milk and honey," for the soul is occupied with present pain and wrapped in darkness which may be felt. In such a condition—

***"We linger shivering on the brink,
And fear to launch away."***

We talk of death too lightly. It is solemn work to the best of men. It would be no child's play to an Apostle to die. Yet if we can hear the whisper, "Fear not, for I am with you," then the mists will sweep away from the river and that stream which was dark will become clear as crystal, and we shall see the "Rock of Ages" at the bottom of the flood. Then shall we descend with confidence and hear the splash of the death stream and think it music.

Yes, and it shall be music as it melts into the songs of the seraphs, who shall accompany us through its depths. It will be delightful when those mists have rolled away, to see the shining ones coming to meet us, to go

with us up the celestial hills to the pearly gate, to accompany us to the Throne of God, where we shall rest forever. Happy they who shall hear their Lord say to them, "I am with you, be not afraid."

After death, we read in this Word of great events that shall happen to us, but we feebly comprehend the revelation. After death solemnities shall follow which may well strike a man with awe as he thinks upon them. There is a judgment and a resurrection. There is a trumpet which shall summon the sons of men to hear from Heaven's doomsday-book their future destiny. The world shall be on fire, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. There will be a pompous appearing of the great Judge at the dread assize. There will be the winding up of the dispensation, and the gathering together of all things in one that are in Christ. And there will be the casting down into Hell of the tares bound up in bundles to burn—and the fire that never shall be quenched will send up its smoke forever and ever.

What about that future? Why, Faith can look forward to it without a single tremor! She fears not, for she hears the voice of the everlasting God saying to her, "I am with you." I will be with you when your dust shall rise—your first transporting vision shall be the King in His beauty. You shall be satisfied when you shall wake up in His likeness. "I will be with you when the heavens are on a blaze, your Preserver, Comforter, your Heaven, your All in All." Therefore, fear not, but look forward with unmoved delight to all the mystery and the glory of the age unborn.

Thus have I mentioned a few of the occasions in which this harp sounds most sweetly. All through life I may picture the saints as marching to its music, even as the children of Israel set forward to the notes of the silver trumpets. Israel came to the Red Sea—they might well be afraid, for the Egyptians were behind them—the crack of their whips might be heard. The rolling sea was before them, but Israel marched confidently through its depths because the word was given, "Fear not, Jehovah is with His people."

See the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night—how safely do they follow its direction—even through the heart of the sea! They tread the sand on the other side. It is an arid waste—how shall they support themselves or their flocks? "Fear not, for I am with you!" Lo, the manna drops from Heaven, and the waters ripple from the Rock. But look! They come to Jordan! It is their last difficulty, and then they shall reach the land of their inheritance. Jordan divides—what ails you, O Jordan, that you were driven back? God was with His people—they feared not, but entered into their rest! This is the heritage of all the saints.

As I thought of the life of faith, I saw before my eyes, as in a vision, a lofty lighted staircase, and, led by an invisible hand, I mounted step by step. When I had ascended long and far, it turned and turned again and again. I could see no supports to this elevated staircase, no pillars of iron, no props of stone—it seemed to hang in air. As I climbed I looked up to see where the staircase went, but I saw no further than the step where I stood. But now and then the clouds of light above me parted and I thought I saw the Throne of the Eternal and the Heaven of His glory.

My next step seemed to be upon the air, and yet when I boldly put down my foot, I found it firm as adamant beneath me. I looked back on the steps which I had trod and was amazed, but I dared not tarry, for “forward” was the voice which urged me on, and I knew, for Faith had told me, that that winding stair would end at last—beyond the sun and moon and stars—in the excellent glory. As now and then I gazed down into the depths out of which the stair had lifted me, I shuddered at my fate should I slip from my standing, or should the next step plunge me into the abyss!

Over the edge of that where I stood I gazed with awe, for I saw nothing but a gaping void of black darkness and into this I must plunge my foot in the faith of finding another step beneath it. I should have been unable to advance, and would have sat down in utter despair had I not heard the Word from above of One in whom I trusted, saying, “Fear not, for I am with you.” I knew that my mysterious Guide could not err. I felt that infinite faithfulness would not bid me take a step if it were not safe, and therefore mounting upward, I stand at this hour happy and rejoicing, though my faith is all above my own comprehension, and my work above my own ability—

***“When we cannot see our way,
Let us trust, and still obey.
He who bids us forward go,
Cannot fail the way to show.
Though enwrapt in gloomy night,
We perceive no ray of light.
Since the Lord Himself is here,
‘Tis not meet that we should fear.
Night with Him is never night,
Where He is there all is light!
When He calls us, why delay?
They are happy who obey.”***

II. Secondly, we come to you, harp in hand, and pray you TO DISTINCTLY HEAR ITS NOTES. The sweetness of all the notes melt into each other but now we shall touch each string severally and by itself, and if you have an educated ear—for all men have not the ear with which to hear the music of God—you will hear that which will solace your souls. “Fear not, for I am with you.” What does it mean?

1. In the first place, it means, “I am with you in deepest sympathy.” When you suffer, you suffer not a new pang—Christ knew that pain long ago. As Baxter puts it—“Christ leads me through no darker rooms than He went through before.” No, not only has Jesus once suffered, but in all our affliction He is still afflicted. When His servants were persecuted, the Lord Jesus cried out of Heaven to the persecutor, “Why do you persecute Me?” The touching of the feeblest member is felt by the Head. Though He is crowned with light, yet He is not insensitive to the glowing of His feet, which John tells us are like fine brass glowing in the furnace.

Our Lord Jesus is moved with intense sympathy towards the members of His body, for His union with us is of a most intimate kind. It is no small comfort to know that Jesus is a fellow sufferer with us. That we have a High Priest who can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities. That we are not alone treading a thorny path where our feet have never trod, but we can plainly see the bloody footprints of the feet of the Man of

Sorrows. Everywhere Christ is with us in the sympathy of His soul. Let that one note sound well. Perhaps I touched the string amiss, but touch it again, and see if angels' music can excel it.

2. But next, the Lord is with us in community of interests. That is to say, if the Believer should fail, God Himself would be dishonored. Luther rejoiced greatly whenever he felt that he had brought God into his quarrel. "Well," said he, "if it were I, Martin Luther, and the Pope of Rome who had to fight it out, I might well despair! But if it is the Pope against Martin Luther and Martin Luther's God, then woe be unto Antichrist! Well may the cold sweat stand on her brow, for when God is with us, who are they that are against us?"

Now God is in the quarrel of the man who attacks error. God is in the quarrel of the man who is trying to do good, to reclaim his fellow creatures from sin, and to establish the kingdom of Christ. Yes, and when you can quote a Divine promise, God is engaged in your affairs, because if He does not keep that promise, He is not true. In the matter of your own salvation, since it is in the purpose of God that you should be brought safely home, your ultimate salvation touches the honor of the Redeemer—

***"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep.
All that His heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep."***

It is with us as it is with the timid traveler in the Alps who is attended by a faithful guide. He shivers as he passes under overhanging cliffs or glides down shelving precipices, or climbs the slippery steeps of glaciers. But if his guide has linked himself with him he is reassured. The guide has said, "You are trembling, Sir, but the way is safe. I have passed it many a time with many a traveler as weak as you are. But to reassure you and make you feel how safe you are, look here!" And he straps a rope round the traveler, and round himself. "Now," he says, "both of us, or neither. We shall both get safely home or neither." As he bids his charge pass on with courage, he says to him, "Now, remember, if there is any danger, it is as great a danger to me as it is to you. We both go down together, or we are saved together." And the traveler plucks up spirit and finds his foot stands firm where it had slipped before.

Now Jesus has bound Himself hard and fast to every soul that trusts Him, and if you do not find your way to Heaven, neither will Christ, for it is both of us, or neither—either you must win the crown of glory—or Christ must lose it, too. How sweet is this to think upon! Strike that string again! Strike it well in your retirement this afternoon and let the music of it ring in your ears, "Fear not, for I am with you."

3. Again, the next string of the harp, "Fear not, for I am with you," gives this sound. "I am with you in Providential aid." We believe in the Providence of God, but we do not believe half enough in it. Remember that Omnipotence has servants everywhere, set in their places at every point of the road. In the old days of the post horses, there were always relays of swift horses ready to carry onward the king's mails. It is wonderful how God has His relays of Providential agents! How, when He has done with one, there is always another just ready to take its place.

Sometimes you have found one friend fail you—he is just dead and buried. “Ah,” you say, “what shall I do?” Well, well, God knows how to carry on the purposes of His Providence. He will raise up another. How strikingly punctual Providence is! You and I make appointments, and miss them by half-an-hour. But God never missed an appointment yet. God never is before His time, though we often wish He were—and He never is behind—no, not by one tick of the clock. When the children of Israel were to go down out of Egypt, all the Pharaohs in the pyramids, if they had risen to life again, could not have kept them in bondage another half-minute.

“Thus says the Lord, Let My people go!” It was time, and go they must. All the kings of the earth and all the princes thereof are in subjection to the kingdom of God’s Providence, and He can move them just as He pleases. And as the showman pulls his string and moves his puppets, so can God move all that are on earth, *and* the angels in Heaven, according to His will and pleasure. And now, Trembler, why are you afraid? “Fear not, for I am with you.” All the mysterious arrangements of Providence work for our good. Touch that string again, dear Friends, you who are in trouble, and see if there my harp is not a rare instrument!

4. Next, God is with us in secret sustaining power. He well knows how, if He does not interpose openly to deliver us in trouble, to infuse strength into our sinking hearts. “There appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him,” it is said of our Lord. And I do not doubt but what invisible spirits are often sent by God from Heaven to invigorate *our* spirits when they are ready to sink. Have you ever felt it? You sat down an hour ago and wept as if your heart would break, and then you bowed your knee in solemn prayer and spread the case before the Lord, and afterwards when you came down from the chamber you felt as if you could joyfully encounter the trouble!

You were humbled and bowed under it, as a child under a chastening rod, but you gave yourself up to it. You knew it was your Father that struck, and so you did not rebel any longer, but you went into the world determined to meet the difficulty which you thought would crush you, feeling that you were quite able to sustain it. I have read of those who bathe in those baths of Germany which are much impregnated with iron—that they have felt, after bathing, as if they were made of iron, and were able, in the heat of the sun to cast off the heat as though they were dressed in steel!

Happy, indeed, are they who bathe in the bath of such a promise as this, “I am with you!” Put your whole soul into that consoling element! Plunge into it and you will feel your strength suddenly renewed so that you can bear troubles which before would have overburdened you!

5. And, once more, there is a way by which the Lord can be with His people which is best of all, namely, by sensible manifestations of His Presence imparting joy and peace which surpasses all understanding. I shall not venture to explain the exhilaration, the rapture which is caused in a child of God by the consciousness that God is near him. In one sense He is always near us—but there is an opening of our eyes, and an unsealing of our ears—a putting away of the external senses and an

opening of the inner *spiritual* sense by which the inner life of the Christian becomes wondrously conscious of the pervading Presence of the Most High.

Describe it, I cannot. It is not a thing for words. It is like what Heaven must be! It is a stray gleam of the sunlight of Paradise fallen upon this sinful world. You are as sure that God is with you as you are sure that you are in the body. Though the walls do not glow, and though the humble floor does not blaze with light, and though no rustle of angels' wings is heard—yet you are like Moses when he put off his shoes from off his feet for the place where you stand has become holy ground to you.

Bowed down, I have felt it, until it seemed as if the spirit must be crushed. Yet, at the same time, lifted up till the exceeding weight of Glory became too great a joy, too overwhelming for flesh and blood! Ah, then, in such moments—

***“Should earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurled,
Then I can smile at Satan’s rage,
And face a frowning world.
Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall,
May I but safely reach my home,
My God, my Heaven, my All!
There shall I bathe my weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across my peaceful breast.”***

I have tried thus, but in a poor way, to show in what senses God does appear to help His people. I beseech you, let each string yield you music, and pass not over these words hurriedly, for there is an abyss of solemn joy within them if you know but how to plunge into it.

III. Thirdly, having thus bid you distinctly hear the notes of my harp, I must now request you to **MEDITATE MUCH UPON THE SWEETNESS OF THOSE NOTES.** How shall I bring out their delights? Taste and see, my Brothers and Sisters, that the Lord is good! It is the shortest mode and the surest of knowing the sweetness of God’s goodness. Let me, however, put a few things before you. The comfort of my text excels all other comfort under Heaven.

Here is a person who has lost all his goods and is very poor. He is met tomorrow morning by a generous friend who says to him, “Fear not, you shall go share and share with me. You know that I am a person of considerable property. Fear not, I know your losses, but I am with you.” Now, I feel sure that any person so accosted would go home and say to himself, “Well, now, I have no need of any trouble. I am rich, since one half of what my friend has is more than I had before.”

Yes, but may not the same losses which fell upon you fall upon your friend? May not the same reverses in commerce which have made you poor, make *him* poor? And in that case you are as ill off as ever! Besides, your friend may change his mind. He may find you much too expensive a client, and he may, one of these days, shut his door against you.

But now, *God* says to you, “I am with you.” Now the Lord has much more than your friend. He is much more faithful. He will never grow weary

of you. He cannot change His mind. Surely it is better for you to feel that *God* is with you than to rely upon an arm of flesh. Is it not so? Believer, you will never prefer man to God, will you? Will you prefer to rest in a poor, changeable man's promise, rather than to rest upon the immutable Covenant of God? You would not dare to say that, though I dare say you have acted as if you would!

I am afraid such is our unbelief, that sometimes we should really prefer the poor arm of flesh to the almighty arm of God—what a disgrace to us! But in our sober senses, sitting here this morning, we must confess that God's, "I am with you" is better than the kindest assurance of the best of friends. I will suppose that one of you may be engaged in Christian service and you have been working very hard. Would not you feel very happy if God were to raise up a dozen young spirits who would rally round you and help you?

"Oh!" you say, "yes! I could go, then, to my grave saying, Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace since there are so many others enlisted in the good cause." Well, but is it so? Might they not also grow as weary as yourself? And what are they compared with the world's needs? And may they not soon be taken away, or prove unfaithful? If God says, "I am with you," is not *that* better than 20,000 of the brightest spirits? Yes, and thousands and thousands of the most industrious missionaries? For what would they all be without God? So that the only comfort they can bring you they have to borrow first of all from Him. Let us, then, take the naked promise of God, for it is *enough*, and more than enough, though all earth's springs were dry.

But, Beloved, to make you sensible of the value of this promise, let me remind you that there is all the comfort here that Heaven itself could afford. When that young man's eyes were opened by the Prophet and he saw the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about Elisha, he said to himself, "Now Elisha is safe enough, they cannot touch him while those chariots of fire protect him." Yes, but what are angels but *ministering* spirits—what are they without God? They are dead, inactive, unless God shall give them their energy and fiery life.

So, my Brethren, if it were written, "The angels shall always be with you," that would not be one half so blessed as this, "Fear not, for I am with you." We have the angels, but we have the angels' Master! We have the chariots of God, which are 20,000, but, better than that, we have God Himself to be our Protector. "I am with you." O child of God, all the seraphim and cherubim could not yield you such a fullness of joy as this!

Note again that when the text says, "I am with you," it gives you something, which is sufficient for all emergencies. In the succeeding verses of the chapter before us, we find one engaged in a service, and for his comfort it was written, "I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you. Yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." Presently we find that same person engaged in warfare, and then the promise changed—"I will make you a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: you shall thresh the mountains and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff."

Then we find that individual becomes a traveler, traveling without water in a barren land, and again the promise is altered—"I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys." Then the traveler became a farmer, but the soil was fruitless, and he could grow nothing. Then came the word, "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree."

So, my Brethren, no matter where we may be cast, God is with us! The Manx people have for their motto three legs, so that whichever way you throw them they are sure to stand. But as for the Christian, it is impossible for them to be thrown down by misfortune, or even by the infernal powers. We shall stand, for God upholds us. Carried to the highest heavens to judgment, God is with us! Cast down to the depths of sufferings, still He is with us! Slumbering in the tomb, as our dust soon must, still God is with us!

It is not possible for the Christian to be in any condition in which these words shall not be to him universal medicine for all disease! Universal armor against every weapon! Universal supply of every necessity. Now divide the words, and view them separately. "I AM." Do you know what this means—"I am"? God is self-existent, eternal, independent, sitting on no precarious throne, nor borrowing leave to be. "I am." It is no other than "JEHOVAH," "JAH," "I AM," who has become the Friend of His people. Note the tense of it—not, "*I was,*" not, "*I shall be,*" but, "I am."

We have, yesterday, today, and forever, the same great "I AM." "I am"—what? "I am with you," poor, feeble thing as you are. As "I AM" was in the bush, and made it glow with golden fire, transforming it from a despicable bush to become a throne for Deity, so shall it be with you. "I am with you, poor bush that might readily be burned. I will fill you with Myself and make you radiant with glory, for I have set My love upon you from of old."

My spirit bows beneath the majesty of the text! I commend it to your earnest consideration. Bear it with you to your chambers of meditation this afternoon, and God open it up to you, that you may be filled with delight!

IV. In the last place, I would have all my hearers remember that though I have spoken of my text as a harp yielding rarest music, yet IT NEEDS THAT THE EAR BE TUNED BEFORE ITS MUSIC CAN BE APPRECIATED. It is not every man that understands the delights of harmony, even in ordinary music. The clown stands by and thinks that a brass band in the street, with all its horrors, would be almost as good. He does not understand how sound accords with sound. He knows nothing of "linked sweetness long drawn out."

So, Beloved, there are tens of thousands of men who know nothing at all of what it is to have God with them. Yes, this would be their dread—they would be glad to escape from God if they could. Is it so with you, my Hearers? Are you afraid of God? Would you shun His Presence? Is it because you are His enemy, and conscience makes a coward of you? If you were His child your spirit would long for His embrace. And as the hart thirsts for the water brooks, so would you thirst after your God.

Now, in order to appreciate the sweetness of the text, you must have *faith*, and the more faith you have, the more sweet it will become. You must believe in a real God. I am afraid that to most men God is a myth, a spiritual something which they have not discerned. But faith realizes God, is sure of His existence, puts eyes into the soul to see God with, and gives hands to the soul to lay hold upon the invisible God. You must realize God, and you must be firmly persuaded of His veracity, that He cannot lie, that it is impossible for Him to deviate a hair's breadth from perfect truth, and that He cannot also fail in power. "Has He said, and shall He not do it?" "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" "Is His arm shortened that it cannot save?"

Such questions as these must meet with a quick answer in our spirit. We must feel that there is with us a mighty Worker, a real working, active, potent, faithful, truthful Agent, who, having promised to help us, *will* help us, and never leave us nor forsake us till He has accomplished all His eternal purpose and brought us to Himself in Heaven. Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, if you have come to this, and can always stay there—I only wish I could! I can believe in God, and do believe in Him, glory be to His name!

I have seen His arm uplifted and His faithfulness and Truth displayed as few have seen, but yet that awful unbelief! That dark vapor which is the death of comfort, worse than cholera! This pest, this infidelity for which no excuse can be made! This most damnable of sins, this which has no foundation, for which I will not whisper even a thought of apology! This still creeps over us and unmans us! How it throws us into the mire! How it breaks our bones, and like a mighty Juggernaut, rolls over our very nature to crush it into nothing!

O God, save us from it! Help us to trust You! It is all we want! It is human omnipotence. Help us to rest upon You! It is all we want! It is Heaven to our souls. Help us to be sure that You are, and that You are the rewarder of them that diligently seek You, and that Your promise must stand fast and firm! This were to make us sons of God, indeed, and of a truth, and to give us the enjoyment of Heaven while lingering in the valleys of earth! May God bless us with this faith!

Some of you have no faith at all. O may the eternal Spirit beget faith in you now, or else your portion must be wretchedness, your end must be confusion, your eternity must be misery! God save us through faith in Jesus!

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AWAY WITH FEAR

NO. 930

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 10, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Fear you not. For I am with you; be not dismayed; for I am your God:
I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold
you with the right hand of My righteousness.”
Isaiah 41:10.***

IF there should be nothing in the sermon this evening, Brethren, there is enough in the text to satisfy your mouth with good things, so that your youth may be renewed like the eagle's. May the Holy Spirit spread for you a table in the wilderness. And may He give you appetites to feed by faith upon these royal dainties, which, like the food that Daniel and his companions fed upon, shall make you well-favored before God and man.

To whom are these words spoken? For we must not steal from God's Scripture any more than from man's treasury. We have no more right to take a promise to ourselves that does not belong to us than we have to take another man's purse from him. These words were evidently spoken in God's name by the Prophet to God's "chosen" ones. Read the eighth verse "But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham My friend."

And again in the ninth verse—"You are My servant. I have chosen you." So, then, if you or I should meet with anything that is gracious and comfortable here it will come to us, not upon the footing of *merit*, but upon the ground of Sovereign Grace. It will not be ours because we have chosen Christ, but because He has chosen us. Our heavenly Father has blessed us with all spiritual blessings according as He has chosen us in Christ Jesus from before the foundation of the world. The eternal choice is the wellhead from which all the springs of mercy flow. Happy are you, my Soul, if Divine Grace has inscribed your name in God's eternal book! You may come to this text like a child to his father's own table, and you may draw from it all manner of comforts to sustain your spirit.

But since, dear Friends, you and I cannot read the secret roll of God's electing love, we are helped to judge whether this text belongs to us by another description. For those who are here called "chosen," are, in the ninth verse, also described as being "called." "You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called you from the chief men thereof." God's chosen people of old were set apart for Himself, and called out from all the rest of the world, and so they are now. They are a people called out by His special Grace—with a gracious call which they have not been able to resist—and they have come forth and declared themselves on the Lord's side.

"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many

Brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called.” If you are called, depend upon it you are chosen. I do not mean if you are called in the common sense with the universal call of the Gospel, for in that sense, “many are called, but few are chosen.” But I mean if you are *effectually* called, *personally* called, called of the Holy Spirit, called as Mary was when Jesus said to her, “Mary”—and that gracious voice thrilled through her soul, and she responded to it, and said to Him—“Master!”

Have you been so called that you have forsaken all for Christ, or are willing to do so? Have you left your old pleasures and your old companions? And are you now a separated one, set apart for Christ? Oh, if it is so, let nothing keep you back from enjoying the riches of my text, for every comfortable sentence in it belongs to you!

Still, farther to help us to find out to whom this text belongs, notice that the person here described is spoken of in the eighth verse as a “servant.” “You, Israel, are My servant,” and in the ninth verse, “And said unto you, You are My servant.” Now, are you God’s servant, dear Hearer? A servant does not do his own will. He would soon get his discharge if he carried out his own whims and wishes. He takes his guidance from his master’s mouth and his master’s eyes. Have you submitted your will to God’s will? Are you no longer governed by a proud and high spirit which cries, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him?” Do you desire to know what God’s will is, and then to do just what He bids you? Do you count it your highest honor to be called a servant of Christ? Is it for Him that you live? Is His glory your highest aim? If so, then you who are willing to labor may come and feast upon the text, for every honey-dropping word of it belongs to you, since you serve the Lord Christ.

One more word to help you to see whether you have a right to these promises. He says in the ninth verse, “I have chosen you, and not cast you away.” Now you have, some of you, been professors of the Christian faith for many years. Some of the younger ones of us have now been twenty years maintained in His House, for it is just so long since we were baptized in Christ’s name. Surely, my Brethren, we feel that, judged by the strictness of the Law, we deserved to have been cast away! And yet, being under Grace, we have been preserved by the Lord’s salvation even until now.

Still though faint, we are pursuing. We are bound to confess, “My feet had almost gone. My steps had well-near slipped.” But we have been upheld even to this hour. Oh, then, we have much to be grateful for, and much to rejoice in, for perseverance is a great pledge and earnest of final salvation. “To him that overcomes, the crown of life shall be.” And to us, as having overcome up till now, the promises of the text belong. He who has kept you, my Brothers and Sisters, till this hour, bids you now come and look into this choice cabinet and take out the jewels and wear them. For they are all your own to deck you, that you may adorn His doctrine the more. In a word, the text belongs to God’s chosen. Those who are His by being separated from the world—who are distinguished by their practical service of God—and who continue in that service. And by God’s Grace will continue in it even till the end.

Come we now to the text. I will read it again, "Fear you not. For I am with You; be not dismayed; for I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." There is here, first, a very natural disease—fear. There is here, secondly, a command against fear—"Fear you not." And there is, thirdly, God's promise to help us to overcome it. And that promise is given in three or four ways so that we may chase fear away with a whip of many thongs.

I. First, then, we are reminded OF A VERY COMMON DISEASE OF GOOD MEN—FEAR AND DISMAY. This disease of fear came into man's heart with sin. Adam never was afraid of his God till he had broken His commands. When the Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of day, and Adam heard the Almighty's footsteps, he hastened to commune with God as a dear child talks with a loving father.

But the moment he had touched the fruit that was forbidden, he ran away and hid himself. And when God said, "Where are you, Adam?" Adam came cringing and trembling, for he was afraid of God. It is sin, consciousness of sin, that "makes cowards of us all." Though He who made us is a consuming fire, and we should always have a holy awe of Him, yet the fear that causes bondage would never have come into our spirit if we had not first of all transgressed His Law. Sin is the mother of the fear which has torment.

And, Brethren, fear continues in good men because sin continues in them. If they had attained to perfect love it would cast out fear, for fear has torment. But, since the flesh is still in them and the lusts still strive for the mastery, even the holiest of God's people are sometimes afflicted with the mockings of the child of the bondwoman. O that he were cast out, for he can never be heir with the freeborn nature! As Divine Grace grows and increases in power, fear declines. And when sin is cut up by the root and branch, then no doubt or fear will ever vex us again. Once strip us of these houses of clay. Once deliver us from all indwelling sin—and our spirits shall seek God as the sparks seek the sun.

But until then, since by reason of weakness sin sometimes prevails, fear also prevails, and we are sadly cast down. Fear, coming in by sin and being sustained by sin, readily finds food upon which it may live. Let the Believer look within, and, my Brethren, he has only to do that for a moment to see abundant reasons for fear. "Ah!" says Fear as it looks within at the heart still prone to wander, "I shall never hold on my way." "Ah!" says Fear as it looks at the besetting sin, "I shall be tripped up yet. I shall never persevere to the end."

Grace is there, it is true, but Fear is blind to the better nature and fixes his glance only on the body of this death. Looking within upon the old nature is seldom a very pleasant operation, especially if we forget that it is crucified with Christ. I suppose if any man among us could see his own heart as it really is, he would be driven mad. But Faith looks at all the ruins of the Fall and she believes that the blood of Christ will get the victory. She sings her poem of triumph even while the fight is raging, rejoicing with the Apostle, that, "Where sin abounded, Grace did much more

abound: that as sin has reigned unto death, even so might Grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

But Fear says, “I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy. Such a poor frail boat as mine will never stem the flood and weather the tempest, but I shall make shipwreck after all.” And then, my Brethren, if Fear finds food within, it also very readily finds food without. Sometimes it is poverty, sometimes sickness, sometimes the recollection of the past, and quite as often dread of the future. Even those who have faith in God may occasionally be weak enough to fear and be dismayed about common circumstances to which they ought to be indifferent, or over which they ought by faith to exult.

Desponding people can find reason for fear where there is no fear. A certain class of persons are greatly gifted with the mournful faculty of inventing troubles. If the Lord has not sent them any trial, they make one for themselves. They have a little trouble-factory in their houses, and they sit down and use their imaginations to meditate terror. They weave sack-cloth and scrape up ashes. They know that they shall be bankrupt—there was a little falling off in their trade last week. They believe that they shall soon be too old for labor—it is true they are older than they were a month ago. They feel sure that they shall die in the workhouse—it is clear they will die somewhere.

They feel certain about this dreadful thing and that, and fret accordingly. None of these things have happened to them yet, and in the judgment of others they are less likely to happen now than ever they were. But yet they convert their suspicions into realities and torture themselves with them though they are but fancies. Oh, it is sad that we should degrade ourselves to this—

***“Shall the thin cloudlets of this transient life
Shut out the light of Love Immutable?
Shall unsubstantial mists of earthborn care
Conceal from saints the everlasting hills,
From which their speedy succor shall descend?
Oh, shame, and sin most base, that heirs of Heaven,
Enriched with all the fullness of the Lord,
Should fret, and fume, and wear away their souls
With childish dreams of ills which never may come;
Or coming, shall be laden deep with good!”***

In certain instances the habit of fearing has reached a monstrous growth. Indeed, I know some of my acquaintances who think it the right thing to be always fearing, and are half suspicious of a man who has strong faith. They even call full assurance, “presumption,” and are amazed that anybody should have confidence in God. But if they did but know it, there is more presumption in unbelief than there can be in faith. It is gross presumption on a child’s part to disbelieve its father’s word. There is no presumption in a child’s believing what its father tells it. It, then, only does its duty. For me to accept the naked promises of a faithful God, and, despite my unworthiness, still to believe them true, is *humility*.

But for me to take that promise from my Father’s lips, and begin to cavil at it, and to question it, is nothing better than pride hiding its na-

kedness with the thinnest gauze of pretended modesty. Shun, I pray you, the unbelief that apes humility, and seek after that unstaggering faith which is the true meekness in the sight of God!

Yet, I would not blame all those who are much given to fear, for in some it is rather their *disease* than their sin, and more their misfortune than their fault. Mr. Feeble-Mind will never make a Great-Heart even if you feed him on the finest of the wheat. Mr. Ready-to-Halt will never stand so firmly, or run so nimbly, as Mr. Valiant-for-Truth—do what you will with him. There are some in God's family who are constitutionally weak, and will probably never outgrow that weakness till they have entered into rest. I would do anything I could to encourage the fearing ones to rise above their weakness. I would even give just enough of the tonic of censure to make them feel that it is not right to be unbelieving, but I would not like to censure their despondency so severely as to make them think that they are not the people of God.

I tell you, Sirs, I would sooner you would go to Heaven creeping on all fours, with never a song in your mouths, than go to Hell presuming. It is better to be a broken-legged lamb in Christ's bosom than to be the strongest ram in Satan's flock. God deliver us from being strong and mighty in *ourselves*. But yet at the same time there are many evils connected with fearing, and every child of God should be on his guard against giving way to it. In every case much may be accomplished by arousing ourselves to cry to the strong One for strength to overcome our unbelief. Gloom need not be perpetual with us.

I know it is said that some of God's plants grow best in the shade. I believe they do, but I should like to try them in the sunlight a little and see if they would not grow better there than their best has up to now been. There are precious flowers of Grace which are constantly watered with the tears of sorrow, but methinks the dews of consolation would answer their purpose just as well. May the Lord visit such, and bring them up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay. May they be of good courage, for the Lord says to them—

“Fear not. Be not dismayed.”

Be it also remarked before we leave this point, that even the strongest of God's servants are sometimes the subjects of fear. David was a very strong man, and he overthrew Goliath. But we read that on one occasion when he was in battle, “David waxed faint.” So the Lord's mightiest heroes sometimes have their fainting fits. We used to talk of our “Iron Duke,” and there was one man in Scripture who was an Iron Prophet, and that was Elijah the Tishbite, and yet he sat down under the juniper tree, and, I had almost said, whined, “It is enough. Now, O Lord, take away my life. For I am not better than my fathers.”

The best of men are but men at the best, and the strongest men are weak if God's mighty hand is for awhile withdrawn. Some of my dear friends will occasionally tell me, “We have suffered from doubts, and fears, and troubles, of which you have no conception.” They suppose that their minister, and others whom they love and respect, know nothing at all experimentally about their infirmities. I wish it were so. We have something

better to talk of than our own follies. We do not feel bound to turn the pulpit into a public confessional, and all experiences are not to be published abroad. But, for all that, permit me to say that there are times with the boldest and the strongest when they would give all they have for the very smallest evidence of Divine Grace. They would count themselves happy to creep to the foot of the Cross and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Yet, I do not say this to encourage anybody in fearing, for, let me just give you the opposite side. There is no reason why, if we lived nearer to God and walked more carefully, we might not, as a rule, live above all this fear and dismay. I once met with a dear Brother in Christ, who is now in Glory, about whose truthfulness I never could have a doubt. He told me that by the space of thirty years he had not felt a doubt of his interest in Jesus Christ. At the time I heard him say it, I thought it was quite an unusual circumstance, but I bless God that I have now met with several, "the excellent of the earth, in whom is all My delight."

Their testimony is the same—that though they may have been shaken, they have never been moved from their steadfast hold on Christ. Though they may have had a few moments of trembling—yet they have never been so dismayed as to question their part in Jesus. They have stood fast, and they have sung year after year, "O God, my heart is fixed. my heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise." I hold that out as an object of ambition to every Believer in Christ. Do try and see if you cannot rinse your mouth out of all that bitter stuff which makes you sing so often and so dolefully—

"It is a point I long to know____."

That is a very suitable song for Christian infants, a hymn often sung by enquirers. But O that you would get beyond such juvenile ditties, and learn to sing fitter music, such as this—

***"Now I have found the ground, wherein
Sure my soul's anchor may remain—
The wounds of Jesus, for my sin
Before the world's foundation slain.
Whose mercy shall unshaken stay,
When Heaven and earth are fled away.
O Love! You bottomless abyss!
My sins are swallowed up in You;
Covered is my unrighteousness,
Nor spot of guilt remains on me
While Jesus' blood through earth and skies,
Mercy, free, boundless mercy cries!
With faith I plunge me in this sea—
Here is my hope, my joy, my rest!
Hither, when Hell assails, I flee,
I look into my Savior's breast;
Away, sad doubt, and anxious fear!
Mercy is all that's written there."***

II. We shall now occupy a little while in considering GOD'S COMMAND AGAINST FEAR. "Fear you not. Be not dismayed." That precept is absolute and unqualified—we are not to fear at all. He does not say, "Fear so much, but not beyond that," but He gives an unlimited exhortation, "Fear not."

He does not say, "Do not fear so often," but, "Fear not." It is an exhortation without any time to it, and therefore it applies to *all* times. "Fear not." Fear not at all. "Be not dismayed." He does not say, "Be not utterly dismayed." There is no qualifying adverb, but it means, "Be not dismayed at all." This command, then, chides fear and forbids dismay.

Why should not the child of God be afraid? There are several reasons which justify the Divine command. Let us meditate upon some of them. First, my Brethren, we may not fear because it is sinful. It is usually sinful to be afraid and dismayed, because such a state of mind almost always results from *unbelief*. Have you ever thought what a great sin unbelief is? No, we talk about it, and confess it, but we do not sufficiently consider the deep heinousness of it. We will confess unbelief of God without a blush, and yet nothing could make us acknowledge *dishonesty* to *man*. I pray you, my Brethren, tell me which of these two is the worst fault? Is not unbelief a robbery of God, a treason felony against Him?

If I were in conversation with any one of you, and you should say to me, "Sir, I do not believe you," nothing you could say would sting me more. It is a very strong thing to say to any man, "I do not believe you." Why, if there were two of the lowest men or women fighting in a street quarrel, and one of them said to the other, "I do not believe a word you say," the sorriest drab would feel the insult. Every truthful man feels that he has a right to be believed. He speaks upon the honor of an honest man, and if you say, "I do not believe you," and even begin to lament that you have no faith in him, the reflection is not upon yourself, but on the person whom you cannot believe.

And shall it ever come to this, that God's own children shall say that they do not believe their God? Oh, sin of sins! It takes away the very Godhead from God, for if God is not true, He is not God. And if He is not fit to be believed, neither is He fit to be adored—for a God whom you cannot trust you cannot worship. Oh, deicidal Traitor, you sin of unbelief! Oh, God-killing sin! May we be delivered from it, and not think it light or trifling, but shake it off from us as Paul shook off the viper into the fire.

Doubts and fears also breed sin. It was said of Jeroboam that he sinned, and made Israel to sin—and so does unbelief. It carries a thousand other sins in its loins. The man who believes in God will fight with temptation, but the man who does not believe in Him is ready to fall into any snare. See yonder tradesman—he is just now in low water through the badness of business. He is a Believer in God, and he says, "I believe that God will carry me through it if I keep to the straight line of integrity. I trust in God, and come what may, I will not pawn my reputation." Now, whatever may come of it, that man's character will be safe, because his faith is firm.

But here is another man. He says, "Well, I am in a very awkward predicament, and I must look to the main chance. I am not sure that God will be with me. I must help myself, for I am very likely to be ruined." That man will take up with one of those dodges in business by which men raise money. I need not tell you what those dodges are, because I dare say a great many of you know them, either by using them yourselves, or by hav-

ing them used upon you. They are part and parcel of the art of stealing other people's money—without being locked up as a thief.

Well, he avails himself of one of those schemes—of course he does—he who has not faith is sure to have much craft. He who cannot trust God soon begins to trust the devil, and he that begins to trust the devil soon finds himself in the mire. Faith it is that holds a man as the great bower anchor holds a vessel when the winds are out. Believing that God will not fail you enables you to defy temptation. Now see how the man who has faith beats the devil! There the devil stands. He says, "If you will serve me I will give you _____." "Well, what will you give me?" "I will give you the whole world." "But I have that already, for this world is mine, given to me in Christ, and as much of it as is good for me I shall always have."

"Well, but I will make you great." "I do not want to be great, my joy is to make Christ great, and my greatness is in Him." "But I will give you silver." "Oh, then!" says the Christian, "put it down." No sooner is the heap spread out than the Believer covers it all over with ten times its weight in gold, and so laughs the fiend to scorn. I mean that for every blessing that sin could bring, Divine Grace brings ten times as much of a greater blessing—and so faith checkmates Satan—and temptation is put away. Unbelief has no such power, but readily falls into the lion's jaws. Therefore, fear not, lest you in the hour of trial be overcome with temptation and hurried into sin.

Fear not, again, because it injures yourself. Nothing can weaken you so much, nothing can make you so unhappy as to be distrusting. Nor is this a small thing, for Christian joy is a fruit of the Spirit, and he who causes it to wither robs the Lord of glory. Is it not written, "Rejoice evermore"? Fear weakens the Believer's influence, and so causes mischief to others. Converts are not brought to Christ through unbelieving Christians. It is faith that wins souls. Let me give you an example of it. There is a good woman over there who has lost her child, her only child. Now when her husband saw that dear child die, he was exceedingly mad against God, and said many a hard and bitter thing, but his wife did not. She loved the child with as tender a love as the father did, but she laid it down on the bed, and she said, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Good woman, your husband did not say anything, but he felt the difference between himself and you, and who can tell what good results will follow?

Now, if a professed Christian under trial acts just like a worldling, the worldly man sums it all up and says, "There is nothing in religion." But, if in the time of difficulty, the time of affliction, the time of bereavement, the Christian man's faith makes him happy, resigned, content with the Lord's will—why, then, even the coarsest of ungodly minds see the power of Divine Grace! And it may be that they will be led to reflect, and to ask themselves, "If there is such a choice Grace as this in the world, why should I not have it?" And perhaps they will come to seek and find it. Oh, for your own sake, for your neighbor's sake, for the Church's sake, for the world's sake, for Christ's sake, for God's sake—fear not—neither be dismayed!

III. Time fails me to dwell on this, and so now I must come to the very heart and soul of the text—THE PROMISES WHICH GOD GIVES TO PREVENT FEAR AND DISMAY. Five times in this verse you get some form of the pronoun “you,” and five times you get the pronoun “I.” Whatever there may be of you, there shall be as much of God. Whatever there may be of your weakness, there shall be as much of God’s strength. Whatever there may be of your sin, there shall be as much of God’s mercy to meet it all. May the Holy Spirit reveal all the fullness of this wonderful verse to your hearts!

“Fear you not. For I am with you.” Many a man fears because he is afraid of loneliness. More or less we must be alone in the service of God. Christian companionship is a great comfort, but if a man becomes a leader in Israel, he becomes a lonely spirit to a certain degree. So, too, in suffering, there is a bitterness with which no stranger can intermeddle. A part of the road to Heaven every man must tread with no companion but his God. Now, I know some of you are getting old, and your friends have died one by one, and you are saying, “I shall be left quite alone.”

Others of you have come up to London from some country village where you used to have many Christian friends. And there is no place so desolate as this horrid London. When a man dwells in its teeming streets, and meets not a friend among its millions of passers to and fro, I know well what your state of mind is. Or perhaps you are going to the States, or Canada, or Australia, and the thought in your mind now is—“I cannot bear being separated from all I love.” Now, here is this precious word for you, “Fear you not. For I am with you.”

The Lord of Hosts is the best of company. His society is the angels’ delight, and the bliss of glorified spirits. Be thankful, Believer, that you are not alone. The Father is with you, the Son is with you, the Holy Spirit is with you, and what does that mean? It means that Omnipotence will be with you to be your strength! Omniscience will be with you to be your wisdom! Immutability will be with you to be your succor—all the attributes of God will be with you to be your treasury. “Fear you not. For I am with you.”

Another fear comes over men, and that is that they may lose all they have in the world. And they know very well that if they lose their property they usually lose their friends. Like the swallows which come to us in the springtime—and are gone when the summer has departed—such are our worldly friends. When our goods are gone they are gone. But here the second promise comes in, “Be not dismayed, for I am your God.” Jonah’s gourd was withered, but Jonah’s God was not. Your goods may go, but your God will not. Those around you may rob you of your loose cash of present comfort, but your invested capital, your God, they cannot take from you.

That was a sweet word of the child when he saw his mother month after month in her widow’s weeds sitting down and weeping, because her husband was dead. “Mother,” said he, “is God dead?” Ah, if our God were dead we should be poor orphans, indeed! But while it rings out from the precious Book, and rings in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, “Be not dis-

mayed. For I am your God,” we have not come to absolute poverty yet. “Look,” said the ambassador of France to the Spanish ambassador as he took him into the French king’s treasury, “Look at my master’s gold! How rich he is!”

The Spanish ambassador took his walking stick and began to thrust it down into the bags and into the money chest. “What do you do that for?” said the Frenchman. “I want to see if there is a bottom to it,” said he. “Oh,” said the French ambassador, “of course there is a bottom.” “Ah!” said the Spaniard, “but my master’s treasury has no bottom, for he has all the mines of Mexico and Peru.” Now, what the Spaniard said *boastfully* we may say *truthfully*. The treasury of our God is without a bottom, it is fathomless. And while you can hear God say to you, “I am your God,” you may laugh at penury and distress, at destruction and famine. For you shall lack no good thing. You shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and your mouth shall praise Him with joyful lips.

Another fear that every good man has at times, unless he is buoyed up by faith, arises from a sense of personal weakness. “I have a battle to fight, and I am very weak. I have a work to do for God before I die, and I have not sufficient power to perform it.” Now, here comes the next word of the text, “I will strengthen you.” The strength which I have to do my work with does not lie in me. If it did it would be all over with me. How little strength there is in this arm I sorrowfully know. But there is no man on earth who can tell me how much strength God might put, if He so willed, into that same arm! If He willed it, He could enable *me*, a poor, weak, trembling man, to pull down Gaza’s gates as Samson did of old!

He can put physical strength of the most gigantic kind into an infant’s arm if He wills it. But, my Brethren, transfer the figure to *spiritual* strength. You have God’s command to preach. Ah, it would be but poor preaching if you were let alone to do the preaching. But no tongue can tell how God can make you preach if He pleases to help you. You have to take a large class of boys and girls, or of young men and young women, and you feel you cannot do it. Of course, without His help you cannot, but go and try! For He has said, “I will strengthen you.”

There was a bush in the wilderness, and it was nothing to look at, nothing but a bush. But oh, how it glowed with splendor when God came into it so that it burned with fire, and yet was not consumed! God can come into you, my Brother, and into you, my Sister, and can make you blaze with glory like the bush in Horeb. He can make you so strong that you can endure anything. Why, He has done it up till now. If somebody had told you years ago that you would have passed through your last trouble, you would have said, “I shall never be able to bear it.” But you have borne it. “Ah,” your unbelief would have said, “that will be the death of me.” But it has not been the death of you. You can at this very moment tell of the widow’s God. You can sing of Him who strengthens the weak against the strong, who delivers them that are ready to perish, and makes the faint heart to sing for joy!

Here is a word, then, for timid, trembling workers for God. “I will strengthen you.” Then comes the next consoling promise, “Yes, I will help

you.” This is intended to meet the fear that friendly succor will fail. There are some who say, “I believe that God can strengthen me personally, but I need to have those around me who will help me. I desire to see raised up in the Church of God other ministers, other Christian workers. I want to have some at my side who will, with equal earnestness, and with greater talent, contend for the Truth.”

Note, then, this word, “I will help you.” I will not only give you strength to use yourselves, but I will exert My strength both in other men and in My Providence to help you. Well, you know what a grand matter is God’s help. I told you once before a story I heard from a minister, but I must tell it again. He said he was one day bringing his books up stairs into another room, for he was going to have his study on the first floor instead of downstairs, and his little boy wanted to help Father carry some of the books. “Now,” said the father, “I knew he could not do it, but as he wanted to be doing something, to please him and to do him good by encouraging his industry, I told him he might take a book and carry it up.”

So away he went, and picked out one of the biggest volumes—Caryl on Job or Poli Synopsis I should think—and when he had climbed a step or two up the stairs, down he sat and began to cry. He could not manage to carry his big book any further. He was disappointed and unhappy. How did the matter end? Why, the father had to go to the rescue, and carry both the great book, and the little man. So, when the Lord gives us a work to do, we are glad to do it. But our strength is not equal to the work, and then we sit down and cry—and it comes to this—that our blessed Father carries the work—and carries the little man, too! And then it is all done, and done gloriously. It is a simple illustration, but may it comfort some desponding heart.

“Yes, I will help you.”

The last word of the text is, “Yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.” Many a child of God is afflicted with a fear that he shall one day bring dishonor upon the Cross of Christ, and in an unguarded moment shall slip with his feet. This is a very natural fear, and in some respects a very proper fear—

***“Ah, Lord, with such a heart as mine,
Unless You hold me fast,
I feel I must, I shall decline,
And perish at the last.”***

It only wants, we think, the temptation to take us in the weak point, and then it will be all over with us. But now again I beg you to grasp this precious Word, “I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.” That is the same hand which holds the stars in their place. That is the hand which bears up the unpillared arch of Heaven, that spans both sea and shore. Can it not bear *you* up?

O rest upon it, and you shall not be cast down! The right hand of His righteousness is the very hand that you and I once had cause to fear, lest our offended King should smite us with it, for we righteously deserved His wrath. But ever since the hand of Christ was pierced, the right hand of God has never smitten a Believer so as to destroy him. That same hand

which might have crushed, is now placed *under* us to bear us up in all our afflictions.

I wish I could have clipped the wings of time for this last half-hour, that we might have tarried longer in these rich pastures. But dear Friends, I give you the words of the text to take away with you. Here you have wafers made with honey, such as Israel fed on in the wilderness. Here you have angels' food—no, the very Bread of Life itself lies within these choice words. The only fear I have is lest you should miss them through unbelief. "O taste and see that the Lord is good." Do not merely "see" that He is good as you read the text, but "taste" the text. Let it lie on the palate of your soul. Absorb it into your very nature.

Try to know that it is true, and true to you, though you are the very least of God's people in your own estimation, and the most unworthy sinner this side of Hell. "Fear you not. For I am with you; be not dismayed; for I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." Go home, and take the text with you in the hand of faith. It shall prove to you like the widow's barrel of meal and cruse of oil. It shall not fail you till the day when the Lord shall bring you out of this land of famine to eat bread in His kingdom with His dear Son.

My heart mourns to think that this text does not belong to some of you, because you do not belong to Christ. O my dear Friend, how I desire that you may yet have the promises of the Covenant for your own! If you believe with all your heart, you may. Trust Jesus Christ, and the promises are yours. I tried to preach my Master's sacrifice for sin this morning. I have now set before you one of the sweet fruits that grow from the bitter tree upon which He hung. O come to the tree of the Cross, and look up to His sufferings, and rely upon Him! And then, when you have sat under His shadow with great delight, may this text, which is one of the fruits of that tree, be sweet unto your taste. The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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

FEAR NOT

NO. 156

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 4, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Fear not, you worm Jacob and you men of Israel. I will help you, says the
LORD and your Redeemer the Holy One of Israel.”
Isaiah 41:14.***

I SHALL speak this morning to those that are discouraged, depressed in spirit and sore troubled in the Christian life. There are certain nights of exceeding great darkness through which the spirit has to grope in much pain and misery and during which much of the comfort of the Word is particularly needed. Those seasons occur in this manner. Frequently they occur at the outset of a religious life. A young man, deeply impressed under the ministry has been led to feel the weight of sin. He trusts also he has been led to look for salvation to the Christ who is preached in the Gospel.

In the young ardor of his spirit he devotes himself wholly to Christ—with the most solemn vows he dedicates body, soul, time, talents—all that he has, to the great work of serving God. He thinks it easy to fulfill his vow. He does not count the cost. He reckons it will be easy to forsake merry companions, to renounce old established habits and to become a Christian. Alas, before many days he finds out his mistake. If he did not reckon without his head he certainly reckoned without his heart, for his evil heart of unbelief had deceived him. He knew not how hard would be the struggle and how desperate the wrestling between his old evil nature and the new-born principle of grace within him.

He finds it to be like the rending off of right arms to give up old and cherished habits. He discovers it to be painful to renounce his former pursuits—as painful as it would be to pluck out his right eye. He sits down, then, and he says, “If this is the trouble at the outset, what may I expect as I proceed? Oh my Soul, you were too fast in dedicating yourself to God. You have undertaken a warfare which your prowess can never accomplish. You have started on a journey for which your strength is not adequate. Let me again return unto the world.”

And if the Spirit says, “No, you can not,” then the poor soul sits itself down in deep misery and cries, “I cannot go back and I cannot go forward. What must I do? I am exceedingly discouraged because of the way.” The same feeling often overcomes the most valiant Christian veteran. He who

has been long experienced in the things of the Divine life will sometimes be overtaken with a dark night and a stormy tempest. So dark will be the night that he will not know his right hand from his left and so horrible the tempest that he cannot hear the sweet words of his Master say, "Fear not, I am with you."

Periodical tornadoes and hurricanes will sweep over the Christian. He will be subjected to as many trials of his spirit as trials in his flesh. This much I know, if it is not so with all of you it is so with me. I have to speak today to myself. And while I shall be endeavoring to encourage those who are distressed and down-hearted, I shall be preaching, I trust, to myself, for I need something which shall cheer my heart—why, I cannot tell—from where I do not know but I have a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me. My soul is cast down within me, I feel as if I had rather die than live.

All that God has done by me seems to be forgotten and my spirit flags and my courage breaks down with the thought of that which is to come. I need your prayers. I need God's Holy Spirit. And I felt that I could not preach today unless I should preach in such a way as to encourage you and to encourage myself in the good work and labor of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What a precious promise to the young Christian, or to the old Christian attacked by lowness of spirits and distress of mind! "Fear not, you worm Jacob and you men of Israel. I will help you, says the LORD and your Redeemer the Holy One of Israel." Christian Brethren, there are some in this congregation, I hope many, who have solemnly devoted themselves to the cause and service of the Lord Jesus Christ—let them hear, then, the preparation which is necessary for this service set forth in the words of our text.

First, *before we can do any great things for Christ there must be a sense of weakness*—"Worm Jacob." Secondly, *there must be trust in promised strength*. And thirdly, *there must be fear removed by that promise*—"Fear not, for I will help you."

I. In the first place, the first qualification for serving God with any amount of success and for doing God's work well and triumphantly, is A SENSE OF OUR OWN WEAKNESS. When God's warrior marches forth to battle with plumed helmet and with mail about his loins, strong in his own majesty—when he says, "I know that I shall conquer, my own right arm and my mighty sword shall get unto me the victory"—defeat is not far distant. God will not go forth with that man who goes forth in his own strength. He who reckons on victory having first calculated his own might, has reckoned wrongly, for "it is not by might, nor by power but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts."

They that go forth to fight, boasting that they can do it, shall return with their banners trailed in the dust and with their armor stained with defeat. For God will not go forth with the man who goes forth in his own strength. God has said it—men must serve Him—they must serve Him in His way and they must serve Him in His strength, too, or He will never accept their service. That which man does, unaided by Divine strength, God never can accept. The mere fruits of the earth He casts away. He will only have the seed of which was sown from Heaven, sprinkled in the heart and harvested by the sun of grace. There must be a consciousness of weakness, before there can be any victory.

I think I hear many saying today, “Well, Sir, if that is a qualification for doing much, I have it to a very large extent.” Well, do not marvel, do not wonder. Depend on this—God will empty out all that you have before He will ever put His own into you. He will first empty all your granaries before He will fill them with the finest of the wheat. The river of God is full of water. But there is not one drop of it that takes its rise in earthly springs. God will have no strength used in His battles but the strength which He Himself imparts—and I would not have you that are now distressed in the least discouraged by it. Your emptiness is but the *preparation* for your being filled and your casting down is but the making ready for your lifting up.

Are there others of you that would almost desire to be cast down that they might be prepared to serve God? Let me tell you, then, how you can promote in yourself a sense of your own nothingness. The text addresses us as worms. Now, the mere rationalist, the man who boasts of the dignity of human nature, will never subscribe his name to such a title as this. “Worm?” says he, “I am no worm—I am a man, a man is the most glorious thing that God has made. I am not going to be called a worm. I am a man—I can do anything. I want not your revelations. They may be fit for children, for men of childish minds that only learn by believing—I am a man. I can think out truth. I will make my own Bible, fashion my own ladder and mount on it to Heaven, if there is a Heaven, or make a Heaven, if that is all and dwell in it myself.”

Not so, however, he who is wise and understands. He knows that he is a worm and he knows it in this way—first, he knows it by *contemplation*. He that thinks, will always think himself little. Men who have no brains are always great men. But those who think, must think their pride down—if God is with them in their thinking. Lift up now your eyes, behold the Heavens, the work of God’s fingers. Behold the sun guided in his daily march. Go forth at midnight and behold the Heavens—consider the stars and the moon. Look upon these works of God’s hands and if you are men of sense and your souls are attuned to the high music of the spheres, you

will say, "What is man that You are mindful of him and the son of man that You visit him?"

My God! When I survey the boundless fields of ether and see those ponderous orbs rolling therein—when I consider how vast are Your dominions—so wide that an angel's wing might flap to all eternity and never reach a boundary—I marvel that You should look on insects so obscure as man. I have taken to myself the microscope and seen the short-lived things upon the leaf and I have called them small. I will not call him so again—compared with me he is great—if I put myself into comparison with God. I am so little, that I shrink into nothingness when I behold the Almightyness of Jehovah—so little, that the difference between the animalcule and man dwindles into nothing, when compared with the infinite chasm between God and man.

Let your mind rove upon the great doctrines of the Godhead. Consider the existence of God from before the foundations of the world. Behold Him who is and was and is to come, the Almighty. Let your soul comprehend as much as it can of the Infinite and grasp as much as possible of the Eternal and I am sure if you have minds at all, they will shrink with awe. The tall archangel bows himself before his Master's Throne and we shall cast ourselves into the lowest dust when we feel what base *nothings*, what insignificant *specks* we are, when compared with our all-adorable Creator. Labor O soul, to know your nothingness and learn it by *contemplating God's greatness*.

Again—if you want to know your own nothingness consider *what you are in suffering*. I was thinking the other evening how small a matter it must be with God to cast any man into the most unutterable agony. We are well and in good spirits. We know not why, but it seems as if God's finger had touched one nerve—but one poor nerve and we are so miserable that we could sit down and weep. We do not know how to bear ourselves. But half an hour ago we could have "smiled at Satan's rage and laced a frowning world." And God does but put His hand on our hearts and just let one of the strings run loose and what discord there is in our spirits! We are annoyed at the slightest matter. We wish to be continually alone. The very promises yield us no comfort. Our days are nights and our nights are black as Gehenna. We know not how to endure ourselves.

How easily, then, can God cast us into misery! O man, what a little thing you are, if so little a thing can overthrow you. You have heard men talk big words when they have been prosperous. Did you ever hear them talk so when they were in deep distress and great anguish and sorrow? No, then they say, "Am I a sea or a whale that You set a watch upon me? What am I, that You should visit me every morning and chasten me every night? Let me alone, until I swallow down my spittle. Why am I sore

vexed? What am I, that You should make me a target for Your arrows and a target for your wrath? Spare me, O my God, for I am less than nothing. I am but a shadow that passes away and declines. Oh deal not harshly with Your servant, for Your mercies sake.” Great sorrow will always make a man think little of himself—if God blesses it to him.

Again—if you would know your own weakness, *try some great labor for Christ*. I can understand how some minister who preaches to his hundred-and-fifty on a Sabbath day and regards himself as having a large congregation, should be very precise about the color of his cravat and about the respect that is paid to his dignity in his little church. I can well comprehend how he should be as big as my Lord Archbishop—because he does nothing. He has nothing at all to try him. But I cannot imagine Martin Luther standing before the Diet at Worms being proud because he had to do such a deed as that.

I cannot conceive John Calvin, in his incessant labors for Christ, leading on the Reformation and teaching the Truth of God with power saying to himself, “Lo! this great Babylon that I have built.” I can suppose the man that has nothing to do and that is doing nothing sitting down in devout complacency with his own adorable self. But I cannot conceive, if you nerve yourselves to great labors but what you will have to say, “Lord, what a worm am I that You should call me to such work as this!” Turn, if you please, to the history of all men who have done great deeds for God and you will find them saying, “I marvel that God would use *me* thus!”

“This day my mind was exceedingly cast down,” says one of them, “for God had called me to a great labor and I never felt so much of my own insufficiency as I did today.” Says another, “I have tomorrow to do such-and-such an eminent service for my Master. I can say that when I was in my low estate, I was often exalted above measure but this day my God has cast me into the lowest depths at the recollection of the work for which He has engaged me.” Go and do something, some of you and I will be bound to say it will be the means of pricking that fair bubble of your pride and letting some of it blow away.

If you would understand what is meant by being a worm, go and do what the 15th verse says the worm should do—go and thrash the mountains and beat them small—make the hills as chaff fanned by the wind, scatter them and then rejoice in God. And if you can do that—

***“The more God’s glories strike your eyes,
The humbler you will lie.”***

Devout contemplation, sharp suffering, hard labor—all these will teach us what little creatures we are. Oh, may God by all means and every means keep us well understanding and knowing that we are nothing more and nothing better than worms!

How easy it is, my Brethren, for you and I to fly up! How hard to keep down! That demon of pride was born with us and it will not die one hour before us. It is so woven into the very warp and woof of our nature that till we are wrapped in our winding-sheets we shall never hear the last of it. If any man tells me that he is humble, I know him to be profoundly proud. And if any man will not acknowledge this truth—that he is desperately inclined to self-exaltation—let him know that his denial of this truth is the best proof of it.

Do you know what is the sweetest flattery in all the world? It is that flattery that Caesar's courtier of old gave to him, when they said Caesar hated flattery, being then most highly flattered. We do not hate flattery, anyone of us. We all like it. We do not like it if it is labeled flattery. But we like it if it is given in a little underhand fashion. We all love praise—

***“The proud to gain it toils on toils endure,
The modest shun it but to make it sure.”***

We all love it, every soul of us and it is right and meet that we should all bow before God and acknowledge that pride which is woven into our nature and ask Him to teach us what little things we are, that we may claim this promise—“Fear not, you worm Jacob.”

II. Now the next point. Before devoting ourselves to Christ, or doing any great labor for the Savior, it is necessary THERE SHOULD BE TRUST IN THE PROMISED STRENGTH. “I will help you, says the LORD and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” It is a certain fact, that though men are worms, they do what worms never could do. Although men are nothing, they do accomplish deeds which need even this power of the Infinite to rival them. How shall we account for this? Certainly it is not the *worms*! It must be some secret energy which gives them might.

The mystery is unraveled in the text. “I will help you, says the LORD.” In ancient history there is a story told of a valiant captain whose banner was always foremost in the fight, whose sword was dreaded by his enemies, for it was the herald of slaughter and of victory. His monarch once demanded of him that he should send this potent sword to him to be examined. The monarch took the sword, quietly examined it, and sent it back with this message—“I see nothing wonderful in the sword. I cannot understand why any man should be afraid of it.”

The captain sent back in the most respectful manner a message of this kind—“Your Majesty has been pleased to examine the sword but I did not send the arm that wielded it. If you had examined that and the heart that guided the arm, you would have understood the mystery.” And now we look at men and see what men have done and we say, “I cannot understand this, how was it done?” “Why, we are only seeing the sword. If we

could see the heart of infinite love that guided that man in his onward course, we should not wonder that he, as God's sword, gained the victory.

Now the Christian may remember that little though he is, God is with him. God will help him and that right early. Brethren, I like a man who, when he begins to do anything, is afraid of himself and says, "It is of no use. I cannot do it." Let him alone—he will do it. He is all right. The man who says, "Oh there is nothing to it, I can do it," will break down to a dead certainty. But let him begin by saying, "I know what I am and I feel confident I cannot do it unless I have something more given to me than I feel today"—that man will come back with flying banners, the trumpets proclaiming that he has been victorious. But it must be because he puts reliance upon *help promised*.

Now, Christian, I see you this morning ready to run away from the battle. You have been so dispirited this last week, through many adverse circumstances, that you are ready to give up your religion. Now, Man, here is a Brother comrade that is passing through just the same thing. He comes here this morning, half inclined to run off to Tarshish like Jonah did of old. Only he could not find a boat, or else he might have sailed away. And he has come here to pat you on the shoulder and say, "Brother, do not let us play deserters, after all. Let us up to arms and still fight for our Master. For the promise says, "I will help you."

Brother, what an all-sufficient promise that is—"I will help you." Why, it matters not what God has given us to do. If He helps us we can do it. Give me God to help me and I will split the world in halves and sliver it till it shall be smaller than the dust of the threshing floor. Yes, and if God is with me, this breath could blow whole worlds about, as the child blows a bubble. There is no telling what man can do when God is with him. Give God to a man and he can do all things. Put God into a man's arm and he may have only the jawbone of an ass to fight with but he will lay the Philistines in heaps—put God into a man's hand and he may have a giant to deal with and nothing but a sling and a stone. But he will lodge the stone in the giant's brow before long.

Put God into a man's eye and he will flash defiance on kings and princes. Put God into a man's lips and he will speak right honestly, though his death should be the wages of his speech. There is no fear in a man who has got God with him. He is all-sufficient. There is nothing beyond his power. And my Brethren, what an opportune help God's is! God's help always comes in at the right time. We are often making a fuss because God does not help us when we do not want to be helped. "Oh!" says one, "I do not think that I could die for Christ. I feel I could not. I wish I felt that I had strength enough to die."

Well, you just won't feel that because you are not going to die and God will not give you strength to die with to lay up till the dying time comes. Wait till you are dying and then He will give you strength to die. "Oh!" says another, "I wish I felt as strong in prayer as So-and-So." But you do not want so much strength in prayer and you shall not have it. You shall have what you want and you shall have it when you want it. But you shall not have it before. Ah, I have often cried to God and desired that I might feel happy before I began to preach—that I might feel I could preach to the people. I could never get it at all. And yet sometimes God has been pleased to cheer me as I have gone along and given me strength that has been equal to my day.

So it must be with you. God will come in when you want Him—not one minute before, nor yet one minute later. "I will help you." I will help you when you need help! And oh, Brethren, what an ennobling thing it is to be helped by God! To be helped by a fellow man is no disgrace but it is no honor. But to be helped by God—what an honor that is! When the Christian Prophet preaches his Master's Word and feels that he has girded about his loins the belt of the Almighty to strengthen him for his day's work—that he may not fear the people—what a noble being he is then! When the Christian philanthropist goes into the prison, in the midst of reeking disease and death and feels that God has put the wing of the angel over him to shield him in the day of pestilence, how it ennobles and honors him to have God with him!

To have His strength girding his loins and nerving his arm is just the highest thing to which man can attain. I thought but yesterday, "Oh, if I were a cherub I would stand with wings outstretched and I would bless God for opportunities for serving Him." But I thought within myself, "I have an opportunity of serving God but I am too weak for it. O my God, I wish You had not put the load on me." And then it struck me, "Do the cherubim and seraphim ever say that? Do they ever for a moment say, "I have not strength enough to do it!" No. If a cherub had a work to do which was beyond his might, he would meekly bow his head and say, "My Lord. I fly, I fly! He that commanded the deed will enable me to perform it." And so must the Christian say, "My God, do You command? It is enough—'tis done. You never did send us to a warfare in our own strength and You will never do so. You will help us and be with us to the end." Before we can do much, then, *we must know our own weakness and believe God's strength.*

III. And now comes the last point, upon which I shall be brief. We must then, LABOR TO GET RID, AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, FEAR. The Prophet says. "Fear not." You are a worm but do not fear. God will help you, why should you fear? Let us labor to get rid of fear when we are certain we are serving our Master. And let these be our reasons—

Get rid of fear, *because fear is painful*. How it torments the spirit! When the Christian trusts, he is happy. When he doubts, he is miserable. When the Believer looks to his Master and relies upon Him, he can sing. When he doubts his Master, he can only groan. What miserable wretches the most faithful Christians are when they once begin doubting and fearing! It is a trade I never like to meddle with because it never pays the expenses and never brings in any profit—the trade of doubting. Why, the soul is broken in pieces, lanced, pricked with knives, dissolved, racked, pained. It knows not how to exist when it gives way to fear.

Up, Christian! You are of a sorrowful countenance—up and chase your fears away. Why would you be forever groaning in your dungeon? Why should the Giant Despair forever beat you with his crab tree club? Up! Drive him away! Touch the key of the promises. Be of good cheer! Fear never helped you yet and it never will.

Fear, too, is *weakening*. Make a man afraid—he will run at his own Shadow. Make a man brave and he will stand before an army and overcome them. He will never do much good in the world who is afraid of men. The fear of God brings blessings but the fear of men brings a snare and such a snare that many feet have been tripped. No man shall be faithful to God if he is fearful of man. No man shall find his arm sufficient for him and his might equal to his emergencies unless he can confidently believe and quietly wait. We must not fear. For fear is weakening.

Again—we must not fear. For fear *dishonors God*. Doubt the Eternal? Distrust the Omnipotent? Oh, traitorous Fear! Think you that the arm which piled the Heavens and sustains the pillars of the earth shall ever be palsied? Shall the brow which eternal ages have rolled over, without scathing it, at last be furrowed by old age? What? Shall the Eternal fail you? Shall the faithful Promiser break His oath? You dishonor God, O Unbelief! Get out of here! God is too wise to err, too good to be unkind—leave off doubting Him and begin to trust Him—for in so doing you will put a crown on His head—but in doubting Him you do trample His crown beneath your feet.

And lastly, doubt not the Lord, O Christian, for in so doing *you do lower yourself*. The more you believe, the greater you are. But the more you doubt, the less you become. It was said of the world's conqueror, that when he was sick, he cried like a child. "Give me some drink," cried one, like a sick girl it was said to his dishonor. And is it not to the dishonor of a Christian who lives in secret on his God and professes to trust alone in Him, that he cannot trust Him? That a little child will overcome his faith? Oh, poor little boat that is upset by a raindrop! O poor puny Christian that is overcome by every straw—that stumbles at every stone! Then, Christian Brothers and Sisters, behave like men and women!

It is childish to doubt. It is manhood's glory to trust. Plant your foot upon the immoveable Rock of Ages. Lift your eye to Heaven. Scorn the world—never play craven. Bend your fist in the world's face and bid defiance to it and Hell and you are a man and noble. But crouch and cringe and dread and doubt and you have lost your Christian dignity and are no longer what you should be. You do not honor God. "Fear not, you worm Jacob. I will help you, says the LORD." Then why should you fear?

I feel that my voice fails me and with it my very powers of thought, too. Therefore I can only turn to my comrades in arms, in the good war of Christ and say to them—Brethren, you and I can do nothing of ourselves—we are poor puny things. But let us attempt great things—for God is with us! Let us dare great things, for God will not leave us. Remember what He has done. And remember, what He has done of old, He will do again. Remember David the shepherd boy. Remember well of Shamgar, with his ox-goad. Forget not the jawbone of the ass and the stone from the sling. If these worked wonders, why should not we? If little things have done great things, let us try to do great things also. You know not, you atoms, but that your destiny is sublime. Try and make it so by faith.

And the least of you may be mighty through the strength of God. Oh for grace to trust God and there is no telling what you can do. Worms, you are nothing but you have eaten princes. Worms you are nothing but you have devoured the roots of cedars and laid them level with the earth. Worms, you are nothing but you have piled rocks in the deep, deep sea and wrecked mighty navies. Worms, you have eaten through the keel of the proudest ship that ever sailed the ocean. If you have done this yourselves, what cannot we do? Your strength lies in your mouths. Our strength lies in ours, too. We will use our mouths in prayer and in constant adoration and we shall conquer yet, for God is with us and victory is sure—

***"You trembling souls! Dismiss your fears.
Let mercy be your theme.
Mercy, which, like a river,
Flows in one continued stream.
Fear not the powers of earth and Hell—
GOD will these powers restrain,
His mighty arm their rage repel,
And make their efforts vain.
Fear not the want of outward good—
He will for His provide
Grant them supplies of daily food,
And all they need beside.
Fear not that He will ever forsake
Or leave His work undone
He's faithful to His promises—***

***And faithful to His Son.
Fear not the terrors of the grave,
Or death's tremendous sting
He will from endless wrath preserve —
To endless glory bring.”***

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YOUR REDEEMER

NO. 157

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, OCTOBER 4, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“And your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.”
Isaiah 41:14.***

AND why does it say, “and your Redeemer”? What was the use of appending the Redeemer’s name to this precious exhortation? By God’s help it shall be the business of this evening to show why there is a peculiar blessedness in the fact that God has not only said, “I will help you, says the LORD,” but has added, “and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.”

You will please notice that it looks as if this were a repetition by three different Persons. Israel was cast down. And Jehovah, for that is the first word—you will notice that the word “LORD” is in capitals and should be translated “Jehovah”—says to His poor, tried, desponding servant, “I will help you.” No sooner is that uttered and, we think we shall not be straining the text if we surmise that God the Holy Spirit, the Holy One of Israel, adds His solemn affidavit also. And declares by oath and Covenant, “I will help you.” Does not this, we say, look somewhat like repetition?

Was it not sufficient that Jehovah the Father should declare that He would help His people? Why did the other Persons of the Divine Trinity unite in this solemn declaration? We think we shall be able, if God shall help us, to show great usefulness therein, especially dwelling tonight upon that word, “your Redeemer,” and marking how the repetition of the word by our Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, adds a peculiar blessedness to the exhortation—“Fear not, you worm Jacob.”

First, methinks this was added *for amplification*. Secondly, *for sweetness*. Thirdly, *for confirmation*.

I. First. When it says, “and your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” it was added FOR AMPLIFICATION. There are some preachers from whom you will never learn anything. Not because they do not say much which is instructive but because they just mention the instructive thought once. And then they immediately pass on to another thought—never expanding upon that thought—but immediately passing on, almost without connection to a third. They cast forth, as it were, bare thoughts, without opening them up and explaining them to the people. Such preachers are generally complained of as being very unprofitable to their hearers.

“Why,” said the hearer, “it made no impression upon me. It was good but there was so much of it that I could not recollect it. I had nothing to bring away.” Other preachers, on the other hand, follow a better method. Having given one idea, they endeavor to amplify it so that their hearers, if they are not able to receive the idea in the abstract, at least are able to lay hold upon some of its points when they come to the amplification of it.

Now, God, the great Author of the Bible. God, the great Preacher of the Truth by His Prophets—when He would preach it and when He would write it, so amplifies a fact, so extends a Truth and enlarges upon a doctrine that He says, “I will help you, says Jehovah.” That means Father, Son and Holy Spirit. “Oh, but,” said God, “My people will forget that unless I amplify the thought. So I will even break it up. I will remind them of my Trinity. They understand my Unity. I will bid them recollect that there are Three in the One, though these Three are One.” And he adds, “your Redeemer, the holy One of Israel.” Jehovah—Redeemer—Holy One of Israel—three Persons, all included, indeed, in the word *Jehovah* but very likely to be forgotten unless they had been distinctly enumerated.

Now, Brethren, suffer your thoughts for a moment to enlarge upon the fact that the Promise contained in this verse, “Fear not, I will help you” (*I will help you*), is a Promise from Three Divine Persons. Hear Jehovah, the everlasting Father, saying, “I will help you.” “Mine are the ages—before the ages began, when there were no worlds, when nothing had been created, from everlasting I am your God. I am the God of election, the God of the decree, the God of the Covenant. By My strength I did set fast the mountains, by My skill I laid the pillars of the earth. And the beams of the firmament of Heaven. I spread out the skies as a curtain and as a tent for man to dwell in. I the Lord made all these things. ‘I will help you.’ ”

Then comes Jehovah the Son. “And I also, am your Redeemer. I am eternal. My name is Wisdom. I was with God when there were no depths, before He had dug the rivers, I was there as one brought up with Him. I am Jesus, the God of Ages. I am Jesus, the Man of Sorrows—‘I am He that lives and was dead, I am alive forevermore.’ I am the High Priest of your profession, the Intercessor before the Throne, the Representative of My people. I have power with God. ‘*I will help you.*’ ” Poor worm, your Redeemer vows to help you. By His bleeding hands He covenants to give you aid.

And then comes the Holy Spirit. “And I,” says the Spirit, “am also God—not an influence but a Person—I, eternal and everlasting co-existent with the Father and the Son—I, who did brood over chaos, when as yet the world was not brought into form and fashion and did sow the earth with the seeds of life when I did brood over it—I, that brought again from the dead your Lord Jesus Christ, the Shepherd of the sheep—I, who am the

Eternal Spirit, by whose power the Lord Jesus did arise from the thrall-dom of His tomb—I, by whom souls are quickened, by whom the elect are called out of darkness into light—I, who have power to maintain My children and preserve them to the end—‘I will help you.’”

Now, Soul, gather up these three. And do you want more help than they can afford? What? Do you need more strength than the Omnipotence of the United Trinity? Do you want more wisdom than exists in the Father, more love than displays itself in the Son and more power than is manifest in the influences of the Spirit? Bring here your empty pitcher! Surely this well will fill it. Hurry! Gather up your wants and bring them here—your emptiness, your woes, your needs. Behold, this river of God is full for your supply. What can you want beside? Stand up, Christian, in this your might. Jehovah Father, Jehovah Jesus, Jehovah Spirit—these are with you to help you. This is the first thing. It is an *amplification*.

II. And now, secondly, concerning that word, “your Redeemer,” it is a SWEETENING OF THE PROMISE. Did you never notice that a Promise always seems all the sweeter for having Jesus in it? All the Promises are yes and amen in Him. But when a Promise mentions the name of the Redeemer it imparts a peculiar blessedness to it. Brethren, it is something like, if I may represent it by such a figure, the beautiful effect of certain decorations of stained glass. There are some persons whose eyes are so weak that the light seems to be injurious to them, especially the red rays of the sun and a glass has been invented which rejects the rays that are injurious and allows only those to pass which are softened and modified to the weakness of the eye.

It seems as if the Lord Jesus were some such a glass as this. The grace of God the Trinity, shining through the man Christ Jesus, becomes a mellow, soft light so that mortal eye can bear it. My God, I could not drink from Your well if You had not put there the earthen pitcher of my Savior. But with Him living waters from Your sacred well I draw. Heaven, you are too bright. I could not bear your insufferable light if I had not this shade with which I cover you. But through it, as through a mist, I do behold the halo of your glory, undiminished in its effulgence but somewhat diminished in their potency which would be my destruction.

The Savior seems to calm His glory, to tone it down to our poor feeble frame. His name put into this wine of Heaven does not diminish in the least degree its sparkling and its exhilarating power. But it takes out of it that deep strength which might upset an angel’s brain if he could drink to his full. It takes away the profundity of mystery which would make the deep old wine of the kingdom intoxicating rather than cheering. Christ Jesus, cast into the river of God, makes all the streams more sweet. And

when the Believer sees God in the Person of the Savior, he then sees the God whom he can love and to whom with boldness he can approach.

Surely I love this Promise all the better, because I think I see my Savior with His hands all bleeding, stamping His hands upon it and saying, "And your Redeemer," and there is the blood-mark left upon the Promise. It does seem to me as if when God uttered that Promise to the poor worm, Jacob, Jesus Christ could not be still. He heard His Father say, "Fear not, worm Jacob." And He saw the poor worm, with his head on one side, with his eyes all flowing with tears, with his heart palpitating with terror and his arms folded in dismay. And when His Father had said, "Fear not," He stepped from behind and whispered in a voice more soft than the voice of His Father, "Fear not, worm Jacob, it is God that speaks."

And then the soft voice says, "And it is your Redeemer that speaks, too." *He* says, "Fear not." He who loves you, who knows you, who has felt what you feel, who has passed through the woes which you are now enduring—He who is your Kinsman and your Brother—He also says, "Fear not worm Jacob." Oh, it is sweet, it is precious to look upon that word as spoken by our Redeemer.

III. And now we come to the other point. I think this is put in by way of CONFIRMATION. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses surely the whole shall be established."—

"Blind unbelief is sure to err."

It needs many witnesses to make such unbelieving souls as we are believe the Promises. "Now," says God, "I will help you." Unbelief! Will you doubt Jehovah? Can the "I Am that I Am" lie? Can the God of faithfulness and truth deceive you? O unbelief! Infamous traitor! Will you dare to doubt Him? Yes and Christ knew I would.

And so He comes in and He says, "and your Redeemer," as a second witness, while the Spirit is the third. "Your Redeemer," volunteers to be the second guarantee, the other security to the faithfulness of this Promise. The Father will lose His honor if He breaks His word. And I, too, do give as the security for the fulfillment of this Promise, My pledge and honor also. "Your Redeemer" engages that He will help you, O you worm!

And now, I want you to read the Promise, recollecting that it says, "Your Redeemer." And then, as you read it through, you will see how the word "Redeemer" seems to confirm it all. Now begin. "*I will help you*"—lay a stress on that word. If you read it so, there is one blow at your unbelief. "*I will help you,*" says the Redeemer. "Others may not but I have loved you with an everlasting love and by the bands of My loving kindness have I drawn you. '*I will help you,*' though the earth forsake you, though your father and your mother forsake you, *I will take you up.* Will you doubt Me?"

“I have proved My love to you. Behold this gash, this spear thrust in My side. Look here at My hands—will you doubt Me? ‘Tis I.’ I said that on the waters and I said to My people, ‘Be not afraid. It is I.’ I say to you, now you are on the waters, ‘Be not afraid. I will help you.’ Surely you need not fear that I shall ever forget you. ‘Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you.’ ‘I have graven you on My hands. Your walls are ever before me.’ ‘I will help you.’ ”

Now, you must just suppose the Savior standing here—that Man whose garments are red with blood—you must suppose Him standing where I stand tonight and saying to you, personally, “Fear not, I will help you.” O my Lord, I have ungratefully doubted Your Promise many a time. But methinks if I could see You in all Your woe and sorrow for me, if I could hear You say, “I will help you,” I should cast myself at Your feet and say, “Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief.” But though He is not here to speak it, though the lips that utter it are but the lips of man, remember that He speaks through me tonight and through His Word, as truly as if He spoke Himself.

If some great man should by a servant, or by a letter send to you this message, “I will keep you.” Though you had not heard his own lips declare it, yet if you saw his own hand writing, you would say, “It is enough, I believe it.” There is the Master’s handwriting. It is His own autograph, it is written by Himself. Behold the bloody signature! It is stamped with His Cross and I, His messenger, am sent tonight to myself and to you and I say to my own heart and to you, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul! Why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God. For I shall yet praise Him.” For the Redeemer says, “I will help you,” and if He says, “I will help you,” who can doubt Him? Who dares distrust Him?

And now let us read the Promise again and lay the stress on the “will.” Oh, the “wills” and the “shalls”—they are the sweetest words in the Bible. “I *will* help you.” When God says “I will,” there is something in it, Brethren. The will of God started worlds into existence. The will of God made nature leap from chaos—the will of God sustains all worlds, “bears the earth’s huge pillars up,” and establishes creation. It is God’s “I will.” He lets the world live. They live on the “will” of God. And if He willed that they should die, they must sink as the bubble into the breaker, when its moment has arrived.

And if the “will” of God is so strong as that, may we not lay a great stress upon it here—“I *will* help you.” There is no doubt about it. I do not say I may help you perhaps. No, I *will*. I do not say that possibly I may be persuaded to help you. No, I voluntarily *will* to help you. “I *will* help you.” I do not say that in all probability—ninety-nine chances out of a hundred—

it is likely I may help you. No. But without allowing any perhaps, or so much as a jot or tittle of hap or hazard, I *will*. Now, is there not strength in that? Indeed, my Brethren, it is enough to cheer any man's spirit, however much he may be cast down. If God the Holy Spirit does but breathe upon the text and lets its spices flow abroad into our poor souls, "Fear not, I *will* help you."

And now we lay stress on another word—"I will *help* you." That is very little for me to do, to *help* you. Consider what I have done already. What? Not help you? Why, I bought you with My blood! What? Not help you? I have *died* for you! And if I have done the greater, will I not do the less? *Help* you, My Beloved? It is the least thing I will ever do for you. I have done more and I will do more. Before the daystar first began to shine I chose you. "I will *help* you." I made the Covenant for you and exercised all the wisdom of My eternal mind in the scheming of the plan of salvation.

"I will *help* you." I became a Man for you. I doffed My diadem and laid aside My robe. I laid the purple of the universe aside to become a Man for you. If I did this, I will *help* you. I gave My life, My soul, for you. I slumbered in the grave, I descended into Hades, all for you. I will *help* you. It will cost Me nothing. Redeeming you cost Me much but I have all and abound. In helping you, I am giving you what I have bought for you already. It is nothing, I can do it easily. "Help you?" You need never fear that. If you needed a thousand times as much help as you need, I would give it to you. But it is little that you do require compared with what I have to give. 'Tis great for you to need but it is nothing for Me to bestow. "*Help* you?" Fear not.

If there were an ant at the door of your granary asking for help, it would not ruin you to give him a handful of your wheat. And you are nothing but a tiny insect at the door of My all-sufficiency. All that you could ever eat, all that you could ever take, if you were to take on to all eternity, would no more diminish My all-sufficiency, than the drinking of the fish would diminish the sea. No. "I will *help* you." If I have died for you, I will not leave you.

And now, just take the last word—"I will help *you*." Lay the stress there. "Fear not, you worm Jacob. I will help *you*." If I let the stars fall, I will help *you*. If I let all nature run to rack and ruin, I will help *you*. If I permit the teeth of time to devour the solid pillars upon which the earth does stand, yet I will help *you*. I have made a Covenant with the earth, "that seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, shall never cease." But that Covenant, though true, is not so great as the Covenant that I have made concerning *you*. And if I keep My Covenant with the earth, I will certainly keep My Covenant with My child. "Fear not. I will help *you*." Yes, you!

You say, "I am too little for help." But I will help you to magnify My power. You say, "I am too vile to be helped," but I will help you to manifest My grace. You say, "I have been ungrateful for former help," but I will help you to manifest My faithfulness. You say "But I shall still rebel, I shall still turn aside." "I will help *you*," to show forth My long-suffering—let it be known, "I will help *you*."

And now just conceive my Master on His Cross bleeding there, looking down on you and on me. Picture Him while His voice falters with love and misery conjoined. And hear Him. He has just now spoken to the thief and He has said to Him, "Today, shall you be with Me in Paradise." And after He has said that, He catches sight of you and of me, poor and depressed—and He says—"Fear not, worm Jacob. I will help *you*. I helped the thief—I will help *you*. I Promised him that he should be with Me in Paradise. I may well Promise you that you shall be helped. I will help *you*." O Master! May Your love that prompts You thus to speak prompt us to believe You.

And now hear Him again. He is exalted on high. He has "led captivity captive and received gifts for men"—now hear Him, as in the midst of the solemn pomp of Heaven He is not unmindful of His poor relations. He looks down and He sees us in this world still struggling with sin and care and woe. He hears us claiming kingship with Himself. And He says, "Worm Jacob! Though I now do reign exalted on High, My love is still as great. I *will* help *you*." I pray the Lord apply the sweetness of that pronoun to your hearts and to mine, my Brethren. "I will help *you*." O surely when the husband speaks to the wife in the hour of darkness and sorrow and comforts her, you can easily understand what arguments he uses, when he says, "wife of my youth! My joy, my delight, I will help *you*!"

You can easily conceive how he enumerates times of love, seasons when he stood by her in the hour of trouble. You can easily think how he reminds her of the days of their espousals and tells her of their struggles and of their joys—and he says, "Wife, can you doubt me? No. As I am a husband I *will* help *you*!" And now you hear the Savior speaking to His Church, "Betrothed to Me before time began, I have taken you into union with My adorable Person. And O, My bride, though My palace stands in ruins and Heaven itself should shake, I *will* help you. Forget you? Forget My bride? Be false to My Betrothal? Forsake My Covenant? No. Never. I *will* help *you*."

Hear the mother speaking to her little child in great danger—"Child," she says, "I will help *you*." And then she reminds that child that she is its mother, that from her breast the child drew its needed nourishment in the days of weakness. She reminds it how she has nursed it and rocked it upon her knee and how in every way she has been its solace and support. "Child!" says she and her heart runs over—"I will help *you*!" Why, the

child never doubts it. It says, “Yes mother, I know you will. I am sure of that, I do not need to be told it, I was certain you would, for I have had such proofs of your love.”

And now ought not we who love the Savior let our eyes run with tears and say, “O You blessed Redeemer! You need not tell us You will help us, for we know You will. Oh do not suppose that we doubt You so much as to want to be told of it again. We know You will help us. We are sure of it. Your former love, Your ancient love, the love of Your espousals, Your deeds of kindness, Your everlasting drawings—all these declare that You never can forsake us.” No, no. “I *will* help *you*.”

And now, Brethren, we are coming downstairs to eat the body of Christ and drink His blood in a spiritual manner. And I hope while we are partaking of that bread and wine, the emblems of the Savior, we shall think we hear every mouthful of bread and every sip of wine saying out in the Master’s behalf, “I *will* help *you*, I *will* help *you*.” And then let you and I just frighten Satan by cheering up our spirits through the power of the Holy Spirit and buckling on our armor. Let us go forth into the world tomorrow to show what the Redeemer can do when His Promise is applied by the Spirit. “Fear not, you worm Jacob and you men of Israel. I will help you.”

Come, bring your fears out tonight and serve them in the worst way you can. Hang them here upon the scaffold this night. Come now and blow them away at the great guns of the Promises—let them be destroyed forever. They are renegade mutineers. Let them be cut off, let them be utterly destroyed and let us go and sing, “Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. Though the waters thereof roar and are troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.” “I *will* help *you*,” says the Redeemer.

O Sinners, I pity you—this is not *your* Promise. If this were all that you did lose by being out of Christ, it were enough to lose, indeed. May God call you and help you to trust in the Redeemer’s blood. Amen.

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WORDLESS PRAYERS HEARD IN HEAVEN

NO. 2696

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 14, 1900.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 8, 1881.

*“When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and
their tongue fails for thirst, I the LORD will hear them,
I the God of Israel will not forsake them.”
Isaiah 41:17.*

NOTICE, dear Friends, that this double promise to the poor and needy stands in connection with other great promises which guarantee the gift of wonderful strength and blessing to God's people. These promises seem to me to be such as the mightiest servant of God might well desire to have fulfilled in himself. Look, for instance, at the one in the 15th and 16th verses—“Behold, I will make you a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: you shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff. You shall fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and you shall rejoice in the Lord, and shall glory in the Holy One of Israel.” What a great promise that is! How it makes the child of God to participate in the greatness of Jehovah's strength! The picture here drawn is a very remarkable one. Here is a man—a poor, feeble man—so strengthened by God that he not only threshes wheat, but he threshes mountains! Nor does he find that the gigantic enterprise is beyond the strength imparted to him—the rocks and the hills are turned to chaff. Nor is that all that happens to them, for this man, Divinely strengthened, takes up a colossal winnowing fan and sets Alps, Andes, Himalayas flying just like the small dust from the threshing floor! This is grand work and it needs a man of God when he has come to the fullness of his strength through the indwelling of the Spirit of God.

Whenever we quote a great promise like that, it usually depresses some little one in the Lord's family. He (or, more likely, she) begins to say, “But what can I do? I cannot thresh mountains! No, rather, it seems to me that Satan's threshing me and desiring to have me that he may sift me as wheat. And, instead of me holding the winnowing fan in my hand, it is the winnowing fan that is being used upon me—and what I thought was a fine heap of wheat is being blown away—and I am afraid there will be few precious grains left to lie upon the floor. Ah, me! Ah, me!” Well, now, our God has a gracious way of caring for all His children and, from the very nature of Him, I am quite certain that if one of His children

could be forgotten, it would not be the little one! You mothers know that if ever there was one member of the household left out in the cold when you closed the door at night, it would not be the baby—you would be sure, first of all, to see that the wee mite was safely housed. And if it were possible that the Divine mind could pass over and forget one of the beloved family, it certainly would not be the little one or the tried one!

There are special promises for the child of God in the time of trial—“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not flow over you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” The Presence of God is with all His chosen ones at all times! But if there could be an exception to that rule, it certainly would not be in the case of those who are tried, troubled and depressed. No, the exception would be the other way. If the Good Shepherd left the 99 safely folded in the wilderness, He would be sure to go after the one sheep that was lost—the weak and wounded one, the feeble and footsore one—even though the cause of its sufferings might be its own guilty wanderings! Oh, the splendor of the love of God! There is nothing to be compared with it under Heaven, or even in Heaven itself. It stands alone and unapproachable. He is always considering those among His people who are downcast, weak and brokenhearted!

And I think that the promise of our text especially comes in, not for you mountain-threshers—not for you who are made so strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, but for some who cannot as yet get a grip of that grand Word of His to which I have referred. There comes in this sweet promise, “when the poor and needy,” those who are not trying to thresh mountains, but are looking for that which is necessary for the supply of their own personal needs—*seeking water*. They are in too low a condition to be able to rise to the dignity of service, but are just like poor Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness, seeking water. They have fallen into such a sad and sorrowful state of heart that instead of testifying to the goodness of God, they cannot testify to *anything*, for “their tongue fails for thirst.” It is then, in their extremity, that the blessed promises shall come to them—“I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.”

I am going to follow the Good Shepherd’s example and leave the 99—you Brothers and Sisters who are happy and joyful in the Lord, I must leave you to take care of yourselves, or, rather, the Lord will take care of you. I want just now to go after that one sheep that is lost! And I would not be surprised at all if there are not more than one out of every hundred here in the condition which our text describes! If so, may the Spirit of God cause the message to reach the hearts of all such sorrowing ones that God may again be glorified in the abundance of His mercy toward them! Let us begin at the beginning of the text and consider it from point to point very briefly. We will start with these people where the text starts with them.

I. Here is, first, POVERTY OF CONDITION—“When the poor and needy seek water.”

This description, of course, applies to poverty of *spiritual* condition—does it describe you, my Brother, my Sister? Sometimes we say that we are “rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing,” though, all the while, we are “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” But there are other times when, consciously, among the poor, we are the poorest—and among the needy, our need puts us in the very front rank.

Certainly, I think that most of us here would take the position of great poverty *as to anything like merit*. What have we ever done that can commend us to God? When we have done all that our Master commanded, we must still say, “We are unprofitable servants—we have done that which was our duty to do. But we have not obeyed all His Commands by a long shot. “Self-complacency may be a very pleasant feeling to cherish, but he who walks near to God is a stranger to it. If ever God honors one of His children in public, I bear witness that He has a way of flogging him behind the door so as to make him feel that he has no glory save only in the Lord! What have you ever done, you who have won many souls for the Savior? You may thank God that He has thus honored you, but beware lest you ever take any credit for it, yourself, for that would be a strange perversion of the Truth of God. What if you have trained up that family of yours in the fear of God and have seen the Divine benediction resting upon your house? That is well, but are you the god of your house? What would you have been and what would your house have been if it had not been for the mercy of God to you and yours? Looking back upon the whole of our life, we have to thank God for it—and we must not let Him be robbed of any of the thanksgiving that is due to Him. As for ourselves, the only fit tribute to all that we have done is a tear! Let us thank God that He blots out our faults and our failings with the precious blood of His dear Son! And let us also weep bitter tears of regret over them that we should ever have sinned against Him. If any here present have any merits in which they think they can glory, there are, on the other hand, some of us who could sit down in dust and ashes and cry out in the agony of our souls, for we are poverty-stricken to the last degree as to anything of merit in and of ourselves.

Yes, and we have poverty of another kind, namely, as to *anything like strength*. Not that we would plead that as an excuse for not doing much for our Lord, for, albeit that we are fully conscious of our own weakness, we never yet learned that God’s Law was limited by human power. We believe that it is our duty to do thousands of things which, by reason of our impotence, we never do and never, perhaps, can do. Still, the claims of duty remain the same as they always were, for if we have sinned away our power, God has not, therefore, lost any of His rights. We ought to have been perfect. Brothers, I say that if you and I had lived absolutely perfect lives, even *then* we would not have rendered a due return to God for the great debt we owe Him! If we have preached Christ’s Gospel, we ought to have preached it like flaming seraphs. If we have suffered for Christ’s sake, we ought to have been ready to die like martyrs. We ought, in our lives, to have reproduced the life of Christ! But when we struggle

to attain to this high ideal, there is a shrunken sinew that makes us like Jacob, halt upon our thigh. And there is another shrunken sinew that makes us drop our arm—and there is scarcely a part of our mental and spiritual constitution which does not make us cry, with Paul, “To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.”

Truly, we are poverty-stricken as to our strength. The smallest sin is too much for us if God is gone from us. The slightest temptation blows us over like children who are weak upon their legs—only God can sustain us—and we need to constantly hear our Savior say to us, as He said to His disciples, “Without Me you can do nothing!” When we first heard that message, we used to think, “Oh, but surely we can do a *little*.” Yet, every day, that word, “nothing,” seems to toll the funeral knell of all self-confidence! Christ still says to us, “Without Me you can do nothing,” and we know that what He says is true. Some of us are feeling the truth of this sentence and we are humbled in the dust as we realize that we are, indeed, poor and needy as to strength.

Then, Brothers and Sisters, as to *Grace*, many of the children of God are, to their shame, obliged to confess that they are poor and needy where they *ought* to be rich and where they *might* be rich—poor in patience, poor in courage, poor in faith, poor in hope, poor in love, poor in private prayer, poor in public influence—poor in every way. Although the Grace of God can make us so spiritually rich that we may be happy and be able, also, to be the means of blessing others, there are many of God’s children who scarcely seem to have a penny of spending money, and they never appear to go to the King’s treasury and dip their hands in, and take out great handfuls of the precious gold of Grace. They might do so if they would, but, alas, they continue miserably poor through their own fault! So this last confession must be made very humbly, as indeed the others I have mentioned ought to be. And perhaps I am speaking right home to some Brothers and Sisters here when I say that, as to merit, as to strength and even as to Grace, you feel yourselves to be “poor and needy.”

II. Our next remark is concerning URGENCY OF NEED.

“When the poor and needy seek”—what? Money? No, that is only to be poor and needy. Bread? Yes, that shows a harder poverty than merely being “poor and needy.” But it is not bread that these poor and needy ones are seeking, but “water.” Why, that is generally to be had for nothing—a drink of water! It must be very hard times, indeed, when poor souls are in such a state that they are longing for water and seeking for it afar, as though there were none near at hand. Brothers, Sisters, are any of you in such a condition, so poor and needy that you are sighing after the Living Water? Though you have drunk of it before, are you still sighing for more of it and feel as if you do not know where to find it?

This is an urgent necessity, *for it touches a vital point*. A man can exist without money. He can live without garments. He could live longer without bread than he could without water, for you may relieve hunger, but the pangs of thirst are awful, so those have said who have had to endure

it on a raft at sea. Water is a vital necessity of our being and, therefore, God has appended to it a feverishness, an agony, a burning, longing and intense desire to obtain it. Thirst is something dreadful! Are you, my Brother, my Sister, thirsting for God, for the living God? Are you crying to Him with David, “My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is”? Do you feel that you must get a visitation from God, or else your soul will die? Have you been in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water and have you come here saying, “Lord, I seek a cup—a necessary cup of Living Water, and I need it to drink, but I am so poverty-stricken that I cannot buy it. I am so weak that I cannot go far to find it. I am so ignorant that I scarcely know where to look for it! Lord, I am brought to this point—it is not any fancied Grace that I need, it is not some high-soaring aspiration after perfection that I cherish—but I need Grace enough to keep my faith alive! I need it now such a cup of water from the well as shall enable me to realize that I am a child of God”?

Do I address one in whom this vital necessity has become *an agonizing thirst*? I think that I shall speak your experience when I say that I have sometimes known what it was to feel that I would sacrifice my eyes, and be blind, if I might but again get near my God. What difference does it make if you have to lie in bed and suffer, if you might but know that God’s Countenance was lifted up upon your soul, and that joy and gladness were in your spirit? They who have never lost the consciousness of fellowship with God are to be envied. May there be many such here! But, if any have once known it and have lost it, I hope that they will be consumed by a vehement desire to have it back again, that they may once more drink of the Water which is infinitely better than that in “the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate.” It were worthwhile that our blood were shed to get a drink of that Living Water again! It is truly sad when any child of God has sorrowfully to say—

**“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?
What peaceful hours I then enjoyed—
How sweet their memory still.
But now I find an aching void
The world can never fill.”**

Thank God that the void does ache and that the world cannot fill it! If you, dear Friend, have an agonizing desire to drink the Water of Life, you are the person to whom my text applies—“When the poor and needy seek water.”

Further, this is *an immediate necessity*. When a man’s tongue fails for thirst and he seeks water, he needs it at once. When he is perishing for lack of water, he is not content if someone tells him that he shall find it, by-and-by—he needs to find it at once. “Water! Water!” he cries. “Give me water!” But as long as a man can cry as loudly as I have just done, he can wait a little while. But if he gets to the point that his tongue fails for thirst, then he needs it immediately, or he will die. O child of God, if you

have lost the Presence of your God, you need to find it, again, while you are in that pew—you would not like to go home without having a sight of your Father's face, would you? And if you are in such a desperate state that you feel that you must have it, then you shall have it, depend upon it! I pray that you may be brought to such a condition that you shall be ready to die of sickness of heart unless your hope is speedily fulfilled and you can once again behold your God.

III. The third step down—and it is a very long one, is this—DISAPPOINTMENT OF HOPE. “When the poor and needy seek water, *and there is none.*”

Ah, “there is none” *even where they have found it before.* They have sought it in the right places. They have gone where they used to go—where there are wells of water—yet they are bitterly disappointed, for “there is none.” Have not some of you, at times, found it so in attending the means of Grace? You have gone again to the same place where, before, your heart was refreshed as you drank deep draughts of the Living Water. You listened to the same preacher whom you heard there before and, perhaps, to others there was as much sweetness as ever in his message—but to you there was none. Does not the preacher himself know what it is, sometimes, to have a subject that is just like a springing well and then, at another time, to find that he may pump as long as he pleases, but not a drop of water comes forth? If it is so with the preacher, it is certainly so with the hearers!

Sometimes, there is an unction from the Holy One resting upon the Word so that it is like the ointment from the alabaster box—the heavenly perfume fills the whole house! At another time it is the same Truth of God that is preached and by the same lips and, possibly, with the same earnest desire for a blessing—yet the blessing is not given. “The wind blows” not only “where it wills,” but *as it wills*—and there are times when not a breath of the heavenly breeze stirs the still air! And then, when “the poor and needy seek water” even where they used to find it, “there is none.”

It makes their case even more disappointing when they have, side by side with them, *others who are seeking water and finding it*, yet, “there is none” for them. Have you ever been to the Lord's Table—say, with your own wife—and when she has been going home, she has said, “Oh, what a precious Communion service! Was not the Lord manifestly among His people in the breaking of bread?” And you have been ashamed to tell her that you had not seen the Lord, even in His own ordinance? Your eyes had been blinded. You have been sitting here sighing and crying and no joy has come to you. I am sure it is often so in the hearing of the Word. It is so in the private reading of the Scriptures. It is so in all those means of Grace which God blesses to His people. We sometimes find Him blessing one and missing others, just as, sometimes, the rains are partial—one piece of ground is rained upon—and another piece, close by, is not rained upon. Thus it comes to pass that where others drink deep draughts, you poor and needy ones come seeking water, “and there is none.”

“And there is none.” Of course, if you go to places where there is none of the Living Water, why, then, you have only yourself to blame when you cannot find it! If you go where the modern divinity is taught. If you go where you hear the new doctrines, you will find no Water of Life there. “There is none.” That stream has been dried up long ago—the Sirocco of doubt has swept across it and it has vanished—and there is nothing left but the dry bed of the river. People who constantly go to hear that kind of teaching must not blame the Lord, or complain if they seek water and find none! When a bucket has the bottom out and the well has long since ceased to hold any water—if you go there for it—you will simply find that “there is none.” But the pain of it is that, sometimes, the earnest child of God frequents a ministry which God has formerly blessed to him and others, yet he turns away sorrowfully from the well which has yielded him no water, and he says, “there is none.” God is showing him the emptiness of the creature, the vanity of all mortal help. He has a great and a wise design in it all, and it may be that He will keep His child in that condition for a long time, as poor and needy, seeking water—and finding none.

IV. Fourthly, we have here THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER—“And their tongue fails for thirst.”

They cannot speak. *They cannot tell their fellow Christians about their trouble*—“their tongue fails for thirst.” They are ashamed to tell others what they feel. It is a sad state for any to be in, yet many are in it and, knowing that they are guilty and that it is their own fault that they have fallen so low, they cannot tell their fellow Christians anything about their condition. And so they miss one very useful means of comfort. And their tongue so fails for thirst that now, if a hymn is given out, they feel as if they must not sing it. If there is a promise quoted, they feel as if they could not appropriate it! And sometimes the prayer of a joyous Brother seems to shoot over their head—they cannot attain to his experience. Yes, “their tongue fails for thirst.” They do not know how to express what they feel.

If they were called upon *to state their own feelings and convictions before the living God*, it may be that they have become so mournful and sad that they could not describe themselves. Indeed, this is one of the painful parts of some men’s condition—that it is indescribable. If they could only put it down in black and white, they might hope to get over it, but it is mysterious, singular, strange, unaccountable. They have fallen into such a strange condition—they have got down so low that “their tongue fails for thirst.”

Now I think we have gone about as low as we can. Here is a man who, to begin with, is poor and needy. Here is a man who is lacking water, who has sought it, but who cannot find it. Here is a man whose tongue is so parched with thirst that he cannot say a single word—he must sit down in sorrowful silence.

V. Yet, strange to say, now is the time that he learns that SALVATION IS OF God!

Look again at the text. It says, "I the Lord will *hear* them." What? Why, they cannot speak! "Their tongue fails for thirst." Yet it says here, "I the Lord will *hear* them." Well, but their tongue fails them! Yes, but He says it, "I the Lord will hear them." So that brings me to this point—that God's great objective in bringing His people down so low as this is to *make them pray directly to Him*—that now they may not seek any water, but just cry to Him who is the Fountain of living waters—that now they may not tell their friends about their need, nor even tell it to themselves—but in the very silence of their soul, they speak with God, for there is a kind of speech which is perfectly consistent with silence—the speech of sorrow—the exhibition of the wounds of misery—the opening up of the brokenness of the heart—the setting before God, not in eloquent descriptions, but in indescribable revelation, the intolerable need which lies within the soul! God means you, dear Friend, to turn right to Him!

The text does not even say that they pray, because, sometimes, even prayer becomes a mechanical act and we are apt to rely upon it for comfort instead of upon our God. So the Lord says that He will hear them, though there is no mention of prayer, and they feel that they cannot pray. You feel, perhaps, as if you could not pray? Well, then, now turn yourself to God! Rest yourself on God. You feel that all is over with you, that your case is desperate? Then roll yourself upon the living God. This is the point to which He means to bring you, so do not let even your desire to pray be an obstacle between the Lord and your soul! If you cannot utter a word, pray in this sense—that your very heart, with unutterable groans, pours itself out like water before the living God! This is where He would have us come and, oftentimes, it needs all this bursting of the tempest, all this sorrow, all this grief, before the Lord can get us to really speak with Him, not in words, but from our very soul.

The prayer which is hidden away in the texts—for, although there is no mention of prayer in it, yet it is hidden away there—is *the prayer of inward thirst*. You know that it is useless to say to a man who is in distress of soul, "You must groan every morning, and you must groan every night." No, no—he groans when he cannot help it! And though I wish that all would have their special seasons for prayer, yet I believe that the most mighty prayer in the world is that which cannot be timed, or regulated, but which comes out because the suppliant must pray. "Oh, God!" There may be more real prayer in that abrupt prayer, when it is forced out of you by the overwhelming sense of your need, than there is when you put yourself into a comfortable position and kneel down to pray, for sometimes you may get up from that posture and say to yourself, "There, I think I prayed very well," yet, all the while, there may not have been any true prayer in it at all! But when, at another time, you say, "O Lord, I cannot pray! I feel as if I cannot pray"—why, dear man, you are praying! You are praying with all your might! There is more prayer, oftentimes, in that sense of not being able to pray than there is in the Pharisaic thought of having discharged the holy duty acceptably, for, in the one case it is the soul speaking by the Holy Spirit and, in the other case, it may be nothing more than the lips speaking into the air!

This is *the prayer of one who despairs of all means*. I wish I could drive every sinner into that corner so that he would understand that as no Popish priest can save him, and as no good works can save him, as no sermon-hearing can save him, as no Bible-reading can save him, no praying can save him—NOTHING that he can do can save him! He must get to God and cast himself upon Christ or else he will be lost! To many of you I might say, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, but you will not come to Christ that you might have life.” That is where the true life lies, in Christ, not in the Scriptures, blessed as they are! I hope that no one will mistake my meaning, for I am only putting the Scriptures as the Lord Jesus Christ put them when He was speaking to the Jews. I desire to put the actual coming to Christ higher than anything else that is possible to you. Get away from all means, and just say, “Now they are all gone, and I will go to God and say, ‘O God, if You do not help me, from where shall I be helped? Neither the barn floor nor the winepress can help me now—there is a famine in Samaria! I would gladly eat up the fruit of my own soul, yet it cannot satisfy me! I must go to You, my Father, for all around me I see husks which swine may eat, but I cannot. I must have You.’”

Notice, also, dear Friends, that this is the *prayer of faintness*—“their tongue fails for thirst.” Oh, what blessed prayer comes out of a heart that faints away on the bosom of Christ! What powerful pleading there is in that very act! It is abject weakness making the most mighty appeal it can to Almighty Love. “There, Lord, there is nothing more that I can do. There is no hope for me, in Heaven or on earth, apart from You. Now, if I perish, I perish. But will You—*can* You—let me die?” No, He cannot and He will not let us die, for now comes the step upwards! You have taken one already in that silent heart-prayer.

Now comes *the declaration of God*—“I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.” Is it not something that God hears you? I think that I have frequently had to explain this word by speaking of the poor woman who was so pleased to see her minister. She was very poor and so was her minister. What good, then, did he do her? Did he speak to her a very comforting word? No. The good man did not happen, that day, to be in much of a mood to do so, yet he did that Sister a deal of good, she said. Why? Because he let her talk and she just told him all her troubles—and he looked sympathetic, for that is how he felt—and that was just what she needed! She needed somebody who would listen to her. It is wonderfully condescending on God’s part to listen to us. Many of our complaints are only rubbish, yet He hears them patiently. Sometimes when people begin groaning and grumbling, I wish I was down the next street—but God is so patient and long-suffering that He hears all that His people say. Oh, what things you and I have had to tell Him! We did not like to tell anybody else, but we have felt that we must reveal it to Him. And we have done so very faintly and feebly, yet He has been listening to us—“I the Lord will hear them.”

You know, dear Friends, that you *have only to get a hearing from God* and you know what the consequence will be when your Heavenly Father

knows what things you have need of. He only needs to know and He will surely supply all that you lack. So when you have got a hearing from God, you have got everything! There it is in our text, "I the Lord will hear them." We say that God is "a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God." That is quite true, but it is not a Biblical expression. David said, "O You that hears prayer, unto You shall all flesh come." It is enough for Him to hear it. If He hears it, He will be quite certain to be moved with compassion and to come to the help of His child. It is all well with you, my Brother. It is all well with you, my Sister, though you cannot pray to God in words. Only exhibit your wounds—let their poor dumb mouths plead for you. They have pleaded! God has heard them and He will answer you. You shall yet come up out of the dungeon and from this time forth He will fulfill the promise, "I the God of Israel will not forsake them."

You know what work God had with Jacob that night when the Angel wrestled with him. The trouble with Jacob was that he was so terribly strong—the chief work that had to be done upon him was to make him weak. The Angel wrestled with him and he wrestled with the Angel. He was a strong fellow, yet he never prevailed by his strength—and he would not have prevailed had not the Angel touched him, so that his sinew shrank and down he went. Then, as he fell, he still clung to the Angel and said, "I will not let You go, except You bless me." That fall of his won the day—it was the lame Jacob who took the prey! It is the God of Israel, also, who will bless *you*, but He must first touch you and make the sinew shrink. You must be *nothing* and *nobody* before God will help you. I have observed that whenever God has given success to my own preaching, I have had a time of sore soul-trouble either before it or afterwards. I have noticed that some Brothers who have suddenly come to the front and have apparently been very useful, have generally become top-heavy if the press has not abused them, or if they have not had some trying affliction—and you hear the sad news concerning them that they have gone astray. But when God ballasts the ship well—when He takes down the topsails—when He makes the vessel have a trial trip in stormy weather, then He is often pleased to put many of His saints on board such a ship as that! So, Brother, be thankful if you are a tried man, and believe that God is going to bless you. Be thankful, Brothers, if you have had an experience of this horrible thirst—if your tongue has been made to cleave to the roof of your mouth in anguish of ungratified desire after God. If you have been ground to pieces, like fine flour in the mill, now may you be offered unto God! If you have been slain, now may you be a sacrifice unto the Most High! But there must be the sentence of death in yourselves. There must be a breaking, and a grinding, and a tearing, or else it is not likely that there will be the sweet shining of Jehovah's face and perpetual joy and peace!

I have been all this while trying to fish—I wonder whether, by God's Grace, I have caught the one for whom my hook was baited? Is there anybody here who has not any good thing in himself at all? Is there any poor wretch who feels that he is only fit to be swept up by the devil with

a broom, and to be cast into the fire? Is that how you feel—as if you were the offscouring of all things and, in your own esteem, not worthy for God to tread on—such a thing as never should have been in existence—and, being here, ought to be put out of existence as soon as possible? O you nothing, Christ is willing to be your All-in-All!

O you naked one, here is a garment to cover you! O you hungry one, here is food for you! My Lord seeks after you who are downtrodden, you who lie on the dunghill, forked out and ready to be spread on the field as if you were only so much manure. Still He calls you! Come and trust Him. You have nothing else to trust to. You have no other refuge, so fly to Christ! Fall down before your God, fall flat on your face, man, woman—and then, when the great shell bursts, which you are now dreading—not a fragment of it shall strike you! Your safety lies in casting yourself upon the mercy and Grace of God!

Say, “It must be mercy, great mercy, nothing but mercy, that can meet my case. I am a lost, ruined, undone sinner, but I believe in the great love, Grace and mercy of God in the Person of His dear Son. And now, down I fall, trusting in Jesus crucified.” You are a saved man if there lives one! Trust thus in Jesus and you have, in that very act, passed from death unto life! Therefore, go your way in peace. The Lord who killed you, has made you alive! The Lord who wounded you, has healed you. May His blessing abide upon everyone of you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ZECHARIAH 12:10-14; 13:1, 2.**

Zechariah 12:10. *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of Grace and of supplications.* This is a promise concerning Israel. Long have the Jews rejected the Christ, but the day is coming when they shall acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth to be the promised Messiah. In that day this promise will be fulfilled. God must always give “the Spirit of Grace” before men will pray aright. And wherever Grace is given, there is always true prayer.

10. *And they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.* Discovering that they have rejected the true Messiah, they will be overcome with the most acute grief that was ever endured—grief altogether inconceivable.

11. *In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.* One of the greatest mourning that was ever known was that when Josiah was slain in battle and the people lamented that their best of kings was so early taken away from them. Such shall be the sorrow that shall fall upon repenting Israel.

12. *And the land shall mourn, every family apart.* There shall be universal mourning throughout the whole land, yet it shall be special and particular to each household—“every family apart.”

12-14. *“The family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart. True repentance is the distinct act of each individual. It cannot, as a rule, be performed in the mass. There is a general repentance which, like that of the Ninevites, has a special excellence about it because it affects a whole city or nation, but that is not the kind of repentance which is described here. In this case, the sharpness of personal conviction of sin cuts and wounds the conscience of each individual and there is a bitter cry uttered by each one as if he were the only sinner in the world. Oh, how sincerely you and I would repent if we felt as if we were the only ones who had ever broken God’s Law. Yet such a repentance as that we must feel if we would be personally forgiven.*

Zechariah 13:1. *In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. They shall see their pardon when they have truly seen their sin. When once the foulness of their transgression is perceived, then the fountain of cleansing shall be perceived, too. No man ever knows the preciousness of the God-given remedy till he has felt the force of the terrible disease. No one by faith plunges into the crystal Fountain of perfect cleansing without first lamenting the filthiness which needs to be removed!*

2. *And it shall come to pass in that day, says the LORD of Hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. Where there is pardon, there is sure to be sanctification. The idols must fall and the false prophets must go. We cannot have our sins and have a Savior, too. If we have Christ to blot out our sin, we must have the same Christ to remove sin as to its authority, power and dominion over us!*

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

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”— 230, 544, 379.

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

TWO “I WILLS” IN ISAIAH 41 NO. 2270

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY AUGUST 21, 1892.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 16, 1890.

***“I will open rivers in high places, and a fountain in the midst of the valleys:
I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.”
Isaiah 41:18.***

YOU notice that in this verse, the Lord twice says, “I will,” and in that respect this verse is in harmony with the rest of the chapter. Will the children, when they are at home, find out how many times in this chapter God says, “I will,” or “You shall,” which is to much the same effect?

How greatly I prize a portion of Scripture which is filled with God’s shalls and wills! Everything He says is precious, but His, “I wills,” are peculiarly precious. There are the, “I wills,” of the Psalms, a long list of them—and the, “I wills,” of Christ, a good company. When we come to the, “I wills,” of God, then we get among the precious things, the deep things, the things which minister comfort and strength to the people of God!

We sometimes say, “I will,” but it is in a feeble fashion compared with the way in which God says it. People say, “Must’ is for the king, and so, “I will,” is for the King of kings! It is His prerogative to will. It is His sovereign right to say, “I will.” When we get a chapter like the one that we have been reading, which is full of the, “I wills,” of God, it is worth while to pause for a few moments and just think of what Jehovah’s, “I will,” must mean.

It is an, “I will,” *uttered with deliberation*. James said, “Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.” We say, “I will,” in a hurry—and then we take time to repent of it. We are under excitement, persuasion, or compulsion and we say, “I will,” and we are very sorry afterwards and, perhaps, we are so unfaithful as not to keep our word. But God never speaks under compulsion—He is almighty. God never speaks in a hurry. He has infinite leisure. God never speaks under excitement or persuasion—that were not like a God. His purpose is of old and His decree is from everlasting. And the, “I will,” which is the mouth of the decree is a word that is spoken with wisdom and prudence. Now, when a man speaks a thing prudently and wisely, you believe that he will carry it out if he can. You may have much more confidence with regard to what the *Lord* says, for He has not spoken without due deliberation and, therefore, whenever God says, “I will,” you may be sure that He will perform it.

Next, when God says, “I will,” His resolution is *supported by Omnipotence*. You say, “I will,” but you cannot do what you have promised. Your will is good enough, but you fail because of lack of the means. You say, “I

will, yes, I will," but afterwards you have to meekly say, "I pray you, take this will for the deed, for I find that I have overshot the mark. I have promised what I am unable to perform." Now, that can *never* happen with God. Has He said and shall He not do it? Is anything too hard for the Lord, especially anything He promised to perform? Come, then, dear Friends, if God is Omnipotent, and we know that He is, when He says, "I will," we dare not doubt it, for eternal power goes forth with the Word of His wisdom and it must, yes, it *shall* be done! Whatever doubts we might have had, if it were not God's, "I will," vanish when we come to remember that all things are possible with Him!

Furthermore, when God says, "I will," we should remember that it is *sealed with Immutability*. We change, we are always changing. Made of dust and ashes, we are made of material that continues to change. Therefore, we say, today, "I will," and we mean it. But tomorrow we wish that we had never said, "I will," and the next day we say, "I will *not*." Ah, me, the suicides that have come through resting on the word of a man who was false and proved a traitor to his friend! But God never changes—He is the same yesterday, today and forever. The thing that has gone out of His mouth shall never be reversed. When He once says, "I will," depend on it, He *still* says, "I will"—and till Heaven and earth shall pass away, it will still be, "I will." He is too perfect to change—and being perfect, He cannot change! A changeable being either changes from a worse to a better, in which case he was not perfect before. Or else he changes from a better to a worse, in which case he will not be perfect afterwards. But God, being always perfect, is always the same, never withdrawing His Word, or altering His purpose! Will you not, therefore, believe the unfailing word of an unchanging God? Can you not hang upon it? And when He says, "I will," depend on it that it shall be even so?

Once more, when God says, "I will," it will be *carried out in faithfulness*. He has fulfilled His threats. He never idly utters words of terror without intending to carry them out. And when it comes to promises, rest sure that God never flatters the ear and then deceives the man. If He did not mean to do it, He would not say, "I will." Eternal faithfulness performs what eternal wisdom declares! Shall God lie? Is He a man as you are? Will He deceive? Will He falsely promise and then run from His Word? That is far from Him—and let it be far from us, thus, to blaspheme His name by such a thought! Come, then, child of God, you who know Him, if He has said, "I will help you," He will help you! If He says, "I will strengthen you," He will strengthen you! Believe God without a trace of doubt and, "be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart, all you that hope in the Lord."

Now, all this is meant to introduce my text with its two glorious, "I wills." Let us try and get something out of them. The Lord says, "I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."

I. I propose to apply the text as a sort of general promise to many things and, first, to apply it to THE TRIALS OF SAINTS.

Consider, first, *their temporal trials*. God's people may be hungry and thirsty—and their anxiety may be great. Your cupboard may be bare. The flocks may be cut off from the fold and there may not be any cattle in the stalls, but God can feed you! Though you seek water and there is none, He can open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. Do not distrust the God of Providence. Many of His children have been brought to their last loaf and yet they have not starved. Remember her who had nothing left but a little meal and a little oil—when the Prophet came to her—and yet the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail! Remember him who sat by the brook Cherith—and the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning—and bread and meat in the evening.

Perhaps no miracle will be worked for you—possibly God will feed you without a miracle—and so long as it is done, you will equally praise Him whether the supply is Providential or miraculous. Plead these promises—“Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.” “He shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.” What though there is nothing at present, perhaps by tomorrow morning the Lord may have opened rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of the valleys!

Certainly my text is true in *the spiritual experience of Believers*. Do you know what it is, sometimes, when spiritual things are at a very low ebb—when you cannot find any joy and scarcely any hope—when you look into your own heart and all seems as dry as the earth after a long autumn drought? You have no power, no strength, scarcely any desire! You sit down and say, “I am afraid that I am no child of God. I am given up. I am spiritually dead.” Yet have you ever known, within an hour, the great floods to be let loose and your soul to be full of feeling, full of faith, hope, joy, love? The chariot wheels were taken off and the chariot dragged very heavily. But now, before you were aware, your soul has made you like the chariots of Amminadib! You are leaping, you are laughing for very joy! The Lord has turned your captivity and filled your mouth with laughter, your tongue with singing—and done it all of a sudden, too! God can do things for His people, even wonderful things which they looked not for.

I was noticing that there are in our text four words relating to water. Everything had been dry, before, and there was no water for the thirsty to drink. Now, here you have rivers, fountains, a pool and springs of water! There is a difference in the four words. The first is, “rivers.” “I will open rivers in high places.” There shall come directly from God a rush of mighty Grace, like the streams of flowing rivers! Your poor, dead, dry heart shall suddenly feel that the Waters of Life have come directly from the Throne of God to you! There shall be, “waters to swim in.” You shall have an abundance where before you had nothing!

The next word is, “fountains,” which may be rendered, “wells.” Now, wells are places to which people regularly go for water. They represent the means of Grace. “With joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation.” Well, now, perhaps you have been to the means of Grace and yet obtained no comfort. You have not blamed the preacher, but you have

blamed yourself very much. But, all of a sudden God appears and opens wells in the midst of the valley! Now the service is all full of refreshment. Now you are glad and you no more go home saying, "I thirsted, but I went to the House of the Lord in vain, for I received no comfort." Look what God can do—He can make rivers of Grace flow directly from His throne and He can open wells in the customary use of the means of Grace!

But there is a third word, "I will make the wilderness a pool of water." Here you have the idea of overflowing abundance. God can give you so much joy that you will not know how to hold it all—and you will have to let it be like a pool that overflows its banks! God can give you so much earnestness that you can hardly employ it all in the work that you have to do! He can give you so much nearness to Himself that your heart shall scarcely be able to contain your delight! God promises to make the wilderness, "a pool of water." He does not give you just a drop of Grace, now and then, but He fills up the dry places till they become standing pools!

The fourth word is, "springs." It seems to indicate a perpetual freshness—always something new—new thoughts of Christ, new delights in holy service, new prospects of the world to come, new communion with God. He can make the dry land, "springs of water." He has promised to do so—trust His gracious Word and it shall be fulfilled in your experience even now.

I want God's people to use the text in this way—as God's promise for your temporals and for your spirituals. Oh, you that are in the wilderness and find the sand dry and waterless, go to God and plead His promise! He has said, "I will," and He has said it twice over! Lay hold of an, "I will," with each one of your hands, and come not away from the Throne of Grace till you have received an answer of peace to your petition, "Lord, do as You have said!"

II. Now, secondly, I am going to use the text in another way, not for God's people who are passing through trials, but as it may be applied to THE EXPERIENCE OF CONVERTS. God will for you, my dear Hearers who have been lately converted, open rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of the valleys! He will make your wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water!

Who were these people to whom the Lord spoke? Well, they were *people who were poor and needy*. "When the poor and needy seek water." God will not do much for spiritually rich people. I mean you who *say* you are rich in yourselves and increased in goods, and have need of nothing—you who have all the grace that you need *of your own making*—you who trust in your own arm and sacrifice to your own goodness. There is *nothing* for you in God. His Grace is for the poor and needy! I think that I have some of them here, tonight. They feel as if they have no right to be here. They almost wish that they could get under the seat and hide! They feel so very low, so broken down. It is for you, dear Friends, that God will make rivers and open fountains!

When will He do it? *When they begin to ask Him*. "When the poor and needy seek water." Can you expect God to bless you if you do not seek Him? Your desires must be wide awake. You must be longing after God.

You must cry in your heart, "I will return unto my God. I will seek mercy at His hands. I will plead with Him that I may be His child." Then will the Lord begin to open fountains and rivers for you!

But the time is noted still further. It is not only when they *begin* to seek, but when *they begin silently to plead*. Notice the words, "When their tongue fails for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them." But they could not speak. Their tongue failed them because of their suffering from thirst. Yet says the lord, "I will *hear* them." A glib tongue is bad at praying. When a man prays in his heart, he is often like Moses, slow of speech. A sinner under a sense of sin is scarcely able to speak a word. Frost of the mouth, but thaw of the soul—this is what we need! Their tongue failed them, but their *heart* was speaking! We know that it was, for God says, "I, the Lord, will hear them." "I cannot pray," says one. I am glad that you cannot! God will hear you, now that your tongue fails you. You used to go upstairs and pray for a quarter of an hour, perhaps, such prayer as it was. But now, when you kneel at your bedside, there is nothing but a broken groan or two, and a tear. God will now hear you! When your tongue fails, your heart begins to pray, and God hears you! "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."

But the time mentioned is still more sorrowful—*these people were in abject distress*. It is added, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none." "My day of Grace is past," says one. I wonder whoever told you that lie? As long as you *live*, your day of Grace is not past! Do not believe any such thing, for—

***"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."***

"Ah, well," says one, "I have gone to look for mercy, but there is none." So you think. Now is *the time for Divine interposition*. When you seek water and find none, God will open rivers for you! You remember how Elijah's servant went up to the top of Carmel and look toward the sea—and he came back to the Prophet and said, "There is nothing." But Elijah said, "Go again seven times." And it came to pass at the seventh time that he said, Behold, there arises a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand." When man says, "There is nothing," God comes in and soon there is everything!

He made the world out of nothing and He makes new creatures out of nothing! When you get back to nothing, God has come to everything! The end of the creature is the beginning of the Creator. I may seem to be speaking these words very calmly to you, tonight, but I have within myself the deep persuasion that I am picturing some here who have reached the lowest point in their experience. They are despairing. They feel the sentence of death in their members. Now is the time for God to interpose, for notice how my text breaks in—"When they seek water, there is none." *Then* God says, "*I will*. They cannot do anything, but *I will* open rivers in high places. *I will* make the wilderness a pool of water." What you need is a Divine interposition! You need God to rend the heavens and come down and save you—and He *has come down in the Person of His Son*. Jesus

Christ is that great interposition of God and He has come to open the rivers of Grace and to dig the wells of salvation!

The promise in the text also relates to *those who are in various positions*. There are some who are in very high places. You run up to the very tops of the mountains and you fancy that God cannot reach you there. But He says, "I will open rivers in high places." A river on the top of a mountain is an amazing thing, but God can make it so. However high you have gone, He can reach you. Others of you are ordinary sinners down in the valleys. "Well," says the Lord, "I will open fountains in the midst of the valleys." You shall find water when you are on the hilltop—you shall not have to come down to the valley for it. And if you are in the valley, you shall not have to go up to the mountain for it—it will come just where you are! I like that thought. There are some people who seem to think that we have to go a long way to find Christ, but, indeed, Christ has come to us just where we are! To use an old illustration of mine, our railways companies generally make the station from a half a mile to two or three miles from a town so that you must have a cab or an omnibus in order to get to it. But our Lord Jesus Christ has made a station just where the sinner is! Step into the train, now! The first-class carriage is right before you. You need not run for half an hour to try to get a ticket, for on this line there is "nothing to pay." "Whoever will, let him take the waters of life freely," for it flows at your feet, whether you are on the mountains or in the valleys!

Yes, and to vary the promise still more, the Lord says, "I will make the wilderness a pool of water." Have you seen a wilderness—a large extent of flat country covered with sand and stones? I have crossed such a wilderness on a small scale, where there was no grass, nothing green—just a wild waste without anything growing upon it. As for a stream of water, there is nothing of the kind, not a drop anywhere. God pictures you as being like that barren, dried-up land, and He says that He will turn *you* into a pool of water! Whatever you are, however barren, however worthless, God can transform you, by His Grace, into the very opposite! And, "the dry land," long dry and always likely to be dry, shall be, "springs of water." God can make springs of Grace in you which shall begin to rise and bubble up at once—and shall never cease to flow till you reach the Throne of Glory!

In a word, no condition can be so bad but God can change it. No sin can be so great but God can forgive it. No garment of our life can be so stained but Christ can make it white. How I love to tell you these things! How much more happy would I be if every sinner here believed them and came to Jesus just as he is, and trusted Christ to be everything to him! I cannot stay longer on that point, precious as it is, because I want to stir up the people of God by one other observation.

III. Beloved Friends, this text is true with reference to THE LABORS OR WORKERS FOR GOD. God can change the condition of the plot of ground on which you are at work.

I may be speaking to one here who says, "Mine is a very bad place to work in, for I cannot get the people to come and hear the Gospel. There seems to be no *spirit of hearing*." That is largely true at the present time.

Somehow the people come *here* and have always come here—but look at many of our Churches and Chapels. Why, in many of them there are more pews than people, more spiders than immortal souls! It is a wretched business. One says to me, "You know, Sir, we have had addresses to working men." Another says, "We have had Pleasant Sunday Afternoons." Another has had a batch of fiddlers at play! But the people do not come, for all that! Some who like cheap music and Sunday concerts may be attracted by such means, but people will not be drawn, thus, to worship God! Of course not—can they not do their own fiddling if they want that kind of music? There is nothing in that style of thing to get people to come to a place of worship! There is just now a kind of hardening come over our population—the people do not care to go to a place of worship. But do not give up preaching, my Friend! Do not give up working, you who long for souls to be saved, for God can suddenly give a love for His House and an eagerness to hear the Gospel! He can make the dry land springs of water and open rivers in high places. Only let all ministers preach the old Gospel, preach it earnestly, and preach it simply, and the people will come back again! God will bring them to hear! He has always done so and why should He not do so again?

Another says, "I get the people to hear, but *there is no feeling.*" Well, I too know what it is to have preached in places that have been like icebergs. When I have talked to the people, they have looked like so many images—there has been no stirring them, no moving them. Regular hearers are all to apt to turn into stone and to be unmoved, but oh, you who are trying to do good, never cease from it because people seem to be turned to stone—go on with your work all the same! If the Gospel hammer does not break the rock, today, hammer away until it does!

When the old St. Paul's Cathedral had to be taken down for the present one to be built, Sir Christopher Wren had to remove some massive walls that had stood for hundreds of years. So he had a battering ram, with a great mass of people, working away to break down the walls. I think that for 24 hours they kept right on, and there seemed to be no sign of giving way. The walls were so well built, very different from our modern walls. The structure was like a rock—it could not be stirred. But the battering ram kept on and on and on, blow after blow, stroke after stroke and, at last, the whole mass began to quiver, like jelly, and, by-and-by, over went the massive walls! You have only to keep on long enough and the same thing will happen in your work. The first blows upon the wall were not wasted—they were preparing for the others—and getting the whole structure into a condition of disintegration. And when that was done, down it came, and great was the fall! Work away, Brothers, work away, feeling sure that God will open rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of the valleys! He will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry lands springs of water.

"Well," says one, "what we need in our place is for *the ministry, itself, to be supplied.*" Yes, that is what we need everywhere. If the minister, himself, is dry, what is to be done? Find fault with him and leave him? No, dear Friend, if he is a man of God, pray for him and never rest till the Lord

makes the dry land springs of water! We poor mortals, whom God has called to be preachers, are desperately dependent upon our congregations. I do not say that we rest on you, *first*—our chief dependence must be upon God—but a praying, loving, earnest, wakeful people will keep the minister awake. And when the people decline and there is no life in them, it sometimes happens that the minister gets dry, too. I remember that when Mr. Matthew Wilks was comparing preachers to pens, he said that some of them spluttered, and others did not make any mark at all. "What is to be done with them?" he asked, and then he answered his own question—"Pray the Lord to dip them in the ink." I think that we must pray for all the pens, that God would dip them in the ink again! Oh, for another Baptism of the Holy Spirit, to put more Divine power upon them! Then, when we begin to speak, God will open rivers in high places and make the wilderness a pool of water!

But what is needed, too, is *the same blessing upon the helpers*. What is the preacher to do, what is the Church to do if the workers are half asleep? Sunday school teachers going through their duty with great regularity and no spirituality? People going about with their tracts when they might almost as well go about with Sunday newspapers, for they have no love to the souls of the people? What is the result if we have deacons and Church officers going about without any life or spiritual power? Well do I remember preaching in a certain place where I was told that there was a great spiritual dearth. I preached my best and when I went down from the pulpit, afterwards, there were two deacons standing against the door of the vestry, with their arms folded, and leaning back in a most comfortable attitude. I asked them if they were deacons, and they said, "Yes." I said, "There is no good doing here, I suppose?" They said, "No, none." I said, "I think I know the cause of it." "Do you know the cause of it?" they asked. "Yes," I replied, "I look to the right and I look to the left—and I see it." I do not think that the Brothers liked my remark, but, at the same time, I know that it was an arrow that went home to their hearts, for they became very different men, afterwards, and woke up—and God blessed the place. One sleepy Christian in a Church may do much mischief.

In some businesses, the whole thing is so arranged that if one person goes to sleep, all the machinery goes wrong—and I believe that it is very much so in the Church of God. You have seen a number of men standing in a long line, pitching bricks to one another. Suppose that one of them goes to sleep? There will be a great accumulation of bricks around him, but none of them will get to the other end of the line! Sometimes we get a member of the Church asleep. I would like to hurl half a brick at him, but I suppose that I must not do that, although he makes the whole work stop. No good is done because he is asleep. One says, "I know that Brother." Who is he? Would you mind just giving him a nudge? Put your arm this way and nudge Him so [describing man striking *himself*] and I should not wonder if you will hit the right man! If you awake, perhaps it might be the waking up of one of the most sleepy people in the Church! At any rate, it is always better to take these things to *ourselves* than to pass

them on to anybody else. It is never well to listen for other people—the Scriptural injunction is, "Take heed unto *yourself*."

I pray that all the members of this Church, if they have, any of them, been like dry land, may become springs of water. Then we may look for a *change throughout the whole congregation*. Men and women will cry out, "What must we do to be saved?" There will be plenty of people to be talked to about their souls. We shall have no difficulty in increasing the Church, month by month, with such as shall be saved—and then *all the neighborhood will be transformed*. A living Church, in which God has made living springs of Grace to rise, will soon turn the desert in which it is situated into quite a different region! There is need for gracious work in all the neighborhoods in which any of us live—and great need of it round this region where it was once very much the reverse!

And what part of London is there that might not make a Christian weep tears of blood? Can you pass through this great city without being distressed and alarmed by reason of its ever-increasing sin and its decreasing fear of God? O Friends, these things cannot go on as they are! Something bad will come of it if something good and great is not soon done by the great God of Mercy! Let us cry to Him in private and in public! Let us entreat the stretching out of His arm of Grace and, with our prayers, let us put forth earnest efforts, each one trying to bring another to Christ and never resting—

***"Till all the chosen race
Shall meet around the Throne,
To bless the conduct of His Grace
And make His glories known."***

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

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON ISAIAH 41:1-20.

Verse 1. *Keep silence before Me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment.* God invites the people to argue with Him. He bids them, first, "listen" to Him and then speak to Him. They had been worshipping idols, so the Lord shows them that the idols are nothing and that all worship paid to them is a lie. He begins by asking a question—

2, 3. *Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his feet, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? Who gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow? Who pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet.* These words are supposed to allude to Cyrus who came "from the east," and conquered "the nations," and then did good to the house of Israel. It was God who spoke to Cyrus long before he was born. What idol god has been able to utter any prophecy? Only the Most High who lives in Heaven can foretell things to come! One of the best proofs of our holy religion is to be found in the prophecies which have been fulfilled to the letter in various countries and at different periods. Now, when they dig up

old stones that have been hidden for hundreds of years from the eyes of men, they see the proofs of how God saw into the future and bade His Prophets foretell the things that should be hereafter!

4-7. *Who has worked and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD, am the first, and with the last; I am He. The isles saw it and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came. They helped, everyone, his neighbor; and everyone said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smoothes with the hammer inspired him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved.* A very graphic picture of the making of an idol! The people were afraid of Cyrus, so they began to appeal to their gods. A pretty god it must have been that had to be made by a carpenter! Then the wood had to be covered with gold plates by the goldsmith—and the god would not be complete without the help of a man smoothing with a hammer and a smith smiting upon an anvil! When it was made, they had to solder it to keep it together and they had to get nails to fasten it in its place, lest, like Dagon, it should fall down and be broken. This is nothing but literal truth—yet what sarcasm it is upon idolatry! What good can come of idols that are made by men, idols that cannot move and must be fixed in their places with soldering irons?

8. *But you, Israel, are My servant.* You do not worship idols—you worship Jehovah, the living and true God.

8. *Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham, My friend.* What a title for God to give to a man, "Abraham, My friend"! Could not we also endeavor to get into God's friendship, where Abraham was—to trust and love God much—to talk with Him much, and enjoy high and holy fellowship with Him?

9. *You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called you from the chief men thereof, and said unto you, You are My servant; I have chosen you, and not cast you away.* To many, here, this verse will come home very sweetly. God is your God and you are God's servants. He has chosen you! He will never change His mind—His election is never changed. "I have Chosen you, and not cast you away." And you have chosen Him and you will not cast Him away. By His Grace, you will never leave your God, nor forsake the ways of Christ. May His mercy keep you faithful, even to the end!

10. *Fear you not; for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God.* Where God is, there is no cause for fear—"Fear you not; for I am with you." That is a grand argument! "Be not dismayed; for I am your God." Everything we need lies within the compass of those words.

10. *I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.* Beloved Believer, are you weak tonight? Claim this precious promise—"I will strengthen you." Have you something to do that is quite beyond your strength? Take hold of this comforting Word of God—"I will help you." Are you ready to slip? Do you feel as if you might fall? Lean on this gracious message—"I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." Do not let these precious

pearls lie at your feet to be trod on! Pick them up and wear them—beautify the neck of your faith with them.

11. *Behold, all they that are incensed against you shall be alarmed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with you shall perish.* Your sins, your temptations—everything that would keep you out of Heaven and drive you away from God—the Lord will overcome all these enemies of yours and deliver you!

12, 13. *You shall seek them, and shall not find them, even them that contended with you: they that war against you shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nothing. For I the LORD your God will hold your right hand, saying unto you, Fear not; I will help you.* That is the second time that we have had that precious promise to forbid our fear—first in verse 10, and now in verse 13, "I will help you."

14. *Fear not, you worm Jacob.* You are earthly, groveling, weak like a worm—yet even you need not fear—"Fear not, you worm Jacob."

14. *And you men of Israel; I will help you.* That is the third time that we have had that promise, "I will help you." "Ring that silver bell again," says the Holy Spirit to Isaiah, "let it comfort My tired ones." "I will help you."

14. *Says the LORD, and your Redeemer, the Holy one of Israel.* I was wonderstruck as I looked at this verse, to find it put, "You worm Jacob, I will help you, says the Lord, and your *Goel*," that is the Hebrew word which is translated, "Redeemer." "Your next of kin." Is the next of kin to a worm the Almighty God? Does He undertake to be our Brother, to pay the redemption price for us because He is our Kinsman? So the text says! Let us drink in the comfort of it—"Your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." In order to become our Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, Himself, became "a worm, and no man."

15. *Behold, I will make you a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: you shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and you shall make the hills as chaff.* The Easterns drag a wooden machine over the corn to fetch out the grain from the ear. This is called a corn-drag—and they put teeth in it, similar to the teeth of a harrow. God said that He would turn His Church, His people, into a new corn-drag, with teeth sharp and tearing—and that they should go against their difficulties, which were like mountains, and against their trials, which were like hills—and they would thresh them small and make them to be like chaff.

16. *You shall fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and you shall rejoice in the LORD, and shall glory in the Holy One of Israel.* All difficulty is gone, torn to pieces small as chaff, and then winnowed away, as the chaff is blown from among the heap on the threshing floor! What a promise this is! You who fear God, believe it! Go and practice it and see if God does not make your greatest difficulties utterly disappear. Now come two sweet verses—

17, 18. *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.* See what God can do? Men are thirsty, they have no

water, and lo—all of a sudden—behold rivers, fountains, springs, pools, floods! God does nothing in halves. He is an all-sufficient, overflowing God. When He gives, He gives like a king! He does not measure His gifts of water by the pint and by the gallon, but here you have pools, springs and rivers! When He has given waters, He will give trees to grow by the waters. When God gives a blessing, He makes other blessings to spring out of it.

19. *I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together.* Making a paradise of streams of water and lovely trees, evergreen trees of the most comely aspect and of great variety. See what God can do? Where there is a wilderness, where there were hills and valleys, and all was dry and parched, He makes woods and forests, rivers and fountains! He can do all things. Oh, that we had faith in Him! But we forget Him—we turn not to Him. We look everywhere but to God. We try every method except that of trusting in the living God. Have we a God? If so, why do we act as we sometimes do?

Martin Luther was a very cheerful man, as a rule, but he had terrible fits of depression. He was, at one time, so depressed that his friends recommended him to go away for a change of air, to see if he could get relief. He went away, but he came home as miserable as ever. And when he went into the sitting room, his wise wife, Kate, Catherine von Bora, was sitting there, dressed in black and her children round about her, all in black. "Oh," said Luther, "who is dead?" "Why," she said, "Doctor, have not you heard that God is dead? My husband, Martin Luther, would never be in such a state of mind if he had a living God to trust." He burst into a hearty laugh and said, "Kate, you are a wise woman. I have been acting as if God were dead and I will do so no more. Go and take off your black." If God is alive, why are we discouraged? If we have a God to look to, why are we cast down? Let us rejoice and be glad together, for God will do all that He has promised, for this reason—

20. *That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it.* God wants you to know that He is at work on your behalf. He wants you to so trust Him as to see how His promises can be applied to your case—and what His right hand can accomplish even for you! Let us trust Him tonight with all our hearts!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—30, 992, 488.

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THE FRIEND OF GOD

NO. 1962

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 8, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“You, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen,
the seed of Abraham My friend.”
Isaiah 41:8.*

*“And he was called the Friend of God.”
James 2:23.*

ABRAHAM was called the Friend of God because he was so. The title only declares a fact. The Father of the faithful was, beyond all men, “the Friend of God,” and the head of that chosen race of Believers whom Jesus calls His friends. The name is rightly given. We read that “whatever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And we may be much more sure that whatever name the *Spirit of God* has given to any man, that is his proper and right name.

James says not only that this was Abraham’s *name*, but that he was called by it. The name does not occur in his life as given in the Book of Genesis and it has been questioned whether it occurs anywhere else in Holy Scripture, for many have preferred to translate the word in Isaiah and in 2 Chronicles 20:7, as, “lover,” or, “beloved,” rather than, “friend.” However this may be, it is quite certain that among the Jewish people, Abraham was frequently spoken of as, “the Friend of God.” At this present moment, among the Arabs and other Muslims, the name of Abraham is not often mentioned, but they speak of him as *Khalil Allah*, or, the “Friend of God,” or more briefly as *El Khalil*, “the Friend.” Those tribes which boast of their descent from him through Ishmael, or through the sons of Keturah, greatly reverence the Patriarch and are known to speak of him under the name which the Holy Spirit here ascribes to him. It is a noble title, not to be equaled by all the names of greatness which have been bestowed by princes, even if they should all meet in one. Patents of nobility are mere vanity when laid side by side with this transcendent honor.

I think I hear you say, “Yes, it was indeed a high degree to which Abraham reached—so high that *we* cannot attain unto it. It would be idle for us to *dream* of being accounted friends of God.” My Brothers and Sisters, I entreat you, think not so! We, also, may be called friends of God—and the object of this morning’s discourse will be to excite in you the desire to know this matchless friendship! Let me read to you the words of our blessed Lord in the 15th chapter of John—“You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants, for the ser-

vant knows not what his lord does, but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father, I have made known unto you.” It is, then, within reach! Jesus, Himself, invites us to live and act and be His friends!

Surely, none of us will neglect any gracious attainment which lies within the region of the possible. None of us will be content with a scanty measure of Grace when we may have life more abundantly. I trust you are not so foolish as to say, “If I may but get to Heaven by the skin of my teeth, I shall not care about what I am on the road.” This would be wicked talk and, if you speak thus, I am afraid you will never get to Heaven at all! He that is being prepared for Glory is always hungry after the largest measure of Grace. He who is born of God desires his Father’s love while he is yet a child and has no idea of waiting for it till he comes of age and enters upon his estate. Let me have as much of Heaven, even now, as I can have! Yes, let me *now* be the friend of God!

The other day there landed on the shores of France a boat full of people soaked with rain and saltwater. They had lost all their luggage and had nothing but what they stood upright in, but they were glad, indeed, to have been saved from a wreck. It was well that they landed at all! And when it is again my lot to cross to France, I trust I shall put my foot on shore in a better plight than that! I would prefer to cross the Channel in comfort and land with pleasure. There is all this difference between being “saved so as by fire” and having “an abundant entrance ministered unto us” into the Kingdom of God. Let us enjoy Heaven on the road to Heaven!

Why not? Instead of being fished up as castaways, stranded upon the shores of mercy, let us take our passage on board the well-appointed Liner of Free Grace! Let us, if possible, go in the first cabin, enjoying all the comforts of the way and having fellowship with the great Captain of our Salvation. Why should we think it enough to be a mere stow-away? I would stir you up at this time, dear Friends, to aspire after the best gifts! Grow in Grace! Increase in love to God and in nearness of access to Him, that the Lord may at this good hour stoop down to us as our great Friend and then lift us up to be known as His friends!

I have many things to say to you this morning and, therefore, I must speak upon each one with great brevity. I am half afraid that I may be driven to a brevity which will render me a little obscure. I ask you, first, to notice *the title to be wondered at*—“Friend of God.” When we have meditated and marveled, I shall then speak to you under a second head—*the title vindicated*—it was a fit and proper title for Abraham and we can see it to be so. Thirdly, I shall speak of *the title sought after*. May we all win it and wear it! After all this, I shall conclude with a few words upon *the title used for practical purposes*. May the Holy Spirit help me graciously at this hour!

I. First, may we be Divinely instructed while we look at the name, “Friend of God,” and regard it as A TITLE TO BE WONDERED AT.

Admire and adore *the condescending God* who thus speaks of a *man* like ourselves and calls him His friend! The heavens are not pure in *His* heart and He charged His angels with folly—and yet He takes a man and

sets him apart to be His friend! What is man, O Lord, that You are mindful of him? Or the Son of Man, that You visit him? Who among our sinful race can be worthy of the friendship of Jehovah? Only His Grace can make it possible for any man to walk with God in high companionship.

In this case the august Friend displays His pure love, since He has nothing to gain. Surely God does not need friends. You and I *need* friendship. We cannot always lead a self-contained and solitary life—we are refreshed by the companionship, sympathy and advice of a like-minded comrade. We are very foolish if we commit ourselves to a host of acquaintances, but we are wise if we have found a faithful friend and know how to make use of him. Friendship is one of the sweetest joys of life! Many spirits might have failed beneath the bitterness of trial if they had not found a friend. No such necessity can be supposed of the all-sufficient God.

We know how sweet it is to mingle the current of our life with that of some choice bosom friend. Can God have a friend? Can He also find it in His heart to unbosom Himself to another? Can the secret of Jehovah be with a frail creature? Does the Holy One desire to commune outside of Himself? It cannot be that He is solitary. He is, within Himself, a whole, not only of unity, but of tri-personality—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and herein is fellowship enough! Yet, behold, in infinite condescension—the Lord deigns to seek the acquaintance of His own *creature*, the love of a *man*, the friendship of Abraham! I dare not go so far in speech as my thoughts would lead me—it is certainly a great marvel that the Creator of the heavens and the earth should look to Ur of the Chaldees for a man and should separate him to Himself, to tutor and train him till He made him His friend—an honor which even the cherubim and seraphim have never reached!

Friendship cannot be all on one side. In this particular instance, it is intended that we should know that while God was Abraham's friend, this was not all, but Abraham was God's friend. He received and returned the friendship of God! From one point of view, Abraham was always the object of God's pity and mercy, but, by His Grace, the Lord also lifted him into another condition in which he became the object of the Lord's complacency and delight. God gave Abraham His heart and Abraham gave God his heart. They were knit together in love. To use expressive Scriptural words, the soul of Abraham was bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord, his God. Not only did the Lord speak to Abraham as He did to Moses, "face to face, as a man speaks unto his friend," but He continually treated Abraham as His friend and communed with him as such—

***"Stupendous Grace of the Most High!
What has the Lord on worms bestowed,
Called to the council of the sky
And numbered with the friends of God!"***

Friendship creates a measure of equality between the persons concerned. I say not that absolute equality is at all necessary to friendship, for a great king may have a firm friend in one of the least of his subjects. But the tendency is towards an equalizing of the two friends—the one comes down gladly and the other rises up in sympathy. Friendship begets

fellowship and this bridges over the dividing gulf. There can be no idea of equality between God, the Lord, and man the servant. Indeed, it is only as we see our true relation as servants that we can be friends. Did not Jesus say, "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you"? We must keep our place, or we shall not be friends. Yet see how the Lord comes down to Abraham and communes with him at his table while He lifts up Abraham to His own state, so that he sees the things of God, yes, even sees with gladness, the day of our Lord Jesus Christ! When we say of two men that they are friends, we put them down in the same list, but what condescension on the Lord's part to be on terms of friendship with a *man*!

Again I say, no nobility is comparable to this. Parmenio was a great general, but all his fame in that direction is forgotten in the fact that he was known as the friend of Alexander. He had a great love for Alexander as a man, whereas others only cared for him as a conqueror and a monarch. And Alexander, perceiving this, placed great reliance upon Parmenio. Abraham loved God for God's sake and followed Him fully—and so the Lord made him His *confidant* and found pleasure in manifesting Himself to Abraham and in trusting to him His sacred Oracles. O Lord, how excellent is Your lovingkindness, that You should make a *man* Your friend!

I also want you to note *the singular excellence of Abraham*. How could he have been God's friend had not Grace worked wonderfully in him? A man is known through his friends—you cannot help judging a person by his companions. Was it not a great venture for God to call any man His friend? We are led to judge the character of God by the character of the man whom He selects to be His friend. Yes, and though a man with like passions with us, and subject to weaknesses which the Holy Spirit has not hesitated to record, yet Abraham was a singularly admirable character! The Spirit of God produced in him a deep sincerity, a firm principle and a noble bearing. Although a plain man, dwelling in tents, the Father of the Faithful is always a right royal personage. A calm dignity surrounds him and the sons of Heth and the kings of Egypt feel its power.

His character is well balanced. He is what is commonly called an all-around man. He walks before God and is perfect in his generation, so that God is not ashamed to be called his God. I might almost say of Abraham's general life that, like the Lord, he was light and in him was no darkness at all. Of course I only use the expression in the sense intended by our Savior, when He spoke of the whole body being full of light, "having no part dark" (Luke 11:36). Father Abraham is a man fit to be the head of the believing family! His quiet son, Isaac, is like a valley, above which his father rises like an Alp in the greater strength of his character. He is equally superior to his notable grandson, Jacob, great personality as Jacob is. There is a fuss, worry and worldly craft about Jacob which somewhat beclouds his undoubtedly great faith, but you do not see this in Abraham—he moves majestically along his course—shining like the sun in mid-Heaven, before whom even clouds are made into chariots of glory!

I say not that Abraham was worthy to be called the Friend of God in the sense of *merit*, but I do say that the Grace of God had made him meet to

be a partaker of fellowship with the God of Light. While he was justified by his faith, the Lord's calling him just was also justified by his works. James asks, "Was not Abraham, our father, justified by works when he had offered Isaac, his son, upon the altar?" Indeed he was—by this great deed of *obedience*, Abraham proved to be in a right state before God! His justification was justified. God was just, even in a legal sense, in declaring such a man to be righteous, for righteous he evidently was. Oh that the sanctifying Spirit may prove in us the truth of our faith by the holiness of our works!

Follow me while I note some of the points in which this Divine friendship showed itself. *The Lord often visited Abraham.* Friends are sure to visit one another. We read, "The Word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision." "The Lord appeared unto Abram." And again, "The Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and He sat in the tent door, in the heat of the day." Three mysterious persons came to Abraham and he entertained them in his tent under the tree and provided a banquet for them. And Abraham waited at the table. Was he not honored above all men to entertain God, Himself? The Lord sojourned with the Patriarch as in a strange land and heard the prayers and praises of His servant day by day. On the other hand, Abraham was prompt to build an altar unto the Lord and, besides this, he had his chosen spot for private communion with God, for we read, "Abraham get up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord." Often did the great Lord and His trustful servant draw near unto each other.

In consequence of these visits of friendship paid to Abraham, *secrets were disclosed.* The Lord informed Abraham as to His design concerning the Canaanites who were ultimately to be destroyed, but their iniquity was not yet full. He revealed to him the birth of Isaac and His intent that the Covenant blessing should run in the line of the child born according to promise. And when He had determined to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, the Lord said to Himself, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" I suppose it is but a gloss, but Philo quotes this text as from the Septuagint and puts it thus—"Shall I hide this thing from Abraham, My Friend?" The present copies of the Septuagint say, "Abraham, My servant," but the other reading is a very natural one. It was a special proof of Divine friendship that the Lord would not execute judgment till He had heard what the Patriarch might say upon it. Abraham, on his part, had no secrets, but laid bare his heart to the inspection of his Divine Friend. Visits were received, secrets were made known and thus friendship grew.

More than that, *compacts were entered into.* On certain grand occasions we read, "The Lord made a Covenant with Abram." Once, with solemn sacrifice, a light passed between the divided portions of the victims. At another time it is written that God swore by Himself, saying, "Surely, blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." The two friends grasped hands and pledged their good faith. Here was a faithful God and faithful Abraham bound in an immovable Covenant! God trusted Abraham, for He said, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." And Abra-

ham knew his God and trusted Him without suspicion—and thus there was firm friendship between them.

This friendship resulted in *the bestowal of innumerable benefits*. The life of Abraham was rich with mercies. We read, “And Abraham was old and well stricken in age: and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things.” Friends bless their friends, or at least wish they could do so. Abraham’s Almighty Friend denied him no good thing. Abraham was rich, but his riches were blessed. We may say of him, “The gold of that land was good.” He was singularly favored in all things to which he set his hands. Jacob, comparing himself with his grandfather, said, “Few and evil are the days of your servant.” And his life was certainly acted out upon a far lower level than that of the first of the three great fathers of the chosen seed. The Lord is a Friend who can never know a limit in blessing His friends! Having loved His own, He loves them to the end. To Abraham, through the Grace of his Divine Friend, difficulties were blessings, trials were blessings and the sharpest test of all was the most ennobling blessing!

Since Abraham was God’s friend, God *accepted his pleas and was moved by his influence*. Friends always have an ear for friends. When Abraham pleaded with God for Sodom, the Lord patiently listened to his renewed pleading. How instructive is that story of the Patriarch’s pleading for Sodom! How humbly he speaks!—“I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, even I that am but dust and ashes.” Yet how boldly he pleads! He ventures to say, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” The strain of his pleading is worthy of special note. It was not an intercession for Sodom so much as an expostulation with God—friend with Friend. If we were pleading for London, we would naturally appeal to God’s mercy, but Abraham takes the bolder course of pleading Divine Justice. In fact, his plea is not only for Sodom, but for God, Himself—“That be far from You to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from You.” As much as if he were more earnest to prevent the name of God from being dishonored by what might look like an injustice, than he was, even, for the saving of the guilty people!

This was a bold stroke. He pleaded rather as a friend of God than as a friend of Sodom—and the Lord recognized to the fullest the force of his friendly appeal! Lot was rescued and Zoar was spared in answer to that prayer; just as Ishmael had been endowed with earthly blessings in response to the pleading, “O that Ishmael might live before You!” And just as the household of Abimelech had been healed in answer to Abraham’s supplication.

There was also between these friends *a mutual love and delight*. Abraham rejoiced in Jehovah! He was his shield and his exceedingly great reward. And the Lord, Himself, delighted to commune with Abraham. The serenity of the Patriarch’s life was caused by his constant joy in God. I cannot now enter into this choice subject for lack of time.

Observe, however, that this friendship was maintained with *great constancy*. The Lord never forsook Abraham. Even when the Patriarch erred, the Lord remembered and rescued him. He did not cast him off in old age.

Until he was laid in the Cave of Machpelah, God was his God. Yes, and He is his God at this day, for did He not proclaim Himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob? Abraham lives and God is still his God! Constancy is also seen on the human side of this renowned friendship—Abraham did not turn aside to worship any false God, neither did the Lord turn away from the man of His choice.

More than that, the Lord kept His friendship to Abraham by *favoring his posterity*. That is what our first text tells us. The Lord styled Israel, even rebellious Israel, “The seed of Abraham, My friend.” You know how David sought out the seed of Jonathan and did them good for Jonathan’s sake. Even so does the Lord love Believers who are the seed of believing Abraham—and He still seeks out the children of Abraham, His friend, to do them good. In the latter days He shall save the literal Israel—the natural branches of the olive which, for a while, have been broken off, shall be grafted in again. God has not forgotten His friendship to their father, Abraham, and, therefore, He will return in love to Abraham’s seed and again be their God.

Thus I have glanced at sufficient facts to cause this title of, “The Friend of God,” to be wondered at. You have all admired the friendship of Damon and Pythias. Behold here a greater marvel! The friendship of the Lord God with Abraham—a friendship in which Abraham gave more than his own life in proof of his fidelity—and the Great God still surpassed Him in faithfulness!

II. And now let us notice THE TITLE VINDICATED. Abraham was the Friend of God in a truthful sense. There was great propriety and fullness of meaning in the name as applied to him.

First, *Abraham’s trust in God was implicit*. To show what I mean, I will bring before you the Patriarch, Job. Now Job was a grand Believer—under some aspects he has “attained to the first three”—but Job had a controversy with God and found it hard to think that the Lord dealt justly with him. He was able, despite all questions, to say, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,” but he was much tossed about and tumbled up and down in his soul—and those three friends of his suggested no end of doubts. Their philosophy worried him and Job was not so fully established in the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty as he might have been. Abraham had no such controversy—“he staggered not.” David, too, was sometimes plagued with unbelief, so that he almost came to infidel conclusions. He was perplexed to know how it was that the wicked prospered while he, himself, was chastened every morning. He descended into the mists of the valley, but Abraham habitually walked the hilltops. Bathing his forehead in the sunlight of Jehovah’s love, Abraham dwelt beyond all questions and mistrusts. O happy man, to know no skepticism but heroically to believe!

There is a blessed ignorance which my soul covets. To know is not always gain. Fool that I am, I have too often eaten the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. I wish that I could forget all that has ever been told me which suggests a doubt of my great Lord and His faithful Word. I will forget, if I can, all the thoughts of man, for they are vain—I

am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified! Abraham possessed that higher knowledge which treads unbelief beneath its feet as unworthy even to be argued down! He was a perfect child towards God and, therefore, a complete man. Unless you are converted and become as little children, you shall in no way enter into friendship with God, for this is God's chief requirement in His friends—that they shall entertain no doubts of Him, but unquestioningly believe Him. Abraham “staggered not at the promise through unbelief,” for he knew that what the Lord had promised He was also able to perform.

Next, there was joined to this implicit trust a *practical confidence* as to the accomplishment of everything that God had promised. He went childless for many a day and the temptation came to him and, for a moment prevailed with him, that he must use human means to effect the Divine promise. But even then he did not doubt that the promise would be effected. His great mistake plainly showed that he believed the promise would be fulfilled—the fault lay in his interference with the Divine method of fulfillment! When he was commanded to slay his son, he never doubted that God would keep His promise—he reckoned that God was able to raise up Isaac from the dead, from which he also received him in a figure. Faith is to credit contradictions and to believe impossibilities when Jehovah's Word is to the front. If you and I can do this, then we can enter into friendship with God, but in no other way, for distrust is the death of friendship! If the Lord brings a man near to Himself, it is absolutely necessary that, at the very least, there should be perfect confidence on the man's part. “He that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” If you think God can lie, you cannot be His friend—you are dividing your interest from the Lord's interest and committing a breach of friendship when you distrust. Between man and man, confidence may be unduly placed, but towards God, you may carry it to the utmost and know no hesitancy. Believe without limit and *then* shall you enjoy fellowship with the Lord!

Next to this, *Abraham's obedience God was unquestioning*. Whatever God bade him do, he did it promptly and thoroughly. When the Lord said to him, “Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you,” he went forth, not knowing where he went. And when the Lord bade him go to the unknown mountain and offer up his son for a burnt-offering, he rose early in the morning and through three days of sore travail he journeyed to the place where his faith must be tested. When both moral and parental instincts might have held him back, he went onward, feeling that it was not his to question when once the command was clear. Jehovah's will to him was law. Not everyone has yet learned that it is God who is the Author of all law and that it is His will which makes a certain course to be right—and the contrary of it to be wrong. He was God's servant and yet His friend and, therefore, he obeyed as seeing Him that is invisible and trusting Him whom he could not understand.

Abraham's desire for God's glory was uppermost at all times. He did not what others would have done, because he feared the Lord. I think that

Abraham comes out grandly when he had pursued the kings who had plundered the cities of the plain. He overcame them and recovered all their spoils. When Melchizedek met him as the priest of the Most High God, Abraham at once gave him tithes of all. But when the king of Sodom proposed that Abraham should keep all salvage that he had taken and only restore to him the persons who had been captured, it was grand of Abraham not to touch a particle of the prey, but to say, "I will not take from a thread even to a shoe lace. I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich." He did not want that a petty prince, or, indeed, *anybody*, should boast of enriching Abraham! He trusted solely in his God and though he had a perfect right to have taken the spoils of war which were his by capture, yet he would not touch them lest the name of his God should be in the least dishonored.

Abraham's communion with God was constant. O happy man, that dwelt on high while men were groveling at his feet! What bliss he knew in those morning communings with God! What peace he felt all day long in the tent and in the plain, since he walked before the Lord and was perfect towards Him! Whether with the Bedouin or with his own servants, you see the man of God rather than the sheik—and the friend of God rather than the prince. Oh, that you and I may be cleansed to such a pure, holy and noble life that we, too, may be rightly called the friends of God!

III. Thirdly, dear Friends, you will have patience with me while I stir you up to regard this name as THE TITLE TO BE SOUGHT AFTER. Oh, that we may get to ourselves this good degree, this diploma, as, "Friend of God!"

Do you wish to be a friend of God? Well, then, first you must *be fully reconciled to Him*. Of course you cannot remain His enemy and be His friend—that is clear enough. If you are pardoned through the sacrifice of Jesus. If you are justified by His righteousness. If you are regenerated by His Spirit, you are no longer God's enemy, but that will not entitle you to be called the Friend of God. It *will* entitle you to call God your Friend and your Helper, but you must go further than that, if you would be His friend. Love must be created in your heart! Gratitude must beget attachment and attachment must cause delight! You must rejoice in the Lord and maintain close communion with Him.

To be friends, *we must exercise a mutual choice*—the God who has chosen you must be chosen by you. Most deliberately, heartily, resolutely and undividedly you must choose God to be your God and your Friend. Beloved, there can be no friendship between you and God without your own full consent, nor without your ardent desire. What do you say to this? If sin is pardoned, all ground of enmity is gone—but now Grace must come in to reign through righteousness unto eternal life—and bring you into a condition of tender love and fervent desire towards the Lord our God.

But even then you have not gone far enough. If we are to be the friends of God, there must be a *conformity of heart*, will, design and character to God. Can two walk together except they are agreed? Will God accept as His friend one who despises holiness, who is careless in obedience, who has no interest in the purposes of Divine Love, no delight in the Gospel of

Christ? Beloved, the Holy Spirit must make us like God or else we cannot be friends of God! We must love Jesus the Son, or we cannot love the Father! We cannot rise to the standard of friends of God if self is our ruling force. God is not selfish and He is not the friend of the selfish. Unless we love what God loves and hate what God hates, we cannot be His friends. Our lives must, in the main, run in parallel lines with the life of the gracious, holy and loving God, or else we shall be walking contrary to Him and He will walk contrary to us.

If we have got as far as that, then the next thing will surely follow—there must be *a continual communion*. The friend of God must not spend a day without God and he must undertake no work apart from his God. Oh, to live *with* God and *in* God and *for* God and *like* God! You cannot be a friend of God if your communion with Him is occasional, fitful, distant, broken. If you only think of Him on Sundays or at sacraments, you cannot be His friend! Friends love each other's society—the friend of God must abide in God, walk with God—and then he shall dwell at ease. What do you say to this? Has the Grace of God made your feet like hinds' feet to stand on such high places? He can do it. Let us seek after the blessing.

Brothers and Sisters, if we are to be the friends of God, we must be *co-partners with Him*. He gives over to us all that He has—and friendship with God will necessitate that we give to Him all that we have. It has been well said that if God is ours, we cannot be poor because God has all and we have all in having God. On the other hand, the cause of God should not be poor if we can make it rich—and His work should never be in straits if we can find supplies. If we are, indeed, the Lord's friends, we count His cause our cause, His work our work—and we throw all that we have into a Joint Stock Bank with the Great All-in-All.

Friendship, if it exists, will breed *mutual delight*. I cannot explain to you the joy that God has in His people—we shall know that, by-and-by, but He calls His Church His Hephzibah and He says, "My delight is in her." I believe our Lord takes infinite delight in a soul which He has new-created and which He has fashioned after His own likeness. He was glad to see man at the first and yet, afterwards, it saddened Him that He had made man. But the Lord is always glad to see the new-created man and He never repents that He has made him upon the face of the earth. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him. I am sure if we are God's friends, our greatest joy is to draw near to God, even to God our exceeding joy. I have sometimes wished that I had nothing else to do but to dwell with God in prayer, praise and preaching. If it were not for the thousand worries and cares which come to me in connection with the lesser matters which arise out of the weaknesses of His Church and people, what a happy life mine would be! Indeed, I do not complain, but I only mean that holy service in constant fellowship with God is Heaven below.

Alas, one has to come down from the Mount of the Transfiguration and meet the lunatic child and the quarrelsome scribes at the bottom of the hill! Our delight is in God. "Yes, my own God is He." He is my All-in-All. Whatever comes from Him is perfumed with myrrh and aloes and cassia. Even His very threats ring like music in the ears of them that love Him!

There is nothing that He does but we will take delight in it. We come, at length, to love even the rod which He yields—the blows of such a faithful Friend are infinitely better than the kisses of our deceitful enemy. The cross which Jesus lays upon us is a light burden because we delight in Him. The God of Love has our love and He has become the light of our delight. He rejoices over us with singing and we rejoice before Him with the voice of melody.

But, Brothers and Sisters, I do not mean to go any further, for we must not tell the secrets of love in the open streets. I see a curtain—a veil shrouding the Holy of Holiest—I dare not lift that veil. Into the Most Holy Place, ordinary worshippers cannot come. Neither can they look therein till the Lord anoints their eyes and purges their spirits. O Lord, reveal Yourself to the half-opened eyes of Your people! Within that curtain there are choice manifestations, secret witnesses and ravishments of supreme delight of which I must not speak because I feel towards these things as Paul felt concerning that which he saw and heard in Paradise! He said it would be unlawful for a man to utter them! Beloved, may you know these special joys by personal experience, even as he did who is called, “Friend of God!”

IV. I have done when I have said a word or two upon the last point which is THE TITLE TO BE UTILIZED for practical purposes. The practical purposes are just these.

First, *here is a great encouragement to the people of God.* See what possibilities lie before you. The other Sabbath morning I tried to say something about the *future* possibilities of saints, since he that was faithful with his pound was made a ruler over ten cities [*The Servants and the Pounds*, Sermon #1969, Volume 33.] It does not yet appear what we shall be—we have not even the beginning of an idea of what we shall be in the next world if we are found faithful to our Master here, nor what the Glory will be that shall transfigure us in the day of the coming of Christ—and during the thousand years of His glorious reign on the earth.

But I want you now to notice the prize of your high calling in this life. You may become the friends of God and may be so manifestly in league with Him that men may call you the friends of God. How few attain to this! Do you know one such person? Let your eyes travel over all the Christian people you know and tell me how many might be called the friends of God. I know one such man. I will not mention his name. I fear he may not be long on earth, for he is well stricken in age. He is a man who has trusted God, walked with God and been faithful to God and has, in consequence, been greatly honored of God to carry on a vast work of usefulness.

I wish I might grow to be like he, but I feel a mere babe in his presence! He is a rare man. Why are there not more such? Because God’s arm is shortened? No, but because our iniquities hide Him from us. We might be and we *ought* to be such men and women that those who know us at home and in business would discover us to be the friends of Jesus. I would like, as a preacher, to have it said of me that I maintained the Glory of my Lord and defended the doctrines of His Cross—and was the friend of the old Gospel while others were gadding after novelties. In some form or

other we should aspire after this heavenly friendship. See the possibility that lies within your reach—and make it a reality at once!

Next, *here is solemn thought for those who would be friends of God.* A man's friend must show himself friendly and behave with tender care for his friend. A little word from a friend will pain you much more than a fierce slander from an enemy. Remember how the Savior said, "It was not an enemy; then I could have borne it: but it was you, a man My equal, My acquaintance." "The Lord your God is a jealous God" and if He brings any of us so near to Him as to be His friends, then His jealousy burns like coals of juniper that have a most vehement flame! He will save you, Brothers and Sisters, despite a thousand imperfections, but He will not call you His friend unless you are exceedingly careful to please Him in all things.

Shall we draw back from the honor because of the responsibility? No, we delight in the responsibility! We thirst to be well-pleasing to God. Though our God is a consuming fire, we aspire to dwell in Him! To our new nature this fire is its element! Even now we pray that it may refine us and consume all our dross and tin. We would gladly be baptized with the fire baptism. We wish nothing to be spared which ought to be consumed, or which can be consumed. We accept friendship with God on His own terms. I tremble while I speak. We are willing to bear *anything* which will make us one with God!

The Spirit of God is the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning—do you know what you ask when you pray to be filled with Him? I trust you will reply, "Be it what it may, I desire to feel that heavenly influence which can make me, forever, the friend of God."

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
James 2:14-26; John 15:9-17.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—220, 770, 811.**

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THE BLIND BEFRIENDED

NO. 1310

A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 9, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not: I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.”
Isaiah 42:16.

This promise is not made to every blind man, or to all sorts of blind people, for there are some blind people whom God does not lead. There is only a peculiar sort of blind people to whom this promise is given, that He will guide them and not forsake them. If you go outside the Tabernacle, take the first turn on the left and walk down what is called the St. George's Road till you come to the end, you may see asylums built for three sorts of blind people. On your right hand you will have the Blind School. That is for the physically blind—those who have lost the sight of these outward eyes. On the left hand you will see the Bethlehem Hospital. That is for the mentally blind, who have lost the inner sight and are in the more unhappy state of lunacy. Then straight before you, you will see the St. George's Roman Catholic Cathedral. That is for the *spiritually* blind, whose case is all the more pitiable, because these blind people have blind *leaders*, and their deluded souls are prescribed for by physicians who foster their delusions.

Now, the promise of Divine guidance is not addressed to any of these. It is not necessarily given to the physically blind, for, alas, some of them, in addition to their loss of natural sight, are without a sight of Christ. Nor is it given to the mentally blind, for some of them, before they lost their reason, had made ill use of it and had despised the Savior. Neither is it made to the spiritually blind, for strong delusion is upon them that they should believe a lie and, alas, they wander in the light as in the darkness, and grope like the blind at noonday.

There is, however, a fourth kind of blindness which you, who are genuine Christians, will attribute to yourselves. A painful experience has made it clear to you. The promise is made to the confessedly, the *consciously* blind—and I shall try to show that this fitly describes every Christian! Every Believer in Christ is a witness of that “judgement for which Christ came into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind” (John 9:39). It is to him and to such as him, that the Lord has said, “I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not: I will lead them in paths that they have not known.”

I. Our first enquiry shall be, WHO ARE THEY? Who are these blind people? We have already said they are *consciously blind people* and they confess that they were once totally blind. Years gone by, before they knew the Savior, they knew nothing aright. Before the light from Heaven shone

upon them they were in the gross darkness of their natural state. Now, it is not every man that *knows* that he is, by nature, in the dark—and when he *does* know it, he becomes one of the blind to whom the Lord makes this promise!

The Pharisees in Christ's day were as blind as bats. But they said, "We see." "Therefore," said Christ, "your sin remains." They were the very people whom it was hard to save because they were a seeing people in their own estimation. But the man who has been converted knows, now, that there was no light in him by nature, that he did not understand anything aright, that he put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light, and light for darkness. He knows that in him—that is in his flesh—there was no good thing, but all manner of corruptions, tendencies towards evil, envy of mankind and hatred of God.

Soul, have you ever seen your own darkness? Have you ever seen that Nature's light is nothing better than midnight? Have you ever been made to see that, as it were, through Adam's Fall, you were plunged into the state of the blind and could not possibly find your way? Well, if you are of that sort, the promise is made to you! These blind people, knowing their infirmity and feeling their privation, recognize that *what they thought was sight, before, was all delusion*. Ah, there was a time with me when I thought I was righteous. And as I looked upon myself I saw fair white linen upon my loins, but now I know that it was my blindness that made me think I was fully dressed when I was naked. I thought I had much goods and many treasures.

I used to go from case to case to inspect my jewels. I would gladly persuade myself that I was rich. But now I see that I was in the delirium of sin and, therefore, flattered myself that I was rich when I was poor. I thought then, too, that I was happy. There was a mirth and a frothy joy which I thought well worth the having. But now I call that joy, misery, which is sinful, and that mirth to be wretchedness, which is apart from God. Now our eyes are open to see that we did not see and to discover that it was all dark, and yet we thought it light! Phantoms passed before us—mere shapes of things that were not—but we counted these to be substantial realities.

Dear Hearer, have you discovered that those bright eyes of yours which you used to possess, which made you see such righteousness in yourself and such pleasure in sin, were, after all, blind eyes and that you did not see at all, but were duped and deluded, and under the witchcraft of Satan, fascinated by the world and beguiled by your own corrupt heart? Well, if it is so, you are one of those blind people who confess their blindness, to whom the promise is most graciously made. But I think I hear you say, "You are telling us rather of a blindness that we used to be afflicted with than of one from which we are now suffering." Well, the figure will not run on all fours. We must use it, however, to set forth *the present truth* and this is as it ought to be used.

Surely, the description, "blind," may well be applied to the Christian for this reason—that *now he does not expect to see that upon which he builds his hope*. All that he sees is nothing to him! That which is to him substantial and real is that which he believes. If you ask any Believer what he

rests his hope upon, he will tell you that it is upon an *unseen* Christ, "whom having not seen we love." He will tell you that there is a promise, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." And he has realized the sweetness of that word. He does not rest his confidence on a crucifix which he can see with his eyes, but on the Savior who is not here—for He is risen and ascended into Heaven! He does not rest upon a *priest* whose voice he can hear—a man like himself—his confidence is in another Priest who has gone within the veil and entered into Glory!

He depends no longer upon his own doings. These he can see, but what he sees of them makes him despondent. He dares not rest in his own works—he rests in the works of Another who has gone up to the Throne of God and carried a matchless righteousness into Jehovah's Presence. He will tell you that he does not even depend upon his own *feelings*—he is very conscious that they are fickle—they change like the weather. As one day we have a little bright sunshine and, perhaps, in an hour we have a hailstorm, and by-and-by are brought back to the very cold of winter, so is it with our feelings. Our experience is always varying and the man that knows himself aright dares not trust in his feelings, nor rely upon his experiences. No, he rests in the feelings of Him who sweat great drops of blood in the garden! His confidence is in the anguish of One who was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death, and not in his own anguish.

He rests in the death and resurrection—in the wounds and in the triumphs—not of himself in any respect, but of Christ whom, having not seen, he, nevertheless, trusts and relies upon! Oh, it is a blessed thing to be thus blind, so that you cannot see any good in yourself, cannot see any good upon which you could rest—cannot discover, even in God's work apart from Christ—any foundation on which to build! You cannot find in Heaven or earth any prop and pillar for the soul, except Jesus Crucified. Ransack the universe and where others can see grounds of confidence these truly blind men are unable to see anything, and only say, "These we count dross and dung that we may win Christ and be found in Him, not having our own righteousness which is of the Law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith." Oh, blessed blindness, never more to be able to see a solitary ray of hope except in Christ—never more to be able to find any confidence anywhere but in Him whom God the Father has set forth to be a Propitiation for sin, through faith in His precious blood!

Moreover, besides this, these blind people are *content not to see a great many things*. He that is blind in the blessed sense knows that there are many things which he cannot see and does not want to see. For instance, he cannot see into the future. He leaves others to say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and will buy and sell and get gain." This man is so wisely blind that he cannot presume to peer into tomorrow. He has been told to leave tomorrow with God, for "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." I know some of the Lord's people who look so far forward that they see a great deal too much for their own peace of mind. They catch a glimpse of trouble ahead and yet that trouble will never come.

Some of them see dreadful disasters which never happen! I have known some good old people who were afraid that they should have to spend

their last shilling and yet they left ample stores behind when they went Home. I have known some who were afraid that they should live so long that they would be a nuisance to their friends, and yet their friends bewailed them when they, at last, fell asleep. I have known a Christian man dread what would happen if—and that, “if,” was entirely his own conjuring up. Some are afraid to die and they feel a thousand deaths in fearing one! There will be no terrors to them in death! There was one who used to be always in bondage through fear of death—he died in his sleep and it would have been a good thing for him if he had been so blind that he could not see the thing he dreaded. Oh, it is a happy thing not to be able to see the trouble which, if wisely appointed, is as wisely concealed, but to leave it all with God! You have enough to do to fight the battles of today.

Permit me to repeat a figure which I have often used before. When Leonidas and the Spartans went into the narrow pass of Thermopylae, where their enemies could only come up one or two at a time, they kept the whole Persian host at bay. But, when afterwards they gave up in despair and rushed into the plain to fight the Persians, they soon fell. Now, if you will stand in the narrow pass of today and just meet your troubles as they come, single-handed, in the name of God Almighty, who is your Defender, you will be sufficient for the evil as the evil will be sufficient for the day. But if you get to meddling with all the troubles that may come to pass between now and the next 12 months—you will soon compass yourselves about with perplexities and plunge yourselves into dismay! You had better let them alone. Be blind to the future. Be happily blind and plead the promise, “I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not.”

There are some other things, too, that these blind people know they cannot see. They are quite aware that if they open their eyes ever so wide they will never see clearly all the *deep secrets*, the profound mysteries of God’s Covenant. I know men who are wise in their own eyes and very well assured of their own intellects, who, while palpably ignorant of everything that is rational, are conscious that they know everything that is *spiritual*. Their acquaintance with theology is thoroughly exhaustive. They have learned, long ago, to count five, to reckon them at their fingers ends—one, two, three, four, five!

These mystic fingers comprise all the doctrines of the Gospel! They know them and they double up their fists at the mention of any of those five points—and they are ready to fight anybody about them. They are men of a great deal of wisdom—seeing men—but I think a man that gets a little nearer to God discovers that he does not know everything and he is quite clear that he can no more compass the whole of Divine Truth than he can hold the ocean in the hollow of his hand. I have long felt that I shall never understand where the two great Truths of God of free agency and predestination meet. I believe them both—believe them with equal faith—but how to reconcile them, I no longer wish to know, because I do not think that God intends we *should* know!

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, there is such a thing as *prying* when you ought to be *believing*! Such a thing as forever quibbling and needing to see where your faith has to acquiesce in being led blindfolded! And who would not wish to be blind, if the blind man’s privilege is to be led by *God*? Who

is not willing not to see, if, instead of seeing, which will always be fallible, there shall come guidance from God which is constantly Infallible? Thus, you see, I have attempted to describe these blind people. I have not given a full description of them but I hope there are some of them here. They are people that feel their own weakness, their own lack of knowledge, their own *nothingness*! They are people that are willing to be led, willing to be guided. They are people that cannot see everything and do not *expect* to see everything, but are willing to walk by faith in the unseen God and to trust Jehovah where they cannot trace His footsteps.

II. Now let us consider THE PROMISE THAT IS MADE TO THEM. What shall be done for them? Well, they have this pact of Heaven for their solace—"I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not: I will lead them in paths that they have not known." Do you catch the idea? Do you discern the sense of this gracious undertaking? If so, you must be wonderfully struck with the condescending goodness of the Lord in that *He* offers to lead blind men! Certainly it is not an office generally sought! It is not one supposed to be attended with any great honor, but it is a very kindly office and one which any Christian may be right glad to render to his afflicted friend.

But only think of God, Himself, coming and guiding the blind—leading His blind children. "I will bring them," said He. "I will guide them." So our first thought is that *God Himself will be the Guide of His people when they feel their blindness*. He will not leave you to stumble and to grope your way, nor will He bid you depend upon your fellow Christian, who is as blind as yourself, but *He* will be your Guide. Think of it! Omniscience shall bow itself to instruct your ignorance! Infinite power shall stoop that you may lean upon its shoulder! Boundless love shall deign without any degradation to take you by the hand and pick your pathway for you! And infinite patience shall continue to direct every step of your course till you are brought to Heaven at last!

As I said, just now, who would not be blind if he could have God for his Guide? Oh, blessed weakness that links me to the strong! Oh, blessed poverty that gives me a lien upon Jehovah's wealth! Oh, blessed wretchedness that issues in beatitude and conducts me to the happiness and bliss of God! Beloved, as you think of your own blindness, be comforted because *He* sees. As you think of your own ignorance, be cheered because *He* knows. And as you comprehend your own aptness to stumble, be of good courage because *He* faints not, neither is weary! There is no searching of His understanding. God will be their Guide.

And, being their Guide, *He will lead them in ways they never went before*. The beauty of the promise appears in its special adaptation to meet *the peculiar need*—"I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not." Of course, when a blind man knows the way, he can almost go without a guide. Many of our friends afflicted with the loss of sight find their way, day by day, along the accustomed road. And there have been some that have been so expert, though blind, that they could go over 50 miles of country, or thread their way up and down the streets of a milkman's walk in town, serving at each customer's house without ever making a mistake.

In fact, they have often acted as guides to others, but, then, it has always been along a way that they have known.

And oh, Brothers and Sisters, there are many blind sinners here tonight who, I have no doubt, could guide others in the ways that they know! They could guide others in the way of the drunk, in the way of the licentious, in the way of the swearer! They know that way very well! I dare say they could guide young people into the way of infidelity—put a thousand horrible thoughts into their minds. But when the Lord takes such a man as that in hand, He does not lead him that way—He leads him in a way that he never went before! Oh, I remember being led by the Divine hand down the dark lane of *repentance* with many a sigh and many a groan! I remember being led into the more pleasant way of *faith* by the same Divine hand and brought to the Savior's feet.

And since then I have not known the way, have not expected to know the way—for the way of Grace that lies before us may be described as the Lord described the way of Israel in the wilderness—"You have not passed this way before." It is a *new* way—and when God undertakes to be our Guide, it is all new! Is it not written, "Behold, I make all things new"? I hope that many of us know what it is to be led in a way we have not known. And I trust that others who do not know that, may breathe the prayer at once, "Lord, lead me in the way I have not known."

Somebody said, the other night, that the way to Heaven was very easily learned. It is the first turn to the right and keep on. Well, that is very good, but I have heard it described another way—out of self, into Christ—only one step and you are on the road to Heaven! Out of self and into Christ. It is a way that you know not, but the Lord will lead you in it. Yet, although the way by which we go is a way that we know not, *we shall be led safely in it*, for it is not only said, "I will lead them," but, "I will *bring* them," which is more. You may lead a man and still he may be unable to follow you. You may be a good enough guide, but his legs may fail him.

Happily the text says, "I will bring them," that is to say, "They will assuredly follow where I effectually lead." O Believer, though you cannot see the way to Heaven, trust implicitly in the Lord, your God, and you shall surely find your way there, for He that *leads* you will also *bring* you! There has never been a vessel which sailed with Christ as a convoy that was captured by the enemy! There was never a pilgrim who entrusted himself to Christ as a guide that lost his way and stumbled to destruction. Now, as of old, our Lord Jesus Christ can affirm, "Of all that You have given Me, I have lost none." He preserves His sheep. He keeps them, yes, unto eternal life does He preserve them. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

Blessed are they, then, who, having no sight of their own and being, themselves, unable to find their way, are trusting in Him who has promised that He will effectually lead and bring them Home! Yes, and He will do this in the very narrowest ways, too, for the text says, "I will bring them by a way: I will lead them in paths." I suppose a way may be descriptive of the high road and the path may be like a track across the fields, over hedge and ditch, over stiles and down lanes, through the mire and

through the slough. Be it, however, along a high road or among by-paths, the Lord will lead them.

Oh, Beloved, there are some very narrow ways in the Christian's pilgrimage! Do you not, sometimes, hear a sermon which makes you question whether you can truly be a child of God? What a narrow way it is! You thought, when the preacher discoursed the other day about Free Grace and dying love, what a glorious highway it was, and you were running along it! But now that he begins to preach about regeneration, the work of the Spirit and its inward marks and evidences, you are afraid, you hesitate, you stand still and wonder whether you are traveling in the right direction! The road seems so narrow!

Well, then, you must pray to your great Guide, and say, "Lord, lead me in the paths that I have not known. If there is any very narrow place—something very stringent and searching, and testing, and trying—if there is some high attainment that I have not yet reached. If there is some sweet enjoyment I have not yet known, Lord, lead me there." You have the promise, the performance rests with Him—"I will lead them in paths which they have not known." So, you see, the blessing of the text is wrapped up in this—you are to be blind and God is to be your Guide! You are not to want to see, but you are to let Him see for you! You who feel yourselves incapacitated by infirmity are to be led by His unerring wisdom.

III. And this brings us, thirdly, to note WHAT SHALL COME OF IT. What shall come of it? Why, the Lord says, "I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." Where are you, Brothers and Sisters? Are you in a dilemma where everything is dark around you, where you see not your signs and where you feel no sweet tranquilizing assurance? Presuming that you are one of the blind—truly blind—it will not make much difference to you! Do you not perceive that? Why, should you or I, who have sight of our natural eyes, want to read, it would be of little use when the sun has gone down. "Between the lights," as we say, there is a little wasted time—we cannot make out the letters.

Well, now, a blind man is as well off, then, as he is in the middle of the day! When you happen to be in the dark you begin fretting and need a light. The blind man does not need a light—he is just as well without a light as with one. Thus it is a great mercy when God has so far enabled you to be blind—so little needing to see—that when it is all dark around you, you are just as happy as when it is all bright around you—because when it was bright you did not walk by sight—and now it is dark you do not need to walk by sight, either! Oh, blessed is the secret art of living by faith, for as you turn to God in days of happiness and trust Him, so you likewise turn to Him in days of sorrow and distress. In trial or in triumph you still trust Him!

It is a dangerous thing to begin to draw your happiness from your circumstances. Thereby you will weaken yourself, for once having drawn happiness from prosperous circumstances, you will, with equal ease, draw unhappiness from adverse circumstances. But if the Lord has taught you not to live according to the sight of the eyes at all, but to rejoice in the Lord always, then you will be prepared to enjoy the same calm, the same peace and the same happiness whatever the circumstances. It was a glo-

rious speech of Job when he said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Was it not as much as to say, "I do not trust in Him because He gave me the camels, gave me the gold and silver and the sheep and oxen. I do not trust Him for them, though I am glad and thankful. And I do not trust Him because of the earrings of gold, and because of the respect I had when I sat in the gate among the citizens.

"But I trust Him, let Him do what He likes. If He shall take all away, till there is nothing left, and afflicts me till I scrape my sores with a potsherd, I will not relax my trust in Him. And since I never did trust in my substance, or my health, though He goes farther, still, and slays me, yet will I trust in Him." Say, then, dear Friends, is it not a sweet contentment that does not need to see? To be delivered from regret and repining, knowing that He makes darkness light before us and why?—Because it is as light in the dark as at any other time and as safe to those who cease to walk with the eyes and only walk by faith!

Nor is this all the meaning we may extract out of this gracious promise. If, my dear Brothers and Sisters, you are surrounded by the darkness of trouble, trust in God and the trouble will vanish. I do not say that the *cause* of the trouble will vanish. Perhaps you will have to bear with that—but the trouble, itself, will cease to trouble you. It will not touch your heart any longer and very likely the trouble, itself, may go, and the cause of it may go, too. For when the Lord brings His people to be resigned to what they have to endure, He frequently does not call them to endure it any longer. If you are in trouble, I can recommend to you, by experience, to be resigned.

I have not so long an experience as some of the friends with gray hairs and bald heads before me, but I believe that they cannot contradict me when I say that He is a faithful God. At any rate, of this I can speak confidently—

***"When trouble, like a gloomy cloud,
Has gathered thick and thundered loud,
He, near my soul, has always stood;
His loving kindness, O how good!"***

Thus the light of His Countenance has chased away the darkness of my trouble. And are you in the dark, child of God, through a sense of sin? Some of our friends, you know, get up so high in the scale of perfection that they never have any folly or negligence to bemoan. Most of us ordinary people are afflicted, every now and then, with such heart-searchings and such inward conflicts that we walk in darkness and see no light. Somehow I think the Bible was written for people like we, rather than for our fine Brethren, for it rather abounds in the details of such experiences!

Should it ever be my lot to get rid of all conflicts and all darkness, I shall be able to dispense with a great part of the Book of Psalms. In fact, I do not know that I should need anything particular except Solomon's Song, and I am afraid I could hardly get on with that, for even the spouse had to seek her Lord in the dark and was unable to find Him, sometimes, when she had been unwary or remiss. But, oh, if you are dejected by reason of darkness, dismayed with a sense of sin, or distressed through soul-trouble, trust in your Lord and you shall find ready relief!—

"When we in darkness walk,

***Nor feel the heavenly flame;
Then is the time to trust our God,
And rest upon His name.
And when your eye of faith is dim,
Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim;
Still at His footstool bow the knee,
And Israel's God your peace shall be."***

He will make the darkness light before you, whatever other sort of darkness may happen to befall you. Only be as the blind man who does not need to see—just leave it all to Jesus—trust in His dear name and He will make the darkness light before you.

And as we are delivered out of darkness, *so shall we be rescued out of difficulty*. "I will make crooked things straight." And God can make crooked things straight! Who among us has not got some crooked thing or other to deal with? As they say that there is a skeleton, somewhere, in every house, so there is a crook in every lot, and none can make straight what God has made crooked! Awkward embarrassments and anxious perplexities full often drive us to our wit's end until we do not know which way to turn. To the right hand shall I go, or to the left? Both seem equally blocked up! Shall I go forward, or shall I go backward? Both ways seem equally hazardous! The judgment has lost chart and compass.

And sometimes a child of God really does not know what he ought to choose. He seems to be in a maze and he has not a clue. The road goes in and out, backwards and forwards, like a map of the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness. "There," he asks, "what shall I do?" "Well, dear Brothers and Sisters, the best thing to do in such a case as that is to do nothing at all, but just to trust in the Lord! There is more wisdom in a quarter of an hour's prayer than there is in a quarter of a year's consultation with friends. Oftentimes when we have sought counsel of the living God, He has befriended us. When we have left things with Him, we have always gone wisely. Oh, how He can make the most crooked thing that ever did happen suddenly turn out to be the very straightest thing that ever occurred for our welfare!

I know that sometimes I have puzzled my head about some difficulty in my Master's service—asked opinions of lots of people, like a stupid—and I have gone home with my head aching in deeper uncertainty than ever what to do. And I have never discovered how to unravel a knotty point by my own ingenuity—but I have always found that when I, at last, bend my knees, by His Grace, and say, "Heavenly Father, it is rather Your business than mine. It is quite beyond me and I now leave it in Your hands to guide me." And when I have just put it up on the shelf and said, "I will never take it down again whatever happens," it has gone all right. If I had maneuvered to manage it for myself it would have gone wrong enough.

You are often, dear Friends, busy in doing yourself a mischief when eager to do the right thing. You do the wrong thing, after all, as though there were a fatality about it. "Stand still and see the salvation of God." A hard lesson to learn, full often, and especially to impetuous spirits, as some of us are. But when it is learned, if we continue to practice it, we shall find it the way of wisdom. Now, my dear Sister, do not fall in too hastily with that proposal which has been made to you. Think it over first. Pray about it.

Just stop. You may get yourself into a world of trouble. Young man, it certainly does look as if a very fine opening was presented before you, but mind what you are doing. There is a fine opening for flies into many a spider's web—and they would be glad to find an opening for getting out again!

Just stop awhile. Stand still and give reflection time to whisper in your ear. Do not delude yourself with flattering visions. Confess that the eyes of your understanding are dark and blind. Let the Lord guide you! Do not have an eye to your own advantage. Do not have an eye to the opinion of this world. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all things will go well with you. Ah, they will call you such a fool not to jump at that chance of commencing trade with a man who you know is no Christian. But you are told not to be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever. Therefore, do not disobey your Master's command, I pray you! Just back out of it and give yourself up to be led and guided by the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and you will go right enough. Here is one of the benefits of being blind in this sense, and this is what shall come of it.

IV. And now, lastly, WHAT WILL BE THE END OF IT? Why the end of it will be, if you can see nothing, if you are blind and yield yourself to the Lord to lead you—leaving all that concerns you to His counsel and His care, your life will be strewn with mercies—fulfilled promises! “These things will I do unto them.” And you shall have a life of everlasting love, for He adds, “and not forsake them.” You shall find God present with you as long as you live! Never does a child of God venture everything by faith but the venture answers! You that speculate—I have no doubt that you find that your speculations are as often bad as good. But if you risk everything apparently in your confidence in God, it is no speculation—it is a certainty! He will not fail you!

I was greatly refreshed, yesterday, by what you may think to be a very small thing, but it was not small to God. I was turning over our Church books and I came to the year 1861, and somewhere in January there is the record—“This Church requires £4,000 in order to pay for the new Tabernacle and we, the undersigned, not knowing where it will come from, fully believe in our heavenly Father that He will send it all to us in the proper time, as witness our hands.” And there stand, subscribed, my hand and the hands of my deacons, and the hands of my elders, and the hands of a great many Christian women among us.

Well, I was pleased to see that we had thus put our confidence in God. There were one or two names down there of very prudent Brothers and Sisters and I remember, at the time I saw them sign it, I was rather surprised, because they had been doubting most of the time whether we should ever get the money—but they signed their names! A month or two afterwards—say two months—there is this record—“I, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who am less than the least of all saints, set to my seal that God is true, for He has supplied us with all this £4,000.” And then follows a fresh minute like this, “We, the undersigned, hereby declare our confidence in Almighty God who has done to us according to our faith, and sent us, even before the time when we needed it, all that was needed. We

are ashamed of ourselves to think that we ever had a doubt and we pray that we may always confide in Him in all things from now on and forever.”

And then there is a long list of signatures. Some of the names down there are those of people whom I can see now. You put your names down there, thanking God that faith was honored. Well, Brothers and Sisters, we have had a good many times to do something like that for large amounts, as a Church, but has the Lord ever failed us, yet? Never! And He never will! And you may depend upon it that in your business, in your household affairs, in your spiritual struggles, if you will trust God, He will be as good as your trust and better! You will never be able to say, “I rested in Him and was ashamed. I trusted in Him, and I found His promise fail.”

Mind, you must have a promise to rest on. You must not go and ask the Lord for every whim you like to get into your heads. But, if He has promised it to you and you can plead a promise, and it is for His Glory and you know it is, then see if ever He will run back! Search this Book, given by Inspiration, and see whether ever a promise of His did fail. Turn, then, to your own lives, by strange experience led, and answer this question—Has He ever been a wilderness unto you? Has He ever been a dry well, or a cloud that mocked you and yielded you no rain? You have trusted in men and you have met your reward, for, “Cursed is he that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm.” But when you have trusted in God, have you not met a very different reward? And can you not say, “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is”? There, you see, you have got this—“These things will I do unto you.” If you can just trust, the promise will be fulfilled!

Then the last clause of the text is peculiarly inspiriting—“*And not forsake them.*” “And not forsake them.” This is no vain tautology. I think that the Lord’s people are subject, at times, to a sudden fluttering of heart, a nervous depression of spirits and a great trembling just when their faith has been in the fullest exercise and the goodness of God has been most conspicuously displayed to them. And I do believe that this little sentence is intended to be at once a powerful tonic and an efficacious sedative. Why is it used? Did it arise from weariness of the flesh in the case of Elijah? You remember how he showed his zeal for the Lord of Hosts on Mount Carmel? You remember how vehemently he contended with the prophets of Baal—how signally his prayer was answered when the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice and the wood and the stones and the dust—and licked up the water that was in the trench?

You remember how he brought down the prophets of Baal to the brook Kishon and slew them there? And you remember how soon, afterwards, he went a day’s journey in the wilderness, sat down under a juniper tree, requested that he might die and said, “It is enough. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers”? He had much fear, but there was no danger that the Lord would forsake him. Or it may be that this strange terror is the reaction and result after intense excitement. David had been again and again delivered out of the hands of Saul and had heard his old enemy acknowledge that he had sinned and played the fool and erred exceedingly. Yet he went on his way and said in his heart, “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul!”

But was he forsaken of God? Had he any real cause to suspect such a climax to the Lord's dealings with him? Far from it! I do not know, but I am prone to attribute this fear, sometimes, to the infirmity of age—when decay creeps over the mortal frame and the soul sympathizes with the weakness of the flesh. The Psalmist, as I have already intimated, touches all the keys of human passion and all the moods to which Believers are subject. Certainly his faith was in full vigor when he said, *“I will go in the strength of the Lord God. I will make mention of Your righteousness, even of Yours only.”* Nor could his gratitude have been at fault when he reviews his life from childhood to advanced years, saying, *“O God, You have taught me from my youth, and up to now have I declared Your wondrous works!”* But you can never forget the impassioned prayer that followed, **“NOW, ALSO, WHEN I AM OLD AND GRAY-HEADED, O GOD, FORSAKE ME NOT!”**

Just ring this bell once or twice, this silver, this delicious silver bell—*“These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.”* They will yet get into trouble. Their friends will desert them as the leaves are gone from the trees in winter, but, says the Lord, *“I will not forsake them.”* They will be very sick and they will lie in bed till the bed gets hard beneath them, but, *“these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.”* They will come to die and the devil will tempt them. Flesh will be very weak and their bodily pains distressing, but, *“these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.”* They will pass through the river and they will stand in judgment, but still, as it is written so shall it be, *“these things will I do unto them and not forsake them.”*

Go on, Beloved! Go on, Beloved! Though blind, and you cannot see your way, go on, Beloved! In the dark and crooked paths, go on, Beloved! For as surely as you trust in God, God will fulfill every promise of His to you—and to the last these shall be His words in your ears, *“And not forsake them.”* For, *“I will not fail them or forsake them.”* is His promise to His people. Throwing that grateful reflection into a verse—the verse of a familiar hymn, I will conclude—

***“The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
He will not, He will not, desert to his foes.
That soul, though all Hell should endeavor to shake,
He will never, no never, no never forsake.”***

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 43.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—23 (VER. III), 741.**

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JOYFUL TRANSFORMATIONS

NO. 847

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 27, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight."
Isaiah 42:16*

IN the pursuit of holiness the pilgrim is often surrounded with darkness. While in the pathway of evil the traveler is dazzled with a glare of light. It is the way of the Tempter to make the downward path as attractive as possible with the flaring splendor of carnal pleasure. Sin is surrounded with a fascinating luster which enchants the unwary seeker of pleasure and leads him to his own destruction. Look at the palace of fire-water, dedicated to the demon of drunkenness—it is brighter than any other house in the street! See how it glitters with abundant lamps, and mirrors, and burnished brass! Rich with color are the flowers which bloom at the mouth of the old serpent's den.

As the sirens in the old classic fable enchanted mariners with their songs, so that, beneath the spell of their music they turned the prows of their vessels towards the rocks of sure destruction, even so sin constrains the sons of men to make shipwreck of their souls. Evil seems to be surrounded evermore with a light that dazzles and fascinates, even as the brightness of the candle attracts the moth to its destruction. As for the way of righteousness and truth, it appears from the text that murky clouds frequently rest upon it and the way appears rough and crooked, otherwise it were not necessary to say, "I will make darkness light before them."

Neither were it necessary that a Divine hand should interfere to make the crooked straight. Brothers and Sisters, the day of evil commences with a flattering morning and changes into a tenfold night, but God's day, the day of good, begins at eventide. Like the primeval days of the creation, the evening and the morning were the first day. We who follow the Lord Jesus have our *night* first and our day has yet to dawn—the sun of which shall no more go down. God keeps the best wine until the last for us, while at the banquet of Satan they set forth the best wine and afterwards that which is worse. Yes, the dregs are wrung out in the end for the wicked of the earth to drink. As for the righteous, they have their draughts of wormwood *here*, before their high festival begins, to give them appetite and zest for the banquets where wines on the lees well-refined shall satiate their souls!

The subject of this morning is the great promise of God, that although His people shall sometimes be enveloped in gloom, their darkness shall be turned to light. Before the advance of faith the most terrible things lose their terror. We shall use this one Truth of God in reference to Believers first, and then briefly turn it to the encouragement of earnest seekers.

I. First, in addressing THE BELIEVER, let us ring the bell of the text again. It has a sweet silver voice—"I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." Believer, observe that there often lies before

you a grim darkness. Upon that darkness let us make these comforting observations—first, that much of the darkness is of your own imagining. As we feel a thousand deaths in fearing one, so do we feel a thousand afflictions in the fear of sorrows which will never come.

Probably the major part of our griefs are born, nourished, and perfected entirely in an anxious, imaginative brain. Many of our sorrows are not woven in the loom of Providence, but are purely homespun and the pattern of our own invention. Some minds are specially fertile in self-torture—they have the creative faculty for all that is melancholy, desponding, and wretched. If they were placed in the brightest isles beneath unclouded skies where birds of fairest wing poured out perpetual melody and earth was rich with color and perfume, they would not be content till they had imagined for themselves a sevenfold Styx, an infernal Tartarus, a valley of death-shade! Their ingenuity is stimulated even by the mercies of God, and that which would make others *rejoice* causes them to *tremble* lest the enjoyment should prove short-lived. Like certain painters, they delight in heavy masses of shade.

My Brother, you may, perhaps, have before your mind this very morning what seems a thick wall of horror, and yet it is nothing but a cloud! Waiting, you imagine the obstruction to increase. But plucking up courage and advancing to meet the imaginary horror, you will yet laugh at yourself and at your foolish fears! And you will wonder how it was that you ever could have been cast down at nothing at all—and distressed by that which had no existence except in your dreams.

I remember well, one night, having been preaching the Word in a country village. I was walking home alone along a lonely footpath. I do not know what it was that ailed me, but I was prepared to be alarmed. When, sure enough, I saw something standing in the hedge—ghastly, giant-like—and with outstretched arms. Surely, I thought, for once I have come across the supernatural! Here is some restless spirit performing its midnight march beneath the moon, or some demon of the pit! I deliberated with myself a moment, and having no faith in ghosts I plucked up courage, and resolved to solve the mystery. The monster stood on the other side of a ditch, right in the hedge. I jumped the ditch and found myself grasping an old tree which some waggish body had taken pains to color with a little whitewash—with a view to frighten simpletons! That old tree has served me a good turn full often, for I have learned to *leap at difficulties* and find them vanish or turn to triumphs!

Half our afflictions are only appalling in prospect because we do not know what they are. If we will but, in faith, patiently await them, they will be but light and transient. Thus, by chasing away the gloom of our dark imagination, God often makes darkness light before us. Much, again, of the darkness which does really exist is exaggerated. There is some cause for alarm, but not one half the cause which your fancy pictures. “All these things are against me,” says Jacob, “Joseph is not, Simeon is not. And now you will take Benjamin away.” There was something in this complaint. Joseph was not with his father, Simeon was kept in ward—but the old man had pictured Joseph devoured of an evil beast, and Simeon given up to be a perpetual slave in a foreign land. His fears had magnified the trouble which existed.

And, Believer, so probably it is with you. You shall find that the load which seems now to be far too ponderous for you to lift, shall be easily carried on the shoulders which Divine Grace shall strengthen if you have but confidence enough to venture upon the task. That cross is not made of iron—it is only a wooden one. It may be painted with iron colors, but iron it is not. It has been carried, yes, and a weightier one, by far, has been carried by other men before—shoulder it like a man, shoulder it like a man of God! Take up your cross daily and go forward with your Master, and you shall find that mountains shrink to molehills, giants are seen to be but dwarfs, dragons and griffins are but bats and owls, and the leviathan, himself, a defeated foe!

Remember, too, that in many cases troubles disappear at the very moment when we expect them to be overwhelming. While we are anticipating them, they seem to block up the pathway completely and leave no door of escape. But on our venturesome advance to them, they are not there at all, they have fled before us! See the host of Israel—they have escaped out of Egypt but they are pursued by their taskmasters. They come to a spot where they are enclosed on either hand by mountains, while the chariots of Egypt are in the rear. How is it possible for them to escape? They are entangled in the land. The wilderness has shut them in!

“Forward,” cries the Prophet, “forward, hosts of God!” But how can they advance? The Red Sea rolls right in their path! But no sooner do the feet of the priests touch the waters of the sea than the depths are divided—the waters stand upright as a heap—for God has made a pathway for His people through the heart of the sea! No better road could be desired than that which they found in the sandy bed of the sea. The trouble, which certainly did appear insurmountable, became the subject of triumph! Miriam’s song and the voices of the daughters of Israel had in them a higher exultation than they could ever have known if they had not been able to cry aloud, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea.”

Brothers and Sisters, your trials may, in a like case, vanish as soon as you arrive at them! You do not know what plan God has in store. He has an unused shaft which shall be the arrow of the Lord’s deliverance for you. The Lord has a counterplot for the plots of your enemies. You see but a part of His scheme—you have not as yet discovered the whole of His resources. And when He brings out His wonderful plan more fully, you will stand in amazement and even bless His name for the trial because it furnished so noble an opportunity for revealing to you the faithfulness and the power of your God. The same thing which occurred at the Red Sea happened, also, to the hosts of God when they came to the Jordan, for Jordan was driven back and fled at the Presence of the God of Israel.

If you should suffer trouble upon trouble, you, too, shall experience deliverance upon deliverance! Think of that mighty instance in which it was proved that God can clear the darkest skies and give us day for night! I refer to the case of Hezekiah. What a blasphemous and insulting letter was that which came from Rabshakeh! What reviling language was that which the foul-mouthed lieutenant of Sennacherib hurled at Judah’s king! Poor Hezekiah was a man of a holy and tender spirit, and was sorely dismayed. But when he spread that wretched letter before the Lord and bowed himself in sackcloth, little did he know how graciously God would prevent the

sorrow from ever coming to him in any other shape but in that of *talk* and *boasting!* “Thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, he shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, says the Lord.” And so it was! And so, O child of God, may it be with the troubles which now block *your* pathway—they shall vanish as you advance!

Reflect, again, that where this does not exactly occur and the trial *does* really come, yet the Lord has a way of making the trials of His people to cease when they reach their culminating point. As the sea, when it reaches the highest mark of flood, can advance no further—but after pausing for awhile to enjoy the fullness of its strength, must then return to its ebb—so with our most desperate sorrows. They reach the point designed and then they recede. See Abraham! God had bade him sacrifice his son. Abraham, probably mistaking the Lord’s meaning, thought that he was to slay the child of promise. He proceeds to Mount Moriah, piles the altar, takes with him the wood, binds his son, and places him upon the altar.

But just as he has unsheathed the knife and is about to perform the act of solemn obedience by sacrificing that which he held most dear, a voice is heard—“Lay not your hand upon the lad, neither do you anything unto him; for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from Me.” In the nick of time God intervenes—but mark when that is—namely, when the Patriarch has proved the *complete* renunciation of his *own* will, and given up everything to the will of *God*—then deliverance comes. So shall it be with you, O tried Believer! When the trial has been submitted to in your own heart and you have laid aside your self-will and obstinacy—and are no longer murmuring and repining and rebelling—then shall God take away the coals of the furnace because the gold is purified!

That is a grand story of Alexander’s confidence in his friend and physician. When the physician had mixed him a potion for his sickness, a letter was put into Alexander’s hand warning him not to drink the medicine, for it was poisoned. He held the letter in one hand and the cup in the other, and in the presence of his friend and physician, he drank up the draught. And after he had drained the cup, he bade his friend look at that letter and judge of his confidence in him. Alexander had unstaggering faith in his friend, which did not admit of doubt. “See now,” said he, “how I have trusted you.”

This is the assurance which the Believer should exercise towards his God. The cup is very bitter, and some tell us it will prove to be deadly. They tell us that it is so nauseous that we shall never survive the draught. Unbelief whispers in our ear, “Your coming tribulation will utterly crush you.” Drink it, my Brothers and Sisters, and say, “If He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” It cannot be that God should be unfaithful to His promise, or unmindful of His Covenant! Your trial, then, will cease when it culminates—He will make darkness light before you when the darkest hour of the night has struck.

Brothers and Sisters, there is one most encouraging reflection concerning the adversity which lies before us, namely, that every trial of our pilgrimage life was *foreseen of God*, and we may depend upon it that it has

been forestalled. Many a besieged city has been captured because the siege was not expected and therefore stores of provision and ammunition were not laid up for the evil day. But God, who laid up seven years of food in Egypt against the seven years of famine which He foresaw, takes care to lay by in store for His saints against coming emergencies. How readily might Moses have been anxious about the commissary of the tribes in the desert! "How shall such a host be fed? Where shall we find water? Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" But in simple faith Moses led the chosen people into the wilderness, and lo, the heavens dropped with a rain of plenty and the flinty rock gave forth its cooling streams so that the host knew no lack for 40 years! Though they had neither gathered harvests nor vintage in all that space of time, yet Jehovah provided!

Once more be it remembered that if trial should come upon any one of us in its fullest force, and in no way should God mitigate the fury of the storm, yet we have His promise for it and may rest confidently, therefore, that as our days our strength shall be. I think I have before remarked to you that to be exempt from trouble would not be a desirable thing, for the life of a man who has no trial is uneventful, poor of incident, uninteresting, ignoble, barren. But the life of a man who has done business in great waters has something noble and manly in it. And considering that Divine Grace is always proportioned to the trial, I think it were wise to choose the trial for the sake of obtaining the Grace which is promised with it!

I noticed in a shop window last week, a little invention of singular interest. A small metal wire with a circular disk at each end was suspended by a thread and continued, without ceasing, to oscillate between two small galvanic batteries, first touching one and then the other. A little card informed me that this piece of metal had continued to move to and fro between those two batteries for more than 30 years, and had, during that time passed over 6,000 miles! The whole affair was so enclosed within a glass case that nothing was likely to disturb it, and so it kept the even tenor of its way with a history which could be summoned up in two lines of plainest prose—to and fro, to and fro, for 30 years, and that was its whole monotonous history!

Men's quiet lives are much after the same order. They have gone to business on Monday morning and home at night. The same on Tuesday and all the days of the year—no dire struggles, no fierce temptations, no gracious victories—no Divine experiences of heavenly love. Their whole inner life is meager of interest because so free from every trial. But look at the man who is subject to trials—temporal and spiritual, and acquainted with difficulties of every sort—he is like yon mass of iron on the prow of a gallant ship which has crossed the Pacific, and bathed itself in the Atlantic! Storms have dashed upon it. A myriad waves have broken over it. It has seen the terrors of all the seas and gleamed in the sunlight of both hemispheres. It has served its age most gloriously—and when old and worn with rust—a world of interest surrounds it.

Let us, if our trials multiply, remember that Divine Grace in abundance will be given with them, and the mingled trial and the Grace will make our lives sublime, prevent our being mere dumb driven cattle, and give us kinship with those who, through much tribulation, have ascended to their thrones! The battle and the storm, the strife and the victory, the depression and the uplifting—and all else that betides us in a varied and event-

ful life—shall help to make our eternal rest and glory the more sweet to us. Let us leave these musings upon expected glooms, relying confidently upon the promise that the Lord will make darkness light before us, by some means or other, and will in no wise fail us in the hour of need!

For a minute or two let me more especially invite you again, children of God, to dwell upon the promise that the Lord will make your darkness light. How soon can Omnipotence accomplish this! It takes *us* much time to create light. We must form companies and erect machinery before we can tarn the night of our great cities into a partial day! But tomorrow morning, however black the previous night may have been, the great Father of Lights will illuminate our whole nation in a few minutes! He will make each wave of the sea and each dewdrop of the lawn to gleam with silvery sheen! God has but to bid the sun accomplish his course and the world is lit up and the shadows flee away! How perfectly the work is done! The illumination is unrivalled in lavish glory. All *our* means of enlightenment are poor when compared with the sunlight—and so scant that we must measure its cubic feet and dole it out for gold—while the Lord pours His infinitely superior illumination in measureless oceans over hill and dale, field and city—gladdening the cottage as well as the palace, and bur-nishing the beetle’s wings as well as the eagle’s pinions.

Even thus our heavenly Father can readily enough turn the deepest sorrows of His people into the most sublime joys, and He needs not to vex the sons of men with labor in order to achieve His purpose of pity! His own right hand, His own gracious Spirit can pour forth a fullness of consolation in a moment. Notice for your comfort some of the ways in which the Lord of Love banishes the midnight of the soul. Sometimes He removes all gloom by the sun of His Providence. He bids prosperity shine into the window of the hovel, and the poor grow rich. He lifts the beggar from the dunghill, and sits him among princes. The wings of angels bear healing to the sick, and the man long tossing on his bed walks forth to breathe the pure sweet air so long denied him.

The great Arbiter of all events does but turn the wheel of fortune, and those who were lowest are highest—the last are first and the first last! He can do the same for any of us, both in temporals and in spirituals, if so it seems good to Him. He has but to ordain it so and our poverty will be exchanged for plenty. Our Lord often cheers His people with the moon of their experience, which shines with borrowed light, but yet with a brightness calm and tranquil, well-beloved of the sons of sorrow. He bids us remember the days of old and our spirit makes diligent search—we find that He has never left His people, neither has He been treacherous to us. We remember when we were in a like case to the present—we note that we were well sustained and ultimately delivered—and so we are encouraged to believe that today shall be as the past and yet more abundant.

Frequently our heavenly Father cheers His children by a sight of Jesus going before them. That path between overhanging rocks is so dark, that I, a poor timid child, shrink back from it. But how is my courage restored as I see Jesus bearing the lantern of His love and going before me into the thick darkness! I hear Him say, “Follow Me,” and while He speaks I perceive a light streaming from His sacred Person. Every thorn of His crown gleams like a star! The jewels of His breastplate flash like lamps, and His wounds gleam with celestial splendor! “Fear not,” says He, “for in all your

afflictions I have been afflicted. I was tempted in all points like as you are, though without sin.” Who can tell the encouragement given to the heir of Heaven by the fact that the elder Brother has passed through all the dark passages which leads to the promised rest!

God had one Son without sin, but He never had a son without chastisement. He who always did His Father’s will, yet had to suffer. Courage, my Heart! Courage! If Jesus suffered—if that pang which tears your heart first was felt by Him—you may be of good cheer, indeed! Better still is the comfort derived from the grand Truth of God that Jesus is actually present in the daily afflictions of Believers. Jesus knocks at my door and says, “Come with Me from Lebanon, My Spouse. Come with Me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions’ dens, from the mountains of the leopards!”

I look forth from the window into the cold and dreary night, and I answer Him, “The night is black and cheerless. I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them? I cannot arise and follow You.” But the Beloved is not thus to be refused. He knocks again, and He says, “Come forth with Me into the fields, let us lodge in the villages. There will I give you My loves.” Overcome by His love, I arise and go with my heavenly Bridegroom. If the raindrops fall pitilessly upon me, yet it is most sweet to see that His head is also filled with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night. The howling wind tosses His garments as well as mine. His feet tread the same miry places as my own, and all the while He calls me His Beloved, His Love, His Dove, His Unde-filed and tells me of the land which lies beyond the darkness.

And He speaks of the mountains of myrrh and of the beds of spices—the top of Amana, Shenir, and Hermon! My soul is melted while my Beloved speaks and my heart feels it is sweet beyond expression to walk with Him, for lo, while He is near me the night is lit up with innumerable stars, the sky is aglow with glory—every cloud flames like a seraph’s wing—while the pitiless blast is all unable to chill the heart which burns within while He talks with me by the way. In later years you and I are apt to speak to one another of that dark night and its marvelous brightness—of that cold wind that was so strangely tempered. And we will say to one another, “I would gladly pass through a thousand nights in such Company! I would be willing to go on a midnight journey evermore with that dearest of friends, for oh, where He is, night is day! In His Presence, suffering is joy! When He reveals Himself, pains are pleasures and earth blossoms with flowers of Eden.” Thus does the Well-Beloved by His Presence make our darkness light.

Oftentimes you and I have known, by experience, how the Lord has made our darkness light when in a moment a text of Scripture has flashed up before our eyes like a beacon fire. I bless God there are parts of this precious Book which I do not only retain in my memory but in my heart. They have been so applied to my soul in times of need, that to forget them would be utterly impossible! They have burned their way into my inner nature and have become part and parcel of my consciousness. You cannot, of yourself, make a text so full of life and power by merely thinking of it—nor by praying over it, nor by studying the original—but the Holy Spirit quickens the Word even as He quickens us.

A Word from the Lord will, at times, rise up from the page as though it had lain there like a sleeping angel. It will grasp us by the hand, embrace us and revive us till in wonder we cry out, "Oh, precious and inexhaustible Word of God! Oh, sweet Word fresh from the lips of Jesus, how is it I could have read you so often but never understood your fullness and preciousness till now?" This is one of the ways of the Lord by which He makes darkness light, by snatching a firebrand from the altar of His Word and waving it as a torch before us that we may advance in its light! Thus you see, Beloved, God can readily turn our darkness into light.

Now the text leads us a little further, and speaks of "crooked things." So, Christian, for a moment think of the crooks of your lot. Like the pathway of the children of Israel through the wilderness, your course appears to be backward and forward like the path which winds deviously through the woods among briars and thorns. The faithful Friend of pilgrims knows the way that you take—all your steps are ordered of the Lord—and in due time, according to His Word, He will make them all straight for you.

Perhaps the crookedness of your lot lies in your poverty. You never have more than barely enough. Food and raiment you have had, but still it has been dry bread and scant raiment. So far from faring sumptuously, you have almost known the need of Lazarus at the rich man's gate. You have reached thus far on your journey, but still yours has been a life of need and great distress. You thank God! You do not repine—still you know well that need is a *crooked* thing. Or, perhaps you have suffered some very crooked calamity. Your dear husband was taken away when the children needed most his training care, and when the labor of those strong arms was wanted to find sustenance for the little ones. Alas, poor widow, that was a very crooked loss for you!

Or, perhaps yonder husband has buried his beloved wife and feels that his loss is irreparable—a crooked thing which he cannot understand. He cannot guess why the all-wise God has permitted such a mother to be taken from children who needed her molding hand. If some other people had died, you could have comprehended the reason—they were ripe and ready—but here was the young and active whose life appeared so necessary! And she has been taken away from you, leaving behind a fountain of perennial tears. This is the crooked thing in your lot.

Perhaps during the late panic you suffered very severely. You had not been one of the speculators and had not ventured beyond your depth, but still, incidentally, the fall of others dragged you down. You do not quite understand the reason for that heavy blow—it is a crooked thing altogether—you have looked at it this way and that way, but you cannot see the why and the wherefore. You believe that God is wise, but it remains a matter of belief in this case—you cannot as yet see it to be a wise thing.

Possibly your crook lies in a trying family at home. Woe to those who have crooked sons—sharper than an adder's tooth is an unthankful child. Have you a graceless daughter? Alas, what a trial is yours! Have you an ill-tempered, malicious wife, or a harsh, unchristian husband? Do you, yourself, love the Truth of God, and have you a partner who hates good things? Will you go home today to hear the voice of blasphemy from your next of kin? Yours is a crook, indeed! Worse than all, if you have no other crook, I am sure you will confess to a crooked *self*. If your own heart were not your plague, all the rest would matter little. Oh, what with our pride,

our sloth, our evil desires, our angry temper, our doubts, and fears, and despondencies, *self* is the worst crook a man has to carry!

Then it may be you have crooked temptations, too. You are tempted to profanity. You hate the very thought of it, but still, the horrible suggestions haunt you! You are tempted to vices from which, by Divine Grace, you have been preserved, but towards which, as with a hurricane, Satan would whirl you! Your temptations abound day by day. You appear to yourself to be like a man beset with 10,000 bees—they compass you about, yes, they compass you about—and you know not how to destroy them! As many as your thoughts, so many your temptations seem to be. Well, these are all crooked things, and in such a fallen world as this, crooked things will always be very common.

Now comes the promise—“God will make all the crooked things in the way of His people straight.” It may be that they are straight now, and that the making straight is only to make them seem so to us, for oftentimes that which we thought to be a misfortune was the best thing that could ever occur to us! We complain of our crosses, yet are not our crosses our best estates? How often we kick against our highest good! We tear up that herb in the garden which has the noblest medicine in every leaf. O for Grace to know that there is much real good in *sorrow*, and that our trials are only crooked because our eyes are not focused!

The Lord also can bend the crooked straight and what will not bend He can break. How often in a family the ungodly Saul has been made into a holy Paul! The crooked character has been bent straight—and where the man would not bend straight, the terrible judgment of God has taken away the crook out of the household—so that the righteous might have peace and comfort! Do not be afraid, Believer—the Lord’s great axe can clear a way through the thick forests of your greatest trials! Do you not see the great Pioneer going before you—His goings forth were of old, and by the name of “The Breaker” is He known, since He breaks down all that can hinder the march of His people. Like the engineers in the advance of an army, those grand old sappers and miners who clear the way for the host—even so will the Lord cast up a highway for all His saints until He shall bring them to the City that has foundations whose Builder and Maker is He.

If He does not do this, He will give you power to leap over the difficulty. He will bid you, His servant, go straight on in the path of duty—and strength—not your own, shall be given you so that you shall say with one of old, “By my God have I gone through a troop! By my God have I leaped over a wall.” You shall cry like Deborah, “O my Soul, you have trod down strength.” If our pathway were always clear in the way of duty, where were our faith? But when we force our way to Heaven through crowds of enemies—hewing a lane by main force through the squadrons of Hell—*then* is our great Captain glorified and His Grace made resplendent! Let us be of good courage, then, for the Lord will make the crooked straight at the end!

Two lessons, and then I shall turn to address a few words to the seeker. One is to the child of God. If God will thus make all your darkness light and all your crooked things straight, do not forestall your troubles. They are darkness now. Leave them alone, Man, and they will turn to light. They are crooked now—well, leave them to ripen—and God will make them straight. Some fruit which you gather from your trees is of such a

nature that if you were to try and eat it in the autumn it would be very sour, and would make you very sick. But just store it up a little, and see how luscious and juicy it becomes! It is a pity to destroy the fruit and pain yourself by premature use!

It is just so with your troubles—they are all darkness now—do not meddle with them. Leave them till God has ripened them and turned them into light. Yonder man is employed in carrying sacks of flour every day. He carries so many hundredweight each time and in the day it comes to tons—and so many tons a day will come to an enormous mass in a year. Now, suppose, on the first of January, this man were to calculate the year's load, and say, "I have all that immense mass to carry! I cannot do it!" You would remind him that he has not to carry it *all at once*—he has all the workdays of the year to carry it in. So we put all our troubles together and we cry, "However shall I get over them?" Well, they will only come one at a time, and as they come the strength will come with them!

A man who has walked a thousand miles did not traverse the thousand miles at a step, nor in a day—he took his time and did it. And we, also, must take our time. With patience we shall accomplish our work. A fine lesson for us all is that word wait, wait, wait. Our second remark is this, always believe in the power of prayer, for if God promises to make your darkness light, He will be required to do it for you. And when you enquire of Him to do it, He will do it because He has so promised. I wish we believed in prayer. I am afraid most of us do not. People will say, "What a wonderful thing it is that God hears George Muller's prayers!"

But is it not a *sad* thing that we should think it *wonderful* for God to hear prayer? We are come to a pretty pass, certainly, when we think it wonderful that God is true! Much better faith was that of a little boy in one of the schools at Edinburgh who had attended the Prayer Meetings, and at last said to his teacher who conducted the Prayer Meeting, "Teacher, I wish my sister could be got to read the Bible. She never reads it." "Why, Johnny, should your sister read the Bible?" "Because if she should once read it, I am sure it would do her good, and she would be converted and be saved." "Do you think so, Johnny?" "Yes, I do, Sir, and I wish the next time there's a Prayer Meeting you would ask the people to pray for my sister, that she may begin to read the Bible." "Well, well, it shall be done, John."

So the teacher gave out that a little boy was very anxious that prayers should be offered that his sister might begin to read the Bible. John was observed to get up and go out. The teacher thought it very unkind of the boy to disturb the people in a crowded room and go out like that, and so the next day when the lad came, he said, "John, I thought that was very rude of you to get up in the Prayer Meeting and go out. You ought not to have done it." "Oh! Sir," said the boy, I did not mean to be rude, but I thought I should just like to go home and see my sister reading her Bible for the first time."

That is how we ought to believe, and wait with expectation to see the answer to prayer. The girl *was* reading the Bible when the boy went home! God had been pleased to hear the prayer, and if we could but trust God after that fashion we should often see similar things accomplished. Do not say, "Lord, turn my darkness into light," and then go out with your candle as though you expected to find it dark. But, after asking the Lord to ap-

pear for you, expect Him to do so, for according to your faith so will it be unto you.

II. And now, just a few words before we depart, TO THE SEEKER. Some here have long been desirous of finding peace with God, but they are still troubled and tossed to and fro in their minds. Now, my dear Friend, we have felt great joy in seeing your anxiety, but we are beginning to feel great sorrow to think that that anxiety should last so long and that you should be so unbelieving as not at once to put your trust in the blessed Lord Jesus. He is *able* to save you, and He *will* save you, now, if you trust Him.

It seems a very simple thing to rest alone on Him—simple as it is, it is most effectual for the soul's peace and joy. We are grieved to think that you have been so long refusing to give Christ the credit which He so richly deserves. Now, perhaps, it may be you are puzzled about some *doctrinal* question. You have been asking your friends to explain this and that to you, and you have not yet had it all cleared up. Let me say, I am afraid you never will—for there are difficulties about our holy religion which will never be explained on this side the grave—and, perhaps, not on the other.

If our religion were within our comprehension, we should feel it did not come from God—but being greater than our brain can grasp, we see in this some traces of the infinite God who, in revealing Himself, does not display all His Glory, but only a part of it to the sons of men. Dear Friend, believe that God's dear Son is able to save you, and trust in Him! When you have done that, all these doctrinal difficulties, so far as they are at all important, will vanish! He has said it and you shall prove it true, "I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." You shall say to yourself, "How could I have raised so many quibbles? How foolish it was of me to be always debating and questioning when eternal mercy was freely presented to me!"

Perhaps your darkness today arises from a very deep depression of mind. Your notion is that you can never believe in Jesus Christ till this depression is removed. But let me tell you your notion is wide of the truth, for the fact is, you are not at all likely to rise out of your depression until you *first* believe in Jesus. Sad and sorrowful as you are, what hinders you to believe in the infinite Son of God as able to put away your sin? He must be able. The death of such a One must have had an amount of merit in it not to be limited. Oh, if you can do Him the honor to trust Him, though you are like poor smoking flax, He will not quench you! Though you are worthless and weak as a bruised reed, yet if you can trust Him you are saved! O rely on Him, I pray you! For your soul's sake rest in the precious blood and you shall find your depression vanish, your darkness shall be light, your crooked things shall be made straight.

"Ah," you say, "but I labor under a load of sin!" Truly there is enough in your sin to make you troubled were it not that for this purpose Christ was born and came into the world, that He might take away sin! Why that great Sacrifice on Calvary's Cross, if not for great offenses? Don't you see that it is the very blackness of your sin that makes you *need* a Savior? Don't you know that Christ came not to call the righteous, but *sinner*s to repentance? In due time He died for the ungodly such as you. O throw your weary soul into His arms! Why do you look about after this and that? Why are you deceived with, "Lo here, and lo there!?" Looking to this and

that for comfort? Come to Him! Come empty, naked, filthy! Come to be made everything that is good through Him!

“Yes, but,” you say, “my nature is so evil.” Well, but your depravity is known and provided for in the text. Your sinfulness, like the crookedness mentioned in the text, shall be made straight! The Lord can overcome your natural disposition. Whatever the peculiar form of your besetting sin, the Holy Spirit is more than a match for it. Though you have sinned very foully, He can forgive—and though you feel a strong temptation to sin in the same way again—He can correct the tendency in your nature and give you new longings which shall overcome the old. O that my Lord had His due of you, then you would not doubt Him!

Blessed Savior, King of kings, and Lord of lords deigning to stoop to suffer and to die, how can men doubt You? How can they look into Your dear face and yet distrust You? How can they see Your blessed hands and feet and riven side, and yet suspect You? O Sinner, cast yourself on Jesus and you shall have joy and peace given you today!

Three things I want you to notice in the text, and I have done. That which saves us is not what *is*, but what *will* be. “I will make darkness light.” “I will make crooked things straight.” The crooked thing is really crooked now, but there is a transformation in store. Sinner, it is not what you are *now* that is to be your salvation. You are dark and crooked, but your salvation shall yet be *given* to you. You shall be light in the Lord, and upright through His Grace.

Note, secondly, it is not what *you* can do, but what *God* can do. “I will make darkness light.” The sinner shall not turn his darkness into light, but “I,” Jehovah—I who can do all things. I, who can create and can destroy, “I will make darkness light before you, and crooked things straight.” Notice again, that this work may not be yours at once, but it shall be soon. It does not say, “I will make darkness light today.” Still it does say, “I will.”

Ah, then, let us look forward to the brightness which we cannot yet see and rejoice in the straightness which as yet we do not discern! God will keep His word to the minute, and His eternal “shalls” and “wills” shall never fall to the ground. I pray God will bless the Word to you who are tried Believers—to give you peace and confidence. And to you who are seeking sinners, that you may trust in Christ and find salvation. The Lord bless you richly, for His name’s sake. Amen.

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END OF VOLUME 14

SMOKING FLAX

NO. 1831

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON JUNE 1, 1884.**

***“The smoking flax shall He not quench.”
Isaiah 42:3.***

I BELIEVE that the first sense of these words is not the one usually given to them, nor yet the one upon which I intend to preach tonight. We read in the 12th of Matthew that our Divine Lord was assailed by the scribes and Pharisees, but He did not enter, at that time, into controversy with them, neither did He make them the perpetual target of His observations. Considering what hypocrites they were and what boundless mischief they were doing, He treated them very gently, indeed. They were, compared to Him, but as bruised reeds and as the smoking flax, and He could, if He had pleased, have broken them up altogether, or have altogether quenched them—but He did not come to be a mere controversialist. He was, in truth, the greatest of all Reformers, but He was not so much a breaker-down as He was a builder-up. He came not so much to drive out error by reason, as to expel it by the natural and efficient process of putting the Truth of God into its place. So, to a large extent, He left these scribes and Pharisees, and other opponents, alone, and He went quietly on with His own work of healing the sick and saving the sinful—a very good lesson to us.

We get a little pugnacious, sometimes, and seek religious controversy. But our Savior did not strive, nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets—a bruised reed He did not break and a smoking flax He did not quench. The best way to put out the twinkling light of a smoking flax was to let the sun shine. Then nobody could see it! Instead of talking down these bruised reeds, He set up the higher claim of sure and certain truth, for men would not care to trust in bruised reeds when they had once seen something more stable and worthy to be relied upon. You and I will best put down error by preaching the Truth of God. If we preach up Christ, the devil goes down. If a crooked stick is before you, you need not explain how crooked it is—lay a straight one down by the side of it and the work is well done. Preach the Truth of God and error will stand abashed in its presence.

That is, no doubt, the first meaning of this passage, as you will see by the connection in Matthew. It is said, “A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He sends forth judgment unto

victory.” When the Lord sends forth judgment unto victory, then it will be all over with the bruised reed and the smoking flax of the hypocrite, the Pharisee, the formalist, the legalist and every other opponent.

Usually these words are understood to mean that Jesus Christ will deal very gently with timid Believers and this meaning is not to be rejected for, in the first place, it is true. And, in the second place, it is true out of this text, also, for if our Lord Jesus, in His lifetime, was gentle even to hypocrites, how much more will He be gentle to sincere but timorous spirits? If it is true that He will not quench the smoking flax even of a Pharisee, how much more true must it be that the smoking flax of a *penitent* shall not be quenched! So that, if the text does not say what is generally understood by it, it implies it and the words so clearly run into the meaning that is commonly given to them.

I take it that there is a kind of instinct in the Church, so that even when judged according to criticism, she may seem to misapply a passage of Scripture. She generally does not misapply it, but only brings out a second light which was always behind the first and which shines none the less brightly, but all the more so, because the first was there. I shall therefore take the text to mean something other than I have stated. “The smoking flax shall He not quench,” is a text for you timorous, desponding, feeble-minded and yet, true-hearted Believers, and you may appropriate it to yourselves. May the Holy Spirit help you to do so!

I. In talking of it, at this time, I shall first enquire, WHAT STATE THIS METAPHOR REPRESENTS. A smoking flax represents *a state in which there is a little good*. The margin is “dimly burning flax.” It is burning, but it is burning very dimly. There is a spark of good within the heart. You, my dear Friend, have a little faith. It is not much bigger than a grain of mustard seed, but faith of that size has great power in it! I wish that your faith would grow to a tree, but I am very glad that you have any, even though it is minute as the mustard seed. You have a desire, too, after better things. You are always wanting to be more holy. You love to be among God’s people and though, sometimes, you are afraid that you are not one of them, you would give all that you have to be sure that you were, for you love their conversation. Having those desires, you pray. “O Sir,” you say, “it is not worth calling *prayer!*” Well, we will not call it prayer, then, but it *is* prayer, for sometimes, when not even a word is spoken, the desire of the heart is a most acceptable pleading with God. “O Sir,” you say, “but I do not always desire alike!” I am very sorry that it is so. I wish you always had a strong desire after Christ. Still, you *do* desire. There is a longing, a desiring, a panting, a hungering, a thirsting—therefore there is some little good in you.

“Do not praise me,” you say. Oh, no, dear Friend, I will not praise you! I know that you would not like it, for you have a modest estimate of yourself and, like the publican, you cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” That tune suits you, does it not? I can see somewhat of good in you since you

do not think well of yourself. If you did, we might think ill of you—but inasmuch as you even repent over your repentance and feel as if your tears need weeping over, I am glad of it. Lowliness of heart is a Grace very much despised in these days, but very much valued by the King of Heaven. “To this man,” He says “will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My Word.” There is some little good in you *put there by the Spirit of God*. “Ah,” you say, “I like that word, Sir. I am sure there was no good in me by Nature.” Friend, I am sure of it, too, if you are at all like I am. The Grace of God has put in us our first desire, our first loathing of sin, our first wish to be forgiven, our first desire to return to our Father from whom we have wandered. The Spirit put it there and you are like the smoking flax because there is a little living fire in you.

You are like smoking flax, again, because *your good is too little to be of much use to anybody*. What could we do with a smoking flax if we had it here, tonight, and the gas was all out? You would, perhaps, see a glimmer, but you would say, “It is not light, but darkness visible.” I like a soul in darkness to find that darkness visible! There is a good point about that. Alas, you are such a poor timid creature, you could not comfort a child of God—you cannot even comfort yourself! You could not strengthen the weak, for you need all the strengthening for yourself. You are not much of a soldier. You could not march in rank—we have to carry you about in the ambulance. Well, we are not tired of carrying you, nor is God, either! You are still a soldier, for you would fight if you could.

Though you are an invalid, yet whenever the trumpet sounds, you wish to be in the thick of the fight. Poor thing that you are, you would soon be trampled down, but you have spirit enough for it, for which I thank God. Though your courage is of no great use to anybody, yet it is of use to *you*, for it proves you to be a soldier of the Cross, a follower of the Lamb! I would to God that you had more of the Light of God that you might light your Brother on his dreary way. I wish you had more faith, more joy, more hope, more rest, for you might, then, be of service to the Lord’s household and the King might find in you a willing helper. But as you cannot do that, you are like the smoking flax—there is a little good, but that good is not great enough to make you very useful. Yet I will tell you one thing you *can* do. When you meet with another poor soul that is like you, you can sympathize, can you not? You see, when bright and shining lights come near those who are dim, they are apt, rather, to shame them than to comfort them—but you will not do that. So far you may even help the despondent—at least you will do so one of these days.

Smoking flax, then, has a little fire, but it is so little that it is of small service and, what is worse, *it is so little that it is rather unpleasant*. No one delights in the smell of a candle that is dying out. Smoking flax does not yield a sweet savor, neither does a Christian when he is in a mournful condition. There is a little good in him, but there is a great deal of wrong about him and that wrong has an ill smell. Sometimes these smoking-flax

people believe a great many errors. They do not hold the true and solid doctrine of God's everlasting love. They favor notions that are not Scriptural and error is never sweet to Christ, nor to any of His own people. Besides, they have a great smoke of doubts. They doubt this and they question that—and they suspect the other thing. There is nothing more obnoxious to our Divine Lord than distrust of Him. It is a gracious act on His part that He puts up with it.

One said to Christ, "If You can"—and that was a shocking thing to say to Almighty God! Another said to Him, "If You will"—and that was a shameful thing to say to One so kind—and yet He bore with them both. Doubting hearts will cry, "If You will," and, "if You can," and do *anything* sooner than believe. This is to make an ill savor in the Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ for, though we may reckon our doubts to be trifling, they are no trifles to Him, but exceedingly grievous and provoking to His heart! A dear Sister came in after service, this morning, and told me that she was 50 years old on the same day as myself, so she came to shake hands with me, and she added, "I am like you in that, but I am the very reverse of you in other things." I replied, "Then you must be a good woman." "No," she said, "that is not what I mean." "But are you not a Believer?" "Well," she said, "I—I will try to be." I got hold of her hand and I said, "You are not going to tell me that you will try and believe my Lord Jesus Christ, for that means unbelief of Him who must be true!" And I held her fast while I added, "When your mother was about, did you say to her, 'Mother, I will try and believe you'? No, you would believe her because she was true—and I must have you believe Jesus Christ." She said, "Sir, pray for me." "No," I said, "I am not inclined to do that. What should I pray for you about? If you will not believe my Lord, what blessing can He give you? What has He ever done that you should say, 'I cannot believe Him'?"

She again answered, "I will try." I was not content till I had reminded her of the Word of God, "He that believes in Him has everlasting life," and I pressed her to a full faith in the risen Lord. The Holy Spirit enabled her to trust and then she cried, "I have been looking to my *feelings*, Sir, and this has been my mistake!" I have no doubt that she had done so—and a great many others are doing the same! And their doubts are just that horrible smoke which comes from smoking flax. O, you poor doubters, believe the Lord Jesus Christ! To say, "I cannot believe Him," is to say, in other words, that He is a liar and we cannot allow you to say *that!*

Dear Friend, if you are like the smoking flax, there is something good in you, but that is so sadly little that there is a great deal that is trying about you—yet the Lord will not quench you! You are full of all sorts of fears. You are afraid of a shadow. You are trembling at nothing at all! Why is this? You are troubled when you ought to be glad and you make your whole family sad when there is no earthly reason for it. May the Lord deliver you! Those that are highest in faith have tried to comfort you and you

have pulled them down instead of their being able to draw you up. Come, Friend, I would be as gentle as ever I can—my text bids me be so. I have no extinguisher for your smoking flax, for my Lord has said, “The smoking flax shall He not quench.”

I must add one more thing about this state and it is this, though the good of it is so little that it is of very little use to other people—and sometimes is very obnoxious—yet there is *enough good in you to be dangerous in Satan’s esteem*. He does not like to observe that there is yet a little fire in you, for he fears that it may become a flame. If any of you were to see a man standing at the back of one of our public buildings lighting his pipe, I will be bound to say that you would be half afraid of an explosion, for he might be applying dynamite! There are times when the smallest smoke would fill the bravest men with fear. Even so—

**“Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees”**

If he hears you groaning about your sin, he is frightened at it. “Oh,” he says, “they have begun to feel! They have begun to mourn. They have begun to desire. They have begun to pray and soon they will leave me!” Let a farmer perceive a little smoke coming out of one of his ricks and I am sure that he will not say that there is nothing at all in a smoking flax! No, he will hasten to prevent a conflagration. So the little Grace that is in you, dear Friend, Christ sees and He approves of it, for He knows the possibilities of it—how little faith can grow into strong faith—how the grain of mustard seed can become a tree and the birds of the air may yet lodge in its branches! And Satan, also, knows what may come of it and he is moved to quench it if he can. We, therefore, would encourage you and fan your spark to a flame.

There is the first question answered. What state does this represent?

II. Secondly, WHEN ARE SOULS IN THAT STATE? Some are in that state when they are newly saved—*when the flax has just been lighted*. Those that are to be received into the Church, tonight, I welcome very heartily, but they are very newly lit and some, perhaps, would have said, “Let them wait a bit.” Yes, but then our Lord does not quench the smoking flax because it is newly lighted and nor will I. No place in the world is so good for the lambs as the fold. No place is so good for babes as their own home. No place is so good for young Christians as the Church of God. So let them come!

Being newly converted, they are strange to many things. You have made a host of discoveries. You find more depravity in your heart than you thought was there. You find enemies where you expected to meet with friends. All this is apt to dampen your courage, but do not be cast down—for though it is but a little that you are lighted—yet the loving Jesus will not quench the smoking flax!

Sometimes a candle smokes, not because it is newly lit, but because it is *almost extinguished*. I know that I speak to some Christians who have been alight with the fire of Grace for many years and yet they feel as if

they were near the dark hour of extinction. But you shall not go out. The Lord will not quench you, Himself, nor will He permit the devil to quench you. He will keep you alight with Grace. "Oh," but you say, "I am so depressed in spirit!" Yes, some of God's best servants have been of a sorrowful spirit. Remember Hannah, whom Eli cruelly rebuked, but who, nevertheless, got a blessing? David had to say, "Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me?" And yet he was a man after God's own heart. Perhaps you are not well, or you have had an illness that has taken much upon your nervous system and you are depressed—perhaps that is why you think that Grace is leaving you—but it will not! Your spiritual life does not depend upon Nature, else it might expire—it depends upon Grace, and Grace will never cease to shine till it lights you into Glory! Therefore be not cast down. You may think that your light will go out in eternal darkness, but it never shall, for the Lord Jesus Christ will preserve the flame.

Sometimes the wick smokes when *worldliness has dampened it*. If some of you never have any holy joy, I am not surprised, for you are so taken up with the world and so fond of it. The life of God is in you, but it is smothered! You are like an autumn fire out in the garden when they are burning the weeds—there is a fire, but all you can see is smoke. Yes, you smother up your piety with the things of this world and no wonder that it smokes! What a mercy it is that the Lord does not allow, even you, to perish! He keeps the dying flame alive though hidden away.

At times a wick burns low because *a very strong wind has blown upon it*. Many men and women are the subjects of very fierce temptations. The place in which they live is a trial to them and their natural constitution furnishes them with a host of temptations—and so the flax scarcely burns, but smokes and smolders. We do not wonder that it should be so.

There are many other reasons why we grow dim at times—reasons, but none of them sufficient to be an excuse. If we were what we ought to be, we would always be burning and shining lights—and there would be no times in which we would be like the smoking flax. But then we are not what we ought to be—we fall short of the true standard—and we become feeble Believers.

III. I desire to finish with a word of promise. WHAT DOES JESUS DO WITH THOSE WHO ARE IN THIS STATE? He says that He will not quench the smoking flax. What a world of mercy lies in that Word of God! Everybody else would quench us but Christ! I am sure that some Christians get into such a state that the most loving Christian friends find it hard to bear with them and fear that such a state of mind cannot be consistent with Grace at all. Thus your friend would give you over as lost. But Jesus Christ says that He will not do so.

He will not quench you, first, *by pronouncing legal judgment upon you*. He will not say, "You have broken My Laws and I have done with you." If He did, our only answer could be, "Enter not into judgment with Your ser-

vant, for in Your sight shall no man living be justified." If the Lord were once to come to that, He would quench us all! Not only some few of the tremblers, but the strongest among us must go to the wall! The Lord Jesus Christ has not come to condemn, but to save.

He will not quench you, dear Friend, *by setting up a high experimental standard*. Certain deep divines will say, "You must have felt so much of this and so much of the other, or else you cannot be a child of God." Who told the good man that? Who made him to be a judge? The Lord Jesus Christ does not quench even the feeble, faint desire, or the trembling faith of His servants, though they fall far short of that experience which ought to belong to a child of God.

He will not judge you, dear Friend, *by a lofty standard of knowledge*. I have known persons who have thought, "If that convert is not better instructed in the doctrines, he is no child of God." The Lord has some of His children whose heads are in a very strange state and if He first puts their hearts right, He afterwards puts their heads right. But for you and for me to say that a man is not a child of God because he does not know all that the advanced saints know, is a very wicked thing! I am sure that your little child, who cannot read or write, is pressed to your bosom, dear mother, with just as much affection as that brave son of yours who has just been winning the first prize at school. You do not say, "I will not love the little one because he is not a man" or, "I will not love my little daughter because she is not grown up to womanhood." Oh, no! The Lord loves the little ones. If you can say, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see," you are taught of God! If you know these two things—yourself a sinner and Christ a Savior—you are scholar enough to go to Heaven!

And the Lord Jesus Christ will not quench you *by setting up a standard by which to measure your graces*. It is not, "So much faith and you are saved. So little faith and you are lost." Oh, no! If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed it will save you. If you believe in Christ, you are saved! That woman who touched the hem of Christ's garment with her fingers and then tremblingly slunk back was truly healed—slight as her touch was! Even Simeon, who took the Savior up into his arms, and said, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace," cannot more surely be said to have had a saving faith than that poor woman who came behind and touched the hem of the Master's garment!

Come along, you little ones—you trembling ones! Be not afraid! Jesus will not quench you by any of these means. I will tell you what He *will* do with you and that is, instead of quenching you, He will protect you! He will blow upon you with the soft breath of His love till the little spark will rise into a flame! You young folks do not know what trouble some of us used to have 45 years ago, when we got up in the morning and had to strike a light in the old-fashioned way. There we were, with a flint and a steel—striking away in a tiresome manner till we spied a little spark down in the tinder—oh, such a little one—and then we gently tried to blow it

into a flame! How we used to prize a spark on a cold, frosty morning, when our fingers were pretty well frozen! We never put out the sparks by shutting the lid on the top of the tinder, but we tried, if we could, to light our match.

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ will blow softly upon you with His gentle Spirit. He will bring to your mind exceedingly great and precious promises. He will bring to you kind friends who shall tell you their experience and try to comfort you. I should not wonder, my dear Brother, that one of these days I shall hear you pray a strong, brave prayer! I should not wonder if you, before long, come forward and made an open profession! And if you have done so already, I feel pretty sure that you will honor it and grow stronger till, one day we shall say, “Who is that bold witness for Christ? Who is that burning and shining light?” He is the man who was once likened to the smoking flax!

I have had the portraits of my two boys taken on their birthdays—from the first birthday till they were twenty-one. The first year the little fellows are sitting, two of them in one baby carriage. At 21 they are doing nothing of the sort—they are men full-grown! Yet I can trace them all along, from the time when they were babes, till they became little boys, and then youths, and then young men! I should not have been pleased to have seen them wheeled about in the baby carriage for 21 years! In that case, I would have thought myself a most unfortunate father. And so I do not want to have any of you remaining in spiritual infancy—we long to see you come to the fullness of the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus!

Life is precious, but we look for growth. A spark is fire, but we expect flame. Grace is priceless, but we long to see it daily increased by going on unto perfection! Despise not the day of small things, but advance to greater things than these. Be comforted, but not self-satisfied. Rest, but do not loiter. The table of the Lord is spread and it is a feast not for men, alone, but for babes in Grace. Come here, you that love the Lord, and you that trust Him, however feeble your trust. However faint your courage, come and welcome! My Lord’s table is not for giants, only, but for infants, also. The viands are not strong meat, but bread and wine, fit food for the faint and feeble. Examine yourselves, you sincere tremblers, but do not let the examination end in your staying away! Rather, mark how the text says, “let a man examine himself, and so *let him eat*”—not, “so let him refrain from eating” Ho, you that hope in His mercy, your Lord invites you to His own feast of love! You may come and welcome! If you have come to Christ, Himself, by faith, come to His table and remember Him tonight. The Lord bless you, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 51.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—734, 682.**

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CHRIST'S WORK NO FAILURE

NO. 1945

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 30, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“He shall not fail nor be discouraged till He has set judgment
in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His Law.”
Isaiah 42:4.***

PREVIOUS verses at the close of the 41st Chapter indicate the utter failure of the hope of man from man. God Himself looked and behold, “there was no man; even among them, and there was no counselor that, when I asked of them could answer a word.” How often it is so in human history—man fails to find leadership and help in man! Great men are raised up, now and then, and the tendency is to make idols of them and so to trust in an arm of flesh. These die and then their fellows look out in the Church and in the world for other men upon whom they may dote after the same manner. But it sometimes happens that they look in vain—none arise whom they can elect for leaders. Just now I think it is so in more departments than one. Look where you may, where will you see the man who is equal to the crisis? Somehow or other, in the Providence of God, every hour has, in due time, had its man, but if our hopes are fixed in men, we must feel at this time sorely pressed.

In expounding the one verse which I have selected for a text, I shall need to open up the whole passage. Follow me, therefore, with opened Bibles and obey the first word of the Chapter, which is, *Behold*.

We are commanded at all times to *behold the Son of God*. There is never a season in which He is not a fit subject for contemplation and expectation. “Behold the Lamb of God” is the standing rule from generation to generation, from the first of January to the last of December. But specially in cloudy and dark days ought we to behold Him. When after having looked and looked long, you see no man and no counselor, then this precept has an emphatic force about it, “Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; My elect, in whom My soul delights.” When all other saviors fail, look to the Savior whom God has set up! The darker all things become, the more eagerly look for His appearing, whose coming is as a morning without clouds! When the lower lights are burning dim, behold the lamp above!

Our great comfort is that *the Lord Jesus Christ is always to be beheld*. He always lives and always works for His people. We must view Him not merely as One who appeared upon the scene years ago, but as still living. He died in the heat of the battle, but He rose again to secure the victory! We do not found our hopes of a brighter future upon a dead Savior—our hopes for the future of the world and for the accomplishment of God’s gracious purposes hang upon One who always lives and is, at this time, in

the place of vantage, carrying on His great work and warfare at the right hand of God. My text says, "Behold My Servant"—and that matchless Servant of God is to be beheld—not with the eyes of sense—that were little worth—for men saw Him in that way and crucified Him! But He is to be beheld with the eyes of *faith* and this is a noble sight, for those who look to Him in that manner are lightened and their faces are not ashamed. At the commencement of my discourse, I beseech you, dear Brothers and Sisters, to look to Jesus Christ the ever-living Worker. If you have been troubled and fretted by peering into these gloomy times and perceiving nothing that can raise your spirits, I pray you look about you no longer, but look up! There *He* sits at the right hand of God, even the Father, the appointed Man, the glorious, chosen Deliverer. Behold Him and your fears and sorrows will fly away!

The text declares concerning our Lord that "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." This leads us to consider what is the work which Jesus Christ has undertaken in which He will not fail nor be discouraged. Our text directs us in this matter, for it tells us that He has come to "set judgment in the earth" and that "the isles shall wait for His Law." The earth is to be delivered from misrule and sin—and men are to be submissive to His instruction and direction. There are some who doubt it, but I still believe in that verse which we sang just now—

***"Jesus shall reign wherever the sun
Does his successive journeys run.
His kingdom stretches from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more."***

Our Lord has come to save His elect and He will save every one of them! No soul for whom He stood as Surety and Substitute shall ever be cast away. The sheep shall pass again under the hand of Him that counts them and they shall all be there. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged," but He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.

As for the Lord's Second Coming, we know not when it shall be. Shall the world grow darker and darker till He comes? It may be so. There are passages of Scripture and signs of the times which may be taken to indicate it. On the other hand, shall the age grow brighter and brighter till He appears to bring the perfect day? Through the preaching of the Gospel shall there yet be periods in which multitudes shall be converted and whole nations shall be saved? I do not know—there are texts that seem to look that way and many a brave worker hopes as much. There are some who can map out unfulfilled prophecy with great distinctness, but I confess my inability to do so. They get a shilling box of mathematical instruments. They stick down one leg of the compasses and describe a circle here and a circle there—and they draw two or three lines—and there it is! Can you not see it, as plain as a pikestaff? I am sick of diagrams! I have seen enough of them to make another volume of Euclid. My impression is that very little is to be learned from the major part of these interpretations or speculations. I do not think that anybody can map out the future so as to be absolutely sure of *anything* definite except certain great clearly-stated facts.

It is certain that the Lord will come, that He will come in such an hour as the most of men look not for Him—and that His coming will be a surprise even to many of His own Church. He may come at this moment while yet I am speaking to you, but He may delay His coming, if it so pleases Him, through many a century. It may sound strange for me to say so, but if our Lord were not to come for ages, we should not be justified in saying, “My Lord delays His coming” nor would any prophecy of Scripture be broken. Furthermore, it seems to me pretty clear that truth and righteousness are to win the day upon the earth—the idols are to be abolished, war is to cease and the great Jehovah is to be called “the God of the whole earth.” Either before or after His Second Advent—I am not going into that question this morning—this polluted earth is to be cleansed and this round planet of ours, which today is darkened by sin, shall yet shine out, like a new-born sun in all the pristine light which beamed from it when first it came from its Maker’s hands! The Lord shall reign over all mankind and a period of peace, rest and holiness shall be the fruit of His blessed sway! The Lord Jesus will not rest till He has subdued all things unto Himself and put down all the spiritual wickednesses which now tyrannize over the world.

I do not think it necessary for me to go further into detail as to all that our Lord is resolved to do. What I have to say is this—*whatever He has undertaken, He will perform*—whatever commission He has received He will fulfill. “He shall not fail nor be discouraged” till all His work is done. Brothers and Sisters, we get to doubting sometimes. We ask, Is it all right? Are matters moving on? Behold Him who is at the head of all affairs, the Director of the high politics of Heaven, the Great One upon whose shoulders rests the business of God in the salvation of men! Behold Him and be comforted! You and I may fail—shame on us if we do! We may be discouraged—it will be our sin if we are. But *He* shall not fail nor be discouraged till He shall have worked out every point of the promises of Grace and shall have accomplished every iota of the eternal purpose of love!

I believe in the final perseverance of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe in the final perseverance of every saint as an individual. Furthermore, I believe in the final perseverance of the saints as a body—the Church of God shall live and continue her work till she has accomplished it! “The gates of Hell shall not prevail against her.” But far more Divine is the thought to me of the final perseverance of the Christ of God! If He were to lay down the task and say it is impossible, woe worth the day to us! If He were to turn His back upon His high enterprise and say, “I will save no more of these rebellious beings. I will attempt no more to shed the Light of God into the darkness which comprehends it not. I will give up the task in which men so madly oppose Me”—then were hope blotted out of the language of men! But while this text stands true, the door of hope is open! We need not fail or be discouraged, since *He* will not.

This morning I shall speak to you in the hope that the Spirit of God may fire you with new courage for the holy war. First, *let this Truth of God be considered and believed.* And then, secondly, *let this Truth of God be believed and enjoyed.*

I. First, then, LET THIS TRUTH OF GOD BE CONSIDERED AND BELIEVED.

Will you now thoughtfully turn it over in your minds? It is certainly a very marvelous enterprise which our Lord Jesus Christ has undertaken. The salvation of a single soul involves a miracle. The salvation of myriads upon myriads of the human race—what shall I call it but a mountain of marvels? The removal of the darkness which has settled over mankind in tenfold night—what a Divine labor! The ending of the enmity which exists between man and God, the reconciling of man unto his Maker—what a design! The redeeming of this world from the bondage of corruption, the setting up of a Kingdom of truth and holiness—what an enterprise! Such wonders has Jesus undertaken and such wonders He will achieve! He died to lay the foundation of His all-conquering Kingdom and He still lives that this Kingdom may be established in its supremacy and all nations may flow to it. Beloved, I fail to conceive, much more to express, the vastness of the task which He has undertaken! Those of you who love your fellow men often mourn your powerlessness with a single individual. What hard work it is to deal with our own countrymen! How are we baffled by their poverty, their ignorance, their misery, their sin! You have only to battle with a single vice, drunkenness, for example, to feel what a monster is to be overcome! Only think for a moment of the social impurity of this city and you are sick at heart as you remember it. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ has come to cleanse this Augean stable and He *will* cleanse it. The stream of the River of Life shall run through the foulest parts of the earth till even those horrible regions which are comparable to the Dead Sea shall be reclaimed!

The problem staggers us. The systems of evil are colossal. The hold of evil on the race is terrible. Man is inveterately a sinner. You cannot cure him of rebellion—he is desperately set on mischief. Even when the consequences of his sin wound and afflict him, he still returns to it. If you prove to him to a demonstration that a thing is right and profitable, he does not, therefore, love it. If you prove it to be injurious, he chooses it! By the use of an accursed logic, he puts darkness for light and light for darkness and thus stultifies his conscience and hardens his heart. If, perhaps, you convince his judgment, you have not won his affection, you have not carried his will, you have not subdued his mind. Nothing but Omnipotence itself can save a single soul! What must be that mighty power which shall cause *nations* to run unto the Lord! They that dwell in the wilderness are to bow before Him and His enemies are to lick the dust. What a conquest is this! How shall Ethiopia be made to stretch out her hands to Him? Look how black are the hearts of her inhabitants, as well as their faces! How shall China and India, beclouded by their false philosophies, be led to acknowledge the Truth of God? Look, Sirs, look at this great mountain and do not underestimate its mass—and then remember that before our Zerubbabel it must and shall become a plain! The stone mentioned by Daniel, cut out of the mountain without hands, smote the monstrous image and broke it and, in due time, filled the whole earth! In the night visions the same Prophet saw the Son of Man having dominion, glory and a Kingdom, that all people should serve Him. So must it be. But how great a thing it is!

The task is rendered the more severe because our Lord Jesus, at this present time, works largely by a Church which is a poor and faulty instrument for the accomplishment of His purpose. I sometimes think there are more difficulties connected with the Church than with the world, for the Church is often worldly, faithless, lethargic and, I was about to add, inhuman. Might I not almost say as much, for she seems at times well near destitute of tender sympathy for the lost and perishing. The Church at one hour receives the light and reflects it like the full moon, so that you have hope of her enlightening men. But soon she wanes into a mere ring of light and becomes obscured. She declines from the Truth. She forgets the glorious Gospel entrusted to her and she seeks after the rotten philosophies of men. How many times since Pentecost has the Church started aside after the wisdom of men and, after a while, painfully returned to her first faith?

At the present moment there is just that kind of wandering going on and this hinders the work of the Lord. If a man has to do a work, he says to himself, "Give me good tools, at any rate. If I have to strike a heavy blow, do not trouble me with a broken hammer. If I have to write, give me a pen that will not hinder my hand." But alas, the Church is too often false to her Master's purpose and traitorous to His Truth! Yet, Brothers and Sisters, the Lord will largely do His work and accomplish His good pleasure by such means as these! He will not fail nor be discouraged. If all Christians should become lukewarm till the whole Church became nauseous, as the Church of Laodicea, yet still the Lord Jesus will not fail nor be discouraged. The disciple may sleep, but the great Savior agonizes over men. Let this battalion and the other waver as it may, He who holds the banner in the very center of the fight will never be moved—He will hold the field against all comers, for the Altogether Lovely One is the Standard-Bearer among ten thousand! Though you mourn over the disciples, rejoice over their Master. They faint or fly, but, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged."

To help you to believe this great Truth of God, I beg you to notice who He is that has undertaken all this. Kindly read at the commencement of the chapter—"Behold My Servant, whom I uphold, My elect, in whom My soul delights." I am sure that He who is thus spoken of will not fail nor be discouraged, for, first, *He is God's own special Servant*. God has many servants, but the Christ is, above all others, called of God, "My Servant." He is a Son far excelling all other sons and, in the same sense, He is a Servant far exceeding all other servants. He took upon Himself the form of a Servant and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. He is a Servant as none of us can ever hope to be in so high and wonderful a sense—He performs all the will of the Father! If He that was Lord of All became a servant, do you think He will not accomplish His service? If He that made the heavens and the earth laid aside His splendor and veiled Himself in our inferior clay, do you think He will fail in the purpose for which He did this? Can the Incarnation of God be a failure? Can the life of the Son of God among men end in defeat? Your heart gives immediate answer—God's own Servant will fulfill His service.

Then the great God says of Him, "*My Servant whom I uphold.*" If God upholds Him, how can He fail? Though God upholds all His people, yet beyond all others He is upholding His own chosen Son and Servant—how then, can He fail? Is it possible with the Divine Power perpetually streaming into Him and abiding in Him, that He should fail, or be discouraged? The text may be read, "Behold My Servant upon whom I lean," and the picture is of a great Oriental monarch who comes forth leaning upon a favorite lord whom he honors by placing him in that position, indicating thereby that he trusts his affairs with him and regards him as his right hand man, a very pillar of the State. Yes, we say it with reverence, God the Father leans on Jesus the Christ! He rests His honor and Glory with the Person of the Incarnate God—and now He comes before us as God in Christ Jesus, revealing His Glory through the Mediator, putting His own sovereign power into the keeping of His Son whom He has appointed heir of all things. Can that Glorified One fail? Has the Father trusted His Kingdom of Grace with One who will be overcome? How can He fail, whom the Father upholds, and upon whom the Father leans all the dignity and Glory of His moral government? "He shall not fail nor be discouraged."

Then the Scripture adds this very significant word, "*My elect in whom My soul delights.*" The chosen of God, the most choice One that God knows, shall He prove a failure? Not only does God delight in Him, but it is put still more strongly—"In whom My soul delights." Do you taste the marrow of the expression? It seems to me to be exceedingly full. The chief delight of God is in His Son, as Mediator. God said of the world, that it was very good, but we read not that His soul delighted in it! But, look, the very soul of the Godhead is moved and filled with delight because of the Savior commissioned to redeem! Blessed Father, we do not wonder that You are taken up with delight in Jesus, for even we, ourselves, when we get a sight of Him, are ravished with His charms. There is none like He! He is Your Only-Begotten, the Son of Your heart—well may You be well pleased with Him. How, then, is it possible that One whom the Lord loves so well, in whom His soul delights, should be put upon a work in which He can fail, or should be left in that work to be discouraged? It is impossible! The connection of Jesus of Nazareth with Jehovah, God of All, makes it absolutely certain that the Divine enterprise to which He has pledged Himself shall assuredly succeed. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged."

Furthermore, *our Lord is the abiding place of the Holy Spirit.* The text says, "I have put My Spirit upon Him"—the Holy Spirit, to whom is Glory and honor forever! The Holy Spirit, very God of very God, dwells in Christ! Upon us He comes in measure. We sometimes receive a large portion of His power, but still we are not capable of receiving all the fullness of the Holy Spirit. But Christ has the residue of the Spirit abiding in Him. The Holy Spirit descended like a dove and rested upon Him—and it still rests upon Him. My Brothers and Sisters, do you dream that He on whom the Holy Spirit always rests can fail or be discouraged? Do you believe that the Gospel system is to die out? Is it going to be throttled by philosophy? Strangled by modern thought? Or trampled down beneath the hoof of anarchy? No, while the Holy Spirit abides upon the great Servant of Jehovah, we cannot know a fear! The anointing on the Head will descend to the

skirts of the garments and as He cannot fail nor be discouraged, neither shall we be dismayed. He who is acknowledged, honored, trusted, sustained, loved and anointed of God cannot but be successful! Jesus must persevere successfully to the end.

Notice yet further, that *the success of Jesus is guaranteed by the decree of God*. It is written, "He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." Oh, those blessed "shalls" and "wills"! Some people make little of them, but I make everything of them. Here my heart rests, for if God says "shall," then it shall certainly be! "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool." Do you think He spoke in vain? Turn to the second Psalm and read, "I will declare the decree: the Lord has said unto Me, You are My Son; this day have I begotten You. Ask of Me, and I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Shall this solemn proclamation of Jehovah be mere waste paper? My Brothers and Sisters, the sun may forget to shine, the eyes of the world may be darkened. Yon mighty ocean may cease to ebb and flow and the heart of the earth may die. All nature may be driven on the rock of fate in general wreckage and confusion, but no Word of God shall fall to the ground, for that Word is essential life and power! If Jehovah has spoken, it is done! If He declares it, it shall be! Therefore the Christ must and shall succeed, for His work is the subject of a Divine Decree.

Yet, Brethren, it may be that at times we fear that the Gospel is not prospering nor fulfilling the purpose for which God has sent it. Looking back on past history and looking out upon the present state of affairs, we are afraid that things are not going well. Possibly this may arise out of *our Lord's way of working* which is so different from what our minds would choose. It is written in the second verse, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street." You are in an awful hurry, are you not? But He is never in haste. You would make a great stir and noise, I know, but Jesus will not thus spread the Gospel. You would go out and fight all the enemies of truth and set clamor against clamor, cry against cry—but, "He shall not strive."

You would shout, rage and rave—but He shall not cry. You would advertise to the ends of the earth, but He shall not cause His voice to be heard in the street. When Mohammed commenced his enterprise, he announced that Paradise was to be found beneath the shadow of swords and numbers of brave men rushed to the battle. They swept everything before them and stained continents with blood! They carried the name of Allah and Mohammed over Asia and Northern Africa—and seemed intent on conquering Europe—and yet the work done will not endure. The Prophet and his caliphs did, indeed, strive and cry, and cause their voices to be heard in the street—but Christ's system is the very reverse of that—His weapons are not carnal. Behold His battle-axe and weapons of war! Truth divinely strong with no human force at the back of it but that of holiness and love! A Gospel full of gentleness and mercy to men, proclaimed not by the silver trumpets of kings, but by the plain voices of lowly men!

The Gospel seeks neither prestige nor patronage from the State, nor does it ask to be advocated by scholastic sophistry, or human eloquence. It does not even aim at becoming predominant by force of the learning or talent of its teachers. It has neither pomp to commend it, nor arms to enforce it. It finds its strength rather in feebleness than in power! The Kingdom comes by the Holy Spirit dropping like dew on human hearts and fertilizing them with a Divine life. Christ's Kingdom comes not with observation, but in the stillness of the soul. All that is really the work of God is worked in the silence of the heart by that wind which blows where it will. Sweetly the Holy Spirit constrains all things by His own power—and the day of His power is not with roar of tempest, but with the noiseless fall of the dew. You, ardent spirit that you are, are all in a hurry! You are going to push the Church before you and drag the world after you. Go and do it! But if the Lord works not after your fashion, be not greatly surprised, for it is written, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street."

His purpose shall stand and He will do all His pleasure. He will do His work all the more surely because He sets about it quietly. I always delight in a man who can afford to go about his life-work without fuss, bluster, or loud announcement. See how a master-workman lays down his tools! He arranges his plan, sketches his ideal and then begins as he means to go on. He will do the thing in that way, depend upon it. Another fellow flings his tools about, rushes at the work without system, makes the dust fly, litters the place with chips, spoils the work and leaves it in disgust! Our Savior works not so. He calmly, deliberately, resolutely pursues His mighty plan and He will perform it. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged."

Note well the spirit in which He works. He is gentleness itself and that always—"A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench." You cannot work in hot haste in this spirit. Gentleness makes good and sure speed, but it cannot endure rashness and heat. We know reformers who, if they had the power, would be like bulls in a china shop—they would do a great deal in a very short time. But the world's best Friend is not given to quench and bruise. Here is a bruised reed and it is of no use to anybody—you cannot even get music out of it, much less lean upon it—yet He does not break it. Here is a smoking flax, a wick with an offensive smell, containing very little heat and no light—yet He does not put it out. This oft quoted text is used, as you know, in the New Testament, in reference to the Pharisees—they thought themselves strong pillars, but the Lord knew that they were only bruised reeds. They thought themselves great lights, but He knew that they were only as smoking flax—and yet He did not go out of His way to snuff them out. Even to them, though often righteously indignant, He was yet gentle and only assailed them when they put themselves in His way and forced a verdict from Him. The Lord Jesus was too good and great to be irritated by Pharisees.

Lions do not hunt for "rats and mice, and such small deer." Great principles are laid down which, in due time, destroy the evil which is not worth while to attack in detail. The smoking flaxes of error and the bruised reeds of pretence go in due season, but the gentle Lord is not in

hot haste to put them out of the way. Hence we grow discouraged. But He will not fail nor be discouraged any the more because of His gentleness. No, let me tell you, Brothers and Sisters, it is the quiet man, the meek man, who is always hard to be turned aside from his purpose. When a man is passionate and easily excited, you have only to wait a while and he will cool down—perhaps chill down below zero. These fiery fellows will be easily managed by the devil, or somebody else after the flame is over. Give me a man who deliberately makes up his mind, calmly sets to work and patiently bears all rebuffs—and I know that what He sets himself to do will be done! He will work in God's way and will not put forth his hand to snatch a premature success at the expense of principle. He is quiet because he is sure, patient because he is strong, gentle because he is firm. The man who cannot be provoked is the man who cannot be turned aside. You cannot discourage him—he will go through with his work even to the end—you can be sure of that.

As you look at our blessed Master, patient and immovable amidst all the battle and the strife, you may assure yourself that He will not fail nor be discouraged. I do not admire Napoleon except in the matter of his cool courage, but for that he was noteworthy. They always represent him in the midst of the battle with folded arms. His eagle eyes are on the conflict, but he is motionless as a statue. Every soldier in the imperial army felt that victory was sure, for the captain was so self-possessed. If he had been hurrying to and fro, rushing here, there and everywhere, and making a great fuss about everything, they would have inferred that defeat was impending. But see him yonder! All is well. He knows what he is doing. It is all right, for he does not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard. He is calm, for he can see that all is well.

There stands the Crucified this day, upon the vantage ground, at the right hand of God—and He surveys the battle-field in calm expectancy until His enemies are made His footstool. Tender towards the weakest of the weak and kind even to the unthankful and the evil, we may see in all this mercifulness the pledge of His success. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He has set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His Law."

Consideration of the statement leads us to believe it firmly.

II. I want you to give me a few minutes while I say, LET THIS TRUTH BE BELIEVED AND ENJOYED. I want you to enjoy the fruit of this Truth of God and to be made glad by it.

First, enjoy it by recollecting that *Jesus has finished the work for His people*—that first work wherein He brought in everlasting righteousness, bore the penalty of human guilt and laid the foundation whereupon should be built the Temple of God. Jesus has done all things well. He persevered in His life-labor till He could say, "It is finished." From the hour when, as a Child, He said, "Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?" All through the contradiction of sinners and the weakness, the poverty and the shame in which His life was spent, you never see about our Divine Master any indication of failing or of being discouraged. We sorrowfully cry, "I am almost ready to give up," but He never spoke in that fashion, nor even thought it! He had reckoned upon all the

toil and the grief. He had foreseen it all—He had taken it into His calculations and, therefore, He was not surprised and downcast. He determined to go, for our sakes, to death and the grave—and to bear the shame of our sin and the curse of our guilt—and even to be put by the Father into darkness on our account. He set His face like a flint and like a flint His face remained to the bitter end. He never turned aside. Let us bless Him this day for His persevering love. It is not a half-finished salvation that we behold on yonder bloody tree! It is not an incomplete redemption that we see in that rising again of Jesus from the dead! When we look up to Him in His Glory we know and feel that through all the agony and death He did not fail, was not discouraged and that He has set up a Kingdom which cannot be removed forever. There let us rest with peaceful confidence.

The next reflection which I want you to enjoy is this—*He will finish the work in His believing people*. He will not fail nor be discouraged until He has completely saved you and me! If I had been my own savior, I would have given up the work long ago. We meet now and then with supposed perfect people, but the most of us dare not whisper the word, *perfection*. When I have overcome a whole body of sin and have risen to be somewhat like my Lord, it seems to me as if a new body of death were formed about me. I kill one dragon, and lo, his body yields a crop of monsters! My evil nature seems to have coats like an onion—and when I have taken off one of them—it only lays bare another quite as offensive. Will it not be so to the end of the chapter? You may be growing better—I hope you are—but I shall be all the more hopeful that you are so if you fear that you are growing worse! If you think less and less of yourselves, it is probably true that you are growing in Divine Grace. But if you think more and more of yourselves, it is highly probable that you are growing in pride! There is a great difference between being puffed up and being built up.

I can clearly see that I shall fail and be discouraged if salvation rests with me. But here is my comfort—*He will not fail nor be discouraged!* If my Lord begins with me, He will never be beaten off from His purpose. What bad stuff is our humanity! What wretched raw material for sainthood! It must be hard, treading and pounding such gritty clay, and I wonder not that both the hands and the feet of the great Worker were sorely wounded since He had such clay to deal with. When He fashions us on the wheel and we begin to assume somewhat of the form which He intends for us, yet we crack and spoil when we come to the oven—and all His work upon us seems lost. He has to grind us down, again, to a powder—and begin with us again *de novo* and fashion us once more. It would have been an easier work to have created new beings altogether than to take us poor fallen ones and lift us up to become sons of God! The Almighty Lord had only to have said, “Let a Church be!” and a Church most fair and spotless would have leaped into being! But instead thereof, He works upon us sinful ones and undertakes to make us perfectly pure—and present us to Himself without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. What a marvel of Divine Grace!

He will do it, Brother! He will do it, Sister! He has not grown weary of the work, neither is He discouraged by all our evil behavior. Before He began, He knew all about it. Had He not been a far-seeing Christ, able to

foresee all our shortcomings and backsliding, He might have been surprised into weariness. But He says, "I knew that you are obstinate." And again, "I knew that you would deal very treacherously." He foreknew all our ingratitude, backsliding, unbelief and unworthiness and, therefore, He will not fail nor be discouraged till His work in us is done and we are fit for Heaven!

Again, dear Friends, *He will finish His work by His people*. Whatever the work is that is to be done by the Church, He will not fail nor be discouraged until it is performed. I do not know whether any of you have noticed in my text a very singular thing. If you have the Revised Version, the margin will give you some rather singular information. The text might be read thus, "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: yet He shall not burn dimly nor be bruised." Though He deals with bruised reeds and smoking flaxes, yet He, Himself, is not crushed, nor does His light become a mere glimmer. To my mind, this is a deeply interesting use of words and should not be allowed to slip. Christianity just now, they say, is a mere smoke, the old-fashioned doctrine, especially, burns very dim. Do not believe it—the light of Jesus shall not darken or grow less! Those souls that can see His light will tell you that His face still shines like the sun. There is a Glory about Him that is undiminished and undiminishable. He does not glimmer and He is not crushed! He is no reed—His enemies will one day find that He carries a rod of iron! He is a pillar of the house of our God—He bears up all things, for He is strong and mighty and He cannot fail. I want you to eject at the back door every suggestion that enters your house as to the defeat of the Christ and the failure of the Gospel! It is not possible! It cannot be. *You* may smoke like the flax. *You* may be broken like the reed but He will never glimmer nor be a crushed reed, even to the end—therefore comfort one another with these words.

And to conclude, I would not have treated the text properly if I did not say that it has in it great comfort to those of you who are, as yet, outside of the Church of God and are not numbered with His people. Will you kindly read the sixth and seventh verses? "He shall not fail nor be discouraged," till He has done—what?—the Divine will. And this is a part of it—"To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." "Oh," say you, "I cannot see Christ!" He has come on purpose to make you see. Turn your sightless eyeballs this way. Breathe this prayer, "Son of David, have mercy on me." And if He says, "What will you that I should do unto you?" answer, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." In one single moment, yes, while the clock is ticking, Jesus Christ can take the scales from a blind man's eyes and let in such a flood of daylight that he shall see Heaven itself! Lord, do it this morning! O dear Hearts, will you not, each one, cry, "Lord, do it to me"? Are you saying that, my Friend? He will do it. He loves to hear a blind man's cry. Do you not remember in the New Testament how often He stood still when He heard a blind man's cry? Poor blind Soul, cry to Him now! He shall not fail nor be discouraged, He will come to you and save you!

“Ah,” says one, “but I am worse than that, I am shut up in prison.” Kindly read the seventh verse again—“To bring out the prisoners from the prison.” You are miserable, without hope, shut up in an iron cage. He has come who will not fail nor be discouraged! He has come on purpose to fetch you out of the cage. Ask Him to break the bars in sunder. I see Him lay His pierced hands to that iron bar. You have filed it a long while and it has broken the teeth of your file. You have tried to shake it in its place, but you could not stir it in the least. See what He does! He plucks bar after bar out of its place, as if they had been so many reeds—and you are free! Arise and take your liberty! The Son of God has made you free. If you have trusted Him, He has broken the gates of brass and cut the bars of iron in sunder—you are free—enjoy your liberty!

“Oh, but,” says one, “in my case it is blindness and slavery united.” Listen, then. He has come to “bring them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.” You cannot see the bars that shut you in, nor even mark the limits of your narrow cell—but He has come who will give eyes to you and light to those eyes—and liberty to your enlightened sight! Only trust Him! All things are possible to Him that believes when Christ is near—you know not, you who are now at the bottom of the sea—how high He can lift you in an instant! Out of the belly of Hell, if you will cry, He can lift you in a moment to the very heights of Heaven! I say no more of my Lord than He deserves to have said of Him. No, nor yet half as much! Try Him and see if He will fail. Try Him now, you in the worst and lowest of all circumstances—you devil-bound and devil-tortured spirit! Dare to believe that Jesus can do all things for you! Leave yourself with Him!

Go your way, for as you have believed so shall it be unto you. To the name of Him that will not fail nor be discouraged be glory forever and ever! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Isaiah 41:28, 29; 42:1-16.

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VICTOR EMMANUEL, EMANCIPATOR

NO. 986

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

***“To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison,
and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.”
Isaiah 42:7.***

On a former occasion [Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No. 915, “Sinners Bound with the Cords of Sin”] we contemplated the unconverted man as being bound by the cords of his sins. It was a very solemn and sorrowful topic. I trust it humbled us all, and made those of us whom the Son has made free feel renewed gratitude for the glorious liberty of the children of God. Sad was the spectacle of the dungeon and the fetters, and the felon bound there—a man, a brother—the image of ourselves.

It is a great relief to turn to another subject akin to that, but full of cheerfulness and joy. We showed you the prisoner—we have now to speak of Him who came to set the prisoners free! We described the captive’s cords and bonds—we have now to tell you of Him whose mighty touch liberates the bond slaves and signs the Magna Charta of eternal emancipation. The case of manhood bound like Prometheus to the rock—and preyed upon by the vulture of Hell appeared utterly hopeless—and the more so because the prisoner was his own fetter, and disdained to be free.

After all that has been done for man by the tenderness of God, the simplicity of the Gospel, and the clear and plain command—yes, and after all the thunders of threat, followed by the wooing notes of mercy—the captive continues still the willing slave of sin! And his liberation appears utterly hopeless. But things impossible with men are possible with God, and where human agency fails, Divine agency delights to illustrate its own extraordinary energy.

We gladly survey at this time the effectual operations of Jesus the Savior, the true Victor Emmanuel, who comes to set men free from the bondage of their sins, to whose name be honor and glory world without end!

I. Looking at the first verses of this chapter, we shall consider WHO IT IS THAT SENDS JESUS CHRIST TO ACCOMPLISH THE LIBERATION OF THE SONS OF MEN, because much will depend upon the Liberator’s credentials, the authority by which He is warranted, and the power by which He is backed. We sing for joy of heart as we see that the Infinite God Himself commissioned the Lord Jesus to be the Deliverer of men. And He did this, first, *in His capacity as Creator.*

Read the fifth verse, and behold the great Author of the Redeemer’s commission—“Thus says Jehovah, He that created the heavens, and stretched them out. He that spread forth the earth, and that which comes out of it.” He, then, who spared not His own Son, but sent Him forth on the mission of love, is Jehovah—who has made the heavens a pavilion of azure, gilded with the sun, and bedecked with stars. The selfsame all-

sustaining One who bears up the pillars of the universe, and impels the earth in its majestic circuit. He who gave its luster to every precious stone from the mine, its life to every blade of grass, its fruit to every tree, its motion to every beast and winged fowl—for all these may be said to come out of the earth.

He it is who sent the Incarnate God to open the two-leaved gates and cut the bars of iron asunder that the slaves of Satan might escape from the thralldom of their sins! Jesus, the Son of God, comes armed with the power of the Creator Himself! Rejoice, then, you that are lost, for surely the power which spoke all things out of nothing can create you new, though there is nothing of good within you to aid the God-like work. Rejoice, you that are marred and broken, like vessels spoiled upon the potter's wheel! Your great Creator puts His hand a second time to the work, and resolves to form you for Himself that you may show forth His praise.

He by whom you were made in secret, and curiously worked you in the lowest parts of the earth, is able by His mysterious working to create in you a *new* heart, and infuse into you a *right* spirit. Is there not hope for the dark chaos of your fallen nature and that heart of yours which is now without form and void? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Is there any restraint of His power? It is true your fellow creatures, be they exalted ever so highly by office or character, cannot regenerate you. The very idea is blasphemy against the prerogative of Him who alone can create or destroy.

But where the will of man, and blood, and birth all fail, the Spirit of the Lord achieves the victory. Thus says the Lord, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be you glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." What has John written in the book of his vision? Is it not to the same purpose? He that sat upon the Throne says, "Behold, I make all things new."

He who made the light can open your eyes! He who bade the rivers flow can open springs of penitence within your souls! He who clothed the earth with verdure can make your barren minds fruitful to His praise! If He piled yonder Alpine summits, balanced the clouds which float about them, and formed the valleys which laugh at their feet—He can yet create within the little world of man thoughts that aspire to Heaven, desires that ascend to the realms of purity—and good works which are the fair products of His Spirit!

Has the Creator sent forth a Liberator to captive men? Then there is hope, indeed! He who sent forth the Lord Jesus as His Elect One to restore our fallen race also describes Himself as *the life giver*. For returning to the fifth verse of the chapter before us, we read, "He that gives breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein"! The Lord creates animal life—He puts breath into the nostrils of men and beasts. He gives also mental life—the life which thinks, imagines, doubts, fears, understands, desires. All life comes from the central fountain of self-existence in the great I AM, in whom we live, and move, and have our being.

This Eternal One, who has life in Himself, has sent forth His Son to give life to those who are dead in trespasses and sins. And He has girded Him with His own power, "For as the Father has life in Himself; so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself." It is by the Word of Jesus that the dead shall rise, "for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth." Arrayed in such life-giving power no case of human corruption can be beyond the Redeemer's skill. Even those who rot, like Lazarus, shall come forth when He calls them, and the bonds of death and Hell shall be loosed.

Thus says the Lord of Life—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears My word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." The vision of Ezekiel's valley has become a fact since Jesus has appeared. And it is no marvel that it should be so, since the Eternal and Ever-Living God has sent Him. He can breathe the Holy Spirit into the dead soul and give the heart that palpitates with penitence and leaps with desires after God. He can give eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. All that belongs to life He can bestow—the hearing ear, the speaking tongue, the grasping hand.

The great obstacle in His way is spiritual death, and as with a word He can remove it, the salvation of man is no longer a difficulty. Rejoice, you heavens! And be glad, O earth! For among the graves of our sins, and into the very morgue of our corruption, the Quickener has descended and is quickening whomever He will. Nor is this all—He who sent the Redeemer is represented, in the sixth verse, as *the faithful God*. "I the Lord have called you in righteousness." That is to say, the God who sends Christ the Savior is not One who plays with words, and having given a promise to-day, retracts it tomorrow.

"He is not a man, that He should lie. Neither the son of man, that He should repent." Immutable are His promises and purposes, for they are founded in righteousness. He who has commissioned His chosen Messenger is not unrighteous to forget His Word. Has He said, and shall He not do it? Has He spoken, and shall it not come to pass? Therefore, dear Brethren, every Gospel promise has the stamp of the Divine righteousness upon it that you may know it to be true. Jesus assures us that if we believe in Him we shall be delivered. God, who cannot lie, sets His seal to the promise. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," is not only the declaration of Christ, but God Himself confirms it.

Then, "Amen, so let it be!" The vilest sinner that believes shall find life, pardon, acceptance and blessedness in Christ Jesus. You have not to deal, O Trembler, with One who will interpret His promise at a lower point than you understand. You have to deal with One who means more than words can express, whose thoughts are as high above your thoughts—even when enlightened by His Word—as the heavens are above the earth. "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

He who utters these words is the Lord, the faithful Promiser who has sent forth Christ—not to deceive you with specious promises—but in very deed and truth to bring abundance of Grace to those who trust Him.

Reading further in the same verse you will perceive that the ever-blessed Sender of the Lord Jesus is *Omnipotent*, for is it not added, “And will hold Your hand, and will keep You”? By which is meant that God will give to the Mediator all His power. Christ is the power of God. Omnipotence dwells in Him who once was slain, but now lives forever. And He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.

In the Gospel of Christ there is a putting forth of Divine power as manifest as in the creation and in the upholding of the world. Here is our comfort under all the assaults with which the Christian faith is threatened, and under all the disappointments which the Christian Church has up to now undergone! Emmanuel, God With Us, is still our strength. We are persuaded that the ultimate victory of the Cross is absolutely certain, for “the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.” The creation was a work of Omnipotence, and yet it was not accomplished all at once. The Lord could, if He had so willed it, have fashioned this habitable globe in one second of time, and have furnished all its chambers by a single word of His mouth.

Instead of this, we have reason to believe that He lingered in the first formation of it—in the beginning—when He created the heavens and the earth. He arranged and disarranged it many times before He came to the final constitution of it in the first six days of time, wherein He modeled it to be a fit abode for man. Even then, when He came to the final work, not in one day did He build up chaos into the beautiful house of humanity. Not at first did the firmament divide the waters, or the dry land appear above the seas. Not till the third day did the earth bring forth grass and the herb yielding seed. Nor did sun and moon divide the empire of day and night till the fourth day had dawned. The fowl that fly in the open firmament of Heaven, and the living creatures that move in the waters owned a yet later birth. Everything was gradual. Step by step the Maker advanced—yet there was never anything less than Omnipotence in every step of His progress.

So, my Brethren, the Lord might as easily have converted the whole world to Christ on the day of Pentecost as not, but His decrees had not so appointed. A step was taken in Apostolic times and the Light shone forth in darkness. Further on the great division between the heavenly and the earthly became marked and clear, and the Church rose like the dry land above the seas of sin, while the plants of the Lord’s right-hand planting brought forth their seed and their fruit. Even now the appointed lights make glad the sky, and the time hastens on when the Lord shall more evidently bless His living ones and say, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth.”

But all is done by degrees as He appoints. Our impatience would gladly stand at the Eternal elbow, and say, “Master, complete Your work, and let our eyes behold the Second Adam in a world restored into a second Eden.” But He tarries for awhile, and waits while His great appointed evenings and mornings fill up His week of glorious work. He delights in this noble labor of His hands, and is not as the hireling who earnestly desires the shadow that his toilsome task may be ended. He lingers lovingly, and His long suffering is salvation.

The Lord's decrees tarry not so long but what, in the Divine reckoning, and according to the Lord's own estimate, the end will come quickly. But to the presumptuous who dare to say, "where is the promise of His coming?" He seems to linger long. How blessed will be the grand finale of redemption work! Then shall the morning stars sing together and all the sons of God shout for joy! The seventh day of redemption shall eclipse the Sunday of Nature, even as the new heavens and the new earth shall outshine the former—a river purer than Hiddekel shall water the new Eden!

The tree of life of richer fruit shall grow in the midst of the garden, and then shall be fulfilled the saying which is written, "Sing, O you heavens. For the Lord has done it: shout, you lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel." As we read the promise, "I will hold Your hand, and will keep You," we see the certainty that the Savior girt with the all-sufficiency of Divine strength will accomplish the work of human salvation.

Be of good cheer, O children of God, and comfort yourselves with the belief "that He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." His Church has no reason for fear, but every ground of confidence as to her future. Rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of you—

***"Fear not, though many a mighty foe
Against your walls advance.
Jehovah's arm will lay them low
For your deliverance.
Oh, take Him at His royal Word
That Word which cannot lie.
Your shield and sword is Israel's Lord,
Almighty sovereignty."***

I know you will tell me, "most men say that the world will end in a few years. Is it not written that the Bridegroom comes quickly?" Yes, but remember that eighteen hundred years ago it was written that He would come quickly. And there have been prophets in all ages who have concluded from this that the end was near, while many Believers have been like the Thessalonians, to whom Paul wrote—"Now we beseech you, Brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand."

We have been instructed by certain pretended expositors to expect the time of the end for the last seven years, and yet it is possible that it may not arrive for the next seventy thousand years. Perhaps human history, as yet written, is but the first stanza of a wondrous poem which shall be unfolded, page by page, for many an age to come. And it may be possible far more rapturous strains of Divine Mercy and Grace in the conversion of men are yet to be read by angels and glorified spirits. If it is so, it will still be true that He comes quickly, for what will time be compared with *eternity*?

Even if the space taken up by the world's history is not a brief six thousand years, but sixty thousand times six thousand years, yet will it be but as a drop in a bucket compared with the years of the right hand of the

Most High—the lifetime of the Ancient of Days. Fight on hopefully, my Brethren, and be not distressed with rumors of times and seasons, but believe this—that God is, in Christ Jesus—reconciling the world unto Himself. And all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Watch daily for the Lord's coming, but yet struggle to advance His empire, for "He shall have dominion, also, from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." The Lord has not withdrawn His hand from His "elect, in whom His soul delights." He will subdue nations before Him. He will loose the loins of kings to open before Him the two-leaved gates. With such a Deliverer so gloriously upheld there is no room for fear of failure! Our hope and faith joyfully rest in Him to whom the Eternal gives His almightiness to subdue all things unto Himself.

I. We will now advance a little further, the Lord helping us. Having contemplated the glorious One who sent Jesus to the work of man's emancipation, let us, in the second place, consider the SENT ONE HIMSELF. We have Him described in the first verse of this chapter, and the first words which we will select from the description inform us that Jesus is *the Chosen One*. "My Elect, in whom My soul delights." God has been pleased to set apart His Well-Beloved Son to be the Savior of sinners, and in every way He is most suitable.

As Man He is supremely adapted for the work. No other born of woman was fitted for the enterprise. Born in a peculiar manner, without taint or blemish, He, alone, of human kind possessed the holy Nature necessary to make Him God's Messenger of love. I tried to show just now that God has girded our Lord with His Omnipotence, and this ought to lead every sinner to feel that Christ can save him—for what cannot Omnipotence do? We may not talk of impossibilities or even difficulties when we have Almighty before us. No sinner can be difficult to save. No bonds hard to remove when God, the Almighty One, comes forth to save.

Now look at the other side of the picture and remember that Christ Jesus was the most suitable Person in whom the Father could place the fullness of His saving power. In His complex Person He is every way adapted to stand as Mediator between God and man. He who laid help upon One that is mighty, and exalted One chosen out of the people, was guided by Infallible wisdom in His choice. None other was so fit as Jesus Christ. In fact there was no other. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid."

Other door of hope can no man open than that which God has opened in the Person of Christ. O Sinner, I beseech you accept what God has wisely chosen! Let God's choice be your willing choice. At this hour, constrained by the Grace of God, say, "If God has chosen the Lord Jesus to be a Propitiation for sin, my heart accepts Him as the Atonement for my sin, feeling that He alone can save me." If thus you do elect the Lord's Elect One, you shall find Him precious. But we are also told in the first verse that the Lord Jesus is *anointed to this work*, as well as a choice one for it. "I have put My Spirit upon Him."

Now, the Holy Spirit is the greatest of all actors in the world of mind. He it is who can illuminate, persuade, and control the spirits of men. He does as He wills with mind, even as in the first creation the Lord worked

as He willed with matter. Now, if Jesus Christ has the fullness of the Holy Spirit resting upon Him it is not supposable that any sinner shall be so desperately enslaved that He cannot set him free. We are about to speak of blind eyes to be opened—but in the light of the Holy Spirit what eyes need remain blind? We shall speak of captives to be liberated—but with God's free Spirit to loose him, what soul need be bound?

Bold men have taught doctrines which have emancipated the minds of their fellows from the slavery of superstition. But the Holy Spirit's teachings deliver minds from bondage of *every* kind, and make men free before the living God. Trembling Sinner, accept Christ as your Savior! God appoints Him! God anoints Him! Are not these two reasons sufficient to make Him acceptable to your soul?

Furthermore, the Redeemer is spoken of as being *gentle and lowly of heart*, which should commend Him much to every lowly and contrite spirit. "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench." We need a Savior who can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, and Jesus is such. Souls conscious of sin are very tender and agitated with many fears. To cure a wounded conscience is no fool's work—but fit labor for the most experienced physician. See, then, how fitted Christ is. He never yet said an unkind word to a soul that desired to find mercy at His hands.

In the records of His life you may find Him try, but you shall never see Him repel an anxious spirit. Feeble faith could only touch the hem of His garment, yet virtue flowed from Him! When the leper said, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean," it was but poor faith—but that faith saved him! Though you cannot yet believe as you would, yet say, "Lord, I believe. Help You my unbelief," and He will not reject you. Look at the smoking candlewick which yields no light, but makes much offensive smoke—yet, perhaps, a living fire lingers in it—and therefore the tender Savior will not quench it, but will even fan it to a flame.

And that bruised reed—how it mars the music of the pipes! Draw it out and break it. So would men do, but not so the sinner's Friend. He makes it perfect yet again, and pours the music of His love through it. O you who are in your own esteem utterly worthless—only fit to be thrown away, unfit to live and unfit to die—Jesus Christ, the Gentle One, will give you mercy if you seek Him! And in giving He will not upbraid you. O wandering Child, Jesus will introduce you to His Father who will kiss you with the kisses of His love! He will take off your rags of sin and clothe you with glorious robes of righteousness!

Only come to Him, for He is such an One that He cannot reject you! "How can I come?" one says. A prayer will bring you—an anxious desire will be as a chariot to you. A trust in Him has brought you, and Christ is yours if you do now accept Him. If your soul is truly willing to have Christ, *Christ has made you willing*, and has already begun to set you free! May these thoughts concerning the great Emancipator cheer you on to confidence in Him.

One point more in this direction. The Christ who has come to save the sons of men is *persevering to the last degree*. "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged till He has set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for

His Law.” Men are unwilling to be saved. They do not desire to be brought out of their prisons. But Jesus Christ will not cease to teach, nor cease to seek, nor cease to save till every one of His elect is redeemed from the ruin of the Fall, and until a multitude beyond all count shall surround the Father’s Throne.

I tell you, Soul, if Christ wills to save you, He will save you. He will track your footsteps, wander where you may. If you should escape, time after time, from the arrows of conviction, and plunge again and again into sin, yet He will seek you out and find you. O delay not, but yield to His power! I pray that He may stretch out His sovereign arm at this moment and rescue you from yourself! If your heart were as adamant, or as the nether millstone—He can dissolve it with a touch. O that the rock-breaking hammer would come down upon you now! He is mighty to save! May He prove His mightiness in you!

III. It is time that we expound the text, and review THE WORK ITSELF. According to the text, the Messiah’s work of Grace is divided into three parts, of which the first is, *to open the blind eyes*. Here is a notable work which brings much glory to our Lord. Man’s understanding is perverted from the knowledge of God, from a true sense of sin, from a realization of Divine Justice, from a right estimate of salvation. The understanding, which is the eye of the soul, is darkened. But when the anointed Savior comes, He removes the scales of our mental ophthalmic, and in the Light of God we see light. Then the sinner is humbled and bowed down for he perceives his guilt and the Justice of God.

Moreover, he is filled with alarm for he sees the bleeding Savior bearing Jehovah’s wrath, and rightly judges that in every case sin must receive a recompense of wrath. For if sin laid on Christ was punished, how much more must *personal* sin involve banishment from the Presence of the Most High? The sinner is then made to see that the only way in which sin can be removed is through the expiatory sufferings of a Substitute. He is led to see that the Atonement avails for him upon his believing.

He is led to understand what believing is. He does believe—he trusts—and then in trusting he is made to see the completeness of pardon, and the glory of the justification which comes to us by faith in Jesus Christ. You may think that this is an easy thing for men to see. Trained in the doctrine of it from their childhood, and hearing it incessantly from the pulpit, it would seem so. But, believe me, simple as it seems to be, no man receives it unless it has been *given* him from Heaven. We may say to each one who has seen all this, “Blessed are you, for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you.”

Many of us heard the Gospel from our childhood, but until the Holy Spirit explained to us what it was to be a sinner, and what it was to believe in Jesus, we did not know even the rudiments of the Gospel. We were in darkness ourselves, though the light shone round about us. And well might we be, for our eyes were not opened.

When Jesus came we saw it all, and we understood the mystery! Our once blind eyes clearly saw ourselves lost—and Christ suffering instead of us, we believed in Him. Our sins disappeared and we were accepted in the Beloved. My dear Friend, if you are seeking rest I pray the Lord to open

your eyes to see the simplicities of the Gospel. One touch of His finger will make you wise unto salvation. There is no need for you to study the twenty-one folio volumes of Albertus Magnus, or even the fifty-two volumes of John Calvin—for the whole secret of the Gospel lies in these few words—“Believe and live.”

Yet you can not open the case unless the Lord gives you the secret key. It needs an opened eye to see even through a glass window. The clear witness of the Gospel is dark to blind eyes. The next work of the Messiah, according to the text, is *to bring out the prisoners front the prison*. This, I think, relates to the bondage under which a man lies in his sins. Habits of sin, like iron nets, surround the sinner and he cannot escape their meshes. The man sins and imagines that he cannot help sinning. How often do the ungodly tell us that they cannot renounce the world, cannot break off their sins by righteousness, and cannot believe in Jesus? Let all men know that the Savior has come on purpose to remove every bond of sin from the captive and to set him free from every chain of evil.

I have known men strive against the habit of blasphemy. Others against unchaste passions, and many more against a haughty spirit, or an angry temper. And when they have strived manfully but unsuccessfully in their *own* strength, they have been filled with bitter chagrin that they should have been so betrayed by themselves. When a man believes in Jesus his resolve to become a free man is to a great extent accomplished at once. Some sins die the moment we believe in Jesus, and trouble us no more. Others hang on to us, and die by slow degrees—but they are overcome so as never again to get the mastery over us.

O struggle after mental, moral, spiritual liberty if you would be free! And remember your only possible freedom is in Christ. If you would shake off evil habits or any other mental bondage, I shall prescribe no remedy to you but this—to commit yourself to Christ the Liberator—

**“The gates of brass before Him burst,
The iron fetters yield.”**

Love Him, and you shall hate sin. Trust Him, and you shall no more trust yourself. Submit yourself to the sway of the incarnate God and He will break the dragon’s head within you, and hurl Satan beneath your feet. Nothing else can do it. Christ must have the glory of your conquest of self. He can set you free from sin’s iron yoke. He never failed yet, and He never shall. I earnestly entreat any man who desires to break off his sins (and we must break them off or perish by them), to try this Divine remedy and see if it does not give him holy liberty.

Ask the thousands who have already believed in Jesus and their testimony will confirm my doctrine. Faith in the Lord Jesus is the end of bondage and the dawn of freedom. The last part of this Divine work is *bringing them that sit in darkness out of the prison*. This we will refer to those who are truly emancipated, and yet by reason of despondency sit down in the dark dungeon. We have in our pastoral duties constantly to console persons who are free from their sins, having, by Divine Grace, gotten the mastery over them, yet they are in sadness. The door is open, the bars are broken, but with strange obstinacy of despondency they remain in the cell of fear in which there is no necessity for them to continue for a moment.

They cannot believe that these good things are true to them. Are they forgiven? They could believe everybody else to be pardoned but themselves! *They* made the children of God? No, they could hope for their sisters. They have joy in knowing that their father is a child of God, but as to themselves—can such blessings really fall to the lot of such unworthy ones? We have talked with hundreds of such and tried to console them, but we have only learned our own lack of skill in the art of consolation. They are rich in inventions for self-torture, ingenious in escaping comfort. But, ah, the blessed Master of our souls, whose business it has been since Adam fell to bind up broken hearts, is never foiled.

When His eternal Spirit comes to anoint with the oil of joy, He soon gives beauty for ashes. The mournful sentinel of the night-watches must rejoice when the day breaks and the Sun of Righteousness shines forth. Although I speak to you in very common language, yet the theme is rich. This one thought, alone, ought to make our hearts dance for joy—to think that the Christ of God undertakes to lift up desponding and despairing spirits into hope and joy once more! I know who will rejoice to hear this!

It is yonder good woman who these many years has been in spiritual bondage. It is yonder young man who has carried a secret burden month after month. It is yonder aged man who longs to find Christ before he gathers up his feet in his dying bed, and who thinks that his hour of Grace has passed. Man, it is not so! Christ is still mighty to save! Still does the message run—“He that believes on Him is not condemned.” “Whoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely.” “Go, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money, come you, buy, and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

Prisoners of hope, your Liberator is near at hand! Trust Him and be free! Though it seem a venturesome believing, yet venture on Him. He cannot, will not reject you. He will proclaim a Jubilee, and set each bond slave free. See, then, how the great Redeemer blessed us—Jesus the Christ does all things well. He clears the understanding. He breaks the power of sinful habits. He removes the load of despondency. He does it all. Christ Jesus, Mary’s son, Jehovah’s Son—Man, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh—yet God over all, blessed forever! He who died on Calvary, whose precious blood is the panacea for all human ills—He it is, and He only—is the Liberator of our fallen race!

IV. WHAT IS THE DESIGN OF GOD IN ALL THIS? This question is answered in the next verse of the text—“I am the Lord: that is My name: and My Glory will I not give to another.” The great end of God in Christ was the manifestation of His own glorious attributes—a simple Truth, but big with comfort.

Should the sinner who has been an atrocious offender against laws, human and Divine, conceive himself to be an improper subject for the Grace of God—I would take him by the hand and lest despair drive him to further sin—I would put this Truth clearly before him. Where is mercy most glorified? Is it not in passing by the greatest offenses? You have great offenses. There is room in *you* for mercy to be greatly displayed!

Where is Grace glorified? Is it not in conquering the most violent passions? You have such—Divine Grace may, therefore, be glorified in you!

Why, great Sinner, instead of not being a fit subject for Grace, I will venture to say that you are, in all respects, one of the most suitable! There is elbowroom in you for Grace to work. There is room in your emptiness for God's fullness. There is a clear stage in your sinfulness for God's superabounding Grace. But you have been a ringleader in the devil's army? Yes, and how can God strike a more telling blow against the hosts of darkness than by capturing you? But you tell me that you are an enormous sinner?

How will the Lord of Love encourage other sinners to come better than by calling you? For it will be rumored about among your fellow sinners—"Have you heard that such an one is saved?" I know they will jeer, but still, in their secret hearts, they will think it over, and they will say, "How is this?" and they will be led to enquire into the ways of God's Grace.

A Brother told the Church, a short time ago, a little of his history and it caused us all to rejoice in Sovereign Grace. He had lived in all manner of sin and iniquity. His profession had been for some years that of a public runner, and in that course of life he was brought into collision with the scum of society. He was practiced, also, in the boxing art, and that, we all know, is the very reverse of having an elevating tendency. But he came to the Tabernacle—and here Jesus met with him—and he rejoices, now, to teach to others the Gospel which he once rejected!

But what do you think he has been doing these three years? Some of our Brethren preach in the streets, and he goes with them, And after they have told of what the Grace of God can do, he humbly and yet boldly rises and says, "I am a living witness to what Divine Grace can do. I can declare to you what God's love has done for me." If the sermon which precedes his little speech has not interested the people, they are quite certain to be struck with his personal testimony, for in some localities many of the street folk know him.

And as they look at him they say, "Why, that is old So-and-So! I knew him when he was this and that, and here he is converted." And his witness-bearing works mightily among his old friends and acquaintances. I say, then, if now I speak to any other who has been a great offender, a drunkard, or what not—if my Master does but set you free and enlist you in His army—there will be such a shout go up in the hosts of Israel as shall make Heaven ring! While the Philistines shall tremble—for their Goliath shall be slain—a new champion will be raised up from his dead body to fight for the Lord of Hosts!

If the Lord saved men because of their *merits*, there would be no hope for great sinners, nor indeed for anyone! But if He saves us for His own Glory, that He may magnify His Grace and His mercy among the sons of men, then none need despair! Up to the very gates of Hell would I preach the Gospel, and between the jaws of death would I proclaim it! God, to glorify His Grace sets free the captives! Then why should not the most Hell-deserving sinner whose heart is like hardened steel, yet become a monument of Christ's power to save?

I remember one who used to say that if God would but have mercy on him He should never hear the last of it, and it may well be the resolve of all of us—that earth and Heaven shall never hear the last of our praises if Grace shall but save us! As one of our hymns puts it—

***“Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,
While Heaven’s resounding mansions ring
With shouts of Sovereign Grace.”***

Yes, we will each sing loudest, each owing most, each desiring, therefore, to bend the lowest and to praise the most heartily the Grace which has set us free!

Time flies with us! Days are rushing past—years are hastening away. How long shall it be before Christ shall gain your hearts? How long shall you hear of Him, and continue to refuse His Grace? How long, you unconverted ones, will you hug your chains and kiss your fetters? “Turn you, turn you from your evil ways! For why will you die, O house of Israel?” “Seek you the Lord while He may be found! Call upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. And let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him. And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 42.

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF PROMISE

NO. 1508

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 29, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“New things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.”
Isaiah 42:9.***

GOD has often foretold things to come by the lips of His Prophets. I need not give you even a single specimen of the multitudes of instances in which events which could not have been guessed at—which, indeed, were highly improbable and unlikely—were nevertheless foretold by the Spirit of God through the Prophets and actually came to pass. The Lord claims this as a proof of His Godhead. It is His special prerogative to possess Omniscience, the knowledge of everything and, therefore, Prescience, or the knowledge of that which will happen in years to come. These are attributes of God, alone, and often He challenges idols to produce instances in which they have exercised foresight and predicted things to come. They had their oracles, which were the mimicry of prophecy, but they continually failed, whereas Jehovah's Word stood fast even in jots and tittles and thus His eternal Godhead was proven.

The imitation of this attribute by the magicians and prophets of the false gods proved that they saw this to be an exclusive attribute of Deity and their perpetual confusion in their attempts proved, with equal clearness, that their mock deities did not possess it. I think it most admirable and it seems another instance of the foresight of the Holy Spirit, that the words of my text should stand where they do, for it may not be unknown to some of you that the modern critics, who always try, if they can, to tear the heart out of every text and are never satisfied until, like swine, they trample beneath their feet every cluster of Eshcol—these modern critics, I say, have dared to ascribe one part of the Book of Isaiah to a second Isaiah, as they call him, who wrote after the times of Christ.

They do this, you see, because the Prophecy so plainly describes our Lord Jesus Christ that men who will not believe in God, or in the Inspiration of His Holy Bible, are driven to invent the notion that a prophecy was written *after* the event. Truly, it might as well have been written afterwards, as before, for it is so accurate. But here, as if the Lord foresaw that there would come, in the last days, scoffers, He bids His servant, in these express words, claim that He speaks things before they come to pass—“Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.”

It remains, therefore, for these sham Christian critics either to accept the fact that Isaiah's book contains actual Prophecies, or else to reject it altogether. Their specious pretense of believing the book to be authentic

while they deny its prophetic character is exposed by the words before us. It is not, however, about Prophecy that I am going to speak at this time. I wish to bring forth a general principle—the principle that our gracious Lord usually gives a promise of that which He means to bestow. Before His favors come into our hands, the sound of them falls upon our ears! Since God is full of mercy and Grace, He has resolved to give great blessings to the sons of men, but He gives not without prudent arrangement and, therefore, His wisdom fixes *times* for the bestowal of His gifts.

A certain fullness of time of which He often speaks was necessary before the coming of Christ. Our Lord could not appear in human flesh until that appointed time had come. But while His wisdom bade Him stay, the fulfillment of His love was so great that He must begin to speak of the grand Covenant blessing! Before the Lord Jesus came, the Father was continually speaking of His coming! Before He had given Him from His bosom to die, He so delighted in what He was going to do and He took such pleasure in the result of His glorious gift that He must speak about it! And so in countless promises He spoke with the sons of men concerning the great deed of love. This seems to me a clear proof of how heartily He went about the great work of our redemption—because He dwelt so much upon the prospect of it that He revealed His thoughts in Prophecy and promise.

If you are going to do some kindness to a friend and the time has not quite come for it, yet you cannot keep your purpose a secret. If you think it will minister to his comfort to receive a promise of it, you are sure to give him some cheering hint or comforting intimation. The thought is pleasant to yourself and you wish him to share your anticipation. You wish him to get a sight of the good thing before he gets a taste of it. Before he actually obtains the help, itself, you wish to see him cheered with the prospect and so you turn his mind hopefully in the kindly direction. Love is so fond of its object that it is not content with blessing it by a solitary act—before the time comes for the actual blessing, love casts forth a fragrance, as a forecast of the flower which is yet in bloom and not fully opened.

It is for this reason that the Lord antedates His mercy and informs His people of things to come before they actually spring forth. Wisdom waits its time to fulfill, as we have said, but Grace gives the promise beforehand that it may ease its own soul of the load of its beneficence and give comfort to those who are to receive the blessing. Hence almost everything that God gives to His people is made a matter of *promise*. He not only means to bestow the favor, but He tells us He means to bestow it and He has a practical purpose in this information. The philosophy of promise is my topic at this time. Why are Covenant blessings the subject of promises? Why does not the Lord give us the blessing without previous intimation? It would be as effectual. Why does He, before it comes, promise it again and again? I shall give five answers to a question which might admit of fifty.

I. And the first is this. GOD SPEAKS THESE THINGS BEFORE THE BLESSING COMES IN ORDER TO DISPLAY HIS GRACE. First, to display

the freeness of His Grace. You will notice that the promise to which He specially alludes is this, "To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison house." Now these blind and captive persons had not sought Grace. They had not pleaded for eyes, nor asked for liberty. In fact, they were not even born in the days of Isaiah! It is a case like that of Jacob quoted by Paul, "The children not being yet born," the promise was made irrespectively of them. Unsought, unbought, unthought of, the promise came that He would open the blind eyes and bring the prisoners out of the prison house.

This, I say, proves the freeness of God's Grace, that He makes a promise before we know our need or seek His face. When He makes a promise of pure Grace, He does not come to us and say, "If this," and, "if that," and, "if the other." No, He comes with, "I will," and, "I will," and, "I will," and, "I will," before we seek Him, before we have any desire towards Him, yes, and before we have any sense of *need* of Him. There are many conditional promises for which we ought to be very thankful, but the foundation of them all is an absolute, unconditioned Covenant of Grace. A redemption was provided for me before I lived and, consequently, before I could have known that I was a slave. The Spirit of God was given that I might live before I knew that I was dead and, consequently, before I could have made an appeal for spiritual life.

The blessings of the Covenant of Grace, my dear Hearers, were laid up in store for God's chosen people ages ago. Before the Fall actually took place, the Covenant had arranged for the recovery of the Church of Christ. These blessings have been in existence and provided for many of you, albeit that even now, perhaps you do not know your need of them and have not yet begun to seek the Lord that you may find Him, for the Lord, in mighty Grace, comes to men long before they come to Him. Their first sincere thought towards Him is caused by His having thought of them!—

"No sinner can be beforehand with Thee.

Your Grace is most sovereign, most rich, and most free."

The promise of the Covenant runs thus—"I will call them My people that were not My people, and her Beloved that was not beloved." The Grace of God comes thus spontaneously from the heart of God and He foretells its working and declares that He will save His chosen in order that it may be seen beyond all dispute to be the outcome of His own deliberate purpose and the act of His sacred Sovereignty and boundless love.

I think the Lord also tells us what He is going to do before He does it that we may see *the fullness of His Grace.* The Lord says that He will come, not to men who are looking for Him, but to those who have blind eyes and, therefore, cannot look! He says that He will come, not to those who are coming to Him, though He will do that, but to those who cannot come to Him because they are shut up as in a prison. Notice the passage—they are blind prisoners and cannot come forth—and yet the Lord comes to take the film from their eyes and to tear the iron bar from the window and set the captive free, not because there is any goodness in the poor blind prisoner at the present moment, nor because there ever will be

any, but simply because the Lord is full of mercy and delights to display His Grace.

Christ died for the ungodly. Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. He is a Physician and, therefore, comes not to seek the whole, but the sick. To make us know this glorious fairness of His Grace, He informs us beforehand of what He is about to do. Moreover, I think it is not only to show the freeness and the fullness of His Grace, but *the power of it*, for He speaks very positively. He says that He will open the blind eyes and He *will* bring out the prisoners from the prison. Can He do this? Yes, that He can. There can be no question about His ability! When the Lord resolves to save, save He can! Some people believe in a great god in Nature, but in a very little God in Grace. The god of Nature can do everything, they say, and they believe in physical miracles—but according to their notions, the God of Grace has to consult the will of man and He has to halt and hesitate until the dead man will arise and give himself life and unwilling man will change his own will!

I believe in the Omnipotence of God in the kingdom of Grace and that He can change a heart of stone to flesh and break the iron sinew of the stubborn will and bow men before Him. To me the Almighty is as supreme in the realm of mind as in the world of matter. I do not doubt the free agency of man—on the contrary, I see daily evidence of it! I believe man to be a free agent and yet he is not and cannot be more powerful in any respect than the Lord of All! The Lord knows how to be master in the kingdom of the human will and, without violating that will in any degree, He can achieve the eternal purpose of His love. To triumph over mere dead matter is nothing compared with the glory of the Lord's rule over mind, thought, intellect and will! He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion, and yet he that comes to Him, He will in no wise cast out.

The Lord's Grace is irresistible—His purpose shall stand and He will do all His pleasure. "This is taking high ground," says one. It is ground blessedly high for sinking sinners! It is such ground as we need who are utterly lost and ruined and undone! You that can help yourselves may go and do it, but we who cannot do so are glad to find that God knows what He is going to do and speaks with the tone of a Sovereign and with the voice of One who has not to ask help from others, but who can work all things according to the counsel of His own will. "Before they spring forth I tell you of them," He says. Because His Grace is mighty, He thus speaks of what is going to be done. Oh listen to me, you blind ones who cannot open your own eyes! Christ has come to open them!

O you lost sinners who cannot save yourselves, Christ has come to save you! Oh, you that are all but damned and lie at Hell's gate expecting the flame, have hope, for Christ has come to save that which was lost! O you firebrands that almost smoke in the burning, He comes to pluck you out of the fire! He does not come to help you to save yourselves, but to save you! He does not approach you with measured steps in order that you may come half way to meet Him, but He comes all the way to you in your

death, your ruin, your poverty, your misery, your blindness, your captivity! He comes to achieve salvation and He proclaims what He is about to do in order that He may have the Glory of it.

That is our first head, then. The Lord announces His purposes of love to display His Grace.

II. Secondly, Brothers and Sisters, I think the Lord announces the Covenant blessings He is about to bestow IN ORDER TO AWAKEN OUR HOPES. Many poor souls would actually die before they were saved if they did not get some little hope, every now and then, while they are in a seeking state. I am not speaking haphazardly, now, I am speaking of cases that I know—poor tempted, troubled ones—to whom the promises are as a brook by the way of which they drink and lift up their heads. Some of you come to Christ apparently very easily. Thank God for it! But I know others who cannot get at the Lord Jesus for the press. They even try to *look* to Him, but they are blinded by their tears. I cannot excuse their unbelief, but I pity their poor trembling spirits. They are coming to Christ, but they are like the child of whom we read that, “when he was a coming the devil threw him down and tore him.” They are sadly torn and cannot get to Christ.

Now, when the Lord tells His people what He will do, they are cheered with expectation. When they read such texts as these, “A new heart also will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you,” and, “I will put My Law in your hearts, and you shall not depart from Me,” and, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more forever.” “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool”—poor souls catch at such words of promise and learn how to hope. “Oh!” they say, “if that promise might be true for *me*, then I would not perish! Perhaps the Lord will look in mercy upon me.” Every now and then the Lord saves a great big sinner—an unusually black sinner—and what does He do with him? He makes him a walking advertisement of His mercy so that others see the infinite Grace of God!

Men cry out in wonder, “What? Has So-and-So found Christ? Then why should not we?” Perhaps the man may have been guilty of great iniquities. He may have been a ringleader in wickedness. But the Lord takes him and washes him from his sin and opens his mouth to praise His name! When such an one begins to speak of Divine love, poor tormented spirits catch at the words and they say, “Why should not I find mercy? Why should not I be saved?” When such a man becomes a living proof of what God can do, the promise stands out to the life before the poor sinner’s eyes and he says, “Ah, perhaps, perhaps, perhaps there is salvation for me!”

John Bunyan, who had been a drunken tinker, went about preaching the everlasting Gospel like a man who had been in the condemned cell and had received a pardon! And I tell you the villagers gathered to listen to such a one as he because they wondered at God’s mighty Grace! They said, one to another, “Has Mr. Bad-Man become a pilgrim? Then why should we not start our pilgrimage, also? Has infinite Mercy changed his heart? Then why should it not change ours?” I would have you pluck up

courage, any sinners among you who are here at this time! Supposing you to be the very worst persons that ever lived and supposing you to have the worst temper, the worst disposition, the worst besetting sins and the worst habits that any men have ever had, I tell you the Lord, in great mercy, has saved just such as you and He has promised, still, to deal with great sinners in a way of great love!

Seize hold of this blessed fact! Weave a hope out of it and say, "I need not despair—not even I. I need not plunge into great sin under the notion that I cannot be saved. 'He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.' He can save me! He has said, 'Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out,' and if I come to Him, He will not cast me out. I will not despair, then, or sit down and say there is no hope! I deserve to be with the devils in Hell, but why should I not be among the saints in Heaven? I deserve to be banished forever, but why should there not be a crown in Heaven for me?"

"Ah, will not the saints wonder when they see *me* come in? The angels will look down from their harps and say, 'What? Is *he* here?' Then I will tell the story of what the Lord has done and set them wondering over again, till even *they* shall say, 'It has never been so before! Here comes the biggest, blackest, most Hell-deserving wretch that ever did enter Heaven! Lift up a loftier song than ever! Louder and louder yet! Let the song ring through the heavenly arches, for Love has out-loved itself and Grace has out-graced itself above all it has ever done before!"

I pray God that some despairing soul may grasp these cheering facts and be comforted. I am trying to throw the big net to catch a whale of a sinner if he is floating anywhere near my boat. I know if the Gospel net once encloses him, it will hold him, for not a single mesh of it will give way despite his size and his struggling. I would like to put the Gospel so wide and so broad that the sheep which is hunted by the dog of Hell farthest away from the fold may, nevertheless, come back to the great and gracious Shepherd of Souls. Why, Beloved, even God's own believing people need to be told, at times, of what God will do in order to encourage their hope.

Look how the Lord deals with His persecuted ones. When they are hunted, slandered, despoiled of their goods, what does He do? He makes them know that they have a richer inheritance in Heaven! He sets before them the joys which He has prepared for them that love Him. Now, He might, if He liked, have kept all about Heaven to Himself and so have made it a surprise to us and, indeed, some seem to think that He has done so, but in this they are ill advised. We know much about Heaven even now. "Why," says one, "the Scripture says, 'Eye has not seen, neither has ear heard.'" I know it does, but why do you stop in the middle of a text? You make it say the reverse of what it intends to say! Hear the whole of it. "Eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love Him; *but He has revealed them unto us by His Spirit.*"

By chopping it in halves you made the passage say the very opposite of what it intended! Your eyes have not seen and your ears have not heard, but His Spirit has told you concerning the things which He has prepared for you—and this is no little privilege. I need not stay to tell you how much the Lord has told us about the eternal state, as to our being with Jesus where He is, that we may behold His Glory and may be sharers in that Glory forever. He has told us this to cheer us up while on the road, to encourage us that we may never sink in despair. Going to lie down and die, Brother? Do you know how near you are to Heaven? Perhaps you will be there in a month! Going to give it all up *now*? Will you be so foolish as to leave the battle just as the victory is won? Brother, does the devil tell you to turn back? He knows how near you are to Glory!

You are something like Columbus when he was within three days sail of America and the sailors bade him stay his course. He could not, *would* not reverse his venturous ship, but pushed on and found the new world! Some of us may be within a very few days' sail of Heaven and yet do not know it—and the devil has the impudence to persuade us to go back. Shall we listen to the impudent fiend? No, by the Grace of God, never! If the journey is long, the end will repay us for it. If the voyage is rough, the brave country will make amends for all the tempests which have wreaked their vengeance upon us. Onward, onward, be our course! To help us to persevere even to the end, the Lord has made the new things known to us and has told us of them before they spring forth.

Two good answers to the question are now before us and each one is an argument for adoration.

III. But now, thirdly, why has the Lord told us about the mercies He intends to give? To EXERCISE OUR FAITH. The Gospel of God is a Gospel for Believers and one of God's great objectives in the whole arrangement of the Gospel system is to educate our confidence in Him. I remember speaking, once, with a Brother upon the room which God has left for faith to work. We were speaking about the various defenses which have been used to prove the veracity of the Christian religion against infidel assaults and I was remarking upon the manifest failure of certain of them which appeared exceedingly strong, at one time, but are now abandoned because under new attacks they have manifestly failed.

My friend was deploring that this book and the other, which had once been considered as standard works, seemed to have lost power over this generation. It came to the minds of both of us that if God had made the Christian religion so clear that you could make an axiom of it, or prove it as easily as you show that twice two make four, there would have been no room for *faith* at all—and then the Divine system of salvation would have taken another course, for faith would have occupied a very narrow space in it. The Lord intends that men should exercise faith in His Word, for He knows that faith is necessary to us if we are to be delivered from sin. A man cannot be saved if He does not trust His God. And when a man is brought to trust His God, he is practically saved.

You ask, "How is that?" If a man has a servant and that servant has fallen out with his master, if it is desirable to bring that servant to obedience, the first thing to do is to make him believe in his master. If he believes his master to be good, true, kind and noble, you have gained the servant's obedience. He will be reconciled to his master and will be right well content to serve him. So that faith and trust, though they appear to be such minor things that we wonder why they should be the great requirement of the Gospel, are not small matters after all! They are the pivot upon which character turns. When I bring my mind down to this, that I believe God and accept the Bible as His Revelation, I am getting right. If when I cannot understand the Word of God I believe it as much as if I *did* understand it, then I have in heart become obedient to God. I have taken up the place which a creature ought to occupy towards His Creator and the act of trusting and believing has become the pivot upon which I turn as my mind seeks the Lord. And by its means I get into a right condition with Him.

Therefore does the Lord, before He gives us a mercy, say to us, "Believe in Me and you shall have it. Believe in the Atonement made by My dear Son and you shall have pardon. Believe in My willingness to forgive you and submit yourself and cast yourself at My feet and I will forgive and bless you." It is not a hard thing that He requires. It is not a wrong thing. It is an act of the *heart* which is good for us all round and, becomes the instrument in the hand of the Spirit of reconciling us to God. The Lord has told us what great things He is going to do for sinners and I want you to answer the question—Do you believe that He can do this? Come now, you that are ungodly and graceless, do you believe that God can save you? Can He make you holy? Can He make you gracious?

You have many sins, but do you believe that Christ can blot them all out in a moment and make you to be as though you had never committed them, casting them behind the back of God, Himself, so that they shall never be mentioned against you any more? Can you believe all this? If you can believe it, can you also believe another thing, namely, that He is willing to do this deed of love? Can you believe that the great Father does not will that you should perish and has no joy that you should be lost? Can you believe that it will give Him delight to receive you? That He will be glad to press you to His bosom and make you His child and that you should be reconciled to Him? Can you believe this? By the wounds of God, by the blood of the Son of God on Calvary, I say you ought to believe it, for He that loved sinners well enough to die cannot be unwilling that they should be saved!

You can believe His power and His willingness, you say. Well, the only thing that you have to do, now, in order to be saved this moment is to act out your belief upon these two points. He can and He is willing—throw yourself upon that power and will. Trust yourself with Jesus, now! That is the one demand of the Gospel—"Believe and live." Rest in the knowledge that He has reconciled you to Himself in Christ and that He forgives you now because you trust alone in His Son for your eternal salvation. Will

you do this at once? Will you rest on Christ Jesus? Then, “Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven.” You are a saved man!

“Oh, but how,” you ask, “do I know that I am saved?” You shall feel and know that you are saved if you believe, for you shall find yourself, from this time, loving the things which you did before hate and hating the things which you did once love—and that simple act of trusting which seems so insignificant will transform you and will become the hinge on which your life shall turn. Believing in Christ, you shall go out of this house saying, “I am a forgiven man and I love the God who has forgiven me. I am washed in the blood of Christ and from now on will I serve Him—

***‘Lord, in the strength of Grace,
With a glad heart and free,
Myself, my residue of days,
I consecrate to Thee.’***

I am Christ’s man forever! I will not grieve Him, by the help of His Holy Spirit. I will live to His praise. I will tell others what He has done for me and my entire life shall be a life of obedience if He will but help me and keep me and sustain me by His gracious power.”

You see now why the blessings of Grace are foretold—that they may become objects of faith. God give you faith to exercise upon them now.

IV. Fourthly, and very briefly, these things are told us before they come to pass **THAT THEY MAY EXCITE OUR PRAYER.** After hope and faith, prayer is quite sure to follow. Note the order—the Lord says that Christ shall come to open the eyes of the blind—here is *Grace*. I pictured the blind man just now as saying, “Jesus is come to open the blind eyes; why should He not open mine?” Here is *hope*. Next the blind man goes on to say, “He says that He will do it if I trust in Him. I know He can. I believe He will. I will trust Him.” Here is *faith*. What is the very next thing that the blind man does? Why he begins to pray to Him. “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.” Here is *prayer*.

As soon as the first little drop of faith falls into a man’s soul, he begins to pray, “Lord, You have promised pardon to Believers. Give that pardon to me. You have promised a new heart. Give a new heart to me. You have promised eternal salvation to as many as obey Christ. Lord, give me eternal salvation.” Oh that blessed gift of faith! It soon brings a man to his knees. When he hopes that he may gain the blessing. When he believes that he may have it—then he begins to cry for it—and if he cries with real faith, he has already obtained the blessing for which he is seeking! While he is pleading, God is hearing!

Think of those poor people in the prisons. There they sit in darkness and they make no sound but groans. But suddenly a Voice is heard. Jesus comes to set the captives free! It is repeated, “He comes, He comes to loose the ones in bondage.” Inside the prison there shines a Light in the midst of the darkness and the prisoners say, “If He comes, why should not He come to us? Blessed be His name, we hope He will come to us.” And now you can hear them cry, “Come! Come! Come, Lord! Come quickly! Break these chains! Dispel this darkness. Set us free.” And it is not long

after the prisoner of hope begins to pray, before the walls totter and the captive is free as a bird of the air. The Lord thus, as it were, holds out the mercy so that His dear ones may ask for it, cry for it, struggle for it! And that so they may get the double blessing of being taught to pray as well as to receive the answer of their prayers!

O you that are the people of God, I want you to learn this lesson, that all God's promises which are not fulfilled are meant to stimulate you to pray! We read a chapter just now in which the Lord says that the isles shall wait for God. Pray for it! He has promised to give His Son the heathen for His inheritance. Pray that the heathen may be the heritage of your Prince! Every promise should be turned into prayer! I believe that the whole earth will yet be "filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea," but not without prayer. Even Christ must pray. Is it not written, "Ask of Me and I shall give you the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession"? Christ is to come, but He has taught His Church to say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

There is no picture of the princely reign of Christ but what should at once awaken our desires and those desires should be set on fire with prayer. Thus says the Lord, "For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." And yet if the Lord does not do some great thing before His Church prays greatly, the good thing is not coming just yet. We do have good Prayer Meetings in this Tabernacle, thank God. It is the joy of my heart to see so many assemble to pray, though some of you do not come as I wish you did. You do not know what you lose, you who do not come to our delightful Prayer Meetings. You are more losers by being away than we are by losing your company. We are sorry to miss you, but our sorrow is on your account, for you do not know what you lose. We *ought* to meet for prayer—we cannot expect the blessing unless we do!

I have little to say on that score, by way of rebuke, to you who compose my regular congregation, for you do not, many of you, sin in that direction. But I know some churches where the Prayer Meeting is a mere form. It is such a little affair that they might put it in a dish, cover it up, lock it up in the pantry and say nothing about it. It is a miniature concern, a very sick dwarf! If God blessed some Churches in London in proportion to their prayers, He would not bless them much, for the Prayer Meetings are held in the vestry and that is not full, nor one-half full at the best. A Prayer Meeting in the Chapel, itself, would look like a drop in a bucket and so they hide the nakedness of the land by holding a hole-and-corner meeting in the vestry. Such things as Prayer Meetings in the Chapel are not expected—a snug little room is quite large enough. Alas, there are not many Brethren to pray! Two or three prose so long and so drearily that they fill up the evening and then they ask the Lord to forgive their *short-comings*—they would do better to ask forgiveness for their longcomings which are the death of all fervency.

There is not much prayer in their long sermonizing and the whole business is far more formal than real. Scant will be the blessing if the Lord is going to bless them in proportion to their prayers. Do you wonder that the

minister cannot preach when the people do not pray? I see some of you up from the country. Perhaps you are deacons and yet do not attend the Prayer Meetings yourselves! I have known such things and I cry shame upon you! And then you find fault with the minister. Have you never heard of the minister who suddenly seemed to fail and, when the people complained, he said, "Ah, I may well fail, for I have lost my prayer book!" Someone said, "I did not know you used a prayer book, Sir." "Oh!" said he, "my prayer book used to be written on the hearts of my people and while they prayed for me, God blessed me and I had success. But they have given up praying for me so what can I do?"

Do you want the man to make bricks without straw? Surely the least thing you can do is to find him straw for the bricks and you can only find that by means of earnest, united prayer! The sinew of the minister's strength under God is the supplication of his Church. We can do anything and everything if we have a praying people around us! But, when our dear friends and fellow helpers cease to pray, the Holy Spirit hastens to depart and "Ichabod," is written upon the place of assembly. Promises of the mercy of the Lord, dear Friends, are sent to you on purpose that you may pray for the covenanted gifts and you shall not have them unless you seek His face for them.

V. Last of all, the Lord tells you what He is going to do and in this He has yet another objective in view, namely, TO FOSTER GRATITUDE AND ASSURANCE WHEN THE MERCY HAS BEEN RECEIVED. When the blessing comes, the man who has received it declares, "I know that this came from God because He promised to give it. I know that God was in all this because I can see He has acted according to His own declaration. His Word has not returned to Him void. He has done what He said, when He said, and as He said—surely this thing is of the Lord!" Then comes the inference—"If He has done all this for me in the past, He will do as much for me in the future. He told me that He would help me and He *has* helped me. He assures me that He will still be my Helper and I am sure He will, for He changes not—

***"Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through."***

This is God's way of breeding assurance in the minds of His people. If you notice in the next chapter, the one argument which God seems to use, there, is, "I will because I have." I will read it to you. "Thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel, Fear not: for *I have* redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are Mine." What then? "When you pass through the waters *I will* be with you and through the rivers they shall not overflow you." Do you think that I have redeemed you to drown you? "When you walk through the fire you shall not be burned." Do you think that I created you to be destroyed and redeemed you that the flames should consume you? *I have* loved you. I have redeemed you. Therefore I will help you and keep you even to the end." This is God's argument of consolation. Do you not see the force of it?

Look in the third verse, “I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you. Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you: therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life.” If I paid a full ransom once, I will stick at no expense to gain My precious purchase. If I gave Egypt and Ethiopia once, I will give the same, again, and I will have My redeemed ones set free. You are Mine, and I will not lose you. I will spend all Heaven but what I will bring you safely home to Myself. See, He says, “*I have created him; I have formed him, yes, I have made him,*” and therefore He says, “*I will bring your seed from the east and gather you from the west.*” I know of nothing except the sure promise and oath of the glorious Jehovah which is worthy to be the ultimate foundation of our hope!

Beyond that, I know of nothing that is so firm a foundation for our hope as our past experience of the faithfulness of God. If the Lord had meant to be unfaithful, He would have been unfaithful long ago. If it had been possible for Him to cast away His people, He would have cast you and me away years ago. Does a man bestow much care and labor and expense on that which he intends to leave unfinished? Does a wise man begin to build a house and then leave the structure unroofed and incomplete? Will God begin the work of Grace in you and not complete it? Will He bring you so far on the road to the Golden City and then leave you and put you to shame? Shall it be said in eternity, “This man trusted in God and God failed him. This poor sinner rested in the blood of Christ, but Christ could not save him”?

Never, oh never! The Lord has given you many promises and He has fulfilled them in order that, today, in your present difficulties and tomorrow in your new troubles, you may stand firm as a rock and feel, “He will help me. Yes, He will uphold me! Yes, He will deliver me! Therefore my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.”—

***“I know that safe with Him remains
Protected by His power,
What I’ve committed to His hands
Till the decisive hour.
Then will He own His servant’s name
Before His Father’s face,
And in the New Jerusalem
Appoint my soul a place.”***

Such faith as this is God’s due. He deserves nothing less than unmingled confidence! He has never lied to any of you—never doubt Him till He gives you cause for suspicion! Rest—quietly wait and patiently hope—and you shall see the salvation of God! As surely as the Lord lives, He will not forsake your believing soul, but will be always at your side till He has done that which He has spoken to you and brought you Home to dwell at His right hand with His dear Son forever and ever. Amen.

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LOVE ABOUNDING, LOVE COMPLAINING, LOVE ABIDING

NO. 1895

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 11, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“But now thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name, you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior: I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you. Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you: therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life.”
Isaiah 43:1-4

“But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob, but you have been weary of Me, O Israel. You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; neither have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense. You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices: but you have made Me to serve with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities.”
Verses 22-24.

“Remember these, O Jacob and Israel, for you are My servant: I have formed you, you are My servant: O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of Me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you. Sing, O you heavens; for the Lord has done it: shout, you lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it: for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel.”
Isaiah 44:21- 23.

WHEN two Christians met together who were sitting under a very lean and starving ministry, one of them comforted his fellow concerning the miserable discourse by saying, “Never mind, my Friend, there is not much in the sermon, but the text is a feast by itself.” So, this morning, if my words should seem to be very poor and powerless, what fullness there is

in these three texts! Here you have a dainty meal of three courses. You ought to be well nourished this morning, for I have set before you, in these passages of Scripture, quite as much as the largest capacity will be able to mark, learn and inwardly digest. Here is good pasture for the flock, wherein they may not only feed, but lie down! Did you say, "Too much text?" Possibly you might, on other occasions, reproach me with having too little of God's Word and too much of my own, but there can be no fault the other way—the more of the Word of the Lord the better! What is man's word compared with God's Word? It is as chaff to the wheat, at worst, and as mere gold-leaf to solid bullion at best! Indeed, my word is of no value at all, except as it is made up of the essence of the Divine Word. Far better than our best exposition is the Word itself—this is the pure light of the sun—ours is but a poor candle! Of the Scripture itself we cannot have too much. If you derive no other profit from this assembling of yourselves together but to have your earnest attention directed to this precious part of Holy Writ, if the Spirit of God is with you, your meditations will make this a profitable hour!

Notice concerning these three texts that they are very much alike in this respect—they are each addressed to God's people under the names of Jacob and Israel. The first text begins, "The Lord that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel." And the second is like it, "You have not called upon Me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of Me, O Israel." And so is the third, "Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for you are My servant." The Lord mentions both the natural and the spiritual names of His servants—and this He does out of love to them. As tender parents will lovingly repeat all their children's names, sometimes calling them by one and sometimes by another. As different memories arise in their minds, so the Lord remembers Jacob, the name of His chosen given him at birth, by which he was known as "the supplanter." And then He repeats that higher name of Israel, the prevailing prince, which he won in a great spiritual struggle when he wrestled with the Angel of the Lord and would not let Him go. To make sure that the people should know to whom He spoke, the Lord calls them both Jacob and Israel. We are so apt to set the promise aside for someone else, that it is well to have the full address placed at the head of these heavenly telegrams.

These texts are also like each other, again, from their being, each one, overflowing with love. Their manner and their matter differ, but their spirit is one. I do not know where the Lord's love is best seen—when He declares it and tells of what He has done and is doing for His people—or when He laments over their lack of love in return, or when He promises to blot out their past sin and invites them to return to Him and enjoy His restoring Grace. I trust that I may be helped so to handle these words that a sweet fragrance of love shall fill this house, as when choice ointment is poured forth. May you believe and feel the love of God to you. And then may there arise out of your own hearts the perfume of another love, born of the first, and like unto it—the love of your renewed hearts towards your God. This love is a spark of the eternal flame of God's love for you—may it never be quenched!

I have to set before you Divine Love in three postures. The first text represents *love abounding*; the second text, *love lamenting*; and the third text represents *love abiding*—remaining constant to its objective, notwithstanding all the provocations which have grieved it.

I. First, we have in our first text, from the first to the fourth verses, LOVE ABOUNDING. Come, you that love the Lord, and dwell upon His love! Concentrate your thoughts upon this wonderful theme, to which I trust you are no strangers, for you live in that love and it is the joy of your hearts. Oh for the melting power of the Holy Spirit to make us feel it now!

Love abounding, I said, and I said well, for you will notice, first, the time when that love is declared. The first verse begins, “But now, thus says the Lord.” And when was that? It was the very time when He was angry with the nation by reason of their great sins! “Therefore He has poured upon him the fury of His anger, and the strength of battle; and it has set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.” It was a time, then, of special sin and of amazing hardness of heart. “It burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.” When a man begins to burn, he generally feels and cries out. He must be far gone in deadly apathy when he is touched with fire and yet lays it not to heart. Yet so the text describes the nation.

Notwithstanding this, however, though His people had so provoked Him, and though they were so unfeeling under His chastisement, yet the Lord interposes in tones of Grace with a word of infinite compassion. “But now, thus says the Lord.” It was a time of love with God, though a time of carelessness with His people. You expect God’s mercy words and love words to come to you after your repentance and obedience and so, indeed, they do, for the Lord has choice rewards of Grace for those who walk with Him in holy fellowship. Yet He restrains not His mercy to our good times, but He gives us glimpses of its sunlight in the midst of the storm. He sends clear shining after rain. Though He may smite us again and again to drive us from our iniquities, yet even then His gracious heart overflows with love and He lets fall a word of pity for His mourners.

Notice, next, that the Lord shows His abounding love in these verses by the sweetness of His consolations. “But now thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel, Fear not.” “Fear not” is a little word measured by space and letters, but it is an abyss of consolation if we remember who it is that says it and what a wide sweep the comfort takes! Fear has torment and the Lord would cast it out. Fear keeps us away from Him and so He would chase it quite away. “Fear not,” He says. As much as to say—I smite you, but fear not that I will destroy you. I chasten you for your sin, but fear not that I will disown you, for you are Mine. My countenance is dark with anger against your iniquities, but still fear not, for my wrath against your sin is but a form of My love to you—

***“In love I correct you, your gold to refine,
To make you at length in My likeness to shine.”***

You that are the people of God may at this hour be smarting, crying and sighing. But, oh the love of God to you! He hears your cries and His com-

passions are moved towards you. Nothing touches Him like the groans of His children! Perhaps you have brought this evil upon yourself by your own fault and you know it—but the Lord is ready to put away your sin and make the bones which He has broken to rejoice!

The consolations of God are small with you because there is some secret wickedness with you, but, having revealed to you this wrong and having subdued your heart by His Spirit, He now speaks to you as to one whom his mother comforts, and He says, “Fear not.” Be not broken down with slavish fear. Do not imagine that the Lord has changed towards you. Do not dream that His promises will fail, or that His mercy is clean gone forever, so that He will be favorable no more. He knows your sin and He has visited you for it, but still, “Fear not, for even this is a token that He has not given you up to perish in your sins.” He has redeemed you and, therefore, He will purify you to Himself. He will never cast you away. Is it not considerate love on the Lord’s part that He would not even have His children endure a fear? He not only removes our dangers, but He soothes our fears! He bends over us and cries, “Let not your hearts be troubled.” He sends the Holy Spirit to be the Comforter and chase all our fears away. There is a wonderful intensity of affection in this passage spoken, as it is, by the great God to His people while they are under the rod which they so richly deserve.

Again, notice that the fullness of God’s love is to be seen in the way in which *He dwells with evident satisfaction upon His past dealings with His people*. When we love some favored one, we like to think of all our love passages in years gone by—and the Lord so loves His people, that even when they are under His chastening hand—He still delights to remember His former loving kindnesses. We may forget the wonders of His Grace, but He does not! He says, “I remember you, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness.” If He remembers our poor love, you may be sure that He does not forget His own! In His heart He stores up the memory of all His works of Grace towards His chosen. See how He puts it—“Thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel.” He regards His people as the work of His own hands. He puts it twice over—He claims not only to have created the materials of the nation, but to have formed them into a people. The great Potter created our clay and then fashioned it with infinite skill! Both as to body and soul, we are fearfully and wonderfully made by the Lord our God.

The Lord thinks upon you as His dear people and remembers how He created you—and how He new-created you—how, by His infinite Grace, He made you new creatures in Christ Jesus and how He has gone on, by His Spirit, to fashion you and mold you to His will, so that you are becoming more and more like His dear Son. The Lord mentions this to show His exceeding love. He has respect unto the work of His own hands. He that has made you with so much care will not break you! He will not abhor that which His infinite compassion has fashioned. In His great love, He dwells upon His relationship to us as our Maker and says, “I created you, I formed you.” This is as true of our second creation as of the first. The Lord

flashed into our soul the first ray of repentance! He created in us the first look of faith! He worked in us the first dew of love and because of this Grace-work He turns in love to us and remembers us still!

Then the Lord passes on to speak of His redemption of His people, saying, "I have redeemed you." Oh, the fullness of Divine Love which led the Lord to redeem His people and then to speak of that deed with pleasure! He brought them out of Egypt, redeemed by the blood of the Paschal Lamb and, in our case, He has brought us out of sin and death by the blood of the Only Begotten. The Lord does not regret that He paid such a price for such poor worthless things, but He glories in it. "I have redeemed you." Our Lord Jesus remembers the agony we cost Him. He cannot leave those to perish in their sins, whom He has ransomed with His own life! O poor backslider! The broad arrow of the King is on you—He cannot let His enemy rob Him of His purchase! Shall the prey be taken from the mighty? Shall Jesus fail to see of the travail of His soul? Picture in your mind, this morning, the Christ of God looking at the print of the nails in His hands and feet, viewing those marks with satisfaction and then, with equal satisfaction, looking upon us who are His ransomed ones, a heritage purchased unto Himself. He cannot be weary of us, for He dwells upon what He has done for our redemption! He chose us for His love and then loved us for His choice! He redeemed us because He loved us and now He loves us because He redeemed us!

Moreover, he adds, "I have called you by your name." He did so to that nation, but we will dwell, rather, at this time, upon His having personally called *us* to Himself. Oh the love which shines in our effectual calling! It must burn on forever! There was a day and we can never forget it, when the Gospel of God came to us with a pointed and personal power such as we never felt before. Like as Mary Magdalene did not know the Savior until He said unto her, "Mary," so we did not know the Lord until He called us by our name! Surely, no love-call with which our mother awakened us in the morning from the happy sleep of childhood was ever more distinct than the call of God's Grace to us when He spoke to us and said, "Seek you My face." Blessed was the day when our heart replied, "Your face, Lord, will I seek." The Lord appeared of old unto us. He knew our name, for He called us by it, and He knew how to reach our hearts by convicting us of secret sin—He sent His servants to describe our character and to say to us, as Nathan to David, "You are the man." We could not mistake the personal appeal which fastened cords of love about us and drew us till we ran to Him who called us! As the Lord of old said to little Samuel, "Samuel, Samuel," and he answered, "Here am I," so has God said to some of us, as clearly as if we had heard it with our ears, "Come to Me," and we have come to Him! He is pleased to remember that He has called us by our name and this shows that He does not repent of having called us.

Observe, also, how He dwells upon His possession of His people. "You are Mine," He says. The Lord God was not ashamed to acknowledge His Israel and, now, Jesus is not ashamed to call us Brethren! The Father is not ashamed to call us children and the Spirit of God is not ashamed to

call our bodies His temples! “I have called you by your name; you are Mine.” Have you forgotten that you are the Lord’s? Yet does He not forget that you are His! You may be false to your covenant and steal away from God, but He has set His mark upon you and you can never obliterate it! He claims you, still, notwithstanding all your wandering and your forgetfulness—and He joyfully asserts His property in you. “I have called you by your name; you are Mine.” He defies all comers to take from Him those whom He did foreknow by name and whom He, therefore, called! Behold the fixity of Divine Love and the warmth of heart which causes the Lord to dwell upon His past loving kindnesses! Does not this bring tears to your eyes?

If you desire to see the overflowing of God’s love in another form, notice in the next verse how *He declares what He means to do*. He says, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” His love casts its eye upon your future! The Lord does not promise you that you shall never go through the waters, nor pass through the fires. He loves you too well to make your way to Heaven free from adversity and tribulation, for these things work your lasting good. You will have to go through fire and through water on your way to Glory. But He does promise you this—that the deepest waters shall not overflow you and the fiercest torrents shall not drown you, for this one all-sufficient reason—that He will be with you. When you come to the fires, however terrible their flames, they shall not consume you. No, they shall not even kindle upon you. Like the three holy children in the furnace, not even the smell of fire shall pass upon you because His Presence shall preserve you to the end.

Oh the love of God, that in the foresight of every grief and every sorrow that can ever befall His children, He pledges Himself never to forsake them! He pledges His word that He will be at their side in every trying hour and this word He pledges to them even though He has felt bound to chasten them. He says, “Fear not, I am with you; be not dismayed, I am your God.” He has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you,” come life, come death, come temptation, come poverty, come sickness, come assault of Satan, come whatever may from Heaven, or earth, or Hell, the Lord has promised that He will bear you through and preserve you to His Kingdom and Glory. Oh the Perseverance, the Omnipresence, the Omnipotence of Divine Love! Who is he that shall measure the length and breadth and depth and height of the love of God? Nothing can separate us from it and nothing can harm us while we abide under its shadow! O cold hearts, do you not feel the warmth of this marvelous love?

Still this is not all. The overflowing of Divine Love is seen in *the Lord’s avowing Himself, still, to be His people’s God*—“I am Jehovah your God,” He says, “the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.” God gives Himself to you, Beloved. What a gift! He endows us not merely with Heaven and earth, things present, and things to come—nor even with the half of His Kingdom—but He gives us Himself! He says, “I will be their God.” He bids us call Him, “Our Father.” All that God is, He gives to His chosen and lays

Himself out for their salvation. "I am Jehovah your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." Oh, how He must love us and with what boundless affection must He regard us, when He counts Himself to be none too great a portion to bestow on us!

Though one would think He might have come to a close here, the Lord adds *His valuation of His people*. This was so high that He says, "I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you." To save Israel, He plagued Egypt! Fast and heavy were His blows, until He smote all the first-born of Egypt, the chief of all her strength! Pharaoh and his first-born were nobodies as compared with Jacob's seed! Further on in history, after Isaiah's day, the Lord moved Cyrus to set Israel free from Babylon, and then gave to the son of Cyrus a rich return for liberating the Jews, for He made him conqueror of Egypt and of Ethiopia and of Seba. God will give more than the whole world to save His Church, seeing He gave His only begotten Son! He seems to say to each one of you, "I give everything for you: I value you so much, that all things else shall be as nothing to Me so long as I can bless and save you." It has certainly been so with some of us—all Providence has lent itself to promote our welfare—the angels of God have been our servants and the Spirit of God has been our Guide and Teacher. We cannot avoid seeing how great events have been made subordinate to the good of persons so insignificant—how the Lord has even bowed the heavens that He might come down to our rescue!

Then the Lord adds another note of great love. He says that He has thought so much of His people that He regarded them as honorable—"Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you." He publishes His love, not only by His deeds, but by express words. I cannot pronounce these words as God's Prophet must have spoken them, much less as God, Himself, would speak them. What a wealth of Grace is here! They were poor Israelites and they had been very guilty—and so they had dishonored themselves—but the Lord says, "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable." What an honor the Lord puts upon those who believe in Jesus! "Unto you that believe, He is honor." I have known those that have fallen into great sin and have been made dishonorable, thereby, but when Grace has renewed them, they have been pure and holy and honorable, made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light! Blood-washed sinners are Heaven's right-honorables! Men and women renewed by God's Grace are the courtiers of Heaven, the peers of the Divine Kingdom! What love is that which has made us heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ!

Such is the Lord's love, that even in the time when they were not acting as they should, but grieving Him, He stands to His love of them and sets the same value on them as before—"Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you: therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life." As if He said, "What I have done I will do again. My love is unalterable. I will give the same price for you as of old, if it is necessary." Remember how it is said of the Lord Jesus, "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end"? Notwithstanding all their ill-manners He was still their Savior! And it is so with

Jehovah, the Covenant God of Israel—having loved us until now with love so wonderful, He holds to it despite everything which might have turned away His heart. He declares, “You have been honorable, and I have loved you; therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life.”

Thus, in a very sorry way, I have skimmed the surface of this great sea of love. I beg you, now, to follow me while we listen to Divine Love as it speaks in quite another tone.

II. Our second text is in the minor key, it is LOVE LAMENTING—“But you have not called upon Me, O Israel” (v. 22). Observe the contrast, for it runs all through and may be seen in every sentence—I have called you by your name; but you have not called upon Me, O Israel. I have called you Mine; but you have been weary of Me. I have redeemed you with a matchless price; but you have bought Me no sweet cane with money. You can work out the contrast yourself and you will find it most remarkable. I cannot tarry to go into detail.

Israel rendered *little worship to God*. She gave the Lord little prayer and little praise. Come, Brothers and Sisters, I will bring no accusations against you, but I will make confession of sin for myself. When we think of God’s delight in us and His love to us, is it not shameful that we should have been so seldom engaged in devotion towards Him? Oh, how slack we have often been in private prayer! How hurried, how superficial! How little of praise have we brought. Now and then a hymn, but this only when we were in the public congregation! How little of secret praise and reverent adoration have we rendered! The Lord has done great things for us and heaped honor upon us, but how seldom has His name been joyously upon our tongue! How little have we spoken of Him or to Him! It takes a world of trouble to drive some of God’s children to their Father—they live without Him and are tolerably comfortable! And even when darkness lowers, they are slow to run to Him. Alas, they hasten to some human friend instead of returning at once to Him who has dealt so bountifully with them! I am not going to dwell upon this because tender hearts will only need a hint. If we grieve those whom we greatly love, they have only to drop half a word and we see their drift at once and endeavor to amend. If we have no love in our hearts, what is the use of a lengthened accusation? It will only embitter and harden. Brothers and Sisters, may not the Lord of Infinite Mercy justly say to some of us, “But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob”?

Notice, next, that there has been *little fellowship*, for the Lord goes on to say, “You have been weary of Me, O Israel.” The Lord has delighted in us, for He joyously recounts His dealings towards us, saying, “I have created you and formed you. I have redeemed you and called you, and made you Mine.” If He had been weary of us, we need not have wondered—but we ought to blush and be silent for shame because we have wearied of Him! Brothers and Sisters, are we tired of our God? If not, how is it that we do not walk with Him from day to day? Really spiritual worship is not much cared for in these days, even by professing Christians! Many will go to a place of worship if they can be entertained with fine music, or grand oratory. But if communion with God is the only attraction, they are not

drawn thereby. They can spend many an evening where all sorts of levity and nonsense waste the hour, but when do they spend an evening with their God? If some of you had ever done such a thing, it would be marked down in your diaries as a wonder! Can any of you say, "I did once spend a night with God?" Is it not, then, true, "You have been weary of Me"? Alas, some of my hearers have never spoken with God in all their lives! They are not on speaking terms with Him—they do not know Him! Small wonder is it that you do not *believe* in Him—he only truly believes in God who has come to know Him. He that lives with God and walks with God, has no questions or doubts about His existence—he has risen long ago above that wretched state of mind. God grant that any of you who are weary at the very mention of eternal things may be delivered from your earth-bondage and made to rejoice in the Lord!

We are moved by this passage to confess how *little of spirituality* has been found in the worship which we have rendered. "You have not honored Me with the sacrifices." When we have come to worship in public and in private, we have not honored the Lord by being intense in it. The heart has been cold, the mind has been wandering. Often we have the posture of devotion without devotion; the words of praise without the praise; the language of prayer without supplication; attendance at the Lord's Supper without communion. Ah me! How hosannas languish on our tongues! How nearly our devotion dies! Let us repent and pray for better things.

Again, the Lord mentions that His people have brought Him *little sacrifice*. "You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; you have bought Me no sweet cane with money: neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices." Everything we have, God has given us—and He has given to us far beyond our deserts or even our expectations! What small returns we have made! In the religion of Christ there is no taxation. Everything is of love. It spoils our gifts if we give because we *must*—it is the voluntariness of what we do for Christ that is the excellence of it. Under the old Law there was a certain tithe to pay, but the devout who loved their God were not content with this—they, of their own accord, bought sweet cane with honey and gave it for the making of incense to be used upon the altar of the Lord. Saints of those times denied themselves luxuries that they might have the high joy of contributing to the worship of the Lord whom they loved. Some saints do this, now, and find great delight in it, even as Mary delighted to pour the very precious ointment from her alabaster box upon the head of the Well-Beloved. Alas, how little have some done in this direction! I will not dwell upon it, for, as I have already said, a hint is all that is needed by a loving heart. Yet is it not sadly true that many offer to the Lord only that which costs them nothing? If it comes to making sacrifices for the Truth's sake, they will have nothing to do with it.

Once more, it is said that we have been very slack in our *consideration of our God*. The Lord says, "I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense; but you have made Me to serve with your sins; you have wearied Me with your iniquities." The Lord is thoughtful of us, but we are not thoughtful towards Him. He considers our feel-

ings, but we treat Him with heartless brutishness. God has made us honorable, but we have not made Him honorable. He has treated us as dear friends, but we have made a servant of Him—made Him to serve with our sins. Many treat the Lord as if it was most fit that He should be forgotten. They profess to believe in Him and yet live atheistical lives, unmindful of His Presence, not regarding His Law. Doubtless many come into His courts unwashed and defiled, having forgotten to seek cleansing through the Atonement of His dear Son. They dare to stand before a holy God in their willful unholiness! Beloved, is it not so? Have not even those who are His people too often spoiled their praises, their prayers and their secret devotions by a lack of preparedness of heart and cleansing of spirit? Let this question go round and he that has the most renewed mind will be the most likely to accuse himself.

I must not fail to remind you that I commenced by declaring that in each of the three voices of the Lord the tone was always that of love. If the Lord did not love us very much, He would not care so much about our love towards Him. Only true love knows how to burn with jealousy. How greatly God must love me, since I see that He desires to have my whole heart! What condescending tenderness that the Lord of Glory should complain, “You have bought Me no sweet cane with money!” It is the plaint of love! Remember, the Lord does not need our sweet canes nor our money. “The silver and the gold are His, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.” He says to His enemy, “If I were hungry I would not tell you.” He needs nothing at our hands. But when He chides us for withholding our love-tokens, it is because He values our love and is grieved when it grows cold. Yonder father does not need anything of his child and yet, when his birthday comes round, and there are whispers all over the house and little contributions that something may be given to dear Father, he is greatly pleased! He is more charmed with the little ones’ trifling gifts than with the gold he wins on the Exchange! It is sweet to live in the thoughts of those we love. You that are blessed with happy domestic life, you know that in these matters you do not look for bare duty, but the free suggestions of love bear the palm. It is because the Lord loves us so much that He bemoans our lack of grateful affection and sadly mourns—“You have not called upon Me, O Jacob; you have been weary of Me, O Israel.”

What has the Lord done that we should treat Him so? O Brothers and Sisters, let us mend our ways! Surely we have treated everybody better than our God. In Him we live and move and have our being and yet, by the way we act, one would think we had never heard of Him! He has loved us with an everlasting love and dealt with us in amazing mercy—and yet we are ungrateful and cold. Well may we smite upon the breasts which harbor such stony hearts and pray that the Holy Spirit may inspire us with ardor of love to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us! God bless these words to you, dear Brethren, by His Grace!

III. I have now to finish with my third text, which I felt bound to take, lest I should conclude with mourning and lamentation. Our third text exhibits LOVE ABIDING.

Notice, in the 21st verse of the 44th chapter, how the Lord still calls His people by the same name. "Remember these, O Jacob and Israel." Still are the names of His elect like music in the ears of God. One would have feared that He would have dropped the, "Israel," that honorable name which came of prevailing prayer, since they had not called upon Him. Why call him a prevailing prince, who had grown weary of his God? We would not have marveled if the Lord had only called them by their natural and carnal name of Jacob. But no, He harps upon the double title—He loves to think of His Beloved as what they were and what His Grace made them. O heir of Heaven, God still loves you! God still earnestly remembers you! Jehovah Jesus wears upon His breast-plate the names of His people and He has not torn one of the gems from its setting, neither has He erased a single name of Reuben, Simeon, Gad, or Levi from its jewel! Your name is still upon the palms of His hands! If nothing has touched you before, this ought to awaken your conscience and melt your heart! O, child of God, your God remembers you! He still calls you by name and acknowledges you as His!

Notice in the text how the Lord claims His servants. "You are My servant: I have formed you; you are My servant." He has not discharged us, though He has had cause enough for doing so. How often have I prayed, "Dismiss me not from Your service, Lord," when I have seen the faultiness of my obedience! I dwell with supreme pleasure upon that sweet assurance, "You are My servant; you are My servant." He has not turned us out of doors, nor given us our wages and said, "Be packing, I shall never make My money's worth of you." I am sure He will never part with us, now, for if He meant to do so, He would have done it long ago! When we grow old and gray-headed, He will not send us off, as so many firms have lately done with old servants who had given them their youth and their manhood. No, the Lord will not cast off His people! Even to gray hairs He is the same. This should bind us to Him. This should quicken our pace in His service. This should make us eager and earnest to show forth His praise.

Then notice how the Lord assures us in the next line, "O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of Me." God cannot forget His chosen! You that have Bibles with margins will find that it is also written there, "O Israel, forget not Me." The Lord longs to be remembered by us. Did not our loving Lord institute the sacred Supper to prevent our forgetting Him! Oh hear Him at that table of fellowship tenderly saying, "Do not forget Me!" Let us each one cry, "We will remember You!" Can you, O heir of immortality, forget Him who died for you? Can you forget Him that gives you eternal life? You who come forth from God's own love, begotten unto a lively hope by the Father's Grace, you can not forget Him by whom you live. Let us think of our Lord's memory of us and of His desire that we should remember Him—and then let our love flame forth.

Notice with delight the triumph of love, how He still pardons. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins." I have seen the clouds come hurrying up, driven by the wind. They were black as night in the distance and, for a while, they spread darkness around us. Soon, however, drops of rain have fallen, for an April shower

has come and the clouds, where were they? Not a vestige remained! The clouds were blotted out, the sky was blue and all things glittered in the sunlight as if hung with pearls! Thus our God beholds our sins gathering like clouds. He cannot endure them—He sweeps them away—no trace is left! “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” Child of God, your Lord forgives you! If you are ashamed and confounded for all your shortcomings, He has put them all away. Therefore return unto your God! Return to your first love! Return to all your former joy and rise to a still higher joy!

See how our text closes with the Lord’s own precept to be glad. “Sing, O you heavens; for the Lord has done it: shout, you lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it: for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel.” Out of all dejection, arise! Out of all sorrow, soar aloft! There is more cause for gladness than for sorrow! What you have done should cause distress of heart, but what the Lord has done is cause for rapture! Heaven and earth help you to praise! The mountains join in your music! The trees of the forest sing out in harmony with your delight! Infinite love has drowned your sins! Almighty Grace restores your wanderings! Eternal mercy establishes your goings! Oh for a well-tuned harp! Oh to be taught some flaming sonnet of pure spirits who are before the Throne of God!

Wait a while and be not weary. Love the Lord, here, and so prepare for beholding Him above. Live after the manner which the whole theme suggests. What manner of persons ought we to be who are so supremely loved! To the glorious name of Jehovah, the God of Love, be Glory forever and ever! Amen.

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“But now thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel, fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior: I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you. Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you: therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life. But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of Me, O Israel. You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; neither have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense. You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices: but you have made Me to serve with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities. I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.”
Isaiah 43:1-4; 22-25.

Beloved Friends, there are many lights in which we can see sin. And our perception of sin very much depends upon the light in which we look at it. Sin is very terrible by the blaze of Sinai, when the mountain of Law and terrors is altogether on a smoke. It is a dreadful thing to look at sin when God speaks in thunder and all the earth trembles before Him. It is an awful thing to see sin by the light of your dying day. More terrible, still, will it be to see it by the light of the Judgment Day. When Abraham rose up early in the morning and looked towards Sodom, it was a lurid light that met his gaze as he saw the guilty cities blazing and smoking up towards Heaven like a vast furnace. To see sin in that light is a solemn thing. But of all the lights that ever fall upon sin, that which makes it, “like itself appear,” is that which falls upon it when it is set in the light of God’s Countenance. To see sin by the light of God’s Love, to read its awful character by the light of the Cross—beholding Christ bleeding and dying—is the way to see sin. Nothing makes us feel sin to be so vile and guilty a thing as when we realize that it was perpetrated against the God of Infinite Love.

I am going to speak at this time mainly concerning God's own people. They are to be the direct object of my talk, and I want to set their sins in the light of God's Love to them. I mean, Beloved, your sins and my own. Let us set our sin in the light of God's eternal Love and if the sight should break us down, so much the better. If it should send us away humbled and ashamed, so much the better. And if it should make us praise eternal love beyond anything we have ever done before, so much the better. My one objective will be to set before you the contrast between God's action towards His people and His people's usual action towards Him. He is all Love, but I fear that some of us who love Him from the bottom of our hearts do not always show it in our lives—and we give much cause for Him to set our conduct in direct contrast to His own.

I pray, dear Brothers and Sisters, that your consciences may be wide awake while I am preaching, and that you will not so much listen to me as make heart-searching inquisition into your own spiritual state and your own behavior towards your God. I do not want so much to preach to you, as just to help you while you take the candle and the broom and sweep the house. There may be some piece of silver that you have lost which you will find very speedily by that process. It may be that you will learn to love the Savior better after you have thoroughly searched yourself and seen the contrast between His action towards you and yours towards Him.

I. The first contrast lies in THE CALL. Please open your Bibles at the first verse, and read with me—"I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name." Now read in the 22nd verse—"But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob."

We will begin by speaking of God's call to us. God has had much converse with those of us who are His people. We are not strangers to the sound of His voice and that method of communication from God came forth toward us even before we knew anything about it, for, first, *God called us out of nothing*. See how He begins this chapter—"Thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob." Our creation is entirely due to God. An ungodly man can hardly bless God for having made him, for his end may be terrible. But you and I can bless the day of our birth and praise the Lord that we ever were created to be His sons and His daughters and to enjoy so much, as we already do, of His infinite love and mercy. Blessed be God for our being, because it is followed by our well-being! Blessed be God for our first birth, because we have also experienced a second birth! We praise the Lord that it pleased Him to make us to be His people!

Our Lord has done more than make us, for He has educated us. He *has continued the fashioning of us*. We are still like the unfinished vessel in the potter's hands—the wheel is yet revolving and God's fingers are still at work upon us, molding and shaping us as He, Himself, would have us to be. "Thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel." Israel is the "formed" Jacob. By God's Grace, Jacob grows into Israel. Let us think for a minute of all the sweet experi-

ences of God's forming and fashioning touch that we have had. Sometimes it has been a rough stroke that was necessary for the molding of our clay. Only by affliction could we be made to assume the shape and pattern that the Lord had determined for us. At other times it has been the touch of very soft fingers. Divine love and kindness and tenderness have molded us. As David said to the Lord, in his Psalm of Thanksgiving, so can each true child of God say, "Your gentleness has made me great." "The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad." He has had wonderful dealings with us in creating us and in forming us!

Think what wonderful dealings He has had, next, in *consoling us*, for the Lord goes on to say, "fear not." Oh, how often He has cheered us up when our spirit was sinking! With the Psalmist, we have been able to say, "My flesh and my heart fails, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever." When it has been very dark with us, the Lord has lighted our candle. When we have been quite alone, then we have not been alone, for He has been with us. "A Syrian ready to perish," was a true description of Israel going down into Egypt, but the Lord did not leave him to perish—and He has not left us to perish, and He never will! Friends have sometimes failed to cheer us, but our Best of Friends has always comforted us. There are many who call themselves comforters, to whom we can truly say, "Miserable comforters are you all." But what a Comforter is the God of All Comfort! He knows how to comfort those that are cast down. He takes care that His comforts are given to us just as we need them and that they always come to us in the best possible way.

O Beloved, the Lord has had strange dealings with some of you which you could never tell! You could not even recount them to yourself in quiet soliloquy. You have lost, one after another, those who were dear to you, and yet you have not been permitted to sink down into despair. You have been brought into great straits, yet you have not been deserted by your God. You have been cast down, but not destroyed. You have gone through fire and through water, yet you have been brought out into a wealthy place and your soul has had to extol the Lord who has dealt with you in loving kindness and tender mercy!

So, you see, we have had from God the blessings of creation, formation, and consolation.

But that is not all, for the Lord has also called us and conversed with us in the matter of *redemption*. How sweetly it runs, "for I have redeemed you." Yes, blessed be God, whether we are poor, or sick, or obscure, we who believe in Jesus are bought with His precious blood! I would give up my eyes rather than give up that thought, "I am bought with the precious blood." I would give my hands, arms and every sense I have, sooner than give up that inward delightful confidence, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me. Upon the Cross of Calvary, when He was paying down His life-price, He gave Himself a ransom for me and I am a sharer in the effectual purchase of His redeeming blood." Beloved, has not the Lord also told you that, sometimes, in His Word and by His Spirit? Has he not made it

come home so blessedly to you that you have cried out with joy, "It is true, it is verily true, the Lord says to me, 'I have redeemed you'"? this is a choice way in which God has spoken to you, cheering and comforting your heart by a sense of His redeeming Love.

The Lord has done even more than that for each of His children. He has given a special *nomination*—"I have called you by your name." You know what your name was, once, but, blessed be God, He has given you a new name, and He has called you to Himself by name as much as Mary of Bethany was called, when her sister Martha said to her, "the Master is come and calls for you," or when Mary Magdalene turned herself and said, "Rabboni," because her beloved Master had called her by her name, "Mary." The Lord delights to call His people by their name, just as mothers and fathers do, but specially as mothers do when they repeat the child's pet name which they have given it—some fondling name which is the mother's own particular register and mark upon the child. "I have called you by your name." Then comes this blessed appropriation, "You are Mine." Dear child of God, your Heavenly father says to you, "You are Mine. You do not belong to the world, now, much less to the devil. You do not even belong to yourself. I have made you. I have formed you. I have consoled you. I have upheld you. I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name, you are Mine and I will never part with you."

This is the way that God talks to us! You recognize that Divine language, do you not? You have heard it many a time. You are, perhaps, hearing it now. Then turn with me to the other side of the question—the neglected call on our part. Listen again to this sad sentence from the 22nd verse. "But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob." That may not mean that there has been literally no calling upon God on your side, but it does mean that there has been too little of it. Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us put this matter to the test. What about *our prayers*? I have no wish to judge anybody, but I know that there are some who, I trust, do love the Lord, who have so little of the spirit of prayer that, broadly speaking, this accusation is true, "You have not called upon Me, O Jacob." Are there not some of you who spend only a very little time in secret prayer with God? Just a few hurried words in the morning, just a few more at night, when you are tired out and half asleep, but few, if any prayers all day long? Now, I consider brief, pious prayer to be the very best form of prayer. I do not think that length in prayer often ministers to strength in prayer, but those breathings of the soul's desire during the day—

***"The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near."***

That sigh, that "Ah!" "Oh!" "Would that!" "O God!"—that is the style of supplication which reaches the Throne of God! Yet are there not some of you who forget to present these brief prayers? Thus there is much less prayer than there ought to be, and the Lord has to say, "You have not called upon Me, O Jacob."

Some who do, I trust, love the Lord, are very lax about prayer with their Brothers and Sisters. I think that next to united praise, united prayer is the most delightful thing that can ever occupy the human mind. I believe that our Monday evening gatherings and our other Prayer Meetings are among the sweetest enjoyments that Christians can have this side of Heaven! Yet there are some who never come to them at all—and to them the Lord seems to address the language of the text, “You have not called upon Me, O Jacob.”

True as this is of our prayers, I am sure that it is still more true of *our praise*. How little praise, my Brothers and Sisters, does the Lord get from us! Our “Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,” we sing here, but how little of singing is there usually in our own houses! I will not blame you if you cannot sing vocally, but how little is there of that heart-music which is the very heart of music, that praising with the soul without any words, when we sit still and bless the Lord, and all that is within us magnifies His holy name! Is there not too little of this heart-music? The revenue of praise paid into the Divine exchequer is so sadly little that I am sure that the Master is robbed. We do not send in a fair estimate of our income of mercy and we do not pay unto the Lord that portion of praise that is due to Him and, therefore, He is obliged to say to us, “You have not called upon Me, O Jacob.”

I will tell you what I think this sentence further means, and that is that there are many with whom God has dealt well, who do not venture to call upon Him for *special help in His service*. They keep plodding along the old roads and mostly in the old ruts, but they do not dare to invoke the aid of the Lord for some novel form of service, some fresh enterprise upon which they can strike out for God. It has been my lot, in years past, to call upon God to help me in what men judged to be rash and imprudent enterprises, but oh, how grandly the Lord always answers to the holy courage of His people if they will but do and dare for Him! Yet, too often, He has to say, “You have not called upon Me, O Jacob.”

I wish we would put God to the test and see what He is both able and willing to do for us and by us. There are the promises, but they are often like locked-up boxes. They lie like that mass of coin which the German Emperor is said to be storing up in a fortress—keeping it all idle and useless—to come in handy, I suppose, one day, for blood and iron. But, meanwhile, it is doing no service to anybody. Let us not keep God’s mercies locked up after that fashion, but let us utilize them wherever we can!

I am also afraid that sometimes, *in our trouble*, we do not call upon God as we should. I may be addressing a Christian here who is in deep trouble and who has, in vain, tried 50 ways of getting out of it, but he has not yet tried what calling upon God would do. They have in Jersey, as you may know, the habit, when they think they are being wronged, of calling, “Ha! Ro! Ha! Ro! Ha! Ro!” and straightway, having called upon the prince, according to the feudal custom, to come to their defense, all action must be stopped, for the prince is supposed to intervene to take up

the quarrel of his subjects. And it is always a wise thing, when you are getting into the deep waters of trouble, not to battle, worry, and fret, but just to say, “O God, my God, I do invoke You! I put this case into Your hands. This man has slandered me, but I will never answer him. You shall answer for me, O God! I am being wronged, but I shall not go to law. I will bear this burden, O God, until You, who are the Judge of the oppressed, shall see fit to right me!” Whenever Christian men can act like this in time of trouble, or in time of service, then they do well. But the Lord still has to say to many of His people, “I have been speaking to you in love, and mercy, and tenderness, but you have not called upon Me.” If this accusation touches the heart of any Believer, here, let him pray for forgiveness and begin, from this time on, to call upon the name of the Lord.

II. Now, secondly and more briefly, let us consider another contrast which is equally striking—upon the matter of THE CONVERSATION between the Lord and His people.

Notice, first, God’s side of it, as it is given in the second verse—“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you, for I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.” Now read the other side, in the 22nd verse—“But you have been weary of Me, O Israel.” Notice how God is with His people *in strange places*. Wherever they are, He will not leave them. He will go right through the waters with them. God also keeps close to His people *in dangerous places*, fatal places as they seem—“When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” There is God keeping pace with His people through fire and through water, never leaving them, but always making this cheering message to be the comfort of each one of them, “I am with you! I am with you! I am with you!” Our faithful God always keeps close to His people. Is it not perfectly wonderful how close Christ has kept to His Church? Even when she had sinned, He would not leave her. When she had fallen and was ready to perish, He would not desert her—

**“Yes,’ says the Lord, ‘with her I’ll go
Through all the depths of sin and woe!
And on the Cross will even dare
The bitter pangs of death to share.”**

He cannot be separated from His people—to every one of them He has given the personal promise, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.”

Now listen to your side of this matter of conversation with God—“But you have been weary of Me, O Israel.” Has it not been so with regard to *private prayer*? A very little of that is quite enough for you, for you soon get tired of it! You actually went to sleep, the other night, in the middle of your prayers. Was it not so? Well, I am not going to blame you too much, but it is truly sad if this is the case with you.

Is it not the same, often, with your *reading of the Scriptures*? When you have taken your Bible to read a portion, have you not had to school yourself to do it? It has been quite a task for you. Did you ever hear how Hone, the author of *The Every Day Book*, who had been an infidel, was brought to the Savior's feet? He was in Wales, one day. He never read the Bible, or thought of God, but he saw a girl, sitting at a cottage door, reading her Bible. He said, "Oh, the Bible?" "Yes, Sir," she answered, "it is the Bible." He said, "I suppose you are getting your task." "Task?" she enquired. "Task?" "Yes, my dear, I suppose your mother has set you so much to read." "Mother set me so much to read?" "Yes," he replied, "I suppose you would not read the Bible, otherwise. It is a task, is it not?" "Task?" she said, "Oh, no! I only wish I could read it all day long. It is my joy and my delight, when my work is done, to get a few minutes to read this precious Book." That simple testimony was the means of converting the infidel and of bringing him to trust the Savior for himself! I am afraid that there are many who could not have said what that girl did, for they have been weary of God's Word and weary of God, Himself!

When they have come up to God's House, they have been weary of *hearing the Word*. Look at many, many, many professors. I trust that they are God's children—but, oh, they like very short sermons—and if they do attend to what the preacher says, he has to be very careful to put in plenty of illustrations and striking sayings. *Then* they will listen, but if he does not preach so as to please them, they say, "Well, you know, it was very warm, and I could not help just dropping off into a doze." Yes, I know. I know. "He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep," but poor Israel, himself, often sleeps, to his own serious loss! And the Lord has to say to him, "You have been weary of Me, O Israel."

Are there not some, also, whom God loves, who get *weary of their work*? They used to be Sunday school teachers, but, you see, they now live out in the country, and they need the Sabbath day's quiet, so they cannot teach any longer. They used to preach at the corner of the street, or in a room somewhere, or do anything that they could for Christ, but they are getting old, they say, and so they must just do a little less. They used to give generously to the cause of God, but their means are reduced, and they are obliged to draw in—so they draw in first in the matter of giving to God! They begin to pinch God's cause before they pinch themselves! So the Lord has, again, to say, "You have been weary of Me, O Israel." Possibly, there are some things in which each one of us has failed to take that delight in God which we ought to have taken. We have not been half so delighted with God as He has been with us. And we have not been so willing to converse with Him as He has been willing to go with us through the floods and through the flames.

III. Now, next, and very briefly, indeed, I want you to notice the contrast in THE SACRIFICE. Turn to the third verse—"I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you." Now read in the 23rd verse—"You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; neither

have you honored Me with your sacrifices. You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices: but you have made Me to serve with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities.”

Here is God giving up everybody else for the sake of His people! Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba were great nations, but *God did not choose the greatest*. Is it not an extraordinary thing that the Lord should ever have loved some of us? We are nothing in particular and there are mighty men, learned men, men of rank and station, yet He has passed them by. “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence.” That is a very wonderful declaration on God’s part—“I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you.” That is to say, “I passed others by, and chose you.”

We may see another meaning in these words, for *God has given us His choicest Gift*. Christ is infinitely more precious than Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba, though they were lands of great abundance of wealth. God had but one Son, yet He gave Him up that He might die for us and that, through His death, we might live! There can be no gift equal to this, for that Son of God was God’s own Self—and in the death of Christ, it was God Himself who came to earth for our redemption! Will you just try, dear child of God, to think over that great fact, for you know that it is true!

Now look at the other side. Will any of you to whom this applies, remember the charge God here makes? “You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings.” I wonder how little some people really give to God! I believe, in some cases, not as much as it costs them for the blacking of their boots. If you were to set it all down, there are some professors whose sacrifice to God might be put—I was about to say, in their eyes—but certainly they would not feel it if it were put in their mouths, for it is so little. “I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you; yet you have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings.”

Then the Lord adds, “You have bought Me no sweet cane with money.” Not even the smallest offering has been given to the Most High by some who profess to have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ! How little is given by the most generous of us! How little, even, by those who live nearest to God! As if His Words ought to touch our consciences, the Lord says, “I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense”—as much as to say, “I have left it entirely up to you what you would bring. I have not demanded *anything*, I have not fixed any rate, I have not taxed you. And this voluntary principle—has it

failed? I have not put you under the Law and said that you shall give just so much—I have left it wholly to your love.”

I read somewhere that in the Roman Catholic times, men were very generous because they thought that they could purchase salvation by their alms and their gifts to the church. And it is said that the doctrine of Free Grace makes people stingy! I do not believe that it is so—I believe that the natural effect of Grace upon any true heart is to make the man feel that if God has done so much for him, it is his joy and his delight to do all that lies in his power for God and His cause. At any rate, dear Friends, let us be sure to make it so in our case. I am not going to press this matter upon you, but I want you to take it home to yourselves, as I take it home to myself. Let not the Lord have to say to any one of us, “I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you...but you have bought Me no sweet cane with money.”

IV. I close with one more contrast, which refers to THE HONOR given *by* God and the honor given *to* God.

Read with me in verse four—“Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you.” Then here is the contrast, in the 23rd verse—“neither have you honored Me with your sacrifices.” The words seem to answer to each other in the declaration of God’s love to His people and in His lamentation for the lack of their love to Him! “Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable.” This is a very wonderful passage and it is blessedly true that *God gives great honor to those whom He saves*. I have known persons who, before their conversion, were unclean in their lives—men who had been everything that was despicable and women who had lost all honor—and when they have been converted, they have joined a Christian Church and, in the society of God’s people, they have become honorable! They have been taken into the fellowship of the saints just as if there had never been a fault in their lives! Nobody has mentioned the past to them—it has been forgotten. If ever any professed Christian has spoken of it, it has been a disgrace to him to do so, but in the Church of God in general, we take in those who have been the vilest of the vile. And if they have but new hearts and right spirits, they are our Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and they are honorable among us, and the Lord says to each one of them, “Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable.”

All God’s people are honorable people, they are the true “right honorables,” for God has made them so! They are honorable as to their new nature, for that is holy and they seek after holiness. They are honorable as the sons of God, for they are of the blood royal of Heaven. They are honorable as wedded to Christ, for He becomes their Husband. They are honorable because of their inheritance, for they can sing—

**“This world is ours, and worlds to come!
Earth is our lodge and Heaven our home.”**

They are honorable as to their station throughout eternity, for they shall dwell forever at the right hand of God. Even those who were once so dis-

honorable that we could not have associated with them, then, are brought near by the blood of Christ and God makes them honorable.

I think that if you and I, poor creatures that we are, are made honorable by God, the very least thing we can do is to honor Him in return. This is the highest honor that God can put upon us, that He fixes His love upon us—"You have been honorable, and I have loved you." Drink in that nectar if you can. I cannot preach about it. I always feel as if, when I get to that theme, I must just sit down and think over this great wonder, that God loves me! "I have loved you—I, the Great, the Infinite Jehovah, have loved you!" Well, then, the very least thing we can do is to honor with our whole heart and soul Him who has so greatly honored us!

Now, Beloved, have you honored God? He says in our text, "Neither have you honored Me with your sacrifices." Have you honored God by your lives, dear Brothers and Sisters? Have you honored God by your confidence in Him? Have you honored God by your patience? Have you honored God by defending His Truth when it has been assailed? Have you honored God by speaking to poor sinners about Him? Are you trying every day to honor Him? Surely, it is the very least thing we can do who have been—

"Chosen of Him before time began,"

and then redeemed with the heart's blood of the Son of the Highest. It is the least we can do, to make every faculty we possess subordinate to this end of honoring and glorifying God! It is for this He has created us, for this He has called us, for this He has redeemed us, for this He has sanctified us! Therefore let us set about it at once and think and plan within our hearts what we can do for the glory and honor of Him who has redeemed us unto Himself. The Lord bless this message to all here present, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 43:1-7; 21-28; 44:1-5.**

Isaiah 43:1. *But now thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel, fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are Mine.* "Fear not," is a command of God and is a command which brings its own power of performance with it. God, who created and formed us, says to us, "fear not," and a secret whisper is heard in the heart by which that heart is so comforted that fear is driven away. "Fear not: for I have redeemed you." That is a good reason why we should never fear again! Redemption is a well of consolation and the redeemed of the Lord have nothing whatever to fear.

2. *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.* The godly have the best company in the worst places in which their lot is cast.

2. *And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.* The godly have special help in their times of deepest trouble.

2. *When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned.* The godly are the subjects of miracles of mercy in seasons of greatest distress.

2. *Neither shall the flame kindle upon you.* You shall come out of the furnace as the three holy children did, with not so much as the smell of fire upon you, for, where God is, all is safe. “You shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.”

3. *For I am the Lord your God.* This is the grandest possible reason for not fearing! Fall back upon this when you have nothing else upon which to rely. If you have no goods, you have a God. If your gourd is withered, your God is still the same as He ever was—“For I am Jehovah, your God.”

3, 4. *The Holy One of Israel, your Savior: I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you. Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you: therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life.* All that God has given, if it were not enough, He would still add to it. He has redeemed us, so there is no need of more, but if there were, God would go through with it even to the end.

5. *Fear not: for I am with you.* This is the second time that the blessed words, “fear not,” ring out like the notes of the silver trumpet proclaiming the jubilee to poor trembling hearts! “Fear not, for I am with you.” The Lord seems to say to each troubled Believer, “My honor is pledged to secure your safety, all My attributes are engaged on your behalf right to the end. Yes, I am, Myself, with you. Therefore, fear not.”

5-7. *I will bring your seed from the east, and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by My name.* Whatever happens, God will be with His Church. His own chosen people shall all be gathered in. There shall be no frustration of the Divine purpose. From east or west, north or south, all His sons and daughters shall come unto Him, even every one that is called by His name.

7. *For I have created him for My glory, I have formed him; yes, I have made him.* And God will be glorified in His people; the object of their creation is the glory of their God and that end shall, somehow or other, be answered in the Lord’s good time. Now I want you to notice the other side of the question. God says, in the 21st verse—

21. *This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise. But.*—A sorrowful, “but.” And the strain sinks from a triumphant shout to a doleful lamentation. “But”—

22. *You have not called upon Me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of Me, O Israel.* How sad it is that those who have been loved so much should make such a shameful return for it all!

23. *You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings.* No kids of the goats, or lambs from the fold.

23. *Neither have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense.* “I

have not been a cruel taskmaster, or tyrant, demanding of you more than you could give.”

24. *You have bought Me no sweet cane with money.* “No calamus has sent forth its perfume from My altar.”

24. *Neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices: but you have made Me to serve with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities.* These are the people whom God had loved so long and so well, those upon whom He had set His unchanging affection! Yet they acted shamefully. What will follow upon such conduct as this? Their swift destruction? No! Listen to the Lord’s gracious message.

25. *I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.* Here is a great wave of mercy washing away everything that could bear witness against the people of God!

26-28. *Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare you, that you may be justified. Your first father has sinned, and your teachers have transgressed against Me. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.*

Isaiah 44:1-5. *Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: thus says the Lord that made you, and formed you from the womb, which will help you; fear not, O Jacob, My servant; and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My spirit upon your seed, and My blessing upon your offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord’s and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob. And another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.* There are different ways of making the same profession of attachment to the Lord. All do not acknowledge in the same way their faith in God, but it is a great blessing when our offspring acknowledge it. Let us end our reading with that sweet blessing upon our children—“I will pour My spirit upon your seed, and My blessing upon your offspring. May it come to pass in all our families, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—732, 742, 640.

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

WITNESSES FOR GOD

NO. 3165

(Suggested by his being summoned to attend the police court as a witness).

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1909.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1875.

“You are My witnesses, says the Lord.”
Isaiah 43:10.

IT is some time since I have known what it is to be at leisure. One's time from morning till night is occupied in different departments of the Master's service and it has been peculiarly troublesome to me during the last week to be compelled to spend many hours in a police court. While sitting on the bench this text has again and again occurred to me—“You are My witnesses, says the Lord.”

A great trial is going on, of which all worlds constitute the jury—a great trial between the powers of evil and the one perfect Lord of Good. Slanders have been vented against the name and majesty of Heaven and plots have been invented with the intent to overthrow holiness and the Truths of God. The whole fraternity of Hell have stirred up their malicious craftiness to defame the God of Heaven and earth. We know which way the suit will be decided, for we know where the Truth lies, but lo, these many centuries the matter has been hanging in the balances. Sometimes it has seemed that Truth had gained the day, but at other times the powers of evil have come to the front. This trial is still proceeding. Satan brings up his witnesses, ready enough to lie and to establish the teachings of the Father of Lies and, on the other hand, the Lord brings up His witnesses to bear testimony for Truth and righteousness. There are many in this place of whom the text speaks. “You are My witnesses, says the Lord.” We are summoned in this great trial of the ages to stand forward as witnesses for God.

Very simply, indeed, let us talk of this matter.

I. At the outset we will take the simple assertion that WE ARE WITNESSES and enquire what sort of witnesses we ought to be? I count it no small honor for the good Lord to call me as a witness in His case. Hence, I, for one, am a willing witness. I need no subpoena to compel me to come forward and bear such witness as I can for the glory of His great name! Such of you as can cheerfully come forward for the Lord should give their attention to the duty of witnesses. Let us see what are the main points of that duty.

First, *let us be present to witness, in our proper place, at the proper time.* I know some Christians who are of a very “retiring” disposition—I

believe that is their favorite word. I fear the Truth of God would say they are cowardly and, therefore, they are silent when their witness should be borne. They are willing enough to bear testimony when thousands are doing the same and they can shout, "Hosanna," when all the streets are ringing with it—but not so many are prepared to witness for Christ when the hoarse cry of, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" is heard on every side. If we are witnesses for God we are bound to be witnesses to all that we know, but flesh and blood will suggest to us to be out of the way when unpopular Truths are in question. Certain brethren find it convenient to insist upon quiet portions of the word of God and not on Truths which might cause them trouble and provoke discussion. That Doctrine which is already received, they will affirm because all men agree with them, but the very portion of Truth which most needs witnessing is shirked and even looked down upon with disfavor! Let us always be there when there is a witness needed to be browbeaten and abused because he states the unpalatable Truth of God! Never pick and choose in Truth, or in your witness to it. Or if you must make a choice, vindicate most that Truth which is most despised. If you happen to be where men are blaspheming, witness against that blasphemy, calmly but firmly. If you dwell where error is taught, wait till you have a fair opportunity and then stand up for Jesus! I do not say that you are to rush about like a knight errant, fighting with everybody—but when there is a demand for a witness upon any point of Truth, be you the man and witness a good confession for Jesus your Lord!

Next, if we are witnesses for God, we should not only be in our place, but *we should be willing to speak up when the time comes*. No redeemed man must be in any degree an unwilling witness for his Lord. It is a pity when Truth has to be extracted from us with as much difficulty as a decayed tooth. That is the best wine which flows most freely from the grape and that is the best testimony which a man bears with cheerful spirit because he values the Truth in his own soul, and would have others prize it too! The thought that our Lord Jesus was silent for us should prevent our ever being silent towards Him. One word from His mouth in Pilate's Hall would have broken the spell which bound Him to death, but He would not speak it. And now, if one word from our lips would sign our death warrant, if it is a word for Truth and Christ, let us speak it and joyfully accept the consequences! God's true children are never born dumb—therefore speak out like a true man. What you know, tell! What God has taught you, teach! What you have learned in the closet, proclaim on the housetop! And what was whispered in your ear in communion with your God, blaze it abroad before all men! Speak up, speak up for Jesus!

It is required of the Lord's witnesses that they speak the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth. Every witness in the court is sworn to do that, and every child of God is bound by the most solemn obligations to his Lord to do the same. Our God never requires a man to tell a lie for Him. The Jesuits have held the theory that the end sanctifies the means. And so those—I was going to say, *diabolical beings*—suppose

they are glorifying God when they heap lies, pile on pile! One of the chief qualifications for a priest is to be able to tell a lie without the slightest sign of blushing—and I must give some of them credit for great proficiency in the art. Our Lord would not have us speak falsely for Him or even suppress the Truth to serve His cause! Occasions may sometimes arise when you feel—“Well, I don’t know. My friend will be annoyed if I confess that Truth of God. So I think I will not exactly deny my belief in it, but I will depreciate it as a small matter of very slender importance.” Thus you will do evil that good may come! Some say to themselves, “I am in a false position, but had I not better remain in it, for it gives me great opportunities for usefulness. It is true I do not believe in the teaching of my church, but may I not still belong to it? Her catechism and ritual do not represent my views and there are many persons of an opposite way of thinking who are very glad to use the very language which I profess to believe in and express, thereby, the most abominable of dogmas. All this is deplorable, but had I not better put up with it and go on as I am?”

My dear Friend, I do not believe that God ever desires any of His people to occupy a position in which they cannot be strictly truthful! And I do not believe that He will justify them in retaining such a position. Whether I am useful or not is not one half as much my business as whether I am faithful and true. Equivocation and suppression of Truth cannot serve the cause of God! You are to speak *the truth* for God. He does not want you in one syllable or word to speak anything but the truth. And you are to bring out *all His Truth* as far as the Lord has taught it to you. Do not conceal anything on the ground of policy! At the same time do not exalt any one Truth out of its fair proportion. If a man’s portrait had to be drawn, it would be a mistake to paint his nose and nothing else, or to make that organ so large that you could not see his eyes. Never distort the Truth of God. Some Doctrines fill up the background of a picture, but were never meant to stand in the front. Still, background, foreground and every part must be truthful. My Lord will not call liars to witness for Him, for they are detestable in His sight!

Remember, also, that *we must be personal witnesses*. A witness the other day got as far as, “And he says to me, says he”—but he was immediately stopped with the sharp rebuke that it was not evidence and could not be listened to. In our courts of law we do not allow secondhand evidence. “No,” says the judge, “what did you see yourself, my good man? We need to know *that*.” It is so with regard to your witness for God. You must testify what you have seen and felt for yourselves. It is very easy to read biographies of good men and then come forward and talk experience—but it is a very wicked thing to do. Let your experience be your own and your testimony for God be what you have tasted and handled of His good Word. There is a vast difference between secondhand spiritual gossiping experience and the firsthand personal testing and trying of the promise and the Word of God. You cannot tell what power you will have with children if you tell them how the Lord dealt with you when you were a child—and upon the unconverted if you tell them what you have dis-

covered of the folly of sinful pleasures and the emptiness of the world. Nothing is more useful to a young convert than to tell him how *you* found the Savior and what the Savior has been to you. In dealing with those who are doubting and desponding, your own trials and your own deliverances will be the most helpful subjects. Personal experience must furnish you with personal testimony—and this you must never withhold.

In the matter of witnesses, there are great differences between one and another. Two witnesses may speak the truth, but you would far sooner believe one than the other because of the previous character of the witness. Good lawyers do not count heads—they weigh them—and if they have one man of known position and honesty, and he will assert such a thing, they scarcely need to support his evidence, whereas, half-a-dozen witnesses of rather a shady description will scarcely be able to prove a fact. *In witnessing for God, the holier your character, the better.* It does not do to say one thing with your mouth and another thing with your hand. Your witness for Jesus Christ in the school will be spoiled if at home there is no piety, if in business there is a lack of honesty. If your character is doubtful, you will rather damage than help the good cause. The devil once wanted to be a witness for Christ and some of us would have thought it would be a fine stroke of policy to put the devil into the box and make him speak the truth—but the Lord Jesus Christ would not have it. He said, “Hold your peace and come out of him.” The Truth of God did not need any assistance from the Father of Lies! I do not invite the ungodly man to be a witness for Jesus Christ. Unto the wicked, God says, “What have you to do to declare My statutes?” Still, if you are a child of God, the weight of your evidence will be considerably lessened if your character is not pure. For your Lord’s sake, then, I beseech you, watch your lives and walk according to His commands. Oh, never let it be said that Christ was wounded by us—by us for whom He died—by us who have leaned our heads upon His bosom! God grant that from first to last we may be mighty witnesses because our character is known and read of all men. May the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies us, help us in this matter!

One thing more. *Every witness should be ready to bear cross-examination.* Oh, how some Christians dislike this! Even as to joining a Church, I frequently hear my Brother ministers say that we should make the way into the Church as easy as possible, that we should not question the “dear young friends,” and a lot of rubbish of that kind! I, on the other hand, believe that if they cannot give a reason for the hope that is in them, it is time they should learn! And if they cannot face their own Christian Brothers and Sisters and relate their experience, it is more their minister’s fault than theirs! I am not going to gather together a horde of cowardly members, nor excuse any from declaring what the Lord has done for their souls! There are plenty of churches where young ladies and gentlemen are taken in because they write a very pretty little letter and some friend hopes they are all right, and so they are received—and thus we are inundated with people who never speak for Christ and tremble to call their souls their own! We have *too much of this kid-gloved,*

lavender-watered religion, and for my part I would not care to march through the world with such a regiment of feather-bed soldiers! Give me the men who can bear persecution, who are ready to go into the streets and preach Christ at the corners, and are bold to speak a word for Jesus to anybody they shall meet! *We need a race of heroes*—of cowards we already have plenty! Dear Friends, we must bear to be cross-examined, for the world *will* cross-examine us with harsh words, sneers, insinuations, misrepresentations and lies. The more outspoken we are, the more of running the gauntlet we shall have to undergo—but we must be prepared for it. If our grandfathers, not without blood, passed to their thrones and we have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin, shall we speak of Christ with bated breath, or dastardly consent to hold our tongues? “I had as well not be, as live to be in awe of such a thing as I, myself.” Is a Christian to be afraid of man and conceal his principles for fear he should be ridiculed? God forbid! Leave shame for those who have no religion, or have a religion which is of no value! Let us be true witnesses for Christ in life and death, worthy of the ancestors that went before us and mindful of the eyes which rest upon us!

II. We will now change the strain and dwell upon the fact that WE HAVE EVIDENCE TO GIVE. Let us enquire to what matters of fact we are able to bear witness?

Let us think a little. Supposing us all to be Christian—we cannot all bear witness to precisely the same facts because there is a growth of experience—but there are some facts to which all of us who know the Lord can bear most positive testimony.

First, we can bear witness to many of the attributes of God, as for instance, that *He is true*. We find Him stating in His Word that man is fallen—that his heart is deceitful. Is it so, Brothers and Sisters? What is your witness about yourselves? If you cannot speak of other people, how do you find it in yourselves? Truly I must bear painfully decided witness to the depravity of my heart! When I saw, or thought I saw, the evil of my nature, I was driven to despair by the sight! And though a sight of Jesus Christ has given me peace, yet I can never forget how vile my nature is. It only needs that God should withdraw His Grace and as the floods drowned all the world, so would the deeps of our depravity drown everything gracious within us! We know that God has spoken the Truth there because facts in our own case prove it. The Lord has promised that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall have eternal life. We have believed in Jesus Christ—have we found that new life has been bestowed to us? Let us speak out. Are we conscious of possessing a heavenly life? If there is anything true in the world, we are sure that this is so! Grace has changed us. Eyes have we with which we see the invisible! Ears have we with which we hear the eternal! We have learned to realize the things not seen as yet—our faith is “the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.” There is a spirit life within us. We cannot describe it. We could not make another man who is unconscious of such a life know what it is—but that we have it is a certain fact and we bear

willing witness to it! There are some who ridicule religion altogether and have ridiculed this fact among the rest, yet they have no right to do so. There are many of us who are as honest and trustworthy as other people, and almost as sensible. If we were to enter a witness box, our evidence would not be questioned—even those who ridicule us would believe us *there*—why do they not believe us now? Why they should think it proven that there is no such thing as a new life because they have not felt it, I cannot see! Negative evidence is worthless in such a case. If we bear testimony that we have felt it, it is fair that they should accept the testimony, whether they personally know the truth of it or not. At any rate, let us be very, very plain about it and say, “Yes, our God was true in what He said about our fallen state, and God is true in what He says about the renewal of the soul by the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ.”

That God is true will also appear in His answering our prayers, His delivering us in time of trial, His fulfilling His promises and in many other ways. Whenever any of these occur to us, let us stand forth as witnesses and say, “Surely the Lord is true.”

We ought, also, to bear witness, Beloved, to *the love of God*. We have an old proverb that everybody should speak as he finds. Speak of the Lord as you have found Him. I am sure that this is more than I shall ever be able to do to my own satisfaction. My blessed God! Was there ever any like You? If the gods of the heathen were gods, yet were they not worthy to be mentioned in the same day with our blessed God! What love He has lavished upon some of us! I doubt not that all of you who know the Lord will echo my words, but I must say that the Lord surprises me every day with His loving kindness and His tender mercies! He melts me down by the fires of His Grace. I cannot understand why He is so good to me. If He had only pardoned His rebellious child and allowed Him to be a dishwasher in the royal kitchen, I would have kissed His feet with gratitude, but behold, He has said to me, “You are no more a servant, but a son, and if a son, then an heir, and a joint heir with Jesus Christ.” If He had only permitted me to have one glimpse of His love, so as to let my soul know that I was not utterly lost, I would have praised Him to all eternity! Instead of which, He has made all His goodness pass before me and proclaimed His glorious name. As to His tenderness to me in Providence, His goodness in chastening, His gentleness in restoring me—I am overwhelmed with it! Blessed be His name! You may have what master you like, but He is mine forever! And you may worship what god you please, but I will have none but the Lord! You may praise up your beauties as you please, but my Beloved is altogether lovely!

Again, Brothers and Sisters, we can testify to our Lord’s *wisdom*, can we not? We younger folk cannot do it as well as our elders, but my veteran friends here who are getting into their sixties and seventies delight us when they speak of the wisdom of the Lord. You are living proofs that all the ways of the Lord are wise, for He has overruled all things for your good and here you are, to praise His name! By-and-by, when life’s journey is more nearly over, we shall be able to tell to others yet more of that

wisdom and prudence wherein the Lord has abounded towards us. For the present let us testify what we know.

Beloved Friends, we can also bear witness to *the Immutability of God*. Of course, our span of life is so little at the longest, that we cannot bear much witness to the eternal unchangeableness of Jehovah. Still, take our 25 years of Christian experience—or some of you can take your fifty—has there been any change in your God? We are fickle as the winds that blow, but there certainly has been no change in Him! He loved us and He loves us still! He forgave us and He forgives us still! He chastened us and He chastens us still! And He sustained us and He sustains us still—

***“Immutable His will
Tho’ dark may be my frame,
His loving heart is still
Eternally the same!
My soul thro’ many changes goes,
His love no variation knows.”***

We have proved this by actual trial. Perhaps in the time of trouble we thought that His love was failing us, but in looking back we confess how wrong we were. There was as much love in the Lord’s chastening as in His caresses. We were as much loved when we were hiding under the shadow of His wings as when we were reveling in the light of His Countenance. Blessed be His name, He changes not!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, besides the things which have a manifest respect to God, in which we are witnesses to the Character of the Most High, there are other facts to which we testify and one is this—we can witness to *the power of prayer*. As I uttered that last word, my eye caught the glance of a Sister below me whom I will not indicate. She and I know how we wrestled together in prayer for a certain sick daughter and how the Lord heard us, so that I rose from my knees and said to her, “Go your way. You will find your daughter recovering when you reach the house.” She knows that she found it so and how, since then, in many other ways, God has heard her prayers. I speak to some with whom prayer is an everyday matter—a commerce with God which they do not carry on at certain seasons, but all the year round—and if you do that, answers to prayer become so usual that you forget a large proportion of them and only the more singular abide upon your memory. If a man tells me that God does not hear prayer, I laugh in his face! He might as well tell me that the sun does not shine, or that twice two does not make four! God hears prayer every day and every hour of the day—and I know it—and a man might sooner beat me out of the belief that I exist than out of this knowledge that God listens to my requests! Upon this point I do not stand alone, for there are thousands who will unite in declaring, “Verily, there is a God that hears prayer!” When I hear Brothers and Sisters say how amazing it is that God has heard prayer, I think it far more amazing that they should talk so—for surely it is not surprising that *God* should keep His Word! No, these are the commonplace of genuine Christianity—a prayer-giving God working in the heart—and a prayer-answering God

working both in Providence and in Grace. Brothers and Sisters, never be slow to bear your testimony to a prayer-hearing God.

We are also quite clear upon *the efficacy of the Gospel*. Where the Gospel is truly preached, there will be results and where the Gospel is believed, it is the power of God unto salvation. Some here present are witnesses to that. You have taught a class in the school and you have seen the boys or girls converted to God. There are Brothers in connection with this Church who have evangelized the lowest parts of London, and they have seen those regions abound in precious fruit unto God! Others have introduced the Gospel to the utterly fallen and they have seen them reclaimed. The manhood which appeared extinct has become bright! The womanhood which seemed to be crushed out has shone like a precious jewel! God's Gospel has done wonders! It is not remarkable that a minister gets skeptical if he never sees conversions. The proof of the Gospel lies in what it does. If it does not save men from sinning, if it does not lift up the fallen, if it does not give light and joy to the despairing, then surely it lacks the evidences of its Divine mission—for even Jesus Christ, Himself, gave to His own mission this as the proof—"The deaf hear, the blind see, the lepers are cleansed, the poor have the Gospel preached to them." If these things are not true, now, we may doubt whether the Gospel which we preach is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But we can bear witness and, oh, how joyfully we do it—that the Gospel has not lost its power!

Another point. As God's witness we can speak to *the sweetness of near communion with Him*—a theme upon which I hardly dare to trust my wandering tongue. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, there is nothing like the joy which comes of high fellowship with God. Mr. Aitken told us the other afternoon that he would give us a recipe for being miserable. I think his words were—"be half-and-half Christians." He said, "If you are a worldling, you will get some sort of pleasure—you will get the painted bubble, though it will soon burst, but you will get that. And if you are a genuine, thorough-going Christian you will get the joy of the Lord. But if you are a sort of neither-this-nor-the-other, you will get nothing." Have you never seen little boys, when they go to bathe in the morning, stand up to their knees shivering? Of course they shiver! The way to get warm is to plunge in head first. Some professors stand in very shallow water and they shiver and cry—

***"Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought"—***

and so on. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, give yourself up wholly to Christ, and the joy of the Lord will be yours as it is ours! These are some of the things we can speak of.

III. Very briefly, in the third place. When a witness is called for one side he is against the other side—so we also must remember that **OUR EVIDENCE CONDEMNNS THE OTHER SIDE.**

We are witnesses *against sin*. Sin comes with a painted face like Jezebel, but we witness that she is a destroyer and must die. The pleasures of sin are but a masquerade of misery. Happy they who never drink of

the cup which this siren presents. May God grant that none of our young friends may try the pleasures of vice, for they are as deadly hemlock. Those who have been converted in later life bear very sorrowful witness that sin is misery and that the wages of sin is death.

We bear witness also *against self*. Many say with the proverb, "Self is the man"—self will save! Self is righteous! But our witness is that self has no strength to perform his own resolutions, that self is a ragged beggar when he thinks himself a king—that self is emptiness and vanity, deceit and death! We bear that witness now and we always shall have to bear it!

We bear our witness *against unbelief*. Is there any Christian here who has ever gained anything by being unbelieving? Has any child of God ever escaped from trouble by mistrusting the faithfulness of the Lord? No. We have been losers all round by our unbelief, but never gainers. Unbelief is a sorry cheat. Mr. Bunyan says that Incredulity was taken and condemned to be hung, but he very rightly said that he broke out of prison, "for he was a nimble-jack." The only part of "Pilgrim's Progress" that I felt inclined to find fault with was where Mr. Greatheart cut Giant Despair's head off—for to my knowledge he is still alive. But Bunyan sets that right by saying in his rhyme—

***"Sin can rebuild his castle, make it remain,
And make Despair, the giant, live again!"***

Oh, that wretched unbelief! Brethren, let your witness against it be clear and distinct!

Moreover, we bear testimony *against Satan*, whom we know to be a deceiver, a liar and a murderer. Evil is never good, nor dare we give place to it in order to turn it to useful ends. We must resist the Evil One, remain steadfast in the faith and always witness that he is the deadly foe of the soul, whatever disguise he may assume.

IV. In closing, let me say that there are times when our witness is peculiarly valuable. Do you ask—And when is that? I reply, Your witness will be precious when others are sinfully silent. If you live in a place where there are few earnest Christians, and error abounds, be faithful, my Brother, my Sister. Your light is needed where lamps are few. You need not find fault with others, for that will not help the matter. If the place is dark, shine the more. If error prevails, hold forth the Truth. There is no argument against error equal to the Truth of God advocated, delighted in and practiced! Testimony becomes more precious as it becomes more scarce. You might have held your tongue, perhaps, had advocates been plentiful, but now that they are so few, be doubly earnest like your Divine Lord to bear witness to the Truth!

Witnesses become valuable, again, in times of persecution. Have you been made to suffer for Christ's sake? Brother, Sister, be glad, for, "so persecuted they the Prophets that were before you." If you can be patient, if you can bear ridicule without resentment, if, being reviled, you do not revile again, you have a grand opportunity! The world looks on a man under scoffing and ridicule to observe how he behaves. And if he conducts himself like a Christian, it feels his power and respects his consistency. Give way a little, and you will have to give way more—and be des-

pired! But adherence to principle commands respect. Put your foot down! Stand firmly where God would have you stand, and your testimony will gather value from the very ridicule which is poured upon it.

My Brothers and Sisters, *your testimony will be none the less valuable because you are poor.* Nothing does the Gospel more honor than the godly lives of humble Christians. It honors the Gospel when a man both wears a coronet and prays, but how few have done so! The poor man who is happy, contented, thankful and trustful is one of God's nobility, and the Church of God honors him! We rejoice to see such men standing in the witness box to declare the loving kindness of the Lord!

Testimony becomes all the weightier as we grow older. People pay more attention to the words of experienced men. It is natural and right that they should do so. As years creep upon us, we ought to be all the more earnest that our testimony for God should be clear, solid and *frequent.* An aged Christian who has little or nothing to say for his Master is a sad drawback to young beginners. I very greatly deprecate the example of some who have long been professors, but who still remain babes in Christ, if they are in Christ at all. It is a great pity to see the head white with the sunlight of Heaven, and yet so little of Heaven in the daily conversation. Rise up, you grave and reverend sires, and declare the faithfulness of our God!

Very choice, too, are the testimonies of the sick. It is a great trial when those whom we love are continually suffering. We wish we could bear their pains awhile and give them respite, yet no greater blessing can come to a man's house than an afflicted child of God. The tried ones go so deep, they speak so sincerely and so touchingly. There is no nonsense about their religion. Racking pain very soon drives away illusions, and pretences and shams do not stand before the solemn reality of continued sickness. Witnesses in the furnace of affliction are powerful indeed! We hear no songs in the night till breasts are pierced with the thorn. If there were not some who, like the Arab divers, plunge deep into the depths of sorrow, we should have fewer pearls but there are such and their testimonies are precious. When your turn and mine comes to go upstairs awhile and preach from our beds, God grant that we may deliver gracious sermons!

Lastly, *there is something peculiarly valuable about the testimony of the dying saint.* The Lord might well say to these, "You are My witnesses." Some of us remember testimonies that we were privileged to gather up from dying men's lips and they have been great strengtheners to our faith. I remember a Brother who used to walk out to preach in the villages, a man of very little talent, but with a great heart. I hardly know any word of witness more powerful than the utterances of his last hours. He was blinded by disease, and when he heard a friend's voice he addressed him thus—

***"And when you see my eye strings break,
How sweet my minutes roll!
A mortal paleness on my cheek,
But glory in my soul!"***

His tones of joy added deep solemnity to his words.

Oh, those sweet testimonies of the dying, how we store them up! Children talk of Jesus in their last hours as wisely as old men. Mothers and fathers leave witnesses behind them precious as gems. But I refrain—you and I will go soon—may Divine Grace enable us to expire with a glad witness on our tongues!

Alas, I recollect as I finish that some of you are not witnesses for God, for you know nothing about Him! Remember, if you are not witnesses for God, you will be prisoners at His bar and you must either occupy the witness box for God, or else take the prisoner's place—to be tried and found guilty! Oh, Sinners, I wish you would try our God, whose witnesses we are! If we had found Him untrue, we would tell you! If we had found that Christ could not save, we would tell you. If we had found that God could not pardon, we would tell you! If religion made us miserable, we would tell you, or you would find it out! If God could not be trusted in Providence and did not hear prayer, we would tell you, for we hope we would not maintain a lie! But we have no such disclosures to make! We bear our willing testimony for God! Remember, it is written, "Him that comes to Me, I will in nowise cast out." Go and test the veracity of that promise and God bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 CHRONICLES 21:1-8.**

Verse 1. *And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.* Israel had greatly offended and grieved God, and it was to be punished. God punished one sin by another—the sin of David works for the chastisement of a sinful people.

2. *And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beer-sheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it.* He had gotten proud. He had begun to depend upon the number of his people. In truth, it was a large population under his sway—five millions or more—and he who had been a shepherd lad, who in his early youth had trusted in his God—now thinking himself a great man, somewhat in the spirit of Nebuchadnezzar, begins to say, "Behold, this great kingdom that I have gathered and founded."

3. *And Joab answered, The LORD make His people an hundred times as many more as they are: but, my Lord, the King, are they not all my Lord's servants? Why, then, does my Lord require this thing? Why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel?* It adds greatly to a wrong action if we are checked in it—and especially if we are checked in it by a man who has not any conscience to spare, but yet, notwithstanding his roughness, such as Joab had, nevertheless expostulates with you, "why do this?" The people generally understood that when they were numbered, it was with a view to taxing them, it was with a view of showing David's sovereignty over them. Now David was not their sovereign, the Lord God was their King—David was but the Viceroy—and when he began to count them as though they were his own, it was a source of great indignation to

the Most High. I am afraid when you and I begin to count up what we have done, begin to reckon upon how much we have given, or how much we have effected for God, we begin to appropriate a measure of glory to ourselves. We had better leave that alone, for although pride may not seem a great sin in the eyes of men, it is assuredly that which brings the utmost wrath from the Most High! He cannot endure pride, especially in those whom He has lifted up. He took David from the sheepfold—and if David has now become great—David must be brought down again.

4-6. *Nevertheless the king's word prevailed against Joab. Therefore Joab departed and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem. And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all they of Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men that drew sword; and Judah was four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword. But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them: for the king's word was abominable to Joab. So he did no more of it than he could possibly help.*

7, 8. *And God was displeased with this thing; therefore He smote Israel. And David cried unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now I beseech You, do away the iniquity of Your servant; for I have done very foolishly.* We read that David's heart smote him. Although he had gone wrong, he was, nevertheless, a good man, and when an ambitious man sins, it is a great sin, but it is not long that he continues in it—his conscience is awakened—the Spirit of God is in him. David's heart smote him. That is a terrible blow when your own heart smites you! If you never feel any other person smiting you, you will feel that.

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

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

GOD'S WITNESSES

NO. 644

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 13, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“You are My witnesses, says the Lord, and My Servant, whom I have chosen.”
Isaiah 43:10.***

You, most of you, know that I am incessantly engaged every hour in the week either in preaching the Gospel or in endeavoring to discharge the multifarious duties connected with this immense Church. Now I always look upon my Saturdays as being consecrated, as far as possible, to meditation and study, that I may find something to set before you on the Lord's Day. But, unfortunately for me, I was served with a subpoena to attend the courts at Croydon and was compelled to spend the whole of yesterday sitting in a hot and crowded court.

There is a vast difference between the Throne of Grace and the bench of justice, and between communion with Heaven and converse with lawyers and witnesses! I tried to think, while sitting there, but I found the business so distracting that I went home with a headache and thought I should scarcely be able to preach to the assembled crowds on the morrow. It struck me, however, that if I could not preach about anything else, I must just try to get something out of the occupation of yesterday.

Perhaps we may glean some profitable ears of corn among such unlikely stubble. Let me draw your attention to the text and compel my occupation of yesterday to yield a few illustrations to set forth its meaning. As the text stands, in its connection, we have before us a great assembly. All the nations of the earth are summoned to bring forth their rival gods, and the question to be decided is this—which one of them is the living and true God? The mode of test is this most admirable one—which out of these gods has foretold the future? Among all these votaries of various idols, which of them can claim that their deity possesses the gift of foresight?

Let all the venerated blocks of wood and stone bring forward their witnesses! They can tell of Sibylline oracles, of strange mysterious mutterings which contained doubtful declarations hidden under ambiguous terms. The Lord demands that there shall be presented before this court plain prophecies, distinct declarations of events which could not have been foreseen by human discernment. In this respect, the gods of the heathen failed. But when Jehovah summoned His people Israel and put them into the witness box, and said to them, “You are My witnesses,” they were able distinctly to prove that all the great events of their national history had been foretold by their God and that each had occurred precisely as foretold.

Not one of His prophecies had failed! Not one word had dropped to the ground. Surely the Jew might, with great satisfaction, recur to that ancient prophecy which is recorded in the fifteenth chapter of the Book of Genesis. We read in the twelfth verse of that chapter that “when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram. And, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. And He said unto Abram, know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs and shall serve them. And they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And you shall go to your fathers in peace. You shall be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come here again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.”

Every descendant of the Patriarch could point to this as a Revelation given to his great ancestor at a time when such events seemed improbable and yet it was literally fulfilled. The people went down into Egypt. They stayed there till the four hundred years of this prophecy had been fulfilled. At that very hour they came out of Egypt. With a strong hand and with an outstretched arm did God bring them out! He judged Egypt with many plagues and with a terrible overthrow in the Red Sea—but Israel came out with great substance, for we find that they had jewels of silver and jewels of gold. After forty years they found the sin of the original inhabitants of Canaan was full and that the set time was come for their slaughter and destruction.

All this was fulfilled verbatim and in the eighteenth and following verses there is a continuation of the prophecy—and this, too, was literally accomplished. “Unto your seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites and the Kenizzites and the Kadmonites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Rephaims and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Girgashites and the Jebusites.” And all the inhabitants of the land were to be destroyed and Canaan was to be the possession of the descendants of the solitary man who, as a stranger and a pilgrim with his God, trod its acres without owning a foot of the soil!

This early prophecy was so exactly accomplished that to Israel it was conclusive proof that Jehovah was truly the Lord. Moreover, the Jews could say that in every national event they had always been forewarned. Was David appointed that his seed should rule over Israel? Jacob long before had seen the scepter in the tribe of Judah. Was the kingdom to be divided at the latter end of the reign of Solomon? Ahijah rends the garment of Jeroboam and foretells that he shall take ten pieces to make another kingdom for himself.

Was the race of Jeroboam to be put away? Remember the terrible words, “There shall not be left so much as a dog of the house of Jeroboam, son of Nebat.” Were they to be molested for their sins by the neighboring nations? God always sent to them a warning Prophet to bid them repent, lest suddenly they should feel the smarting rod. Now, what the Jew could say in Isaiah’s day, we can say yet more fully! My Brethren, it is our hap-

piness to live in an age when expeditions to eastern lands are proving every letter of prophecy!

Go to Nineveh and mark her heap and her solitary river flowing silently to the sea. Did it ever seem likely that Tigris and Euphrates, where the Chaldeans made their boast in their ships, upon whose banks stood the two greatest cities of antiquity, should become the haunt of dragons and owls? Go to Nineveh and learn what God can do and how He can foresee the desolation of His foes. Cast your eyes to the beach of Tyre where the fisherman spreads his net and there is not a ship to be seen—but where once the commerce of half the world floated in its glory! Tread the silent and deserted halls of Petra and shiver as you read the words—“The pride of your heart has deceived you, you that dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high. That says in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though you exalt yourself as the eagle and though you set your nest among the stars, there will I bring you down, says the LORD.”

Where is Moab? What ails you, O Ammon? Where are those boastful monarchs which said, “We are rulers forever: we shall sit upon our thrones and know no sorrow”? Jehovah has spoken and has done it—He is God—He only is the God of the whole earth!

This is the scene presented before us in the text—the whole assembled nations and the Jewish people brought together to prove that in their Sacred Books they had distinct notification of future events—proving that God is God—since no heathen idols have been able, after this sort, to foresee or to foretell. We will depart from the precise meaning of the text and take it in a very truthful sense, though not in the one originally intended. Believers in Christ Jesus, you take the place of Israel of old and you are, every one of you, God's witnesses this day!

A great controversy is going on between God and the world. The world puts its witnesses forward to speak in its name. And you, the chosen ones of the Most High, are ordained to this office to be testifiers and witness-bearers for your God and for His Truth. “You are My witnesses, says the Lord, and My Servant, whom I have chosen.”

I. We will advance at once to our subject by mentioning some of THE QUESTIONS UPON WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED TO GIVE EVIDENCE IN FAVOR OF THEIR GOD. These questions are the most weighty which can be discussed. One of the first is this—is there such a thing nowadays as a distinct interposition of God on behalf of man in answer to believing prayer? The world ridicules the idea. The horse laugh is heard the moment you talk about the efficacy of prayer and faith.

“Why,” some say, “the wind that drives the pirate on the rock will also cause the shipwreck of a vessel laden with ministers of the Gospel. Providence is alike severe in its severities and alike bountiful in its bounties. The rain falls upon the field of the wicked as well as upon the field of the righteous! God has gone away from earth and left it to manage itself—has wound it up like a clock and set it going and now He does not interfere, but lets each wheel act upon the other wheel and the whole machinery go on without any interposition from His hand.” That is the world's theory.

Now, in opposition to this, we hold that, albeit the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, yet still in those very events there are distinct differences in God's dealings. But that is not precisely the question. The question is whether or not God does answer prayer and come in to the assistance and deliverance of those who have faith in Him. We declare that He does do so. I think, dear Friends, if I were to call some of you into the witness box, you would give very clear and distinct proofs of this.

Suppose I call Mr. George Muller, of Bristol? He would say, "Look at those three orphan houses, containing no less than one thousand one hundred and fifty orphan children who are entirely supported by funds sent to me in answer to prayer. Look," says he, "at this fact—that when the water was dried up in Bristol and the water works were not able to serve sufficient water to the people—I, with my more than a thousand children dependent upon me, never asked any man for a drop of water. But I went on my knees before God and a farmer who was neither directly nor indirectly asked by me, called at my door the next hour and offered to bring us water! And when he ceased because his supplies were dried up, instead of telling anybody, I went to my God and told Him all about it and another friend offered to let me fetch water from his brook."

He will point you to his report in connection with the orphan houses these many years, and say to you, "Here it is—I solemnly assert that I never told any man one of my needs but went straight away to call unto my God—and while I have been calling, He has answered me! And while I have yet been speaking, He has sent the reply." And George Muller is no solitary specimen! We can, each of us, tell of like events in our own history. Indeed, it were hard for me to find in my life a case in which I have asked and not received. I should find it difficult to discover a season in which I have cried unto God and not received deliverance during the whole run and tenor of my life.

I admit it to be shorter than that of some of you, but yet that short life suffices for me to say that in hundreds of instances I have had as distinct answers to prayer as if God had thrust His right hand through the blue sky and given right into my lap the bounty which I had sought of Him. Now we are not insane! We are not so wonderfully enthusiastic—we wish we were a little more so! Many of us are as soldiers' souls, as common sense acting men as any that are to be found! There are Brethren here who exhibit a shrewdness in business which would screen them from being called fools by worldlings themselves, and yet our unanimous witness as Christians is this—we have sought God and He has heard us—and though we have been brought very low, if we have been enabled to cry out to God, even from the very depths He has delivered us in our hour of need!

Upon this point the Christian should take care that he bears very clear testimony, for he certainly may do it without any difficulty. There is a question, also, as to the ultimate results of present affliction. The world holds, as a theory, that if there is a God, He is very often exceedingly unkind. That He is severe to the best of men and that some men are the vic-

tims of a cruel fate. That they are greatly to be pitied because they have to suffer much without compensating profit.

Now, the Christian holds, first of all, that the woes of sinners are *punishments* and are very different from the *chastening* sorrows of Believers. Of these last he believes that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose. He believes, as a matter of faith, that he gains by his losses! That he gets health by his sicknesses! And that he makes progress towards Heaven by that which threatens to drive him back. This, I say, is the doctrine with which he begins!

Now what is your testimony, Brother Christian, with regard to this as a matter of experience? How have you found it? I must speak for myself and say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word." "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." All of you who have sounded the deeps of soul-trouble and have enjoyed the Presence of Jesus can distinctly testify the same! You have found that affliction works the comfortable fruits of righteousness, though now, for a season, it is anything but joyous. You have, some of you, passed through very severe difficulties and trials—I have been the sympathizing witness of the griefs of some of you—but I have heard you say and say it confidently—not in moments of religious excitement, but in times of sober quiet—that you would not have had it otherwise for all the world!

I have heard you say and I know you are ready to repeat it in any company and in any place, that if you could have altered your past life, especially as to its trials and its difficulties, you would not now in looking back upon it have had it altered for a thousand worlds. Oh no, the rough was a right way. The tempest purged the pestilential air. The earthquake shook down houses of evil. The fire consumed heaps of wood, hay and stubble. In this thing may I beg you always clearly and distinctly to state the truth as witnesses for your God.

A third point very much in dispute is as to the joyfulness of a true Believer's life. The world's theory is that we are a very miserable set of people who take to religion from the necessity of a naturally melancholy disposition. "The gloomy tenets of Calvin," as they are generally called. "The horrid dogmas of Calvin," are supposed to possess congenial charms for minds gloomy and morose. Now what is your testimony, Christian, especially you Christians who have learned to see in "the horrid dogmas of Calvin" the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Well, we can say if we are melancholy, joyous people must be very joyful, indeed. We sometimes think we have run up as high on the gamut of joy as any human hearts can go and if we are melancholy, what a deal of joy there must be in the world! What happy people other people must be if we are melancholy! I know that many of God's saints can say that when they can lay hold upon the great doctrines of Sovereign Grace they are as happy as the day is long in midsummer—with all their trials they can rejoice in the Lord and again and again rejoice!

I saw a Baptist minister this week who was "passing rich on forty pounds a year" owing no man anything. I told him I hoped he would not

die with the secret, for I should like to learn the art of keeping house on forty pounds a year. But he said to me, when I smiled at his salary, "You see before you the happiest man out of Heaven." And I know I did, too, for his face showed that he meant what he said. The happiest man out of Heaven—a poor Baptist minister on forty pounds a year!

Yes and there are some here who can declare though they are nothing but poor work girls, and have to stitch, stitch, stitch far into the night to get their living, yet when they think that Christ is their own Beloved, they are the happiest girls out of Heaven! Some of you have not much to spare when the rent is paid and food is bought, yet with all that you want no man's pity for you are rich to all the intents of bliss! When Mr. Hone, who wrote the "Everyday Book," was traveling through Wales—he was an infidel—he stopped at a cottage to ask for a drink of water. A little girl said, "Oh yes, Sir, I have no doubt mother will give you some milk. Come in."

He went in and sat down. The little girl was reading her Bible. Mr. Hone said, "Well, my little girl, you are getting your task?" "No, Sir, I am not," she replied, "I am reading the Bible." "Yes," said he, "you are getting your task out of the Bible?" "Oh, no," she replied, "it is no task to read the Bible, I love the Bible." "And why do you love the Bible?" said he. Her simple, childlike answer was, "I thought everybody loved the Bible." She thought full sure it was the greatest treat in all the world and fancied that everybody else was delighted to read God's Word! Mr. Hone was so touched with the sincerity of that expression that he read the Bible himself, and instead of being an opponent to the things of God, came to be a friend of Divine Truth!

Let us, in the same way, show to the people of the world who think our religion to be slavery, that it is a delight and a joy—that it is no more a burden to us to pray than it is for fish to swim. That it is no more bondage for us to serve God than for a bird to fly. True godliness is our natural element now that we have a new nature given us by the Spirit of God. On that matter be you witnesses for God!

Another point in dispute refers to the moral tendencies of Christianity and especially of that form of Christianity which it is our delight to preach. There is a growing belief, nowadays, that the preaching of the doctrines of Free Grace has a tendency to make men think little of sin. And that especially the free invitations of the Gospel to the very vilest of sinners and the declaration that who believes in Jesus shall be saved, has a tendency to make men indulge in the worst of crimes. I read a paper the other day in which a public writer had the impudence to lay the crimes of Southey and Pritchard and such men at the door of our holy religion.

I called the writer a villain and he deserves no better name. He must be a villain to dare to lay at the door of Christ's holy Gospel the infamy of murder! He says that while we continue to preach that God forgives sin so easily, men will sin more and more. Now our testimony is, and we speak positively here, that there can be nothing which exerts so sanctifying an influence upon the heart of man as the doctrine of the love of God in Christ Jesus. And if you seek proofs, look around. If it were right for you to speak, my Brothers and Sisters, there are certain happy ones among us

who could testify this day, "We are living manifestations that the Grace of God can turn the drunkard into a sober man and make the harlot a Christian woman—and bring up the depraved and the profane to seek after purity and holiness."

Why, we are each of us, in our degree, witnesses to that! When do you hate sin most? Why, at the foot of the Cross! And when do you love holiness best? Is it not when you feel that God has blotted out your sins like a cloud? No truth can so subdue the human mind as the majesty of infinite love. It is just that which makes a man hate himself for having offended against so tender and gracious a God. Prove by the integrity and uprightness of your characters that the Gospel has had a mighty power on you to make you honest, benevolent, devout, loving your neighbor and your God!

Again, it has been whispered—no, it has been *boasted* by certain very profound philosophers—that the Christian religion has reached its prime. And though it had an influence upon the world at one time, it is now going down and we want something a little more juvenile and vigorous, with a fresher vigor in its veins to stir the world and produce noble deeds. I have been told many times that the simple preaching of the Doctrines of Grace has no effect now upon the thinking portion of the community. The gentlemen who say this being, themselves, the thinking portion of the community in their own estimation—for you must understand that in order to be one of the "thinking portion of the community," it is necessary not to think in a straight line but to think in a kind of circumbendibus—to think in a style in which nobody else can understand!

It is necessary that you think till you get at the bottom of things and stir the mud so that you cannot find your own way and nobody else can see where you are. That is considered to be thinking nowadays—whereas it strikes me that the best form of thinking is that which submits itself to God's thoughts and is willing to sit at the feet of Jesus. Now is the time, however, for true Believers to vindicate the manliness and force of their faith. It is not true that Christianity has lost its force and its power! And we must make this clear as noonday. You are God's witnesses, my Brethren! You are put in the box and I pray if in the past or present you have not proven this, do it in the future.

The Gospel can now nourish heroes as it did of old—it could furnish martyrs tomorrow if martyrs were required to garnish Smithfield's stakes! It produces *now* self-denying missionaries! It educates men and women by the thousands who can bear the sneer and the jeer and who would be prepared to lie in a prison till the moss grew on their eyelids sooner than give up Christ! Our belief is that Christ has the dew of His youth and that the Gospel is as adapted to the boasted enlightenment of the nineteenth century as to the darkness of the first ages.

But you are God's witnesses and you must prove it, and I must ask every one of you to prove it by the holy zeal, the conspicuous enthusiasm, the sacred fire and fervor that shall blaze and flash in your lives. For truth and for Christ let us teach this world that we retain the old power among us! Let us ask the Holy Spirit to enable us to live such forceful vigorous lives that men shall know once more what we can do. Indeed, I am not

boastful in venturing to say that there are still a host of facts to prove that the Gospel has not lost its power over the minds of men. We can point to spots in Glasgow, London, Edinburgh—in the most crowded of our cities where once there were dens of infamy and haunts of vice. And there, by the enterprising benevolence and holy perseverance of single, solitary men, the desert has been made to blossom as the rose!

But enough of this! Go, each man! Witness in his own person! Once again—it is our daily business to be witnesses for God on another question—as to whether or not faith in the blood of Jesus Christ really can give calm and peace to the mind. Our hallowed peace must be proof of that. The last testimony we shall probably bear will answer the question, whether Christ can help a man to die well or not—whether religion will bear the test of that last solemn article—whether we shall be enabled to go through the river either triumphantly shouting, or quietly accepting our end.

Well, Beloved, we will prove *that* when the time comes! And how many there have been among us, whose names we venerate, who have died rejoicing in the love of Jesus! There are those above whom we mention with a joyous sorrow, when we recollect how well to the last they testified of the faithfulness of Christ and His power to bless when all other blessings fail us. You see, then, that there are many questions in dispute and that the Christian's business is to be God's witness, speaking the Truth for God upon these matters.

II. Time flies and therefore I must take you on to the second point, which is to give SOME SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE MODE OF WITNESSING. Let me say, as a first suggestion, that you *must* witness—you must witness if you are a Christian. You may try to shirk it if you will, but you must witness, for you are subpoenaed—that is to say, you will suffer for it if you do not. Some Christians think they will sneak comfortably into Heaven without bearing witness for Christ. I fear they will be mistaken—and this I know—every Christian who does not come out distinctly and boldly for his Master will lose all choice enjoyments.

He may have enough religion to make him wretched, but he shall have none of the joy and peace, the exhilaration and delight which a greater boldness and faithfulness would have given him. The bravest Christians are the happiest Christians. Those who serve God most have the most enjoyment—and those Nicodemites who come to Christ by night, generally find it night.

Christian, do not shun witnessing for Christ. After the disgraceful defeat of the Romans at the battle of Allia, Rome was sacked and it seemed as if at any moment the Gauls might take the capitol. Among the garrison was a young man of the Fabian family, and on a certain day the anniversary of a sacrifice returned—when his family had always offered sacrifice upon the Quirinal Hill. This hill was in the possession of the Gauls. But when the morning dawned the young man took the sacred utensils of his god, went down from the capitol, passed through the Gallic sentries—through the main body, up the hill—offered sacrifice and came back unharmed. It was always told as a wonder among Roman legends.

I think this is just what the Christian should do when there is something to be done for Christ—though he is a solitary man in the midst of a thousand opponents—let him, at the precise moment when duty calls, fearless of all danger, go straight to the appointed spot! Let him do his duty and remember that consequences belong to God and not to us. I pray God that after this style we may witness for Christ.

In the next place, every witness is required to speak the Truth of God, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth. Christian, as a witness for God, do this. Speak the Truth, and let your life be true as well as your words. Live so that you need not be afraid to have the shutters taken down—that men may look right through your actions. You are not true if you have any sinister motive or anything to conceal. Speak in your life the Truth of God and let it be the whole Truth, too. Proclaim for God all the Truth as it is in Jesus and let your life proclaim the whole teaching of Truth. Let it be nothing but the Truth.

I am afraid many Christians tell a great deal which is not true—their life is contrary to their words. And though they speak the Truth of God with their lips, they speak falsehoods with their hands. Suppose, for instance, I draw a miserable face and I say, “God’s people are a blessed people.” Nobody believes me because my face tells a falsehood while my mouth utters a truth! And if I say, “Yes, religion has a sanctifying influence upon its professors and possessors,” and put my hand into my neighbor’s pocket in any sort of way, who will believe my testimony? I may have spoken the truth, but I am also speaking something that is not the truth and I am thus rendering my witness of very small effect.

When the witness is before the court, his direct evidence is always the best. If a man can only say, “I heard somebody say,” the judge will frequently stop him and say, “We do not want hearsay evidence. What did you see?” Many professing Christians only give witness of what they have read in books. They have no vital, experimental acquaintance with the things of God. Now remember, dear Friends, that second-hand Christianity is one of the worst things in the world. We do not like it as we see it in the Church of England—we do not believe in that sponsorial salvation in which one man promises for another that he shall keep all God’s holy commandments to be anything better than a lying pretense.

The same is true of any form of religion which you may happen to have—which you borrow from your mother, or take from your father—or gather from good books. True religion is more than what we can teach or learn. It is something that must be known and felt. And your witness for God is not worth the words in which you utter it, unless it comes from your own experience of its truth. A witness must take care not to damage his own case. How many professed witnesses for God make very telling witnesses the other way? They damage their case by either retaining a part of the truth, or else by flatly contradicting, as we have said before, in their lives what they have professed!

Do not let it be so! As a witness for God be careful that every action speaks for His Glory—yes, and that every thought and word and deed shall be such witnessing as you shall wish to have borne in the day when

the great Judge shall call you to account. Every witness must expect to be cross-examined. "He that is first in his own cause," says Solomon, "seems just. But his neighbor comes and searches him." You know how a counsel takes a man and turns him inside out—and though he was one color before—he looks quite another directly afterwards.

Now you, as God's witnesses, will be cross-examined. Watch, therefore! Watch carefully. Temptation will be put in your way—the devil will cross-examine you. You say you love God—he will set carnal joys before you and see whether you cannot be decoyed from your love to God. You said you trusted in your heavenly Father—Providence will cross-examine you. A trial will dash upon you. How is it now? Can you trust Him? You said religion was a joyous thing. A crushing misfortune will befall you. How is it now? Can you now rejoice when the fig tree does not blossom and the flocks are cut off and the cattle are dead? Can you now rejoice in God as before?

By this species of examination true men will be made manifest and the deceiver will be detected. What cross-examinations did the martyrs go through? What fiery questions had they to answer? What cutting cross-examinations were the sword, the rack, the spear, the prison, the banishment? And yet you know how faithfully they witnessed, still standing fast to the Truth of God even to the end! What a noble sight is Martin Luther when under trial! His friends said to him, "Luther, you will never think of going to Worms, will you? Why the cardinal will burn you as they did John Huss." "Ah," he said, "but if they were to make a fire so big that it would reach from Wurttemberg to Worms and should flame up to Heaven, in the Lord's name I would go through it to declare the Truth of God before the council. I would enter between the jaws of Behemoth! I would break his teeth and would confess Jesus Christ."

Thus Luther was proved to be the true man of God and his witness for God moved the world in his own time and is moving it now. May we all be able to stand the test of such cross-examinations!

III. Did you observe in the text, dear Friends, that THERE IS ANOTHER WITNESS BESIDE YOU? "You are My witnesses, and My Servant whom I have chosen." Who is that? Why the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ! If you want an exposition of who this servant is, turn to the Philippians and read these words—"Who took upon Himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross."

Witnesses for God are never alone! When they seem alone there is still One with them whom Nebuchadnezzar saw in the fiery furnace with the three holy children—"The fourth is like unto the Son of God." "Fear not," Christ may well say to all His faithful witnesses, "I am with you, the faithful and true Witness." Let us remark, concerning Christ's life, that He witnessed the Truth of God, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth. If you want to have a witness to every attribute of God, only read the four Evangelists and there you have it!

Beloved, would you see God's Truth? Observe how Jesus Christ, in all His actions—with a sacred simplicity, with a transparent sincerity—writes

His heart out in His every act! Here you have no sophistry, no Jesuitical reservation—He lives out His life—His own heart and the heart of God! What testimony you have to God's holiness in the life of Christ! In Him was no sin. "The Prince of this world comes and has nothing in Me." Read that Divine Book, "The Life of Christ," through and through and through—you shall find nothing to be put at the end by way of addendum, much less anything by way of errata. It is all there and there is nothing there but what ought to be!

What witness-bearing, too, there is in the life of Christ to Divine Justice. See Him sweating great drops of blood! Mark His face marred with a multitude of sorrows! See His brow crowned with thorns, decked with ruby drops of His own blood! Read in His hands and in His feet the terrible writing of Divine vengeance! Look into His side and see there the sacred mystery of God's hatred for sin—a hatred so deep that He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him because of sin! Never could there be a clearer Witness than the bleeding Jesus, of God's hatred to sin! Above all, read Christ's witness to God's love. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the Propitiation for our sins."

In every action of the life of Jesus—from the time when He lay in Bethlehem's manger to the moment when a cloud received Him out of their sight—it is all LOVE! Elijah brings fire from Heaven to destroy—Christ sends it in Pentecost to bless. He opens His mouth at the first with—"Blessed, blessed, blessed"—for so He multiplied that word on the Mount where He preached His first sermon. And He closed His earthly sojourn by blessing His people. His paths dropped fatness. No imagination can picture love more deep and pure than that which is reflected in the life of Jesus Christ!

I cannot, however, detain you this morning to show that the entire circumference of Divine excellence is contained in the life of Christ—that every pearl of Deity is in the Crown which we call Jesus. There is not time to show that He contains in Himself a full declaration of all that the Father is, so that His words are true—"He that has seen Me has seen the Father." Brothers and Sisters, you are to be witnesses for Christ and Christ is to be a Witness *with* you. If you want to know how to discharge your duty, look at Him—He is always witnessing. By the well of Samaria and the Temple of Jerusalem. By the lake of Gennesaret, or on the mountain's brow. He is witnessing night and day! His mighty prayers are as vocal to God as His daily services.

He witnesses under all circumstances! Scribes and Pharisees cannot shut His mouth! That fox, Herod, cannot frighten or alarm Him! Even before Pilate He witnesses a good confession—He witnesses so clearly and distinctly that there is no mistaking Him. The common people heard Him gladly, for among other reasons, that no dark, unintelligible jargon concealed His meaning. Beloved, make your lives clear! Be as the brook where you may see every stone at the bottom—not as the muddy creek of which you only see the surface—but clear and transparent, so that your heart's love to God and man may be distinctly visible to all.

You need not tell men that you love them—make them *feel* that you love them. You need not say, “I am true”—be true. Boast not of integrity, but be upright. So shall your testimony be such that men cannot help seeing it. Let me beg of you to never, for fear of feeble man, hold back your witness. Never put the finger of shame after this style to your lips. Those lips have been warmed with a coal from off the Divine altar—let them speak like Heaven-touched lips! “In the morning sow your seed and in the evening withhold not your hand.” Watch not the clouds! Consult not the wind! In season and out of season still witness for the Lord!

And if it shall ever come to pass that for Christ's sake and the Gospel you shall have to be like Naphthali—a people that hazarded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field—then blush not, but rejoice in the honor this conferred upon you—that you are counted worthy to suffer loss for Christ's sake! For then your suffering shall be a pulpit for you! Your losses and persecutions shall make you a platform from which the more vigorously and with greater power you shall proclaim your witness for Christ Jesus!

Gird up your loins, my Brethren, and go out from this assembly asking, “Am I God's witness? Then, Lord, open my lips that I may speak with decision and power and give me Grace that my witness-bearing shall be such that I shall not be ashamed when the reporting angel shall read the whole of it before assembled worlds.” The Holy Spirit is needed for this—may He dwell in us and make our bodies His temple and so make each of us witness for Christ!

Remember, this sermon has nothing to do with many of you. You cannot witness for Christ, for you do not know Him. You cannot witness for Him till you have trusted Him. O you who are out of Christ, let my witness to you this morning be this—that except you seek Him you must perish! But that if you seek Him He will be found of you! May the Lord grant you Grace to find Him now and His shall be the glory. Amen.

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FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!

NO. 397

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 23, 1861,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned,
neither shall the flame kindle upon you.”
Isaiah 43:2.*

BEFORE we explain the metaphor of the text it may be well for us to remark that we are not sufficiently grateful, I fear, for the preservation which God affords to us from fire. To be startled at the dead of night with the alarming cry and to find one's self and children and goods in danger of being immediately consumed must be no small trial. I have felt, myself, extreme gratitude to God that while both on the right hand and on the left the flames have raged, He has been pleased to spare to us this temple of our solemnities, this place where we delight to worship. And is it not meet that we should each and all render to Him our hearty thanks for sparing our habitations—preserving the roof under which we rest—enabling us to go out and to come in in perfect safety?

Or, probably, I may be addressing some this morning who have escaped from the very midst of the fires. Let such not only bless God for preservation in the past but let them celebrate His goodness in plucking them as brands out of the burning. Let them be extremely grateful to God that while others this day are dying as a black heap of ashes who but yesterday were living men, we are still in the land of the dying unburned and unsinged. I know that many of you, during the past week and again last night, witnessed a conflagration of awful grandeur, in which tongues of flame, mountains of fire and pillars of smoke made a spectacle to be gazed at with interest while it produced terrors and apprehensions that could awe the wildest mob into silence.

With you and me it is a common mercy to be preserved day by day and night by night from the devouring element. Yet when the dreadful catastrophe is within view—when those we know personally or by repute are sufferers—and when at the same time we look on with a sense of our own present security—then surely we ought to give more than a common expression of gratitude to God for mercies that at other times we are too apt to paste over unheeded as but the effects of a common Providence. Never was a truer sentence uttered than when one said, “These mercies are not valued until they are lost and these preservations are not esteemed until they are withdrawn.”

Let us thank God while we have the mercies lest He be provoked by our ingratitude and take forth His rod and scourge us. Then, indeed, might we cry out under the smart and wish and desire that we had our mercies back again. Thus, much I could not in my conscience withhold at a time when there are judgments around us enough to make us tremble and mercies enough in the little circles of some to make us exceedingly grateful.

Let us now take the text in its real signification. Of course the walking through the fire here is put for the severest form of trouble—you have, in the commencement of the verse, trouble described as passing through the water. This represents the overwhelming influence of trial in which the soul is sometimes so covered that it becomes like a man sinking in the waves. “When you go through the rivers”—those mountain torrents which with terrific force are often sufficient to carry a man away. This expresses the force of trouble, the power with which it sometimes lifts a man from the foothold of his stability and carries him before it.

“When you pass through the rivers they shall not overflow you.” But going through the fire expresses not so much the overwhelming character and the upsetting power of trouble as the actual consuming and destructive power of trouble and temptation. The metaphor is more vivid, not to say more terrific, than that which is employed in the first sentence. And yet vivid and awful though it be, it is certainly not too strong a figure to be used as the emblem of the tribulations, temptations and afflictions through which the Church and people of God have been called to pass.

We may apprise the richness of the promise in proportion to the astonishing character of the metaphor and we ought to value the privilege which it confers in the precise ratio of the dreadful character of the danger against which it preserves us. “When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you.”

We shall talk of three things, this morning, as the Holy Spirit may enable us. First of all, a *terrible pathway*—walking around the fire. Secondly, an *awful danger*—the danger of being burned and utterly consumed. And thirdly, a *double insurance*—“You shall not be burned, neither shall the fire kindle upon you.”

I. First, then, let us speak a little upon this TERRIBLE PATHWAY. The sacramental host of God’s elect has never had an easy road along which to journey. I see the fields on fire—the prairie is in a blaze, the very heavens are like a furnace—and the clouds seem rather to be made of fire than water. Across that prairie lies the pathway to Heaven, beneath that blazing sky the whole Church of God must make its perpetual journey. It started at the first in fire and its very glory at the last shall take place in the midst of the fiery passing away of all things.

When first there was a Church of God on earth, in the person of Abel it was persecuted. Cain lifted up his cruel club to slay his brother. And when the children of Seth were the representatives of God’s chosen, they were without doubt the subject of the jeer and gibe of the descendants of Cain. Noah, the preacher of righteousness endured during his one hundred and twenty years, the hardness of heart and carelessness of an unthinking world. He and his family, who were the remnant of the Church in the latter part of those days, were constantly exposed to the laughter and persecution of men.

When God had destroyed the earth with water and the whole race of man was contained within the ark, you would think that then, certainly, the Church within the ark would be secure from molestation. But no, we find him ready to detect the failings of his parents and no doubt a ring-leader of everything that was vile and vicious, just as we have reason to

hope that some of his brethren adhered to the most true God. From that day forward, whether you read through the life of Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, it still stands true, "He that is born after the flesh persecutes him that is born after the Spirit."

Whether we refer you to the history of Israel by the side of the brick-kilns of Egypt, or to the host of God constantly beset by the marauders of the Amalekites, you find it still to be true that through much tribulation the people of God must wade their way to Canaan. And if you look further on in history, between David and Saul, between Hezekiah and Sennacherib, between the faithful followers of God after the captivity who would rebuild the temple and Sanballat the Horonite, between the Maccabees and Antiochus Epiphanes—there must always be preserved a deadly feud—to let it be seen that the world must hate God's people and must harass them and seek to hunt them out, while they, on the other hand, must steadily pursue their onward march through the midst of billows of fire till they come at last to their eternal rest.

Find me the abode of the Church of God and I can smell the furnace not far off. Show me the follower of the God of Abraham and I shall soon find the host of enemies ready for the attack. Up till the days of the Savior the kingdom of Heaven suffered violence—not only from its friends who would take it—but from those enemies who would assault it. From the blood of Abel down to the blood of Zecharias the son of Barachias, the pathway of the Church has been a blood-besprinkled time. Since that day what tongue can tell the sufferings of the people of God?

Since Christ became martyr as well as Redeemer, has there been a season in which God's people have not somewhere or other been made to feel that they are not of the world and that the world does not love them because they are not of the world? In Apostolic times, Stephen expires beneath a shower of stones. James is killed with a sword—certain others of the saints are vexed—believers are scattered abroad. The Roman lion takes up the fight. Herod delights in the gore of the Christians and smears the confessors of that holy faith with pitch and sets them in his gardens that they might be literally, as they were spiritually, the lights of the world.

Let the catacombs of Rome witness to their sorrowful lives and let the capitol witness to their terrible deaths. Let the old dungeons, some of which still remain, testify to the places where they wore out their dreary lives and let the blood-stained Campus Martius still show where they cheerfully surrendered those lives for Christ. Oh, if the lands could speak, if the Earth could vomit forth her blood—what stories could still be told of the way they were slain! Some of them were tortured, others sawn asunder, some stoned and others burnt to death—though of them the world was not worthy. All the Roman Emperors, with but few exceptions, were persecutors.

And the Christian emperors were as bad as the Pagan, for the Christian emperors were not Christians, nor were they members, as I believe, of a Christian Church. The Christian Church and especially that Church of which we are still members—which has never defiled its garments, but which, never having had any alliance with the Church of Rome has never needed to be reformed—that Church under its different names, Pauli-

tians, Novations, Albigenses, Lollards, Wyckliffites, Anabaptists, Baptists—has always suffered. It matters not what State, what Church, may have been dominant—whether it has been Christian or anti-Christian—the pure Church of Christ has always been the victim of persecution.

And though she has persecuted never, but has always maintained inviolate disunion from the State and an utter hatred of all laws which would bind the conscience of man, yet has she been especially destitute, afflicted and tormented. And if she has today a little breathing room, perhaps it is rather owing to the timidity which has made us keep back our sentiments than to any charity towards ourselves. Find the Church of Christ wherever you will and you shall find her scorned and despised of man. Find her in Scotland and her Covenanters have to hide themselves in the midst of the mountain and read the Word of God by the lightning flash to escape from the dragoons of Claverhouse.

Find her in England and where was she? Not in the cathedrals of her cities but in the dungeons of her rural towns like Bedford with John Bunyan. Not among the great and noble who were the persecutors but among the poor and conscientious who were the persecuted. “If you want to find the drunkards and sinners of the worst dye,” said one of our preachers at or before Cromwell’s time, “you can find them in Church and State, but if you wish to find the men who are holy and who serve God, you must look into the felon’s dungeons for them, for that is where they have been cast by the powers that be.”

Everywhere from the first day until now it is not respectable to be a follower of Christ. If we follow Christ fully and faithfully before God it is not equitable and praiseworthy before men. To take up His Cross and to perform the ceremonies which He ordains, man hates. To adhere to Truths which never were and never can be palatable to the carnal mind of man, is and ever has been, to excite animosity. The pathway of the Church, then, has been one of fire and flame. As it has been so with the Church, we may suspect there is some reason for it—and that reason has to be found in the great fact that the Church is in an enemy’s country.

She is not among her friends—she is a pilgrim and a stranger upon the earth. She is a bird that has lost her place and all the birds round about her are against her because she is a speckled one and belongs not to the common flock. If we were of the world, the world would love its own, but “because,” said Christ, “you are not of the world but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” “We know,” said He, “it hated Me before it hated you.” True Christians are aliens, foreigners—men that speak another speech—men who are actuated by different motives. Men who live for different ends—who are governed by different maxima from the rest of the men of this world—therefore it is that their pathway must be one of trial and opposition.

All things the Christian teaches are so dead against the pleasures of the worldling and his gain that it is no wonder he opposes us. Men hate the Gospel because the Gospel does not like them. That Church is never true to her Christ, nor true to herself which does not draw upon herself the hatred of ungodly men by a faithful testimony against their sins.

It has fared well with the Church when she has been persecuted and her pathway has been through fire. Her feet are shod with iron and brass. She ought not to tread on paths strewn with flowers. It is her proper place to suffer. Christ redeemed the world with agonies and the Church must teach the world by the example of her anguish. First of all, the blood of Christ was shed meritoriously. Afterwards the blood of His Church is shed to win the world by suffering. When you hear of the massacre of Christians in Madagascar, weep for their deaths, but do not be utterly cast down. This is a good work. This is the way the Church grows.

There is no loss in the army of Christ when the best preachers fall and the mightiest Evangelists are put to death. They are not lost—the blood is well shed and gloriously well spent. It is buying victory. It is procuring crowns for Jesus Christ. It is, after all, accomplishing higher results by *dying* than could have been effected by doing. It is under the heaviest fire of artillery that the loyal, the brave and the true do the most daring feats of prowess. When one hero falls, from his ashes other heroes arise. The post of danger is the post of honor, therefore fresh aspirants will be found ready to lead the brigade.

Moreover, my Friends, if the path of fire be always a path of terror, it is often a path of progress. As melancholy as it is to mark the ruins of a conflagration while the dying embers smolder, how often you must have observed more majestic edifices raised to replace the structures that have been consumed! Thus fearful disasters are made to stimulate industry and nourish enterprise. No doubt the sufferings of the Church and the fact that she has to pass through the fire must be ascribed to the great Truth that thus her God is glorified.

Brethren, you and I do not glorify God much. For we have very little to suffer. The blood red crown of martyrdom is such an object of ambition, or it should be to the believer that he might almost regret that it is not in his power to coin it. Suffer?! What do we suffer? Somebody slanders our character. What is that? Somebody abuses us in the newspaper. What is that? We are accused of one crime and another. What can it signify to a man who knows his conscience is right in the sight of God? What does he care if all the babbling tongues of all the liars in earth and Hell should be let loose against him? He can bear all that and endure it quietly. It is nothing.

When I read the stories of the Book of Martyrs and note how our great reformers fought for Christ and manfully won the victory, I blush for ourselves. Why, Brethren, we live in such silken times that glory is scarcely possible to us. We have much to do but we have nothing to suffer. We cannot prove our love to Christ as they did. They indeed were a highly honored people who were permitted to glorify Christ even in the very fires. Look at it in this light—and the light afflictions you have to endure will seem to be as nothing at all—when you think of the weight of glory which *they* shall bring to your Lord and to yourself.

But as history confirms the statement that the Church of Christ must walk through the fire, so does the history of each individual Christian teach him that he must walk through the fire, too—

***“The path of sorrow and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”***

Through much tribulation we must inherit the kingdom. Think it not a strange thing when the fiery trial shall happen to you. If you have the common afflictions of the world do not wonder. You must have them.

The same thing happens both to the evil and to the good. You lose in business, you have reverses and disappointments—do not stagger at these in the way to Heaven. You must have these—they are necessary to your spiritual health. Worse than that, you have strange temptations—you are placed in a position where you are constantly exposed to sin. It must be so. This, too, is the pathway of God's people. You must have these fiery temptations, that, being tried in the fire you may come forth as "gold seven times purified." You have mental anxieties. Neither let these seem a wonder to you. They fall to the lot of all the saints of the Most High.

Moreover, you will have to endure the attacks of Satan—you must go through the valley of the shadow of death and fight with Apollyon as Christian did—you are not to be exempted from the hardness of Christian warfare. If you will mount the hill, you must climb. If you are to win the crown, you must win it by sheer might. Think not this a strange thing. And if in doing good you meet with difficulties, let not that stagger you. It is but right and natural. I tell you again—if there is any pathway in which there is not fire tremble—but if your lot is hard, thank God for it. If your sufferings are great, bless the Lord for them and if the difficulties in your pathway are many, surmount them by faith—but let them not cast you down.

Be of good courage and wait on the Lord, setting this constantly in your minds that He has not promised to keep you *from* trouble, but to preserve you *in it*. It is not written, "I will save you *from* the fire," but "I will save you *in* the fire"—not, "I will quench the coals," but, "they shall not burn you." Not, "I will put out the furnace," but "the flames shall not kindle upon you." Write it down, Brethren and expect it to come true—that in this world you shall have tribulation. Only follow your glorious Leader, be it through flood or flame.

II. We will now turn to our second point—there is AN AWFUL DANGER.

The promise of the text is based on a prophecy that follows it. As I glance my eye down the chapter I see that it tells us how God taught His people by terrible things in the past. And how He has terrible lessons to teach them in the future. If the judgment of Egypt and of Ethiopia and Seba are behind us, we have startling destinies that rise up to view before us. There is a people to be gathered in and we are to be the agents in gathering them. Fear not, says the Lord, though you walk through the fire in fulfilling My mission.

God speaks to the north, "Give up." And to the south, "Keep not back. Bring My sons from far and My daughters from the ends of the earth." But the manner of Egypt is repeated again. The monarch said, "I will not let them go." Jealousy is stirred. The fire burns—the coals thereof have a vehement flame. And they that come forth from the bondage of this world must walk through the fire—even as those that came forth from Egypt had to pass through water. The fire of prophecy is no poetic fiction—it is real fire. It *will* burn. If it does not burn the believer, it is not for want of

energy—it is because some supernatural restraint is laid on it, or some supernatural protection vouchsafed to the saint.

My Brethren, the Church has had very painful experiences that persecution is a fire which does burn. How many ministers of Christ, when the day of tribulation came, forsook their flocks and fled? When King Edward the Sixth was on the throne there were many who professed to be Protestants and preached justification by faith. When Mary returned, the Vicar of Bray was but a specimen of a great class—his principles being to keep alive. When again Elizabeth was upon the Throne, there were plenty who found it to be profitable to profess the reformed faith.

But when the Acts of Conformity were passed afterwards—by which those who had before had a Christian freedom in the Church of England were driven out—there were some who said they did not love prelacy but hated it! And others who had before professed the old Puritanical doctrines—finding that their livings were to be lost thereby—held fast to this world and let the things of the next world shift for themselves. Too many have forsaken the Church as Demas forsook Paul. Their piety would not stand the fire—they could walk with Christ in silver slippers—but they could not go barefoot. They had no objection whatever to accompany Him to His Throne, but they had some slight difficulties about going with Him to His Cross. They would not mind bearing the weight of His glory but the weight of the Cross of tribulation was much too great for their constitutions. Persecution is a fire which *does* burn.

Again—I see iniquity raging on every side. Its flames are fanned by every wind of fashion. And fresh victims are being constantly drawn in. It spreads to every class. Neither the palace nor the hovel are safe. Nor the lofty piles that are raised for merchandise, nor the graceful edifice that is constructed for worship. Iniquity whose contagion is fearful as fire, spreads and preys upon all things that are homely and comely—things useful and things sacred are not exempt. We must walk through the fire. We who are God's witnesses must stand in its very midst to pour the streams of living water upon the burning fuel—and if not able to quench it—at least we must strive to prevent its spread.

There are young men whose youthful lusts, inflammable as they are, have not yet ignited. They are in imminent danger. "Fire! fire!" we may well cry. We may give the alarm this morning to you young men who are in the midst of ribald companions. I may cry "fire!" to you who are compelled to live in a house where you are perpetually tempted to evil. I may cry, "fire!" to you who are marked each day and have to bear the sneer of the ungodly—"fire!" to you who are losing your property and suffering in the flesh for many have perished thereby. Oh, may God grant you strength!

I see today before my mind's eye the blackened skeletons of hundreds of fair professions. Multitudes—multitudes have perished in the valley of temptation who once, to all human judgment, had bid fair for Heaven and made a show in the flesh! How many, too, have fallen under the attacks of Satan! This is a fire that does burn. Many a man has said, "I will be a pilgrim." But he has met Apollyon on the road and he has turned back. Many a man has put on the harness but he has given up the battle quickly—put his hand to the plow and looked back.

There are more pillars of salt than one. If Lot's wife were a solitary specimen it were well—but there have been tens of thousands who, like she, have looked back to the plains of Sodom. And like she has, as they are in their spirit, have stood forever what they were—lost souls. We ought not to look upon our dangers with contempt. They are dangers. They are trials—but we ought to look upon them as fires. Oh, they are fires! If you think they are not fires you are mistaken. If you enter then, in your own strength, saying, "Oh I could bear them," you will find that they are real fires, which, with forked tongues, shall lick up your blood and consume it in an instant—if you have not some better guard than your own creature power.

III. I will not tarry longer here, because I want to get to the pith and marrow of the promise. "Though you walk through the fire you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you." Here is A DOUBLE INSURANCE.

Dr. Alexander, an eminent and most admirable American commentator says there appears to be some mistake in the translation here because he thinks the two sentences are an anti-climax. "You shall not be burned." And then follows, "neither shall the flame kindle upon you." It strikes me, however, that in the second clause we have the higher gradation of a climax. "You shall not be burned," to the destruction of your life, nor even scorched to give you the most superficial injury, for "the flames shall not kindle upon you." Just as when the three holy children came out of the fiery furnace it is said, "upon their bodies the fire had no power, nor was a hair of their head singed; neither were their coats changed, nor had the smell of fire passed on them."

So the text seems to me to teach that the Christian Church under all its trials has not been consumed, but more than that—it has not lost anything by its trials. The Lord's Church has never been destroyed yet by her persecutors and her trials. They have thought they crushed her but she lives still. They had imagined that they had taken away her life but she sprang up more vigorous than before. I suppose there is not a nation out of which Christ's Church has ever been utterly driven. Even Spain, which seemed at last to have accomplished it by the most persevering barbarities, finds still a few believers to be a thorn in the side of her bigotry.

And as for our own denomination—in the very country where by the most frightful massacres it was believed that the sect of Anabaptists had been utterly extinguished—our good and esteemed brother, Mr. Oncken, has been the means of reviving it, so that throughout all Germany and in parts of Denmark and Prussia and Poland and even Russia itself, we have sprung up into a new, vigorous and even wonderful existence. And in Sweden where, under Lutheran government, the most persecuting edicts have been passed against us, we have been astonished to find within ten years three hundred churches suddenly spring up—the Truth has in it a living seed which is not to be destroyed.

But I have said that the Church not only does not lose her existence, but she does not lose anything at all. The Church has never lost her numbers. Persecutions have winnowed her and driven away the chaff. But not one grain of wheat has been taken away from the heap. No, not

even in visible fellowship has the Church been decreased by persecution. She is like Israel in Egypt. The more they were afflicted the more they multiplied. Was a bishop put to death today? Ten young men came the next morning before the Roman proctor and offered themselves to die, having that very night been baptized for the dead bishop, having made their confession of faith that they might occupy his position. "I fill up the vacancy in the Church and then die as he did."

Was a woman strangled or tortured publicly? Twenty women appeared the next day and craved to suffer as she suffered that they might honor Christ. Did the Church of Rome in more modern times burn one of our glorious reformers—John Huss—yet did not Martin Luther come forward as if the ashes of Huss had begotten Luther? When Wycliffe had passed away, did not the very feet of Wycliffe being persecuted help to spread his doctrines—and were there not found hundreds of young men who in every market-town in England read the Lollard's Scriptures and proclaimed the Lollard's faith?

And so depend upon it—it shall ever be. Give a dog a bad name and you hang him. Give a Christian a bad name and you honor him. Do but give to any Christian some ill name and before long a Christian denomination will take that name to itself and it will become a title of honor. When George Fox was called "Quaker" it was a strange name, one to laugh at—but those men of God who followed him called themselves Quakers, too—and so it lost its reproach. They called the followers of Whitfield and Wesley "Methodists"—they took the title of Methodists and it became a respectful designation.

When many of our Baptist forefathers, persecuted in England, went over to America to find shelter they imagined that among the Puritans they would have a perfect rest. But Puritan liberty of conscience meant, "The right and liberty to think as they did, but no toleration to those who differed." The Puritans of New England as soon as ever a Baptist made his appearance among them persecuted him with as little compunction as the Episcopalians had the Puritans. No sooner was there a Baptist than he was hunted up and brought before his own Christian brethren. Mark you, he was brought up for fine, for imprisonment, confiscation and banishment before the very men who had themselves suffered persecution.

And what was the effect of this? The effect has been that in America where we were persecuted we are the largest body of Christians. Where the fire burnt the most furiously, there the good old Calvinistic doctrine was taught and the Baptist became the more decidedly a Baptist than anywhere else—with the most purity and the least dross. Nor have we ever lost the firmness of our grip upon the fundamental doctrine for which our forefathers stained the baptismal pool with blood—by all the trials and persecutions that have been laid upon us—and by God's grace never shall we.

Upon the entire Church, at the last, there shall not be even the smell of fire. I see her come out of the furnace. I see her advance up the hill towards her final glory with her Lord and Master and the angels look at her garments—they are not tattered. No, the fangs of her enemies have not been able to make a single rent therein. They draw near to her. They

look upon her flowing ringlets and they are not crisp with heat—they look upon her very feet—and though she has trodden the coals they are not blistered. And her eyes have not been dried up by the furiousness of the seven times heated flame.

She has been made more beautiful, more fair, more glorious by the fires—but hurt she has not been, nor can she be. Turn, then, to the individual Christian and remember that the promise stands alike firm and fast with each believer. Christian, if you are truly a child of God, your trials cannot destroy you and what is better still, you can lose nothing by them. You may seem to lose for today but when the account comes to be settled you shall not be found to be a farthing the loser by all the temptations of the world or of all the attacks of Satan which you have endured. No, more, you shall be wondrously the gainer! Your trials having worked patience and experience shall make you rich. Your temptations having taught you your weaknesses and shown you where your strength lies, shall make you strong.

From your first trouble till the last enemy shall be destroyed you shall not lose a fraction, jot, or tittle, by anything or everything which God in His Providence, or the world in its fury, or Satan in his craftiness shall ever be able to lay upon you. Upon you, not the smell of fire shall have passed. You shall not be burned, neither shall your clothes, nor your hats—but like the men that you read of in Daniel—you shall be wholly preserved intact from the flame.

I shall close now, having spoken the general Truth by making some particular applications of this precious promise. There is a brother here who during the last three or four months has had wave upon wave of affliction—everything goes against him. He is an upright, honest, indefatigable merchant. Yet, let him do what he will, his substance wastes away like snow before the sun. It appears that for every ship of his the wind blows the wrong way and where others win by the venture he loses all—

***“He sees each day new straights attend,
And wonders when the scene shall end.”***

When I spoke of walking through the fire just now, he said, “Ah, that is what I have been doing. I have been walking through it these months—to God and my own soul alone is it known how hot the furnace is.” Brother, will you take home my text this morning? Perhaps God sent you here not for the sermon, but for the text. Perhaps you strolled here today, not being a regular attendant, on purpose that this text might comfort you. “When you go through the fire, you shall not be burned.” When your troubles are all over, you shall still be left and what is more, “neither the flame shall kindle upon you.” When the finishing time comes, you shall not be any the loser.

While you think you have lost substance, you shall find when you read Scripture that you only lose shadows. Your substance was always safe, being laid up in the keeping of Christ in Heaven. You shall discover in the issue that these trials of yours were the best things that could happen to you. The day shall come when you will say with David, “I will sing of judgment and mercy.” “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept Your Word.”

Or perhaps there is some young woman here—and the case I am about to paint is a very common one—alas, too common in this city. You love the Savior my Sister, but you are very poor and you have to earn your living by that sorriest of all means. When the sun rises in the morning He sees you with that needle in your hand—

***“Sewing at once with a double thread
A shroud as well as a shirt,”***

and all day long you have scarcely time to rest for meals. And in the evening when the fingers are worn and the eyes are heavy, you shall have need to refrain from sleep because the pittance is so small that you can scarcely live upon it.

We know hundreds of that class who always constrain our pity because they work so hard for so little wage. Perhaps your mother is dead and your father does not care about you. He is a drunken sot and you would be sorry to meet him perhaps in the street. You have no helper, no friends. You do not care to tell anybody. You would not like to take anything if charity should offer it to you. You feel it the hardest thing of all is to be tempted as you are. There seems to you to be by the path the open road to plenty and in some degree to delight. But you have said, “No, no,” and you have loathed the temptation and by God’s grace you have stood—and I have known how year after year some of you have fought with temptation and struggled on when sometimes you were well near starved. But you would not do this great wickedness against God.

My sister, I pray you take the encouragement of this text to strengthen you for the future battles. You have been going through the fires. But you are not consumed yet and I bless God—upon your garments the smell of fire has not passed. Hold on, my Sister, hold on! Through all the sorrow you have and all the bitterness which is heavy enough to crush your spirit, hold on—for your Master sees you. He will encourage and strengthen you and bring you more than conqueror through it all in the end.

I address, too, this morning, some youthful minds. Young men who love Christ and as soon as they get home after attending the house of prayer, the taunting enquiry made by their fellow-workmen is—“You have been to some meeting-house, I dare say.” How cruel sometimes worldly young men are to Christian young men! Cruel, for when there are a dozen worldlings and only one Christian they consider it to be honorable for the dozen to set upon one. Twelve big tall fellows will sometimes think it a fine game to pass from hand to hand some little lad of fifteen and make sport and mockery of him. There is honor, it is said, among thieves—but there seems to be no honor at all among worldlings when they get a young Christian in this way.

Well, young man, you have borne with it. You have said, “I will hold my tongue and won’t say a word.” Though your heart was hot within you and while you were musing, the fire burned. Remember what I have often said to you—the anvil does not get broken even if you keep on striking it—but it breaks all the hammers. Do the same. Only hold on and these fires shall not consume you. If the fires should burn up your piety, it would only prove that your piety was not worth having. If you cannot stand a few jokes and jeers, why, you are not built together in that habi-

tation of God which He has made fire-proof. Bear up and in the end you will find that this hard lot of yours—this severe discipline—did you a deal of good and made you a better man than you ever would have been if you had been dandled on the lap of piety and kept from the battle.

In after years your high and eminent post of usefulness may be, perhaps, owing to the severe and harsh discipline to which you were put in your younger days. “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.” Or, maybe, I am speaking to someone who has met with opposition from his own ungodly relations. Remember how Jesus said, “I am come to send fire on the earth and what will I, if it be already kindled? From henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, two against three and three against two.” Perhaps your father has threatened you, or what is more bitter still, your husband has threatened to discard you.

Now, indeed, you are walking through the fires. He rails at your godliness, makes a mockery of everything you love—and does his best by cruelty to break your heart. My dear Sister in Christ, you shall not be burned by the fire. If grace is in your heart the devil can’t drive it out, much less your husband. If the Lord has called you by His grace, all the men on earth and all the fiends in Hell cannot reverse the calling—and you shall find in the end that you have not suffered any loss—the flame has not kindled upon you. You shall go through the fire and bless God for it! From a dying bed or at least through the gates of Paradise you shall look back upon the dark path of the way and say it was well—it was well for me that I had to carry that Cross and that now I am permitted to wear this crown.

Who of this congregation is on the Lord’s side this morning? While Jehovah speaks on high in the thunder, let us speak on earth in tones of earnestness. Who is on the Lord’s side among you? You that are not, be warned—“Tophet is ordained of old. He has made it deep and large. The pile thereof is fire and much wood. The breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, does kindle it.”

You that are on His side, set up your banners today. He says, “Fear not, I am with you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” May the Lord bless the words we have spoken. Though hastily suggested to our minds and weakly delivered to you, the Lord bless them for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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TRIALS EXPECTED AND CONQUERED

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“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you, when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior: I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you.”
Isaiah 43:2, 3.

EVEN down to the present day, the Jewish nation has not been destroyed. It has been made to pass through fire and through water. The story of the persecution of the Jews, both in earlier and later times, would fill many volumes with the most harrowing details. Had they not been a people whom God specially ordained to remain as His witnesses until the Messiah comes again, they would have utterly perished from among the sons of men! They have been a people scattered and peeled, rent and torn, hunted and harried—yet they still exist. For many a century they were equally abhorred by the heathen and the so-called Christians, yet they have lived on and they will continue to live on until a new heart and a right spirit shall be given to them and the Lord shall, in His great mercy, take away the blindness which in part has happened to Israel, so that they shall look on Him whom they have pierced and shall mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son. Then shall come the glory of the Gentiles, when more than the former glory of Israel shall be restored to her.

But, Brothers and Sisters, every promise in the Scriptures, of a spiritual nature, which is made to the literal people of Israel and to the seed after the flesh, is, according to the Inspired teaching of the Apostle Paul, yet more fully made to the seed of Abraham after the spirit—for all Believers are his spiritual seed. Was he not the father of all the faithful, not of the circumcision only, but of them, also, who are uncircumcised, if they trust in the living God? To us, then, as well as to the literal Israel, is this promise made. And to the Church of God, as a whole, will it be fulfilled, even as it has been fulfilled to her thus far. Her martyrologists have told us how often she has gone through fire and through water, but the floods have not drowned her, neither have the flames consumed her. At this time she stands in a wealthy place—her Lord has set her feet in a large room. Her banner still floats upon the breeze. No weapon that is formed against her shall prosper and every tongue that rises against her

in judgment, she shall condemn. For her there is a noble destiny. Her full glory is not yet revealed, but we know that when her heavenly Bridegroom shall appear in His Glory, His bride shall share in it with Him. Yes, Beloved, we who believe in Jesus are on the winning side—we are on the side which has God with it and Christ with it, and eternity with it—and the appointed day shall reveal that this is the conquering side!

But, further, this promise, while it applies to the whole Church of God, also applies to every individual in that Church, for it is a rule, with the promises of God, that you may break them up as small as you please, but they will still be after the same fashion as at the first. Like certain crystals, which, if you break them again and again, and again, retain the same crystalline form—which is their natural form—so a Divine promise that is true to the whole corporate body of the Church, is also true to every one of the members of that Church—and true to every one of those members in every trial into which that member may be cast! Take you, then, this promise to yourselves, Beloved! You who are in Christ Jesus and who worship God in the Spirit, claim this promise as made to you, just as much as if God had spoken it out of the excellent Glory right into your ear, or as much as if you saw Him writing, with His own eternal pen, these precious sentences as a personal epistle to you, for He does speak them and write them to you by His ever-blessed Spirit!

On looking at our text, we see that it very readily divides itself into three parts. The first is this—*trials must be expected by Believers*. You may have to go through fire and through water. But, secondly, *trials will not be able to destroy you*. You have, in the text, the most express declaration that you shall neither be overwhelmed nor consumed. And, thirdly, *of this blessed fact, we have the very highest assurances given to us*. They are found in the third verse of this chapter, where we have argument after argument to prove to us that God will be with His people, to deliver them when they are called to pass through rivers of trial or through fiery tribulations.

I. First, then, TRIALS ARE TO BE EXPECTED BY BELIEVERS.

I suppose that some young Christians imagine that the favorites of Heaven will never be tried, but it is not so. The first verse of this chapter bids us fear not, for God has redeemed us and called us by our names, and we are His. And we might, therefore, draw the conclusion that we could live at our ease, enjoy all manner of luxuries and, as the chosen people of God, be protected from every wintry blast! Beloved, it is not so—if you are heirs of the Kingdom of God, you are also, most assuredly, heirs of tribulation, for your Lord has declared, “In the world you shall have tribulation.” If you are soldiers in the army of Christ, you are not intended to win the victory without a conflict! And if you are ordained to wear a crown above, you are certainly equally ordained to bear a cross below. Grace does not bring luxury in its train, nor does it lull us into a sweet slumber and carry us to the skies—

“On flowery beds of ease.”

No, we must fight if we would reign! We must suffer for Christ if we would be glorified with Him. Our text speaks about all this as if it were a

matter of course—“When you pass through the waters...and through the rivers...when you walk through the fire,” just as if we hardly needed to be told that it would be so!

Our text tells us that *these trials will be of various kinds*. We use the expression, “through fire and through water,” to signify a variety of severe trials. If you are a true child of God, you will have to go through the waters. You will have to endure trial of a certain kind which will chill you to the very marrow—trial which will seem to sweep you off your feet, take away from you your foot-hold and carry you along, with its rapid current, where it pleases. You must expect to have trials of that sort. And after you have endured them long, you must not delude yourself with the promise of relief, for, when one trouble has gone, another will come and it will probably be of a different character from the last one you had and will require the exercise of another kind of Grace and another form of watchfulness! Instead of being in the water, you will be in the fire—you will not be chilled, now, but heated, like molten metal in a furnace—and the fierce flame will be all around you, alarming you and filling you with dismay and distress. It is a different trial altogether from any that you had experienced before. You know how, in one day, the wind often blows from quite opposite quarters of the compass and how, in a few hours, we have, first snow, then rain, then sunshine, then wind, then snow again, then sleet, and I scarcely know what beside—a sort of epitome, in one day, of human life—yet a strange day, as most human lives are—a day one never wishes to have repeated, but is glad when it is over? God’s children would not wish to live their lives over again and they are glad when they come to the evening and can undress, and go to the place of rest. But, in the meantime, if they are wise, they will expect a variety of trials to come to them.

And our text seems to intimate that *some of these trials will be very terrible ones*—“When you pass through the rivers”—strong, rapid rivers that come rushing down from the hills, like Kishon, the mighty flood which swept away Jabin and his hosts—deep, impassable rivers, perhaps, through which, nevertheless, you will have to pass—rivers which are like the Jordan which overflows all its banks at the time of harvest. There will come to you trials like these and it will sometimes seem as if you never could get over them—as if, now, your Christian career must end, and end in failure, even as the pilgrim’s course would end in drowning if, in attempting to ford a rapid river, he was swept away. And if the flood is so terrible, what shall I say of the fire? It is the nature of the flood to overwhelm, but it is the nature of the fire to consume. There are certain trials that could overwhelm our faith and speedily consume us if there were not a secret source of strength—Divine, Omnipotent—within our hearts and round about us. If it were not true that “the Lord sits upon the flood: yes, the Lord sits King forever,” the rivers would long ago have overwhelmed us. And if it were not that He makes the flaming fire to be His messenger and the burning heat to be His servant, we would have been utterly consumed!

But we shall not be, although the trial, if it could work in its own way, would have this result. You may quite expect that between here and Heaven, if you have not met with it yet, you will have enough trouble to destroy you utterly unless the Lord is your Helper. I suppose that the most of us can already sing with the Psalmist, "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say—if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul." But because the Lord has been with us, therefore our adversaries have not been able to prevail over us.

Our trials have not only been varied and terrible, but *they have been many times repeated*. I do not think it is merely the parallelism of the Hebrew poetry which requires the reduplication of the sentences here, or, if it is, yet even then we may suppose the poetry to be typical of the trials of the Believer's life. We have to pass through the waters and, after that, through the waters again, only, this second time, it is called through the rivers. We are encompassed, at one time, with fire and, by-and-by, the fire comes again—only this time it is called flame, as if the fire raged yet more furiously. No, my young Friend, you are not done with temptation yet, and not even with the temptation which you have overcome, for it may return in another form! No, my Brothers and Sisters, you have not seen the last of your corruption, not even of that corruption which you consider to be quite dead. You have not yet passed through all the trials which Satan will cause you, or which the world will cause you, or which the flesh will cause you. You will have to go through not merely one river, but many rivers, and through, not simply one fire, but through many fires before you come, at last, to God's right hand in Glory!

And this is sometimes the sharpest pinch of our tribulation, that it comes upon us again and again. We have all read, with great interest, the story of Job's many trials and we have felt that the force of them was increased by the declaration of messenger after messenger, "I, only, am escaped alone to tell you." First the oxen and asses were stolen by the Sabeans and the servants that were with them were killed. Then the sheep and their keepers were slain by lightning. Then, the Chaldeans captured the camels and slew the servants in charge of them. Last of all came the terrible tidings of the death of all his children! It was stroke upon stroke, sorrow upon sorrow, trouble upon trouble—and it is this repetition of trial that bows even a strong man down and that makes the firmest Believer begin to doubt and tremble! But, Beloved, you must *expect* wave upon wave, trial upon trial. You are not, as a soldier, after having fought one battle, to take off your regimentals and retire to your tent and say, "I have won the victory." That battle is but the beginning of a long campaign—and you will have to endure the smoke and dust of the battlefield and the garments rolled in blood, time after time—before the victor's wreath shall at last surround your brow! So, your trials will be repeated, as well as varied and terrible.

And, mark you, according to the text, *these trials are inevitable*. “When you pass through the waters.” It is taken for granted that you have to go through them. There is no bridge and there is no boat by which you can pass over these waters—and no tunnel by which you can go underneath them—so you must go through them. Then it is added, “When you walk through the fire.” There is nothing said about putting out the fire, or about waiting until the flame burns low, or the embers begin to cool. No, you have to go through the fire and through the water. You have not merely to dip your feet in the waves of trouble—you have to go through them. You have not merely to go and just singe yourself a little in the flame—it is through the fire that you have to go and that fire will be like Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace when it was heated seven times hotter than usual. It is not a fire for you to warm your hands—you have to tread those glowing coals—possibly with bare feet. Are you prepared to endure that fiery ordeal? Can you so trust in the living God as to feel sure that when you get into the midst of the burning fiery furnace, there will be with you one like unto the Son of God, who will preserve you by His gracious Presence? God does not promise His people any immunity from trouble. In fact, He has foretold that they shall have trouble. As there is no royal road to learning, so there is no royal road to Heaven—

***“The path of sorrow and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”***

Make up your mind that you have to go through these trials and ask the Lord to give you Grace and courage that you may be able to endure unto the end. These trials of the saints are appointed and ordained and they have their destined end, so, depend upon it, if you are a child of God, you will have more or less of them. If you have more, then you shall have the more consolation. If you have less, you may be grateful for the Lord’s tenderness towards you and not wish for more. But rest assured that all God’s children will be baptized with fire! He has had one Son without sin, but He has never had one child without suffering—all the sons and daughters of God are brought under the rod of the Covenant and are made to feel the chastising strokes of their wise Father’s hand.

II. Now, secondly, I have to remind you that TRIALS SHALL NOT DESTROY BELIEVERS.

First of all, *they shall not divide Believers from their God*. That would be destruction, indeed, but it can never be. Notice the first sentence of our text—“When you pass through the waters.” But, my Lord, will those waters roll between You and me? No, for, “I will be with you.” Then, Lord, let them roll, for I can say, with the Apostle Paul, “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” “Quis separabit?” “Who shall separate us?” asks the Apostle and the answer is, “None shall separate us,” for God and His people are indivisible! If I said no more and sat down, there would be enough comfort, I think, in that thought, to make you ready to rush through floods and flames where Jesus leads the way. “When you pass

through the waters, I will be with you.” You shall not have less of God because you are poor, or because you are sick, or because your mother is taken from you, or your children are, one by one, caught up into Heaven. Oh, no, in your losses, crosses and troubles, you shall realize the Presence of God even more conspicuously than you have ever done before!

Our text does not say, “When you shall tread the flowery mountain and rest upon the soft green bank, I will be with you.” I never remember reading, in the Scriptures, a promise of that kind, or one like this—“When you walk upon close-shaven grass, which seems like a carpet beneath your feet, I will be with you.” No, but God says, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.” He gives a special promise for a special time of trial and, to meet the doubt which has so troubled His child, He says, “Fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are Mine.”

Then our text tells us that *neither the waters nor the seas shall stop the Believer’s march*—“When you *pass through* the waters, I will be with you.” It does not say, “When you get to the waters, you shall stop there.” They cannot stop us—we are to go through them! Our way to Heaven lies through that flood—then, through that flood we will go! God has ordained that no troubles, however great, and no persecutions, however terrible, shall stop the onward march of a soul predestinated to eternal joy. Suppose it is a deep and rapid river, whose swollen torrent seems to sweep everything before it? We shall go through it! We shall neither be stopped by it, nor swept away by it, for the promise is, “When you pass through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.”

But what about the fire? Can we get through *that*? Surely we are not fireproof—we wear no asbestos garment that shall preserve us from the devouring flames. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, you shall pass through the fire as well as through the water! Our text implies that your march through the flame shall be quiet, calm and safe, for the Lord says, “When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned.” There is no need to quicken your usual pace. If I had to go through literal fire, I would want to run and leap through it, but the Believer is, *spiritually*, to walk through the fire. That is a beautiful passage in the 23rd Psalm—“Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” Walking is the pace at which men go when nothing distresses or alarms them. “He that believes shall not make haste,” but shall walk even through the fire! What a blessing it is that, as no trouble shall separate us from God, so no trouble shall hinder our progress towards Heaven, but, through Divine Grace, whether floods or flames are in the way, we shall go through them!

Our text further says that *some trials which threaten to overwhelm us, shall not be able to do so*—“The rivers... shall not overflow you.” You may be carried off your feet and have to take to swimming—the blessed swimming of faith, which casts itself upon Divine strength and spreads out its hands as the bold swimmer does! The water will sometimes, perhaps, be near your head for a minute, the spray will dash into your eyes and the brine will be in your throat—but the waves shall not overflow

you, however furiously they may rage around you. There are some trials which seem as if they must crush the life out of those to whom they come. Possibly you are saying, "I do believe, but I am in such a turmoil, that my mind seems quite upset. I am exceedingly sorrowful, almost to the death of my faith." Ah, but it shall not be quite to the death of your faith—the floods shall not overflow you!

Other trials seem as if they would consume you, as if, with fierce and burning vehemence, they would destroy you as a martyr burns at the stake. But what does our text say? "When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." You shall not lose faith, or hope, or love, or patience, or any Christian Grace! You shall come out of the fire as you went into it—no, you shall be improved by the flame, for our text says, if we read it in the Hebrew, "When you pass through the fire, you shall not be scorched, neither shall the flame burn you." We remember that when those three brave witnesses for God came out of the burning fiery furnace, not so much as the smell of fire had passed upon them! I think I see the Babylonians crowding around them and asking, in amazement, "Are these men alive? We saw the guards, who cast them into the fire, consumed by the great heat of the furnace—and are these men alive who were actually in the midst of the flames?" They had to come close and touch them, to make sure that they were not ghosts or apparitions. When they had grasped the hand of one of the three, to see whether it was alive, they next would want to examine it. But had not the fire scorched their eyebrows, or their hair? No, "the fire had no power; nor was a hair of their head singed." They were just as they were when they went into the burning fiery furnace! It was very amazing and, in like manner, the child of God, sustained by Divine Grace, will be none the worse for all his troubles!

Look at Job after all his trials. The Lord gave him twice as much as he had before—and he was neither the weaker, nor the less honorable for all he had been called to endure. No, he was a gainer by it all! O Brothers and Sisters, the gold loses nothing in the fire but what it is glad to lose! The silver in the crucible loses none of its real preciousness—it only loses its alloy. So shall it be with you, Beloved!

III. The latter part of our text supplies us with THE ARGUMENTS AND ASSURANCES WHICH GO TO PROVE THAT THIS WILL BE THE CASE WITH BELIEVERS.

And the first is, "*For I am Jehovah.*" Ah, Brothers and Sisters, if you and I are trusting to anything short of the one living and true God, the rivers will overwhelm us and the fires will consume us! But if our living faith rests on the living God, it is not possible for us to have reason to be ashamed or confounded, world without end! I ask without any fear as to the answer that may be given to me—Did any man ever trust in God and find himself forsaken? Has it ever come to pass, in all the history of the Church of God, that one single heir of Heaven has had cause to be ashamed of his hope and his belief in his God? If you rely on an arm of flesh, you will soon find it fail you. If you turn to idol gods, and earthly priests, they will all prove useless to you in your hour of trial—but it is

not so with any who trust in the Lord! Have we not seen the saints on their deathbeds—yes, seen them in excruciating pain and in deep depression of spirit! Yet they have never been ashamed of staying themselves upon their God. They have always found this to be an Infallible protection in the time of their deepest need—“I am Jehovah.”

Now, child of God, are you afraid of the fire, or are you afraid of the flood when you have the self-existent, eternal, almighty, unchangeable God to trust to? O Man, be afraid to be afraid, and fear to fear, but trust in God at all times! And, with dauntless courage, go wherever He leads or points the way! It is the living God in whom you trust, therefore, when you pass through the rivers, they shall not overflow you! When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned!

The next assurance lies in the words, “*your God.*” “I am the Lord your God.” Ah, the God in whom you trust is your own God! The God who, in an Everlasting Covenant, has taken you to be His servant and has given Himself to you, to be your Father, your Friend, your All-in-All—in a word, your GOD! Now, my dearest earthly friend may fail me. The choicest companion I have may forget me. But my God never will. There is an enduring relationship which can never end in disappointment. “I am your God.’ Yours, for I chose you. Yours, for I redeemed you. Yours, for I have taken you to be Mine and I have made Myself to be yours in the Covenant of everlasting love. Trust Me, then, for, ‘I am your God,’ so I cannot forsake you. ‘Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, she may forget, yet will I not forget you.’ ‘I am Jehovah your God.’ If I am nobody else’s God, I am your God, so, ‘when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame even scorch you.’”

Now turn to the next words, “*the Holy One of Israel.*” When David wrote, “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name,” why did he select the *holiness* of God’s name as the objective of special blessing? If you sound the word a little differently, you will see that holiness is whole-ness—and that is one of its meanings. God is holy or whole. His holiness comprehends all His other attributes. If there were a failure in any one of the moral attributes of God, He would not be whole, or holy! But there is no such failure. So, now, the whole of God—the holy guarantees to the Believer that he shall be preserved in all perils and trials!

You are not trusting to a God that can lie, or that can break His promise, for He is “the Holy One of Israel.” You are not relying upon One who will divorce His people whom He has espoused unto Himself, for the Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away. You are not trusting to One who, after all, will repent of what He has promised and not fulfill it, for, “God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should change His mind: has He said, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?” The holiness of God is terrible to an unreconciled soul, but, to a heart that is reconciled to God, the holiness of God’s Nature is a pledge that every one of His promises shall be kept and that not one jot or tittle of all that He has

guaranteed to His people shall fail to come to them. Look, then, Believer, at the guarantees of your safety which you have in the very Nature of your God! Whether the rivers flow about you, or the raging sea roars in your ears, or the furnace pours forth its vehement heat, or the prairie is on fire all around you, you are at all times safe!

Then there is a further word of assurance—"the Holy One of Israel, *your Savior*." Now, to be true to His name, He must save all who trust in Him. Why does He call Himself the Savior—and especially put in the words, "*your Savior*"—if He does not save, and save you? Come, Believer, surely it needs no words of mine to draw out the force of this argument. If He does not save, He is not a Savior! And if He does not save *you*, He is not *your* Savior. But if you believe on Him, He will redeem His word—every iota of it! As honorable businessmen meet their bills and notes of hand when they become due, so will the honorable God fulfill His Word and prove Himself to be the Savior of all who trust in Him. In six troubles, He will be with you. And in seven, there shall no evil befall you. He has promised to save you and He will save you. He will rest in His love. He will rejoice over you with singing. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers Him out of them all." That is His own Word and that Word will be kept to the very letter. He is "*your Savior*."

The last assurance is, in some respects, the strongest of all—"I gave *Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you*," by which the Lord means, "I will surely preserve you, because I have bought you at such a great price that I cannot afford to lose you. I have shown My valuation of you by the price I have paid for you, so you may rest assured that I will not suffer any harm to come to those whom I have so dearly purchased." You remember that the Israelites were redeemed by the Egyptians being made to suffer. You recollect how the plagues thickened about the heads of Egypt's sons and that Ethiopia and Seba were conquered by the Assyrian turning his forces against *them* instead of against the Israelites. And, since then, it has often happened that God has succored His saints by allowing other people to feel the force of the sword which was turned aside from the godly. When the poor persecuted Protestants of France or Piedmont were likely to be destroyed, it generally happened either that the kings of Germany and France fell out, or else that France went to war with Spain and then the soldiers were recalled—and the poor saints had a little liberty. God had given other nations as a ransom for them, and so He will do again when it is necessary. He will blot whole nations off the map of Europe, or the map of Asia, or any other part of the world, for the sake of His people! What cares He for them in comparison with His own chosen ones? In the olden days He set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the children of Israel—and He will do the same for the spiritual Israel. All the world is but peel or rind, but His Church is the sweet fruit! All the universe is only as the shell, but the kernel inside the shell is His own redeemed!

But, in a higher sense, God has paid a far greater price than this for the redemption of His people—something infinitely more precious than Egypt with all her treasures, or Ethiopia with all her gold, or Seba with

all her fragrance. Did He not give His Son to die for His people? And if Christ redeemed me with His blood, is not my safety guaranteed, not only against flood and flame, but against the very gates of Hell? Think you, Beloved, that the death of Christ can be in vain? Do you believe that He bought with His blood some who, after all, shall be cast into Hell? I know that there is a general aspect to redemption which brings some good things to all men—but there is also the special aspect in it which brings all good things to some men! “Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it.” He has redeemed us from among men. The good Shepherd laid down His life for His sheep. Christ said, concerning His disciples, “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me.”

And did He really, specially and with an eye to *my* salvation, lay down His precious life as a ransom for *me*? And shall God, after having given me to His Son, let me fail to come into the possession of Him who redeemed me with His blood? I confess that I am unable to conceive of such a thing being possible! Once redeemed with the blood of the Son of God, who could again enslave the soul that has been thus set free? Go where you will, redeemed one, the blood-mark is upon you and “the Lord knows them that are His.” According to the notion of some people, redemption does not guarantee salvation to anybody—but our text directly contradicts such a theory as that! It is *because* we are redeemed that we shall be saved—that is the reason why there are saints already in Heaven and why they will be there forever and ever. Redemption is the pledge of their eternal safety. If Christ should lose any one of His redeemed—if God should lose any one of those who were so dearly purchased—what a terrible result it would be! Then, from the depths of Hell, the blaspheming fiend would look up and cry, “Aha! Here is a soul that was redeemed by the blood of Jesus, a soul that believed in Jesus, yet He could not save it from destruction! When it came to the river, it was drowned, or it was consumed by the fire. Aha! You call Yourself the Redeemer? But You have not redeemed this one!”

Now I am going to conclude my discourse by asking one or two questions. My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, have you not proved, in your experience, that what I have been saying is true? I see, before me, some who have been through fire and through water. The whiteness of their hair betokens that they have been pilgrims for a long while. You, my aged Friends, have the snows of many a winter upon your brows—and the furrows of many a care are also there. Well, what have you to say concerning your God? Has He ever failed you? You have had many sharp pinches, but has He ever left you in them? You have had heavy burdens to bear, but have they broken your back? You have had stern trials, but has your faith ever altogether failed? Brothers and Sisters, I think we who have had any experience in the ways of God might stand up and sing good Samuel Medley’s verse—

***“When trouble, like a gloomy cloud,
Has gathered thick and thundered loud,
He, near my soul has always stood,
His loving kindness, oh, how good!”***

Then there is another question that I want to ask. If the Lord has dealt with you thus up till now, what ails you that you should have any fear about the future? “Ah,” you say, “but I have not passed this way before.” I know you have not, but then, all the way you have already trodden was new to you until you came to it—and the Lord helped you then. Why should He not help you now and for all the future, too? “Ah, but there will be changing circumstances!” I know there will, but there will not be changing promises. “Ah, but I find such frequent changes in myself!” Very likely you do, but do you find any change in the Lord? That is where your confidence is to be placed—in the Lord—not in yourselves. Brothers and Sisters, if you never doubt your Lord till you have just cause to do so, you will never doubt Him at all! And if you never have any mistrust of His goodness till He betrays your confidence in Him, you will never mistrust Him! Is it not a base thing, on our part to get down in the dumps so readily as we do and to fret and worry ourselves the moment a little cloud appears in the sky? Let it not be so with us! Let us who have believed enter into rest, as our Lord intended that we should. We shall just as assuredly wear the crown of final victory as we have fought and won our first battle, for the Grace that enables us to begin the conflict will never forsake us, but will help us to conclude the campaign, however long it may last! So let us raise our song of holy confidence and sing it all our journey through, for, perhaps, the sweetness of our notes of praise may be heard by others and may draw them, also, to go on pilgrimage with us, trusting in the Lord!

Last of all, what are some of you doing—you who never did trust in God? Well, you say you have got on so far, somehow. I cannot make out how you do it. If I had not a God to trust in, though I have many earthly comforts, I should be, of all men, most miserable, but I cannot understand how a suffering man with a large family, and small wages, manages to live without God! I cannot comprehend how a hard-working woman, with many children and, perhaps, a drunk for a husband, manages even to *exist* without trusting in God! Oh dear, dear, dear, dear, dear, dear! Why, your life is not worth five minutes’ purchase! I would not like to give you even a bad farthing for it, you do seem to have such a wretched lot.

Then, some of you business people, with all your cares and worries and troubles—up early in the morning and working till late at night—what is it all for? Saving a little money. For whom are you saving it? Who will have it when you die? Somebody who will call you a fool for saving it, very likely! What are you other people living for? “Oh, we have our amusements!” Yes, yes, yes, I daresay, and wonderful stuff the amusements of the world are made of nowadays! Passing along the streets I sometimes hear one of the songs that are being sung and I cannot help feeling that the common songs that are sung in our streets would be a disgrace to apes if they were to sing them—they are meaningless and absurd, if not worse than that!

People sometimes ask me, “What sort of amusements would you have us go into?” I know they only do it for an excuse, so I answer, “You know

what you like.” “Ah,” says one, “but I am a Christian.” Well, if you are a Christian, you will not care for the amusements of worldlings, you will count them as unclean and not fit for you. I always say, “Let the dogs have their biscuits and the cats their meat, and the hogs their slop—and let the worldling have his amusement—I don’t want to rob him of it. It really is such poor, poor stuff that they must be poor, poor creatures who can make themselves happy on it.” A bag of wind—that is all the world’s amusement is!

When I hear how fashionable people spend an evening and go away saying how delighted they were, I think they must have been absent when brains were being distributed, or else they would say, “Dear me, this is a wretched way of wasting time! I cannot endure it.” You have not anything, O you Worldlings, even you who dwell in palaces and ride in chariots! You who have great riches, you who have broad acres—you have not anything fit to feed a soul upon! It is all wind, chaff, husks such as the poor prodigal could not fill his belly with, yet you eat it. How is that? I do not understand you. I go back to what I said before. If I had all that my heart could wish for—I have that already, for I do not wish for anything more than I have in this world—but if I had all that my heart could wish for, supposing that it took to ambition and covetousness, yet should I be wretched without my God! I cannot live without Him! I would be like Noah’s dove when it was flying over the wild waste of waters—I could not find a place where I could rest if I were to try to do so! I must go back to my Noah, to my Ark—there is no other place of rest for me.

Poor Soul, how is it that you think there is rest for you anywhere but in Christ? Come back, you with the weary wings, come back to God! Come back, you with the weary heart, come back to your Savior’s bosom!

May God bless you all, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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

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***“I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake,
and will not remember your sins.”
Isaiah 43:25.***

THIS extraordinary passage is rendered the more remarkable from its connection, for it follows a description of the sins of God’s people, a description which mentions their sins of omission in that they had neglected the service of the Most High—and their sins of *commission* in that they had gone so far in breaking God’s Law that they had even wearied Him with their iniquities. There is the charge—a thousand facts prove it—and nothing can be urged by way of extenuation. We might expect that the next utterance would be the sentence. And the next motion of the Divine hand would be the execution, but, instead of that, O wonder of wonders! (Who is a pardoning God like unto You, O Jehovah?)—there comes a full remission, a complete absolution—“I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions.”

The verse is succeeded, moreover, by other sentences which go on, still further, to convict the people of great sins. The Lord asks them to come and plead with Him, if they can. If they have anything to say in extenuation of their faults, He gives them an opportunity of speaking for themselves. And then He tells them that they had sinned as a nation from their very beginning and had continued, still, to sin. Though the Lord knew that He would add those words of expostulation, He made a break and a pause in the very middle of His righteous accusation, and before He had concluded His charge against them, He had already forgiven them, and said, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake.”

The remarkable point is not merely that the absolution contained in the text is preceded and succeeded by verses of accusation, but that it breaks in upon the connection and cleaves the sense right in the middle. The King’s messenger of mercy rides through the ranks of the men-at-arms in hot haste, sounding his silver bugle as he clears his way. He cannot linger, his message is too precious to be made to tarry. Sooner may sun and moon stand still than mercy be hindered! Such breaks as those, of which the text is a specimen, are very precious to me because they show the intense love of God to deeds of Grace and His eagerness to perform them. I love these soft showers of Grace and mercy all the more because they so abruptly interpose between the tremendous peals of thunder of well-deserved wrath.

It will be our wisdom not only to weigh the text, but to notice the practical lesson of its connection, namely, that since God is sure to reveal His

mercy when it will be most valued, we may conclude that men know and prize Divine Mercy most when they most feel the weight of their sins. Until a man is consciously condemned and pleads guilty, he will not ask for mercy. And if mercy were to come to him, he would treat it with disdain. He would look upon the offer of forgiveness as an insult, for what better would it be than an insult to pardon an innocent man? As well send medicine to a man who was never sick, or alms to a millionaire!

We must be proven guilty, and confess it, before we can be forgiven. We must know that we are sick and we must distinctly recognize that our sickness is a mortal disease, or else we shall never value the Divine Medicine which Jesus came to bring. A sense of sin, although it is exceedingly painful, is a most blessed thing, and I pray God, if you have never felt how guilty you are, that you may be made to feel it at once. If you have never been broken down before the awful majesty of Divine Justice, may the Holy Spirit break you down now—for Jesus will never clothe those who are not stripped. He will never wash those who are not foul, nor will He attempt to heal those who are not wounded. Others may spend their strength in flattering human goodness—the Lord Jesus has come on another errand and deals only with our sin and misery. If you are not poverty-stricken, you will have no dealings with the blessed soul-enriching Savior!

Having thus considered the connection, let us notice two other points. The first is the nature of the pardon which is here so graciously proclaimed. The second is the effect which this pardon produces upon the minds of those who are enabled to receive it.

I. First, dear Friends, let us carefully notice THE NATURE OF THE PARDON WHICH IS HERE SO GRACIOUSLY ANNOUNCED. “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.” Note, first, it is a pardon from God Himself, whereupon we further observe that it is a pardon from Him who is offended. Sin is mainly an attack upon God. It is an offense against His own most excellent Person.

It is treason against His most glorious Sovereignty. God therefore feels more, sees more and is more thoroughly affected by the evil of sin than anyone else. And the connection of the text shows that He does not treat sin as a trifle as some do—that He does not regard it as a thing which can be readily passed over—but takes solemn note of the sinful omissions and commissions of His people and in due time calls them to account, mentioning their sins in a way which shows that He is sorely displeased.

Sin is, in Jehovah’s eyes, exceedingly sinful,. It is an abominable thing which His soul hates. And yet, notwithstanding this, it is the very same God who has such a hatred of sin who, nevertheless, says, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions.” We have offended God and the same offended God forgives us! We have violated His Law and yet the Lawgiver, Himself, pardons us! We have insulted His majesty and yet the King, Himself, deigns to say, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions.” This is the more delightful because we know that only He could forgive.

What is the use of forgiveness from one who has not been offended? How can I forgive you for a transgression which you have committed against another person? He, alone, whose Law has been broken and who is both the fountain of justice and the executive of the law, is able to forgive offenses committed! Power to forgive resides nowhere but in the great Supreme. And if you obtain pardon from Him, it is pardon beyond all question! If some man, like yourself, who takes upon himself to say that he has received a commission from Heaven, shall absolve you, it is not worth the breath he spends in uttering the mimic absolution, or the time you waste in listening to it!

But if the Lord, Himself, out of His excellent Glory, says, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions," then, indeed, the pardon is divinely precious and effectual! There is reality in Divine Forgiveness—it is no dream or fiction of the imagination. Whom God forgives who can condemn? This led the Apostle Paul to say, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies; who is he that condemns?" Deep is the peace which the Lord's own absolution brings to the soul! If He has said to the greatest offender, "I forgive you," what more is needed? What is the use of adding ceremonies and rituals, and the like, if the Lord, Himself, has spoken? One word from the lips of Jehovah, the great forgiving God, is worth millions of "masses," and billions of indulgences from the Pope, himself!

Our conscience demands no more than pardon from the Lord and it will never rest satisfied with anything less. O Lord, against whom we have erred, Your own sure Word of Grace contents us, but without that Word, spoken home to us by Your Spirit, our heart continues to condemn us and we pine away in our sins. Brothers and Sisters, there is something about the Character of God which is not always dwelt upon as it should be. It is something which tends to make His forgiveness more full of consolation to the soul.

There are many idolaters in the world besides those who worship blocks of wood and stone. There are men who would scorn to be called idolaters, who, nevertheless, are not worshippers of the true God, but votaries of a deity of their own making. They have not made him with wood, or clay, or gold, or silver, but they have fashioned him out of their own conceptions. They believe in a god such as they think God ought to be. And according to the general rule and fashion nowadays, the god whom men invent for themselves is a being entirely devoid of justice. They say that the God of the Bible, (who is the real, living and true God who made the heavens and the earth), is vindictive because He severely punishes rebellion against His Law, because, being at the head of all moral government, He will not suffer His Law to be trampled on with impunity, and will by no means spare the guilty.

The God who executes vengeance and terribly rewards the proud doer is not the God for men of the modern school—they want an easier deity—a far less stringent governor. They want a god of as easy virtue as themselves. The Lord God of Elijah will never suit the fair-spoken Ahabs of this age who cry, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace. He never was be-

loved by proud and carnally-minded men. They set up an effeminate deity of their own who is like themselves, who cares nothing about the evil of sin and will wink at it, and will suffer sinners to go unpunished—a god who does their bidding, for he quenches the fires of Hell, or renders it only a transient punishment for a few years. Theirs is a god who gives them license to think as they like and treat his word as a roll of wax for them to cut according to their own fashion.

The god of modern thought is not the God of the Bible, neither is he any more the true God than Baal or Ashtaroth, Jupiter or Apollo. The true God is the God who is revealed in the Scriptures and manifested in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is known only to those to whom He reveals Himself, and the rest, by their own carnal wisdom, are blinded so that they have not seen Him, neither know Him. Now, I say it here, that if there were a god whose nature was nothing else but gentleness, and who, therefore, winked at sin, his pardon would never have satisfied *my* conscience, for when my conscience was awakened to know the evil of sin, I felt that if God did not punish me, He ought to!

There was about my heart this feeling that my sin ought not to go unpunished. In fact, I punished myself for my sin by the deep convictions, fears and trembling of my soul. And if anyone had said God blots out the sin and thinks no more of it, the assurance would have given me no peace. I should have felt that there was an injustice involved in my being pardoned! My sin would still have cried for vengeance and therefore my conscience would have had no peace.

And when I came to understand that the God of the Bible would not pass by sin without first vindicating the honor of His moral government. That He would not permit sin to be trifled with and to go unpunished and that, therefore, He, Himself, in the Person of His own Son, had suffered the penalty for my sin—then I said, “This is the kind of pardon which I need—a pardon which satisfies God’s justice and, therefore, satisfies my own instincts of right. The bearing of my sins by the Lord Jesus in His own body on the tree makes me feel perfectly content, for now God, Himself, can bring no charge against me, since He cannot punish me for that which He laid upon His own Son.”

Shall He demand payment twice for one debt, or punish twice for one offense? If my sins were laid upon His Son, then is His justice abundantly satisfied and my soul accepts the free pardon which He gives, without a fear that the strictest justice will ever pronounce my pardon null and void. Now, when God, even Jehovah, the Jehovah of this Book, says, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions. I who thundered from the top of Sinai. I who drowned Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea. I who smote Sennacherib with all his armies. I, the just and terrible God, who revenges and is furious, and whose anger burns like fire against sin, I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions,” this is a glorious word, indeed!

“A just God and a Savior.” “Just and yet the justifier of him that believes.” Oh, here is a solid foundation for the heart, the conscience, the entire man to rest upon! This is pardon which weighs well in the scales of judgment and is not mere wind. This is pardon which acts as balm to the

wounds of conscience and breathes life into hearts dying of despair! So, you see, there is much in the fact that the pardon comes from God—but I have not brought it all out yet, for remember, Beloved, that inasmuch as it comes from God, He, alone, knows the full extent of sin—and there can be no pardon given for a sin which has not been recognized somewhere or other. It might be that pardon would only reach to a part of the offense through the ignorance of the person offended, supposing him to be a fallible, finite being. And though he forgave the wrong done, as far as he knew it, yet he might soon wake up to a fuller sense of the offense committed against him and feel new anger at the transgressor.

A king can only forgive a rebel for those acts of which he knows him to be guilty. Now the Lord knows *all* our sins. There is not a sin that has ever escaped His eyes. Those committed in the secret chamber, in the darkness of the night—those which never struggled into action. Sins of the heart and imagination, those which have never been whispered into any human ear, God has known. What does He *not* see? And this is a blessed thing for us because it causes the pardon to cover fully the whole extent of the sin! A priest once said that if we did not remember all our sins, and confess them, they would never be forgiven. Well, then, certainly they never will be forgiven, for no man can ever remember one thousandth part of his transgressions!

But blessed be God the pardon does not rest with *our* knowledge of the sin, but with God's knowledge of the sin! And therefore that pardon is complete which comes from the all-seeing God. "I, even I, am He"—the Omniscient who is everywhere present, who saw you in the darkness and heard your heart in all its evil speeches against the Most High—I, the all-knowing One, "I am He that blots out your transgressions." Oh, this unrivalled pardon, how full of consolation it is! Every attribute of God adds to its splendor! Every beam of the Divine Glory heightens its grandeur! When we think it is our Father, Himself, our Father whom we have offended—who now kisses us with the kisses of His lips and presses His penitent children to his bosom and says—"I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions," the pardon is rendered inestimably precious by the Person from whom it comes.

II. Notice, next, the reason why it is given, the grounds upon which it is based, for they are profoundly comforting. "For My own sake." The entire motive of God for forgiving sin lies within Himself—"For My own sake." No man has his sins forgiven because they are little, for the smallest sin will ruin the soul, and every sin is great, however little it may seem to us. Each sin has the essence of rebellion in it and rebellion is a great evil before God. No man, therefore, will have God say to him, "I have blotted out your sins because of the littleness of them." Never!

Again, no man's sin is forgiven on the ground that his repentance is meritorious. There is nothing in Scripture to warrant such an idea. Repentance *precedes* a sense of forgiveness in some measure, but it *follows* forgiveness in a larger measure. It is not the cause, though it is the attendant, of remission. God's motive for pardoning a sinner is not because that sinner repents, for repentance of itself is no recompense to God.

There is a repentance—I think I had better call it remorse—which the lost feel in Hell—but it changes not their doom. And had it not been for a Savior we might have known the repentance which Esau felt when he went out and wept, but, nevertheless, lost the blessing—lost it irretrievably.

Neither does our text tell us that God forgives men's sins because He trusts that after they are forgiven they will do better. By His Grace, forgiven men are made to do better—but it is not the foresight of any betterness on their part which leads God to the forgiveness. That cannot be a motive, for if they do better, their improvement is His work in them. Left to themselves they would do even worse after they were pardoned than they had done before. And from the mercy of God they would argue immunity to sin, as, alas, too many who hold the truth in *unrighteousness* have already done! No, the only motive which God has for pardoning sinners, according to the text, is one which lies within Himself—"for My own sake."

And what, I pray you, is that motive? Brothers and Sisters, the Lord knows all His motives and it is not for us to measure them. But is it not, first, that He may indulge His mercy? Mercy is the last exercised, but the most pleasing to Himself, of all His attributes. Therefore, because He is full of mercy, He blots out sin. He has this motive, too, which is within Himself, that He may glorify His Son, who is One with Himself. His Son has made an Atonement—has offered and presented it—and now, in order that He may have His full reward, the Lord delights to blot out the sins of those who come to Him. It is within Himself that the motive lies. And what a comfort this is, for if, when looking into my soul, I cannot see any reason why God should save me, I need not look there, since the motive lies yonder, in His own gracious bosom!

According to the multitude of His loving kindnesses will He blot out my transgressions. I may look to all my past life and not discover a solitary action out of which I could make a plea for mercy. I may look to my present condition and perceive not even a glimpse of improvement, or even a ray of hope that I shall be better in the future, but rather a dreadful fear that I shall grow worse and worse! And when I have seen these discouraging facts, I have only seen what is the truth, for in itself, my case is deplorable, indeed! But this is my comfort—I may look right away from myself to God, yes, it is my *duty* to do so. O Man, if God is to save you, it will not be because of anything you *are*, or ever *will be*—He must do it for His own sake!

And, oh, how splendidly this sets the door of Mercy open! It does not stand, now, upon the latch, that those may enter who are little sinners—but the great gate of Grace stands wide open—what if I say nailed back to the wall? For what sinner is there whom God cannot pardon if He pardons for His own sake and not for the sinner's sake? What if the man were black with lusts which we dare not mention? What if he were red with murder? What if every crime in the catalog of guilt had been committed by him? Yet if God pardons, not because of anything He sees in the man, but because of what He finds in Himself, it remains a possibility for God to pardon the vilest of the vile—and the truth revealed in the Bible makes it

certain that God will forgive such if they turn to Him, confess their transgressions, believe in His dear Son—and so pass from death unto life.

How blessed, then, it is to look not only at the God who gives the pardon, but at the reason why He gives it—for His own sake!

III. And now, thirdly, it is noteworthy in this glorious text how complete and universal the pardon is. He does not say, “I, even I, am He that blots out *some* of your transgressions and will not remember a certain number of your sins.” No, the Lord makes a clean sweep of the whole dreadful heap of our sins! They are all driven away at once by one stroke of Almighty Mercy. The text includes all the sins which the Lord had mentioned before—their buying Him no sweet cane with money—their refusing to attend to His sacrifices. Our sins of omission are all gone.

Beloved Friends, can any of us number our sins of omission? Those are the sins which ruin men. At the Last Great Day the Judge will say, “I was hungry and you gave Me no meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; sick, and you visited Me not.” Those on the left hand were not condemned for what they *did* do, but for what they did *not* do! And the things which we have *not* done—the things which we have left undone which we ought to have done—these are the majority of our sins! Who shall count them? They outnumber the sands of the ocean! Yet the Divine Pardon cleanses us from them all. No spot nor wrinkle remains.

And then He mentions actual sins. He says, “You have made Me to serve with your sins.” [You have burdened Me with your sins.] But He declares that He blots them out, transgressions and sins, both forms of evil. They are both gone, all gone, wholly gone. Now, I know not what particular sins may have been committed by the members of this congregation. Suppose we were to begin at yonder aisle, and each one had to stand up and acknowledge his sins? Well, it would take much time and we should have sinned a great deal more before we had come to the end of the confession! What a pile of sin there would be on this threshing floor if every man were compelled to bring his own mass of sin and pour it out upon the common heap!

Yet the Lord does not set bound or measure, but says, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions, and will not remember your sins.” All the Believer’s sins are gone—and all are gone at once. And this is the very joy and glory of Gospel absolution! The Believer knows that his sins are not in the process of *being* pardoned, but are actually pardoned at this moment! No remnant of our sins remains to be dealt with in the *future*—the whole mass is put away. However black the guilt, however aggravated the criminality, however repeated the crime, however heinous because committed against light—however enormous because perpetuated despite the Holy Spirit—they are all forever made an end of, annihilated, and forever gone when we believe in Jesus Christ!

Sins against God’s Law and Word and His Day. Sins against Christ’s blood. Sins against His love. Sins against His Person. Sins against His crown. Sins against Himself in all His offices—an infinite variety of sins—they all vanish before that gracious declaration, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions.” Once more upon this point. The pardon is

noteworthy on account of its being most effectual. It is described as blotting out. Now, blotting out is a very thorough way of settling a thing. If an account has been standing in the ledger a long time and the pen is drawn through it, it remains no longer. Whether it is a large account or a small one, the same stroke of the pen will do it.

If you owed a creditor a thousand pounds and another owed him only 10, the word, "paid," takes as many strokes of the pen to write for the one account as for the other. And it is just as easily done if the creditor is satisfied. Whatever sin there may have been in God's people when they come before Him, He writes, "Acquitted," at the bottom of the page which is against them, and its condemning power is gone! What a joy it is to see the long catalog of my sins blotted by the bleeding hands of Jesus so that it cannot be read in the court of heavenly Justice! What bliss to see it nailed to the Cross of the dying Savior! Heavy as my soul's debts were, I doubt no longer! Now I see the grim reckoning fastened to the bloody tree!

And then mark the wonderful expression, "I will not remember those sins." Can God forget? Forgetting with God cannot be an infirmity as it is with us. We forget because our memory fails, but God forgets in the blessed sense that He remembers, rather, the merit of His Son than our sins. Indeed, God forgets sin in the sense of remembering that it is forgiven! I think it was Augustine who had been, once, a great sinner. After he was converted he was met in the street by one with whom he had often fallen into sin. When she spoke to him and said, "Augustine, it is I," he said, "Ah, but it is not I, I am dead, and made alive again." Now, when God's Justice meets a man who believes in Jesus, that man is no longer the I that sinned, for that I is dead in Christ!

"Know you not that we were crucified with Him? "The Believer was buried with Christ, so that, as he that is dead is free from the Law which condemned him—for how shall the Law arrest a dead man?—so we, being dead in Christ and risen again in Him, are new creatures, and do not come under the Divine sentence. And God knows us not as sinners, but only, now, knows us as new creatures in Christ Jesus! He knows and recognizes in us the new life, having "begotten us again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

That is one of the instructive features of the ordinance of Baptism. The Believer, there, sets forth the doctrine of salvation by death and burial. That was Noah's salvation. He went into the ark as one dead to the world. He was buried in the ark and then he floated out from the old world into the new. "The like figure," says Peter, "whereunto Baptism does also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God), by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ." That is to say, Baptism is a like figure of salvation, for it sets forth in a figure, *and only in a figure*, our death with Christ, our burial with Christ, our resurrection with Christ.

Therefore where there is true faith and the soul has communion with Christ, we are buried with Him in Baptism unto death, "that like as Jesus rose from the dead by the Glory of the Father, even so, we also may rise to newness of life." Death has passed upon us, "for we thus judge," says the

Apostle, “that if one died for all, then all died”—(for such is the literal Greek)—and that He died for all, that they which live should not live from now on unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them and rose again.” Well, then, Beloved, if we are dead, I do not wonder that God says He does not remember our sins, for we are new creatures! We have passed from death to life!

We have come into a new life and God looks upon us from a new point of view. He regards us under a new aspect as members, not of the first Adam condemned and dead, but of the second Adam, the Lord from Heaven, the living and the quickening Spirit. Well may He say to men who are new creatures, “I will not remember your sins.” Every word of the text is delightful and I cannot attempt to go into the fullness of it. May the Lord lead each one of you into it, and especially you young people. As for those who are not converted—oh, that they would long for the precious things here set forth! May God speak to some who came in here vile sinners, and say to them, “For My own sake I forgive you.”

Oh, how you will leap for joy! What a thrill will go through your heart! You will not doubt the existence of God any more, I will guarantee you! You will have no more questions and quibbles. The Spirit of God will speak to your heart and that will convince you, though nothing else will—and you will go away to glorify the Grace you once despised.

IV. Now I come to the consideration of the second point very briefly—**THE EFFECT OF THIS PARDON WHEREVER IT COMES WITH POWER TO THE SOUL.** Timid persons have thought that the free pardon of sin would lead men to indulge in it. No doubt some are base enough to pervert it to that use, but there was never a soul that did *really* receive pardon from God who could find in that pardon any excuse for sin or any license to continue any longer in it. For all God’s people argue thus—“Shall we sin that Grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”

And again, the Apostle says, “Shall we sin because we are not under the Law but under Grace? God forbid!” He utters a most solemn disclaimer against the idea that the amazing mercy of God can lead the regenerate into sin. The first effect of pardon upon the man who receives it is surprise. The man has been lying at the foot of the Cross looking for mercy and all of a sudden he glances at the bleeding Savior and he is forgiven! And he feels something like Peter when he was brought out of prison. “He knew not that it was true that was done unto him by the angel, but thought he saw a vision.”—

***“When God revealed His gracious name,
And changed our mournful state,
Our rapture seemed a pleasing dream—
The Grace appeared too great.”***

I remember how overjoyed I was when I received pardon. I did not know how to contain myself for delight! But after a while this thought assailed me—such great mercy is too good to be true! My surprise at it staggered me. How could it be that I was actually forgiven and through the blood of Jesus made clean in the sight of God? The goodness of God astounded me! It reminds me of an illustration I have used before, but it is a good

one. If you have a dog at the table and you throw him a scrap of meat, he swallows it directly. But if you were to set the whole joint down on the floor before him, he would turn away. He would feel that you could not mean to give a fine joint of meat to a dog!

He would not think of touching it—at least, few dogs wouldn't. And it seemed to me as if the Lord could not have meant all the wonders of His love for such a dog as I was. I was ready to turn away from it through the greatness of it! But then I remembered that it would not do for God to be giving little mercy. He was too great a God to spend all His power in pardoning little sinners and granting little favors. And I came back to this—if His Grace was not too big for Him to *give*, I would not be such a fool as to refuse it because of its greatness!

You remember how Alexander told a soldier that he might have whatever he asked? The man went to the royal treasury and demanded such a vast sum that the officer refused to let him have it, and said to him, "How can you be such an unconscionable fellow as to ask for so much?" When Alexander heard of it he said, "It is much for him to receive, but it is *not* too much for Alexander to *give*—he has a high opinion of my greatness. Let him have what he has asked for. I will not fall short of his expectations." God is a great God and to forgive great sins is just like Him. We cannot forgive at this rate, but God can! To forgive great sins, tremendous sins, unspeakably black sins, adds to His Glory and makes men say, "Who is a God like unto You, passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin?"

At first, then, Mercy fills us with surprise. The next thing it does is to fill us with holy regret. We feel, "What? And is this the God I have been standing out against so long? Is this the God whom I have despised or neglected, whose Gospel I put away from me, saying that there was time enough for me to attend to it when I grew old and had seen a little of life? Is this the God whom I have been slighting, who has loved me at this rate, and given His dear Son from His own right hand to bleed and suffer in my place?"

It has been said—I think by Aristotle—that a person cannot know that he is loved without feeling some degree of love in return. I am quite certain that you cannot know in your soul, by the experience of pardon, that God loves you, without feeling at once, "I am ashamed that I did not love my gracious God. I am disgusted with myself that I could have acted in such a disgraceful way towards Him. Did He love me before the world began? Did He write my name in the roll of His electing love? Did He ordain me to a crown of life and to a harp of gold? Did He predestinate me to be conformed to the image of His Son? When the Savior bled, did He think of me as He was dying, and did He especially lay down life for me? Am I one whom He has betrothed unto Himself forever in faithfulness and love and mercy—and yet have I been foolish enough to live all this while a stranger and an enemy to Him?"

When a sense of dying love comes mightily into the heart, we feel that we cannot be enough revenged upon our cruel hearts for having treated so, such a generous, such a forgiving God! As this sense of pardon first breeds surprise and then intense regret, it next creates in us fervent love.

“We love Him because He first loved us,” and we love Him best of all for having pardoned us. No one loves God so much as the man or woman who has had much forgiven. Scripture tells us this in the case of the woman who was a sinner—she, alone, washed the Savior’s feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

Commonplace Christians have never experienced any deep sense of sin, and consequently, Christ is a very commonplace Savior to them. Ah, but when a man feels that he is a vile sinner and that he should have been in Hell, and in the hottest part of it, if it had not been for Sovereign Grace, I tell you, Sir, if the Lord lifts that man up out of the Pit and gives him a place among His servants, that is the man who will feel the water in his eyes when he talks about the Savior’s Grace. That man cannot speak about redeeming Grace and dying love without feeling that there is charming music in those precious words and the best of all music in their precious sense! The viler the sinner the more love has he to the Lord when he is forgiven. As he feels his sin, so He loves his Redeemer.

“The burnt child dreads the fire,” but I will tell you the child that dreads the fire most—if there could be a child which had burnt itself in the fire and then all its sores and blisters were taken off it and laid upon its mother, and that child saw its mother’s face all scarred and marred with the burning, and saw her body in pain on her dear one’s account—I am sure the child would hate all idea of playing with fire as long as it lived. Many suffer for sin in their own persons, but do not hate it. They will go back to the very sin which injured them, as moths fly again to the candle. But to see another suffering for my fault—such a One as Emmanuel, God With Us—to see His hands fastened to the Cross, and His feet pierced, and His heart gashed, and all His life flowing out in blood, and Himself bearing agonies unutterable for my sins—it makes me feel that the very *name* of sin is accursed and I abhor it utterly!

We would, if we could, be perfect! We long and sigh, and cry to be delivered from everything that has one murderous spot of the Savior’s blood upon it! If yonder knife had killed your friend, would you hoard it up and think a great deal of the deadly instrument? You would hurl it out of your sight as an accursed thing! Yet sin slew Jesus! Sin slew Jesus! Away with it, then! Away with it! Away with it! My precious Christ was murdered by sin! From now on I am dead to sin! This is the spirit which Divine Grace breeds in every Christian—and the more sure he is of his pardon—the more intensely, by God’s Grace, he hates his sin.

Therefore our Gospel is a reforming Gospel, a sanctifying Gospel. It is a Gospel that delivers men from the power of sin and brings them through the power of love into the blessed liberty of the children of God. In closing, I would say to every unconverted person—your state before God is here in this picture—Many years ago in Russia a regiment of troops mutinied. They were at some distance from the capital and were so furious that they murdered their officers and resolved never to submit to discipline. But the emperor, who was an exceedingly wise and sagacious man, no sooner heard of it than, all alone and unattended, he went into the barracks where the men were drawn up, and, addressing them sternly, he said to

them, “Soldiers, you have committed such offense against the Law that every one of you deserves to be put to death. There is no hope of any mercy for one of you unless you lay down your arms immediately, and surrender at discretion to me, your emperor.”

And they did it, then and there, though the heads of their officers were lying at their feet. They threw down their arms and surrendered, and he said at once, “Men, I pardon you. You will be the bravest troops I ever had.” And they were, too! That is just what God says to the sinner—“Now, Sinner, you have done that which deserves My wrath. Down with your weapons of rebellion! Ground arms at once. I will not talk with you until you submit at discretion to My Sovereign Authority.” And then He says, “Believe in My Son. Trust Him. Accept Him as your Savior. This done, you are forgiven, and from now on you will be the most loving creatures that My hands have made. You will love Me better than the angels, for though they never sinned, they never had a God to become Incarnate and to bleed and die for them.

“You know what sin is and will hate it. And you know what goodness is, for you have seen it in My Son, and from now on you will strive to be like He is, and among the sweetest notes that shall come up to My Throne will be your grateful songs.”—

***“Blessings, forever on the Lamb,
Who bore the curse for wretched men!
Let angels sound His sacred name,
And every creature say, ‘Amen!’ ”***

None will more loudly sing the praises of God than those who have been washed in the precious blood and have had their transgressions blotted out! The Lord bless you and give every one of you to know and taste all this, and that, too, at this very hour if it is His will, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Isaiah 43:22-28, 44:1-22.**

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FORGIVENESS

NO. 24

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 20, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for
My own sake and will not remember your sins.”
Isaiah 43:25.***

THERE are some passages of Sacred Writ which have been more abundantly blessed to the conversion of souls than others. They may be called *salvation texts*. We may not be able to discover how it is, or why it is, but certainly it is a fact that some chosen verses have been more used of God to bring men to the Cross of Christ than any others in His Word. Certainly they are not more Inspired, but I suppose they are more noticeable from their position, from their peculiar phraseology more adapted to catch the eye of the reader and more suitable to a prevailing spiritual condition. All the stars in the heavens shine very brightly, but only a few attract the eye of the mariner and direct his course. The reason is that those few stars from their peculiar grouping are more readily distinguished and the eye easily fixes upon them. So I suppose it is with those passages of God’s Word which especially attract attention and direct the sinner to the Cross of Christ. It so happens that this text is one of the chief of them. I have found it, in my experience, to be a most useful one. Out of the hundreds of persons who have come to me to narrate their conversion and experience, I have found a very large proportion who have traced the Divine change which has been worked in their hearts to the hearing of this precious declaration of Sovereign Mercy read and the application of it with power to their souls. “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake and will not remember your sins.” Hence I feel this morning somewhat pleased to have such a text, because I anticipate that my Master will give me souls. And I feel likewise somewhat afraid lest I should spoil the passage by my own imperfect handling thereof. I will, therefore, cast myself implicitly on the help of the Spirit, so that whatever I speak may be suggested by Him and whatever He says, that may I speak—to the exclusion of my own thoughts as much as possible.

We shall notice first, this morning, *the recipients of mercy*—the persons of whom the Lord is here speaking. Secondly, *the deed of mercy*—“I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions.” Thirdly, the reason for

mercy—"for My own sake." And fourthly, *the promise of mercy*—"I will not remember your sins."

I. We are about to see who are THE RECIPIENTS OF MERCY. And I would have you all listen. Perhaps there are some strayed in here who are the very chief of sinners—some who have sinned against light and knowledge, who have gone the full length of their powers for sin—so that they come here self-condemned. They may fear that for them there is neither mercy nor pardon. I am about to talk to you of the loving kindness of our glorious Jehovah and may some of you be led to read your own condition in those characters which I shall describe to you.

If you will turn to your Bibles, you will find who are the persons here spoken of. Look, for example, at the 22nd verse of the chapter from which our text is taken and you will see, first, that they were a *prayerless people*—"you have not called upon Me, O Jacob." And are there not some prayerless ones sitting or standing here this morning? Might I not walk along these benches and point my finger to one and another and say, "you are not a praying one"? Or might I not reach out my hand to one and another upon this platform and say, "you have not been with God in secret and had close communion with Him"? These prayerless ones may have repeated many a *form* of prayer, but the breathing desire, the living words, have not come from their lips. You have lived, Sinner, up to this time without sincere prayer and if an intercession has been forced from your lips from a fear that took hold of you—if a cry has gone forth from you when in the sufferings of a sick bed because the pains of death got hold upon you—if it has not been your habit to pray, the impressions of that trying period have soon been forgotten. Is prayer your constant practice, my Hearers? How many of you now, before me, yes, and behind me, too, must confess that you have not prayed, that it is not your habit to hold communion with God? Prayerless souls are Christless souls! You can have no real fellowship with Christ, no communion with the Father, unless you approach His Mercy Seat and are often there. And yet if you are condemning yourselves and lamenting that this has been your condition, you need not despair, for this mercy is for you—"you have not called upon Me, O Jacob." Yet, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake."

Next, these persons were *despisers of religion*, for observe the language of the same verse—"You have been weary of Me, O Israel." And may I not say to some here—you despise religion, you hate God? You are weary of Him and love not His services. As for a Sunday, do not, too, many of you, find it the most tiresome day in the week? And do you not, in fact, look over your ledger on a Sunday afternoon? If you were compelled to attend a place of worship twice on a Sunday, would you not think it the greatest

and most terrible hardship that could be inflicted upon you? You have to find some worldly amusement to make the hours of a Sunday pass away with any comfort at all. So far from wishing that, “congregations might never break up,” and a Sunday last for eternity, is it not to some of you the most tedious day of the week? You feel it to be a weariness and are glad when it is gone. You do not understand the sentiment expressed by the poet—

**“Sweet is the work, my God, my King,
To praise Your name, give thanks and sing.”**

You know nothing of the pain of banishment from the courts of Zion, where the sacred tribes repair. And when there, you do not hold communion with God, rejoicing that the hallowed place has become a Bethel—the House of God—the very gate of Heaven. You can never say—

**“My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss.”**

Ah, no, not only is religion unlovely to you, but it is a weariness! But if you are now convinced of this sin and are repenting of it and desire to be delivered from its power, then God speaks to *you* this morning and says, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake—return unto Me with unfeigned repentance and I will have mercy upon you.”

Note, again, the character. They have been *thankless persons*—“you have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings.” They have been unthankful. They had their cattle and their flocks all multiplied and increased many fold, but they did not bring even one of the small cattle to Him in return. You never gave Him a kid for a burnt offering but have been like the swine, regardless of the oak which strews food upon the ground for you. You have been a carnal worldly character, receiving a gift but never thanking the Almighty who caused it to be bestowed. While even the little chicken, after it has drunk of the stream, lifts its head as if to thank God who provided the water. You have been fed, day by day, by an Almighty Power and yet you have never given in return even one of the small cattle of your flock for a burnt offering. This is true of some who attend our Houses of Prayer. They very rarely give to any collection for the cause of God. They are like the man in America, of whom someone has told us, who boasted that religion had been to him a very cheap thing, costing him only a few cents a year, of whom a good man said, “The Lord have mercy on your little stingy soul.” If a man has no more religion than that—if he has not a religion that will make him generous—he has no religion at all. I thought of that passage last Thursday night, while I was preaching—“you have bought Me no sweet cane with money.”

God needs nothing at your hands but He likes little presents. He loves, now and then, to receive of your substance. For you know that little as it is in His eyes, comparatively speaking, it is great because it comes from a friend. But some of you have never bought Him a sweet cane with your money—never sang a hymn to His praise. You have attributed everything to your good luck and have boasted that you have obtained everything you have by the labor of your own hands. You boast that you can say, “I have need to thank nobody for what I have.” That has been your spirit. You have given no thanks to God—the God of Heaven and earth. You have not glorified *Him*, but yourself—and yet the Most High is willing to pardon your sin in this thing if you are but sincerely penitent and ask for forgiveness, for He also says to you, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions.”

Yet, again, these people were a *useless people*. “Neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices. But you have made Me to serve with your sins.” It is well said the chief end of man is to glorify God. For that purpose God made the sun, moon and stars and all His works—that they might honor Him. And yet how many are there, even, perhaps among my Hearers this morning, who have never honored God in their lives? Ask yourselves what you have done? If you were to write your own history, it would be little better than that of Belzon’s toad which existed in the rock for three thousand years. You may have *lived* like it, but you have *done* nothing. What souls have you ever won to the Savior? How has His name been magnified by you? Have you ever served Him? How have you ever worked for Him? What have you done for God? Have you not been cumberers of the ground, taking the nourishment of the earth where some better tree might have grown and bearing no fruit for your Creator? For all you have done, the world might as well have never known you! You have not even been as much use as the glowworm, which, at least, serves to light the steps of the traveler. The world may possibly be glad to get rid of some of you and rejoice when you are gone. Perhaps you have assisted in destroying the souls of those with whom you have been connected in life. You can recollect the time when you led that young man first into the ale house. You can remember the hour when you swore a most horrible oath—your child was within hearing—and learned to also be profane. You may look upon some souls who are going even now to damnation through your example. And in Hell you may see spirits starting up from their iron beds and hear them shrieking in their woe—“Who is it that led me here and caused my soul to be destroyed?—you are the author of my damnation!” Is the indictment true? Will you not be compelled to plead guilty to the charge? Do you not even now repent of your great transgressions? Even if it is so, my Master authorizes me to say again,

“Thus says the Lord, I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions and will not remember your sins.”

Again—there are some who may be termed *sanctuary sinners*—sinners in Zion—and these are the worst of sinners. I can usually tell whether inquirers have been the children of pious parents or not, if, after a confession of great guilt they feel unable to proceed at the remembrance of what they once were. Groaning, sobbing and tears running down their cheeks are the silent language of their woe. When I see this, I always know that the language that succeeds will be—“I have been the child of pious parents. And I feel that I am one of the worst of sinners because I was brought up to religion. And yet I disregarded it and turned aside from it.” O yes, the worst of sinners are sinners in Zion because they sin against light and knowledge. They *force* their way to Hell, as John Bunyan says, *over* the Cross of Christ. And the worst way to Hell is to go by the Cross to it. Many of you now before me were consecrated to God by a beloved mother. And many of your fathers taught you to read and love the Scriptures of Truth. You were brought up like Timothy. You well understand the theory of the way of salvation and yet you come here, young men and women, some of you enemies of God and without Christ and despisers of His Word! Some of you are even scoffers, or if not actually scoffers, you say religion is nothing to you and by your actions, if not by your words, declare it is nothing to you that Jesus should die! Ah, when I speak to you, I should not forget myself. Should it ever be my lot to wake up in Hell, I should be among the most horribly damned there, for I had a most pious training and would be forced to take my place with the sanctuary sinners. And you that are such, whom I am addressing now, are you not afraid? Ask yourselves now, “Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire?” Do you tremble and shake for fear and with a penitent heart desire forgiveness? If so, then I say again, in my Master’s name—who spoke nothing but love and mercy to penitent sinners—who said, “Neither do I condemn you”—Jehovah now declares—“I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake and will not remember your sins.”

Yet, once more, we have here *some who have wearied God*—“you have made Me to serve with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities.” You see here the man who has been a professor of religion and can look back 20 years ago, when he was a member of a Christian Church. He was apparently walking in the fear of the Lord and all men thought he had received the Grace of God in Truth. But he has turned aside into the paths of sin. Sometimes his lips have been defiled with oaths and his soul the bond slave of sin. But even now he is often found in God’s House. Sometimes he is affected to tears and says within himself, “Surely

I will return unto the Lord, for then was it better with me than now." Self-condemned, he stands and weeps in the bitterness of his heart. And mark you, it may be this morning he has stepped into this vast assembly and that his knees are knocking one against the other. Yet it may be that his goodness shall prove like the morning cloud and the early dew, that passes away. Or it may be that the turning point is now come. "Now or never," as Baxter used to say. Now God or Satan, now accepted or condemned. Poor Backslider, by God's Grace return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon you! He will blot out all your sins. And so blot them out that He will not remember them against you any more forever.

These, then, are the characters who receive mercy. Some of you may say, "You seem to think us a bad lot"—and so I do. Others exclaim, "How can you talk to us in this way? We are an honest, moral and upright people." If so, then I have no Gospel to preach to you. You may go elsewhere if you will, for you may get moral sermons in scores of chapels if you want them. I am come in my Master's name to preach to sinners and so I will not say a word to you Pharisees except this—by so much as you think yourself righteous and holy, by so much shall you be cast out of God's Presence at last! Your sentence will be eternal banishment from the Presence of Him who has said to every repenting sinner, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions and will not remember your sins."

II. The second point is THE DEED OF MERCY. We have found out the persons to whom God will give mercy. Now what is mercy's deed? It is a deed of forgiveness and in speaking of it, I shall speak first of its being a *Divine forgiveness*—"I, even I, am He." Divine pardon is the only forgiveness possible. For no one can remit sin but God only. It matters not whether a Roman Catholic priest, or any other priest shall say in the name of God, "I absolve you from your transgressions," it is an abominable blasphemy! If a man has offended me *I* can forgive him, but if he has offended God, *I* cannot forgive him. The only discharge possible is pardon by God. But then it is the only pardon necessary. Suppose I have so sinned that the king or the queen will not pardon me, that my Brothers and Sisters will not forgive me and that I cannot pardon myself. If *God* absolves me, that is all the acquittal that will be necessary for my salvation! Perhaps I stand condemned by the law of my country—I am a murderer and must suffer on the scaffold. The queen refuses to pardon and perhaps she does right in such a refusal. But I do not need her forgiveness in order to enter Heaven. If God acquits me, that will be enough! Were I such a reprobate that all men hissed at me and wished me gone from existence. If I knew that they would never forgive my crime—though I ought to desire my fellow creatures' forgiveness—it would not be neces-

sary that I should have it to enter Heaven. If God says, I forgive you, that is enough. It is only God who can forgive satisfactorily because no human pardon can ease the troubled conscience. The self-righteous Pharisee may be content to give himself into the hands of a priest to be rocked to sleep in the cradle of delusion—but the poor convinced sinner needs something more than the arrogant dictum of a priest. Ten thousand priests, with all their enchantments, he feels to be all in vain, unless Jehovah, Himself, shall say, “I have blotted out your sins for My own sake”

Again—it is *surprising forgiveness*. For the text speaks as if God, Himself, were surprised that such sins should be remitted—“I, even, I.” It is so surprising that it is repeated in this way lest any of us should doubt it. And it is amazing to the poor sinner when first awakened to his sin and danger. It seems to be too good to be true and he “wonders to feel his own hardness depart.” The mercy offered is so overwhelming. It is said that Alexander, whenever he attacked a city, put a light before the gate of it. And if the inhabitants surrendered before the light was burnt out, he spared them. But if the light went out first, he put them all to death. But our Master is more merciful than this. For if He had manifested Grace, only, while a small light would burn, where should we have been? There are some here 70 or 80 years of age and God still has mercy on you. But there is a light you know which when once quenched, extinguishes all hope of pardon—the light of life! See then, gray-headed man, your candle is burnt almost to the socket—it has but the snuff left. Eighty years you have been here living in sin and yet mercy waits for you. But you shall soon depart—and mark me—there is no hope for you, then! But surprising Grace, mercy’s message is still proclaiming—

**“For while the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return.”**

Unutterable mercy! There is no sinner out of Hell so black but that God can wash him white. There is not out of the pit of Hell one so guilty that God is not able and *willing* to forgive him. For He declares the wondrous fact—“I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions.”

Notice once more, that it is a *present forgiveness*. It does not say I am He that *will* blot out your transgressions, but that blots them out *now*. There are some who believe, or at least seem to imagine, that it is not possible to know whether our sins are forgiven in this life. We may have hope, it is thought, that at last there will be a balance to strike on our side. But this will not satisfy the poor soul who is really seeking pardon and is anxious to find it. And God has, therefore, blessedly told us that He blots out our sin *now*—that He will do it at any moment the sinner believes. As soon as he trusts in His crucified God, all his sins are forgiven, whether past, present, or future! Even supposing that he is yet to commit them, they are all pardoned! If I live 80 years after I receive par-

don, doubtless I shall fall into many errors—but the one pardon will avail for them as well as for the past. Jesus Christ bore our punishment and God will never require at my hands the fulfillment of that Law which Christ has honored in my place—for then would there be injustice in Heaven—and that is far from God. It is no more possible for a pardoned man to be lost than for Christ to be lost, because Christ is the sinner's Surety. Jehovah will never require my debt to be paid twice. Let none impute injustice to the God of the whole earth—let none suppose that He will twice exact the penalty of one sin. If you have been the chief of sinners, you may have the chief of sinner's forgiveness—and God can bestow it now!

I cannot help noticing the *completeness of this forgiveness*. Suppose you call on your creditor and say to him, "I have nothing to pay with." "Well," he says, "I can issue a distress against you and place you in prison and keep you there." You still reply that you have nothing and he must do what he can. Suppose he should then say, "I will forgive all." You now stand amazed and say, "Can it be possible that you will give me that great debt of a thousand pounds?" He replies, "Yes, I will." "But how am I to know it?" Here is the note—he takes it and crosses it all out and hands it back to you and says, "Here is a full discharge, I have blotted it all out." So does the Lord deal with penitents. He has a book in which all your debts are written—but with the blood of Christ, He crosses out the handwriting of ordinances which is there written against you. The note is destroyed and He will not demand payment for it again. The devil will sometimes insinuate to the contrary, as he did to Martin Luther—"Bring me the catalog of my sins," said Luther. And he brought a scroll black and long. "Is that all?" said Luther. "No," said the devil. And he brought yet another. "And now," said the heroic saint of God, "write at the foot of the scroll—"The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses from all sin.' That is a full discharge."

III. Now, very briefly, the third thing—THE REASON FOR MERCY. Says some poor sinner, "Why should God forgive me? I am sure there is no reason why He should, for I have never done anything to deserve His mercy." Hear what God says, "I am not about to forgive you for your sake, but for My sake." "But, Lord, I shall not be thankful enough." "I am not about to pardon you because of your gratitude, but for My name's sake." "But, Lord, if I am taken into Your Church I can do very little for Your cause in future years, for I have spent my best days in the devil's service. Surely the impure dregs of my life cannot be sweet to You, O God." "I will not engage to forgive you for your sake, but for My own. I do not need you," says God, "I can do as well without you as with you. The cattle upon a thousand hills are Mine. And if I pleased I could create a

whole race of men for My service who would be as renowned as the greatest monarchs, or the most eloquent preachers—but I can do as well without them, as with them. And I forgive you, therefore, for My sake.” Is there not hope for a guilty sinner here? It cannot be pleaded by anyone that his sins are too great to be pardoned! The amount of guilt is hereby put entirely out of consideration, seeing that God forgives not on account of the sinner, but for His own sake! Did you ever hear of a physician visiting a man upon a sick bed, when the poor man said, “I have nothing to give you for your attention to me.” “But,” says the doctor, “I did not ask for anything. I attend you from pure benevolence. And moreover to prove my skill. It will make no difference to me how long you live, I love to try my skill and let the world know that I have power to heal diseases. I want to get myself a name.” And so God says, I desire to have a name for mercy, so that the worse you are, the more God is honored in your salvation. Go, then, to Christ, poor Sinner—naked, filthy, poor, wretched, vile, lost, dead—come as you are, for there is nothing required of you, except the *need* of Him—

**“This He gives you,
Tis His Spirit’s rising beam.”**

“For My own sake,” says God, “I will forgive.”

IV. Now to conclude—THE PROMISE OF MERCY. “And will not remember your sins.” There are some things which even God cannot do. Though it is true He is Omnipotent, yet there are some things He cannot do. God cannot lie—He cannot forsake His people—He cannot disown His Covenant. And this is one of the things it might be thought He could not do—that is, *forget*. Is it impossible for God to forget? We finite creatures forget many things, but can the Almighty ever do so? God who counts the stars and calls them all by their names—who knows how many microscopic organisms there are in the mighty ocean—who notices every grain of dust that floats in the summer air and is acquainted with every leaf of the forest—can He cease to remember? Perhaps we may answer, “No.” Not as to the absolute fact of the committal of the deed. But there *are* senses in which the expression is entirely accurate. In what sense *are* we to understand God’s forgetfulness of our sins?

First of all, He will not exact *punishment for them when we come before His judgment bar at last*. The Christian will have many accusers. The devil will come and say, “that man is a great sinner.” “I don’t remember it,” says God. “That man rebelled against You and cursed You,” says the accuser. “I do not remember it,” says God, “for I have said I will not remember his sins.” Conscience says, “Ah, but Lord, it is true, I did sin against You and that most grievously.” “I do not remember it,” says God—“I said, I will not remember his sins.” Let all the demons in the pit of Hell clamor in God’s ears and let them vehemently shout out a list of

our sins—we may stand boldly forth at that great day and sing, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” for God does not even *remember* their sin! The Judge does not remember it and who, then, shall punish? Unrighteous as we were. Wicked as we have been. Yet He has forgotten it all. Who, then, can bring to remembrance what God has forgotten? He says, “I will cast your sins into the depths of the sea,” not into the shallows where they might be fished up again, but into the depths of the sea, where Satan, himself, cannot find them. There are no such things as sins recorded against God’s people. Christ has so taken them away that sin becomes a nonentity to Christians—it is all gone and through Jesus’ blood they are clean!

The second meaning of this is, *I will not remember your sins to suspect you*. There is a father and he has a wayward son who went away that he might live a life of looseness and profligacy. But after a while he comes home again in a state of penitence. The father says, “I will forgive you.” But he says the next day to his younger son, “There is business to be done at a distant town tomorrow and here is the money for you to do it with.” He does not trust the returned prodigal with it. “I have trusted him before with money,” says the father to himself, “and he robbed me and it makes me afraid to trust him again.” But our heavenly Father says, “I will not remember your sins.” He not only forgives the past, but trusts His people with precious talents. He never suspects them. He has never one suspicious thought. He loves them just as much as if they had never gone astray. He will employ them to preach His Gospel. He will put them into the Sunday school and make them servants of His Son—for He says, “I will not remember your sins.”

Again—*He will not remember in His distribution of the recompense of the reward*. The earthly parent will kindly pass over the faults of the prodigal—but you know when that father comes to die and is about to make his will, the lawyer sitting by his side—he says, “I shall give so much to William, who always behaved well. And my other son shall have so-and-so. My daughter, she shall have so much. But there is that prodigal. I have spent a large sum upon him when he was young and he wasted what he received. Though I have taken him, again, into favor—and for the present he is going on well—still I think I must make a little difference between him and the others. “I think it would not be fair—though I have forgiven him—to treat him precisely as the rest.” And so the lawyer puts him down for a few hundred pounds, while the others, perhaps, get their thousands. But God will not remember your sins like that! He gives all an inheritance. He will give Heaven to the chief of sinners as well as to the chief of saints. When He divides the portion to His children it may be He will put Mary Magdalene as high as He does Peter

and the good thief as high as He does John. Yes, the malefactor who died on a cross is as much in the sight of God as the most moral person that ever lived. Here is a blessed forgetfulness! What do you say, poor Sinner? Is your heart drawn by a mysterious inspiration to the foot of the Cross? Then I thank my Master! For I trust the one objective of my life is to win souls for Christ and if I may be blessed in that, my life shall be happy! Do you still say, “My sins are too great to be forgiven”? No, but O Man, as high as the Heaven is above the earth, so great is His mercy above your sins and so far does His Grace exceed your thoughts! “Oh, but,” you say, “He will not accept *me*.” What then is the meaning of this text—“He is able to save unto the uttermost.” Or this—“Whoever comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” And again—“Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” Do you still say, “This does not include me”? Oh be not so faithless, but rather believe! Oh, had I the power, God knows I would weep myself away in order to win your souls—

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

I can do nothing but preach God’s Gospel. But since the moment Christ forgave me, I cannot help speaking of His love. I turned away from His Gospel and would have none of His reproofs. I cared not for His voice or His Word. That blessed Bible lay unread. These knees refused to bend in prayer and my eyes looked on vanity. Has He not pardoned? Has He not forgiven? Yes! Then sooner may this tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth than cease to proclaim free Grace in all its mighty displays of electing, redeeming, pardoning and saving mercy!

Oh, how loud I ought to sing, seeing I am out of Hell and delivered from condemnation! And if I am out of Hell, why should not you be? Why should I be saved and not another? It was for sinners, remember, that Jesus came. Mary Magdalene, Saul of Tarsus—the very chief of sinners, were accepted and why do you foolishly conclude that you are cast out? Oh, poor Penitent, if you perish, you will be the FIRST penitent who ever did so! God give you His blessing, my dear Friends, for Christ’s sake. Amen. Amen.

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

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

GOD'S NON-REMEMBRANCE OF SIN NO. 1685

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 22, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake,
and will not remember your sins.”
Isaiah 43:25.***

***“For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”
Jeremiah 31:31.***

***“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their
iniquities will I remember no more.”
Hebrews 8:12.***

***“And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”
Hebrews 10:17.***

You see these texts are all alike in their declaration that the Lord will not remember His people's sins. I have taken four of them to make the basis of my sermon firm as adamant. It is written, “In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.” Here then, you have Isaiah and Jeremiah, two Old Testament saints, affirming the same thing—is this not enough? Added to these, you have the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who, in all probability, was Paul, and these three agree in one. Their united testimony is that Jehovah, the Lord God, will forgive the sins of His people, and do it in so complete a way that He will remember their iniquities no more. Now, if I did not preach at all, but merely gave you these four texts to consider, I think the service ought to be full of comfort to all who know their guiltiness and are anxious to obtain mercy.

That article in the creed is too little thought of—“I believe in the forgiveness of sin.” Men flippantly declare that they believe it when they are not conscious of any great sin of their own. But when his transgression is made apparent to a man, and his iniquity comes home to him, it is quite another matter. Does any unregenerate person believe in the forgiveness of sin? I think not. No man, in sincerity, believes it until God, the Holy Spirit, has taught him its truth, and has written it upon his heart. No revealed Truth of God is more generally doubted and disbelieved than this, the plainest of all revelations, that the Lord is gracious and full of compassion and ready to pass by the iniquities of His people! Men disbelieve for themselves and doubt it as to others when the matter is fairly tested.

When a man's sins are set before him in the light of God's Countenance, his first instinct is to fear that they are altogether unpardonable. If he does not state his unbelief in so many words, yet, in the secret of his soul, that dreadful conviction takes hold upon him and darkens every window of hope. He looks to the Law of God and while he looks in that direction, he will certainly conclude that there is no pardon, for the Law

knows nothing of forgiveness. It is, "Do this and you shall live. Disobey and you shall die." To convict and to condemn is all the Law was sent for. By the Law is the *knowledge* of sin and by its power sinners are shut up in the prison house of despair, from which only the Lord Jesus can deliver us.

What the Law asserts, the understanding, also, supports, for within the awakened man there is the memory of his past offenses—and on account of these his conscience passes judgment upon his soul—and condemns it even as the Law does. "God must punish wickedness," is the utterance of conscience. "He were not the judge of all the earth if He did not do right and if He does right, He must visit my transgressions with the threatened penalty." Thus, the thunder of Sinai is echoed by conscience. Meanwhile, many natural impressions and instincts assist and increase the clamors of conscience, for the man knows within himself, as the result of observation and experience, that sin must bring its own punishment.

He perceives that is a knife which cuts the hand of him that handles it; a sword that kills the man who fights with it. He feels that he cannot, himself, readily pass by offenses committed by his fellow men and so he concludes that the Lord cannot willingly forgive. That part of the hardness of his heart goes to deepen the conviction that God will not pass by his transgression and he is, therefore, terribly dismayed and hopeless of mercy. Meanwhile the devil comes in with all the horrors of the infernal Pit and threaten speedy destruction!

That same evil spirit who once pictured sin in glowing colors and set before the sinner the pleasureableness of unrighteousness, now comes in and turns accuser, forestalls the final sentence and hardens the man's heart by the assurance that there is no hope! Bunyan very aptly pictures Diabolus, when he was attacking the town of Mansoul, as making Captain Past-Hope unfurl the red colors which were carried by Mr. Despair. And he also speaks of the roaring of the tyrant's train, which sounded forth terribly, especially by night, so that the men of Mansoul had always in their ears the sound of Hell-fire! Hell-fire! And all this to keep them from submitting to their gracious Prince.

Thus, for once, the devil craftily cooperates with the Law of God and with conscience—these would drive men to despair, but Satan would go further and compel them to despair as touching the Lord, Himself, so as to believe that pardon for transgression is quite impossible. The convinced sinner is able to believe that mercy may be shown to others, but as for himself, he signs his own death warrant and labors under the full persuasion that the acts of God's mercy can never extend to him. No stocks can hold a man so fast as his own guilty fears! The hangman's whip never tortured men so cruelly as does an awakened conscience.

With the desponding I shall try to deal at this time and may the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, help me to console them.

I. Our first theme is this—THERE IS FORGIVENESS. Our four texts all teach us that doctrine with great distinctness. Is not that a sublime assurance, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins"? Does not Paul put it sweetly as from God's own mouth, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no

more." Remember how the Psalmist, in the 130th Psalm makes this a special note of thanksgiving—"There is forgiveness with You that You may be feared." Let us adore the Lord because He delights in mercy!

For a minute or two let me try to prove—may it be to your satisfaction, O you despairing ones—that there is forgiveness. This appears, first, in the treatment of sinners by God, inasmuch as He spares their forfeited lives. When our first parents had transgressed, they came at once under desert of penalty. The Lord visited the garden and convinced the offenders of their transgression. But, instead of then and there pronouncing their doom and casting them forever away from His Presence, He talked to them of a certain Seed of the woman that should bruise the serpent's head. The curse which must fall, fell obliquely, descending, first, upon the soil and secondarily upon the man—first upon the serpent and more gently on the woman, whose very pain and travail were to bring forth deliverance for the race and vengeance on the enemy.

The man and the woman each had a separate sentence in labor and in childbirth, but, oh, how mild were these sentences compared with what they might have been! How joyful is the fact that, over all, there was the sparing hand of God letting them live and His cheering voice promising them ultimate deliverance! Would the Lord thus have spared them if He had not meant to show mercy? Would He not have crushed a sinful race, even in its egg, and have blotted out forever those of whom, not long after, it agonized Him that He had made them upon the earth? Assuredly the Lord meant pardon when He tarried to enquire, "Adam, where are you?" In the morning of human history the Lord's long-suffering displayed itself and gave promise of larger Grace!

The same is true of you and of me. If God had no pardons, would He, not long ago, have sent us down as cumberers of the ground? We sinned early in life—perhaps we sinned grossly in our youthful days—doing evil with great wantonness and willfulness according to the obstinacy of our hearts. Why did He not, then, say, "I will take these away. They will only go from bad to worse and they will infect others with their vices. Therefore will I root them out lest they become injurious to those about them and a curse to future generations"? But no, even yonder blasphemer was not smitten to death when he imprecated damnation upon himself! Yon Sabbath-breaker was not cut down when he made the Lord's holy Day to be an opportunity for wickedness! He that lied was not made a dreadful example of judgment like Ananias and Sapphira! He that stood out to oppose God was not swallowed up quickly like Korah, Dathan and Abiram! No, all these have been spared, spared to this day—and to what end, do you think? Surely, the long-suffering of God is repentance and repentance is mercy! God waits long because He wills not the death of any, but that they turn to Him and live.

In the second place, why did God institute the Ceremonial Law if there were no ways of pardoning transgression? Why the bullocks and the lambs offered in sacrifice? Why the shedding of blood, if God did not intend to blot out sin? Why the burnt offerings in which God accepted man's gift, if man could not be accepted? Assuredly He could not be accepted if regarded as guilty! Why the peace offering in which God feasted

with the offerer and the two united in feeding upon the one sacrifice? How could this be, unless God intended to forgive and enter into fellowship with men? I confess I cannot understand the institution of the priesthood and sacrifice unless mercy was intended thereby.

Again, why was there a Tabernacle for God to dwell with His people if He would not forgive their iniquities? How could He dwell with unforgiven men? Why was there a Mercy Seat? Why was there a High Priest ordained from among men who should enter into the Holy Place and make a typical atonement? Does not a type imply the existence of that which is typified? Why the scapegoat to take away sin in symbol, if sin cannot be taken away in reality? Why the burning of the offering outside the gate in order that sin might be put away from God's people, if it could not be put away? Certainly the evident design of the whole Mosaic economy was to reveal to man the existence of mercy in the heart of God and the effectual operation of that mercy in washing away sin!

Further than this, dear Friends, if there were no forgiveness of sin, why has the Lord given to sinful men exhortations to repent? Why does the Lord say, "Turn you to your God: keep mercy and judgment and wait upon the God continually"? Why does He say to men, "O Israel, return unto the Lord your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips"? Why does He cry, "Therefore also now, says the Lord, turn you even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God"? Is it not because it can be added, "for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repents Him of the evil"?

Is it not true, even as Elihu said, "He looks upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the Pit, and his life shall see the light"? If sin could not be pardoned, why, under the Gospel, are we bid to urge men to repent of sin, to confess their sins, and to forsake them? Might not the Lord have said, "Let them alone: it is of no use their repenting: no mercy is in reserve for them, therefore let them continue in their iniquity till their own ways destroy them"? Even John the Baptist's cry of, "Repent! Repent!" is a note of hope to transgressors. The times of their ignorance, God has winked at, but now under Gospel rule, He commands all men everywhere to repent, because repentance has the promise of the blotting out of sin.

If you will think of it, you will see that there must be pardon in the hands of God, or why the institution of religious worship among us to this day? Why are we allowed to pray in secret, if we cannot be forgiven? What is the value of prayer, at all, if that first and most vital favor of forgiven sin is utterly beyond our reach? Why are we allowed to sing the praises of God? Why has the Holy Spirit given us the Book of Psalms? Why are we bid to use Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs? God cannot accept the praises of unforgiven men! Worshippers must be clean before they draw near to His altar with their incense! If, then, I am taught to sing and give thanks to God, it must be because "His mercy endures forever!"

Does God expect the *condemned* to praise Him? Will He shut us up in the prison for certain death and yet expect us to chant hallelujahs to His praise? It cannot be so! The very ordaining of prayer and praise indicates a design of mercy to the sons of men. Why, dear Friends, are there two special ordinances of God's house if, in that house, there is no remission of sin? Why the Baptism of Believers? It signifies our death in Christ to sin. But how so if we cannot be dead to sin? It signifies, typically, the washing away of sin. But to what end and to what use, except of delusion, if there is no washing away of sin by God's abounding Grace? What does the Lord's Supper mean, that eating of bread with God and drinking of the cup in familiar fellowship with Him? Why that showing forth the death of Christ until He comes if, in that death there is no virtue and if God cannot deal with men on terms of love? Surely the ordinances of the Lord's house are full of invitation to such as bemoan their transgressions and are willing to come to Jesus for pardon and renewal!

The very existence of a Church, of a Gospel ministry and the toleration of Divine worship are promises and prophecies of the forgiveness of sins! What assurance of pardon lies in the ordaining, sealing and ratifying of the Covenant of Grace! The first Covenant left us under condemnation, but one main design of the New Covenant is to bring us into justification. Why a New Covenant at all, if our unrighteousness can never be removed? Is not this the tenor of the Covenant as stated in our second text? Let the Holy Spirit, Himself, be a witness unto us as we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put My Laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." What do You say to this, O despairing one? Will you dream that God can lie and even make a Covenant merely to mock poor sinners with a groundless hope? Oh, think not so, for there is forgiveness!

Furthermore, my Brothers and Sisters, why did Christ institute the Christian ministry and send forth His servants to proclaim His Gospel? For what is the Gospel but a declaration that Christ is exalted on high to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins? Is not this a great promise—that God will put away our transgressions upon our believing in Jesus Christ, our Great Sacrifice? "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," for if it were not so, then has the Cross become null and void and the death of the Only-Begotten a hideous mistake! To what end those bleeding wounds? To what end that crown of thorns? To what end that cry, "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani"? To what end that shout of, "It is finished"? The Cross is the grandest of realities and the core of its meaning is the removal of sin by Him who bore our sins in His own body on the tree! Assuredly there is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness—heavy-laden Soul—that fountain is opened for you!

Now, once in the history of the world has the Son of God appeared to put away sin by the Sacrifice of Himself—poor guilty one, if you believe your guilt was put away by His atoning death! Why are we so earnestly commanded to preach this Gospel to every creature, if the creature hearing it and believing it must, nevertheless, still lie under his sin? Our Lord Jesus has commanded that repentance and remission of sins should be

preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem—why is this, if there is no remission of sins? The genuine love of God is manifested in His desire that to the utmost ends of the earth it should be proclaimed, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.”—

**“Carry, carry, you winds, the story,
And you, you waters, roll,
Till like a sea of Glory
It spreads from pole to pole!”**

There is forgiveness! Through the name of Jesus, whoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins. “Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.” “He that believes in Him is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the Law of Moses.” Paul says, “God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven you,” and it is even so.

Now, you do not need any more arguments, but if you did, I would venture to offer this. Why are we taught in that blessed model of prayer which our Savior has left us, to say, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,” or, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us”? It is evident that God means us to give a true and hearty absolution to all who have offended *us*. He does not intend that we should *play* at forgiveness, but should really, and from our hearts, most freely and sincerely forgive all those who have done evil towards us in any way. Yes, but then He has linked *with* that forgiveness, our prayer for mercy, teaching us to ask that *He* would forgive us as we forgive them. If, then, our forgiveness is real, so is His! If ours is sincere, so is His! If ours is complete, so is His—only much more so, inasmuch as the Great God of All is so much more gracious than we poor, fallen creatures ever can be!

A star of hope shines upon the sinner in the Lord’s Prayer in that particular petition, for it seems to say, “There is a real, true and hearty forgiveness of God toward you, even as there is in your heart a real, true and hearty forgiveness of those who offend you.” Mind you do really and heartily forgive others, for your own pardon is to be measured thereby. See well to this. The best of all arguments is this—God has actually forgiven multitudes of sinners. We have read in Holy Scripture of men who walked with God and had this testimony, that they pleased God. But they could not have pleased God if their sins still provoked Him to wrath—therefore He must have put their sins away. Those saints of the Old Testament who were evidently Divinely favored; with whom God held sweet communion; to whom He gave marvelous power in prayer; in whom He showed the majesty of faith—all those must have been forgiven men—for the Lord could not have walked with them, dwelt in them, worked by them and displayed His Glory in them if He had not forgiven them.

But I need not talk of past ages! There are many sitting among you, this day, who, if you will ask them, will tell you that they enjoy a clear sense of forgiven sin. They remember well that happy day when Jesus washed their sins away! And their state of peace, of joyful privilege and of expectant hope is, to them, intensely delightful—and may be to you an evident testimony that remission of sin is a real experience—and is known among God’s people at this day. Sin can still be put away! The spot which seemed indelible can be washed out till all is white as snow through the precious

blood of Christ! Our texts, all of them, declare it, saying with one breath, "I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more." May God the Holy Spirit make use of these arguments for the comfort of every seeking sinner here and of many more who shall read this discourse.

II. Secondly, THIS FORGIVENESS IS TANTAMOUNT TO FORGETTING SIN. This is a wonder to me, a wonder of wonders—that God should say that He will do what, in some sense, He cannot do—that He should use speech which includes an impossibility and yet that it should be strictly true as He intends it. God's pardon of sin is so complete that He, Himself, describes it as not *remembering* our iniquity and transgression. I have said that there is an impossibility in it and so there is, because the Lord cannot, in strict accuracy of speech, forget *anything*—forgetfulness is an infirmity and God has no infirmities!

The Lord does not exercise memory as you and I do. We recall the past, but He has no past—all things are present with Him. God sees everything at once by an intuitive perception—the past, the present, the future are before Him at a glance. We may not speak, except after the manner of men, of the Lord God as having memory, and yet how blessed it is that He should, Himself, use the speech which is current among ourselves and represent Himself after the manner of a man, and then say, "Your sins and their iniquities will I remember no more forever." He wishes us to know that His pardon is so true and deep that it amounts to an absolute oblivion—a *total* forgetting of all the wrong-doing of the pardoned ones!

You know what *we* do when we exercise memory. To speak popularly, a man lays up a thing in his mind—but when sin is forgiven, it is not laid up in God's mind. A certain matter has happened and we remember it—storing it away in our memory. We read that, "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." We make a kind of storeroom of our memory and there things are preserved, like fruit in autumn, stored up to be used, by-and-by. We reckon a man to be fortunate who has a good memory, so that he can lay by things in his brain where he can get at them in time of need. The Lord will not do this with our sins! He will not store them in His archives! He will not give them house-room. The record of our sin shall not be laid up in the Divine treasury—we shall not cry with Job, "My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and You sew up my iniquity."

As for the ungodly, their sins are written with an iron pen and the measure of their iniquity is daily filling, till it is poured out upon their own heads! Their sins have gone before them to the Judgment Seat and are crying aloud for vengeance. As for God's people, their case is otherwise—the Lord imputes not their iniquities to them and does not treasure them up against a day of wrath. Of course the Lord remembers their evil doings, in the sense that He cannot forget anything. But judicially as a Judge, He forgets the transgressions of the pardoned ones. They are not before Him in court, and come not under His official sight.

In remembering, men also consider and meditate on things, but the Lord will not think over the sins of His people. A grievous wrong is apt to engross *our* thoughts. It often casts its shadow upon the mind and you cannot get rid of it. I have known persons brood over an offense as a hen

gathers her chickens under her wings. The wrong grows worse as they think it over. They carefully observe the offense from different points of view and, whereas they were indignant at first, they nurse their wrath and make it so hot that it turns to fury! At first they would have been satisfied with an apology, but when they have brooded over the injustice, it seems so atrocious that they demand *vengeance* on the offender. The merciful Lord does not do so to those who repent. No, for He says, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

The Great Father's heart is not brooding over the injuries we have done—His infinite mind is not revolving within itself the tale of our iniquities. Ah, no! If we have fled to Christ for refuge, the Lord remembers our sin no more! The record of our iniquity is taken away and the Judge has no judicial memory of it. Sometimes you have almost forgotten a thing and it is quite gone out of your mind—but an event happens which recalls it so vividly that it seems as if it were perpetrated but yesterday. God will not recall the sin of the pardoned. I am blest, thank God, with a splendid memory for forgetting what anybody says or does against me. I forget it, not because I *try* to do so, but because I cannot help it and, therefore, I claim no credit for it. The other day when I was speaking kindly with a person, I was reminded by another that this man had done me a great injustice years ago. I had no recollection of it and when it was brought before my mind, I was grateful that I had forgotten it because I could honestly treat the man as a friend, as indeed he now is.

The occurrence was banished from my mind till my memory was refreshed about it. The gracious Lord can never be refreshed in His memory concerning the sins of His people—they are gone past recall—"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." Neither will there be a dark day when, all on a sudden, the Lord will say, "I have been treating this man graciously, but now I recollect what He did in former years and I must change My tone. I recollect that oath he swore, that criminal indulgence into which he fell, that drunkenness, that piece of dishonesty, that awful hypocrisy. And though I have been gentle with him, I must, in justice, change My course and punish him." No! No! This will never be the case with our forgiving Lord!

"Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." "No more!" Let those words go echoing through the chambers of despair—"NO MORE!" Is there not music in the two syllables? God will never have His memory refreshed. The transgressions of His people are dead and buried with Christ and they shall never have a resurrection! "I will not remember their sins." Furthermore, this not remembering means that God will never seek any further atonement. The Apostle says—"Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." The one Sacrifice of Jesus has made an end of sin! Under the old Law they offered an expiatory sacrifice, but they must necessarily offer it again and again. There was remembrance of sins made every year on the Day of Atonement—but now the Blessed One has entered, once and for all, within the veil and has put away sin forever by the Sacrifice of Himself, so that there remains no more a need of a sacrifice for sins!

The Lord will never demand another victim, nor seek another expiatory offering. The sufferings of Jesus are so all-sufficient that no Believer shall be made to suffer penalty for His unrighteousness. Look at that fiction of "purgatory" which is coming back into the English Church and is hankered after by certain Dissenters. They are beginning to believe in a modified form of "purgatory" and this is a dark sign of the times. "Purgatory" has always paid the Pope well—it is the fattest province of his dominions and has furnished his treasury plentifully. But how can God's people go to "purgatory"? For if they go there at all, they go there for sins which God does not remember and so He cannot give a reason for sending them there! I have no authentic communication by which to describe "purgatory," but by Romish report it is a terrible place.

Now, if true Believers go there, then God either *does* remember their sins, which He says He will *not* do, or else He punishes them for sins which He does not remember! Did you ever hear of a judge sending a man to prisons for a crime which the judge did not remember? Does God forgive and forget and yet punish? Do not, I pray you, believe, in any shape or form, in a middle state in which sin can be atoned for or the condition of a man altered. When you die, you shall either go to Heaven or to Hell—and that straight away—and your state, in either case, will be fixed, and fixed *eternally* without the possibility of a change. This doctrine is the cornerstone of Protestantism and if that is taken away, there is a vacuum left in which all the evil doctrines of the papacy will speedily find a nest. Stand to the Truth of God revealed in Scripture and to that only! The wicked shall go away unto everlasting punishment and the righteous unto eternal life. If you are forgiven, God will never remember your sins—so that in no shape or form shall you ever have to make an atonement for them.

Again, when it is said that God forgets our sins, it signifies that He will never punish us for them. How can He, when He has forgotten them? Next, that He will never upbraid us with them—"He gives liberally and upbraids not." How can He upbraid us with what He has forgotten? He will not even lay them to our charge! See what Ezekiel says—"All his transgressions that he has committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him." The Apostle bravely demanded, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Shall God do it? It is God that justifies," how then, can He accuse? Shall Christ do it? He is the Judge, but He cannot accuse, for, "it is Christ that died, yes, rather that is risen again, who sits at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." Shall Jesus intercede for us and yet accuse us? Shall there come sweet waters and bitter waters out of the same fountain? No, that cannot be! The Lord has forgotten our sins and, therefore, He can never lay them to our charge.

Once more, when the Lord says, "I will not remember their sins," what does it mean but this—that He will not treat us less generously on account of our having been great sinners. You that have been the chief of sinners, He will not put you in the second class of Christians and treat you with a sort of second-rate love. He will not even remember that you have sinned, but treat you as if you had been perfectly innocent and were totally clear from all iniquity. He will not remember your faults. Why, look

how the Lord takes some of the biggest sinners and uses them for His Glory! Is not this a proof that He has ceased to remember their sins? When I think of Peter standing up on the day of Pentecost and 3,000 being converted under His first sermon, I think no more of Peter's failure and the cock crowing! I can see that the Lord has forgotten His threefold denial and placed Him in the front to be a soul-winner.

But the Lord Jesus not only uses His people, He honors them greatly. What honors He put upon the Apostles, those men that forsook Him and fled in the hour of His passion! He says to each of them, "I will not remember your sins," for He makes them leaders of His hosts, though they have been a parcel of runaways and have forsaken their Master in His hour of peril. See how condescendingly the Lord has taken some, here present, and has honored them, and given them to bring blood-bought souls to Himself in proof that He has wholly forgotten their sins! And then, think about that He should adopt us into His family—we that were His enemies—rebellious and children of the devil! Is it not wonderful that He puts us among the children and even makes us "heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ"?

Surely, when that testament was written by which He made us heirs with Christ, it was clear proof that the Father did not, any more, remember our iniquities! To put down such blacks in the same testament with His own dear Son and then to say, "I will receive them graciously and love them freely," this is surprising Grace! Brothers and Sisters, infinite Love has made us to be "accepted in the Beloved," comely with His comeliness which He has put upon us; precious in His sight and honorable, jewels in His case and a crown of glory unto Him! Is not this the sign of perfect forgiveness? With His whole heart He watches over us to do us good. Surely, with blessing He blesses us, yes, and makes us blessings! We shall have Grace on earth and glory in Heaven! He will seat us, as objects of His Grace in Heaven, not in an inferior place in the suburbs or behind the door—but He will cause us to sit with Jesus on His Throne, even as He has sat down with the Father on His Throne. We shall be with Him where He is and behold His Glory, and be forever peers of the heavenly realm.

Surely all this proves that He has altogether blotted out our sins and has determined to treat us as if we had been perfectly innocent. Indeed, the saints are without fault before the Throne of God, for they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! The Believer's sins no longer exist and, "if they are searched for, they shall not be found; yes, they shall not be, says the Lord."—

***"Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
And who has Grace so rich and free?"***

Oh, that God would comfort His mourners by this sermon! I have a notion in my head that if when I was under the sense of sin I could have heard this subject handled, I should have found liberty at once! Though I had been hidden away in the back seat of the gallery out of sight, if only I had heard of such mercy as this, I should have jumped at it! I cannot tell how it might have been, for I do not remember hearing so plain a declaration of boundless Grace.

Oh, how I pray and hope that the Lord will lead some poor soul to accept this unspeakable blessing! Come, you consciously guilty ones, and

touch the silver scepter of your reigning Savior! He is ready to forgive—the Atonement is made and accepted—the Savior who died has risen again! Come to Him and be at peace! Oh, that the blessed Spirit may lead you to feel the power of the reconciling blood!

III. I finish with the blessed fact that FORGIVENESS IS TO BE HAD. How is it to be had? Let me speak briefly and you catch up every word and think over it. Forgiveness is to be had through the atoning blood. Why does God forget our sin? Is it not on this wise? He looks upon His Son, Jesus, bearing our sin. Did you ever think of what God the Father sees in Jesus on the Cross? Why you and I have seen enough to make us break our hearts, but when the Father saw His only-begotten Son suffering, even to death, it made such an infinite impression upon His great soul that He forgot the sins for which His Son gave His life!

That new thing coming in, the most wonderful thing that God has on His heart, the death of the Only-Begotten, made a clean erasure in the eternal memory of all the transgressions of those for whom Christ died. In such way does He describe to us the mystery of forgiving love. Dear hearts, get under the shadow of the Redeemer's Cross! Trust Jesus Christ, now, and that blood is, then and there, applied to *you*, and your sins shall be remembered no more, forever, because He remembers His Son's suffering in your place and stead. Next, remember that this forgetfulness of God is caused by overflowing mercy. God is love—"His mercy endures forever"—and He desired vent for His love. His great heart was filled with a desire to display the Grace which pervaded His Nature—He must be gracious and He would be gracious— and because of that Divine resolve, He cast our sins behind His back.

Come, then, if you wish to have your sins forgiven! Come and bow before the mercy of God! Plead not merit but mercy! Do not dare to approach the Lord on terms of Law, but draw near on terms of Grace. Here is a word for you which was said by an eminent saint when approaching his God—"Lord, I am Hell, but you are Heaven." Here is a full description of yourself and, as blessed a description of God as may be! Come, then, poor Hell-deserving one and hide yourself in the Heaven of everlasting love—and it shall be a haven of peace to you forever! How does God forget sin? Well, it is through His everlasting love! He loved His people *before* they fell and He loved His people *when* they fell. "I have loved you," says He, "with an everlasting love"—and when that great love of His had led Him to give His Son Jesus for His people's ransom, it made Him also forget His people's sins.

The Lord so loved His chosen that He said, "He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither has He seen perverseness in Israel." Having shown His love by the gift of Jesus, that love has covered a multitude of sins. Do you not see, then, that if you want to enter into this pardon, this forgetfulness of sin, you must come to God on the terms of His free love and ask Him to forgive you because His name is Love? "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions."

Again, God forgets His people's sins because of the complacency He has in them as renewed and sanctified creatures. When He hears their cries of

repentance; when He hears their declarations of faith; when He sees the love which His Spirit has worked in them; when He beholds them growing more and more like His dear Son, He delights in them! His joy is fulfilled in them. He is well-pleased with them and communes lovingly with them. He observes their signs of Grace and accepts them—and remembers their iniquities no more! Oh, then, you must come to God and ask Him to change you and to renew you, that He may have delight in you! Come and beseech Him that you may be born again and made new creatures in Christ Jesus, for this must be if you are to be forgiven. There cannot be pardon of sin where there is not a renewal of the heart—and that must come from God by His sovereign Grace alone.

Oh, you that would have pardon of sin, come for it, this morning, in God's appointed way. "Repent," He says! That is, be sorry for your sins. Change your mind about them and hate them, though once you loved them. Then confess them, for He says, "only *acknowledge* your iniquity." Get home and mourn your transgression before your offended Lord, sincerely, fully and with deep regret—and then He will take away your sins, for it is written he that confesses and forsakes his sins shall find mercy. This is His way, then. Acknowledge that you are guilty, but ask that you may be guilty no more. Chief of all, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," and that saving includes an act of amnesty and oblivion as to all your sinful thoughts, words, and acts!

Trust the Lord Jesus Christ! That is the pith of it. Trust yourself in the hands that were nailed to the Cross for you! Trust yourself to the love of the heart which was pierced with a spear and forthwith there came out blood and water! Have you done this? Then you are, even now, forgiven! Your sin has gone, it is cast into the depths of the sea! Go down those aisles with your heart dancing within you for delight, for there is nothing laid against you since you are a Believer in the Lord Jesus! God imputes not iniquity to the man who has cast Himself on the Savior. Go, therefore, but never forget your sin, nor the mercy which has forgiven it!

Always repent and always praise the Lord. Honor the forgetfulness of God in not remembering your faults and, from now on, tell this blessed news to everyone you see—there is forgiveness, such forgiveness as was never heard of until God, Himself, revealed it by saying of His people, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." God bless you dear Friends, from now on and forever. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Jeremiah 31:15-37.*
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—152, 202, 371.**

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A LOVING ENTREATY

NO. 1743

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 7, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare you,
that you may be justified.”
Isaiah 43:26.***

We shall mainly dwell upon the first invitation of the text—“Put Me in remembrance.” If you will cast your eyes upon the Scripture, itself, you will be struck with its singular position—it makes a paradox of the most striking kind if you read it in connection with the preceding clause—“I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins. Put Me in remembrance.” [Remind Me.] This looks like a contradiction, but, as a wise teacher will win attention by dark sayings, so does the Word of God abound in expressions by which thought is excited and the lesson is more deeply impressed upon the mind. Many are the paradoxes of the Prophets and of the Lord and Leader of all the Prophets. Who can read without attention two such sentences as these in succession—“I will not remember your sins,” and, “Put me in remembrance”?

The use of such paradoxes in Scripture needs no sort of apology. Man is a living riddle. Does any man understand himself? He may think he does, but by this conceit he betrays his ignorance! The sinner is a paradox, but the saint is a double paradox! I say it is meet and right that the Holy Spirit should thus use paradoxical expressions because those whom He addresses have paradoxes lying deep in their nature and so the speech is congruous to the listener. In this verse man is invited to draw near to God. Those same men, of whom God says that He was weary of them, are bid to plead with Him. “You have burdened Me with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities.” And yet it is evident that in another sense the Lord was *not* weary of them, for He calls upon them to come to a conference with Him, saying, “Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together.”

This approach to God is the way of our salvation! The first thing that must be done with some men is to make them think of God at all—and the best thing that can be done with any man is to draw him nearer and yet nearer to the great Father of spirits. “It is good for me to draw near to God,” said one who knew right well what he was speaking of—and every man who does not yet understand such an utterance will find it to be true if he will test it! Here is a commandment with promise—“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” Here is another—“Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake His ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

Nearness to God is evidently the hope of the seeker! For the prodigal in the distant country, the most essential thing was that he should arise and go to his father. It would have been of little use for him to have washed himself from the filth of the swine trough, or to have broken off his acquaintance with the citizens of that country. He could never be right while he dwelt so far from his father's house. The most sober and secluded life in the far country would not have satisfied the cravings of his heart any more than the husks would have filled his belly! True, it would have been some improvement upon spending his living riotously, but it would have worked no change in his *soul* and given no rest to his heart. The remedy is the father's kiss, the father's bosom, the father's house, the father's love!

Understand my text, then, however paradoxical it may seem, as being a genuine invitation on the part of a gracious God to the most provoking of men. Though they have acted so wickedly that He may well be tired of them, He presses them to hold conversation with Him! If anything has been charged upon them in error, He is willing to hear their complaints—He only longs that they will not keep at a sullen distance from Him. God grant that the invitation may be accepted by those of you to whom it will, this morning, be addressed!

We shall regard our text thus. First, it is a humbling challenge—"Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together." Secondly, as we cannot answer the challenge, we will put another sense upon the words and accept them in an amended version—such as penitence can carry out. And, thirdly, we shall see in it a practical suggestion—perhaps more than one. May the Holy Spirit enable us to learn the lessons and carry out the suggestions!

I. First, then, our text appears before us as A HUMBLING CHALLENGE. God had punished Israel on account of sin. Israel was not penitent and in self-righteousness judged that the Lord was harsh and severe. "Come, then," says God, "come and plead your case with Me. Put Me in remembrance of any virtues on your part which I may have overlooked. If I have misjudged you; if you have not really been neglectful of My service and worship, let the matter be rectified. If you really have a righteousness of your own, put Me in remembrance of it."

On looking back we find that the Lord had charged His people with neglect of prayer—"But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob." This is the charge which we are compelled to bring against all unconverted men and women—you do not call upon God—you live without sincere and fervent prayer. Perhaps you offer a *form* of prayer, but that is nothing if your heart does not go with the words. This is rather to mock God than truly to call upon Him! But come now, if there is any mistake in this charge, disprove it. If you have earnestly called upon the Lord through Christ Jesus. If you have been diligent in seeking His face and yet He has turned His back upon you—testify against Him! It will be a new thing under the sun to find a praying heart rejected at the Throne of Grace. I know you cannot deny the accusation of prayerlessness. If you are Christless, you are prayerless! If you have received no mercy it is because you have not sought it at the Mercy Seat.

Next the Lord charged Israel that they had not delighted in Him—"You have been weary of Me, O Israel." Is not this a charge which cannot be denied? You men and women who are not regenerate and have never received the pardon of your sin—is it not true that you are weary of God? You readily enough grow tired of a sermon in which we try to speak of Him, though you would listen for hours to a silly tale. You become tired of the Lord's Day. What a weariness it is! You are weary of the Bible—how little you read it! A foolish novel suits you better. If you hear Christians talking wisely and seriously of the things of Christ, you have no liking for their words—you would rather listen to a comic song! To you, the House of God is the temple of dullness and the worship of God is bondage! As for God, Himself, you will not allow yourself to remember Him—He is not in all your thoughts. You sometimes think that even Heaven, itself, would be a weary place for you if it is the praising and adoring of God and communion with Him. Can you deny this? If you can, you are invited to state your innocence before the Lord.

But I know that in truth you cannot raise the question, for there is within your mind an unquestionable aversion to the service of God. In fact, you would feel happier if there were no God and if thoughts of eternity never intruded themselves! Take heed lest your aversion become mutual and God should say, "My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred Me." The Lord had also said that these people did not honor Him—"You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; neither have you honored Me with your sacrifices." It may be you have presented no tokens of love to the Lord at all. Or, on the other hand, you may have brought sacrifices, but you have not honored God with them. You have given that you might be *known* to give, or because others gave—but not with the view of honoring God.

You come and sit with His people and join in their songs, but you do not seek the Glory of God! Nor is this the main objective of your daily life—you know it is not! Yet if it is so—if any unconverted man can say that whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, he seeks to do all to the glory of God, this ought to be known! It would be a new thing under the sun! In truth, it would prove that the man *was* converted and had been renewed in the spirit of his mind by the Grace of God! But it is not so—you have not honored the name of your Creator and Benefactor! You have robbed Him of the Glory due His name!

Moreover, the Lord charged Israel that they did not love Him—"You have bought me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled me with the fat of your sacrifices." No token of love had been presented, but they had made idols to serve with their sins. The purchase of oil with money had not come into their thoughts. They could not afford it, they said—but when they were worshipping their false gods they could find money enough—"They lavish gold out of the bag and weigh silver in the balance." And so there are men who cannot afford to give anything to the cause of God or Christian charity, but for their sinful pleasures they can waste their substance! No sacrifice is too expensive for a man's lusts—he will do *anything* that he may live a merry life—which merry life consists in rebellion against God! This proves that man has no love in his heart for

God! O Sinner, did you ever feel a tear start in your eyes at the thought of God's being dishonored? Did you ever humble yourself before God because you have, yourself, dishonored Him? Is His Word dear to you? Is there music in the sweet name of Jesus to your ears? No, it is not so! You know you are dead to all this. He challenges you to plead your innocence if you can! Dare you take up the glove? Prove that you have loved Him! Remind Him of your kindly deeds and zealous acts! You have none to bring to remembrance! Your heart has had no delight in the Lord your God!

The Lord again challenges them upon the charge that they had not obeyed Him—"You have burdened Me with your sins"—you have burdened Me with your waywardness. "You have wearied Me with your iniquities"—God's patience was tried to the utmost with their wanton wickedness! Is not this charge true—sadly true, of many? Oh, you that have never accepted Christ, nor cast yourselves at His dear feet—you have, by this willful refusal of love, insulted the mercy of the Lord! You have had no respect of His Law! You have not checked yourself because you were likely to offend! You have not stirred yourself up to please the Lord! Ah no, on the contrary, you have lived as if you were your own masters! If it is not so, you are now challenged to vindicate your characters. Do not set up a lying defense, but speak the truth. "Put Me in remembrance," God says. If you have abounded in prayer; if you have delighted in God; if you have sought His honor; if you have loved Him; if you have obeyed Him, then set out your righteousness before the sun and be not afraid!

But you are not innocent before the Lord. Therefore humble yourselves, confess your guilt and cover your face before the Lord. The Lord would thus humble you that you may *repent*—and that He may fulfill His Word to you—"I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins." The challenge before us is occupied not only with the ways of man, but with the ways of God, for the Lord, here, asserts of Himself, "I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense." That is to say, God is no hard taskmaster. He is not an austere man, gathering where He has not sown. The Commandments of God are essential justice—you could not improve upon them! No law could be more for our benefit than that which He has given us. The service of God is not bondage!

Ask His children how they find it. When they take His yoke upon them and learn of Him, they find rest for their souls. His ways are ways of pleasantness and all His paths are peace. Perfect obedience is Heaven! If God has treated you like slaves. If He has exacted of you more than His right. If He has made your heart heavy with endless labors, then say so, and state your grievance in solemn conversation with God! Only speak with Him! But who in his right senses will say that the service of God is anything but liberty? O Beloved! When God forbids us anything, it is because He knows it would be for our harm! And when God commands us to do anything, it is because He knows that it is for our soul's welfare and eternal good. The moral law is the mirror of right—the will of the Lord as therein revealed, commends itself so thoroughly to the conscience of man

that he cannot wage an honest warfare with it—it is “true and righteous altogether.”

If we are upright in our judgments, our desire will be, “Oh that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!” If we offend against the Law of God it is not because it is unreasonable, unjust, or unkind. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. It is so, most surely so. Though I feel myself quite unable to plead the cause of God worthily as I would desire, I could stand here and weep because of the manner in which His creatures treat Him! I feel ashamed of myself that I can so coldly vindicate His cause which deserves a far better advocate than I. But have you not, you that are ungodly, have you not treated the Lord shamefully? Have you not forgotten Him who never forgets you? Have you not turned your backs on your Benefactor and your Friend? Have you not refused the service which would have afforded your souls a deep delight? Have you not quarreled with your mercies and fought against Heaven, itself?

It is surely so. If you have anything to plead to the contrary, argue it with your Maker! Only do not continue to keep away from Him. Turn unto Him and answer His appeal, “Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare you, that you may be justified.”

II. I hope you will be prepared to follow me while our penitence suggests AN AMENDED VERSION. I do not mean an alteration of the words, but of the *sense*. Let us take the text as our consciousness of guilt desires to read it. There are certain things which God, in great love, invites us to bring before His memory. What are these? Let me tell you. If you cannot take up His challenge and prove your personal righteousness, let the charges stand with your silence as an assent to them! And now plead with Him and remind Him of matters which may serve your turn and lead to your forgiveness.

First, remind the Lord of that glorious act of amnesty and oblivion which, in Sovereign Grace, He has proclaimed to the sons of men in the preceding verse. Come, now, all guilty and defiled, and say to Him, “Lord, though my iniquities testify against me, I rest upon Your forgiving word, ‘I, even I, am He that blots out your iniquities for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.’” Remember that God has not forgotten to be gracious; neither has He changed a single declaration of His mercy. Still, He would have you remind Him of them as earnestly as if He *had* forgotten them! It is not for the refreshment of His memory, but for *yours*, that He wishes you to remind Him!

Never will you find a safer position as a sinner than kneeling at the Mercy Seat, pleading such words as these—“Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” At once and with broken language remind the Lord of His gracious promises and say, “Remember Your Words unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope.” Cry to Him after this fashion, “Lord, do as You have said! Here is one who is full of iniquity. I pray You cleanse me! If I

had no transgressions You could not blot them out—but here they are—I beseech You, blot them out according to Your Words! Behold, I remind You of Your Words. “O Lord, let me hear You say—‘Your sins, which are many, are forgiven.’”

That done, proceed to remind the Lord of your sins. Make an open unreserved acknowledgment unto the Lord. Tell Him that you have transgressed. Say with the returning prodigal, “I have sinned against Heaven and before You, and am no more worthy to be called Your son.” Hide nothing, for nothing can be hidden—conceal nothing, for it cannot be concealed. You can be sure your sin will find you out! Therefore, find out your sin and surrender it into the hands of the great God, that He may deal with it! Especially put the Lord in remembrance of this—that you have sinned against One who has continued to pardon you and, therefore, you have sinned in a most cruel and ungrateful manner. It puts an exceedingly heinousness into sin, that it is an offense against One who so freely forgives it!

The Lord might long ago have cast us into Hell, and yet He spares us—shall we find in this a liberty to offend yet more? “He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.” And this fact makes perseverance in rebellion a scarlet sin! Confess this, also, that you have continued by your sins to go away from Him who invites you to return and promises you a welcome reception. Remember, if you are still out of Christ, it is not because God has made you so. He takes an oath, “As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.” He will not have your damnation laid at His door! He expressly says, “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself!” And the tender Savior cries, “You will not come to Me that you might have life.”

Acknowledge the truth of this. Though you may have foolishly boasted of your free will, before, now be humbled about that wicked will of yours which threatens to be your destruction! On your knees cry to the Lord for the pardon of offenses against His mercy and the forgiveness of provocations against His long-suffering! He invites you to do it and, therefore, He says, “Put me in remembrance.” When you have done this, if your spirit is much depressed and your heart is driven to despair by a sense of your guilt, then I would advise you to remind the Lord of the extraordinary reason which He gives for pardoning sin—“I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake.” Say unto Him—“Lord, there is no reason in me why You should spare me, but do it for Your own sake—for Your love’s sake, for Your mercy’s sake. You have said that You delight in mercy! Lord, delight Yourself in having mercy upon me! It is to Your glory to pass by transgression—it greatly honors the Lord Jesus Christ when He puts away the guilt of men! Lord, I pray You, now for Your own sake, for Your Son’s sake, to cast a veil over all my former iniquities and let me be reconciled to You by the death of Your Son.”

I fear dear Hearers, that I do not speak this as I ought to speak it. I wish I could weep over you while I plead with you! I implore you at once to honestly and affectionately obey the exhortation of the text. Come, I beseech you, hear your Father say, “Put me in remembrance: let us plead

together.” Remind the Lord of His sovereign Grace and of His all-sufficient power to bless! Remind Him that He has taken the vilest of the vile and washed them in the blood of Jesus; that He has taken the hardest and most obdurate hearts and softened them to the praise of the glory of His Grace! And then add, “Lord, do all this in me, that I, too, may magnify Your gracious name!” When you have gone as far as that in putting God in remembrance, I would, with much affection, advise you to plead the Lord’s purpose and intent revealed in the 21st verse—“This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.”

Say, “Lord, I am Your poor creature. You have made me; even my very body is fearfully and wonderfully made; and the mysterious thing which dwells within me, which I call my soul, is also the creature of Your power. Have You not made me for Yourself? Will You not have a desire to the work of Your own hands? Lord, come and bless me! Sinner as I am, and utterly undeserving, yet I am Your creature! Do not fling me upon the dunghill. If You will forgive me, Lord, might I not praise You? Is there not room, *somewhere*, for me to give You thanks? In earth, or in Heaven, may I not yet render to You some little service and magnify Your name? Now, Lord, I dishonor You while I live in sin, but I shall glorify You if You make me holy. I am as a worthless vessel, only fit to be cast with the broken potsherds—of no use to You or man, and scarcely of use even to myself. But in my person I beseech You, fulfill Your Words, ‘This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.’”

This is good arguing! After this fashion obey the word—“Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together.” If that does not ease you, go a little further back in the chapter till you come to the 19th verse—“Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beasts of the field shall honor Me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the deserts to give drink to My people, My chosen.” Plead that published declaration! Say, “Lord, You have said, ‘I will do a new thing.’ It will indeed be a new thing if I am saved! I am driven to such self-aborrence, that if ever I am saved I shall be a leading wonder among your miracles of Grace.”—

***“Saved!—The deed shall spread new glory
Through the shining realms above!
Angels sing the pleasing story,
All enraptured with Your love!”***

It may be you can say—“Lord, I have been sighing, crying and groaning, now, by the months together, and I can find no peace. Oh, if You will but put a new song into my mouth, the dragons and the owls that saw me in my gloom shall open their eyes and be astonished and honor the Lord God of Israel!” You have come to be familiar in your gloom with strange company, comparable to the dragons and the owls—therefore cry unto your Redeemer, “Lord, save me, and the owls will hoot no longer, or if they do, they will hoot to Your praise and the very dragons that all men dread shall become comfortable things and begin to magnify Your name, as said the Psalmist, ‘Praise Him you dragons, and all deeps.’” I know some who might say, “Lord, it will fill all the workshop with wonder if I shall rejoice in Jesus. All my friends and companions will be amazed that I should be-

come happy and holy through Sovereign Grace. I am the very last person they would have thought to see converted! Then will they know what Your arm can do and confess that this is the finger of God! Men that could not open their mouths except to blaspheme You, Lord, shall stand awe-struck and astonished as they see what a brand is plucked from the burning.”

You see I have tried to help you in obeying this Word of God—“Put me in remembrance.” But I cannot do the work for you. Dear unconverted Hearers, you must, *yourselves*, make confession and plead for your lives. This pleading must be worked in you by the Spirit of God—and if it is, I could almost wish to be a mouse in your chamber, that I might listen to you while you are reminding the gracious Father of His promises and of the Glory which will come to His name if He will save you! Especially would I like to hear you begin thus—“Lord, remember Your only-begotten Son. Have You not declared that it is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners? I am a sinner, Lord, save me! Oh, remember Gethsemane! Remember Calvary! Remember the bloody sweat! Remember the wounds of your Well-Beloved! Remember the cry, ‘It is finished!’ and give Him to see of the travail of His soul in me! Give me as a spoil to the Risen One, that in me He may see the reward for His pains!”

That is the style of pleading! This will, before long, bring you rest and ease. God help you not only to hear me now with attention, but to go and see to the doing of it! I fear and tremble lest my labor should be lost through your failing to come to the mark. In vain do you listen if you do not obey!

III. So this brings me to the last point, which is this—our text affords us some PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS. If the Lord says to us, “Put Me in remembrance,” then, in the first place, it is very clear that we ought to remember these things *ourselves*. We cannot remind another of a thing which we, ourselves, forget! Come, then, let us, for a time, remind ourselves of certain matters which we are prone to cast behind us. Going over the same ground which I have traversed before, I shall make no apology, since my desire is that God’s Spirit may impress it upon your hearts.

Oh, you that are not saved, remember the years in which you have lived without prayer! What a wonder that you have been permitted to live at all! Morning light and evening shade—and yet no prayer! Mercies on the table, mercies in the family, mercies to your body, mercies to your soul—and yet no prayer! Sermons heard, exhortations given, gentle entreaties all thrown away—but still there has been no prayer! “You have not called upon Me, O Jacob.” It is not good to take our sins in the whole, but to set them out, in detail, one after the other. Here is *God* ready to pardon and we would not even ask for forgiveness! Here is *God* waiting to be gracious and we have kept Him waiting these 40 years! Here is mercy’s door before us and we will not knock, though there is a promise that it shall be opened to every knocker! Here is Jesus, Himself, knocking at our door till His head is wet with dew and His locks with the drops of the night—and yet we will not open! Remember that! Let this transgression come before us and cause us deep repentance and self-humiliation.

Remember, next, for your own humbling, how weary you have been of God. I went over that just now, but think of it! Here is a creature that cannot endure to think of its Creator! Here is one that has daily fed at the table of a Friend and yet he never gives that Friend a good word. Living where God's works are all around you so that you cannot help but see them, when even the night does but unveil a new scene of wonder as it shows you the stars that were hidden by day, yet you can look upon all that wondrous scene and refuse to see your God! You were tired of God! You did not want to hear about Him, wished there were no God and no eternity, and that you could just enjoy yourself like the beasts do who live only in the present! Ah me! Think of this, and so let your sin come to remembrance—you have been willing to be a *beast* rather than serve God and be as the angels.

Some I would earnestly urge to remember long years of neglect of God's service and all their neglect to the cause of God; all their lack of love to God; all the many times in which they have hardened their hearts, stopped their ears and refused the warnings and invitations of their Savior. Such memories might be used of the Holy Spirit for their conviction. Oh, dear, unconverted Hearers, am I speaking the truth about you or not? God forbid I should bring a false accusation against any man! I am not charging you, now, with the blacker and more open sins, for perhaps you are innocent of them, but yet this is the sin of some—forgetfulness of God, weariness of His service, refusal to receive the salvation of His Son. "This is the condemnation, that Light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light." You think of your business—salvation causes you no concern. Think of that! You put your dying body before your immortal soul!

You are full of care and anxiety about matters which relate only to a span of time—yet you care not for your eternal interests! Can you justify this? Are you in your senses? Why do you act so foolishly? There is a God whose smile is Heaven and whose frown is Hell—and yet you ignore His existence and neither seek Him nor serve Him! I know I plead badly, but my cause is a good one, and if you are right at heart you will feel its force. Ought not the wrongs done to God be admitted and forsaken? Say, dear Hearer, "I remember my faults this day and remembering them I will arise and go unto my Father, and remind Him, that I may be forgiven."

My faith sees the Lord standing here blotting out the debts of all who will bring them to His remembrance! Come, bring your bills! Hand in the record of your debts to Justice! Spread them, now, before the face of the Lord, not that He may condemn you for them, but that He may stamp them with the atoning blood and say, "I have blotted out your sins." Do not hesitate to remind the Lord of them, for then He promises to forget them! I am sure if I could stand here tomorrow and exercise the power to remit all debts by giving a receipt in full for them all—and if the one condition were that each debtor would produce his schedule of debts—I say I am sure no one would be backward in doing so!

You who owe anything would search your files, rake out your drawers and look in every place to find every unpaid account—as to have them all blotted out! I pray you do so in this *spiritual* business! Bring your sins to

remembrance by humble acknowledgment and penitent confession, for, “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” O Spirit of God, support this appeal to these, my Hearers, and send it home to the hearts of Your chosen, that they may confess their iniquities unto You and be saved this very day!

A second practical suggestion is this—since the text says, “Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together,” it is time that we should now begin our pleading with God. He says, “Come now, and let us reason together.” Let us not be so unreasonable as to refuse! I am once more going over the same ground, just as schoolmasters do with their pupils, teaching the same lesson over, again, that it may be thoroughly learned. I do so long for the troubled sinner to find the way of peace at once that I would beseech him to begin pleading with God at this moment. Plead thus—“Lord, there stand Your Words, ‘I am He that blots out your transgressions’—I entreat You make those Words true for me!” Appealing to the faithfulness of God is a grand argument. To lay hold of God by His promise is the main part of the art of wrestling in prayer. No grip of the Covenant Angel is half so sure as that which faith gets when she seizes a promise. This is, as it were, the hem of Jehovah’s robe! Blessed is he that can hold it, for it will never tear away!

He that holds a promise holds the God who gave it, and he shall not trust the promise in vain. “Has the Lord said, and will He not do it?” Plead it, then! “Lord, You have said that You forgive sin. I pray You, forgive mine! Had You never promised pardon, I could never have dreamed of gaining it. But since You have promised it, I dare not doubt Your Word. My blackest, foulest, filthiest sins can be washed away, for You tell me that all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. I urge Your Words as my only claim. I implore You to carry out Your Words.” We read that out of Christ’s mouth there goes a two-edged sword—may not His Word of promise be to us as a sword with which we may overcome even mercy itself—conquering Heaven by Heaven’s own weapons? Oh that you may have faith enough to try this at once! Be sure you do not forget to use in your pleading that verse about God being honored by the dragons and the owls.

Say, “Lord, this very room in which I have cried to You, of late, for mercy beams witness to my sighs and groans and deep sorrows. But if You will grant me Grace, it shall ring with Your praises. I have dwelt spiritually with owls and dragons, but if You will forgive me, these shall honor You! Lord, if You do but set me free, You will have won a new singer for the choirs of earth and for the orchestra of Heaven! Oh, my Savior, I know my poor praises cannot make You more glorious, for You are Divinely great, but still, such as they are, they shall be laid at Your feet.” Next, plead with the Lord that He will have won your heart by His Grace. He evidently desires it, for He complains, “You have bought Me no sweet came with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices.”

Does God care for sweet cane? Does He delight in burning fat? Ah no! But He does care to see His people making a self-sacrifice—to prove their love by presenting something to their Lord which cost them dearly. He

condescends to accept at their hands their love tokens and He takes much pleasure in them. Now tell Him, "Lord, I am not worthy of Your acceptance, but still, if You will but save me, I will be all Yours, and all that I have shall be laid upon the altar. Lord, I must love You! I have nothing whereof to glory in that love, for how can I help it? I am under constraint to love You because You first loved me! I am a captive to Grace! I am bound hand and foot by the cords of Your love! When I have dared to entertain a hope that You would look upon me in mercy, I have felt my stony heart dissolve and my soul has gone out after You with strong desires. If Your great love will, indeed, stoop to me, and to the putting away of all my sin, then my whole heart shall be bound to You forever and I will magnify Your name as long as I have any being."

This is good pleading! Be sure you use it with deep sincerity and true humility. Then plead the argument which lies in the words, "for My own sake." Cry, "Lord, save me for the glory of Your own name, that men may know how gracious You are! There is room in me for the display of all the wonders of Your love, for I have been one of the chief sinners. O Lord, prove the power of the cleansing blood of Jesus by washing *me*, that I may be whiter than snow. I have shown a harder heart than most of my fellows. Oh that Your Spirit would display the energy of His operations by turning this stone to flesh! Lord, I have been unbelieving, yes, desperately full of doubt and unbelief. Oh, demonstrate in me the truth that faith is the gift of God! If you save all the world besides me and save not me, there will be a note lacking in the music of Your mercy, for in some respects I stand alone, a special sinner!

"But, Lord, if You save me, You will put Your finger on a string that will give forth a note such as can come from no other string in all the universe! You will have saved the most worthless of all—the one who can do least for You in return. You will have shown how gratuitous is Your mercy by bestowing it upon one who has no past merit, no present worth, no future hope of doing great things for You." Thus plead with God and may the Wonderful, the Counselor, direct your pleading till you prevail!

Finish all pleadings with the argument of the precious blood, for that shall prevail where all else is driven back. "I believe in the forgiveness of sins"—thousands say this when they repeat the creed! But they do not feel that they are sinners and, therefore, they find it very easy to believe in forgiveness. But, believe me, when a man knows and feels that he is, in very deed, a sinner before God, it is a miracle for him to believe in the forgiveness of sins! Nothing but the Omnipotence of the Holy Spirit can work this faith in him! When you really know what it is to be lost and condemned, so that you receive the sentence of death in your own conscience, then it is a brave thing to believe in pardoning Grace! Some of us remember when it seemed like mocking us for people to say, "Believe, Believe!" for we felt that it was one thing to say, "I believe," and quite another thing to possess the faith of God's elect! When God the Holy Spirit comes to reveal Jesus to us—and the poor empty sinner is plunged into Christ's fullness—*then* there is glory to God both from the sinner's faith and from the Object of that faith.

God is magnified in the work of Grace, for it is His from top to bottom! In the heart of the saved one is heard the voice, “I, even I, am the Lord; and besides Me there is no Savior.” Lofty looks are laid low and boasting is excluded. Humility rules the mind and obedience walks hand in hand with it. Then do renewed hearts cry, “O Lord our God, other lords beside You have had dominion over us: but by You only will we make mention of Your name.”

Thus have I tried to plead with you for the Lord, wishing only your good and His Glory! I am very conscious of my own weakness, much more so, perhaps, than ever I was in my life—but yet I expect to succeed with many of you! What am I apart from the Spirit of all Grace? What am I but as a sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal? And yet I am not feebler than other servants of God in this respect, for we are all nothing apart from the Spirit—

***“Till God diffuse His Graces down,
Like showers of heavenly rain,
In vain Apollos sows the ground,
And Paul may plant in vain.”***

Blessed be God we shall not plant in vain, for He is with us! Some of you have received the message and I shall hear from you soon. Let it sink into the spirits of all of you. Do you feel any degree of softness creeping over you? Yield to it! It is the blessed Spirit now inclining you to repent, making you feel serious and thoughtful—anxious and desirous. Bow before His heavenly breath as the rush by the river yields to the wind! Yours shall be the benefit, but to the sweet Spirit of Love, together with the Father and the Son, shall be Glory forever and ever! Amen and Amen!

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

JEHOVAH'S VALUATION OF HIS PEOPLE

NO. 2167

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 5, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior:
I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you."
Isaiah 43:3.***

IN this chapter the Lord comforts His people. By His Divine foresight He perceives that there are great and varied trials a little way ahead and therefore He prepares them for the ordeal. They are to go through rushing waters and flaming fires and He kindly bids them not to be afraid. How often in God's Word do we read those tender, gracious words, "Fear not"? Should not the trembling ones listen to the voice of their God and obey it when He says to them, "Fear not"? It is not right for you who fear God to fear anything else. Once brought to know the Lord, what can harm you? Abiding under the shadow of the Almighty, what danger need you dread? No, rather, be of good comfort and press forward with peaceful confidence though floods and flames await you.

To encourage His people to rise superior to their fears, the gracious God goes on to issue matchless promises—"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you." Present good—"I will be with you." Absent danger—"they shall not overflow you." God stays His people's hearts by His own promises. In proportion to their faith those promises lift them up. If you do not believe the promise, you shall not be established by it. But if, with childlike confidence, you accept every Word of God as true, then His Word shall be to you the joy of your heart and the delight of your spirit—and you shall be a stranger to fear.

The Lord proceeds, after giving those promises, to set before them what He Himself is and what He has done for them and what they are to Him. He is speaking, of course, to Israel—and He says of Israel, His chosen nation—"I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you." What cause for fear now remains? All Believers are of the true Israel. Abraham was the father of the faithful. The faithful, or the believing, are, therefore, Abraham's seed according to the promise. The seed was not after the flesh, else would the children of Ishmael have been the heirs of the Covenant. But the true seed was born according to promise and in the power of God, for Isaac was born when his parents were old, by faith in the power of God.

Isaac was not the child of the flesh, but he was born according to promise, so that we who are not born of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, by His Spirit and according to the Divine promise, are the true children of Abraham. We are the *spiritual* Israel. Though after the flesh Abra-

ham is ignorant of us and Sarah acknowledge us not, yet we are the true seed of him who was the father of Believers. The literal Israel was the type of those chosen and favored ones who by faith are born-again according to promise. To these heirs according to promise the Lord says, "I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you."

I am sure I shall not be straining the passage if I now apply it wholly to the chosen of God. But if any of you feel staggered at my use of that term, I would remind you that the chosen of God are made known by their believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is the sure evidence of election. If, therefore, you are a believer in Christ, you are of the true Israel. "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." And being born of God, you are of the family of His love—you are heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ. If you are not believers in Him, what can I preach to you that can comfort you? The unbelieving, living and dying such, have no portion in the Covenant of Grace. If you believe not, you must perish. The promise is given to obedient faith only—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned."

If this day you become Believers, you have, in that faith, the token and mark of the Divine choice and you assuredly belong to the Israel of God! Every heavenly blessing which God promises to Israel belongs to you who are in Christ Jesus and so are in union with the promised seed.

Coming to our text, I shall ask you, first, to *listen to the Lord's declaration of His own name*—"I am Jehovah your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." When you have carefully listened to that solemn name and learned something from it, then I will ask you to *note the Lord's estimate of His people*. What does He think of them? What price does He set upon them? "I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you." When we have wondered a while at this, we shall briefly *consider the outcome of this very wonderful statement of God's value of His people*. They are precious in His sight and He loves them and therefore He will withhold no good thing from them.

I. First, I pray you, LISTEN TO THE LORD'S DECLARATION OF HIS OWN NAME. May the Holy Spirit open our ears to hear to profit! He says, "I am Jehovah your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." He gives His name thus at large to distinguish Himself from the false gods. Other things there were, which men called gods and these had names, though, indeed, they had no being, but were the creatures of man's imagination and fear. God, the living God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, sets forth His own name and title that there may be no mistake as to who He is. "I am the LORD," He says, "and My Glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to engraved images."

He also sets forth His name at large, for the comfort of His people. Is it not written, "They that know Your name well put their trust in You"? There is something in every name of God which may breed faith in our souls. Whether we know Him as Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai, or Lord, or by whatever other name He has been pleased to manifest Himself, that title becomes the ground of our confidence and is the means of fostering faith in His people's minds, when they come to understand its meaning. To a

trembling people the Lord enlarges on His wonderful names. I think He also does it to excite our wonder and our gratitude. He that loves us so much is Jehovah—He that can create and destroy—He that is the self-existent God! He, even He, has set His heart upon His people and loves them and counts them precious in His sight! It is a marvelous thing! The more one thinks of it, the more shall we be overwhelmed with astonishment that He who is everything should love us who are less than nothing!

It is the Holy One who has deigned to choose and to love unholy men—and to look upon them in Divine Grace—and save them from their sins. That you may bow low in loving gratitude, God lets you see who He is. That you may see how great a stoop of condescension He has made when He loves His unworthy people and takes them into union with Himself, you are made to see how great and glorious is the Divine name. Let us devoutly think of each of these names separately. First, the Lord speaks of Himself as "*Jehovah, your God.*" I need not tell you that where you see LORD in capitals, it should be Jehovah. Jehovah—"the God of the whole earth shall He be called." His kingdom rules over all—there is *universality*.

But He calls Himself, "Your God"—there is *specialty*. The goodness of God surrounds all the creatures He has made, but there is a love which is peculiar to His own. To all the nations of the earth He was the one only LORD and God, but yet He said of Israel, "You only have I known, of all the families of the earth." Limit not the benevolence of God but, at the same time, do not deny the specialty of His love to His people. Wide is the circumference of mercy, but the chosen dwell in the innermost center of His love. Thus, the one ever-glorious Jehovah, while He is God unto the ends of the earth, is Israel's God in a sense in which He is not the God of Assyria, or Persia, or Egypt, or Ethiopia. He has made Himself over to His own chosen people, saying, "I will be their God."

Jehovah, the glorious I AM, signifies self-existence. He borrows nothing from others. Indeed, in a sense, there are no others apart from Him since all live by His permit and power. He is as complete without His creatures as with them. When there were no heavens, no earth, no twinkling star nor flying seraph, He was as truly God and as complete within Himself as He is now that He has made innumerable creatures. Yet, though He is thus all-sufficient, self-sufficient and self-existent, He still deigns to link Himself with our nothingness and call Himself, "Jehovah, your God." The Self-existent gives His people existence and they exist that He may bless them and magnify the glory of His own existence in them! The Lord lives and we live in Him and by Him. In Jesus we hear God saying to us, "Because I live, you shall live, also." Oh, blessed union to God in Christ Jesus by which we are supplied with every good from the self-existent fountain of life and being!

Jehovah, again, is a name which means immutability. "I AM THAT I AM" was His name to Moses. God always is in the present. To Him there is no past or future—

***"He fills His own eternal NOW,
And sees our ages past."***

This unchanging One here declares Himself to be the God of beings who are but of yesterday and full of change. Yes, great Lord, You were my God when first my pulse began to beat. You did care for me when I lay upon my mother's lap. You have watched over me when, in youthful days, I foolishly wandered. You have called me back and taught me to lay my finger in the print of my Savior's wounds and say, "My Lord, and my God." Yes, Jehovah has been our God—"The same yesterday, today and forever." He never changes nor ceases as to His love to us. He cannot love us more—He will not love us less. Without "variableness or shadow of turning" is Jehovah in His relation to those whom He has called into His favor.

Furthermore, Jehovah means Sovereignty. "Jehovah reigns, let the people tremble." His is a name of lofty royalty, for, "Jehovah is a great God and a great King above all gods." He exercises the absolute prerogative and "does according to His will in the army of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth." He gives no account of His matters. As the potter, He disposes of the clay at His own pleasure. Yet, stooping from His boundless Sovereignty and freedom, our Lord binds Himself to His own people by bonds of Covenant pledge and promise. He says, "I am Jehovah, your God." He is our God, ready to hear our prayers, prompt to help our needs, held by His own oath and promise to be the guardian and helper of His people. I do not know how to admire enough these words of title, so glorious and so gracious—so high above us and yet so near to us—"JEHOVAH, your God!" Here is matter of thought and motive for love.

Now comes a second combination of titles—"The Holy One of Israel, your Savior." It may not have struck you before, but what a New Testament combination this is—"The Holy One, your Savior"! It reminds us of the words—"Just, and the justifier of him that believes." Here we have one so holy as to be separate from sinners and yet the Savior of sinners! "Holy, Holy, Holy," is the ascription which is justly due to Him and yet He passes by iniquity, transgression and sin. "The Holy One of Israel, your Savior." It is a commingling of attributes which only the Cross can explain. Herein is a world of comfort! God's holiness appears to look dark and black upon a sinner, but when he believes in Jesus this attribute of holiness smiles upon him!

Is God holy? Then He will never break His promise! If He declares men to be justified through faith in Christ, then depend upon it, they are justified! He will not run back from the compact of His Grace. Having exacted at the hand of our great Surety that which vindicates His justice, He makes that justice the guarantee that He will no more be angry with His people. There is a substantial truth in those lines of our hymn—

***"Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine."***

We can now appeal to the holiness of God and expect that having accepted a Sacrifice on our behalf, He will graciously pass by our sins. His holiness forbids that He should declare the death of His Only-Begotten to be a failure by punishing those for whom Jesus was an accepted Sacrifice.

The Lord has made to meet on His beloved Son the iniquity of us all—how, then, shall it be laid at our door? “He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree”—and to what end did He bear them if we, also, shall endure their penalty? If by faith the substitution of Christ is made ours—and God declares that it is so—then how shall we be condemned who have accepted His Sacrifice? Am I not forgiven if I have died in Christ and am raised in Him to newness of life? The very holiness of God makes us rejoice, for it is enlisted on our side and assures us of salvation! Delightful title! “The Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”

No doctrine has more often filled my mind with adoration than this—that God is as holy in the pardon of sin as He is in the punishment of it—that if He had sent the whole race of guilty men to Hell, He would not have been more just than He is now in the pardon of those who, by faith, are in Christ Jesus and who, in Him, were made to die unto sin. “The Holy One of Israel, your Savior.” The holiness of Divine Grace makes salvation 10,000 times more precious than if it had been an arbitrary act of the Divine Sovereignty. Had it been possible for God to set aside the claims of His justice and simply to forgive without making satisfaction to His Law, we should have felt our standing to be questionable. Unjustly saved! Poor position for one who has a conscience!

But instead of that, the Lord is supremely just and not even to be gracious will He abdicate the judgment throne. His justice shines out as clear and bright as the fair light of His mercy. When I behold the Son of God at Calvary, what do I see? Which is most conspicuous, at the Cross—Justice or Grace? Truly, I see Grace in the gift of Jesus, but I see as plainly Justice that made Jehovah bruise His Son and put Him to grief! It is a blessing to feel that our salvation rests upon the Rock of Divine holiness, quite as surely as upon the basis of Divine love. Treasure up those names, “The Holy One of Israel, your Savior.” Since “The Holy One of Israel” is our Savior, we are confident that He will save us from all sin!

He has saved us from the penalty and the defilement of sin—He will also save us from the disease of sin—that is to say, our tendency to evil. “They shall call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins.” The Lord will save Believers from all inclination to evil. We shall be saved not only from sins committed, but from indwelling sin, from original sin, from the corrupt tendencies of our nature. “The Holy One of Israel, your Savior,” will save us until we become holy as God is holy—or, as our Lord Jesus worded it—“Perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.” My Brothers and Sisters, aspire to this salvation! Let this blessed name of God, “the Holy One of Israel, your Savior,” encourage you to believe that you shall yet be without spot, or wrinkle, or any evil thing. Into Heaven there shall in no way enter anything that defiles and you shall be pure as God Himself—

**“O glorious hour! O blest abode!
I shall be near and like my God;
And flesh and sin no more control
The sacred pleasures of my soul.”**

I beg you to reflect upon the fact that the glorious Lord—who here styles Himself, “Jehovah, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior,” the Creator of all things and their Preserver—is come very near to you.

In the next verse He says, “Since you were precious in My sight you have been honorable, and I have loved you.” Mark, “I have loved you.” It is not enough that He thinks kindly and deals tenderly—He loves! He loves! This is an exceeding marvel. You know, dear fathers, what it is to love your children. You know, dear women, what it is to love your husbands. These loves are faint shadows of the love of God to His chosen! Sweet is the love which unites us to each other, but it is wonderful that God Himself should say, “I have loved you.” It makes my heart beat quick to think that I am the object of Jehovah’s love!

Remember, also, that this Holy Lord is working upon you still, that you may reflect His Glory. He says in the seventh verse, “I have created him for My glory, I have formed him; yes, I have made him.” He has begun our new creation. He is carrying it on and He is completing it. There is a new character forming in Believers by God’s own hand—a character which will be the image of the Lord Jesus! We are the handiwork of God, His higher creation, the product of His eternal power. No, we are more—it is written, “Of His own will He begat us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures.” We are begotten again unto a lively hope and the life will never die, neither will the hope be frustrated, for the Lord has fixed His strong resolves to perfect His work in us.

What does He say in the 13th verse? “There is none that can deliver out of My hand: I will work, and who shall reverse it?” Jehovah is fashioning us in the image of His Son and who shall hinder Him? Who shall stand in God’s way? If I am a Believer, despite depravities of nature, temptations from the world and assaults from Satan, I must be, I *shall* be perfectly transformed into the image of the Lord Jesus and in me shall the promise of verse 21 be absolutely fulfilled—“This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.”

II. Secondly, LET US NOTE THE LORD’S ESTIMATE OF HIS PEOPLE. Whatever *we* may think of the Israel of God, the Lord thinks more of it than words can express. He says, “I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you.” Let us turn that over in our minds. When the Lord chose a nation to be the depository of His sacred Oracles, He might have selected Egypt if He had willed to do so. Egypt was in the known world the oldest nation. It was hoary with antiquity. Egypt contained the wisest and most civilized people of early times. Its very ruins are the wonder of the ages. Its records show an extraordinary progress in literature, architecture and the arts and sciences.

Egypt was also the most powerful of empires in the olden times. Before the banners of Assyria, Babylon and Medo-Persia came to the front, the dragon of Egypt was a mighty ensign. Yet the Lord did not choose the sons of Ham, but passed by Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba. The Lord chose the seed of Abraham and the family of Jacob—He multiplied them and instructed them—and made them to be His own peculiar people. In this sense He could say, “I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for

you.” In the course of history the claims of various countries came into collision with those of Israel. Especially Egypt proudly oppressed Israel.

What did God do? Did He hesitate as to which of the two peoples should be preserved? No. The Lord brought out Israel and turned His artillery upon Egypt. That His people might be free, He hurled plagues upon Pharaoh until at last He killed all the first-born of Egypt, the chief of all their strength. In this way He gave Egypt for the ransom of His people. He brought Israel forth and when the proud Egyptians pursued them and overtook them by the Red Sea, the Lord destroyed the chariot and the horse—the army and the power—and again gave Egypt as the ransom of His elect nation. In the days of King Asa the Ethiopians came up against Judah to the number of a million of men—but “they were destroyed before the Lord and before His host”—thus was Ethiopia given for Israel.

Nebuchadnezzar came up against the land and struck Egypt sorely, as it was foretold by Ezekiel the Prophet. “Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald and every shoulder was peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it: therefore thus says the Lord God; behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army. I have given him the land of Egypt for his labor wherewith he served against it, because they worked for Me, says the Lord God.”

Then was the crocodile broken by the river and its power was never restored. Probably the full meaning of the text must be found in the conquest of Egypt by Cambyses, the son of Cyrus. It was written of Cyrus, “I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build My city, and he shall let go My captives, not for price nor reward, says the Lord of hosts.” Accordingly, Cyrus did cause the people to return to their land and then the Lord promised him Egypt as his reward. See Isaiah 45:14—“Thus says the Lord, the labor of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto you, and they shall be yours: they shall come after you; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto you, they shall make supplication unto you, saying, Surely God is in you; and there is none else, those is no other God,”

Cambyses conquered Egypt and destroyed many of its cities, and never since has there been a native prince sitting upon the throne of Pharaoh. God gave to the king of Persia, Egypt and the neighboring regions as the ransom price of His people. Thus the Lord did of old on the behalf of His literal Israel. And what does this fact say to us? It means this—God’s chosen are immeasurably precious in His sight! He chose them to be His people before all worlds out of mere love; and in this ancient love He will abide world without end. Long before we were born we were thought of by the Lord—our names were in His book and our persons lay on His heart from before the foundations of the world. “Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.”

He ordained the chosen ones to be what they were, not in themselves. They were not holy, but He ordained them that they should be holy. He chose them that He might make them like His dear Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. These chosen men are the center of God's plan and design. If I understand God's great project, it was on this wise—He had formed matter into a thousand marvelous shapes and He had then created vegetable life in infinite variety and beauty. To this He had added animal life in its differing degrees of intelligence and then He made angels, who are pure spirit. These several creations He would link together, blending matter and mind, the animal and the spiritual—therefore He resolved that He would make a being that should be nearer to Him than the angels and yet should be akin to the rest of the universe—down even to the mere materialism of which its body should be composed.

His Son was in His thought! Immanuel, God-With-Man. He resolved that the eternal Son should be Incarnate, should be the Adam of a chosen race, "the firstborn among many brethren," and that these brethren should be His Son's joy and crown and delight forever. The Word made flesh was to be the model and pattern for a generation of beloved ones who should be "a kind of first-fruits of His creatures." These favored beings would be of earth and yet of Heaven—brothers to the worm and yet partakers of the Divine Nature—lifted up into alliance with the Godhead through Jesus Christ, their Representative, who is both God and Man.

This wonderful conception I can but dimly set before you. Man was so surely to be made in the imago of God that he should never again lose that image. The chosen were to be placed beyond further danger of falling because they would know sin and hate it intensely because of their experience of it and salvation from it. By His gracious redemption, the Lord purposed to produce beings that would be forever loyal to their great King, not through force, but through their new nature and the constraint of love to Him who redeemed them from evil. Perhaps it would not have been possible, by a mere fiat, to have created free agents who would be safe in the surpassing elevation of sons of God. Before they could be able to stand near to the Eternal Throne, related to the Eternal God, they must be knit to Jesus by eternal bonds of love. They must be so bound by grateful love that there shall be no possibility of their imitating Satan in proud rebellion.

By the operations of His Grace, the Lord has prepared a creature who is able humbly to enjoy the favor of Heaven and safely to occupy a rank to which angels cannot aspire. A creature, however wisely made, might become self-sufficient and disobedient—but a creature that has fallen, that has been condemned—and then has been redeemed by God Himself assuming its nature, redeemed by blood, lifted up by a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit into newness of life and so made akin to God—that creature, I say, is thus prepared to live near the Eternal Throne and to bear the dignity of a child of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ!

God's intent was to produce a race that should be honorable in His sight and well-beloved of His soul. That being His eternal purpose, He

firmly fixed His soul upon the accomplishment of it. He would glorify Himself in these people. "This people have I formed for Myself: they shall show forth My praise." Did not the world show forth His praise? Yes, in a measure the spacious earth and swelling flood proclaim the wise and powerful God. But He meant to make men far clearer mirrors of His Glory. In them He would be seen through all the ages! Their lives should show forth His longsuffering, His Grace, His love, His wisdom, His holiness and His whole Character. In redeeming them with His own blood, He would set forth in them His Justice and His Grace.

These were to be repetitions of the image of the Only-Begotten in whom God is well-pleased. God so loved His Son that He would see His beauties reflected in others—He, the Son of God, should stand surrounded with Brothers and Sisters who would rejoice to honor Him! It was a God-like idea! God determined that in saving men He would show forth all the Glory of His Nature. This design would be costly, even to Jehovah Himself. To carry out this purpose, men, having fallen, must be redeemed by blood. The Lord gave Ethiopia and Seba for His people, but this was little. Would He give His only-begotten Son? The ever-blessed Son of the Father was more precious than Egypt multiplied beyond all count—and Ethiopia and Seba were as nothing to His value. Would the Lord give His own Son? Yes, to carry out His Divine resolve of magnifying Himself in the salvation of guilty men, He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all!

O miracle of miracles! Love beyond degree! But even then men could not be saved unless the Holy Spirit, another blessed Person of the Divine Three, should condescend to come and live in their bodies! It was great for Jesus to come and live in human flesh for 30 years, but for the Holy Spirit to abide in our human nature for *thousands* of years is an equal marvel! Yes, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is true. This further miracle of love has been perfected in us in whom the Spirit abides. This is far more than giving Egypt for our ransom. God gives Himself to save unworthy man! And now, Beloved, shall He not, with the Lord Jesus, also give us all things? Is anything, now, too dear for God to make a sacrifice of it? Is there anything in Heaven or earth, or even within the sphere of *imagination*, that God would not give for the accomplishment of purposes of Divine Grace to His people?

Believers, do you know how great you are? Do you know, O men and women saved by Grace, *what* you are and where you are? If you did, I think you would begin to shout, "Hallelujah!" and would never come to an end. You are blood-redeemed and bought by your Lord with a price. You are the jewels of Jesus' crown, the gems within His breastplate. You are molded by His hands to be likenesses of Himself. You are set over the works of God's hands and made princes of the royal blood of the universe. Do you know what it means to be called sons of God? Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God! You are joint heirs with Christ—do you comprehend that? The Lord Jesus has made us kings and priests unto our God and we shall reign forever and ever!

Oh, the splendors, the infinite splendors of the love of God to His believing people! From now on everything shall be sacrificed for us. God will give all that He has to save His beloved ones! He will make the whole of Nature and Providence subservient to the complete salvation of His chosen. Kings shall be born and buried. Empires shall rise and fall. Republics and systems shall come and go—and all shall be the scaffold for the building of the house of God which is His Church! All events shall work for the good of the chosen! It is God's grandest, highest purpose to gather together in one the whole company of His redeemed in Christ Jesus their Lord and to make them like their Head!

O Beloved, I know not how to preach! I want to sit and in silent wonder offer to the Lord the praise of my heart. Glorify God, I pray you, for He has glorified *you!*

III. And now we shall close with a brief meditation. LET US CONSIDER THE OUTCOME OF THIS. If it is so, that the glorious God has really and of a truth loved us, His people, and valued us at a mighty price, then see *how secure His people are!* I will not say anything upon this topic, but the Lord Himself shall speak. "Fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name, you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior: I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you." He has given so much for us that He will not, now, lose us! He values us too highly to let His enemy carry us away! Beloved, see how secure they must be who are priceless in the esteem of God!

Note, next, *the honor which God puts upon them.* It follows upon the text, "I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you. Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable." God has put us poor sinners among His honorable ones. I know one, who, in her unconverted state, had fallen into sad sin and the remembrance of it was painful. But the Lord removed the shame by laying home to her soul these gracious words, "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable." Oh, yes, the woman, who was a sinner, who washed our Savior's feet with tears and wiped them with her hair, was honorable to her Lord! The thief on the cross, hanging though he was, was honorable before Him who is the Fountain of honor! He was a peer of the realm and went in with Jesus into the Palace, for his Lord said, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Our ascending Lord entered Paradise with this thief as His attendant!

The Lord has a way of transforming dishonorable ones into honorable ones. He lifts us from the dunghill and sets us among princes, even the princes of His people. His own dear Word says to us, "Since you were precious in My sight you have been honorable, and I have loved you; therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life."

Again, from the high estimate which the Lord puts upon His people we conclude *the certainty of the Lord's gathering together all His people.* This is set forth from the fifth to the seventh verses, "I will bring your seed from

the east, and gather them from the west,” and so forth. This encourages me to preach with all my might, for the Lord has a people whom He *must* and *will* gather to Himself! He bids the nations act as His servants in this matter. “I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth.”

Why, they may be up to their necks in the bogs of sin! But they are to be brought home, for the Lord will not lose His sons and daughters! Perhaps they have wandered far into grievous vices—but if they are called by His name, every one of them must come. Yes, it is written, “even every one.” Our almighty Savior can draw a sinner back from the shelving brink of Hell. While there is life there is hope! God will bring back His redeemed in spite of whatever iniquity they may have fallen. Victorious Grace shall set free the captives of sin! As to free will, the Lord will make His people willing in the day of His power.

On the Cross, according to Psalm 22, our Lord said, “A seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come.” “Shall come”—shall make them come—and the Lord Jesus shall not shed His blood in vain. The Lord gave Egypt for Israel’s ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for her and He will not lose what He has purchased at such a price. Whether the exile has been carried west, or east, or north, or south, the Lord will devise means that he is not left to perish in the far-off land. When I come to preach in this great house, I say within my heart, “Lord, You have many people in this city. I will look for them. This people You have bought for Yourself at an exceedingly great price and I desire to find them for You.”

A controversialist once said, “If I thought God had a chosen people, I should not preach.” That is the very reason why I *do* preach. What would make *him* inactive is the mainspring of *my* earnestness! If the Lord had not a people to be saved, I should have little to cheer me in my ministry. Other sheep He has whom He must bring in and my hope is that He will bring some of them in by me! Beloved, God has a people everywhere and we are sent to draw them to Him with the powerful magnet of the Cross. This finds them out amid the ashes, even as Jesus said—“I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.” We preach Christ Crucified and, “to Him shall the gathering of the people be.” The Lord calls to Himself His own sheep and these follow Him and are saved.

Here is another little bit for meditation. If God has determined to glorify Himself by us and in us, *let us be in one accord with Him*. Already I have quoted the 21st verse—“This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.” Beloved, let us labor to show forth His praise, for He has formed us for that purpose! Oh, that we could live wholly to His Glory! Not only let us speak *sometimes* to His praise, but let us *always* be making known the exceeding riches of His Divine Grace! Do you not feel, Beloved, that if God has chosen you for such an end as this, your whole being cries, “I must and will show forth His praise. My soul does magnify the Lord”?

If we knew how much God loved us, we should love Him much more in return and we should give much more to His cause and to His poor than

we do. Just now I have need of large help in money for repairs at the Tabernacle—and this need would not arise if we were all consecrated as we ought to be. As it has arisen, we shall soon meet the need if we all used our substance for the Lord. It is not my work any more than it is yours, but I have the responsibility for it and I would be glad to be helped. We are stewards and not owners—the least hint should set us enquiring as to what is needed in our Master's house. We should not need exhorting, much less to be begged of—we should always be crying to the Lord, "Show me what You would have me to do."

He is Jehovah our God, the Holy One of Israel who has redeemed us at a measureless price—the very least we can do is, by holy loving, cheerful working, patient suffering and spontaneous giving—show what we think of our Lord. Ah, if we live near to God, we shall not long for the silly amusements which are beguiling the base-born professors of this evil age. Think of a joint heir with Christ at the theater! The very thought of consorting with the world is degradation! We are born of a nobler birth and lifted to a higher level than to grovel in childish, stupid play. If we are the sons of Jehovah, our joy, our hope, our recreation, our object in life will all be among high and eternal things! Our affections are set upon things above, not on things on the earth.

Try to live up to your destiny, you heirs of God! May God the Holy Spirit help you! *What love we ought to bear to God!* Does God give up Egypt for us and shall we not give up the riches of Egypt for Him? Shall we go down to Egypt for help when God has already given up Egypt that He might help us? If we could have all the wealth of Ethiopia and Seba, what would it be in comparison with our Lord? Therefore, let us love Him supremely and count all things but loss for the excellency of His knowledge.

Beloved, we must love Him—we do love Him. How can it be otherwise? "The love of Christ constrains us." Madame Guyon wrote of "torrents." Divine love, if truly felt, is a torrent sweeping all before it, like that ancient river Kishon. Oh, for those torrents now! May God the Holy Spirit bless these feeble words of mine to all His people and may many long to be joined with His people by faith in Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 43.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—192, 730, 733.**

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

THE VALUE AND RANK OF THE BELIEVER NO. 1671

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

***“Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable,
and I have loved you: therefore will I give men for you,
and people for your life.”
Isaiah 43:4.***

ONE of the worst mistakes we could make would be to judge our condition before God by our outward circumstances. Know you not that the ungodly have their portion in this life? They increase in riches; their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart can wish. They are not in trouble like other men, “neither are they plagued like other men,” therefore pride compasses them about as a chain; violence covers them as a garment. Poor creatures, they have no joy in the world to come and, therefore, God permits them to have as much joy as they are capable of in this world. They stand upon slippery slopes and fiery billows rage below! How are they cast down as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors!

Envy them not and never dream that they are beloved of God because, like the beast which is fattened for the slaughter, their manger is full of corn and their rack is overflowing with fodder. As for the people of God, they are often in great trials. David said of himself, “All the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning”—as if his heavenly Father whipped him as soon as he was up and kept him under the rod all day long. Such chastisements are not unusual in the family of Grace. Many of God’s best servants are rich in faith, but extremely poor in pocket. They are strong in the Lord, but sadly weak in body. They are beloved of Heaven, but abhorred by the men of the world.

Many of those whom the Lord loves most, endure sharp affliction, even as the most precious metal is likely to see the most of the fire. Is it not written, “As many as I love I rebuke and chasten”? “What son is there whom his father chastens not?” The Lord scourges every son whom He receives. Therefore, never judge yourselves by *outward* circumstances, for these are not the balances of the sanctuary and cannot help you to a just conclusion as to your state before God! Everything may seem to go against you and yet all things may be working together for your good. Jacob was no good judge of his own matters when he cried, “All these things are against me!” He needed Egypt and a sight of Joseph to teach him the reason for the Lord’s dealings.

Everything may be prospering with you openly and yet you may only be as the victim which is covered with garlands when it is being led to be slain at the altar. Everything may be grieving you and yet securing your best prosperity. Our Heavenly Father has, I think, given us the words of the text and the context by way of comfort in reference to His outward dispensations. If God has a favored people whom He has chosen—upon whom His distinguishing Grace has lighted to make them great and hon-

orable—you would suppose that the second verse of this chapter would run thus, “You shall not go through the waters, for I will be with you to keep you out of them; neither shall you pass through the rivers, for I have bridged them on your behalf. You shall never go through the fire and, therefore, you shall not be burned. Neither shall there be any fear that the flame shall kindle upon you, for it shall not come near you.”

There is no such word of promise! It would be contrary to the whole tenor of the Covenant, which always speaks of a rod and of the chosen passing under it! On the contrary, it is here supposed and taken for granted that we shall have to pass through fire and through water to get to Heaven! And it is put thus—“*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned.*” And then it comes in, in the language of our text, that although the chosen are bound to go through fire and through water, yet they are precious in God’s sight. Oh true Believer, rest in perfect peace! Although you have to pass through unnumbered afflictions, you are honorable and safe, for the Lord will make any sacrifice so that He may secure your safety!

He will give all mankind for you, for the word is in the plural, “I will give *men* for you.” And He will give all things, yes, whole nations of men, for you, sooner than you shall perish, so determined is He that you shall be saved! Come, then, dear tried people of God—come to the text and see whether you can find comfort in it! I know you will not be disappointed if the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, shall apply it with power to your souls.

I. First, THE LORD COUNTS HIS PEOPLE TO BE PRECIOUS. The text was spoken of a nation whom He had chosen and what is true of a nation is true of each individual in that nation—at least, what is true of Israel is true of every Israelite. If God has loved His Church, He has loved every member of that Church. And if His Church is precious in His sight, so is each individual Believer. Is not that a blessed word, “You were precious in My sight”? In your own sight you appear to be unworthy, insignificant and undeserving, but you are precious in the sight of the Lord!

I know that when the Lord gives us a soul-humbling experience, we are made to feel as if we were worthless worms, good-for-nothing, incapable, ungrateful, undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving. “God be merciful to me a sinner,” is often the cry of the most sanctified child of God. Yes, and the nearer he gets to the likeness of Christ, the more he mourns over his deficiencies, till he is like David who had spoken all through the 119th Psalm of his love to God’s Word and his delight in it—and yet concluded the Psalm by saying—“I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant; for I do not forget Your Commandments,” as if that were the conclusion of the whole matter and the utmost to which he had attained.

Only the ignorant and self-exalted will talk of their own goodness! Saints mourn because they perceive sin remaining in them. The Divine assurance of our text comes in as a blessed counterbalance to our lowly sense of our own worthlessness. The Lord, Himself, bears witness, “You are precious in My sight.” A child of God is often far other than precious in the sight of others. Men of God are often as broken pitchers in the sight of men, only fit to be thrown away. If they become earnest, people

say that they are almost out of their minds through religion. If they are quiet, their critics remark that they are moping and melancholy. Nothing you can do will altogether please men of the world—they are sure to pick holes in your coat one way or another—it is the way of them.

We are not precious in their sight, for they value glitter, pomp, riches and the things which perish in the using. They can do without Christians, so they think. Albeit that the people of God are the very salt of the earth and the light of the world, yet they are utterly despised and rejected. “The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!” Ah, well! Child of God, you are precious in *God’s* sight and that is infinitely more than being precious to princes! You live in a little room, alone, and few know you. And those who do know you do not think much of you, but the Lord says, “You are precious in My sight.” Poor old Mary, who has been bed-ridden for years, fears that her friends think her a burden, but let her be comforted, for her best Friend says, “You are precious in My sight.”

John, the carter, with his large family, small wages and shabby clothes, yet fears the Lord and walks with Him! And no man may despise him, for to the Lord he is worth more than his weight in gold, and his Redeemer says, “You are precious in My sight.” A humble working man has come to worship with the Lord’s people, all unknown to fame. He has only one talent, which he tries to use, and he is often downcast because he can do so little for his Master. Yet the Lord says, “You are precious in My sight.” And is it not better to be precious in the sight of God than it would be to be precious in the sight of kings and queens and the great ones of the earth? May you not be well content, like your Redeemer, to be unknown and despised, if the Lord does but say, “You are precious in My sight”?

Do you know, sometimes, these words of our Lord quite take me aback? It is so wonderful that I should be precious to the All-Glorious Jehovah! I remember being startled, once, when that word in Solomon’s Song came with power to my soul—“You are all fair, My Love; there is no spot in you.” It shone so brightly on my soul that it seemed to give a sunstroke to my faith and I almost whispered, “I cannot believe it.” Yet it is even so! We know how lovers will exaggerate and use hyperboles in their expressions, but the Lord our God speaks not after the fashion of foolish men! He is seriously in earnest in all that He says.

But still, I was set wondering. Could it be that Jesus could speak thus in His infinite love to *me*? I needed to remember the power of the washing in His blood, and the power of His cleansing Spirit, and the power of His justifying righteousness before I could understand how He could say such a word to *me*. Do you not feel a bit staggered as you hear this word, “You are precious in My sight”? Does not unbelief prompt you to say, “Lord, that love-word is meant for somebody else! It cannot mean *me*.” And yet, if you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you are born of God, and it is to you that this text is spoken, “You are precious in My sight.”

How can this be? I think the text explains it. Read the first verse. “But now thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel.” It is clear that we are precious to God because we are His

creation. The first creation was marred upon the wheel by sin. It became a thing without honor and came under the curse. But he that believes in Jesus has been created anew by the work of the Holy Spirit. God has, in a very special sense, created him. He has gone beyond mere creation—having first created the clay—He has formed it. We are not half-made or ill-made in regeneration—we are *formed* as well as created! The Lord who has given us spiritual existence is daily giving us fashion and completeness. Having first given us life, He has tutored that life. Having planted the tree, He has pruned it. He has created us and formed us and, in both, He has worked according to the counsel of His own will.

In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth, but afterwards the first chapter of Genesis tells us how God fitted up the heavens and the earth to be man's abode, *forming* what He had, before, *created*. The earth, though long before created, was "without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." In the moment of regeneration we are like that newly-created world, but as by the Lord's power the world was brought into light and order, so by Divine Grace the work of sanctification goes on, stage by stage, till Christ is formed in us and we are formed in His image!

Now, because the Lord has done a great work upon us equal to a creation and a formation, therefore we are precious in His sight. How a man will love a garden when he has laid it out himself! How he will admire the fruit that comes from trees which he planted with his own hands, years ago, and to which he has attended, himself! When we see our work in anything, it has great value in our eyes. Work is a great creator of preciousness. You know how a little piece of metal, which intrinsically may be scarcely of any worth, can have such work put into it that from half a farthing it can rise in worth to hundreds of pounds. Skilled, artistic work makes the most common material to be as precious as a gem.

Think, then, of what the Lord has worked upon us! We who seemed to be intrinsically so worthless have the workmanship of God upon us, for, "He that has worked us to the same thing is God," and by that workmanship, that creation, that formation, He has made us to be very precious things. From an old horseshoe the artificer may make a work of rarest workmanship and thus has the Lord done with us! Though we were like the common pebbles that lay in Jordan's brook, the Lord has of those stones raised up children unto Abraham! Though we were but as the dross that is cast out at the pit's mouth, to be left there as worthless, yet the Lord has taken us up and transformed us into silver and gold, that we may make a crown for Himself, world without end! Has He not said "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise"? Oh, but this is sweetly clear and, surely, the creative work of God upon us has made us to be precious in His sight!

But what does He say next? "I have formed you: I have redeemed you." I wish I could sit down in that chair and let somebody else talk of this most Divine subject. Here is the reason why we are precious in the sight of the Lord—it is because we have been bought with precious blood! Can we contemplate the sufferings and the death of Christ for us without feeling that whatever He intended to accomplish by such sufferings and death must be an objective most precious in His sight, an objective that

He will certainly achieve? Some seem to fancy that Christ either had no purpose at all in His death, or else that He played at haphazard, redeeming all men, or no men, as the chance might happen to turn out. They say that He was a Substitute for *all* men, and yet it is clear that many of them are lost—lost, though redeemed with His precious blood!

I am loath to repeat the statement, though to them it does not appear to be profane. I know this—I would not willingly give my life on a speculation! I must be well convinced that a grand result will certainly follow, or I will not even *risk* my life if I can help it. And I cannot conceive the infinitely wise God, our Savior, as laying down His life for any purpose but that which will most certainly be accomplished! What He bought, He will have. What He purchased, He will receive. If a thing is bought with *your* money, it becomes precious to you! And though it may be a bad bargain, yet if it cost you dearly, you do not intend to lose it. You value it too much to throw away that which has cost you so dearly. And Christ has not thrown His blood away, or wasted it, or spilt it on the ground for nothing! He shall see of the travail of His soul!

Come back to a view of yourself. Have you believed in Jesus? Then you know, by that mark, that He has redeemed you from among men! Do you believe in Jesus? Then you are of His sheep! Christ laid down His life for His sheep. Do you believe? Then you belong to His Church of which we read, “Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it.” You see the specialty of His redemption as coming to those of you who believe in Him, therein you have the key of our text. Now you can understand why you are precious—redemption makes you so. “I bought that woman,” says Christ. “Amidst my pangs and groans and death I saw her—saw her through the tears that filled My eyes. I also saw that man—My prescient love beheld him in his sin and beheld him as redeemed from them when I bore his sin in My own body on the tree.”

Oh, blessed thought! We *must* be precious to Him who has not only created us, but has laid down His life for us, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” The agony and bloody sweat cause me to understand my Lord’s saying, “You were precious in My sight.” In any case, the Spirit of God in our text assures us that such is the fact—we are precious unto God—the jewels of His crown, the apple of His eye, the portion of His possession.

Another blessing of Grace is mentioned in the chapter and that is that God has called us. “I have called you by your name; you are Mine.” There is a work of Grace called Effectual Calling, by which the Spirit of God calls out the redeemed from among men. They lie with the rest of the fallen mass, knowing nothing about what Christ has done for them—ignorant, indifferent, insensible. But Free Grace calls them out from the mass of the dead! Many calls are given to them in the Gospel—to them amongst others—indeed, to *all* men, for the call is to all the sons of men. But they regard not the invitation. Even the elect refuse the voice of the Lord till God, in Sovereign Grace, puts power into the Word—and then it comes as a *personal* call—as it is written, “I have called you by your name.”

Then the summons of love comes effectually and they are made willing in the day of the Lord’s power. Being effectually called, they spontane-

ously answer, "When You said, Seek you My face, my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek." Jesus knows when He called you—do you remember it? Some of us remember it as distinctly as ever the two sons of Zebedee recollected when Jesus called them as they were fishing and promised to make them fishers of men. The day is as distinct to us, now, as it must have been to Matthew when he sat at the receipt of custom and Jesus said unto him, "Follow Me." We have been called, as surely called as the child Samuel when he was upon his bed, for our spiritual ears have heard the voice of God and our hearts have answered, "Here am I; for You did call me."

Yes, Beloved, we know our calling, and it is well for us to be fully assured that, therefore, we are precious in the sight of the Lord! Effectual calling has made us so! He drew us and we followed. He called us and we answered to the call. Therefore are we dear to the Father to whom we have returned; dear to Jesus by whom we have been reconciled; and dear to the Holy Spirit who has led us into this Grace. We have been ever since kept by His rich Grace and preserved—and this, also, has endeared us to the Lord. Those to whom we have shown great favor are sure to be dear to us. We love those to whom we have acted lovingly. The Lord has daily called us from one stage of Grace to another. "Friend, come up higher," is a word that we hear from time to time and we expect to hear it, soon, for the last time when He shall bid us rise from earth to Heaven. Then will He say, "Friend, come up higher, and we shall sit down in the highest room." He is always calling and, by His Grace, enabling us to answer the call and, therefore, we are precious in His sight.

But I do not care so much to think over the reasons as I wish to get you to grip the truth, each one of you on his own account. Perhaps you are downtrodden and despised, oppressed and depressed. Is your spirit sinking within you? If so, rejoice that you are precious to God! You are nobodies, so the world says, and so you think, but, for all that, the Lord declares that you are precious in His sight! Now, will you try to think that many and many a poor soul that as yet knows not Christ is as precious in His sight as you are? They are His sheep, though not yet the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hands—

***"Oh, come! Let us go and find them,
In the paths of death they roam."***

Let us go and hunt up the lost jewels which belong to Jesus! All the treasures hid in a field have not yet been found. God has a chosen people in the back slums, in the lowest haunts of vice—let us go forth and seek them. "I have much people in this city," He said to Paul, and I believe that He has much people hidden away in the holes and corners of London! If poor fallen men and women are precious in His sight, though they may be the offscouring of the streets—though they may be thieves and drunks—let us never despise them! Let us never say, "Oh, I cannot be associated with such!" "Precious in My sight," says Jesus, as He points to them. "Precious in My sight," as He points to the poor fallen woman. "Precious in My sight," as He mourns over the blasphemer. Go after the degraded haunter of the street and never rest until you have the happiness of bringing her to Him who bought *you* and bought *her* with His most precious blood!

Brothers and Sisters, do you not think that if you are precious in Christ's sight, then everything that has to do with Him ought to be precious to you? Oh, how you should value Christ! Is He not your All-in-All? Everything that is connected with Him ought to become dear to you! Some of His people are very disagreeable people and we cannot feel much joy in their company, but we must still love them. Remember what Augustine said—he declared that he loved every man that had “a liquid Christi”—anything of Christ—about him. “Precious in My sight,” says Christ of this Brother and that! Let them, then, be precious to you and be it your joy to cheer them and succor them for Jesus Christ's sake! Think once more. If you are precious in God's sight, do not despise yourself so as to fall into the follies and vanities which please other men. The ungodly may do as they please, but here is a charming check for you—Jesus says of you—“Precious in My sight.”

Then, Lord, I cannot go into amusements which some others so much delight in, for if You have said, “Precious in My sight,” I cannot be found among the giddy throng. If there is a sin that once was sweet to me and I find it to be sweet to many of my friends, I will abstain from it with all my heart and try to get them to do so, also, since You have taught me that I am precious in Your sight. Nobility has its obligations. We do not dream of seeing princes of the blood running in the streets and playing with the children of the gutter. No, something better is expected of them! If you are precious in God's sight, let the obligations of discriminating Grace lie upon you! Maintain a holy separation from the world! Heirs of Heaven, behave as such! Children of the eternal King, remember the dignity of your condition and so walk that you live not inconsistently with what the Lord has done for you!

That is our first point. In the Lord's esteem His people are precious.

II. Now, secondly, they being precious, He adds another epithet. “Since you were precious in My sight, YOU HAVE BEEN HONORABLE.” Is not that another blessed word? Alas, how many of God's people were the reverse of honorable before they knew the Lord! Many a dishonorable thing they thought, said and did, and it is the dishonorable life that makes the dishonorable man. They are honorable, now, but possibly they were children of shame at their birth. Perhaps they lived in sins that are not to be mentioned lest the cheek of modesty should crimson—and yet they are now honorable! Perhaps they went so deep in sin that the laws of their country convicted them of crime and yet—wonder of Divine Grace—as soon as ever they are precious in God's sight they are honorable!

All the past is blotted out! It shall be remembered against them no more, forever! They take their rank among the honorable. I do not know that I should care to be called, “right honorable,” among men, for there are too many “right honorable” whom we could not honor, patrons of the race course, the betting ring and the prizefight. The name is a falsehood when applied to debauched men whose only worth lies in their money. But an, “honorable,” that *God* calls honorable is honorable, indeed! Although, previously, that poor soul may have been everything that was *dishonorable*, Jesus says, “I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and

like a thick cloud, your iniquities”—and that free pardon puts him among the honorable!

Those who trust the Lord Jesus are honorable, “for unto you that believe he is honor.” The meanest child of God that lives is honorable, for he belongs to a right worshipful family. An angel thinks it an honor to wait upon him, bearing him up in his hands lest he dash his foot against a stone. “Honorable!” Why, all Nature honors the elect of God! The saints of God are the center of all Providential arrangements. Next to God, for the Church all things exist, for so the Lord has put it, “He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.” “And all things work together for good to them that love God.” The stones of the field shall be in league with them and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with them.

The Lord gives a charge to all the powers of Nature that they are on the side of the man who is on the side of God. Honorable? Why, we are the most conspicuous objects of the Divine forethought from all eternity—the most esteemed subjects of the guardian care of Heaven in all time—and we shall be the most eminent objects of Divine love throughout a whole eternity when the Lord shall make known, through the Church, to wondering angels and principalities, the manifold wisdom of God. “Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable.”

Now let a poor child of God tell how he believes that he is honorable. First, dear Brothers and Sisters, we are honorable by birth. Some are proud because they have been born of fathers who have been made lords, or elevated to the peerage in years gone by, thus by birth they are honorable—that is the way people talk and it must be so among men as long as there are classes and ranks. Descended from the King of kings, each *saint* has a lineage before which the pedigrees of princes grow stale and mean! He that is “begotten, again, unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” He that is born of the Spirit of God—he into whom God has infused His own Nature—he is honorable by birth in a sense which none can dispute! Not by blood, but by the *new* birth which comes from the Spirit of God, every child of God is made both precious and honorable.

Next, we become honorable by our possessions, for men pay honor to those who become millionaires and are immensely rich. Alas, the gains may have been dishonorably made and then the honor that comes of wealth is a stench in the nostrils of good men and angels. But, Brethren, our wealth that we get by our new birth is such that we are richer than the wealthiest of worldlings and must, in consequence, be honored! Paul says, “All things are yours—whether things present, or things to come, or life, or death. All are yours and you are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.” What an estate is that which belongs to every heir of Heaven, for we are “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,” and thus we become, indeed, honorable.

Yes, and the child of God becomes honorable in rank. To be a child of God is to occupy a rank surpassing all human dignity. A child of God is a “prince of the blood imperial,” I was about to say, but, still better than that, he is a prince of the Divine line—he is a child of God! No dignity can excel this. One who is a child of God has a rank which he could not wish

to change though all the empires in the world should lie at his feet to tempt him with their glories. Beloved, we, then, become ennobled by our *relationship*. When a person is related to some great man, he has a degree of honor reflected upon him. It may be by marriage that the relationship is made, but it is all the same. Honor comes with honorable connections. Since, then, we are related to God by the spiritual birth and united to Christ by the spiritual marriage, we are partakers of the honor of God our Savior!

Beloved, we are now the sons of God and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when Jesus shall appear we shall be like He is. Jesus is, "the first-born among many brethren" and we, as the younger brethren, are all honorable! We are honorable by calling, for He "has made us kings and priests unto our God." And these among men are the most noteworthy of all callings. None more honorable than priests and kings of God's own making! By Divine Grace we have become honorable by *character*, for the Lord has sanctified His people and made them to love that which is good and right and to forsake that which is evil. By His Grace they shall no longer bear the fruits of the flesh, but the fruits of the Spirit shall be in them and abound! And so, being honorable according to God's calling, they shall become honorable by a conversation agreeing therewith. Theirs is an honorable life—they live for an honorable purpose, they are quickened by an honorable spirit—they are wending their way through an honorable destiny on earth to Glory and honor and immortality and life eternal! Therefore may they rejoice that God has made them honorable.

The lesson to be learned from it is, do not let any child of God be bashful, shamefaced and cowardly in the presence of men of the world. It becomes us to be lowly and meek with all humbleness of mind, but not with any kind of meanness, so that we would flatter the great, or cringe before the powerful. We are greater than they, for they know not the Lord and he is greatest who knows best the Great One. Why should we fear their threats? Who are we that we should be afraid of a man that must die? Who are we? We ought to feel ourselves to be too honorable to fear the son of man who is crushed before the moth. "Princes did sit and speak against me," said David, "yet I declined not from Your statutes."

Who are princes? If they speak against God's children, they speak against those who are more honorable than they! They revile their superiors, compared with whom they are but mimic monarchs. Do not, therefore, go about with the bearing of a menial, but with the air of a king! I would like to walk as Abraham did among men. He was every inch a king—the sons of Heth could do no other than respect the princely Patriarch. Poor Jacob is often beggarly with his bargains and his tricks—he cuts a sorry figure as compared with his majestic grandsire, the Father of the Faithful. Abraham so trusts his God that he is the independent man everywhere—he lends, but he does not borrow. He is the head, but not the tail. When he stands before the king of Sodom, how more than royal his bearing!

The king would give him the spoils which were, indeed, justly his according to the laws of war, but he replies, "I will not take from a thread even to a shoelace, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich." The

child of God is too honorable to take what other people would take, if, thereby, he would stain his dignity. He may often feel it unbecoming his dignity to do that which is lawful. He may, therefore, choose a more excellent way. Lions will not be found stealing little bits of meat like cats, or feeding on carrion like dogs. It is not for eagles to hawk for flies and it is not for children of God to stoop below the glorious level of their new birth! "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable." Oh, you right honorable, take care to act honorably!

My Brothers, we do not wish to be called, "reverend," any one of us. but *God* has called us honorable and it would be a fairer title by far for us to wear! Reverence, surely, we can never claim—that belongs but to One. But if He calls us, "honorable," I venture at least to call you, "right honorable." O you right honorable, always live as right honorable! Do not let us hear of you, that you spoke in a fit, for that is to act like a spoiled child. One of God's honorable in a passion, uttering burning words? This will never do! One of God's children doubting God, afraid to trust his heavenly Father and trying, by little tricks of trade to get on, instead of being honest? Is this a conversation such as becomes the household of faith? Is not this the reverse of what becomes us?

There is one that cannot forgive his brother—is that seemly? He will not speak to his friend because of some small offense—is that honorable? Some that profess to be God's children seem to think it a poor business to be a Christian! Brothers and Sisters, think not so! Have a high idea of what a Christian ought to be and then pray the Spirit of God to raise you up to it! If you have been called a king in the Eternal Covenant, I pray that you may be anointed to your office with a horn of oil by the Divine Spirit and that about you there may be regal qualities such as become a king—and a sacrificial life such as befits a priest—for God has, indeed, made you to be a king and a priest unto Him!

III. Be of good cheer, then, as you pass on to the third point. "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, AND I HAVE LOVED YOU." Ever since the Lord has manifested Himself to you, He has loved you *manifestly*. He has not only told you of His love in the secret of your soul, but He has *publicly* acted in love to you. I desire you to get that Truth of God fully into your mind. Ever since the time of your conversion—yes, and long before that—ever since He loved you, He has acted in love to you.

"Oh, but I have been very ill. I have been frequently bound to my couch and my bed has been as painful to me as though it were of red-hot iron." Yes, yes, but He has loved you and put you to that pain to glorify Himself and to benefit you by preparing you to receive more of His love and to manifest more of it to others! "Since you were precious in My sight, I have loved you." Is there not a well of delight in that assurance? "Oh, but I have been in the dark as to my Lord. I have not walked in the light of His Countenance and He has hidden Himself from me. I have had many questions in my conscience as to my condition before Him."

Just so, because He loved you He would not let you be happy unless you were in a right state before Him. And He has put you in the dark because you were not fit to be in the light. He loved you and He saw you to be a naughty child and, therefore, He resolved that you must be put in

the corner. The Father could not smile, for to be smiled on by God when we are indulging in *sin* would be a *curse* to us—not a blessing! Our Father loves us too much to let us be at ease in sin! Will you try to remember that the Lord has loved you and kept on loving you all these years and He has never thought an unloving thought towards you? Nor has He done an unloving action towards you in any shape or form. He has looked out for wise ways in which to exhibit His love to you and He has done the very best for you. He has loved you infinitely—His whole heart has been set upon you.

The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout all the earth to show Himself strong on the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards Him. God loves you as much as if there were not another saint for Him to love! Can you believe that? God puts the center of His love in Christ and if there is any other center of His love, you are in it because God is a circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere—and you and I and each one of us may thus be the actual center of the love of God in Christ Jesus! Although there are ten thousand times ten thousand of my Brothers and Sisters for God to love, He does not mean to love me any the less. If I have so many to love, I must cut my heart in pieces, but His great heart is so capacious that He gives the whole of it to you and the whole of it to me! Even as the Father loved the Son, so does He love His people.

Jesus says, “As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Continue you in My love.” He is loving you now. The great Father is looking down upon you with infinite delight and boundless affection at this instant. Cheer up, then! Cheer up! Let nothing distress you. Did I hear you complaining that you are all alone? Are your father and mother dead? Perhaps years ago. The friends that you have been living with have been taken away and you are friendless and alone. Some of us who have got to middle life, or past it, see our dear old friends going to Heaven in flocks! We sometimes wonder what we shall do for friends when we grow old, ourselves, if we are spared! But that is a sweet word, “When your father and your mother forsake you, then the Lord will take you up.” “Even to your old age I am yours and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.” Is God thus loving us? Then it is enough! Let us fall back upon that love and say, “Your love, my Lord, is all I can desire.”

Well, now, if God loves us so, shall we not love Him? Awake, O heart that sleeps! Awake, awake, and give back to God all the love of which you are capable! And shall we not love poor sinners for Christ’s sake? Shall we not try to love them to the Savior? The greatest converting power in the world, next to the Holy Spirit, is the power of human love. Men are never saved by scolding and an angry preacher is not likely to bring many to a loving Savior. We must love sinners so much that they must be saved, or we will break our hearts! When we get to that, God will make us to be instruments in His hands of gathering in His chosen. Let us turn into flames of love! Oh, to be transmuted! Someone said, “What is Basil?” and then he dreamed that he saw a pillar of light and heard a voice saying, “This is Basil.”

Oh that we might be, in character, like burning and shining lights, and may our light and fire be love to God and love to men! Surely He that has made us precious in His sight and made us honorable, and loved us so, deserves that, for His sake, we should go out and seek His lost precious ones and bring in the dishonorable, that they may be honorable! If it is written “I have loved you,” let us feel the force of heavenly love and serve the Lord with gladness!

Now, poor souls, you that have had no share in all this text—you may have a share in it! Is there anyone here who is empty? Christ has come on purpose to fill him! Is there a soul here that is hungry after God and salvation? Then it is written, “He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He has sent empty away.” Sinners are scarce articles. “Why,” you say, “they are common as blackberries.” Yes, those that will *say* they are sinners, but those who truly feel that they are sinners are very scarce! A sinner is a sacred thing—the Holy Spirit has made him so. He that really knows his sinnership is redeemed by Christ! He is the man that Christ came to save! He is the man to whom infinite blessings belong! He is the man who may lift up his heart unto God and rest in Jesus. You blind eyes, Christ came to open you! You prisoners, Christ came to set you free! You good-for-nothings, you ungodly ones, you sinful, you that have no good thing in yourselves, but are despairing at the gates of Hell—“unto you is the Word of this salvation sent.” Christ has come to save such as you are!

For proud Pharisees, Christ has nothing! He came “not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” He came not to fill the full—they want it not. Nor did He come to heal the healthy—they need it not. But He comes to save you that have no good thing about you—that have no good feelings within you. You that have no broken hearts, He comes to give you broken hearts. You that have no faith, He comes to give you faith. You that have no repentance, He comes to give you repentance—

***“True belief and true repentance,
Every Grace that brings you nigh!
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”***

And oh, what a surprise it will be for you to hear His Spirit saying to you, by-and-by, “Because I loved you before the world was—because I had chosen you—because I had determined to save you, because you were precious in My sight, therefore you are honorable, and I have loved you. Come and rejoice in Me.” God help you to do so, for Jesus’ sake, Amen.

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PRECIOUS, HONORABLE, BELOVED NO. 917

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 20, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Since you were precious in My sight you have
been honorable, and I have loved you.”
Isaiah 43:4.*

THE first reference of this text is evidently to Israel. That nation was precious in God's sight. He had been pleased sovereignly to make an election of the seed of Abraham, that they should be His portion, and He should be their portion evermore. They were precious in His sight because of the Covenant which He had made with their great forefather, saying, “In blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed, and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”

This word of promise elevated them to an eminent position before the Lord. They were precious in the Lord's sight because His honor was concerned in their history. If the Covenant promise could be broken, there would be an impeachment of the fidelity of the Most High—if by any means the chosen people could be crushed by their enemies, then the Omnipotence of their Patron and Defender would also be in question. It was an important point that they should be preserved, because in the fulfillment of His Covenant with them the name of God would be glorified, as the God of faithfulness and Truth.

They were therefore precious in His sight. Many of the vast purposes of the Divine Being were intertwined with the being and well-being of the chosen people. To them He had committed the sacred oracles—among them lived His holy Prophets, to them He revealed the Law—of them as concerning the flesh, Christ came, and out of them the first preachers of the Gospel were chosen. Scarcely any great event that glorifies the Grace of God can be dissociated from the Jewish people. Let me even remind you that the calling of the Gentiles is the consequence of the putting away of Israel for awhile because of unbelief, and that the future glory, whenever it shall come, will certainly be intimately connected with the restoration of the chosen people.

Very precious is Israel, because like a silver thread we see her story running through the whole line of God's Grace as manifested to the sons of men. The Israelites of old were precious to God because He had done so much for them. He had brought them out of Egypt “with a high hand and an outstretched arm.” He had cast out the tribes of Canaan before them. He had oftentimes rebuked kings for their sakes, yes, and slain mighty kings that they might be delivered. The results of all this the Lord would not lose, and they, therefore for this cause also were precious in His sight.

Doubtless, one main reason of Israel's preciousness lay in the fact that out of Judah should arise the Royal Man, the Son of God, in Whom the Father is well-pleased. For the sake of that Divine Seed, which I may call the vital kernel of Israel's race, the Lord took pleasure in the descendants of Abraham, and they were precious in His sight.

Many other reasons might be given why God, having once elected the little nation of Israel by an act of distinguishing Grace, should look upon the people as peculiarly precious. But we pass on to observe that He next declares them to be honorable—honorable because, or from the time when they had been precious in His sight. Whoever God may elect for Himself, he is by that very fact rendered honorable, and the Jewish people in being set apart as the Lord's own people, were by that very separation honored above all other nations on the face of the earth.

They, moreover, received the Light while the whole world was in darkness. Although some stray gleams fell here and there among the nations, yet the brightest illumination which enlightened the early ages from the Throne of God came to the Israelite people. While others worshipped gods that were not gods, Israel adored Him whose Throne is in the heavens and whose kingdom rules over all. Theirs were the commands written with the Divine finger—theirs a sacredly instructive ritual—theirs a line of priests ordained to stand between man and God. All this made them honorable.

Conjointly with this special privilege they were honored by being chosen to special service. They were to conserve the knowledge of the true God amid surrounding idolatry, and they were to maintain a testimony for holiness in the center of abounding wickedness. They were ordained to be a holy nation, a peculiar people, sanctified unto the Lord to show forth the praise of Jehovah. They were honored by His constant Presence with them. No other nation saw God go before them in pillars of cloud and fire—nowhere else did the Shekinah blaze forth except between the wings of the cherubim overshadowing the Mercy Seat.

He had not so dealt with any other nation—only to His chosen people had He been pleased to reveal Himself. They were favored with special protections in Providence, with special guidance in all their difficulties, special supplies in time of famine. And if they sometimes had special chastisements, yet even these were but tokens of His peculiar regard. Israel was precious in the sight of God, and therefore, though small and inconsiderable, it was honorable among the nations, so that David could truthfully say, "What one nation in the earth is like Your people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to Himself?"

I need not dwell upon God's special love to Israel. We believe it continues to this hour, and though the scattered nation is despised, and the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, are esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter—yet the day shall come when "There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Then Judea's mountains, (Your land, O Immanuel), shall drop down with new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk. Then the glorious diadem of her former glory shall return to Zion's brow, and God, even her own God, shall bless her. The Covenant of salt shall be remembered, and it shall be soon that the Lord has not cast away His people whom He did foreknow.

We must not leave this point without noticing how true it was that because the Israelite people were so favored of God, He gave men for them, and people for their life. Egypt had to see the death of all its first-born for Israel's sake. The Canaanites were utterly exterminated to make room for the tribes. And when mighty kings came against the chosen people, they, too, were smitten with terrible destructions. Sennacherib's host withered

like autumn leaves when “the angel of death spread his wings on the blast,” for Israel must be saved.

If the people were carried captive for their sins, yet in captivity they became like the firebrand amidst the dry stubble, for Babylon was destroyed for their sakes—the hammer of the nations was broken in pieces that the exiles might be set free to worship the Lord at Jerusalem. Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba were all thrown into the scale together, and made nothing of in comparison with the elect nation. He gave men for them, or as the Hebrew reads it, he gave *man* for them, as though the whole race of man, with all its interests, were made to yield to the interests of the one chosen people. Thus dear was the seed of faithful Abraham to Jehovah’s heart. I dare not take such a text as this is without first of all giving you its original and natural signification, and I doubt not that it is as I have now declared it.

This passage may, however, without the slightest wrenching of it from its connection, as I believe, and certainly without any distortion of its meaning, be applied to the *spiritual* Israel, namely, to Christ’s chosen Church, which He has redeemed with His blood. Now this Church of God is, and always has been, precious in God’s sight. Not that there was anything of natural excellency in His elect why they should be chosen. Not that in the whole of them put together there was any value above the rest of the sons of men. But because the Lord, having been pleased to choose them, put by that very act a preciousness upon them which otherwise had not been there.

They are now precious to God, because, having loved them from of old, that ancient love sets a stamp of preciousness upon them in the dear memories of the past eternity. His goings forth in love to His people were of old—yes, He has loved them with an everlasting love, and therefore they are dear to Him. The Church is precious because His purposes of Grace mainly relate to it, and His other purposes are made subservient to the glory of His Grace in them. The bounds of the nations has He set according to the number of His chosen. The arrangements of Providence have all been disposed with an eye to them. All things work together for their good, and for the achievement of their ultimate perfection.

God is pleased to reckon them as His crown jewels—His peculiar treasure—because He sees in them the purchase of His Son’s agonies. They have been bought with a price far above gold and silver. And by the memories of Gethsemane and Calvary, they are made most precious in the esteem of the Most High. They are precious, because in them, above all others, His Glory is to be revealed. He has displayed it in Nature. He manifests it in Providence. But peculiarly He intends to illustrate all His attributes in His Church, when she shall be conformed to the image of Christ Jesus her Lord.

Exceedingly precious is the Church to God, and for this cause she is in the highest sense honorable. Even in her lowest estate, when despised and persecuted, the Church has still been honorable. In dark days and times of deep depression, when her candle was ready to go out, still was she honorable in the sight of the Most High. She was honorable because of her character, for she is holiness unto the Lord. Honorable because of her nearness to His Son, for is she not the “bride, the Lamb’s wife”? Honorable because of the service entrusted to her to bear witness for the Truth of the one God and the glory of the one Mediator. She is honorable

because of the destiny which awaits her, when she shall be taken up to dwell with her Lord forever, and reign with Him world without end.

Brethren, the men of this world do not see as yet the excellency of the Church, but then they saw not the glory of Christ. They thought Him a "root out of a dry ground," and therefore it is not at all remarkable if they defame the Church as a despicable nest of fanaticism. But as He shall appear, and in the latter days His Glory shall strike all eyes, so shall His true Church be revealed also, and the nations that once despised her shall be glad to bow down and lick the dust of her feet. Let us hold in high esteem the Church of God, the secret and mystical Church first, and the outward and visible Church next, as her representative.

I grieve when I hear some speaking as though the organized Church of God were a thing to be ignored or snuffed at. There have been many efforts made extra in the Church of God, and I would not for a moment have prevented one of them. But I have observed, and I think all must have done so, that the results of work disconnected with the Church of Christ have been but meager. God will bless the world, after all, through His Church. And your irregular efforts, though He shall own them, and they may be ordained by Him for a purpose, yet can never supersede the regular action of His people associated together in Church fellowship.

Neither do I believe that operations which ignore a true and visible Church of Christ ever will be permanent, at least never so permanent as that work which springs out of a Church ordered according to the Apostolic rule, working under the Divine sanction, prayerfully sowing in the name of Christ, and carefully ingathering to the name of Jesus the fruits of its labors. Honor the Church, for God has honored it. Unite yourself with it if up to now you have stood aloof, that you may participate in the favor which Christ accords to His people as a body.

"Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you." This last word means, "I have taken a complacency in you." The Lord takes a delight in His Church. When God made the world he said it was good, but I do not find that He ever broke forth into any song of congratulation over His work. But when He views His Church, the new creation, we hear by the mouth of the Prophet, "He shall rest in His love, He shall rejoice over you with singing." There is that in the Church of God which makes even the august silence of God to be broken for awhile—the Triune Deity lifts up the voice of song over His chosen.

Jesus loves His Church, His delights are with the sons of men. Of all that He has ever made or done, there is nothing in which God takes such satisfaction as in the "Church of the First-Born whose names are written in Heaven." Now rest assured, Brethren—that as for the Jewish Church, God gave up nations, threw them away as though they were but the common pebble stones, and His Israel the only diamond among them—so will it be and so has it been in reference to His own Church bought with the blood of Christ.

It was remarked by the Reformers that at the time when the Catholic kings agreed to persecute them, they might have been crushed, but jealousy sprung up among the various monarchs. They were so engaged with wars among themselves that the Reformers were able to escape. As though the blood of thousands upon thousands might be shed that God would take care that His Gospel in the world should not be harmed. And

now today what are empires and kingdoms but so many potters' vessels that shall be dashed to shivers sooner than the kingdom of Christ shall be moved?

What are you, you kings, and you great ones of the earth, though you think yourselves to be the rulers of the times and the masters of events—yet of yourselves what are you? You are crushed before the moth if you oppose the advance of the Master's empire and the spread of His Truth. Do not gloomily foretell that missionary operations will be all in vain—it is not so, it cannot be so! Our prospects are bright, bright as the promises of God. Has He not said, "I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth"? God would sooner make the whole earth to quiver with earthquakes, like the leaf of the aspen in the gale, than allow one idol temple to stand fast forever.

He would sooner unbind all the civil compacts of mankind until the human race became disintegrated into separate atoms, than suffer thrones and dominions to prevent the triumph of His Church, and the victory of her Lord. This line of remark seemed so naturally to spring out of the text that I could not but dwell upon it.

I now beg to conduct you to the consideration which most forcibly strikes my own mind, namely, the application of this verse to each individual Believer in Christ. To every Christian I think the Master speaks, "Since *you* were precious in My sight, you have been honorable and I have loved you." Three things are in this text, "precious," "honorable," "Beloved." O Believer, if you have Grace to suck the honey out of these, it shall be a happy day for you!

I. Believer, the first wonderful adjective of the text is applicable to you—you are "PRECIOUS." Notice how that preciousness is enhanced beyond the superlative degree by the next words, "precious in My sight." There are mock jewels now made which are so exactly like rubies, emeralds, and diamonds that even those who are connoisseurs of precious stones are deceived—and yet these imitations are not precious. They are not precious in the sight of the lapidary, who is able to put them to severer tests—with him these mimicries are soon proved to be of little value.

The degree of preciousness depends much upon the person who forms the judgment. And what estimate can be so accurate as that of God the Infallible? What judgment can be so severely exacting as that of God the infinitely Holy? How precious must a Believer be if he is precious in God's sight? For the things that are precious in man's sight, what are they to Him? What cares the Most High for all the diamonds of Golconda, or all the gold and silver that could be heaped together, though they should compose ranges of mountains like the Himalayas, all of precious ore? The golden mass would be nothing more than sordid dust in the sight of the Most High. He esteems not these things, but His poor and afflicted people are precious in His sight. It sometimes appears to unbelief as if it would be a comfortable thing to escape from—God's sight—so that our unworthiness might be hidden.

"Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered." We imagine in dark moments that it would be a great mercy to be ourselves covered and kindly forgotten by the Most High. But, Brethren, instead of that we are always in God's sight—placed as fully there as we shall be in the Day of Judgment. And, though His thoughts are not

mistaken about us, and His judgment is not premature, for He knows precisely what we are, have been, shall be—yet He calls us precious!

Ah, you humble Believers who are far from being precious in your *own* sight, and perhaps esteemed as worthless in the sight of those that know not the Grace of God—sit down and contentedly roll this under your tongue as a sweet morsel—you are precious in the sight of the Lord! If you are, indeed, the Lord's by faith in Christ Jesus, worked in you by the Holy Spirit, you are precious in the Father's sight.

This preciousness, my Brothers and Sisters, cannot arise from anything essentially and intrinsically precious in us by nature, for we confess freely that we are even as others in our natural estate. The quarry out of which we were hewn was no quarry of precious things, and the pit out of which we have been dug was no pit in which rare stones were glittering. We were taken from common clay and out of the ordinary ruin of mankind. Yet God says we are *precious*, and the fact of our former degradation and fallen estate cannot dispute the Divine declaration. Fallen, depraved, and ruined, as we once were—yet for all that—we are precious in God's sight! How is this?

Why, I think it springs out of four considerations. We are precious in the sight of God because of the memories which cluster round each one of us. Jacob said of a certain portion that he would give it to Joseph—"I have given to you one portion above your Brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow." Evidently the Patriarch set great store by that portion because it had been won amid the hazards of actual warfare. It might not have been so valuable in itself as others of his possessions, but he thought much of it because he remembered the risks he ran in winning it to himself.

And you, Child of God, you are the portion which Jesus took out of the hand of the Amorite with His sword and with His bow. For you He undertook the strife of battle and trod the winepress alone, that He might redeem you from the tyrant who held you in bondage and make you to be His peculiar heritage forever. You have at home today some trifle which, notwithstanding its little value, you would not sell for a thousand times its weight in gold because it belonged to a son or to a daughter since departed this life. That little memento is connected with some deed of daring, or act of generous self-denial on the part of your beloved child—and though in itself it is nothing—you count it very precious.

Now, to the Father, you, Beloved Brothers and Sisters, are memorials of the Savior's condescension in taking upon Himself the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of human flesh. You are a memorial of His being found in fashion as a Man, and becoming subject to death, even the death of the Cross. As God looks at each of you He sees what His Son has done, beholds in you the griefs of Calvary, bears anew the sighs of Olivet and the groans of Golgotha. You are to God, therefore, most precious, as the token and memorial of the death of Jesus Christ.

Things become precious, sometimes, on account of the workmanship exercised upon them. Many an article has been in itself intrinsically of small account, but so much art has been exercised upon it, so much real work thrown into it, that the value has been increased indefinitely. I think I have heard of the raw material being worth scarcely a single penny, and

yet so much skill has been used that occasionally even a thousand pounds in value has been attained.

Now, the Christian is precious to God on account of the workmanship that has been spent upon him. Taken as we were from among the utterly destroyed, the Holy Spirit worked in us life from the dead, subdued our stubborn wills, and enlightened our darkened understandings. He has up till this day continued to exercise upon us all His exquisite and heavenly art by which we have been molded and fashioned, and made vessels fit for the Master's use. Look back, my dear Friends, you who are precious in God's sight, to what the Holy Spirit has already done for you.

Remember the lines of the engraver's tool which He has made upon you in days of joy when he prompted you to thankfulness, to consecration, to communion? You are more likely, however, to remember those deeper strokes of the engraver's hand, made in the days of your pain and affliction. I do remember well when the Holy Spirit brought me to humiliation, to repentance, to self-purgation, to a holy vengeance against my sins and a sweet ardor for my Lord. In many ways the Great Worker has worked mightily in us and continued perseveringly to pursue His purpose.

You never took such pains with a child as the Holy Spirit has taken with you. None of you ever took so much pains to instruct your little one as He has in teaching you. Your child has never grieved you, nor vexed you to the extent that you have grieved the Holy Spirit and provoked Him. Yet still He has not ceased His work, and seeing, as He does, so much already worked in you, you are precious in His sight—for He will not cast away what He has already expended.

The Holy Spirit sees in you His own work as it will be, for being resolved to accomplish it, He beholds you not as you are just *now*, but as you shall be by-and-by, when "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," you shall be presented before the Eternal Throne—every tendency to iniquity being eradicated, and every desire that is good and holy, and commendable, being accomplished! Therefore, for the sake of what He will make you, the Holy Spirit counts you precious.

Certain articles are precious because of their peculiar fashion. This was the case with the Portland vase, which to any common observer seemed to be of very small value, but because of the extreme beauty of the design, the greatest potter of the age was ready to pay his thousands to possess it. We are precious in God's sight, too, because of our fashion and form. For what, my Brethren, is to be the form of every Believer? We are to be made like unto Christ! There is no beauty like the form of Christ—nothing in Heaven or in earth can match the perfection of Jesus' Character.

We are to be made like He, and God, therefore, counts us very precious because He sees His Son's image in every one of us. I know you prize and hang about your neck that dear memorial of a Beloved one now in Heaven. The likeness so accurately photographed recalls to your mind the very image of the departed one. And God views every one of His people as especially precious because they are, and are to be yet more perfectly, in the likenesses of Jesus Christ.

Once more. Things are precious often because of their *relationship*. The most precious thing a mother has is her dear babe. We all love those who are near to us by the ties of nature. Precious, therefore, in the sight of the Lord are His saints because they are born in His household. By regenera-

tion they are made to be His sons and daughters. Think not that God our Father has a less affection towards His sons than we have towards ours. Ah, no! No mother's heart ever yearned over her child, and no father's bosom ever rejoiced over his offspring as the heart of God yearns over His erring children—and as His soul rejoices when they come back to Him.

Do you call your child precious, and would you give your very life that you might preserve it? Even thus precious, O Believer, are you to your heavenly Father at this hour. I cannot preach on such a word as this—the theme is too sweet for language. But I wish that in your quietude you would silently sit down and turn this over—"I, poor, feeble, sinful worm as I am, yet, since I am chosen by distinguishing Grace and made to lay hold on eternal life in Christ Jesus, I am precious to God! My precious things I put under lock and key to preserve them. I view them with satisfaction and set great store by them. Even so will the great God hide me in His secret places. He delights to commune with me, and rejoices in me as He views me in Christ Jesus. I am more precious to Him than my own child is to my heart."

Why, here is comfort for you, even if you are very poor, or bitterly persecuted. Perhaps you have, like Hannah, to suffer day by day sneering and bitter words from your adversary, who vexes you sorely to make you fret. Why, then, let this Truth of God console you—*you are precious* in the sight of the Lord, and therefore you may sing, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior, for He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden." How it should make your spirit exult! How precious ought your thoughts of God to be to yourself, since you are precious in the sight of the Most High!

II. But we must pass on briefly to the second choice word. Every child of God is, in the second place, "HONORABLE." If things go on as they do now, I do not know whether this word "honorable" will not be so degraded that a man will be ashamed to wear it. We who see lords dishonoring themselves will have to thank God that we are not lords, but men. Speak of the scum of society, it seems pretty clear that as the scum of every pot is on the top, so is it with the nation.

We are reaching a pretty state of things, certainly, when the highest sin is to be found in the highest places. God grant that our great ones may mend their manners, for it is a crying shame and a detestable scandal when those who are accounted honorable and noble by birth cannot be even decently moral. God grant our nation better lights and ornaments than these. But, my Friends, this grand old word was written when it was untarnished, and in its virgin purity. If it has now come to be ordinarily meaningless or a mockery, let us now restore it to its pristine luster and see it glow on the page of Scripture as gold seven times purified with fire. Every Christian is in God's sight right honorable and excellent—because the Lord in His discriminating Grace has made him precious.

First, every Christian is honorably born. Never mind how lowly your earthly parentage—you have been born unto God by the Holy Spirit—and therefore descended from the King of kings. It matters not though no blue blood may run in your veins, and you cannot trace your pedigree to any of the Norman invaders. If you can trace your pedigree up to the Lord of hosts, Himself, through being "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," you belong to the blood impe-

rial, and to the seed royal—and you may therein rejoice! God has made you honorable, no matter who despises you.

The Christian is moreover honorable in rank. God has been pleased to take us from the dunghill to set us among princes. Rank in the order of Providence exists in all societies. Not only among men, but among pure spirits we have reason to believe there are various degrees and orders. But the nobility of holy men is everywhere paramount in God's sight. Man, redeemed by the blood of Christ, stands second to none in the whole range of created intelligences. Nearest to God stands a Man. "You have put all things in subjection under His feet, You have set Him over all the works of Your hands."

In the Person of Jesus Christ man stands next to Deity, I mean man twice born—man renewed by the Holy Spirit. What lofty dignity is this, that even angels should be only "ministering spirits sent forth to minister" to us, our commissioned bodyguards commanded to pitch their tents around us! They are our servitors to bear us up in their hands lest at any time we dash our feet against a stone! Speak of lords spiritual—these are they—the spiritual seed of Abraham! Speak of kings and princes and peers of the blood royal—these are they—in whom Jesus Christ's Spirit dwells—who are Brethren to the august First-Born.

Honorable, then, in birth, and honorable in rank, and right honorable in their service, are Believers. For what blessed employment is that which God has sent us on? He has sent us into the world to bear witness of the Truth. He has bid us proclaim the name of Jesus to the utmost bounds of the earth. He has sent us to seek after the lost sheep of the house of Israel. I know of no service that can be more distinguished than the doing of good, the scattering of blessings among the sons of men. Methinks the very angels before the Throne might envy us poor men who are permitted to talk of Christ even though it is but to little children. I reckon the most humble Ragged school teacher to be more honored than even Gabriel himself, in being commissioned to tell out the story of the Cross, and to win youthful hearts to the Savior's service!

You are not employed as scullions in your Master's kitchen, though you might be content with such a service. You are not made as His hired servants, to toil in meanest drudgery. You are not sent to be hewers of wood and drawers of water, but you are His friends, the friends of Jesus, to do such work as He did. And even greater works than He did are you enabled to do, because He has gone to His Father. "This honor have all the saints," the honor of being gentlemen-at-arms under Jesus, the Captain of their salvation.

Christians are honorable also in privilege. It was accounted an eminent honor when a nobleman had the right to go in to his king whenever he willed to proffer a request. Approach to the royal throne was always, among Orientals, considered to be the highest token of regard. O child of God! You have access into this Grace in which we stand—you are permitted to come boldly to the Throne of the heavenly Grace to obtain Grace in your time of need! You are especially honored, O you saints, for we are "a people near unto Him." Every middle wall of partition is broken down, and you are brought near by the blood of Christ. Oh, what privileges are these! You are this day priests to offer acceptable sacrifices, kings to rule over

your corruptions. Never were men so privileged as you upon whom the Lord's love has descended to make you precious in His sight!

And every child of God who is what he should be, becomes, through Grace, honorable by his achievements—and this is, in some respects, the highest form of honor—to be honored for what you have been *enabled* to do. To wear a coat of arms which you have fairly won in battle, and honors that are not merely attributed to you by the heraldic pencil, but which are *due* to you because of your victorious feats of arms! Every child of God shall have this honor if he is led earnestly to strive after it. To conquer sin is no small achievement. To keep down through a long life the corruptions of the flesh, to contend against the world and the devil—these are no deeds of carpet knights.

And what an achievement it will be when Satan shall be bruised beneath our feet, as he shall be shortly, when the hosts of Hell, with all their craft and malice, shall find themselves utterly overthrown by the men and women whom they despised—those in whom God's Grace so dwelt that they were victorious and carried the banner of Truth and goodness onward to complete victory! God grant you, Brethren, as you have already the honor of birth and rank this day, and as you have proffered to you the honor of service, that you may be honorable through your achievements, being precious in God's sight.

III. We come now to the last of these notable words, which is "BE-LOVED"—"I have loved you." I must decline to preach on this word. It is not a word for talk, but thought. I always feel that the love of God to His people is more fit for contemplation than public discourse. "I have loved you." Come, heir of Heaven, listen a moment. God has loved you *eternally*. Before the stars began to shine and before the sun knew his place and poured forth his oceans of light, God loved you in *particular*.

He has loved you *actively* and *effectually*, given His Only-Begotten for you—an unspeakable gift—giving you everything in Him—a boundless dowry of love. He has loved you *pre-eminently*, better than the angels, for unto which of them has He ever said, "You were honorable, and I have loved you"? He has loved you *unchangeably*, never less, and never more. In all your sin the same. In all your sorrow, still the same. He has loved you *immeasurably*. You can never know the heights and depths of your God's love to you. O Man, plunge yourself into this river! If you have up to now gone wading into it up to the ankles, now get breast high and heart high into it—yes, commit yourself to the fathomless stream, and swim in it as in a sea of bliss. "I have loved you." Let that dwell richly in your heart, and ring out celestial music for your comfort and delight!

These three things being put together, I want you, practically, this morning, as they are your own by faith, to make use of them in other senses. "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you." My Savior, do You say that? Why, those words You put into *my* mouth to give back to You! You also are precious in *my* sight. Is He not so—precious beyond comparison? Therefore is He honorable in our esteem. Will you not honor Him? Shall it not be the continual strife of your soul to get Him renown? Will you not talk of His fame to others? Will you not spread abroad the glory of His mighty acts?

My Savior, once I knew You not, but now I prize You, and by Your Divine Grace my heart sees how precious You are. Now, therefore, You are

honorable in my soul. Reign, reign over every heart, as well as over mine. Gladly would I seat You on a glorious high throne, and be content to be trampled in the mire, if I could lift You but one inch higher, or get to Your name but one grain more of love among the sons of men. "You have been honorable, and I have loved You."

I am afraid, if you make this confession you will have to blush as you make it. You have loved Him, but, oh, how little have you loved Him! Look not back, then, except with penitence, but from now on say, "Lord, You have been honorable, I will love You. Forgive the past, kindle in my soul a fresh flame of Grace, help me to say—

***'Yes, I love You and adore,
O for Grace to love You more!'*** "

When you have so used those words, turn them in another direction. Apply them next to every child of God. Since you, my Brother, since you, my Sister, were precious in my sight, and you have been so ever since I knew how precious a child of God was, you have been honorable, and I have loved you.

Let us never think of the children of God in any other way than as honoring them. Some of them are very poor. Many of them illiterate. Some of them not altogether in temper, action, or creed what we might desire them to be. But if they are bought with the blood of Christ, they are honorable. The Lord declares them so, and let us not treat them dishonorably. It is a very sad thing when poor saints are despised by those who happen to be better off. If some great noble were to come into this House of Prayer, how many of you would be glad to give him the best seat, and yet he might be one of the worst of men?

But if a child of God should happen to be so poor that he must wear garments that are all but rags, and must live in a miserable cottage, there are many who will scarcely own him as a Brother. We who understand what spiritual worth is should never fall into this error. We should say, "You, poor as you are, have become precious in our sight for Jesus' sake. We see you are an heir of Heaven, and therefore we prize you above all kings and princes, and we love you for the Master's sake. Can we help your poverty? Can we cheer your sickness? Can we bear a part of your burden? We love you and count you honorable for the sake of Jesus, our Lord and yours."

Once again. You might use these words in reference to unconverted men and women. There is a certain sense in which they are applicable to all born of woman, for they possess immortal souls. Years ago you and I knew nothing of the value of our own souls, and were not likely to care for those of others. But now the souls of men are precious in our sight. We believe them to be immortal. We know that they are to live forever in misery or forever in bliss. And therefore, let others say what they will, we can never think of the human soul but as a very precious and priceless thing.

And now, if that is the case, how honorable all men become as objects of our zeal! "Honor all men," says the Apostle—a text I do not hear quoted half so often as that other, "Honor the king." Do not forget the last, but take equal care of the first. There is, because of its spiritual and immortal nature, a dignity about the soul of the meanest man—which no degree of poverty or degradation can altogether take away. The harlot in the streets—how few will care for her! But, O you tender hearts, as you look

on the poor fallen one, say, "Since your soul was precious in my sight as an immortal spirit, you have been no longer despised and trampled on, but I have loved you as my Savior loved you, and for His sake I esteem your soul as an honorable, priceless thing."

Do not think of the thousands in prison today as though they were just so much filth to be gotten rid of. Do not think, above all, of the great mass of the needy and destitute classes of society as though they were a mere encumbrance of the common man, the mere rubbish to be swept away and laid in heaps in the workhouse or on foreign shores. No, they are precious. As precious is their soul as yours. Think of them in that respect—and honor the immortal spark that is in them—the manhood that God has been pleased to create. Honor that, and as you honor it, love it—and prove your love by praying that God will save it, by using every instrument within your power to recover it from its ruin—and to bring it back to the great God to whom it belongs.

If the woman in the Gospels who lost her piece of money had said, "It is only a penny, I have more, I shall not trouble about it," she had never lighted the candle and swept the floor, and searched diligently until she found it. And if the shepherd with his ninety-and-nine sheep had said of the hundredth which went astray, "That sheep was always scabbed and worthless. Its loss is no great thing, the ninety-nine are far more precious," he would never have left the flock to go after that which was lost. The less value you set upon your fellow men, the less earnest you will be in seeking their good.

But if you feel that they are precious to you for Christ's sake, and honorable because they are men—capable, by God's Divine Grace, of Heaven and holiness, you will set to work in God's strength to reclaim them. And God will second and bless your efforts, and you will see them saved. Gladly would I have you give yourselves for them, and the Church give people for their life. May God grant to every one in this House of Prayer, first, to be precious in the sight of God Himself. And next, to seek after others whom God has loved and whom He means to save through them.

May God lead you to give all you have—though it were Egypt, and Ethiopia, and Seba—that precious souls may be reclaimed. Send us such zeal, O Holy Spirit, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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NORTH AND SOUTH NO. 1007

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

***“I will say to the north, Give up. And to the south, Keep not back.”
Isaiah 43:6.***

IN the fullness of the promised days when the Jews shall be restored from their wanderings, and all the seed of Jacob shall again meet in their own land, God in His mighty Providence will speak to all the nations, saying—“To the north, Give up. And to the south, Keep not back.” And at the Divine bidding free passage shall be given, all lets and hindrances shall be removed, and His own people shall come to their own land. Entailed on Abraham’s seed by a Covenant of Salt, the Holy Land shall receive again its rightful heritors, the banished shall come to their own again, and no nation or people shall keep them back.

So much for the *literal* meaning. I am unable to indulge you with fuller details, for I have no skill in guessing at the meaning of dark passages, but leave such things to those to whom it is given, or who think it is given to them. We shall now pursue the *spiritual* teaching of the passage. At this moment, my Brothers and Sisters, we who follow the footsteps of King Jesus are soldiers of an army which has invaded this world. This land belongs to our great Leader, for He made it. It was right that everywhere, all round the globe, His name should be honored, for He is the King among the nations, and the Governor of them.

But our race has revolted, set up another monarch, and bowed its strength to support another dynasty—the dynasty of darkness and death. Our race has broken the good and wholesome laws of the great Lord, the rightful King, and set up new laws and new customs altogether opposed to right and the Truth of God. This is the Great Rebellion, the Revolt of Manhood, the sedition of Sinners.

Now, no king will willingly lose his dominions, and therefore the Great King of kings has sent His Son to conquer this world by force of arms, though not by arms of steel, or weapons that cut and kill and wound—yet by arms far more mighty. And this earth is to be yet subdued to the kingdom of the Crown Prince, the Prince Imperial of Heaven, Jesus Christ, the Lord. We, His regenerated people, form part of the army of occupation. We have invaded the land. Hard and stern has been the battle up to this point. We have had to win every inch of ground by sheer push of pike.

Effort after effort has been put forth by the Church of God under the guidance of her heavenly Leader, and none has been in vain. Up to now the Lord has helped us, but there is much yet to be done. Canaanites and Hivites, and Jebusites have to be driven out. Yes, in fact, the whole world seems still to lie in darkness, and under the dominion of the Wicked One.

We do but hold here and there a sacred fortress for truth and holiness in the land. But these we must retain till the Lord Jesus shall send us more prosperous times and the battle shall be tamed against the foe, and the kingdom shall come unto our Prince. Nor is there any fear but that such a time will come—therefore let us have courage! Soldiers of the Cross, have faith! Have faith in your great Leader, for behold, He is still at the head of you, and is still Omnipotent.

The hour of His weakness is past. His sun set once in blood, but it has risen to go down no more. Once was it eclipsed at noon day. But now the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing beneath His wings. He who died once for all, is now life's Source, Center, and Lord. The living Christ is present among us as the Commander-in-Chief of the Church militant. Let us refresh our souls by drawing near to Him by the power of the Holy Spirit!

The text has two grand matters in it. First, here is *the royalty of the Word*—where the Word of this King is there is power. Secondly, here is *the Word of royalty*, and that Word we may well consider, for where the Word of this King is there is wisdom.

I. First, here is THE ROYALTY OF THE WORD. It is more than an imperial edict. It is the fiat of Omnipotence. Jesus Christ says to the north, "Give up," and it does give up. And to the south, "Keep not back," and it cannot keep back. I understand from reading this declaration that there is a general opposition in the world to the cause and kingdom of God. For until He says, "Give up," and, "Keep not back," men do not crowd to Immanuel's feet, and even the chosen of God do not come forth from their hiding places. All the world over there is a general opposition to the cause of Christ, to the doctrine of Truth, to the Throne of God.

Go where you may, in the highest places of the earth, you shall find true religion despised. Among the lowest of the land you shall find that same religion blasphemed. And in the middle classes, where some seem to fancy that all virtue resides, you shall find carelessness about the things of the world to come, and carking carefulness about the selfishness of this present life. Jesus Christ is everywhere despised in comparison with the things that perish. They will not have this Man to reign over them.

The trees of the wood reject Heaven's cedar, and choose Hell's bramble. Even the eleven sell the true Joseph into Egypt—nor is there one found who will defend the chosen of God. Go among savage nations and there the idol is worshipped, but Jesus is not known. Go among civilized nations, and, lo, they have only changed their idols. They have rebaptized their infants, given new names to the objects of their superstitious reverence—but the true Christ is misunderstood and rejected. Go to the swarthy Hindu, the man of deep philosophy and sophistry, and you shall find his heart set against the Gospel of Jesus of Nazareth.

And then sail over the blue sea to the islands of the deep, and man in his simplicity worships he knows not what, but not the Incarnate God. Traverse the central parts of continents where as yet civilization has scarcely reached, and you shall find that man is still opposed to his Maker, and hates the name of the only begotten Son of God. Nor need we

travel or even look abroad. The opposition is universal among ourselves, among the old, among the young. Striking is that text, "They go astray from the womb, speaking lies." An old Puritan puts it: "They go astray before they go—they speak lies before they speak."

And so it is. Before it comes to acts, the evil propensity is in the *heart*. And before the lips can frame the falsehood, there is the lie within the soul. From the earliest infancy to palsied age nothing seems to cure manhood of its rebellious disposition. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not reconciled to God. Neither, indeed, while it remains what it is, can it be. There is a general opposition to the cause and kingdom of Christ. But the text seems to hint that there is a particular form of that opposition in each case.

There is a word to the north, a different word from that which is given to the south. The north holds fast, and therefore the word is, "Give up." The south retires, is despairing, therefore it is said, "Keep not back." The opposition takes different shapes, and there is a different word to meet its ever varying forms. How true is Dr. Watts' verse—

***"We wander each a different way,
But all the downward road."***

As each land has its own tribes of wild animals, so has each heart its indigenous sins. All land will grow weeds, but you will not find the same sort of weed equally abundant in every soil—so in one heart the deadly nightshade of ignorance chokes the seed—and in another the prickly thistle of malice crowds out the wheat.

There are difficulties in reaching the heart of any man, but not the same difficulties in all men. Some, for instance, cannot be influenced because of their want of intelligence. Others because of their supposed learning. Some cannot be reached because of their presumption—others because of their despondency. Some spend their all upon the pleasures of this world. Others spend nothing but find their pleasure simply in hoarding, yet are they equally averse to heavenly things. Whatever form sin takes, it is the same opposition, but yet it may need a different mode of treatment, and by a different weapon will it have to be overcome.

My dear Brother in Christ, you, perhaps, have a different personal, spiritual difficulty from mine. I have no wish to change with you, and I should not advise you to change with me. The same is true with our trials in winning souls. We have each our difficulties, but they are not precisely alike in detail. You have to fight the north perhaps, and I the south. But the same Lord and Master can make us victorious, and without Him we shall be equally defeated. The opposition which we encounter in serving our Lord is the same, depend upon it.

You need not say, "Mine is a peculiarly hard task," or if you do, I may say the same of mine. After all, both tasks are impossibilities without God, and both labors shall be readily performed if Jesus speaks the Divine fiat, and says "to the north, Give up. And to the south, Keep not back." Further, as there is in all an opposition, and as there is in each a distinct opposition, so no power can, in any case, subdue any part of the world to Christ apart from Him. It is possible that you may fall in with a family

which seems to be naturally religious—you may even meet with tribes of people who appear to be spontaneously inclined to godliness.

But if you bring the religion of Christ to them, you will find that their very religiousness is the greatest difficulty you have to deal with. Some, on the other hand, never could be superstitious—the conformation of their mind is that of practical, sound, common sense. But do not deceive yourself with the idea that their conversion is any the easier. You may preach the Gospel in the most forcible way to them and you will find that this very common sense of theirs will be the main difficulty to be overcome. Believe me, however intent you may be in winning souls to Christ, you shall never meet with one who can be subdued to Christ by any persuasions of yours apart from the working of His own power.

I know the preacher has thought within himself, “I have only to put the Truth in a reasonable way and the man will see it.” Ah, Sir, but sinners are *not* reasonable—they are the most unreasonable of all creatures—none are so senseless, none act so madly as they do. “But,” says one, “if I were to tell them of the love of Christ in an affectionate, loving way, that would reach them.” Yes. But you will find that all your affection, your tears, and earnest delineation of the love of Jesus will be powerless against human hearts unless the Eternal Spirit shall drive home your appeals.

We know some who have been reasoned with, and if logic could win them, they ought to have been won long ago—they have also been persuaded—and if rhetoric could reach them, they ought to have turned away from their evil ways years ago. But all human art has been tried and tried, and tried in vain. Yet there is no room for despair, for Jesus can conquer the unconquerable and heal the incurable!

Do not be disappointed, dear Brother, if you have, up to now, failed in your efforts. You have but proved that “vain is the help of man.” You see now, by experience, that “it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.” It is yours to try and bring that soul to Jesus—but it lies with Him to perform the work. Duty is ours, the result is God’s. If the soil of the field committed to me will never yield a harvest, I am yet bound to plow it if my Lord commands.

If I could foresee that my child would never turn to the Lord, yet I ought not to slacken my efforts for its conversion. I have to do with my Master’s command, and what He bids me do I am bound to do. Never let us be surprised when we are defeated, for we ought to know that old Adam is far too strong for us. If we assail him single-handed, we cannot expect to cast out the devil—he laughs us to scorn if we attempt to exorcise him in our own name. We may speak as we will, but if it is only *we* that speak, the devil will say, “Jesus I know, and the Holy Spirit I know—but who are you? I do not yield to you! I will not go out of this sinner, in spite of all your persuasions and all your talk.”

Do not forget then that there is a general opposition to the kingdom of Christ—such opposition as no human power can by any possibility overcome. But, my Brethren, here is the point of the text. That opposition, whatever form it assumes, though not to be subdued by our agency alone,

shall assuredly yield before the fiat of our great King when He says, "to the north, Give up. And to the south, Keep not back."

His Word is a Word of power wherever it comes. Let us rejoice, then, whatever place we dwell in, that we have only to ask the King Himself to come there, and to speak with power, and we shall see conversions—conversions most numerous—that shall glorify His name! I fully believe that the dark time of any true Christian Church is just the period when it ought to have most hope, for when the Lord has allowed us to spin ourselves out till there is no more strength in *us*, then it is that He will come to our rescue.

What could have been lower than the condition into which we, as a Church, had sunk some seventeen years ago? But a little faithful band used to meet in that dreary chapel in Park Street and cry unto the Lord, never ceasing their prayers. And, oh, how soon the house began to fill, and how speedily our tent was too strait for us, and we broke forth on the right hand and on the left—and God made the desolate places to be inhabited. Members of other Churches, you have the same God to go to! Go to Him! He can work the same wonders for you. Look to the Most High, and not to man, or ministers, or modes, or methods, but only to HIM, and the guidance of His Spirit.

"Well, but ours is a village," says one. And is not He the Lord of the villages? Is He the Lord of the cities, and not the Lord of the hamlets? "But our Chapel is ugly, and built in a back street," says one. "Nobody knows of its existence. We shall never get the people within its obscure and dreary walls." Is God the God of the wide thoroughfares and not of the lanes? Does not the Lord know the back streets as well as the broad ones? Was not that the question in disputes of old? Is He the God of the hills, and not the God of the valleys? I have already put it in another shape to you. In His name I ask you, can anything be too hard for the Lord?

Perhaps in your sphere of service you have grown so dispirited that you are inclined to say, "I may as well give up all further effort. No good will result from my endeavors." But what have you told the Master, and what have you sought at His hand? Have you told Him all your discouragements? Have you asked Him to speak with power, and has He refused you? If so, then give it up, but not till then—for He can even now "say to the north, Give up. And to the south, Keep not back." And as when He said to the thick primeval darkness, "Let there be light," and the light leaped into being, and the darkness fled, so can He, amid the gross darkness of our huge city, or the not less dense darkness of our villages, create light to our astonishment and to His Glory!

It is the King's Word we want—nothing short of it, and nothing more. We must get that by prayer—we must wait upon Him with importunity. If there are only two or three whose hearts break over the desolations of the Church. If we have only half a dozen that resolve to give the Lord no rest till He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth, we shall see great things yet! A handful of people who resolve if a blessing is to be had they will have it, and that if souls are not saved it shall be the sover-

eighty of God that prevents it and nothing else—such a mere handful shall win the day!

If they *will* have souls saved. If so they plead and agonize, oh, then the Lord will turn His gracious hand and send a plenteous stream of blessings upon their district. For where He wills it, the blessings must come, and He always wills to display His Grace where and when He leads His people to pray for it. Before I leave this point, let me say the power of the King's Word is always exercised in full consistence with the free agency of man.

You must not think when we say that Christ has His will, and works Omnipotently in men's hearts, that we imagine that He violates the free agency which He has created. He says to the north, "Give up," and that *Word* does it. For a *word* is a suitable instrument by which to rule a free agent. The way to make blocks of timber move would be to drag them, and if we wish to shape them we must hew them with the axe, or cut them with a saw. But the way to deal with men is to *speak* with them. That is how Jesus operates.

His power is exerted in conformity with the laws of human mind. He does not violate the free agency of man, though He does as He wills with man—His Word is an instrument consistent with our mental nature, and He uses that Word wisely. He says to the north, "Give up." He says to the south, "Keep not back." His Word touches the secret spring and sets all in motion. No man is ever taken to Heaven against His will, though I do not believe any man ever went there of his own free will till God's Sovereign Grace enlightened him and made him willing.

You must not suppose that Christ conquers human hearts by physical compulsion, such as the King of Prussia used, for instance, in subduing France, or such as a man uses in driving a horse. The Lord knows how to leave us free and yet to make us do His bidding—and there lies the beauty of Gospel influences. Suppose man's will to be a room. If you and I want to open it, we break in the lock. We do not understand the true method. But the Lord has the key, and knows how to open the door without a wrench. Without violating even the most delicate spring in the watch, the maker knows how to regulate it.

Grace draws, but it is with hands of a man. It rules, but it is with a scepter of love. The fact is, the great dispute between Calvinists and Arminians has arisen very much through not understanding one another, and from one Brother saying, "What I hold is the Truth of God"—and the other saying, "What I hold is the Truth of God, and nothing else." The men need somebody to knock both their heads together and fuse their beliefs into one. They need one capacious brain to hold both the Truths of God which their two little heads contain. For God's Word is neither all on one side nor altogether on the other—it overlaps all systems, and defies all formulas. It lays the full responsibility of his ruin on man, but all the power and glory of Grace it ascribes to God.

And it is wise of us to do the same. The great King does as He wills among men as well as among the armies of Heaven. Who shall stay His hand or say unto Him, "What are you doing?" He rules men as men, and not as inanimate stones. He has a scepter which is adapted to mind and

spirit. The weapons of His warfare are not carnal—His forces rule the heart, the mind, the whole manhood as He has made it. And so He conquers, and becomes the happy king of willing subjects, who, though subdued by power, are happy to own His sway. Thus much on the first point—the royalty of the Word.

II. Now we will consider THE WORD OF ROYALTY. The King says “to the north, Give up. And to the south, Keep not back.” We will not spend many minutes over these words, but just briefly hint at what meaning may be drawn from them. There are some persons to whom, when the powerful Word of Grace comes, it speaks in this way—“Give up. Give up.” There are other persons, in another state of mind, to whom, whenever the Word of salvation comes, it says, “Keep not back. Keep not back.”

Now, to those we find that it comes in this way—“Give up. Give up.” You say, “I am righteous. I am no worse than others. I have broken the Law, but not much. My sins are trivial. I cannot deserve to be cast into Hell for my small offenses. I have been—not *perfect*—but as righteous as most. I have done this, I have done that, I have done the other.”

Ah, dear Friend, the sword of Divine Grace will kill all this. And the message that God’s mercy sends to you today is, “Give up.” Renounce your fancied goodness and deceitful self-esteem. Oh, give up that spinning! It is a poor trade to spin cobwebs. Give it up! Your father, Adam, taught you to make aprons of fig leaves. But it was after he had fallen. It is a bad business—give it up! Your own works will never cover you as you should be covered. There is a better righteousness than yours to be had. There is a better footing to stand before God upon than anything you have done.

Your refuges are all refuges of lies—give them up! That pretty righteousness of yours, which looks so pure, is only pure because your eyes are blind. If you could see it, it is all as black as filth can make it. You conceive your robe to be new and fair, but it is all riddled through and through with holes. The worms have devoured it. It is all moth-eaten and decayed. Give it up! Oh, give up that Pharisaic mouthful, “God, I thank you,” and betake yourself to the publican’s prayer, “God be merciful to me, a sinner!”

Give up your self-trust—it is a painted lie, a rotten plank, a foul deception, a false traitor! It promises salvation, but it brings sure damnation. JESUS is the sinner’s only hope. Give up every other reliance. Then, too, you have an opposition in your hearts to the Gospel. Concerning that also the Word says to you, “Give up.” Perhaps you were prejudiced against it foolishly and ignorantly. Before you ever *heard* it, you felt persuaded you should not like it. Possibly you have been brought up in a religion of forms. You hardly think that salvation can be by simple faith in Jesus Christ.

You feel a great deal of attachment to that regeneration of yours which was worked in your Baptism, and to that Confirmation of yours bestowed by the bishop’s fingers. Besides, you have been so regular in your religion up till now that you can hardly stand to be told that the whole bundle of it

is mere rubbish, not worth the time you have spent on it! You cannot endure to be told that—

“None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good.”

But rest assured, the sooner you give up all those flattering reliances of yours, the better for you—for there is nothing in them. Even ceremonies that God has commanded are only of *spiritual* use to *spiritual* men—and since you are not a spiritual man they cannot profit you. Have you in your heart an opposition to Christ? Can you not yield to Him as God? Can you not stoop to be saved entirely by His merits, and acknowledge Him for your Lawgiver, and Teacher, and Guide? Then as, the text says, so will I say—and may the Lord apply the word—“Give up! Give up!” There is no salvation for you till you “give up” all ceremonial hopes and formal confidences.

Strike the colors, Man, before a broadside goes through you! Depend upon it, if you yield not in one way you will in another. You shall either break or bow—you shall either turn or burn. That is the alternative to every man born of woman—he must turn away from his enmity to Christ, and yield himself up to His love—or else he shall find the power of God in Christ to be his destruction.

It is possible, dear Friends, that your opposition to Jesus Christ has taken the form of the love of a favorite sin. Now, there is nothing more certain than this—that you cannot be saved and keep your sins—they must be parted with. No man can carry fire in his bosom and yet be safe from burning. While you drink the poison, it must and will work death in you. The thief cannot expect mercy while he keeps the goods he has stolen. John Bunyan says that one day, when he was playing “cat” on a Sunday on the village green, he thought he heard a voice saying to him—“Will you have your sins and go to Hell, or leave your sins and go to Heaven?”

That question is put to every man who hears the Gospel faithfully preached. Most men in their heart of hearts would like to have their sins and go to Heaven, too. But that cannot be! While God is just, and Heaven is holy, and Truth is precious, it cannot be! What then? “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him. And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” Give up, give up! Give up your sin!

What is the sin? The drunkard’s cup? Away with the bewitching draught! Is it the drunkard’s company? That is as damnable as his cup! Renounce such society at once. Is it blaspheming? O man, God rinse your mouth out of such black stuff as that! Have done with a sin for which there cannot be any excuse, for it cannot bring you any pleasure or profit, nor can there be any necessity for it—it is a degrading, useless, senseless, God-provoking crime! Is it some secret sin that must not be named lest the cheek of modesty be reddened? Give it up, Friend! It will be much better for you to lose it though it were as precious as your right arm or your right eye, than to keep it and be cast into Hell fire.

The chamber of wantonness is the gate of death—flee from it without delay! The sins of the flesh are a deep ditch, and the abhorred of the Lord fall in. But as you love your soul, O young Man, escape like a bird from the fowler’s snare! Here is the message from God to you—“Give up, give up

your sin.” Perhaps, though you hear the summons, you trifle with it, and reply, “Yes. I mean to give them all up, and I hope by so doing I shall find my way to Heaven. I shall deserve well of my Maker when I have denied myself *all* sinful pleasures.”

But stop! Let me not deceive you—this is not all. I fear that some men are not improved in their hearts when they are altered in their outward behavior. I am glad of the outward improvement, but I have sometimes fancied that they have only changed their *sins*, but not *given them up*. They show no leprosy in their skin, but it dies in their bones and their flesh. It is of little use merely to shift the region in which sin sets up its throne if its dominion is still undestroyed. It reminds one of the verse—

**“So when a raging fever burns,
We shift from side to side by turns
And it is a poor relief we gain
To shift the place but keep the pain.”**

What if the man does not go to Hell as a drunkard, it will not mend it if he is ruined by being self-righteous—so long as he is lost I do not see that it materially matters how. Many and many a man has given up outward sins and set up a self-righteousness of his own, and said, “These are your gods, O Israel.” And so he fled from a bear, and a lion slew him. He leaned on a wall, and a serpent bit him. All sin must be cast out of the throne of the heart, and whatever righteousness that is not *Christ’s* righteousness must go with it.

I would gladly put the sword-point to your heart, O Sinner, and say, “Give up all that opposes Christ.” For if you do not give it up, your soul will be lost. In fact, dear Friends, speaking to the children of God as well as to such as are not converted, I say, give up all and have Christ! Give up all attempts to save yourself, and let Christ save you! Work afterwards, because He works in you to will and to do—but now—do nothing either great or small to make yourself righteous, for Jesus did it all long, long ago.

Do nothing by way of straining for merit, but begin to do everything by way of gratitude. “Give up.” That is, give up *yourself* to Christ, whatever His will may be. If it is His will that you be sick, that you be poor, that you die, give all up, and say, “Your will be done. I resign all to You, my God.” Does Jesus command you to do anything? Let it not be irksome to you. Whatever He says to you, do it. Let there be no backstairs by which to play the truant—no keeping back of part of the price as though you would not do Christ’s will, except in some points. Give up unreservedly, and make no provision for the flesh!

Let His will be your will. Yield entirely! And if you have anything in this world of substance, of talent, of opportunity, “Give up.” Begin with resignation. Go on to obedience, and finish with consecration. “Give up, give up” till all is given up—body, soul, and spirit, a reasonable sacrifice to Him, till you can say—

**“Now Lord I would be Yours alone,
And wholly live to You.”**

I perceive that my text has grown from a word to the sinner who has to be conquered into a word directed to Christ’s nearest and dearest friends,

even to those who are the soldiers of His army. It is in effect a lofty, far-reaching precept, and would to God we could live up to it by presenting our all to Jesus our Lord.

Let us now spend a minute or two on the second word of the King—"Keep not back." Is there some person within this assembly who feels within his heart the desire to come and confess his sins to his God? Standing at the filthy swine trough, does the prodigal say within himself—"I will arise and go unto my Father, and say unto Him, Father, I have sinned"? "Keep not back!" Quench not that holy flame! If you have a desire to come and acknowledge your transgressions unto the pardoning Savior, let nothing keep you back—neither fear, nor shame, nor procrastination—rest not till you have reached the bosom of your God and acknowledged all your guilt before Him.

A repulse need not be feared, nor even an upbraiding—a rich, free, loving welcome is sure. "Keep not back." But is there another who has confessed his sin, but yet has found no peace? Do you see yonder Christ on the Cross? "Yes," you say, "I know there is life in a look at Him, but *may I* look?" My Master's message to you is, "Keep not back! Keep not back," for whoever looks shall be made whole, and none are forbidden to look. Does the crowd around the Savior hinder you, you sick and dying Soul?

Be not baffled by difficulty, but persevere. Press into the thickest of the throng, for if you do but touch the hem of His garment you shall be made whole. "Keep not back! Keep not back!" You may believe in Jesus now! *May!* No, you are *commanded* to do it! And you are *threatened* if you do not, which proves that you have permission and something more. It is written—"He that believes not shall be damned." O Man, it is but another way of saying you have full permission to do it—for you are threatened if you do it not! Come, then, come now, right joyfully! "Keep not back." Confess your sins with repentance, and lay them on Christ by faith and you shall be saved!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, many of you have come to Christ and have been saved, and to you the text says, "Keep not back," in another sense. Do not keep back from confessing Christ. If you have the love of Jesus Christ in your soul, confess it, tell it to others! Never be ashamed of your Lord and Master. Come and unite with His Church and people. You owe it to the Church. You owe it to the preacher who was the means of your conversion! You owe it especially to your Lord and Master that you "keep not back."

I have heard of some who keep back because the Church is not perfect. And *you* are perfect I dare say? Why, if the Church were perfect we should not endure *you* in it, my critical Friend. I have no doubt whatever that you will find the Church quite as perfect as you are. There are others who keep aloof from the people of God because they feel they are not perfect themselves. My dear Friend, if you were perfect we should not want you, because you would be the only perfect member among us—and having a very imperfect pastor, I do not know what we should do with you! We should find you such a speckled bird among us that we should probably pray the Lord to take you home to Heaven at once.

I should like to have you *become* perfect, and the nearer perfection the better—but still if you make no profession of faith till you are sinless, it will not be this side of the grave. No! Confess Christ, for is it not written—“He that with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes confession of Him, shall he be saved”? Do not forget the confession of the mouth. “Keep not back.” And when you have done that, if there is any Christian excellence that can be reached, do not despair of reaching it. “Keep not back.” And if perfection, itself, is attainable, never be content till you get it.

If you are a child of God you never will be self-satisfied, you will be always crying, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” O that you may never be content with yourself! Self-satisfaction is the death of progress. You have come into the lowest seat at the feast, but Jesus says—“Friend, come up higher.”

And when you get into a higher room, and enter into closer communion with Him, He will say to you, “Friend, come up higher.” Do not hesitate to climb higher in Grace and fellowship. Let your prayer be, “Nearer to You, my God, nearer to You.” Be insatiable in the longings of your soul—hunger and thirst after righteousness. Covet earnestly the best gifts. Grow in Grace, and in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. “Keep not back.” There is no point in Grace which we are prohibited from aiming at. We ought, none of us, to say, “I am all I can ever be.” Oh, no, let us reach to the front ranks by God’s Grace. For He says, “Keep not back.”

Let me add if there is a Brother who could do more for Christ than he is doing, let him “keep not back.” Could you preach? Well, there are plenty of places needing occasional ministers, and others that are quite destitute. I do not know a nobler occupation for a man who is in business in London than for him to be maintaining himself by his shop, or whatever else his calling may be, and going out to suburban villages on the Sunday to preach! I often wonder why more persons do not imitate the example of some good Brothers, whom I could name, who are in their business diligently, and who are also fervent in spirit in their Master’s work.

What reason can there be that for every little Church there should be a pastor specially set apart for the work? It is a very desirable thing wherever there are enough Christian people to be able to support the minister that there should be such. But I believe we very much hamper ourselves in our Christian work through always imagining that a paid person set apart to preach is necessary for every Christian Church. There ought to be more farmers who educate themselves, and preach in their own barns or on the village greens. There ought to be more men of business in London who seek to improve their minds that they may preach acceptably, *anywhere*, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And I hope the time will come when our dear friends, the members of Churches in London, will not be so backward as they are, but will come forward and speak to the honor of the Lord Jesus.

If you cannot edify a thousand, perhaps you can influence ten. If you cannot, with a regular congregation, continue to find fresh matter year af-

ter year (and believe me that is a very difficult thing), yet you can preach a sermon here and a sermon there, and tell to different companies the same story of the Savior's love. I do not know what special work you can do, but something is within your power, and from that, "Keep not back." Besides, there are all our street corners. In spring and summer, how delightful to stand in the thick of the throng and uplift the Crucified One! Of course, you are sure to have a congregation out of doors, and a congregation that is rather attentive, and sometimes rather inquisitive, and do not need to be so inconveniently crowded as we are in this Tabernacle!

Take the wide sweep, cast the big net, and hope for fish. If you have any Grace or gift, "Keep not back." "Alas," murmurs the glowworm, "I mean to shut up my lamp, and hide under those damp weeds, and never shine again." What is the matter with you? "Why," says he, "I have seen the sun. I shall never shine again after seeing the sun." That glowworm is stupid. If he were wise, he would say, "I have looked upon the sun. And I perceive with shame that my lamp is but a poor light, but for that reason I must use it the more diligently. The sun may well hide its light after twelve hours are over, but I must try to glimmer during the whole twenty-four hours and so give as much light as I can, little though it is."

You complain that you have but one talent. That is the reason for being doubly diligent with it. If you had five, they ought to be fully used. But if you have only one, you must put all your wits to work to make something more of it. At any rate, "Keep not back." "We," says one, "I think I could do something, but I am of a retiring disposition." I am afraid if I had been in the French army in the late war, I should be very much of the same disposition. But in a soldier, as a rule, a retiring disposition in the hour of battle is not much commended by his captain."

You who are so modest (shall I say so cowardly?) that you cannot do for Christ what you ought to do, will have an account to settle with your consciences one of these days which will cost you a world of sorrow. Break through this bashfulness, this laziness (for it comes to that in the long run), this silly, wicked, shame! Pride must also be slain, for this hinders many. They cannot be so prominent as others, and therefore shun the work altogether.

Get rid of all that cripples you! Shake all off by the power of the Holy Spirit, my dear Brethren, and, "Keep not back," for who knows but that you may yet bring sinners to Jesus, may save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins, through God's eternal Spirit? May it be so, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 43.

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THE CHURCH ENCOURAGED AND EXHORTED NO. 2799

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 5, 1902.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 27, 1878.**

***“Bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth.”
Isaiah 43:6.***

IF YOU will look at the connection of these words, you will see that they were spoken with the view of encouraging the Church—“Fear not: for I am with you: I will bring your seed from the East, and gather you from the West; I will say to the North, Give up; and to the South, keep not back: bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth.” The Lord loves His Church and He loves to see her full of courage and confidence, but, sometimes, her ministers appear to labor in vain and to spend their strength for nothing. The services in connection with the various agencies of the Church appear to be like plowing upon a rock. The bread is cast upon the waters, according to the Lord’s command, but it is not found again even after many days have passed away. At such times the Church begins to tremble—she is full of fear. She cannot give up her mission which is the enlightenment of the world, but she is very apt to continue in it with a faint and feeble heart and, consequently, to do what she is doing as a matter of mere routine, with very little zeal, or love, or hope, or joy.

Now, Beloved, the Lord would not have it so. He intends that His cause and Kingdom shall prosper in the world. It is written concerning the Messiah, “He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He has set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His Law”—and He would not have His people to be discouraged! Does not the farmer, after sowing his seed, wait a long while for the precious fruits of the earth? And for such fruits as those which are to be reaped by us we may well be content to wait, not merely for weeks, or for months, but for centuries! We need not be in such a hurry as we often are. God has great leisure. He lives not merely in time, He inhabits eternity. A thousand years are to Him but as one day, so He can afford to wait. We are only children and we feel that we must have something done at once, or we may be dead and gone and never see it—but Jehovah is always the same and of His years there is no end, so He bids us cease to judge by the appearances after a few days or years of toil for Him and to believe in the grandeur to be revealed in the ages yet to be, for, before the end of the age, this prophecy must

be fulfilled and Christ shall “set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for His Law.”

My subject, on this occasion, is intended to cheer up the workers for Christ, to encourage those who are seeking to serve the Lord by giving them full assurance that the Lord has a people whom He means to save, that they will be saved, are being saved, now, and that it becomes us to see to it that we help—each one of us according to his or her own measure—in this glorious work.

I. The first Truth of God that I see in the text is that THE LORD HAS CHILDREN FAR AWAY—“Bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth.”

Some of them are *far away in the matter of locality*. They are not dwelling where the Gospel is preached. They are nowhere near to the happy shores where the message of salvation is constantly being proclaimed. Some of them are where roads have not as yet been made and the commerce of civilization has not come. I doubt not that, in dark Africa, the Lord Jesus has multitudes of those who are redeemed with His precious blood—those who are elect according to the foreknowledge of God—whom He is determined to save. And in those lands of which Mr. Hudson Taylor spoke to us the other night—in Tibet, in Manchuria, in Tartary—Christ has a people whom He has ordained unto eternal life and whom He means to bring unto Himself. In all nations and among all kindreds, people and tongues, there is a remnant according to the election of Grace upon whom the eyes of God are especially set, and of whom He has declared, in His eternal purpose, “They shall be Mine in that day when I make up My jewels.” It should be a great encouragement to every missionary of the Cross to know that the Lord has a people everywhere. He said to Paul, concerning Corinth, “I have much people in this city” and that assurance encouraged the Apostle to preach the Word there. We can never tell where the Lord has much people, but this we do know—our commission runs thus, “Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature”—and one reason for this command is because the Lord has many of His sons and daughters who are far off as a matter of locality.

But we know that He also has many sons and daughters who are far off in a worse sense than this—for they are *far off as to character*—as opposed to God as darkness is to light! Alas, alas, that it should be so! Yet so it is, for the whole race of mankind has gone astray. But God has His chosen people among the fallen race. Some of the human race have gone further astray than the rest by gross criminality, or by long-continued habits of abominable filthiness, yet even among those who are reckoned to be beyond the pale of decent society, among those who have gone the full length of their tether and who could not go any further in sin if they were to try to do so—the Lord still has sons and daughters whom, in due time, He intends to bring to Himself and to save! It is a great joy to us, when we think of the fallen masses of London, to know that many a daughter of our Lord shall be washed and cleansed though now impure, unhallowed, and vile. It is a comfort to us to think that many a son of God shall yet be redeemed by power, having already been redeemed by price, and shall be brought to Jesus’ feet, though now a slave to sin and

an ardent lover of everything that is evil! Oh, yes, the Lord has a chosen people whom He means to fetch out of the worst dens and kennels of London—a people whom He intends to allure away from the frivolities of fashion, the blasphemies of infidelity and the degradations of superstition! He will effectually call them out from all their old associations, for He has chosen them and Christ has redeemed them—and He will, in this sense, bring His sons from far and His daughters from the ends of the earth!

There are some who are far off in another sense. It is not so much character that puts them far off from God, as their *not being in the way of hearing the Gospel*. The Kingdom of God has come near to most of you. You, dear Friends, who constantly occupy your seats here, or who attend other places of worship where Christ is preached, are not far off in this sense—you are near. Alas, that some of you should be so near the Kingdom of God and yet should not enter it! “You are not far from the Kingdom of God,” said Christ to one of the scribes, yet we do not know that that man ever crossed the border line and entered the Kingdom! It is a mournful fact that so many are willing to go down into the bottomless Pit with Gospel invitations and exhortations ringing in their ears. Bitter, indeed, shall be that man’s cup who deliberately puts from him the cup of Everlasting Life—and bitter shall be the bread that he shall eat forever who refuses to take the Bread of Life, even though it is set before him and pressed upon his acceptance every Sabbath! But there are great numbers of persons, even in our own land, who are not in the way of hearing the Gospel. They have been brought up under some form of religion which they believe to be right, but, as long as they adhere to the faith of their fathers, they never hear the doctrine of free and full salvation by the Grace of God! They are content with what they hear, but there is little likelihood of their ever being converted, for the Gospel, by which men are converted, is not allowed to have access to them. Yet, notwithstanding this, it is our firm conviction that there are many among them who are the sons and daughters of God and who shall yet be brought near to Him.

It happens, sometimes, that the more unlikely ones are the first to be converted. You probably remember the story of the man who went to hear George Whitefield preach and who had filled his pocket with stones to throw at God’s servant. But, as Whitefield preached the Gospel, the man dropped one stone after another until, at last, all the stones were gone out of his pocket and, better still, God had taken the stony heart out of his flesh and given him a heart of flesh! There have been others who have never heard the Gospel, yet who are opposed to it—but, in some remarkable way they hear it for the first time and all their opposition is overcome! It is love at first sight with them, but it is true love! They lay hold on Christ by faith and are saved! When Lady Erskine was riding, one day, near where Rowland Hill was preaching in the open air, she paused and listened to him and he put the Word of Life so clearly before her that she accepted Christ then and there, and became one of the greatest helpers of the Methodist Reformation of the time!

The Lord may work in a similar fashion in other cases—those who seemed as if no one could get at them shall be reached by the Gospel and

be converted. The Lord does bring in His chosen ones! As I look round in this audience, I can joyfully remember some of you who seemed as little likely ever to be brought to accept Christ as any people on the face of the earth—yet here you are, happy in the Lord and rejoicing in His Divine Grace! I am sure that with many of you, your own experience must make you feel that the Lord has other sons to bring from far, and daughters to come unto Him from the ends of the earth. If you will walk down any of our streets and chalk upon the door of a house in which you think it is most unlikely that anybody will ever be converted, I should feel almost certain that someone will be brought to Christ, by Divine Grace, out of that very house! The Grace of God often comes into the most unlikely hearts.

Once again, the Lord Jesus Christ saves by His Grace some who *are far off in their own apprehension*. It is not really true that they have been more sinful than others, but they think they have. It is not because they do not hear the Gospel that they are not converted, for they do hear it and, generally, they are among the most attentive hearers, but they consider that theirs is a case which the Gospel cannot touch. They imagine that they are excluded from all participation in the mercies of God. To hear them talk, you would suppose that they had read the roll which contains the names of those for whom the Divine act of amnesty and oblivion has been passed and had discovered that their names were not written there. Well now, dear Friends, though you are far off through your own fear and apprehension, I want to comfort you with the assurance that the Lord has many sons and daughters who are in a similar condition to yourself! I can speak from experience upon this point, for I was long in that sad condition. I judged that the salvation of my brother, sisters and friends was possible, but not my own. I came to the conclusion that all other young men might be saved, but—I did not quite know why—yet I nevertheless felt that I never could be saved. I imagined that I had sinned away my day of Grace, or something of that sort equally absurd—yet I lived to prove that it was not so, for the Lord brought His son from far. And you, also, dear Friend, may bow at the feet of Jesus! And He is here to say to you that however far off you may be in your own apprehension of your case, His Word still applies to you, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Even if you feel that you cannot come to Him, look up to Him, for He has said, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” Who will say that He cannot look? A babe may look! A person with little education may look! One who is dying may look! A half-blind man may look! So, look unto Christ and be you saved, even though you are at the very ends of the earth!

So you see that the Lord has children who are far off from Him in several senses. Have you ever known what it is to have a child of yours far off from you? Thank God, some of us have never had the sorrow of having our children far off from us in character, or in love. They have always been true to us and worthy to be held dear by us, yet we know, from our observation of others, something of what it must be to have a son a long way off. What does a father or a mother do when the son is a long way off? Why, they like to hear all they can about him—especially they love to hear from him—to get a letter or a message from their boy. Well, now,

our Heavenly Father watches over all His poor wandering children. Many of them have forgotten Him, but He has not forgotten them. He exercises a wonderful care over them long before they are converted and checks them in a thousand ways. There are some of you who would have laid violent hands on yourselves, before you were converted, if it had not been for God's restraining mercy! And some of you had so grossly sinned that you might have sinned the sin that is unto death if God had not held you back in the nick of time! Long before regenerating Grace is manifest, there is a prevalent Grace which watches over the heirs of mercy who know not that they are heirs of mercy—and keeps them from going down into the Pit because the Lord has found a Ransom. You who have been brought to Christ, though you were far from Him, can tell this story as no others can!

II. Now we pass on to the second point which is that THE LORD IS BRINGING HOME SOME OF THESE FAR-OFF ONES. In our text He gives this command, "Bring My sons from far."

To whom is this command spoken? I think we shall be right if we say that it is spoken much in the same way in which the Lord said, "Let there be light," "and there was light." His fiat did the deed. So God says, "Bring My sons from far," and, therefore, we may be sure that they will be brought to Him!

First, *Providence obeys this command.* Everything that happens in the mysterious movements of Providence is operating, under the controlling power of God, for the bringing in of His chosen. I like to read the newspaper somewhat in John Newton's fashion—with the view of knowing what is my Heavenly Father's next move—watching to see where next He means to turn His hand. I am not a great believer in the wisdom of our rulers, nor of any rulers whatever, but I rejoice that "the Lord reigns" and that He is just as certainly effecting His eternal purposes by the folly of man as by the wisdom of man! To me, the one thought concerning all the kingdoms of the earth is this—how is the Gospel advancing in Turkey, or in Afghanistan, or in other lands? I care for this world only for the sake of God's own people in it. The world is all scaffolding—the Church of Christ is the true building. The ultimate purpose of God is the gathering out of the world as many as He has given unto His Son, Jesus Christ, that they may have eternal life in Him and glorify Him forever. As you see those awful wheels of Providence revolve, those wheels that are full of eyes—and as they grind on in their ever-widening circles, you stand aghast and are awed and terrified by them—yet you may know that they are always revolving with this purpose—the fulfillment of the everlasting counsel of God and the giving unto Christ to see of the travail of His soul that He may be satisfied. God is saying to the North, "Give up," and to the South, "Keep not back." His voice in Providence is saying to all the powers that be, "Bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth."

The same is true on a small scale. All manner of afflictions that come to men are sent to touch their conscience and to bring them back to God. Many are brought to God by the loss of infants, by their own sickness, or by falling into poverty, who, speaking after the manner of men, would never come to God if it were not for these trying experiences. Many are

my Master's black dogs with which He fetches His sheep into the fold! And when they won't come at the call of the Gospel, He often says, "Fever, fetch him in. Death, bring him to Me." There is a mother who will not come to Christ in any other way, so He sends the black dog of bereavement to her—her child is carried to the cemetery and in the day of her distress she seeks the Lord! This is frequently God's way of working, but, by one means or another, He will bring His sons from far and His daughters from the ends of the earth. All the dispensations of His Providence shall work to that end.

This seems to me to be a charge *given to all God's people*, as well as to Providence, "Bring My sons from far." You know Me. You love Me, so, look after My wandering children." There is a well known proverb, "Love me, love my dog," but God could give us a better one, "Love Me, love My children—love poor sinners. Go and find them and bring them back to Me." Do not be satisfied till you have brought them in. Make this your life work—let it be the one thing you live for—to bring God's children from far. Are there some whom you know who are very near to the Kingdom? Try and bring them, but do you also know some others who are a long way off? Then, single them out! Pray more for them than for other people! Be most diligent to bring in those who are the worst and the least likely to come to Christ. "Bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth." Be sure not to neglect them. Whatever else you do, mind that you preach to the Jerusalem sinners, the biggest and blackest sinners whom you can find anywhere. This is God's command to us who have ourselves been already brought to Him.

But this command would be of no force unless my text were, as I have already said it is, a fiat. In consistency with this command, *the Holy Spirit goes forth*, in ways known to Himself, and He brings God's sons from far and His daughters from the ends of the earth. You remember the story of Thorpe and the other members of the Hell Fire Club who met together for profane purposes on the Sabbath? It was decided that Mr. Thorpe should imitate Whitefield, so he went to hear that mighty preacher of the Gospel, got the sermon well memorized, preached it to his infidel companions and, by God's Grace, became converted while doing so! He left the Hell Fire Club to become a heavenly fire preacher all the rest of his life! O Sovereign Grace, what is there that you cannot do? When God says, "Bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth," they are sure to be brought and laid at His feet—and added to His Church—to the praise of the glory of His Grace!

III. Now I am going to conclude with my third point which is that THIS IS SAID FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF GOD'S CHURCH.

This command has a very intimate connection with Christ's Church. Our text says, "Bring My sons and My daughters." But the 5th verse says, "I will bring your seed." Then, saved souls are the seed of the Church as well as the sons and daughters of God! God puts a wonderful honor upon human instrumentality. Paul represents himself as being, spiritually, both father and mother to souls that were born to God. He wrote to Philemon, "I beseech you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds." And to the Galatians he wrote, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ is formed in you." Thus, great honor was

put upon instrumentality—and the Lord is pleased to consider converts as the children of His Church as well as His own children!

Now then, Beloved, you who are members of the Church of the living God, will you not take a deep interest in the bringing home of the far-off ones who are your own children—the children of the Church—as well as the children of God? I trust that some of you will find them to be, literally, your own children—your own flesh and blood! May they all be converted and may your word be blessed to their conversion so that they may become your own spiritual children! The whole Church of God ought to think, with the deepest sympathy, of all those who are hopeful, those who are impressed, those who are coming to Christ and never to rest satisfied until they are all brought safely home! We should never be content till we get them to confess their faith in Christ and know that they are, indeed, saved in the Lord with His everlasting salvation!

Many of you know that I am expecting my son home from Australia. One feels inclined to run down to Plymouth to meet the ship and I would like to send some of you down to meet those who are coming where they first touch the land—that is, where they begin to believe in Jesus. Do you not feel that you want to go as far as you can to meet the sinner who is coming to Christ, to try to take away his last fear, to smooth the last wrinkle from his face and to tell him that he is fully and freely forgiven through the precious blood of Jesus? I hope, dear Christian friends, that you will all have deep sympathy with our Heavenly Father, so that you will say, “If He is bringing His sons from far, let us go meet them and do the utmost that we can to show them that they shall have a hearty welcome, not only to their Father’s house, but also to our hearts.”

I have known professing Christians whose children have grown up to be their sorrow and their curse. I said to a Sister who brought the last of her children to join the Church, “You are a favored woman, for I know some who, I hope, are Christians, yet their children are turning out very badly.” She said, “Have you noticed, Sir, whether they have family prayer or not?” That was a wise question, for, where there is no family prayer, we cannot expect to see the children grow up in the fear of God. There may be a public profession of religion, but, if there is no *practice of religion at home*—if its true position is not distinctly recognized every day—we cannot wonder if the young people do not go in the right way. Neglect anywhere is sure to bring evil consequences, but in keeping God’s commandments there is always a great reward. I have seen many of God’s faithful servants who began their Christian life early and took their stand for Christ and, in taking that stand, had to bear opposition, persecution and loss—yet they soon got over all that and God greatly prospered them! They brought up their children in the fear of the Lord and it cost them many a pang to speak severely to them, or to use the rod when it was needed—but they did what God would have them do and He blessed them. And now you can see the venerable patriarch with his children and his grandchildren around him, prospered in his business, happy in his own person, blessed himself and made a blessing to others! Many a time I have seen this cheering sight and I have learned that even in this life, in keeping God’s commandments there is great reward!

The Church of Christ has a further interest in these far-off sons and daughters from the fact that not only are they her seed, *but they are coming home to her*. All those who are God's spiritual children shall certainly come into His Church. They may not join our portion of His Church, but they will help to strengthen the true Church of God. But some of these far-off ones will come to us—so should we not be getting ready to welcome them? Let us have no surly tempers in our midst, no cold hearts and no divisions, because when these young converts come among us, they will be frightened if they find us full of evil passions and with little or no love to Christ. I like to see a Church keep herself in such a state that she is always ready to welcome “the little stranger”—the new-born child of God—whenever it comes into her midst. Whatever quarrels there may be in the streets, we must always have peace at home for the sake of these little ones. I would like, sometimes, to say to those who have noisy church meetings, or who display a party spirit, “Hush! Be quiet for the sake of these newcomers. Do not let them be hurt in their feelings and injured in their minds.”

And to you older Christians I would affectionately say, “Always keep your hearts young, warm and cheerful, that you may be a help to those who have just come into the Church for, if they see a crabby looking face, or if they hear harsh and unkind words, they are very likely to say, “This is not the place for us! This cannot be our Father's house.” Or else they will think, perhaps, that they have met an elder brother like the one in the parable—and it is very likely that they have—and it is always a pity if the poor prodigal, when coming back, meets his elder brother before he meets his father! It was a great mercy for the prodigal that he met his father first, for his loving welcome enabled him afterwards to endure very different treatment from his unbrotherly elder brother! Do not let any of us play the elder brother in *that* fashion, but let us be glad to receive the wanderers whenever they come and unite with us!

For, remember that these who are coming—these outsiders who are going to be brought in—these far-off ones who are being brought home—*will greatly help us when they do come*. Read the 7th verse—“Even everyone who is called by My name: for I have created him for My glory.” That is the kind of converts and members that we want—those who are created for God's Glory! Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we are living for God's Glory, are we not? Is not that the great end and objective of our being? Well, here come some recruits to join our ranks and some of them are the best recruits that can be found anywhere! A number of young Christians constantly coming into a church is a great blessing to that church. It tends to keep all the members alive and full of earnestness and vigor.

“But,” say some of the older friends, “these young converts are so imprudent.” Bless them! The Lord increase their imprudence, for that is one of the grandest things in the world when it is sanctified! It was most imprudent, on the part of the Apostle Paul, to go into those cities where he was stoned, dragged out and left for dead!. It was most imprudent of him, was it not, to lose his reputation and his standing among men simply that he might preach Jesus Christ and Him Crucified? May our young converts always maintain such grand imprudence as that!

“But, Sir,” say the objectors, “these young people who are coming into the church do not know much.” For that matter, Brothers and Sisters, we do not know much either, so we cannot keep them out on that ground! “But they have zeal without knowledge.” Yes, Brother, and it is quite possible to have knowledge without zeal. Both of those things are bad when alone, but, my Brother, if you have the knowledge and they bring the zeal, you have only to trade with them a little in the way of barter, to your mutual benefit. You can give them some of your knowledge, which will not be to their loss, and they can give you some of their zeal, which will be very much to your gain—so fetch them in as speedily as you can!

I remember the case of a godly man who prayed very fervently for the conversion of his children, yet he never saw one of them saved until he was the means of bringing to Christ a very desperate sinner—and when that great sinner was converted, *he* became the means of the conversion of that good man’s children! The Lord has many ways of working out His eternal purposes. There are some people for whom you are praying, yet, possibly, you will never bring them to Christ by merely praying for them. While others for whom you have never yet specially prayed, if you will talk to them faithfully and earnestly, you may bring them in by God’s great Grace, and then they may be the means of bringing in others. You must never imagine that you are to pick and choose who is to be saved! That is not a matter that is left to you—the Lord’s choice may be very different from your choice. The way for you to ascertain God’s choice is to talk about Christ to everybody you meet—*try to bring everyone to Christ*. The Lord will do the sorting far better than you can—He never makes a mistake. Your part is to cast the net into the sea and to enclose all the fish if you can get them in—and then haul them ashore if it is possible. There will not be one more really in the Gospel net beside those whom God has ordained to bless and save. Therefore do not be afraid to cast the net in again and again. Especially, dear Friends, let all of us look after the far-off ones who are coming home and be ready to welcome them!

God grant that they may not be wrecked in the last part of their voyage! May all go safely, even if roughly, with them and may they come to land praising redeeming Grace and dying love in which song you and I will join both now and forever and ever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 43:1-7, 18-28; 44:1, 2.**

Isaiah 43:1. *But now thus says the LORD that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are Mine.* Observe the tender ties that bind our God to His people—creation, the formation of them for His praise, redemption, the purchase of them for Himself and the calling of them by their name. The Lord remembers the bonds which unite us to Himself even when we forget them. He recollects His eternal love and all the deeds of mercy that have flowed from it. Though our memory is treacherous and our faith is feeble, “yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself.” Blessed be His holy name!

2. *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.* His Presence is all that we need even in the deepest floods of tribulation—this He has promised to us. He does not say what He will do for us, but He does tell us that He will be with us, and that is more than enough to meet all our necessities.

2. *And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.* That is a wonderful picture of a man walking through fire and yet not being burned. But there was a greater wonder that was seen by Moses, which may well comfort us. He saw a bush that burned with fire and yet was not consumed. Now a bush, in the desert, is usually so dry that at the first application of fire, it flames, glows and is speedily gone. Yet you and I, who are, spiritually, just as dry and combustible as that bush was naturally, may burn, and burn, and burn, yet we shall not be consumed because the God, who was in the bush, is also with us and in us!

3. *For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior: I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you.* And He has given infinitely more than that for us who are now His people, for He gave His only-begotten Son that He might redeem us with His precious blood! Now that we have cost Him so much, is it likely that He will ever forsake us? It is not possible!

4. *Since you are precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you: therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life.* How sweetly this verse comes home to those whose characters have been disreputable! As soon as they are truly converted to Christ, they become “honorable.” “Since you are precious in My sight, you have been honorable.” God does not call His people by their old names of dishonor, but He gives them the title of “Right Honorable,” and makes them the nobility of His Court! “Unto you that believe, He is an honor,” and you have honor in Him and from Him.

5-7. *Fear not: for I am with you: I will bring your seed from the east and gather you from the west, I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by My name: for I have created him for My glory, I have formed him; yes, I have made him.*

The Lord seems to dwell upon that note of the creation of His children for His own Glory. This accounts for many of our troubles and for all our deliverances—it is that God may be glorified by bringing His children through the fires and through the floods. A life that was never tested by trial and trouble would not be a life out of which God would get much Glory. But they that do business in the great waters see the works of God and His wonders in the deep and they give Him praise and, besides, when they come to their desired haven, then they praise the Lord for His goodness and God is thereby glorified.

18, 19. *Remember you not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing.* It is a very profitable thing to remember the things of old. It is greatly beneficial to us to study what God did in years and ages long gone by—yet God intends to do for us something in the future that shall eclipse all the past! Especially was this

true in Isaiah's day, for the coming of Christ, which was then in the future, was to be such a sun-rising of mercy that all the stars of blessing that had shone before, would seem to be lost in the brightness of His appearing! Dear Friends, do not always dwell on the past. You who are getting gray are very apt to say that the former things and former times were better than now. Do not say so, but believe this promise of Jehovah, "Behold, I will do a new thing."

19, 20. *Now it shall spring forth; you shall not know it. I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honor Me, the dragons and the owls.* I have sometimes laid hold of this text and have been comforted by it concerning the conversion of the very worst of men. Some people say, "What is the good of going among blasphemers and profane persons with the Word of God?" Well, if the beast of the field—the dragons and the owls shall honor Him—we need never think of leaving any of the sons of men to perish! It is not what they are, but what God is, that should give us confidence concerning them. Even if they were worse than they are, the Omnipotent Grace of God would still be able to reach them and to convert them—let us have no doubt about this matter!

20. *Because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen.* Oh, the wonders of the love of God! Wherever He has a chosen people, every mercy shall certainly come there! If they are in the wilderness, waters shall come to them! If they are in the desert, rivers shall flow to them! They shall have drink till they come where they can drink to the full at the living fountains of water at God's right hand.

21. *This people I have formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.* Here is this same note again. Yet mark what kind of people they had been—a people whom God had greatly loved, but who had backslidden from Him. They had wandered very far away from God, yet still His purpose of love did not change—"This people I have formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise." What a blessed, "shall," that is, uttered by One who knows how to make it good by deeds of mighty Grace!

22. *But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of Me, O Israel.* They were not much like Jacob, for he prayed at Jabbok and became Israel, who wrestled till he prevailed, saying to the Angel, "I will not let You go except You bless me." Yet here are people who bear the same name—"Jacob" and "Israel," yet God has to say to them, "You have not called upon Me, O Jacob. You have been weary of Me, O Israel."

23. *You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; neither have you honored Me with your sacrifices.* Is that true of any of you? Have you restrained prayer and have you also stinted God in your offering? Whereas He gave His Son for you, have you refused the small cattle of your burnt offerings?

23. *I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense.* "I have laid no tax upon you. I have not demanded so much of your income as a condition for your being members of My Church. I have left it to your love and gratitude to bring your freewill offerings to Me."

24. *You have bought Me no sweet cane with money.* No perfume or incense that should sweeten the temple of God.

24. *Neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices: but—* Oh, this “but! “But”!

24. *You have burdened Me with your sins.* You have made a servant of your Master—treated your Redeemer as if He were your slave!

24. *You have wearied me with your iniquities.* Oh, what a terrible verse this is about a people whom God had formed for Himself and who shall yet show forth His praise! Alas, this is how they sometimes still are—indifferent, ungrateful, presenting Him no tokens of love, but, on the contrary, disobedient, grieving Him and vexing His Holy Spirit. What will He do with them now? “Cut them off, and reject them,” says one. Yes, that is what men would do—but that is not what God will do. Listen!

26. *I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.* You have forgotten His mercies—but He will forget your sins! You have grieved Him—but He still has a tender heart towards you! He will blot out your sins. Oh, how this ought to melt us! How this ought to encourage us to begin again in better style—to be much in prayer, much in holy service and much in self-sacrifice!

26-28. *Put Me in remembrance: let us contend together: state your case that you may be acquitted. Your first father has sinned, and your teachers have transgressed against Me. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.*

Isaiah 44:1, 2. *Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: thus says the LORD that made you, and formed you from the womb, which will help you; Fear not, O Jacob, My servant; and you, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.* He comes back to that point, again, you see—“Israel whom I have chosen: thus says the Lord that made you.” See the deep argument for Infinite Love? God will not forsake the work of His own hands. “I have formed you, and chosen you; therefore, fear you not, but come to Me anew, and serve Me henceforth with all your heart.”

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—625, 627.

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**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 10, 1864,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Yet now hear, O Jacob, My servant. And Israel, whom I have chosen: thus says the Lord that made you and formed you from the womb, which will help you. Fear not, O Jacob, My servant. And you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon your seed and My blessing upon your offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord’s, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob. And another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.”
Isaiah 44:1-5.*

WE ought not to overlook the first and immediate meaning of these words. There can be no doubt that we have here a promise made to God’s ancient people, the Jews. Whatever their sins may have been, God has not forever cast them away. They have become like the dry and thirsty desert, but the day will yet dawn when God’s sovereign love shall again visit them and His Spirit shall distil upon them until Israel shall be glorious among the nations and her children shall be multiplied and saved. O that the long-expected day would hasten! Break, hallowed morning, for earth’s watchers are growing weary! The twelve tribes right longingly wait for the appearance of Messiah the Prince and we also who believe in Jesus, joyfully expect His advent and the gathering together of Israel.

How great will be the day of the Lord’s gracious visitation! “For if the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” If the fall of them is the riches of the world and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness? The vision tarries, but it will surely come! The Glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. Be it ours to rejoice in that ancient promise, “There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is My Covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.”

Leaving this interesting view of the text, we will meditate on it, for practical purposes of comfort to ourselves. Observe that the text begins with the word, “Yet.” What an ominous word as to the past! What a cheering word as to the future! “Yet.” “Yet.” What black words are those which come before it? Surely all is not well. Look at the preceding verses and see. God’s people were represented as being in a sadly backsliding state. They had lost their love to the service of God. They neglected His altar. They brought Him no thank offerings. No, they had fallen into a state of sin until they wearied God with their iniquity.

Consequently they fell into a condition of sorrow—God gave them up to the curse and the reproach. It may be that such is our case this morning, though we are God’s people. Perhaps our soul lies cleaving in the dust. We have forgotten to run with diligence in the way of God’s Commandments. We have fallen into a lukewarm state. We are following afar off. It may be that we have even fallen into sin and sitting in this House of Prayer we confess with Pharaoh’s butler, “I do remember my faults this day.”

It is very possible that we have been made too smart for our sins. God may have hidden His face from us. Our faith may be flagging—our graces may be withering. It will be so, it *must* be so when we forsake our God. If we leave the flowing Fountain to trust in broken cisterns, we shall soon know the bitterness of thirst. “Yet.” “Yet,” says the text—“yet,” though you have fallen into this state, do not despair! Though you have transgressed very foully, do not think God has cast you away! “Yet now hear, O Jacob, My servant. And Israel, whom I have chosen.” Yet—the word is a star of the morning, prophetic of brighter rays—yet I love you! Yet you are My chosen! Yet My loving heart is true to you! Yet will I return unto you in favor! Yet shall you rejoice in Me and be filled with My goodness!

Come then, Brothers and Sisters, if we have wandered ever so far, let this word sound like the shepherd’s call to bring us back. You need not always be sad—there is no necessity that you should be always weak in righteousness and abundant in sin—yet the promise is yours! Yet God loves you! Yet He invites you to come to Him! Return now and seek His face once more. You have lived in the feverish lowlands, yet climb the mountains! You have groveled in the dust, yet ascend as on eagles’ wings! You have been covered with sackcloth, yet put on your beautiful array! Your neglect of the promises has not made them the less sure. The key of your faith may be rusted, but it will still open the door of mercy.

You may have been unbelieving, but God abides faithful. Up! Enjoy your sure inheritance. Let us feel comforted by the very first word of the text and let it encourage us to lay hold, despite our own unworthiness, upon the great promise of the Lord. The Lord, in order to comfort His people and bring them out of their present state, first, reminds them of what He *has* done for them. Secondly, He repeats His promise of what He *will* do. And thirdly, He adds to this a most gracious and full promise of what He will do for their *offspring*.

I. First, then, and O may the Lord refresh our memories by revealing to us the way by which He has led us—first of all HE COMFORTS HIS PEOPLE BY THE REMEMBRANCE OF WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR THEM. Come, my Brothers and Sisters, reach down for your biographies. Turn over your diaries. Go back with me a little while to that spot where first you knew the Savior. Then march on along the way by which the Lord has led you till you reach the day and hour which found you in the House of God, listening to His promise.

1. Taking the text as our guide, let us notice, first, the Grace we have experienced in its practical effect. The practical effect of Divine Grace in our case has been to make us God’s servants—“Yet now hear, O Jacob, My servant.” We may be unfaithful servants—we certainly are unprofitable ones—but blessed be His name, if not awfully deceived we are His true servants! We were once the servants of sin and the slaves of our own passions, but He who made us free has now taken us into His family and

taught us obedience to His will. We can say with David, "I am Your servant. I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds."

We do not serve our Master perfectly, but we would if we could. There are some of His Commandments which we forget, but there are none which we would despise. We do, through infirmity, turn aside unto crooked ways, but we find no comfort in them. Our meat and our drink is to do the will of Him who sent us and our prayer is—

***"Make me to walk in Your commands,
It is a delightful road.
Nor let my head, nor heart, nor hands,
Offend against my God."***

Beloved, if God has made us His servants, let us be comforted. It is so great a change and so wonderful an effect of Irresistible Grace upon a man to transform him from an heir of wrath into a servant of the living God that we have herein ground for comfort.

2. Observe again, this Grace is peculiar, discriminating and distinguishing. He calls us, "My *chosen*." We have not chosen Him first, but He has chosen us. If we are God's servants, we were not always so—to Sovereign Grace the change must be ascribed. We might have been left, like other men, to continue in sin and to be rebels against the King of Heaven, but the eyes of Sovereignty singled us out from among others not more unworthy than we were and it was the voice of Love which said, "I have loved you with an everlasting love."

Long before those stars were kindled into flames—long before the sun begun his mighty course—long before the mountains lifted their hoary heads, or the deep clapped its hands in the tumultuous joy of tempest. Long before time began, or space was created, God had written upon His heart the names of His elect people. He had selected them, never to change His choice. He had united them unto the Person of His Son Jesus Christ by a Divine Decree never to be revoked. He had predestinated them to be conformed unto the image of His Son and had made them the heirs of all the fullness of His love, His Grace and His Glory.

Have you and I been chosen? Can we see the connection between the link of calling and the link of predestination? Have we made our calling sure? If so, we may infer most certainly that we must have been predestinated. What comfort is here! Would the Lord have loved us so long and will He cast us away? I know you are dead and barren and your soul feels heavy and your sins stare you in the face, but did not your God know all this beforehand? He made the choice, knowing all—why then, should He change His purpose? He knew how stiff-necked you would be! He understood that your heart was evil and that the imaginations of it would be only evil, and that continually, and yet He loved you!

Ah, my Savior is no fickle lover. He does not feel enchanted for awhile with some gleams of beauty from His Church's eye and then afterwards cast her off because of her unfaithfulness. No, my Brethren, He married her in old eternity and though, according to the words of the Prophet, she has played the harlot and done exceedingly evil, yet it is written of Jehovah, "He hates putting away." There is no divorce in the court of Heaven. Christ has espoused His people to Him in faithfulness and they shall know the Lord. Be this your comfort then—the activity of Grace has made

you God's servant. The distinguishing character of Grace has made you His chosen.

3. Reflect again, in the light of the text, upon the ennobling influence of Grace. The people are first called Jacob, but only in the next line they are styled Israel. You and I were but of the common order. If we had boasted of anything we should have been called Jacobs, supplanters, boasting beyond our line. But as Jacob at the brook Jabbok wrestled with the angel and prevailed and gained the august title of prince—prevailing prince—“For as a prince have you power with God and with men and have prevailed,” even so has Grace ennobled us!

It may be that we wear today the common well-worn garb of labor. Our names never glitter in the rolls of earth's mightiest—but we are allied unto the King of kings if the life of God is in our soul! We are of the royal family! We are princes of the blood imperial! We shall take our seats among those lordly spirits who forever dwell before the Majesty of the Most High. Priests and kings unto our God has Christ made us by virtue of His own position. Oh, to think that *we*, who were worse than dogs, should sit among the children! That *we*, who once stood at the swine trough and gladly would have filled our belly with the husks, now feed upon the fatted calf!

What love is this, that whereas we said, “I am not worthy that you should come under my roof,” He has been pleased to make our bodies the temples of the Holy Spirit and God dwells in us and we in Him! My Brethren, what an honor to be one with Christ—to be united to the Person of Him who counts it not robbery to be equal with God—to be made at last to sit upon His Throne, even as He sits upon His Father's Throne! Why, when I look upon the dignity which belongs to the meanest Christian, the imperial pomp of all emperors and kings sinks into insignificance and like a shadow melts away. Think of this, my Brethren, and despite your low state of Grace this morning, take comfort. He would not have made you such mighty ones as you are in Him if He had not intended to bless you still.

4. Furthermore, the text conducts us onward to notice the creating and sustaining energy of that Grace. “Thus says the Lord that made you and formed you from the womb.” How did you become Believers in Christ? By any internal energy of your own? Speak, Believer—was it your free will that brought you to the Savior's feet, or was it God's Free Grace? Men may hold free will doctrine as a matter of *theory*, but you never find a Believer hold it as a matter of *experience*. We can all say—

**“Oh, to Grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be.”**

It was all of Your Grace I was brought to obey, while others were suffered to go the downward road! About this you can have no difficulty, for your own experience tells you that you were dead in trespasses and sins and it must have been something beyond any power of yours that quickened you into spiritual life. Men might as well claim the honors of creation or resurrection as boast of commencing their own spiritual life! The Lord alone shall have the Glory of that opening hour of love.

Since that happy day what has sustained you? Has your fire of piety been fed by internal, self-produced fuel? Have you kept yourselves from the power of Satan? My Brethren, have you kept *yourselves* in commun-

ion with God? You know that you have not. You are debtors for your soul's daily bread to your Father who is in Heaven. Every good thing which you have you have received from Him. The great Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning, has given you every good and perfect gift which you have received. You have profited in nothing by the flesh, but in all things by the Spirit of the living God.

Taking you from your first conviction and tracking you to the present moment, it has been God's creating and forming. In the womb of conviction He fashioned you and He has nurtured you until now. Let this be your comfort—if God could quicken you when you were absolutely dead and if He has kept you until this moment, can He not revive you again? Can He not make that spark again become a flame? Have you fallen too low for Him? Is His arm shortened that He cannot save? Is His ear heavy that He cannot hear? No! He that has delivered you aforetime will deliver you yet again. Therefore be of good comfort.

5. We will leave this part of the subject when we notice once again that this Grace has the characteristic of intense affection in it. This is not very plain in our translation but I think we can make it clear. God gives to His people the title of Jesurun, which means the righteous people, according to some translators. But most interpreters are agreed that it is an affectionate title which God gives to His people. Perhaps it may be considered to be a diminutive of Israel. I do not know that we could pronounce it so as to make it plainly appear here, but very likely it is so—a diminutive of Israel.

Just as fathers and mothers, when they have great affection for their children, will frequently give them an endearing name—shorten their usual name—or call them by a familiar title only used in the family, so in calling Israel, Jeshurun, the Lord sets forth His near and dear love. God's Grace to us is not merely the mercy of the good Samaritan towards a poor stranger whom he finds wounded by the way. It is the love of a mother to her sick child. The fondness of a husband towards a weeping wife. The tenderness of the head towards the wounded members.

O Beloved, did you ever did try to grasp the thought that God loves you? Whenever I try it, it brings tears into my eyes and I can go no farther. That the *Eternal God* should *pity* me I can understand. That He should regard my misery and deliver me I can comprehend. That He should look upon me with eyes of benevolence seems reasonable enough. But that He should LOVE me? Love me, too, with a love infinitely stronger than any love I have to my own children, or to my own spouse! That He should so love me that His own darling Son, the Only-Begotten, was not better loved than I have been—this is a wonder of wonders!

I must not say that Jesus was not so well loved as poor sinful men, but I will say when the question came to this—whether those poor sinful but beloved ones should die or Christ should die—He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all. Oh, what mysterious love! That Christ should suffer that we may go free! That the Father's Darling should hang upon the accursed Tree and bleed away His life that *we* might be received into the eternal bosom of Jehovah and might be forever accepted as the favored ones of His electing love! He loves you! Oh, there is nothing can melt the heart like this—God loves you!

And while it melts, it strengthens. While God loves me, whom shall I fear? If Jehovah has chosen me, if He has set His heart upon me, of whom shall I be afraid? Verily, with this I may walk through the valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil! With this in the midst of war I may have confidence! Upon this in famine I shall be fed. And in affliction I shall not be afraid. Oh, the joy which dwells in the thought that God loves His people! Jesus loved me and gave Himself for me! Can you say this, my Hearer? If you can, you can say more than Demosthenes or Cicero were ever able to say with all their eloquence.

It may be, as we have said before, that we have fallen into a low sad state this morning and are trying to get ourselves out of it by chastening ourselves with many dark and doleful fears. Now that is *not* the way to rise from the dust. It is not the *Law* but the *Gospel* which saves at first. And it is not a legal bondage but a Gospel liberty which can restore the fainting Believer. It is not slavish fear that brings back the backslider to God, but the sweet wooing of love allures him to Jesus' bosom.

As I sat the other night in my study, musing on my message for the coming Sunday, some little unbelief crossed my mind. Would the Lord sustain me in my ministry among such multitudes? Would He give fresh matter on the morrow? And there stood on my shelves nine volumes of my sermons, the records of nine years of gracious help. What witnesses did those volumes seem to be of the faithfulness of the Lord! Now you can look back, some of you, to ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years, which are like so many volumes of Grace received! Dare you distrust your God? David went forth to fight Goliath with past experience as his comfort, "Your servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them."

Cannot you use the same argument? You have already slain your adversaries—what can stand against you? Be of good comfort and dash forward to the fray! Take as your war cry, "His mercy endures *forever*," and you need never quail, whatever difficulties assail you. So much for the first point. Now let us turn with great brevity to the second.

II. We are encouraged, in the second place, this morning, by THE PROMISE OF WHAT GOD WILL DO. He says "Fear not, I will help you." And then He adds, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground." You feel thirsty this morning, that is, uncomfortable in heart. You have lost much of the joy of religion and your prayer is, "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation."

You are conscious, also, that you are barren, like the dry ground. You are not bringing forth that fruit unto God which He has a right to expect of you. You are not so useful in the Church nor in the world as your heart desires to be. Well then, here is His promise of what He will do, "I will help you." You cannot pray this morning. You cannot wrestle as you desire—"I will help you." You feel unable to overcome sin—"I will help you." You are engaged in service too heavy for you—"I will help you."

Whether it is to suffer, to sacrifice, to labor, or to endure, take this comfort—"I will help you." I love this promise! It is a very short one, but it is all the longer in meaning because it is short in expression. You may avail yourself of it in all cases. The promise turns every way and blesses in every form. It is like a weapon which may be used for fifty purposes. It will be to you, if you will, a sword and you may beat it into a plowshare. Or it

will prove a shield, a spear, a chariot, and I know not what besides. You cannot find any possible position into which the child of God can be brought in which this promise will fail to bless him!

Sit down no longer in lethargy! Lift up the hands which hang down and confirm the feeble knees, for if God says, "I will help you," how can you be afraid? Then comes a promise, fuller in words and as rich in Grace, "I will pour water on him that is thirsty." You shall have the Grace you want. Water refreshes the thirsty—you shall be refreshed—your desires shall be gratified. Water quickens sleeping vegetable life—your life shall be quickened by fresh Grace. Water swells the buds and makes the fruits ripe—you shall have fructifying Grace. You shall be made fruitful in the ways of God!

Whatever good quality there is in Divine Grace, you shall enjoy it to the full. All the riches of Divine Grace you shall receive in plenty. You shall be, as it were, drenched with it! And as sometimes the meadows become flooded by the bursting rivers and the fields turn into pools, so shall you! The thirsty land shall be springs of water. O my Brothers and Sisters, when the Holy Spirit visits a man, what a difference it makes in him!

I know a preacher, once as dull and dead a man as ever misused a pulpit. Under his slumbering ministrations there were few conversions and the congregation grew thinner and thinner. Good men sighed in secret and the enemy said, "Aha, so would we have it!" The revival came—the Holy Spirit worked gloriously! The preacher felt the Divine fire and suddenly woke up to energy and zeal. The man appeared to be transformed! His tongue seemed touched with fire! Elaborate and written discourses were laid aside and he began to talk out of his own glowing heart to the hearts of others. He preached as he had never done before. The place filled. The dry bones were stirred and quickening began! They who knew him once so elegant, correct, passionless, dignified, cold, lifeless and unprofitable, asked in amazement, "Is Saul also among the Prophets?"

The Spirit of God is a great wonder-worker! You will notice certain Church members. They have never been good for much. We have had their names on the roll and that is all—suddenly the Spirit of God has come upon them and they have been honored among us for their zeal and usefulness! We have seen them here and there and everywhere diligent in the service of God and foremost in all sorts of Christian labor, though before you could hardly get them to stir an inch! I would that the quickening Spirit would come down upon me and upon you—upon every one of us in abundance—to create us valiant men for Truth and mighty for the Lord!

O for some of the ancient valor of apostolic times, that, like good knights of the Cross we would dash forward against the foe and with irresistible courage deal heavy blows against the adversary of souls and his vast host! We may do this! We have only to plead the promise! God will be enquired of, but the promise stands true, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground." Do not lose the blessing through remissness, but ask and you shall receive. Brethren, pray for me! For I need more Grace and in return I will plead the Lord's words on your behalf.

III. As a very great comfort to His mourning people, the Lord now promises A BLESSING UPON THEIR CHILDREN. You will observe, dear Friends, that they must get the blessing for themselves first, for the third

verse has it—"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground"—that is first. And then afterwards—"I will pour My Spirit upon your seed."

We must not expect to see our children blessed unless we ourselves grow in Grace. It is often the inconsistency of parents which is the obstacle—the outward obstacle to the conversion of their children. No doubt there have been multitudes of children of professing parents who have been damned instrumentally by the ungodliness and inconsistency of their parents at home. The parents, let us hope, were Christians—but there has been so much of apparent inconsistency about them that the ruin of their children has been the consequence. It is a notorious fact that some of the worst of men have been the children of godly parents. I could give living instances but I forbear.

When good Mr. Williams was murdered at Eromanga—the fact should be well-known—the natives had first been exasperated by the most abominable conduct on the part of the son of a missionary, who, having gone there, had practiced all sorts of evil upon the natives. And then good Mr. Williams was sacrificed to their fury. You will find that among the most fearfully depraved there are a few of the very deepest dye who received an early Christian education and dashed down all its restraints that they might run greedily into iniquity.

I think the children of godly parents are like Jeremiah's figs—the good are very good, but the bad are very bad—very naughty figs, such as cannot be eaten. Some of the children of God have been the parents of great offenders. Eli begets Hophni and Phinehas. David has an Absalom. Noah is father to Ham. Isaac begets profane Esau. The wise Solomon is followed by Rehoboam the fool. And pious Hezekiah is sire to persecuting Manasseh. Oh, how sad it is that it should be so, but so it is! We must, therefore, look to ourselves and our own careful walking before God, for we shall not get the promise for our offspring till we obtain its fulfillment in our own case.

But now, supposing that this is done. If we have had faith to receive much Grace from God, here comes a blessed promise for our children—"I will pour My Spirit upon your seed," in which, observe first of all, the need. Our children need the Spirit of God. They are not like children educated in the street, the tavern, or the low theater. They have not heard from our lips words of lust or profanity. They have been hushed to sleep by the name of Jesus as their lullaby. They breathe the air of religion. But for all that they need the Spirit of God!

We love to see the children of godly parents brought into Church membership, but we would avoid, above all things, anything like hereditary profession or inherited religion. It must be *personal* in each individual or it is not worth a gnat. I believe that the idea of birthright membership has tended materially to weaken the strength of that most respectable and once powerful denomination, the Society of Friends. Believing that their children have an inward Light which they ought to follow, I do fear they often teach their children to follow inward *darkness* rather than light. Forgetting the necessity of the Holy Spirit, which is infinitely superior to ordinary light of conscience, their children have grown up to attend meetings and to wear a particular garb without receiving the Spirit—certainly without that grand enthusiasm which honored their sires in bygone days.

We must not adulterate our membership by the reception of the children of godly parents unless we have clear proof that they, themselves, are converted to God. Your children need the Holy Spirit quite as much as the offspring of the Hottentot or the Kaffir. They are born in sin and shapen in iniquity—in sin do the best of mothers conceive their children, and, however well you may train them, you cannot take the stone out of the heart nor turn it into flesh. To give a new heart and a right spirit is the work of the Holy Spirit and of the Holy Spirit alone.

In the second place, the source of the mercy which God will give. “I will pour out My Spirit.” It was the work of the Spirit which transformed their fathers—it is that which must transform them. The Word may come to them and not be blessed. We may be silly enough to take them to baby-Baptism and they would not be blessed. We may persuade them to come to the Lord’s Table, but they would not be blessed. But when the Spirit of God comes upon them, *then* it is all done. Now comes the broken heart! Now comes the humble spirit! Now is breathed the earnest prayer! Now love to Christ flames forth and trust is built upon Him!

Do pray, dear Friends, for your children, that God will pour His Spirit upon them. And as to the rest, you may depend that all the fruits will come in due time. I do not know that the parent needs to say much to his child about Baptism or the Lord’s Supper, except, sometimes, a gentle word as to the *duty* of the Believer, and a clear explanation of the meaning of the ordinances. But I do hold that the duty of the parent is to look first and foremost for the work of the Spirit and insist upon it that he must be born again or else no profession can be made. Tell the child that he is dead in trespasses and sins. Let there be no doubt about his natural condition and let this always be your prayer, “Almighty Grace, renew his heart! Turn him from darkness to Light and make him Yours!”

I think that in some Sunday school addresses there is not always the Gospel so clearly and decidedly proclaimed as it should be. It is not very easy, I know, to preach Christ to little children, but there is nothing else worth preaching. To stand up and say, “Be good boys and girls and you will get to Heaven,” is preaching the old Covenant of Works, and it is no more right to preach salvation by works to little children than to those who are of mature age. We are all dead and as the Spirit of God can alone renew us, so He alone can renew them and there is no natural goodness, no amiability, no generosity of character which can supersede the work of the Holy Spirit. We must remember this and hold to it, that we pray to God to work by His Spirit in their hearts.

Then you have in the promise in the third place, the plenty of Grace which God gives. He says, “I will pour My Spirit upon your seed”—not a little of it—but they shall have abundance. It has charmed me, especially of late, when I have conversed with very many children—many of them children of godly parents and others we have brought into our school and instructed by good and loving teachers. I have been charmed, I say, in examining them for membership, at the profoundness of their knowledge and the abundance of their Grace. I have questioned them in a way I would not question some gray-headed men and women.

I have gone into points of intricate doctrine with many of them in a way which I would not use with many of middle age because I know I would take them out of their depth. But these children have been able to tell me

from Scripture—and generally their answers have been quotations of a text—the great plan of salvation and the doctrines connected with it as explicitly as the best Doctor of Divinity in any of our Universities. And I have been often pleased to notice that the very babes are those out of the mouths of whom God has ordained strength and He gives the perfect wisdom of the upright full often to those who are but as babes and sucklings. It is so good to notice this!

You are not to expect children merely to exhibit *faint* traces of Grace, but in the strength of this promise you may look for *great* things. In the deathbeds of your children—and very often children who are early saved are early caught up to Heaven—many very wonderful expressions have fallen from their lips. Mr. Janeway, in his, “Token for Children,” has preserved many examples, showing that some dying children have been wondrously mature in piety and the expressions they have used have perfectly astounded the most experienced of the saints.

You ought not, in the case of children, to look merely for life—you will find *vigorous* life! You may not expect a little surface-knowledge only, but you may expect to find in them a depth of knowledge in the things of God, for so God’s promise has it, “I will pour My Spirit upon your seed.” I must not leave the text without noticing the blessedness of all this. “And My blessing upon your offspring.”

Oh, what a blessing it is to have our offspring saved! God give us each to see it! What a blessing to have our children enlisted in Christ’s army! Beloved, we wish them well, we wish them the best of God’s gifts. But if we were asked whether we would have them famous or wealthy, we should pause to ask whether it were good for them. But if it were put to us, “Shall they be saved?” we feel we would cheerfully give our life if that must be the price, to know that our children walked in the Truth of God. “I have no greater joy than this,” said one in Holy Scripture and there can be no greater joy than this to the Christian parent. How happy the family becomes!

And when they grow up and go out from us, married in the Lord—for how else can they be gracious?—we should expect to see a gracious house built up. There is a very sad verse, I think you will find it in the second chapter of Judges, which runs thus—“And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel.” Oh, that is sad to see how soon religion dies out in a nation! But without household piety—without constant instruction both in the Sunday school and at home—the next generation in our case will be as ignorant of God as if Christ had not been known by their fathers!

Unless we are careful over the young, there may be none to bear the Lord’s banner when we sleep among the clods. In matters of doctrine you will find orthodox congregations frequently change to heterodoxy in the course of thirty or forty years and that is because too often there has been no catechizing of the children in the essential doctrines of the Gospel. For my part I am more and more persuaded that the study of a good Scriptural Catechism is of infinite value to our children and I shall see that it is reprinted as cheaply as possible for your use. Even if the youngsters do not understand all the questions and answers in the “Westminster Assembly’s Catechism,” yet, abiding in their memories, it will be of infinite

service when the time of understanding comes, to have known those very excellent, wise and judicious definitions of the things of God.

If we would maintain orthodoxy in our midst and see good old Calvinistic doctrines handed down from father to son, I think we must use the method of catechizing and endeavor with all our might to impregnate their minds with the things of God. It will be a blessing to them—the greatest of all blessings—a blessing in life and death, in time and eternity, the best of blessings God Himself can give. I will not prolong this, but there are still two points I must mention. Carefully notice the vigor with which these children shall grow. “They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.”

Close by the water’s edge the grass grows very green and the willow is a well-known tree for speedily shooting forth its branches. Our farmers lop their willows often, but they very soon sprout again. As the old proverb has it, “A willow will buy a horse where an oak will not buy a saddle, because the willow being often lopped and then springing again, yields much to the grower.” The willow grows fast and so do young Christians. If you want the eminent men in God’s Church, look for them among those converted in youth. There are, of course, exceptions, but after all, our Samuels and Timothy’s must come from those who knew the Scriptures from their youth.

O Lord! Send us many such whose growth and advance shall as much astonish us as the growth of the willows by the water courses. Why, since I have been among you these ten years and more, lads who used to come into the school and were the objects of our hope, where are they now? Why they are preaching the Gospel this very morning! And as I look at the happy parents here and remember the time when the now useful minister sat as a lad in the pew and remember that at this very moment they are preaching in the name of Jesus, they do seem to have grown quite as fast as the willows. They grow so fast and so well and serve the Lord so admirably! The promise has, indeed, been fulfilled to the very letter!

Then comes, last of all, the manifestation of this in public. It appears from the text that not only are our children to have the Spirit of God in their inward parts, but they are to make a profession of it. One shall say, “I am the Lord’s”—he shall come out boldly and avow himself on the Lord’s side. And another shall so ally himself to God’s Church that he “shall call himself by the name of Jacob.” And then another who can hardly speak quite so positively, but who means it quite as sincerely—“shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord,” and a fourth shall, “surname himself by the name of Israel.”

Oh, it is a joy, indeed, when those who know the Lord come forward and declare themselves to be on His side! May we, by God’s Grace, be helped to train our children to an open avowal of that which is within them. A hint sometimes will do our sons and daughters good when we believe that they fear God. Indicate to them that religion is not meant to be kept under a bushel, that the Grace of God is not to be covered and concealed—and before long, seeing their duty—God will help them to walk in the way of it and it shall be your privilege and mine to rejoice at seeing them added to the Church. The promise upon which I have preached this morning needs to be pleaded before God, for God does not fulfill such

promises as these without our bringing them before Him in earnest fervent prayer.

A banker gives me a check and it is a very good one, but I can never get the cash for it without going to the counter and presenting it for payment. And if God gives me a promise conditional upon my pleading it, I must never expect Him to fulfill it unless I enquire concerning it. I look upon some here who can remember the way by which God has led them—who look upon their children and their children's children walking in the Truth of God—you, my Brethren, can confirm the faith of the younger parents among us and make us feel that as God has dealt well with you, He will deal well with us!

Some of us, in looking back, can speak of a godly father and a godly grandfather. We can look for generations back, till as far as we can trace a line—Divine Grace has run in our family. O that the line may continue for years to come, till as long as generations are born there shall be one of our kith and kin to carry the standard and sound the trumpet and fight for the Lord of Israel! I invite you, therefore, to much earnest prayer, especially during the coming week, which is selected by the Evangelical Alliance as a prayer week for this special object. And I trust with regard to this promise none will be backward in pleading it.

As for you who are unconverted, you cannot pray for your children if you do not pray for yourselves. You never can expect a blessing, for you are under the Divine curse! Nevertheless I pray God to make you thirsty and if He makes you hunger and thirst after righteousness, then you can put your hand upon this promise, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground." And afterwards the remainder of the blessing shall be yours. God bless the Word for Jesus' sake. Amen.—

"Wake, parents of Israel!

O hasten to plead

For the Spirit of Grace to descend.

The Word has gone forth and the faithful have need

Of your prayers the great cause to defend.

From the youth of our country shall armies arise,

The Gospel of peace to proclaim.

Over the land and the seas, the glad message that flies,

Shall re-echo Immanuel's name.

Wake, parents in Israel!

O, wrestle and pray

That Grace to our youth may be given

For the hands that in faith are uplifted today

Shall prevail with our Father in Heaven."

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

THE DECEIVED HEART

NO. 2686

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 5, 1900.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, IN THE SUMMER OF 1858.

*“He feeds on ashes: a deceived heart has turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?”
Isaiah 44:20.*

THE Prophet, no doubt, is here primarily referring to the heathen. He accounts for the fact of their gross stupidity in bowing down to worship blocks of wood and stone by asserting that their deceived hearts had turned them aside so that they never sought to know the Truth of God, nor asked the question whether their idol was not a delusion and a snare. The idolater practically never said, “Is there not a lie in my right hand?” With the immediate connection of my text, however, I shall have, at this time, very little to do. I shall only attempt to draw from it a few lessons which, I trust, may be useful to some persons, if God, the blessed Spirit, shall be pleased to apply the Truth to their hearts.

There is but one true religion and there is only one way of receiving that religion. There are many false religions and there are many wrong ways of professing the true religion. There are a thousand paths that lead to Hell, but only one that leads to Heaven. In the many broad roads that lead to destruction, there is room for innumerable winding alleys, but the way that leads to Heaven is a strait and narrow one—there is no room for any divergence there. We must have the same religion and have it in the same way, or else we shall not arrive at that hoped-for end, towards which, by our profession, we pretend to be pressing.

Now, Beloved, there are many persons who are deceived in their religion. They are professing a wrong religion, or else they are holding the right religion in a wrong way. This shall be our first point, that *there are many persons who are entirely deceived in their religion*. We shall, secondly, notice that *their religion is unsatisfactory to them*. We may rest quite certain that any religion that is unsound and untrue is not satisfactory to the conscience—“He feeds on ashes.” But then we shall have to notice, in the next place, that although that is so, *yet there are many who seem perfectly content with their false religion*, although, to us, it is clear that they are *not* satisfied, but are feeding upon ashes, yet they say that they are satisfied with their own condition, the reason being that, as our text puts it, “a deceived heart has turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?” Having briefly

run over those particulars, I shall then address myself to the representatives of the different classes of deceived persons, *those who profess religion, but do not possess it*, and shall endeavor with all the might that God, the Holy Spirit, shall give me, to arouse and awaken them, lest they perish in their strong delusion!

I. In the first place, then, THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE WHO ARE ENTIRELY DECEIVED IN THEIR RELIGION.

I need scarcely refer to the *idolater* who bows himself down before the idol that his own hands have fashioned. However sincere he may be, however devout in his worship, however punctual in the observance of his ceremonies, we are perfectly sure that he is a deceived man. And when we discover the stupidity of such a form of worship, we marvel that any man should be found so deficient in sense and wisdom as to continue to be deceived by such a travesty of religion.

And I need only, in passing, mention the *Roman Catholic*. He, too, has a false religion. To us it is perfectly clear that he is deceived while he strives, by his good works and by his sacraments, to reach a Heaven to which he cannot attain if he seeks it by the works of the Law and not by the righteousness of faith. We know that there is no admittance to Heaven save by the blood and the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, relied upon by a Divinely-imparted faith. Let the Roman Catholic be as earnest and as devout as he may—let him strive with all his might and let him carry out his own convictions to the fullest, yet of this we are sure, beyond a doubt—he is a deceived man and his religion is a thing that is utterly worthless!

On the other hand, we have another class of persons living in our midst who pretend to have no religion at all, but who, in fact, have a superstition of their own—I mean the men who generally class themselves amongst *Freethinkers*, the people who will not believe the Bible and who cannot walk in the narrow way in which their grandmothers walked because it would imply a sort of slavery if they were to walk in the way of the Truth of God. They think they are bold and brave men, who glory in dashing away the fetters of right and doing wrong because of the freedom of it. They think it is a high prize and a great attainment, when they are able to despise everything which their fellows regard as being venerable and true. And, in fact, one of their greatest ambitions is to strive to reach such a height of impudence that they can laugh at everything that has the stamp of antiquity and truth upon it—and may just let their own wild thoughts fly as they will, without bit or bridle, guide or rein! Now these men, however true they may be to their convictions, we know, are deceived in their religion—for, after all, it is a religion—a religion of credulity and no one is so credulous as the man who professes not to believe anything! No man is so ready to suck in any delusion as the one who professes to abhor superstition. You will never find anyone so ready to be led astray as the man who says that he cannot be led astray. He who despises the miracles of our Lord and all that is recorded in the Word of God is the most gullible creature alive—and we know that however high

his opinion of himself may be—he is a deceived man and feeds upon ashes!

But, alas, to come nearer home, we have another class of men who are also deceived in their religion—*false professors*, who, in a sense, have the true religion, but have not got it in the right way. We have some men whose doctrines are orthodox, whose theological views are sound—if they were tried before the Westminster Assembly they would come off with flying colors! They hold the Truth of God taught in our Catechisms and Creeds, nor do they swerve a hair's-breadth from the technicalities of our doctrine, but, alas, they hold it in a wrong way! They hold the Truth of God in licentiousness, or they hold it in hypocrisy. We have some who make a fair profession, but who, after all, have no heart in the matter and neither part nor lot in the things of God. We have some who have been baptized in the pool who have never been baptized with the Holy Spirit—some who sit at the Lord's Table and eat the bread and drink the wine, but never have had any real fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. We dare not deny the fact that in the purest Churches there are men who have, by great craft and subtlety, deceived the fallible judgment of minister, deacons and brethren. It is not possible for us to keep the church thoroughly pure! Let us stand at its gate both night and day, let us watch without sleep, for enemies will smuggle themselves in! We may be ever so careful, yet the enemy will creep in and sow tares among the wheat.

We doubt not that there is, in many churches, a far larger proportion of deceived persons than we would like to think. We are afraid that there are many more who will share the doom of Judas than it would be charitable for us to declare. Alas, hypocrisy must be rife in a church that is so cold or lukewarm. There must be far too many in our midst who are not true to God when the world can point to members of the Church, and say, "If these are the children of God, if these are Christians, then it is far better not to make a profession at all than to live as they do." There have been men who have been looked up to as great and mighty in the Church, but who have turned out as black as Hell itself! And so we are obliged to think that there are still hypocrites here and there, whom the Great Day shall reveal, but who are at present unknown to us. Perhaps hundreds, or even thousands are to be found in the various Churches throughout the length and breadth of our land who have no solid ground of hope. Although they may be trusting in themselves that they are righteous, they are deceiving themselves, and others, too—and fearful shall be their discovery when the Lord shall strip them of their masks and disguises—and make them naked to their eternal shame.

II. My second remark is that **ALTHOUGH THERE ARE MANY PERSONS THUS DECEIVED IN RELIGION, WE ARE NOT TO SUPPOSE THAT ANY OF THEM ARE REALLY, IN HEART, CONTENTED WITH THEIR RELIGION.** They may seem to be satisfied with themselves, but we know that in their innermost spirit, they are not.

Our text says of the idolater that "he feeds on ashes." You see a man on his knees before his idol god. He has brought an offering to the priest.

He kneels down and repeats his form of prayer. He rises and you say, "What a clear conscience that man has! That worship is enough for him—he can go to his bed and rest in peace, tonight, for he has said his prayers to his god, he has chanted a solemn litany that may be accepted and, certainly, with all the forms and ceremonies of his religion, he will have a quiet conscience." But we are very apt to look upon the surface of things when, in reality, it is very different down below! And I believe that there is not an idolater beneath the heavens who does not find his religion unsatisfactory. I am fully aware that human nature is fallen. I know that reason has become darkened and blinded, but I do not believe that the idolater's reason is so dark that a ray of the Light of God cannot get into it and, therefore, I believe that, sometimes, the poor man realizes that there must be a God higher and better than the block of wood or stone which he worships. I cannot conceive, as my own heart could not rest without a Savior, that another man's could! I think the mind of the heathen has enough light left in it to prevent him from being thoroughly satisfied and contented with his religion. No, it is true, as our text says—"he feeds on ashes." He must know that his religion is but as refuse on an ash heap—something that degrades, but can never content him.

It is just the same with the Roman Catholic. He will tell you, when he converses with you, that he is quite content with his religion, but I cannot believe it. There may be times when he is so imposed upon as to believe that, in his church, there is infallible salvation and that, by attention to ceremonies as absurd and wicked as those of idolaters, he shall obtain the favor of the Lord his God. But there are hours when Romanists, especially in this country, must tremble for the stability of their religion! There are times when they must be a little shaken. Surely there is enough of moral dignity and conscience in most men to teach them that a rotten rag cannot have any saving virtue about it! Surely the man who has kissed the toe of the Pope must feel everything within him that is noble recoil from the act! There ought to be enough humanity in man to rise above that groveling system which has sought to bring human nature lower than the dregs of the brute creation! I cannot suppose that a man who has a soul—a soul whose high aspirations are among the best proofs of its immortality—can be content with that poor piece of outside show which we call Popery! No, in that case, also, man "feeds on ashes." He is not satisfied with his religion, although he may pretend to be.

Now, in the next case, I speak with still greater confidence. It is just so with the infidel—"he feeds on ashes." He says he is very well content to be a Freethinker. He looks you boldly in the face and he laughs at your fears. As to death and all that is to come after it, what does he care about such things? He is not a child to be frightened with a nursery tale! He would as soon think of believing the story of Jack the giant-killer as of Christ on the Cross. He is not going to believe what priests tell him. He is quite content to be *where* he is and *what* he is. Yet see him on board ship in a storm—how is it that he cries to God *there*? How is it that Volney, the atheist, who took on board a large number of his infidel books to distribute—when a storm arose fell on his knees and asked God to give

him mercy through Jesus Christ—and then, when he got on shore, cursed the God whose mercy he had implored?

A storm soon drives the infidelity out of a man. There is too much manhood left in him to let him continue so base a thing as an infidel! A man may be wicked enough to say that he has arrived at such a pitch of unbelief as to doubt the existence of God, but I do not think anyone has ever really thought so in his *heart* unless he were entirely demented and bereft of his senses. Infidelity will do very well for you when you can have a heated dance and merry revelry, but sickness and death are tests which it cannot endure! Many have found, then, that the ashes upon which they were feeding were but the preparation for feeding upon the burning coals of the eternal wrath of God!

I must also say that it is the same with the fourth class, that is, the people who make a profession of religion, but who have no religion in their hearts. We know that you are not at ease. We know that you are feeding upon ashes. You come to the Baptismal Pool and the Communion Table. You accost the deacon and the pastor with all confidence. You talk of experience even as they talk and you look as if religion made you happy—but we know better! Nothing can ever make the conscience really quiet, nor give the soul a solid peace except true religion *rightly received in the heart*. If there were any other cure for the heartache except the blood of Christ applied to the conscience, surely so costly a remedy need not have been provided. This I know—many of us tried everything else except true religion to give us peace, but we never could find it. We tried obedience to the Law of God, we tried what we could do by a bare profession without religion in the heart, but we could never find rest for the sole of our feet till we came to Christ! And we do not believe that you have anymore rest than we had. We believe that your deceived heart has turned you aside, for you are feeding upon ashes even now!

III. But, in the third place, IT IS A STRANGE THING THAT ALL THESE PEOPLE SEEM VERY WELL CONTENTED WITH THEIR FALSE RELIGIONS.

The idolater, the Romanist, the infidel, the mere professor—all these people seem very satisfied with themselves and their delusions, and sometimes we marvel how this can be. How can it be that an idolater can think that a piece of wood, part of which has just boiled his kettle, and another part of which has been fashioned into a seat for him to sit upon—how can he think that the remnant of that wood can become a god? It seems strange to us that the very heathen should not laugh at one another for their folly, and we know that an old poet put this ironical utterance into the mouth of an idol that was set up in a vineyard, “Formerly I was the stump of a tree, a useless log. And the carpenter hesitated whether to make me into a table or a stool and, therefore he made me a god.” We ask, how is it, how can it be, that the heathen can find any satisfaction in so silly a superstition? How is it that the Romanist can be content with such a mere sham as his religion is? How can the infidel live in such an uncomfortable atmosphere as that cold, credulous unbelief that now surrounds him? How can it be that the mere professor

can get peace of mind as he now has, or even that appearance of peace of mind which he is able to keep up when he speaks to us? We answer, the true reason is this—it is not that these men are thoroughly satisfied with their religion. It is not that they themselves firmly believe in it—it is, as the text says, “a deceived heart has turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?”

If they were once to ask that question honestly, it would be fatal to their false religion! Let the infidel just sit down and ask this question, “Is there not a lie in my right hand?” Let him solemnly, as before the tribunal of his own conscience, if he cannot say it before God, sit down and examine what he pretends to believe and fearlessly ask himself, “Is this not a lie?” Let the Romanist do the same, let the idolater do the same, let the false professor do the same! And then, as soon as it had been done, conscience would be at once enlightened and would give its answer—and each man would say, “Yes, the religion upon which I have been building my hope is a lie and I renounce it to seek a better.”

But the deceived heart does not let that question ever come up, or if it is asked, the question is put away as quickly as possible. Up rises one devil in the heart and says, “Did not your grandmother worship that idol? Have not multitudes of other people done the same?” And if the question is asked again, another devil says, “Look at the tens of thousands who go to the shrine of Juggernaut. Are there not millions who bow before the shrine of Buddha? Common custom shall decide what is right.” The Roman Catholic says, “Look at Christendom as a whole—is it not almost everywhere covered with the adherents of my religion?” “And,” says the infidel, “I do not stand alone—some of the master spirits of the age have dared to think as I think.” “And look,” says the man who is making a false profession, “am I not as good as Mrs. So-and-So, and as pious as Mr. This or Mr. That? I am sure that there is no need of any examination of the position that I hold.” And so, between them all, the poor heart is so deceived and baffled that the question never really comes before the conscience, “Is there not a lie in my right hand?” For I repeat that if this question were truly to come before the conscience, there could not be any mistake about the answer that even poor fallen reason must give, “Your religion is a lie, therefore away with it!”

IV. Now, for the rest of the time at our disposal, I WANT TO SPEAK TO THOSE WHO ARE PROFESSORS OF RELIGION, BUT WHO DO NOT POSSESS IT.

I will introduce myself to you, Sir, at once. You have not, for a long time, asked yourself any questions about your religion. Will you honestly put to yourself the inquiry in my text, “Is there not a lie in my right hand?” “Well,” you reply, “I was baptized and I joined the church many years ago, and I concluded that I was converted and, at any rate, the church was satisfied with my testimony. I am not troubled with any doubts, or fears, or anxieties, and I am quite sure that if I am not all right, it will go very hard with a great many other people.” Yes, Sir, I have no doubt it will go very hard with a great many people, but your conclusion does not prevent me from returning to the question, as far as it con-

cerns you, personally. I want to put this question to you—Is there not a lie in your right hand? I do not say that you have a lie on your forehead—you would not like to put it there. But is there not a lie in your right hand? Now, come, open your palm. No, I mean your right hand, not your left one. Your right hand—that hand with which you act.

I do not mean that left hand which you have been keeping in reserve to lay upon your hypocritical heart. No, it is your right hand that I mean. It is your acts, your life, your conversation that I want to know about! Have not these been such as to prove that there is a lie in your right hand? We do not know all your conversation, do we? God knows all, but we do not. You have been able to keep many vices to yourself, or there are many things that you do in business that you know are wrong—so I will again put the question to you—Is there not a lie in your right hand? Are you quite sure that you are truly converted to God? Do you think, if you were, that you could live as you are living? Do you imagine that the indulgence of such-and-such a vice and such-and-such a sin can be consistent with Divine Grace in your heart? Do you suppose that if you were really the possessor of the Grace of God, you could be what you now are? Does not your own conscience say, “No. I have a lie in my right hand”?

If you knew anyone who was a member of a Christian Church and who lived as you live, would you not be among the very first to say, “Such a man ought not to be in the Church”? Very well, then, measure your own corn by the same bushel which you use when you are measuring your neighbor’s. Do you not, even now, know several people whom you regard as being mere formalists and hypocrites? Have you not, sometimes, *said* so? Now, what is the difference between yourself and them? Do you not think that if you could get into their bodies and look out of their eyes, you could see enough in yourself to condemn you, quite as justifiably as you now condemn them? Yes, I think that if conscience speaks now, it will be obliged to say, “Ah, it is so, Sir. Alas, it is so!” And then, when conscience hears this question asked again, “Does it not look as if you had a lie in your right hand?” how are you to escape front the solemn answer, “I fear I have. If my life is inconsistent with my profession. If my feelings and inward experience are not in conformity with the words that I speak with my lips, then most certainly I must have a lie in my right hand”?

Now, O professor, you who are a mere professor, I will address you, yet again, and may God bless the words I speak to the warning of some who have a name to live and yet are dead! Ah, Sir, you have not had a doubt about your state for a long time and a true child of God has said, “Oh, that I could get into the place where that man is, that I could be as easy in my mind as he is!” Little does the child of God know what a miserable fraud you are, nor how your deceived heart has beguiled you. Ah, if he did know, he would wish to be anything *but* what you are! Your peace is not the result of the assurance of faith—it is only presumption. Your confidence does not arise from trusting in Christ, but from sheer delusion. There was a time when you did tremble for yourself. When first you were

united to the Church you did often ask yourself, “Am I Christ’s, or am I not?” Now all those doubts and fears have vanished and it is very seldom you ask any question about yourself. You fold your hands and take it for granted that all is right with you. Are you not, you think, a member of the Church—then why should you be asking yourself any searching questions? When the minister is preaching specially to you, you look up to the gallery and you see a drunk—and you say you hope the message will touch his heart.

When the minister is saying something strong about inconsistencies, you look across the Chapel and you notice somebody there—and you think surely that ought to reach *his* conscience. Ah, man, is it not God’s message to *you*? Ought it not to reach *your* conscience, but from the fact that it does not, may we not draw the fearful inference that you are given up to a strong delusion to believe a lie—that your deceived heart has turned you aside so that you have a thousand artifices and schemes to evade an honest answer to that most important question—“Is there not a lie in my right hand?”

As God’s ambassador, let me clear my conscience of your blood as I try to reach even your hardened conscience. Professor, I beseech you, as in the sight of God, let this question for once come home to your heart! Oh, you that have only a profession, let this question be answered by each one of you, now—“Is there a lie in *my* right hand? Am I a true Christian or a false professor? Am I making a profession to be what I am not, or am I, in the sight of God, what I am in the sight of man?” I shall not exempt *myself* from this solemn self-examination and I would ask you, my Brothers in the ministry, and those of you who are deacons, and all of you who are members of this or any other Christian Church, not to exempt *yourselves*. Let the question come home to each of us, “Is there not a lie in my right hand?”

Oh, remember that to have made a profession of religion and yet to be deceived is one of the most frightful things to be imagined! And while it is so frightful, it is also sadly frequent—to have our face toward Zion by profession, and yet to be going towards Hell by our actions! To go with bold, brazen-faced impudence to the very gates of Heaven and cry, “Lord, Lord, open to us”—and to have those gates barred fast against us and to hear the Lord say—“Depart from Me, I never knew you! Depart, you cursed!” That is, I say again, frightful beyond all conception, but it is as frequent as it is frightful! My Brothers and Sisters, would you have that to be your lot? O my God, let it never be my portion! If I am to be damned, let it be as the worldling! Let me be as the sinner who openly lives and dies in his sin—but never suffer me to endure that double Hell that consists, first, in the torment of just punishment for my sin and then in the added torment of my disappointed hope. O my God, whatever You suffer me to be, permit me not to have a hope of Heaven and then, at the last, to have that hope turn out to be a delusion!

Do you, my Friend, put away the question of the text and say you know that you are all right? You are the very person who ought to let the question come home to you! Are you sure that all is well with you? Then

perhaps you have no right to be sure. Do you never doubt? Have you never had any fear about the future? Then, remember what the poet Cowper so wisely said—

***“He has no hope who never had a fear
And he that never doubted of his state,
He may perhaps—perhaps he may—too late.”***

Does your confidence stand so firm that nothing can shake it? Perhaps, then, it is not built upon a rock. There are things that stand very firm for a time that, after all, will not endure forever. The great mountains stand fast, but they shall be removed and be carried into the midst of the sea. And your hope may seem to have a firm foundation, yet you may find yourself swallowed up in a fearful whirlpool of horrible destruction. I appeal to some men who think that they need not heed my earnest words—men who are not members of Christian Churches, but who are reputed to be Christians. There are some among us who are generally reputed to be children of God—their conversation is full of weighty religious matters—no one better understands the Truth of God than they do. Yet they have one master vice, one evil propensity that leads them astray everyday. In the name of God, I have warned them of the consequences of continuing in sin. As they must stand before Jehovah’s bar and as I, who have warned them, must stand there with them, I do entreat them to let the voice of warning reach them!

O Man, it is little to have had a pious mother! It is little to have been enlightened concerning the things of the Kingdom of God! It is little to know the Truth and to love sweet and savory doctrine! It is little to be a friend of all good men and to be beloved of them! It is little to have had all this if you have not Divine Grace in your heart! Little, did I say? It is *nothing* at all to your advantage, but it is *not* little—it is a great and fearful thing to have had all these advantages and all this knowledge, and still to have suffered some base thing that was beneath your manhood to turn you aside and destroy all your hopes of Heaven!

There are some whom we know who live in this fair world of ours and who live near our hearts, too—men who might go to Heaven, we sometimes think, if it were not that they are too covetous to get there. Some we could not find any fault with except that they are given to strong drink—and that sin is their curse and ruin and will forever shut them outside the gates of Paradise. And some we know, whose love we prize and whose company we seek, who have some secret fault which now and then is discovered by those who watch them warily—and that fault is like a great cancer, eating up the man’s vitals! His clothes are neat and trim. His friends call him “a perfect gentleman,” yet he is carrying damnation in his heart by that secret lust and darling vice! Oh, you who are making a boast of your religion, or who keep it secretly and have some kind of a hope, I beseech you take warning! It is not my pleasure thus to address you, but if I did not speak thus, how should I render in my account at the Last Great Day? If I sat in those pews in which you sit, I would scorn the minister who did not speak faithfully to me and I would soon cease to be a hearer of such a man! I would not go to a Chapel if there were not a

man in the pulpit who spoke the Truth of God in simple language and, as I judge you, you wish to hear the Truth of God plainly.

As I would wish it to be told to me, so have I told it to you, and if there should be any individual whose deceived heart has turned him aside, and who says, "The minister was very personal. He evidently meant *me*. His word was like a sword and it cut *me* to my very heart"—if that is the case with any of you, let the preacher at once admit that he *did* mean you! He does not deny that he has been personal! He meant you and he beseeches you to take his message to your heart. If you are angry with the preacher, he can well afford to bear it. Though he does not wish for it, if your soul can be saved in that way, he will rejoice in it! If there could be a possibility of making some man so angry that his conscience pricked him, I would fall on my knees and say, "My God, if that man should kill me, if it will be the means of saving his soul, let him do it! If an honest warning should so stir up his wrath, then even so let it be, only grant, my Father, that the end may be served in letting him know the folly and the evil which were leading him astray."

Brothers and Sisters, let every one of us retire to our closets and examine ourselves. Put your hopes in the crucible—see whether they will stand the test of the Word of the Lord which is like a fire. Judge yourself as you would judge another. If you are acquainted with another man who, you know, is living in the commission of a sin which makes his profession a falsehood—and you also are living in that sin—do not think any better of yourself than you think of him. If you knew a man whose limb was rotting with mortification, would you not urge him to have it cut off? Well, then, have your own cut off! If you saw a man who was rushing swiftly to Hell, would you not start off boldly and warn him? Then, be as bold with yourself as you would be with others! Talk to yourself as you would talk to other people. If you would observe this rule, I would not be afraid of what will happen to you—and some of you will thank God that you were ever led to examine yourselves, for now, as guilty sinners, you can flee to the Cross of Christ and, by faith, lay hold of Him who is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 14:25-35.**

Verse 25. *And there went great multitudes with Him.* During at least a part of His earthly ministry, Christ was very popular. The people crowded at His feet and they were willing to make Him a king. But you must have observed that He was always faithful in speaking to the populace—He did not flatter them. He also dealt in the same fashion with those who professed to be His followers. He winnowed the heap that was laid upon the floor and drove away the chaff from the midst of the wheat.

25, 26. *And He turned and said unto them, If any man comes to Me, and hates not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. Do not misunderstand this passage. Our Lord does not use the word, "hate,"*

in our common acceptation of the term, for no man would hate his own life. He means that the love of all these must be *secondary* to the love we bear to Him. Compared with our love to our Lord, all lower love must be more like hate. We must be willing to give up everything—to give up even ourselves—our entire selves—to Him, for Christ will have all or nothing. He will never divide the human heart with any rival. If we profess to serve Him, we must have Him for our only Master and not attempt to serve two masters. I fear that this Truth of God greatly needs to be enforced nowadays, for we have numbers of so-called Christians who are worldlings first, and Christians afterwards. We have a great many professors who might be accurately described by the words of a little girl concerning her father. When someone asked her, “Is your father a Christian?” she replied, “Yes, but he has not worked much at it lately.” There are plenty of that sort. Christianity is their trade, their business, their profession—but they have not worked much at it lately—they carry it on very slightly, indeed. Let it not be so with us. If we would be followers of Christ, our whole hearts must be His.

27. *And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.* If there is any cross-bearing involved in Christianity—such as the cross of holy living, or the cross of believing old-fashioned doctrines and not being “abreast of the times”—if there is any sort of cross which is involved in the conscientious discharge of our duty as followers of Christ, we must bear it, or else we cannot be His disciples. Our Lord’s words are very clear and explicit—“And whoever does not bear his cross—be he who he may, whatever pretensions or professions he may make—if he does not bear his cross, ‘and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.’”

28-30. *For which of you, intending to build a tower, sits not down first, and counts the cost, whether he has sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.* Do you not think that there are a great many towers of that kind about in our day? I mean, unfinished Christian characters, persons who profess to be followers of Christ, but are not! They just exhibit to you their own shortcomings. They are people with good intentions who did make some attempt to follow Jesus, but, since it involved too much self-denial, they were not able to go that length—so they turned back and walked no more with Him. They began to build a tower, but never finished it. May God, in His mercy, prevent you and me from becoming a laughing-stock to all eternity! I believe that in the Last Great Day and forever, those persons who knew enough about the Gospel to wish to be Christians, and who were somewhat actuated by right motives, but yet who never went so far as to give up their hearts to Christ, will stand forth as monuments of their own folly and even the demons in Hell will point at them and say, “These men began to build, and were not able to finish.”

Such persons will be unable to answer that contemptuous sneer. If you have conscience enough to begin to follow Christ, even reason, itself, requires you to go the whole length. If you know that it is right for you to

do so, why do you not go through with it? If you are sufficiently convinced of its rightness to go as far as you do, why not go still farther? God grant that you may! Better never begin to build than to commence without having counted the cost and then to find that you have not sufficient to finish.

31, 32. *Or what king, going to make war against another king, sits not down first and consults whether he is able, with ten thousand, to meet him that comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends an ambassador, and desires conditions of peace?* If you cannot fight the world, the flesh, and the devil—if there is no power that can help you to do it, or if you are not willing to be helped by the only Power that can help you—if you will not surrender yourself to Christ that He may baffle all the hosts of the adversary, then it is of no use for you to begin the war.

33. *So likewise, whoever he is of you that forsakes not all that he has, he cannot be My disciple.* In Christ's days and afterwards, discipleship usually involved the absolute giving up of everything that His followers had, for those were times of persecution. And if such seasons should come to us, we must have such love to Christ that, for His sake, we could forsake all that we have. Otherwise we cannot be His disciples.

34. *Salt is good: but if the salt has lost its savor, how shall it be seasoned?* Christianity is good, but if the very life has gone out of it, what can you do with it? A dead professor is the most corrupt thing under Heaven. Some there are who think that God's salt can lose its savor and yet get it back again. I remember one who told me that he knew a person who had been born again four times. That doctrine of re-re-re-regeneration is one that I have never found in the Word of God. I believe that true regeneration never fails to take effect and that it never loses that effect. It begets within the soul a life that cannot die, but, if that life *could* die, it could never be brought back again. The Apostle Paul puts this matter beyond dispute in Hebrews 6:4-6—"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame."

35. *It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out.* A dead profession of religion is utterly useless and if it could be possible that a man should be really quickened by the Spirit of God, and yet that the new life should depart from him, he would be in a hopeless case, indeed.

35. *He that has ears to hear, let him hear.* Let all of us give good heed to this injunction, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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

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

“FORGET YOU, I WILL NOT” NO. 2384

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY,
OCTOBER 28, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 12, 1888.**

**“You are My servant: O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of Me.”
Isaiah 44:21.**

The idols said nothing to their worshippers. They had mouths, but they spoke not. You might go on worshipping an image for 20 years, but you would never get a reply to anything you said to it. It could not see you, it could not hear you, it could not answer you. That is a poor kind of worship! I do not think that I would care to go on worshipping a Madonna even if she winked—one cannot make much out of a wink—we need something more than that from the object of our adoration.

But God has spoken to His people! We have a Revelation from the one living and true God. Jehovah has broken the eternal silences. He has torn the veil behind which He was hidden and He has revealed Himself. I believe this Book to be Inspired of God. I accept every word and every jot and tittle of it as God’s voice to me. He has spoken and the record of what He has said is before me and I can rejoice in it. This was a blessed speech when God said to His ancient people, “You are My servant: O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of me.”

I cannot, at this time, stop to make any preface, but I must speak to you, first of all, upon *the title which the Lord gives to His people*—“My servant.” Secondly, I will remind you of *the promise which He makes to them*—“You shall not be forgotten of Me.” And then, thirdly, I will give you *some reasons which assure us that His promise must and will be kept*.

I. First then, dear Friends, here is THE TITLE WHICH THE LORD GIVES TO HIS PEOPLE—“My servant.”

Notice what *a practical title* it is—“My servant.” It has to do with action and service. It has to do with the heart, but also with the hands, with the inner and with the outer life. There is no true Christian but the *practical* Christian. The merely doctrinal professor has only the dead logs of wood—there is no fire of devotion, there is no warmth of fervor, there is nothing that is really worth having. The man who talks about his experience as a Christian, who never does anything for Christ, is, I am afraid, only an idle dreamer! There must be *practical obedience* to God from those who claim to be His servants. A servant is not always at work, but a servant is always a servant and always ready for work. I have known some servants who were very particular about what work they did. If

there was a little given them to do that they thought was outside their special duty, they went about it in a very grumbling humor. I do not call such a person as that a servant! But the Lord’s servants belong entirely to Him, they are His property, their time and talents are wholly at His disposal, their whole mind and heart and soul are subservient to His will. Let Him say, “Do this,” and they do it. Let Him say, “Go there,” and there they go.

I want you, dear Hearers, to ask yourselves, “Are we servants of God?” Are not some of you servants of *sin*? Are not others of you servants of *self*, servants of the *world*, servants of the *devil*? Well, there is nothing comforting in the text for you! There is nothing comforting in the whole Bible for you while you remain as you are! You must quit that evil service. You must, by Divine Grace, become servants of God! But I know that I am speaking to some who *are* the servants of the Lord and who wish that their service was more perfect than it is. The will is present with you—with hearty goodwill you wear the golden yoke of Christ and you desire that every member of your body, and every faculty of your soul, may be yielded up to Him—for that is your reasonable service.

That is the first point, then, this is a practical title, “My servant.”

Notice, also, that in the text it is *a personal title*. The Lord says, “*You are My servant.*” There were a great many who were not God’s servants. Multitudes of people were the servants of those idol gods of theirs, which they had made with their compass and their rule, their line and their plane. Poor things—the servants of a piece of wood! It must be beggarly service to serve that which you, yourself, have made! But God says to each one of His people, “*You are My servant.*” Would the Lord Jesus go round this Tabernacle, and stop in front of each of you, and say, “*You are My servant.* Do not judge your fellow-worshippers, nor try to find out whether this man or that may be My servant. You, yourself, are my servant”? Oh, would not some of us, if our Master would do this, just leap to our feet, take hold of His hand, and say, “*Lord, it is so. Brand us as your slaves, for we would gladly bear in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus. We would let all men know that, indeed, we are Your servants*”? Will you just turn your thoughts away from this great crowd? I am trying to do so, that I may take to myself the personal title, “*You are My servant.*” Will you, each one individually, either allot to yourself these words of the Lord, “*You are My servant,*” or else honestly put them on one side as not belonging to you?

Next, notice that, as the title is a practical and personal one, so *it is an exclusive title*. “*You are My servant.* These other people are servants of Baal or Ashtaroth; but you are *My* servant.” When a man has a servant, he expects him to serve him, and not to be in the employ of other people. God’s servants must serve God—not idols, not the world, not self, not sin, not Satan. “*You are My servant.*” When you get up tomorrow morning and begin to light the fire, and prepare the breakfast, it is true that you will be your earthly master’s servant, but, as you commune with your God, hear Him saying to you, “*You are My servant.*” When you take down the shutters, to begin the business of the day, hear a voice saying

to you, across the counter, “You are My servant.” You will live better, you will serve better, it will put a glory about your actions if you can know and feel that you are truly serving God!

“You are My servant.” I can tell you that this passage has very greatly comforted me. One has said, “You are altogether wrong.” Another has said, “You are very bigoted,” and so on. “Yes,” I have answered, “but I am not your servant. I am not responsible to you. And if my Master is satisfied with me, I am satisfied with His satisfaction.” Certainly I am not going to be the servant of men, to put my neck under their feet and do their bidding! Send your own slaves on your business! I shall attend to my Lord’s work, for I have only one Master to serve. I want you tonight, and all the week, when the devil says, “Now here is a fine chance for you to get rich very quickly, you can make a lot of money,” just say to Him, “I am not *your* servant, and I cannot take your wages. I can do nothing wrong in order to get gain, for I am the servant of God.”

And if, young man, there should come in your way, during the week, a pleasurable vice which may seek to win you, flee from it! Say, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God, for I am God’s servant?” “You are My servant, not the servant of anybody else.” Hold your heads up! Be not ashamed! He is a free man whom God has made to be His servant. “You have loosed my bonds,” said David, after he had said, “I am Your servant.” “I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid. You have loosed my bonds. By the very fact of taking me into Your service, You have made me a free man.”

Note, next, that as this is an exclusive title, so it is *an honorable title*. I will not dwell upon that fact, but it must be so, for God uses the title in this verse twice over. He says, “You are My servant: I have formed you; you are My servant.” It is a greater honor to be the Lord’s servant than to be an earl or a duke, a prince or a king! To serve God is truly to reign. My dear Friends, is this high dignity yours? Never mind about earthly stars and garters—this is the highest degree that you can take—the highest honor that you can win in earth or Heaven—to be the servant of the ever-blessed God!

Once more, this is *a title of acceptance*. As God says, twice over, “You are My servant,” He means by this, “I accept you as My servant; I acknowledge you as such.” What a grand thing it will be if, at the Last Great Day, God is able to acknowledge us as His servants! He will do so if He can accept us now. Do you not, sometimes, have a servant in your employment to whom you say, “Really, I cannot keep you any longer. The sooner that you are gone, the better”? One does not care to have some people for servants. Now and then a man pleads that he cannot get any work and begs you to employ him. You give him a broom and set him to sweep a path, and he sweeps it in such a way that he makes your flesh creep, and you pretty soon sweep him out. You would be ashamed to have anybody know that he was a servant of yours. But when God says, “You are My servant: you are My servant,” it means that He is not ashamed of us!

Brothers and Sisters, we are often ashamed of ourselves when God is not ashamed of us. He overlooks a thousand imperfections and it is well for us that He does, for who among us can serve God perfectly? I have sometimes known Christian people, who were doing a good work for God, get quite down-hearted because they found somebody else doing a larger work. Oh, do not envy your brethren who have more service than you have! I daresay that they almost envy you, and think how nicely they could do the work that you have to do. One said to me, the other day, when I had preached, and preached in what I thought to be a very poor way, too, “I feel as if, after hearing you, I cannot preach again.” “Oh dear,” I said, “if you knew what I thought of the sermon, you would feel very differently! You would think that *anybody* could preach better than *that*.”

I often think that anybody can preach better than I can till I sit and hear them, and then I say to myself, “Well, after that, I will try again.” But, dear Friends, whether we think we fail, or others think we fail, how little does it matter if the Lord says, “You are My servant: you are My servant. It was a poor sermon, dear One, but you are My servant. That work was very poorly done when you visited the sick, but you did it with all your heart. You are My servant. You are not a very brilliant teacher for that class of yours, but you love your scholars, and you love your God. You are My servant?” He does, as it were, pat you on the back, and say, “You are My servant. Go on with your work for Me. I will acknowledge you, I intend to bless you. You are My servant.”

One reason why we are God’s servants is that He has forgiven us our trespasses. Shall I read to you, again, the next verse to my text? “You are My servant. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins.” Is not that a reason why we should serve Him? Forgiven sins should bind us to His service with bands stronger than steel! We can never run away from Him who has pardoned such grave faults as we have committed! Then He adds, “I have redeemed you,” and in the 24th verse He goes on to say, “The Lord has redeemed Jacob.” Oh, we must serve Him who has redeemed us! If He has bought us, we are not our own—we belong to Him—and we must spend and be spent in His service. And then the Lord says, “Jehovah has redeemed Jacob and glorified Himself in Israel.” Well, if He has been able to get any Glory out of *us*, we will keep on serving Him! What a marvelous God He must be to glorify Himself in such poor wretches as we are! But as He does so, we will continue in so Divine a service while life shall last and then we will serve Him forever above!

Thus have I spoken upon the title which the Lord gives to His people—“My servant.”

II. Now, secondly, comes a sweet part of the subject, THE PROMISE WHICH HE MAKES TO US—“You shall not be forgotten of Me.”

Men forget us, do they not? And they turn against us. Those for whom you do the most are often those who will be most unkind and most bitter against you. I will not speak as I might, but I know and I have felt, and I daresay that you know, and that you have felt, in your measure, too,

that, “cursed is he that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm.” The whole of mankind put together in the scales are lighter than vanity—there is no use in trusting in them at all! But God says, “You shall not be forgotten of Me.” Remember those comforting words that we sang just now—

**“Forget you I will not, I cannot. Your name
Engraved on My heart does forever remain!
The palms of My hands while I look on, I see
The wounds I received when suffering for thee.”**

What does this promise mean? It means, first, that *God will never cease to love His servants*. If you are His servants, He loved you before the world began! He still loves you and He will love you, world without end. “You shall not be forgotten of Me.” Do not *dream* that God can cast away His people! We are members of the body of Christ—do you think that Christ will ever lose any of the members of His body? I should not like to lose my little finger and Christ will not lose one of the members of His body. You would think, according to the teaching of some, that Christ’s members keep dropping off, something like the limbs of lobsters, and that new ones were constantly growing! There is nothing in Scripture to warrant such a notion as that!

Do you remember Mr. Bunyan’s parable of a child, who is in a room, and a stranger comes in and says, “Come here, child, I will cut off your finger.” “No,” says the child. “Yes, but I will. I will take off your little finger. Here is a knife, I will cut off your little finger.” “No,” says the child again, and he begins to cry. “Oh but,” says the stranger, “that is a poor little finger that you have! I will take it off and I will buy you a gold finger, such a brave gold finger, and I will put it on your hand instead of your little finger.” “Oh,” says the child, “but it would not be *my* finger! I cannot lose my own finger.” Whereupon Mr. Bunyan says, “If Christ could have better people than those He has, He would not make the change, ‘For,’ says He, *they* are not My people; *they* are not a part of My own living Self.” So, the Lord Jesus would not change you for a golden saint, for one much better than you are! That new finger would not be what the Father gave Him, nor what He bought with His precious blood. “You shall not be forgotten of Me,” means that God will never cease to love His servants.

Next, it means that *the Lord will never cease to think of His servants*. The thoughts of God are wonderful! He can think of every individual saint as much as if there were no other saint in the universe! He never leaves off thinking of each one of His people. The Divine mind is distinctly set on you, Brother, on you, Sister, and it is never taken off from you. If God were to cease to think of us for five minutes, in that five minutes we might be ruined—but He never forgets us and, consequently, there shall be no part of our body without its armor, and no portion of our time without a sentinel set to watch over us every single moment of it! Listen to the Lord’s promise about His vine—“I the Lord keep it. I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it. I will keep it night and day.” God will never leave off thinking of you as well as loving you!

Next, *the Lord will never cease to befriend His servants*. God’s thoughts are always practical. The gifts of His hands go with the thoughts of His mind. Our text means, “You shall not be forgotten of Me in the distribution of My benefits.” The Lord will not cease to give you bread, water and garments. His Providence shall always take care of you. Remember the passage we read at this morning’s service, “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want”? He will never cease to bestow upon you the blessings of His Grace. He will go on to pardon you, to guide you, to teach you, to strengthen you, to lead you until you shall be in His glorious Presence without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing! “I, Jehovah, will not forget you. You shall not be forgotten of Me.”

I think I hear some dear child of God crying, “I was afraid that the Lord had forgotten me the other day.” It is you who had forgotten Him! “Oh, but I thought surely that He had cast me off!” What right had you to think anything of the kind? Will the Lord cast off His people? Will He be faithful no more? Shame on you that you should think He could or would act in such a fashion! “But, oh, I am so little and so feeble!” Are there any of His saints that are not just the same? “Oh, but I am so unworthy!” And pray, what child of God does not have to make the same confession? The Lord says, “You shall not be forgotten of Me,” and He will stand to it! Depend upon it and you shall share with the rest of His people in the high privileges of the Covenant of His Grace. He will not cease to love you, nor cease to think of you, nor cease to befriend and benefit you. With John Newton, you may sing—

***“His love in time past forbids me to think
He’ll leave me at last in trouble to sink.
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through.”***

Once more, *the Lord will not cease to commune with His people*. Whenever you desire to commune with Him, He is ready to meet you. Knock at His door—the servant will not say that He is not at home, for He waits to be gracious. Have you been slipping away from your God of late? Come back to Him, come back at once. The Lord Jesus Christ has rebuked you for your Laodicean lukewarmness, but, after having said some hard words about you, how does He finish? “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” He will take supper with you, tonight, if you are willing. O dear child of God, this is the cure for your lukewarmness, for the Lord to come to you and have high fellowship with you—and He is waiting for that communion! “You shall not be forgotten of Me.”

I do not feel that I need say any more upon this promise; but I should like everyone who is a Christian to take it home. “You shall not be forgotten of Me.” Perhaps, in a few days, you will be lying upon the bed of pain. The Lord bids me say to you in preparation for that affliction, “You shall not be forgotten of Me.” Or, possibly, during this week, you will have a very serious loss in business that will occasion you a great staggering unless, as you read this promise to yourself, you say, “But the Lord has said, You shall not be forgotten of Me.” Dear children of God, you never

know what trouble or alarm is coming, only you have often proved the truth of Mr. Bunyan’s quaint ditty—

**“A Christian man is never long at ease
When one fright’s gone, another does him seize.”**

Therefore, be ready for anything, be ready for everything! You will be prepared for whatever may come if you remember this promise, “You are My servant: you shall not be forgotten of Me.” The Lord will help you, He will help you right through, He will help you even to the end. Fall back upon this precious promise, “You shall not be forgotten of Me.” I wish that I could put this passage, like a wafer made of honey, under every tongue where the mouth is full of bitterness, so that you might suck at it and get the sweetness out of it, and so say to yourself, “I shall be happy, yet, and happy, come what may, for the Lord will not forget me!”

III. My last work at this time is to mention SOME REASONS WHICH ASSURE US THAT GOD WILL NOT FORGET THOSE WHO ARE TRULY HIS SERVANTS.

I should say, first of all, that the very best reason is that *He says He will not forget us*. As He says, “You shall not be forgotten of Me,” then, He cannot forget us! He is God who cannot lie and His every Word of Grace is worthy of our utmost confidence. You remember what a boy said about his mother? “How do you know it is true, Jack?” asked one. “Mother said so,” answered the lad. “Well, but that is no reason at all.” “Yes,” he said, “it is. It is the best reason of all, for if Mother says so, it is so if it is not so.” That is the way for a boy to trust in his mother’s word—what she said must be true, her son would not believe that it could be otherwise! We have just to trust in God like that—it is so for He says it! “You shall not be forgotten of Me.” We cannot tolerate a doubt as to the Truth of what the Lord says.

But the next reason is this, *God cannot forget us since He has made us*. The former part of the verse says, “You are My servant: I have formed you.” The Lord has fashioned us—not merely in the common way in which others of His creatures have been formed, but upon the wheel of Grace He has made us revolve like the clay in the potter’s hand! With His own fingers He has made us into vessels of mercy so He cannot forget us. I think I have heard that before the siege of Paris, Gustave Dore had nearly finished one of his greatest paintings, one of the finest pictures which has ever been produced. Having to flee from the city, all of a sudden, as the Germans were coming up, he hid his picture in a cellar, down under a heap of rubbish.

When the siege was over, Dore came back to Paris and, of course, when he returned he had forgotten all about his picture, had he not? Not he! He had taken too much trouble with it to forget it. He knew the value of it and he remembered where he had put it. He did not have to go up and down the house and say to the people, “Do you know where my picture is?” No, he never forgot where he had, himself, put it, so he found it where he had hidden it, brought it out to the light of day and finished it! Now, in a far higher sense than that, God will have respect unto the work of His own hands. The very bodies of the saints, though they are hidden

away for a while in the rubbish of the earth, He will fetch out and He will complete the work of Grace which He has begun upon each one of them! The Lord having formed us to be His servants, we shall not be forgotten of Him!

A further reason is that *He has blessed us*. He has blessed us so much, already, that He cannot, now, forget us. If you needed persons to love you, perhaps you would set to work to do them a kindness. Very good and very proper. But you may be beaten over that plan. As a matter of selfish prudence I would suggest to you that you had better let them *do you* a kindness, and then they will be bound to you forever! A boy forgets his mother’s love—alas—it is often so, but the mother never forgets the kindness she has shown to her son, because she has done so much for him. The persons you love best are not those who have done most for you, but those for whom *you* have done the most. If I should bind God to me by anything I can do for Him, I should feel that the ties would be very feeble ones, but when God binds Himself to me by His blessings and mercies, it is another thing, for then the ties are Divinely strong! I say, then, that God has blessed us, and He has done so much for us that He cannot leave off loving us. “You shall not be forgotten of Me.”

Again, the Lord will not forget us, because *He has loved too long already*. I was talking with an old saint this week—once a renowned preacher of the Gospel—who is now some 84 years of age. He shook my hands and he said, “I am with you, my Brother, I am with you, my Brother. I know what the contention is and I am on your side, heart and soul.” Then he added, “You and I have known the Lord too long to run after this new trumpery.” And it is so—you get so bound to the old Truths of God that you cannot give them up! You grow to love the Gospel so fervently that you cannot renounce it! Well, now, the effect that such love has upon us is still more clearly seen in God. He has loved us so long that He cannot forget us. How long has He loved you? “Oh,” you say, “it is about 10 years since I was converted.” Well, but did not the Lord love you before that? Did not our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ die for you before you were converted?

“Oh, I see!” you say, “then He has loved me more than 1,800 years.” But did He not purpose and plan that Christ should die for you before the world began? Was there ever a time when the redeemed of the Lord were not written on the heart of Christ? He loved you before the first star began to dart its golden arrows through the darkness of space! Rest secure, then! Love so ancient will never die out!

Further, the Lord must continue to love us. He cannot forget us, for *we have cost Him so much*. Oh, how much we have cost our Lord! “By Your agony and bloody sweat,” by the scourging and the spitting, by the false accusations and the ridicule, by the nails, the vinegar, the spear, that bitter cry, “Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani,” by Your sorrow, even unto death—by all this, Lord Jesus, You have bought us! These are the travail pangs of our spiritual birth and He, by whom all those agonies were borne, can never forget us! In us He sees of the travail of His soul and He is satisfied. Look at His hands, look at His side, look at His feet—there

are the records of the costly price that He paid down for our redemption—and they are the pledge that He cannot let us be forgotten!

Besides, Beloved, if we had no other reason for thinking that we should not be forgotten of God, if we are His servants, we know that *He is too good a Lord to cast us out*. He is a wretch of a man who casts off an old servant simply because he is old. Yet many, when they grow old and feeble, find that their masters want to get rid of them. A young fellow has given all his life, ever since he was 15, to a firm in the city, and when he gets over 60, the employers think to themselves, “A nice brisk young man will be better in the place of old Jones,” and they pick some little hole in him and off he goes—to the workhouse, for all they care, as a general rule. “Ah, but,” says the Lord, “you shall not be forgotten of Me.” He does not turn His old servants adrift—for He says, “Even to your old age, I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you.”

In olden times, and I am afraid it is still so, masters have been known to get rid of their servants when they have been ill. What did the Amalekite do with the young Egyptian? David found him left behind in the field and he said that his master was an Amalekite, and left him because he fell sick. Ugh! So they still say of their sick servants, “We must get rid of them! They are not strong enough to do their work.” But our Lord never forgets His servants when they are ill. Then He is more near, more dear, more tender, more considerate than ever! “You shall not be forgotten of Me, O My servant!” Sick and sad, yes, and sinful, and worn out, yet still we shall not be forgotten of our Lord! Young man, enter the service of this blessed Master! You will never rue it. I love my Master and I would like to see you in His blessed employment. It is always a sign that a man has a good master when He would like to see his own boys in the same service, and I can truly say that nothing gives me so much joy as to think that both my sons are in the same service as I am in!

Sons of godly parents, may God put you in the same service as your fathers are in! Daughters of holy mothers, I do pray that your mother’s God may be your God! There is no service like our Master’s. If the Lord were a hard master, tyrannical, changeable, unkind, ungenerous, austere—if He discharged His servants right and left, for this fault and for that, or because they grew feeble and faulty—well then, I think I would stand here and tell you the truth about Him, and urge you not to think of entering His employment! But oh, He is a blessed Master, therefore I can plead with you to be His servant and I can assure you that you shall never be forgotten of Him!

This morning [Sermon #2039, Volume 34—*Crossing the Jordan*—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .] I spoke about being on the verge of Jordan. When you are about going into Heaven, passing over that last stream, dear child of God, you shall not be forgotten! The Lord will be very near you, then—He will especially help you in your dying moments.

I cannot at all make out how you who are without a God get on, especially you poor people. With no comfort in this world, with nothing worth living for, here, how can you exist without a good hope for the hereafter,

without a Savior to trust in, without a God to run to for protection, as the chicks run to the hen? And you rich people, how can you do without a God? What is to become of you? You will have to lose all that you have and over you it will be said, “Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust.” Members of parliament, or whoever you may be, you will have to go down to the worms, like other people. What a horrible thing for you, Dives, to be dragged down with all your scarlet and fine linen on, and cast into Hell! You who have fared sumptuously every day—denied even a drop of water to cool your burning tongue! What a change for you! If the poor need a Savior, so do you, just as much! May the Lord make both—rich and poor—to be His servants and then whisper in the ear of each one of you, as you go down the Tabernacle steps tonight, “You are My servant: you shall not be forgotten of me”!

God bless you all, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
*Isaiah 44:1-22.***

Verses 1-2. *Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: thus says the LORD that made you, and formed you from the womb, which will help you; Fear not, O Jacob, My servant; and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.* God cannot bear His people to be sad, He delights to drive away fear, trembling and mistrust. He loves faith, for faith brings confidence, hope, rest. So He says to us, “Fear not, fear not, be not afraid.” It is God Himself who made us, and who chose us, who says to us, “Do not fear.” Come, dear Hearts, lay aside your disquietude. If God bids you cast away fear, will you not do it? Nothing hushes a babe to sleep like its mother’s voice. Let God’s voice hush you into sweet and blessed calm whenever you are troubled and full of fear.

3. *For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.* God will never do anything by halves. He will not only send rain, but the waters shall pour down from the sky. He will not merely moisten the surface of the dry ground, He will send floods to saturate it. God is great in giving His Grace. When once you reach the region of Grace, you have entered the region of plenty, even the riches of God’s unspeakable Grace. If, dear Friends, you have at this time no spiritual power, unction, favor and love, you may have it, for here is the Lord’s own promise—“I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.”

3. *I will pour My Spirit upon your seed, and My blessing upon your offspring.* Is that your great burden—trouble about your boy? Does your dear girl grieve you? Well, He who blesses the father and the mother will bless the children—the God of Abraham is the God of Isaac! Pray that this promise may be fulfilled to you, that your seed may get a share of that Spirit of Grace which has been given to you.

4. *And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.* You can track a stream by the willows. Standing on a hill and looking down the valley, you can tell where the little brook winds, for

there are the willows. So shall it be with your children—they shall spring up by the waters of Grace, and be a joy and a blessing.

5. *One shall say, I am the Lord's.* That is the brave son who comes out boldly and avows his faith. “One shall say, I am the Lord's.”

5. *And another shall call himself by the name of Jacob.* That is the one who goes and joins the Church and does not say much about it, but he has united himself with the Lord's people. “And another shall call himself by the name of Jacob.”

5. *And another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel.* He cannot speak much, but he can write. He is not so bold as the others, perhaps, but he is quite as true. “Another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord.” It does not so much matter how our children are converted so long as they really are converted—and as to the particular way in which they join the Church—we have only to bid them seek the guidance of God's Word and His Spirit and follow wherever They lead! Pray earnestly, dear Friends, that the Lord will bless your children. I thank God that most of the members of the Church known to me, have their children saved. There are many families that are altogether in the Church. There are others which have not that privilege, yet, but, dear Friends, you may have it! Ask believingly, act faithfully, watch hopefully and you shall see it joyfully before long.

6, 7. *Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of Hosts, I am the First, and I am the Last, and beside Me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient peoples and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them.* Jehovah challenges the idol gods to utter a prophecy! Let *them* tell the future if they can, but they cannot. Prophecy is always the mark of the one living and true God!

8-11. *Fear you not, neither be afraid: have not I told you from that time, and have declared it? You are even My witnesses. Is there a God beside Me? Yes, there is no god; I know not any. They that make a graven image are all of them vanity, and their delectable things shall not profit, and they are their own witnesses, they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who has formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together.* Well they may. Men who pretend to make a god ought to be ashamed.

12. *The smith with the tongs both works in the coals, and fashion it with hammers, and works it with the strength of his arms.* What irony! Making god with hammers and bellows!

12. *Yes, he is hungry,* This god-maker is hungry!

12. *And his strength fails: he drinks no water, and is faint.* The god-maker is getting faint. There is a sarcasm about this description which ought to convince the most blind devotees of an idol!

13. *The carpenter stretches out his rule, he marks it out with a line; he fits it with planes, and he marks it out with the compass, and makes it af-*

ter the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. A god in the house! A god shut up in a room! A god that has been made with compasses and planes! How ridiculous it seems!

14. *He hews him down cedars, and takes the cypress and the oak, which he strengthens for himself among the trees of the forest: he plants an ash, and the rain does nourish it. The raw material for a god is an ash, a watery tree—“The rain does nourish it.”*

15-17. *Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take, thereof, and warm himself; yes, he kindles it, and bakes bread. Yes, he makes a god, and worships it, he makes it a graven image, and falls down thereto. He burns part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eats flesh; he roasts roast, and is satisfied: yes, he warms himself, and says, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: and the residue thereof he makes a god. Oh, the folly of idolatry! Perhaps you do not see your own folly, you who are worshipping yourselves! A man who worships his belly is a worse idolater than the one who worships a god of wood! A man who worships gold and silver, if that gold and silver should take the shape of sovereigns and shillings, is not a bit more justified in his idolatry than if he had made it into the shape of a calf and had bowed before it in idolatrous homage and reverence!*

17-20. *Even his graven image: he falls down unto it, and worships it, and prays unto it, and says, Deliver me; for you are my god. They have not known nor understood: for He has shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considers in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yes, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? Shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feeds on ashes. Mad people have been known to do even that, they have thrust cinders into their mouths—and this is what everybody does who is not trusting in the living God. “He feeds on ashes.”*

20, 21. *A deceived heart has turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his oath, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? Remember these, O Jacob and Israel. Think of these false gods and be ashamed of them!*

21, 22. *For you are My servant: I have formed you; you are My servant: O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of Me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sin: return unto Me; for I have redeemed you. These wooden gods have done nothing of the sort. Come back to the true God and worship Him—/and be happy in His love.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN PRAYERBOOK”—720, 733, 716.

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GRACE FOR THE GUILTY

NO. 2563

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 27, 1898.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 25, 1855.**

***“I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you.”
Isaiah 44:22.***

THIS declaration was not made to a pious and praying people, who kept near their God, but was spoken to idolatrous Israel—to those who, after having drunk from the fountain of living waters, turned aside to drink the drops that were to be found in broken cisterns. It was spoken to a people who, after they had tasted the good things of God and known the high privileges of true religion, yet turned aside with the nations of the world, forsook the God of Jacob, made unto themselves graven images that were not gods, provoked the Lord to jealousy and moved Him to wrath against them on account of their sins. These words of wondrous mercy were not spoken to the nation of Israel while living near God—who, notwithstanding, would have had sins to mourn over and to be forgiven—but they were addressed to a brutish and foolish nation, to a harlot people who had committed wickedness with all the idols of the heathen! They were those who had offered incense on their hills to false gods, who had made their children pass through the fire of Topheth in the Valley of the Children of Hinnom—to men who were filled with abominable and loathsome sins—men who had committed the crimes of Sodom and bowed down to Baal and Ashtaroth!

This promise was made to those who had wandered far from God, not because they repented, or because they believed, but simply and entirely of the Sovereign Grace of God, because, having set His affection upon them, He would not turn away from them because, having sworn unto their father Abraham that He would bless his seed forever, He still remembered them. He forgot them not, notwithstanding they had forgotten Him days without number—but provided them a Savior and now sends them, by the mouth of His Prophet, this comfortable assurance, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you.”

We will take this text as it shall open to us gradually and, therefore, we will give you the thoughts as they come to us. [This sermon is the one described in *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography*, Volume I, Chapter 32, where the beloved preacher gives a graphic account of a certain Sabbath evening when he delivered an extempore discourse from a text which the Holy Spirit vividly impressed upon his mind *while the congregation was singing the hymn immediately before the Sermon*. Readers of the *Autobiography* will also see how timely was the sudden and unexpected extinction of the gas lights mentioned at the end of the present discourse.]

I. The first is, that A MAN'S SINS MAY BE REALLY FORGIVEN LONG BEFORE HE KNOWS IT, for it is written, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions."

If they knew it, there would be no necessity for telling it to them. If they understood in their hearts that their transgressions were blotted out, what need had they of a Prophet to come and tell them that it was so? Long before a man knows that his transgressions are pardoned, God may have pardoned and blotted them out. I do not say that a man receives actual pardon in his own soul, or a sense of justification without knowing it. I cannot believe, with some, that a man may be born again without *being aware of it*. I know there never was a natural birth without pangs and pains—and I am equally sure that there never will be a *spiritual birth* without some suffering and some agonies. A man is not to be born again when he is asleep—he is to know it and know it, he will, at some time or other in his life! Not constantly, it may be, but nevertheless he will know, even if it is only for an hour, that he is a child of God! I think he who never had one minute of assurance, never had faith. He who never knew himself to be a child of God, who never could say, "I believe in Jesus," never could see his sins blotted out—I think such an one does not know what faith is. It may endure for ever so short a time, but if it is real assurance, it springs from true faith and the man is saved.

But a man may have his sins blotted out before he knows it. And they may be blotted out when he does not believe that they are—and blotted out when he is full of doubt on the point—yes, they may be pardoned even when he cannot be persuaded that they actually are. I can tell you of persons whom, in my inmost soul, I believe to be the subjects of Divine Grace. I can see in them the marks of God's power—He has convinced them of sin, they are humble, they are penitent, they are prayerful, they feel their guilt, they confess it—yet they have a haziness about their views of the Atonement and from this arises great darkness of spirit. They cannot see the plan of salvation and because they cannot see the plan, they do not, therefore, get a joyful sense of the thing, itself. Yet if these persons were soon to die, I am well assured that before they departed this life, God would give them such a glimpse of sunshine that all

the clouds would be dissipated and they would be able to enter Heaven singing, as they waded through the stream of Jordan, "Christ is with me! Death is nothing. Christ is with me! He is my Helper and my Stay." Long before they know it, their sins are forgiven.

Besides, there is a doctrine very much scandalized by certain professors and rejected by many persons, but which I firmly believe in. I mean, the Doctrine of the Eternal and Complete Justification of All the Elect in the Person of Christ Jesus. It does seem to me that when the Divine Surety paid our debts, our debts were discharged. That when He took our guilt upon His head and suffered for us on Calvary, our sins were, in that moment, blotted out. Some will say, "But the sins were not in existence, then." No, they were not, except in the foreknowledge of God, but the foreknowing God had all those sins written in the book of His foreknowledge long before they were committed. And by the blood of Christ, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," He did forever blot out the crimes and sins of all His Covenant people, so that everyone who shall be saved at last *was* justified in Christ when He died. The sins of all who shall be saved were atoned for by Christ, though they know nothing of it until God reveals it to them, by His Spirit, in the moment when they exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If the debt was paid, then surely a full receipt was given! If the crime was then laid on Jesus' head and He was then punished for it, surely the crime ceased to be! If you say that the crime was not in existence because it was not committed—I would tell you that Christ died for it before it was committed. Therefore we are quite right in saying that it was blotted out before it was committed.

I received my pardon when I believed—but it was purchased when Christ died. In *the Person of Christ* I was as completely and as truly, in God's sight, justified then, as I am now! But I knew it not—it was not revealed to me, I could not rejoice in it, I could not be blessed by it. The blood-bought pardon could not absolve me till I had a sense of it—the pardon of Christ could not redeem me from the prison of sin until I knew about it—but yet it was virtually given. When the ransom price was paid, the freedom was really secured, though the slave was still scarred, branded and chained to his oar. He was a purchased man and would one day receive his liberty. Oh, are not your hearts gladdened and do not your eyes glisten? Though you do not know that you are pardoned, it may be true that your sins are blotted out! Though you do not know that you have been justified, it may be true that you are "accepted in the Beloved!" "Oh," says one, "if I thought there were a hope or even a chance of such a thing for me, I would go to Jesus, though my sins had 'risen like a mountain.'" Go, then, poor Sinner, and if you cannot read your pardon, there—if you cannot see the handwriting of ordinances that were against you nailed to His Cross—come back and say that I speak not the Truth of

God! There have been many sinners who went to Christ full of sin—but there never was one who came back from Him as he went! Many have gone to Him guilty, but none have been turned away from His door unforgiven! He blots out, as a thick cloud, their transgressions and, as a cloud, their sins.

A man may have his sins forgiven, then, before he knows it, and a true Christian who has come to the Lord Jesus may have his sins blotted out even when he does not believe they are. The devil can make you believe anything. No lawyer is equal to him—though some lawyers have, most undoubtedly, learned a few lessons at his hands—for not only can he make what is half the truth appear the whole truth, but he can take a lie and gild it with truth. How often does he persuade a truly justified man that he is not justified! It often comes to pass that when God has pardoned a poor sinner, the devil will come to him and tell him that he is not pardoned—and so much logic will he use with him, that he will make him believe that he is not pardoned, although he really is. Though every crime of that man has been forgiven long ago, though all his iniquities have been cast into the depths of the sea, Satan will agitate his conscience, stir up his soul, bind him with unbelief, cast gravel into his food, cause him to eat wormwood and drink the water of gall, as Jeremiah has said, until he will not only deny that he has ever tasted that the Lord is gracious, but he will be in such despair that he will fancy it is not possible that he can ever be saved. Satan will persuade a justified man that he is yet “in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”

Are there not some of you who have had many pleasant days, many sweet hours of fellowship with Christ, but in some dark moment the thought crossed your mind that you might be a hypocrite, after all? From that hour you have not been able to come near to Him and though you have trusted under the shadow of His wings, yet you have not seen the light of His Countenance. Well, but let me tell you, Brothers and Sisters, the pardon is not revoked because it is concealed from view! The pardon is just as good when you cannot see it as when you do see it. A pardon is a pardon and though the condemned criminal does not see the pardon, it is not revoked. God takes care of our pardon for us! He does not put it into our hands, for Satan might take it away from us, but He lets us have a copy of it to read and though Satan steals the copy, he cannot get the original—that is safe in the archives of Heaven! Up there, in the Ark of God, where He keeps the deeds of the universe, there He preserves the writings of the pardon of our sins! Yes, though I may doubt whether I am pardoned, if I really am so, I am so! And I ought not so much to depend upon my own frames and feelings as upon this—God has said to me once, “I have blotted out your sins.” He has said it to me twice! I read it in His Word and though Satan says they are not removed, I believe they

are. And I will stand fast in this assurance because God said, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions.”

II. Another remark upon our text is that NOTHING CAN SO STRONGLY LEAD A MAN TO COME TO GOD AS A SENSE OF PAR-DONED SIN. “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed you.”

Enthusiastic divines have thought that men were to be brought to virtue by the hissings of the boiling cauldron. They have imagined that by beating a Hell drum in the ears of men, they could make them believe the Gospel. That by the terrific sights and sounds of Sinai’s mountain, they could drive men to Calvary. They have preached perpetually, “Do this and you are damned.” In their preaching there preponderates a horrible and terrifying voice. If you listened to them, you might think you sat near the mouth of the Pit and heard the “dismal groans and sullen moans,” and all the shrieks of the tortured ones in Perdition! Men think that by these means sinners will be brought to the Savior. They, however, in my opinion, think wrongly! Men are frightened into Hell, but not into Heaven. Men are sometimes driven to Sinai by powerful preaching. Far be it from us to condemn the use of the Law of God, for, “the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ,” but if you want to get a man to Christ, the best way is to bring Christ to the man! It is not by preaching Law and terrors that men are made to love God—

***“Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone.
But a sense of blood-bought pardon,
Soon dissolves a heart of stone.”***

I sometimes preach “the terror of the Lord” as Paul did when he said, “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” But I do it as did the Apostle—to bring them to a sense of their sins. The way to bring men to Jesus, to give them peace, to give them joy, to give them salvation through Christ, is by God the Spirit’s assistance, to preach Christ—to preach a full, free, perfect pardon. Oh, how little there is of preaching Jesus Christ! We do not preach enough about His glorious name. Some preach dry doctrines, but there is not the unction of the Holy One revealing the fullness and preciousness of the Lord Jesus. There is plenty of, “Do this and live,” but not enough of, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” O sweet Jesus, have not some of Your disciples forgotten You? Have not some of Your preachers almost lost the sound of Your glorious name and scarcely know its blessed pronunciation? Send us, once again, we pray You, the spirit of love and of a sound mind, that we may preach more fully Jesus Christ our Lord!

But now, my Friends, let me ask you earnestly—when did you ever feel, under a sense of sin, the most inclination to come to the Savior? I think you will reply at once, when you felt that there was hope for you

and that He had blotted out your sins! No man will come to Jesus while he thinks harshly of Him. But when he has sweet thoughts of Him, then will he come. You have no doubt heard the old figure, borrowed from John Bunyan, of a certain army that was inside a city and which was attacked by another host. The king outside said, "Give up the city, directly, or I'll hang every man of you." "No," they said, "we will fight to the death and we will never give up!" "I will burn your city," he said, "and utterly destroy it, raze it to the ground and slay your wives and children. I will wholly cut off the race and exterminate you." "Ah," they said, "then we will fight till we die! We will never open the doors." Seeing that threats were of no avail, he sent another message, "If you will only open your gates and come out to me, I will let you go away, bag and baggage. I will give all of you your lives and liberty and, what is more, I will let you have your lands, again, for a small tribute, and you shall be my servants and friends forever." "Straightway," says the parable, "they unbarred the gates and came tumbling out to the monarch." That is the way, by the Spirit's help, to get a sinner to come in penitence to Jesus—to tell him that the Lord says this—"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed you."

Come along, Beloved! Why are you afraid of Jesus? He says, "Return unto me; for I have redeemed you." Come along, Brothers and Sisters, to the Lord Jesus if you are a sinner! I speak to that one who feels himself a lost and guilty one. Come with me to Jesus, for He has blotted out your transgressions as a thick cloud and, as a cloud, your sins. And He has redeemed you. "Oh," says one, "I dare not come in! He will frown upon me." Come and try Him! He says He has forgiven you—come in at the door and you will find it true that Christ has forgiven you! I think I see you standing and looking at yourself and saying, "Oh, was I not worse than ten thousand fools to be afraid to come in—to be afraid to trust Him when He had pardoned me beforehand? Was I not worse than ignorant to stand back from my best Friend, as if He had been a lion—to stay away from the dear Jesus who had purchased my ransom, as if He were my foe?"

One would think, dear Friends, when you are so loath to come to Christ, that you were coming to receive condemnation instead of coming to be saved! Men come unwillingly to execution, but must they come as unwillingly to Christ as they do to the slaughter? You think Him some angry Judge. You have bad ideas of my sweet Jesus, or else you would not keep away from Him when He is continually crying, "Return unto Me!" "Return unto Me!" O that you would so love Him and rejoice in Him, that you would feel the greatest pleasure in the world in coming to Him! [Some alarm was here occasioned by the gas lights suddenly going out.

After the temporary confusion had subsided, Mr. Spurgeon proceeded to address the large and excited auditory on a different subject. In his *Autobiography*, he mentions that both the discourses delivered under these unusual circumstances were blessed to the conversion of some of his hearers.]

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 125.**

Verse 1. *They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion which cannot be removed, but abides forever.* Various conquerors have destroyed the buildings upon Mount Zion, but the mountain, itself, is still there. None have ever dug it up and cast it into the Mediterranean Sea. It stands fast and will stand there as long as the world endures. And “they that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion”—they shall abide as firmly as that sacred mountain does! Nothing can move them, or remove them. They are in the hands of Christ and none can pluck them from there. “My Father, who gave them to Me, is greater than all,” says Christ, “and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.” Oh, what strength does faith give to a man!

2. *As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds His people from this time forth and forever.* This verse shows the Believer’s safety, as the former one showed his stability. As the mountains stood to guard the sacred city, so does God surround His people as a wall of fire. Before any can hurt the Believer, they must first break through the ramparts of the Godhead! It is not merely said that horses of fire and chariots of fire are round about His people, though that is true, but that the Lord, Himself, surrounds them, and that not occasionally, but “from this time forth and forever.” I believe in the eternal safety of the saints and I would base it upon these two verses if there were no other Scriptures to that effect! If they never are to be moved any more than Mount Zion and if God is round about them forever, then they must live and they must stand. There is no, “if,” or, “but,” put in here—there is no, “provided that they behave themselves,” and so on. No, but, trusting in God, they shall never be moved and God will surround them as their sure defense! I fancy I hear someone say, “If it is so, why am I tried and troubled?” Ah, my Brother, it was never contemplated that you should be free from trouble! There is a rod in the Covenant and if you never feel it, you may suspect that you are *not* in the Covenant!

3. *For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.* You will feel that rod, but it shall not rest upon you. The days of persecution shall be shortened for the elect’s sake and though, perhaps, the devil may be more furious

with you than ever—having great wrath because he knows that his time is short—yet God will put an end to your suffering, your persecution, your oppression, for He knows your frame and he is aware that, perhaps, if the temptation were pushed too far, you might yield. Therefore will He makes a way of escape for you. He means to try and test you, but not too much. He will abate the fierceness of man's wrath and deliver you.

4. *Do good, O LORD, unto those that are good, and to them that are upright in their hearts.* True Believers are good—especially are they good at heart, for Divine Grace has made them so and God, therefore, will do them good. He will bless them more and more. He will sanctify them and prepare them for the ineffable goodness that is at His right hand forever and ever.

5. *As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel.* There are—there always have been—in the Church of God some who have been the Church's dishonor. They have crooked ways of their own and, in due time, under stress of persecution, or through temptation, they "turn aside unto their crooked ways." They leave the path of trustfulness and holiness, as Judas did, as Demas did, as many have done. What will God do with them? He will "lead them forth." He will show them up. He will bring them into His Light. And in what company will He lead them forth? Why, "with the workers of iniquity," for if they were not such in outward action, they were really so in thought and heart! And where will He lead them? He will lead them forth to execution—they shall go among the malefactors—they shall be led forth to die. But will this hurt the Lord's people? No. When the chaff is separated from the wheat, the wheat shall be all the purer. "Peace shall be upon Israel." All the Lord's chosen, pleading, princely people—His Israel—shall have peace upon them! May we all be found among them, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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

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

BARRIERS OBLITERATED

NO. 2847

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1903.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 16, 1877.**

***“I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins; return unto Me; for I have redeemed you.”
Isaiah 44:22.***

WE noticed, as we read the chapter, the extreme folly of a man attempting to make a god for himself, or to worship anything as God save only the one living and true God. We consider the heathen to be very foolish for worshipping their hideous idols. Yet, you know, to be an idolater a man need not make an image of wood, or stone, or gold, for he can worship his own *thoughts*, his own *ideas*, his own notions. And every man whose great objective in life is anything less than the Glory of God is really a worshipper of idols. If that statement is true, and I challenge anyone to prove that it is not, London swarms with spiritual idolaters! He who lives to himself, practically worships himself. That, you know, is a very extreme form of idolatry, for even the heathen do not bow down and worship themselves. But there are many who do not call themselves heathen who do that. He who lives only to make money—what is he but a worshipper of the golden calf? And he who cares continually for the opinion of his fellow men—what does he worship but that shameless creature, Fame? He lives upon the breath from other men's nostrils and counts it worth his while to make himself a slave that he may win the applause of his fellow slaves! If we live to You, great God, we live wisely, for You alone are self-existent, and you can reward us and bless us. But if we live for anything less than You, we live foolishly since, even if we could attain the objectives which we seek, they would soon pass away from us, or else, by death, we should pass away from them. For an immortal spirit, there is nothing worth living for but to please God. “To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever” is the only worthy end of mortal man!

Now, Beloved Friends, it is strange that this, which seems so simple, is continually being forgotten. Indeed, by the mass of mankind, it is not remembered at all. They go their way and burn their sacrifices and their incense to this idol and to that, but God is not at all in their thoughts. And the worst of this evil is that even His own people have far too great a tendency to this kind of idolatry. Even those who are born-again and who love the Lord, find within themselves an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God and I feel sure that I am addressing many who, to a greater or lesser degree, have been guilty of turning away from the only

true God. And it is for them that my text is meant—"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed you." I am speaking, of course, to those who really are God's people, but who have lost somewhat of the fervor of their love and who have not been truly faithful to Him. But while I am especially addressing them, I hope that a good many others, who could not yet say that they are the Lord's people, will, nevertheless, perceive that the door of God's mercy is also open to them—and that they will enter in even while I am setting it open for the Lord's wandering children. Remember that if you do get in, you will never be put out! Whether I know that I have a right to go through the gate of mercy, or not—if I once get in, I am in, and I shall never be turned out. If I am only like a dog that goes into a house uninvited, yet, so long as I am once inside, there is no power that can expel me, for the Lord Jesus, Himself, said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

There are four things in our text that are worthy of notice. First, *the dividing medium*—a cloud of sins, a thick cloud of transgressions. Secondly, *its complete removal*—"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins." Thirdly, *the tender command*—"Return unto Me." And, fourthly, *the sacred claim*—"for I have redeemed you." I must speak briefly upon each point.

I. First, here is AN INTERPOSING AND DIVIDING MEDIUM—a cloud of sins. A vapor, says the Hebrew and, then, a thick cloud.

God's people ought always to dwell in fellowship with their God. There ought to be nothing between the renewed heart and God to prevent joyful and hallowed fellowship, but it is not so. Sometimes a cloud comes between, a cloud of sin and, whenever that cloud of sin comes between us and God, *it speedily chills us*. Our delight in God is no longer manifest—we have little or no zeal in His service, or joy in His worship. Beneath that cloud we feel like men who are frozen and, at the same time, *darkness comes over us*. We get into such a sad state that we hardly know whether we are God's people or not. Sin comes between us and our God and all our joy departs. To be near to God is to live in the sunlight, but to sin against God soon brings us under very heavy gloom. We are like men in a thick London fog—we can scarcely see our own hands and we have, sometimes, to stand still in utter astonishment and ask, "Where am I, and what am I doing? I thought I was a child of God, but if I were to die just now, where would I go?" Sin is the cloud which comes between us and God—and chills and darkens us.

Besides that, *it threatens us*. A great black cloud over one's head makes us wonder what may be in it. It may be charged with tempest and may burst upon our devoted heads. Backslider, when you get away from God, I do not wonder that you begin to be in distress and alarm! The thought of death distresses you. At one time you could have met death with a calm countenance, but you could not do so now. You begin to have thoughts of judgment and of eternal wrath and destruction from the Presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. You know you do, for he who is under the frown of God because of sin never knows what

woe may come out of that dark cloud! He is full of alarm and distress and has no true rest of heart. Affliction seems to be the judgment of God upon you who are in this sad state! And your present distress of mind, great as it is, seems to be nothing compared with what you think will come upon you. You fear that you will be utterly deserted, that God's mercy will be taken from you forever and that He will be favorable to you no more. It is your sins that look so black upon you—you have the dark side of them turned to you and can you wonder that it is so if you have been getting away from God, loving the world and acting like a fool in forsaking the Most High?

Remember, dear Friend, if you are in that condition, that *clouds are earth-born things*. There is not a drop of water in the cloud yonder but what went up, first of all, from the earth or the sea! And so your present darkness and distress have all arisen from your sins. You say that you go to the House of God and get no comfort. Remember the times when you used to go there and pay but little attention? And when you used to go home and pick holes in what you had heard, finding fault with your spiritual food, like naughty children do with food for the body when they have no appetite and cannot eat this, and do not like that? Like they, you need to be put on "short commons" till you get your spiritual appetite back again!

Do you remember how it used to be with you? You once had bright days and happy times, but then you used to be very careful of your walk and conversation. At that time you were almost afraid to put one foot before another, for fear you would not tread in your Lord's footprints! You used to watch your words. You were very particular as to the company you kept. You would not consort with worldlings, then—but now you can do, without compunction, a thousand things which you would not have done then! Things for which you have severely censured others, you now tolerate in yourself. And now you say, "There is a thick black cloud over my sky." Do you wonder that there is? With all those bogs and morasses of sin, is there any marvel that the mists of doubt and fear should have arisen around you? Your iniquities have come between you and your God!

Ah, there are some of you who used to be very fervent and earnest in Divine things. You used to speak of Christ to others and you were even the means of bringing some souls to Jesus. But now you have yourselves turned aside from Him! Oh, it is a sad thing when one who used to be a Sunday school teacher has forgotten the lessons he taught to his boys, or when the man who was once a street preacher, or even the pastor of a Christian Church has himself become a profaner of the Sabbath! Yet such things do happen.

I will mention only one more thought under this head, a very encouraging one. It is this—though your sins are like clouds which chill you and darken you—and though those clouds are of your own making, yet remember that *the sun is not affected by the clouds*. Though hidden for a while, it is still shining! This is a most comforting truth, but be careful not to pervert it. The everlasting love of God to His people is not changed

even by their wanderings and their sins. The child thinks that the clouds have destroyed the sun, but high up above the clouds it is as bright as ever—always glowing like a mighty furnace are you, O sun! And our damps and fogs quench not your brilliance! And, Backslider, the love of God, the Grace of God, the mercy of God, the power of God to bless—and the willingness of God to receive you back again remain just the same as ever they were, notwithstanding the density of these horrible vapors of sin and transgression! Do not, I pray you, make an ill use of this great Truth of God. If you do so, you will give sure evidence that you are no child of God, but a base hypocrite! But if there is any spiritual life within you, this blessed Truth will tend to bring upon you compunction of conscience to think that you should be offending against a God whose love is still the same, notwithstanding all your backsliding—and who does not turn aside from His Covenant, nor cast away His people whom He did foreknow!

II. Now, secondly, we are to consider THE COMPLETE REMOVAL OF THIS BARRIER—"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins."

Nobody but God can get at the clouds and drive them from the firmament of Heaven. There they are, floating high above our heads, and *no known human power can remove them*. So it is with your darkness and doubts—if you have fallen into sin, you cannot get rid of them. You may sit down under them in despondency and weep—and be almost in despair—but there they are and there they will remain. You may go to the so-called priests, if you like, as the poor African goes to the pretended rain-maker and asks him to bring rain when he needs it. And the priest can do just as much for you as the rain-maker can do for the African—certainly not any more. He and the rain-maker are a couple of deceivers, so do not be duped by either of them! There is no one who can forgive sins save God, only, so do not be deluded into the belief that there is any other forgiver in the whole universe!

But what a mercy it is that *God can remove these clouds of sin!* He can do it and do it effectually. How quickly God sweeps the sky clear of clouds! Sometimes, in this fickle climate, we have all sorts of weather mixed up together so that we experience spring, summer, autumn and winter in the course of a few hours. You have seen the clouds hanging thick and heavy all over the sky. You have gone into your house and said, "It will be a very wet day." But you have hardly gone indoors before there has been a clear blue sky above you, with not a cloud the size of a man's hand to be seen anywhere! Thus can God quickly sweep away the clouds and He can just as quickly take away sin. Before you can even get out of this building, you who are groaning under a sense of sin may be completely delivered from it! You who now see the clouds of your transgressions and iniquities hanging black above your heads, may, in a moment, be able to see the clear sky of God's forgiving love with not a trace of your transgression and iniquity!

The mercy is, that when God drives away these clouds from us, *though we may see other clouds, we shall never see those black ones anymore.*

When the Lord takes away His people's sins, they are gone and gone forever! They shall not be remembered against them anymore, forever. Whenever I get upon this topic, I feel as though I should like to keep on speaking upon it and go no further. The glorious forgiving love of God is an indescribable theme and it is altogether inexhaustible! We may continue to talk about it year after year, but we shall never get to the end of it. Yes, even throughout eternity we shall never be able to tell all the splendors of the pardoning mercy of our gracious God. O Backslider, He can take away all your sin this very moment! He can shine forth upon you like the sun in its strength and, then, every shadow and cloud shall be driven from your soul!

Now I am getting near to the very heart of the text, but I have not quite reached it yet, for the glory of it is that *the Lord has already done this great work of Grace*. The text does not say, "I *can* blot out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions." Nor, "I *will* blot them out," but, "I **HAVE** blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions." It is *done*—fully done, forever done! Did you hear this, poor wanderer? Perhaps you say, "I cannot come back to God, for I have been so long a wanderer from Him and my sins still lie heavily upon me." But, my Brother, my Sister, the Lord has forgiven you all your sin! He says, "Think no more about it, for I have blotted it all out." If you are, indeed, a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are like a child who has offended his father and run away from home, perhaps. In a distant land, in sin and sorrow, that son is longing to return and he gets a message from his father saying, "All is forgiven. Come home!" It is so with you, you wandering child of God—if you have repented of your wanderings, all is forgiven! Even the guilt of this backsliding of yours was laid upon Christ. If you are believing in Him, that is the clearest possible proof that all your transgressions were laid upon Him and that He has made a full and complete Atonement for them all.

Even while you are coming back to Him, all your sin is forgiven through the superabundant mercy which moves Him to run to meet you even as the father of the prodigal ran to meet his son! And before He falls upon your neck, before you have begun to confess your transgressions in His ear, He has already blotted them all out! What say you to this wondrous display of Sovereign Grace which He, Himself, bids us proclaim to you? He knows whether He has forgiven your sin, or not, and it is He who says, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins." Often and often have I mused upon this great Truth of God! The Lord has loved me with an everlasting love and He has washed me in the precious blood of Christ—and forgiven me all my transgressions—and whenever I think of that, I feel my heart drawn still more closely towards Him.

Unbelief will never bring you rest of heart, but faith will. I am speaking now to any of you who have wandered quite a long way from Christ. I may be even addressing some member of the Tabernacle who has not lately been very regular in hearing the Word. You have fallen into a very lean, sad state, my Brother. You are finding fault with other people, but it is yourself who ought to be blamed. Many things do not suit you, now,

as they used to do, and you lay upon others the blame which you ought to bear yourself. You could sit on any hard seat once, but you need a soft cushion now. You could stand in any hot place to hear the Gospel in those days, but you are too grand a gentleman to do that now. I do not know what we can do to get you into a good temper, for, after all, you are the one who is wrong! You know it is so, yet, notwithstanding that, I want to whisper in your ear that your Father is still your Father, that Christ is still your Savior, that the Holy Spirit is still your Guide and Teacher! So, come home! Stay no longer away because you fear your Father's frown. You have grieved Him, you have vexed His Holy Spirit, you have dishonored His Son, yet He has not changed! Still does His heart yearn for you, still does He cry, "How can I give you up?" And He will not. Come back to Him, for it is His mercy that is calling you!

III. I have already passed into the third division of my subject almost before I was aware of it. We have already seen that there is a barrier between some souls and God and that the Lord can clear that barrier. Now we are to consider THE TENDER COMMAND—"Return unto Me." "The great barrier that separated us is removed—so let us not be divided from one another any longer."

Perhaps, my Brother, you have thought that God had left off loving you, but He has not. You have begun to quarrel with God because you imagined that He had a quarrel with you, but it is not so, for He loves you still. It was your sin that He hated. Kindness is in His heart and words of Infinite Love are on His lips, still. Surely, if you know that the sin which has come like a great mountain chain between you and Him is regarded by Him as mere vapor—a cloud which He has removed by the power of His Almighty Grace—you will give heed to Him when He cries to you, "Come back. Come back. Come back. Bygones shall be bygones. The guilt of all your wanderings I have laid on the great Scapegoat's head. I have drawn My pen through the record of your sin in My Book of Remembrance and have struck it all out. Come back. Come back!" When, in your soul, you hear God speak to you thus, do not your hearts at once respond, "Lord, since You have taken away the barrier that separated us, we will come back to You and we will come back this very hour"?

When He says, "Return," He means that *He wants you to give up that which has grieved Him*. You cannot come back to God, you know, bringing your love of sin with you. Some of you professors, who are, I hope, still the Lord's people, fall into various evil ways which grieve the Holy Spirit. And then the black clouds form a great barrier between you and your God. He requires you to give up that which has caused the dark clouds to cover your sky. What is it that has brought about this sad result? I have known some professors fall into a sad state through keeping evil company. They have associated with some very fascinating person who has been able to greatly amuse them, but who certainly could not edify them, for he knew nothing savingly of the things of God!

I have known some professors go, by degrees, into very gross sin as the result of giving way to the habit of tippling. They would not like to be called drunks, but I am sure I do not know what other name I could give

them. And some nominally Christian trades people do things in their business which they would not like to have generally known. They seem to forget that God sees them and knows all about them. Now, any sin that is known and tolerated, will soon separate a Christian from his God as to any conscious enjoyment of His Presence. Be very careful, then, dear Brothers and Sisters, as to anything which is grieving your God. And though it should be a loss or a cross to you to give it up, do not hesitate a moment, but give it up and come back to your Heavenly Father. Nothing can compensate for the loss of His Presence and you cannot have His Presence as long as you continue to hug your sin! Therefore, give up the sin which He hates, especially as He has forgiven you in the past.

If a young man has left his father's house in anger, but his father writes to him, and says, "William, the trouble is all over. My Boy, I fully forgive you, so come back to me," will he still stay away? Let us hope not and, dear child of God, your Father says to you, "Return unto Me, for I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud, your sins." So, give up your sin, seeing that God has blotted it all out.

The Lord's gracious invitation, "Return unto Me," also means, "*Come back, and love Me.* See how I have loved you? I have already forgiven you your sin, you who are, indeed, My child, but whose faith has almost disappeared. Though you have provoked Me by your sin, I still love you. Though there is nothing lovely about you, yet I still love you. For My name's sake and for My Son's sake, will you not love Me?" After such pleading, can you keep on in this cold-hearted state toward your God? Some of you professors make us weep when we think of how you live and how far you get away from your God. I do pray that He may cast the cords of His Almighty Love about you and bind you to Himself, so that you cannot escape from Him if you would and would not if you could.

The Lord also means, when He says, "Return unto Me," "*Return again to your old joys.*" Oh, you who have got away from the sunlight through making your sins into a thick cloud, come back into the sunlight! I would like to refresh the memories of some of you who are here as to the happy times you once had. Ah, then you were the people who loved the Prayer Meeting! How sweet the gatherings of the saints were to you! Do you not also remember your little room where, kneeling by your bedside, you had such communion with God that although you are very cold, now, you never can quite forget that holy fervor? You were not a hypocrite, were you? You know you were not! Oh, how your feet used to trip along as you went up to the House of God with the multitude that kept holy day! How earnestly you used to tell others of the joys of true religion!

Possibly you say, "Do not remind us of that joy, for we have lost it." Yes, but you can have it all back again! God can give you, once more, the years which the locusts have eaten. Those wasted days, those joys which have been starved to death, you shall have them back again and you shall yet lift up your voice with the sweet singer of Israel and praise the Lord that His mercy endures forever! Yes, though you feel like guilty Peter, when he denied his Lord, you may yet come back like Peter and be

all the stronger for your past bitter experience. Your Heavenly Father bids you return and I, your Brother in Christ, would stretch out my hand to you and say, "Come, my Brother. Come, my Sister—

***'Come let us to the Lord our God,
With contrite hearts return.'***

IV. My last point is THE SACRED CLAIM WHICH BACKS UP THE GRACIOUS INVITATION—"Return unto Me," said the Lord, "*for I have redeemed you.*"

I do not know whether you see the meaning of this, but I think I do. It is this—"I have loved you so much that I redeemed you with the blood of My dear Son and, having loved you so much in the ages past, I still love you. Come back to Me. I did not make a mistake when I first loved you, through which I shall have to change the object of my choice. I knew all about you from eternity—all that you ever would be or could be, I knew—I saw it all with My foreseeing eyes and yet I loved you, and bought you with the precious blood of Jesus, My only-begotten and well-beloved Son. And I love you still. Therefore return unto Me—return, return!"

But even that does not convey the full force of this gracious invitation. It further means this—"I have a right to you. I have bought you. You are Mine and you shall not go away from Me. Come back to Me, for Redemption's sign, the blood-mark, is upon you." Many of you bear in your very bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus, for you have been immersed in water, in the name of the Sacred Trinity, on profession of your being dead to the world and alive unto the Christ. It is utterly impossible for you to get that watermark off you! It is upon you forever! And Christ has marked you as His own with His own blood and He will not let you go! Listen to what He says about the matter—"Behold these wounds on My head, and hands, and feet, and side. I bought you with the very blood of My heart, so do you think that I will lose you? Did I bow My head in unspeakable agony and cry, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' and shall I lose those whom I purchased by My death?"

Who is he that shall snatch out of the hands of Christ those whom He has bought with His own blood? Shall the arch-enemy come and steal away the sheep of Christ? Shall the lion of Hell devour even one stray lamb out of His flock? No, verily, our Greater David shall tear him in pieces, first, and deliver every one of the innumerable souls that His blood has redeemed! Buy them with His death and then leave them to be damned? I find no such sham redemption in this blessed Book, nor would I care the turn of a farthing for the value of it! But that Redemption which Jesus Christ has worked is a Redemption that does redeem! He has paid too great a price for His people for Him to ever lose those whom He purchased with His blood!

So He says to each one of you who have believed in Him but who have gone astray from Him, "Return unto Me, for I have redeemed you and I will have you. Your league with Hell is broken and your covenant with death is no more! Come back to Me. Come back to Me. You will never find rest anywhere else. You may go into sin, but you shall never find pleasure in it, neither shall you be content with it. If you were one of the swine, you might fill your belly with the husks that they eat, but you are

My child and you must starve till you come back to My table. For you there shall be no mirth, no music, no feast, no robe, no joy until you come back to Me. I have redeemed you and I will hedge up your way with thorns until you return to Me! I will not let you go. I will turn you out of your wicked paths. I will beat you as with blows of a cruel one. I will smite you with affliction upon affliction, but I will have you—I will not allow you to perish! Return ere this rough treatment is meted out to you. Return at Love's gentle wooing and with Mercy's tender voice, for I have redeemed you. 'It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.' I have you in hand and I can do with you as I please—and you shall, after all, be drawn back among the rest of My people."

Go, poor dove, and fly over the wild waste of waters. Look North, South, East, West, but you shall never see a log floating on the waves upon which you can rest. That foul raven, out yonder, can light upon a corpse and both rest and feed upon the carrion, but you cannot. Fly where you will, O dove, there is but one rest for you and Noah, alone, can tell you where it is! It is within the ark! But do you refuse to return to that ark? Do you still fly, and fly, and fly till your wings are weary, and you can scarcely keep yourself above the flood? Fly on, on, on, till your pinions, at last, cannot bear you up any longer! But, oh, if you will be wise, fly with your failing pinions to yonder ark and hide yourself there, for there, alone, is rest to be found. You shall go there, you *must* go there for there is rest for you nowhere else!

Ah, young man, you did not think of this when you came in to this service? You scarcely know why you came, for you meant to go with evil companions! But if Christ has really bought you with His blood, He will have you! So, in His name, I do arrest you and bid you trust in Him—

***"Thus the eternal counsel ran
Almighty Grace, arrest that man!"***

You are arrested in the name of the great King! Pause and turn to Him and live!

Perhaps you remember how Colonel Gardiner, on the very night when he had made a sinful appointment, was convicted of sin, brought to the Savior and became one of the most earnest followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. My dear Lord, with His sorrowful Countenance, looks into the faces of some of you. I do not know who it may be, but He does and, lifting up His pierced hand, He lays it upon one here, and another there, and He says, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed you." The Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 43:21-25; 44:1-23.**

Isaiah 43:21. *This people—That is, God's own people. "This people."—*
21, 22. *Have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise. But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of Me, O Israel.* The very people whom He had formed for His praise forgot to pray to Him, ceased to remember Him, grew weary of Him! Oh, how sad is this

and how great is the long-suffering of God, that He bore with them so long.

23. *You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; neither have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense.* God has laid no tax on His people. He does not ask any hard thing of us and yet, notwithstanding that, we have been slack in His service. His yoke is easy and His burden is light, yet our shoulders have been unwilling to bear them.

24, 25. *You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices: but you have made Me to serve with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities. I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.* That is a very astonishing verse, wherever we might find it, but to find it in such a connection is, indeed, a wonder! These people had wearied God, yet even then, He said, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions.” Note on what a sure and blessed ground He puts it—“for My own sake.” The Lord could not do anything for such sinners as we are for *our* sakes, for there is nothing deserving about us! But in order that His mercy may be the more clearly seen and His faithfulness and Immutability may be displayed, He says, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.”

26-28. *Put Me in remembrance: Let us plead together: declare you, that you may be justified. Your first father has sinned, and your teachers have transgressed against Me. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.*

Isaiah 44:1, 2. *Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus said the LORD that made you, and formed you from the womb, which will help you. Fear not, O Jacob, My servant; and you, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.* You see, the Lord goes on to show His people that if they were in trouble, they had brought it upon themselves. If the sanctuary had been degraded, it was because both they and their teachers had transgressed against God. But, after He has justified His wrath, He still goes on to talk of mercy and, oh, with what plenteousness of love does He address these wandering people of His!

3. *For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon your seed, and My blessing upon your offspring.* Here, O you needy souls, you who thirst after mercy, is a rich promise for you! How plenteously does God bestow it! “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.” Your needs cannot be so great as the Divine Supply! All the Lord asks is that you should be willing to receive His mercy, willing that your emptiness should be filled out of His fullness.

4. *And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.* Your shall spring up where there were none, before, and grow very quickly. These are our young converts. I trust that we shall have many such springing up “as willows by the water courses”!

5, 6. *One shall say, I am the LORD'S, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the*

LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel. Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and His Redeemer, the LORD of Hosts; I am the First, and I am the Last; and beside Me there is no God. That is a great Truth, always to be kept in mind—that there is no God beside Jehovah! Let us beware of ever attempting to set up, in our own hearts, any god save the one living and true God.

7-12. *And who, as I, shall call and shall declare it, and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people? And the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them. Fear you not, neither be afraid: have not I told you from that time, and have declared it? You are even My witnesses. Is there a God beside Me? Yes, there is no God; I know not any. They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who has formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for anything? Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together. The smith.*—Note how the Lord holds up to mockery and scorn the makers of idol gods! He shows the process of god-making, the making of idol gods but His words may be equally well applied to the making of the Virgin Mary and the various saints, crucifixes, and all other lumber of this kind in the idolatry that calls itself Christian! “The smith”—

12. *With the tongs works in the coals, and fashions it with hammers, and works it with the strength of his arms: yes, he is hungry, and his strength fails: he drinks no water, and is faint.* That is one of these god-makers, you see—a man who makes an idol god, yet who himself gets thirsty by reason of the heat of the coals in his forge! A fine god it must be that he makes! Next comes the carpenter.

13, 14. *The carpenter stretches out his rule; he marks it out with a line; he fits it with planes, and he marks it out with the compass, and makes it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. He hews him down cedars, and takes the cypress and the oak, which he strengthens for himself among the trees of the forest: he plants an ash, and the rain does nourish it.* They like some choice wood out of which to make their gods. So we see that these idol gods grow first in the woods and then, afterwards, they need a carpenter’s rule, and line, and compass, and plane in order to shape them according to his taste, or the order of his customers!

15-17. *Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself, yes, he kindles it, and bakes bread, yes, he makes a god and worships it; he makes it a graven image, and falls down thereto. He burns part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eats flesh; he roasts meat and is satisfied: yes, he warms himself, and says, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: and the residue thereof he makes a god, even his graven image: he falls down unto it, and worships it, and prays unto it, and says, Deliver me; for you are my god.* Did ever sarcasm—truthful and proper sarcasm—go further than this? Idolaters in various lands have

frequently been convinced of the absurdity of their worship as they have read this very remarkable piece of Inspired writing!

18, 19. *They have not known nor understood: for He has shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considers in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yes, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? Shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? Shall I, an intelligent being, worship gold, silver, wood, or brass, however excellent may be the workmanship of it? Shall I, an immortal being, cast myself down before a piece of bread and worship that, as some do who first worship, and then eat their god? Oh, what strange infatuation!*

20. *He feeds on ashes: a deceived heart has turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?* The Prophet concludes that madness must have laid hold upon the minds of men, or they never could have fallen into the debasing superstitions which degrade them all over the world. Yet, even in this present century old superstitions have come back to our country—it is strange that here, where so many martyrs were burnt, the sons of these martyrs should actually be willing to go back to the beggarly elements and superstitions of the olden times! The Lord have mercy upon this land and deliver it from all forms of idol worship!

21, 22. *Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for you are My servant: I have formed you, you are My servant: O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of Me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed you.* Out of all the world, God had a chosen people, His own Israel, to whom He revealed Himself—but they also turned aside to idols, yet here He bids them return to Him. Even to this day they bravely bear their protest against idols. I would to God that they also knew the Christ of God and worshipped Him. All Believers are the true Israel after the spirit and are to maintain forever the Glory of the one only living and true God.

23. *Sing, O you heavens; for the LORD has done it: shout, you lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—605, 545, 296.

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

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

THE SONG OF SONGS

NO. 1240

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 13, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Sing, O you heavens, for the Lord has done it: shout, you lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel.”
Isaiah 44:23.***

No doubt this prophecy had a fulfillment in the restoration of the captive Jews from Babylon, in the rebuilding of the Temple and the completion of the walls of Jerusalem. This made the nation rejoice with unspeakable joy and made them cry, “Sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem.” This was a fulfillment, but not the fullest accomplishment of the soul-stirring prophecy before us. A larger blessing was yet to come, to make every word emphatic and to enlarge the area of the joy till all the earth and all the spheres of Heaven should take part in it.

I shall spend no time upon the minor meanings of the passage, but speak at once of that Redemption, of which all the rest are but types, the Redemption of the true Israel of God by Christ Jesus our Lord. To that Redemption the words of our text are preeminently applicable. “Sing, O you heavens; for the Lord has done it: shout, you lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel.”

In considering the text we shall first *survey the scenery of the prophecy*. Secondly, we shall *contemplate the exceedingly glorious subject for joy*. Having attended to both of these matters, we will, for a little while, *listen to the song*. And then, in the last place, if the Spirit of God shall graciously help us, *we will join in the universal chorus*.

I. LET US SURVEY THE SCENE. The scene of our text is noteworthy. We saw its earthly parallel yesterday. The heavens were overcast, the clouds were dense, the sky was black, the sun was obscured and albeit, it is near midsummer, a chill came over us. Far overhead rolled the loud thunder! The dread artillery of Heaven pealed forth as in the day of the Lord's battle. We expected a terrific tempest and timid hearts began to quail. Who knew where the bolts of Heaven might fall and what mischief the flames of fire might work?

The coward's fears were groundless—the storm had gathered for other fields than ours. There fell a shower which blessed the earth—

***“Down, down they come, those fruitful showers!
Those earth-rejoicing drops!
A momentary deluge pours,
Then thins, decreases, stops.
And before the dimples on the stream***

Have circled out of sight,

***Lo! From the sun a joyous gleam
Breaks forth, of amber light.”***

Then the ever gracious Lord hung out across the heavens His bow of beauty—the Covenant token—as if to assure us that He was not about to destroy the earth with a flood. Soon the swift winds blew and cloud after cloud disappeared, till, as we went forth to walk beneath the gladsome trees and amidst the laughing flowers, the thick clouds had gone and above us was the blue serene beauty of Heaven! Tempest and bolts of terror were far removed! Heaven shone on earth and earth smiled back on Heaven.

On such a spiritual scene the Prophet fixed his eyes and he pictured it in the verse which precedes my text. A cloud, even a thick cloud of sin shut out the light of God’s Countenance from His people and turned its dark side on their upward gazing eyes. Sins and transgressions interposed like a curtain, no, rather like a wall of brass, between the sinful people and their God, so that their prayers could not pass through to Him. Nor could His favor shine down on them. They cowered down in terror as they heard the voice of God threatening judgment—and they expected every moment that He would overthrow them in His wrath.

Lo! Instead thereof, the Lord hung out the Covenant rainbow! Gospel promises were seen, Jesus was set forth as the great atoning Sacrifice and, as men looked upon Him, gleams from the light of God’s Countenance filled them with hope. Nor did they hope in vain, for soon the Lord fulfilled, as in a moment, the Word in which it is written, “I have blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins.” So, going forth and returning to their God beneath that clear sky, from which the Sun of Righteousness shone down with beams of love, the forgiven people were filled with rejoicing and, by the mouth of the Prophet, they cried aloud, “Sing, O Heaven! Clouds veil you no longer! Shout, you lower parts of the earth, which have been refreshed with fertilizing showers! Shout, O you forest trees, whose every bough has been hung with diamond drops, for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel.”

Thus the scenery of the text is helpful to the full understanding of it. Read the two verses together and their beauty is seen. When did the joyous event take place which we are bid to celebrate with song? We may consider it as virtually accomplished *in the eternal counsels of God*, for our Lord is, “the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world.” When the Covenant was made between the Father and the Son, and Jesus undertook to die as a Substitute for His chosen people, then the cloud was gone and the Lord could look upon His elect with complacency, as redeemed by their Surety’s pledge. Viewing them as guilty, His holy eyes could endure them, but looking upon them as in Christ Jesus, regarding them through the Atonement, He cast their iniquities behind His back and was well-pleased with them, “for His Righteousness’ sake.”

At the thought of the Covenant, “ordered in all things and sure,” the universe of intelligent beings may well rejoice, for therein man’s Redemp-

tion and God's Glory are joined together by an eternal decree! On the strength of that Covenant, multitudes entered Heaven before the great Surety had shed His blood—it was, therefore, a legitimate theme for holy song before the long appointed day had dawned! The clouds were actually removed *when the Atonement was presented*. In the fullness of time, Jesus appeared and carried up to the tree all the sins of His people. Having all His life carried their sicknesses and sorrows, He bore the burden of sin to the place of its annihilation—and by His death he made an end of it!

Apart from the Atonement, the chosen of God, like other men, lay under sin. The black cloud was over all the race, but Jesus took the dense mass of all the transgressions of His people—past, present and to come—and obliterated the whole, even as a cloud is blotted out from the face of Heaven. Jesus took the whole incalculably ponderous load, all charged with tempest as it was, and bore it all upon those shoulders which would have been crushed to the earth had they not been Divine! On the tree He bore that sin and the wrath which was due to it, feeling all its crowded tempests in His own soul, until in that moment when He had borne all, and ended all, He sent up the victorious shout of, "It is finished!"

Then shone forth the unclouded Glory of boundless love! Then was gone, forever, the threatened storm! Then righteousness sprang out of the earth and peace looked down from Heaven! Then the reconciled ones might well exclaim, "Sing, O heavens; for the Lord has done it: shout, you lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel!" Sin was put away, transgression was cast into the depths of the sea and loud over all rang out the jubilant challenge—"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who is he that condemns, now that Christ has died?"

The text also receives an actual fulfillment to each one of God's people in the moment *when the eye of faith is first turned to the crucified Savior*. I scarcely need to sketch that experience, for, my Brothers and Sisters, you know it well. O, the blackness of the darkness above! O, the horror of the tempest within in the dreadful hour of conviction of sin—when my weary soul longed for nothingness that it might escape from its own Hell! O, the dread of the wrath to come! I saw all God's indignation gathering up to spend itself upon *me*, but, Glory be to God, it spent itself elsewhere!—

***"The tempest's awful voice was heard;
O Christ, it broke on Thee!
Your open bosom was my ward,
It braved the storm for me.
Your form was scarr'd, your visage marr'd,
Now cloudless peace for me."***

Well do I remember the day in which I looked to Jesus—I was lightened in a moment! The rain was over and gone, and all was peace and joy. Oh, that blessed day! I went forth with joy and was led forth with peace. The mountains and the hills broke forth before me into singing and all the trees of the field did clap their hands. Nor has the joy departed! For me the mountains are still singing and the trees still clap their hands! My heart is still glad within me at every mention of the precious name of Je-

sus! His blood still speaks peace within my conscience and His finished Sacrifice is still my joy! This also comes true not only at first, *but frequently during the Christian life*, for there are times when our unbelief makes new clouds and threatens new storms.

Though our sin was all forgiven at the very first and when we were first washed we were clean, every whit, so that we needed not ever afterwards to wash again, except to wash our feet, yet unbelief can revive the memories of sin and defile the conscience with dead works. And so it can create clouds between us and God. Nevertheless, when our Lord reveals Himself, He blots out our sins like a cloud and like a thick cloud our transgressions. And we return unto Him and rejoice in Him. We need not come under these returning glooms and we ought not to do so—but should it happen to us that we come under a cloud—it will be a blessed thing to look up and remember that the Lord can clear the skies in a moment and turn our dreariest shades into the brightness of the morning!

The text will obtain its best fulfillment, I think, *at the day of the Lord's appearing*—that day around which our chief hopes must ever center. The day will come when the Gospel shall have been preached for the last time—when the chosen of God shall have been all gathered out from among men and the dispensation shall be fulfilled. Then shall all the saints rise to Glory at the call of God. The elect multitude shall all be there—everyone according to the purpose of the Father, everyone according to the Redemption of the Son, everyone according to the calling of the Spirit—all will be there and upon their faces there shall be no spot nor wrinkle! And on their garments no stain nor defilement, for they are without fault before the Throne of God.

Then as the books are opened and the transgressions of the ungodly are published under Heaven, they shall stand without trembling, for—

***“Jesus, Your blood and righteousness
Their beauty are, their glorious dress.
‘Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall they lift up their head.”***

Yes, and *we* shall be there who have believed in Jesus, every one of us! And with what delight, as we reflect upon our sins, shall we see the all-covering Atonement, the Cross which crucified our sins, the sepulcher which swallowed up in an eternal death all our transgressions, the Ascension which led captivity captive and the Second Coming which gave to us the adoption, to wit, the Redemption of our body, and perfected us so that no trace of sin's mischief can be found upon us! No damage shall be sustained by our humanity! We shall come up out of the furnace of life's trials with not the smell of fire upon us! Though the temptation and the guilt were like a seven-times heated furnace, yet, because He, the Son of God, came into the burning furnace with us, we shall live and come forth unscathed! And in the Last Day our humanity shall have suffered no harm, but shall even be brighter and better than if it had never fallen.

Ah, what notes will be heard! Not the sound of cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, as in the days of Babylon's idolatries, but blessed songs of holy adoration shall be heard, to which angels' harmonies shall keep tune and this shall be the hymn—

“Sing, O you heavens; for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel.”

II. We have now reached the second part of our subject and, therefore, LET US CONTEMPLATE THE GLORIOUS SUBJECT FOR JOY. The great subject of joy is *Redemption*—the Redemption of God’s Israel. *This is a stupendous work.* It was a simple matter for man to sell himself into slavery, but to redeem him was another matter! This is the work, this is the labor! To redeem man from his iniquity is a work which all the cherubim and seraphim could not have accomplished! A work, indeed, which all creatureship would have failed to perform!

My Brothers and Sisters, our slavery was terrible and the price of deliverance was far beyond mountains of silver and gold. The Redemption of the soul is precious. “It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold.” As there needed a price, so there was needed a power, to redeem. With a high hand and an outstretched arm must Israel be brought out of Egypt—but where could such power be found? Neither angel nor archangel possessed it. And as for the sons of man, the insects which dance through a summer’s eve are not more feeble. Hopeless is human bondage unless the malice and craft and power of Satan can be matched by love and wisdom and a superior force at all points.

The price has been found, the power has been displayed! Sing, O you heavens, for the Lord has found a Ransom! We were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious *blood* of Christ and that price has effectually set us free! Break forth into singing, you mountains, for the Lord has also found the power—His own right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory! He has brought up His people out of the house of bondage and made them free, indeed! Of Redemption, Redemption by price and by power, we are bid to sing! A Redemption so *pre-eminently desirable* that we can never sufficiently value it! A Redemption which has delivered us from sin, of all slaveries the worst!

“Sin shall not have dominion over you.” Christ has effectually redeemed you from its tyrannical sway. You enjoy, also, deliverance from the curse of the Law, by Christ’s being made a curse for us. As it is written, “Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.” You are blessed with deliverance from misery—wherever there is sin, misery is sure to follow—but Jesus has borne the penalty for your sins and turned it aside from you. You are delivered from carking care and unbelieving anxiety. The peace of God, which passes all understanding keeps your heart and mind by Jesus Christ.

And you are delivered from death and Hell. Let this thought thrill you with delight—in your ear can never ring the doleful sentence, “Depart, you cursed!” For you there is no bottomless pit, no fire which cannot be quenched, no worm which can never die! Christ has delivered you! You are no longer slaves to sin and victims to death, for you are set free from the thralldom of Satan who has the power of death! He may tempt, but he cannot force. He may provoke, but he cannot subdue. Christ has undone

the devil's work! He has cast him down from his throne and torn up his stronghold—his empire over you is ended, never to be renewed!

In you who have believed, the Lord has set up His Throne and there He will reign forever. Glory be to God for this! The Lord's Redemption is the theme of ceaseless praise, for it is a Redemption which brings in its train, hope, holiness and Heaven. It brings deliverance from sin, likeness to Christ and eternal Glory with Christ. Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O Earth! Brothers and Sisters, the very center and emphasis of the song seems, to me, to lie in this—"The Lord has done it." How my heart delights in those five words, "The Lord has done it!" Look at them for a minute. Whatever God does is the subject of joy to all pure beings! God in action is the delight of an intelligent universe.

When God created the world, the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy! I can well conceive that they kept a more than ordinarily joyous festival on that Seventh Day, when the Lord "rested and was refreshed." Wondrous expression! If we were perfect, everything that God did would cause us to sing—and as He is always acting—we should be always singing! Yes, if He smote us, it would make us bless Him. If Eve were clean divorced from sin. If salvation were the work of man, our scantiest notes might suffice, for what is man but a worm, a creature that is crushed before the moth? For what is he to be accounted of? But when we sing of Redemption, it is the Lord's Redemption! He planned it from the beginning. He carried it out in the Person of His Son! He applies it by His Holy Spirit! Salvation is of the Lord. "The Lord has done it."

You who choose, may invent a salvation that is partly by man and partly by God, and you may cry this up as much as you please. As for me, I have no desire for any salvation but that which is all of God, neither is there any other! This one note shall occupy my entire being—"The Lord has done it." "The Lord has done it." Every new convert who has newly found peace knows that the Lord has done it! Every man who has been, for years, a Believer and has learned his own weakness, will say clearly, "The Lord has done it!" Yes, and the aged Christian, just about to depart, is the man to say, "The Lord has done it." Grace reigns without a rival! The Lord, alone, is exalted! Sing, O heavens, and be joyful O earth, for Redemption is Jehovah's work!

It is sweet to reflect that *Redemption is an accomplished fact*. It is not "The Lord *will* do it," but, "The Lord *has* done it." If I were sent, this morning, as a prophet to tell you that the Lord would become Incarnate, bleed and die on Golgotha, I hope that some would believe it. But it may be you would find it difficult to *realize* it and, as Abraham did, to see Christ's day and be glad. For it is a marvel not to be believed at all except upon Divine testimony that God Himself should make Atonement for injury done to His own moral government. But I have, today, to speak of a matter of *history*—"The Lord has done it!" He who was the offended One has provided a Propitiation—His own deed of transcendent Grace has scattered the thick clouds of sin and poured eternal day upon the darkened earth! Jesus *has* bled and died and, thereby, vanquished sin!

Our glorious Samson lay asleep in the Gaza of the tomb and His foes thought they had Him fast forever. But He awoke before the morning light and He pulled up the gates of Death and Hell, post and bar and all, and carried them away, leading captivity captive! He has done it! Our Divine Deliverer has spoiled Death and the Grave for us. "Sing, O you heavens: shout, you lower parts of the earth." The Breaker is gone up before us and our King at the head of us! He has broken up and cleared a pathway straight from the tomb to the Throne of God! Glory be to His name, He has done it!

We may lay peculiar force upon the word, "The Lord has *done* it," for *He has finished the work*. In the matter of the Redemption of His people, nothing remains to be done. There is no mortgage on the Church of God to be ultimately discharged. The Lord has made us His unencumbered freehold and we are His own portion forever. There is not a little left of human merit for the sinner to work out for himself, or some little point in which the work of salvation is incomplete. But "The Lord has done it!" No, Brothers and Sisters, even the fringe of the robe of righteousness is all there—you have not a thread to add to it—it is without seam and woven from the top throughout, all of one piece. *Consummatum est*. "It is finished," every type fulfilled, every Commandment kept, every sin abolished—the wrath of God and everything that hindered put away. "The Lord has done it." The heavens sang when Jesus came to do the deed! They woke the silence of the sheepfolds when the heavenly Babe was born—how must they sing, now, that He has finished the work which was committed to Him and perfected forever all those who were set apart!

I cannot speak on such a theme. Language is too poor a medium for the expression of my grateful joy. I wish that we could pause and sing the text—"The Lord has done it: He has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel." A very important part of the song, however, lies in the fact that *what God has done glorifies Himself*. Infinite Mercy and condescending Love reflect Glory upon God! What a subject for a Dr. Owen to write upon—the attributes of God as displayed and glorified in Redemption! He would need a score of volumes, all crowded with such condensed thought as he was apt to give forth. What a chapter should be written on the *wisdom* of Redemption! What another chapter upon the *justice* of it! How the Lord would not pardon sin without a Sacrifice because He was just and could not tolerate iniquity. What another chapter, no, what *volumes* upon volumes might be composed upon the love of Redemption!

The fear would be that our finite minds, in beholding the brightness of one Divine attribute, would be so dazzled as to forget the rest. Who can tell us, concerning the Atonement, which of its letters is best written—the Wisdom, the Justice, or the Grace? In Redemption you see all the attributes of God, blended in harmony, shining with benignant radiance! Not with the flash and flame of Sinai, but with the soft beams of peace and love from Calvary. God is never so gloriously seen as at the Cross! No, not even amidst the flaming seraphim do the saints above enjoy such a view of God as when they see Him in the wounds of Jesus! And putting their

finger into the print of the nails, they exclaim with transport, "My Lord and my God."

Why, my Brothers and Sisters, the Lord has not only illustrated every one of His attributes in the great plan of Redemption, but He has been pleased to show how the goodness of His Nature triumphs over all the power of evil. Satan seemed to have gained a great advantage over God when he poisoned our race with his venom. The advantage was but temporary and it ended in his greater defeat! Little did he know that by his craft and malice he was preparing a black background for Divine Love to lay its lovely tints upon, that they might be the more conspicuous. How are you baffled in your dark designs, O Lucifer! How are you vanquished, O you enemy! How are you spoiled, O you spoiler! How are you led captive, O captivity! You thought that man would be your weak and willing instrument with which to show your spite against the Most High, but lo, man, whom you did disgrace and dishonor, triumphs over you on God's behalf!

The Seed of the woman whom you did beguile has been wiser than you! His bruised heel has been the breaking of your head! He has all things under His feet—all sheep and oxen, yes, and the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea—and whatever passes through the paths of the sea. The man Christ Jesus is Lord of All and at His name all creatures bow the knee. Even the devils are subject unto Him, and evil is overruled for good. See how the Lord "frustrates the token of the liars, and makes diviners mad." Let the Lord be praised forever and ever!

The Lord has also glorified Himself by raising up a race of creatures such as could not have been created by mere power, at least, so far as we can judge. God has a company of angels to worship Him but they never knew evil and, consequently, their choice of good is not so marvelous. They are also of an ethereal nature and are not cumbered with material bodies of flesh and blood. The Lord might have created myriads more of pure spirits like the angels, but He desired to be served and loved by beings who should be, in part, material, and yet should be akin to Himself—beings who should possess freedom of will and should know both good and evil—and yet should forever choose good alone.

Behold how such creatures have been produced! Not so much by *creation* as by Redemption! The glorified were once plunged deep into sin, but they were, without a violation of their free agency, recovered to their allegiance by the love of Jesus and then lifted up into such a position that in Christ Jesus they are akin to God Himself, so that no order of beings intervenes between them and God! And yet they never will, nor can, presume, nor take ambitious advantage of their elevated position. If God were to create free agents, knowing both good and evil, and put them where men will be in Heaven without their undergoing any preparatory process, it would be a dangerous experiment.

But for Him to let them know evil to the full and yet be forever bound to perfect holiness because infinite Love sways them with Omnipotent obligations of gratitude—this is to make creatures which bring exceeding glory to their Author! These are not merely fashioned on His wheel, but

dipped into the blood of His own suffering and indwelt by His own mighty power—well may they be precious in His sight! “Glory, glory, how the angels sing!” But far louder are the notes of the redeemed! “Glory, glory,” thrice and sevenfold told is that which comes from those loud harps of ransomed ones who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! The Lord has glorified Himself in Israel!

I cannot linger here, though the subject fascinates me, for I have to speak somewhat upon the third point, which is,

III. LET US LISTEN TO THE SONG. The angels sing, for they have deep sympathy with the Redemption of man. The redeemed in Glory sing, for they have been the recipients of this mighty mercy. The material heavens, themselves, also ring with the sweet music and every star takes up the refrain! And with sun and moon they all praise the Most High. Descending from heaven, the song charms the lower earth and the Prophet calls upon materialism to share in the joy—mountains and valleys, forests and trees are charged to join the song.

Why should they not? This round earth of ours has been overshadowed by the curse through sin. She has yet to be unwrapped of all the mists which iniquity has cast upon her, for the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him that subjected the same in hope, because the creature, itself, shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God! Therefore let creation sing! What mountain is there that has not been defiled with idolatry? Lo, the altars of Chemosh and the high places of Baal! But sing, you mountains, for the God of the hills is revealed and has purged you by the blood of Calvary!

What valley is there which man has not polluted with sin? In the plains, which should have been sacred to peaceful harvests, men have shed the blood of their fellows in fierce battle—and cities have been built which have become the strongholds of iniquity. But sing, you valleys and you fruitful plains, for the Lord shall walk through you and make you as the valley of Barachah where the men of Judah sang, “Praise the Lord, for His mercy endures forever.” Therefore the name of the place was called the Valley of Blessing unto this day. You forests, where wild *beasts* have been invaded by still wilder *men*, break forth into singing, for no more shall the destroying hand of the Lord be upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan! You groves which have witnessed the cruel rites of bloody worship, sing, for down your aisles shall now be heard the holy hymn which chants redeeming Love!

O you green trees, under which men have polluted themselves, beneath your shade shall saintly spirits find retreats prepared for prayer and praise! Break forth into singing, you mountains! Sing, O Moriah, on whose summit the Patriarch drew his knife to slay his son, for the true Isaac has been offered up! God has provided for Himself a lamb! Sing, O Sinai, for the Law proclaimed from your awful summit has now been magnified and rendered honorable! Sing, O Pisgah, for now that Christ has died, from your peak may be seen a promised land into which the servants of the

Lord shall not be denied an entrance! Sing, O Carmel, for the controversy between God and Baal has been decided once and for all! Sing, O Hermon, for now the gentle dews of brotherly love shall fall upon and keep not silent! Sing, O Gilboa, once accursed, for the Son of David gives you back your dew! Sing, O Tabor, for Messiah transfigured has become the image of the future race! Sing, O Olivet, for where Jesus groaned and bled He comes to plant His foot to establish bliss and holiness forever!

The text exhorts the lower parts of the earth to shout, and well they may, for in the hands of the redeeming Lord are the deep places of the earth. Let the valleys respond to the song of the hills. Shout, O valley of Shaveh, you that are called the king's vale, for now the great Melchizedek has brought forth the true Bread and Wine for the seed of Abraham! Shout, O Eshcol, for your richest clusters are outdone by the true Vine which the Lord has planted! O valley of the Jordan shout, for in your river the Redeemer was baptized! O valley of Baca rejoice, for the Lord Jesus has filled your pools! O vale of Achor shout, for you are now a door of hope! O you wildernesses and solitary places, be glad, for Redemption shall make you blossom as the rose! Let every tree in the forest bless the Lord, let each one yield boughs with which to strew the way before the lowly Prince. Fruitful trees and all cedars, praise the Lord!

Down the fir trees' pillared shade let the soft murmur of praise be heard! And beneath our island's giant oaks let the glorious Gospel be proclaimed! Praise the Lord you elms, as peace sports down your ancient avenues. Praise Him you far-spreading beeches, as beneath your shade the flocks feed in plenty. And you, you pines forever clad in verdure, join the song! Let not a single herb be silent, nor even the hyssop upon the wall be dumb! I cannot reach "the height of this great argument," nor can any man besides, I suppose, unless he were a Milton and had a soul inspired at once with loftiest poetry and Divine Grace.

The meaning of the whole seems to be this, that wherever saints are, they ought to praise God for redeeming love, whether they climb the Alps or descend into the plains. Whether they dwell in the cities or walk in the quietude of the woods—in whatever state of mind they feel themselves—they still should praise redeeming Grace and dying love. Whether on the mountaintop of communion, or in the valley of humiliation—whether lifted up by prosperity or cast down by adversity—they should leave a shining trail of praise behind them in their daily course, even as does the vessel when it plows the sea. The text calls upon all classes and conditions of men to praise God for Redemption. You that are lifted up like mountains—magistrates, princes, kings and emperors—and you who lie beneath like plains.

You who eat bread in the sweat of your faces. You children of poverty and toil, rejoice in redeeming love! You who dwell in the midst of sin as in a tangled forest, you who have transgressed against God and plunged into the deep places of vice, be glad, for you may be restored! All you born of woman, together, praise the Redeemer of Israel, for He has accomplished the salvation of His people!

IV. LET US JOIN THIS SONG. Mr. Sankey is now behind me, but he cannot sing sweetly enough to set forth to the full the majesty of this song, nor could the choicest choir of singing men and singing women! No, this task exceeds the reach of the seraphim, themselves! Praise is silenced, O Lord, by the glory of Your Love! Yet, Brothers and Sisters, let us give forth such music as we have.

Let us consider how we sing this song. We sing it, when, by faith we see the grand Truth of God that Jesus Christ took His people's sin upon Himself and so redeemed them. Understanding this fact, which is the heart of the Gospel, we begin to sing for joy! Get a grip of that, my Brethren, and hold it fast—your hearts will then sing—you cannot help it! Not all the harps of Heaven can be more melodious than your song will be when your heart fully understands this fact—that Jesus Christ did actually stand in His people's place and finished transgression and brought in everlasting righteousness for them!

You will sing it better, still, if the Holy Spirit has applied it to your soul, so that you can say, "*My* sins are blotted out like a cloud, and like a thick cloud *my* transgressions." "Through Jesus' blood I am clean, I am accepted in the Beloved, I am dear to the heart of God! On *me* there remains now, no spot nor wrinkle, for I am cleansed through Jesus Christ!" Nothing else can bring forth such charming music from any man's mind as a sense of redeeming Grace and dying Love! You will still be better able to sing this if you, everyday, realize the blessings of Redemption and pardon! By drawing near to God, using the privilege of prayer. By trusting the Lord for everything. By enjoying sonship and communing with your heavenly Father as you seek to bear the image of the heavenly as truly as you have borne the image of the earthly. Yes, you will sing it, by the Grace of God, right beautifully, if you are fully consecrated to the Lord's service, and are borne along by the irresistible current of Divine Love! O, if it is so with you, Beloved, you will be forever crying, "Sing, O heavens, for the Lord has done it."

I think I hear from different parts of the building the lament, "Alas, we cannot sing, for we have not believed in Jesus and Christ has not put away our sin." Listen a minute, and I have done. Sinner, though you have not this Redemption, yet I would still have you sing about it, for it is precisely what you need. You are slaves to sin and ought you not to bless God that there can be such a thing as *Redemption*? If I had been a slave in the old slave days, even though I had small chance of being redeemed, yet the word *Redemption* would have been a sweet morsel to me. And if I heard of others being redeemed, if I sang at all, I should choose for my theme, Redemption! So may you, poor Soul! Many are redeemed and are rejoicing in it, why should it not come to you?

At any rate, begin to hope. Rejoice because salvation is a work done for you by Another. "The Lord has done it." A Redemption in which you had to find a part of the price would not make you sing, for you are too poor to contribute a farthing! But the Lord has found the whole cost to the utmost penny. If ever you are saved, it must be by power beyond your own, for you are weak as water. Be glad, then, that the Lord has done it! If you can

ever get that thought into your mind, (and I pray the Holy Spirit will put it there), that your salvation was completed on the tree by the Lord Jesus, why, I think you will, with joy, shout forth the Redeemer's praise! Think again! "The Lord has done it!" Even He whom you have offended. The God whom you have grieved has condescended to work our your Redemption! Ought not this to make your soul say, "Would God it were for me"? and then begin to sing even at the bare possibility of such a thing!

Then, Sinner, listen. Your sin *can* be blotted out! You have tried to remove the stain, but all in vain. That scarlet stain abides, and though you were to wash your hands in the Atlantic till you reddened every wave, that blot would never disappear! No finite power can ever remove the accursed spot! But it can be removed, for the text says He has blotted it out in the case of others. Why not, then, for you? This disease is not absolutely unto death—it may be cured! O Sinners, those fetters are not, after all, eternal! They may be snapped! The bars in yonder window may be torn out so that you can escape into liberty! Begin to sing, then!

Alas, I know you will not because *I* bid you, nor at *any* man's bidding, till Grace sets you free! The only thing to make you sing is for you to realize salvation and O, may you do so at this moment by believing in Jesus! Have done with everything but Christ and drop into His arms! Rest in Him! Trust Him! Depend upon Him and all is well! And then will you cry aloud, "Sing, O you heavens, for the Lord has done it."—

***"Come every soul by sin oppressed,
There's mercy with the Lord,
And He will surely give you rest
By trusting in His Word!
Only trust Him!
Only trust Him!
Only trust Him now!
He will save you.
He will save you.
He will save you now."***

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 44.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—96, 203, 428.**

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THE JOY OF REDEMPTION

NO. 2450

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
FEBRUARY 2, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Sing, O you Heavens, for the LORD has done it: shout, you lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel.”
Isaiah 44:23.***

WHEN the human mind is on the stretch of emotion, whether it is under the influence of grief or joy, it often thinks that the whole world is in sympathy with itself. It seems to wrap the mantle of the universe round about its spiritual nature as a garment. If it is joyous, it puts on nature as a spangled robe, but if it is wretched, it finds its sackcloth and ashes in the world round about it. You know how the Prophet—poet as well as Prophet—says of us in our joyous moments, “You shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.” When the heart is happy, nature seems to ring marriage peals in unison with the music within the heart. Let the eyes be clear and all nature will be bright! The earth seems glad when we are so.

On the other hand, it is a part of the nature of grief to be able to transpose itself into the world around. Does not old Master Herbert cry—

***“O who will give me tears? Come, all you springs,
Dwell in my head and eyes; come, clouds and rain:
My grief has need of all the watery things
That nature has produced. Let every vein
Suck up a river to supply my eyes,
My weary, weeping eyes, too dry for me,
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies,
To bear them out, and with my state agree.”***

Gladly would he make the world weep with him when he wept, as others have made the world sorrow when they grieved, and rejoice when they were full of joy. The fact is, the world is one great organ and it is man that plays it—and when he is full of joy and gladness, he puts his tiny fingers upon the keys and wakes the world to a majesty of joy! Or if his soul is gloomy, then he plays some pensive, dolorous dirge and thus the outside world keeps pace with the other little world within.

The Prophet, in this chapter, had been studying the great redemption which God had worked for His people, and he was so happy and delighted with it, so overjoyed, so charmed, so enraptured, that he could not help saying, “Sing, O you heavens.” There were the angels looking down on man with eyes of sympathy. “Sing,” he said, “you angels, that sinners can be saved, yes, that sinners *have* been saved! Rejoice to think

that repenting sinners can have their sins forgiven them! Sing, you stars, that all night long, like the bright eyes of God, look down on this poor world, so dark but for you! Sing, for God has blessed your sister star, unwrapped her from her gloom and made her shine more radiant in mercy than any one of you! Sing, O blue sky of profound heights! O you unnavigated ether, be you stirred with song and let space become one mighty mouth for melody! Sing, O you heavens!”

Then, when he must come down from those lofty heights, he looks upon *the earth* and he says, “O earth, echo, echo with song, and you lower parts of the earth, you valleys and plains, the sea with its million hands, the deep places of the earth and the hollow caverns thereof—let them all sound with joy because Jehovah has redeemed man and, in mercy, has come down to His poor erring creatures.” And then, as if he heard all earth getting vocal with the voices of happy ones, and felt it would not do for the praise to be limited, even, to the tongues of men, he thinks of those mountains where man cannot climb, those virgin snows, undefiled by human feet, and he says, “*Sing, you mountains!*” Then he thinks of the shaggy woods upon their brows and he bids them sing in admiration—“*Sing, you forests!* Let every tree break forth in melody!”

Do you catch his thought? Do you not see how the great poet-Prophet, in a mighty fervency of delight, wakes the whole earth and even Heaven, itself, to one mighty burst of song? And what is the subject of it? “The Lord has redeemed His people, and glorified Himself in Israel.” Oh, that I could stir in your hearts songs of joy for the redemption which God has worked for His people and for the Glory which God has gotten to Himself by this wonderful act of Divine Grace!

There are three redemptions which may well make all hearts rejoice. The first is *redemption by blood*. The second is *redemption by power*. And the third is the completion of the two—*redemption in perfection*.

I. The first is, REDEMPTION BY BLOOD. You know the story. Man had sinned against his God and God, the Just One, must punish sin. But it was agreed that if a plan could be devised by which Justice should be satisfied, Mercy should have full play for all her kind designs. What a day that was when the Eternal Wisdom revealed to man the plan by which the Son of God should suffer instead of us, so that Justice might have its claims discharged in full, and yet Mercy enjoy its boundless, unlimited sway! Sing, you heavens, because of the wisdom which devised so benevolent a scheme! Rejoice, O earth, because of the marvelous, matchless understanding which framed so wise a plan!

The terms or preamble thus agreed upon, it was necessary that someone should suffer instead of man in order that man might escape. *Will the Eternal Son undertake to do this?* He is God. His Glory is excessive. Angels veil their faces as they adore Him. Is it possible that He will ever become a Man—to bleed, to be spit upon, to be scourged, to be crucified? Will He undertake to do it? He said unto His Father, “Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God!” Sing again, you heavens! Let your hallelujahs rise aloft, you angels! The Son of God has undertaken the redemption of men! That which was once only a scheme has now become a Covenant! That which was but a

plan in the Divine mind is now a compact between the Father and the Son!

But though Christ has undertaken it, *will He perform it?* The years roll on, the world gets gray, and yet He does not come. But all of a sudden, when shepherds were keeping their flocks by night, there was heard a sound up yonder and straightway a multitude of the heavenly host appeared, singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" What does this mean? It is Jesus, the Son of God, come to do what He undertook to do—and there He is, lying in a manger, wrapped in swaddling cloths and God is born into the world! God has become flesh! He, without whom was not anything made that was made, has come down to tabernacle among us, that we may behold His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, and yet a Man of the substance of His mother, like ourselves! Sing, you angels! Let the carols of that first Christmas night never cease, for that which was once a scheme, and then a Covenant, has now commenced to be a work in real earnest!

He has come to do it, *but will He ever fulfill it?* Will He ever accomplish the stupendous obligation? Thirty-two years roll over Him, during which He is despised and rejected of men, the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. But will He ever achieve that last, that dreadful task? Will He ever be able to perform it? Will He give His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that pluck off the hair? Will He, verily, be led like a sheep to the slaughter? Can it ever be that the Lord of Life and Immortality will actually die the death of a criminal and be buried in a borrowed tomb? My Brothers and Sisters, not only will it be, but it has been! Recall to memory that eventful night when Judas betrayed Him with a perfidious kiss, when, in Gethsemane, He was covered with a bloody sweat, a sweat caused by your sins and mine! Do you not see Him led away by those who have arrested Him? Do you not see the Lord of Glory mocked and set at nothing, made an object of ridicule, the jeer of sarcasm and the butt of scorn?

"*Ecce Homo!*" Behold the Man covered with an old robe, the cloak of some common soldier—and His back laid bare to show you that it is covered with another crimson, the crimson of His own most precious blood, fetched by the accursed scourge from those blessed shoulders! Do you see Him staggering along beneath the weight of that heavy Cross, hurried and hounded through the streets of Jerusalem? Do you mark Him as He bids the daughters of Jerusalem stop their tears and weep not for Him, but for themselves and their children? Can you not see Him as they fling Him on His back, stretch out His hands and feet to the wood—and then drive the cruel nails through their most tender parts? Can you not see Him as they lift Him high between earth and Heaven and then dash the Cross into its place, dislocating all His bones, till He cries out, "I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint. You have brought Me into the dust of death"?

Yes, He is accomplishing it all! Jehovah's wrath is pouring over Him, wave after wave, and He is meekly bowing His head to it all! Jehovah's sword is being driven into His heart and He is baring His breast to receive it—for your sakes and for mine! Sinner, He does it altogether. He

can do it! He is doing it! *He has done it*, for He bowed His head, saying, "It is finished!" and gave up the ghost! That which was first a purpose, then a Covenant, and then a work initiated, is now a work achieved! Jesus Christ has redeemed His people with His own most precious blood!

But they took His mangled corpse down from the Cross. They put it in the tomb. It remained a question whether He really had accomplished the work, for if He had, God would set two seals to it—first, by His rising from the tomb, and secondly, by His ascending into Heaven. See then, Believer! On the third day, the mighty Sleeper unwound His grave-clothes! An angel came from Heaven and rolled away the stone and, in the glory of a life unshackled by the trammels of vanity to which our poor creatureship is made subject, He rose from the dead! And when He had shown Himself to His disciples and to others for 40 days, He took them out to Olivet. And as He communed with them and blessed them, He went up into Heaven and a cloud received Him out of their sight! Can you not, in the devout exercise of imagination, track Him past those clouds? Do you not see Heaven's heroes as they meet Him and welcome Him? See you not His chariot waiting for Him? Do you not behold Him as He mounts it and they sing in advance of Him till they come to the crystal gates and then, from over the gates, the watchers cry, "Who is this King of Glory?" while others shout, "Lift up your heads, O you gates and be you lift up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in!" Yes, in He rides, up to His Father's Throne, and there He sits in state, God over all, blessed forever, the Lamb once slain, no more to die! Sing, you heavens, and be glad, O earth! The work which was accomplished is accepted. The deed which was finished is stamped and recognized by Heaven and now there is peace "through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant."

Ah, I know what would make some of you very happy. Should you come, tonight, to the Cross, look up and trust Christ to save you—your joy would then be unspeakable! Never did a soul trust Christ in vain. You would receive pardon, you would get peace, you would feel as if Heaven did sing and as if earth did rejoice! You would say, "Here am I, a poor, guilty sinner, having nothing to trust to of my own, but I know my sins were laid on Christ! And if they were laid on Christ, they cannot be in two places at one time—consequently, they cannot be put on me when I trust in Jesus! They were put on His bleeding back and they are gone! There is not one left in the Book of God against me."

O dear Hearer, if you believe in Christ, you are perfectly absolved. You need not a priest to say, "*Absolvo te*"—"I absolve you." There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus! Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect, since Jesus died? If you rest in Jesus Christ, He has paid all your debts and you are out of debt! Christ has discharged all your liabilities and you are free! Let your soul, then, be happy! Let your soul be so happy that it transfers its joy to all nature and makes Heaven and earth glad with its own gladness!

This is the first redemption—redemption by blood.

II. Let us strike another key and celebrate the second theme that redemption unfolds—REDEMPTION BY POWER.

Those for whom the Savior shed His blood and so redeemed them by price, are, by-and-by, redeemed by power. The Spirit of God finds them, like other men, fond of sin. Like other men, blind to the beauties of the Savior, deaf to the commands of Christ. But if Christ has bought them with His blood, He never paid for what He will not have. The price was too precious to be paid for those who are not saved. If Christ has paid His blood for a soul, He will have that soul! Neither will God's honor rob Him of His purchase, nor will Christ be content to lose what He so dearly bought.

This second redemption, which is conversion and regeneration, is equally a subject of holy joy. Very briefly I will set it forth. What sort of people are those whom Christ saves? Why, *some of them were the very worst of the worst*. Some of them were the companions of the lost. No, they were lost themselves! But when the Grace of God met with them, it washed them and made new men of them. There is many a man who has been a captain in the devil's service, but whom the Lord has taken and made a valiant man for the Truth. Oh, what a great sinner John Newton was before his conversion! You who have read his life know that he went about as far as a man could go. What an offender was John Bunyan before this Lord met with him! What a blood-thirsty wretch was Saul of Tarsus! What a horrible life had the thief led with whom Christ met at the last!

Now, when I think of these being saved, I feel as if I could say, "Sing, you heavens, and be joyful, O earth!" Sometimes, at our Church meetings, when some Brethren have told the story of their past lives, we have felt inclined to stop and sing! Some have said, "I never entered a place of worship for years. I cursed at the very thought of it! The Sabbath I never regarded. Yes, the very name of God, Himself, I despised. But Eternal Mercy met with me!" "Sing, O you heavens; for the Lord has done it: shout, you lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel." Yes, and the greatest wonder to every one of you will be that ever God's mercy saved you!

I can understand very well His saving any of *you*, but I often cannot comprehend why He should save me. Oh, this will be the wonder of Heaven to each one of us, to find ourselves there! And how will we say, "Sing, O Heaven, and be joyful, O earth!" if once our poor guilty feet tread that golden pavement and if, once being washed in the precious blood of Jesus, we shall be permitted to sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven! Oh, the joy to think that such sinners should be saved!

Does it not enhance the joy that *they were in such a miserable plight before they were saved*? They were prejudiced against the Gospel, but God knew how to knock their prejudices over! They were blind and would not see the beauties of it, but the Lord has a blessed way of opening blind eyes! Their hearts were as hard as granite, but God knew how to use the hammer and shiver the rock in pieces! Very likely they derided the very idea of being converted and yet they were made partakers of the saving change! Yes, and I have noticed that some of the most hardened are the very first who are met with—some of those who seemed the most

unlikely subjects of Divine Grace have been chosen by Divine Sovereignty and have been made wonders of Divine Power! Herein lies the matter that makes us sing and rejoice because the blind have been made to see, the deaf have been made to hear and the dead have been made to live! O you forests, sing of this wonder of mercy!

And still further, think of *what these souls are saved from*. But for Grace, the very hottest Hell would have been our portion—but we are saved from it. We should have been made to drink of the bitter cup of wrath forever—but we shall never drink a drop of it now. And then consider *what the man of God is saved to*. He is saved for Heaven. He is made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light! His head shall wear the crown. His hands shall sweep the strings of harps of gold. Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth! Saved from Hell and lifted up to Heaven, let the bass notes of our songs go down to Hell and make the devils grind their teeth with rage! And let the alto notes go up to Heaven and make even the angels glad as they see how sinners saved exult in Jesus' name!

Mighty as is the power, are we not often constrained to marvel at the weakness of the instruments which the Lord employs? Sometimes a soul is saved by Christ's Grace through a poor preacher who is despised by many and who, in himself, is humble, weak and feeble. By means of a tract, or a quotation from the Bible, or something of that sort, the heart is turned! Any instrument in the hand of God, though it seems most unlikely, is capable of bringing a soul to Christ! Oh, rejoice, you heavens, for God is glorified in using poor instruments to work His will!

And then see how *some are saved in the teeth of ten thousand obstacles*. It seems as though they only escape by the skin of their teeth, as though all the devils in Hell came after them with their mouths open, like roaring lions, seeking to devour them! Yet the hand of Divine Grace has been upon them and they have been saved! Are not some of you perfect miracles to yourselves? Do you not wonder that you have not gone back long ago? When you see what temptations you have had and how base your hearts, are you not astonished that Divine Grace should have made you a Christian at all, and kept you in the way of righteousness until now? Oh, with tears in our eyes let us bless God that we are what we are! Let our hearts be glad, tonight, and let us make all nature seem glad as we remember the hole from which we have been spared and the mire or the clay from which we have been drawn by the Irresistible, Effectual Grace of the Spirit of God!

III. And now, lastly, what a song will that be as Heaven and earth, mountains and forests, rejoice WHEN THE BELIEVER IS PERFECTLY REDEEMED!

On earth he was still the subject of temptation and he wrestled hard with inbred sins. But when death comes, he shall be perfect! There shall not be a rag of corruption, nor a relic of the old man. Brothers and Sisters, will you not make the heavens and the earth ring when you find yourselves made like unto Christ—when you shall find that nothing that old Adam gave you is left, that all sin is gone and that you are like the angels of God? Surely there shall be no voice in Heaven more exulting,

more joyous than that of men delivered from strong passions and deep depravity, and made perfectly like the Lord Jesus!

And there we shall be perfectly free from all the cares and troubles of this mortal life. No sweat to wipe from aching brows! No tossing upon beds of weariness! No nights of languishing! No question of, "What shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and with what shall I be clothed?" "The Lord God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." There shall be no more spiritual battles and conflicts. Death and Hell shall no more annoy us, nor sinners vex the righteous with their ungodly conversation—

***"Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in,
They are forever blest."***

Oh, blissful hour! Oh, happy moment when—

"We shall be near and like our God!"

Brothers and Sisters, does it not make you long to be gone when you think of the perfection of redemption? The body will be redeemed! It will rise from the dead. This poor dishonored body will be made like unto Christ's glorious body and then body and soul, together, shall, like twin angels, glorify God throughout eternity!—

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

Do you not wish you had wings to fly away? Well, it is but for a few minutes that you are detained here. "Minutes!" you say. "Why, they are months and years!" Yes, but what are they? When once they are gone, they shall be but as a watch in the night! You shall think of them then as God thinks of them, now, as but a very small moment. Courage! Wait with patience and you shall make all eternity sing because the Lord has redeemed His people and glorified Himself in Israel.

Alas, I fear there are some of you who will have no part or lot in this matter! If you would have this last redemption, begin with the first! Faith first! Look to the price—to the blood—and then the Holy Spirit will graciously give you the redemption which is by power! Your faith will be the first proof that you are so redeemed and will lead you on until you attain that perfection for which we groan, that adoption for which we wait, to wit, the redemption of the body! Bought with the blood of Jesus, quickened into newness of life by the power of His Resurrection and, at length gathered unto Jesus, to be with Him where He is, the joy of His salvation shall swell into a mighty chorus in which Heaven and earth shall ring out their loud-sounding music, while our tongues shall sing Immanuel's praise forever and ever! Amen.

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
488, 136 (SONG II), 116 (SONG III).**

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 44; 55; 2 SAMUEL 23:1-5.**

This evening, we will read two chapters from Isaiah's prophecy, the 44th and the 55th, and a few verses from the 23rd chapter of the second

Book of Samuel. May the Lord bless all these passages to us as we meditate upon them!

Isaiah 44:1. *Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen.* See, the chapter begins with a, “yet.” There is a great deal in God’s, “yets.” Notwithstanding all the sin and provocation mentioned in the previous chapter, the Lord still reveals His mercy and goodness to His ancient people.

2, 3. *Thus says the LORD that made you, and formed you from the womb, which will help you; Fear not, O Jacob, My servant; and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.* Be not cast down, you thirsty souls, think not that you must perish of drought, you who are like the parched earth; God is ready to bless, and to bless largely, too—“I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.”

3, 4. *I will pour My Spirit upon your seed, and My blessing upon your offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.* God’s Grace to our children is also Grace to us, for there is nothing that we desire more than to see them saved. It will be well for all of us who are parents to grasp this promise and to plead it before God—“Lord, send such floods of your Grace that our children may grow like the willow trees that flourish wherever the brooks and rivers wander!”

5. *One shall say, I am the LORD’S; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel.* They shall come in different ways, but they shall come unto the Lord. Some can, perhaps, only write out their resolve to be the Lord’s, while others can boldly speak it to whomever may hear. But they shall come when Grace is given to them.

6, 7. *Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of Hosts, I am the First, and I am the Last, and beside Me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people? And the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them.* God claims to be the one great Source of all true prophecy. He challenges the gods of the heathen to arrange future Providences, or even to foretell what those Providences will be.

8. *Fear you not, neither be afraid: have not I told you from that time and have declared it? You are even My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me? Yes, there is no God; I know not any.* God Himself, who knows all things, knows of no other God beside Himself. Indeed, there is no other, and there can be no other! The unity of the Godhead must be accepted by us—we cannot think of there being two Gods, since the one living and true God fills all space. Now the Lord, through the Prophet, holds up to ridicule the unreasonableness and folly of those who worship graven images.

9, 10. *They that made a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit, and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who has formed a God?* The very question is absurd!

10, 11. *Or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? Behold all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workman, they are of men. Does man make God? What kind of a god must that be that man can make?*

11, 12. *Let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together. The smith with the tongs both works in the coals, and fashions it with hammers, and works it with the strength of his arms: yes, he is hungry, and his strength fails: he drinks no water, and is faint. This maker of a god is faint? How utterly ridiculous is the idea that one who can make a god should, himself, be faint!*

13-16. *The carpenter stretches out his rule; he marks it out with a line. He fits it with planes, and he marks it out with the compass, and makes it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. He hews him down cedars, and takes the cypress and the oak which he strengthens for himself among the trees of the forest: he plants an ash, and the rain nourishes it. Then shall it be for a man to burn; for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yes, he kindles it, and bakes bread; yes, he makes a god, and worships it; he makes it a graven image and falls down thereto. It has often happened that when this passage has been read in the hearing of idolaters, they have been convinced by it of their folly. It is a very simple description of what takes place in an idol-maker's workshop, yet, simple as it is, it shows the absurdity of the idea of worshipping that which can be made by man's hands.*

16-18. *He burns part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eats flesh; he roasts roast and is satisfied: yes, he warms himself, and says, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: and the residue thereof he makes a god, even his graven image: he falls down unto it, and worships it, and prays unto it, and says, Deliver me; for you are my God. They have not known nor understood. There must be a failure of knowledge or understanding where such folly as this is possible!*

18. *For He has shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. They have been so full of sin that God has given them up to judicial blindness! And hardness of heart has come upon them as a punishment for their rebellion against the Most High.*

19, 20. *And none considers in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yes, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? Shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feeds on ashes. He is like a madman who takes to eating ashes—*

20, 21. *A deceived heart has turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? Remember these, O Jacob and Israel, for you are My servant. You who fear God, remember these things and keep clear of idolatry—the setting up of crucifixes, the hanging up of crosses or any kind of symbol whatever! Even though it is merely the simple triangle, or the sacred Alpha and Omega, away with it! The people of God must be clear from even the slightest traces of idolatry! See how many so-called Christian churches are nothing better than congregations of idolaters, such as the Church of Rome and even the Greek Church—the one with her images and her relics, and the other with her*

pictures and her icons! We must have none of these things, for the command still stands, “You shall not make unto you any graven image, nor any likeness of anything that is in the Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them.” In days like these in which we live, the people of God should be more particular than ever not to countenance any form of idolatry lest, by slow degrees, we come back to the old abominations which God abhors!

21-23. *I have formed you; you are My servant: O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of Me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed you. Sing, O you heavens; for the LORD has done it: shout, you lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel.* Glory be to His holy name, it shall be our delightful occupation, as long as we live, to glorify Him who “has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel.” Now turn to the 55th chapter of this prophecy—might we not almost say, the 55th chapter of this *Gospel*?

Isaiah 55:1. *Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.* “Ho...come you to the waters...to buy wine,” says the Lord by His servant, the Prophet. It is just like it was at the wedding feast at Cana, when the servants went to the water pots and found them full of wine. God often gives us more than we even think we need! Water would suffice to quench our thirst, but the Lord adds, “Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” Wine and milk were among the blessings that old Jacob pronounced upon Judah—they are symbolic of the special blessings which come to Believers through Jesus Christ, who is our true Judah. He gives us joy, He gives us nourishment, He gives us everything we really need. Whatever you lack, you shall find it in Christ! You have nothing to do but to come for it. You have no money, but even if you had, the blessings are priceless, they cannot be purchased! The price of mercy is without price. This is all you have to do in order to receive it—come and take it, take it freely, come and take it now! Never did a salesman plead with a customer more earnestly than the Spirit of God here pleads with sinners, yet it is not God who is to be profited by the transaction! He gains nothing except the indulgence of His love—we are the eternal gainers by His gracious Gift, yet the Lord says, “Come you,” and then again, “Come you,” and then a third time, “Come.” When he says, “Come, come, come,” who will refuse to come?

2. *Why do you spend money for that which is not bread?* All your care, your toil, your anguish of heart are spent in a vain desire to get this world—and if you do get it, it is nothing more than bread, and bad bread, too! It cannot satisfy the cravings of your immortal spirit—why do you waste your time and money trying to get that which is not worth the having? Will you hunt after shadows? Will you pursue the wind?

2. *And your labor for that which satisfies not? Listen diligently unto Me and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* True religion gives substantial joy to the heart. It is no dream! It is a blessed

reality, as those of us know who have tried it. If you will come and have it, you shall eat what is really good and your soul shall find such a satisfaction in it that you shall delight yourself in fatness.

3, 4. *Incline your ear and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live and I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.* These words refer not only to David, but to Jesus, great David's greater Son. The next verse is spoken especially to him, not to us, yet as we overhear it, we suck comfort for ourselves out of it.

5. *Behold, you shall call a nation that you know not, and nations that knew not you shall run unto you because of the LORD your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you.* Christ must have a people. He did not die in vain. God will give Him a following! He shall not be a Commander without troops. He shall not be a Leader without disciples. I shall preach, tonight, [The exposition was always *before* the sermon. For some reason, the publishers chose to place the exposition *after* the sermon.—EOD] in strong confidence that many will be saved in this place tonight. Where there is faith, God will respond to it. Pray, you who are the people of God, that this promise may be kept! It is a promise to Christ and the Father will keep His promise to His own Son! Be you sure of this, He will glorify Him, but He would have us pray for Him. Let every heart that knows how to pray be breathing out the petition, "Father, glorify Your Son."

6. *Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near.* There may come a day when He cannot be found, a time when He will not be near. When the great Judge of All has once said, "Depart." When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, in vain will be all your seeking, your praying and your knocking at the door that will never open again! Therefore, "Seek you Jehovah while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near."

7. *Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God for He will abundantly pardon.* The marginal reading is, "He will multiply to pardon." We multiply sin, but God's multiplication table goes farther than ours—"He will multiply to pardon."

8-11. *For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from Heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater so shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.* What comfort there is, here, for Christian workers, for you who proclaim God's Word! Yours is no haphazard business! Look at the "shalls" in this 11th verse—"It shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." When we make known God's Word, we are not drawing a bow at a venture! We are not sowing seed which may or may not beget a harvest—it shall, it shall, it shall. God says it three times! He is very fond of

the number three, the Trinity is constantly revealed throughout both the Old and the New Testaments. When it is not spoken and declared so such doctrinally, you see its practical effect in the frequent threefold utterances of God.

12. *For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.* There shall be demonstrative delight! All nature is in sympathy with the man who is in harmony with God! The world, itself, echoes to the joy of the little world within man's bosom.

13. *Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.* We read, in the third verse, about "the sure mercies of David." To explain that phrase, let us read a few verses from the second Book of Samuel, and the 23rd chapter. I might have selected another passage, but these being David's dying words, will be the more striking.

2 Samuel 23:1-5. *Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the Anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His Word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me, He that rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Although my house is not so with God. He remembered his many sins and the many tribulations in his family which had come upon him in consequence of those sins. And the dying man felt a sad heartache, so he thought of the errors of his life—as well he might.*

5. *Yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow.* What blessed words his last words were! His sorrow is turned into joy! His own house grieves him, but God's promise comforts him. I think we must read this verse again. Perhaps there is some father here who is growing old, or some mother upon whom years are multiplying. May these last words of David be such as your last words may be! "Although my house is not so with God; yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire."

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A REVIVAL PROMISE

NO. 1151

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 11, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon
the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon your seed,
and My blessing upon your offspring:
and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows
by the watercourses. One shall say, I am the Lord's;
and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob;
and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord,
and surname himself by the name of Israel”
Isaiah 44:3-6.*

IN the Christian Church at this moment there is a very general desire for a revival of religion. You may go where you may among Christian people and you will find that they are mourning over the present state of things and saying, one to the other, “When will a greater blessing come? How can we obtain it? When shall we make some impression upon the masses of the ungodly? When shall our houses of prayer be filled with attentive hearers? When will the Lord's kingdom come and His right arm be made bare in the eyes of all the people?”

I am delighted to hear the inquiry My soul magnifies the Lord as I discern tokens of growing anxiety about the cause and kingdom of Jesus and the perishing sons of men. This is an omen of better times. “As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.” Searchings of heart, anguish, groans which cannot be uttered and abounding intercession are the heralds of blessing! They are the sound in the tops of the mulberry trees which calls Believers to bestir themselves in hope of victory! May the movement among the saints continue and deepen till it brings forth a movement among sinners far and wide.

At this time, also, there are manifest the most pleasing signs that God is about to work among His people. A very notable gathering of converts has taken place in the town of Newcastle and the two Brothers whom God honored to be the means of it have now moved to the city of Edinburgh. There the ministers of all denominations are united in helping them and in earnestly imploring the Divine blessing of the gracious visitation which has already come upon Edinburgh is such as was probably never known before within the memory of man. The whole place seems to be moved from end to end! When we hear of many thousands coming together on weekdays, to quite ordinary meetings, and crying, “What must we do to be saved?” there is, we are persuaded, the hand of God in the matter!

Now, there is among earnest Christians a general feeling that what has been done for Edinburgh is greatly needed for London and *must* be done for London if prayer and earnest effort can obtain it. Our prayers must go

up incessantly that God will be pleased to send forth His saving health among the people of this great city of four million souls and turn many to righteousness, to the praise of the glory of His Divine Grace. Our growing anxiety for Christ's Glory and our faith in the energy of His Spirit will be two hopeful signs of a coming blessing. As a Church we have always felt a delight in any work which has to be done for God of this kind and we have enjoyed, for many years, a continuous visitation of the Holy Spirit.

That which would be a revival anywhere else has been our ordinary condition—for which we are thankful. By the space of these 20 years, almost without rise or fall, God has continued to increase our numbers with souls saved by the preaching of His Truth. Unto Him be all the praise! But now we are anxious to take a part in a yet further advance—we want a greater blessing! What we have had has not decreased, but rather stimulated our appetite. Oh, for more conversions! More hearts for Jesus! Would God that the dews of Heaven would fall in sevenfold abundance upon us and our fellow Christians—and the past be put to the blush by the future! That this desire may be fanned to a flame in all our hearts is my earnest prayer.

I have taken this text as one which is full of encouragement, that we may be all moved with hope and excited with expectation. I shall handle it in this way. First, we have before us *the great Covenant blessing of the Church*. Secondly, we have *the glorious result of that blessing described*. And when we have spoken thus, we shall spend the rest of our time in speaking of *the conduct which is consistent with the desire, that this blessing and its results may come to us*.

I. In our text we have THE GREAT COVENANT BLESSING OF THE CHURCH. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Whatever metaphor is used, this is the meaning of it. He is the refreshing, life-giving, fertilizing water—the living water of which Jesus spoke. The first promise of the text, “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground,” is explained by the second, “I will pour My Spirit upon your seed, and My blessing upon your offspring.” While speaking upon this, it is well for us to remember, first, that *this blessing has been already given*. We must never underrate the importance of the ascension of our Lord and the gift of the Spirit which followed.

God forbid that we should think lightly of Pentecost—the Holy Spirit then descended and we have no record that the Spirit has since ascended and departed from the Church. He is the Church's perpetual heritage and abides with us always. I like to sing—

***“The Holy Spirit is here,
Where saints in prayer agree,
As Jesus' parting gift He's near
Each pleading company.
Not far away is He,
To be by prayer brought near,
But here in present majesty,
As in His courts on high.”***

He is permanently resident in the midst of the Church. But when we have received that Truth of God, we may still go on to use the language which is very frequent among us and pray for the outpouring of the Spirit. If the language is not exactly accurate, the meaning is most excellent. So far as any one assembly or person is concerned, we may request the Holy Spirit to be poured forth upon us in His gracious operations. We desire to see the Spirit of God working more mightily in the Church—we long, each one of us, to be more completely subject to His influences and more filled with His power—so that we may be full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.

We want the Holy Spirit poured upon those who have Him not—upon the dead in sin that they may be quickened, upon the desponding that they may be consoled—upon the ignorant that they may be illuminated and upon seekers that they may find Him who, alone, is our peace. We, being evil, give good gifts unto our children, and therefore we are persuaded that our heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. We do but enlarge upon the prayer of the Apostolic benediction when we cry for the blessing peculiar to the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit that quickens—neither the letter of the word nor the energy of our manner can give life! Therefore we feel that when we have prophesied to the dry bones we must also prophesy to the Wind, for unless the Divine Breath shall come, the dry bones will never live.

Notice, Beloved, that this great Covenant blessing of the Spirit is, in our text, *the subject of a promise*. “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon your seed, and My blessing upon your offspring.” We may always be confident of receiving those blessings which are promised by the Lord. The general promise, “No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly,” is very comforting. Under its broad cover we are encouraged to plead for many favors for which we have no special note of promise—but when we can put our finger upon a plain and specific word, by which a certain good thing is guaranteed to us, our faith rises to full assurance, and we feel confident of receiving an answer to our prayer!

“You have said, ‘I will pour My Spirit upon your seed,’ therefore, O Lord, fulfill this word unto Your servant, in which You have caused him to hope.” You have God’s word for it—place your finger upon it and on your knees beseech the Lord to do as He has said. He cannot lie, He will never revoke His Word. Has He said and shall He not do it?—

**“As well might He His being quit
As break His promise or forget.”**

He has spontaneously made the promise and He will Divinely make it good. Upon every promise the blood of Jesus Christ has set its seal, making it, “yes and amen” forever. Test Him here, then, and you shall find Him faithfulness itself! A promise of God is the essence of the Truth of God, the soul of certainty, the voice of faithfulness and the substance of blessing. What a right royal promise it is! How lofty and full of assurance is the language! “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty.” It is for God to say, “I will” and, “I will.”

We may venture as far as declaring, "I will if I *can*." But there are no limits to His power. Our wisdom is to say, "I hope I shall be able to do as I desire." But there are no impossibilities with the Almighty. His Spirit falls upon men as a dew from the Lord, waiting not for man, neither tarrying for the sons of men. When the time has come for a shower, God asks not the potentates of earth to give their consent, but down come the blessed drops! When the season for spring has arrived, the Lord does not ask man to help Him to remove the ice from the streams, or the snow from the hills, or the dampness from the air. He asks no human aid in quickening the seeds and awaking the plants, so that the sleeping flowers may open their lovely eyes and smile on all around. *He* does it all!

His mystic influences, as Omnipotent as they are secret, come forth, and the work is done. And so, glory be to God, we have a promise, here, which is the word of Omnipotence, and when we plead it we need not be at all dismayed by the question, "Can such a thing be?" We know that dry bones can live when the Spirit breathes upon them and we are equally well persuaded that the life-giving Spirit can so breathe, for we have a Divine promise that He shall be given to the people. We hear the double "I will, I will," and we are certain that the Lord can and will "pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground."

It becomes us also, Brothers and Sisters, to notice that this gift, which is the subject of a promise, is *a most necessary blessing*. I have sometimes heard it sneeringly remarked that we know very well we need the Holy Spirit, but there is no need to be everlastingly talking about it. But, Brethren, we need to make frequent acknowledgment of this Truth—it is due to the Holy Spirit, Himself, that we should do so. If we do not honor the Holy Spirit, we cannot expect Him to work with us. He will be grieved and leave us to find out our helplessness. Moreover, I fear that, however generally the doctrine of the necessity of the Spirit's work may be believed as a matter of theory, it is not acted upon—and what is not believed in *practice* is, in fact, not believed at all.

I am very suspicious of a man who tires of a Truth of God so vitally important and dares to call it a platitude. We shall not hesitate to repeat the doctrine again and again—and we feel persuaded that God's people will not tire of it. Without the Spirit of God we can do nothing! We are as ships without wind, or chariots without steeds, without the Holy Spirit. We are like branches without sap, we are withered without the Holy Spirit! We are like coals without fire. We are as useless as an offering without the sacrificial flame, without the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit we are unaccepted. I desire both to feel and to confess this fact whenever I attempt to preach. I do not wish to get away from it, or to conceal it, nor *can* I, for I am often made to feel it to the deep humbling of my spirit.

I pray that you who teach in the Sunday school, you who visit the poor, you who work in any way for God may acknowledge your impotence for good and look for power from on high. To our hands the Holy Spirit is the force, to our eyes He is the light. We are but the stones and He the sling, we are the arrows and He the bow. Confess your weakness and you will be

fit to be strengthened. Acknowledge your emptiness and it will be a preparation for receiving Divine fullness. For, observe, the promise of the living water is to “him that is thirsty,” or, as it may be better rendered, and the figure would be more clear, “I will pour water upon it (the land) that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.”

The blessing is to come where it is needed—upon the desert, the parched places which are as the Valley of Death till the rain comes. If you think yourself to be as the well-watered plain of Sodom, God will pour no food upon you. It is upon the thirsty land, upon the heart which laments its barrenness and confesses its own unworthiness, that the Spirit of God shall come! I do pray that as a Church we may never imbibe the idea that we have a lock on God’s blessing, or a monopoly on His benediction, so that He is sure to grant His approval to any one particular ministry, or any form of Church government.

The Lord might leave us, and will, unless we lie low before Him and acknowledge our nothingness. Remember His Word which He spoke to His erring people when they boasted of their pedigree and called themselves His temple—“Go you, now, unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel.” He may leave His garden to be overgrown with briars, and His vineyard to be marred with stones. God is not tied to any *one* place or people—He can remove the candlestick and set it up in another chamber—let the seven churches of Asia Minor serve as a warning to us in this thing. O blessed Spirit of the living God, we do confess the barrenness of our soil and the drought of our land, and we beseech You never to withdraw Your dew, or cause Your rain to depart from us! What greater curse could You inflict than to let us alone? Oh, come upon us, we beseech You, and let the Divine promise be fulfilled!

It should be very comfortable to us to reflect that, while we need the Spirit of God, *His working is most effectual* to supply all our needs when He does come upon us. In the east, you can generally tell where there is a stream or a river by the line of emerald which marks it. If you stood on a hill, you could see certain lines of green, made up of grass, reeds, rushes and occasional trees which have sprung up along the watercourses. Nothing is required to make the land fertile but to water it. We are told by travelers that they have seen plains looking completely barren, apparently covered with dry dust and powder—yet a heavy shower has fallen, and in a space of time which seems incredible in our colder climate—the most lovely flowers and the most refreshing verdure have clothed the plains till the wilderness and the solitary places have been glad—and the desert has rejoiced and blossomed as the rose! Yes, it has blossomed exceedingly—and an excellency as of Carmel and Sharon has been upon it.

Even thus, let the Spirit of God come upon any Church, and He is all that it needs to make it living and fruitful! Church machinery, apart from the Spirit of God, lacks the motive power. The motive power coming, your machinery will do its work. Of course, if it is *imperfect* machinery, the Holy Spirit will not make it do all the work which better organizations

have done. Still, even the most imperfect shall accomplish so much as to astonish all who behold it! What a blessing it is when the Church does really receive the Spirit of God abundantly! Her minister may be slow in utterance—like Moses, the leader of the people may be a man of stammering speech—or, like Paul, his personal appearance may be mean and his speech contemptible. But this matters not when the Spirit of God is upon the man and in the people! The Church may be very small, the members may be very poor, and many of them illiterate, too, but as the barley cake of the soldier's dream smote the royal pavilion of Midian, so that it lay along, so the Lord, by the hands of the most feeble, shall do His greatest deeds and get to Himself renown! Where the Spirit of God is, there is the majesty of Omnipotence!

I, here, call your attention to the fact that the promise in our text is *liberal and unstinted*. "I will *pour* water upon the thirsty land, and *floods* upon the dry ground." The Lord does not need to stint His gifts. When He gives a blessing He gives it like a king. His treasury will not be exhausted by giving, or replenished by withholding. I have seen in Italy the fields watered by the processes of irrigation—there are trenches made to run along the garden and smaller gutters to carry the lesser streams to each bed—so that each plant gets its share of water. But the gardener has to be very careful, for he has but little water in his tank, and only an allotted share of the public reservoir.

No plant must have too much. No plot of ground may be drenched. How different is this from the methods of the Lord! He *pours* the water. He deluges the land! "The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes." Oh that He would pull up the sluices, now, and let a torrent of Divine Grace rush through this Tabernacle! Oh that at this moment He would open the windows of Heaven and send us a flood of Grace, like the deluge of vengeance in Noah's day, till the tops of our loftiest expectations should be covered! He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask, or even *think*. He gives liberally, and upbraids not!

Our abounding sin and death need abounding life and power! In such a city as this the largest blessing will be none too great. Let us open our mouths wide, that He may fill them. The Lord is illimitable in His wealth of Grace and boundless in His goodness and power. Let us take the promise as it stands, and plead it at the Throne of God, "Have You not said, 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground'? Lord, do it, to the praise of the glory of Your Grace." One other remark and I leave this point. This Covenant blessing is, in our text, *peculiarly promised to a certain class of persons who are especially dear to us*. "I will pour My Spirit upon your *seed*, and My blessing upon your *offspring*."

Parents, lay hold greedily upon these points of the promise! I am afraid we do not think enough of the promise which the Lord has made to our children. Grace does not run in the blood—we have never fallen into the gross error of birthright membership, or the supposition that the child of

godly parents has a right to Christian ordinances! We know that religion is a *personal* matter and is not of blood nor of birth. We know, also, that all children are heirs of wrath till the Grace of God regenerates them. But still, there is some meaning in that gracious saying, "The promise is unto you and your children, even to as many as the Lord your God shall call."

Paul was assuredly not wrong, but sweetly right, when he said to the jailer, in answer to his question, "What must I do to be saved?" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, and your house." Lay hold of those words, Christian parents, and do not be content to get half the promise. Pray to God to fulfill it all. Go to Him this very day, you mothers and fathers, and implore Him to have pity upon your offspring. Cry unto Him, and say, "You have said, 'I will pour My Spirit on your seed, and My blessing upon your offspring.' Do it, Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake."

II. We are now to consider THE GLORIOUS RESULT OF THIS COVENANT BLESSING. The certain result of the outpouring of the Spirit is the springing up of spiritual life. Wherever the water comes in Palestine, as I said before, the grass will be sure to follow and vegetation becomes at once lively. Wherever the Spirit of God comes, there will be life in the Church and life in the ministry, life in prayer, life in effort, life in holiness, life in brotherly love. The next effect will be seen in the calling out of numerous converts by the Holy Spirit. "They shall spring up as among the grass, and as willows by the watercourses."

Who can count the blades of grass? They are a fine symbol of the greatness of number and might as justly be used for that purpose as the sands of the seashore. Where the Spirit of the Lord comes, converts are not few as the cedars of Lebanon, but they flourish like the grass of the earth! They fly as a cloud and as doves to their dovecots. Can we be satisfied with having in a year a dozen or so added to the Church? Yet do I meet with some of my Brothers—and far be it from me to judge them—who say they have had a happy year and are very comfortable though they have had only three or four persons added to the Church. Surely, however small the congregation, that must be a very unsatisfactory reward for a year's ministry!

My Brothers and Sisters, where, in this day, do we see results attending the Gospel which should satisfy us? Hundreds may be added to the Church in a year, as has been our common blessing, but what are hundreds? If 400 were brought into our fellowship last year, what is that out of four million? What are these saved ones among so many? The headway made by the Church is next to nothing! It hardly keeps pace with the growth of the population. We need more of the Spirit of God—and if we had it—I have no doubt, whatever, the converts would at once be counted by thousands and tens of thousands! And there is no reason whatever why the Church of God, which is now in a pitiful minority, should not become in many a district a triumphant majority—and the influences of the Divine Grace of God be felt far and near!

Observe that the text tells us that the converts called out by the Spirit of God are vigorous and lively. "They shall spring as the grass." Now the

grass in the east springs up without any sowing, cultivating, or any other attention. It comes up of itself from the fruitful soil. There is the water—and there is the grass! So where the Spirit of God is with a Church there are sure to be conversions, it cannot be otherwise. True, we are bound to use all agencies that are fit and right for the promotion of the good end. But where the Spirit of God is we shall often be astonished to find the life has extended far beyond the usual result of agencies! The willows, also, are mentioned, to indicate great vitality. How rapidly the willow grows!

There is a proverb in Cambridgeshire that a willow will buy a horse, where an oak won't buy a saddle, because the willow grows so quickly and yields such frequent boughs to the cutter. You may cut it this year, and in a short time you may remove its pliant boughs again, for they will come anew. So truly saved ones will bear discouragement and trial but still spring up. If you cut every bough from the willow tree it will be green again next spring—and if you even cut it down to the root it does not matter—at the *scent* of water it will bud! Do you not remember when you were children taking little twigs of willow to make hoops around your little garden? You thought them dead and used them as a little fence. But in a short time, to your astonishment, they were all sprouting out with green! The willow is full of life.

Now, where the Spirit of God is, the newly converted are full of life. You may check them, but they will not be repressed. You orthodox people, who happen to have surly tempers, may go round with your pocketknives and snip at their boughs cruelly, and say, "We do not need these young people. We do not need revivals," but they will grow in spite of you! Blessed be God, you elder Brothers and Sisters cannot turn the penitent prodigals out of doors! Should you even be so unkind to the newly grown willows as to cut them right down, they will spring up again, for if they are plants of the Lord's own right hand planting, and of the Spirit's watering, they will outlive the worst of usage! They will grow as the grass and as willows by the watercourses.

We may expect, then, if the Spirit of God shall work among us, that there will be an abundance of converts, and those of the most vigorous kind. These conversions will come from all quarters. The text says, one shall say, and another shall call, and another shall subscribe. Here is one who is the son of a deacon—we expected him to give his heart to Jesus. Here is another—he is not the child of a religious professor, but comes from an ungodly family. Ah, here is another, he had grown up and come to ripe years, having followed after folly and confirmed himself in sin—yet he comes forward, for the Grace of God has called him! One comes from the wealthy, another comes from the poor, a third comes from nobody knows where—but they will and must come—for God knows His own and will call them!

They shall come from all trades and occupations, from all churches and denominations! From these little boys below me, I hope, and from you gray-headed people over yonder—one here, another there! We shall be wonderstruck as we hear from all corners, and parts, and places, "I am

the Lord's." And again, "I am called by the name of Jacob." And again, "I am surnamed this day by the name of Israel." The vessel of Divine Grace does not run in a groove, but breaks out where it seems least likely to do so! At one time it creates a revival at Samaria. At another time it saves a widow at Joppa, or the eunuch on the road to Gaza. Lord, call whomever You will, but do call many, for Jesus' sake!

One memorable thing about the conversions worked by the Holy Spirit is this—that these converted people shall be led to acknowledge their faith. They shall not, like Nicodemus, come to Jesus by night. They shall not hope to go to Heaven creeping all the way behind the hedge, but they shall avow their allegiance. "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." The God of Israel shall be their God and the people of Israel shall be their people. I love to see both these things in young converts. Some appear to dedicate themselves to God, but they feel themselves such superior beings that they do not join with any Church. Rather they hold themselves in the isolation which practically means, "Stand by, I am holier than you."

They do not think any Church good enough for them, but my private opinion is that they are not good enough for any Church! On the other hand, some will join a Church, but do not seem to have had enough respect to the inward, vital part of religion in giving themselves up to the Lord and, therefore, no Church will find them to be any great gain. There must be the two together—a surrender to God and then a union with the people of God. Consider the first of these points—One shall say, "I am the Lord's." He shall confess that from head to foot, body, soul and spirit—he is not his own, but Christ's. He will feel, "I have been washed in His blood. I have been pardoned all my sins and been renewed in heart. And now I am the Lord's, and I desire to live to His praise. Tell me what I can do, and how I can serve the Lord, for I am His and mean to be His forever." This is delightful. Oh, to hear hundreds of you saying this! I would give my life to see it!

Another convert is said to subscribe with his hand to the God of Jacob. He gives himself over to God and he does it deliberately—as deliberately as a person who signs a deed by which he makes over an estate. He writes his name and places his finger on the seal, and calmly says, "This is my act and deed." We do not recommend persons to write out covenants with God and sign them—they are apt to gender unto bondage—but we do recommend them to make such a covenant in their *hearts* before the Most High, saying—

***"Tis done, the great transaction's done!
I am my Lord's and He is mine!
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to obey the voice Divine."***

The text may have another rendering, for, if you notice, the word "*with*" in the text is in italics, to show that it was inserted by the translators. It might run thus—"Another shall subscribe his hand unto the Lord." This alludes to the custom which still exists, but which was more common in

those days, of a servant being marked or tattooed on the hand with his master's name.

So was it with soldiers—frequently, when they were enthusiastic for a leader, they would print his name on some part of their body, but very often upon the palms of their hands. There are constant allusions to this in the classics. We know that devout worshippers dedicated themselves to the god they worshipped and were stamped with a secret mark. Paul alludes to this when he says, “Henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus,” as much as to say, “I am Christ's—I have had His name branded upon me.” When he suffered from being scourged and beaten with rods, he called it bearing the marks of the Lord Jesus, and did as good as say, “Flog away, you will only engrave His name into my flesh, for I am Christ's.”

Now it would be a very superstitious and foolish thing for any man to be tattooed with the name of the Lord, or with a cross, for all that such an act meant in those who did it of old, we ought to mean, namely, that we are forever and beyond recall, the property of Jesus. Our ear is bored. We are servants, as long as we live, to our dear Master. They may sooner kill us than lead us away from Him whose we are, and whom we serve. Who shall separate us from the love of God?—

***“High Heaven that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear,
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear.”***

There was dedication to God of the fullest kind, but side by side with it went unity with the Church, for the declaration, “I am the Lord's,” was parallel with, “calling himself by the name of Jacob.” Now the name of Jacob was the first, the lower, the common name of God's people—they were the seed of Jacob. “Ah,” says the man who is converted, “I do not care what they call Christian people, they may call *me* by the same title if they will, and I will not complain. They may call us Puritans, Methodists, Ranters, Quakers—or whatever they like—I am one of them.”

I have read of a certain nobleman who was also a saint, that when he heard religious persons scoffed at as Puritans, he was accustomed at once to declare, “I am a Puritan, too. I glory in being one of them!” They felt that it was of little use to mock at *him*—he was too stout a soldier and too bold a speaker. It is a grand thing when a man can say in company, “It does not matter what you think of religion, I belong to such-and-such Christian people, and I am not ashamed of it. I know their name is a mockery and their minister is despised, but it does not matter, I am one of them.” It is mentioned, also, that one surnamed himself by the name of Israel. That was the grand name of the Church in those days—Israel, the prevailing prince.

We ought to feel that to be a Christian is to possess a patent of nobility second to none. Duke, earl, knight, esquire—we covet none of these—call us by the name of Christ and we have honor enough! The name of Caesar is a poor thing compared with the name of Christ! Better be known as a disciple of Jesus than as an emperor of emperors! Oh, may the Spirit of

God be poured out upon this place, that many of you may be savingly converted, and then say, "I will give myself to the Lord, and will also cast in my lot with His people. Where they dwell I will dwell. Where they die there would I die. Their people shall be my people, since their God has become my God." Pray, dear Brothers and Sisters, that the promise before us may be fulfilled in this Church, and in all the Churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Now, lastly, I have to speak upon THE CONDUCT SUITABLE IF WE OBTAIN THIS BLESSING. First, O my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if we would obtain these floods of blessing we must confess how dry, how thirsty, how wilderness-like we are! Humble yourselves, therefore, under the hand of God, and He will exalt you in due time. "He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He has sent empty away." Oh, for the spirit of humiliation throughout the Church!

Next to that let us cultivate prayer. "For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." If you have a man's check for a thousand pounds, it would be very wicked of you to say, "I cannot get my money, this paper is not paid," if you have never taken it to the bank. And so, if you have God's promise and have never pleaded it, it is your own fault if you have not obtained the blessing. The very least thing God can ask of us is that we shall ask of Him. "Ask and it shall be given you: seek and you shall find: knock and it shall be opened unto you." Plead more earnestly in private. Make your Prayer Meetings more energetic, attend them more often, throw your hearts more fully into them and God's Spirit will be surely given.

Next to that, if we want the blessing we must put forth our own personal *effort*. It would be a most absurd thing for a man to pray for a harvest, and neither plow nor sow! I cannot conceive anything more insulting to the majesty of God than for us to pray and meanwhile, fold our arms! It is not thus that we prove our sincerity. I desire to preach to you as if the conversion of these sinners around us depended wholly upon *me*, but then I delight to fall back upon the Truth of God that it wholly depends upon the Lord God! Sunday school teachers, use the *means* for the conversion of your children! Try and speak personally to every one of them. If you can find opportunity, pray alone with them, one by one. You will win young hearts for Jesus in that way.

Try, dear Friends, to get hold of individuals. You who come here continually, look out for individuals in the congregation and endeavor to tell them what you have experienced of the love of Christ. If you cannot speak to them, write letters to them! An earnest letter is as good as a sermon. Do anything, do everything, to bring souls to Jesus! While we are working we shall find God working with us, for He is never slower than His people. If we are building, He will be the Master Builder, and will build through us. For a man to pray that he may have a safe journey and then to go to bed—and not start from home would be wickedness! And to pray to God to convert sinners and then *not* to preach or teach them the Gospel would be a piece of impudent mockery of God. Beloved, see to this. I cannot

pause to stir you up about it, for our time is going, but I pray the Holy Spirit to stir you, that everyone here may become a soul-winner.

Once more, I have a word to say to those who are not the people of God. O beloved ones who are not saved, all our concern is about *your* salvation! We are always preaching and praying about you! How can you obtain saving faith? I would urge you to labor after a clear idea of your real position. O unconverted people, try to know *where* you are, and *what* you are. It might, perhaps, awaken you from your present indifference. If you would really and distinctly understand that you are out of Christ, condemned already—an enemy to God by wicked works, with the wrath of God abiding on you and in danger of eternal Hell—it might startle you and lead you to desire salvation.

I would think hopefully of you if I knew that you were taking stock and estimating your condition before God. I ask you, when you get home, to sit down and write, every one of you, on a piece of paper, “Saved,” if you are saved, and “Condemned,” if you are not a Believer. For that is your condition! I want you to realize whose you are and where you are going. When you have done so, I pray that a sense of your condition and prospects may be deepened upon your mind! Sinners, do you *think* enough? Do you *consider* enough? You are busy about a thousand things, but do you really *think* about your souls, death, judgment and eternal Hell? Do you *think* enough about the Savior’s love? Do you ponder your sin and the blessed fact that it may be pardoned?

Oh, that you would reflect, consider and turn your whole mind to God! But I am beating around the bush! I have a much more important precept to which to exhort you. Remember, the Gospel command is, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” Every minute that you remain an unbeliever you are adding to your sin! You are increasing your iniquity and confirming yourself in condemnation. Oh, that you would believe the Divine Testimony concerning Jesus, for that is the object of faith! What you are asked to believe is true. He whom you are commanded to trust in is able to save you—and the promise that you shall be saved if you trust is a sure and certain one!

Do not, therefore, fling away your souls and despise the mercy of God! May it please the Eternal Spirit to lead you, at this very moment, to put your trust in Jesus Christ and to be saved! Then you will be one of those who spring as the grass, and as the willows by the watercourses. May God bless you, every one of you, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 44.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—98, 95 (SONG II), 67.**

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CONVERTS, AND THEIR CONFESSION OF FAITH NO. 2429

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 4, 1837.**

***“One shall say, I am the Lord’s; and another shall call himself by
the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his
hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.”
Isaiah 44:5.***

THIS is to take place after the Lord has poured out His Spirit upon His people, and upon their offspring. The mainspring of everything good and gracious is the Holy Spirit. Where He comes, everything prospers. But when He has gone, nothing but failure and disaster will come. I believe that at this present moment God’s people ought to cry to Him day and night that there may be a fresh baptism into the Holy Spirit. There are many things that are desirable for the Church of Christ, but one thing is absolutely necessary, and this is the one thing—the power of the Holy Spirit in the midst of His people. You know the very simple imagery which sets forth this blessing. If you go down to some of our Thames bridges, you will find the barges stuck fast in the mud and you cannot stir them. It would be a very difficult thing to provide machinery with which to move them—all the king’s horses and all the king’s men could not do it! But wait till the tide comes in! Now every black, heavy old barge “walks the waters like a thing of life!” Everything that can float is movable as soon as the silver flood has returned. So, many of our churches lie in the mud. Everything seems motionless, powerless—but when the Spirit of God comes in like a flood, all is altered! Therefore, let us pray—

“Come, Holy Spirit, come.”

I know that, in one sense, He is always with us, but I am sure that, in another sense, He is not. He is abiding in this dispensation, but He is not with this Church or with that—and all the churches have need to cry, “Come, heavenly flood! Come with Your mighty force and lift us all out of our spiritual death!”

When the Spirit of God comes, converts come, too. If they do not come by the Spirit of God, they are not worth having. I have heard, and sorrowfully heard, of many instances where revivalists have added to churches by the score and by the hundreds, but after a couple of years none of the professed converts have been left. If men are brought to say, “I am the Lord’s,” merely as the result of *excitement*, they will generally be saying what is not true. And though they may think it true, yet time,

which tries all things, will prove their profession to have been untrue. We must have the Spirit of God with us for *real spiritual work* and if we have Him not, the most powerful revivalist will be only as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal!

We must have the Spirit of God with us. If we have His Presence, even the ordinary minister's preaching will suffice for great blessing to the hearers. But without that Spirit, the ordinary preaching will become more dull and flat and lifeless than ever—and there will be no increase in the Church, and no earnestness among those already in it. I beseech you, therefore, pray day and night for the Spirit of God! We want to have sound doctrine, we want to have great diligence and zeal, we want to have superior holiness—I will not go on with the catalog of what we want—but let us have the Holy Spirit and we shall have all these! This will bring back to the Church and to the individual Believer all that is necessary for spiritual health and strength.

Now, supposing that we have had our prayers answered and that the Spirit of God has been poured out like floods upon the dry ground, then see what is to happen—converts will come forward to confess their faith! So the text evidently tells us.

In considering it, I would have you notice, first, that *this confession of faith is personal*—"One shall say, I am the Lord's," and so on. Secondly, *it is varied*, for, while there are some who say it, there are others who subscribe it with their hand. And, thirdly, while this profession is varied, *it is also very gracious*. There are wells of sweet water within this expression, "I am the Lord's." We shall try to draw some of the water out that we may drink and be refreshed.

I. Concerning the converts we so much desire to see and the confession which the Spirit of God will lead them to make, let me begin by saying that THIS CONFESSIOIN OF FAITH IS PERSONAL—"One shall say, I am the Lord's; and *another* shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and *another* shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord." You see, it is not a joint confession, but an individual one. It is "one," and, "another," and, "another."

Notice, first, that *all confession of Christ must be personal*—anything else is unreal and worthless. All religion that is true is *personal*—it has to do with the man's own heart. He is moved to it by his own conscience. His faith must be his own faith. His repentance must be repentance of his own sin. His coming to Christ must be his own coming to Christ. Nobody can perform your religion for you—it is not possible that anything like sponsorship should be admitted into real, vital godliness! Here is a man who professes that he promised that you should renounce all the pomps and vanities of this present wicked world. Who dares promise such a thing as that? If I were to promise for an unborn child that it would have red hair and a Roman nose, I would be quite as reasonable as if I promised that any child should become a child of God!

I cannot do it, it is not in my power, nor within the power of any man! In every act of religion you, yourself, must be concerned—the godliest

mother can pray for you, but you will not be saved unless you pray for yourself! The most believing father may use his faith on your behalf, but you will not be saved unless you, yourself, believe! It is useless for one man to think that he can either believe or repent for another. You are born, one by one—you will die one by one! You will have to stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ in your own proper personality! You must, each one, humble yourselves before God, confess your sin and personally look to Him who was lifted up upon the Cross for our redemption—and personally yield yourselves up to God. Baptism of which you have no personal knowledge, in which you have no conscious part, is the mockery and mimicry of Baptism—but it is not Scriptural Baptism—and any profession of faith in which you have no conscious part, yourself, is the mimicry of a confession, but it is not a Scriptural confession!

“One shall say, I am the Lord’s,” but he would not speak for another! That other “shall call himself by the name of Jacob.” And the two, together, cannot speak for number three, for he shall come forward and “subscribe with his hand unto the Lord.” My dear Friends, I do charge you, understand that “you must be born again.” You must yield your hearts to Jesus! And this must be a matter of personal concern with you. National religion and family religion may be well if rightly understood, but nothing less than *personal religion* will bring anyone into the Kingdom of Heaven!

This, then, is required of us by the Lord, that our religion should be personal. The Gospel comes to us with its urgent call, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” To each convinced sinner who asks, “What must I do to be saved?” the Gospel says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” It invites you, my Friend, as much as if there were not another person in the world! And the Word of God, if it comes with power to your soul, will come as distinctly to you as if you were the only person in the whole universe! It must be so—nothing but distinct personality will do in religion—and especially in the confession that we make of our being the Lord’s people.

This personal confession, dear Friends, *needs to be carefully attended to when there are many coming forward*. I always dread lest any of you should come into the Church in a crowd. I have often known persons brought into this Tabernacle by the crowd. They somehow mingled with the stream and they did not and they could not move out of it—they were caught up off their feet and carried in here! And, sometimes, there are seasons with Churches when individuals seem to be carried into a confession of faith because it is the fashion to do so—others are doing it, so they do the same! I pray you to be very careful about this matter! If your father, your mother, your brothers, or your sisters make a profession of religion, that is no reason why *you* should do so unless you can truthfully do it! If you have not repented of sin, do not say that you have done so! If you have not believed in Jesus, do not say that you have! Do not

think of coming forward merely because your friends are joining the Church. Act for yourselves!

One of the lessons I have constantly to teach you is that you are individually responsible to God and that it is absolutely necessary for you to exercise your own personal judgment about matters of faith and practice. There may be some who say, "Do what your priest tells you," but we have no priests, because we want all of you to be priests! You are to be a nation of priests. If you are God's people, you are to act before God for yourselves under the teaching of His Spirit given to you individually—and we beseech you to do this. Do not let custom, either good or bad, sway you, but as we charge you not to run with a multitude to do evil, so we exhort you not to run with the multitude professedly doing good when you are not doing it and when your practice does not go with your profession! In all times of revival, it is very necessary that this Truth of God should be taught.

But, next, this individual confession of your faith in Christ is *incumbent upon you especially when there are few coming forward*. I could say to myself, "If there is nobody in this village confessing Christ, then it is all the more urgent upon me that I should confess Him. If in the Church few have come to tell the pastor that they have found Christ by his means, if I have found the Savior, I will certainly go! I will let him see that he has not quite labored in vain. I will go for his sake. If there are few added to the Church, then I will go that the Church may not be discouraged in its Christian efforts." Oh, I like to have around me those who feel, "It is no consideration with me whether there are many or few! I have to act as before God on my own account. If there are few who do right, that is all the more reason why I should do it." One said to me, the other day, "My daughters go to such a place of worship because it is fashionable and," he added, "that seems to me a curious reason, for I go to another place because it is *not* fashionable."

I think that it is a grand thing to learn to be in the right with two or three. Some people say, "Why, you are in such a small minority!" Yes, yes, but as a general rule, minorities are right. Up till now, the majority has never been on the side of Christ, the majority has never been for God, the majority has never been with the Truth of God! Oh, dear young fellows, I cannot bear that you should always be trying to jump the way the cat goes! Go the *right* way—never mind about the cats! Do not be saying, "I must do what the other fellows do," but be bold and do exactly what the others do *not* do when you believe that is the right thing to do. What? Is heroism altogether gone? Will Christianity breed no more martyrs? I trust in God that it is not so, but that when there are few confessing Christ, and faith in Him, some of you men and women will feel, "I shall take up my cross and follow Christ and do it the more decidedly, and the more openly, and the more quickly because there are so few doing it."

If we do not mind what we are doing, we may go to Hell for the sake of company! But I would rather go to Heaven, alone, than go with all the

multitude down the road to Hell. Still are our Savior's words true, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there are that find it." Oh, that you may resolve that the way shall not be too narrow and the gate shall not be too strait for you and that, by God's Grace, you will find it, and love it none the less, but all the more because the multitude prefer the broader road!

II. Secondly, THIS CONFESSION IS VARIED.

First, one person speaks out for himself—"One shall say, *I am the Lord's.*" That is a fine speech! Truthfully made, it is like a clean cut piece of marble! "I am the Lord's." If you, from your very soul, can say this in any company and not be ashamed to say it before men, angels, or devils, God has taught you a noble piece of eloquence! "I am the Lord's." There is a great fullness about these words, as I will try to show you, directly, but there are some Christians who have made this distinct avowal and they stand to it. Perhaps they have not joined a Church yet—they should do so, but they have done well to say, "I am the Lord's." Paul said of the Macedonian Christians, "This they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord and unto us by the will of God." You have no right to belong to a Church till first you belong to the Lord—so that you can truly say, "I am the Lord's." But it is most blessed when a man or a woman feels this, and says this, and keeps to it till death—"I am the Lord's." This is a noble avowal. I pray God that you may be enabled, now, to make it for the first time if you have never made it before.

The next person mentioned in our text confessed his faith in a different way, for he called himself by the name of Jacob. That is to say, *he took up his position with the people of God under their lowliest title.* "There," he said, "I am prepared to suffer affliction with the people of God, to be reproached when they are reproached, to be shunned when they are shunned, to be ridiculed when they are ridiculed. I belong to Jacob! He is an extraordinary person, cut off from the rest of the world to be the Lord's and I go with him." It is a grand thing when, first of all, a man knows he is the Lord's, but in some persons, this confession takes more prominently the shape of feeling that they will be with the people of God, that they are willing to take up their cross and go with God's people wherever they go. Their resolution is something like that brave declaration of Ruth to Naomi, "Where you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge: your people shall be my people and your God my God."

I remember speaking with a Christian woman who lay dying. She was under some form of doubt at the time, but she said, "I feel sure that the Lord will never send me among the ungodly, for my tastes and habits do not lie that way. I have always been happiest among the people of God and, surely, the Lord will let me be gathered to my own company." And so He will. There is a story told—I believe a true one—of a poor woman who had long been a Believer, but, partly through aberration of mind, I think, she grew so despondent that nobody could cheer her. Before she died, she came out into bright light, but for a long time she was under a cloud and her belief was that she would be sent to Hell. She feared such

a doom above all things, but she prayed this very singular prayer, that, although she must suffer for her sins, she might have a place by herself where she might not hear the blasphemies of the wicked against God. She seemed as if she was not afraid of any form of suffering, but she said that she could not bear to hear God's name blasphemed! Dear Soul, there was no fear about her safety, was there? Where there is that holy dread of sin, that hatred of evil, that real love to God, there is no fear whatever of what will become of such people!

Now, there are some who, at first, are afraid that they do not belong to the Lord, but they say that they will belong to His people. They wish, somehow or other, to get in among them and especially when they see them despised. Then they come forward and stand up for them, and say, "On me, also, let the reproach fall, for I, also, am one of them." This is a grand spirit. I commend it heartily!

But here is a third person who makes *his* confession in a still different way—"Another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." I do not know this person. Sometimes I think that he is a friend of mine *who is afraid to speak, but who likes to write*. "I could not," says one, "speak my confession of faith, but I could joyfully sit down and write it." Yes, you are timid, trembling and slow of speech. Do not condemn yourself for that. I have heard of one who came before the Church and could not speak a word—and when the pastor asked her some questions and almost put the answers into her mouth, she could say nothing. So he was obliged to say, "My dear Sister, the Church cannot judge at all as to your faith, for you say nothing." And then she broke the silence by exclaiming, "I cannot speak for Christ, but I could die for Him." "Oh!" said the minister, "that is the best confession of all!" There are some of that sort who would not be able to speak in public, being so timid and retiring, but they subscribe with their hand unto the Lord.

Still, I am not sure that this is the person mentioned in the text. I seem to fancy that it is a stronger body, a man who is *not content with saying it, but who writes it down in black and white*—"I am the Lord's." That which is written remains, so he puts it down. I have known such people to write out and sign a declaration that they belong to Christ. If they add any promises to that declaration, I am afraid that they will bring themselves into bondage. But if this is all, that they distinctly declare that the transaction is done, and that they belong to God, I think that it is a very admirable way of confessing faith in Him. Possibly, I may be addressing some young people who have done this. Let them be thankful that they have been enabled to make such a declaration of their faith and let them stand to it and abide by it all their days!

But you will notice, also, that this person who thus subscribed, or wrote with his hand, unto the Lord, also *went the whole way towards God and His people at their best*, for it is added that he surnamed himself by the name of Israel. Let me put this matter very plainly to you. I believe that there are some who give themselves up to the Church of God in a

very complete and unreserved manner, resolving that all the *privileges* they can enjoy they will have, all the *holiness* they can ever attain to they will gain, and all the *consecration* that lies within the region of possibility they will strive after and secure. They surname themselves by the name of Israel—they not only join God’s people at their worst, but they mean to join them at their best. Not only do they take the name of Jacob, but the name of Israel, also!

There are certain persons who have joined this Church—I shall not indicate them, but you must know who they are—they are those who, when they joined the Church, joined it with all their heart and threw their whole soul into it. They give their time, their substance, themselves, to the cause of God for the Glory of Christ. On the other hand, there are some who join the Church and we have the distinguished privilege of having their names in our books, but that is all, for they do *nothing* for Christ. They are a worry to us rather than a help. They are the very first persons to find fault if they do not derive benefit. But as for the Church’s service, they cannot answer to their names when the roll is read, for they are not here—they are busy in the world and their whole strength is *there*—they do not surname themselves by the name of Israel!

Happy is the Church when the Lord sends into her midst men and women who are so completely the Lord’s that they give themselves up heart and soul to His service. Years ago, when farming used to pay, I have known farmers have a farm which they worked, themselves, and then they had another at a distance which they called their off-hand farm, out of which they did not get very much. So I believe that there are some people whose religion is a sort of off-hand farm—they do not get much out of it, nor do much with it—but their worldly business is their home farm which they work with all their might. The other matter is of secondary importance to them. Such people are not likely to be very happy in the Lord, themselves, and they are not likely to be made useful to others.

I think that I have thus shown you that there are varied ways of making this confession of faith. With some, it is a distinct avowal of their union with the Lord, Himself. With others it is mainly a sense of their union with the Church. With others it is a blending of the two and a carrying of both to a high degree of perfection. God give us many converts of this last sort!

III. I was going to finish with this observation, that THESE CONFESIONS OF FAITH ARE ALL GRACIOUS, but I can only deal with one, for our time has gone—“I am the Lord’s.”

I wish that I could convey to others the feelings which I have had in thinking over these words. They had been with me many days before I ventured to think of preaching from them—“I am the Lord’s.” You know the order in which they come elsewhere. “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” “I am His,” follows, “my Beloved is mine.” *You must have Christ before you say that you belong to Christ.* Beloved, have you taken hold on

Christ? Have you appropriated Him? Is He your all, your everything? Is it so? Well then, you should go on to say, "I am the Lord's."

This declaration, "I am the Lord's," is a *very practical confession*, for, if I am the Lord's, then I must not give myself up to be the slave of another. I must not serve the world, the flesh, or the devil, for, "I am the Lord's." If the Lord has bought me, if the Lord has chosen me, if the Lord has called me, if the Lord has taken me to be His peculiar portion, I must be reserved for Him and not given to another. This ought to be a check to me in my whole daily life, if I am tempted to do this or that which is wrong.

It will be also a *high incentive to duty to say truly*, "I am the Lord's." I must live for Him; I cannot merely talk about being His, I must prove it to be so in private by my walking with Him and in public by my walking like He. If I am the Lord's, I must lay myself out to extend His Kingdom and win the souls of others to His sway. I must be zealous for my Lord—it must not be one step today and another tomorrow, for "I am the Lord's." I must not be idling and trifling, for "I am the Lord's." If this Truth shall come with power to your hearts, it will tend to make earnest workers of you, such servants as need not be ashamed even in the day of their Lord's appearing.

But while it has a practical bearing, *this confession has a sweet comforting aspect*—"I am the Lord's." The devil desires to have me, but, "I am the Lord's," so he cannot have me. Sin would have me, but, "I am the Lord's," and He has forgiven me and delivered me from the guilt of sin. I might fall a thousand times a day, but, "I am the Lord's." I might fall foully but not finally, for, "I am the Lord's"—and being the Lord's, He holds me in His hands and none shall pluck me from His gracious grasp!

"I am the Lord's." This is *my hope of safety and of perfection*. If I am the Lord's, then He has begun a good work in me and He will not leave off till He has performed all that He purposed concerning me! He will have respect to the work of His hands. I have heard that when Gustave Dore left Paris, before the siege, he hid one of his most beautiful pictures under a heap of stones in a cellar. Only he knew where it was and, when the siege was over, Dore hastened to the place, for he had a respect to the work of his hands, and though his picture lay hidden there, you may be sure that he soon disinterred it and completed it. And, sometimes, the Lord's people seem to get down under the stones in the cellar, but He will find them. If you are the Lord's, He will not leave you to perish! He will go on with His work and finish the task He has commenced till you shall reflect His wisdom and display His power!

"I am the Lord's." Why, I think I will turn this confession into a hymn! I will not rhyme it, but let it stand as it is, "I am the Lord's." Sing it in your souls! Let the joy bells of your heart ring it out, "I am the Lord's. I shall die in the Lord, I shall rise again at the sounding of the archangel's trumpet, I shall see my Lord's face in Glory, I shall be forever with Him, for I am the Lord's." If you come to the Communion Table with this sweet reflection in your hearts, and then go from the table with this Truth of God worked out practically in your lives, it shall be well with you!

My dear Hearers, I wish you could all say, "I am the Lord's." I would to God you would all put your trust in Christ and take Him to be yours. When you have done that, then do not hesitate to come and confess Him before men! God help you to do, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 44.**

In this chapter God encourages His Church by a promise of the visitation of His Spirit. Oh, that it may be fulfilled to us, also!

Verses 1-3. *Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: thus says the LORD that made you, and formed you from the womb, which will help you; Fear not, O Jacob, My servant; and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon your seed, and My blessing upon your offspring:* That is exactly what we need! Oh, that God would thus revive His Church! A little while ago you saw the earth become dry and brown and bare—the very pastures were chapped and parched and opened their mouths to cry for rain. What could we have done if the clouds had still withheld their nourishment? But at last, down came the refreshing showers and all the face of nature was revived! What we have had upon our fields, we need upon our Churches! Nothing will do for our souls but a visitation of the Spirit. Let us pray for it. Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Rain, pour out Your life-giving treasures upon thirsty souls even as the floods have been poured out upon the dry ground! Here is a Divine promise, let us plead it—"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon your seed and My blessing upon your offspring."

4. *And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.* You must often have noticed how you can trace the course of a brook by the willow trees that grow upon its banks. When you cannot see the brook from a distance, you can see the willows. So, wherever the Spirit of God comes, young people are converted—we see our children growing up in God's fear—and we know that this is the result of the Spirit's working.

5, 6. *One shall say, I am the LORD'S; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel. Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and His redeemer, the LORD of hosts; I am the First, and I am the Last; and beside Me there is no God.* This is spoken in the Lord's usual majestic style—does it not remind you of the words of our Lord Jesus as recorded in the Book of the Revelation? "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, says the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." How can He be less than Divine who rightly adopts the same style which Jehovah uses in the Prophets—"I am the First, and I am the Last; and beside Me there is no God"?

7. *And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people? And the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them.* The great God challenges all pretended gods to compete with Him and to show that they have ever prophesied or foretold the future! One of the greatest proofs of the Inspiration of Scripture and that our God is the only living and true God, is that the prophecies up to now have been literally fulfilled. Go to Bashan, or to Edom, or to Sidon, or to Egypt—and wherever you go, you will see that whatever the Lord said concerning the ancient nations and peoples and cities has been carried out to the very letter!

8. *Fear you not, neither be afraid: have not I told you from that time, and have declared it? You are even My witnesses. Is there a God beside Me? Yes, there is no God, I know not any.* “There is no God” in the world but Jehovah, the one living and true God whom we adore! Now follows that very wonderful passage descriptive of the making of idols, which we have often read. If there are any of you who worship crosses, crucifixes, or any other visible objects, please remember that God’s command is spoken as much to you as to any other idolaters! We may not worship anything that can be seen or handled, for this is the Law laid down by God Himself—“You shall not make unto you any engraved image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them.” Here, then, is God’s description of idol gods.

9. *They that make an engraved image are all of them, vanity.* They must be very empty-headed and foolish people, or they would not worship a thing which they have engraved with their own hands.

9. *And their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed.* Idolaters are just as wooden and doltish as their idols, or else they would know better than to worship them.

10-12. *Who has formed a god, or molten engraved image that is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together. The smith with the tongs both works in the coals, and fashions it with hammers, and works it with the strength of his arms: yes, he is hungry, and his strength fails: he drinks no water, and is faint.* Here is a god-maker with his tongs, and his coals, and his hammers—yet this god-maker gets hungry and faint! Here comes another—

13. *The carpenter stretches out his rule; he marks it out with a line; he fits it with planes, and he marks it out with the compass, and makes it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house.* Fancy a god-maker with his rule and his line, his planes and his compasses! What fine irony there is here

14. *He hews him down cedars, and takes the cypress and the oak, which he strengthens for himself among the trees of the forest; he plants*

an ash, and the rain does nourish it. The forest is growing stuff to make gods with out of ash, and oak, and cedar, and cypress!

15. *Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself.* He cuts up part of the tree for fuel, and warms himself with it!

15-17. *Yes, he kindles it, and bakes bread; yes, he makes a god, and worships it; he makes it an engraved image, and falls down thereto. He burns part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eats flesh; he roasts roast, and is satisfied: yes, he warms himself, and says, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: and the residue thereof he makes a god, even his engraved image: he falls down unto it, and worships it, and prays unto it, and says, Deliver me; for you are my god.* And have not we seen hundreds of persons adoring a doll, or a little picture said to be a likeness of the virgin, or something of that kind? Ah, me, that even under the garb of Christianity the lowest kind of idolatry should still be common among our fellow men! God grant that none of us may ever fall into this deadly evil!

18-20. *They have not known nor understood: for He has shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considers in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yes, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? Shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feeds on ashes.* As madmen will sometimes devour ashes, so surely men who worship things that they have made or bought must be mad—"He feeds on ashes."

20. *A deceived heart has turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?* If you shall worship the crucifix, or anything else that is visible, you are dishonoring yourself and you are breaking the Law of God! Remember that, "God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." He will have no similitude. This He abhors with His whole heart and will hold no one guiltless who worships an idol of any kind! Even though the man has reverentially and sincerely bowed before it, he is transgressing against God! These are the false gods—now we shall read of the one true God

21. *Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for you are My servant: I have formed you.* "You have not formed Me, as these idolaters make their gods, but I have formed you."

21. *You are My servant: O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of Me.* God does not forget His people. If you are trusting in Him, you may forget Him through your infirmity, but because of His infinite love, He will never forget you.

22. *I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed you.* First He pardoned their sins and then He bade them return to Him. What a wonder of mercy this is—Free Grace removing sin and then the sweet constraints of gratitude drawing the forgiven sinner near his God!

23. *Sing, O you heavens, for the LORD has done it: shout, you lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel.* Pardoned sin is enough to make even the rocks sing! Mountains, trees, forests and even the lower parts of the earth are made to echo with song when sin is blotted out!

24. *Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, and He that formed you from the womb, I am the LORD that makes all things; that stretches forth the heavens alone; that spreads abroad the earth by Myself.* God does everything by His own unaided strength. With whom took He counsel when He formed the universe? Who instructed the Ever-Blessed when He made the heavens and the earth! He did it all by His own wisdom and power.

25. *That frustrates the tokens of the liars, and makes diviners mad: that turns wise men backward, and makes their knowledge foolish.* This is what He does to those who boast and think that they know better than He does. But simple hearts that will believe His Word shall know His will and shall grow wise unto salvation.

26-28. *That confirms the word of His servant, and performs the counsel of His messengers; that says to Jerusalem, You shall be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, You shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: that says to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up your rivers: that says of Cyrus, he is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, You shall be built; and to the temple, your foundation shall be laid.* This Book of the Prophet Isaiah was written long before the days of Cyrus, yet he is here mentioned by name, and the prophecy of what he would do is here given! We know how completely this prophecy was fulfilled and the Lord who uttered it, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is our God forever and ever! He shall be our Guide even unto death, blessed be His holy name! Amen.

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

COMFORT TO SEEKERS FROM WHAT THE LORD HAS NOT SAID NO. 508

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 10, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not
unto the seed of Jacob, Seek you Me in vain.”
Isaiah 45:19.*

WE might gain much solace by considering what God has *not* said. What He *has* said is inexpressibly full of comfort and delight. What He has *not* said is scarcely less rich in consolation. It was one of these, “*said not*,” which preserved the kingdom of Israel in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash. “The Lord said not that He would blot out the name of Israel from under Heaven” (2 Kings 14:27). In our text we have an assurance that God *will* answer prayer, because He has, “*not* said unto the seed of Israel, Seek you My face in vain.” You who write bitter things against yourselves, I would have you remember that. Let your doubts and fears say what they will, if *God* has not cut you off from mercy, there is no room for despair—even the voice of conscience is of little weight if it is not seconded by the voice of God.

What God *has* said tremble at! But suffer not your own fears and suspicions to overwhelm you with despondency and sinful despair. Many timid persons have been vexed by the suspicion that there may be something in God’s decree which shuts *them* out from all hope—some secret, written in the great roll of destiny, which renders it certain that if they *did* pray and seek the Lord—He would not be found of them. Our text is a complete refutation to that troublesome fear. “I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth. I have not said,” even in the secret of My unsearchable decree, “Seek you My face in vain.” The decrees are “spoken in secret”—the decrees *are* hidden as, “in a dark place of the earth.”

But it is absolutely certain that the Lord has said nothing in any of them, or anywhere else, which can be interpreted to mean, “Seek you My face in vain.” Oh, no, Brothers and Sisters, that Truth which God has so clearly revealed, that He *will* hear the prayer of those who call upon Him, cannot be contravened by anything which God may have spoken elsewhere. He has so firmly, so truthfully, so righteously spoken that there can be no equivocation. He does not, like the Sibyls, speak mysteriously with a double tongue. Nor does He, like the Delphic oracle, reveal His mind in unintelligible words. No, our God speaks plainly and positively, “Ask, and you shall receive.”

O that all of you would accept this sure Truth of God—that prayer must and shall be heard, and that never, even in the secrets of eternity, never, even in the council chamber of the Covenant—has the Lord said unto any living soul, “Seek you My face in vain.”

The proposition I come to deal with this morning is this—that those who seek God, through Jesus Christ, in God’s own appointed way, cannot, by any possibility, seek Him in vain. That earnest, penitent, prayerful hearts, though they may be delayed for a time, can never be sent away with a final denial. “He that calls upon the name of the Lord *shall* be saved. He that seeks, *finds*. He that asks, *receives*. Unto him that knocks it *shall* be opened.” I shall prove this, first, by the negative, as our text has it—“*I have not said, Seek you Me in vain.*” And then, briefly, by the positive. Oh, may God give us His Holy Spirit, that while I am preaching, comfort may be given to many troubled hearts.

I. First, then, BY THE NEGATIVE. It is *not* possible that a man should sincerely, in God’s own appointed way, seek for mercy and eternal life and not find it. It is not possible that a man should earnestly, from his heart, pray unto God, and yet a gracious answer be finally refused. And that for several reasons.

1. We will suppose the case—suppose that sincere prayer could be fruitless—then the question arises, *Why, then, are men exhorted to pray at all?* If prayer is not heard, if supplication may possibly end in a failure, why does God so constantly, so earnestly, so strenuously constrain and command men to call upon Him? Would it not be a heartless cruelty on my part, if I saw a poor farmer who could not pay his way, if I exhorted him to plow upon a rock, and scatter the little seed he had upon soil where I knew it could never grow? Or if a king imposed upon his poor subject a law that he should plow the seashore, and harrow it, and exercise all the arts of husbandry upon it—when he was perfectly aware that not a single grain could ever bless the farmer’s toil?

What would you think of any man who should advise a thirsty wretch to pump an empty well? Suppose some sovereign should enjoin it upon his subject, seeing he is ready to die of thirst, to let the bucket down where there is no water and to continue to do it without ceasing—to be always letting down the bucket and always winding it up—with the absolute certainty that no good can come of it! And do you think that God, who commands men to pray and not to faint, would bid them do it, if no harvest could be reaped from it? Does He tell them to continue in prayer, to, “pray without ceasing”—to watch unto prayer, to arise in the night watches and cry unto Him—and yet, after all, has He settled it that He will be deaf to their entreaties and despise their cries?

Would it not be a piece of heartless tyranny if the Queen should wait upon a man in his condemned cell and encourage him to petition her favor, no, *command* him to do it, saying to him, “If I do not send you at once an answer, send another petition and another. Send to me seven times, yes, continue to do it, and never cease so long as you live. Be importunate and you will prevail.” And what if the Queen should tell the man the story of the importunate widow, should describe to him the case of the man, who, by perseverance, obtained the three loaves for his weary friend? And then say to him, “Even so, if you ask you shall receive”? And yet all the while should intend never to pardon the man, but had determined in her heart that his death warrant should be signed and sealed and that on the execution morning he should be launched into eternity?

I ask you, Brothers and Sisters, whether this were consistent with royal bounty, whether this were fit conduct for a gracious monarch. And can you for a moment suppose that God would bid you, as He does each one of you, to seek His face—would He bid you come to Him through Jesus Christ—and yet, secretly in His heart, intend never to be gracious at the voice of your cry?

2. Further, for a second argument—if prayer could be offered continuously, and God could be sought earnestly—but no mercy found, then *he who prays would be worse off than he who does not pray*. And supplication would be an ingenious invention for increasing the ills of mankind. For a man who does not pray has less woes than a man who does pray, *if* God is not the Answerer of prayer. The man who prays is made to hunger—shall he hunger, and not eat! Were it not, then, better never to hunger? How, then, can it be said, “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness”? The man who prays, thirsts. As the hart pants after the water brooks, so he pants after his God.

But if God will never give him the living water to drink, is not a thirsty soul much more wretched than one who never learned to thirst at all? He who has been taught to pray has great desires and wants. His heart is an aching void which the world can never fill. But he that never prays has no longings after God. He that never makes supplication feels no ungratified desires after eternal things. If, then, a man may have these vehement longings, and yet God will never grant them, then assuredly the man who prays is in a worse position than he who prays not.

How can this be? Has God so constituted the world that virtue shall entail misery, and that vice shall engender happiness? Can it be, while God is the moral Ruler of the universe, that He will reward the man who forgets Him, and will pour misery into the soul of the man who earnestly seeks His face? It is blasphemy to suppose it! The beasts in the field do not lament that they are not immortal, for they never had aspirations after immortality. A gracious God has limited their ambition to their attainments—but if the ox could groan after Heaven, if the sheep could pray for a resurrection—it were a wretched creature, indeed, to be denied these things.

So the ungodly man, like the beast of the field, has no longing after God’s favor. He has no yearnings after eternal life, no desire to be conformed to the image of Christ—and his ambitions are so far limited to what he gains. But shall it be that a soul shall pant to be like God, shall thirst to be reconciled to his Maker, shall hunger even to faintness, that he may find, “peace with God through Jesus Christ,” and yet shall such desires as these be only given to make him wretched? I cannot suppose such a thing! The absurdity of imagining that the man who *does* pray, would be by God put in a worse position than the man who does not, seems to me to be at once convincing that the earnest, faithful prayer shall certainly, through the merit of Christ, prevail with God.

3. But I go a step further. If God does not hear prayer, since it is clear that in that case the praying man would be more wretched than the careless sinner, then it would follow that *God would be the Author of unnecessary misery*. Now we know that this is inconsistent with the Character of

our God. We look around the world and we see punishment for sin, but no punishment for good desires. We discover that the Fall has brought us loss and ruin. And we know that there is a dreadful Hell where justice shall be executed to the uttermost.

But I see no chamber of arbitrary torture, where God, the Almighty, takes pleasure in the undeserved pangs and unmerited groans of His own creatures! I do not see a single invention made by God to give pain unnecessarily. I find not a joint of my body, no, not a sinew or a muscle, that is intended to *cause* me anguish. They may all be racked with aches and pains, since I am a fallen, sinful man. But the body was not organized with a view to pain, but for pleasure. And do you think that God would ingeniously put up a Mercy Seat to increase human misery by a mockery of Divine Grace, a mimicry of bounty?

Do you dream that He would send out commands to men, obedience to which would entail upon them greater sorrow than disobedience could bring? Do you think that He would woo them with outstretched hands to be more wretched than they were before? Would He be so false and heartless as to bid them come, knowing that their coming would only make them ten-fold more unhappy than they were already, because He did not intend to accept them when they did come? He that can think thus of my God does not know Him. He who could dream that it is possible for Him to invite and incite in you the prayer He has promised to hear, and yet, after all, would reject it, must surely be comparing Jehovah to Juggernaut. He knows not what Jehovah is.

Know you not that prayer, itself, is the *work* of God? Prayer is not the *act* of the *creature*, but the *work* of the *Creator*. Prayer is God in man coming back to God. Prayer is the fruit of Divine life. And do you believe that God would Himself write upon the human heart prayers which He did not intend to hear? Do you think the Holy Spirit would dictate petitions which God, the Eternal Father, had determined to reject? No, no, no! We must, from this negative way of reasoning, be persuaded that our God will hear and answer prayer.

4. Should there still be some desponding ones, who think that God would invite them to pray and yet reject them, I would put it on another ground. *Would men do so?* Would even *you*, full of sin though you are, so treat your own fellow creature? I know that we should hold up to scorn any rich man who should say to beggars in the streets, "I live in such-and-such a place. It is six miles off. If you will all come tomorrow morning at eight o'clock and knock at my door, repeating my son's name, I will supply your wants." And what if, when he had collected the poor beggars, he should let them stand and knock according to his bidding till they were weary and never grant them an answer?

If he should let them know that there was bread within the house, but not a morsel for *them*, we should say, "Well, if men must make themselves merry with practical jokes, let them not be carried out upon the poor and needy. Let them find some other victims, and let not the helpless mendicants of the streets be the victims of such foolish mirth." And shall it be possible for my God to be less generous than men?

Do we not find continually, if there is an hospital opened to relieve the sick, or to heal the maimed, that when much injured persons make an application they are received? I know not that there are any peculiar hearts of compassion in those who have the oversight of the hospital, but I do know this—there is so much of the milk of human kindness in their bosoms, that the moment a poor wretch is brought to the door almost dead—if it were a slighter case they might take some exception—the very desperateness of the case throws open the hospital door, and at once the patient is admitted.

Man is in such a case, near to die, no, condemned and utterly ruined by his sin—and I do not believe that my God will shut His door in the face of misery. Rather, I am persuaded that the very desperateness of the case will make an appeal to His heart and He *will* fulfill His promise. It is a low ground to put it on, I will admit, for God is infinitely more loving than man. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts.” And if a *man* would not reject the supplication which he had himself invited—if a *man’s* heart would be moved to pity by the cry of misery—much more the heart of the All-Bounteous God, whose very name is Love, and whose Nature it is to give liberally without upbraiding. I am persuaded, therefore, that He must, and will hear prayer.

5. Yet further—have you forgotten that this *is God’s memorial, by which He is distinguished from the false gods?* “They have ears, but they hear not, hands have they, but they help not their worshippers. And feet have they, but they come not to the rescue of their votaries. But *our* God made the heavens, and this is His memorial, the God that hears prayer.” Has not David put it—“O You that hear prayer, unto You shall all flesh come”? One of the standing proofs of the Deity of Jehovah is that He does, to this day, answer the supplications of His people.

But suppose that any one among you could seek His face day after day, week after week, and month after month, and yet He should refuse you—where would His memorial be? O if yonder poor sinner, with tears and plaintive cries were really to besiege the Mercy Seat in the name of Jesus, and God, the Almighty Father, should refuse him and drive him away, I say, where is the boasted name of God? I grant you, the answer may tarry, but only that it may be the more sweet when it comes. I know the ships of Heaven may be long upon the voyage, but only that they may bring a richer cargo to you.

But come they must. “If the vision tarry, wait for it. It *shall* come. It shall not tarry.” For otherwise, I say, where is the glory of God? How is He distinguished above Baal? How is He exalted above the gods of the heathen? Did not Elijah put it to the test? The priests of Baal cried—they cut themselves with knives. From morning to evening their shrieks went up to Heaven and the sarcastic Prophet said, “Cry aloud, for he is a god! Perhaps he is on a journey, or he sleeps and must be awakened.” All day long the lancers drew forth priestly blood. But no voice came from Baal.

Clear the stage and let God’s servant come. He lifts his hands to Heaven and cries—“Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and of Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel, and that I am Your servant,

and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their heart back again.” Down falls the fire of the Lord, consuming not only the bullock, but the stones of the altar and the water in the trench! For our God *does* hear prayer.

Now do you see, Soul, that your despair, when you say He will not hear you, really takes away from God one of His grandest titles? You do Him a serious dishonor in supposing that He will refuse to hear you. You cast mire upon the escutcheon of Deity, and think unworthily of the Most High when you imagine for an instant that He would teach you to pray, and come to Him through the blood of Christ—and yet refuse to hear the voice of your groaning.

6. Surely these arguments might well suffice. But if unbelief has as many lives as a cat, as John Bunyan says, I will deal it the full nine blows and one over, to make assurance doubly sure.

If God does not hear prayer—suppose such to be the case for a moment—then I want to know—what are the meaning of His promises? I ask, with all reverence, how He shall make His veracity to be proved, if He does not answer His people? Let me give you one or two of His own promises—“Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I *will* deliver you, and you *shall* glorify Me.” “He *shall* call upon Me and I *will* answer him.” What does this mean, by the mouth of Isaiah—“He *will* be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry. When He shall hear it, He *will* answer you.” That is neither more nor less than a falsehood, if God does not hear prayer.

What about this splendid passage—“And it shall come to pass, that before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I *will* hear”? And this by Zechariah—“They *shall* call on My name and I *will* hear them. I will say, It is My people and they shall say, The Lord is my God”? Can there be words plainer than these, from the lips of the Savior—“Ask and it *shall* be given you. Seek and you *shall* find, knock and it *shall* be opened to you. For *everyone* that asks receives, and he that seeks finds. And to him that knocks it *shall* be opened”? Or these, “If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask him?”

And what is the meaning of this great promise—“And *all* things, whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you *shall* receive”? Are not these so many arrows shot at the very heart of unbelief? I begin at that ancient writing, the Book of Job. “He *shall* pray unto God, and he *will* be favorable unto Him, and he *shall* see His face with joy.” The Psalms are crowded with such promises, and even the Prophet Joel, who is full of thunder and lightning—even he says, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord *shall be delivered*”—which the Apostle Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, varies a little, and puts it—“For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord *shall be saved*.”

Even James, who is all practical, and very little comforting, cannot get through the Epistle without saying, “Draw near to God and He *will* draw near to you.” Why, even under the old Law, Deuteronomy had a promise like this—“If you shall seek the Lord your God, you *shall* find Him, if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul.” Under the rule of the

kings, we find it written, "If you seek Him, He will be found of you." So might I go on quoting promises, until you were weary with hearing my voice. But, my dear Friends, I ask you, if God does not hear prayer, after saying what I have repeated to you, where is His truthfulness?

He *must* be true, if every man is a liar—God's own Word *must* stand—though Heaven and earth should pass away. Like flowers, you nations, you shall die. Like a dream, you kingdoms, you shall melt. Like a shadow, O you mountains, you shall dissolve. Like a wreck, O earth, you shall be broken into pieces. Like a worn out gesture, O you heavens, you shall be rolled up. But every Word of God is sure and steadfast, "yes, and amen in Christ Jesus." "The voice said, Cry. And I said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withers and the flower thereof fades away. But the Word of the Lord endures forever." How can we find arguments stronger than this?

7. Another stroke. If God has virtually said to us, "Pray, but I will never hear you. Seek My face in vain," then I ask, what is the meaning of all the provisions which He has already made for hearing prayer? I see a way to God. It is paved with stones inlaid in the fair crimson of the Savior's blood. I see a door. It is the wounded side of Jesus. Why was that blood shed, if God hears not prayer? Why that side rent if, after all, the veil still shuts out from access to the Mercy Seat? Moreover, in Heaven I see a Mediator between God and man. But why a Mediator, if God will not be at peace with man nor hear his prayer?

Moreover, I see an Intercessor. I see the Son of God stretch His wounded hands, and point to His side, wearing the jeweled breastplate on His forefront. But why the breastplate, and why the High Priest, if prayer is a futile thing, and God has said, "Seek you My face in vain"? Moreover, I see all the marvelous transactions of the Covenant from first to last. And I ask, Why all this, if it is not meant for sinners who seek His face? Moreover, I see the blessed Spirit. He, Himself, condescends to dwell in us, and make, "intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered." And I ask of you, O Melancholy and Despair, why was this Spirit sent? Why this blood shed? Why this Savior ordained and exalted on high, "to give repentance and remission of sins," if remission is never to be given, repentance never to be accepted and intercession never to be heard?

By every wound of Jesus I beg you, Sinner, to believe that God will hear you! By every drop of that precious blood, by every cry of those dying lips, by every tear of those languid eyes, by every smart of that bruised back, by every jewel of that crown of glory, by every precious stone upon that priestly breastplate, by every honor which God the Father has bestowed upon our Lord Jesus—yes, by all the power of the blessed Spirit, by all the energy with which He raised Christ from the dead, by all the "power" with which He is acknowledged to be God—I do beg you to never doubt but that God will in due time be gracious to the voice of your cry.

8. Still to pursue this dying foe, whom methinks we might have slain outright by this time, I use the argument which the Apostle uses upon the resurrection. If God does not hear prayer, *what Gospel have I to preach?* As the Apostle said, concerning the resurrection, "Then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain. You are yet in your sins." If God does not

hear prayer, I say, our preaching is in vain. We are sent to tell men that, “though their sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow”—if they will turn from their evil ways, and *seek* the Lord.

But if they can turn, and yet not be accepted, I, for my part, renounce my commission, for I have not a Gospel that is worth the preaching. And surely *you* would say, “It is not a Gospel worth our acceptance.” If prayer, offered in Jesus’ name, is not accepted, taking Paul’s line of argument, then Christ is not accepted. If the sinner’s plea, “for Jesus’ sake,” is not heard, then is Christ not heard? And if Christ is not heard and accepted, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain. Yes, and we are found false witnesses for God, because we have testified of God that He hears the intercession of Jesus, whom He hears not if He hear not those who plead His name.

9. Further, my Brothers and Sisters—and here we strike the ninth blow—if this could be removed, *where is the Believer’s hope?* Hang the heavens in sackcloth, let the sun be turned to darkness, let the moon become a clot of blood if the Mercy Seat can be proved to be a mockery! Oh, if God would let His people cry and not be gracious, better for us that we had never been born! The most happy saint, in his best moment, would be as wretched as the damned in Hell, if he were persuaded that God did not, and could not, hear prayer.

What would we have to comfort us in our hours of trouble, what to strengthen us in our times of labor, what refuge from the storm, what cover from the heat? Where, where, my Brothers and Sisters, could we fly, if the Throne of Grace were a fiction? Heaven, surely, is shut, when the gate of prayer is shut. Surely every blessing will pass away at once, when prayer ceases to avail. The ladder which Jacob saw would be drawn up into Heaven, and from now on, there would be no communion between God and man. Glory be to God, such a thing cannot be! Sinner, you think that God would never hurt His saints, but that He would reject *you*. But see, if He refuses to hear *you*, the rule is broken, and the rule, being once broken—there being *one* exception—the whole stability of the saints’ comfort is removed at a blow.

10. I close this negative view of the subject by asking, in the tenth place, What would they say in Hell if a soul could really seek the Lord and be refused? Oh, the unholy merriment of devils! “Here’s a soul,” says one, “that perished, though it prayed! Here’s a hand that touched the hem of Jesus’ garment, but that garment did not heal! Here are lips scorched with burning fire which once were warm with living prayer.” Methinks they would drag such a one in triumph through the streets of Tophet. They would crowd the thoroughfares to look on. And oh, what dread acclaim of scorn!

What thundering laughter would go up! “Aha! Aha! Aha,” they would say, “Where is the boasted Savior now? He lied unto men’s souls! He promised, but He did not give. He taught them to pray—and made them begin their Hell on earth—and then threw them into Hell forever.” Could it be? Oh, could it be? What would praying men do in Hell? I remember that story of Mrs. Ryland, a good Christian woman, who, when she lay dying,

was very, very sad, and her husband said to her, "You are dying, my Dear?" "Yes," she said. "And where are you going?" he asked. She replied, "Ah, John, I'm going to Hell."

"And what will you do there?" he asked her. Well, that had not struck her, what she should do there. "Do you think," he asked, "you will leave off praying, Betsy?" "No, John," she said, "even if I were in Hell, I would pray." "Oh, but," said he, "they'd say, 'Here's praying Betsy Ryland here—turn her out—this isn't a fit place for her.'" And so methinks if one of you could go there with a prayer upon your lips, pleading and crying, they would either rejoice over you, as a proof that God was not true, or else they would say, "Turn her out. We cannot bear prayers in Hell. We could not bear to hear the voice of earnest supplication among the shrieks and curses of lost spirits."

I have been arguing against a thing which you know theoretically is not possible. But yet there are some who, when they are under conviction of sin, still cleave to this dark delusion—that God will not hear *them*. Therefore, I have tried by blow after blow, if possible, to smite this fear dead. When Jael did but take one nail and hammer, she was able to smite Sisera through his brain with it. Since I have used ten nails, and have given the ten as lusty strokes with the hammer as I could give them, O may God make them strong enough to strike the Sisera of unbelief dead at your feet!

II. Now, for a very little time, THE POSITIVE VIEW OF THE QUESTION. That the Lord does hear prayer, we think, may be positively substantiated by the following considerations:

For the Lord to hear prayer is *consistent with His Nature*. Whatever is consistent with God's Nature, in the view of a sound judgment, we believe is true. Now, we cannot perceive any attribute of God which would stand in the way of His hearing prayer. It might be supposed that His justice would. But that has been so satisfied by the atonement of Christ, that it rather pleads the other way. Since Christ has "put away sin," since He has *purchased* the blessing, it seems but just that God should accept those for whom Jesus died, and give the blessing which Christ has bought.

All the attributes of God say to a sinner, "Come, come! Come to the Throne of Grace, and you shall have what you want." *Power* puts out his strong arm and cries, "I will help you! Fear not." *Love* smiles through her bright eyes, and cries, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with the hands of kindness have I drawn you." *Truth* speaks in her clear, plain language, saying, "He that seeks finds. To him that knocks it *shall* be opened." *Immutability* says, "I am God. I change not. Therefore you are not consumed." Every single attribute of the Divine Character—you can think of these as well as I can—pleads for the man who prays, and I do not know—I never dreamed of a single attribute of Deity which could enter an objection. Therefore, methinks if the thing really will *glorify* God, and not dishonor Him, He will certainly do it.

"Oh, but," you say, "I am such a great sinner." That gives me another argument. *Would it not greatly extol the love and the Grace of God* for Him to give His Grace to those that deserve it least? To give to a man what he deserves is no charity. To bestow a favor upon those who have a *little* of—

fended, is no very great act of beneficence. But to choose out the biggest rebel in His dominions, and to say to that rebel, "I forgive you"! Yes, to take that rebel, and to adopt him into His family, adorn him with jewels, and set a crown of gold upon his head—is this the manner of men, O Lord God? No, it is in such cases that we see the broad distinction between the leniency of human sovereigns, and the mighty Sovereign Grace which is in the King of kings.

The worse you make your case out to be, the better is my argument. The worse the disease, the more credit to the physician who heals. The worse the sin, the more glory to the astounding mercy which puts it away! The greater the rebel, the more triumphant that Divine Grace which makes that rebel into a child of God. I say that the greatness of your sin may act as a foil to set forth the brightness of God's love. And herein, because the hearing of your unworthy prayers, and the listening to the cry that comes out of your polluted lips—because this would honor Him—I am persuaded He will do it.

Further, though these two reasons would suffice, let me notice that it is *harmonious with all His past actions*. If you want a history of God's dealings with men, turn to the 107th Psalm. There you find travelers lost, like you, in a desert. They wander in a wilderness in a solitary way. They find no city to dwell in. The water is spent in the bottle. The bread is exhausted from the camels' backs. They find no well. They perceive no way—they follow this path, then that. At last, hungry and thirsty, their souls fainted within them, up from the desert's parched sand there arose to the burning sky the voice of wailing, "O God, spare us and let us live."

How is it written? "He delivered them out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." For it says, "He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness." That is not told us as the *exception*, but as the *rule*. This is God's way of dealing with men. When they are lost and turn to Him, He hears them. "Ah," you say, "I am lost, but I am not like those travelers. I am lost by reason of my own sin."

The next case in this Psalm will suit you. Here we find rebels brought into prison. They have been rebelling against the Word of God, and they have condemned the counsel of the Most High. Therefore He brought them down by labor. They fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto God in their trouble. Did He hear them? These were "rebels," fitly and properly put in prison, justly and rightly fettered with iron. Do you wear the fetters of conscience and the chains of terror? Are you in the prison of the Law? So long as you are not in the final prison of Hell, if you call upon God in your trouble, you will find it with you as it was with them. "He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their bands in sunder."

"Oh, but," says another, "I have got into trouble through my sin. But I do not know how to pray as I should, I am such a stupid blockhead." Then the next case is yours. "Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted." One of these "fools" had brought on disease by his sin, and he was so sorely sick that he lost all appetite. He abhorred all manner of meat and drew near to the gates of death. This

fool, what sort of prayer did *he* pray? Why, a fool's prayer, certainly. But even a fool's prayer God will hear, as it is written, "He sent His Word and healed them and delivered them from their destructions." So, if you are ever so great a fool, and the suffering you now feel has been brought on you through your own folly, yet He *will* hear you.

"Ah, but," you say, "I have been such a bragging fellow, such a boaster. And I have done such terrible deeds in my day." What is the next case? The case of the sailor. You know, we generally reckon that seafaring men do not care for much. They are daredevils and rap out an oath without compunction. And in the olden times, I dare say, they were worse than they are now, so that when they did get ashore they were a very pattern of everything mischievous and bad. But here we have a crew of sailors in a storm. They had, no doubt, been cursing and swearing in the calm, but here comes a storm.

They go up to Heaven, and then they go down again into the depths—"They reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man," for they cannot walk across the deck. The ship reels, "they are at their wits end," and they think, "Surely she will go to the bottom." Then they cry unto God. There was no chaplain on board. Who prayed? Why, the boatswain, and the captain, and the crew—and I dare say they did not know how to put the words together. They were more used to swearing than to praying—but they went down on their knees on deck—clinging to mast and bulwark and tiller, and they cried, "O God! O God! Save us! The ocean swallows us up! God of the tempest deliver us."

And did He hear the sailor's prayer? Did He hear the cries, the frantic cries, of sinking men? Read here. "He makes the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they are quiet. So He brings them unto their desired haven." Well now, you that have been accustomed to cursing and swearing, and say, "What is the use of my praying?" here is a case which just suits you. And this is the rule, I say again, not the exception. And I argue, therefore, from the past acts and ways of God, that He does hear prayer.

Besides, here is another argument for you. What does He mean by His promises? As I said negatively, if He did not hear, where are His promises? So I say positively this time, *because* of His promises, He *must* hear. God is free, but His promises bind Him. God may do as He wills, but He always wills to do what He has said He will do. We have no claim upon God, but God makes a claim for us. When He gives a promise, we may confidently plead it. I venture to say that promises made in Scripture are God's engagements, and that as no honorable *man* ever runs back from his engagements, so a God of honor and a God of truth cannot, from the necessity of His Nature, suffer one of His Words to fall to the ground.

In this little book, *Clarke's Promises*, which one likes to have always near, you find two or three chapters containing collected promises of the Lord—that He will answer secret prayer and listen to the voice of penitents. But I shall not occupy our time with promises which you can find in your Bibles at home. Only "let God be true and every man a liar." If God promises, He must and will perform, or else He were not true. While we dare to say that God's answering prayer is certified by abundance of facts

in our own experience, we observe that the best proof is to *try for yourself*. It is said that there is no learning to ride except on a horse's back. And I believe there is no learning any Truth of God except by experiencing it.

If you want to know the depravity of the human heart, you must find it out when you look at your daily imperfections. And if you would know that God hears prayer, you must test the fact, for you will never learn it through my saying, "He heard *me*"—you will only know it through His having heard *you*. And I would, therefore, exhort you—all of you who are now within reach of this voice of mine. Since it is not a perhaps, a chance, a maybe, a haphazard—but since it is a *dead*—I must not use that word—since it is a *living* certainty, that, "he that asks receives, and he that seeks finds," go to your houses, fall upon your knees and pray to God!

Pray to Him even now in your pews, to save your souls. Ambition tempts you to disappointment. Riches charm you to speculations which will lead to failure. Your own passions drive you to pleasures which end in pain. The best the world can promise you is a *perhaps*. But my Master presents to you, "the *sure* mercies of David"—certainties—infallible certainties. Will you not have them? O may the Spirit of God lead you to accept them. In your pew you may pray! In that aisle the silent cry may go up to Heaven! In your little narrow chamber, or in the saw pit, or in the garden, or the field, or in the street, or in the prison cell—wherever *you* have a heart to pray, *God* has an ear to hear.

No words are wanting, except such as spring spontaneously to the lips. Tell Him you are a wretch undone without His Sovereign Grace. Tell Him you have no hope in yourself. Tell Him you have no merits! Tell Him you cannot save yourself. Say, "*Lord*, save, or I perish!" It was Peter's sinking prayer. But it preserved him from drowning. Say, "God be merciful to me, a sinner"! It was the publican's prayer in the temple. It justified him.

Bring a suffering Savior before a gracious God—point to the wounds of Jesus, and say, "O God! Though my heart is hard as a millstone, Christ's heart was broken. Though my conscience is not tender and is callous, yet the flesh of Christ was tender and it smarted sorely. Though *I* can give no atonement, Christ gave it—though *I* bring no merits, yet I plead the merits of Jesus." And let me say to you, pray as if you meant it, and continue as Elijah did, till you get the blessing.

I would to God that some of you would never rise from your knees till God has heard you! Plead with Him as a man pleads for his life! Clutch the horns of the altar as the drowning man clutches the life buoy to which he clings. Lay hold on God, as Jacob grasped the angel—and do not let Him go until He blesses you, for "thus says the Lord, I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth. I said NOT unto the seed of Jacob, seek you My face in vain"!

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“LIFE FOR A LOOK”

NO. 2805

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1902.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 22, 1877.**

***“Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth:
for I am God, and there is none else.”
Isaiah 45:22.***

SINCE this text was blessed to my conversion many years ago, I have often preached from it, but, on this occasion I am not going to speak of it as a whole. There is only one thought that I shall endeavor to bring out of it and I intend to act as the gold-beaters do with the metal upon which they work, that is—beat it out very thin and, perhaps, when it covers a wide surface, some may be able to see it who have not previously perceived its preciousness and power.

The great sin of man ever since he has fallen, has been that of idolatry. He is always seeking to get away from God, who is real, but whom he cannot see, and to make for himself a god which can only be an idol, but which pleases him because he can gaze upon it. And thus it comes to pass that some with images of wood and stone—and others with carnal confidences and the like—put something else into the place which should be occupied by God alone. And they look to that something and expect good from it, instead of looking for all good to come from God, and from Him alone. This looking to anything which usurps the place of God cannot but be most offensive to Him and it must also be very disappointing to ourselves, for it is impossible for the false god to yield us any true comfort. When matters come to a pinch and we really need succor, we shall find that we have been leaning upon a broken reed if we have been trusting to anything except the Lord our God.

For a while the idolater may delight himself in the idol which he has so dexterously carved and which he has covered with silver plates and adorned with golden chains. But when he finds that he cries in vain to his god in the day of trouble—when he discovers that no answer comes to his earnest prayer—in his disappointment and vexation of spirit, he is ready to lie down in despair! It must be so, more or less, with all of us. If we trust in anything but God, we shall be disappointed. And if we are living for anything but the Unseen One, who created and still sustains us, we shall have to lie down in sorrow despite the sparks of the fire we have ourselves kindled.

Yet note the Lord’s great patience even with those who are thus provoking Him by this idolatry of theirs. What do you think, Sirs? If you had made men, sustained them and provided for them, yet they did not worship you, or serve you, or fear you, or trust you, but, instead, transferred their fear, or love, or trust to mere idols that had eyes, but could not see, had hands, but could not help—would you not feel righteously angry? Would it not grieve you to have a dead thing, which these people had themselves made, put into your place? I am sure it would! And the Lord our God is a jealous God and He has been, generation after generation, provoked by the idolatries of men. Yes, and He has even been provoked by us who profess to be His people, but who have loved something else better than we have loved Him. Why, some of us have actually trusted ourselves more than we have trusted the lord and, sometimes, in the hour of trial, we have fled to a friend and relied upon an arm of flesh, instead of trusting in the Lord alone!

Yet how patient He has been under it all! And how blessedly this chapter teaches us of the loving kindness of the Lord! Here He admonishes His ancient people with great gentleness, while He also reasons with great force of argument. Tenderly He chides the wrongdoers and then earnestly He invites them to a better way. He seems to say to them, “Have done with these idols once and for all! You have come into trouble and difficulty through looking to them, yet they could not save you. Now turn away from them and look to Me. Though you are like the very ends of the earth and have gone as far away from Me as you could, as if you would escape from My Presence altogether if that were possible, yet, now, in the hour of your distress, turn your eyes to Me and see if I will not help you! Come and trust Me just this once. ‘Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. ‘Listen to this Divine message, you who have forgotten your God, as, in these gracious terms, He bids you turn your eyes to Him and let your expectations be from Him!

Our text, as I read it, teaches me, first, that *for salvation out of any trouble, we should look to God alone*. When I have spoken briefly upon that point, I shall carry the principle into deeper spiritual matters by showing you, in the second place, that, *for eternal salvation, we must assuredly look to God alone*.

I. First, then, FOR SALVATION OUT OF ANY TROUBLE, WE SHOULD LOOK TO GOD ALONE.

You know, Brothers and Sisters, that there are some troubles in which men *do* look to God alone. I have known even the most profane, godless men turn to God, after a fashion, in the hour of supreme peril. It has often been observed that men in time of storm or shipwreck—those who had used blasphemous language and ridiculed all religion—when they have been caused to reel to and fro and stagger like drunken men, and have been at their wits’ end, they have cried unto the Lord in their trouble. And in earthquakes, when the very globe, itself, rocks and reels, as though it were as unstable as the restless sea, and huge buildings are

torn in pieces, and strong towers come tumbling down, thousands of men have cried aloud to God to save them! Knees, unused to devotion, have been bent in abject terror while hearts that never felt the gracious Presence of God, have begun to tremble at the majestic display of His power. This kind of experience has often been witnessed in ungodly men at the approach of death. When, at last, the chill drops stand on their brow—when they know that life is almost over and their soul is melting in their dire distress and the dark gates of the grave stand wide open before them—then they also cry unto the Lord in their trouble.

Now, if men will act thus by the compulsion of great calamity, is there not sound reason why you should cheerfully and willingly do the same and resort to God in every trial, difficulty and dilemma? Why do not men also seek Divine help in other matters? It is evident that God’s hand is in other things besides shipwrecks, earthquakes and death! And it has often been proved that He is able to help in the lesser troubles as well as the greater ones. It is the Lord that quickens the wheels of commerce, or that stops them and so causes distress. It is the Lord that permits the good and the evil which happen to men. “Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord has not done it?” Is there a cry or a wail in war that God does not hear? Then why should we not go to Him in every time of peril and trouble—even in the minor trials and difficulties of life? Why must we have a severe sickness in order to drive us to God? Why is it that only the very peril of life brings us to our knees?

It ought not to be so—especially with the Lord’s own children. Is anything too unimportant for the Lord to notice? Is any trial too slight for you to bring in prayer before Him? If you, fathers, listen to your children’s little tales of sorrow. If you, mothers, with your needle, deftly take out the tiniest thorn from your child’s hand, how much more will your Father, who is in Heaven, note all the little trials you have to bear in this life—and deliver you out of them all? Look unto Him, then, and be you saved out of all the trials that beset you! Brothers and Sisters, we ought to habitually look to God—in the morning, looking to Him for the mercies of the day. At night, looking to Him for the pardon that shall cover the day’s offenses. In the morning, expecting strength for the day’s burden and, in the evening, laying down the burden at the Master’s feet and blessing Him for the Grace which has sustained us.

“But,” says one, “may we not use means to help us out of our difficulties?” Of course you may! You would be wrong if you did not. He who bids you pray for harvest, would have you sow your seed! He who would have you ask to be guided all through your journey, would have you also follow industriously the track of the fiery-cloudy pillar. Yes, use the means, but mind that you trust in God while you use the means—and trust in God beyond all means! And when means utterly fail and you have come to the limit of the tether of your own wit and skill, then feel as if you were flung into the bare arms of God and confide all the more because there is nothing else that you can do! You are not to make faith in God an excuse for idleness. It would be equally wrong to make your in-

dustry a pretext for trusting to yourselves, instead of confiding only in God.

Let this be the rule of your whole life. For all things, trust in God. In all matters, submit to God and, in all ways, serve God. You may take this Divine command, “Look unto Me,” as the motto which shall illuminate your pathway at all times. You can stand safely on the high hills of prosperity as long as you look to Him. And even in the chilly valley of adversity, your heart shall rejoice while you keep looking unto Him. You may go forth to battle against innumerable foes and conquer them all while you look to Him. You may lie upon the bed of sickness and be able to bear your pain with patience while you look to Him! And you shall come at last into the valley of death—death’s sullen stream shall begin to flow over your feet and chill your heart’s blood—but, if you are still looking unto the Lord, the promise of our text shall be fulfilled to you and you shall be saved, for He is God and beside Him there is none else!

II. Now, secondly, while this is the principle which should guide all Believers, it is also the right principle for those who are beginning to be Believers, that is, those who are seeking the salvation of their souls. **FOR ETERNAL SALVATION WE MUST LOOK TO GOD ALONE!**

I want to keep you to this point if I can, so I ask you to remember, first, that *salvation is not to be found in any mere agent*. The idolatry which leads some men to make blocks of wood and stone into objects of worship has led others to make gods of what are called, “the means of Grace,” selecting this or that matter—sometimes, that which is of Divine appointment and, sometimes, things which are the result of human invention. At one time you may find a man resting the whole weight of his soul on what he calls, “sacraments.” Has he not been baptized and is he not, therefore, a member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven? He goes regularly to what he calls, “Holy Communion,” and he supposes that he has received Grace by the eating of “consecrated” bread and the drinking of “consecrated” wine. But, Beloved, “sacraments” become mere idols as much as the false gods of the Hindu when we expect salvation from them! We have put the Christian ordinances altogether out of their place when we have allowed them to usurp the position which belongs only to the Savior.

I do not suppose that many of you will do this, yet I am sometimes afraid that you may fall into an equal error of much the same character. Some people seem to suppose that because God blesses the hearing of sermons, (and He does bless it, even as He blesses other means that He has ordained), therefore they shall surely be saved through the hearing of sermons. Or because good books are often exceedingly useful and lead men to Christ, they expect that by reading such books they shall be saved and, especially, because the Bible, itself, is the best of books—the Book of God, and the God of books—because it gives much Light to those who are in darkness, they suppose that if they search the Scriptures, they will have eternal life. Now, dear Friends, sermons, good books and even the Bible, itself, may be made into idols if you look to them for sal-

vation and expect that by hearing and by reading—and going no further—you will be saved! You must go beyond all these things and get to God, Himself, and say, with David, “My soul, wait you only upon God; for my expectation is from Him.”

The two Christian ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are precious things. The ministry of the Word—and the Inspired Word as we have it recorded in this Book—these are precious things. But they are only like the porch through which we pass to get to God, Himself. If a man stays on the porch, instead of passing through it to the great Host of the house, he misses the design and end of the porch which is not intended to keep the man upon the threshold, but that he should pass through it and find the God who dwells within! It is very easy to look to mere agents for salvation, but salvation is not to be found there. “Salvation is of the Lord,” and of the Lord alone! No man in the world can accomplish this great work. The Psalmist had learned that lesson when he wrote, “None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.” Though a man should speak with the tongues of men and of angels, yet, if you are not led, by his speech, to *look to God for salvation*, you will not be saved! And though the ordinances of God’s House are observed before you in all their sacred simplicity, yet they can yield you no profit if you do not pass beyond that which is seen by the eyes and look unto the great invisible God to whom your soul must draw near, in spirit and in truth, if you are ever to find salvation!

Does someone ask, “To what, then, are we to look?” I will try to tell you if you will listen. You are guilty, so, in order that you may be saved, you need to have your sins pardoned. And you also need that your heart should be renewed by God’s almighty Grace. So, *the great thing that you need to know, look at and rely upon, is the mercy of God*. Especially should you think much of the greatness of that mercy. If your sin is great, remember that it is so and mourn over it. But also remember that God’s mercy is a bottomless, boundless ocean which can swallow up and cover, forever, the great mountain of your guilt. The merciful God is able to put away all your sin. Think, too, of the freeness of that mercy, which asks nothing at your hand—no price, no bribe to move the heart of God to take pity upon you—for his heart burns with love of itself. It does not need you to bring anything to make Him love you, or to incline Him to be ready to forgive you. He is so already from the very force of His own Character! God’s mercy is free, full, rich and abundant. To Moses, He, “proclaimed the name of the Lord” in that remarkable utterance, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression and sin.” He clasps His lost child to His bosom and rejoices that he is found!

Yet also remember that God’s mercy is Sovereign—He saves whom He will—and that there is no reason known to you why He should not save you as well as any other sinner, especially since that Sovereignty of His is generally displayed toward the most unlikely and undeserving! Well says

the Apostle, “Not many wise men after the flesh. Not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise: and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence.” Ponder this great Truth of God and then say to your soul, “I, a guilty sinner, needing salvation, must look for it to the rich, full, free, ever-flowing, over-flowing, Sovereign, everlasting mercy of God.” O eyes that weep because of sin, behold this glorious attribute of the God of Mercy and of Grace—and let your tears be dry!

Then, since God says, “Look unto Me,” let me ask you *whether you are looking unto Him as He has revealed Himself to us in His Word*. If you simply look to God as He reveals Himself in Nature, you will have but a very imperfect view of Him and you will derive but little comfort from Him. We cannot possibly understand Him, there, as well as we do when He speaks to us—not by the signs and hieroglyphics of Nature—but in the plain words that we can read in our own mother tongue in this blessed Book. Therefore, if you would be saved, look to God here where He looks at you from the pages of His Word—and hear what He tells you. He tells you, by almost innumerable promises, that He is ready to forgive your sin if you repent of it and trust His Son. Then, to His promises, He adds such gracious and cheering invitations as this, “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” And such loving exhortations as this, “Let the wicked forsake His ways, and the unrighteous man His thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

Read this blessed Book, search out its exceedingly great and precious promises, study its many invitations and also examine the examples that are given in its records of the multitudes of sinners God has saved by His Grace—the great sinners whom, in His abundant mercy, He has accepted and made to be His children! Keep your eyes fixed on God as He so graciously manifests Himself in the pages of His own Book, for then you will be able to cry with the Prophet Micah, “Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retains not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy.” O guilty Soul, if you would find salvation, you have not to look to any priest, nor to any book, nor to any ceremony, nor to any doings of your own! But look to God as He has revealed Himself in His Word!

And especially is it intended that *we should look unto God as He reveals Himself in the Person and work of His dear Son*. This is the very essence of the Gospel—that we should look to God in Jesus Christ and so find salvation. That is where salvation is to be found—and nowhere else—“for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” And, “other foundation can no man lay than

that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Look, then, to the Lord Jesus Christ if you would find salvation! You say that you dare not come to God by reason of your great sin? You do well to regard your sin as great and to mourn over it, but you must not be content with doing that. Look away to Jesus, the great Sin-Bearer, on whom was laid the iniquity of all who believe in Him, even as the Prophet Isaiah says, “He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.” Look away from your sin, Sinner! No, rather, follow your sin as it is laid by God on the Sin-Bearer’s shoulders and, as you look there, you will find salvation!

“But,” you say, “I have no merit to plead before God. I cannot hope to meet with acceptance in His sight.” Then listen to my text. God says here, “Look unto Me, and be you saved.” God, in the Person of His well-beloved Son, shows the only method by which you can be accepted by Him. The perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ is both imputed and imparted to all who believe in Him and, therefore, dream not of trusting in their own merits! Indeed, you have none to trust in—a spider’s web is more substantial than the flimsy, fancied merits of the best man under Heaven! But if you look to what Christ was and is, to what He did and what He suffered, you will find the garment—the royal robe beyond all comparison for beauty—in which you may wrap yourself for time and for eternity! If you put on this robe, Friend, God will love you and bless you! No, I must reverse the order of my words and say that, because God *has loved you*, He has made it possible for you to take the righteousness of Christ to be your righteousness forever and ever!

“Ah,” says another, “but if I am to find salvation, I must escape from the power of sin—and I have no strength to do that.” I know you haven’t—do not think of looking to yourself to find any, but listen again to our text, “Look unto Me, and be you saved.” The sin that you cannot master, Christ can conquer! He can make the lust that now binds you as with fetters of iron, to have no more power over you! Have I not often seen this happen to a man who has been bound with chains that he could not break? But the Spirit of the Lord has come upon him and he has snapped them as easily as Samson, “broke the ropes, as a thread of straw is broken when it touches the fire.” Poor manacled slave of sin, Christ can enable you to get your liberty! Look not to what you can do, for that is nothing! Look only to the Omnipotence that dwells in the eternal arms of the once-crucified Redeemer.

“But,” you cry, “I could never hold on even if I did once look to Christ! If I were to begin to believe in Him, I would be tempted and would go back to the world.” I know you would if the matter rested with you—but if the Lord Jesus Christ begins to work upon you, He will persevere with the task until He has fully accomplished it! Look to His faithfulness, for you have none apart from Him! Look to His Immutability, for you are as fickle as the wind that continually changes its course! Rest wholly in the Christ who says to you, “Look unto Me, and be you saved.”

“Oh,” you say, “but I have none of the gifts and graces that make up a Christian life.” That is quite true, but Christ is ready to give them to you. He is a full-handed and a freehanded Savior—and when He begins to bless sinners, riches untold are lavished upon them so that they become rich as kings through the spiritual wealth which Christ bestows upon them! There is nothing that any one of us can need between here and Heaven, but is stored up for us in Christ—and we are to look to Him alone for it. Oh, that the Lord would teach all of us this simple and blessed art, for this is the way of salvation! “Look unto Me”—to God in Christ Jesus—“and be you saved.”

Now I shall conclude by trying to strike this one nail on the head and urging you to give your most earnest heed to this one matter of looking to God in Christ. Dear Friend, you are seeking salvation, so the devil will make a dead set at you to try to keep you from looking unto Jesus. I cannot tell you exactly which way he will go to work, for he has many inventions, but I know that this will be one main point that he will drive at with you—*he will try to get you to not look to God, but to look somewhere else*. Now, if you are determined to look to yourself—if you feel that you cannot help doing so, mind that you never look to yourself without mourning, for every look at yourself ought to cost you a tear. Look to yourself that you may sorrow over your sinful state, but never look there with any hope of finding salvation! When a man is altogether bankrupt, will he go and look into his ledger for consolation? When a man’s house has been stripped by creditors, will the poor penniless tenant go and gaze into the bare rooms to find comfort? When there is not a morsel of bread in the cupboard, will a man look into the empty dishes in order that he may appease the cravings of hunger? If the well is dry, what is the good of looking down to the bottom of it? So, dear Friend, if you do not understand your ruined condition, look at yourself! But if you know that you are lost and undone, you might as well look to the grave for life as to yourself for salvation! Do not let the devil persuade you that there is anything good in you by nature, or that there is any hope of salvation for you in yourself! If he tells you that you are utterly bad, ruined and lost, believe him, for that is true. But if he ever tries to persuade you that there is some good in you, tell him that he lies and you may also tell him that if there were any good in you, there would be no hope for you even in *that*, for your only hope lies in that utter hopelessness which drives you out of yourself to God!

You know how the high priest, under the old Jewish law, was commanded to treat the lepers who were brought before him. When there came a man who said, “I think that my case is a very hopeful one, for I have a large spot of perfectly sound flesh on my arm. And I have another place on my foot where my flesh is like that of a little child.” When the high priest heard the man say that and he looked upon him, and saw that it was even so, he said to him, “Alas, you are a hopeless leper and must be shut outside the camp!” And there he remained till he died. But there came another leper who was quite covered with the signs of the

loathsome malady and he said to the high priest, “My disease has gone to the very extreme—there is not a sound place on me from the crown of my head to the sole of my feet, there is not a single spot that is not affected.” “Ah, my Brother!” replied the high priest, “I am glad to hear you say that and to be able to tell you that now you are clean.” It appears that when the leprosy threw itself out all over the body, the man would recover, but if it was only on a part of him, it was there forever.

And so is it with the sinner—when he cannot see any good in himself, he is the man whom God will save, but, as long as there is a spot of his own supposed goodness as big as a pin’s head, or a pin’s *point*—he is still suffering from the leprosy of sin and must be shut away from the people of the Lord. “That is strange talk,” someone says. I hope it will be strangely comforting to some poor broken-hearted sinner who has been well-near in despair, but who will now hope, believe and live!

Do not let Satan take your eyes away from Christ by any other device. I have known him trouble poor souls with questions about difficult doctrines, or various forms of church government, or about the disputes that arise even between Christian people. The sinner’s one business is to look to Christ and be saved—yet he will get to bothering his head with this and that and the other which he does not understand, and which he does not need to understand. Oh, what thousands of people there are who have some wonderful knot which they want to untie and which they cannot! It would not make the slightest difference to them if it were untied, yet it keeps them from looking to God in Christ Jesus that they may be saved. You may ask about church government afterwards! You may decide, further on, as to Calvinism or Arminianism—or as to the post-millennial or pre-millennial Advent of Christ—but those matters do not concern you now. When a man is drowning, he does not want to read “The Times” newspaper, or Adam Smith’s, “Wealth of Nations.” He needs someone to help him out of the water before he is quite dead! And that is what you need, my unsaved Friend—you need salvation—and you can only obtain it by looking to God in Christ Jesus!

I have known Satan also to take away a man’s gaze from Christ by saying to him, “You do not know whether you are elect or not.” Well, it is a very important question whether a man is one of the elect of God, but I beg you to remember that an unsaved sinner has nothing to do with his election and that it is not possible for him to know anything about that matter at present. When he has believed in Jesus Christ, then he will have the evidence that he is one of the Lord’s chosen people. But until he has done so, he has no reason to think that he is elect. Divine Election is the eternal choice which God the Father has made—and there is no way of coming to the Father except by Christ, His Son. *Redemption* is the word with which you are first concerned—then, when you know the power of the precious blood of Jesus, you will have the proof of your election unto eternal life—and so you will begin to understand the “Everlasting Covenant ordered in all things and sure.”

Sometimes—and this is a common trick of Satan’s—he tries to make men look at their own faith instead of looking unto Jesus. “See,” says he, “you have to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but have you the right kind of faith? Is yours the faith that saves?” Thus, he fixes your eyes on your *faith* instead of on Christ. And then he will ask you, “Is your state of mind what it ought to be?” So you begin looking into your state of mind and you enquire, “Have I a due sense of my need? Have I a proper realization of my dire necessities and of the hardness of my heart?” My dear Friend, whatever your question may be—whether it is holy or profane—it is out of place just now! The only questions that concern you now are such as these—What has God revealed to me in His Word? What has God done for me through His Son? What does He say to me? What does He require of me? What does He promise to give me? You can find the answer to all those questions in our text, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” The devil tells you that you have not got the right kind of eyes, or that you have a squint, or that you have a cataract in one of your eyes! He will say anything to keep you from looking to God in Christ! Yet that is where you are to look—and it is on Him, alone, that you are to rely. And you are not to rely upon your reliance, nor on your faith, nor on your looking—you are to place your complete dependence upon Jesus Christ and Him Crucified!

I pray you to let these simple yet important Truths of God sink into your mind and heart. Endeavor every day to know more of Jesus and, to that end, search the Scriptures that you may learn more and more of God in Christ as He is there revealed. Try to think more about Him, you who are seeking the salvation of your souls. Get as much time as you can, alone, that you may think of Jesus on the Cross and of all that God reveals to you in His dear bleeding wounds, for, the more you know of Him and the more you think of Him, the more you will be able to rely upon Him. Our confidence usually increases in proportion to our knowledge, if the thing known is really worthy of our trust. It is emphatically so with Christ. The more we know Him, the more we shall trust and love Him!

Settle this matter in your mind as an absolute certainty that *whoever and whatever you are, you may look to God in Christ and be saved*. Do not let any doubt upon that point ever cross your mind. Our text says, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” And there are many other passages which are quite as wide in the sweep of their invitation—such as these—“Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” And, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” And the very Gospel commission itself, “Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Whoever you may be, you have a perfect right to look to God, for He invites you to do so! No, more than that, you are bound to do so, for you are *commanded* to do it! And there is this dreadful threat against all who disobey the command, “He that believes not shall be damned.” Look,

then, to God in Christ, without fear, for, looking unto Him, you shall be saved!

With this last point, I close. *Let no feeling of yours beat you off from looking to Christ.* If, when you look to God, your sins seem to rise and howl at you and say, “Who are *you* that you should trust in God?” keep on looking all the same! And if it appears to you that a thousand texts thunder against you, look all the same! Look to God even if He appears to look angrily at you. Run to His arms, for it is your only place of shelter! If He takes His rod to chastise you, still run to His arms. He cannot smite you half so heavily as if His arms get full swings at a distance from you! Lay hold on God’s strength. Just as the child, when his father is going to flog him, lays hold of his father’s hands and, with his tears melts His father’s heart, you do the same! Lay hold on the strength of God and tell Him that you will trust in Him. Even if He shall still seem to threaten you, tell Him that you know that He delights in mercy—that you have heard of great sinners, like yourself, being saved by Him—and that you believe that Christ’s precious blood will make you clean and that you will continue to believe it, come what may.

Will He reject you if you come to Him thus? That is impossible! He never did shake off a soul that thus clung to His arms. He never drove from the door of His mercy one who was resolved to die upon the threshold of His house rather than trust to anyone else! So let nothing turn you from looking to Jesus. Even if you walk without a ray of the Light of God—if you should be tried in circumstances and so afflicted in body as to be at death’s door—remember that the Lord has said, “Look unto Me, and be you saved.” Hang upon that blessed word and this, also, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Carry out both parts of that text and when you have done so, claim the fulfillment of the promise, feeling sure that the mountains shall melt away and the seas lifted up with flaming tongues of fire sooner than God shall be false to the promise He has made to you, unworthy though you are, if you believe in Jesus Christ and are baptized after His own example! May God the Holy Spirit enable you thus to look to Christ for, looking to Him, as surely as He lives, you, too, shall live! And, as surely as God is true, you shall be saved, for you are saved the moment you believe in God through Christ Jesus His Son!

I have not attempted to set these great Truths before you in fine language, for I want them to come home to the heart of everyone here present who is not yet saved. I recollect when I used to go to various places of worship meaning business—and my business was to try to find a Savior—if there really was one for me. I am sure that if anybody in the whole place used to listen with both ears and all his heart, I did. I did not care anything about the preacher’s elocution—the one thing that I wanted to know was what I must do to be saved. Am I addressing anyone in a similar case? If so, O you poor Soul, convinced of sin, I assure you that if you believe in Christ Jesus, you shall be saved! Understand clearly, however, what the salvation is that He will give you. It is not salvation from the *consequences* of your sin while you continue to indulge in it. *He*

will save you from being the sinner that you now are. The ancient Covenant promise runs thus, “From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.” I can see some people sitting before me, now, who, if they had been told, a few years ago, that they would be what they now are, would have laughed such a notion to scorn—they would have poured the utmost contempt upon the speaker! “What?” such a man would have said, “I—the man of pleasure—ever be found among canting hypocritical professors of religion? It is not likely.”

Many a man has said, “I know how to look after myself. I need none of the Grace of God of which you think so much.” Yet there are many such persons here at this moment and they are rejoicing in the very thing they once despised! And their lives are now so altered that no two persons could be more different than their present self is from their old self. I am afraid their old self still occasionally visits them, but I am sure that they never show him indoors. They try, if they can, to push him into the back yard and they get rid of him as quickly as possible. I have known many an one of this sort cry out, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this old enemy of mine? I never want to see him again.” The change is marvelous between what he was and what he is—and such a change as that must be worked in secret.

Our Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Except a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Read that 3rd chapter of John’s Gospel—and, before you get to the end of it you will find that the very same chapter in which the new birth is insisted upon by our Lord, also has these verses in it—“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Both doctrines are true, and perfectly consistent with each other—the free Grace of God and the necessity of a change of heart and life. May you prove them consistent in your own experience and then we will glorify God together forever and ever! Amen and Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—267, 535, 538.

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THE LIFE-LOOK

NO. 2867

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 1904.

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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 9, 1876.

***“Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth:
for I am God, and there is no other.”
Isaiah 45:22.***

I HAVE preached a good many times from this text. [The following sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon this passage, have been previously published—No. 60, Volume 2—*Sovereignty and Salvation* and No. 2805, Volume 48—*Life for a Look*—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] I hope to do so, if life is spared, many more times. It was about 26 years ago—twenty-six years exactly last Thursday—that I looked unto the Lord and found salvation through this text. You have often heard me tell how I had been wandering about, seeking rest and finding none, till a plain, unlettered lay preacher among the Primitive Methodists stood up in the pulpit and gave out this passage as his text—“Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” He had not much to say, thank God, for that compelled him to keep on repeating his text and there was nothing needed—by me, at any rate—except his text! I remember how he said, “It is Christ that speaks. ‘I am in the garden in an agony, pouring out My soul unto death. I am on the tree, dying for sinners—look unto Me! Look unto Me!’

“That is all you have to do! A child can look! One who is almost an idiot can look! However weak, or however poor a man may be, he can look! And if he looks, the promise is that he shall live.” Then, stopping, he pointed to where I was sitting under the gallery and he said, “That young man there looks very miserable.” I expect I did, for that is how I felt. Then he said, “There is no hope for you, young man, or any chance of getting rid of your sin but by looking to Jesus.” And he shouted, as I think only a Primitive Methodist can, “Look! Look, young man! Look now!” And I did look and when they sang a hallelujah before they went home, in their own earnest way, I am sure I joined in it. It happened to be a day when the snow was lying deep and more was falling, so, as I went home, those words of David kept ringing through my heart, “Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow”—and it seemed as if all Nature was in accord with that blessed deliverance from sin which I had found in a single moment by looking to Jesus Christ!

I have always felt inclined, when this time of the year comes round, to preach from this text. I have sometimes thought—“They will suppose I must go over the same ground again and give them the same sermon and

so, perhaps, I shall not have so attentive an audience.” I cannot help it if it is so, for I must preach from this text. As it was blessed to me, I hope it will be blessed to somebody else. I wanted to preach from it last Thursday night, on the exact anniversary of my spiritual birthday, but I was led to take another text and I am glad I was, for, when I entered my vestry tonight, I found on the table this note—“Mr. Spurgeon, I want to tell you that your ‘good news’ [Sermon No. 2866, Volume 50—“Good News”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] last Thursday, was the means of reclaiming a wanderer. How good of Jesus to take such an one as I am back and give me the joy I had when first I knew Him!” The writer enclosed a thanksgiving offering and blessed the name of the Lord. So, this text has been reserved for tonight and who knows but that there has come here somebody who was not here on Thursday night, and whom the Lord intends to bless? I only hope it may be so! Indeed, I *know* it will be so!

Let us read the text again. “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is no other.” This message is addressed, as you perceive, not to the Israelites, but to the Gentiles—to the nations at the very ends of the earth. Alas, many of these nations have long been looking to their idols. They do not feel at rest. They know that they lack something and very earnestly are devout heathens looking to their false gods for what they need. They make great sacrifices and spend vast sums of money upon their idol temples—but salvation does not come and cannot come through these false gods. Jehovah bids them look to Him, that they may be saved. Some among the nations are throwing off the yoke of superstition, but, sad to say, they seem to be falling into skepticism instead. The Hindu, when educated, turns from his idols only to make an idol of his own judgment. Many men worship their own wisdom. They hope, by searching, to find out the Almighty unto perfection—and this theory and that they promulgate and say—“This form of thought and the other will emancipate the human mind.” Ah, it is not so! “The world by wisdom,” in the old Socratic and philosophic days worked out that problem, and the result was that they “knew not God,” but, “professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.” And that is where man, with his great thought and wisdom, always drifts to some absurdity or another. Only Jehovah can save mankind! Philosophy is powerless in this matter.

The nations have been looking long, first to this thing and then to that, to save them. Sometimes they have looked for some great conqueror who will break the yoke of oppression and set the people free. But how often have they been deceived and the idols of the democracy have turned out to be the grossest tyrants that ever lived. Then there are various international and other societies formed by which men are to lift themselves up by confederation. They will look there, too, in vain—though all men should join hand in hand, they cannot do it. If they looked to God, there would be accomplished what all mankind would not be able to perform! One man advises this policy. Another pleads for that form of government. One has this idea and the other has another. And,

every now and then, there seems to be a craze for something or other. Just now we are told that civilization will do away with war and I know not what besides. All evil is to be extinguished by the growth of commerce. But the Lord of Hosts has willed it that nothing shall save the nations but Himself and this poor, bleeding earth needs to be told, again and again, that, for her wounds—and she has many of them—there is no healing liniment but that which flows from the hands, feet and side of Jesus Christ, the Son of God! From the crown of her head to the sole of her foot, she is full of “wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores,” and for all these there is no cure but the blessed balm that flowed from Jesus’ heart on Calvary—no remedy but the one Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. “Look unto Me,” He says, “and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is no other.” O Lord, turn the eyes of the nations to Yourself and to Your Son! When this happens, then shall the day of the world’s salvation have fully come!

The general principle holds good in each particular case. As it is with the nations at the ends of the earth, so must it be with me, so must it be, dear Friends, with you. There is no salvation but by looking unto God in Christ. Let us try to turn that thought over, not merely with the view of thinking of it, but that we may carry it into effect—that if there is salvation to be had, we may have it, and have it at once. O God, grant that it may be so!

First, we shall ask, *What does the word, “Look,” mean in reference to God?* Secondly, *for what part of salvation are we to look to God?* Thirdly, *what is our encouragement to look?* And, fourthly, *when is the best time to look?*

I. First, Jehovah says, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” WHAT DOES THIS WORD, LOOK, MEAN? It means a great deal more than I can tell you, but, among other things, it means this—

First, *consider that there is a God* and enthrone Him in your mind as a real Person, the one living and true God. You have been trying to cure yourself of your spiritual maladies. Now think of God as the great Physician of your soul. Let your mind turn towards Him. You are like that young man who left his father’s house and whose circumstances became so bad, through his own fault, that he was obliged to take up very low and mean employment. And yet, with all that he did do, he did not earn enough to fill his belly. The best thing that he could do was to remember that he had a father—and the happiest day for him was when he came back to his father and received a loving welcome from him.

You say that you are not happy, you are not at rest, your conscience is disturbed and you have tried ever so many things in order to get peace. Now, think about your God. Think about the loving Father who receives His wandering prodigal children and as you think of Him, you will have begun to look to Him. While you are thinking about Him, I wish you would remember this concerning Him—that “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Think of that wonderful Truth that God came here in human flesh and blood and, for us men and for our salvation died a cruel death upon the

tree. Turn that over and over, again, for it is there that your only hope of salvation lies. Do think of that. Read often—

**“The old, old story
Of Jesus and His love.”**

Think over all the details of it. Accustom yourself to look towards God in Christ Jesus in your thoughts and contemplations. By the blessing of the Holy Spirit, this will breed faith in you. Set your face that way—look at God as He has revealed Himself in the Person of the great Propitiation, Jesus Christ, His Son.

Looking to God means, however, more than that. When you have considered Him and taken Him into your calculations, then *address yourself to Him*. Speak to Him! Tell Him where you are and what you are. Tell Him what you feel and what you do not feel, what you ought to feel and what you wish to feel. Tell Him what you want which you have not yet got. If you cannot pray, tell Him so. If you cannot repent and cannot believe, tell Him so. Only speak to Him, for that speaking will be a turning to look and I find that the Hebrew word used here is not so well expressed by the word, “look,” as by the phrase, “turning to look.” If I want to look at the clock above my head, I must turn to look at it. In that fashion, I want you to turn towards God, to consider Him and then to speak to Him. Tell Him that you are a wretch undone without His Sovereign Grace. Tell Him whatever you know to be the truth—do not mock Him with mere words that do not come from your heart, but let your heart speak to Him. Address Him, for that is looking to Him.

Only, *mind that you get to God*. The mischief is, dear Friends, that we often stop somewhere short of God when we are seeking salvation. A Romanist, for instance, erects a crucifix and bows down before it. The original intention of the crucifix, no doubt, was to help the person who used it to remember the death of Christ—but frequently the thought rests on the *crucifix*, instead of upon the Christ. If the Romanist says that he does not worship the image, it is not true, because there is a certain, “Our Lady of Lourdes,” and another, “Notre Dame de la Garde,” and other, “Our Ladies.” Why is it that the Virgin Mary, in a certain church, or a certain town, works great cures and gets more worship than “Our Lady” in a certain other place? The fact is, it is the *image that is worshipped*, and so is it with the crucifix—*that* gets the Romanists’ worship—not the Christ. They stop there.

But why do I talk about this to you Protestants? Why, because many of you do the same in other respects! You say, “Now, if I am to be converted, I ought to read the Bible.” Yes, that is quite right. Read the Bible, but, if you stop at the Bible, you will no more get to God than if you stop at the crucifix! What you need is to get to God through what you read and not merely to come to the Book. The Bible, or the most gracious words, or the most appropriate collects, or the most pious prayers cannot save you! You must pass through these things, which ought to be helps, and not make them into barriers, for, if you make them into barriers by stopping there, you never will be saved. You have to get to God, dear Heart—to God in Jesus Christ—and I pray you, do not stop till you feel,

“I have spoken to God in Jesus Christ. I have confessed to Him my sins. I have sought His forgiveness. I have asked Him for mercy.” You are sure to get it if you have done so.

But if you stop at this point—“I have prayed so often, I have read so much,” these very readings and praying will get to be idols and they will keep you away from God! I used to, when seeking the Lord, often read Doddridge’s *“Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul,”* and an admirable book it is. I also read Baxter’s *“Call to the Unconverted.”* I would wake up as soon as the sun was up in the morning that I might read these books! But I must confess that for many a day I stopped at Doddridge’s *“Rise and Progress”* and Baxter’s *“Call.”* When I had read so much and tried to feel what those good men said, there I stuck. Oh, that I had gone to Christ before! Oh, that I had got away from Doddridge’s *“Rise and Progress”* and Baxter’s *“Call,”* and gone to Jesus Christ Himself! I am not finding fault with those books—I commend them, but I find fault with myself for making so bad a use of the books. In like manner, I do not find fault with prayer or the reading of the Scriptures—God forbid! But I do complain of putting prayer and the reading of the Scriptures into the place of getting to God, for it is looking to Him as He is revealed in Jesus Christ that will save the soul and nothing short of that, be it what it may, will do so! Therefore, looking to God means that we are to consider God and then to address ourselves to Him.

In the next place, to look to Him means that *we must know that if we are ever to be saved salvation must come from God alone.* Learn this O Man, that you are helpless and hopeless apart from God—that you are shut up and cannot come forth, bound with fetters of iron, and laid like the dead in their graves, numbered among the slain like those that go down into the pit—and no arm can help you but the arm of the Omnipotent! Nothing can save you but the blood of Jesus Christ!

Then, next, to look to Him means *expect that He will save you.* Oh, what a step that is for anyone to take! I would that, by God’s Grace, you might take it, saying, “Nobody but God can save me. Salvation comes from Him, but He is gracious, He has given His dear Son to die for sinners. I, a sinner—the most unworthy, perhaps, who ever lived—will, nevertheless, dare to hope that I shall be saved. No, more—

**“He has promised to receive
All who on His Son believe”—**

“so I will now trust His Son and look to Him to give me full and free salvation because I trust Him.” Joseph Hart’s hymn puts it—

**“Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude!
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.”**

Some have objected to the verse because, they say, it is not a venture. It is very easy to be too critical. It is a venture to the sinner’s thoughts—it appears to him to be a venture—and you must not expect him to talk as you wise men talk! Do not put into a sinner’s mouth words that would be above his range of thought. I know it seemed a wonderful venture to me. I thought, “Can it be true that this is all I have to do? Have I to believe

God's Grace in Christ and trust myself only to that?" Why, if the minister had said, "You must go home and take a whip and flog yourself—20 lashes will do"—I tell you I would have laid them on as heavily as I could, for I would have felt, "I will make sure work of it" and they would have been 20 of the sweetest cuts that ever a man endured! If they made me smart, I would have blessed God for them, so long as I received mercy through them. But there was nothing in the Gospel about lashing myself—nothing even about lashing my *conscience*—I was simply told to look to God as He revealed Himself in Jesus Christ—and I did so and thus I was saved!

Possibly someone asks, "Does that faith make any difference to a man?" It makes all the difference in the world! Suppose you have a bad servant who is always doing wrong things and you find out that the great reason why he so provokes you is that he does not believe in you and has no respect for you? But, one day you convince him of your kind feeling towards him and prove to him that all you wish is for his good and that you have been seeking his good all the while you have had him. Now that man is saved from his ugly temper by believing you to be good and kind and, from the moment when this change takes place, there is nothing too much for him to do for you! That is just the effect that faith in God has upon a sinner's moral character. Before you believe in God, you do not care much about Him. It is true that you may do a few good works with the hope of thereby getting salvation—just as your servant does as much or as little as he dares do for the sake of his wages. But, oh, when once you believe in God and serve Him out of love, then you become like those old-fashioned servants that our grandmothers used to have—we cannot get them now. They used to serve their masters and mistresses from motives of affection—those old body-servants that the squires and dames used to have who would cleave to them, wages or no wages, because they loved them so! What a grand thing it is to have faith in the heart! It will save a man entirely from his old ways, his old lusts and his old sins by making him love God and serve God out of love, which is the mightiest transforming motive that was ever implanted in the bosom of a lost soul! This is how God saves men—by leading them to trust in Him in Jesus Christ.

II. Secondly, FOR WHAT PART OF SALVATION ARE WE TO LOOK TO GOD?

For every part of it, from beginning to end and, first, *for the pardon of sin* you must look to God in Christ, for who can pardon an offense except the person who was offended? If somebody over there has offended a Brother, yonder, it would be no use for me to say to that person, "I forgive you the offense." The other Brother might say, "The wrong was not done to you, it was done to me! Only I, who have been offended, can forgive the offense." So, if you need the pardon of your sin, it is evident that it can only come from God. But you tell me that you feel as if you were not fit to be forgiven? Very well then, if there is such a fitness—I know there is none—but if there is any truth in what you mean, that fitness must be given you by God and you must look to Him for it—

**“True belief and true repentance—
Every Grace that brings you nigh—
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”**

Possibly you say to me, “It is not merely that I need to have my sins forgiven—I want to become a new man.” You must look for that, also, to God. I think that the best man to clean a watch is the watchmaker—and the best person to renew the heart is the God who made the heart. He who made you can alone remake you. There is no power under Heaven except the power that created you, which can create you anew in Christ Jesus! So you must look to God for that.

But you say, “Well, if I were made a new man, I fear that I would go back to my old sins. *Must I not trust to something to keep me?*” No, to nothing but God, for all the bonds and all the devices that men make to keep themselves from sin are of no more strength than a spider’s web. God must keep you alive as well as make you live. “For I am God,” He says, “and there is no other.” Rest in the almighty power of God to keep you from going back to sin after He has rescued you from it.

You know, also, that you must be perfect, or you can never enter Heaven. *How are you to become perfect?* Well, you must look to God for that, too, for He, the perfectly Holy One, can sanctify you wholly—spirit, soul and body. May your faith embrace the whole of salvation and see it to be all in God in Christ—and look to God in Christ Jesus for it all!

III. Our third question is, WHAT IS OUR ENCOURAGEMENT TO LOOK TO GOD?

I tried to show you what it was to look—to consider God, to speak with Him, to trust in Him as He is revealed in Christ Jesus and to rest wholly in Him. You say, “What is my encouragement to do that and to expect that thus I shall be saved? May I do it? I know that trusting in Christ saves men, but *may* I trust Him?”

Your encouragement to do this is, first of all, *God’s command*—“Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” We, certainly, almost beyond the inhabitants of any other country, might have been called “the ends of the earth.” There was a time when England was reckoned to be the Ultima Thule—the far-off land. It was supposed that there could be nothing beyond the British Islands. When the Prophet spoke, these were the very ends of the earth, so, surely, God commands you, my dear Hearer, to look unto Him, inasmuch as you belong to the ends of the earth! If you tell me that you come from America, well, you also come from the ends of the earth. Do you say that you come from Australia? That is another of the ends of the earth. Some of you sail round the world—well, sometime or other, you have been at the ends of the earth and you know that when God sends His command to the ends of the earth it always includes everything within its bounds. He certainly commands the middle as well as the ends. Those who are farthest off from Him are bid to look unto Him and, as He commands you to do it, what better warrant can you desire than His command? The Gospel command is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” You never ought to say, “May I believe?” for God *commands* you to do so, and

threatens you with punishment if you do not, for He says, "He that believes not shall be damned." The only warrant for a sinner's believing is the command of the Gospel! Oh, that you might be encouraged by that!

The next encouragement for you is *God's promise*—"Look unto Me, and be you saved"—as much as to say, "As surely as you look, you are saved. When you look, you are saved." Does it not mean that? If anyone said to you, "Sit down and eat and be filled," you would not say, "He only means that I am to sit down at a bare table"—you would feel sure that he meant that there should be something on the table of which you might freely eat. So, Sinner, do but look to the Lord! Turn your eyes in confidence to God in Christ Jesus, for there is no other God and no other Savior—and when you have done this, you shall be saved at once!

Still further to encourage you, you have *the fact of His Godhead*—"for I am God." You need a God to save you. You have a great load of sin resting upon you, but the Omnipotent can lift it off your shoulders. Then, there are the bonds of iniquity—the old habits of 40 years, perhaps of 50 years—but Christ can tear away the iron net, break the chains and set the captive free in a moment, for He is God! Were the Savior any less than Divine, I would not dare to encourage sinners to believe in Him! But here is a Divine Savior infinitely strong and infinitely gracious, so, you blackest, foulest, vilest sinner, why should you not obey the command of my text and look unto Him, expecting mercy and favor from Him?

Another encouragement to you comes from *God's character*. He knew that you sinners would be afraid that His justice would stand in your way and that, though able to save you, He might not do it because you have been such great sinners and He must punish you. So kindly read what He says in the latter part of the 21st verse—"There is no God besides Me: a just God and a Savior: there is none besides Me." God can justly save you by His wondrous plan of Substitution. If you look unto Him, He will not mar the integrity of His government or the severity of His justice in order to save you, for, by the blood of His dear Son, His Law has been so magnified and made so honorable that He can be as just in pardoning as He would have been just in punishing! This Doctrine of the Atoning Sacrifice of Christ is the marvelous mystery of the Gospel, the greatest of all revealed Truths of God and this ought to take away from the guilty conscience everything that makes it fear to trust God! God's justice is satisfied by Jesus' death—therefore, trust Him! I implore you, trust Him! Did you know the joy that faith brings—could you but understand the peace, the liberty, the transport, the bliss which simple confidence in Christ will bring to you—you would not need my pleadings, but you would say, "Blessed Jesus, I rush into Your arms, accepting You as my Savior and rejoicing in Your great salvation!"

IV. Our last question was to be, **WHAT IS THE BEST TIME IN WHICH TO LOOK TO THE LORD?**

I answer—the best time is God's time. And when is God's time? What does the Holy Spirit say is the best time? "*Today*, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." This is God's time—today. I do not remember, nor do I think there is in the whole Bible, a single precept ad-

dressed to the sinner requiring him to repent and believe tomorrow, or next week. The Gospel promise runs, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." But it does not say, "Believe next February." Or, "Believe next March," or, "next year." It is understood that every Gospel precept or command is for this present moment. God Himself, my Hearer—not I, poor, feeble man, but God Himself says to you, "Let the wicked forsake His way, and the unrighteous man His thoughts; and let Him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon Him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." And He says this to you at this very moment!

What is your answer? What reply shall I give to Him who sent me to you with this message? Will you have Him to be the Savior, or will you not? Say one or the other, whichever you will! If I may plead with you, I urge you to say, "Yes." from your very heart. But I shall be almost satisfied if you will say one or the other, for that will bring you to the point. But if you say, "no," it may be that, having taken up that position, you may begin to think where you are and you will go home saying, "I have refused to look to Christ. I have refused the great salvation and deliberately said, 'I will not look for salvation in God through Jesus Christ.'"

I wish, Sinner, that you would even do that rather than act as so many do who say, "Go your way for this time. When we have a more convenient season, we will send for you." For that tends to quiet conscience, although the convenient season never comes and Felix is most *infelix*. There is nothing felicitous in what he says. Happy by name, he is most unhappy in his fatal procrastination concerning this all-important matter! I must have an answer to give to Him that sent me. Will you now be saved or not? God sets the time—the time is now—so, say, "Yes," or, "No."

Let me, however, remind you that *the present is the only time you have*. The past is gone—the future may never come. Should it come, it will be present when it does come. On this winged hour all eternity hangs. Possibly you are thinking of what you will do when you get home—but you do not know that you will get there. Do not many fall in the street never to rise again? You are calculating upon what you will do tomorrow. The image of death will be on your face when you are asleep—are you quite sure that you will ever awake from that form of death into real life again? May not that bed become your sepulcher? You have planned what you intend to do on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday—yet you know not what a day may bring forth! There is a seat, just there, that may speak to some of you. There used to sit, in that pew, one who was well known to you. He came home from business feeling slightly unwell. The doctor was sent for, but our friend was dead before he arrived. Why should not that which has happened to many others who have attended here, happen also to you, or to me? "Be you also ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes."

If I knew how to preach to you so that I might win men to believe in Jesus Christ, God knows that there is nothing that I would not say, or leave unsaid, that might conduce to that end. I know that there is no

power in mere rhetoric or oratory, so I have chosen to speak to you very plainly and simply, without any ornament of speech and almost without an illustration—so that he who runs may read. It is not one half as much my business, dear Hearer, that you should be saved as it is yours! When I have faithfully delivered the word of salvation, I wash my hands of you. If you refuse it, I cannot help it.

At your own door must your doom lie and at your own door alone. Yet would I pluck you by the sleeve and say, “Dear Friend, you do need to be saved. Salvation must come from God and He bids you look to Him for it. Trust His Son for it. God in Christ must be your hope. Will you trust Him? Do you understand me? Simply relying upon the Atoning Sacrifice, trusting in it, resting in it, believing God to be God and henceforth yielding yourself up to be ruled by His goodness—believing Christ to be able to save you and yielding yourself up to be saved by Him and guided in the way of holiness and peace—believing that the blood of Jesus can take away your sin and trusting to it so to do—if so it be, it is done and you are saved!”

The salvation has commenced which will never end, for, in the simple act of faith, there lies a living seed which the devil himself cannot crush—which, though it is small as the mustard seed, will begin to swell, and germinate, and send forth its shoots till it shall be such a tree that many a happy bird of the air shall come and sit and sing among its branches! And your life, made happy and shaded by this blessed faith in Jesus, shall then bring forth fruit unto God and the end shall be everlasting life! God grant that it may be so, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ISAIAH 45.

The first paragraph concerns Cyrus and the great work for which God raised him up.

Verses 1-4. *Thus says the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before you, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give you the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the LORD, which call you by your name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant’s sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name: I have surnamed you, though you have not known me.* A remarkable prophecy, issued long before the time of Cyrus, foretelling that he would conquer Babylon and destroy it. And, though for many a day Cyrus knew nothing about the Most High God, yet he was used, in the Lord’s hands, for wonderful purposes! Sometimes a man may have been used of God for great ends without his own knowledge. When, however, he comes to the discovery of that fact, as he may if he will but think it over, should he not reverently bow before the Most High

and worship Him who, though unknown to him, had been his Helper and his Friend?

5, 6. *I am the LORD, and there is no other. There is no God besides Me: I girded you, though you have not known Me that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other.* Those who believe in idols think that there may be many lords and many gods, but he who is a true follower of Jehovah knows that there can be no other god besides Him. He fills all space and there is no room for another. There is but one Creator, one Preserver and one God who alone is to be worshipped.

7. *I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil. I the LORD do all these things.* Cyrus was a believer in two gods—one, the god of light and the other, the god of darkness. Hence this declaration from God's servant, the Prophet, that there was no prince of darkness who was a god, but that all things were made by the one Most High God.

8-11. *Drop down, you heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it. Woe unto him that strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashions it, What are you making? Or your work say, He has no hands? Woe unto him that says unto his father, What did you beget? Or to the woman, What have you brought forth? Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands you command me.* Note the tone which God uses. He speaks like a God and claims to be above the questioning of His creatures. These verses remind us of what the Apostle Paul wrote—"No but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have You made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" God is the great Sovereign over all and He claims a Sovereign's place. He does as He wills, but He always wills to do that which is just and right.

12-17. *I have made the earth and created man upon it: I, even My hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build My city, and he shall let go My captives, not for price nor reward, says the LORD of Hosts. Thus says the LORD, The labor of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto you, and they shall be yours: they shall come after you; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto you, they shall make supplication unto you, saying, surely God is in you; and there is no other, there is no God. Verily You are a God that hides Yourself, O God of Israel, the Savior. They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols. But Israel shall be saved by the LORD with an everlasting salvation: you shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end. If you are God's people, you have a God of whom you need never be ashamed and One*

who will not leave you to be ashamed of your confidence and hope. Those that trust to false gods will be ashamed. Those that rest upon themselves will be confounded. But stay yourself upon God, O Man, and you shall never be ashamed, world without end!

18, 19. *For thus says the Lord that created the heavens; and Himself that formed the earth and made it; He has established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is no other. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek you Me in vain; I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.* Here is the Glory of our God—that His every Word is true and that He has never said, in any place, that which contradicts what He has spoken in public to His people. You may safely rest upon the God who is always the same, who never plays fast and loose with His promises, or speaks anything in secret contrary to His pledged Word. He is as true as He is Sovereign—therefore stay yourselves upon Him.

20, 21. *Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, you that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their engraved image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell and bring them near, yes, let them take counsel together: who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Have not I the LORD?* He challenges all the idols to prove that they had uttered any true prophecy—that they had spoken about Cyrus, or anybody else from ancient times, so that the prophecy was literally fulfilled. There were dark double-meaning oracles with which the false priests mocked their votaries, but the true Words of God—His ancient prophecies—proved Him to be the only real and true God.

21-23. *And there is no other God besides Me, a just God and a Savior there is none besides Me, look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.* Glory be to God, it will be so in the latter days! It shall come to pass that the Truth of God shall be universally triumphant and the one God who made the heavens and the earth shall be worshipped both by Heaven and by earth, without any discordant note.

24, 25. *Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength even to Him shall men come; and all that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.*

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

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

SOVEREIGNTY AND SALVATION

NO. 60

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 6, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth,
for I am God and there is none else.”
Isaiah 45:22.***

SIX years ago, today, as near as possible at this very hour of the day, I was, “in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity,” but had yet, by Divine Grace, been led to feel the bitterness of that bondage and to cry out by reason of the soreness of its slavery. Seeking rest and finding none, I stepped within the House of God and sat there—afraid to look upward—lest I should be utterly cut off and lest His fierce wrath should consume me. The minister rose in his pulpit and, as I have done this morning, read this text—“Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else.” I looked that moment! The Grace of faith was vouchsafed to me in the same instant, and now I think I can say with truth—

***“Ever since by faith I saw the stream
His flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.”***

I shall never forget that day while memory holds its places, nor can I help repeating this text, whenever I remember that hour when first I knew the Lord! How strangely gracious! How wonderfully and marvelously kind, that he who heard these words so little time ago for his own soul’s profit, should now address you this morning, as his hearers, from the same text! It is my full and confident hope that some poor sinner within these walls may hear the glad tidings of salvation for himself, also, and may today, on this 6th of January, be “turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God.”

If it were within the range of human capacity to conceive a time when God dwelt alone, without His creatures, we should then have one of the grandest and most stupendous ideas of God! There was a season when as yet the sun had never run his race nor commenced flinging his golden rays across space to gladden the earth. There was an era when no stars sparkled in the firmament for there was no sea of azure in which they might float! There was a time when all that we now behold of God’s great universe was yet unborn, slumbering within the mind of God—as yet uncreated and non-existent. But there was God and He was over all blessed forever! Though no seraphs hymned His praises, though no strong-winged cherubs flashed like lightning to do His high behests, though He

was without a retinue, yet He sat as a king on His Throne—the mighty God, forever to be worshipped—the Dread Supreme, in solemn silence dwelling by Himself in vast immensity, making of the placid clouds His canopy, and the light from His own Countenance forming the brightness of His Glory. God Was and God Is! From the beginning God was God—before worlds had beginning, He was, “from everlasting to everlasting.” Now, when it pleased Him to create His creatures, does it not strike you how infinitely those creatures must have been below Himself? If you are potters and you fashion upon the wheel, a vessel, shall that piece of clay arrogate to itself equality with you? No, at what distance will it be from you because you have been, in part, its creator! So when the Almighty formed His creatures, was it not consummate impudence that they should venture, for a moment, to compare themselves with Him? Yet that arch-traitor, that leader of rebels, Satan, sought to climb to the high Throne of God, soon to find his aim too high and Hell, itself, not low enough wherein to escape Divine Vengeance! He knows that God is “God alone.”

Since the world was created, man has imitated Satan—the creature of a day, the ephemera of an hour—has sought to match itself with the Eternal! Hence it has always been one of the objectives of the great Jehovah to teach mankind that He is God and beside Him there is none else. This is the lesson He has been teaching the world since it went astray from Him. He has been busying Himself in breaking down the high places, in exalting the valleys, in casting down imaginations and lofty looks, that all the world might—

**“Know that the Lord is God, alone,
He can create and He can destroy.”**

This morning we shall attempt to show you, in the first place, *how God has been teaching this great lesson to the world*—that He is God and beside Him there is none else. And then, secondly, *the special way in which He designs to teach it in the matter of salvation*—“Look unto Me and be you saved, for I am God and there is none else.”

I. First, then, HOW HAS GOD BEEN TEACHING THIS LESSON TO MANKIND?

We reply He has taught it, first of all, to *false gods and to the idolaters who have bowed before them*. Man, in his wickedness and sin, has set up a block of wood and stone to be his maker and has bowed before it. He has fashioned for himself out of a goodly tree, an image made unto the likeness of mortal man, or of the fishes of the sea, or of creeping things of the earth—and he has prostrated his body and his soul, too, before that creature of his own hands, calling it God—while it had neither eyes to see, nor hands to handle, nor ears to hear! But how has God poured contempt on the ancient gods of the heathen! Where are they now? Are they so much as known? Where are those false deities before whom the multitudes of Nineveh prostrated themselves? Ask the moles and the bats whose companions they are, or ask the mounds beneath which they are

buried. Or go where the idle gazer walks through the museum—see them there as curiosities and smile to think that men should ever bow before such gods as these! And where are the gods of Persia? Where are they? The fires are quenched and the fire-worshipper has almost ceased out of the earth. Where are the gods of Greece—Those gods adorned with poetry and hymned in the most sublime odes? Where are they? They are gone! Who talks of them, now, but as things that were of yore? Jupiter—does anyone bow before him? And who is he that adores Saturn? They are passed away and they are forgotten! And where are the gods of Rome? Does Janus now command the temple? Or do the vestal virgins now feed their perpetual fires? Are there any, now, that bow before these gods? No, they have lost their thrones. And where are the gods of the South Sea Islands—those bloody demons before whom wretched creatures prostrated their bodies? They have well-near become extinct! Ask the inhabitants of China and Polynesia where are the gods before which they bowed? Ask and echo says ask and ask again! They are cast down from their thrones. They are hurled from their pedestals, their chariots are broken, their scepters are burned in the fire, their glories are departed. God has gotten unto Himself the victory over false gods and taught their worshippers that He is God and that beside Him there is none else! Are there gods still worshipped, or idols before which the nations bow themselves? Wait but a little while and you shall see them fall! Cruel Juggernaut, whose ear still crushes in its motion the foolish ones who throw themselves before it, shall yet be the object of derision. And the most noted idols, such as Buddha and Brahma and Vishnu, shall yet stoop themselves to the earth and men shall tread them down as mire in the streets, for God will teach all men that He is God and that there is none else!

Mark you, yet again, how God has taught this Truth to *empires*. Empires have risen up and have been the gods of the era. Their kings and princes have taken to themselves high titles and have been worshipped by the multitude. But ask the empires whether there is any besides God. Do you not think you hear the boasting soliloquy of Babylon—“I sit as a queen and am no widow. I shall see no sorrow. I am god and there is none beside me”? And think you not, now, if you walk over ruined Babylon, that you will meet nothing but the solemn spirit of the Bible, standing like a Prophet, gray with age, and telling you that there is one God and that beside Him there is none else? Go to Babylon, covered with its sand, the sand of its own ruins! Stand on the mounds of Nineveh and let the voice come up—“There is one God and empires sink before Him. There is only one Potentate and the princes and kings of the earth with their dynasties and thrones are shaken by the trampling of His foot.” Go, seat yourselves in the temple of Greece. Mark you, there, what proud words Alexander once spoke, but now where is he and where is his empire, too? Sit on the ruined arches of the bridge of Carthage. Or walk

through the desolated theatres of Rome and you will hear a voice in the wild wind amid those ruins—"I am God and there is none else." "O city, you did call yourself eternal! I have made you melt away like dew. You said, 'I sit on seven hills and I shall last forever.' I have made you crumble and you are now a miserable and contemptible place, compared with what you were. You were once stone, you made yourself marble. I have made you stone, again, and brought you low." Oh, how has God taught monarchs and empires that have set themselves up like new kingdoms of Heaven—that He is God and that there is none else!

Again—how has He taught this great Truth to *monarchs*! There are some who have been most proud that have had to learn it in a way more difficult than others. Take for instance, Nebuchadnezzar. His crown is on his head, his purple robe is over his shoulders. He walks through proud Babylon and says, "Is not this great Babylon which I have built?" Do you see that creature in the field there? It is a man. "A man?" you say. Its hair has grown like eagles' feathers. And its nails like bird's claws. It walks on all fours and eats grass, like an ox. It is driven out from men. That is the monarch who said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" And now he is restored to Babylon's palace, that he may "bless the Most High who is able to abase those who walk in pride." I remember another monarch. Look at Herod. He sits in the midst of his people and he speaks. Do you hear the impious shout? "It is the voice of God," they cry, "and not the voice of man." The proud monarch gives not God the glory—he accepts the title of God and seems to shake the spheres, imagining himself Divine! There is a worm that creeps into his body. And yet another and another and before that sun has set, he is eaten up of worms! Ah, monarch! You thought of being a god, and worms have eaten you! You have thought of being more than man—and what are you?—less than man, for worms consume you and you are the prey of corruption! Thus God humbles the proud, thus He abases the mighty! We might give you instances from modern history, but the death of a king is all-sufficient to teach this one lesson, if men would but learn it! When kings die and in funeral pomp are carried to the grave, we are taught the lesson—"I am God and beside Me there is none else." When we hear of revolutions and the shaking of empires—when we see old dynasties tremble and gray-haired monarchs driven from their thrones—then it is that Jehovah seems to put His foot upon land and sea and with His hands uplifted cries—"Hear, you inhabitants of the earth! You are but as grasshoppers! I am God and beside Me there is none else."

Again—our God has had much to do to teach this lesson to *the wise men of this world*. For as rank, pomp and power have set themselves up in the place of God, so has wisdom. And one of the greatest enemies of Deity has always been the wisdom of man. The wisdom of man will not see God. Professing themselves to be wise, wise men have become fools! But have you not noticed, in reading history, how God has abased the

pride of wisdom? In ages long gone, He sent mighty minds into the world who devised systems of philosophy. "These systems," they said, "will last forever." Their pupils thought them infallible and, therefore, wrote their sayings on enduring parchment, saying, "This book will last forever. Succeeding generations of men will read it and to the last man, that book shall be handed down as the epitome of wisdom." "Ah, but," said God, "that book of yours shall be seen to be folly before another 100 years have rolled away." And so the mighty thoughts of Socrates and the wisdom of Solon are now utterly forgotten! And could we hear them speak, the very child in our school would laugh to think that he understands more of philosophy than they! But when man has found the vanity of one system, his eyes have sparkled at another. If Aristotle will not suffice, here is Bacon. "Now I shall know everything"—and he sets to work and says that this new philosophy is to last forever. He lays his stones with fair colors and he thinks that every truth he piles up is a precious imperishable truth. But alas! Another century comes, and it is found to be "wood, hay and stubble"—a new sect of philosophers rise up who refute their predecessors! So, too, we have wise men in this day—wise secularists and so on, who fancy they have obtained the truth. But within another 50 years—mark that word—this hair shall not be silvered over with gray before the last of that race shall have perished—and that man shall be thought a fool that was ever connected with such a race! Systems of infidelity pass away like a dewdrop before the sun! For God says, "I am God and beside Me there is none else." This Bible is the stone that shall break philosophy in powder! This is the mighty battering ram that shall dash all systems of philosophy in pieces! This is the stone that a woman may yet hurl upon the head of every Abimelech and he shall be utterly destroyed! O Church of God! Fear not! You shall do wonders. Wise men shall be confounded and you shall know and they, too, that He is God and that beside Him there is none else!

"Surely," says one, "*the Church of God* does not need to be taught this." Yes, we answer, she does. For of all beings, those whom God has made the objects of His Grace are, perhaps, the most apt to forget this cardinal Truth of God—that He is God and that beside Him there is none else! How the Church in Canaan forgot it—when they bowed before other gods, He brought against them mighty kings and princes and sorely afflicted them. Israel forgot it—and He carried them away captive into Babylon! And what Israel did in Canaan and in Babylon, that we do now. We too, too often forget that He is God and beside Him there is none else. Does not the Christian know what I mean when I tell him this great fact? For has he not done it, himself? In certain times prosperity has come upon him, soft gales have blown his boat along just where his wild will wished to steer. And he has said within himself, "Now I have peace. Now I have happiness. Now the objective I wished for is within my grasp. Now I will say, 'Sit down, my Soul, and take your rest. Eat, drink and be merry.

These things will well content you. Make these your god, be blessed and happy.” But have we not seen our God dash the goblet to the earth, spill the sweet wine and instead, fill it with gall? And as He has given it to us, He has said—“Drink it, drink it—you have thought to find a god on earth, but drain the cup and know its bitterness.” When we have drunk it, the draught was nauseous and we have cried, “Ah, God, I will drink no more from these things. You are God and beside you there is none else.” And ah, how often, too, have we devised schemes for the future, without asking God’s permission. Men have said, like those foolish ones whom James mentioned, “We will do such-and-such things on the morrow, we will buy and sell and get gain.” Whereas they knew not what was to be on the morrow, for long before the morrow came, they were unable to buy and sell—death had claimed them—and a small span of earth held all their frame! God teaches His people every day by sickness, by affliction, by depression of spirits, by the forsaking of God, by the loss of the Spirit for a season, by the lacking of the joys of His Countenance that He is God and that beside Him there is none else. And we must not forget that there are some special servants of God raised up to do great works, who, in a peculiar manner, have to learn this lesson. Let a man, for instance, be called to the great work of preaching the Gospel. He is successful. God helps him—thousands wait at his feet and multitudes hang upon his lips. As truly as that man is a man, he will have a tendency to be exalted above measure! And he will begin, too much, to look to himself and too little to his God! Let men who know, speak, and speak what they know—let them speak and they will say—“It is true, it is most true.”

If God gives us a special mission, we generally begin to take some honor and glory to ourselves. But in the review of the eminent saints of God, have you ever observed how God has made them feel that He was God and beside Him there was none else? Poor Paul might have thought himself a god. He easily could have been puffed up above measure by reason of the greatness of his revelation—but Paul could feel that he was not a God—for he had a thorn in the flesh and gods *could not* have thorns in their flesh! Sometimes God teaches the minister by denying him help on special occasions. We come up into our pulpits and say, “Oh, I wish I could have a good day, today!” We begin to labor. We have been just as earnest in prayer and just as indefatigable. But it is like a blind horse turning round a mill, or like Samson with Delilah—we shake our vain limbs with vast surprise, “make feeble flight,” and win no victories! We are made to see that the Lord is God and that beside Him there is none else! Very frequently God teaches this to the minister by leading him to see his own sinful nature. He will have such an insight into his own wicked and abominable heart that he will feel, as he comes up the pulpit stairs, that he does not deserve so much as to sit in his pew, much less to preach to his fellows. Although we always feel joy in the declaration of God’s Word, yet we have known what it is to totter on the

pulpit steps under a sense that the chief of sinners should scarcely be allowed to preach to others! Ah, Beloved, I do not think he will be very successful as a minister, who is not taken into the depths and blackness of his own soul and made to exclaim, “Unto me, who am *less than the least of all saints*, is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ”? There is another antidote which God applies in the case of ministers. If He does not deal with them personally, He raises up a host of enemies that it may be seen that He is God and God alone! What? Will a man subject himself to the calumnies of the multitude? Will he toil and work, day after day, unnecessarily? Will he stand up Sabbath after Sabbath and preach the Gospel and have his name maligned and slandered if he has not the Grace of God in him? For myself, I can say that were it not that the love of Christ constrained me, this hour might be the last that I should preach, so far as the case of the thing is concerned. “Necessity is laid upon us, woe is unto us if we preach not the Gospel.” But that opposition through which God carries His servants leads them to see at once that He is God and that there is none else! If everyone applauded, if all were gratified, we would think ourselves God—but when they hiss and hoot, we turn to our God and cry—

***“If on my face, for Your dear name
Shame and reproach should be,
I’ll hail reproach and welcome shame
If You’ll remember me.”***

II. This brings us to the second portion of our discourse. Salvation is God’s greatest work and, therefore, in His greatest work, He specially teaches us this lesson—That He is God and that beside Him there is none else. Our text tells us HOW HE TEACHES IT—He says, “Look unto *Me* and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” He shows us that He is God and that beside Him there is none else in three ways. First, by the Person to whom He directs us—“Look unto *Me* and be you saved.” Secondly, by the means He tells us to use to obtain mercy—“Look,” simply, “Look.” And thirdly, by the persons whom he calls to “look”—“Look unto *Me* and be you saved, *all the ends of the earth.*”

1. First, to *whom does God tell us to look for salvation?* Oh, does it not lower the pride of man when we hear the Lord say, “Look unto *Me* and be you saved, all the ends of the earth”? It is not, “Look to your priest and be you saved”—if you did, there would be another God—and beside Him there would be someone else! It is not, “Look to yourself”—if so, then there would be a being who might arrogate some of the praise of salvation. But it is, “Look unto *Me.*” How frequently you who are coming to Christ, look to yourselves. “Oh!” you say, “I do not repent enough.” That is looking to yourself. “I do not believe enough.” That is looking to yourself. “I am too unworthy.” That is looking to yourself. “I cannot discover,” says another, “that I have any righteousness.” It is quite right to say that you have not any righteousness. But it is quite wrong to *look* for any. It

is, “Look unto *Me*.” God will have you turn your eye off yourself and look unto Him! The hardest thing in the world is to turn a man’s eye off himself. As long as he lives, he always has a predilection to turn his eye inside and look at himself—whereas God says, “Look unto *ME*”—from the Cross of Calvary, where the bleeding hands of Jesus drop mercy! From the Garden of Gethsemane where the bleeding pores of the Savior sweat pardons—the cry comes—“Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” From Calvary’s summit, where Jesus cries, “It is finished,” I hear a shout, “Look and be saved.” But there comes a vile cry from our soul, “No, look to yourself! Look to yourself!” Ah, my Hearer, look to yourself and you will be damned! That certainly will come of it. As long as you look to yourself, there is no hope for you. It is not a consideration of what *you are*, but a consideration of what *God is* and what *Christ is* that can save you! It is looking from yourself to Jesus. Oh, there are men that quite misunderstand the Gospel. They think that righteousness qualifies them to come to Christ—whereas *sin* is the only qualification for a man to come to Jesus! Good old Crisp says, “Righteousness keeps me from Christ—the whole have no need of a physician, only they who are sick. Sin makes me come to Jesus when sin is felt. And in coming to Christ, the more sin I have, the more cause I have to hope for mercy.” David said, and it was a strange thing, too, “Have mercy upon me, for my iniquity is great.” But, David, why did you not say that it was little? Because David knew that the bigger his sins were, the better reason for asking for mercy! The more vile a man is, the more eagerly I invite him to believe in Jesus. A sense of sin is all we have to look for as ministers. We preach to sinners—and let us know that a man will take the title of sinner to himself—and we then say to him, “Look unto Christ and you shall be saved.”

“Look.” That is all He demands of you and even this He gives you! If you look to yourself, you are damned. You are a vile miscreant, filled with loathsomeness, corrupt and corrupting others. But look here! Do you see that Man hanging on the Cross? Do you behold His agonized head drooping meekly down upon His breast? Do you see that crown of thorns causing drops of blood to trickle down His cheeks? Do you see His hands pierced and torn and His blessed feet, supporting the weight of His own frame, torn well near in two with the cruel nails? Sinner! Do you hear Him shriek, “Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabacthani?” Do you hear Him cry, “It is finished”? Do you see His head hang down in death? Do you see that side pierced with the spear and the body taken from the Cross? Oh, look here! Those hands were nailed for you! Those feet gushed gore for *you*. That side was opened wide for *you*. And if you want to know how you can find mercy—there it is! “Look!” “Look unto *ME!*” Look no longer to Moses! Look no longer to Sinai! Come here and look to Calvary, to Calvary’s Victim and to Joseph’s grave. And look yonder—to the Man who near the Throne sits with His Father, crowned with light and immortality! “Look, Sinner,” He says, this morning, to you, “Look unto *ME* and be you

saved.” It is in this way God teaches that there is none beside Him—because He makes us look entirely to Him and utterly away from ourselves.

2. But the second thought is *the means of salvation*. It is, “*Look unto Me and be you saved.*” You have often observed, I am sure, that many people are fond of an intricate worship—an involved religion—one they can hardly understand. They cannot endure worship as simple as ours. They must have a man dressed in white and a man dressed in black. They must have what they call an altar and a chancel! After a little while that will not suffice and they must have flower pots and candles. The clergyman then becomes a priest and he must have a variegated dress with a cross on it! So it goes—what is simply a plate becomes a paten. And what was once a cup becomes a chalice. And the more complicated the ceremonies are, the better they like them! They like their minister to stand like a superior being. The world likes a religion they cannot comprehend! But have you ever noticed how gloriously simple the Bible is? It will not have any of your nonsense! It speaks plain and nothing but plain things. “*Look!*” There is not an unconverted man who likes this, “*Look unto Christ and be you saved.*” No, he comes to Christ like Naaman to Elijah. And when it is said, “*Go, wash in the Jordan!*” he replies, “*I verily thought he would come and put his hand on the place and call on the name of his God, but the idea of telling me to wash in the Jordan—what a ridiculous thing! Anybody could do that!*” If the Prophet had bid him do some great thing, would he not have done it? Ah, certainly he would! And if, this morning, I could preach that anyone who walked from here to Bath without his shoes and stockings or did some impossible thing, would be saved—you would start off tomorrow morning before breakfast! If it would take me seven years to describe the way of salvation, I am sure you would all long to hear it. If only one learned doctor could tell the way to Heaven, how would he be run after! And if it were in hard words with a few scraps of Latin and Greek, it would be all the better. But it is a simple Gospel that we have to preach—it is only, “*Look!*” “*Ah,*” you say, “*is that the Gospel? I shall not pay any attention to that.*” Why has God ordered you to do such a simple thing? Simply to take down your pride and to show you that He is God and that beside Him there is none else. Oh, mark how simple the way of salvation is. It is, “*Look, look, look!*” Four letters and two of them alike! “*Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.*” Some divines need a week to tell you what you are to do to be saved—but God the Holy Spirit only needs four letters to do it. “*Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.*” How simple is that way of salvation! And, oh, how instantaneous! It takes us some time to move our hands—but a *look* does not require a moment! So a sinner believes in a moment—and in the moment the sinner believes and trusts in his Crucified God for pardon—he at once receives salvation in full through His blood!

There may be one that came in here, this morning, unjustified in his conscience—who will go out justified rather than others. There may be some here, filthy sinners one moment, pardoned the next! It is done in an instant. “Look! Look! Look!” And how universal it is! Because wherever I am, however far off—it just says, “Look!” It does not say I am to see. It only says, “Look!” If we look on a thing in the dark we cannot see it, but we have done what we were told. So if a sinner only looks to Jesus, Jesus will save him, for Jesus in the dark is as good as Jesus in the light—and Jesus, when you cannot see Him—is as good as Jesus when you can! It is only “look!” “Ah,” says one, “I have been trying to see Jesus this year, but I have not seen Him.” It does not say *see* Him, but, “*Look unto Him!*” And it says that they who looked were lightened. If there is an obstacle before you and you only look in the right direction, it is sufficient. “Look unto Me!” It is not seeing Christ so much as looking after Him. The will after Christ, the wish after Christ, the desire after Christ, the trusting in Christ, the hanging on Christ—that is what is needed! “Look! Look! Look!” Ah, if the man bitten by the serpent had turned his sightless eyeballs towards the brazen serpent, though he had not seen it, he would still have had his life restored. It is *looking*, not seeing, that saves the sinner!

We say again, how this *humbles* the man! There is a gentleman who says, “Well if it had been a thousand pounds that would have saved me, I would have thought nothing of it.” But your gold and silver is cankered. It is good for nothing! “Then am I to be saved just the same as my servant Betty?” Yes, just the same, there is no other way of salvation for you. That is to show man that Jehovah is God and that beside Him there is none else. The wise man says, “If it had been to work the most wonderful problem, or to solve the greatest mystery, I would have done it. May I not have some mysterious Gospel? May I not believe in some mysterious religion?” No, it is, “Look!” “What? Am I to be saved just like that Ragged School boy who can’t read his letters?” Yes, you must, or you will not be saved at all! Another says, “I have been very moral and upright. I have observed all the laws of the land and if there is anything else to do, I will do it. I will eat only fish on Fridays and keep all the fasts of the church, if that will save me.” No, Sir, that will *not* save you! Your good works are good for nothing. “What? Must I be saved in the same way as a harlot or a drunkard?” Yes, Sir, there is only one way of salvation for all. “He has concluded all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all.” He has passed a sentence of condemnation on all, that the Free Grace of God might come upon many to salvation. “Look! Look! Look!” This is the simple method of salvation. “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.”

But, lastly, mark how God has cut down the pride of man and has exalted Himself *by the persons whom He has called to look*. “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” When the Jew heard Isaiah

say that, "Ah," he exclaimed, "you ought to have said, Look unto Me, O Jerusalem, and be saved. That would have been right. But those Gentiles—the dogs—are *they* to look and be saved?" "Yes," says God, "I will show you, Jews, that though I have given you many privileges, I will exalt others above you. I can do as I will with My own."

Now, who are the ends of the earth? Why, there are now poor heathen nations that are very few degrees removed from brutes, uncivilized and untaught. If I might go and tread the desert and find the Bushman in his kraal, or go to the South Seas and find a cannibal, I would say to the Cannibal or the Bushman, "Look unto Jesus and be you saved all the ends of the earth." They are some of "the ends of the earth," and the Gospel is sent as much to them, as to the polite Grecians, the refined Romans, or the educated Britons! But I think "the ends of the earth" imply those who have gone the farthest away from Christ. I say, drunk, that means you! You have been staggering back till you have got right to the ends of the earth. You have almost had *delirium tremens*, you cannot be much worse. There is not a man breathing worse than you. *Is there?* Ah, but God, in order to humble your pride, says to you, "Look unto Me and be you saved." There is another who lived a life of infamy and sin until she has ruined herself and even Satan seems to sweep her out at the back door. But God says, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." I think I see one trembling and saying, "Ah, I have not been one of these, Sir, but I have been something worse—for I have attended the House of God and I have stifled convictions and put off all thoughts of Jesus. And now I think He will never have mercy on me." You are one of them! "Ends of the earth!" So long as I find any who feel like that, I can tell them that they are "the ends of the earth." "But," says another, "I am so peculiar. If I did not feel as I do, it would be all very well. But I feel that my case is a peculiar one." That is all right. They are a peculiar people—you will do just fine. But another one says, "There is nobody in the world like me. I do not think you will find a being under the sun that has had so many calls and put them all away and so many sins on his head. Besides, I have guilt that I should not like to confess to any living creature." One of "the ends of the earth"—therefore all I have to do is to cry out, in the Master's name, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else." But you say sin will not let you look. I tell you, sin will be removed the moment you do look. "*But I dare not. He will condemn me. I fear to look.*" He will condemn you more if you do not look! Fear, then, and look—but do not let your fearing keep you from looking. "*But He will cast me out.*" Try Him! "*But I cannot see Him.*" I tell you, it is not *seeing*, but *looking*. "*But my eyes are so fixed on the earth, so earthly, so worldly.*" Ah, but, poor Soul, He gives power to look and live. He says—"Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth."

Take this, dear Friends, for a New Year's text—both you who love the Lord and you who are only looking for the first time. Christian! In all your troubles through this year, look unto God and be saved! In all your trials and afflictions look unto Christ and find deliverance. In all your agony, poor Soul, in all your repentance for your guilt, look unto Christ and find pardon! This year remember to put your eyes heavenward and your heart heavenward, too. Look unto Christ—fear not. There is no stumbling when a man walks with his eyes looking up to Jesus. He that looked at the stars fell into the ditch. But he that looks at Christ walks safely! Keep your eyes up all the year long. “Look unto *HIM* and be you saved,” and remember, that “*HE* is God and beside *HIM* there is none else.” And you poor Trembler, what do you say? Will you begin the year by looking unto Him? You know how sinful you are this morning. You know how filthy you are and yet it is possible that before you open your pew door and get into the aisle you will be as justified as the Apostles before the Throne of God! It is possible that before your foot treads the threshold of your door, you will have lost the burden that has been on your back and you will go on your way, singing, “I am forgiven, I am forgiven! I am a miracle of Grace! This day is my spiritual birthday!”

Oh, that it might be such to many of you, that at last I might say, “Here am I and the children You have given me.” Hear this, convicted Sinner! “This poor man cried and the Lord delivered him out of his distresses.” Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Now believe on Him. Now cast your guilty soul upon His righteousness. Now plunge your black soul into the bath of His blood. Now put your naked soul at the door of the wardrobe of His righteousness. Now seat your famished soul at the feast of plenty! Now “LOOK!” How simple does it seem! And yet it is the hardest thing in the world to bring men to. They never will do it, till compelling Grace makes them!

Yet there it is, “LOOK!” Go away with that thought. “Look unto Me and be you saved all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else.” Amen

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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 15, 1878.

*“Surely, shall one say, in the LORD I have righteousness and strength:
even to Him shall men come; and all that are incensed against
Him shall be ashamed. In the LORD all the seed
of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory.”
Isaiah 45:24, 26.*

IF YOU carefully read the chapter from which our text is taken, you must notice the high style which God here adopts. He speaks like a king—no, more—He speaks like a God, as He is entitled to do, for He is God. David says, in the 29th Psalm, “The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.” We can hear that powerful, majestic voice in this Chapter! The Lord here speaks about men coming to Him, confessing to Him and obeying Him without inserting any “if” as to their own will in the matter, or raising any question as to whether He can accomplish what He promises. Listen attentively to these words in the verse before our text, for they are very strong and forcible—“I have sworn by Myself, the word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.” The Lord lays unusual emphasis upon the irrevocable oath which He has sworn and says that He will never recall the word which has gone out of His mouth. He speaks with that same power which said, “Let there be light: and there was light.” In a word, He speaks Divinely and, therefore, He can fulfill what He has declared.

“But,” someone says, “men are free agents.” Who denied it? “But men will not bow their knee before Him unless they are willing to do so.” Who said they would? Yet, He who has the power to control the freedom of the human will—He who rules, not only over inanimate objects and over creatures whose wills are gladly subordinated to His, but even over souls that are naturally rebellious—still has a way of turning them according to His own mind! He speaks in the majesty of His Sovereignty and swears that every knee shall bow before Him—and that all shall acknowledge Him to be the only supreme Lord and Governor!

It is true that there are two ways in which men shall be made to bow the knee before God. Some of them will bow unwillingly when they shall feel the weight of His iron rod. Others shall bow joyfully before Him when they shall feel the power of His Grace. I am going to read my text in that sweet and merciful manner, and I think the context justifies us in so

reading it. I want you to see how God's power over mankind is exerted in a way of Grace, although it is also true that His power is put forth in a way of Judgment towards those who reject His mercy. I read, with delight, the expressions of my text as the decrees, determinations, promises and declarations of the God of Grace, who affirms that men shall say, "In the Lord have we righteousness and strength. Even to Him shall men come and all that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed. In the Lord all the seed of Israel shall be justified and shall glory." There is no doubt about this great Truth of God—Christ did not die in vain—the Gospel has not been sent into the world for nothing! There shall be a people "saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." There shall be a multitude that no man can number who shall bow before the Savior. There shall be an adequate reward for the travail of His soul which shall satisfy even the infinite heart of the great Son of God Himself!

I. There are five Divine declarations in the text. The first is this, that **THERE SHALL BE A PEOPLE WHO SHALL ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRUTH CONCERNING GOD.** Our version says, "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord I have righteousness and strength," but there are other readings which appear to be more accurate. "Men shall say, In the Lord is righteousness and strength," would be quite as correct a rendering, or even more so. It means that there shall be a people who shall confess that in God there is righteousness and strength.

First, *they shall see these to be His attributes.* Everybody ought to be able to plainly see the evidences of God's strength. Many shudder in terror before the thunder of His power, yet they will not, or they cannot, see God's righteousness. They begin accusing Him, from one point or another, of being unjust in His dealings with the sons of men. So it always has been and so it will be as long as the ungodly are on the earth. But there shall still be a people who shall be able, because their eyes have been touched with Heaven's eye salve, to see that God's strength is always associated with righteousness. They shall perceive what human nature full often refuses to perceive—that God is as good as He is great and as just as He is strong! Even the terrible things, they shall see to be "terrible things in righteousness." They shall cease to question anything done by the Most High and they shall submit unreservedly to His Sovereign sway. This is one of the miracles of God's Grace, but it is a miracle that shall never cease so long as God sits upon the Throne ruling over all.

More than this, our text means that there shall be a people who will see that all *their righteousness and strength must be found in God.* Each of them shall say, "In the Lord I have righteousness and strength." Other men may fancy that they can find righteousness in their own doings, but the Lord's people know that the work of righteousness has been carried out to the full only by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and they are content to accept God's righteousness by faith in Christ Jesus—and so to become righteous before God as Abraham was, for he, "believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness." There shall never cease from off the face of the earth a people who shall feel that all their righteousness is found in "the Lord Our Righteousness," who justifies the ungodly, and

they shall also find their strength in Him. They shall be conscious of their own weakness. They shall perceive that they have no strength to run in the ways of holiness by themselves, but they shall look to the Holy Spirit for help and shall trust in the Lord to uphold them and preserve them in the ways of integrity even to the end. I am addressing many a Believer who can say, "In the Lord I have righteousness and strength." You have neither righteousness nor strength apart from Him and you know it—and it is your delight to confess that you do not expect to find either righteousness or strength anywhere but in Him! Thus, you show that you are resting on Him, alone, and you are helping to fulfill the promise of the text that there shall always be a people who shall know and feel that their righteousness and strength are found only in the Lord.

Besides that, they shall not only know and feel it, but *they shall be prepared openly to declare it*, for the text says, "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord I have righteousness and strength." Some, who truly know the Lord, are very timid in confessing Him—they keep back much that they know concerning Him. But I thank God that there shall always be a people brave enough to "stand up for Jesus" whatever it may cost them! There were many such people when, to confess that righteousness and strength were in the Lord, alone, involved burning at the stake of the one who made such a confession. He who held the Lutheran doctrine of Justification by Faith was condemned to die. He was hunted as though he had been a wolf or a mad dog. His existence was thought to be obnoxious to the human race and, therefore, he was put to death in the most painful form. Yet persecution could not stop the confession of faith in Jesus, for, as fast as one was slain, another stepped forward to take his place! Through all the centuries that have passed since the death of Christ, the grand Truth of God that strength and righteousness are not to be found in men, and come not through the priest, or by human works, rites and ceremonies has never lacked men and women to come forward to state it plainly and boldly in the teeth of all mankind—nor shall it ever want for such witnesses while sun and moon endure!

Some may be cowards and turn their backs in the day of battle, but God has reserved unto Himself a people who will be brave for Him even to the end! And should Rationalism and Ritualism, in these evil days, devour the strength of the Church of God, yet has He reserved unto Himself hundreds of thousands whose knees have never bowed before these modern Baals and which will never so bow—for these men first confess their faith to God, alone, upon their knees in prayer, and afterwards boldly declare to the world, each one for himself, "Surely, in the Lord I have righteousness and strength."

I wonder how many of us really know this great Truth of God in our inmost souls, for this is one of the weightiest matters you ever heard about in all your lives. If you think that you have any righteousness of your own, you are sadly mistaken. If you fancy that you have strength of your own which will carry you to Heaven, you are living in grievous error. You shall faint and die, "as a snail which melts," if you trust in yourselves! There is no foundation upon which we can build so as to secure

the blessings of eternal salvation but Jesus Christ, the Crucified—and the only way to build upon that foundation is by simple trust in Him. If you are resting alone upon Him for righteousness, strength and everything that you need, it is well with you—but if you are not, may the Lord in mercy bring you to do so this very hour!

Every now and then, dear Friends, it is advisable for us to review our past lives—to look back and honestly, as in the sight of God, to make a summary of what they have been. Many a Christian has done this when he has been slandered. He has then looked over his past career to see whether there was any ground for the calumny cast upon him. And he has been truly happy if he has been able to sum all up by saying to the Lord, “I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies.” We frequently make these reviews of our lives in times of sickness. Then we are all alone and quiet—and being incapable of attending to our worldly business—we begin to turn our gaze within, to see how we stand before God. Possibly, we cannot raise ourselves up in our bed, to look out of the window, or, as we lie awake in the watches of the night, we mentally recall our whole career from our childhood even to that hour. And it is truly wise on our part to do so—it is then exceedingly beneficial to mark the evil and repent of it, or to note the good and thank God for it.

Many godly people set apart special seasons for making these examinations. It would be well if we all reviewed each day before we fell asleep. Some folk, if they knew themselves better, would not brag as loudly as they now do. A keener eye might, perhaps, make their tongue less talkative. Some persons like to go through this process with peculiar rigor on their birthdays, or upon the anniversary of their conversion, or at the close of some notable period of time. Whenever it is done, it is well. And happy, thrice happy, is the man who closes up his account of himself in the words of our text—“In the Lord I have righteousness and strength.”

When we come to die is another time for making this review. Looking back from the shelving bank of the great river, our eyes gaze along the whole track which we have traversed. We see that goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life, but we also see that we have not always kept to the King’s Highway, but have often gone astray like a lost sheep. We are blessed, indeed, if, notwithstanding all that, we can still feel that the set and current of our being has been towards that which is right, so that we can join with the Psalmist in saying, “I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies: for all my ways are before You.”

I urge you young people who are beginning your Christian life to begin on a sound foundation, searching the Scriptures to know what is the will of God, and yielding yourselves up entirely to the sway of God the Holy Spirit, that you may not have a broken life, running for a while in the wrong direction, so that you have to go back and start afresh. There are some men whom I know who seem to pick up every novelty that they come across, but they soon drop it and go off after something else. These are the people who need new prophets to arise every week. I said to one individual of that kind, when I met him in the street—and he was a preacher, too—“Well, what are you now!” He said to me, “Why, you asked

me that question the last time you saw me.” I said, “I know I did, but what are you now!” He was something very different from what he had been when I met him six months earlier! And a year later, when I saw him again, I saluted him in the same way. I said, “Dear Friend, what are you now?” He was very angry with me and said that it was a shame that I should ask him that question. But I replied, “Well, never mind—what are you now?” And when he told me, I found that he had again changed his denomination! What he is or where he is now, I do not know—probably something quite different from what he had been before.

You might as soon measure the moon for a suit of clothes as measure some men’s doctrine. They seem to be perpetually waxing or waning. They box the compass. They shift like the wind. That is a poor life, when it comes to the close, in which the man has been “everything by starts, and nothing long.” My dear young Friends, give yourselves up to the teaching and guidance of the Spirit of God and resolve that if you do err, it shall be unintentionally, for you wish to be right—you desire to know and to do nothing save what the Lord taught you and the Lord bade you do.

II. The second declaration of the text is that men will not only acknowledge the Truth concerning God, but that **THEY WILL ACT UPON IT**—“Even to Him shall men come.”

I must remark again how the Lord speaks here like a God—“Even to Him *shall* men come.” Someone asks, perhaps, “Suppose they will not come, what then?” Yes, but they *will* come, for He makes them willing in the day of His power. “But suppose,” says the objector, “that, having heard the Gospel, they reject it.” Then they shall hear it again, and yet again and, at last, they shall yield to its entreaty, for they shall come! When God says, “Men shall come,” You may depend upon it that His, “shall come,” will carry the day! Christ said, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me” and “shall come” will win the victory! Not by violating the freedom of men’s will, nor by treating them otherwise than as free agents, yet does God prevail over them so that they do come and submit themselves unto Him!

Notice the wording of this gracious declaration. “Even to Him shall men come,” The glory of it lies in the fact that *they rest in nothing but Himself*. The bulk of men stop short of coming to God in Christ Jesus—and content themselves with reading the Bible, or saying prayers, or attending places of worship. But my text says that there is a people who shall get beyond all that—“Even to Him shall men come.” If you would be saved, you must get to God in Christ. Short of that, you are lost. Many go to priests and think that all is well with them. And many go to rites and ceremonies, and suppose that all is well with them, yet it is not. I tell you, prodigal son, it will never be well with you till you come to your Father! You must get your head on His bosom, make your confession to Him and receive His kiss of forgiveness, or else you will never have peace in your soul. Christ said to the men of His day, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. But you will not come to Me, that you might have

life.” There was the fatal flaw—they read their Bibles, but they would not come to Christ, though even the Old Testament Scriptures pointed them to Him! And many a man, when we bid Him come to Christ, says, “I will pray about it.” Pray, by all means, but praying will not save you—you must come to Christ, as our text says, “Even to Him shall men come.”

But how do they come to Him? They come, first, by repentance. They come weeping because of their sins. They also come by faith—they come trusting in Jesus and disowning all other confidences. They come just as they are—naked, filthy—“poor, wretched, blind”—acknowledging that they are undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sinners. But they come to Him—to God in Christ Jesus—and they look up to Him and they cry, “Jesus, save me! Father, I have sinned! Have mercy upon me, for Christ’s sake!” Neither will they rest until they do come there. I hope I am addressing many in whom this prophecy has been fulfilled—“They shall come to Him.” When it is fulfilled in any of you, admire the Grace that drew you, otherwise you would never have come! Sing, from your very hearts, those sweet verses by Dr. Watts—

***“Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter while there’s room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?
‘Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin.”***

What confidence it gives me, when I am preaching, to feel—I do not know who it may be, but I am sure that some soul will come to Christ and will come to Christ just now—for, if it is the true Gospel which is preached, with a pure motive and in simple terms, there is no question about the success of it! The Lord has said, “My Word shall not return to Me void.” It will not go back to Him without having accomplished His Divine purpose of love and mercy! Jesus is drawing you, so yield to Him, Beloved! Pray from your hearts the prayer, “Draw us; we will run after You” and so, in your case, my text shall be blessedly true, “Even to Him shall men come.”

III. The third Divine declaration might be read in another light, but I prefer to keep to the strain of mercy. It says that **THOSE WHO DO COME SHALL BE ASHAMED OF THEIR FORMER OPPOSITION**—“All that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed.”

There is never a soul that comes to Christ that does not soon begin to be ashamed—with a blessed and holy shame—of having been angry with God. Is it not a very shameful thing and enough to make us blush scarlet and crimson, that we should ever have been “incensed” against God? It is most ridiculous, as well as terribly wicked, that such puny creatures as we are should ever think of being angry with God! I recollect hearing a little child say to his big father, “I am mad with you.” “Yes,” I thought, “and if you had been my boy and had talked to me like that, I would have tried to take some of the madness out of you.” He was in such a fury that he could scarcely stand! And there is many a man who, compared with

God, is far smaller than that little child was in comparison with his father, yet who, nevertheless, talks to God as if he were His equal and is not ashamed to acknowledge that he is angry with God.

There are some who are *angry with God's Providence*. They have said that they will never forgive Him for some action of His which has offended them—as if they could forgive HIM! They have impudently stood up before Him as though they would—

**“Snatch from His hand the balance and the rod,
Rejudge His judgments, be the God of God.”**

They have dared to summon the Eternal to their bar! They have been “incensed against Him.” Ah, but when they come to Him and when they find righteousness and strength in Him, how ashamed they are of all their former anger! They hardly like to be reminded that they ever thought or said such hard things—and they are heartily ashamed of themselves.

Some are incensed against God because of His Law and its penalty. Have you not heard them say, “It is too severe, too stringent! Men cannot be expected to keep such a perfect Law as that”? Some of them almost foam at the mouth, like madmen, when they talk of the punishment of sin. When God says, that “the soul that sins, it shall die.” And when His dear Son speaks of a worm that dies not and a fire that never shall be quenched, I scarcely dare repeat the blasphemies that even professed ministers of the Gospel have dared to utter against the righteous and holy God—and the terrible doom which surely awaits the ungodly! But when those who have been angry at the plain declarations of God concerning the punishment of sin are brought to Him, they are utterly ashamed of themselves! When they really come to know Him—when they find righteousness and strength in Him—they would gladly eat their own words if they could and they will bare their backs to His rod and feel that if He were even to destroy them, He would be fully justified! Many and many a Christian has had a broken heart when he has been forgiven as he has mourned that he could ever have been so rebellious against his God.

I have heard this personality of holy grief stigmatized as being morbid, self-conscious, and even selfish, but I take leave to say that those gentlemen who thus speak are strangers to spiritual facts and know nothing about them. Their opinion is not worth the breath they spend in uttering it, for, if they did know the Truth about this matter, they would understand that there is nothing selfish in a man's praying to be rendered unselfish—and that is a main part of our prayer! And there is nothing selfish in an individual confessing before God that he has been selfish—and that is a large part of our confession. How shall a man do good to another until he has been made good himself? Is it not the very height of benevolence to my fellow creatures that I should begin by wishing to be made fit to be of service to them? And how can that be until I first have been personally cleansed and have personally known the value of true religion in my own soul? I charge you, dear Friends, that instead of that “broad-hearted philanthropy” of which we hear so much—which consists in talking fine nonsense about the good other people ought to do—you had bet-

ter begin by getting your own hearts right with God so that you may be taught to love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength—and to love your neighbors as yourselves—for then and not till then are you in a right condition to learn what is true philanthropy! Be sorry first, that afterwards you may not be sad. Repent first, so that you may get close to God, that afterwards you may go and close in with your fellow men and live and die to serve them for Jesus' sake!

There are others who are incensed against God because of the great plan of salvation. Some are even *incensed against the Savior Himself*. The preaching of the Deity of Christ makes some men gnash their teeth! They cannot endure that blessed fact. But, oh, when He saves them by His Grace, there is no quarrel, then, with the Divine Savior! Emmanuel, God With Us, is very precious to the Believer. Away goes all Socinianism—the soul loathes it and cannot even bear to think that it could have fallen so low as to think or say anything derogatory to the dignity of the ever-blessed Son of God! Some are incensed against the blood of Christ—they are so delicate that they do not even like to *hear* about it. They can sin without compunction, but the Divine way of cleansing from sin offends them! Some men positively rave at the Atonement. Substitution, the vicarious expiatory suffering of Christ in the sinner's stead, they cannot endure! But when the Lord breaks their hearts with the hammer of His Word and when He makes them see their sin as it is in His sight, I guarantee you that the precious blood of Jesus becomes to them the dearest thing in earth or Heaven! And they rejoice in it, for it gives them access to God and peace and pardon! Some of those who have most reviled the Gospel have, when they have been converted, been the most faithful preachers of it!

That grand Truth of God of Justification by Faith—that a sinner is saved not by works of righteousness which he has done, but according to the free Grace of God, through Jesus Christ—oh, how fiercely some hate it! They do not call themselves Papists, but Protestants, and though this is the central truth of Protestantism—the very core of Lutheranism—yet do they object to it and revile it! They do not act so when the blessed Spirit of God brings them to the Father by way of Jesus Christ and His atoning Sacrifice. “Then are they glad because they are quiet,” for they are brought to the Fair Havens of Gospel security and joy!

O Beloved, if you are incensed against God about anything, it is foolish and wicked on your part to be in such a condition! I pray God, of His great Grace, to speedily bring you out of it and when He does, He will make you to be ashamed of yourselves! What a melting thing the love of Christ is! Stout-hearted sinners are sometimes not even moved by the thunderbolts of God, but when they see the wounds of Jesus, that sight brings them to their knees! When they find that He loved them even while they were rejecting Him. That He died for them when they were dead in trespasses and sins. That He had their names engraved upon the palms of His hands and upon His heart even when they were blaspheming Him, and that in “free Grace and dying love,” there is a shelter pro-

vided even for *them*—then do they bite their lips and cover their eyes and turn unto the Lord with deep humiliation of spirit.

I heard someone say, once, that God might forgive his sin, but that he would never forgive himself—and I think that is the feeling of all who have been enraged against God, but who have been brought as penitents to His feet. Now that they love Him, they are grievously ashamed of their past conduct and they will never open their mouths in boasting any more. As I look round this place, I notice some who once were very strongly opposed to our dear Lord and Master. Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, I know who they are who now love Him most and desire to serve Him best—it is you who were formerly exceedingly angry with Him. See that persecuting Saul of Tarsus when the Lord lays His pierced hand upon him—what a loving, gracious, pleading Paul, the Grace of God makes of him! Oh, that the Lord Jesus would lay hold of somebody this very moment! I am greedy for the souls of some of you who might become my Master's best servants. Even if you are saying, "We want Him not! We hate His religion and the cant that, we believe, always goes with it," you are the very ones whom I pray Him to lead captive, in silken chains of blessed bondage, as trophies of the Irresistible Grace with which His almighty Love wins the hearts of His greatest enemies and transforms them into His faithful friends and willing servants forever and ever!

IV. The fourth Divine declaration is that **THE LORD'S PEOPLE SHALL ALL BE JUSTIFIED.** "In the Lord all the seed of Israel shall be justified."

What is meant by our being justified? It means that we are made and constituted just before God. "But," someone asks, "can that be done? Can an unjust person be made just in the sight of God?" Yes, it is done, as our text says, "in the Lord."

The Prophet here means to teach us that the *Lord Jesus Christ stands in the sinner's place and puts the sinner in His place.* This was done, in God's purpose, from all eternity, as John Kent sings—

***"Then, in the glass of His decrees,
Christ and His bride appeared as one!
Her sin, by imputation, His,
While she in spotless splendor shone."***

And it is actually done, in time, as each of the chosen ones is, by Grace, led to believe in Jesus. Then is the righteousness of Christ received by faith and it becomes ours—and we stand before God justified through Christ's righteousness. Perhaps you ask, "Can I, who have been sinful all my life, become righteous in God's sight?" Yes, Beloved, if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall, for His sake, be accounted righteous. That long list of your sins which now so greatly troubles you, shall be cancelled. There shall be written at the bottom of it, "Forgiven," and you shall be as clear of sin, in God's sight, as if you had never sinned! And, inasmuch as you cannot enter Heaven without merit, the merit of Christ shall be set down to your account and you shall stand "accepted in the Beloved," perfect in Christ Jesus! There shall come to you, also, a change of heart and a change of life, so that you shall become a just man or woman or child. But, still, that great declaration will be true, "The just shall live by faith," so the justification which you are to have before God

will never be your own justification, except by imputation—and it will always be because you have taken the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness and have wrapped it around you—that you will be accepted of God.

I hope, I believe, no more—I feel certain that I am addressing some of the poor of the people—some who have no confidence in themselves, no righteousness of their own, no power for prayer or anything that is good apart from the Holy Spirit. Well, then, come to the Lord Jesus, who is the David of our dispensation, and dwell beneath His shadow! Trust yourselves with Him. Repose in His promises. Rest in His Atonement. Rely upon His intercession. Rejoice in His eternal love. Look for His coming. It is a grand thing to feel a bit of rock under your feet, and if you are on the Rock of Ages, you are safe for time and eternity. A dear Brother reminded us in prayer, before this service, that we may tremble on the Rock, but the Rock never trembled under us. Another reminded me of a remark I made some time ago, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in Jehovah." "Well," I said, "that is going to Heaven in a third-class carriage—the better way is to go to Heaven first class, so—I will trust, and not be afraid," letting no fear come in at all, but depending entirely upon what God has declared in His Word and feeling that it must be fulfilled, for nothing can prevent God's carrying out His purpose! Nothing can hinder Him from keeping His promise. So, dear Friends, with good Dr. Watts, let us, each one, say to the Lord—

***"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Your kind arms I fall;
Be You my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my All."***

Every soul that believes in Jesus belongs to the true seed of Israel, so in Him shall every such soul be justified! What a grand thing it is to be justified! A justified man need not fear to live, or to die, for, "there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." No, more—such a man may, without fear, go right up to the bar of God, Himself, in that last tremendous day, for what says the Apostle? "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." Do you all know what justification means? Have you all received it? You recollect what Martin Luther did when he was going up those stairs—the Santa Scala—in Rome? I have stood, two or three times, at the foot of that staircase and seen the poor devotees going up and down, on their knees, saying a prayer on each step and so trying to win Heaven by merit. As Luther was doing this, there suddenly flashed into his mind this text, "The just shall live by faith." Up he sprang! There was no more going up and down the Santa Scala for him! He had found another and a better way of salvation and this is the way which we preach to you—and which our Master has bid us preach to every creature in all the world—"He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." "He that believes on Him is not condemned." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned."

V. I close with the last three words of the text—"In the Lord all the seed of Israel shall be justified, *and shall glory.*" Those who find righteousness and strength in the Lord, **THOSE WHO COME TO CHRIST AND ARE JUSTIFIED IN HIM, SHALL GLORY.**

What does the text mean when it says that they shall glory? Sometimes, when I have been preaching in Wales or among Methodists—when I have set before them good, rich, Gospel Truth, perhaps two or three have shouted, at the same time, "Glory!" And though it has not increased the solemnity of the service, it has added a good deal of vivacity to it. And, really, when we see what Divine Grace has done for us, we often feel inclined to cry out, "Glory! Glory be to God!"

Have not many of you *felt the glory in your soul*, even if you have not uttered it with your mouth? All your sin gone, Jesus Christ as your Savior, your soul forever secure in His hands—and all that granted to you by Divine Grace, simply through believing—surely, you must have felt the glory within your soul? The devil has said to you, "That is too good to be true," but you have believed it, notwithstanding what he said, and you have felt as if you needed to be enlarged to be able to hold so much joy and blessedness! Do you ever sit down alone and think over what the Lord has done for you? If you do and you have the full assurance of faith, I am sure you will glory in the Lord, and you will say like those delivered from captivity, "Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing...The Lord has done great things for us; whereof we are glad."

But the Lord's true people will not keep that glory all to themselves. *They shall so glory that they shall speak about it to others.* I should not wonder if when they tell what the Lord has done for them, some should think that they are intrusive. I wish we were more so. Some of them shall so glory in God that they shall, sometimes, imprudently cast their pearls before swine—but they had better even do that than keep their pearls concealed and never let them show the brightness which God has given them. "They shall glory." That is to say, they shall *speak of the Lord's love* with flashing eye and smiling countenance. They shall speak of it as of a priceless treasure, as of something worth more than all worlds. They shall wonder that other people do not think as much of it as they do. They shall often feel sad at heart because the worth of Christ is not more widely known among men, but, as for themselves, "they shall glory." And they shall so glory that nobody shall be able to stop their glorying, for, when they are ridiculed, they shall only glory in that, also! And when others sneer at and try to depreciate their Lord, they shall only the more firmly believe and rejoice in Him who is All in All to them! I am sure, dear Friends, that if Christ is really yours, you must glory in Him and boast about Him—and sometimes make other people wonder why you talk so much about Him!

Those who truly know Christ will glory in Him alone. They will glory neither in their church, nor in their creed, nor in their good works, nor in the earnestness with which they serve the Lord—but only in Him, according as it is written, "He that glories, let him glory in the Lord." Oh,

yes, we will glory in the Lord when we lie sick and all things are melting away from us. We will say to those around us, “Now do we find Jesus near! Now do we find Him dear! We must bid ‘good-bye’ to the dearest friends, but He sticks closer than a brother to us.” We will glory in the Lord with our last breath! We will be propped up in our bed, as many a saint has been, to tell those around us yet once more what a precious Christ—what a blessed Christ we have—and what a glorious salvation we have found through His precious blood!

And will we not glory in Him alone when we enter those pearly gates above? What will our disembodied spirits say to our comrades who have gone on before? What shall we have to tell them but the story of the great love and the amazing mercy, and the abundant power and Grace of God in Christ Jesus? I think that if we are in Heaven for ages before our bodies rise from the grave, we shall have nothing to talk of or think of but Him! And when this poor dust of ours shall, at His coming, rise again and we shall be able, with spirit, soul and body, to speak, again—what shall we speak of except His Glory? Oh, we will glory in Him! We will glory in Him! Well may each saint say with the gracious Countess of Huntingdon—

***“Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,
While Heaven’s resounding mansions ring
With shouts of Sovereign Grace.”***

May every soul now *here*, be *there* to do it, for Jesus sake! Amen.

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

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

THE SOLAR ECLIPSE

NO. 183

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

***“I form the light and create darkness.”
Isaiah 45:7.***

WE are all expecting tomorrow to witness one of the greatest sights in the universe—the annular eclipse of the sun. It is possible that many of us shall have gone the way of all flesh before such a sight shall again be seen in this country and we are therefore looking for it with some degree of expectation. It is probable that hundreds and thousands of the human race will be attracted by it to study for a few hours at least the science of astronomy. Certain it is that our astronomers are making the most capital they possibly can of it by endeavoring to thrust it in every way under our notice in order to induce us to make the sun, the moon and the stars a little more the object of our attention than they have been.

Surely I need offer no apology whatever if religion comes forward today and asks that attention should be drawn to her, even by the eclipse itself. Without a doubt, if there are sermons in stones, there must be a great sermon in the sun. And if there are books in the running brooks, no doubt there is many a huge volume to be found in a sun eclipse. All things teach us if we have but a mind to learn. There is nothing which we can see, or hear, or feel which may not be the channels of great instruction to us. Let us see whether this may not lead us this morning into a train of thought which may, under God’s blessing, be something far better to us than the seeing of an eclipse.

I shall note this morning, in addressing you, that since the Lord creates darkness as well as light—first of all, *eclipses of every kind are part of God’s way of governing the world*. In the second place, we shall notice that since God creates the darkness as well as the light, we may conclude, beyond a doubt, that *He has a design in the eclipse—in the darkness as well as the light*. And then, thirdly, we shall notice that *as all things that God has created, whether they are light or whether they are dark, have a sermon for us, no doubt there are some sermons to be found in this*.

I. First of all, ECLIPSES ARE A PART OF GOD’S PLAN. In the olden times the ignorant people in England were frightened of an eclipse—they could not understand what it meant. They were quite sure that there was about to be a war, or a famine, or a terrible fire. They were absolutely certain that something fearful would happen. For they regarded it as being a

prophecy of coming ills. They were totally at a loss to account for it and knew nothing about the theory which now so satisfactorily sets our minds at rest. And you are aware that till this day in the East and in other parts of the world still in the ignorance of barbarism, an eclipse is looked upon as a very horrible and a very unaccountable thing.

The Hindus still believe that a great dragon swallows the sun and they may be seen by thousands plunging into their sacred river, the Ganges. There they plead to the gods that they may set the sun at liberty, that the dragon may be compelled to disgorge him. Hundreds of other most stupid and absurd theories are still prominently relieved and held in different parts of the world. And I believe that here among a very great number of us, an eclipse is looked upon as something contrary to the general law of nature.

Now, Beloved, all that understand anything of God's works know very well that eclipses are as much a part of nature's laws as the regular sunshine. An eclipse is no deviation from God's plan, but is a necessary consequence of the natural motion of the moon and the earth around the sun and each other. And when we see the eclipse tomorrow we shall not look upon it as a miracle or anything out of the ordinary course of God's Providence, but we shall say it was a necessity involved in the very plan whereby God governs the earth.

And now, Beloved, I have only said these things to draw your attention to other eclipses. There are certain eclipses which happen in God's Providence as well as in God's Grace. As in nature an eclipse is part of God's plan and is in fact involved in it, so we believe that in Providence the eclipse shall sometimes overshadow the earth. I mean, the adversities, the wars, the famines, which sometimes fall on the human race are but a part of God's Divine plan of governing the earth and have some beneficial object in their falling upon us.

First, let me invite your attention to *Providence at large*. How many times have we seen Providence itself eclipsed with regard to the whole race. Behold, the Lord created the world and placed man upon it. "Increase and multiply," is His Law. Man multiplies, fills the earth and replenishes it. The whole earth is populated and its valleys and hills rejoice with the voice of song. On a sudden comes an eclipse. God sends a flood of rain. He draws the plugs of the great fountains of the mighty deep and lets the water burst up upon the earth. He bids His rain descend, not in showers, but in whole cataracts at once and the earth becomes a void covered with water, and afterwards a dreary swamp covered with mud. The whole human race, with the solitary exception of eight persons, are swept away. This is what I mean by a providential eclipse.

After that God again suffers man to multiply and the earth to be replenished. Year after year the earth laughs with harvests and the fields are made glad with God's bounties. For seven years following each other there

is such an abundance of plenty on the earth that men know not how to gather up by handfuls the stores which God has cast. These seven years are passed and lo, there comes an eclipse of God's bounty. There is no calf in the stall, the olive fails and the fields yield no meat, all the land goes to Egypt to buy corn, for only in Egypt is there corn to be found. There is a great eclipse of God's bounty which happens to the world.

But I need not stop to particularize the thousand instances that have happened in history. Nations have grown strong and mighty. Then there has come an eclipse of their glories and all that has been built has crumbled to the earth. Vast empires have been built and they have become great and beneath their sway some of their people have become happy. Some savage conqueror from the north has descended with his barbarous hordes and swept away every vestige of civilization and the earth seems to have gone back hundreds of years.

There has been a dark eclipse. Or it may have happened differently. A city is prosperous and rich. In one unhappy night a fire seizes upon it and like the stubble before the name the whole city is consumed and over the ashes of their houses the inhabitants sit down to weep and die. At another time a plague is upon the multitudes and the pits are filled with the dead. Nations die and perish and whole hosts of men are carried to their graves. Now, all these great eclipses of God's favor, these darkening of the heavens, these sudden glooms that fall upon the human race are parts of God's plan of Providence.

Beloved, believe me, it is God's Providence when His paths drop fatness and when the valleys rejoice on every side. It is a part of His plan when the fields are covered with corn and when there is grass for the cattle. But it is equally as much a part of the plan of His Providence to reduce the earth to famine and bring the human race to misery at certain stated seasons when He sees that an eclipse is absolutely necessary for their good.

It is just the same with you in *your own private concerns*. There is a God of Providence to you. Lo, these many years has He fed you and has never denied you the supply of your wants. Bread has been given to you and your water has been sure. Your children have been about. You have washed your feet with butter, you have rejoiced, you have stood fast in the ways of God and in the ways of happiness. You have been able to say, "Our ways are ways of pleasantness and all our paths are peace." You have not been, of all men, the most miserable but in some respects connected with your life and blessed by God's Providence, you have been the happiest among the human race. And now a dark cloud has fallen upon you.

The sunlight of God's Providence has set while it was yet noon. When you were rejoicing in the brightness of your light, on a sudden a midday midnight has fallen upon you, to your horror and dismay. You are made to say "Why does all this evil come upon me? Is this also sent of God?"

Most assuredly it is. Your penury, your sickness, your bereavement, your contempt—all these things are as much ordained for you and settled in the path of Providence, as your wealth, your comfort and your joy. Think not that God has changed. It involves no change of the sun when an eclipse overshadows it. The sun has not moved from its predestined spot. There it stands fixed and secure. Beloved, so it is with God. It may be that His purposes are moving onward to some great and distant goal, which yet we cannot see, circling around Himself in some greater circle than human knowledge yet can guess.

But this is certain, that so far as we are concerned, God is the same and of His years there is no end and from His fixed and settled path He has not swerved. His glory is undimmed, even when eye cannot see it. His love is just as bright, even when the shinings of it are concealed. He has not moved to the right hand nor to the left. With the Father of lights there is no variableness neither the shadow of turning. He abides fast and fixed though all things pass away. Let me confide then in Him. Eclipses in Providence, like eclipses in nature are but a part of His own grand plan and necessarily involved in it.

I suppose that it is impossible that the earth should revolve around the sun and that the moon should spin continually round the earth in the same plane of their orbit without there being eclipses. Since God has made the ellipse, or the circle the great rule of nature, it is impossible but that eclipses should occur. Now, did you ever notice that in Providence the circle is God's rule still? The earth is here today. It will be in the same place this day next year, it will go round the circle. It gets no further. It is just so in Providence. God began the circle of His Providence in Eden. That is where He will end it. There was a Paradise on earth when God began His Providential dealings with mankind. There will be a Paradise at the end.

It is the same with your Providence. Naked came you forth from your mother's womb and naked must you return to the earth. It is a circle. Where God has begun, there will He end. And as God has taken the rule of the circle in Providence, as well as in nature, eclipses must be sure to occur. Moving in the predestined orbit of Divine wisdom, the eclipse is absolutely and imperatively necessary in God's plan of government. Troubles must come. Afflictions must befall, it must be that for a season you should be in heaviness, through manifold temptations.

But I have said that *eclipses must also occur in Grace* and it is so. God's rule in Grace is still the circle. Man was originally pure and holy, that is what God's Grace will make him at last. He was pure when he was made by God in the garden. That is what God shall make him, when He comes to fashion him like His own glorious image and present him complete in Heaven. We begin our piety by denying the world, by being full of love of God. We often decline in Grace and God will bring us back to the state in

which we were when we first began so that we shall rejoice in none but Christ and give our hearts to Him as we did at first. Hence, there must be an eclipse in Grace, because even there the circle seems to be the rule of God's gracious government.

Now Beloved, you are in the eclipse, some of you, today. I hear you crying, "Oh that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shone round about me! I looked for light, but lo, darkness came. For peace, but behold, trouble. I said in my soul, my mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved. Lord, You did hide Your face and I am troubled. I sink in deep mire where there is no standing. All your waves slid. Your billows have gone over me. It was but yesterday that I could read my title clear, today my evidences are bedimmed and my hopes clouded. Yesterday I could climb to Pisgah's top and view the landscape over and count the fields that were flowing with milk and honey and rejoice with confidence in my future inheritance. "Today my spirit sees no Heaven, it has no hopes, but many fears—no joys, but much distress."

And you are apt to say, dear Friends, "Is this a part of God's plan with me? Can this be the way in which God would bring me to Heaven?" Yes, it is even so. The eclipse of your faith, the darkness of your minds, the fainting of your hopes—all these things are but the parts of God's plan for making you ripe for the great inheritance into which you shall soon enter. These trials are but waves that wash you onto the rocks. They are but winds that waft your ship the more swiftly towards the desired haven.

As David says in the Psalm, so might I say to you, "So He brings them to their desired haven." By honor and dishonor, by evil report and by good report, by plenty and by poverty, by joy and by distress, by persecution and by comforts—by all these things is the life of your soul and by each of these are you helped to hold on your way and to be brought at last to the great goal and haven of your hopes. Oh, think not, Christian, that your sorrows are out of God's plan! They are necessary parts of it. And inasmuch as He will bring many heirs of God unto Glory, it is necessary that through much tribulation He should bring them there.

I have thus tried to bring out the first Truth of God, that the eclipse is a part of God's government and that our temporal afflictions and our own sorrows of heart are but a part of that grand scheme. Permit me to trespass on your patience one minute more, when I notice that in God's great plan of Grace to the world, it is just the same. Sometimes we see a mighty reformation worked in the Church. God raises up men who lead the van of the armies of Jehovah. See, error flies before them like shadows before the sunlight! Behold, the strongest towers of the enemy are tottering! The shout of a King is heard in the midst and the saints of the Lord take courage that their great and final victory at last is come.

A few more years and those Reformers are dead and their mantle has not fallen upon any. After great mountains come deep valleys. The sons of

great men are often small and driveling—so there comes a poor lukewarm Church. After the Philadelphian state of love, there comes the Laodicean state of lukewarmness. The Church sinks, and in proportion as she sinks the enemy advances. Victory! Victory! Victory! shout the hosts of Hell. And pushing on their course, they drive back the Lord's host and the world trembles as in the balances, for victory seems to be on the side of the *enemy*.

Again there comes another time of refreshing, another Pentecost—some other leader is raised up of God. Another mighty judge is brought into Israel, to drive out the Hittites and the Amorites that have invaded God's Canaan. Once more, the world rejoices and the creature that has toiled so long, hopes to be delivered from its bondage—alas, it sinks again! The rising has its ebb, the summer has its winter and the joyous time has its season of despondency to follow it. But, Beloved, all this is a part of God's plan. Do you see how God governs the ocean? When He means to produce a flood tide He does not make the water come marching straight up upon the shore, but as you stand there you are absolutely certain that the sand will be covered and that the flood will dash against the cliff at the foot of which you are standing. But you see a wave come marching up and then it returns again and then another wave, then it dies and rolls back and another follows it.

Now, it is even so in the Church of God. The day must be when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. But this must be accomplished by different waves, by growing and decreasing, by multiplying and by division. It must be by triumph and by victory, by conquest and by defeat that at last God's great purpose shall ripen and the world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. Think not, then, that eclipses of our holy religion, or the failure of great men in the midst of us, or the decline of piety is at all apart from God's plan. It is involved in it and as God's great purpose moving in the circle to bring forth another gracious purpose on earth must be accomplished, so Beloved, an eclipse must necessarily follow, being involved in God's very way of governing the world in His Grace.

II. But, secondly, EVERYTHING THAT GOD DOES HAS A DESIGN. When God creates light He has a reason for it and when He creates darkness He has a reason for it, too. God does not always tell us His reason but He always has one, We call Him a sovereign God because sometimes He acts from reasons which are beyond our knowledge. But He is never an unreasonable God. It is according to the counsel of His will that He works—not according to His will but according to the *counsel* of His will, to show you that there is a reason, a wisdom in everything that He does. Now I cannot tell you what is God's design in eclipsing the sun. We can see many gracious purposes answered by it in our minds, but I do not know of what use it is to the world.

It may be that if there never were an eclipse some great change might happen in the atmosphere, something beyond the reach of all philosophical knowledge at present, but which may yet be discovered. It may be that the eclipse, like the tornado and the hurricane, has its virtue in operating upon this lower world in some mysterious way that we know not. However, we are not left in any darkness about other kind of eclipses. We are quite certain that Providential eclipses and eclipses of Grace have both of them their reasons. When God sends a Providential eclipse He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men for nothing. When pestilence stalks through the land and sweeps away its myriads, think not that God has done an unthoughtful act without any intention in it. When war, with its blood-red sword, sweeps the nations and lays the mother bleeding with her child—imagine not that this comes in vain.

God has some design in all these things. Permit me to tell you what I believe to be God's design when He sends troubles into the world and when He sends troubles upon us. It is this—it is to draw our attention to Himself. "Well," said an old Divine, "Nobody ever looks at the sun except when he is in an eclipse." You never thought about the sun yesterday. You will all of you be staring at it tomorrow. Pieces of smoked glass, telescopes and all kinds of inventions down to a pail of water, will be used in order to look at the sun. Why don't you look at it when it is shining brightly? There is nothing interesting in that, because it is an ordinary object.

Now do you not notice that when everything goes well with the world they never think about God? People always get religious when they get into trouble. The Churches were fuller in London when we had the cholera here than they had been for many a long day. There were more ministers went to see sick people in those times than had ever been known before. People that never read their Bible, never prayed, never thought of going to God's House, were hurrying off to a place of worship, or reading their Bibles, or pretending at least to pray, though, afterwards, when it went away, they forgot all about it. Yet they did think a little of it when they were in trouble.

"Surely in trouble they will seek the Lord. In the day of their distress they will seek Me early." Doubtless, we should entirely forget God if it were not for some of those eclipses which now and then happen. God would not have His name remembered on earth at all by the race of man if He did not make them remember His name when He scourged it into them with His rod. Famine, pestilence, the sword, the flood—all these must come upon us to be terrible remembrances to make us think of the dread King who holds the thunders in His hand and keeps the lightning in His power.

Doubtless, this is God's great design in His afflictive Providences to make us think of Him. But there is another design. Sometimes troublous times tend to prepare the world for something better afterwards. War is an awful thing. But I doubt not it purges the moral atmosphere, just as a

hurricane sweeps away a pestilence. It is a fearful thing to hear of famine, or to hear of plague. But each of these things has some effect upon the human race. An evil generally goes to make room for a greater good. Men may bewail the fire of London but it was the greatest blessing God could have sent to London. It burnt down a set of old houses that were placed so close together that it was impossible for them to be without the plague and when these old things had been burnt down, there was then room for a healthier action. And there has been less plague and less disease ever since.

Many of the troubles that come to the great wide world are meant to be like axes, to cut down some deadly upas tree and lay it level with the ground. That tree, when it stood, scattered greater evil, though it scattered it gradually, than the injury which God sent on a sudden did inflict, though it was more apparent to the mind, having come all at once. Ah, my Hearer, God has sent you Providential trouble. You are not His child—you do not fear His name nor love Him—you are saying, “Why has this trouble happened to me?” God has a gracious design in it. There are many men that are brought to Christ by trouble. Many a sinner has sought the Savior on his sick bed who never would have sought Him anywhere else.

Many a merchant whose trade has prospered, has lived without God. He has been glad to find the Savior when his house has tottered into bankruptcy. We have known many a person who could afford to despise God while the stream flowed smoothly on, but that same man has been compelled to bow his knee and seek peace through the blood of Christ when he has come into the whirlpool of distress and the whirlwind of trouble has got hold upon him.

There is a story told, that in olden times, Artaxerxes and another great king were engaged in a furious fight. In the middle of the battle a sudden eclipse happened and such was the horror of all the warriors that they made peace then and there. Oh, if an eclipse of trouble should induce you to ground arms and seek to be reconciled unto God! Sinner, you are fighting against God, lifting the arm of your rebellion against Him. Happy shall you be if that trouble which is now fallen upon you should lead you to throw down the weapons of your rebellion and fly to the arms of God and say, “Lord have mercy upon me a sinner.” It will be the best thing that you have ever had. Your trouble will be far better to you than joys could have been, if your sorrows shall induce you to fly to Jesus who can make peace through the blood of His Cross. May this be the happy result of your own troubles and sorrows.

But furthermore, *eclipses of Grace have also their end and design.* The Christian asks why it is that God does not seem to favor him in his conscience as much as He did aforesaid. “Why is it that I have not more faith? Why have the promises lost their sweetness? Why has the Word of God seemed to fail in its power in operating upon my soul? Why has God

hidden His face from me?” Christian, it is that you may begin to search yourself and say, “Show me why You contend with me.” God’s people are afflicted in order that they may not go astray. “Before I was afflicted,” said the Psalmist, “I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word.” Leave a Christian alone and he becomes like a piece of iron covered with rust. He loses all his brightness. Take the file of affliction and once more the brightness becomes apparent. Christians without trouble would be like oysters without the sickness. They would not have produced pearls. The pearl oyster would have no pearl unless some disease had fallen upon it and were it not that trouble lights upon the Christian, he would live without producing the pearl of a holy and contented piety.

God’s rods are improvers. When they are laid upon us they always mend us. God searches the Christian that He may cleanse him of his weeds. He plows him deep that He may turn up the subsoil to the air, that the influence of the Divine Spirit may rest upon him. He puts us into the crucible and into the furnace that the heat may burn away our dross and may consume all our impurities. He sends us into the deep waters that they may be like a sacred Baptism to us and may help in sanctifying us, by delivering us from our pride, our lust, our worldliness and our conceit. Happy is the man who understands this—who knows that all things work together for good to them that love God and believes that even an eclipse of God’s countenance has its end and design in making him perfectly conformed to the image of Christ Jesus the Lord.

III. And now not to detain you longer, I have got a sermon or two more to preach to you from the eclipse. Tomorrow, Christians, if you will just remember what I am about to say you will learn a useful lesson. What is that which will hide the sun from us tomorrow? It is the ungrateful moon. She has borrowed all her light from the sun month after month. She would be a black blot if the sun did not shine upon her—and now see all the return she makes as she goes impudently before his face and prevents his light from shining upon us! Do you know anything at all like that in your own history? Have you not a great many comforts which you enjoy upon earth that are just like the moon? They borrow all their light from the sun. They would be no comforts to you unless God shone in them and they reflected back the light from His countenance.

What is your husband, your wife? What are your children, your friends, your house, your home? What are all these but moons that borrow their light from the sun? Oh how ungrateful it is when we let our comforts get before our God. No wonder that we get an eclipse when we put these things that God gave to be our *comforts* into God’s own throne and make them our *idols*. Oh, if our children take half of our hearts, if our friends take away our souls from Jesus. If like it was with Solomon, the wife leads the heart astray. If our goods, our house, our lands become the object of our life—if we set our affections upon them instead of setting them upon

the things above—no wonder that there is an eclipse. Oh, ungrateful heart that allows these moons of comfort to hide the sun!

Old Master Brookes very prettily says the husband gives his wife rings which she wears upon her finger as remembrances of his love. But suppose a wife should be so foolish as to love her jewels better than her husband? Suppose she should set her heart more upon his love tokens than upon his person? Oh, what marvel if he should then take the rings and the jewels away that she might again love him. It is even so with us—God loves His children and He gives us strong faith and gives us joy and comfort. And then if we begin to set our hearts upon these more than upon Him, He will come and take them away, for says He, “I must have *all* your love. I gave you these to win your love, not to rob Me of it. And inasmuch as you do divert your heart unto them, instead of allowing your love to flow in one channel towards Me, I will stop up the channel of your comfort that your heart may cleave to Me and to Me alone.”

Oh, for a heart that is like Anacreon’s lyre, that would sing of love alone, that whatever subject you tried to bring to it, it would not resound with anything but love! Oh, that our hearts were like that towards God so that when we tried to sing of comforts and of mercies our hearts would only sing of God! Oh, that every string were made so Divine, that it would never trill to any finger but the finger of the chief player upon my stringed instruments, the Lord Jesus Christ! Oh, that we had a heart like David’s harp, that none but David could play. A soul that none but Jesus could make glad and cause to rejoice! Take care Christian, lest your comforts, like the moon, eclipse your sun. That is a sermon for you, remember it and be wise from it.

And let the Christian remember another sermon. Let him take his child out and when he takes him outside the door and he sees the sun begin to grow dark and all things fade away and a strange color coming over the landscape, the child will begin to cry and say, “Father the sun is going out, he is dying. We shall never have any light again.” And as gradually the black moon creeps over the sun’s broad surface and there remains only a solitary streak of light, the tears run down the child’s eyes as he says, “The sun is nearly quenched. God has blown it out, it will never shine upon us again. We shall have to live in darkness,” and he would begin to weep for sorrow of heart.

Now touch your child on the head and say, “No, my little boy, the sun has not gone out—it is only the moon passing across its face. It will shine bright enough presently.” And your boy would soon believe you. And as he saw the light returning, he would feel thankful and would believe what you had said, that the sun was always the same. Now, you will be like a child tomorrow. When you get into trouble you will be saying, “God has changed.” Then let God’s Word speak to you as unto children and let it

say “No, He has not changed—with Him is no variableness, neither shadow of a turning”—

***“My soul through many changes goes,
His love no variation knows.”***

And now, last of all, a total eclipse is one of the most terrible and grand sights that ever will be seen. We shall not see the eclipse here in all its majestic terror. But when the eclipse of the sun is total it is sublime. Travelers have given us some records of their own experience. When the sun has been setting far away, the mountains seemed to be covered with darkness except upon their summits, where there was just a streak of light, when all below was swathed in darkness. The heavens grew darker and darker and darker, until at last it became as black as night and here and there the stars might be seen shining, but beside them there was no light and nothing could be discerned.

I was thinking that if on a sudden the sun should set in ten-fold darkness and never should rise again, what a horrid world this would be! If tomorrow the sun should actually die out and never shine any more, what a fearful world this would be to live in! And then the thought strikes me—Are there not some men and are there not some *here*, who will one day have a total eclipse of all their comforts? Thank God, whatever eclipse happens to a Christian, it is never a *total* eclipse—there is always a ring of comfort left. There is always a crescent of love and mercy to shine upon him.

But mark you, Sinner, when you come to die, bright though your joys are now and fair your prospects, you will suffer a total eclipse. Soon shall your sun set and set in everlasting night. A few more months and your gaiety shall be over. Your dreams of pleasure shall be dissipated by the terrible wailing of the judgment trump. A few more months and this merry dance of revelry on earth shall all have passed away and that passed away, remember, you have nothing to expect in the world to come but “a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.” Can you guess what the Savior meant when He said “outer darkness, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth”? Can any tell except those eclipsed spirits that have been these many years writhing in the torments of eternal judgment—can any tell what is meant by that “outer darkness”?

It is darkness so thick that hope, which lives anywhere, cannot dart even a feeble ray through its impenetrable gloom. It is a darkness so black that you have no candle of your own fancy, no fair imagination to illuminate. A horror thicker than the darkness of Egypt, a darkness that may be felt will get hold upon the spirit. “Depart, you cursed,” shall roll like volumes of cloud and darkness over the accursed spirit. “Cursed, cursed, cursed,” pronounced by the Sacred Trinity thrice, shall come, come like a three-fold ocean of unutterable depth and shall in its caverns hide the soul beyond the reach of hope.

I am but talking in simile and figure of a matter which none of us can thoroughly understand, but which each of us must know unless we are saved by Grace. My fellow Sinner, have you today any hope that when death shall come you shall be found in Christ? If you have none, beware and tremble. If you have any, take care, it is “a good hope through Grace.” If you have no hope but are seeking one, hear me while I tell you the way of salvation. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became Man. He lived in this world, He suffered and He died. And the object of His death was this—that all who *believe* may be saved.

What you are required to believe is simply this—Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—do you feel that you are a sinner? If so, He came to save you. All you have to do—and that Grace makes you do—is to believe that He came to save sinners and therefore came to save you. Mark, He did not come to save all. He came to save *sinners*. All men who can claim the title of sinners, Christ came to save. If you are too good to be a sinner, then you have no part in this matter. If you are too proud to confess that you are a sinner, then this has nothing to do with you. But if with a humble heart, with a penitential lip, you can say, “Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner,” then Christ was punished for your sins and you cannot be punished for them.

Christ has died instead of you—believe on Him and you may go your way rejoicing that you are saved now and shall be saved eternally. May God the Holy Spirit first teach you that you are a sinner, then lead you to believe that Christ died for sinners and then apply the promise so that you may see that He died for you. And that done, you may “rejoice in hope of the glory of God,” and your sun shall never set in an eclipse, but shall set on earth to rise with tenfold splendor in the upper sphere, where it shall never know a cloud, a setting, or an eclipse.

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IDOLS FOUND WANTING, BUT JEHOVAH FOUND FAITHFUL NO. 2056

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 9, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPT. 27, 1888.**

*“Bel bows down, Nebo stoops, their idols were upon the beasts and upon the
cattle: your carriages were heavy loaded. They are a burden to the weary beast.
They stoop, they bow down together.
They could not deliver the burden but themselves are gone into captivity.
Hearken unto Me, O house of Jacob and all the remnant of the house
of Israel, which are borne by Me from the belly, which
are carried from the womb. And even to your old
age I am He. And even to hoar hairs will
I carry you: I have made and I will
bear. Even I will carry and
will deliver you.”
Isaiah 46:1-4.*

THE confidence of Babylon is buried among her heaps of rubbish for her gods have fallen from their thrones. “Bel bows down, Nebo stoops.” As for us, Beloved, our trust is in the living God who lives to bear and carry His chosen, even in Jehovah, the only true Lord. We begin our spiritual life by faith in Him, for till faith comes we have no power to become the sons of God. Our spiritual life will have to be continued in the same way of trust in the Lord, “for the just shall live by faith.”

We live by faith upon the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. We rejoice that we shall never have to change our confidence, for our God will never be carried into captivity, nor torn from His Throne. Our faith is built upon a rock that can never be moved. Nothing in the past has shaken the foundation of our faith. Nothing in the present can move it. Nothing in the future will undermine it. Whatever may occur in the ages to come, there will always be good reason for believing in Jehovah and His faithful Word.

The great Truths which He has revealed will never be disproved. The great promises He has made will never be retracted. The great purposes He has devised will never be abandoned. So long as we live, so long shall we have a refuge, a hope, a confidence, that can never be removed—

*“His sovereign mercy knows no end,
His faithfulness shall still endure;
And those who on His Word depend
Shall find His Word forever sure.”*

That part of our text which says, “Even to your old age I am He. And even to hoar hairs will I carry you,” may seem to be a promise made to old age. So, indeed, it is. Many a hoary saint has made a soft pillow of this

precious promise and has rested upon it with delight in the days of his decay. But yet the text, if it is rightly read, is a promise to the people of God at any and every period between their birth and their death. While the Lord does say that He will carry us to hoar hairs, yet He begins by telling us that He has carried us from the womb and that He will carry us still. All tenses meet in these verses—“Hearken, O house of Jacob, which are borne by Me; which are carried from the womb. Even to your old age I am He. I have made and I will bear. Even I will carry and will deliver you.”

The Lord is good to us in all tenses and in all ways. We shall not, alone, consider in our discourse the mercy of God to those who are near the end of their pilgrimage but that same mercy to His people throughout their wilderness journey—from the day when they first ate of the Paschal Lamb and left Egypt—even to that hour when the Jordan was dried up and they took possession of the land which flows with milk and honey. Our experimental dealings with God make us know that He is our gracious Helper from the first to the last. When we begin with the Alpha of our life’s spelling, we find Him good. And when we come to the Omega and faintly pronounce the last letter of life, we know still better how gracious He is. Bel and Nebo disappoint their votaries but Jehovah is our God forever and ever and He will be our guide even unto death.

I. I shall begin my sermon by calling your attention, first, to the background, which is placed behind the brilliant promise which is herein given to the Lord’s people.

Observe that FALSE CONFIDENCES PASS AWAY. The Lord has made a full end of false gods and their worship. “Bel bows down, Nebo stoops, their idols were upon the beasts and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy loaded: they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together. They could not deliver the burden but themselves are gone into captivity.” Bel and Nebo were two great gods of Babylon. You get the name of Bel in the name of king Belshazzar. And the name of Nebo in the name of Nebuchadnezzar.

They were esteemed to be such great deities that their kings were named after them and professed to be their servants. Bel and Nebo stood supreme in Babylon. The Babylonian empire which served these deities was so strong as to be invincible—it carried its cruel sword into all nations and piled up the dead bodies of men in heaps—it was, therefore, dreaded in every part of the world. And not without cause. What kingdom or empire could stand against it? If you had gone to Babylon and seen its mighty walls, its lofty towers, its engines of war, its wonders of art, its multitudes of heroes, you would have thought that the worship of Bel would endure forever and that the image of Nebo would stand there to be adored of mortals as long as the world existed.

But these idols—always a mere deceit—proved themselves powerless in the day of trial. Cyrus came, the Euphrates was dried up, the empire of Babylon ended and the gods were discredited for all ages. In the ruin of Babylon the gods became a prey. The golden images, themselves, were too precious to be left standing in Babylon and too little venerated to be treated with respect. They were taken off to Persia as spoil and became a

burden to the weary beasts. Huge images of less costly material were dragged down with ropes, dashed in pieces, or buried beneath heaps of ruins.

Ah me, what a melancholy fate for things which were called gods, and received the reverence of great nations! Even in these latter days, we have had an illustration of “Bel bows down and Nebo stoops,” when Mr. Layard went to the ruins of Babylon and Nineveh and dragged out those huge bulls, which stand today in the British Museum—objects of our curiosity but certainly not of our worship. “Bel bows down, Nebo stoops.” The false gods that reigned supreme over so many myriads of men were made contemptible. The Prophet cries, “They stoop, they bow down together, they could not deliver the burden but themselves have gone into captivity.”

Not only concerning Bel and Nebo but concerning many a set of heathen deities, a note of exultant derision may be taken up. “The idols He shall utterly abolish.” As potters’ vessels are broken, so are the gods of the heathen ground into dust and treated as nothing. The like thing has happened unto false systems of teaching. They have risen and they have dominated over the minds of men—but, like Bel and Nebo—they have tottered and fallen. They seemed to be established beyond all hope of confutation and overthrow, and yet they have passed away!

If you are at all readers of the history of religious thought, you will know that systems of philosophy and philosophical religions have come up and have been generally accepted as indisputable and have done serious injury to true religion for a time. And yet they have vanished like the mirage of the desert. When at their best, they have withered—the grass has flowered, the flower has come to its full and has fallen beneath the scythe. The gourds have come up in a night and have perished in a night. Even those of us who are not aged, yet remember two or three different forms of philosophical Divinity which preceded this new dreaming, which is just now so loudly cried up.

Many modern thoughts have come up and have gone down again. Bel has bowed down and Nebo has stooped. The boastful “thinkers” carried up their elaborate systems into their places with great labor and then they carried them away again and buried them with equal labor. What philosophers prove one year, philosophers disprove another year. We, old-fashioned Christians, have remained unchanged in our fidelity to the revealed Truth of God and we have seen Bel go up and Bel go down, and Nebo go up and Nebo go down. Yes, we have seen rubbish venerated as a precious thing and before long the precious thing carted away as so much lumber.

Like a child’s merry-go-round at a fair, heresy is a revolution of the old things over and over again. Yet people think it new. The present idols of the mind are just as worthless as those of former times. The god of modern thought is a monkey. If those who believed in evolution said their prayers rightly, they would begin them with, “Our Father, which are up a tree.” Did they not all come from a monkey, according to their own statement? They came by “development,” from the basest of material and they do not belie their original. If you are not well acquainted with this new

Gospel, I would not advise you to be acquainted with it. It is a sheer clear waste of time to know anything about it at all.

The moderns are able to believe anything except their Bibles. They credulously receive any statement, so long as it is not in the Scriptures. But if it is founded on Scripture, they are, of course, prepared to doubt and quibble straight away. The credulity of the new theologians is as amazing as their skepticism. But we shall see the monkey-god go down yet and evolution will be ridiculed as it deserves to be. The philosophy of the present, whose aim is to get rid of God, has nothing to support it in fact or in nature. It will fly as chaff before the wind and in fifty years nobody will own that he ever thought of believing it.

The new religion will be regarded as a craze, an emanation from bedlam. And every man will be ashamed to think that he stopped to hear or read anything about it. So idiotic is it from beginning to end that it will become a standing jest for ages to come, a proverb and a byword to mankind. Bel bows down, Nebo stoops already. And, as the Lord Jehovah lives, the whole of this thing, which has been so cunningly and carefully devised to dethrone Him and cast down His Gospel, shall be had in derision. These new gods, newly come up, shall not deliver themselves, or their worshippers any more than did the idols of Babylon.

But now, Beloved, it will be just the same with us if we trust in false confidences of any sort—for instance, our experiences, or our attainments, or our services, or our orthodox belief, or anything else. If we set up any confidences apart from our God, we shall soon see the end of them. Imagine that any Christian here should be so foolish as to rely upon his own works. God forbid we should! What an airy nothing our confidence would be! Before long that Bel would bow down and that Nebo would stoop, for the hope would be too flimsy to bear the least weight.

Or, if we should begin to rely upon our own enjoyments—if frames and feelings should become our confidence—all would come down and our boast would become our burden, our glory our shame. “Bel bows down, Nebo stoops”—sooner or later this will be the end of all false trusts. Placing confidence in our inward feelings is like building upon a bog, or leaning upon a rush, or feeding upon wind. The idols of our feeling are like the mud gods of India—they are utterly worthless and they turn to mere clay almost as soon as they are formed. If in our daily life we look to an arm of flesh, or practice self-reliance instead of God-reliance, or if we trust to friends instead of leaning upon the one great Invisible, we shall yet learn with tears the terror of that sentence, “Cursed is he that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm.”

“Bel bows down, Nebo stoops”—anything that you make your confidence, instead of God, will fail to bear your burden and will itself become a burden to you. Instead of its carrying you, you will have to carry it. Instead of its taking your load, it will increase your load and become at last an intolerable curse. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”

Beloved in the Lord, think not that this is an unnecessary warning, even for you, for you may as easily set up an idol in your heart as other men may set up a false system of philosophy, or an idol god. Guard

against setting up a rival trust to rob the Lord of even a small part of your confidence. "My Soul, wait you only upon God. For my expectation is from Him." None but Jesus is the ground of salvation—none but the Eternal God is the disposer of Providence. Trust wholly in Him who loves to be trusted. Let us lean upon our God with all our weight and lean nowhere else.

If we put our confidence elsewhere, our idolatry will come home to us and we shall hear the voice of disappointment, wailing bitterly, "Bel bows down, Nebo stoops: your carriages were heavy loaded. They are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together."

II. Let that stand as the black cloud on which God will paint his bright rainbow, while I notice in the second place, that OUR GOD ABIDES ALWAYS THE SAME. "Even to your old age I am He." He is always the same in Himself and always the same to His people. If you are, indeed, a Believer in the Lord and resting in Christ Jesus, He says to you at this time with regard to all the future unknown and, perhaps greatly dreaded, "Be not afraid, for I am the Lord your God. Even to your old age I am He."

Dear Friends, we rightly expect trials between here and Heaven. And the ordinary wear and tear of life, even if life should not be clouded by an extreme trial, will gradually wear us out. We shall come, by-and-by, if life is spared, to that bottom of the hill where the eye grows dim and the ear is heavy and the arms are trembling and the strong men bow themselves. Well, what then? What says our God concerning the days of decline and decay? He says to us, "I AM HE." He will not grow weak. His eye will not be dim. His ear will not be heavy. His arm will not be shortened that He cannot help us, nor His hand palsied that He cannot deliver us. Change is written across the countenance of every mortal but there are no furrows on the brow of the Eternal.

If life should flow ever so smoothly, yet there are the rapids of old age and the broken waters of infirmity and the waterfall of disease. And these we are apt to dread. But why? Is not the Lord our trust? Is it not sure that the Lord changes not? Make this your strong confidence. As for you, you youths, you are strong, but boast not of your strength. The Lord Jehovah is our strength and our song. As for you in the midst of life—tremble not because of your difficulties—"is anything too hard for the Lord?" As for you that are sinking into the decline of life and know that very soon your tabernacle will be taken down, be not afraid, for the Lord has not altered. Has he not said, "I am the Lord, I change not"?

Let this be your delight. In the course of years, not only do we change but our circumstances change. Many look forward to trying circumstances in the declining days of life. "When I cannot earn my livelihood. When I cannot go out to the farm, or stand at the counter, or work on the bench, what will become of me then?" Hearken, my Brother, if you are where you ought to be, your confidence is in God now—and you will have the same God then—and He will still be your guardian and provider. He will be under no decay from age, nor decline from weakness. His bank will not break, nor his treasury fail. His granary will not be exhausted and His bounty will not be worn out.

Trust in Him for that which is written between the folded leaves of destiny, as well as for the page which lies open before you. If the infirmities of the body scare you, trust Him. And if the changing circumstances of your life alarm you, trust Him. For He must be the same though Heaven and earth should be dissolved. He says, "Even to your old age I am He." "Ah," you say, "but what I most mourn is the death of friends." Yes. That calamity is a daily sorrow to men who are getting into years. A new-made grave is with us every day. How many of those whom I dearly loved are now with God?

When we near sixty, or pass onward towards seventy, we lament the multitude of dear Friends that have fallen like the innumerable leaves of autumn. Some of us have now more friends in Heaven than we have on earth. The best are going, still going—the messengers with heavy tidings follow close upon each other's heels. One of these days we think that some friend will cry, "Only I am left." Ah, yes, but the Lord says, "I AM HE," as much as to say, "I am left to you and will not fail you." Jehovah dies not but still abides the same. If you have only viewed your friends as loans from Him—but Himself as your ultimate confidence—then you have acted wisely. When your friends are gone, you have not lost the source of all your strength and help and comfort—therefore, be not afraid—for the Lord says, "Even to your old age I am He."

Some trouble themselves more than there is need concerning prophetic crises which are threatened. One would think from their perpetual alarms that the Prophets wrote to afflict us rather than to comfort us. "Oh, what shall I do," says one, "if there should be wars and rumors of wars and earthquakes in different places, and so forth?" What would you wish to do but trust in the Lord even as you do now? I know some good people who are much distressed with political prospects, with the evident tokens of social disorder, with the increasing tendency to break up everything and with the stealthy progress of the superstition of Rome.

Well, you may sit and look out of your windows till you see nothing but clouds and darkness, for fancy and fear together can fashion out of clouds monsters and portents and alarms. We know so little of the future that to worry about it will be the height of folly. Our view of the near future may be incorrect—why fret over that which will never happen? Certainly, we only see part of the Lord's ways. And if we could see the whole we should most probably rejoice where now we grieve. Why, then, are we cast down? The Lord Himself says to us, "Even to your old age I am He."

In our days of palsy, Jehovah trembles not. The Lord took care of the world before we were here to help Him and He will do it just as well when we are gone. We can leave politics, religion, trade, morals, and everything else with Him. What we have to do is to obey Him and trust Him and rejoice in Him and go on our way rejoicing. He knows the end from the beginning and will not allow the flood of human iniquity to swell beyond the control of His supreme will. His purpose shall stand and He will do all His pleasure. Not even to the extent of the small dust of the balance shall the event vary from the decree, or the decree vary from the rule of unmingled love.

“Still,” says one, “there are such evil tokens in the Church itself as must cause serious apprehension to godly men.” Yes, I know it. I have had to know it to my personal sorrow. The Church grows old—gray hairs are upon her here and there and she knows it not. But never despair of the Church of God, for of her it is true, “Even to hoar hairs will I carry you. To your old age I am He.” The Head of the Church never alters. His choice of His Church is not reversed. His purpose for His Church is not shaken. The Holy Spirit, as indwelling in the Church, has not returned to His rest. He still abides in His Church and works mightily.

Beloved, fear not. We shall see better days and brighter times yet, if we have but faith in God and importunity in prayer. Let us not be afraid, though clouds should come, for it is written, “Behold He comes with clouds.” God is the same—there is the cornerstone of our comfort. If you are depending upon anything or any person beside your God, woe unto you! “Oh,” you say, “I used to hear a dear old minister in my early days. But I find none like him now. He has gone home. And I feel as if I could cry, ‘My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!’” I could make some of you weep if I were to go through the list of those holy men who fed you with food convenient for you in your younger days.

Their very names are like music to our ears and honey in our mouth. Remember Joseph Irons and Harrington Evans and Watts Wilkinson and Rowland Hill and men of that order? Where are the teachers and fathers now? But then the point is, the *God* of these saints is not dead. The Great Shepherd of Israel still lives and He leads us still and feeds us still and guards us still. And He will guard His flock and guide His flock—till He makes us to lie down in the green pastures on the hilltops of Glory. Oh, let us bless and praise His name tonight, that He gives us this rich comfort, “I am He.” Jehovah, eternally the same, is the Rock of our salvation.

III. And now, thirdly, I want to call your attention, in the words before us, to the fact that while false confidences pass away, **GOD WILL FOREVER BE THE SAME.** His former mercies guarantee to us future mercies. Read the passage before us—He says, “I have made and I will bear. Even I will carry, and will deliver you.”

First, you see, He says, “I have made.” The Lord, who is your helper is He that created you—you certainly could not have created yourself. It is well to remember the mercy of God to us in our formation and in the first days of our birth and infancy. David was not ashamed to say to his God, “You are He that took me out of the womb.” The Lord gave us birth, or we had never seen the light. When we were born, we could not help ourselves in the least degree. Poor helpless, shiftless creatures—all we could do was to cry! We shall never again be so weak as we were at our birth. Great decrepitude may fall upon us but we shall never be so little, so feeble, so pining, so dependent as we were when we could not speak and make known our wants, except by a cry.

We were entirely dependent upon others for everything. We were quite helpless and yet we survived. We did not starve then. Yet for years we never earned a crust. We did not want for clothing then. And yet we could not have fingered a needle if we had been offered a thousand pounds. We

were taken care of then, and surely God will take care of us for all the rest of our lives. We have been nursed through our first childhood and we shall be nurtured through our second childhood, should it come upon us. We know very little, indeed, about those first three or four years, yet the Lord fed us and led us and here we are in proof of it.

Therefore, when He says, "I have made," He takes us back to those early days and makes us feel that He that made us to grow and gave us one by one the powers of manhood, will not leave us to molder away in old age, nor to break up like a wreck upon the rocks of disease. But think, Beloved! God made us in another sense. He made us new. Blessed is the man that has been twice born and thus twice made! The Lord God has made us new creatures in Christ Jesus. He has made us to be His children—we have been "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

If He has done all this, He does not intend to leave us till He has finished the work of Divine Grace with power. A statue thinks nothing of the man that made it. But the man who has fashioned a thing of beauty of that sort takes a great interest in his handiwork. You that are made do not take such interest in your Maker as your Maker takes in you. "I have made," says He, "I have made." What He has done to you, in making you anew, should breathe into your heart the conviction that He will do yet more for you. That is, if there is a true heart in the world, God made it and thinks of it—if there is a true Church in the world, God made it and keeps it.

Every Church that is a Church in the Scriptural sense, God has gathered to Himself. And of it He says, "I have made." He called the people out and knit them together and built them up as a house for Himself to dwell in. If He has made either heart or Church, He will keep it—He will not forsake the work of His own hands. He has used both thought and skill and has exercised both power and care for it and He will not desert that which has cost Him dearly. God's past mercy in the making of us encourages us to believe that He will put forth all His might to bear us on even to the end.

And then, He also tells us, in the next place, that He has carried us. And if we have been carried by Him, He will carry us the rest of the way. There is a quaint saying of Bishop Hall that God has a very large family and not one of His children can run alone. In a certain sense, that is true. You know what an armful you have when you have two or three children that cannot run alone. What a great care has our gracious God since none of His children can run alone without His power, His love, His Grace! The Lord has to carry everyone of us every moment of our lives. The beginning of a Christian's life is very like the latter part of it!

As to the natural man, we begin with being carried, and if we live long enough, we have to end with being carried. So, with the spiritual man—we begin with a simple trust—and as we grow in Divine Grace, we feel more and more our own weakness and come a second time to a trust as simple as at first. But whether we have one childhood or fifty childhoods, here is a Father who is ready to carry us, from the first even to the last. "I have

made and I will bear. Even to hoar hairs will I carry you.” Of this I am convinced, God will not begin to make and carry us and then leave the work unfinished. It shall never be said of Him that He began to build and was not able to finish.

God will not redeem us with the blood of His Son and then lose us. He will not suffer Calvary to become a mistake and the Cross to be frustrated in its Divine purpose. God will not prepare us for Heaven and prepare Heaven for us and not bring us there. He will not store up the blessings of the Covenant and then refuse to bestow them, or cast off those for whom they were provided. He who has begun a good work in us will carry it on and perfect it unto the day of Christ. The past guarantees the future, since we have to do with a God who can never change.

But I must not linger on any point, as our time flies. I must notice next that, practically, God’s mercies through life are always the same. If you will look at the text carefully you will not fail to see that it is so. God may be said to begin in regeneration the work which we experience from His hands—therein He makes us. But all through life He is still making us. We are perpetually revolving on the wheel. And He is continually fashioning us. He has not yet perfected in us the image of Christ. He has only to keep on doing what He has been doing and we shall be perfected. His first work in us was resurrection work. And is He not daily quickening us, constantly raising us from the dead?

It was new creation and He is daily creating us anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. No new form of mercy is ever wanted. All we need is the old mercy repeated and adapted to our case. My dear Friend, you will never want anything of God but what you have already had. The Divine Grace that saves the young man will save the old man. The patience that bore with your follies in youth will bear with your weakness in age. Depend upon it, you will require nothing but what you have already received. In this matter, the thing that has been is the thing that shall be—and there is nothing new under the sun.

As for this “carrying” of which the text speaks, assuredly that is no new thing. As I have already said, the Lord carried us in our infancy. Our first spiritual blessing came of our being carried—we were sheep going astray and the Shepherd came after us. And when He found us, He carried us upon His shoulders rejoicing and brought us home. After that we were lambs in the fold and He gathered the lambs in His bosom and carried us. Many a rough place have I encountered in my life’s pilgrimage and I have wondered how I should ever get over it. But I have been carried over the rocky way so happily that the passage has made one of the most charming memories of my heart. I begin to like rough places, even as Rutherford fell in love with the Cross he had to carry.

When the road is smooth, I have to walk. But when it is very rough, I am carried. Therefore, I feel somewhat like the little boy I saw the other night. His father had been carrying him uphill. But when he reached a piece of level road, the boy was a great lump to carry and his father set him down and let him walk. Then the little gentleman began to pull at his father’s coat and I heard him say, “Carry me, father! Carry me, father.

“Carry me again!” Just so. Any sensible child of God will still say, “Carry me, Father! Carry me still, I pray you!” The Father’s answer is, “I have made and I will bear. Even I will carry you.” Therefore call upon Him and ask that when the road is rough, or miry, He carry you. And He *will* carry you.

The promise closes with the words, “And I will deliver you.” That is no new mercy. Have you not been delivered many times already? “The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine”—so David trusted, and so do we. Oh, the deliverances of God’s people! Time out of mind He has appeared for us. “O my Soul, you have trod down strength!” We have overcome through the power of the Lord and have escaped even from between the jaws of death. Still He will save us in life and when we come to die He will deliver us gloriously. It will only be the same mercy again—a repetition of the Covenant guardianship in another form.

See how Paul puts it, “Who delivered us from so great a death and does deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us.” See, it is a note from the same trumpet, a voice from the same mouth. Therefore, Beloved, as you will only want the same mercy repeated, be confident, be joyful. Do not dread tomorrow. Do not fear next year. Do not pine because of the coming of old age. Do not dread that painful operation which seems needful. Do not dread even death, itself. He that made you will make you to endure. He that has carried you, will carry you. He that has delivered you will deliver you to the end. If it were possible, when we get to Heaven, one of the things that we should do would be to sit down and laugh at our fears.

Surely we should laugh, and cry, too. Shall we not say, “How could I ever doubt my God? How could I ever have mistrusted my faithful Lord? Here I am, after all, sitting among the thrones of the glorified! Why did I doubt my God?” That poor old woman in the almshouse, that poor man who was bedridden, how different they will be and how they will wonder that ever they were so timorous! Hear the sick one say, “I feared I should perish in my trouble—but here I am, by God’s Grace, as bright and glorious, as alert and nimble, as any of them.” Hear the poor man from his cottage shouting, “Hallelujah, I will sing aloud unto the Lord all the more because of the weakness and the poverty through which I have triumphantly passed.” Blessed be God, we only want a continuance of the same mercy as we have already experienced and that the Lord promises to us.

And now, to close, notice in the text two things which are always here—the *same* God and the *same* mercy. There is nobody else here but the Lord, alone with His people. Will you note that? There is nobody else here but you and your God. And you are nobody but a poor thing that has to be carried. “Even to your old age I am He. Even to hoar hairs will I carry you. I have made and I will bear. Even I will carry and will deliver you.” We have great admiration of angels but we are very pleased to see that they are not mentioned in this promise. We have many kind-hearted friends, but we are glad to see that they are not brought in here. God’s

great I, and that alone, fills up the whole space. And oh, what a blessing it is when we trust in the Lord alone!

Look, Beloved, when you were made, it was God that made you. When you were made new it was God that made you new. It was His Grace, His power, His love, His wisdom, His life. Nobody else was there. Up to this time, He, alone, has carried you and no other hand has sustained you. He has always been sufficient for the task—to bear you and your own weight—and your Divinely appointed burden. The Lord has borne you up and He has borne you through and He has borne you on. He has borne you to this day. He, alone, has done it. Do you not think that He can do it in the future? His own right hand and His holy arm have up to now gotten Him the victory—can you not trust Him for tomorrow?

He alone has delivered you and He, alone, can repeat the deliverance. You have been, perhaps, as I have often been, stuck in a cleft, where nobody could tell you how to get out but yet the Lord found a way of escape for you. You were shut up and you could not come forth—and then God cleared the way in a moment. What a great Maker of ways is the Lord God! His way has been in the sea and His path through the deep waters. And there have you rejoiced in Him. He, alone, dried up the sea and made a path for His chosen—and ten thousand hands could not have done it better. God, alone, is greater than a whole universe of creatures.

Come, Brethren, let us hear the voice of our experience. O you who have known the Lord and His Grace, trust your God, the lonely Champion of the righteous, the sole Savior of the sinner, the all-sufficient Deliverer of those that cast themselves upon Him. You young people, oh, how earnestly I wish that you would begin with my Lord Jesus Christ—begin with the great and blessed Father and trust Him, for He will take care of you to hoar hairs! What may happen between your youth and your age I cannot tell. You may never see old age. I cannot look into the palm of your hand and read your destiny. But come and trust my Lord and all will be right—for your destiny will be in His hand for time and for eternity.

You in middle life, with your children about you and hard times to struggle with. Your God whom you trusted in your youth will not leave you now. All between your birth and your death, the God of our Lord Jesus guarantees to be there. And He promises to remember your seed after you. Trust him. Play the man. Do not mistrust your heavenly Father. Doubt yourself as much as you like, but do not distrust the Lord who cannot lie. Did you come here with a heavy heart tonight? Leave the heaviness behind. Many a time a friend has come in on a Thursday evening, I mean a friend who does not generally worship here on the Sabbath. He has come in from the Exchange, or from the shop, having been a heavy loser in the day and he has found such rest of mind at this service that he has been no more sad, but has gone home nerved for the conflict.

How often friends have sent in help for different works because of the encouragement they have had while listening to the preaching of the Word here! By faith they have been delivered and they have offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the Lord God. O my Brothers and Sisters, do trust my God! Do not let the world say, “God’s own people cannot trust Him!”

Surely they will think that He is not to be depended on if you begin to doubt Him. Trust Him as He deserves to be trusted and rest in Him with all your souls—

***“Trust Him, you saints, in all your ways,
Pour out your hearts before His face;
When helpers fail and foes invade,
God is our all-sufficient aid.”***

And you, my aged Brothers and Sisters, to whom I speak with much reverence, show to us who are younger where your joy and your peace are, that we also may rest in God. He has brought you through seventy years of trial! Do you think that He will now forsake you? You are eighty, you say, or even getting on to ninety. Well, you have at least eighty reasons why you should not distrust your God and Savior. If you will read your own diaries you will see that there are eighty million reasons why you should trust Him and yet you cannot find one solitary reason why you should not do so.

Therefore, “rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him,” and may He bless you evermore, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS, Although we have had two days of rainy and tempestuous weather, I have improved so greatly that I feel like the man who is described in Scripture as “walking and leaping and praising God.” As I cannot quite manage the two former exercises, I desire to be doubly abundant in the third. Watts says—

***“When we are raised from deep distress,
Our God demands a song;
We take the pattern of our praise
From Hezekiah’s tongue.”***

That man of God, on his recovery, said, “The living, the living, he shall praise you as I do this day.” In that spirit I have prepared the sermon to which this note is appended. And I have borne therein my willing testimony to the faithfulness of God and to the certainty that He honors the faith of His people.

From the Tabernacle I have joyful news of a meeting at which four or five hundred persons came together to confess that they had found mercy during the late services. What a cordial to one’s heart! “Therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the House of the Lord.” Blessed be His name! With my heart’s best wishes for all my hearers and readers,

Their servant for Christ’s sake,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Mentone, December 1, 1888

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THE GOD OF THE AGED

NOS. 81, 82

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 25, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK**

**THE SUBSTANCE OF WHICH WAS ALSO DELIVERED AT STAMBOURNE,
ESSEX, ON THE COMMEMORATION OF THE JUBILEE OF HIS
GRANDFATHER, THE REV. JAMES SPURGEON, TUESDAY, MAY 27, 1856.**

***“Even to your old age I am He and even to gray hairs will I carry you. I have made and I will bear. Even I will carry and will deliver you.”
Isaiah 46:4.***

THOSE will be peculiar circumstances under which I shall stand up to address the people next Tuesday—circumstances which, perhaps, seldom occur—possibly may never have occurred before! It might have been more in order that the aged minister should, himself, address the people, but nevertheless, as it is his own choice, so it must be. And I shall draw my consolation from the third verse, where it is declared, that though God is the God of the close of our life, yet He is also the God of its beginning. He carries us from the very womb, therefore the child may trust in God as well as the gray head. And He who gives special blessings to the gray hairs does also crown the head of the young with His perpetual favor, if they are His children—

***“Even to your old age I am He;
And even to gray hairs will I carry you.”***

Will you allow me to expound *the Doctrine of this text* and then to show you how *it is carried out, especially in the time of old age?*

I. THE DOCTRINE OF THE TEXT, I hold to be, *the constancy of God’s promise—its perpetuity and its unchangeable nature.* God declares that He is not simply the God of the young saint. That He is not simply the God of the middle-aged saint—but that He is the God of the saints in all their ages from the cradle to the tomb! “Even to old age I am He,” or, as Lowth beautifully and more properly translates it, “Even to old age I am the same and even to gray hairs will I carry you.”

The Doctrine, then is twofold—that God *Himself is the same*, whatever may be our age. And that *God’s dealings towards us*, both in Providence and in Grace, His carryings and His delivering *are alike unchanged.*

As to the first part of the Doctrine, that God Himself is unchanged when we come to old age, surely I have no need to prove that. Abundant

testimonies of Scripture declare God to be an Immutable Being, upon whose brow there is no furrow of old age and whose strength is not enfeebled by the lapse of ages. But if we need proof, we might look even abroad on Nature and we would, from Nature, guess that God would not change during the short period of our mortal life. Seems it unto me a hard thing that God should be the same for 70 years, when I find things in Nature that have retained the same impress and image for many more years? Behold the sun! The sun that led our fathers to their daily labor, lights us still! And the moon by night is unchanged—the same satellite, glittering with the light of her master, the sun. Are not the rocks the same? And are there not many ancient trees which remain well near the same for multitudes of years and outlive centuries? Is not the earth, for the most part, the same? Have the stars lost their light? Do not the clouds still pour their rain upon the earth? Does not the ocean still beat with its one great pulse of ebb and flow? Do not the winds still howl, or breathe in gentle gales upon the earth? Does not the sun still shine? Do not plants grow as heretofore? Has the harvest changed? Has God forgotten His Covenant of day and night? Has He yet brought another flood upon the earth? Does it not still stand in the water and out of the water? Surely, then, if changing Nature, made to pass away in a few more years and to be “dissolved with fervent heat,” remains the same through the cycles of 70 years, may we not believe that God, who is greater than Nature—the Creator of all worlds—would still remain the same God, through so brief a period? Does not that suffice?

Then we have another proof. Had we a new God, we would not have the Scriptures—had God changed, then we would need a new Bible. But the Bible which the infant reads is the Bible of the gray head! The Bible which I carried with me to my Sunday school, I shall sit in my bed to read when, gray-headed, all strength shall fail save that which is Divine! The promise which cheered me in the young morning of life, when first I consecrated myself to God, shall cheer me when my eyes are dim with age and when the sunlight of Heaven lights them up and I see bright visions of far-off worlds, where I hope to dwell forever. The Word of God is still the same—there is not one promise removed. The Doctrines are the same. The Truths are the same. All God’s declarations remain unchanged forever. And I argue, from the very fact that God’s Book is not affected by years, that God, Himself, must be immutable and that His years do not change Him. Look at our worship—is not that the same? Oh, gray heads! Well can you remember how you were carried to God’s House in your childhood! And you heard the same hymns that you hear now. Have they lost their savor? Have they lost their music? At times,

when prayer is offered, you remember that your ancient pastor prayed the same petition 50 years ago. But the petition is as good as ever. It is still unchanged. It is the same praise, the same prayer, the same expounding, the same preaching. All our worship is the same. And with many, it is the same House of God where first they were dedicated to God in Baptism. Surely, my Brothers and Sisters, if God had changed, we would have been obliged to make a new form of worship—if God had not been Immutable, we would have needed to have sacrificed our sacred service to some new method. But since we find ourselves bowing like our fathers, with the same prayers and chanting the same Psalms, we rightly believe that God Himself must be Immutable.

But we have better proofs than this that God is still unchanged. We learn this, too, *from the sweet experience of all the saints*. They testify that the God of their youth is the God of their later years. They proclaim that Christ “has the dew of His youth.” When they first saw Him, as the bright and glorious Immanuel, they thought Him “altogether lovely.” And when they see Him, now, they see not one beauty faded and not one glory departed—He is the same Jesus! When they first rested themselves on Him, they thought His shoulders strong enough to carry them. And they find those shoulders still as mighty as ever. They thought at first His heart did melt with love and that His heart was beating high with mercy—and they find it still the same. God is unchanged and, therefore, they “are not consumed.” They put their trust in Him because they have not yet marked a single alteration in Him. His Character, His Essence, His Being and His deeds are all the same! And, moreover, to crown all, we cannot suppose a God, if we cannot suppose an Immutable God. A God who changed would be no God! We could not grasp the idea of Deity if we once allowed our minds to take in the thought of mutability. From all these things, then, we conclude that, “even from old age He is the same and that even to gray hairs He will carry us.”

The other side of the Doctrine is this—not only that God is the same in His Nature—but that He is *the same in His dealings*. That He will carry us the same, that He will deliver us the same, that He will bear us the same as He used to do. And here, also, we need scarcely to prove to you that God’s dealings towards His children are the same—especially when I remind you that God’s promises are made not to ages, but to people, to persons and to men and women! It has been recently declared by some ministers that certain ages are more likely to be converted than other ages. We have heard persons state that should a man outlive 30 years of life, if he hears the Gospel, he is not at all likely to be saved. But we believe a more palpable, bare-faced lie was never uttered in the pulpit, for

we have, ourselves, known multitudes who have been saved at forty, fifty, sixty, seventy and even bordering on the grave at eighty! We find some promises in the Bible made to some particular conditions. But the main, the great, the grand promises are made to sinners as sinners! They are made to the elect, to the chosen ones, irrespective of their age or condition. We hold that the man who is old can be justified in the same way as the man who is young! That the robe of Christ is broad enough to cover the strong full-grown man as well as the little child! We believe the blood of Christ avails to wash out 70 years, as well as 70 days of sin. That “with God there is no respect of persons,” that all ages are alike to Him, and that “whoever comes to Christ, He will in nowise cast out.” And we are sure that all the good things of the Bible are as good at one time as at another. The perfect robe of righteousness that I wear—will that change by years? The sanctification of the Spirit, will that be destroyed by years? The promises, will they totter? The Covenant, will that be dissolved? I can suppose that the everlasting hills shall melt. I can dream that the eternal mountains shall be dissolved like the snow upon their peaks. I can conceive that the ocean may be licked up with tongues of forked flame. I can suppose the sun stopped in its career. I can imagine the moon turned into blood. I can conceive the stars falling from the vault of night. I can imagine “the wreck of Nature and the crash of worlds.” But I cannot conceive the change of a single mercy, a single Covenant blessing, a single promise, or a single Grace which God bestows upon His people! I find everyone of them in itself stamped with immutability and I have no reason to put this merely upon guess-work! I find, when I turn over the whole Bible, that the experience of the saints, one thousand, two thousand, three thousand years ago, was just the same as the experience of the saints today! And if I find God’s mercy is unchanged from David’s time till mine, can I conceive that God, who lasts the same for thousands, would change during the brief period of seventy? No. We still hold that He will carry us and He will bear us in old age as well as in our youth. But, besides that, we have living witnesses, living testimonies. I could fetch up from the ground floor of this place and from the galleries, not one or two, not 20 of you—but a hundred living witnesses, who, rising up, would tell you that God does carry them, now, as He did of old and that He still does bear them! I need not appeal to my friends, or they would stand up in their pews and, with the tears trickling down their cheeks, they would say, “Young men, young women, trust your God. He has not forsaken me!” I find that—

***“Even down to old age, all His people do prove,
His Sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love!
And when gray hairs do their temples adorn***

Like lambs they still now in His bosom are borne.

Ask yon aged friend! Ask any aged Christian whether he finds God has, in the least forsaken him and you will see him shake his head and hear him say, "O young man, if I had another 70 years to live, I would still trust Him, for I have not found Him fail all the way that the Lord God has led me. Not one promise has failed, but all has come to pass." And I think I see him lifting up his hands in the midst of the assembly and saying, "I have nothing to regret but my sin. If I had to live over again, I would only want to put myself into the hands of the same Providence, to be led and directed by the same Grace." Beloved, we need not prove to you any farther, for living witnesses testify that God carried out His promise, "I have made and will bear. Even I will carry and deliver you."

II. But now we come to our real subject, which is, to consider THE TIME OF OLD AGE AS A SPECIAL PERIOD and to mark, therefore, the constancy of Divine Love—that God bears and succors His servants in their later years. I cannot imagine or dream that I need offer any apology for preaching to aged people. If I were in sundry stupid circles where people call themselves ladies and gentlemen and always need to conceal their ages, I might have some hesitation. But I have nothing to do with that here! I call an old man, an old man—and an old woman, an old woman—whether they think themselves old or not is nothing to me! I guess they are, if they are getting, anyway, past sixty, onto 70 or eighty. Old age is *a time of peculiar memories, of peculiar hopes, of peculiar concerns, of peculiar blessedness and of peculiar duties*. And yet in all this, God is the same, although man is peculiar.

1. First, *old age is a time of peculiar memory*. In fact, it is the age of memory. We young men talk of remembering such-and-such things a certain time ago. But what is our memory, compared to our father's? Our father looks back on three or four times the length of time over which we cast our eyes. What a peculiar memory the old man has! How many joys he can remember! How many times has his heart beat high with rapture and blessedness! How many times has his house been gladdened with plenty! How many harvest homes has he seen! How many "readings of the vintage"! How many times has he heard the laugh run round the fireplace! How many times have his children shouted in his ears and rejoiced around him! How many times have his own eyes sparkled with delight! How many hill Mizar has he seen! How many times has he had sweet banqueting with the Lord! How many periods of communion with Jesus! How many hallowed services has he attended! How many songs of Zion has he sung! How many answered prayers have gladdened his spirit! How many happy deliverances have made him laugh for joy! When he

looks back, he can string his mercies together by the thousands! And looking upon them all, he can say, though he will think of many troubles that he has had to pass through, "Surely, goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life." God has been with him to gray hairs and even to old age. He has carried him. His joys he looks back upon as proofs of God's constancy.

And how many griefs has he had! How many times has that old man been to the chamber of sickness! How many times has that aged sister been stretched on the bed of affliction! How many diseases can he or she look back upon! How many hours of bitter travail and pain! How many seasons of trouble, infirmity and approaching to the grave? How many times has the old man tottered very near that brook from which no traveler can return? How many times has he had the Father's rod upon his shoulders? And yet, looking back upon all, he can say, "Even to old age He is the same. And even to gray hairs He has carried me." How frequently, too, has that old man gone to the grave where he has buried many he has loved? There, perhaps, he has laid a beloved wife and he goes to weep there. Or the husband sleeps, while the wife is yet alive. Sons and daughters, too, that old man can remember—snatched away to Heaven almost as soon as they were born. Or perhaps permitted to live until their prime and then cut down just in their youthful glory. How many of the old friends he has welcomed to his fireside has he buried? How frequently has he been forced to exclaim, "Though friends have departed, yet 'there is a Friend who sticks closer than a Brother,' on Him I still trust and to Him I still commit my soul."

And mark, moreover, how many times temptation has shattered that venerable saint! How many conflicts has he had with doubts and fears! How many wrestlings with the enemy! How often he has been tempted to forsake his faith! How frequently he has had to stand in the thickest part of the battle. But yet he has been preserved by mercy and not quite cut down. He has been enabled to persevere in the heavenly road. How travel-sore are his feet! How blistered by the roughness of the way. But he can tell you that notwithstanding all these things, Christ has, "kept him till this day and will not let him go." And his conclusion is, "even to old age God has been the same and even to gray hairs He has carried him."

There is one sad reflection which we are obliged to mention when we look upon the bald head of the aged saint and that is, how many sins he has committed! Ah, my Beloved, however pure may have been your lives, you will be obliged to say, "Oh, how have I sinned, in youth, in middle age and even when infirmities have gathered around me! Would to God I had been holy! How often have I forsaken God! How frequently have I

wandered from Him! Alas, how often have I provoked Him! How frequently have I doubted His promises when I had no cause whatever to distrust Him! How frequently has my tongue sinned against my heart! How constantly have I violated all I knew to be good and excellent! I am forced to say now, in my gray old age—

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

“I am still—

***A monument of Grace,
A sinner saved by blood!***

I have no hope, now, save in the blood of Christ and can only wonder how it is that Christ could have preserved me so long. Truly, I can say, ‘Even to old age He is the same and even to gray hairs He has carried me.’”

2. The aged man, too, has *peculiar hopes*. He has no such hopes as I or my young friends here. He has few hopes of the future in this world. They are gathered up into a small space and he can tell you, in a few words, what constitutes all his expectation and desire. But he has one hope and that is the very same which he had when he first trusted in Christ. It is a hope “undefiled, that fades not away, reserved in Heaven for them that are kept by the power of God through Truth unto salvation.” Let me talk a little of that hope and you will see from it that the Christian is the same as he ever was. And even down to gray hairs, God deals the same with him. My venerable Brother, what is the ground of your hopes? Is it not the same as that which animated you when you were first united with the Christian Church? You said then, “My hope is in the blood of Jesus Christ.” I ask you, Brother, what’s your hope, now? And I am sure you will answer, “I do not hope to be saved because of my long service, nor because of my devotedness to God’s cause—

***All my hope on Christ is staid,
All my help from Him I bring—
He covers my defenseless head
With the shadow of His wing.***

And, my Brother, what is *the reason* of your hope? If you are asked what reason you have to believe you are a Christian, you will say, “The same reason I gave at the Church Meeting.” When I came before it, I said, then, “I believe myself to be a child of God because I feel myself to be a sinner and God has given me Grace to put my trust in Jesus.” I think that is all the reason you have to believe yourself a child of God now. At times you have some evidence, as you call it. But there are hours when your Graces and virtues are obscured and you cannot see them, for gloomy doubts

prevail and you will confess, I am sure, that the only way to get rid of your doubts will be to come and say, again—

***“A guilty, weak and helpless worm,
On Christ’s kind arms I fall.
He’s still my strength and righteousness,
My Savior and my All.”***

And *the object or end* of hope, is not that the same? What was your hope when you first went to the wicket gate? Why, your hope was that you might arrive at the land of the Blessed! And is it not the same, now? Is your hope of Heaven changed? Do you wish for anything else, or for anything better? “No,” you will say, “I thought when I started, I would one day be with Jesus. That is what I expect now. I feel that my hope is precisely the same. I want to be with Jesus, to be like He is and to see Him as He is.” And is not *the joy* of that hope just the same? How glad you used to be when your minister preached about Heaven and told you of its pearly gates and streets of shining gold! And has it lost any of its beauty in your eyes, now? Do you not remember, that in your father’s house, at family prayer, one night, they sang—

***“Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name, ever dear to me!
When shall my labors have an end
In joy and peace and thee”?***

Can you not sing that, now? Do you want any other city besides Jerusalem? Do you remember how they used to rise up, sometimes, in the House of God, when you were children and sing—

***“On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye”?***

Will not that hymn do for you, now, even better than it did for you then? You can now sing it, as your old father used to sing it, with a firm heart and yet with a quivering lip! The hope that ravished you, then, ravishes you now! You start at the same watchword. Heaven is still your Home—

***“There your best friends, your kindred dwell,
There, God your Savior reigns.”***

Does not all this prove, again, that though our hopes are somewhat more contracted than they were, yet, “God is still the same and even to gray hairs He will carry us”?

3. Again, old age is a time of *peculiar concern*. An old man is not anxious about many things, as we are. For he has not so many things for which to concern himself. He has not the cares of starting in business, as he once had. He has no children to launch out in business. He has not to cast his anxious eyes on his little family. But his concern has somewhat increased in another direction. He has more concern about his bodily frame than he once had. He cannot now run as he used to do. And he

must walk with a more sober gait. He fears, every now and then, that the pitcher will be “broken at the cistern.” For “the noise of the grinders is low.” He has, no longer, that strength of desire he once possessed—his body has begun to totter, to shake and to quiver. The old tenement has stood these 50 years and who expects a house to last forever? A bit of mortar has gone off from one place and a brick out of another. And when a little wind comes to shake it about, he is ready to cry out, “The earthly house of my tabernacle is about to be dissolved.” But I told you before, this peculiar concern is but another proof of Divine faithfulness—for now that you have little pleasure in the flesh, do you not find that God is just the same? And that though the days are come when you can say, “I have no pleasure in *them*,” yet the days have *not* come when you can say, “I have no pleasure in Him”? No! On the contrary—

***“Though all created streams are dry,
His goodness is the same.
With this you still are satisfied,
And glory in His name.”***

If He had only been your God when you were a strong young man, you might have thought that He loved you for what you could do for Him. But now you have become a poor worn-out pensioner, have you any better proof that He is an unchanging God because He loves you when you can do so little for Him? I tell you, even your bodily pains are but proofs of His love! For He is taking down your old tenement, stick by stick, and is building it up again in brighter worlds, never to be taken down again!

And remember, too, there is another concern—a failure of mind—as well as of body. There are many remarkable instances of old men who have been as gifted in their old age as in their youth. But with the majority, the mind becomes somewhat impaired, especially the memory. They cannot remember what was done yesterday, although it is a singular fact that they can remember what was done fifty, sixty, or 70 years ago! They forget much which they would wish to remember. But still they find that their God is just the same. They find that His goodness does not depend on their memory. That the sweetness of His Grace does not depend upon their palate. When they can remember but little of the sermon, they still feel that it leaves as good an impression on their heart as when they were strong in their memories. And thus they have another proof that God, even when their mind fails a little, carries them down to their gray hairs, their old age and, that to them, He is always the same.

But the chief concern of old age is death. Young men may die soon. Old men *must* die. Young men, if they sleep, sleep in a siege. Old men, if they sleep, sleep in an attack, when the enemy has already made a breach and is storming the castle. A gray-headed old sinner is a gray-

bearded old fool—but an aged Christian is an aged wise man! But even the aged Christian has peculiar concerns about death. He knows he cannot be a long way from his end. He feels that even in the course of nature, apart from what is called, “accidental death,” there is no doubt but in a few more years he must stand before his God. He thinks he may be in Heaven in 10 or 20 years—and how short do those 10 or 20 years appear! He does not act like a man who thinks a coach is a long way off and he may take his time. No, he is like one who is about to go a journey and hears the post-horn blowing down the street and he is getting ready. His one concern, now, is to examine himself whether he is in the faith. He fears that if he is wrong, now, it will be terrible to have spent all his life claiming to be a Christian and to find, at last, that he has got nothing for his pains except a mere empty name—which must be swept away by death. He feels now how solemn a thing the Gospel is. He feels the world to be as nothing. He feels that he is near the bar of doom. But still, Beloved, mark—God’s faithfulness is the same! For if he is nearer death, he has the sweet satisfaction that he is also nearer Heaven! And if he has more need to examine himself than ever, he has also more evidence whereby to examine himself. For he can say, “Well, I know that on such-and-such an occasion the Lord heard my prayers. At such-and-such a time He manifested Himself to me, as He did not unto the world,” and, though examination presses more upon the old, they still have greater materials for it! And here, again, is another proof of this grand Truth of God—“Even unto old age I am the same,” says God, “and even to gray hairs will I carry you.”

4. And now, once more—old age has its *peculiar blessedness*. Some time ago I stepped up to an old man whom I saw when preaching at an anniversary, and I said to him, “Brother, do you know there is no man in the whole Chapel I envy as much as you.” Envy *me*,” he said—“why, I am eighty-seven.” I said, “I do, indeed—because you are so near your Home and because I believe that in old age there is a peculiar joy which we young people do not taste at present. You have got to the bottom of the cup and it is not with God’s wine as it is with man’s. Man’s wine becomes dregs at the last, but God’s wine is sweeter, the deeper you drink it.” He said, “That’s very true, young man,” and shook me by the hand. I believe there is a blessedness about old age that we young men know nothing of! I will tell you how that is. In the first place, the old man has a good experience to talk about. The young men are only just trying some of the promises. But the old man can turn them over, one by one, and say, “There, I have tried that and that and that.” We read them over and say, “I *hope* they are true.” But the old man says, “I *know* they are true.” And

then he begins to tell you why. He has got a history for every one, like a soldier for his medals. And he takes them out and says, "I will tell you when the Lord revealed that to me—just when I lost my wife—just when I buried my son. Just when I was turned out of my cottage and did not get work for six weeks—or, at another time, when I broke my leg." He begins telling you the history of the promises and says, "There! Now, I know they are all true." What a blessed thing, to look upon them as paid notes—to bring out the old checks that have been cashed and say, "I know they are genuine, or else they would not have been paid." Old people have not the doubts young people have about the Doctrines. Young people are apt to doubt but when they get old, they begin to get solid and firm in the faith! I love to get some of my old Brethren to talk with me concerning the good things of the Kingdom of God. They do not hold the Truth with their two fingers, as some of the young men do—they get right hold of it and nobody can take it from their grasp!

Rowland Hill once somewhat lost his way in a sermon and he turned to this text—"Oh, Lord, my heart is fixed." "Young men," he said, "there is nothing like having your hearts fixed. I have been all these years seeking the Lord. Now my heart is fixed. I never have any doubts, now, about Election, or any other Doctrine. If man brings me a new theory, I say, 'Away with it!' I stand hard and fast by the Truth of God alone." An old gentleman wrote me a little time ago and said I was a little too high. He said he believed the same Doctrines as I do, but he did not think so when he was as old as I am. I told him it was just as well to begin right, as to end right, and it was better to be right at the beginning than to have to rub off so many errors afterwards! An old countryman once came to me and said, "Ah young man, you have had too deep a text. You handled it well enough, but it is an old man's text, and I felt afraid to hear you announce it." I said, "Is God's Truth dependent on age? If the thing is true, it is just as well to hear it from me as from anyone else. And if you can hear it better anywhere else, you have got the opportunity." Still, he did not think that God's precious Truths were suitable to young people! But I hold they are suitable for all God's children—therefore I love to preach them! But how blessed it is to come to a position in life where you have good anchorage for your faith—where you can say—

***"Should all the forms that Hell devise,
Assail my faith with treacherous are."***

I shall not be very polite to them—

***"I'll call them vanity of lies
And bind the Gospel to my heart."***

And I think there are peculiar joys which the old Christian has, of another sort. And that is, he has peculiar fellowship with Christ—more than

we have. At least, if I understand John Bunyan rightly, I think he tells us that when we get very near to Heaven there is a very glorious land. “They came into the country of Beulah, whose air was very sweet and pleasant. The way lying directly through it, they solaced themselves there for a season. Yes, here they continually heard the singing of birds and saw, every day, the flowers appear on the earth and heard the voice of the turtle in the land. In this country the sun shines night and day—therefore this was beyond the Valley of the Shadow of Death and also out of the reach of Giant Despair. Neither could they, from this place, so much as see Doubting Castle. Here they were within sight of the City they were going to—also here met they some of the inhabitants thereof—for in this land the shining ones commonly walked, because it was upon the borders of Heaven. In this land, also, the contract between the Bride and the Bridegroom was renewed. Yes, here, as the Bridegroom rejoices over the Bride, so does their God rejoice over them. Here they had no lack of corn and wine. For in this place they met with abundance of what they had sought for in all their pilgrimages. Here they heard voices from out of the City, loud voices, saying, ‘Say you to the daughter of Zion, Behold, your salvation comes.’ Behold, His reward is with Him. Here all the inhabitants of the country called them, ‘the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord.’” There are peculiar communings, peculiar openings of the gates of Paradise, peculiar visions of Glory, just as you come near to it. It stands to reason that the nearer you get to the bright light of the Celestial City, the clearer shall be the air. And, therefore, there are peculiar blessings belonging to the old, for they have more of this peculiar fellowship with Christ. But all this only proves that Christ is the same—because, when there are fewer earthly joys, He gives more spiritual ones! Therefore, again, it becomes the fact—“Even to old age I am He. And even to gray hairs will I carry you.”

5. And now, lastly, the aged saint has *peculiar duties*. There are certain things which a good man can do, which nobody else ought to do, or can do well. And that is one proof of Divine faithfulness. For He says of His aged ones, “They shall bring forth fruit in old age.” And so they do. I will tell you some of them.

Testimony is one of the peculiar duties of old men. Now, suppose I should get up and say, “I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread”? Someone would reply, “Why, you are not 22 yet! What do you know about it?” But if an old man gets up and says, “I have been young and now am I old. Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread,” with what power that testimony comes! Suppose I say to you, “Trust in God with all your troubles and trials. I

can bear witness that He will not forsake you.” You will reply, “Oh, you, young man, but you have not had many troubles. You have not been a child of God above these six years—how should you know?” But up gets an old Christian—and well do I remember an ancient Christian rising up at the sacramental Table and saying, “Dear Brothers and Sisters, we are met again around this table and I think all an old man can do is to bear testimony to his Master. These 45 years I have walked in His Truth. Young people, hear what I have to say! He has been my God these 45 years and I have no fault to find with Him. I have found religion’s ways to be ways of pleasantness and her paths to be paths of peace.” You know, if you hear an old man talk, you pay greater attention to what he says because he is old. I remember hearing the late Mr. Jay. I fancy that if I had heard the same sermon preached by a young man, I would not have thought so much of it. But there appeared such a depth in it because it came from an old man, standing on the borders of the grave. It was like an echo of the past coming to me, to let me hear of my God’s faithfulness, that I might trust for the future. Testimony is the duty of old men and women! They should labor, whenever they can, to bear testimony to God’s faithfulness and to declare that now, also, when they are old and gray-headed, their God forsakes them not!

There is another duty which is peculiarly the work of the aged and that is the work of comforting the young Believer. There is no one more qualified that I know of than a kind-hearted old man to convert the young. I know that down in some parts of the country, there is a peculiar breed of old man who, for the good of the Church, I heartily hope will soon become extinct—as soon as they see a young Believer, they look at him with suspicion, expecting him to be a hypocrite! They go off to his house and find everything satisfactory. But they say, “I was not so confident as that when I was young. Young man, you must be kept back a bit.” Then there are some hard questions put and the poor young child of God gets hard pressed and is looked upon with suspicion because he does not come up to their standard. But the men I allude to are such as some I have here, with whom I delight to speak, who tell you not hard things, but utter gentle words—who say, “I was imprudent when I was a young man. I know that when I was a little child, I could not have answered these questions. I do not expect so much from you as from one who is a little older.” And when the young Christian comes to them they say, “Do not fear—I have gone through the waters and they have not overflowed me. And through the fire and have not been burned. Trust in God—for down to old age He is the same and to gray hairs He will carry you.”

Then there is another work that is the work of the old and that is the work of warning. If an old man were to go out in the middle of the road and shout out to you to stop, you would stop sooner than you would if a boy were to do it. For then you might say, "Out of the way, you young rascal," and go on. The warnings of the old have great effect. And it is their peculiar work to guide the imprudent and warn the unwary.

Now I have done, except the application. And I want to speak to three classes of persons.

What a precious thought, young men and women, is contained in this text—"That even to old age, God will be the same to you. And even down to your gray hairs He will not forsake you"! You need a safe investment—well, here is an investment safe enough! A bank may break, but Heaven cannot! A rock may be dissolved and if I build a house on that, it may be destroyed. But if I build on Christ, my happiness is secure forever! Young man! Young woman! God's religion will last as long as you will! You will never be able to exhaust His comforts in all your life! And you will find that the bottle of your joys will be as full when you have been drinking 70 years as it was when you first began. Oh, do not buy a thing that will not last you—"eat that which is good and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Oh, how pleasant it is to be a young Christian! How blessed it is to begin in the early morning to love and serve God! The best old Christians are those who were once young Christians! Some aged Christians have but little Grace for this reason—that they were not young Christians! Oh, I have sometimes thought that if there is any man who will have an abundant entrance into Heaven, it is the man who, in early life, was brought to know the Lord! You know, going into Heaven will be like the ships going into harbor. There will be some tugged in almost by miracle, "saved so as by fire." Others will be going in just with a sheet or two of canvas—they will "scarcely be saved!" But there will be some who will go in with all their canvas up and unto these "an abundant entrance shall be ministered into the Kingdom of their God and Savior." Young people! It is the ship that is launched early in the morning that will get an abundant entrance and come into God's haven in full sail!

Now, you middle-aged men, you are plunged in the midst of business and are sometimes supposing what will become of you in your old age. But is there any promise of God to you when you suppose about tomorrows? You say, "Suppose I should live to be as old as so-and-so and be a burden upon people? I should not like that." Don't get meddling with God's business—leave His decrees to Him! There is many a person who thought he would die in a workhouse, who has died in a mansion. And many a woman who thought she would die in the streets, has died in her

bed, happy and comfortable, singing of Providential Grace and everlasting mercy. Middle aged man, woman! Listen to what David says, again, “I have been young and now am old. Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” Go on, then, unsheathe your sword once more. “The battle is the Lord’s.” Leave your declining years to Him and give your present years to Him. Live to Him, now, and He will never cast you away when you are old. Do not lay up for old age and keep back from the cause of God. But rather trust God for the future. Be “diligent in business.” But take care you do not hurt your spirit by being too diligent, by being grasping and selfish! Remember you will—

**“Need but little here below,
Nor need that little long.”**

And lastly, my dear venerable fathers in the faith, and mothers in Israel, take these words for your joy. Do not let the young people catch you indulging in melancholy, sitting in your chimney corner, grumbling and growling. But go about cheerful and happy and they will think how blessed it is to be a Christian! If you are surly and fretful, they will think the Lord has forsaken you! But keep a smiling countenance and they will think the promise is fulfilled—“And even to your old age I am He. And even to gray hairs will I carry you. I have made and I will bear. Even I will carry and will deliver you.” Do, I beseech you, my venerable Friends, try to be of a happy temperament and cheerful spirit, for a child will run away from a surly old man! But there is not a child in the world but loves his grandpapa if he is cheerful and happy. You can lead us to Heaven if you have got Heaven’s sunlight on your face! But you will not lead us at all if you are cross and ill-tempered, for then we shall not care about your company. Make yourselves merry with the people of God and try to live happily before men. For so will you prove to us—to a demonstration—that even to old age, God is with you and that when your strength fails, He is still your preservation! May God Almighty bless you, for the Savior’s sake! Amen.

The foregoing sermon exceeding the limits of the usual Penny Number and it being desirable that it should be given in full, it has been deemed advisable to make the present a double number. The two appended Tracts have been inserted as a specimen of a series called, “The New Park Street Tracts,” printed in large type, at 1s. 4d. per 100.

**THE NEW PARK STREET TRACTS
EDITED BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON.**

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THE INFIDEL'S SERMON TO THE PIRATES

A native of Sweden, who had imbibed infidel views, had occasion to go from one port to another in the Baltic Sea. When he came to the place from where he expected to sail, the vessel was gone. On inquiring, he found a fishing boat going the same way, on which he embarked. After being, for some time out to sea, the men, observing that he had several trunks and chests on board, concluded he must be very rich and, therefore, agreed among themselves to throw him overboard. This he heard them express, which gave him great uneasiness. However, he took occasion to open one of his trunks, which contained some books. Observing this, they remarked among themselves that it was not worth while to throw him into the sea as they did not need any books, which they supposed were all the trunks contained. They asked him if he were a priest. Hardly knowing what reply to make them, he told them he was. And at this they seemed much pleased and said they would have a sermon on the next day, as it was the Sabbath. This increased the anxiety and distress of his mind for he knew himself to be as incapable of such an undertaking as it was possible for anyone to be, as he knew very little of the Scriptures. Neither did he believe in the Inspiration of the Bible.

At length they came to a small rocky island, perhaps a quarter of a mile in circumference, where was a company of pirates who had chosen this little sequestered spot to deposit their treasures. He was taken to a cave and introduced to an old woman, to whom they remarked that they were to have a sermon preached the next day. She said she was very glad of it, for she had not heard the Word of God for a great while. His was a trying case, for preach he must, even though he knew nothing about preaching! If he refused or undertook to preach and did not please, he expected it would be his death. With these thoughts, he passed a sleepless night, and in the morning his mind was not settled upon anything. To call upon God, whom he believed to be inaccessible, was, in his mind, altogether vain. He could devise no way whereby he might be saved. He walked to and fro, still shut up in darkness, striving to collect something to say to them, but could not think of even a single sentence!

When the appointed time for the service arrived, he entered the cave where he found the men assembled. There was a seat prepared for him

and a table with a Bible on it. They sat for the space of half an hour in profound silence. And even then, the anguish of his soul was as great as human nature was capable of enduring! At length these words came to his mind—"Verily, there is a reward for the righteous—verily, there is a God that judges in the earth." He arose and delivered them. Then other words presented themselves and so on, till his understanding became opened and his heart enlarged in a manner astonishing to himself! He spoke upon subjects suited to their condition. The reward of the righteous, the judgments of the wicked, the necessity of repentance and the importance of a change of life. He spoke of the matchless love of God to the children of men which had such a powerful effect upon the minds of these wretched beings that they were melted into tears. Nor was he less astonished at the unbounded goodness of Almighty God, in thus interposing to save his spiritual as well as his natural life! And well might he exclaim, "This is the Lord's doing and marvelous in our eye." Under a deep sense of God's goodness, his heart became filled with thankfulness, which it was out of his power to express. What a marvelous change was thus suddenly brought about by Divine interposition! He who a little while before disbelieved in communion with God and the soul, became as humble as a little child. And they who were so lately meditating on his death, now were filled with love and goodwill towards each other, particularly towards him—manifesting affectionate kindness and willing to render him all the assistance in their power.

The next morning they fitted out one of their vessels and conveyed him where he desired. From that time he became a changed man. From being a slave to the influence of infidelity, he was brought to be a sincere Believer in the power and efficacy of the Truth as it is in Jesus.

[How marvelous the Providence of God and the Sovereignty of His Grace! Who is he that has stepped beyond the range of Almighty Love? Or has sinned too much to be forgiven? Reader! Are you an infidel? What would you do in a similar situation? What other Doctrine than that of Scripture would benefit pirates? Certainly not your own! What would you like to teach your own children? Certainly not your own sentiments! You feel that you would not wish to hear your own offspring blaspheming God. Moreover, forgive us if we declare our opinion that you know that there is a God, though with your lips you deny Him. Think, we beseech you, of your Maker and of His Son, the Savior. And may Eternal love bring even you to the Redeemer.—C. H. S.]

NO. 3—THE ACTRESS.

AN actress, in one of the English provincial or country theatres, was one day passing through the streets of the town in which she then resided. Her attention was attracted by the sound of voices which she heard in a poor cottage before her. Curiosity prompted her to look in at an open door, where she saw a few poor people sitting together, one of whom, at the moment of her observation, was giving out the following hymn, which the others joined in singing—

***“Depth of mercy! Can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?”***

The tune was sweet and simple, but she heeded it not. The words had riveted her attention and she stood motionless until she was invited to enter by the woman of the house, who had observed her standing at the door. She complied and remained during a prayer which was offered up by one of the little company. And uncouth as the expressions might seem in her ears, they carried with them a conviction of sincerity on the part of the person then employed. She left the cottage, but the words of the hymn followed her. She could not banish them from her mind and, at last, she resolved to procure the book which contained the hymn. The more she read it, the more decided her serious impressions became. She attended the ministry of the Gospel, read her, up to now, neglected and despised Bible, and bowed herself in humility and contrition of heart before Him whose mercy she felt she needed, whose sacrifices are those of a broken heart and a contrite spirit and who has declared that therewith He is well pleased!

Her profession, she determined at once and forever, to renounce. And for some little time excused herself from appearing on the stage, without, however, disclosing her change of sentiments, or making known her resolution finally to leave it.

The manager of the theater called upon her one morning and requested her to sustain the principal character in a new play which was to be performed the next week for his benefit. She had frequently performed this character to general admiration. But she now, however, told him her resolution never to appear as an actress again, at the same time giving her reasons. At first he attempted to overcome her scruples by ridicule, but this was unavailing. He then represented the loss he would incur by her refusal and concluded his arguments by promising that if to oblige him she would act on this occasion, it should be the last request of the kind he would ever make. Unable to resist his solicitations, she promised to appear and on the appointed evening went to the theater. The character she assumed required her, on her first entrance, to sing a song. And

when the curtain was drawn up, the orchestra immediately began the accompaniment. But she stood as if lost in thought and as one forgetting all around her and her own situation. The music ceased, but she did not sing. And supposing her to be overcome by embarrassment, the band again commenced. A second time they paused for her to begin and still she did not open her lips. A third time the air was played and then, with clasped hands and eye suffused with tears, she sang, not the words of the song, but—

**“Depth of mercy! Can there be
Mercy still reserved for me!”**

It is almost needless to add that the performance was suddenly ended. Men ridiculed, though some were induced from that memorable night to “consider their ways,” and to reflect on the wonderful power of that religion which could so influence the heart and change the life of one, up to now, so vain and so evidently pursuing the road which leads to destruction.

It would be satisfactory to the reader to know that the change in Miss _____ was as permanent as it was singular. She walked consistently with her profession of religion for many years and, at length, became the wife of a minister of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[Perhaps, dear Reader, you are a great transgressor and you fear there is no forgiveness for you. Let this remove your fears. You may be the vilest creature out of Hell and yet Divine Grace can make you as pure as the angels in Heaven! God would be just should He damn you, but He can be just and yet save you! Do you feel that the Lord has a right over you to do as He pleases? Do you feel that you have no claim upon Him? Then, rejoice, for Jesus Christ has borne your guilt and carried your sorrows and you shall assuredly be saved! You are a *sinner* in the true sense of that word, then remember Jesus came to save sinners and you, among the rest, if you know yourself to be a sinner.—C. H. S.]

**“Lo, the’ Incarnate God ascended,
Pleads the merit of His blood—
Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude!
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good!”**

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

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

THE PORTION OF THE UNGODLY

NO. 444

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 13, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Behold, they shall be as stubble. The fire shall burn them. They shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: it shall not be a coal to be warmed by, nor a fire to sit before.”
Isaiah 47:14.

THIS text is part of a terrible description of God’s judgment upon Babylon and Chaldea. The Prophet had clearly written out the indictment of the Lord against that tyrannical people, and having proved their guilt he pronounces their sentence. He accused them of showing no mercy to the inheritance of the Lord which, in His wrath, He had given into their hands. He charges them with pride and boastfulness, for Chaldea had said in her heart, “I am and there is none beside me.” And Babylon had boasted, “I shall be a lady forever. I shall see no sorrow.”

He testifies against their over-boldness and presumption. For they were given to pleasures and lived carelessly, expecting no ill. Thus said the Prophet, speaking in the name of the Lord, “You have trusted in your wickedness: you have said, None sees me. Your wisdom and your knowledge, it has perverted you. And you have said in your heart, I am and none else beside me.” On account of these iniquities the destruction of Chaldea and Babylon was to be sudden, terrible and complete.

They were to be so utterly destroyed, that there should not be one single comfortable rejection connected with their state. There should be a fire to consume but none to warm at. The burning should not be as when wood crackles in the flame, when glowing ashes or a charred log may be left, but they should be as stubble, utterly consumed, without vestige or remembrance. How to the very letter this has been fulfilled let the modern discoveries of our great travelers tell.

We want no better evidence of the truthfulness and Divinity of Scripture than that which is furnished by prophecies which have been fulfilled in lands concerning which we had no knowledge until of late. In the good Providence of God there have been dug out from mounds of rubbish and heaps of decayed matter, slabs and stones, bearing in their carvings and inscriptions, the most wonderful proofs what the Lord has said and has fulfilled—what He has spoken has come to pass. O virgin daughter of Babylon! You have been made to sit on the ground. There is no throne—O daughter of the Chaldeans! You are no more tender and delicate, but your nakedness is uncovered and your shame is seen. Sit silently and get into darkness, O daughter of Chaldea, for you shall no more be called the lady of kingdoms.

It is a truth beyond dispute, that God's justice is not partial. That the description of the destruction which He awards to one class of sinners is a most fair picture of what He will do with others, for God has two or three ways of dealing with men in His justice. He has not many different weights and measures, for these things are an abomination unto the Lord. He lays righteousness to the line and judgment to the plummet and He awards vengeance unto impenitent men by an established and an invariable rule. So, then, the ruin of Chaldea is to us, today, a representation and metaphorical description of the destruction which shall surely come upon impenitent sinners in that day when the Lord comes out of His place to judge His enemies and to rid Himself of His adversaries.

It is with great trembling of heart that I come to this subject this morning. I have preached to you, lo, these many months in this Tabernacle and I have delighted most to lift up my Master's Cross and to speak of the sufficiency of His blood and of the fullness and freeness of His Divine Grace. But there are times when the Lord's hand lies upon us, and we cannot refuse to speak of His terrible things in judgment. I feel today somewhat like the Apostle when he said, "Knowing therefore *the terror of Lord*, we persuade men . . . as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's place, be you reconciled to God."

We believe that the Lord would not have said so much about the terrible things of His Law and justice in Scripture—for He has said more about them than any other subject, except the Cross—if it had not been that there is a healthy use to be made of the vengeance which the Lord executes upon the wicked. It will be both for the benefit of the righteous and for the awakening of the ungodly, sometimes to thunder out the sentence of the Lord. Be it, therefore, known unto you, O sons of men, that Ebal and Gerizim still stand, both the blessing and the curse—and either the one or the other must be yours.

To look at our text at first sight, the figures seem contradictory, for the first metaphor is, "They shall be as stubble. The fire shall burn them. They shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame." But the next figure is apparently opposite to it—"It shall not be a coal to be warmed by, nor a fire to sit before." We shall first *take the first figure and then the second*. And thirdly, we shall close by endeavoring to dwell upon that important word with which the verse begins, which is put there like a hand in the margin to draw our attention to it, put there as a sort of signal hung out from Heaven to tell us that there is something here upon which we ought to meditate with attention—I mean the word "*Behold*"!

I. With reference to the FIRST SENTENCE. You will see in reading it over that one of the most striking thoughts which it conveys to the mind is this, *that the punishment of the wicked will be easily inflicted*. "They shall be as stubble." Nothing can be more easy to kindle than stubble when it is fully dry. Strike the match and the whole is on a blaze, for it bears within itself the materials of conflagration. So shall it be with impenitent sinners. It shall not be hard for God to visit them with vengeance, for they bear in their own hearts the material of their punishment.

Oh, ungodly and impenitent Man, there is that in yourself today which, left alone and permitted to ripen, will bring Hell upon you. We read in Scripture of the worm that dies not—that worm may be bred in the corruption of the sinner's lusts. We read of the fire that never shall be quenched—that fire will find its fuel in the hearts of lost spirits. We read of the pit that has no bottom—sin has dug a pit for itself of fathomless depth. Sinner, the Lord needs not to forge huge chains of iron, or build cells of darkness. He shall find in sinners the means of their punishment. He needs not to make tormentors for you—you shall be your own executioner.

From no bitter herbs need He distil your draught of woe—you yourself shall mingle the cup which you shall drink. The racks of torture and the whips of torment your own soul shall make. Hear me, Man, you have in yourself the power of memory, and that power shall become a vehicle of sorrow to you. Memory shall look back upon all your past sins and each of these, though now they seem to you to be glossy as the scales of the serpent, shall sting you and infuse into your veins a worse poison than the viper ever knew. Your memory shall recall the pleasures which you did once enjoy, but from which you are banished forever.

Your memory shall remind you of the warnings you did once receive and of the loving invitations which sounded in your ears. When it is all over with you, your memory shall be stronger than it is now. You shall have abundant time to remember every circumstance of your ruin. And your memory, enlarged and strengthened, shall bring up the record of every neglected Sunday, of every secret sin, yes, of those forgotten words of profanity, those secret iniquities which have been buried deep by time, but which shall be disinterred by the hand of eternity.

Even now, at the very recollection of your sin, your cheek reddens with shame. But when memory gets a voice that will be heard, then shall you, indeed, become pale and your knees shall knock together with fear. The voice which says, "Son, remember," is as terrible as the pouring out of the vials of the wrath of Almighty God. You have, besides your memory, *a conscience*—a conscience which you have strived to silence. But, even drugged and gagged as it is, it sometimes makes you feel unhappy. When conscience smote the heart of Judas, you remember, he went out and hanged himself. But even the conscience of Judas was not so awake as will be the understanding and judgment of the sinner when condemned forever.

You will then find, Sinner, that you cannot mitigate the guilt of sin. You will then see sin in its true colors. You will not then be so apt at making excuses for it. The hand of truth shall rend all those rags away. You will find, then, that conscience will not be trifled with as it is now. Now you try to make it hold the scales with an unjust hand, but then it will deliberately award you the due reward of your deeds. O, Man! Your memory and your conscience shall be as two great millstones grinding you to powder, or as two contending winds which shall with their tempestuous strivings

break you in pieces, as the ships of Tarshish are broken by the north wind.

Then, added to your memory, and to your conscience, there shall come *your increased knowledge*. You know enough now to leave you without excuse—but then your knowledge shall increase so as to leave you without pretense of apology. You shall then perceive the craft of the Tempter who deluded you. You shall then see the blackness and the filthiness of sin as you do not see it now. Then shall you understand the greatness and the goodness of the God whom you have despised. You shall then discern the glory of the Heaven which you have lost. You shall then begin to get an idea of that eternity which shall roll over your head forever. Your knowledge shall swell—your mind shall be strengthened. You shall grow. You shall have time enough for development.

And all this increased light shall be but an increase of pain to your eyes, and all this increase of wisdom shall be but a fresh source of misery for your impenitent spirit. Believe me, Man, I speak not thus that I may agitate you merely for the sake of causing you pain. God forbid I should do that. But oh, if I can but arouse you. If but some thunder-clap may awake you before you have slept yourself into Hell, I shall be but too happy, and you will not think my words too rough if they are the means of bringing you to the knowledge of Christ and of eternal life.

Why, do you not know, Man, that your sin, itself, without anything besides, will be enough to make you as stubble to the flame? What is sin on earth? Is it not the mother of misery? Does a man ever do wrong without smarting for it? And those sins which are committed by the body, do they not entail, even on earth, their own punishment and doom? Then if sin in the bud *here* is bitter, what will it be when it is full-blown? Sin bears its punishment in its own heart! Besides, *think of your companions*. Shut up fifty drunkards and profane men together and would they not soon make a Hell for themselves without any interposition of Divine power?

What will it be when they are bound up in bundles. When the tens of thousands of those who obey not Christ shall find themselves in their own place? Oh, they will be as the flesh in the seething-pot, as the oil in the cauldron, as the fire wood in the flame, as the coals in the fire. They shall be tormenting and be tormented—exciting one another to worse sins and direr blasphemies, and so increasing in each other the horror of the great darkness which results from separation from God and enmity against Him. You shall find, Sinner, that God needs send no devils to torment you—your sins shall be devils enough, your companions in the pit shall be Fiends enough. Your memory, your conscience and your knowledge, shall add such fuel to the flame that you shall, indeed, be as stubble cast into the fire.

That is the first Truth of God clearly set forth in the text. But secondly. And solemnly, there is also another very plainly taught, namely, *that this punishment shall be most searching and terrible*. The metaphor of fire is used in Scripture because it is that which, of all things causes the most pain and is the most searching and trying. One would suppose that death

by fire must be one of the most painful that can be endured, and the pangs of burning reach to the very inwards of human life. The judgment of God is quick and powerful, it shall search your inwards. It shall reach the secret parts of your belly. There shall be no part of your frame or of your heart that shall be free from its inroads.

As fire consumes and so reaches to the very essence of things, so shall the wrath to come reach to the very essence and subsistence of the soul. It shall be utter and overwhelming destruction which shall totally consume everything like joy and hope. It shall be a penetrating and a piercing of the very veins and the marrow of the man, and he shall not be able to escape. In Scripture this wrath to come is sometimes spoken of as the second death. Imagine a man dying, dying in pangs and then rising again to die again and so continually dying and yet living—expiring and yet breathing—perishing and yet existing. Being dissolved but yet being still in the body. You have now before you, then, the Biblical view of punishment—“the second death.”—

**“To linger in eternal death,
Yet death forever fly.”**

O Soul, there are no words that human eloquence can ever find, however dreadful, that can reach the thousandth part of this great argument! No language that was ever uttered by the sternest Prophet, no dreadful denunciations that ever flowed from the most burning lips, could ever attain to the tremendous terror of the wrath to come. I know men say of God’s preachers that at times they speak too harshly. Sirs, we cannot speak half harshly enough. We tell you again, even weeping, that our poor feeble words cannot portray your danger!

We cannot ourselves even feel the danger as we would wish. But oh, if our lips had language, if we could but speak as sometimes we *feel*, we would move you till you should neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, until you had sought and found a refuge in the wounds of Christ. But we are so dull, or else your hearts are so hard, that when we speak, we are like men who throw stones against a wall, and the stones come back upon us. Oh that instead we might be this morning like the man who drew the bow at a venture, that the arrow may find a place in the joints of your harness, where your heart may be wounded with the arrows of the King!

Thirdly, when we look at our text we see most evidently that this destruction *will be most inevitable*, for the express words of the Prophet are, “They shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame.” There *is* hope now. There shall be *no* hope then. There is a new and living way now. There shall be no way then. The gate of mercy is open now. It shall be fast bolted forever then. There is a ladder which reaches from earth to Heaven, but there is no ladder which reaches from Hell to Heaven. There is a great gulf fixed so that they who would pass from them to us cannot, neither could we go to them even if we should wish to venture there—

**“Fixed is their everlasting state,
Could man repent, it is then too late;
Justice has closed mercy’s door,**

And God's long-suffering is no more."

It is inevitable, we say. How can they avoid it? Man, have you strength to fight with the Most High? Can you defy the Eternal God to battle and go forth in your weakness to meet the Lord God of Hosts? If so, *then* might you hope to escape, but then you would be God yourself, and Jehovah would be no God. But you are a puny man—a tooth-ache makes you tremble. A little feather in the wind makes you shake. You are a dying man. You have not power to keep yourself in life—your breath is in your nostrils and wherein are you to be accounted of?

Certain is it, then, that by your own power you will not be able to escape out of the power of the flame. And can you escape by your wit? Why, you have not wit enough now to fly to Christ! You have not wisdom enough now to look to Him. Where, then, could you find the wisdom that could invent another plan of salvation? The way of salvation by Christ is the only one that even God's wisdom has revealed to us. No! Fool, you can never find another, nor in Hell will you ever have the comfort of the *hope* of another—for there shall you understand that no other foundation can man lay than that which is laid—Jesus Christ the Righteous.

Or do you think to escape from God by hiding from His Presence? Ah, where will you go? Could you seek the heart of the mountains? God is there, for He, by His strength, sets them fast. If you could dive into the depths of the sea to seek its deep cavernous recesses, even there would He reach you, for His hand dug the channels of the ocean and the strength of the sea is His, also. Would you try to escape behind the clouds of darkness?—

***"Darkness and light in this agree;
Great God, they're both alike to You;
Your eyes can reach Your foes as soon
Through midnight shades as blazing noon."***

Or would you hope to fly beyond the range of the known universe? Man, He is there, for He fills all things. And as it was said of the world in the days of the Caesars—that it was only one great prison for the offender, so that go where he might, Caesar would track him—so shall you find the universe, even could you escape from your prison, to be but one great den where the Eternal Eye should see you and the Eternal Hand should reach you. No, there is no escape, there is no deliverance, there is no means of avoiding sin's penalty when life is over. It is "Escape from the wrath to come" *today*. But then escape shall be a thing unknown.

These three Truths of God stand clearly enough in our text—that the punishment of the wicked will be easily inflicted, that it will be most dreadful in its character, and that it will be most inevitable. Do I speak to any here who say they do not believe it? Well, Sir, I might only say this much to you—you profess to be a Christian nominally, do you not? And you, you say, live in a Christian land. Now, if so, if you do really believe this Book to be the Word of God, then what can you say in denial of a future judgment? You must believe in the wrath to come and in the general judgment.

If not, turn Turk—say so at once—turn infidel. Or something of that kind. But never again pretend to be called a Christian and live in a Christian land, and to be one of a Christian people. Never profess that, while you object to that which is one of the fundamental Truths of Revelation—one of these great things about which there can be no dispute among those who receive this Book as being a Revelation from God. But, you will tell me again that you think I speak too harshly of it. O Sirs, not half so harshly as Isaiah! Not half so plaintively as Jeremiah or Ezekiel, nor in such telling words as did my blessed Master!

The Lord Jesus, though the most loving of spirits, was the most stern of preachers. In His sermons, while there is everything that could melt and woo, there is no lack of the great and terrible thunderbolt, and the sounding forth of wrath to come and the judgment which must await the impenitent. But again, you will say to me, why do you speak like that? Why not dwell upon more pleasant themes? Because, as the Lord, my God, lives, before whom I stand, I wish to be free of the blood of all men.

What is it to win your applause today? Or, what is it to gain your censure? Think you, Sirs, that the breath of your applause is that on which we live? Fancy you that your opinion of our ministry is anything to us? No, not if God has sent us. If we are but what *you* may think us to be—impostors to please you—then, indeed, we should eschew all such subjects as these. We should be silent upon the hard sayings and only prophesy smooth things. If we cared for popularity and such like, we should put these doctrines behind and cry, “Peace, peace and sew pillows to your armholes.” But, as God has sent us and as we know we must give an account of our ministry, we tell you that if you perish, it shall not be for want of warning.

And if you must go down to Hell, it shall be with your eyes open. If you will have your sins, you shall know that you must have the punishment with them. And if you will reject Christ, and if you will despise Him, it shall be with this fact before you—that you did it willfully—knowing what you did, knowing that those who do such things shall not escape the just vengeance of God. Oh, may God but convince you by the spirit of His Truth and the solemn realities of the judgment and the wrath to come, and we shall need no excuse and no apology. But you would rather think us to be false traitors to your souls if we did not boldly speak on these matters.

II. But our text now changes its figure and therefore we, still keeping to the same subject, change our mode of address. “Thus says the Lord, It shall not be a coal to be warmed by, nor a fire to sit before.” By which is meant that there shall be nothing in Hell that can give the sinner a moment’s comfort. Nothing. Let me picture him there. The text says, “Behold,” as though it were a thing to be seen with the eyes, and to be heard with the ears. Behold you, then, for a moment, a spirit cast away from God and receiving the due reward of its deeds. That spirit, we say, has not a coal to warm itself, nor a single thing that can yield it a ray of joy.

The soul lifts its eye to *Heaven*. There are the glorified spirits before the Throne of God—but the sight of Heaven affords no comfort to the lost in Hell, for they say, “See what glory we have lost! What transcendent joys we have missed! What bliss we renounced—that we might have the mirth of an hour and the misery of eternity!” And as they look up, they shall see some of their old companions there. Some who were once sinners like themselves, but who have sought for mercy through the precious blood and having washed their robes in it, stand before the Throne of God.

And then the lost ones shall wring their hands and curse the day in which they were born, that they should have rejected the mercy which they heard proclaimed in their hearing, while others were saved. And this shall tend to make the contrast of their condition appear the more dreadful. And then they will see there the poor tried saints of the Lord whom they were likely to mock at and they will say, “Ah, there is the man whom we despised. He reigns, and we suffer—Lazarus, the beggar that lay at our gate full of sores and was licked of the dogs, is there in Abraham’s bosom—and we are tormented in this flame.”

Soul, the thought of Heaven shall fan the flames of Hell. The sense of the glory of the righteous shall depress the spirit with a double woe. And at the thought of what you have lost, there shall ever be in your ears a sound, “How are you fallen, O you son of the morning! How are you cast down from Heaven and brought into the depths of Hell!” Nor when the spirit turns its eye around upon *Hell itself* shall it see any reason for comfort there. I know there are some who say, “Well, if I am lost, there will be many more that will be.” Ah, but the multitude of the damned will be no consolation to the damned.

The more there are, the more wretched shall they be. For maybe, O Reprobate, as you shall cast your eye around, you will meet the eyes of the woman whom you did lead astray and she will curse you to your face. Perhaps, Drunkard, as you are in your musings, you will see the lad whom you first took to the ale-house and taught to be a beast like yourself! Knaves, there shall you meet your partners in your trade! There shall the ungodly see eyes which shall look upon them glaring like eyes of fire, which they can never avoid—the eyes of those whom they duped and deceived and misled.

Most horrible of all must be the position of the professed minister of Christ who did not preach the Gospel, or who never cared for the souls of men. Oh, if such a lot should ever be mine! Think of the million eyes of those in Hell, every one of them darting flames of fire at the false preacher who did not care for their souls! Better to be a devil than to be a preacher who was untrue to his Master. Better to sink to Hell as a prostitute, or as a thief, than to go to perdition as a clergyman or a minister who has not preached the Word of God with all his might! There shall be no comfort in the company that they find there—neither Heaven nor Hell shall yield them a coal to be warmed by.

Nor, indeed, will they be able to find any comfort *in themselves, nor in their thoughts*. Now, we sometimes find men who get comfort to them-

selves out of the doctrines of God's Gospel. I have known a man come up to this House of Prayer and under some soul-searching sermon, he has been alarmed. He has gone home and sat with his finger upon his brow in thought, for a little season, and said, "You almost persuaded me to be a Christian." His heart seemed ready to break, but at last he has risen up and said, "If I am to be damned, I shall be damned, and if I am to be saved I shall be saved," and he has made the doctrine of predestination a coverlet in which he might wrap himself and sleep comfortably.

Souls, you shall not be able to do that then. In the world to come, no doctrine will be able to yield you a moment's comfort. Instead of it, your thoughts shall be a case of knives, cutting and piercing your souls, and every Truth of God you have ever known, yes, and every falsehood that you have once believed, shall be spikes upon the bed where you seek to find some peace. Indeed, there is never any real joy to the sinner even here, when his mind is awake, and certainly there will be none hereafter. Why, the greatest torture to which you could put some men would be to make them *think*. How do some of our men live? They drink hard and go to bed drunk.

They wake up in the morning and they are very low and miserable. And then they must have a little drink again to lift their spirits up and, when they have lost their reason, they get happy. But if they would sit down and think awhile over their present estate, they would kill themselves. This is how many an one has been made a suicide. When they have had a moment's sober thought, they have looked at themselves. And if this on earth has brought men to the halter and to the knife, what will it do in Hell when, forever, forever and forever, their thoughts shall revolve, and revolve and revolve again upon sin and its punishment, upon Divine Grace despised, upon mercy rejected—upon an angry God and upon the all-devouring wrath which has come forth from His Presence?

But again—the sinner shall certainly find *no comfort in God*. Mark you, if the sinner could say *there* what he now says *here*, he would have comfort in God. For now he says, "If God is to treat me thus in the world to come, it will be unjust." Ah, you will not think so *then*, for this shall be the sting of it all—"I deserve it. I deserve it. I brought this on myself!" You may mutter now about the hardness of God, and call Him a cruel taskmaster—but when your better sense gets the upper hand, as it will do—then you will be compelled against your will to acknowledge that He is not too severe. That He is not too hard with you. Oh, if the lost spirits in Hell could but believe God to be unjust, their pains would cease!

But it is the conviction that He *is* just, and that every pang and every throe they have willfully brought upon themselves by despising Him and running in a false way—it is that conviction which will be the Hell of Hell. No, more, Sinner—when you are there, you will not be able to say that God has broken a single promise that He ever made to you. If there is a soul in Hell that could say, "I sought the Lord but He would not be found of me"—if he could say—"I did trust Christ but He did not save me." If he could say, "I did seek and pray, but He would not hear"—if he could say,

“I did humble myself and leave my sin. I did come to Him and say, Jesus, Savior, pity me. Have mercy upon me through your precious blood.” If he could say that and then add, “And yet I was not saved”—then that man would have no Hell, because he would always have some excuse.

But there is not one among you that will ever have an excuse. If you are lost, it will be because you did not pray. And if you perish, it will be because you did not repent. And if you are cast away, it will be because you would not believe in Christ. You shall find no comfort in any broken promises. But those which are now the hope and joy of the penitent, shall then be your dread and fear. Moreover, you sometimes comfort yourselves with the thought that you cannot help it, that it must be so, and therefore you are comforted in it. But you will get no comfort in that thought in the world to come, for then you will clearly perceive that your sin was willfully undertaken, that you did it to please yourself, that you followed your own wayward, headstrong will, instead of bowing to the will of God.

O! There is nothing in God, nothing in His promises, nothing in His threats, nothing in His Word, which will at the Last Great Day yield a coal for the sinner to be warmed by, or a fire by which he can sit before. It will be black, black despair, and not a solitary ray of light shall come from God to that soul.

But further, the sinner shall then find no comfort *in the past*. I know he will look back upon his past joys but what will he say of them? He will call himself ten-thousand fools to think that for such little paltry joys as those, he should have lost eternal bliss. The drunkard will doubtless remember his cups but it will be to call himself an idiot to think for a little drink and the sweet excitement of his palate for an hour, he should have damned himself to all eternity. Ah, and the very thought of those enjoyments will act as a foil to set forth the present state in which he is. He will have the sin without the pleasure of it. The dregs but not the wine. The bitterness, the worm-wood, and the gall, but not the froth upon the cup.

That he has had in time, but *now* he has to drink the bitterness to all *eternity*. As he looks back, instead of comfort, O Sirs, what agony the past will give him! Should I be so unhappy as to have in my congregation this morning one man who shall at last perish, I do not doubt that this present assembly will flash before his eyes. Ah, then he will say, “I remember how the preacher spoke. Whatever he did not say, he did warn me to flee from the wrath to come. However feebly he put it, I ought not to have thought of that, but I should have remembered the Truth and my interest in it.”

Oh, by these tears which these eyes must shed and by the emotions which this heart does feel for your soul’s salvation, I plead with you—do not remain in such a state that when you die you will have to say, “He cared more for me than I cared for myself. He thought more of my conversion than I ever thought of it, and he wished more to see me brought to eternal life than I have ever done.” Oh, let not the past become so bitter as this! Young man, shall your mother’s tears and your father’s prayers, when they sought to bring you to Christ, make a part of the bitter remembrances of eternity? And you, my dear Hearers, who sit here constantly,

must these seats cry out against you? Must this House of Prayer bear witness against you? Must I appear at the great bar of God, and say “My Lord, it is just. I did warn them. They *were* prayed for. They *were* wept over. They *were* wooed. As a mother loves her children, so has my soul loved them”?

Must it be so? God forbid! But it must, except you repent. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” And what remains then, but that he must be driven from the Presence of God to the place where hope can never come? God have mercy on you, for if He does not, you shall find not a coal to warm you in the recollections of the past.

Then when that soul is lost, it certainly shall find no coal to warm itself by in its *condition in the present*. Now, ungodly men get some degree of comfort from the very ruin of their state. I mean this—some of them are presumptuous. They say, “What do I care? I will defy all this. Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?” And this gives some sort of comfort *here*. But you will not be able to face it out thus in eternity. The most brazen among the ungodly crew shall then hide his face for shame—like Belshazzar, his knees shall knock together and his loins be loosed. Then shall the stout-hearted fail, and the soul of the mighty shall be bowed down.

Ignorance, too, gives many men comfort here. They do not know their state and so they are at peace. But you will have no ignorance then—you will know, even as you are known—so that this also shall be taken away. Here also stupidity often gives men peace. They will not feel. You may hammer them with the Law but they are not moved. You may preach as though you would move a heart of stone, but they are not moved. Ah, but hearts of stone shall be no more in Hell. They shall be hearts of flesh to suffer, though not hearts of flesh to repent. Then the stout heart shall be taken away and the proud spirit shall quail, so that there shall be nothing in the present condition of the lost that can yield them any comfort.

Nor will there be anything to comfort them in their *future condition*. They may look on through the long vista of the eternal ages and never see the shadow of a hope. Forever, forever, forever—wave after wave—stream after stream of sorrow. Forever, forever, forever! Oh, it would make holiday in Hell, if it could be proved that the pains were not eternal! But it stands, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment. Where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched.” No hope! When a woman has no hope, we wonder not that she seeks the cold river. When a man has no hope, we wonder not that he is taken to the asylum as a lunatic. But when the *soul* has no hope, then it will be death and madness combined forever, forever, forever!

III. And now our text bids us “BEHOLD.” Therefore I pray you, Beloved, turn not away your eyes from this meditation. Children of God, behold it. It will make you grateful—

**“Oh, were it not for Grace Divine,
This case so dreadful had been mine.”**

Does not the thought of the misery from which you have escaped make you love your Savior? And oh, Christian, will it not make you love poor sinners, too? Do you not feel as if you wanted to be doing something to pluck them as brands from the burning? Knowing the terrors of the Lord, do you not wish to be the saviors of men? Wake, you sleepers! Woe unto you if you can think of these things and still be quiet! “Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion,” who can see men perish without doing anything to rescue them! Woe unto you! Woe unto you! How can you be the servants of God?

But especially, you that are unconverted, the text says, “Behold.” It is a gloomy subject for you to think upon, but better to think of it now, than to think of it forever. Better to weep the tears of penitence than the tears of despair, and better the pangs of conviction, than the pangs of condemnation. Better for a little season to lose your mirth and your merriment to get Heaven and eternal life, than it is to have your joys now and then to be driven forever from the Presence of the Lord.

I am about to close the sermon and you will go your way and there will be some few blessed by the Holy Spirit, in whom God’s Word will abide. But oh, for the many of you, for the many of you, we do but preach in vain. We do but speak to ears that are dull of hearing and to hearts that will not feel. If I have told you what is false, reject it—laugh at it! If I have tried to stir you up about a theme which does not concern you, turn on your heels and go your way.

But oh, Sirs, if these things are real, if they are true, if there is but a step between us and death, I entreat you, by the love you bear to your own selves, if not by any care for God or Christ, to meditate upon these things. And may God lead you out of self to Christ—away from your sin to Him who is the great Sin-Bearer, that you may find in Him eternal life. “Turn you, turn you, why will you die, O house of Israel?” Why will you perish? Why will you go down to destruction? Why will you make your bed in Hell, and dwell with everlasting burnings? God turn you! May God turn you now, and by His Grace save you. And to Him shall be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

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REFINED, BUT NOT WITH SILVER

NO. 1430

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

***“Behold, I have refined you, but not with silver; I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction.”
Isaiah 48:10.***

THE Lord refines His people, but He exercises great discrimination as to the means by which He does so. A silver furnace is one of the very best for the removal of dross and would seem to be well adapted for refining the most precious things, but it is not choice enough for the Lord's purpose with His people. It is prepared with extreme care and has great separating power, but the purging away of *sin* needs greater care and more cleansing energy than a silver refinery can supply. The greatest delicacy of skill is exhibited by the refiner who watches over the process and regulates the degree of heat and the length of time in which the precious metal shall lie in the crucible—this, then, might well serve as a figure of the best mode of sanctification—but evidently the figure falls short in its delicacy.

The process of silver refining is, no doubt, one of the best arranged and most ably conducted of the works of man, but when the Lord sits as a Refiner, He executes His work with greater wisdom and art. Silver refining is but rough work compared with the Lord's purification of His people and, therefore, He says, “I have refined you, but not with silver.” The Lord has a furnace of His own, as it is written, “His furnace is in Jerusalem,” and in this special furnace He purifies His people by secret processes unknown to any but Himself. He has a fire of His own kindling in Zion, compared with which all other flame is strange fire and only in this peculiar fire will He, in His own singular fashion, consume His people's dross and sin.

His saints are more precious than silver or gold and, therefore, while in one place it is written, “You have tried us as silver is tried,” yet in another He declares that He has gone about it after a more Divine sort and has refined us, “but not with silver.” No one would think of refining silver by the same rough means as they smelt iron, so neither will the Lord purify His precious ones, who are far above silver in value, by any but the choicest methods. More subtle and yet more searching, more spiritual and yet more true, more gentle and yet more effectual are the purifying processes of Heaven! There is no refiner like our Refiner and no purity like that which the Spirit works in us!

Note, then, that distinguishing and discriminating Grace finds room to exercise itself even in the trials of the elect—“I have chosen you in the furnace, yet not in the best furnace that man could make, but in a furnace of My own, which I reserve for My peculiar treasures.” There is distinguishing Grace in all the trials of God's people. Every man in the world has a measure of trial for, “we are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward,” but there is a distinction between the sorrows of the wicked and

the trials of the righteous—a very grave distinction between the punishments of the ungodly and the chastisements of them that fear God! There is a furnace for each metal, but the more precious the ore, the more special the refining.

There is a furnace for all men—for kings upon their thrones—to whom sickness and bereavement come as freely as to the poor! There is a furnace for the rich in the midst of their wealth—from whom their substance departs or their power to enjoy what they have heaped together! But there is a *special* fire, a reserved furnace into which neither the great ones of the earth nor the wealthy ones shall ever be placed. It is kept for more precious material than the unregenerate children of men! God's furnace in Zion is especially meant for His own people. Of each of these right royal jewels He says, "I have refined you, not with the precious things of earth—the kings and princes, the silver ones among mortals—but I have refined you in a different manner and thus I make My election to be visible, even in connection with the furnace in which I refine My treasures."

I will push the thought a little farther, dear Friends, and remark that the Lord has special dealings with each one of His saints and refines each one by a process peculiar to the individual. He does not heap all His precious metals into one furnace of silver, but refines each metal by itself. You do not know *my* trials—I am glad you do not—and neither do I know yours, nor do I wish to bear that which *you* may have to suffer. There is a common sympathy, for we all go into the furnace—but there is a distinction in the case of each one, for to each one the furnace differs. Some tender hearts would be utterly crushed if they were afflicted as others are. Does not even the farmer teach us this? He does not beat out the tender cumin and fitches with the cartwheel which he turns upon the heavier grain. No, he has different modes of operating upon the different kinds of seeds.

They must all be thrashed, but not all thrashed in the same way. You, Brother, may be as a sheaf of the best corn. Be grateful! But remember you shall feel the sharp thrashing instrument having teeth. And you, my Brother, may be one of the tender seeds, the minor seeds of the Master's granary. Be grateful, for you shall feel a lighter flail than some others. But do not compliment yourself upon it, for you might regret that gentler flail because it proves that you are of lighter stuff, although still true grain, of the Master's sowing. Beloved, I would venture to go so far as to say that the lines have not fallen to any two men in precisely the same places.

We rejoice as we read the life of David because he seems to set us all forth. David is to the Church of God what Shakespeare is to the world—

***"A man so various, that he seems to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome,"***

and yet David is totally distinct from any of the other saints. There are not and could not be two Davids! So you and I may travel in lines almost parallel and we may, therefore, know each other's griefs and tenderly sympathize, but there is a turning in my life which you have never reached and there is a dark corner in your life which I have never seen. The skeleton in

any one person's house is of a different sort to that which haunts any other dwelling. No one man is the exact replica of another.

In all this, Divine Sovereignty operates in connection with Divine love and Divine wisdom, purifying all the sons of Levi, giving to each one his own separate purification according as his need may be. "I have refined you, but not with silver. I have chosen you." Mark—a distinct personal word is used and is addressed to *each* separate saint. "I have refined *you*, but not with silver; I have chosen *you* in the furnace of affliction."

Having thus sufficiently shown that distinguishing Grace is to be seen even in the trials of the chosen, we will now turn to the subject of this evening which is the sweet connection which exists between God's election and the furnace. I have many things to say to you and, therefore, I will say them as briefly as I can, asking you to jot them down upon the tablets of your memory and enlarge upon them when you are alone.

I. And first, between God's election and the furnace there is this connection—that THE FURNACE WAS THE FIRST TRYSTING PLACE BETWEEN ELECTING LOVE AND OUR SOULS. God did not choose His people in the furnace in any sense in which it can be said that He never chose them before they were there, for He chose them before the foundation of the world! Before one solitary star had begun to peer through the darkness, the Lord had given over His people unto Christ to be His heritage and their names were in His book. But the first *manifestation* of His electing love to any of us was—where? Well, I venture to say it was in the furnace!

Abraham knew little of God's love to Him till the voice said, "Get you out of your country and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you." This was a grievous trial for him—the breaking up of family ties and associations was a furnace to him—and then it was that he knew that God had chosen him, for the same voice said, "And I will bless you and you shall be a blessing." I do not think that Isaac knew much about God's choice of him till he went up the mountain's side and said to his father, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" When he found out that the burnt sacrifice was to be *himself*, it was there that he, like his father, knew Jehovah-Jireh and learned the Covenant!

So was it with Jacob. Little did he understand the mystery of electing love till he lay down one night with the stones for his pillow, the hedges for his curtains, the skies for his canopy and no attendant but his God. As he slept, even there at the mouth of the furnace—an exile from his parents and his home—he began to understand that God had highly favored him in His electing love. Certainly Israel, as a nation, did not understand God's election till the people were in Egypt. And then, when Goshen, the land of plenty, became a land of brick making and sorrow and grief and the iron bondage entered into their souls—it was then, I say, that they cried unto God and began to understand that secret word—"I have called My son out of Egypt." They knew, then, that God had put a difference between Israel and Egypt.

The more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied. The more they were afflicted, the more God blessed them! They perceived that the hand of God was in this and that He had met with them there in the furnace of affliction. Yes, if you want the trysting place of the electing God with the chosen soul, it is just there—at the back of the desert where the bush burns with fire and yet is not consumed! Now may you take off your shoes, for the place where you stand is holy ground, while out of the bush there comes the voice—“I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” God finds His people in the place of trial and distress—and there He reveals Himself in His special Character as their God.

Did He not say to Moses, “I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt and I have heard their cry”? We will settle this matter by personal experience. When did you first know anything about God’s choice of *you*? Was it not when you were in trouble—in many cases in temporal trouble? You had prospered in the world for years and you knew not God, but you were like the prodigal son, wasting your substance in riotous living. By-and-by things went against you and you became poor, sick and sorry. And then it was that you began to think of the Father’s house and resolved to fly to it. Then it was that electing love began to deal with you! I admit that it was not so in *all* cases. With some of us it was very different, but I make no kind of exception to the rule, namely, that we first began to learn electing love when we were in *spiritual* distress.

When that fine righteousness of ours turned out to be a spider’s cobweb; when that hope on which we had built so fondly began to rock and reel beneath our feet; when we found ourselves on the borders of death and at the gates of Hell—it was then that Free Grace and dying love rang out most sweetly in our ears. We had often kicked against the doctrine of Free Grace before, but now we clutched at it as a hungry man at a piece of bread which before he had despised! We saw that it was the only hope for us and we turned to it and, blessed be God, we found salvation! Would our proud wills have ever bent before the scepter of Sovereign Grace if they had not, first, been melted in the furnace of soul-trouble?

Would we have ever known that the Lord kills and makes alive if we had not, ourselves, been slain by the fire of His Word? Had He not permitted us to lie like Nebuchadnezzar’s guards, slain at the furnace mouth, we would never have known the Truth of God! “It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.” While we heard the thunder roll—“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion”—we bowed our heads meekly, accepted the Grace which was in Christ Jesus and, at the furnace mouth, for the first time in our lives, we understood this text, “I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction.”

II. We will now pass on to a second remark which grows out of this. It is very clear that **THE FURNACE OF AFFLICTION DOES NOT CHANGE THE ELECTION OF GOD.** If He chose us in it, then His choice stands good while we are in it and when we are out of it. If the very first knowledge we had of His electing love found us at the gates of despair, we can never be worse than we were then, nor can His love see less to rest upon. If He

loved us at our worst, when we were dead in sin, and yet quickened us, much more, then, now that we are quickened and forgiven, He will continue to love us!

Yet I have known a great many fears cross the mind of God's anxious people when the smoke of the furnace has brought tears into their eyes. So let me declare plainly—no amount of trouble, no degree of pain, no possibility of grief can change the mind of God towards His people! The furnace may alter the Believer's circumstances, but not his acceptance with God. You were a fine gentleman once—you had a large house and grounds, but now you have to be satisfied with a small room and scant fare. You were a fine well-built young fellow once—but now you are a gray old man. Everybody bade you good morrow once—nobody knows you now. Forsaken by flatterers and forgotten by friends, you might sit down and weep were it not that the only Being worth caring for loves you, now, as much as ever and selects this as a season for declaring His love towards you!

Ah, your Lord did not love you for your coat, nor for your house, nor for your health and beauty, for He "takes not pleasure in the legs of a man." He loved you of old for reasons known only to His own sacred heart and He loves you now the same as ever. O dear Soul, do not be at all discouraged because you are going down the hill into deep adversities, for His love will go with you! The Lord's love does not rise and fall like the thermometer according to the temperature of the surrounding air. Oh no, but it abides the same to His people whatever their condition! The furnace very often alters our friendship. Our friends knew us before we got into the furnace—we were so fresh and fair they were glad to know us! But we have come out of the furnace so wrinkled and scorched that they are ready to run away from us! Like Job, we have to mourn that our familiar acquaintances forget us.

Yes, but God does not thus change! He is not "a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent." "I am God," says He, "I change not." Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, and His friendship never turns to hate or to forgetfulness. Blessed be His name, He has known my soul in adversity and made the valley of Achor to be a door of hope to me! And therefore I must and will speak well of His name. Yes, and the furnace changes us very wonderfully. Do you think some of you would know yourselves of 20 years ago if you were to meet yourselves in the street? I hardly think you would. You have undergone a marked change, have you not?

Aches and pains of body have altered you terribly. Your juvenile elasticity of spirit has altogether vanished and your outward appearance is very much the worse for wear. Ah, you have altered, but your God has not! What a mercy it is that though eternal ages roll over His Immutability, they cannot effect the shadow of a turning. He stands fast like the great mountains, but we, like the clouds that melt upon the mountain's brow, come and go, for we are and are not—the mists of an hour! He is the same and of His years there is no end—and this is our consolation while we sing with Moses, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.”

I want you to believe very firmly in the permanence of the Divine choice so that when you next enter the furnace you may have no doubt about eternal faithfulness. When you lie sick by the weeks or by the months together, or when you are driven away from home, or plunged in poverty, or bereaved of friends, do not say in your heart, “God has forgotten to be gracious. He has cast me away from His heart.” It cannot be, for the bonds of Divine love cannot be snapped! To prevent its being supposable that the Lord casts away His people because they are in adverse circumstances, the text says the very contrary—“I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction.”

III. So now we hasten onward to notice another Truth of God. Thirdly, THE FURNACE IS THE VERY ENSIGN OF ELECTION. The escutcheon—the coat of arms—of election is the furnace! You know that it was so in the Old Covenant which God made with Abraham. He gave him a type when the victim was divided. When a deep sleep fell upon the Patriarch, there passed before him a smoking furnace and a burning lamp—two signs that always mark the people of God. There is a lamp to light them, but there is also a smoking furnace to *try* them. “No cross, no crown,” was true of old as it is true now! It is the escutcheon of the Covenant.

If you think of our great Master’s dying will and testament, what is its prominent codicil? “In the world you shall have tribulation.” You may be quite sure that if you belong to Jesus, “in the world you shall have tribulation.” Do you want to erase that sentence from the will? Then you must give up the whole deed of gift! You must give up the sweet blessing as well as that which looks like a bitter warning! The child of God *must* feel the smarting rod. Sooner or later, in some form or other, the Lord sets His mark upon His people—and His mark is the *furnace* mark! Some of you youngsters have not received it yet. You will have it. Before you get to Heaven you are sure to have it. As the king sets a broad arrow on all his stores, so does the King of kings set His mark on all His people!

You must, I say, pass under the rod of the Covenant—it is the ensign of God’s love. Do you not see that thus He shows His love to His own? You do not think of giving a flogging to a boy who is none of yours. A stranger may do as he likes, but if it is *your* own boy who is caught in mischief, you will not spare the rod. If you are a child of the devil, you may go and sin as you please and may even prosper all the more in worldly things. But if you are one of God’s children, you will be scourged as sure as you transgress! Has He not, Himself, said, “You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities”?

That the Lord refines us shows His value of us! A man does not build an elaborate furnace and then cast into it odd stones and heaps of useless slag. You would say, “What are you wasting all your fuel for?” And he could not give you a rational answer. But if you see ingenious contrivances, lavish use of fuel and the application of refining apparatus. And the person who is using them says, “This is silver,” or, “this is gold,” you know at once that the ore is worth the fuel and will repay the labor and

expense. So, dear Friends, if we are precious in the sight of the Lord, He will bring us through the fire—rest assured of that!

If He regards us as mere refuse, He may let us rest in quiet. But for precious ore there are many torturing processes in store! A man does not take his knife and go through the wood and prune all the dog roses, the blackberries and the haw thorns—he does not care anything about them! But if he is a gardener, see how he purges the vines and cuts the fruit trees! My gardener cut my roses back so very much that I thought no flowers could ever come, but when I saw the luxuriant roses, I acknowledged that he and his knife knew more than I! Good roses must be cut back! And God's saints must be afflicted! God's people will pay for pruning, but wild vines will not. So it is a *type* and *mark* of the love which God has for them that He chooses them in the furnace of affliction.

And it is a mark, in another way, that when God afflicts His children, it shows that He is not going to let them have their portion in *this* life. It was a deed characteristic of Martin Luther when a great man called to see him and, having spent some few hours with him, gave him, I think, a hundred crowns. Martin said, "I must get rid of this. I will *not* have my portion in this life—I must give this to the poor at once!" He used to talk in this fashion—"God gives His dogs plenty. See how rich the Pope and the Grand Turk are—they can have any quantity of gold and silver—but I am not His dog and I am not going to be fed so. He is not going to put me off with gold and silver. I am looking for my heritage in the world to come!"

Now, my Brothers and Sisters, the Lord does not try many of you in that manner. He keeps you on short commons, embitters your bread and mingles wormwood with your cup. Why is this? Why, because you are not to have your portion *here*! You once half thought you might have *two* heavens, but you were deceived. The other day you began feathering your nest, but a sharp thorn has been put into it of late. You are one of the Lord's birds and He wants you to be much on the wing and little in the nest—therefore does He make it uneasy for you. *This* is not your rest—make it as comfortable as you may—this world is not your rest!

Though godliness has the promise of the life that now is, yet this is not our rest and woe unto us if we try to make it so! All the trees in this forest are marked with the axe and they are all to come down! You may build up there, Sir Crow, as fine a nest as you desire, but it must come down! Build your nests, my Brothers and Sisters, on the everlasting rocks where God's eagles make *their* nests—high above the reach of time and change, in the eternal purpose and everlasting love of God—for your portion is not for the present, neither can you be satisfied with the world, try as you will!

Enough upon this point—it is plain that the furnace is one of the ensigns of the election of Grace.

IV. Fourthly, THE FURNACE IS THE WORKSHOP OF ELECTING LOVE. What are we elected to, if God has chosen us? Why, He has chosen us unto *holiness*. There is no man in this world chosen to go to Heaven apart from being made fit to go there! We are chosen to be made the children of God; chosen to be made like Christ. Well, now, in the hands of God, the blessed Spirit, the furnace often becomes very helpful to this end, for it

consumes much of our dross! Do you ask me what sort of dross does a man lose in the furnace? I answer, affliction helps to remove many a superfluity of naughtiness, but there is one which I will tell you of at once and that is mushroom faith and wild-fire joy.

We have a great store of the fictitious and unreal, especially when we begin. Then we are mighty big Christians and are likely to surpass all that have gone before us! I do not know whether we have not reached the higher life, but certainly we are quite near it, for we are very rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing! It is wonderful what fine saints we are until we are *tried*—and then our beauty consumes away like a moth. The Lord puts us into the furnace three or four days and we wonder where one-half of us has gone! He keeps us there another week or two and we shrivel in a most satisfactory manner.

What have we lost? Any Divine Grace? No, Brothers and Sisters, no man ever lost any Grace in the furnace! What have we lost? Well, we have lost what we *thought* was Grace—we have lost spiritual gas. We have parted with vast accumulations of self-conceit, self-confidence and self-esteem—and instead of glorying in ourselves, we begin to cry for mercy out of the very dust! I have known a child of God so big that he could hardly get inside the door of any ordinary Meeting House and by the time that the Lord had given him a twist or two, he was glad enough to creep into a mouse hole, so long as he might be somewhere near the people of God!

Sanctified affliction is a wonderfully diminishing process, but that is the way we grow—we grow by becoming less and less in our own esteem! The Lord uses the furnace on purpose to this end—to take away fictitious Grace! Some of our young friends all of a sudden descend into the pit of despair and we are very grieved for them—but it is the best thing that can happen to them—for when they find their feet, again, they will have learned how to walk in a much more careful and godly manner than they did before! So you see that electing love uses the furnace to consume our dross.

The Lord uses the furnace to also prepare the soul for a more complete fashioning. The metal must be melted before it can be poured into the mold and affliction is used by the Holy Spirit to melt the heart, to make it tender and pliable and to fit it to receive the fashion and take the shape of the sacred mold into which heavenly wisdom delivers it. Besides, affliction has much to do in loosening a Christian from this world—and this is a great and necessary part of his education, seeing that he is not to be here long—and yet is as apt to cling to earth as if he would dwell here eternally! He is soon to be up and away to his estates on the hilltops, yet he clings to this poor earth and would hug it yet more if it were not that the Lord makes it bitter to him!

One said of old, “My soul is even as a weaned child.” A great many might far more truly say, “My soul is even as a *weaning* child—very fretty and very willful—but not at all ready to give up its childish delights.” A blessed thing it is when there has been enough furnace work to make a

man say, "I have done with the world. Now all my thoughts rise towards the world to come, for *there* my treasure, by God's Grace, is laid up."

My time flies so rapidly that I cannot stop long on any one branch of this very fruitful topic. There is no doubt that electing love does use the furnace as its workshop and that there the vessels of mercy are made to receive many a line of beauty and marks of Divine Grace.

V. But now, fifthly, THE FURNACE IS A GREAT SCHOOL IN WHICH WE LEARN OF ELECTION ITSELF. First, in the furnace we learn the *graciousness* of election. When a child of God, in the time of trouble, sees the corruption of his heart—the little Hell, the perfect Sodom which reeks within his nature—he begins to say, "How can the Lord ever love *me*? If He has loved me, His affection must be traced to Grace, Free Grace, Sovereign Grace, Divine Grace and nothing but Grace." Now that is a great thing to learn!

Then, too, we learn the *holiness* of election, for while we lie suffering, a voice says, "God will not spare you because there is still sin in you. He will cleanse you from every false way." Then we learn what a holy thing God's election is! Then we learn how clean they must be who are to stand in His Presence. Then we see how He would have His favorites loathe every sin! Then we learn how God sees it better that His children should always smart than that they should *sometimes* sin! He will sooner make them bleed at every pore than He will allow their hearts to go after their idols. What a holy thing election is when it involves rebukes and chastisements in order to our perfecting!

Then, too, in the furnace we see what a *loving* thing election is, for never is God so loving to His people consciously as when they are in the flames of trouble. How tenderly He presses them to His bosom in their hour of grief! The mother always loves her child, but let that child be ill, let it pine away, let it become weaker and weaker and you will see the mother's heart! She loves that child better than the others because it needs more love! And when the Lord allows His dear children to grow poor, or to become distressed in mind or in body, then He lets out His heart to them—then will He show them His love in such choice and delicate ways as perhaps they never knew before. It is at such times that God's people know the power of electing love!

"Ah," cries the instructed Believer, "I can now see how the decrees of God preserve my soul! I am in the furnace and if He had not kept me, the vehement heat would long ago have utterly consumed me." If you want to see what the power of God can do for a Believer you must stand where Nebuchadnezzar stood and look into the red mouth of the furnace! Those who threw in the holy children perished by reason of the vehemence of the flames so that there was no fancy about the fire—it was a real and killing flame! Look steadily in—your eyes can bear the gaze. You see three men walking. They were cast in bound, but they are walking loose!

Three, did I say? There are four! There is a mystic Stranger with them—One who wears a crown brighter than all the crowns of earth—but who is He? "The fourth is like unto the Son of God." Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had never seen the Son of God so near them as when they trod

the glowing coals! Is it not written, "I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction"? When you go through the fire you shall not be burned. The Lord's choice of you shall be shown by His bearing you company! Yes, Beloved, and it is at such times that the sweetness of God's electing love comes home to the Christian heart, for he joys and rejoices in his tribulation while he is conscious of the love of God! I would not change my estate—no, not in the furnace—with the bravest worldling that lives! When everything else is gone, if electing love remains, I am rich to all the intents of bliss! Let me be sure of almighty love and all the rest is not worth a thought!

So, Beloved, you learn election in the furnace and, though I do not desire any Believer the slightest harm, but wish him every blessing, yet as to some of my Christian Brothers and Sisters who never go very far into the deep things of God and are very cloudy about the Doctrines of Grace and cannot, indeed, say, "Grace," without somehow stuttering, "free will," I would to God that they had a little touch of the furnace for their eternal good! A scorch or two might do them good and they might, perhaps, be better able to speak to the praise of the glory of that infinite eternal Grace which chose the saints of old and will not cast them away!

VI. Now, lastly, by the FURNACE SOME OF THE HIGHER ENDS OF A YET MORE SPECIAL ELECTION ARE OFTEN REVEALED for there is not only an election of Grace, but there is an election from among the elect to the highest position and to the noblest service! Jesus Christ had many choice disciples, but it is written, "I have chosen you twelve." Out of the 12 there were three—you know their names and out of the three there was one, elect out of the elect—that loving, tender *John*, who leaned upon his Master's bosom!

The furnace has much to do with this, as a rule, since it usually attends and promotes the higher states of Divine Grace and the wider ranges of usefulness. First with the preacher this truth is seen—affliction makes him eminent. I do not think that the preacher will long feed God's saints if he does not read in that volume which Luther said was one of the three best books in his library, namely, *affliction*. That book is printed in black letters but it has some wonderful illuminations in it and he who would teach the people must often weep over its chapters. Men never bake bread so well as when the oven is well heated, nor do we prepare sermons so well as when the fire burns around us.

When we have been in heaviness, ourselves, we are able to talk experimentally to the tried children of God. When the Lord means to train any of His servants for eminent usefulness in the building up of His people, He passes him through the fire—edification comes of tribulation. So is it with the Christian hero. He could never lead the host if he had not been chastened of the Lord in secret places. Men who have stood in the front of the armies of God have been trained by adversity. Martin Luther—grand, brave man—have you ever read his private biography? He was a man so tempted, so tried and so frequently the victim of depression of spirits and dire despondency that he was often ready to die in despair!

There were times when he did not know whether he had any part or lot in the glad tidings which he loved so well. Though he went on thundering out the Gospel for other people, he sometimes could get no comfort himself. Those awful conflicts of his with the devil were the means of confirming his spirit in his public controversies! How could he be afraid of the Pope when he had faced the devil, himself? He could not fear to go to Worms because of the devils on the housetops of which he spoke—for he had faced all the infernal legions in his own house and, by God's Grace, had overcome them!

Look at Calvin, again, that mightiest master in Israel—clear, upright and profound! He suffered daily under a list of diseases, any of which would have made an invalid of a less courageous man and, although always early in the morning at the cathedral, delivering his famous expositions which have enriched the Church of God, yet he always bore about him a body full of anguish. Nor could England find a Wycliffe, nor Scotland a Knox, nor Switzerland a Zwingli, except it were where the Refiner sits at the furnace door!

It must be so! No sword is fit for our Lord's handling till it has been full often annealed. Well, as it is with the preachers and heroes, so it will be with us if we would rise. I would have you greatly aspire in holy things! Labor after a perfectly consecrated life! Renounce all selfishness and live for the salvation of souls and the glory of God! But remember that you will not reach it except by many a trial! Do you aspire to be Christly? I trust you do. But you never will be like Jesus if you never bear a cross! If your life is one of ease, can you be like He who had no place to lay His head? If you never know self-denial, if you never have reproach heaped upon you—if no man ever calls you devil, or mad—if everything goes swimmingly with you, how can you know fellowship with the Despised and Rejected of Men? God's true people are opposed by the current of the times, even as their Master was!

Oh, yes, it will cost you many a sorrow, many a tear if you are to follow your Master fully! But do not, therefore, hesitate. Do you want to be heavenly? I know some that are already, in a measure, so. I could indicate some members of this Church whose speech is savored with eternity and glory—they cannot speak half-a-dozen sentences but their speech betrays that they have been with Jesus! Mark well this fact—they are tried people—they are mostly sick people of whom I would dare to say that they are heavenly! We ought all to be so, but oh, my Brothers and Sisters, we are very little what we should be till we are put upon the anvil and the Lord uses the hammer upon us! If He is doing that, now, with any of you and you have crosses to bear, do not repine, but let the soft whisper of the text sustain you—"I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction."

There are tokens of consumption about you, dear Sister—I see that hectic flush, but do not dread the future, for the Lord says—"I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." You have struggled hard, my Brother, to rise out of your situation, but as often as you have strived, you have fallen back, again, with broken wings to your somewhat hard lot. Do not be despondent, but abide in your calling with contentment since the Lord

has said—"I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." Young man, you have been to college and you were near taking your degree, but your health is failing you and you will never become a renowned scholar as you hoped. Do not distress yourself because your part will be passive rather than active, for the Lord says—"I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction."

Merchant, your firm is going to pieces—you will be poor—but have faith in God. It is the Lord's will that you should go struggling through the rest of your life, but He says—"I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." Mother, you have lost three or four little ones and there is another sickening and you say, "I cannot bear it." Yes, you *will* bear it, for the Lord says, "I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." And are you here, Hannah? Are you here, tonight, you woman of a sorrowful spirit? Is your adversary bitter of spirit toward you? Are there those about you that grieve you and make you fret? Weep no more, for the Lord loves you when no one else does and He says, "I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction"!

Some of you are like ferns. You never flourish except in the damp and in the shade. Too much sunlight would not be good for you. Some plants need a marsh and a fog to develop them and, perhaps, you are such. Perhaps your Master knows that if He puts you where you would like to be, it would be deadly to you and therefore He writes, "I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." Now, I take my leave of you all by a morsel of personal experience. My Lord met me tonight and said, "I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction," and I endeavored to reply to Him, "My Lord, inasmuch as You do graciously condescend to say, 'I have chosen you,' I leave the rest of the sentence entirely to Your will and ask not whether it is in the furnace or out of it. Choose me and then choose everything for me. If you choose the furnace, I would choose the furnace, too."

Remember the good woman who, when they said to her, because she was very ill, "Would you rather live or die?" replied, "I would rather God's will were done"? "Oh," they said, "but if God would let it be just as *you* wish, which should it be?" She replied, "If the Lord were to leave it to my will, I would beg Him to be so good as to let it be His will and not mine." O, Beloved, pray, "Not as I will." Grief is almost ended when self is slain! Sorrow well near ceases to be sorrow when you take the sting of *self* out of it! The Lord be with you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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GOD'S PEOPLE IN THE FURNACE

NO. 35

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 12, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction.”
Isaiah 48:10.***

WHEN traveling through the country you have often noticed that in different spots the old rocks peep out from under the soil as if they would let us know what earth's bones are made of and what are the solid foundations of this globe. So in searching through the Scriptures you will find here, instruction, here, admonition, here, rebuke and here, comfort—and very frequently you will discover the old Doctrines, like old rocks, rising amid other matters. And when you least expect it you will find election, redemption, justification, effectual calling, final perseverance or Covenant security introduced—just to let us see what the solid foundations of the Gospel are—and what are those deep and mysterious Truths on which the entire Gospel system must rest! So in this text, for instance, when there seemed in the Chapter little need of the mention of the Doctrine of God's choosing His people—on a sudden the Holy Spirit moves the Prophet's lips and bids him utter this sentiment, “I have chosen you.” I have chosen you by My eternal, Sovereign, distinguishing Grace. I have chosen you in Covenant purposes. I have chosen you according to My electing love. “I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction.” Well, it is a good thing that they are sometimes mentioned when we least expect it. These are things which we are apt to forget. The tendency of the many in the present age is to slight all Doctrinal knowledge and to say, “We care not whether a thing is true or not.” This age is a superficial one. Few ministers plow deeper than the top soil. There are very few who come into the inward matter of the Gospel and deal with the stable things of which our faith must rest. And, therefore, we bless and adore the Holy Spirit that He so frequently pens these glorious Truths to make us recollect that there is such a thing as election, after all! “I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction.” However, I am not going to dwell upon that, but after making one or two preliminary observations, I shall proceed to discuss the subject of the furnace of affliction being the place where God's chosen ones are continually found.

And the first observation I shall make will be this—*all persons in the furnace of affliction are not chosen.* The text says, “I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction,” and it implies that there may be and there doubtless are some in the furnace who are not chosen. How many persons there are who suppose that because they are tried, afflicted and

tempted, therefore they are the children of God, whereas they are no such thing! It is a great Truth that every child of God is afflicted but it is a lie that every afflicted man is a child of God! Every child of God will have some trial or other. But every man who has a trial is not necessarily an heir of Heaven. The child of God may be in poverty—he frequently is. But we must not infer that therefore every man who is poor is a child of God—for many such are depraved and ruined, blaspheming against God and going far into iniquity. Many a child of God loses his property. But we are not, therefore, to conclude that every bankrupt or every insolvent is a vessel of mercy. Indeed, there is often some suspicion that he is not a child of God if his crops have blasted and mildew seizes his fields. But that does not prove his election, for multitudes who never were chosen of God have had the mildew and the blast as well as he! He may be calumniated. And his character may be slandered. But that may be the case with the most wicked worldling, also, for there have been men far from religious who yet have been slandered in politics or in literature. No tribulation ever proves us to be children of God unless it is sanctified by Grace. But affliction is the common lot of all men—man is born to it even as the sparks fly upward. So you must not infer, because you happen to be troubled, because you are poor, or sick, or tried in your minds that, therefore, you are a child of God. If you do imagine so, you are building on a false foundation—you have taken a wrong thought—and you are not right in the matter at all. I would, this morning, if possible, disturb some of you who may have been laying a healing plaster to your souls when you have no right to do so. I would show you if I could, very plainly, that after all your suffering, you may yet, through much tribulation, enter the kingdom of Hell! There is such a thing as through trial going to the pit of Hell, for the road of the wicked is not always easy, nor are the paths of sin ever pleasant. There are trials in the pathway of the ungodly. There are troubles they have to suffer which are quite as acute as those of the children of God. Oh, trust not in your troubles, fix your thoughts on Jesus—make Him the only object of your trust and let the only test be this, “Am I one with Christ? Am I leaning upon Him?” If so, whether I am tried or not, I am a child of God! But let me be ever so much tried, “though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profits me nothing.”

Many an afflicted man has never been a child of God. Many of you, no doubt, can remember persons in your lifetime whose afflictions made them worse, instead of better, and of a great many men it may be said, as Aaron said, “Behold, I put gold into the furnace and out of it came this calf.” Many a calf comes out of the furnace. Many a man is put into the furnace and comes out worse—than he was before—he comes out a calf. Men passed through the fire in the days of the kings of Israel—when they passed through the fire to Moloch. But Moloch’s fire did not purify or benefit them. On the contrary, it made them worse, it made them dedicated to a false god! We are also told in the Word of God how a certain

class of people are put into the furnace and get no good by it and are not the children of God. But, lest any should doubt what I have said, let them turn to the passage in the 22nd Chapter of Ezekiel, verses 17-20—“And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of Man, the house of Israel is to Me become dross: all they are brass and tin and iron and lead in the midst of the furnace. They are even the dross of silver. Therefore thus says the Lord God, Because you are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver and brass and iron and lead and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in My anger and in My fury and I will leave you there and melt you.” So you see there are some who feel the furnace who are none of the Lord's, some to whom there is no promise of deliverance, some who have no hope that thereby they are becoming more and more pure and more fit for Heaven. On the contrary, God leaves them there as dross is left, to be utterly consumed. They have on earth the foretaste of Hell and the brand of the demon is set upon them in their afflictions even here. Let that thought be taken to heart by any who are building their salvation on false grounds. Afflictions are no proof of sonship, though sonship always ensures affliction.

But the second preliminary remark I would make is on the *Immutability of God's love to His people*. “I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction.” “I chose you before you were here. Yes, I chose you before you had a being and when all creatures lay before Me in the pure mass of creatureship and I could create or not create as I pleased. I chose and created you a vessel of mercy appointed unto eternal life—and when you, in common with the whole race, had fallen, though I might have crushed you with them and sent you down to Hell, I chose you in your fallen condition and I provided for your redemption—in the fullness of time I sent My Son, who fulfilled My Law and made it honorable. I chose you at your birth, when a helpless infant you did sleep upon your mother's breast. I chose you when you did grow up in childhood with all your follies and your sins. Determined to save you, I watched over your path when, as Satan's blind slave, you did sport with death. I chose you when, in manhood, you did sin against Me with a high hand. When your unbridled lusts dashed you on madly towards Hell, I chose you then! When you were a blasphemer and a swearer and very far from Me, I chose you—even when you were dead in trespasses and sins—I loved you and your name was still kept in My Book. The hour appointed came. I redeemed you from your sin. I made you love Me. I spoke to you and made you leave your sins and become My child and I then chose you over again. Since that hour how often have you forgotten Me! but I have never forgotten you. You have wandered from Me. You have rebelled against Me. Yes, your words have been exceedingly hot against Me and you have robbed Me of My honor—but I chose you even then! And now that I put you in the furnace, do you think My love is changed? Am I a summer friend flee-

ing from you in the winter? Am I one who loves you in prosperity and casts you off in adversity? No, hearken to these, My words, you furnace-trying one—"I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction."

Think not, then, when you are in trouble that God has cast you off. Think He has cast you off if you never have any trials and troubles! But when in the furnace, say, "Did He not tell me this beforehand?"—

***"Temptation or pain?—He told me no less—
The heirs of salvation, I know from His Word,
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord."***

O blessed reflection! Let it comfort us—His love does not change. It cannot be made to alter. The furnace cannot scorch us—not a single hair of our head can perish. We are as safe in the fire as we are out of it. He loves us as much in the depths of tribulation as He does in the heights of our joy and exultation. Oh, you who are beloved of friends, "When your father and mother forsake you, the Lord will take you up." You who can say, "He that ate bread with me has lifted up his heel against me"—"Though all men forsake you," says Jehovah, "yet will not I." O Zion, say not you are forgotten of God! Hear Him when He speaks—"Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I never forget you." "I have engraved you upon My hands. Your walls are continually before Me." Rejoice then, O Christian, in the second thought—that God's love does not fail in the furnace but is as hot as the furnace and still hotter.

And now to the subject, which is this—*God's people in the furnace*. And in discussing it we shall first of all endeavor to prove the fact that *if you want God's people, you will find them in the furnace*. Secondly, we will try to show *the reasons why there is a furnace*. Thirdly, *the benefits of the furnace* and fourthly, *comforts in the furnace*. And may God help us in so doing!

I. First, then, I state the fact that IF YOU WANT GOD'S PEOPLE—YOU MUST GENERALLY LOOK FOR THEM IN THE FURNACE. Look at the world in its primeval age when Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden. Behold, they have begotten two sons, Cain and Abel—which of them is the child of God? Yonder one who lies there smitten by the club, a lifeless corpse. He who has just now been in the furnace of his brother's enmity and persecution—that is the heir of Heaven. A few hundred years roll on and where is the child of God? There is one man whose ears are continually vexed with the conversation of the wicked and who walks with God, even Enoch and he is the child of God. Descend still further, till you come to the days of Noah. You will find the man who is laughed at, hissed at, hooted as a fool, a simpleton, an idiot—building a ship upon dry land, standing in the furnace of slander and laughter—that is Noah, the elect of God. Go on still through history. Let the names of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob pass before you and you may write upon all of them—"these were God's tried people." Then go down to the time when Israel went into Egypt. Do you ask me to find out God's people? I take

you not to the palaces of Pharaoh. I do not ask you to walk through the stately halls of Memphis, or go to the hundred-gated Thebes. I take you to none of the places decked with the splendor, the glories and dignity of monarchs! I take you to the brick kilns of Egypt. See yonder slaves smarting beneath the lash, whose cry of oppression goes up to Heaven? The tally of their bricks is doubled and they have no straw wherewith to fashion them. These are the people of God. They are in the furnace! As we follow on in the paths of history, where were God's family next? They were in the furnace of the wilderness suffering privation and pain. The fiery serpent hissed upon them. The sun scorched them, their feet were weary, they lacked water and bread failed them and was only supplied by a daily miracle. They were in no desirable position. But amidst them—for all are not Israel that are of Israel—were the *chosen ones*—those who were most in the furnace. Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, against whom the people took up stones to stone them—these were the sons of God! These were distinguished above their fellows as being elect out of the chosen nation. Still turn over the blessed pages, pass through Judges and come to the time of Saul and where was God's servant then? Where is the man whom the king delights to honor? Where is the man after God's own heart? He is in the furnace—wandering in the caves of Engedi, climbing the goat tracks, hunted like the partridge by a remorseless foe. And after his days where were the saints? Not in the halls of Jezebel, nor sitting at the table of Ahab. Behold, they are hidden by fifties in the cave and fed by bread and water. Behold yon man upon the mountaintop wrapping his shaggy garment around him.

At one time his dwelling is by the rippling brook where ravens bring him bread and flesh. At another time a widow is his host—whose only possessions are a little oil and a handful of meal—in the furnace Elijah stands, the remnant of God's chosen people! Take history through. There is no need for me to follow it up, otherwise I might tell you of the days of Maccabees, when God's children were put to death without number, by all manner of tortures till then unheard of. I might tell you of the days of Christ and point to the despised fishermen—to be laughed at and become persecuted Apostles. I might go on through the days of Popery and point to those who died upon the mountains or suffered in the plains.

The march of the army of God may be tracked by their ashes left behind them. The course of the ship of glory may be traced by the white sheen of sufferings left on the sea of time. Like as a comet when it dashes in its glory leaves a blaze behind it for a moment, so has the Church left behind it blazing fires of persecution and trouble. The path of the just is scarred on earth's breast, the monuments of the Church are the sepulchers of her martyrs! Earth has been plowed with deep furrows wherever they have lived. You will not find the saints of God where you do not find the furnace burning round about them. I suppose it will be so until the latest age. Until that time shall come when we shall sit under

our own vine and our own fig tree, none making us afraid or daring to attempt it. But we must still expect to suffer. Were we not slandered, were we not the butt of ridicule, we would not think ourselves the children of God. We glory that we stand prominent in the day of battle. We thank our enemies for all their shafts—for each one bears upon it proofs of our Father's love. We thank our foes for every stab—for it only cuts our armor and rattles on our mail—never reaching the heart. We thank them for every slander they have forged and for every lie they have manufactured—for we know in whom we have believed—and know that these things cannot separate us from His love. Yes, we take this as a mark of our being called, that we, as the sons of God, can suffer persecution for righteousness' sake.

It is a fact, I say, that you will find religion in the furnace. If I were asked to find religion in London, I proclaim the last place I should think of going to look for it would be in yon huge structure that exceeds a palace in glory, where you see men decked out in all the toys which the old harlot of Babylon, herself, once did love! I would go to a humbler place than that! I would not go to a place where they had the government to assist them and the great and the noble of the land to back them up. I should generally go among the poor, among the despised, where the furnace blazed the hottest. There I would expect to find saints—but not among the respectable and fashionable churches of our land. This is a fact, then, that God's people are often in the furnace.

II. And now, secondly. **THE REASON FOR THIS.** Why is it that God's children get there? Why does God see fit to put them in the furnace?

1. The first reason I have is this—*that it is the stamp of the Covenant.* You know there are certain documents which, in order to be legal, must have a government stamp put upon them. If they have not this stamp, they may be written, but they will not be at all legal and cannot be pleaded in a court of law. Now we are told what the stamp of the Covenant is. There are two stamps and for your information, allow me to refer you to the Book of Genesis 15:17—and there you will see what they are. When Abraham was lying down at night, a horror of darkness came upon him and God made a Covenant with him and it is said, "And it came to pass, that when the sun went down and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace and a burning lamp that passed between the pieces." These two things were the stamps that made the Covenant secure—"a burning lamp"—the light for God's people, light for their darkness, light to guide them all the way to Heaven. And beside the lamp "a smoking furnace." Shall I then wish you to rend the smoking furnace off? Do I wish to get rid of it? No! For that would invalidate the whole! Therefore will I cheerfully bear it, since it is absolutely necessary to render that Covenant valid.

2. Another reason is this—*all precious things have to be tried.* You never saw a precious thing yet which did not have a trial. The diamond must

be cut. And hard cutting that poor jewel has—were it capable of feeling pain—nothing would be more fretted and worried about than that diamond! Gold, too, must be tried. It cannot be used as it is dug up from the mine, or in grains as it is found in the rivers. It must pass through the crucible and have the dross taken away. Silver must be tried. In fact, all things that are of any value must endure the fire. It is the law of Nature. Solomon tells us so in the 17th Chapter of Proverbs, the 3rd verse—he says, “The fining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold.” If you were nothing but tin, there would be no need of the “fining pot” for you. But it is simply because you are valuable that you must be tried. It was one of the Laws of God, written in the Book of Numbers, 31st Chapter, 23rd verse—“Everything that may abide the fire, you shall make go through the fire and it shall be clean.” It is a law of Nature, it is a law of Grace that everything that can abide the fire—everything that is precious—must be tried! Be sure of this—that which will not stand trial is not worth having. Would I choose to preach in this house if I thought it would not stand the trial of a large congregation, but might one of these days totter and break down? Would anyone forming a railway construct a bridge that would not stand a trial of the weight that might run across it? No, we have things that would stand the trial, otherwise we would think them of no value. That which I can trust one hour but find it break the next, when I need it most, is of little use to me. But because you are of value, Saints, because you are gold, therefore you must be tried! From the very fact that you are valuable you must be made to pass through the furnace.

3. Another thought is this, *the Christian is said to be a sacrifice to God.* Now every sacrifice must be burned with fire. Even when they offered the green ears before the harvest, it is said the green ears must be dried with fire. They killed the bullock and laid it on the altar, but it was no sacrifice till they burned it. They slew the lamb, they laid the wood—but there was no sacrifice in the killing of the lamb till it was burned. Know you not, Brothers and Sisters, we are offerings to God and that we are a living sacrifice unto Jesus Christ? But how could we be a sacrifice if we were not burned? If we never had the fire of trouble put about us, if we never were kindled—we would lie there without smoke, without flame, unacceptable to God! But because you are His sacrifice, therefore you must be burned. Fire must penetrate you and you must be offered as a whole burnt offering, holy and acceptable unto God.

4. Another reason why we must be put in the furnace is because *otherwise we should not be at all like Jesus Christ.* If you read that beautiful description of Jesus Christ in the Book of Revelation, you will find it says that “His feet were like fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace.” The feet of Jesus Christ represent His Humanity, the head, the Divinity. The head of His Deity suffered not—as God He could not suffer. But, “His feet were like fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace.” How can we be like

Christ, unless our feet, too, are burned in the furnace? If He walked through the flames, must not we do the same?—that, “in all things He might be like unto His brethren.” We are, we know, to *be* like Christ in that august appearance when He shall come to be admired of all His saints. We are to be like He when we shall see Him as He is. And shall we fear to be like He here? Will we not tread where our Savior tread? There is His footstep—shall not our foot fill the same place? There is His track—will we not willingly say—

**“His track I see and I’ll pursue
The narrow way, till Him I view”?**

Yes! Onward, Christian! The Captain of your salvation has gone through the dark valley before you—therefore, onward! Onward with boldness! Onward with courage! Onward with hope! That you may be like your Savior by participation in His sufferings.

III. And now WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE FURNACE? We are quite sure that all these reasons are not sufficient for God’s trying His people unless there is some benefit to be derived from it.

1. Very simply and briefly, then, one benefit to be derived from the furnace is that *it purifies us*. I was very kindly shown, by some of the magistrates of Glasgow, one of the largest shipbuilding works I had ever seen. I saw them cast certain articles while I was present. I noticed them put the metal in the crucible and after subjecting it to an intense heat, I saw them pour it out like water into the molds—but first they removed the impurities from the top. But the scum would never have come on the top had it not been for the fire. They could not extract the dross if it had not been put in the furnace and melted! That is the benefit of the furnace to God’s people. It melts, tries and purifies them. They get rid of their dross and if we can but get rid of that, we may be willing to suffer all the misery in the world. The man who is very badly diseased may stop a long while before he is willing that the doctor’s knife shall be used upon him. But when death comes to his bedside, he will say at last, “Anything, physician! Anything, surgeon! If you can but get this disease away—cut as deep as you please.” I confess I have the greatest antipathy to pain. But nevertheless, a greater pain will make one bear a less one to relieve it. And as sin is pain to God’s people, as it is a weary torment, they will be willing, if necessary, to have their right hand cut off, or their right eye plucked out rather than having two eyes or two hands to be cast into Hell. The furnace is a good place for you, Christian. It befits you. It helps you to become more like Christ and it is fitting you for Heaven. The more furnace work you have, the sooner you will get Home. For God will not keep you long out of Heaven when you are fit for it! When all the dross is burned and the tin is gone, He will say, “Bring here that wedge of gold. I do not keep My pure gold on earth. I will put it away with My crown jewels in the secret place of My tabernacle of Heaven.”

2. Another benefit of the furnace is that *it makes us more ready to be molded*. Let a blacksmith take a piece of cold iron, lay it on the anvil and

bring down his heavy hammer with tremendous force to fashion it. There he is at work. Ah, Mr. Blacksmith, you will have many a hard day's work before you will make anything out of *that* bar of iron. "But," he says, "I mean to smite hard, to strike true and morning, noon and night, this hammer shall be always ringing on the anvil and on the iron." Ah, so it may, Mr. Blacksmith, but there will be nothing come of it. You may smite it eternally while it is cold and you shall be a fool for your pains! The best thing you could do would be to place it in the furnace—then you might weld it—then you could melt it entirely and pour it into a mold and it would take any shape you pleased. What could our manufacturers do if they could not melt the metal they use? They could not make half the various things we see around us if they were not able to liquefy the metal and afterwards mold it. There could be no good men in the world if it were not for trouble. We could, none of us, be made useful if we could not be tried in the fire. Take me as I am, a rough piece of metal—very rough, stern and hard. You may tutor me in my childhood and use the rod. You may train me in my manhood and set the pains of the magistrate and the fear of the law before my eyes—but you will make a very sorry fellow of me with all your hitting and knocking! But if God takes me in hand and puts me in the furnace of affliction—and melts me down by trial—then He can fashion me like unto His own glorious image that I may, at last, be gathered with Him above! The furnace makes us fusible. We can better be poured out and molded and delivered unto the Doctrines when we have been somewhat tried.

3. Then the furnace is very useful to God's people because *they get more light, there, than anywhere else*. If you travel in the neighborhood of Birmingham, or in other manufacturing districts, you will be interested at night by the glare of light which is cast by all those furnaces. It is labor's own honorable illumination. This may be an idea apart from the subject but I believe there is no place where we learn so much and have so much light cast upon Scripture as we do in the furnace. Read a Truth in hope, read it in peace, read it in prosperity and you will not make anything of it. Be put inside the furnace, (and nobody knows what a bright blaze is there who has not been there) and you will then be able to spell all hard words and understand more than you ever could without it!

4. One more use of the furnace—and I give this for the benefit of those who hate God's people—is that *it is useful for bringing plagues on our enemies*. Do you not remember the passage in Exodus 9:8-9—"The Lord said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace and let Moses sprinkle it towards the Heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man and upon beast"? There is nothing that so plagues the enemies of Israel as "handfuls of ashes of the furnace" that we are able to cast upon them! The devil is never more devoid of wisdom than when he meddles with God's people and tries to run

down God's ministers. "*Run him down?*" Sir, you run him up! You will never hurt him by all you can say against him for "handfuls of the dust of the furnace" will be scattered abroad to bring plagues upon the ungodly throughout the land. Did any Christian ever suffer yet by persecution—really suffer by it? Does he ever *really* lose by it? No, it is quite the reverse. We gain by it. You remember the case of the burning fiery furnace of Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego and Nebuchadnezzar's dealings? You remember he commanded that the furnace should be heated seven times hotter than usual and he told his brave men, his strongest ones, to bind these three men and cast them into the furnace. There they go! They have thrown three bound men into the fire, but before they have time to turn back, it is said the heat of the flames slew those men that cast them into the furnace! Nebuchadnezzar, himself, said, "Did we not cast three bound into the furnace? Behold I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire and the fourth is like the Son of God." Now, just mark these points—Nebuchadnezzar made a great blunder and heated the fire too hot. That is just what our enemies often do. If they would just speak the truth about us and only tell our imperfections, they would then have enough to do. But, in their endeavors to cast down God's servants, they heat the fire rather too hot. They make what they say smell, as Rowland Hill said, too much like a lie, therefore nobody believes them. Instead of doing any hurt it just kills the men who would have cast us into the fire! I have noticed, sometimes, when there comes out a desperate article against any particular man, suppose the man is right, the person who writes the article is always damaged by it, but not the man who is thrown into the fire. It does the slandered man good.

All that has ever been said of me, as one of God's servants, has done me good—it has just burned the bonds of my obscurity and given me liberty to speak to thousands more! Moreover, to throw the Christian into the furnace is to put him into Christ's parlor, for lo, Jesus Christ is walking with him! Spare yourselves the trouble, O you enemies! If you wish to hurt us, spare yourselves the labor! You think that is the furnace. It is not—it is the gate of Heaven. Jesus Christ is there and will you be so foolish as to put us just where we like to be? Oh, kind enemies, thus to render us threefold blessed! But, were you wise, you would say, "Let it alone. If the thing is of God, it will stand. If it is not of God, it will utterly fall." God's enemies receive more damage from "the ashes of the furnace" than in any other way. They are shots that kill wherever they go. Persecution damages our enemies—it cannot hurt us. Let them still go on, let them still fight—all their arrows fall back upon themselves. And as for anything of evil that is done against us, it is but small and light compared with the damage that is done to their own cause. This, then, is another blessing concerning the furnace—it hurts our enemies though it does not hurt us.

IV. And now, to wind up, let us consider THE COMFORTS IN THE FURNACE. Christian men may say, "It is all well to tell us what good the furnace does, but we want some comfort in it."

1. Well, then, Beloved, the first thing I will give you is the comfort of the text itself—ELECTION. Comfort yourself, you tried one, with this thought—God says, "I have *chosen* you in the furnace of affliction." The fire is hot, but He has *chosen* me. The furnace burns but He has *chosen* me. These coals are hot, the place I love not, but He has *chosen* me. Ah, it comes like a soft gale assuaging the fury of the flame. It is like some gentle wind fanning the cheeks. Yes, this one thought arrays us in fire-proof armor against which the heat has no power. Let affliction come—*God has chosen me*. Poverty, you may come in at the door—God is already in the house and *He has chosen me*. Sickness, you may come, but I will have this by my side for a balsam—*God has chosen me*. Whatever it is, I know that He has chosen me!

2. The next comfort is *that you have the Son of Man with you in the furnace*. In that silent bedchamber of yours, there sits by your side One whom you have not seen but whom you love. And oftentimes when you know it not, He makes all your bed in your affliction and smoothes your pillow for you. You are in poverty. But in that lonely house of yours, that has nothing to cover its bare walls—where you sleep on a miserable pallet—do you know that the Lord of Life and Glory is a frequent visitor? He often treads those bare floors and putting His hands upon those walls, He consecrates them! Were you in a palace He might not come there. He loves to come into these desolate places where He may visit *you*. The Son of Man is with you, Christian. You cannot see Him, but you may feel the pressure of His hands. Do you not hear His voice? It is the Valley of the Shadow of Death—you see nothing, but He says, "Fear not, I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God." It is like that noble speech of Caesar's, "Fear not, you carry Caesar and all his fortune." Fear not, Christian! You carry Jesus in the same boat with you and all His fortune! He is with you in the same fire. The same fire that scorches you, scorches Him. That which could destroy you could destroy Him, for you are a portion of the fullness of Him that fills all-in-all. Will you not take hold of Jesus, then, and say—

***"Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads,
I'll follow where He goes"?***

Feeling that you are safe in His hands, will you not laugh even death to scorn and triumph over the sting of the grave because Jesus Christ is with you?

Now, dear Friends, there is another great furnace besides the one I have been talking of. There is a very great furnace, "the pile thereof is fire and much wood, the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, does kindle it." There is a furnace so hot that when the ungodly are cast into it, they shall be as the crackling of thorns under a pot. There is a burning so exceedingly fierce that all those tormented in its flames spend

their time in “weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.” There is a furnace “where the worm dies not and where the fire is not quenched.” Where it is I know not. I think it is not down here in the heart of the earth. It were a sad thought that earth has Hell within her own heart! But I think that it is somewhere in the universe. The Eternal has declared, men and women, you who love not God—a few more years will set you on a journey through the vast unknown to find out where this place is! Should you die Godless and Christless, a strong hand will seize you on your deathbed and irresistibly you will be borne along through the vast expanse of ether, unknowing where you are tending but with the dread thought that you are in the hand of a demon, who with an iron hand is bearing you most swiftly on. Down he plunges you! Ah, what a fall were that my Friends! To find yourselves there in that desperate land of torments! May you never know it! Words cannot tell you of it now. I can but just call up a few dread horrible emotions. I can but picture it in a few short rough words—may you never know it! Would you wish to escape—there is but one door. Would you be saved—there is but one way! Would you find entrance into Heaven and escape from Hell—there is but one road! The road is this—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved and he that believes not shall be damned.” To believe is to trust in Jesus. As an old Divine used to say, “Faith is Recumbency on Christ.” But it is too hard a word—he meant—faith is lying down on Christ. As a child lies on its mother’s arms, so is faith. As the seaman trusts to his boat, so is faith. As the old man leans on his staff, so is faith. As I may trust, there is faith. Faith is to trust. Trust in Jesus, He will never deceive you—

***“Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude!
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good!”***

Thus may you escape that furnace of fire into which the wicked man must be cast. God bless you all, for His name’s sake.

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

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

THE GREAT NEED—OR, THE GREAT SALVATION NO. 610

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

***“O that you had hearkened to My commandments! Then
your peace would have been like a river and
your righteousness as the waves of the sea.”
Isaiah 48:18.***

FROM this verse we may learn that when God smites men on account of sin it gives Him no pleasure. The voice which speaks is not that of the seraphic Prophet, but it is the voice of the Lord God of the prophets Himself. The manner is not merely the majestic formula, “Thus says Jehovah,” but it is supplemented with words intended to remind us of His graciousness and His goodwill. “Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer,” He who rescued you from perils past, “the Holy One of Israel,” the faithful Promiser, who has shown you His counsels and His statutes. Moreover, He challenges attention with more simple, touching mementoes of His kindness when He adds, “I am the Lord your God which teaches you to profit, which leads you by the way that you should go.”

As the Instructor of their childhood and the Guide of their riper years, He first expresses the most natural interest in their welfare and then pitifully bewails the folly of His children. Speaking after the manner of men, to chasten His own people is a pain and a grief to His heart—“Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” John Knox said that he never chastised his children without tears in his own eyes. Jeremiah, in the bitterest chapter of his unparalleled Lamentations, bears this grateful witness to our Covenant God—“He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.”

And surely if in the gentler chastisement of His hands the Most High takes no pleasure, much less can He find delight in that withering curse which destroys the finally impenitent. Beloved, the eternal torment of men is no joy to God! The ruin of a sinner gives Him no satisfaction. While the calamity is such as He only can estimate, the warnings, expostulations and entreaties He has spoken furnish proof upon proof of His pity. Hear His own words, no, listen as He swears, listen to His own oath—“As I live,

says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.”

Not vengeance, but *mercy*—to kiss the returning prodigal! To wash the feet of the guilty sinner! To press the rebel to His bosom and to adopt Him into His family—this is happiness to God! When, therefore, He rises to judgment and pronounces the fearful sentence, “Depart, you cursed,” and casts down the transgressor to Hell and delivers him over to the tormentors—though He vindicates the justice of His Throne, it is—“His strange work, to bring to pass His act, His strange act.”

Even the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction have experience of God’s longsuffering. How tardily He puts off the time! How often He tarries before He inflicts the stroke! How He hides His power while He unfolds His patience! He refrains the fierceness of His anger because He is “God, and not man!” “How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together.”

Let me appeal to you then, my Hearers, those of you who have entertained hard thoughts of God—correct them now—banish them from your breasts tonight! *You* may take pleasure in the damnation of your fellow men—my God has no such pleasure! You may find gratification in your sins, but He grieves over them, for as He sees your course, He foresees your end! Nor is this the only lesson which lays on the surface of the text. Still speaking after the manner of men, I beg you to observe that the Lord addresses words of poignant regret over the prize the sinner has lost, as well as the penalty he has incurred.

So did Jesus Christ look upon Jerusalem. Musing on the desolation to which she should shortly come, He reflected on the preservation in which she might have safely stood. Just as little chickens cluster under the hen’s wings, nestling there in genial warmth and peaceful security, so might Israel have found prosperity in her own borders and protection against foreign invaders under the shadow of the wings of the Lord God Almighty. You remember how He burst into tears? Can you ever forget that cry of His, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the Prophets and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings and you would not”?

Such, too, are the words of my text—words which I pray God may rouse your thoughts and be engraved deeply on your hearts. God looks upon the “peace” you might enjoy and the “righteousness” that would enrich you—if you would just hearken to His commandments and obey His great mandate, “Believe and live.” He sees you afar off from peace! He beholds what you cannot yet discern—the clouds gathering round your head. It may be

you feel in a dead calm. He utters this pathetic exclamation, “O that you had hearkened to My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.”

Sinner! The eternal *God* weeps over you while you are utterly careless about yourself! The infinite heart of my Divine Master yearns over you! The voice which has often reproved you now mourns your hapless state in plaintive tones. I think I hear the chords of His heart in notes of pity far exceeding all that Prophets, Apostles and ministers could ever utter! “O that that sinner would believe in Jesus! O that He would give Me his heart! O that he would be obedient to My Word! Then his peace should flow in purity and fertility like a river. And then his righteousness should roll in boundless plenty and multiply its grand impressive witness like the waves of the sea.”

And now, instead of giving you the order of my sermon, let me speak straight on. How great is the Divine Grace which the sinner despises! He cannot tell the loss he suffers. And what sweet figures these are by which God has been pleased to set that Grace forth! Gladly would I woo you by their charms. But oh, how terrible the consequences of neglect! May God enable me to sound the warning faithfully in your ears this night! What loss do you think is that which God bewails on your account? It is not for you, O Sinner, to understand, or to appreciate such blessings as you have never known or possessed.

We strive in vain to describe the blessing of sight to him who was born blind, or the sweetness of melody to the deaf. “Peace like a river,” and “righteousness like the waves of the sea,” are not within the limits of your comprehension. Be it so, then. There is a need which you unconsciously suffer. You are a stranger to peace. “There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked.” David Hume used to say that Christians were melancholy people. But that was a happy retort in which somebody observed, “David Hume’s opinion is not worth much, for he never saw many Christians. And when he did see any, there was enough to make *them* miserable in the sight of David Hume.”

The true Christian has a peace which is totally unknown to any other man! Yes, he has, “the peace of God which passes all understanding.” There are, indeed, two kinds of peace into the secret satisfaction of which no unconverted person can enter—peace with God, and peace in the heart. Yet both of these are the inalienable right of the Believer! The peace which our Lord Jesus Christ made by the blood of His Cross has sealed his acceptance with the Father. And the peace which is produced in his conscience as the fruit of the Spirit calms the troubled passions of his breast. He enjoys peace with God. Happy soul!

He says of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress: my God! In Him will I trust.” The terrors of the Lord do not make him afraid. When he walks in the midst of God’s works, this is his joy—

“My Father made them all.”

When he is on the deep and hoary sea, he says, “The deep is in the hollow of my Father’s hand and were I to sink beneath its surging billows, I could only drop on to His bare arm.” When the thunder is abroad and the lightning flashes dart across the jet-black sky, he trembles not—his lips do not grow pale, nor is his face all blanched with fear—they are but his Father’s servants that do His pleasure, why should he be alarmed? Let sickness of body, or sorrow of mind, or any Providence, however calamitous come upon him—he bears it all with an equanimity which faith alone can beget—because God has done it.

He has perfect peace with God which the tribulations of the world cannot disturb. Between my soul and my God, if I am a Believer, there is no breach. No, there is friendship, love, union! The bonds which bind me to Him are the bonds of His own immutability and His Covenant love. This peace of God must transcend the strife of the elements which surround me, for—

**“The hand that may ruffle the evening’s calm,
Bears Calvary’s print on its bleeding palm.”**

So, too, the Christian is at peace with himself. Self is an ugly enemy for a sinner to encounter. It is written in the Bible, “And David’s heart smote him.” Conscience strikes hard blows. A good conscience has a keen edge and severely cuts those who tamper with it. Bad men are sometimes afraid of evil spirits. We have heard of people shutting their doors to keep the devil out of their houses. But so long as the thing called, “Conscience,” dwells in their breast, they will never be able to shut out a troublesome spirit. He carries a demon with him who has an unsatisfied conscience.

Tell me not of the howling of the wolf, when, in the depths of winter—meager, gaunt and grim—it gets a smell of blood and speeds on in its ravenous career—conscience is infinitely more insatiable! The deep baying of the hounds of conscience is more terrible to a man than any sound except the voice of God. But the Christian is not afraid of himself. He can sit with himself in the hours of midnight, walk with himself in the lonely road and talk with himself in the still calm of his meditations—God has enabled him to shake hands with his conscience and they have become the best of friends!—

**“Oh, lost to virtue, lost to manly thought,
Lost to the noble sallies of the soul,
Who think it solitude to be alone.
Our reason, guardian angel and our God,
Then nearest these when others most remote,**

And soon all shall be remote but these.”

This is a peace which no man can attain unto except the man who hearkens to the commandment, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.” And if you hearken to that commandment and believe in the Son of God you shall have peace and that peace shall be like a river. The metaphor is full of beauty and not wanting in instructiveness either—by which peace is compared to a river. What does this mean? I think it may suggest several things. Peace, like a river, for continuance. Look at it, rising as a little brook among the shingles of that green hill, it comes dashing down a rugged waterfall—it flows along that valley yonder—where the red deer wanders and where the child loves to play.

It turns the village mill—listen to its babblings as it flows onward, sometimes leaping down the wheel and at other times flinging carelessly its strength to the winds. Now it becomes broad and deep and many a large and heavy craft floats upon it. Then it swells its bosom—bridges with noble arches span it and it becomes an estuary like a great arm of the sea and pours its torrents into old father Ocean. It continues. It is not a thing of today which is gone tomorrow, but it proclaims its own constancy—

***“Men may come and men may go,
But I flow on forever.”***

Forever! Throughout all generations the river speeds to its destined place. Such is the peace of the Christian. He is always at peace. He has not peace like a swollen torrent which is dried up under some hot sun of adversity, but his peace is with him at all times. Do you enquire for the Thames? You shall find it flowing in its own bed in the thick black night, as well as in the clear bright day. You shall discover the Thames when it mirrors the stars or sends back the sheen of the moon as well as when multitudes of eyes gaze upon it at midday. You shall see the Thames in the hour of tempest by the lightning’s flash as well as in the day of calm when the sun shines brightly on it. Ever it is there.

And such is the Christian’s peace. Come night, come day, come sickness, come health, come what will—this peace which passes all understanding will keep the Christian’s heart and mind, through Jesus Christ. Like a river it always flows on—no matter what the scenery on its banks, it does not stop. Here is a hill and there a dale, here the dry and thirsty sand and there, again, the fat and laughing fields—but the river is still the same. And so with the Christian. Today he abounds—tomorrow he is empty. One day he walks with manly stride, erect in health—another day he pines and tosses upon the bed of pain. Today men praise him and every man extols him in song—tomorrow he is the butt of ridicule and the subject of caricature—pointed at in the streets and despised. Today he lives—tomorrow he dies.

But his peace is still the same. Like a river, no matter what the banks which overlook it, or what the weather which overcasts it—still it is the same. Such is the deep calm which pervades the Christian's spirit. It is a continual thing—a peace with which the world cannot market—a peace of which the world cannot deprive, but a peace, still, unto which the Christian is called and it abides with him forevermore.

Since the day I learned to wear in my button hole the heart's-ease plucked from God's garden, my soul can laugh all men to scorn who find comfort elsewhere. And this peace is "peace like a river" for freshness, too. The water which runs down the Thames, say at Maidenhead, never was there before. It is fresh water, fresh from the hills today and tomorrow it is the same and the same the next day—ever fresh supplies from the heart of old England to keep her glorious river swelling and abounding.

Now the peace which a Christian has is always fresh, always receiving fresh supplies. We found peace at first through the precious blood of Christ. We have sinned since then, but we have gone anew to the Fountain and have washed again and again. We have had doubts and fears. These at first were dispersed by a sight of Christ—we have fresh views of our glorious Savior and His completed work and so the river goes on receiving fresh supplies. The Spirit of God was our Comforter ten years ago. Ah, gray-headed man, he was *your* Comforter, perhaps, before I was born! Before this babbling tongue had touched any man's conscience, you had rested on the Cross of Christ and the Spirit had said, "Peace be unto you."

The whole of these forty years you have had fresh anointings, fresh unction from on high and so your continued peace has been like a river. Do not suppose, O you who are strangers to these things—do not suppose that the Christian gets a peace like the striking of a match which goes out in a moment! Oh, no! It is the steady shining of a fixed star! Not the blaze of a meteor in an autumn evening, but the shining of the brightest lamp which never goes out and never goes down. Happy that Christian who has fresh floods of peace, peace like a river for the freshness of its streams!

And you know, Brothers and Sisters, that a river increases in breadth and its waters augment their volume. You can leap across the Thames, say, at Cricklade, or Lechlade—it is so tiny a little brook you may almost take it up in a cup! There is a narrow plank across which laughing village girls go tripping over! But who thinks of laying down a plank across the Thames at Southend, or at Grays? Who would imagine that at Gravesend it might be crossed by the tripping girls, or by the skipping lambs?

No, the river has grown—how deep! At the mouth of it, I suppose, comparable to the sea—how broad! It is a sort of ocean in miniature. There go the ships and leviathan might play there. Not even Behemoth himself, I think, would have the presumption to suppose that he could sniff up this

Jordan at a draught, for it has grown too great for him! Such is the Christian's peace. Pure and perfect though it is at the first, little temptations seem to mar it and oftentimes the troubles of this life threaten to choke it. Not that they ever do—

***“Men may come and men may go,
But it flows on forever.”***

True, it seems little at the point of its rise. But be not deceived. Wait. When the Christian is ten years older and has meandered a few more miles along the tortuous course of a gracious experience, his peace will be like a broad river!

Wait twenty or thirty years—till he has traversed these rich lowlands of fellowship with Christ in His sufferings and conformity to His death—then his peace will be like a deep river, for he shall know the peace of God which passes all understanding! And he will have cast all his care upon God who cares for him. Thus that peace will go on increasing till it melts into the Infinite peace of the beatific vision, where—

***“Not a wave of trouble rolls
Across the peaceful breast.”***

Well, therefore, may our peace be likened to a river for its perpetual increase!

Yet once more, the peace of the Christian is like a river because of its joyful independence of man. We have heard the story of a simpleton who went to see the reputed source of the Thames. Putting his hand over the little rivulet that came trickling down the ditch, he stopped it and said, “I wonder what they are doing at London Bridge now that I have stopped the river?” His idea was that as he had stopped its flow, all the barges were high and dry, the steamers breaking their backs on the sandbanks and nobody knowing what consequences might ensue because he had stopped the Thames!

But who knew the difference? A child takes into its hand its cup of water and blows it and the whole surface undulates with little waves—but where are the giant lips which could blow the Thames and cause waves upon its bosom? Steadily, pleasantly, laughingly, the river flows on, gliding beneath the majestic castle of monarchs and sporting past the bowers of the muses, careless altogether what men of might *do*, or men of intellect *think*! A whole Parliament could not make the Thames swell with waves and fifty Parliaments could not lessen the body of its waters. It *were* well, by the way, if they could preserve its streams from the pollution of those foul and putrid sewers constantly emptied into it! The rivers would be better without the interference of men.

Such, then, is the Christian's peace. I have watched this river as it broke over the stones of adversity—and when the tide of earthly comfort

ran low—it has seemed as if the flow of peace were clearer and more transparent than ever! Some of you may have said, “I wonder whether such a Brother or Sister will be as peaceful when he is lying on his sick bed, as he used to be when he joined our Sunday services.” You go and you will find his peace abounds in the hour of need. Perhaps you hardly expected that another dear friend could bear the loss of his situation and thus come down, as it were, in the world—but to your amazement he tells you how he is just beginning to learn Habakkuk’s song—“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines. The labor of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat. The flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls—yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

The devil cannot rob us of the peace which comes from God! Neither can the world take it away! O Christian, what a comfort it is for you to think that if all the powers of darkness should be in arms against you, they cannot destroy your peace which is in Christ Jesus the Lord! Only let God be with you and your peace of mind would still be like a river. It would still be like a sea of glass which is not to be ruffled at all. Glorious in deed and in truth is the Christian’s independence. Some Christians call themselves “Independents.” I believe we are all very *dependent* upon God, and therefore we shall never be Independents in that respect!

But, at the same time, every Christian is so entirely independent of man when he leans upon his God that we may, every one of us, be Independents! We can afford to defy the world to do its best or its worst to stay the tide of our joy when He causes our peace to flow like a river! What would some of you give to have such a peace as this—that you could go to bed with peace and not be afraid of sleeping your last and wake up with peace fearing no ill? That you could go to business not afraid of evil tidings because your heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord? What would you give to have a great lump of sunshine put into your bosom which you might break up and sprinkle over all your days and nights?

Yet such peace you shall have if you hearken to God’s commands. That you have it not is our regret tonight. Alas! Alas, for you, that you have not listened to His commandment, which is, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” If you had hearkened to it, then the blessing would be yours and the sweet enjoyment thereof would tranquilize your minds while it caused a tide of pleasure to stir up every grateful emotion of your heart!

Time flies and I am still lingering upon the former of the two figures employed. I must pass on to notice the other figure which is used to express those good things which the sinner has missed—“YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS AS THE WAVES OF THE SEA!” Let us pause a moment and

notice how this metaphor surpasses the previous one in dignity, if not in delicacy. Now we can all see a sort of comparison and yet at the same time a strong contrast between the water of an inland river and the collection of waters which make up the wide expanse of the sea. One, for the most part, is tranquil—the other always heaving and surging to and fro.

So I suppose, as the words were originally addressed to the Jewish nation and referred to their temporal welfare, the river would represent the beauty and happiness of their own land, like the garden of Eden watered by the river of God's pleasure. And the sea, with its waves rolling in majestically one after another in unbroken succession, would set forth that progress which is the renown of righteousness. Generation after generation would witness the rising tide of prosperity. Each chapter of their chronicles would lift its crested plume and tell of mighty acts and righteous deeds, till, like the roar of the ocean, the righteousness of Israel should proclaim the name of the Lord from the river even to the ends of the earth!

Oh, what did that rebellious seed of Jacob lose by forsaking the Lord! This seems to me to be something like the meaning. But I want to apply this metaphor of the waves of the sea, like I have that of the flowing of the river, to the happiness of the Believer. Look, dear Friends, at this precious doctrine of the Gospel through the glass of that Old Testament symbol. The man who believes in Jesus Christ has the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, that is to say, the obedience of Christ is considered by God as *his* obedience. So if I believe in Christ, I am as much beloved and as much accepted as if I had been perfect in a moral uprightness of my own—for the righteousness of Christ becomes mine.

But how is this righteousness like the waves of the sea? Well, first it is like the waves of the sea for multitude. You cannot count the waves of the sea, do what you will. And so is it with the righteousness of Christ—you cannot count its different forms and fashions. Let us tell you of some of these waves. I was born in sin and shaped in iniquity, but Christ is called, "that holy Thing" which is born of the Virgin and the holiness of Christ's birth takes away the unholiness of *my* nativity.

I have committed sins in my childhood, sins against my parents. But Jesus Christ was a child full of the Spirit and grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor both with God and man—so Christ's childish perfection is imputed to me and hides my childish sins. I have to mourn over sins of thought because the imaginations and thoughts of my heart are evil. But Christ can say, "Your Law is My delight," and the thoughts of Christ's mind cover my thoughts. Sins of the tongue you have all had to lament—but Grace is poured into His lips and the graciousness of Christ's speech covers the gracelessness of yours.

You have had heart-sins—but Christ has had heart-virtues. Your heart is hard. But He could say, “Reproach has broken My heart.” Your heart was cold—but His fervor was constant, till He could say, “The zeal of Your house has eaten Me up.” Your heart was proud, high and lofty—but Christ was humble and meek—He endured shame and spitting. You have had sins in worship—but Christ purged the temple and served the Father in perfection, yes, both in Spirit and in truth. We have sins in private prayer—but the cold mountaintops witnessed the fervor of His supplications.

We have sinned against our fellow men. But He loved His neighbor better than Himself. We have many sins against God—but Christ loved the Lord His God with all His heart and it was His delight to do His Father’s business. Keep on, Brethren, keep on—let the list of your sins be long, but the list of Christ’s righteousness will be longer still, for it is like the waves of the sea! What are you—a servant? Well, if you have the sins of a servant, Christ has the virtues of a servant. Are you a master? Your sins as a master are covered by Christ’s righteousness as a master. I am a minister. I feel my imperfection—but my Lord was a perfect Shepherd of the flock—as He was a perfect Teacher, the perfection of His teaching belongs to me and I am covered with it.

Oh, what a righteousness is this! It is like the waves of the sea, manifold. All that the Christian can want to satisfy the claims of the Divine Law is found in the righteousness of Christ! There is a moral grandeur in the picture here—“Righteousness like the waves of the sea.” The righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ is also like the waves of the sea for majesty. What an illustration of overwhelming power! There comes the rushing wave. The tide has determined to rise to such-and-such a point—who can keep it back? And ask now, Beloved, “Who can withstand the power of Christ’s righteousness? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? Whom Christ has justified, who shall condemn?”

Rise, mighty tide of Righteousness, rise on, for none can stay You in Your course. Then it is majestic, because it is profound. Who can plumb the depth of the righteousness of Christ?—deep as the demands of the Law, deep as the miseries of Hell, deep as the thoughts of God! It is majestic, too, because of its ceaseless energy. Sit in the boat and see the waves as they go rolling by, following each other in endless succession. Never will the sea stop—it boils like a pot. Now, the righteousness of Christ has a ceaseless energy. Wave upon wave, it breaks upon the eternal shore of Divine justice, fulfilling the counsels of God, while it covers all the sins of His people!

Beloved, that righteousness pleads tonight for every sinner who is resting on it and it brings to you and to me the countless mercies which we

are privileged to enjoy. For majesty, then, the righteousness of Christ is like the waves of the sea. And the analogy may be traced still further if you reflect on the sufficiency of the one and the other. All over the world, at low water, you will find certain muddy creeks, bays and coves. How are all these to be covered? How will that swamp once more be made to look like a seabed? Who can do it? God can! And there is water enough in the sea to cover every cove and creek. And there is not a river which will have to say “We had no tide today.”

O careless Hearer, what shall I say to you to commend this righteousness of Christ? You may be the vilest sinner out of Hell, but there is enough righteousness in Christ to cover you! For every creek of sin, for every bay of blasphemy, for every cove of infamy here is a flood which will cover them all! The high-water mark of complete salvation shall be gained by every child of God. You cannot measure the all-sufficiency of the waves of the sea, much less can you find a gauge by which to estimate the all-sufficiency of the merit of Christ!

Only once more, to make four points here, as we did in interpreting the river. The righteousness of Christ is like the waves of the sea for origin. Who is the father of those waves? Out of whose womb came that mighty company? Who is the joyous sire to whom these children may lift up their voices and say, “Here we are”? “God,” let the torrents roar, “He has made us and not we ourselves. The holy hands of God poured us into the channels which He had dug and here we are, sometimes as a glass, that He may mirror His awful face in tempest, but ever His willing servants and His obedient sons.”

Now the righteousness of Christ comes not from man. No one adds a jot or tittle to it, but it is of the Lord and the Lord alone. Jehovah-Tsidkenu bared His mighty arm and stretched it to the work and with Him there was no man. When He worked out the salvation of His people He stood alone without a helper. “O” says one, “I wish I had that righteousness to cover all my sins and to take me to Heaven!” If you had hearkened to God’s commands, you would have had it. Yes, Sinner, if you had believed in Christ, your peace would have been as a river and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.

That you have it not is owing to this—that you have not listened to God. I will put it to you very affectionately, but with the utmost faithfulness. When the Gospel has been preached, have you listened attentively? Do you say, “Yes”? We will go farther, then. Have you listened in solemn earnestness, desiring that the Word might be blessed to you? Have you listened in prayerfulness, crying, “God be merciful to me, a sinner”? Have you hearkened with willingness, being willing to be obedient? Have you hearkened with resolve, determining to do what was commanded you?

Have you listened with humility, feeling your own inability and did you beseech Him, the Lord, to help you? Have you listened with all the powers of your mind, calling upon your entire being and saying—“Now, Lord, here is my ear. Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears”?

O my Friends, you have, many of you, listened to *me*, but you do not listen to my Master and even my poor word goes in one ear and out the other! You will go chatting home tonight and you will seek after your amusements tomorrow and all that the Word might have done will be thrown away upon you. I know how some of you hear—it is always with procrastination. You mean to hear, but you do not give heed with a present anxiety. You do not hear as that clock would bid you, for every tick of it seems to say, “Now, now, NOW.” Do any of you remember the loss of that vessel they called the “Central America”? I suppose some of you do. She was in a bad state—she had sprung a leak and was going down and she hoisted a signal of distress.

A ship came close to her, the captain of which asked, through the trumpet, “What is amiss?” “We are in bad repair and are going down. Lie by till morning,” was the answer. But the captain on board the rescue ship said, “Let me take your passengers on board now.” “Lie by till morning!” Was the message which came back. Once again, the captain cried, “You had better let me take your passengers on board now.” “Lie by till morning,” was the hoarse reply which came through the tempest. About an hour and-a-half after, the lights were missing and though no sound was heard, she and all on board had gone down to the fathomless abyss.

Do not say, Sinner, “Lie by till morning!” For God’s sake, do not say, “Lie by till morning!” Tonight, even tonight, hear the voice of God! O that the Spirit of my God might come upon you and open your ears to listen to His commandment, for, “now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” This is the commandment—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” To believe, as you know, is to TRUST. It is, as it were, to fall flat down upon Christ—to let Him carry you to Heaven—to put yourself out of your own hands into Christ’s hands!

It is to have done with saving yourself and to believe that He who died upon the Cross has perfected your salvation. Trust Him and if you listen to His commandment, then your peace shall be as a river and your righteousness as the waves of the sea. The Lord grant that it may be so, for His name’s sake. Amen.

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GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE OF MAN'S SIN NO. 779

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 3, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Yes, you heard not; yes, you knew not; yes, from that time
that your ear was not opened: for I knew that you
would deal very treacherously, and were called
a transgressor from the womb.”
Isaiah 48:8.***

THE ancient people of God were most annoyingly emotionless, and although the Lord taught them very plainly and repeatedly, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, yet they would not understand His will. More especially, in order to convince them that Jehovah was the only true God and that the gods of the heathen were *not* gods, He was pleased to send them Prophets to foretell things to come. And when those events transpired which had been so plainly predicted, one would have thought that ordinary sense and reason would have led them to adore the God who thus proved His existence and His foreknowledge. But even this powerful proof did not convince them! They still paid more respect to the gods of the heathen than to the one and only living God, and their souls hankered after the idols of the nations.

The Lord rebukes them for this folly in the verse before us. “Yes, you heard not,” though I spoke so plainly that the deaf might hear, yet you would not listen to My voice. Though taught by God-sent Prophets, yet the people refused to be instructed. “Yes, you knew not,” though your own internal consciousness might have taught it to you, apart from any voice, yet you would neither learn from without nor consider within. Nothing can exceed the obstinate stupidity of the unrenewed heart. It will not learn, let the teaching come as it may. “From that time that your ear was not opened,” for your ear had become as though sealed up, impervious to sound. Your heart had become so vile with iniquity as to be incapable of feeling. And this was not because the Jewish people were foolish or naturally devoid of intelligence, for, as we all know, to this very day there is no sharper generation under Heaven than the sons of Judah.

And yet, in the days of Isaiah and until the captivity they proved themselves to be most arrant fools in that they still went after the idols which had brought them no blessing, and forsook the Lord who alone could benefit them. As in a looking glass, let us see ourselves! Let the unconverted man see his own picture! God has spoken quite as pointedly to *you* as ever He did to the seed of Israel. He has called you by Providences of different kinds. His mercies have wooed you to the worship of a generous God. Afflictions have called you to kiss the hand that smote you and to turn unto the Lord who smites us out of mercy to our souls.

Providence has spoken to you with many tongues, with singular patience and persevering tenderness. As for the Bible, which is open before you and in all your houses, has it not often addressed you with a voice most clear and simple, "Turn you, turn you! Why will you die?" There is not a lack of express texts of Scripture to assure you that the way of sin is not the path of peace, and that only the path of obedient repentance and trust in the Lord Jesus can lead you to happiness here and hereafter. You have, some of you, been called by the admonitions of affectionate and godly parents, who, perhaps from the skies are beckoning you this morning in spirit to follow them to Paradise. You were further invited to the path of holiness by loving friends in Sunday school—the recollections of whose earnest warnings have not quite faded from the tablets of your memory.

Frequently the voice of God's minister has bid you to come to Jesus from the pulpit. And Conscience, a nearer pleader still, if you would but hear *his* voice, has often echoed the voice of God setting its seal to the testimony of God's Word, bidding you turn from your evil ways and acquaint yourself with God that you might be at peace. And yet up till now it may be said of many of you, "Yes, you heard not; yes, you knew not; yes, from that time that your ear was not opened."

As yet the plow has been driven upon a rock which has not felt its power. The bread has been cast upon the water and after many days there is no return. Three times a "yes" is put in our text, as if to show God's wonder at man's obstinacy, and the certainty that such was the state of the heart. It was certainly so. You heard, but it went in one ear and out the other! You heard and heard not—you heard as sticks and stones might hear—or as cold, insensible steel. You knew not though the knowledge was before your eyes and you might have known it. You are, I fear, many of you, among the blind people that have eyes and the deaf people who have ears who refuse to use their eyes and fast close their ears through willful ignorance. You know not what you might have known. The very birds of the air know their time, and the fishes of the sea obey the laws of the world's great Governor—but ungodly men are more stupid and foolish than irrational creatures! The net is spread before us and yet we fly into it! The lure is laid before our very eyes and yet we willfully are ensnared!

This accusation which God brought against the Jews, He can this day bring against the Gentiles, and who shall dare deny it? More painful, still, is it to remember that in a certain degree the same accusation may be laid at the door of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ! Even those who have received Divine Grace to become the sons of God have not such a degree of spiritual sensibility as they should have. Alas, my Brothers and Sisters, we may well bewail ourselves that we do not hear the voice of God as we ought. God often speaks in the heart of man, but man regards Him not. There are gentle motions of the Holy Spirit in the soul which are unheeded by us. There are whispers of Divine commands and of heavenly love in our souls which alike are unobserved by our lead intellects.

God speaks to us in the silent shadows of the night, but when we lie awake we are not with Him, though He is with us. How often do we shirk

a duty clearly revealed to us as a duty? How constantly do we postpone obedience to precepts which are only to be fully obeyed by being kept at once? How constantly are we in the habit, when a command becomes disagreeable, even though we know it to be right, of ignoring it? Forgetting it and finding apologies for neglect? How little is there of the little child about us, and how much of the willful man! We are not like the sheep that follows close at the shepherd's hand, but, I fear we are more like the bull unaccustomed to the yoke which kicks against the pricks!

Whether you have to make the same confessions in private that I have to make I do not know, but verily I must say, "Guilty," if the Lord says to me, "Yes, you have not heard." "Yes, you have not known." There are matters within which we ought to see—corruptions which are making headway unobserved—sweet affections which are being blighted like flowers in the frost, untended and uncared for by us. There are gleams of heavenly sunlight which would enter if we did not shut them out. There are glimpses of the Divine Face which might be perceived if we did not wall up the windows of our soul—but we have not known.

It is marvelous how little of introspection there is with many of God's people—how little they look within—how little they look after their own vineyard and the garden of their own souls. I am afraid most of us would have to say, "It is so," if it were said, "Yes, you have not known." Alas, though our ears are open, they naturally soon close themselves. They need to be cleansed again and again. Sanctification has need to be in *us*, my Brethren, a *perpetual* work, a daily work. If ever we are to be sanctified wholly—spirit, soul, and body (as we thank God we shall be)—we shall need to have the blood of Jesus applied every day. We need to go continually to Him and ask that the Holy Spirit would manifest in us the cleansing influence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—for still we do not hear and know as we should hear and know—nor are our ears opened as we should desire.

Having thus reminded you, dear Friends, of your sin, trusting we may be led to confess it with deep humility, I have now an encouraging Truth of God to tell to you this morning—a very simple one. I leave no room for any of the graces of oratory, but tell of a Truth which, to my mind, has been exceedingly refreshing. And I trust it may be to yours. It is this, that all this folly and ignorance, and obstinacy and rebellion on our part was *foreknown* by God! And notwithstanding that foreknowledge, He yet has been pleased to deal with us in a way of *mercy*.

That one Truth is the subject of this morning's discourse. We read it in these words, "For I *knew* that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb." The same Truth is stated in the fourth verse, "Because I knew that you were obstinate, and your neck was an iron sinew, and your brow brass." First, we shall endeavor to address this Truth of God to the Believer, and secondly to the unbeliever.

I. First, THE BELIEVER. The latter part of our text mentions a mournful fact, "I knew that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb." Believer, here, then, is this sorrowful Truth—you have dealt very treacherously! Does not the very mention of this bring tears into your eyes? Ah, if your heart were not hard, it would

be so. You have dealt very treacherously! Let me sound those two words again, "treacherously." "Very treacherously."

You are the beloved of Heaven, redeemed by blood, called by Divine Grace! You are preserved in Christ Jesus, accepted in the Beloved, on your way to Heaven, soon to be with God! And yet, "You have dealt very treacherously." Very treacherously with God, your best Friend! Very treacherously with Jesus, whose you are! Very treacherously with the Holy Spirit, by whom alone you can be quickened unto life eternal! That word, "treacherously," is one which a man would not like to have applied to himself in the common transactions of life. He would feel it to be very galling, and, if there were truth in it, very degrading! And yet I question whether it will produce the same effect upon our minds when it is applied to us in relation to unfaithfulness to God!

We have dealt with Him very treacherously. Come, let me refresh your memories, my Beloved in the Lord. How treacherous you and I have been to our own vows and promises when we were first converted! Do you remember the love of your espousals, that happy time, the springtide of spiritual life when the rain was over and gone, and the voice of the turtle-dove was heard in your soul? Oh, how closely did you cling to your Master then! You heard some of the older saints complaining that their souls were cleaving to the *dust*—you wondered at them—for you said within yourself, "The blessedness I know in finding Christ will continue with me forever! He shall never have to charge *me* with indifference. My feet shall never grow slow in traveling the way of His service. I will not suffer my heart to go wandering after other loves. White and ruddy is my Beloved with all human excellencies and Divine glories combined! Farewell, all you meaner creatures, for in Him is every store of sweetness ineffable. I give all up! I renounce *all* for my Lord Jesus' sake."

But now, has it been so? Charge your memory—has it been so? Conscience, what do you say to this? Alas, if Conscience speaks, it will say, "He who promised so well has performed most ill. Prayer has oftentimes been slurred—it has been short, but not sweet—it has been brief, but not fervent. Communion with Christ has been forgotten by the day, no, by the weeks together! Instead of a heavenly mind there have been carnal cares, worldly vanities and thoughts of evil. Instead of service, there has been disobedience! Instead of fervency, lukewarmness. Instead of patience, petulance. Instead of faith, confidence in an arm of flesh."

We have, if we look at what we thought we should be and at what we are, reason to confess that we have dealt very treacherously. Look at this picture, and on that look at what we vowed to be, and at what we have been—truly none among us will be able to say, "Not guilty." We must confess that we have been traitors to the Most High! This is not all. It is not merely that we have failed in *promises* which were made in a period of excitement, but we have been treacherous to obligations which were altogether apart from voluntary vows on our part. We have been treacherous to the most blessed relationships which mercy could have instituted. Know you not that you are redeemed men and women, and therefore the property of the Lord Jesus? "You are not your own," says the Apostle, "For you are bought with a price." "Forasmuch as you know that you were not

redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold but with the precious blood of Jesus.”

I ask you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, most solemnly—have you not lived as if you were your own? Have you not found yourselves full of ten spending your strength for *self* and for the world, and robbing Jesus of that which He purchased at so dear a price? Treachery to the blood of Jesus! What words shall I use in denouncing it? Words would little avail—let our penitent thoughts execrate the sin which is so surely in us! Treacherous to Your *wounds*, O Jesus! Oh forgive us, and let us not be farther guilty of it! How shameful to be treacherous to Him who never forgets us, but who this day stands with our names engraved on His breastplate before the eternal Throne.

Remember that we are soldiers of *Christ*, enlisted soldiers, sworn in for a life-long campaign. As soldiers, by cowardice, disobedience, and desertion, we have been treacherous to a very shameful degree. You know what the military penalty is for a treacherous soldier on earth! Truly, if we had been accused and condemned by court martial, and ordered to be shot dead, we should have been dealt with most righteously! We have been armed, and carried bows, and have turned back in the day of battle! When we ought to have fought we have *fled*! When we should have stood fast we have swerved! And when we might have conquered we have basely surrendered!

We have been treacherous, also, as *disciples* of Christ. We were taken into His school to be taught and trained. We engaged to sit at His feet and learn His Word. We engaged to imitate His example, to abide by His precepts. Who among us has not played the Peter and sometimes denied Him? Who among us can say that he has not forsaken Christ and fled in some sharp hour of persecution? Beloved, as disciples we are not worthy of the name! If the Master should discharge us forever from His sacred school of holy learning, and say, “You have been false friends. You have eaten bread with Me, but lifted up your heel against Me. You have only followed Me in the days of sunshine, but have gone from Me in the days of storm,” should we not have to bow our heads before Him, and say, “Lord, it is even so”?

Worst of all is the fact that we have been treacherous to our Lord in a relationship where fidelity constitutes the very essence of bliss! I mean in the *marriage* bond which exists between our soul and Christ. There is not one among us who would not blush or feel indignant if the slightest accusation could be brought against our conjugal fidelity to those who are dear to us on earth. But there is a marriage which has been consummated between us and a nobler Bridegroom than this earth can find, and here—ah, where are your blushes!—let your cheeks burn as you confess the unpardonable infidelity! We have been unfaithful to the Well-Beloved, the infinitely glorious Husband of our souls!

We are one with Him! By eternal union, one, and yet we treat Him so treacherously! Never did He have a thought towards us that was unkind. Never one faithless wandering of His holy immutable mind! But as for us, we have thought of a thousand lovers and suffered our heart to be seduced by rivals which were no more to be compared with Christ than

darkness is to be compared with the blaze of noon! It is said of Israel that although they had the manna from Heaven to eat, and God-given water to drink, and the Divine Presence resplendent in the night in the pillar of fire, and comforting by day in the shadowy pillar of cloud, yet they did remember the leeks, the garlic, and the onions of Egypt! What foolery is this, that God all glorious is to be despised and the rank ill-scented garden stuff of Egypt—leeks, and garlic, and onions—are put in the place of Jehovah! And yet such is *our* case. Thrice glorious Lord Jesus, we must confess in Your Presence that we have behaved very treacherously and gone after worthless trifles when our soul should have been set on You alone.

I shall not enlarge upon a subject so painful, because I trust I may have sufficiently revived your memories to bring you into a state of humiliation. We pass on to the second Divine statement of the text, that all this was known—"You have behaved very treacherously, and I knew that you would do so." It was all *known*. The Lord foreknew all the original corruption of His people—

***"He saw them ruined in the Fall,
Yet loved them notwithstanding all."***

It was no secret that we were transgressors from the womb. God knew it! He chose us as such. He saw us depraved, debased sons of Adam with judgment unhinged, conscience darkened, affections polluted, and wills perverted. He saw the neck as an iron sinew and the brow of brass, and yet He chose us who from birth were full of sin!

As the Lord foreknew the fountain of sin, so He knew all the streams which would gush from it. There is not a sin which a child of God has committed, or ever shall commit, which was not clearly foreseen to the prescient eye of God Most High from all eternity. You deny Him to be God if you deny that—for it enters into the very essential of Deity that He should know everything. There are no unknown things to God! He fills His own eternal now. Man only occupies the *present*, which is ever fleeting—but the past, the present, and the future are all as one moment with God. A thousand years in His sight are but as yesterday when it is past. Therefore all the actual transgressions of His people were conspicuous before His eternal mind—

***"Long before the sun's refulgent ray
Primeval shades of darkness drove."***

And all the evil *thoughts* which have gone with these evil actions were foreknown to Him. If there are mixed up with the sin some motive more vile than the crime itself. If unexpressed and unknown to man there should lurk in our breast some passion more pernicious than malice ever produced. If there should be a thought more devilish than Satan's vilest deed. If there should be known to us some cursed imagination so diabolical that we dare not whisper it in the ear of our most tender friend—yet all was well known in Heaven ages before! God knew that the root of all evil was in *your* heart and foresaw how it would shoot and spread and bear its horrid fruit.

Perhaps there is someone here who is recollecting in his mind some gross sin of fearful name into which he fell in bygone years but which he never will forget, let him live for centuries. God has forgiven him, but he

never can forgive himself. Some of the old bones of former feasts with Satan will stick in our throat. It matters not though we have humbled ourselves a hundred times for them, we still have need to say with David, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions."

Let us here again recall to our minds the fact that all our sinfulness and the development of it, and all the thoughts and evil imagination that went with that development—and all and sundry the aggravations of our sin, whatever they may have been—must clearly have been known to God. *Nothing* has come out of us which God did not know would come out of us. We have never surprised the Most High! We have never brought Him to such a position that He could say, "I did not know this." We have never gone into *any* sin of which it could be said concerning God that He did not know that it would so be worked by us.

Now I think I hear impatient minds enquiring clamorously, "what purpose is there in the preacher's repeating to us this statement? He puts it over and over again in very simple terms. What is he aiming at? Where is the edification to the people of God?" In the first place, here is the edification. Seeing that this is most certain and sure, I want you to adore the amazing Grace of God! Do you see, then, that knowing and foreknowing, God nevertheless chose us, elected us—though He saw us covered from head to foot with sin! When election's eye fell upon us we were regarded as the helpless infant in Ezekiel, cast out unwashed and unswaddled to perish in our filth! But then, viewing us as such, the Divine heart loved us! "His great love," says the Apostle, "wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins." We were, as Kent puts it—

***"Loved when a wretch defiled with sin,
At war with Heaven, in league with Hell,
A slave to every lust obscene,
Who, living, lived but to rebel."***

Do you not admire the marvelous Sovereign Grace which could have chosen you in the sight of all this? I can understand God's choosing me if He had not known my sinfulness, or if He had known only a part of it. But that He should choose me when He had an infinitely clearer sense of my sin than I ever can have is, indeed, wonderful! I do know something of my sins at times, and am horrified at them. Yet I never have had such a clear estimate of my sinfulness as God has, for the least sin is hateful to God and He looks upon it as worthy of the eternal fires of Hell! Yet we, in whom there is not only to be found little sin, but multitudes of great iniquities were chosen from before the foundation of the world!

Child of God, does not this make you admire electing love? Further remember that in consequence of your election you were redeemed! Come here and wonder at the price that was paid for you, a *traitor*! You have dealt very treacherously, and yet you were redeemed not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ—when Christ knew what you would be. What do you say to this? Does not that thought make your eyes swim in tears as you think that He who hangs bleeding there foresaw you as being unbelieving, backsliding, cold of heart, indifferent, careless, lax in prayer, and yet He said, "I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you. Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I

have loved you. Therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life"? O Redemption, how wondrously resplendent do you shine when we think how vile we are!

And then, dear Friends, remember that you have been adopted into the Lord's family as well as redeemed. Now when a man adopts a child, he supposes that he shall have an *obedient* child, that the child will be of a pliable temper and he shall be able to rule and govern it. But by-and-by, perhaps, it turns out to be a very sorry specimen of the race. It grieves the generous spirit much to experience its ingratitude to him. Then he complains to himself, "If I had known what this child would have been, I should never have adopted it. I would have looked somewhere else." See, Beloved, God *knows* what His children will be—that they will deal very disobediently—and yet for all that He says, "I will put them into the family." I might thus enumerate all the marvelous works which Divine Grace has worked in us and for us. And I think they would all shine very abundantly in the simple light of God's having known what we would be, and having done, with this knowledge, all that He has done for us.

Furthermore, I think this Truth of God is very important to us because in the light of it our security is clearly manifest. I cannot understand how we can be perplexed with the thought that God will cast us away, now we are His people, if it is true that all the sins we have committed since conversion were all present before His mind! For surely if there is a reason in our sin for God casting us away *now*, since He *foreknew* that sin, it would have been an equally valid reason for His never loving us at all!

A man undertakes mining operations in such-and-such a place. He says, "I shall dig for iron." Well, he meets with great difficulties, hard rocks to bore through and so on. He comes to this conclusion, "If I had known of this labor, and of the expense, I should not have sought for the metal here." But suppose the man is well aware of everything, and that he meets with nothing but what he foresaw? Then you may depend upon it that the man means business, and having commenced operations he will continue working till he obtains that which he seeks after.

Now our God can never be obstructed by a circumstance in us which can create surprise in His mind or throw His course out of His reckoning. He knew that we should be what we are and He determined to save us in the teeth of all our rebellion. And, my Brothers and Sisters, I am persuaded that since the Divine determination was wisely made, the cost all counted and every circumstance taken into consideration, there can be no shadow of a fear that He will ever turn aside from His eternal purpose. Has He found me, as His child, to be exceedingly willful? Will that tempt Him to drive me from the family? He knew I should be willful! It might have prevented His *beginning* to love, but, seeing He *has* begun, how can it operate to make Him cease from blessing?

Oh let this be a comfort to you, when the evil of sin weighs most heavily upon your faith! Your soul is married to Christ! Now, when a man takes a wife, it is for better or worse. And I can imagine that a man with a very base wife might say, "Had I known this woman better. Had I known how she would constantly make my house unhappy, there certainly would have been no marriage tie between us." But no husband could say that

unless he was an arrant fool, if he were able, *beforehand*, to see as in a glass all that would happen between him and his spouse in his married life! And if he, with his eyes open, made the choice, surely he could never repent it without confessing his folly in running into the snare. If he has wisely done he will stand to his engagement and prove the power of his love.

So it is between our condescending Lord and His elect. He has taken all our sins into the estimate when entering into marriage bonds with us, and He says, "I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness: and you shall know the Lord." "The Lord, the God of Israel, says that he hates putting away." He has foreknown all their faults and yet ordained them unto eternal life. Therefore are his people safe!

This truth also, I think, should tend very much to enhance our sense of the fullness which is treasured up in Christ Jesus. The Lord our God has provided for us in Christ all the necessities that can occur, for He has foreknown all these necessities. "I knew that you would be this and that." Oh, is your heart heavy this morning? God knew it would be! There is the comfort that your heart's needs are already treasured in the promise. Seek the promise! Believe it and obtain it!

Do you feel, this morning, that you never were so consciously vile as you are now? Behold the crimson Fountain is still open with all its former efficacy to wash your sins away. Never shall you come into such a position that Christ cannot aid you. No pinch shall ever come in your spiritual affairs in which Jesus Christ shall not be equal to the emergency, for it has all been foreknown and provided for in Him. A man goes on a journey across the desert, and when he has made a day's advance and pitches his tent, he discovers that he lacks many comforts and necessities which he has not brought in his baggage. "Ah," he says, "I did not foresee this. If I had this journey to do again, I should bring these things with me so necessary to my comfort."

But God has foreseen all the necessities of His poor wandering children! And when those needs occur, supplies will be found ready. "My grace is sufficient for you." "As your days, so shall your strength be." I think the Truth of God is capable of being turned in many lights, but I must leave it with you. I believe the child of God will find that, simple as the doctrine of God's foreknowledge is, it is remarkably full of comfort. Some, who know no better, harp upon the foreknowledge of our repentance and faith, and say that, "Election is according to the foreknowledge of God." A very scriptural statement, but they make a very *unscriptural* interpretation of it.

Advancing by slow degrees, they next assert that God foreknew the *faith* and the good works of His people. Undoubtedly true, since He foreknew *everything*. But then comes their groundless inference, namely, that therefore the Lord chose His people because He foreknew them to be Believers! It is undoubtedly true that foreknown excellencies are not the *causes* of election since I have shown you that the Lord foreknew all our *SIN*! And surely if there were enough virtue in our faith and goodness to constrain Him to choose us, there would have been enough *demerit* in our bad works to have constrained Him to reject us! So that if you make fore-

knowledge to operate in *one* way, you must also take it in the *other*—and you will soon perceive that it could not have been from anything good or bad in us that we were chosen, but according to the purpose of His own will, as it is written, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

Herein God's great power may be seen and His decree is made to roll, in peals of thunder over the heads of rebellious men—that they shall hear it even though they gnash their teeth at it. So, then, “it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but God that shows mercy.”

II. And now, for a short time, as God shall help me, I have to use the text in its relation to UNCONVERTED PERSONS. I shall hopefully believe, this morning, that there are some in God's House, who, although they are unsaved, are, nevertheless, sufficiently aroused to desire eternal life—who have in them at least some sense of their guilt and their danger—and are anxious, if it may be, to find mercy. The doctrine of my text may afford them some comfort.

My dear Friend, you have discovered lately the natural vileness of your heart. If at one time anyone had told you that your heart was deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, you would have been very angry. But you know it to be so now, painfully know it. You wish, sometimes, that you had never been born sooner than that this should be the case. This day you have brought before your mind, by your quickened conscience, your actual transgressions. There is no need that you should read the list, but the roll may well be written within and without with lamentations, for it is written within and without with iniquities.

In addition to this, this morning, you have a deep regret for your long delay in seeking mercy, for you have been called by the Gospel thousands of times—sometimes more than *outwardly* called—for conscience has been impressed and aroused, but your goodness “has been as the morning cloud, and as the early dew.” You have quenched the Spirit of God. You have resisted frequently the better volitions of your own spirit. You feel sorrowful that this is the case. And this morning you are willing to acknowledge that there have been special aggravations in your case—you have sinned against more light than usual—against more expostulations than ordinary. You have sinned with less excuse, with more fearful pertinacity. All this you acknowledge.

Now, my dear Hearers, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is sent to you in the state in which you now are—to you lost by nature, ruined by practice, and undone in a thousand ways! The Gospel says to you, even to *you*, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” Now, in order that you may get a hold on that Gospel despite the difficulties which your sins would raise, I would remind you of the Truth of God of which we have been speaking. All these sins, delays, aggravations and rebellions of yours—they were all foreknown to God! Therefore, since He has sent the Gospel to you, I pray you be not slow to accept it, since it is not possible that your sins, whatever they may be, can at all militate against the fact that if you believe and receive the Gospel you shall be saved!

Let me remind you that if God had not intended to save men upon believing—if their sins were so great that He did not intend to save them if

they trusted in Jesus—why then, since He foreknew these things He would never have planned the plan of salvation at all! If He stops *now* and refuses to be gracious, why did He not stay His hand in the very first stage of the business? You would not devise a scheme, surely, unless you meant to go further. Who sits down to make plans of a house unless he has some notion of carrying them out? If God intended no mercy to such a sinner as you are, why did He devise a plan which is suitable to such a sinner as you are? Why invent a scheme by which a rebel might be saved if He foreknew that on account of sin that rebel never could be pardoned?

Let me ask you, do you think God would have gone farther—gone to the vast expense of providing a Savior—if really the Gospel were null and void? Jesus Christ hangs on the Cross to die for sinners—sinners whose sins were all foreknown! Do not say, therefore, that God does not intend to save, for if He had not intended to save, He would have stopped before He gave His Son for a sacrifice and nailed Him to the tree! “Ah, but,” you say, “mine is a particular and special case.” Then I remind you that since God had known all that, if He intended to leave *your* case out, why did He not say so in the Bible? If this were something new that had arisen since the Scriptures were written, then I could understand that yours might be exceptional! But nothing is new with the Most High.

Now, if the Lord intended to leave out a case He would have mentioned it, and we should have found somewhere in the Bible, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature except such-and-such a one.” I do not find it so. “Preach the Gospel to every creature.” Here it is, “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved.” He makes not an exception. He bids us go and proclaim it east, west, north, and south. “Ah, but,” you say, “still mine is a very special difficulty.” Yes, but I tell you again your God *foreknew*, and you may depend upon it, He provided for it in the plan of salvation. He says, “If you believe, you shall be saved.” He says not, “Unless you have committed this or that.” He says, “If you believe.” And God is not true unless He saves every soul that believes in Jesus.

Though a man had damned himself a thousand times with the blackest filth that ever came from Hell, yet, if he believes in Jesus, God must be true to His solemn promise! It is not possible that the sin of man could justify God in flying from His promise or denying Himself. He declares full pardon to every soul that trusts in the Lord Jesus—I pray you slander not my Lord and Master by saying that this or that could make Him take His words back, or break His Covenant in Christ Jesus. Your blasphemies—He knew what oaths you would swear. Your lusts and evil deeds—He knew into what mire you would plunge. The imaginations of your wicked heart—He knew them! Yes, they have been before His eternal mind every moment since the world began and before it.

He knew that you would be a sinner—He never ceased to know your sins. All things are present before God at every time and your aggravating sins have been before God's mind at every moment of eternity, if we may use the expression. And yet, notwithstanding that, He says, “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” God knew YOU, Sinner! He did not fall upon the peni-

tent's neck and kiss him, and think him clean and pure and chaste while He kissed him. He knew that he had spent his living with harlots. God knew that he went to feed with the swine, and yet He took him into His house and heart and fed him daintily!

He knew what you have done in secret, in the darkness of the night, in the chamber where none may follow you, in the inner chamber of your soul where you have rebelled worse than in your outward actions. He knew it all, and yet He says, "Let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

I do humbly and earnestly trust that the Lord may lead some sinner—whose sins He has so clearly discerned—to perceive the suitability of Christ to his own case and to close with the proclamation of mercy, and to say—

***"I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter, pardon gives.
I can but perish if I go.
I am resolved to try,
For if I stay away,
I know I must forever die.
But if I die with mercy sought,
When I the King have tried
This were to die delightful
As sinner never dies."***

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MERCY'S MASTER MOTIVE NO. 1041

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 17 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For My name’s sake will I defer My anger, and for My praise will I refrain for you, that I cut you not off. Behold, I have refined you, but not with silver; I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction. For My own sake, even for My own sake, will I do it: for how should My name be polluted? And I will not give My Glory unto another.”
Isaiah 48:9-11.***

THE people of Israel in all their generations were full of evil. Those who came out of Egypt were a rebellious people. For 40 years they multiplied their provocations of the Lord in the wilderness till, at last, they all found a grave in the desert. The generation following were stiff-necked and rebellious like their fathers and they continually went astray after false gods. Though by the good hand of the Lord they were settled in a goodly land which flowed with milk and honey, yet they forgot the Covenant and sinned grievously. Though they were smitten and bruised for their idolatries, yet their successors did the same. Whether they were ruled by the high priest, or governed by the judges, or presided over by a king, it little mattered—they still started aside—they were never to be depended upon.

Idolatry and rebellion against God were ingrained in their nature. This sin was in their bones and it would come out in their flesh. At last the Lord, whose Glory tabernacled in Zion, appeared to grow weary of keeping house with such ungracious children and unfaithful servants. And so He broke up the house altogether—He gave up His Temple to be destroyed, the whole land to be ravaged and the inhabitants to be carried away captive into Babylon. The Lord was angry with His heritage and therefore He gave His holy and beautiful house to the fire and the carved works thereof to be broken down with hammers—while the whole Jewish state was utterly shattered and of the kingdom not one stone was left upon another that was not cast down.

Yet such is the immutability of God in His affection that He had not long sent His people into captivity before His heart yearned towards them again! He cast His eye over to Babylon and saw His chosen sitting in sadness by the far-off rivers, hanging their silent harps upon the willows and weeping at the remembrance of Zion. And He said unto Himself, “I have chosen this people of old, and I have loved their fathers, and I have made them to be people unto Me above all the people that are upon the face of the earth. Therefore again I will have mercy upon them.” Then the Lord looked to find a reason for mercy in their past conduct but could find none.

He looked at their present character for a plea and found none—for even while they were under the rod they exhibited hardness of heart so

that even the eyes of Mercy could see no reason for favor in them. What should the Lord do? He would not act without a reason—there must be something to justify His mercy and show the wisdom of His way. Since there is none in the offender, where shall Mercy find her plea? Behold the inventiveness of eternal love! The Lord falls back upon Himself and within Himself finds a reason for His Grace. “For My name’s sake will I defer My anger, and for My praise will I refrain for you, that I cut you not off. For My own sake, even for My own sake, will I do it: for how should My name be polluted? And I will not give My Glory unto another.”

Finding a motive in His own Glory which was bound up in the existence of Israel, and would have been compromised by their destruction, He turned unto them in love and kindness—Cyrus wrote the decree of emancipation, the Israelites came back to the land and once again they sat, every man, under his own vine and fig tree, and ate the good of the land! So far we give the *historical* meaning of the passage. We shall now use the text as an illustration of Divine love in other cases, for from one deed of Grace we may learn all.

As God dealt with His people Israel after the flesh, in the same manner he deals with His people Israel after the *spirit*. His mercies towards His saints are to be seen as in a mirror in His wondrous loving kindness towards the seed of Abraham. I shall take the text to illustrate first, the conversion of the sinner. Secondly, the reclaiming of the backslider. And I pray, dear Friends, most earnestly, that while I speak God may move with His Spirit upon your hearts so that many of you may follow me, sincerely feeling that which I describe. While I am speaking may your souls be silently saying, “Yes, we know what that means. We have felt it. We gladly yield assent thereto, for we know it to be so.”

I. First, then, in reference to THE CONVERSION OF THE SINNER. Let us suppose a case. It is God’s will to save yonder sinner. He has ordained him to eternal life and predestinated him to be conformed to the image of His dear Son. In due time the Lord begins to deal with the man in a way of Grace, and how does He find him? This shall be our first point this morning. He finds him so utterly ruined and depraved that in him there is no argument for mercy, no plea for Grace. I will suppose that such a soul is here this morning, awakened into a perception of his true condition and craving for pardon.

Soul, can you, upon calm reflection, find in yourself some good thing which may be pleaded in extenuation of guilt, or as a reason for forgiveness? What has been your past conduct? Are there redeeming features in it? Alas, no! You must at once confess that your neck has been an iron sinew and your brow brass. You have been obstinate in sin—against many warnings, entreaties and chastisements you have persisted in it. Neither Law nor Gospel, Providence nor conscience has sufficed to turn you from your perverse ways. Your neck would not bend before either the terrors or the mercies of God! You have heard sermons which seemed enough to melt the heart of a stone but you have been unmoved. You have seen others bowing themselves before the Lord Jesus Christ with holy joy, and yet you have done no such thing, but have been exceedingly stout against the Lord of Hosts.

Looking back upon the past, also, you have to confess great impudence in your dealing with God. Your brow has been brass. You have gone directly from His House to sin. He claims but one day in a week to Himself but you have robbed Him of that. It may be you have used His name in common jests, if not worse. You have dared to employ it profanely. You have scoffed at His people. You have derided everything that has been good, and in looking back you are obliged to confess that there are thousands of reasons why God should not refrain from His anger, and overwhelming reasons why He should cut you off! And you cannot find so much as one single argument why He should be pleased to spare and save you.

Every man who is really brought to Christ is first stripped of all on which he placed reliance as a ground of hope and made to see that in himself there is only guilt deserving condemnation, and rebellion demanding punishment. There is no quality which can enlist Divine sympathy or secure, by its own excellence, Divine regard. In us, by nature, there are no beauties of character, no charms of virtue or loveliness of conduct to win the Almighty heart. We were called "transgressors from the womb," and rightly were we named. O awakened Soul, where are you this morning? I wish I could speak with you face to face, and hear you say, "How can I expect Divine goodness to spare such a one as I am, for, in addition to all the other sins, I have behaved very treacherously towards the Lord my God.

"Not long ago I was laid upon a sick bed, and then I repented, or thought I did. And I sought God very vehemently, and I vowed unto the Lord that if I were raised up again, I would not rest till I had sought His face. But I left my couch, and my repentance died on my sick bed. No sooner had I recovered than I returned to my sin—as a dog to his vomit—and as the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. After this, how can I have the face to go to God again? I lied to Him! I flattered Him with my tongue, and my heart was not sound in His ways. My goodness was gone as the dew from the grass or the meteor from the sky."

Yes, poor Soul, this confession is true, and it proves, beyond all question, that no reason for mercy can be drawn from your past conduct when you have been under the rod. Why should you be struck any more? You will revolt more and more. Chastisement is lost upon you—your nature is hopeless! Do what He may with you, you will not turn unto the Lord. Ah, and I think I hear you say, "Neither can I promise to God anything as to the future. I dare not say to Him, today, have mercy upon me, and then I will be very different from what I have been. No, my heart is too treacherous for me to trust it. I might sooner promise what the sea will be tomorrow than pledge my future character. Changeable as the winds that blow from every quarter of the sky is my nature as fickle and false.

"I seem today resolved for good. Tomorrow I may be resolved for evil, and what I vowed to do most vehemently will never become fact. I dare not say that in the future I can see any reason why God should have mercy upon me." Oh, how glad my heart is when I can meet with a person who confesses this to be his case! It is a very sad difficulty to be in—a very painful one when the soul, at last, abandons all arguments, extenuations,

and apologies, and says—"Lord, I am guilty. I stand at Your Judgment Seat and I can say nothing but guilty. You are clear when You judge. You are just when You condemn. And if You should put on the black cap, and say, 'Prisoner at the bar, have you anything to say why sentence should not be speedily executed upon you?' I could not even stammer out an apology, but must stand speechless before my Judge.—

***"My lips, with shame, my sins confess
Against Your Law, against your Grace.
Lord, should Your judgment grow severe,
I am condemned, But you are clear.
Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
I must pronounce You just in death.
And, if my soul were sent to Hell,
Your righteous Law approves it well."***

In the text I beg you, especially, to take note of our second thought, namely, that God Himself finds the reason for His mercy, and, O you heavens hear it and be astonished! O earth, He finds it in Himself! "For My name's sake will I defer My anger, and for My praise will I refrain for you, that I cut you not off." Here is the drift of the thought—the Lord is a patient God and determines to make His patience glorious! When all was darkness the Lord said, "Let there be light!" and light was—thus He glorified His *power*. When all was chaos Jehovah brought fair order out of grim confusion and so glorified His *wisdom*. So in the sinner's case the Lord sees a wretch who has provoked Him to His face for 30, 40, 50, 60, perhaps 70 or 80 years! And as the Lord desires an opportunity to glorify His *patience*, He finds it ready to His hand.

Having permitted that sinner to live when he scoffed at the Gospel, scorned the Atonement and rejected the Redeemer, the Lord, at last, crowns His longsuffering by blotting out his sins and forgiving all his misdeeds! And all creatures stand amazed! And men, and angels, and devils in astonishment cry out, "Who is a God like unto You, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin?" Who but the God of boundless Grace could have borne with such a provoking sinner and then have taken him into His own bosom as His child?

God also would illustrate in the salvation of a sinner not only His patience, but His Sovereign and abundant *mercy* towards sinners. If the Lord were to select, this morning, as the object of His Grace some soul possessing merit—if such were the case—if He were to choose some soul in whom there was a claim for pity, (of course I am supposing an impossibility), then there would be little Glory to His Grace! But, when casting His Divine eyes of compassion all round this assembly, He selects a soul that is bad throughout—black without and black within—a soul that has laid soaking in sin like the wool in the scarlet dye till the color is ingrain, then He magnifies the Glory of His mercy!

When He looks upon a wretch who confesses, either by his silence or by his tearful speech, that he deserves His wrath, and says, "Your sins which are many are all forgiven you—I have laid them on the Savior's head, go and sin no more, your transgressions are blotted out—I have purchased you unto Myself by the death of My Son," oh, then, how the sinner's heart melts with gratitude, love, and wonder in the Presence of such a God! The Lord is loved much in that heart which feels that much has been forgiven!

Thus God's Glory begins to be known and soon it spreads abroad. The neighbors and friends and kinsfolk of the pardoned penitent say unto one another, "Was it ever done after this sort before? Have you ever heard the like of this? Here is this man saved—this man who lay at Hell's dark door and seemed only fit to be cast into the Pit!" Oh, how the shouts go up to high Heaven from the watchful angels who joy over penitents, "Glory be unto almighty Grace." Now, listen, Man, once more—God can, by saving such a one as you are, not only glorify His patience and mercy but display His power! It is evident that it is not an easy task to conquer you. You have been like Leviathan whose heart is hard as a stone. Yes, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone. "The sword of him that lays at Him cannot hold: the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon; the arrow cannot make Him flee; He laughs at the shaking of a spear."

You have laughed at all men who would convince you, and even the thunders of God's Providence have not alarmed you. Yet now the Lord intends to show what His Almighty Grace can do. Now will He, by a miracle of gracious power, turn the lion to a lamb, the raven to a dove. The conversion of little sinners, if there are such, would but little honor Him. But if they are desperately set on mischief, there is room for the eternal and ever blessed God to display the Glory of His name! For His name's sake will He do it—even for His own sake will He do it—that men may see what His patience, mercy, and power can accomplish!

Truly the Lord's love does accomplish great moral wonders. Forgiveness, even among men, is often more potent than punishment. I have heard it related of a soldier at Woolwich, that he had frequently been drunk and disorderly. And, though he had been very frequently imprisoned and otherwise punished for his offenses, he was incorrigible. On one occasion he had incurred the severe penalty of the lash and expected to receive it. He had no excuse to offer, and did not pretend to make any. He was sullen and obdurate. At last the commanding officer said to him, "We cannot do anything with you. We have imprisoned you. We have dogged you. Yet we cannot improve you. There is only one thing we have never done with you and that we are going to try—we forgive you."

The culprit broke down at once. Hard as he was, this new treatment overcame him. That word, "You are fully forgiven," broke him down far more than the nine-throated cat—he was never an offender again. Many a soul that has been very obstinate against God, even to persecuting the followers of the Lord Jesus—when the Lord has, by the Holy Spirit, said in his heart, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, I gave My Son to die for you. I laid your sins on Him, and now I freely forgive you, and take you to be My child, My well-beloved"—Oh, the heart dissolves and the rebellious will surrenders—

***"I yield—by mighty love subdued,
Who can resist its charms?
And throw myself, by wrath pursued,
Into my Savior's arms."***

God grant that in many and many a case this may be true at this very moment!

But, now, it may be that a soul here present is saying, "Well, I can see that God can thus find a motive for mercy in Himself, when there is none in the sinner, but why is it that the Lord is chastening me as He is?" Possibly you are sickly in body or have been brought low in estate and are grievously depressed in mind. God now, in our text, goes on to explain His dealings with you, that you may not have one hard thought of Him. It is true He has been smiting you, but it has been with a purpose and in measure. "I have refined you, but not with silver." You have been put into the furnace of affliction, but not—note the, "but"—"but not with silver."

Now, when silver is refined it requires the most vehement heat of all metals. God has not brought upon you the severest troubles. You have been chastised, but not as you might have been, nor as you deserved to have been. You have been made to suffer, but His strokes have been fewer than your crimes and lighter than your guilt! You are now bowed down and depressed, but you are not quite without some rays of hope, especially now that you have heard the glad sound of a free-Grace Gospel. You have been "refined"—that was God's objective—but the process has been slight. It is "not with silver."

The Lord has not dealt with you as men do with silver. What do they do with it? They put it into a fire that the dross may be consumed and the silver may be made pure. Now, if you, poor Sinner, had been put into such a fire as that, you would have been utterly destroyed for in you there was no silver at all! As you are by nature not at all like silver, the heat of a silver furnace would quite consume you. True it is that now His Grace has created a vein of silver in your heart, but He does not yet intend to put you to extreme tests, for your weak Graces would fail in the process. What He has sent to you has been with a view to awaken and to quicken—to take away your self-confidence and false peace—and so in a measure to refine you. But He does not depend for the refinement of either you or His people upon the furnace of affliction—He has other and more effectual modes of purification!

The furnace of trouble is often used as a mode of refining, but after all it is only a *means*—the real refining fire is the Holy Spirit. The true purification lies in the blood of Him who sits as the Refiner. Remember it is not said that trouble will purify the sons of Levi, but, "HE is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap." And, "He," not with trouble but by Himself, "shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver." Here suffering would only make a man more full of dross. Apart from Divine Grace, affliction has no good effect. If we are not sanctified by the Eternal Spirit when in the furnace of affliction—and if the precious blood of Jesus is not applied to our soul—all the distress and grief in the world will not purify us.

And so, poor Soul, God has worked in your trouble, but He does not mean to continue to vex you until your soul is perfectly refined, for that would be more than you could bear, even could it be possible. No, no, He will put away your sin by better means. Behold the precious blood! You have not to suffer for your sins, for Christ has suffered for them in your place! You are to be refined, but not by processes of a fiery character. Behold the sacred water from the side of your Redeemer, for that will take

your filthiness away! Behold the Eternal Spirit waiting to renew your soul—that will effectually remove your dross! The Spirit has refined you, in a measure, by what you have suffered—by awakening and convincing you—but the *true* refining shall come to you in another way. Therefore be of good courage! Thank God for what you have felt, but be not bowed down with abject terror as though your trials would quite consume you. They shall be both mitigated in degree, and useful in result.

And now, notice the next thing—the Lord declares that the time of trial is the chosen season for revealing His love to you—“I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction.” This verse does not teach that God’s choice of any man begins in time, or begins when he is under affliction. Oh, no! The choice of God is without beginning, it is eternal! God sees the things that shall be as though they were—everything is *now* with Him. But it often happens that the time in which God *reveals* His choice and *manifests* His electing love to a soul is when that soul is almost consumed with trouble. And now, dear Hearer, I must again picture *you*, for my object is not to preach to the winds, but to preach right into your soul!

You have been brought very low of late. You have been like a field plowed, harrowed, cross-plowed, scarified. There is no rest for you and you can plead no reason why God should give you rest. You are brought into abject distress of spirit. Now is the time when the Lord reveals His love to such as you are! I never knew His love when I strutted abroad in the bravery of my self-righteousness, and I never could have known it. I never heard Him say, “I have chosen you,” when I fared sumptuously every day at the table of my own self-sufficiency. I never heard Him say, “My son that was dead is alive again, he that was lost is found,” when I had still the gold in my purse and was spending my living riotously.

But, I will tell you when I heard Him say, “I have chosen you”—it was when I came fresh from the swine trough with my belly aching because I could not fill it with husks! It was when, with my filthy rags about me, and my soul all sinking in despair and with no argument upon my lip except this—“Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before You, and am no more worthy to be called Your son.” Then, for the first time, I heard Him say, “I have chosen *you* in the furnace of affliction.” It is when we are down to the very lowest, when we are brought to bankruptcy and spiritual beggary—when we lie at Christ’s feet as though we were dead—it is *then* He puts His hand upon us, and says, “Fear not, I am the First and the Last.” It is then He anoints us with the oil of joy. It is then He clothes us with the garments of salvation. It is then we hear the voice of Eternal Love saying, “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.”

But note, once more, before I leave the sinner’s case, that lest the soul should forget it, the Lord repeats again the point He began with, and unveils the motives of His Grace once more. What is the 11th verse but the echo of the ninth—“For My own sake, even for My own sake, will I do it: for how should My name be polluted? And I will not give My Glory unto another.” God cannot save you, Sinner, for your own sake—you are not worth the saving! If you are cast away upon the dunghill of oblivion forever, it is what you deserve. You are not worthy of God’s notice—you

are a mere speck in His great universe and having dared to sin against Him, it is as fit that He should destroy you, as it is fit that a venomous reptile should be crushed beneath your foot.

Yet the Lord declares that He will refrain from wrath. He will have mercy upon *you*, oh, broken Heart, for His own sake! Do you observe why it is, “for His own sake,” namely, that His name “may not be polluted.” Now, suppose a sinner shall come to Him and cry, “Lord, I am a guilty soul. I have no merit to plead, but I appeal to Your mercy! I trust in Your love. You have said that through Christ Jesus You will forgive sinners. Lord, I trust in Your dear Son! Save me for His sake!” Now if He does not save you—we speak with reverence and bated breath—but we use His own words, His name will be “polluted,” because then it will be said, “Here is a soul that came to the Lord and He cast it out, and yet He said, ‘him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.’ Here is a poor sinner that rested on the love and mercy of God in Christ Jesus and yet was confounded, whereas He promised that they that trust in the Lord should never be confounded, nor ashamed, world without end.”

I know this morning that my hope is fixed on Christ Jesus alone. If I am ever lost I shall be a soul in Hell resting upon Christ, and do you think that can ever be? Will they not publish it in the streets of Tophet—here is a soul that dared believe in Jesus, but Jesus repelled him as presumptuous! Here is a poor soul who cried—

***“If I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there,”***

and yet this soul is damned!” Why, surely such an one would be carried in triumph through the blazing streets of Hell, and held up as an insult to the God of Mercy as a proof that He had not kept His Word! O Soul, He will save you for His own sake lest His name should be “polluted,” for He is jealous of His name! He will never permit it to be truthfully said, even by a devil, that He ever broke a promise, even to a devil. If you will go to Him in Christ Jesus, though you are all but damned already, and feel that your death warrant is signed—He will not, He cannot reject you! Throw yourself at the foot of the Cross, and say, “Lord I believe, help You my unbelief,” and God will never tarnish His name by your destruction.

And then He adds, “And I will not give My Glory unto another.” If a soul should perish while trusting in the blood of Christ, the Glory of God would go over to Satan! It would be proven that Satan had overcome the truthfulness of God, or the power of God, or the mercy of God—that at last evil had proved more mighty than good—and sin had abounded over Grace! Can it ever be that goodness shall find a difficulty which it cannot overcome, a Red Sea it cannot divide, or a Lebanon which it cannot climb? No! Never, while God is God! Oh, that I had before me the biggest sinner that ever lived! I would like to look, this morning, into the face of a criminal who has piled up mountains on mountains of sins, defied his God, and derided the laws of his country. A ruffian red-handed with murder and dripping with lust—for I would glory in saying to him—“All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. Come but to God’s arms through Jesus Christ His Son, and you shall find Him a God ready to forgive, and abounding in loving kindness. He retains not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy.”

I do not know how to preach the Gospel more fully than I am now doing. I am laboring to set before downcast sinners an open door, and to show them how effectually Grace has removed every hindrance out of the way by basing its arguments of love upon the *name* of God, and not upon the *merit* of the creature.

II. Thus much to the sinner. We shall now speak OF THE RECLAIMING OF THE BACKSLIDER. Backsliding professor, your case is more evidently meant in the text even than that of the sinner, for God was speaking to His own people, Israel, in these remarkable words! Now, *your* crime, if anything, is a more censurable one than that of the sinner! I can see no more reason why God should have mercy upon you than upon the ungodly. Indeed, I see *more* reason for punishing you, for you have made a profession and belied it.

“Hear you this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, which swear by the name of Jehovah, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth or in righteousness.” That is your character—you have taken Christ’s name upon you—I cannot say altogether that you have been deceived and a deceiver, but your actions look as if you have been. You have gone aside from the faith and turned aside from your Lord. You did know something of His love, and, unless awfully deceived, you once rested on the Lord Jesus. Shall I publish abroad your guilt? How has the much fine gold become dim? How has the blazing sun of your profession been altogether eclipsed?

You have transgressed in opposition to light and knowledge—you knew more than the sinner and yet you have sinned as he did—you knew something of the sweets of Christ’s table but you have joined yourself to the table of devils. And you have been very perverse about it, too, for Providence has dealt sharply with you, but you would not come back to your God. Your neck has been an iron sinew and your brow has been brass! Alas, how treacherously have you dealt with the Lord your God! No sin is so destructive to married love as that of adultery, yet the Lord puts the backslider’s case on the same footing in the third chapter of the book of Jeremiah.

“They say, if a man put away his wife, and she goes from him, and becomes another man’s, shall he return unto her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted? But you have played the harlot with many lovers. Yet return again to Me, says the Lord.” Quibble not at the imagery for its coarseness, but rejoice in its matchless Grace! Read on in that same chapter, from the 12th verse to the end, and note the verse, “Turn unto Me, O backsliding children; for I am married unto you, says the Lord.” But why should the Lord bid His chosen nation come back? Not because she deserved to be received again! Not because in Heaven, or earth, or Hell there could be found *any* reason why she should, for her own sake, be restored!

Her sins said, “Put her away. Put her away! Shall the holy God have anything to do with such an one as this?” Justice said, “Put her away, the Law demands it.” Holiness said, “Put her away, how shall she come into God’s House?” But His infinite Love replied, “The Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away.” He will not hear of a divorce, and again

He cries, "Return, you backsliding children, I am married unto you, says the Lord." Backslider, you see there is no reason for God's Grace that can be found in your person or in your character—but it *is* found in the Divine heart. I must go over the same ground again. "For my name's sake will I defer My anger, and for My praise will I refrain for you, that I cut you not off."

The Lord has a reason for not cutting off backsliders, and it is this—first, His many promises must be kept in which He has declared that His chosen shall not perish, neither shall they utterly depart from Him. Is not this the very tenor of the Covenant? "If My children forsake My Law, and walk not in My judgments. If they break My statutes, and keep not My commandments, then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless by My loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail." His gifts and calling are without repentance—they are irrevocable! It shall not be said that His promise was ever revoked or broken! He has made a Covenant with our Lord Jesus, and that Covenant is sealed with blood!

Do you not know the sum and substance of it? "I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." Thus the faithfulness of God to His promises would be questioned if any of His people finally apostatized. God's Grace is also interested in it for if, after all your provocations, God were to say, "I have given you up, I will never deal with you in Grace again," then it would be said that God's Grace had a limit—that it could not abound over sin—and after all was a mutable thing. Can it be that forgiving Grace should punish the forgiven? That adopting Grace could unchild the child? That wrath should dismember the body of Christ and mangle the Redeemer, to be avenged upon the backslider?

Oh, no! Such is Jehovah's Truth that He will keep every promise to the letter. Such is His Grace that His people shall never sin to such an extent but what His Grace will overtop it all. And such is His immutability that though we believe not, yet He abides faithful—He cannot deny Himself. Has He said, and will He not do it? Has He commanded, and shall it not come to pass? Come back, Backslider! God has not changed towards you! Return at once to Him! His heart is still full of love for you. Return unto Him, for still does He say, "How can I set you as Admah, how can I make you as Zeboim? My repentings are kindled. I will not destroy him, for I am God and not man."

There is a free course for mercy to those who have wandered furthest—when God finds a motive for Grace in His own name and in His own praise! Why, do you not see, poor trembling Backslider, that if God forgives you, and you once get to Heaven you will be among the heartiest of Heaven's choristers? I mean to sing the loudest of any if I ever enter the celestial seats, for I shall owe so much to the sweet love and Grace of God! But David and other great backsliders will also love most intensely! It is amazing Grace which not only saves at first, but restores the wandering sheep after it has gone astray. Oh, you Christians who, by Divine Grace,

are kept walking with God—you have much to praise Him for! You ought to bless Him every day you live!

But you who have fallen and gone aside—if the Lord brings you back you must henceforth render *double* diligence and *sevenfold* love! You must be like the woman who broke the alabaster box over Christ's head! You must feel that you cannot do enough for that dear Lord and Savior who saw you in all your rebellions and yet loved you! Loving you because He would love you—not because you were lovely, but because He would love you—not because you were deserving, but because He would love you! This ought to make you the very choice of Christians! This should place you in the front of the champions of the Lord in the day of battle!

Please observe that God, having thus declared the reason of His love to the backslider, goes on to tell him that the present sufferings which he is now enduring as the result of his backslidings should be mitigated. "I have refined you, but not with silver; I have put you into the fire, but I have not blown the heat to such an extreme degree that your sins should be melted from you—that would be a greater heat than any soul could bear. I have refined you, that was necessary—but not as silver—that would have been destructive to you." You say, "All His waves and billows have gone over me." Not so—you know not what all God's waves and billows might be, for there is a depth infinitely deeper than any you have ever seen.

The deeps of Hell are far more horrible than anything you can imagine! If you are in the furnace today, do not repine, do not say like Cain, "My punishment is greater than I can bear," but rather say, "I will kiss the rod and bless my Father's name that He allows me to live at all, and now bids me to return to Him. I will thank Him for the rod—it is the token of the Father's love to His child." Then comes His next word—"I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." that is, as if he said, "I will renew my election of you." It was never revoked, but now it shall be more manifestly declared! God has looked at you in prosperity and He has seen you treacherously forgetting Him. You prospered in business and you grew very worldly—God could see no beauty in your face. You had your children about you and your wife made you glad—but you lived, almost, without prayer, without reading the Scriptures.

God, therefore, hid His face from you. Now, however, your affairs are at a low ebb and you once again pray. The neglected Bible is brought down again. Now the seat that could be left unoccupied half the Lord's-Day is always filled by you. Now you begin saying, "My God, my God, have mercy on me." Hear this for your comfort—the Lord never thinks His children's faces more lovely than when they are wet with tears! When repentance defiles the face before men it beautifies it before God! When the eyes grow red with sorrow they are lovely unto the Lord. Do you beat upon your breast and say, "God be merciful to me, a sinner"? Then know that no sound of labor is so sweet to God as the sound of beaten breasts! No music has more melody in it than the sigh of a broken heart!

Brothers and Sisters, all of you, though you are not open backsliders perhaps you may be worse than those who are. I know in my own soul I never feel safe except when I stand as a sinner at the foot of the Cross.

And though I desire to grow in Grace, and to be a saint, and would use language suitable to a child of God, and would not keep my hands off a single Covenant privilege that belongs to me as one with Christ—yet for all that, while I am in this flesh—I feel my happiest moments are those lowly times when I feel that I am nothing and that Jesus is my All in All! God chooses His people over again when He sees them contrite in the furnace of soul-affliction.

When He sees them, how He loves them! When He sees them down He lifts them up! When He sees them withered in themselves then He makes them flourish! When they are nothing, His love is everything! When they are swollen with pride and self-reliance, He turns His face away from them—but to His dear, broken-hearted children He is all kindness. And this is His reason—“How shall My name be polluted? And I will not give My Glory unto another.” If one poor Believer who is pining after Jesus' face were forgotten by Him, His name would be polluted—where would be His immutability? And then again, Satan would glory over that child of God and say, “I have dragged a child of God down to Hell!”

Christ's blood would suffer dishonor, for it would be said that a soul was punished though Christ was punished in its place, and that were to obliterate the Atonement and to make the Substitution of Christ to be of no effect. If it could once be said, “Here is a spirit that God justified and yet condemned it,” where were God's immutability? There were no God at all! He were a changeable being, and not Jehovah! If it could be said, “Here is one that was espoused unto Christ in righteousness—a soul that was one with Jesus in vital union—yet He suffered this sheep of His flock to perish! He allowed this jewel of His crown to be cast away!” If it could be said, truthfully, that He was too weak and allowed this member of His body to rot into corruption—God's Glory *could* be given to another—and He would not be what He now is!

Oh, Beloved, let us, one and all, whether we are unsaved sinners or backsliders, or may suspect ourselves to be either the one or the other—let us go to the dear fountain of His blood, whose open veins are the gates of healing to us! Let us go again and touch the hem of His garment and be made whole! And together let us rejoice that He, for His mercy's sake can save us, and magnify Himself by the deed of mercy! Amen.

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GOD COMFORTING HIS PEOPLE

NO. 3012

**A SERMON
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***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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***“The LORD has comforted His people.”
Isaiah 49:13.***

THE JOY of the Prophet was too great for him to give adequate expression to it with his own solitary tongue and, therefore, he would have even the angels of God and the redeemed from among men in Heaven to praise the Lord for His super-abounding mercy! He would also have the redeemed upon earth and all the works of God's hands take up the joyful strain of praise to the Most High! And he would have even the great mountainous masses of inanimate Nature find tongues with which to express the greatness of God's loving kindness and tender mercy in having comforted His people!

And, when we come to think of it rightly, we see at once that it is a theme for wonder, worthy of the consideration of Heaven and of earth that ever the Infinite God should stoop so low as to comfort finite and fallible creatures such as we are. Had He nothing better to do than that? Were there no more worlds to be created? Were there no other deeds of power and glory to be performed that He must come to this poor earth to comfort the sick, the sad and the sorrowing? To speak comfortably even to those who had rebelled against Him and to give them peace and joy when their penitent hearts were breaking in earnest longing for His pardoning mercy? That is a wonderful passage in the 147th Psalm—“He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. He counts the number of the stars. He calls them all by their names.” He is truly great in the majesty of His power, but He is equally great in the condescending Character of His love and, as “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” when Jehovah's great creative works were worked, let them not be slack in their music when His condescending works are worked—when, from the highest heavens, He stoops to the couch of deepest woe to lift us up from our sins and sorrows by the power of His eternal love!

Taking the text somewhat out of its immediate context and speaking simply upon these six words, “The Lord has comforted His people,” we see that in the first place, *the Lord has a people*. Secondly, *they are a*

people who need to be comforted. And thirdly, *the Lord gives them the comfort that they need.*

I. First, then, it is clear, from the very wording of our text, that THE LORD HAS A PEOPLE. Isaiah does not say, in general terms that the Lord has comforted the children of men as a whole, but he says, “the Lord has comforted *His people.*” Here is, as Dr. Watts says—

**“A garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground!
A little spot, enclosed by Grace
Out of the world’s wide wilderness”—**

and it is concerning this particular portion of the human race—selected and elected by God—that the Prophet was moved by the Holy Spirit to write, “the Lord has comforted His people.”

Observe, in the first place, that the children of God are “His people” in this sense, that they *enjoy His special love.* Never let us doubt the universal benevolence of God. Let us hold it as a fundamental Doctrine that “the Lord is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works.” And let us firmly believe that if any man shall be consigned to carnal misery, it will be because it is just that he should so suffer and he has brought his terrible doom upon his own head, for, as the Apostle Peter tells us, God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Yet, we must never forget that inside this universal love, there is a private, secret, distinguishing, discriminating love which is set only upon those whom God chose, before the foundation of the world, to be His own peculiar people. Paul writes to his son, Timothy, “We trust in the living God who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe.” And Moses, long before, was Inspired to write, “The Lord’s portion is His people.” There is something peculiarly personal in His affection for them. He is kind and generous to all His creatures, but He is lavishly liberal to His own people. And Paul bids us imitate him when he says, “Let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

The Lord, then, has a people whom He regards with a special love which is not shed abroad in the hearts of others. These people He set apart for Himself from eternity. They are a people who are near and dear unto Him, to whom He says, by the pen of the Apostle Peter, “You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

They are not only God’s people because He has thus chosen them unto Himself, but because, having fallen into sin, they are now His by *particular and special redemption.* Again let me remind you that the Scriptures plainly teach us that the Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ has a universal bearing and it seems to me that those who limit the value of the Atonement do most seriously err from the faith. I believe the

Sacrifice of Jesus Christ was so Infinite that if there had been ten thousand worlds full of sinners to have been redeemed, it was amply sufficient to have redeemed them all! Paul writes to Timothy, “There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the Man, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” And I am not known to put a limit where I see no limit put by God’s Word. Yet, notwithstanding that Truth of God, you cannot diligently read the Scriptures and study them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit without learning that there is a special aim and objective in the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He Himself said, “I lay down My life for the sheep.” The singers in Heaven, in their new song, declare that “these were redeemed from among men”—they were bought out of the great mass of mankind, “not with corruptible things, as silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” Paul says that “Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it.”

The special objective of Christ, in coming to this world, was that He might “save His people from their sins.” That is the very meaning of His name, Jesus. It is in them that redemption attains its great end. It is in them that Christ sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. It is for each of them, personally and individually, that the Lord Jesus Christ shed His blood on Calvary with the distinct purpose of saving them. Christ did not die for Judas as He did for Peter. He did not shed His blood for Demas as He shed it for Paul. There is, in the redemptive work of Christ, an inner and select circle into which none but those who are spiritually quickened by the Spirit of God are ever privileged to enter—and herein, Beloved, we see that God has a people who are specially His—a people especially loved and specially redeemed.

These same people, too, *are especially called by the Spirit of God*. Again, to keep up the parallel with which I commenced, let me remind you that all sinners are called to repentance and faith in Christ wherever the Word of God is faithfully proclaimed. It is true that Christ Himself said, “Many are called, but few are chosen,” yet the call of the Gospel is a universal call to all mankind. Wisdom truly says, “Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men,” but, Beloved, there is another call, a special, peculiar, personal, *effectual call* by which only the Lord’s chosen and redeemed people are called out from among the mass of men by whom they are surrounded. The New Testament title for the Church of Christ is the *ecclesia*—the assembly of those who are “called out” from among men by the distinguishing Grace of God. The Holy Spirit has breathed upon those who were, spiritually, like the dry bones in the valley—and they have “stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.” Though they were, once, heirs of wrath even as others, and far off from God by wicked works, they have been brought near by the blood of

Christ and now they are “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” They are now regenerated, quickened and so completely changed that “all things have become new” with them! They now enjoy the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a way which others know nothing at all. The Holy Spirit may “strive” with some men who ultimately perish, yet He does not operate upon them as He does upon those in whom He works effectually, making them what He would have them to be, *without violating their will*, yet so effecting the Divine Purpose as to constrain them to be obedient to the will of the Most High.

These, then, are the Lord’s people—especially loved, especially redeemed and especially called.

Besides that, *they are especially cared for in the world*. God’s Providential care extends not only to the righteous, but also to the wicked—yes, and not only to the wicked among men, but to the very beasts of the field. You know what I said to you, the other Sabbath morning, about the God who makes the grass to grow for the cattle. [See Sermon No. 767, Volume 13—IN THE HAY FIELD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It is the same great Provider who feeds the young ravens when they cry, and the hungry lions when they roar for their food. God’s Providence not only extends to mankind in general, and to the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air, and the innumerable fish in the sea, but also to every atom of matter in the universe. The grain of dust that is blown from the threshing floor is steered as certainly as “the stars in their courses.” It is the same God who provides for the little and for the great—though all must be infinitely little to Him who alone is great. Yet, while all that I have said is true, we cannot read the Bible without knowing that there is a special Providence always watching over and caring for the people of God. That comforting assurance in Psalm 34:7 applies not to all men, but only to some men—“The Angel of the Lord encamps around *them that fear Him*, and delivers *them*.” Then there is that cheering question concerning the holy angels, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister”—not for all men, but—“for them who shall be heirs of salvation” Turn to Romans 8:28. “We know that all things work together for good”—to whom? Not to every son or daughter of Adam, but—“*to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose*.” The wheels of Divine Providence are like those wheels which Ezekiel saw—full of eyes, but everyone of those eyes gazes upon everything out of love to the chosen people of God who are thus especially cared for, as well as especially loved, especially redeemed and especially called.

I need not try to describe the sense in which the saints are to be God’s people *throughout the never-ending eternity of bliss which is especially reserved for them*. It will suffice if I remind you that God has said of them that they are to be His special treasure, His royal regalia, His crown jewels—“They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I

make up My jewels.” Just as a man sometimes says of a certain thing that he prizes beyond everything else, “I will give all else away, but I will reserve this for myself,” so God gives to kings and princes the power to rule in the world and He frequently gives to the ungodly the very fat of the land—but He gives away everything but His people—and of them He says, “They shall be Mine.” He claims such complete ownership of them that He will never give them away. For them the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world and lived, loved, labored and died. For them that same Jesus still lives to plead before His Father’s Throne above. Their names are engraved on His hands and on His heart. He carries them upon His shoulders as the shepherd carries the sheep that was lost and He will never let go His hold of any one of them till He has brought it home and called together the holy angels and the redeemed from among men, and said to them, “Rejoice with Me, for I have found My sheep which was lost.”

Thus I have shown you that God has a people.

II. Now, secondly, and very briefly, because I do not want to make the roll of lamentation too long, **THEY ARE A PEOPLE WHO NEED TO BE COMFORTED.**

You never find God giving any blessings that are not really required. “Works of supererogation” are talked of by fools and knaves, but such works are never performed by God, nor by man either! So that, when the Lord comforts His people it is because they *need* comfort.

If I began to tell you why the people of God need to be comforted, you would think that I was attempting a work of supererogation! You do not need to be told *that*—some of you can find enough reasons in your own recollections to assure you that the people of God often need comfort. Yet I may, perhaps, give you one or two reasons that occur to me.

We need comfort *because we are in the valley of tears*. We do not travel long in that gloomy valley without finding that the dewdrops of tears are hanging thickly every morning and every evening upon the briers and the brambles by the wayside. Many of you have troubles in your family and they are very heavy troubles. Some of you have dead crosses in the form of those who have been taken from you, and living crosses—which are much heavier to carry—in the form of those who seem to live only to trouble you. Others of you meet with serious losses in your business and you have to ask how that bill is to be met and how that liability can be honorably discharged. There are troubles in the house and troubles in the field—troubles on the land and troubles on the sea and, worst of all, there are troubles even in the Church of God.

“Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.” But *when we were born-again, we were born to a double set of troubles*. Both our births bring us troubles! Our first birth brings us the troubles that are incident to sin and our second birth brings us the troubles that are incident to

fighting against sin. But, though we get a double share of trouble, we get a double share, a triple share, a sevenfold share, a thousand-fold share of joy when we become partakers of the new life in Christ Jesus! There are troubles incident to ordinary manhood and troubles incident to Christian manhood. But the worst trouble of all is that caused by our inbred sin. I would not mind all the trouble that comes from the world if I could but get rid of sin—if I could but live without temptation, or even with temptation if it came only from the devil. We could manage very well, even with him, if it were not for the evil that is within our own hearts—for we are worse enemies to ourselves than even the devil is! Our great enemy cannot do us much harm if he is kept locked outside the gates—as long as there is no traitor within the walls of Mansoul to admit him into the castle of our heart. The sailor does not fear the roaring billows outside his vessel, but when he finds that a leak in the ship gives the water power to rise in the hold, then he begins to fear. And, alas, we have many a leak in the ship of our soul and, in that way, temptation gets great power over us. We need comfort from God while we are wrestling with inbred sin. That fearful trinity, “the world, the flesh and the devil,” will keep a Christian from imagining that this world is his rest, for one or other of them will stuff his pillow with thorns and make his bed hard for him to lie on and cause the pilgrimage of his life to be like passing through a hedge of thorns and briers which lacerate the flesh and weary the spirit.

The sorrows of God’s people not only come from within and from without, from Satan beneath and from the world around, but they also come from God, Himself, when He chastens His people for their good. Is there any son, anywhere, whom his father chastens not? If so, he is not a son of God, for He “scourges every son whom He receives.” Among the mercies of the Covenant, the rod is very conspicuous, and when the Lord chastens us with it, He causes us to smart! Yet every twig of the rod is sanctified and every stroke we receive from it is for our lasting good.

I said that I would not enlarge upon this part of the subject. Neither will I. But I know that there is not a little trouble in the lives of many whom I am now addressing. As I look around this area and these galleries—though I know far less of many of you than I would like to know, and if there were fewer of you, I could know you better—I remember some of your sorrows and I know that many of you are seldom long at ease, yet, with all your troubles, you enjoy that peace which is like a river, for you have learned to drink of that river, the streams of which make glad the city of our God!

III. Now I must pass on to the third point which is more comforting to us. It is this—as God has a people who need to be comforted, the Prophet Isaiah is Inspired to tell us that “THE LORD HAS COMFORTED HIS PEOPLE.

It is profitable to us to note the various ways in which God has provided for our comfort in our ever-recurring sorrows. He knew that we should have many fountains of grief and, therefore, He appointed quite as many fountains of joy and even more. And besides opening the fountains for us, blessed be His name, He draws the water for us and puts it to our parched lips, as the Holy Spirit applies to us the precious promises which God has provided for us in His never-failing fountain of comfort.

In the first place, in providing for the comfort of His people, *God has been pleased to give us this grand old Book, the Bible.* What a storehouse of comfort this is! Many times have we gone to it, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and we have never gone there without finding a portion that just exactly met our needs. Some of you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ are, perhaps, in old Giant Despair's castle, but if you use this precious Book rightly, you will find in it a key that will open every lock in Doubting Castle and make the way clear for you to pass through the great iron gate. O Beloved, what would we do without this Bible of ours? Let us prize it, among other reasons, because through it, "the Lord has comforted His people."

Then He has also been pleased to give us that blessed institution which is not second in importance even to the Bible, namely, the Mercy Seat. Wherever we may be, that Mercy Seat is always accessible! What a mercy it is that there are no longer any specially holy places, like the Temple at Jerusalem but that—

***"Wherever we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground!"***

If I thought that I had always to go up to a certain "sacred" building in order to be able to pray to God, or that there were certain "holy" hours in which it was right to pray, I would often be miserable—but it is not so. At midnight, in prison, prayer is in season and in place, for Paul and Silas thus prayed at Philippi—and the prison walls began to shake and the prison doors flew open! Prayer is in season at all hours, for David says, "Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice." No matter where you are, nor into what state you may have fallen, nor how low and desponding you feel—and no matter how sinful you are—for God has said, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me." After providing for us the Mercy Seat, over which is written, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," surely you may truly say, "The Lord has comforted His people!"

You all know that prayer to God is necessary in great things, but it is equally necessary in little things. None of you doubt that when much is at stake you ought to pray, but you ought equally to pray when little is at stake. I do not think that many true Believers go wrong in the difficult

places of their pilgrimage, for they then kneel down and ask God's guidance. And so they go right. But when they get to the very plain places, they think they know all about the road and then it is that they are sure to make a mistake. The warrior was not slain in battle for lack of courage, nor for want of armor—why was he slain? It was because one nail was missing from his horse's shoe, as the old saying puts it, "For the want of a nail, the shoe was lost; for the want of a shoe, the horse was lost; for the want of a horse, the rider was lost"—and many a Christian has been almost lost "for the want of a nail." Mind that you look after the nails and take care of them. Take the little things to God in prayer, for the little is the mother of the great and that of the greater, and even the little is great if we only look at it rightly. Just as the brush of a bird's wing sets the first snow-flakes moving, which afterward accumulate into a ball, which grows into a great mass, which comes rushing down the mountain in a mighty avalanche, so it is the little thing that sets the great in motion! And it is for this that we need particularly to enquire of the Lord—

***"There is no sorrow, Lord, too light
To bring in prayer to Thee.
There is no anxious care too slight
To wake Your sympathy.
You who have trod the thorny road
Will share each small distress.
The love which bore the greater load
Will not refuse the less."***

Besides that, He has been graciously pleased to give us *the means of Grace*. I trust that you have often gone out of this House of Prayer saying, "Truly, 'the Lord has comforted His people' this morning." Or, "We have certainly had our burdens taken away from us while we have been listening to His precious Truth this evening." When God the Holy Spirit has spoken through the preacher, you have found that the Word preached has been to you a delightful spiritual repast and cordial, so that you have been able, at least for the time, to forget your sorrows!

The Lord has, however, comforted us in a still higher way, *by forgiving all our sins*. I recollect the time when I would gladly have made a strange bargain with God, if He would have agreed to it. My sin was such an awful burden to me that I thought that if I might but have it all pardoned, I would even be willing to be imprisoned for a hundred years. If you have ever felt the weight of your sin, you must acknowledge that there is no bodily affliction that is at all comparable to it. If you once really know, by sad personal experience, what the word, "guilt," means—if its horrors are clearly revealed to your soul—you will be distracted in mind and know not what to do. And you will admit that all the griefs that could possibly be heaped upon you could not equal the horror of great darkness which comes over the soul under a sense of sin. But, then, "the Lord has comforted His people," because He has forgiven their sin. Your

coat may be threadbare, my Brother, but your sins are forgiven you for Christ's sake! Your loaf may be but a very small one, and your bed may be a very hard one, but, being justified by faith, you have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ! If you are the very poorest of God's saints, in pardoning your sins "the Lord has comforted His people." Is not this the best comfort you could possibly have? Long ago the Prophet Isaiah was Inspired to write, "Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned." The forgiveness of all their sins is the greatest comfort that the Lord's people can ever enjoy!

Moreover, in addition to giving us the pardon of all our sins, *the Lord has graciously adopted us into His family*. Ah, poor son of toil, your brow may often be covered with sweat, but you shall, by-and-by, be made like unto your Divine Elder Brother, for you have become, by Grace, a child of God! How delightful it is to us to know that "we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father"! There is no other peace like this, no other joy like this! The angel Gabriel has not half so much reason to be happy as I have. It is true that he has not my cares, nor my troubles, but then, he is not a child of God, for, as Paul wisely asks, "Unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My Son?" But He does say that to us who have believed in His Son, Jesus Christ! We are the sons and daughters of the Most High God! The holy angels are highly favored in having been kept from sinning, yet the Son of God took not up angels, but He became a Man that He might redeem us from destruction and, through Him, we are brought into closer communion with God than the angels ever have! Oh, what cause we have, then, for thankfulness when we think of our adoption as well as of our pardon!

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I have not time to even mention all the blessings which are already in your possession. Truly, the full roll of them would need eternity in which to display it rightly before your eyes, "for all things are yours...whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours and you are Christ's and Christ is God's." So you have every reason to rejoice and no cause to be disconsolate, for God has comforted you with the richest of consolations in the blessings which He has already bestowed upon you!

But *think of what is yet to come!* Let the pearly gates be opened for a moment. You will soon be inside them—how soon, none of us can tell. Unless our Lord shall first come—as He may—we who have believed in Jesus shall all pass through the gates of pearl and our disembodied spirits shall see our Savior face to face! Glory be to God, there is a crown there that no head but yours shall wear, Believer! A harp that no hands but yours shall play, a mansion that none but you shall inhabit. Without you, Christ's mystical body would not be complete—one of its members

would be missing without you! The hallelujah chorus of Heaven would lack some of its jubilant notes and the eternal orchestra would miss one of its players on golden harps—so you must be brought there. The Apostle Paul, speaking of glorified saints who have gone to Heaven before us, says, “They without us should not be made perfect.” They must have us to perfect the company of the redeemed, to gather in Glory the full complement of the elect! Come, Brothers and Sisters, take off your sackcloth and ashes. Take down your harps from the willows. Put away the sackbut and bring out the Psaltery and all kinds of joyous music, and let us sing, in the words of the familiar hymn—

***“My God, I’ll praise You while I live,
And praise You when I die!
And praise You when I rise again,
And to all eternity.”***

Well now, what follows from all that I have been saying to you? This question surely follows—*who would not be one of the Lord’s people?* I pity those of you who have great grief, but no consolation. I do not know how some of you manage even to live! You work hard, but what do you get by it all—food and raiment? Yes, and then you go on again and again, and all your life is like that of the blind horse at the mill, going round and round and round, and you never make any real progress. You bring up your children—in a fashion. You grow old, and you die, and that is the end. It would be better for you if it *were* the end, but, alas, there is something far worse to come! How can you keep on living as you do, without any objective beyond this poor groveling world? I can understand a Christian galley-slave, chained to the oar and flogged all day long, feeling that he was living up to the dignity of a man in Christ Jesus, for he could say, “I have a Savior on high and though my legs and wrists are bound, yet my free, immortal spirit has fellowship with the eternal God.” But I cannot understand how men can work on, day after day, or, being above work, can roll along in their carriages and yet have no thought beyond this present, sin-stained world! It is not even fit for immortal spirits to think much about—it is too base, too scant, too poor, too barren a thing to satisfy immortals! Its atmosphere is a coverlet too narrow for a man to wrap himself and all that earth calls good or great is a bed too short for a never-dying spirit to stretch itself upon! How do you live without your God? Especially you who are sick and ill! You young people who have consumption stamped upon your cheeks—you young men who are mortally ill and know you must soon depart, you graybeards who are not only awaiting the assaults of Death, but are already attacked by him—how can any of you bear the thought that God’s short sword of Infallible Justice is furbished against you? How can you make mirth on the very edge of the bottomless Pit? Oh, that you would flee away to Christ, lay hold upon Him by a simple faith and so be saved forever!

If a man suffers much trouble, some persons draw from that an inference that he is one of God's people. I have sometimes heard very great professors of religion pacify their consciences with the idea that because they were going through much tribulation, they must, therefore, inherit the Kingdom—because they were tried and troubled, they have, therefore, inferred that they must necessarily be the children of God. Let such understand that there is a rod for the wicked as well as a rod for the righteous! 'Tis true that many go through much tribulation to the Kingdom of Heaven, but it is equally true that many go through all their tribulations to the depths of Hell. "Well" says good Mr. Watson, an old Puritan, "The path to Hell is hard and rough to many. Many a man has gone to Perdition in the sweat of his brow and has toiled harder to win for himself eternal damnation than ever the Christian has labored to serve his Master." I doubt not that this is exactly the truth, or may even come short of it!

There is another thought that is suggested by what I have been saying. It is this, *If God comforts His people, we should imitate Him*. If we are His, let us be God-like. I do not know when a man is more like God than when he wipes the tears from a mourner's eyes. God wipes away the tears from all eyes in Heaven, so, whenever we have wiped a tear from the eye of a saint here below, we have been doing similar work to God's. If you do not yet know what joy and satisfaction are to be found in helping the fatherless and the widow, I hope you will all soon have that joy and satisfaction by helping them in every way that you can. When you go to visit the widow and see those many little children, their heads rising one above another like a set of stairs, the father dead, the mother doing a little needlework to provide for her children—when you see all this, I am sure you will help them all you can! It has been a great joy to some of us, this very night, to receive some six or seven fatherless children into the Orphanage which has yet to be built—and we could not help feeling great joy as we accepted them. There is great joy in helping the fatherless and the widow, relieving the poor and needy, comforting those who are broken-hearted, speaking a cheering word to the mourner, or a guiding word to the soul that is seeking Christ, repeating a word of promise in the ear of a backslider, or of one who, for a while, has lost his evidences. So, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, as God has comforted His people, mind that you try to do the same good work, remembering that in ministering to *them*, you are also ministering to HIM, as our hymn puts it—

***"They who feed YOUR sick and faint
For YOURSELF a banquet find!
They who clothe the naked saint
Round YOUR loins the raiment bind!"***

And then, finally, *as God has comforted His people, why do they go about the world as if they were not comforted?* I thank God that there are

so many members of this Church the sight of whose face is enough to make us glad even in the worse weather! Some of my Brothers and Sisters, when I am the most disconsolate, cheer me up with the very grasp of their hands! These are cheerful Christians who live near to God and who so firmly believe in Christ that they will not believe the devil's lie when he tells them that God has forsaken them. Dear Brothers and Sisters, should we not all try to be like them? It is a great blessing to be of a happy, thankful spirit and to carry a cheerful countenance wherever we go. Yet some Christians, when you go to see them, are always telling you how poor they are, how badly they have had the rheumatism, how many aches and pains and trials and troubles they have, and so on. I remember one visitor who had heard this sort of story so often from one good old lady whom he used to visit, that one day he said to her, "My dear Sister, I have heard all about your troubles so many times that I think I could repeat them word for word! So could you now change the subject for once, and tell me something about your joys?" Whenever we must touch the mournful theme, let us do as the swallow does when it just brushes the brook with its wing and flies up into the clear air as if its whole being were full of joy. So let it be with us—sometimes touching the waters of trouble, as we must, yet swiftly mounting in sweet contemplation and holy meditation—leaving the sinful, sorrowing world behind us and entering into the very Presence of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ—

***"Why should the children of a King
Go mourning all their days?
Great Comforter, descend and bring
Some tokens of Your Grace."***

God bless you, dear Friends, with the Spirit of consolation! The Holy Spirit is the Comforter! May He comfort you, for Jesus' sake! Amen!

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

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

NEITHER FORSAKEN NOR FORGOTTEN NO. 2672

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 29, 1900.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 5, 1882.

*“Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.”
Isaiah 49:16.*

You have probably noticed, dear Friends, while reading the chapter from which our text is taken, that it seems to divide itself into two parts. The first portion concerns that glorious Servant of God, “who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” even our Divine Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. There is, in this part of the chapter, somewhat of a complaint—Christ was, as it were, uttering one of His Gethsemane groans when He said, “I have labored in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing, and in vain: yet surely My judgment is with Jehovah, and My work with My God.” As far as our Lord’s personal ministry among the Jewish people was concerned, it did seem as if He had labored in vain, for almost all of them rejected Him and they even imprecated an awful curse upon themselves and their descendants when they said, “His blood be on us, and on our children.” He is here represented as crying out before Jehovah concerning this apparent failure of His earthly mission. And an answer is at once given to Him which must have been eminently satisfactory to our Savior’s spirit, for He adds, “Though Israel is not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of Jehovah and My God shall be My strength. And He said, It is a light thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give You for a light to the Gentiles, that You may be My salvation unto the ends of the earth.” Oh, what joy must have filled the heart of our Divine Master, even in the depths of His agony, as He saw that, through His death, all nations should ultimately behold the Light of God’s salvation! What though Israel for a while rejected Him? Yet multitudes of the Gentiles would receive Him and then, by-and-by, in the fullness of time, the Jews would also receive Him, and acknowledge as King the Nazarene whom once they crucified on Calvary!

The second part of the chapter, singularly enough, relates to the Israelite Church and, to a large extent, to the whole Church of God, and it also contains a complaint. In the expressive language of verse 13, God bids the heavens and the earth rejoice—“Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for Jehovah has comforted His people, and will have mercy upon His afflicted.” Yet, even while that jubilant note is pealing over sea and land, there is heard the

wailing of poor forsaken Zion—Judaea's Church, the ancient Church of the living God! She sighs, "Jehovah has forsaken me and my Lord has forgotten me.' He is blessing the Gentiles, but I am left unblessed. He is gathering multitudes unto Himself, to glorify His Son; but His poor Israel, His ancient choice, His first love, He seems to have left out of all reckoning,' Jehovah has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me.'" Then comes the Lord's answer, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands." Israel shall yet acknowledge her King, her salvation waits for the appointed time. There is a high destiny in store for the Israel of God and many shall yet see the day when He who died as King of the Jews shall live again to wear that title and to be acknowledged as the Head of all the house of Abraham!

My objective, in speaking upon the familiar and precious words of our text, is just this—Sometimes you and I get into the same sad condition as Zion was then and we fancy that God has forgotten us, so I want to show you that if we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord gives to us an answer similar to that which He gave to sorrowful Zion, "I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands." Upon that short sentence I shall try now to speak to you.

I. First, let us think, for a while, upon THE FEAR EXPRESSED—the fear in the hearts of God's people which led to the utterance of our text. In verse 14, this fear is thus expressed, "Jehovah has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me."

This fear has been felt by very many. Fear is a most contagious and infectious thing. When it has taken hold on one person, it has been often known to spread to many others till a terrible panic has resulted from a very slight cause. Here is the whole Jewish church expressing the fear that God has forgotten her! I feel sure that I am not now addressing such a church as that—I hope that the most of those now present know that God has not forgotten them and that they are walking in the light of His Countenance so that they do not imagine that Jehovah has forsaken them. But, still, this fear has darkened, shall I say, every sky, and passed before the window of every spirit? Well, I will not go quite that far, yet I know that there must be but very few of us who have not, at one time or another, naughtily whispered to our own heart, if we have not said it aloud, "Jehovah has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me." We have gone up to the House of God with our brethren and we have seen them very happy. The Word of God has been precious to them and they have seemed to enjoy it to the fullest, but we could not feed upon it, or get a glimpse of the Well-Beloved. And we have gone out of the place sighing, "Jehovah has forsaken me and my Lord has forgotten me." Have you ever had that thought? If you never have, I hope you never will, but I fear that the most of us have, at some time or other, been subject to that distressing complaint.

And it has sometimes been very plaintively expressed. It is so in the text. I think I hear the mountains echoing the joyous voice of God and

the very skies reverberating with the song of the redeemed! And then, in between the breaks of the glad chorus, I catch this little mournful note, "Jehovah has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me." Perhaps it is all the more plaintive because the tone seems to indicate that Zion felt that she deserved to have it so. She thought herself so insignificant, so sinful, so provoking, that it was no wonder that the great Jehovah should forget her in her littleness—and that the pure and holy God should turn His face away from such iniquity as hers. Brothers and Sisters, I feel sure that you and I must have been in that state in which we could weep and groan and sigh because of the joy in the air of which we could not partake, the songs in which we could not unite unless we became utter hypocrites. We heard the sweet strains of the holy merriment in the Father's House, but we felt that we could not join in it! And we sat by ourselves mourning, with our harps hanging on the willows, while everyone around us only increased our grief in proportion to his own delight. I am trying to speak to such troubled souls—God comfort them! There are many such, and their grief is great.

And some, too, are very obstinate while they are in that condition, for our text contains *a very unreasonable complainer*. Read the latter part of the 13th verse. "Jehovah has comforted His people, and will have mercy upon His afflicted." Yet, in the teeth of that double declaration, Zion said, "Jehovah has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me." Ah, dear Friends, our complaints of God are generally groundless! We get into a state of mind in which we say, "God has forsaken us," when He is really dealing with us more than He was known to do. A child who is feeling the strokes of the rod is very foolish to say, "My father has forgotten me." No, those very blows, under which he is smarting, are reminders that his father does *not* forget him—and your trials and your troubles, your depressions and your sorrows are tokens that you are not forgotten of God. The chastening which is guaranteed to every legitimate son is coming to you! If you had not been chastened, there would have been far more cause for saying, "My Lord has forgotten me." Besides, dear Friend, you have had some comforts though you have had many sorrows. You can say, "Comforts mingle with my sighs." Do not forget that. It is not all gall and wormwood—there is so much honey as greatly to mitigate the bitterness. Think of that and do not obstinately stand to a word which, perhaps, you spoke in haste. If you have said, "My Lord has forgotten me," take back the word, for it cannot be true. You have slandered Him who can never forget one of His own people! And if you have said, "Jehovah has forsaken me," again I ask you to take back the evil and false word, and eat it. Never let it be heard again, for it is impossible that Jehovah should change, or that the Immutable love of His Infinite heart should ever die out! Be not obstinate about this matter, I implore you! Yet I have known some of God's people stick to this grave lie to their own grievous wounding and hurt.

I suppose that Zion came to this conclusion *because she was in banishment*. She was away from the land that flowed with milk and honey—she was suffering in exile. Is this the conclusion to be drawn from all suf-

fering? Does the vine say, "The vinedresser has forsaken me because he prunes me so sharply"? Does the invalid say, "The physician has forgotten me because he gives me such bitter medicine"? Shall the patient beneath the knife, say, "The surgeon has forsaken me because he cuts even to the bone"? You see at once that there is no reasonableness about such talk, so dismiss it at once! "Judge not the Lord" by outward Providences, any more than "by feeble sense," but trust Him even when you can see no trace of His goodness to you. "Let God be true, and" every circumstance, as well as "every man, a liar," for God must keep His promise to His people. He is Immutable! He cannot possibly change. He must be true to every word that has gone forth out of His mouth. The fear that God may forsake and forget His own, if obstinately indulged, will certainly deserve to be set down among the wanton and unreasonable transgressions of His people against their gracious God.

Yet I think that *there is some measure of Grace mingled with this fear*. Let me read you this passage straight on—"Jehovah has comforted His people and will have mercy upon His afflicted. But Zion said, Jehovah has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me." She did not say that till God had visited her. "The Lord has comforted His people." He has brought them out of a yet lower depth that they were in and they have been lifted up so high as now to want His Presence, and to sigh for it! Beloved Brothers and Sisters, you who are so deep down in the dungeon, I feel glad that you want to get out of it. There is, in your soul, a longing after God, is there not? There is a panting and a crying after peace with God, is there not? You are not satisfied as long as you even *think* that God has forsaken you, are you? Ah, then, this is *the work of His Holy Spirit in your soul*, making you long after the living God, so that there is some sign of Grace even in that discontented moan of yours, for it proves that you cannot bear that God should forsake you! Now, if you belonged to the world, it would be nothing to you if the Lord had forsaken you. If there were no Grace in you, you would not care whether God forgot you or not! Indeed, you might almost wish that He *would* forget you and not visit you in His wrath. There is, therefore, some trace of His hand in your spirit, even now that you say, "Jehovah has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me."

Besides, although the text is a word of complaint, it has also in it a word of faith—"my Lord." Did you notice that? Zion calls Jehovah hers though she dreams that He has forsaken her! I love to see you keep the grip of your faith even when it seems to be illogical—even if you fancy that the Lord has forgotten and forsaken you! Though you fear that it is so, yet you still say, "my Lord," held on to this assurance with a death-grip! If you cannot hold on with both hands, hold on with one and if, sometimes, you can hold with neither hand, hold on with your teeth! Let Job's resolve be yours—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. Though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" "And every scattered grain of this, my dust, shall still confide in God." Oh, for the faith that laughs at impossibilities, that leaps with joy between the very jaws of death, itself, and sings in the very center of the

fire! Such a faith as that, whatever weakness there may be about it, brings glory to God! So I treasure up that little word, “my.” There are only two letters in it, but they are fraught with untold hope to the man who can use them as Zion does here, “my Lord.”

So much for the fear which the text is intended to meet.

II. Now I come, as God shall help me, to speak concerning THE COMFORT BESTOWED. “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.”

This assurance is the Lord’s answer to Zion’s lament, “Jehovah has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me.” So take it from God’s own mouth and never doubt it! God’s remembrance of His people as a whole and of each individual in particular, has been secured by Him beyond all question. “That we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us,” He has said to each of us, “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.’ I have done it and I have done that which will render it utterly impossible that I should ever forget one of My people. I the Lord have committed Myself to something which will henceforth render it absolutely certain that I never can forget My own, for, ‘I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.’”

These words seem to say to us that God has already secured, beyond any possible doubt, His tender memory towards all His own. He has done this in such a way that forgetfulness can never occur at any moment whatever. The memorial is not set up in Heaven, for then you might conceive that God could descend and leave that memorial. It is not set up in any great public place in the universe, nor is it engraved in a signet ring upon God’s finger, for that might be taken off. It is not written upon the Almighty’s clothes—to speak after the manner of men—for He might disrobe Himself for conflict. But He has put the token of His love where it cannot be laid aside—on the palms of His hands. A man cannot leave his hands at home. If he has put something, by way of memorial, upon the walls of his house or the gates of his home, he may go away and forget it. Or if, as I have said, he shall write the memorial upon some precious diamond, or topaz, or other jewels which he wears, yet he might lay them aside. But God says, “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands,” so that the memorial is constantly with Him! Yes, it is in God, Himself, that the memorial of His people is fixed.

I suppose the allusion is to an Oriental custom, possibly not very common, but still common enough to have survived to this day. Mr. John Anderson, the pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Helensburgh, who was a very dear friend of mine, told me that on one or two occasions, he had seen, in the East, men who had the portraits of their friends, and others who had the initials of their friends, on the palms of their hands. I said to him, “But I suppose that, in time, they would wash off or wear out.” “No,” he said, “they were tattooed too deeply in to be removed, so that, whenever they opened their hand, there were the familiar initials, or some resemblance to the features of the beloved one, to keep him always in remembrance.” And the Lord here adopts that ancient custom and says, “I cannot forget you. It is impossible for Me to do so, for I have en-

graved you where the memorial can never be apart from Myself. 'I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.'"

Now, what is it, dear Friends, that makes it so certain that God cannot forget His people? Well, first, *God remembers His eternal love to His people*, and His remembrance of them is constant because of that love. He says to each believing soul, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." The people of God were loved by Him long before the world was created—He has loved them too long to ever forget them. "I have loved too long," said one man, "to be turned aside by the blandishment of another." We cannot imagine anything that could separate us from that dear heart to which our heart is knit even with a human love. While both of us shall live, the two are, indeed, one. And God has loved us more than husbands love their wives, or fathers love their children, or brothers love their brothers. His love is like a great ocean of which all human love is but a drop of spray! And He has loved us so long, so well, so deeply, so unreservedly, that He cannot forget us. Even when any of His people wanders from Him and grieves His heart, He says, "Yes, but I have loved you with an everlasting love, and I will not cast you off. Though all that you now are might tend to wean Me from you, yet Mine is not the love of yesterday, it is not a passion like that which flames within some men for a brief space and then quickly goes out in darkness." It is God's eternal love that makes Him keep us in memory! He has engraved us, from all eternity, upon the palms of His hands and, therefore, He cannot forget us.

Next, *God's suffering love secures His memory of us*. Well did we sing, just now—

***"The palms of My hands while I look on I see
The wounds I received when suffering for thee!"***

Oh, how deeply the cruel engravers cut our names in Christ's dear hands! Those nails that fastened Him to the Cross were the engraving tools and He leaned hard while the iron pierced through flesh, and nerve and vein. Yet the engraving of which our text speaks is more than that, for the Lord Himself says, "I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands." The sufferings of Christ for us were such that never, by any possibility, can He forget us. Since He has died for us, He will never cast us away. By His death, on Calvary's Cross, Christ ensured that all those for whom He died shall live with Him in His Kingdom as surely as He, Himself, lives. He paid not in vain such a tremendous price—neither shall He lose any part of that which He has thus purchased for Himself! What a blessed memorial, then, is not only God's eternal love, but Christ's suffering love!

Yet again, by the expression, "I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands," God seems to say, "*I have done so much for you that I can never forget you.*" God has actively worked for His people in many ways, but I will only now mention what His Spirit has worked in you. What a theme that is! And, from the fact that the Spirit of God has worked so much in us, we derive the satisfaction that He will never forget us. A man does not forget the work of His own hands, especially if it is something very choice. I remember that, in the siege of Paris, a great artist hid away a grand picture which was then but partly finished. Did he forget to go to

Paris when it had its liberty, and to seek out his painting? Assuredly not! He remembered the work of his own hands and back he went to draw it out and put the finishing touches to it. So God has done too much for us for Him ever to lose us. Has He not created us anew in Christ Jesus, and given His Spirit to dwell within us? Then, surely, He will never turn away from work so costly, so Divine—but He will complete it to His own praise and Glory!

But, once more, when a memorial is engraved on a man's hand, *then it is connected with the man's life*. While he lives, that memorial is a part of his life. So is it with God. He has linked His people with His life. Our Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "Because I live, you shall live also." The union between your Incarnate God and yourself is a thing which is so complete that your life is intertwined with His life! Christ and you have become one fabric. To tear you away would be to destroy Him. "Your life is hidden with Christ in God" and until Christ Himself shall die, His people shall not die. Oh, think of this wondrous mystery! The ever-blessed Son of God is bound up in the bundle of life with all His people!

This I take to be the meaning of the Lord's words, "I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands." I cannot go deeper into this blessed subject, but I pray God to take you deeper, for there is a great depth here.

III. Now, Beloved, I turn to the third head of my discourse, upon which I will be very brief. We have had a fear expressed and a comfort bestowed. Now, here is AN INSPECTION INVITED. "Behold," says Jehovah, "Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands."

Come, then. "Behold." Look for yourselves. There is God the Father. Did you say that He had forsaken you? But how can that be? Behold, and see. He is your Father if you are trusting in His Son, Jesus Christ. Do you forget, do you forsake your own children? Tell me! You had a boy who well-near broke your heart. He went away and you were sadly glad when he went, for he had so grieved you that you thought it better that he should be out of sight. But have you forgotten him? Suppose he came back tonight? 'Tis years, now, since he left you without your blessing. Mother, you have never heard from him. Father, no tidings of your boy ever come to you. But if, when you went home tonight, there should be a big fellow sitting by the fireside—not your boy any longer, and yet your own long lost son—after the first surprise and after you had seen that it was your son, tell me, Mother, would you turn him out of doors for all his ingratitude to you? Father, what would you do, first of all? I know what I would do if it were my case—I would fondly kiss that cheek, and bless God that I had lived to see my son again, whatever he might have been, and however much he might have grieved me! If you, then, being evil, neither forget nor forsake your children, will your Father who is in Heaven forget you? Behold, and see if it is possible! God the everlasting Father does so intensely love, so Infinitely love His own children that it must never be dreamt for a moment that it is possible for Him to forget any one of them!

Come, now, and look again. Behold, by faith, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity in Unity, Jesus, the Lamb of God. Look at Him on the Cross. Oh, what griefs He bore there for His people! Take down the blessed body—(you can scarcely bear to handle it), and help to wrap it in its linen cloths, and lay it in the tomb. Why did He suffer thus? Why did He die? For His own loved ones! Then, can He ever forget them? Is it possible? After all that agony, can Jesus forget? Oh, no! Our children may forget us, but the mother remembers how she suffered for the child and she loves it for the very pangs she endured in its birth. She knows the struggles of her widowhood to find bread for the child—how she starved herself to satisfy its hunger. Oh, what agony and self-denial some parents have suffered for their children! But these make them all the dearer and render it all the more impossible that they should ever forget them. Well, then, remembering all this, look into the face of your Savior, who died for you, and will you dare to say that He can possibly forget you? It cannot be! He has engraved you upon the palms of His hands and He will never forget or forsake you!

Then think, also, of that dear and blessed Spirit of God who has come into your heart and striven with you when you resisted Him and, at last, won the day. And, since then, has helped your infirmities, checked your hastiness, awakened you from your sloth and been everything to you that He could be—and do you think that, after all this, He will ever forget or forsake you? Oh, if He had meant to cast you away, He has had many opportunities when He might have done so! Surely, He would never have come to dwell in such a hovel as your fallen nature is if He had not intended to transform it and make it into a pure alabaster palace wherein the living God might dwell! “Behold,” says the Lord. That is, look into this great Truth of God—look deeply into it—and then say to yourself, “My fears of being forgotten or forsaken are all gone, for I am engraved upon the palms of His hands.”

IV. So I close by referring very briefly to the last point, which is this, A RETURN SUGGESTED.

I want, Brothers and Sisters, to speak in a very homely and familiar way to each one of you and, at the same time, to be speaking to myself as well as to you.

Does Christ remember us as I have tried to prove that He does? *Then, let us remember Him.* To that end He ordained that blessed Supper to which many of us are presently coming—the eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup in memory of Him. “This do you in remembrance of Me.” Now try to forget everything but your Lord and Savior. Pass an act of oblivion on all your cares, troubles and sorrows—and only look at Him as though, like a mysterious stranger, He stood at the pew door and leaned over you, and you seemed to feel His shadow falling upon you. Now think of Him, for He is very near you, and you are very near to Him.

And, Brothers and Sisters, let us not only remember Him at His Table, but *let us remember Him constantly.* Let us, as it were, carry His name upon the palms of *our* hands. Let us ask God to help us always to think of Jesus—never to forget Him, but to have the memory of Him inter-

twined with our very breathing, with the pulsing of our blood—till our whole nature, like a bell, shall ring out but one note, and that shall be love to Jesus! And our heart shall be like Anacreon's harp, of which he said that he wished to sing of the deeds of Cadmus, but his heart and his harp resounded only love. Oh, for the love of Christ to be the one all-engrossing, all-absorbing theme of our entire being, till we truly say to Christ, "I have engraved You upon the palms of my hands."

And, Brothers and Sisters, *let us remember Christ practically*. We ought so to wear Christ on our hands that whatever we touch should be thereby Christianized. I have heard of the "christening" of babies—that is an idle superstition and a perversion of Christ's ordinance of Believers' Baptism—but I believe in the Christening of everything a Christian touches! Make it all Christ-like by doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, as the Apostle Paul says, "Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Thus engrave His name upon the palms of your hands.

And, so Brothers and Sisters, *let the name of Christ and your memory of it become vital to you*. Not with a broad phylactery, not with the borders of your garments enlarged, not with outward signs and tokens of which some think a good deal too much in these days—for true religion consists not in a dress of this cut or that, nor does it lie in boasting, like Pharisees, what we are, sounding our own praise at the corners of the streets that all may know it and observe! True religion lies in this—that we cannot live without Christ, that our ordinary life becomes uplifted by the Christ who dwells within us till every meal is a sacrament, every garment is a vestment, every place is an altar, and the whole world a temple in which we are kings and priests because God has made us so! Unto this may we each of us come, and come now!

If any of you have not yet believed in Jesus, oh, how I wish you would! As I am going away for a while, I shall not be able to speak personally to you for some time to come, but I hope that those whom my voice has failed to influence, may be reached by some other servant of the Lord Jesus Christ who shall occupy this pulpit to speak to you in my absence. Oh, that you all knew my Lord! There is none like Him! His bonds are freedom! His service is rest! To die for Him is life! To live for Him is Heaven! God bring you to Him and fasten you to Him forever! Amen, and Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 14:1-21.**

We have often read this chapter, both in our private meditations and at our public worship, but we cannot read it too often. It is sweet as honey and the honeycomb. It contains the very quintessence of consolation. Every word in the chapter is rich and full of meaning. Perhaps they understand it best who cannot read it quickly, but are obliged to spell over every word of it and so are like those who feast upon marrow and fatness.

Verse 1. *Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me.* That is the cure for heart-trouble, and all other trouble, too—believing in God, and believing in His Son, Jesus Christ. Faith is the double cure of trouble, for it delivers us altogether from the trouble and, at the same time, it helps us to find sweetness in it as long as we have to endure it. Notice that our Savior says, “Let not your *heart* be troubled.” If your heart can be preserved from trouble, you will not be greatly tried by it. Trouble is in your house, perhaps, but, if so, let it not get into your heart. The waves beat all round your vessel, but let not the vessel itself leak and take in the water. “Let not your heart be troubled.”

2. *In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.* This was very largely the cause of their trouble—they were full of sorrow because their Lord and Master was going away from them. Yet He was going for their good. It was with a set purpose that He was leaving them, and the same reason still keeps Him away from us. We are not to mourn for Him as we might for one slain in battle who would never come back to us. He has gone for a little while to another country, to the great Father’s House, upon a most gracious and necessary errand—“I go to prepare a place for you.” The Spirit of God is down here to prepare us for the place—the Son of God is up yonder to prepare the place for us!

3. *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.* Do not tell us about a “purgatory” for Christ’s people, a limbo in which they are to be awhile to be prepared to share His Glory. No, He will come at the right time and take them to be where He is, and they shall have the very place that Jesus has! “I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” Do you need a better rest than that after all your work and warfare here below? Does not this prospect cheer you while you are journeying down the hill of life? It is better on ahead.

4. *And where I go you know, and the way you know.* “You know that I am going to the Father, and you know that I am, Myself, the Way to the Father; I am going from where I came.”

5, 6. *Thomas said unto Him, Lord, we know not where You go; and how can we know the way? Jesus said unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.* “I am all that you need on your Way to Heaven—the Truth that will make Heaven for you—and the Life which you will enjoy with Me forever in Heaven. I give you all that while you are yet here below.”

6. *No man comes unto the Father, but by Me.* There is no getting to God except through Christ. Those who say that we can go to Heaven without a Mediator know not what they say, or say what they know to be a lie! There can be no acceptable approach to the Father except by Jesus Christ the Son!

7. *If you had known Me, you should have known My Father also.* For Christ is also “the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father.” All the Character of God is seen in the Christ of God, and he who truly comes to Christ has really come to the Father.

7. *And from henceforth you know Him, and have seen Him.* I hope that this may be said of many of us, that we do truly know God and, since we have seen Christ by faith, we have seen the Father also.

8. *Philip said unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us.* What a comfort these questions and blunders of Thomas and Philip ought to be to us, for it is clear that we are not the only dolts in Christ's school! And if He could bear with them, He can bear with us also. Like they, how little do we retain of that which He teaches us! We are taught much, but we learn little, for we are such poor scholars. Our memory holds but little and our understanding still less of what we have been taught, and we are all too apt to want something that we can see, just as Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us."

9-11. *Jesus said unto him, Have I been so long a time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father; and why do you say, then, Show us the Father? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself, but the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake.* Note how the Master continued to urge His disciples to believe. Again and again He returned to that vital point—"Do you believe?"...believe Me...believe Me." This He did because there is no relief from heart-trouble but by believing the everlasting Truth of God and especially by believing Him who is "the Truth." The Believer, alone, has true peace of heart. The unbeliever is tossed to and fro on the billows of the great ocean of doubt—how can he rest? There is nothing for him to rest upon. Happily, Christ is still saying, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest," and they are truly wise who accept His gracious invitation!

12. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father.* When Christ had gone back to the Father, He opened all Heaven's treasures for His people. He bestowed the Spirit of all Grace, and so His servants were helped to do even greater works than He, Himself, did while He was upon the earth. We cannot add anything to His Atonement—that work must forever stand as complete and unique—but there are other forms of service in which He engaged in His earthly ministry, in which His servants have gone far beyond Him. The Lord Jesus Christ never preached a sermon after which 3,000 were converted and baptized in one day. To a large extent He kept His personal ministry within the bounds of Palestine, but, after His Resurrection, when the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, then, in the power of the Spirit, greater works than His were worked the wide world over!

13, 14. *And whatever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.* Is that promise true to every man? Certainly not! It was made by Christ to His own disciples and not absolutely to all of them, but only to them as they believe in Him, as they are filled with His Spirit, and as they keep His commandments. There are some of God's children who have little power with Him in prayer—some who walk so disorderly that

since they do not listen to God's Words, He will not listen to theirs. Yet He will give them necessities as you give even to your naughty and disobedient children. But He will not give them the luxury of prevailing prayer and that full fellowship with Him which comes through abiding in Him. Such luxuries He saves for His obedient children who are filled with His Spirit. Even under the old dispensation, David wrote, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed. Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart." And in a very special sense, under the new dispensation, that spirituality of mind which enables us to delight in God is a necessary antecedent to our obtaining the desires of our heart in the high and spiritual sphere of prayer.

15-17. *If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him.* The world is carnal. It is unspiritual. Therefore, it is unable to see or to know the Spirit of God. A man outside a spiritual nature cannot recognize the Holy Spirit—he must be born again before he can do so. You who are only soul and body need to receive that third and loftier principle—the spirit which is worked in us by the Spirit of God! Until you have it, this verse applies to you—"The Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him."

17. *But you know Him.* Christ's own disciples know Him.

17-19. *For He dwells with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more; but you see Me: because I live, you shall live also.* Oh, what a rich promise! How, then, can Christ's people ever perish? Until Christ Himself perishes, no child of His can ever be lost!

20. *At that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.* Three wondrous mysteries of union—Christ in the Father, the Church in Christ, and Christ in His Church.

21. *He that has My commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves Me: and he that loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.* May we be such lovers of Christ that He may love us and manifest Himself to us, for His name's sake! Amen.

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

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

GOD'S MEMORIAL OF HIS PEOPLE

NO. 3441

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 14, 1915.**

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

***"Behold I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands."
Isaiah 49:16.***

A LITTLE more than eight years ago, I remember addressing you from these very words. You will find the sermon in the printed series [See Sermon #512, Volume 9—A PRECIOUS DROP OF HONEY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at www.spurgeongems.org.] But such a text as this is to be preached hundreds of times! It is quite impossible to exhaust it, and if we should run over the same circle of thought in some measure, the thought suggested is of itself so precious, it were well to have our pure minds stirred up by way of remembrance.

The apprehension that God might forget us would be very horrible to a child of God. As to the ungodly, they care not whether God thinks of them or not. He is nothing to them and they care not whether they are anything to Him. To the Christian, it is far otherwise. He could imagine no greater calamity than for him to be forgotten of his God. He knows there are many reasons in him why he *should* be forgotten, and though those reasons are all met by the promises of God, yet there are times when those reasons exercise great effect upon his mind. As, for instance, the Christian knows how insignificant he is. It is always a wonder to him that God did ever think of him. Like David, when he considers the heavens, the works of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which God has ordained, he says, "What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You visit him?" The ungodly man has large ideas of himself, but the Christian has very humbling notions of his own condition and he marvels, therefore, that God ever should have remembered him—and he fears, sometimes, lest he should be forgotten. So, too, the Christian is aware of his own unworthiness. He knows something of his natural depravity. He remembers somewhat of things done in his youth, his former transgressions—he sees that even now he is not clear from sin in his daily life—and he says within himself at times, "If the Lord were to deal with me according to my desert, He would certainly appoint me a portion with the unbeliever, discountenance me and cast me away." Yes, and when he thinks of his unthankfulness to God for His many mercies, and remembers what a sting there is in ingratitude, and how it cuts sharp the person who is wronged by it, he sometimes wonders that God has not turned against His ungrateful servant and said, "You are not mindful of My goodness. You make such a slight return for it, that I will henceforth no more remember you! The streams of My mercy shall be dried up and the

sunlight of My favor shall be taken away forever.” Oh, what would we do if God did forget us for any of these reasons, my Brothers and Sisters? We could bear, it might be, to be forgotten by the dearest heart that beats in the fondest bosom of our nearest relative—bitter, indeed, would be such an affliction, to find a Judas where we hoped we had a friend—but let all creature friendships go sooner than God should forget us! It would be a calamity if death should visit our habitations, or if sickness should come and lay us low, if some calamity should strip us of our earthly comforts. But let them all go without reservation, let us be reduced to Job’s extremity and sit upon a dunghill and scrape ourselves with a potsherd, sooner than God should forget us! That were Hell itself! Oh, may we rejoice in heart by faith that this calamity cannot occur to us! And let this text help to remove any fear that any Believer here has ever had, that he may be forgotten of God! The text was meant to meet that case, for so it runs, “Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you.” And here is the reason given, “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.”

We come, therefore, Brothers and Sisters, by the help of God’s Spirit, to consider *this Divine Memorial*—“I have engraved you on the palms of My hands.” Then very briefly let us trace out *the result of this memorial of God*. And let us close with *a personal reflection upon the object of this Divine Remembrance*—“I have engraved YOU upon the palms of My hands.”

I. THE DIVINE MEMORIAL.

We have here a metaphorical speech to set forth the impossibility of God’s forgetting us. “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.” I will give a catchword to each particular explanation of this metaphor. *The first word is present*. When we have a thing fresh in our minds and we need to make others know that we have it close to our memory, we say we have it at our fingertips. I say to such an one, “I shall not forget you. I constantly remember you. Your name, your business and your circumstances are at my fingertips.” Everyone understands what is meant by the expression. It is a present memorial, but the figure of speech here used is more beautiful than that. “I have you as near to Me as if I had you always in the palms of My hands.” That by which I remember you is most near to Me. A dear friend told me that when travelling in the East, he frequently saw persons who had the portraits of their friends printed on the palms of their hands. I said to him, “But did not they wear out?” Yes, sometimes,” he said, “but very frequently they were tattooed, marked right into the hand, and then, as long as the hand was there, there was the image of the friend, roughly drawn, of course.” Oriental art is not very perfect, but there it was, drawn on the palms of the hands, so that it could be always seen. A person had never to say, “Run and fetch the portrait. Run and bring me the memorial”—he always had it present with him! So the Lord Jesus always has His people present with him at all times. He is the Head, they are the members. The members are never far off from the Head. He is the Shepherd, they are the sheep and the careful shepherd, in time of danger, is never far from his sheep. Christ is

not far from any of His people and, therefore, His recollections of them are not difficult to be maintained. He keeps the memorial of them in His hands present with Him. There is no fear, therefore, that He will forget them.

The next thought that arises from the metaphor may be remembered by the catchword of *permanent*. As I have already said, the impression made upon the hands, as intended in this figure, was permanent—so long as the person lived, there it was. You engrave your friend's name upon a sapphire and you may lose it. You may write it upon a rock and the rock may crumble. You may get to yourself the most precious and lasting form of matter and stamp the impression of your friend upon it, and by-and-by it may fade away. But when Christ says that He writes His people's names upon His hands, unless He, Himself, can perish, their memorial must abide as long as Jesus lives, He must bear with Him the memories of His people. It is inconceivable that Christ should be without a hand—and what is deeply engraved on those palms, never to be erased, must abide near to Him forever and forever! Oh, think, Christian, you are never forgotten by God! Never in your darkest night of sorrow, never in your most wayward moment of personal doubt and wandering, never forgotten—and you never shall be! If you live to the decrepitude of old age, He will bear and carry you! If you lie long upon a lonely pallet, where few shall observe your suffering, He will not forget you! If you are drifted to some remote part of the world, far from all you love, He will be just as near. Time shall roll on and come to its close, but Christ will not forget you, then, and in the eternity that comes amidst the burning of the world and the judging of mankind, the engraving on His hands shall be as permanent as ever! You shall still be remembered of the Lord, who loved you before the earth was! Present and permanent, then, is the memorial which Christ cherishes of His people. We have lately seen an unusual number of rainbows and I must confess that nothing gives me greater joy than to see a rainbow. It is the memorial of the Covenant. I like to look upon it. But there is something more cherishing to me than looking on it myself—it is the thought of that text where God says, "The bow shall be in the clouds and I will look upon it that I may remember the everlasting covenant." It comforts me that I can look on the sign of God's faithfulness, but it comforts me much more that God looks at it—that His eyes are on it! Had I been an Israelite, I think it would have given me much pleasure to see the blood sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts of my house. I would have known I was secure. But there is something better than that. You remember the text, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." It is *God's* sight of the blood that saved you! So here it is Christ that looks at the palms of His own hands—that sees the memorial—always looks there and has not to look far, for His hands are not far removed from Himself—they are part of Himself. It is on Himself He bears the memory—the permanent memory of all whom He has bought with blood! Therefore, be you comforted, and think not that you are overlooked.

The third word shall be *personal*—present, perpetual, and personal. “I have engraved you not in the Book of Record, but I have engraved you upon Myself, upon the palms of My hands.” It means this—I will put it in one short, compact sentence—that Christ could as soon forget Himself us He could forget His people! He has stamped them into Himself! Yes, more—He has taken them into such vital, indelible union with His own Person, that to forget one soul that He has bought with blood would be to forget Himself! The mother does not forget her child because there is an intimate connection between them. The head cannot forget the members because there is a still more intimate connection there. My finger does not need to tell my head that it suffers, and when a limb is full of pain and agony, it does not need to send express messengers up to the brain to say to the head, “Think of me, for I am full of grief.” No, the head feels that the limb is a part of itself, knit to itself! And Christ has a personal interest and a personal union with all His people. Oh, precious thought! You are dearer to Christ than any treasure could be to Him because you are of His flesh and of His bones. This is the reason—this is one reason that is given in Scripture—for conjugal love, because the woman was taken out of the man, and she is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh—and when our blessed Second Adam fell asleep in death, God took His Church out of His side, and the Church is bone of Christ's bone and flesh of His flesh. He cannot forget her! He looks upon her with a love that can never change and can never be indifferent.

The next word I shall give you after this one of personal is *painful*. “I have engraved you on the palms of My hands.” I may be permitted to illustrate this by our Savior's hands. What are these wounds in Your hands, these sacred stigmata, these ensigns of suffering? The engraver's tool was the nail, backed by the hammer. He must be fastened to the Cross, that His people might be truly engraved on the palms of His hands. There is much consolation here. We know that what a man has won with great pain, he will keep with great tenacity. Old Jacob valued much that portion which he took out of the hand of the Amorite with the sword and with the bow, and so truly does Christ value that which He has conquered at great expense! Child of God, you cost Christ too much for Him to forget you! He recollects every pang He suffered in Gethsemane, and every groan that He uttered for you upon the Cross. The engraving upon His hands brings to His recollection the redemption price which He paid down that you might be set free! Oh, what better ground can you have for believing that Christ remembers you than this—that He loved you and gave Himself for you? Treasure up that thought.

The other word is *practical*. “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.” As much as if God would say, “I can do nothing without remembering My people.” If He creates the world, it is with the hand that has His people engraved on it. If He puts forth His hand to uphold all things, that upholding hand upholds His saints. With His left hand He smites the wicked. But He cannot smite His people, for He sees them in the palm of that very hand! All that God does has an eye to His people. When He divided the nations, He divided them according to the number

of the children of Israel. The world stands for their sake—'tis but a stage for the display of His Grace to them. And when the number of His elect is accomplished, He will take it all down and put it away. O child of God, the Lord has given you the richest consolation when He tells you He can do nothing without remembering you, for on the hand with which He works, He has stamped your name! Note before I leave this, that it does not say, "I have engraved you on the palm of My *hand*," but "on the palms of My *hands*," as if there was a double memorial before the Lord forever. With His right hand He blesses, and His people have a share in that. With His left hand He deals out vengeance, but He sees His people there, and gives no vengeance to them. "His left hand," the hand of His angry power, "is under my head," says the spouse, "and His right hand, the hand of His beneficent love, does embrace me." A left-handed or a right-handed God, He altogether loves us and remembers us on the right hand and on the left. By both His hands, by all His power, He pledges Himself never to forget one of His saints! Oh, this is a rich text! And we trust we shall so handle it as to bring out the juice from the luscious sentences, throw it in the winepress and tread it again and again with active feet—and it shall always yield fresh sweetness—and give forth yet more and more luscious draughts to slake your thirst, if you know but how to use it. Dear, abiding, precious memorial of our crucified Lord, you do charm away our fears! He never can forget us. And now, briefly, not for lack of matter, but for lack of time—

II. WHAT WILL BE THE RESULT OF OUR BEING THUS DAILY REMEMBERED?

Children of God, God remembers you *to make you joyful*. How runs the text? "Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth." The Lord, who thinks of you, will sometimes give you heydays and holidays. You shall not always be in the dark. Do you recollect how John Bunyan describes it, that after Giant Despair's head had been cut off, Mr. Ready-to-Halt, Miss Much-Afraid and Miss Despondency, all of them, had a feast? And they had a dance, too, and Mr. Ready-to-Halt leaped on his crutches! The very weakest and most limping among God's saints sometimes have their seasons of joys and rejoicing, and so shall you! You daughters of depression, you sons of sorrow, God has engraved you upon the palms of His hands! You have had your evenings, you shall have your mornings—you have had your droughts, you shall have your floods. If God remembers us, we may rest assured that *He will provide for all our needs*. If the shepherd remembers the sheep, the sheep shall not starve. If the farmer remembers the plant, it will be cared for. God, who is the Great Farmer, remembering the plants of His garden, says, "I will water them every moment." If the mother remembers her baby, it is to give it all it needs and lull its griefs to rest. God will give us all we need. Sons of need, you who feel your need, be of good comfort—you are engraved on the palms of Jehovah's hands! We shall not want any good thing if He remembers us, so let us reflect that we shall get chastened some time. A child forgotten of its parent, never feels the rod. I have been comforted sometimes when I have

been smarting, to think I was not quite cast off. The goldsmith will not put a common stone into the furnace—he sets some value on that which he spends his coals upon. If the Lord afflicts you, O heir of Heaven, He has not cast you away, be sure of that! The refining that you are undergoing proves that He sets a price upon you. He has taken trouble and care with you. By the furnace, maybe, He will deliver you from your dross and your sin. Oh, to be remembered, even if it is with a blow, is better than to be forgotten and to be left to riot in this world's pleasures! Let me be, my God, only able to know I am Yours by Your rod, sooner than have to live in doubt and fear as to whether I am Yours or not. If God thus remembers us, and we get chastened, we may also know that we shall have consolation in chastening and be delivered in due time out of the trial. If you are engraved on the palms of God's hands, though you should have to lie long and pine on that couch of suffering, He will not forget you!

Oh, my dear young Friends, whose pale faces often grieve me when I see you sad, let us look up to God for comfort! Though you are marked for death, He does not forget you! He will cheer those days of growing weakness, and as you get nearer to the grave, you will also get nearer to Heaven! Many a poor woman lying in a lone cottage, or dying in a workhouse, has had more joy than some of the princes of earth in all their wealth and pride. Christ never leaves those who are His in the world, but to them He reveals Himself more sweetly than to others! I would like to say to every child of God here, because God remembers you, all that you lose between here and Heaven, He will be sure to give you. All you ask for that is right, you shall have, and a great deal you never thought of asking for! You shall have as much sweet and as much bitter. You shall have as much of everything that is good for you, as shall be best, and afterwards you shall have the fullness, you shall have the glory, for, being engraved on the palms of God's hands, He will not forget to bring you home to the place where He is and to appoint you a mansion among His chosen! I wish I could speak more at large on this, but we have hurried over it. Only take it home—chew the cud upon this. It is worth it. Here are subjects for meditation that any thoughtful mind may bring out. If God remembers me, it is all I need. You know that verse we sometimes sing that ends, "This my Father knows; this my Father knows." Oh, yes, your needs, He sees them all! Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of these things. There is nothing more required to comfort your hearts. If He knows it is good for you, you shall have it! And now to close. Who is it that is—

III. THE OBJECT OF THIS REMEMBRANCE

"I have engraved *you* upon the palms of My hands." "*You*"—pass it round. Let each one before God, as though he saw Christ upon the Judgment Throne, ask himself, "Am I engraved upon the palms of Jesus' hands—am I?" It is nothing that His whole Church is there—His Zion. He is immediately thinking of His truly blood-bought, regenerate people—there they are—all there. He has in His eyes the circumstances as He has on His hands the names of many that are greatly afflicted. Notice the connection of the text—*it is to the afflicted that He is there speaking*. He

says, "The Lord will have mercy on His afflicted"—and He says that their names are on His hands! Don't say, then, that you are not the Lord's because you are afflicted! Because you are low in circumstances, or sick in body, don't conclude, therefore, that you are not in Christ, but rather pray more earnestly than ever that these trials may be greatly sanctified to you! Nor, Beloved, don't conclude that you are not Christ's because you feel you are sinful. Observe how the connection runs, "He will have mercy on His afflicted." Now mercy is *for sinners*. I may be a sinner, but yet engraved on the hands of Christ, for, indeed, all whose names are written there are, by nature, guilty, but they have obtained mercy! The greatness of my past guilt does not prove that I have no interest in Christ. If I have faith in Him. If I come and put my trust in Him, then is my name written on the palms of His hands! But is it so, dear Reader? Is it so? Have you trusted Christ or not? Answer, I say again, as though Christ were here upon the Throne of His Judgment Seat! Answer now. Do you rest your soul alone on Jesus Christ? If you do, all that is implied in having yourself imprinted upon the hands of Christ is yours! Take it—enjoy it—be glad. What consolation should this Scripture itself afford! But if you have not believed, touch not these sweet things, but rather say, "Lord, help me to believe tonight!" To believe is but to trust—to rest yourself upon Christ. Watts calls it falling—

***"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Your kind hands I fall."***

Here I am leaning on this rail. If this that I lean upon, fails me, down I must go! I have no other support. Lean just like this on Christ! You have seen a fainting person at last throw himself back on another. Do that to Christ—faint away into Christ! Relax all your own power—let it all go. That sham power you think you have, and that merit you think you have, and all the hopes you ever had—let them all go and now drop into Christ's arms! I have heard it said that if a man would only lie still when he falls into the water—lie on his back—he would float. But the tendency is to struggle. Don't struggle, Sinner, after righteousness in your own strength—fall back and rest on the Infinite Love of God in Christ Jesus! 'Tis all you have to do—to leave off doing and let Christ do everything! And when Christ has done that everything, then you shall begin doing again on quite another principle—not with a view to merit, but out of gratitude to Him who saved you! I do pray that some may be saved tonight in this house. Before they go down yonder steps, may some of you look to Jesus. There is life in a look! I cannot help bringing out these simple Truths of God often and often, but they are constantly forgotten. Those that were bitten by the serpent in the wilderness had not anything to say, had not anything to feel, had not anything to think of—all they had to do was just to look to the serpent lifted on the pole! And you have nothing to do, or feel, or be, in and of yourself—all you have to do is to look straight away to Christ!

There is not any good thing in you. Know that to begin with. You say, "But I am bad." I know you are—you are ten thousand times worse than you think you are! You are bad as you may conceive yourself to be—but

worse than that by fifty thousand times! But your goodness is in Jesus, your hope is in Jesus. Look straight away now to those dear wounds of Jesus! Look straight to Him! And if you perish trusting in Christ, you will be the first sinner that ever perished there! It will be a novelty in Hell, and the news will be spread on earth, and even in Heaven, that there was a sinner that trusted Christ and then perished! Farewell to the Gospel, then! Put away the Bible. We have done with Christ, Himself, if that could be true. But it never can be! "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Look, Man! Look, Woman! Look, Child! Whoever you may be, there is life in a look at the Crucified One! There is life at this moment for you! Look, Sinner! Look unto Him and be saved! Look unto Jesus, who died on the Cross! May God bless you all for Christ's sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 42:1-17; 43:18-25; ROMANS 10:1-19.**

ISAIAH 42:1-17

This book might well be called "the Gospel according to Isaiah," for it is full of evangelical Truth.

Verse 1. *Behold My Servant, whom I uphold: My Elect One, in whom My soul delights: I have put My Spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.* Of whom speaks the Prophet this, but of the Messiah—Jesus of Nazareth? He was upheld by the mighty power of God. He was the Lord's Chosen. The Spirit of God rested upon Him and this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears, for He has brought forth righteousness to the Gentiles.

2. *He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.* He shall be no clamorous seeker after applause. He shall not shout as those that seek for the mastery. Now the Savior was quiet, gentle, meek, humble. When He lifted up His voice, it was for God and for the sons of men—not for Himself. He was meek and lowly of heart.

3. *A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth.* How exactly these words describe the Lord Jesus! He was so gentle that He did not break or break off the bruised reeds. We read that He did not answer the Scribes and Pharisees. They were so powerless—such bruised reeds in His esteem—such worthless, smoking flax—that He left them alone until, by-and-by, He came to bring forth judgment unto victory. And now the weak, the feeble, the gentle, the poor in spirit shall never find Christ to deal harshly with them. "The bruised reed He will not break: the smoking flax He will not quench."

4. *He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He has set judgment in the earth and the isles shall wait for His Law.* Oh, what a blessed thing it is that we have a Savior to trust to, who will not fail! And He is one who will never be discouraged. He will carry out the salvation of His people and never give it up as a hopeless case. Poor Sinner, if He begins with you, He will not fail nor be discouraged—nor will He even with the whole

earth. He will not take back His hand till surely all flesh shall see the Glory of the Lord. He who has undertaken man's redemption is not feeble of spirit and easily baffled. He shall not fail or be discouraged!

5, 6. *Thus says God the LORD, He that created the heavens, and stretched them out; He that spread forth the earth, and that which comes out of it; He that gives breath unto the people upon it and spirit to them that walk therein: I the LORD have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand, and will keep You, and give You for a covenant to the people, for a light to the Gentile.* See what God has made His Son, Jesus Christ? If you want to get a Christ in the Covenant of Grace, you have only to lay hold on Christ, for Christ is given as a Covenant to the people. He is the embodiment of the Covenant—the sum and substance of it—the seal of it—the surety of it. He is, indeed, the Covenant, itself! And if you want light, you have only to get Christ. He is the Light of the world, and here we are told that God has given Him for a Light to the Gentiles.

7. *To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and they that sit in darkness out of the prison house.* Hear this, you melancholy ones, you that are desponding, you that cannot get out of the prison of bad habits, or shake off the chains of sin! Behold a Liberator has come—One whose very business it is to open the fast closed cells of sin and set the captives of Satan free!

8, 9. *I am the LORD: that is My name: and My Glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to engraved images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth, I tell you of them.* One great proof of the truth of the Deity of Jehovah is that He can foresee and foretell, so that long before events happen, He makes them known. Now Isaiah, by God's Spirit, told the Israelites concerning Christ, hundreds of years before Christ came—and yet the terms are so express that one might almost think that they were written *after* the event. But does not God know? And is not He God who sees through the mists of ages and looks upon the things that are to be as though they were? Verily He is God!

10, 11. *Sing unto the LORD a new song, and His praise from the ends of the earth, you that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains.* For the coming of Christ is the coming of music into the world! When He hung upon the Cross, there were lighted up new stars to cheer earth's night. No, what if I say that the sun, itself, had risen then to chase away the darkness once and for all? O Lamb of God! Creation made the angels sing, but Redemption makes us fallen men sing, for it lifts us up to sit among the angels through Your most precious blood!

12. *Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare His praise in the islands.* Now for His enemies. While God is thus graciously dealing with men, He determines to make an end of the powers of evil.

13. *The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, He shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: He shall cry, yes, roar; He shall prevail against His enemies.* Do not imagine that the gods of the heathen will always sit on their thrones or that the powers of anti-Christ will always darken the earth. Ah, no! God will bestir Himself before long.

14. *I have a long time held My peace; I have been still and refrained Myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once.* Oh, what a time will that be when God comes forth in the splendor of His power to put down all the hosts of evil!

15. *I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs: and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools.* What a terrible God He is! When He once puts forth His hand for deeds of justice and of vengeance, who can stand before Him? But yet how His mercy walks arm-in-arm with His justice!

16. *And I will bring the blind by the way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.* Oh, the condescension of God, that even when His right arm is bared for war, and thunder girds His cloudy car, yet still He stoops out of the chariot of wrath to look after poor, blind, helpless souls, and lead them in the way of peace and mercy. But as for His enemies—

17. *They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, who trust in engraved images, that say to the molten images, You are our gods.*

ISAIAH 43:18-25.

Verses 18, 19. *Do not remember the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing: now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.* Do not imagine that what God has done in the past will never be repeated! It will be excelled—He will do yet greater things. Of all the mercy and love which God has shown, we may say that these are only prophecies of what He yet will reveal. There are now things yet to come wherein the splendor of His mercy shall be yet more clearly seen than in all the former things!

20, 21. *The beast of the field shall honor Me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen. This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.* However barren may your soul be and however all your surroundings may seem to be stamped with death, God can come and make you happy and blessed and surround you with delights! And He will do it in order that in you, whom He has formed for Himself, His praise may be seen!

22. *But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob.* Prayer has been neglected. Praise has been suspended. There has been an ungracious negligence in the service of God. “You have not called upon Me, O Jacob.”

22. *But you have been weary of Me, O Israel.* “You thought the service long—thought the time for prayer came around too soon—refused to give to My cause and said it was a tax. You have been weary of Me, O Israel.”

23. *You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; neither have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not encased you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense. "I have not taxed you. I have not drawn upon your resources heavily."*

24. *You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices. "I left you to give or not to give, that your free will might be seen in all your deeds of love, but nothing has come of it. On the contrary"—*

24. *You have burdened Me with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities.* A solemn charge, this, which God lays against His people. Now see the next verse and read it with wondering eyes!

25. *I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.* He has pointed out the fault. He has shown that He is not forgetful of it. And then He pronounces absolution! The transgression is put away! Blessed be His name! Now let us turn to the New Testament and read in the Epistle to the Romans, the 10th Chapter, and we shall there see the way in which pardon is brought home to the soul.

ROMANS 10:1-19.

Verses 1-3. *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.* A fault—a pitiable and grievous fault—that men should be in earnest and very zealous, and yet nothing should come of it because they spend that zeal in a wrong direction! Men would make themselves righteous. They would come before God in the apparel of their own works, whereas God has already made a righteousness which He freely *gives!* For us to try and produce another is to enter into rivalry with God—to insult His Son and do dishonor to His name! May God grant that any here who are very zealous in a wrong direction may receive light and knowledge, and turn their thoughts in the right way.

4, 5. *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the law, that the man who does those things shall live by them.* That is the righteousness of the Law of God. We are not under that Covenant now. We shall never attain to righteousness that way.

6-9. *But the righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (That is, to bring Christ down from above). Or, who shall descend into the deep? (That is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart; that is the word of faith, which we preach. That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.* How very simple! No climbing, no diving, no imagining, no

long reckoning of the understanding, no strangling of the mental faculties. It is just believe God's testimony concerning His Son and you shall be saved!

10, 11. *For with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, Whoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek. [Gentile] in this matter.*

12, 13. *For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* This was the old prophecy of Joel. The Jews knew it. It is the new teaching of the Gospel. The Gentiles know it. Oh, who would not wish to be in that broad "whoever," that he might find salvation?

14, 15. *How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they are sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things? So that, rightly looked upon, the humblest preacher of the Gospel stands in the most solemn relationship towards mankind. His Master sends him. He tells His message. Men hear it, believe it and by it are saved! Happy is the messenger! Well may his heart rejoice, even when his soul is heavy, because he has such work to do in his Master's name!*

16. *But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report? And what Isaiah says, many and many a preacher since has had to say. "Woe, woe to us for this."*

17-19. *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? Did not the Jewish people have a time of hearing and instruction? Certainly they knew—and they also knew that the Gospel was not to be confined to them. They had a warning that it would even be taken from them and sent to other nations.*

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

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

A PRECIOUS DROP OF HONEY

NO. 512

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 31, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Behold, I have inscribed you upon the palms of My hands.”
Isaiah 49:16.***

GOD’S promises are not exhausted by *one* fulfillment. They are manifold mercies, so that after you have opened one fold and found out one signification, you may unfurl them still more and find another which shall be equally true, and then another, and another, and another, almost without end. Like the cherubim, God’s promises have a face for every quarter of the earth, and like the wheels, they are full of eyes for every trial of the chosen people. The Lord knows how to speak many-handed promises. His words, like the trees of the New Jerusalem, bear twelve manner of fruits, and yield their fruit every month.

No doubt the text and the preceding promises all refer to the seed of Abraham. God will not cast them away. He does no more forget them than does a woman forget her sucking child. They shall return to their own land and accept Messiah, the Prince whom they have so long despised. But the seed of Abraham is the grand type of the Church. And therefore we believe that every word here, in its widest and most extensive sense, belongs to the elect of God—those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, and for whom Jesus shed His blood. We feel persuaded that the favor which is shelved to the whole body is given to each member, and therefore any true Believer who is, through faith, one of the spiritual seed of Abraham, may take the promises to himself and say, “Thus says the Lord unto my soul. Thus and thus speaks He comfortably concerning me.”

I believe, I say, that the text before us belongs primarily to the seed of Israel. Next, to the whole Church as a body. And then to every individual member. Understand it so, and may each one of you, even though you are numbered among the little in Israel, have Divine Grace to draw forth marrow and fatness out of the inexpressibly rich text which today the Spirit of God presents to us.

I intend, first of all, to *consider our text verbally*, pulling it to pieces word by word. Then next, to consider it as a whole. And then, to incite you by it as a whole, to consider what is the conduct demanded of you by a Truth of God so sweet.

I. First of all, then, my text is one of those remarkable sentences in which EVERY SINGLE WORD DESERVES TO BE EMPHASIZED. We will begin with the first word, “Behold.” “Behold, I have inscribed you upon the

palms of My hands.” “Behold,” is a *word of wonder*. It is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient signboard, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritan books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation.

Here, indeed, we have a theme for marveling. Heaven and earth may well be astonished that God should ever inscribe upon His hands the names of sinners. That rebels should attain so great a nearness to His heart as to be written upon the palms of His hands! Well might the angels wonder, and those bright spirits be lost in amazement, for unto which of the angels said He at any time, “I have inscribed you upon the palms of My hands”? What cherub ever attained this dignity, or to what seraph was this honor awarded? But to man, who is but a worm. To the son of man who is but dust and ashes. To man who has rebelled, who has lost all claim upon God’s favor, and deserves His hottest wrath—to *man* is this consolation given, “I have inscribed you upon the palms of My hands.”

Speak of the seven wonders of the world! Why this is a wonder in the seventh heavens! No doubt a part of the wonder which is concentrated in the word “Behold,” is excited by the unbelieving lamentation of the preceding sentence. Zion said, “The Lord has forsaken me, and my God has forgotten me.” How amazed the Divine mind seems to be at this wicked unbelief of man! What can be more astounding than the unfounded doubts and fears of God’s favored people? He seems to say, “How can I have forgotten you, when I have inscribed you upon the palms of My hands? How can it be? How dare you doubt My constant remembrance, when the memorial is set upon My very flesh?”

O Unbelief, how strange a marvel you are! I know not which most to wonder at, the faithfulness of God or the unbelief of His people! He keeps His promise a thousand times, and yet the next trial makes us doubt Him. He never fails. He is never a dry well. He is never as a setting sun, a passing meteor, or a melting vapor—and yet we are as continually vexed with anxieties, molested with suspicions, and disturbed with fears—as if our God were fickle and untrue. Here follows the great marvel—that God should be faithful to such a faithless people! And that when He is provoked with their doubts, He nevertheless abides true.

Behold! Behold! I say and am ashamed and confounded for all your cruel doubts of your indulgent Lord. I remarked that the “Behold” in our text is intended to attract *particular attention*. There is something here worthy of being studied. If you should spend a month over such a text as this, you should only begin to understand it. It is a gold mine. There are nuggets upon the surface, but there is richer gold for the man who can dig deep. I can only indicate the veins of gold—it is for you afterwards in your meditations to follow them out.

I pray you, be very careful with the text—lose not a drop of the wine of consolation contained in its precious crystal—be prayerful and anxious to grind forth from this wheat every atom of its fine flour. Leave no meal to grow stale in this barrel. Drain all the oil from this cruse, for where God sets a “Behold,” depend upon it, there is a something that is not to be trifled with, nor to be passed over in indifference.

We pass on now to the next word, “Behold, *I* have inscribed you upon the palms of My hands.” The Divine Artist, who has been pleased to engrave His people for a memorial, is none other than *God Himself*. Here we learn the lesson which Christ afterwards taught His disciples—“You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.” No one can write upon the hands of God, but God Himself. Neither our merits, prayers, repentance, nor faith can write our names there, for these in their goodness extend not unto God so as to write upon His hands.

Nor did blind chance or mere necessity of fate inscribe our names. But the living hand of a living Father, unprompted by anything except the spontaneous and Omnipotent love of His own heart, wrote the names of His people upon His own hands. How dependent are we upon God! If my name is in the Lamb’s Book of Life, how ought I to adore the sovereignty of the Divine Grace which placed it there! Had it not been there, *I* could not have inscribed it. Had it not been found in the list, no archangel could, by any possibility, have inserted it—

**“What if my name should be left out
When You for them shall call?”**

It is a black thought to any of us, but when I know that it is *not* left out, but is written there among the bright spirits chosen of God, and precious, how this should make me leap for joy! “*I* have inscribed you.” Then, again, if the Lord has done it, *there is no mistake about it*. If some human hand had cut the memorial, the hieroglyphs might be at fault. But since perfect Wisdom has combined with perfect Love to make a memorial of the saints, no error by any possibility can have occurred. There can be no erasures, no crossing out of what God has written, no blotting out of what the Eternal has decreed. Fixed, and fixed forever must be the inscription which is of Divine Authorship.

The powers of darkness cannot erase those everlasting lines. “I have inscribed you upon the palms of My hands.” Soul, this is enough to overwhelm you with humble adoration that God should so much as take notice of you. When you receive the daily tokens of Divine care, ought you not to exclaim with David—“When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?” But how is it, Lord, that You can go farther than this, and You Yourself write the names of these insignificant mortals upon Your own hands?

“I have inscribed you.” It is wonderful to see how God comes into immediate contact with His saints, and appears in Person in all His acts of Grace towards them. In other works it is His far-reaching voice, but in the wonders of His Grace it is His present hand. In the making of worlds, He stands at a distance, and speaks His will. But when He creates saints, and redeems His people, He comes out of His chambers—He rends the heavens and comes down—He reveals Himself as a God near at hand. He stands over His work as the potter over the clay upon the wheel.

It is written that when He made the heavens and the earth, “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” But I never hear that God sang. There is nothing in the merely material universe to stir the Infinite heart. The work is not dear enough to Him, nor so full of satisfaction as the grand work of *redeeming* love. When He saved His people—when He created Israel for Himself, I hear it said—“He shall rest in His love. He shall rejoice over you with singing.” Oh, matchless verse, in which the Eternal Trinity burst forth into sacred song! Do you not catch the strain even now. “I have done it. I have come forth Myself out of the secret of My tabernacle wherein I have concealed Myself from the gaze of men, and ‘I have inscribed you upon the palms of My hands.’”

Take the next word. We have many wells here out of which we may draw water. “Behold, I *have inscribed* you.” Not, “I will,” you see. Nor yet, “I *am* doing it.” It is a thing of the *past*, and how far back in the past! Oh, the antiquity of this inscription! They take us to the British Museum and show us most reverend writings which are the memorials of those hoary ages—which were the first born of the years beyond the flood. But here is an inscription older than them all. Compared with it, Assyrian antiquities and Egyptian records are things of yesterday. Before the young earth had burst her swaddling bands of mist, yes, before the globe had been begotten, or yonder sun had darted his infant arrows, or yonder stars had opened their eyes, the Eternal had fixed His eyes of love upon His favorites.

Fly back as far as you will, until this present world and all the worlds within the universe sleep in the mind of God, like unborn forests in an acorn cup, and even then you have not reached the time. Before all time when it was first said—“I have inscribed you upon the palms of My hands.” “From everlasting to everlasting You are God.” From everlasting to everlasting You are the same, and Your people’s names are written on Your hands!

Yet, methinks there may be a prophetic reference here to a later writing of the names, when Jesus Christ submitted His outstretched palms to those cruel engraving tools, the nails. Then was it surely, when the executioner with the hammer smote the tender hands of the loving Jesus, that He engraved our names upon the palms of His hands. And today when He

points to those wounds, when by faith He permits us to put our fingers into the prints of the nails, He may still say to us—

***“Deep on the palms of both My hands
I have engraved Your name.”***

Well, Christian, do not these deep things comfort you? Have you no consolation in the ancient things of the everlasting mountains? Does not eternal love delight you? God is no stranger to you. He has known you long before you knew yourself—yes, long before you were curiously worked in the lowest parts of the earth—in His book all your members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them. Known unto God from the foundation of the earth were you. He was always thinking of you. There was never a period when you were not in His mind and on His heart. *“I have inscribed you upon the palms of My hands.”*

But the next word is *“inscribed.”* My dear friend, The Rev. John Anderson, of Helensburgh, whom I am glad to welcome here today, told me this morning that while traveling in the east he has frequently seen persons with portraits of their friends upon their hands, so that wherever they went, as one in this country would carry the portrait of a friend in a brooch or a watch, they carry these likenesses printed on their palms.

I said to him, “Surely they would wash out.” They might by degrees, he said, but they frequently had them pricked in with strong indelible ink, so that there, while the palm lasts, there lasts the memorial of the friend. Surely this is what the text refers to. I have inscribed you in. I have not merely printed you, stamped you on the surface, but I have permanently cut you into my hand with marks which never can be removed. That word “inscribed” sets forth the perpetuity of the inscription. Not on the hand of man but on the hand of God is it engraved.

Oh, mysterious thought! On that hand immortal and eternal is it dug, engraved in. Our engravers press upon their tools. They tell us how stern the labor when they cut the hard metal to mark each line, and God has thus engraved—with the whole strength of Omnipotence He has leaned upon the tool to cut our names into His flesh! Was there not such an engraving at Calvary? Is it not written, “It pleased the Father to bruise Him. He has put Him to grief”? It is as if eternal strength, I say, leaned upon that engraving tool to write the memorial of His chosen people in the hands of Jesus. *“I have inscribed you upon the palms of My hands.”*

We need not indulge the dark foreboding that we shall be lost, but we may sing with Hammond—

***“If Jesus is ours we have a true Friend,
Whose goodness endures the same to the end.
Our comforts may vary, our frames may decline,
We cannot miscarry. Our aid is Divine.
The hills may depart and mountains remove,
But faithful You are O fountain of love!***

***The Father has inscribed our names on Your hands,
Our record, in Heaven, eternally stands.***

Shall we stop to take that next word? Scarcely may I preach from it, but you should meditate upon it constantly. "I have inscribed *you* upon the palms of My hands." My Lord, do You mean *me*? Yes, even me, if I, by faith, cling to Your Cross. I am not shut out from Your heart of love, if by faith I have entered into Your happy family. I know that You remember me or You would never have helped me to remember You. Glory be to You, O my gracious Lord."

But I want you, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, to notice that the word runs, "I have inscribed *you*." It does not say, "*Your name*." The name is there, but that is not all—"I have inscribed *you*." See the fullness of this! I have inscribed your person, your image, your case, your circumstances, your sins, your temptations, your weaknesses, your wants, your works. I have inscribed *you*—everything about you—all that concerns you. I have put you altogether there. It is not an outline sketch, you see. It is a full picture, as though the man himself were there. What? Do you dare dream that God forgets you? Will you ever say again that your God has forsaken you when He has engraved *you*—not your name, I say, but everything that concerns you—upon His own palms?

"Oh," says one, "but I am in such a plight this morning." Well, He has inscribed that there. "Ah," says another, "I am so weak and so feeble!" That, too, is engraved there. "I have inscribed *you*." The Omniscient God knows you better than you know yourself—and whereas you are conscious of *some* sin and *some* imperfection—He knows that you have an infinitude of sin and a vastness of infirmity. He has put it all there—"I have engraved *you*." I say, again, this is a thing too great to be talked of, but more fit to be read, marked, learned, and digested in the silence of your closet.

You have never inscribed yourselves so well upon the tablets of your own knowledge as God has inscribed you upon those blessed tablets—the palms of His hands. Yes, I dare to say it—our indulgent God as much thinks of one saint as if there were no other saint—and no other created thing in all the world. Our Covenant God so recollects and cares for His child, that if the whole universe were dissolved and had departed like a shadow, and our Lord had but one man to fix all His Divine Grace upon, He would not watch him more, nor more carefully and lovingly see after his best interests, than He now cares for *each one* of His people. "I have inscribed *you* upon the palms of My hands."

We have up to now taken every word, but we must now take the next two or three. Remember we are inscribed, where? Upon *His hands*, not upon the works of His hands. *They* shall perish—yes, they shall all wax old as does a garment. But His hands shall endure forever and ever. We are not inscribed upon a seal, for a seal might be slipped from the finger

and laid aside. The hand itself can never be separated from the living God. It is not inscribed or engraved on a huge rock, for a convulsion of nature might rend the rock by an earthquake, or the fretting tooth of time might eat the inscription out. Our record is on His hands, where it must last, world without end. Not upon the back of His hands where it might be supposed that in days of strife and warfare the inscription might suffer damage, but there upon *the palms* of His hands where it shall be well protected, so that even—

**“When God’s right arm is bared for war,
And thunder clouds His stormy cry,”**

even then, when He smites with His fist, His people shall be well protected within the palms of His hands.

The most tender part shall be made the place of the inscription, that to which He is most likely to look. That which His fingers of wisdom enclose, that by which He works His mighty wonders shall be the unceasing remembrance, pledging Him never to forget His chosen. Do notice, it does not say, “I have inscribed you upon the palm of one hand,” but “I have inscribed you upon the *palms of My hands*.” There are two memorials. His saints shall never be forgotten, for the inscription is put there upon the palm of this hand, the right hand of blessing, and upon the palm of that hand, the left hand of justice. I see Him with His right hand beckon me—“Come you blessed,” and He sees me in His hand.

And on that side He says, “Depart you cursed,” but not to me, for He sees me in His hand, and cannot curse me. Oh, my Soul, how charming this is, to know that His left hand is under your head, while His right hand does embrace you. Both hands are marked with the memorial—this left hand, which is the hand of cursing, cannot curse me, for it is under my head. It cannot smite, for it has become my strength and my stay, my pillow and my rest. While His right hand does embrace me, to keep me safe from death, and Hell—and to preserve me and bring me to His eternal kingdom in Glory.

Now I am conscious that I cannot work out the beauty of this passage. I am equally conscious that you cannot either, unless you have much longer time for meditation than such a short service as this can afford you. Take it home and look at it again and again, especially laying an emphasis on the word “you.” And oh, if you can render it—“He has inscribed *me, me, me*, upon the palms of His hands.” If your soul can know that God has you daily in remembrance, and neither can, nor will, forget you, then you will dance before the Ark of the Lord. And if Michal mocks, you may answer her as David did—“The God that chose me, made me to dance.” Eternal Election and Indissoluble Union are truths which make Believers rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. “Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous, and shout for joy all you that are upright in heart.”

II. Now let us proceed to the second part of the subject, which is to CONSIDER THE TEXT AS A WHOLE. “I have inscribed you upon the palms of My hands.” This seems to show us, first of all, *that God’s remembrance of His people is constant*. The hands, of course, are constantly in union with the body. In Solomon’s Song we read, “Set me as a seal upon Your hands.” Now this is a very close form of remembrance, for the seal is very seldom laid aside by the Eastern, who not being possessed with skill in the art of writing his name, requires his seal in order to affix his signature to a document. Therefore the seal is almost always worn, and in some cases is never laid aside.

A seal, however, *might* be laid aside, but the hands never could be. It has been a custom, in the olden days especially, when men wished to remember a thing, to tie a cord about the hand, or a thread around the finger by which memory would be assisted. But then the cord might be snapped or taken away, and so the matter forgotten. But the *hand* and that which is printed into it must be constant and perpetual. O Christian, remember that by night and by day God is always thinking of you. From the beginning of the year even to the end of the year, the Lord’s eyes are upon you, according to His precious Word—“I, the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it. I will keep it night and day.”

Your remembrance of God is intermittent. You thought of Him this morning when you rose from your beds. You are trying to think of Him now, and this evening, again, your thoughts will go up to Him. These are only times and seasons of remembrance, but God never ceases to recollect you. The finite mind of man cannot constantly be occupied, if it is to engage in other pursuits, with any one thought. But the gigantic mind of God can think of a million trains of thought at once. He is not confined to thinking of one thing, or working out one problem at a time. He is the great many-handed, many-eyed God. He does all things, and meditates upon all things, and works all things at the same time—therefore He never is called away by any urgent business so that He can forget you.

No second person ever comes in to become a rival in His affection towards you. You are fast united to your great Husband, Christ, and no other lover can steal His heart. But Jesus, having chosen you, does never allow a rival to come. You are His beloved, His spouse, the darling of His heart, and He has Himself said, “My eyes and my heart are toward you continually.” Every moment of every day, every day of every month, and every month of every year, is the Lord continually thinking upon you, if you are one of His.

Still further, the text as a whole seems to show us that this recollection on God’s part is *practical*. We are engraved upon His heart—this is to show His love. We are put upon His shoulders—this is to show that His strength is engaged for us. And also upon His hands, to show that the activity of our Lord will not be separated from us. He will work and show

Himself strong for His people. He brings His Omnipotent hands to effect our redemption. What would be the use of having a friend who would think of us, and then let his love end in thought? The faithfulness we want is that of one who will *act* in our defense. We need one who so cares for us that against every arrow of the adversary He will lift up the shield. And for every want will find a supply. We want an active sympathy from God. Surely this is the intention of the text. "I have inscribed you upon the palms of My hands."

He has done all He has done as if everything that He touched left a memorial of His people on it—as if every work He did, He did it with the same hands that carved the remembrance of His people. Do you see the drift of it? If He molds a world between His palms and then sends it wheeling in its orbit—it is between those palms which are stamped with the likeness of His sons and daughters—and so that new work shall minister to their good. If He divides a nation, it is always with the hand that bears the remembrance of Zion. Scripture itself tells us this, "When He divided the nations, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel."

The great wheel of Providence, when God makes it revolve, works for the good of the people whom He has called according to His purpose. There are many strings, but they are all in one hand, and they all pull one way—to draw a weight of glory to the chosen. There are many wheels and innumerable cogs, and as you and I look about us, we cannot understand the machinery. We cry, "O wheels, what do you work?" But the end, the end, if you stood there and saw the end of everything, you would see that God has stamped all the wheels with the memory of His children, so that the result is always good and only good to those whom He has inscribed on the palms of His hands. It is, then, a practical as well as a constant sympathy.

Next, dear Friends, and to the children of God this will be a delightful thought, this is *an eternal remembrance*. You cannot suppose it possible that any person can erase what is written on God's hands. The Scriptures tell us that we are in the hands of Christ, and that none shall pluck us out. Some Arminians say we can slip out. But how can we slip out if we are engraved there? We may well defy all the devils in Hell, with all their craft, even to forge a plan by which they can get at the palms of God's hands. I cannot think of a thing that should seem more impossible, more tremendously impossible, than that any creature—whether it be life or death, things present or things to come—should ever be able to reach the palms of God's hands, so as to erase our names. Our hymn is not wrong when it says—

***"Once in Christ, in Christ forever,
Nothing from His love can sever."***

And Toplady made no mistake when he said—

"My name from the palms of His hands

Eternity will not erase.

***Impressed on His heart it remains
In marks of indelible Grace—
Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given.
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in Heaven.”***

“I have inscribed you upon the palms of My hands.”

Still I have not drained my text dry. Let the treader of the winepress tread the grapes once more, and more holy wine shall flow there from this memorial—*how tender!* How tender, I say, because it is inscribed on the hands. We have heard of one, an eastern queen, who so loved her husband that she thought even to build a mausoleum to his memory was not enough. She had a strange way of proving her affection, for when her husband’s bones were burned she took the ashes and drank them day by day, that, as she said, her body might be her husband’s living sepulcher.

It was a strange way of showing love and there was a marvelous degree of strange, fanatical fondness in it. But what shall I say of this Divine, celestial, unobjectionable, sympathetic mode of showing remembrance by cutting it into the palms? Words fail to express our intense content with this most admirable sign of tenderness and fond affection. It appears to me as though the King had said, “Shall I carve my people upon precious stones? Shall I choose the ruby, the emerald, the topaz? No. For these all must melt in the last general conflagration. What then? Shall I write on tablets of gold or silver? No, for all these may canker and corrupt, and thieves may break through and steal.

“Shall I cut the memorial deep on brass? No, for time would fret it, and the letters would not long be legible. I will write on Myself, on My own hands, and then My people will know how tender I am, that I would sooner cut into My own flesh than forget them. I will have my Son branded in the hands with the names of His people, that they may be sure He cannot forsake them. Hard by the memorial of His wounds shall be the memorial of His love to them, for, indeed, His wounds are an everlasting remembrance.” How loving, then, how full of superlative, super-excellent affection is God toward you, and toward me in so recording our names.

Weary not when I yet further remark, *that this memorial is most surprising.* Scripture, which is full of wonders, yet allows a “Behold” to be put before this verse—“Behold!” If the things I have been saying are enough to make you wonder—the deep sea of the text, without bottom and without shore—would much more cause you to hold up your hands in astonishment. Child of God, let your cheerful eyes, and your joyful heart testify how great a wonder it is that you, once so vile, so hard of heart, so far estranged from God, are this day written on the palms of His hands. And then I close this point by saying *it is also most consolatory.* When God

would meet Zion's great doubt—"God has forgotten me," He cheers her with this—"I have inscribed you upon the palms of My hands."

Where are you this morning, Mourner—where are you? Ah, you may well hide your head for shame. You said yesterday, when trial after trial came —

***"My God has quite forgotten me;
My Lord will be gracious no more."***

Here is God's answer to you this morning—"It cannot be. I cannot forget you, for I have inscribed you upon the palms of My hands."—

***"Forget you, I will not, I cannot, your name
Engraved on My heart does forever remain;
The palms of My hands while I look on, I see
The wounds I received when suffering for you."***

There is no sorrow to which our text is not an antidote. If you are a child of God, though your troubles have been as innumerable as the waves of the sea, this text, like the channels of the ocean, can contain them all. I care not this morning though you have lost everything, though you came here a penniless bankrupt beggar—so long as you have this text you are rich beyond a miser's dream!

You may have forgotten your own mercy. Your own experience may seem a dream to you. The devil may tell you that you never knew the Lord. Your own sins may bear evidence in the same way—but if you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Covenant made with David's Lord must not, and cannot, be broken. "I have inscribed you upon the palms of My hands." Come, drooping Saint, lift up your head! You dreary, downcast Brother, be of good cheer! If Christ remembers you, what more can you want? The dying thief's extremity could not suggest a prayer larger than, "Lord, remember me!"—and your greatest sorrow cannot ask for a more complete assuagement than this—"Lord, show me that You have inscribed me upon the palms of Your hands."

III. And now we come to the last point, upon which only a hint. I said the last point would be to EXCITE YOU TO THE DUTY WHICH SUCH A TEXT SUGGESTS.

Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ, if you are partakers of this inestimably precious text, let me say, first of all, *is it not your duty to leave your cares behind you today?* We do not want any valuables left behind in the Chapel, but these cares can be swept out tomorrow morning when the women clear away the rubbish—and I am sure the dustbin never contained viler stuff. Leave them here today. What are you fretting about? Is not a Christian inconsistent when he is full of carking care? Should not the fact that God always graciously and tenderly remembers you, compel you once and for all to leave your burden with Him who cares for you?—

***"The Lord our Leader goes before,
Sufficient He and none besides.
And were the dangers many more,
We need not fear with such a Guide."***

***Through snares, through dangers and through foes
He leads, whose arm almighty is—
What, then, if earth and Hell oppose?
We need not fear if we are His.”***

Then, if you must not have cares, I think you *should not have those deep sorrows and despairs*. Lift up your head! Jehovah remembers you, Man! The billows cannot drown him whom the Lord of Hosts ordains to bring to shore. Be glad in your God, and His perfect love. Do you not think that joy becomes a man to whom such a text as this belongs? Wipe your brow. It is true, the sweat stands on it, but your greatest labor is done—Christ has finished it for you. There need, at least, be no sweat of trepidation and alarm upon your face. He cannot forget you. You have what angels envy. You have what poor mourning souls would give their eyes to win—what troubled consciences would give their blood to buy. Be glad!

Why should the children of such a King go mourning any *one* of their days? Now lift up your heads and bathe them in the sunlight of God. Take the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. I am certain that the man who wears such a gold chain about his neck need not bear the rags of penury. The man who wears such a diamond coronet as this upon his brow ought not to behave like a poor beggar in the streets. Go not clothed in rags of mourning, but put on the scarlet and fine linen of thanksgiving—since God gives you this consolation—“I have inscribed you upon the palms of My hands.”

One thing more and that is, *if this text is not yours, how your mouths ought to water after it*. It is wrong to covet, but not to covet such a thing as this. “Covet earnestly the best gifts.” Is there a soul here who says, “O that I had a part and lot in this matter! Would God that I were saved, that I were written in the palms of Jesus’ hands”? Poor Soul, if you desire Christ, He desires you. If you have a spark of love to Him, His soul is like a fiery furnace of love toward you—and you may have His pardoning love shed abroad this morning.

“How?” you ask. “Whoever believes on Him shall never perish.” To believe is to trust, and if you trust confidently, simply—just as a child trusts to its mother’s arms—you shall find that He will never fail your trust nor prove untrue to your confidence. May God bring you to know yourself, and to know the sweetness of this blessed, blessed text, which overwhelms and destroys all power of speech in me, and makes me feel the poverty of my thoughts and language.

God bless you, for Jesus’ sake. Amen. Amen.

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CHURCH INCREASE

NO. 2692

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 1900.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 18, 1881.

“The children which you shall have, after you have lost the other, shall say again in your ears, The place is too small for me: give me a place that I may dwell. Then you will say in your heart, Who has begotten these for me, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and wandering to and fro? And who has brought these up? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?”
Isaiah 49:20, 21.

MEN who have no Grace in their hearts despise the Church of God. Those who have only a little Grace have but slight sympathy with her condition. Men who have great Grace and are conscious of having received much mercy from God have great sympathy with the Church of God, and a deep regard for her. You remember how David, in that memorable penitential Psalm, the 51st, after he had poured out his whole soul in pleading for mercy and forgiveness for himself, concluded his prayer by saying, “Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem.” In like manner, those who have needed mercy, have pleaded for mercy and have received much mercy, are usually those who are most anxious that the people of God should be happy, that the cause of God should prosper, that the Truth of God should speedily overthrow error and that the Christ of God should be exalted and glorified in the earth.

I do not expect to say anything upon this subject which will interest those who have no love for the Church of God, but those who belong to her and who are spending their lives to promote her welfare because she is the bride of Christ, will, I trust, find something in what I say which will interest and perhaps encourage them. I shall come at once to the text and notice that, first, *we must expect a measure of decrease in the Church.* But then, secondly, *we may expect a great increase in the Church.* And, thirdly, from what this text has to say upon that subject and also for other reasons, *we ought to be encouraged to seek the increase of the Church of God.*

I. First, then, dear Friends, THERE IS A DECREASE GOING ON IN THE CHURCH OF GOD ON EARTH.

Zion is represented here as mourning for the children that she had lost. The Jewish Church in the olden times saw her sons and daughters slain with the sword, or carried away captive. Afterwards, she saw the

great majority of the nation refusing Christ and turning away from Him—and thus the Jewish Church was diminished and brought very low. The same thing has happened in many other cases and I am going to apply the text to ourselves and our own churches. We must naturally expect to see, in each separate church of Jesus Christ, a certain process and measure of decrease.

For, first, *some are being drafted from us to supply the choirs of Heaven with fresh musicians.* That is a happy source of loss which we would not stop if we could! Perhaps, in the case of each sheaf that is gathered into the heavenly garner, there are some who would gladly detain it, to the loss of that particular sheaf, and also to the loss of the great Husbandman. When we speak as we ought concerning those who are thus taken Home, we thank God that when the shocks of corn are fully ripe, they are no longer left in the field to suffer through the falling showers or the blighting mildew, but they are carried away to their proper place in the garner of God!

Therefore, Beloved, bury not the saints with dolorous music, but sing Psalms of praise as you bear them to the grave. I like the old Puritan style of funeral. The body of the Believer was borne to the tomb upon men's shoulders and the surviving friends sang Psalms and hymns as they marched along. Their faith taught them that they had no need to sorrow as those that are without hope, so they took care to always mingle the music of a joyful faith with the tears that they shed over the departure of those who had fallen asleep in Christ. So let it always be with us. As star by star descends below the horizon of earth, it shines far more brightly in the skies above! Should not Jesus have His own? Is it not still His prayer, "Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory"? Should we wish to detain them from their Lord's embrace, or rob the Master of the satisfaction of receiving Home His loved ones? No, certainly not! That source of decrease has lately taken away some of the godliest and most gracious of ministers. Some of the officers of the Church who seemed to be its pillars, have been removed, and others, less known, but equally gracious, have also been missed from our midst. So must it continue to be—therefore, let us not rebel against the blessed necessity. Who among us would wish to alter the Lord's arrangement? No, let this form of decrease still go on and let the Church on earth be the nursery for the Church above! Let it be the school, the place of education, the training-ground, until the children shall come of age and enter upon their inheritance fully prepared to enjoy it to the praise and glory of their Lord!

Each separate church will also have a measure of decrease *through the removal of God's servants from one place to another.* This is a circumstance which is sometimes much regretted, but I think it should not be so. "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Often, the removal of a Christian out of a particular place is in order that he may be more helpful to another community than he is in his present position. I have frequently seen Brothers and Sisters who were just ordinary members of this Church—good, useful people—but they did not at-

tain to any very great prominence. Yet, in another place they have been exceedingly useful. I go into the country to preach and the deacon shakes hands with me. And as I look at him, I say, "Ah, I remember you." "Well, Sir," he replies, "I moved away from London some years ago and the Lord has been pleased to put me here, so that I may help this little cause. It has been strengthened, I hope, by my coming." And I find the Brother greatly developed by being transplanted. He is where the trees do not stand so thickly together as they do here, and he grows all the better for the change.

Sometimes, under the shadow of some great tree, there is a large number of saplings, and they grow pretty well. But, by-and-by, the big tree is cut down and it is not altogether a loss—for then the minor trees, that were beneath it, begin to develop and to become strong forest trees themselves. So is it, sometimes, that men are overshadowed in one position, and their removal is for their own development. On the whole, it is a gain to the Church of God for certain churches to lose some of their members. Do not, therefore, always regret this source of decrease. For my part, I thank God for the many whom we lose by emigration. I am glad that some friends have gone to America. What would the United States have been, at this moment, if it had not been for "the men of the *Mayflower*" in the olden times, and the many pilgrim fathers and pilgrim sons and daughters who have since gone across the Atlantic to be as salt in that part of the earth?

Look still further away to Australia, so largely peopled by those who are of our race. What a mercy that it is so! Would you have those lands given up to Romanism, or to Mohammedanism, or to Paganism? God forbid! Salt ought not to be kept in a box—it is meant to be rubbed into the meat—and Christians are intended to be scattered all over the carcass of this world, to salt it all, and act with purifying and preserving power in every place! Let not the members of any one church, therefore, sit down and sigh, and cry, because their fellow members are removed. There are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it, so try to catch some more! If your Brothers and Sisters are gone where they can be more useful, God speed them! Freely and cheerfully let them go! A heart that should try to keep all the blood within itself would be no source of life to the body—no, it could not itself live—but the heart that continually pumps in the blood and then pumps it out again is the one that is serving its proper purpose.

That is what churches should do—let them not be stingy, but rather lavish in the cause of God. Depend upon it, if we decrease in numbers because our friends depart to other spheres of service for the Savior, it is not a thing to weep over! We must try to get in some new members to take their places and may God prosper the endeavor!

But there is another source of decrease over which we must greatly *grieve*, and that is *the backsliding of many professors*. Over this decrease I mourn even more than over another, grievous as that is, namely, *the sifting process by which the chaff is removed from the wheat*. For when the saints backslide, they are still God's people, although their power for

good, their influence, their help to the Church of God is gone until they are brought back—and that is very lamentable. Churches lose much, if not in number, yet certainly in strength, in fervor, in power of prayer, by the declining in Grace of some who once ran well, but who have been hindered. Pray much, dear Friends, that God would keep all who are members with us from growing cold. May they have their first love restored, if it is at all declining, and may they have much more than that, for it is not much to stay just as we were when we were spiritually made alive—we ought to “grow in Grace.” Our first love should be like the kindling of the fire when, perhaps, there are shavings or straw set alight, and it burns apparently more fiercely than it does afterwards. Yet, later on in the Christian life, there ought to be a steady flame like the glow of the coals when they are turned in the grate to one solid ruby. That steady glow of permanent love to the Lord Jesus Christ is what we should seek after—but we do not see it in some of our members. Then, by-and-by, they cease their attendance at the Communion Table and they are missing from various forms of Christian work and service—and so the church has ineffective members and thus it has to regret a real decrease.

As for that other decrease over which we mourn—the sifting by which the chaff is separated from the wheat—how sadly true it still is, as the beloved Apostle wrote, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” There is a separating process always going on in the professing church and the most effectual fan of all is a faithful ministry. After a while, some of our hearers do not like what we say—it is too personal, too cutting, too searching. They want to listen to that kind of preaching which will allow them to go on comfortably in their sins and to keep up a name to live even while they are dead.

How constantly our Lord’s teaching kept on sifting His disciples! After one of His utterances concerning human inability apart from Divine Grace, we read, “From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.” As He continually brought out some of the deeper Truths of God as His disciples were able to bear them, there were certain of the mixed multitude that had joined with His followers who went off this way and that way. So is it always—and so *must* it be under the faithful preaching of the Word—and you must not be astonished or grieved when it is so. It is a gain to any church to lose such members as these, for the mixed multitude usually falls a-lusting as it did in the olden times. Half the sin in the camp in the wilderness came not from the children of Israel, but from the riff-raff and rabble that went up out of Egypt with them—and that were mingled among them to their hurt.

Do not, dear Friends, ever believe that the true saints of God can finally turn away from Him and be lost. There was a notable sermon preached, last Sunday, in St. Paul’s Cathedral, against the perseverance of the saints. Did you notice why it was preached and the whole tone and tenor of it? It was this—if the saints shall finally persevere, why, then, we

do not need “the sacraments.” Ah, that is the great secret! Calvinism is the death of priest-craft! Calvinism is the end of “sacraments” and, hence, “sacraments” must be cried up and God’s everlasting love must be proved to be mutable, and the Covenant to be founded on an “if” and an “an,” and the Christ of God is, after all, to be just a toy for “priests” to play with! The preacher, perhaps unintentionally, let the cat out of the bag—“the sacraments” must be cried up, “the priests” must be kept up and everything else must go!

But we do not believe any such teaching as that! We still hold to it that when Christ gives to His sheep, eternal life, they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hands. Yet there are some that come in among His sheep that are only goats or wolves in sheep’s clothing and, after a time, these depart and the church thus apparently decreases. But so it must be to the end, even as Judas went to his own place, yet the Apostles did not really lose by his departure. They were rather the gainers thereby and, as those who are not true converts go out from her, the church need not lament except for their sakes—certainly, not for her own!

I have brought this subject forward because I may be addressing some Brothers and Sisters who see the tide running out in their churches, and they are very sad as they watch the ebb. I have not seen much of that sort of thing, myself, but the least ebb troubles me and I go before God in prayer about it. I cannot bear to lose one of the members of my church, or to see one of them turn aside from the company of the faithful. Yet there is another side to this picture and we must not shut our eyes to it.

II. So I ask you now to consider with me the second part of our subject. That is, THERE IS AN INCREASE TO BE EXPECTED IN THE CHURCH OF GOD. There are new converts yet to come in, as says my text—these children which Zion is to have, after she has lost the others.

And, Brothers and Sisters, *these new converts are necessary*. No church can be healthy without the constant infusion of fresh blood. Unless there are new converts, you cannot see the church built up. They often help to keep the old members warm and zealous. How I like, at a Prayer Meeting, to hear a Brother pray for the first time! I am not greatly grieved even if he breaks down, for it is the best kind of praying in the world when a man breaks down. Such an incident puts a sense of reality into the whole meeting. Our good old friends, who cannot break down, but must inevitably run on till the winding was all worked out, are not always the most edifying to us. But those who, from very passion of earnestness, cannot find words in which to express their feelings, and so come to a pause with a sigh or groan, or a flood of tears, often do us the most good. The young converts are also quick in inventing new ways of usefulness and they venture to do things which some consider “imprudent.” Oh, how I love that word, “imprudent,” in such a connection! I like “imprudent” young people. The more “imprudent” they are, in the cause of God in the judgment of stolid, cold-hearted professors, the more I rejoice in them! Imprudence which believes in God and dares to do exploits

in His strength is far preferable to that prudence which has no faith and is, therefore, a poor, dead, useless thing.

So you see that the church needs new converts and, therefore, *she ought to have every preparation for their reception*. There should always be an arrangement in every church to afford a welcome to the coming ones. Everything should be in readiness for the reception of the newborn converts. They should scarcely have to ask for admission and, certainly, as soon as they come, they should see that it is the church's joy to welcome them. Hence we should always be on the lookout for them. We ought to look for new converts every Sunday. I do not think any sermon ought to be preached without each one of you Christian people saying, "I wonder whether God has blessed the message to this stranger who has been sitting next to me? I will put a gentle question to him and see if I can find out." I have known some hearers to be annoyed at such a question being put to them by an earnest Brother. Do not be annoyed, dear Friend, if you can help it, because you are very likely to be treated in that way again! It is our *custom* to do it here, so you will have to put up with it. And the only way to get over the annoyance is to give your heart to Christ and settle the matter once and for all! Then, the next time you come here, you will not be asked the question because they will know who you are, for they will recognize your happy face—or if anyone else *should* ask you the question, you will give such a glad answer to it that you two will rejoice together!

We *expect* people to be converted when they come here. So much is this the case that I know a friend, who came to take a sitting—I will not point it out, but I know just where he is now occupying it—and he said that he must see me before he took the sitting. He said, "I understand that if I take a sitting here, you will expect me to be converted." I said, "Oh, yes, I do expect that." "Well," he replied, "I cannot guarantee that." "No, my good man," I answered, "I know you cannot, but you use the word 'expect' in a different sense from what I do. I hope you will be converted through coming here—that is what I mean." "Oh," he said, "I hope so, too." And that is just what happened! When people come to the House of God and they *expect* to be saved, and *we* expect it, too, it is tolerably certain that they *will be* converted before long! We may rejoice and bless God if you live in an atmosphere of holy expectancy! Where the great door stands wide open for the prodigal son to come back—where all in the house are on the watch for his return, where they keep on sending letters to him to ask him to come home—is there not a good hope that such a wanderer will, indeed, return, and that the great Father will be made glad?

Churches need converts and they should be on the lookout for them, and *all who love the Lord should labor earnestly on their behalf*. All of us who believe in Jesus should seek, as God helps us according to our individual talent, to bring others to the dear Savior's feet. If we do this, we shall often be made to remember that all true conversion comes from God alone. There is no possibility of converting anybody by persuasion, by logic, by rhetoric, or anything of the sort. It is the work of God, and

the work of God, alone! And though He uses instrumentality in almost every case, yet He will not use that instrumentality which thinks itself sufficient for the work. He will make us know that we are *nothing*—and then He will make everything of us. He does not mind how much He makes of His servants when all that He does for them brings the more glory to His own name, and they do not, even with their little finger, touch the honor of it, or wish to do so.

When we come to that point, and we are all pleading and laboring for an increase to the church, it will come. And when it comes, it is probable that *we shall be astonished at the number of those who come*. “The children which you shall have, after you have lost the other, shall say again in your ears, The place is too small for me: give me a place that I may dwell.” Or, to quote another text, the church shall say, “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?” I wish I could put it into the heads of some Christian people that when there are large additions to a church, the new members are not necessarily at all inferior to those who come in by slow degrees and in small numbers. My own solemn impression is that it is more probably a work of God in conversion when there *are many* than when there are but few. For, look, when there are few converts, the tendency of human nature is to encourage as many as possible to come forward and, in the process, to bring some who, if more caution had been used, and more true judgment exercised, might have been bidden to stand back for a while. The tendency of the minister and of everybody else is to try to bring in some when but few are being converted—and the probability is that they will not, all of them, prove to be true Christians. But when there are a great many candidates coming forward, I can vouch for it that we become even more earnest than usual not to receive any but those who are, as far as we can judge, truly converted! Every elder is doubly watchful at such a time and everybody tries, if possible, to prevent an enthusiasm which might deceive people into the notion of their being Christians when they are not. We feel that we can afford, as it were, to use many sieves and strainers, many tests by which to try whether they really are the children of God or not—whether they are resolved and determined that they will follow Christ at all hazards.

I say not this as though I would depreciate the work of God in the conversion of ones, twos and threes. No, no! I bless God for them, but I want to make it clear that when great numbers of converts come, it is wrong of people, for that reason, to think that it is *not* the work of God. I would, on the contrary, conclude that it *is* the work of God when many are saved at one time. If Peter, when he preached on the day of Pentecost, had been the means of the conversion of half-a-dozen of his hearers, it would have been a thing for which to praise God, and no one ought to have suspected the genuineness of the half dozen. But, as Peter’s ministry was blessed of God to three thousand, there was not any more reason to say that there was one too many! Remember, also, dear Friends, that they were all baptized before night and the whole of the three thousand were received into the church that same day. Many critics might have said, “Oh, dear, there is far too much excitement!” Are you

afraid of excitement, Brother? You have excitement in political affairs, you have excitement in business matters, you have excitement in your family.

What excitement there was in your house when but one little stranger came there and shall there be no excitement in the Church of God when souls are born there? Why, surely we may be permitted to share in a Divine excitement, for there is an excitement in Heaven! Our Lord Jesus has told us that “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.” There was considerable excitement when the prodigal son came home—it was so great that they killed the fatted calf and had a festival of joy. There was holy merriment in the house—it was the scene of intense excitement and I think, within reasonable bounds—within such bounds as true reason would dictate from the great events that are happening! The conversion of a soul is the grandest event in human history next to the Redemption—there must be a blessed excitement among the people of God!

Dear Friends, *expect* great numbers of sinners to be converted by the proclamation of the Gospel! I remember praying, when I went to preach in the great shed at Bedford, belonging to Mr. Howard, the plow maker, that God would be pleased to bring at least some few souls to Himself by that service. Dear old Mr. Howard, a Wesleyan friend who has since gone Home to Heaven, kept on saying, “Amen, Amen, Amen” while I was praying. *but* he did not say, “Amen,” to that particular petition. When I went home to the house, he said to me, “I joined with you in all your prayer except when you asked that God would at least convert a few people. Why, my dear Friend,” he said, “did you not pray that God would convert every soul there?” I said, “I will, tonight, Mr. Howard. I am rebuked by what you have said.” We do not ask enough of God! Open your mouth wide and He will fill it. Oh, that we would open our mouths wide in large requests to God that He would bring in the converts by hundreds of thousands to the glory of His holy name!

The next thing that was a subject for astonishment to Zion was, *how those converts came to be born at all*. She inquired, in the language of the text, “Who has begotten these for me?” The reason was that she did not feel as if she had any power to bring forth all these. “Why,” she said, “I have been in a truly sad state. ‘I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and wandering to and fro.’ How did it ever happen that all these should be my children?” Ah, Brothers, sometimes we ask the same question!

Yesterday, [Wednesday, August 17, 1881] I had a joyous day—all the bells of my heart rang! While many of you have been away at the seaside, I thought there was a little difference in the numbers coming to hear. And when I sat to see inquirers, there did not seem to be quite as many as usual coming forward and I was troubled about it. But yesterday I had so many sheaves that the cart was loaded with them, and my helpers came to me, every now and then, and said, “What a joyful day!” I do not know whether all the friends whom I saw yesterday are here, but they delighted my soul with the stories they told me of what the Grace of God

had done for them. I bless God and take courage as I see another great slice cut out of the kingdom of Satan and transferred to the Kingdom of Christ!

Quite a number of people who had never known the Lord, or anything about Him—outsiders altogether—had dropped in here and heard the Word—and found Christ! And they kept on coming, hour after hour, till I was weary with the blessed task of speaking to them, one by one, about their souls. And as I went home I kept saying to myself, “How has all this come about?”—because I have often felt so dull and heavy when I have been preaching. “Who has begotten these for me?”

And, dear Friends, if God blesses you in your Sunday school classes, you also will say, “However has this come about? What could I have said that could have brought my scholars to Christ?” If the Lord shall bless you much, my dear Brother, in your preaching, you will more and more marvel that He should ever use such a poor tool as you are. I do not mean that you are a worse tool than I am, for I feel that I am a still poorer instrument than you are, but I often wonder that God uses me as He does, and I think you will also marvel that He uses you. When the church has grown feeble, when she has seemed to have no hope that God should bless her, but He then comes and visits her, and a multitude of converts is suddenly brought forth, she may well say, “Who has begotten these for me, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and wandering to and fro?” Take comfort then, Beloved, from the fact that whatever the decreases in the church may be, we may also expect increase—and in their number, the converts will surprise us—and in their being converted at all, we shall greatly marvel!

But what Zion wondered at next was, *how they had been nurtured*, for she says, “Who has brought these up?” They were not merely born, but they had been brought up! And we also meet with persons who come forward to tell us that they are converted to Christ—and they are by no means fools. No, but when we begin to question them concerning the things of God, they answer us sensibly and intelligently. They do not need us to lead them like little children and to put the words into their mouth, for they know what to say—yet some of them have only been converted about a month and they have not been used to hearing the Gospel—but since they have heard it, they seem to have sucked it in like Gideon’s fleece drank in the dew! Many doctors of divinity make a dreadful muddle of their theology, but these dear converts are as clear as possible upon what they believe. They have it all at their fingertips and they can tell what, “Covenant,” means, and what, “Substitution,” means, and what, “Regeneration,” means.

We say, “Who has brought these up?” It seems so amazing to us! Has it not often been so to you, also, dear Friends? Yet, all the while we have been forgetting the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and we have said, “Why, my poor teaching could not have taught them all this.” No, nor has it taught them all this. There is a higher Teacher than the best of ministers, there is a better Teacher than the most earnest and the most ad-

vanced of Christians—and He still fulfils that gracious promise, “All your children shall be taught of the Lord.”

A further cause of wonder was *the sudden appearance of this great increase*. Zion inquires, “These, where had they been?” Ah, that is just what I thought and said last night—and that is why I took this text, for it kept coming to my mind, “These, where had they been?” Some of them I had seen here forever so long, but others of them I had never seen at all, except on two or three Thursday nights lately I noticed them and, perhaps, at one or two Prayer Meetings. And I began to think that there was something good coming to pass with them, or else they would not have come. So I kept saying to myself, as I went home, “These, where had they been?” A month ago, I could not have found them. “These, where had they been?” They have sprung up and come forward all of a sudden through the blessed working of the Spirit of God! “These, where had they been?” Shall I tell you where they had been? Some of them had been in godly families, with fathers and mothers praying for them. No wonder that they came to close in with Christ! Some of them had been in the Sunday school, in classes where Brothers and Sisters love their children and never rest till they bring them to decision for Christ. It is not so very amazing that they should, by-and-by, come forward! “These, where had they been?” Well, they had been under the influence of Christian wives, Christian children, sometimes Christian brothers and sisters—and so, at last, the gracious influence took effect upon them, by the power of God’s Spirit, and out they came! Thank God that there are great numbers still under those sacred influences, for they are sure to come in due time, and say, “We are on the Lord’s side.”

Then there were some others. “Where had they been?” Well, they had long been listening to the Gospel, regularly sitting in their pews—and we had heard of them as people who had been attracted by our ministry for 20 years, but who did not know the Lord. What a blessing it was for them that even after the hardening influence of listening so long to the Gospel had operated upon them—for it has such an influence in some cases—yet, at last, God Himself touched the Rock, and the waters streamed forth! There are some such persons now coming forward to join us in church fellowship—let us pray for all the rest of our fellow worshippers who are unconverted, that they also may come after them.

But there were others whom I saw yesterday about whom I might well ask, “These, where had they been?” On the Lord’s-Day, at home in their shirtsleeves. On weeknights, at the theater or the music hall, finding enjoyment in the lowest form of amusement. “Where had they been?” Never troubling church or chapel, some of them scarcely ever entering such an edifice at all! But God, in His Providence, brought them for once to hear the Word and, as one said to me, “I laid hold of something and something laid hold of me, and I shall never part with it, for it will never part with me.” This is how it happened with many utterly *irreligious* people—those who had no fear or thought of God. And there were some still worse, who had gone into sin, and transgression, and crime—but they had been induced by some kind friend to come and listen to the Gospel, so there

they were to tell of “free Grace and dying love,” and to testify what Infinite Mercy had done for them!

“These, where had they been?” Well, I cannot tell you where they had all been. Some had been at death’s dark door, buried in sorrow and in sin, in poverty and in vice. Others, though they were not apparently so bad as these, were, notwithstanding, quite as much lost, for they were in the dark wood of self-righteousness, boasting that they were not as other men, and that they were as good as they ought to be, and so deceiving themselves. Now, it is just as much a marvel of mercy for God to save a self-righteous man as it is for Him to save a drunk or a harlot, and it takes as much of the almighty Grace of God to tear a man away from his own righteousness as to pull him away from his sin. Oh, the wonders of redeeming love that out of every place can fetch its thousands upon thousands to make the Church of God glad, and to cry in sweet surprise, “These, where had they been?”

III. I have no time to dwell on the third point, further than just to say that ALL THINGS SHOULD ENCOURAGE THIS CHURCH—and the same rule applies to every church that God blesses—TO SEEK LARGER INCREASE.

For, first, dear Brothers and Sisters, *there is the same power to convert ten thousand as there is to convert one.* The Lord, who brought you in, can bring thousands in! And if He adds to our Church some hundreds now and then, why should He not be constantly doing it? His arm is not shortened and He is still ready to bless us.

Besides, we ought to be encouraged by the fact that *the converts come in answer to prayer.* Notice that these additions to our Church have come just when we have been praying more than ever. Every Thursday night, before the service, there is a Prayer Meeting at 6 o’clock, in which a few friends gather to pray especially that their Pastor may be helped to preach. And tonight I suppose there were three or four hundred gathered together with that objective, and it is real praying, let me tell you—short, deep, earnest cries to God for a blessing—and the preacher cannot help preaching when he is prayed for like that! As that Prayer Meeting has increased in intensity and power, a blessing has already begun to come! Some of us are conscious of it—we cannot help seeing it. Is it possible for me not to believe in prayer? Can I deny that there is such a thing as the electric fluid when I see a tower shivered by a lightning flash? If I were fool enough, I could deny that, but I never could be such a fool as to deny the power of prayer which I see everyday exhibited in all sorts of things, and all sorts of ways! Very largely, in proportion as we pray, God blesses the Word. It has been so for years and they who have been among us, and know, can bear witness that this is an unexaggerated statement of fact. Well, then, if that is so, let us pray! If prayer can be the means of bringing souls to Christ, let there be no stint in that matter!

And, further, since the converts come from all sorts of places, *let us carry the Gospel into all sorts of places.* There is not any part of London, however bad it may be, where God may not have an elect soul in it. Go after him, then! Down in the deepest kennel, in the worst court, in the

filthiest houses, following the vilest occupation, there may be some whom God in mercy means to bless through you—so go after them, and go after them at once! You can never tell where God’s chosen ones are. “These, where had they been?” is the question concerning those who have come to Him. And where they were, there are others—

***“How many sheep are straying,
Lost from the Savior’s fold?
Upon the lonely mountain,
They shiver with the cold
Within the tangled thickets,
Where poison vines do creep,
And over rocky ledges,
Wander the poor lost sheep.
Oh, come let us go and find them!
In the paths of death they roam—
At the close of the day
‘Twill be sweet to say—
I have brought some lost ones home.”***

What a little thing God often blesses to save a soul—a word from a sister—a little note from a Christian woman—half a word in these aisles! A man, who was never before spoken to about his soul, had not been pleaded with for five minutes before he came under conviction of sin—and he soon found the Savior. The very smallest thing has been made the means of bringing souls to Christ! Will you not, dear Friends, make use of those little things? Will you not use everything? Will you not be willing to spend and be spent for Christ in this blessed work of soul-saving? “In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold not your hand: for you know not what shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.”

Go on, dear Brothers and Sisters, to cry mightily to God, and to labor earnestly for Him, till we shall, in glad surprise, bless and magnify His Grace that multitudes are brought to Him, and that His name is made to be yet more renowned! Let us constantly have your prayers at home as well as here, and the Lord be with you all! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”— 965, 449, 369.

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

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

THE CHURCH A MOTHER

NO. 2776

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 27, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPELS SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE SPRING OF 1860.

“The children you will have, after you have lost the others, will say again in your ears, The place is too small for me; give me a place where I may dwell. Then will you say in your heart, Who has begotten these for me, since I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and wandering to and fro? And who has brought these up? Behold, I was left alone; but these, where were they?”
Isaiah 49:20, 21.

I NEVER like to look upon the Bible as merely an old Book, a relic of the past. I like to read it and think of it as a new Book and one applicable to the present time. And I am continually compelled to regard it as such, for I find that it relates to the things passing around me—it deals with my present sorrows, my present doubts and my present joys. It is not merely a record of the saints in olden times—it is a Book of Direction for the saints of the present generation. It not merely gave consolation to those who received the promise centuries ago, but the same promise comes home fresh and sweet to us and we look upon it as being a new and present Revelation from Heaven to us. At least there are times when the Spirit takes of the words of Scripture and makes them as fresh and new to us as though an angel had just flown from Heaven and, for the first time, uttered the gracious words by whispering them in our ears! And the passage which I have read bears to me, just now, though it may not to you, all the freshness and sweetness of a passage made for the occasion. If this Book had been written yesterday, I am sure it could not contain truth more applicable to myself—no, if I had to have it, as Mahommed's followers had the Koran, chapter by chapter, just as they required it, I could not have a Bible more adapted to my daily experience and my daily needs, for so does the Holy Spirit continually take of the things of Christ and not simply apply them unto us, but, apparently, He seems to *adapt* them to us, or else He brings out to our mind's eye that old original adaptation which God had placed in them, foreknowing for what purpose they would be used in later days.

I propose to comment upon this text somewhat pointedly and I hope that the remarks I shall make upon it may be the means of leading others to take the passage as a subject of profitable meditation. I shall begin by observing that *the Church is a mother*. When I have dwelt upon that idea, I shall notice that, like other mothers, *the Church has, sometimes, to be bereaved*. Then, in the third place, I shall observe that she has another

er trouble which mothers in England do not have—God grant they never may—*she is sometimes, herself, a captive*—she wears bonds and fetters, and groans in slavery. And then I have to notice, in the fourth place, the promise of the text, that *this mother, despite her bereavement, despite all her captivity, shall see her family multiplied to a most extraordinary degree*, so that she shall be overwhelmed with amazement and, lifting up her eyes, shall say, “Who has begotten these for me, since I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and wandering to and fro? And who has brought these up? Behold, I was left alone; but these, where were they?”

I. Well now, first of all, notice that THE CHURCH IS A MOTHER. She has always stood in that relationship to all her members. Take each member of the Church individually, he is a child. Take us altogether, we make up the mother, the Church. The Church of Rome professes to be a mother and what a mother she has proved to be! Let the Inquisition tell how tenderly she has nursed her babes! Let conventual torture chambers tell how her little infants have been cared for! Let the stakes that once stood on Smithfield. Let the gallows and the fires all stand up and tell the story of that tender and pitiful mother! Ah, but the Church of Christ is a true mother. Even when she is not continually using the name, yet is she a tender and affectionate nursing mother to all her offspring. I shall begin here very briefly to speak about this mother.

The Church is a mother *because it is her privilege to bring forth into the world the spiritual children of the Lord Jesus Christ*. The Church is still left in the world that she may bring out the rest of God’s elect that are still hidden in the caverns and strongholds of sin. If God had willed it, He might have brought out all His children by the mere effort of His own power, without the use of any instrumentality. He might have sent His Grace into each individual heart in some such miraculous manner as He did into the heart of Saul, when He was going toward Damascus. But He has not chosen to do so. He, who has taken the Church to be His spouse and His bride, has chosen to bring men to Himself by means. And thus it is, through God’s using the Church, her ministers, her children, her works, her sufferings, her prayers—through making these the means of the increase of His spiritual Kingdom—she proves her right to take to herself the title of mother.

But when these little ones are born, the Church’s business is, next, *to feed them*. It is not enough that she has brought them to Christ. It is not sufficient that through her agency they have been quickened—and begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is her work to feed them. She gives to them the unadulterated milk of the Word of God. Through her ministers, through her servants, through the different agencies which she employs, she endeavors to satisfy their longing souls with the Bread of Life. She gives them food convenient for them—she feeds them by her doctrine, by her ordinances—she bids them come and eat and drink at her table and it is her earnest desire and effort to supply all their spiritual needs by feeding their understandings, their affections, their hearts. The Church labors to feed every part and power of the mind and soul.

Nor is she content with feeding—it is her endeavor *to train up her children*. There are some professed churches of Christ that seem to do nothing whatever in the way of training up the young in their midst. These churches, if there are any sinners converted, scarcely ever hear of it. If children are born, there is no rejoicing over them. Their names are not written in the family register—the church book. They are not asked to come forward and be recognized as children of God by being baptized—they are permitted to come up, perhaps, to the church's house, but if they should offer to join her number by profession of their faith, they would be at once told that they were not yet fit to be numbered with her right royal children! But the true nursing Churches do not act thus. They look out for every babe in Christ that they can find and then they seek to instruct these babes—and when they are instructed, the Church receives them into her arms and she takes them to be hers, to be trained up for future deeds of usefulness. She trains up some of her sons to be captains in the Lord's host. She puts the Sword of the Spirit into their hands and bids them use it in fighting their Master's battles. She trains up others of her sons and daughters to teach still younger ones and these she puts into her schools. She trains up all her children, some by one means and some by another. She says to some, "Go abroad, my children, and labor for your Lord in His far-off fields and extend His Kingdom wherever you can." Thus does the Church well deserve the name of mother, when she brings up and fosters, and nurtures the children of God.

Nor is this all the Church can do. *She will be always ready to nurse her children when they become sick*, for, alas, in the Church's family, there are always some sickly ones, not only sick in body, but sick in spirit. And never does the Church appear so truly a mother as she does to these! Over these she will be, if she is what she should be, peculiarly watchful and jealous. Though the strong shall have her attention, yet the weak shall have double. Though those who are standing up shall be helped, yet those who are cast down shall be helped still more. If there is a weak lamb, if there is a wandering sheep within the Church, she opens wide her eyes and it will be her endeavor to watch most over these. She knows her duty is like her Lord's—to bind up the broken in heart and comfort those who mourn—so she continually bids her ministers bring forth sweet things out of the storehouse. She says to her servitors, "Set on the great pot, and put in the precious Doctrines of the Gospel, and let all these be set a-simmering, that there may be food for all my children." "And," she says, "take care that you bring forth the wines on the lees well refined, the fat things full of marrow, for I have some weaklings in my family who will not be strong to labor unless they have the rich cordials of the Gospel continually given to them."

Ah, and when the Church is in proper order, how she will nurse the weak! Do you remember what she did in Paul's days?—for what Paul did, the Church did. He says, "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherishes her children." So will the Church do, through her ministers, her officers and, indeed, through all her members if they act up to their duty. She will be watching for the souls of men, especially for those souls that are the saddest and the most cast down, and the most subject to

temptation and to trial. She will watch over them and nurse them. And she will never be happy, let me add, until she brings all her children up to her Husband's house in Heaven! She is expecting Him to come, by-and-by, and when He comes, it will be her joy to meet her Husband leading her daughters with her. And she will say, "Come forth, you daughters of Jerusalem, and see Him who is greater than King Solomon crowned with the crown which his mother crowned him on the day of his espousals." And, at last, when she and her Husband shall be safe in the glory kingdom in Heaven, then will she say, "Here am I, and the children which You have given me, and have nursed for You; but by Your help have they been kept, by Your Grace have they been preserved—and it has been my loving duty, as their tender mother, to nurse, and cherish, and nurture them—and bring them up for You."

Every time I give the right hand of fellowship to a new member, especially to those just brought in from the world, I think I hear Christ's voice speaking to me and saying, "Take these children and nurse them for Me, and I will give you your wages." I say this is said to me, but I mean it is said to the entire Church—I merely speak, of course, as the representative of the body. We have, whenever members are given to us, a great charge, under God, to nurse them for Him and, instrumentally, to advance them in the road to Heaven. But in all this the Church is a poor mother if her God is not with her. She can do nothing in bringing forth, nothing in nurturing, nothing in training, nothing in preserving and nothing, at last, in bringing her children Home, unless the Holy Spirit dwells in her and sends her strength to accomplish all.

When we speak of persons joining the Church, we mean that they are added to the company of God's people. We believe that the Church does not consist alone of the preachers, deacons and elders, but that the Church is a company of faithful men and women, banded together according to God's holy rule and ordinance for the propagation of the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. And Betsy, the servant-maid is as much in the Church as any Very Reverend Doctor or Dean is! The Church, then—by which I mean the great company and body of the faithful—that Church is a nursing mother.

II. The second remark which I proposed to make upon our text is that THE CHURCH IS SOMETIMES BEREAVED. Ah, there must be coffins in every house. There must be shrouds in every family and so is it in the Church.

The Church has to lose some of her children. "After you have lost the others," I read here. Some of her nominal children she loses *by spiritual death*, but the reason of this is because they are not really her children at all. They are those who crept in and pretended to be hers—and they looked so much like hers that she could hardly tell them apart. For a little while she nursed them but, afterwards, they turned out to be the offspring of Satan—and then they went away from her. But even when they go away, she is such a loving mother that though she feared they were not her children, yet she did not like to lose them. I heard some of her children singing, the other night, after one of these false brethren had been found out—

"When any turn from Zion's way,

***Alas, what numbers do!
I think I hear my Savior say,
'Will you forsake Me too?'***

The Church does not like to lose even those who are not her children.

Then, next, she loses many of her children—I mean, they go away from her—*by temporal death*. Many of the Church's children are taken up above and, somehow, though she is glad to know they are in their Father's bosom, yet she does not like to miss them. The Church regrets to see the vacant seat of her dead—and especially if it has been one of her children who has been very dutiful and has strived to serve her much. She will weep plenty for such. When she lost her son Stephen, do you remember that a whole company of her children followed him to the grave? For it is said devout men carried him to his burial and made great lamentation over him. Though the Church does not sorrow as one that has no hope—though she is glad to know that her children are well provided for and taken up to dwell in their Father's House—yet it is no small suffering to see her ministers taken away, and her church officers and members removed, one by one, even while in their various spheres of usefulness—and while faithfully serving their Lord and Master.

Then, again, the Church loses her children, sometimes, *by a trying Providence*. Many churches, as well as ourselves, are in that position. We have lost our children. We have lost many simply from the fact of their having to remove to a distance—in this way our congregations are necessarily scattered. Some of those who used to sit under our ministry Sabbath by Sabbath, who came up with our great company and kept holy day, cannot now be seen in our midst. And I, even if you do not, feel this as bereavement. I cannot bear to miss the face of a single one from the members of the church! There is a sort of sacred bond of union that binds us all together and I do not like anyone to go away, except it is, now and then, when some grow dissatisfied—and then I feel it is better for them to go somewhere else—it is certainly not worse for their minister. But those who have been loving, tender children have had to leave the Church—those who have strived for her good. It is a sad thing to see them separated from us and that has happened to this church over and over again. As often as the minister has been removed from her midst, some of her children have been lost. The church book is a very checkered book to look at. As I look back upon the record of the past, I see the membership increase rapidly. A certain minister dies and then the church is diminished and brought low. Again another comes and a fresh company is gathered together, but as soon as he removes, away they go! And thus the church suffers bereavement. Her children are removed—not into the world, let us hope—but, alas, this *does* happen, even with God's own children—after losing their early love in some one church, they go on wandering here and there, scarcely caring to unite themselves in church fellowship again, living unhappily, bereaved and alone, desolate and without companions!

I think I have said enough upon this point. The Church, like every other mother, has sometimes to lose her children and suffer bereavement.

III. Now I come to the third head, which is this—THE CHURCH HAS SOMETIMES TO BE CARRIED AWAY CAPTIVE.

How often has this happened to the Church of God in the olden times! The Church has been carried into foreign countries, taken from her much-loved house at Jerusalem and compelled to sit down by the waters of Babylon and weep while she remembered her ancient habitation. Her children have hung their harps upon the willows and, when their enemies came and required of them a song, they have said, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" She has been a captive, indeed, in more modern times! Since the days of Christ, the Church has been a captive in another sense, namely, that sometimes she has been cruelly persecuted. Kings have sent forth their bloody edicts against her and then the tender nursing mother, the Church, has been obliged to house her children in the dens and caves of the earth. They have worshipped in catacombs, by the light of candles, or perhaps with no light whatever. Her dearest sons have been compelled to administer the ordinance of Christ in the vaults among the dead. When the living were too unkind, then has death found them a shelter. The earth has helped the woman and in the catacombs have her children been brought forth.

Often, too, has the Church been compelled to seek a refuge in foreign countries. You know how she went far into Africa and how, again, she sought a lodging place in the fastnesses of the Alps—there, amidst the snow-clad mountains, she found some little shelter from the blood-thirsty hounds of Hell. And in still more modern times, the Church in this land has had to flee across the waters and there, in America, the Pilgrim Fathers have become the founders of mightier churches than those they had left behind! Those were the times of the Church's captivity. We cannot tell in this age what griefs they were that wrung the hearts of the first passengers in "The Mayflower." When they left England and went to America, they went forth not knowing where they went. They could not meet together for worship—it was death if they ventured to preach the Gospel—but they went where they could among the red men, to be free to worship their God. Ah, those were days of wandering to and fro! Then the Church wept and said, "I am desolate, I am a captive, I am driven far away from my former habitation."

The same thing has sometimes happened to the Church, also, not in days of persecution, but in days when deadly sickness has seized upon her limbs, when, all of a sudden, her energies have been dampened, her power lessened and she has no more brought forth children, or even nursed them tenderly. Days of slumber and heaviness have come over the Church, yes, and days of heresy, too, when her ministers were no more shining lights, but, like the flax when the light is gone out, they were an offensive stench. When her fountains have no more gushed forth with living waters but a black, turbid, and putrefying stream. When, instead of the Bread of Heaven, her children have had to eat husks. When, instead of the pure Word of God, it was anything but the Truth of God—the lies of Satan and the inventions of Hell.

IV. I will say no more of the Church's captivity, but will just observe, in the last place, that when the Church has lost her children, and when she herself has been made captive and removed to and fro, she has said,

“Ah, me! Ah, me! My God has forgotten me, the Lord has forsaken me! I have become a widow. I will sit in the dust, I will sorrow even to the end, I will groan even in the bitterness of my spirit. Like Rachel, I will weep for my children and I will not be satisfied or comforted, because they are not.” And here comes this last point—even then THE CHURCH HAS HAD A MARVELOUS INCREASE AFTER ALL HER CAPTIVITIES—and all her bereavements have always worked for her good!

Never has the Church lost her children without obtaining many more. You remember when the Jewish nation seemed to be once and for all cut off from the Church? When the Apostle said, “Seeing you judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles”? The Church might have sorrowed and said, “I have lost the Jews.” But she found the Gentiles! Where she lost one, she found thousands! The day of her sorrow was the day of her increase! And, do you know, whenever the Church has lost a martyr, she has always, soon afterwards, found her numbers increased? Gathering round the stake, idle bystanders have marked the patience of the man of God—they have seen him when his beard was being singed by the flames. They have watched him as his very bones cracked in the fire. They have seen him lift to Heaven his burning hands and clapping them, cry, “God is with me in the fire!” Struck with amazement, they have asked, “What is this that makes the man rejoice in a death so terrible?” And they have gone home and they have retired to pray. And the next day has found them knocking at the door of the Church, entreating to be admitted into the sacred number of her children!

The days of her bereavement have been the days of the increase of her family and when the Church has been scattered and driven to and fro, it has always been for her good—it has been like the scattering of seed. There was once a time when there was a granary full of heavenly seed. Satan knew this was destined to cover the whole earth with a glorious harvest. He was exceedingly angry concerning it and he said, “What shall I do to destroy this seed?” So he went down into the dark Pit and brought up a legion of fiends. “Now,” he said, “we will burst the granary door open. We will take out that grain and we will cast it on the waters, we will throw it to the winds of Heaven—we will throw it all away—it shall not be kept here to make a harvest on the earth.” So they broke open the door and scattered the seed. Fool that he was—God was making use of him to sow the fields and, lo, the harvest sprang up and Satan was still more full of wrath to find that he had outwitted himself! Instead of scattering the Church, he had increased it! The little handful of corn on the mountaintop, when it was planted, grew and shook like Lebanon, and made the fruit of the seed rejoice and flourish like the grass of the earth! Yes, my Brothers and Sisters, you will find, in every instance in the Church’s history, whenever she has been made captive, or has been bereaved, it has been for her good!

Now, just at this time, we are somewhat desolate. We have lost many of our children. Our hearers are compelled to wander here and there, instead of listening to the Church’s voice, while we ourselves are like a captive wandering to and fro from one place to another where we can meet. And we have been apt to say, “This is a very sad thing and very much to

our hurt.” But let us say that no longer—for mark, I take this to be a personal promise, and I think it is a promise to the Church—“The children you will have, after you have lost the others, will say again in your ears, The place is too small for me; give me a place where I may dwell. Then will you say in your heart, Who has begotten these for me, since I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and wandering to and fro? And who has brought these up? Behold, I was left alone; but these, where were they?” This shall be the cry of the Church!

The first thing which astonishes the Church when she opens her eyes after her captivity, is *to notice the number of her children*. She formerly counted her children by the number of their graves. She said they were all dead, but, all of a sudden, she found others coming round her and calling her mother! Again she saw her house filled—they were thronging about her and she was astonished to see so great a number. Had there been but one or two, she would have thought they were the residue spared from the hands of the enemy, but she saw the great number, and was astonished! Now, sometimes, when we think of this Church which God has so greatly enlarged that we number 1,500 souls, we are apt to think, “What a number!” It astonishes us. “You shall see greater things than these,” and you shall find that our removal to another place, and our apparent captivity shall increase the number of converts, and we shall be astonished as, month by month, they come before the Church and bear witness of what Grace has done for them! We shall say, “Who has begotten these for me? Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?”

It was not merely their number, it was also *their character* that astonished her, for she said, “Who has begotten these for me? I do not know them. I have lost my children. These, where had they been? Who has brought these up?” It is their character, as well as their number, that amazes her. Often the Church finds her converts run in a certain vein—a certain class of persons is brought to know the Truth of God. But when the Church removes to and fro, there is another set brought in. Do you remember what happened, once, in Exeter Hall? A young man going, one Sunday morning, with his skates in his hand, to the Serpentine, and passing Exeter Hall, saw a crowd blocking up the path. He said, “What is this? There is something special going on here.” He joins the crowd and the mass behind pushes him in—the minister preaches and the Words of God go home to that young man’s heart. They are quick and powerful—he is brought to know the Savior and is converted! Many who are not accustomed to go to one place, will go to another. Many who would not enter a place consecrated to Divine Worship, may, nevertheless, step in to another building out of idle curiosity or amusement. This has happened at the Surrey Gardens and now, when we go to another place, another class, who perhaps have never been to hear the Gospel, will be induced to come in and we shall say, “Who has begotten these for me? These, where have they been?”

I am not a Prophet, nor the son of a Prophet, but, before long, this will come to pass—we shall see numbers converted to God that will astonish us! And, besides that, there will be among them some remarkable sinners and some remarkable saints—and when they are added to the

Church, they will compel us to say, "These, where have they been? Who has begotten us these?" Then will you thank God that you ever had to suffer. Then shall the Church rejoice that she was bereaved and that she was removed to and fro. How do I know this? Well, I know it simply because I know, if I know anything, that this passage has been applied to my heart by the Holy Spirit! It has stuck so to me and entered so thoroughly into my heart that I have not been able to get rid of it, but have lived upon it, and have felt the sweetness of it! And if this does not come true, then I am certainly deceived. But let us take care that it does come true, for, while we believe the promise, it is ours to be the *means*, in the hand of God, of fulfilling it!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, pray more than you have ever done! Wrestle with God in prayer. Plead with Him that this may come true. For though He gives the promise, He says, "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." I ask you this night—I cannot get you each to say, "Yes"—but I ask you, as a personal favor to your minister, and as an act of kindness to our loving mother, the Church, as a proof of your affection to your Lord and Master—I ask you, at the family altar, and in private tonight, and on till next Christmas, that we meet together to plead with God for this particular blessing!

Turn to this promise in your Bibles. Read the passage at your family altars, and then plead it—"Lord, You have made us to be, for a time, desolate. We have lost some of our children. Now grant that the children which we shall have, after we have lost these others, may cry, Make room for us; the place is too small for us to dwell in." One of our Brothers lately said to me, "You surely do not expect to see the Tabernacle crowded down the aisles, do you?" I do, indeed! I expect to see it as crowded as ever this chapel has been. I think we shall *often* be moved to say, "Who has begotten these for me?" God's arm is not shortened that He cannot save, neither are His ears heavy that He cannot hear us. We shall go on and conquer and never cease! The God who has been with us in the past, will be with us in the future and, as it has been, so shall it still be! God shall still be glorified in the salvation of men.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 CHRONICLES 11:1-17; 12.**

Let us read, for our instruction, part of the story of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon.

2 Chronicles 11:1-4. *And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he gathered of the house of Judah and Benjamin an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against Israel, that he might bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam. But the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, the man of God, saying, Speak unto Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, saying, Thus says the LORD, You shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren. Return, every man, to his house: for this thing is done of Me. And they obeyed the words of the LORD, and returned from going against Jeroboam. So far, so good. There was some degree of the fear of God in the*

minds of men when, at the bidding of a single Prophet, a king would disband his troops and cease from war.

5-15. *And Rehoboam dwelt in Jerusalem, and built cities for defense in Judah. He built even Bethlehem, and Etam, and Tekoa, and Bethzur, and Shoco, and Adullam, and Gath, and Mareshah, and Ziph, and Adoraim, and Lachish, and Azekah, and Zorah, and Aijalon, and Hebron, which are in Judah and in Benjamin fenced cities. And he fortified the strongholds, and put captains in them, and stores of victual, and of oil and wine. And in every several city he put shields and spears, and made them exceedingly strong, having Judah and Benjamin on his side. And the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel resorted to him out of all their coasts. For the Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the LORD; and he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made. No wonder, therefore, that Rehoboam's kingdom was strengthened by the advent of these men, who were, doubtless, the best men in the whole country—men who feared the Lord—men who knew the Law of God and who knew how to teach the people what they should do.*

16. *And after them out of all the tribes of Israel such as set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the LORD God of their fathers. "Birds of a feather flock together," so those in Israel who feared the Lord went where their ministers had gone. This movement would bring about an emigration of some of the best of the population to reside near the sacred shrine where Jehovah was worshipped. And it must have tended still further to the strengthening of Rehoboam's little kingdom.*

17. *So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, strong three years, for three years they walked in the way of David and Solomon. That was well while it lasted; but, alas, it did not continue long.*

2 Chronicles 12:1. *And it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the Law of the LORD, and all Israel with him. He was not able to endure the perils of prosperity. He forgot the Lord who had caused him to prosper and, in the pride of his heart, he turned aside to idols.*

2. *And it came to pass, that in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, Shishak, king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the LORD. That was not Shishak's reason for coming up against Jerusalem. He had heard of the riches of Solomon and, doubtless, he came for the sake of the spoil which the palace and the temple would yield to him! But God often overrules, for the accomplishment of His own purposes, the lower motives of men. "I girded you," said He of Cyrus, "though you have not known Me." So did He gird Shishak for the chastisement of Israel, though Shishak knew Him not.*

3, 4. *With twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen: and the people were without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubims, the Sukkiims, and the Ethiopians. And he took the fenced cities which pertained to Judah, and came to Jerusalem. How vain is man when he boasts in the strength of his fortifications! These fenced cities fell at*

once, like houses built of cards, before the power of the mighty king of Egypt and the vast hordes that accompanied him! Rehoboam had spent his strength in making these defenses, but how soon they were proved to be worthless. “Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.” But, “cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord.”

5, 6. *Then came Shemaiah the Prophet to Rehoboam, and to the princes of Judah, that were gathered together to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said unto them, Thus says the LORD, You have forsaken Me, and therefore have I also left you in the hands of Shishak. Whereupon the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said, The LORD is righteous.* Now, that is the very essence of true humility—the acknowledgment that God is righteous in whatever punishment He brings upon us on account of our sin. It is a very short sentence, but there is a great fullness of meaning in it—“Jehovah is righteous.”

7, 8. *And when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves; therefore I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and My wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. Nevertheless they shall be his servants that they may know My service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.* That is a very instructive expression. I believe that when God’s people go astray from Him, He sometimes allows them to fall into great bondage in order that they may realize the difference between His happy service and the servitude in which they may be held by any other lord. All masters, to whom we surrender our minds and hearts, will turn out to be tyrants, except the blessed Prince of Peace! His yoke is easy, and His burden is light, but all other yokes gall the shoulders sooner or later and God has, sometimes, made His wandering people feel this so bitterly that they have longed to get back to the service of their God!

9. *So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king’s house. He took all: he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made.* He did not plunder the people—he was content with the loot of the temple and the palace. These were comparatively easy terms for the conquered nation and one wonders how such a powerful king as Shishak would have been thus satisfied in those days. But God has the hearts of all men under His control and even when He lets a powerful foe go forth against His people, He still restrains him when He pleases. What a mercy it is for us that when God chastens us, there is an end to it! It is always in measure—He does not let loose the fullness and the fierceness of His wrath, as He will upon the castaways in eternity—but when He lays His rod upon us, He counts every stripe. Forty stripes save one was all that an Israelite might have to endure and, surely, God often stops far short of that number when He deals with us! However, Shishak humiliated the king and his people by taking away the treasures of the temple and the palace and, among the rest of his plunder, “he carried away the shields of gold which Solomon had made.”

10-12. *Instead of which king Rehoboam made shields of brass, and committed them to the hands of the chief of the guard that kept the en-*

trance of the king's house. And when the king entered into the house of the LORD, the guard came and fetched them, and brought them again into the guard chamber. And when he humbled himself, the wrath of the LORD turned from him, that He would not destroy him altogether: and also in Judah things went well. Or, rather, "things in Judah even went well." There was comparative prosperity—they were not altogether prosperous, for they were not altogether right with God. But there was a sufficient proportion of godly men, the Puritan party, the Evangelical party was strong enough in the land for God to still look upon it with favor, yet not unmixed with disapprobation, for the party that worshipped idols, the party composed of the superstitious, the party belonging to the world was still very strong.

13-15. *So king Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned: for Rehoboam was one and forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess. And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD. Now the acts of Rehoboam, first and last, are they not written in the book of Shemaiah the Prophet, and of Iddo the seer concerning genealogies? Where are those books now? It is of no consequence, whatever, where they are! There are a great many other books that have perished because they were not Inspired. They were books of genealogies—valuable in their day, but if they had been of any use to us *spiritually*, they would have been preserved. Now, as other ancient books have evidently been lost, let us devoutly bless God that the Inspired Books have been preserved to us. By what a continuous miracle of Providence every Inspired letter has been continued in existence, it would be hard to tell, but we ought to constantly praise the Lord that out of the Book of this prophecy, not a line has been removed.*

15, 16. *And there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually. And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David: and Abijah his son reigned in his place.*—[This sermon was preached 42 years before it was published in 1902. The Metropolitan Tabernacle was in the process of being built—the first sermon preached in it was on March 25, 1861. There were more than 5,000 members of the Metropolitan Tabernacle when Brother Spurgeon died in 1892—EOD]

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

TO THE RESCUE

NO. 3462

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 10, 1915.

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

***“Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive be delivered?”
Isaiah 49:24.***

IN the days when this prophecy was written, there were certain great nations of the earth that sought and obtained their wealth, not by commerce, but by force—not by fair trading, but by fiercely invading their richer neighbors. The Babylonians and the Chaldeans gathered together great armies and then pounced upon small territories, such as those at Israel and Judea, and carried off all the substance of the inhabitants as a prey. When the marauding host, flushed with victory, was returning home with its booty, it would have been a very dangerous thing to attempt to rescue the spoil. “Shall the prey be taken from the mighty?” What a great king has captured and what his mighty hosts have fought for—shall this be taken from them? Where are the warriors that have strength and numbers enough to attack the victors as they return with the spoil? Sometimes treaties were broken and then the Babylonians made that a pretext for taking the people away captive. They were “lawful captives,” as they had broken certain conditions and made themselves subject, according to the articles of war, to be lawfully taken prisoners. Now where such is the case, when enraged kings and princes have taken cities which have proved traitorous to them, shall anybody deliver the prisoners? Who shall step in between the monarch and his righteous captive? That is the literal meaning of the verse, “Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive be delivered?” It was first applicable to the Jewish people. They were taken into captivity in Babylon. Shall they ever be set free?

God declared that they should be delivered, and so they were. In due time they came up without price or reward into their own land. God had promised it by His Word, and by His Providence He performed it. Leaving, however, this primary literal interpretation, we intend to draw your attention to the *spiritual* sense, and to ask the question concerning some of you whom it most intimately concerns. If it should appear that you are “prisoners,” and that, according to the conditions of your captivity, you are “lawful captives,” you will see and feel the urgency of the matter! “Is it possible for you to be set free?” Is there any arm that has strength enough to tear off your fetters? We will begin by describing—

I. THE NATURAL CAPTIVITY IN WHICH EVERY UNREGENERATED MAN IS HELD.

Every creature of Adam born, who has not been saved by Grace, is a prisoner to sin. *He is a lawful captive to God's Law.* His nature is in thralldom under the power and dominion of sin, for that nature is evil. The man does not sin by accident—he sins because he wills to sin! He wishes to do it—he takes delight in it—he casts his heart into it. As the fish naturally swims in the stream, so the unconverted man finds sin congenial to his depraved instincts. He chooses to do that which is evil, and revels therein! He omits to do that which is good, and recoils from it. Who shall set free the man whose nature is thus enslaved? Moreover, the chains of habit become more and more highly riveted on those who indulge their lusts, but never restrain their passions. Time was when you hesitated whether to follow the pleasure that allured you, or to heed the conscience that would restrain you. Then you chose the wrong—and now the Ethiopian might sooner change his skin, or the leopard his spots, than you can change your guilty propensities—so hard is it for the man accustomed to do evil to learn to do well! As well try to reverse the course of the sun, or make the waters of Niagara return to their source, or check the north wind in its fury, or stop the rising tide, as hope to make men cease from ways which by constant repetition and steady accumulation over a long course of years have acquired the force of a natural disposition and produced an unmistakable type of character! Unhappily, too, custom, of which it has been well said that it is the law of fools, gives sanction to vices which would otherwise be abhorrent. A man will willingly consent to be the slave of sin because his fellow man sins after the same fashion. He must do this and that because his neighbors or his comrades do the same. Why should he be different? Why should he swim against the general current? If others see no harm, feel no compunction and find it pleasant sport, why should he not join them? Is it not always more lively to follow the multitude? What road is better than the broad road where all sorts of good company may be met with? And, brethren, the less scrupulous men are, the more self-complacent they become. Mirth, it would seem, extracts the venom from sin, and wit can robe ribaldry in innocence. But be not deceived! The customs you adopt and the habits you cherish combine with the depravity of your own nature to weld a chain which the strength of Hercules could not snap—a chain that makes the creature an abject slave to the flesh, instead of a liege subject of his adorable Creator.

Each man, according to his own order, has some peculiar chain to bind and chafe him. There are aberrations to which the constitution is prone. There are temptations to which one's business or employment expose him. And there may be entanglements in the social relationships and the home circle that involve a heavy bondage. Raging passions, restless anxieties and rigorous circumstances carry men far out to sea and leave them to the tender mercy of the waves and breakers. They seem to be as powerless to resist as the chaff in the wind that blows from side to side on the summer threshing floor. Like some bird borne out to sea by an impetuous hurricane, they cannot stem the torrent! They are hurried

away whether they will it or not. But, alas, alas, their will concurs! They do not struggle or contend for the right, but where their passions bear them, there do they float! 'Tis so with some men. The slavery of other men consists in their self-righteousness. They do not hold themselves guilty of any crime. They have always acquitted themselves to their own satisfaction. As for their transgressions, they are trifles! They account themselves as good as their neighbors in all respects and in some points better. And because of this, is their conceit. Repentance they will not practice! Remission they will not seek! In vain the Gospel tells them that they are lost! To them the Gospel is a fiction—a thing scarcely consonant with the delicacy of their feelings. They will try to find a way to Heaven by their merits! Why need they cry, “God be merciful to me, a sinner”? What need for them of scalding tears of penitence? What occasion for them to fly to the blood of sprinkling to be cleansed? They are not conscious that they are foul! Others may say—

“Black, I to the Fountain fly.”

But they are not conscious that they are black and, therefore, to no fountain will they resort. This is another chain and how heavy an one it is! How difficult to take it off! Some of the victims of self-flattery are faster bound and harder to set free than the most reckless and profligate of their neighbors, with whom they would count it an insult to compare them!

So it was in Christ's days. Publicans and harlots, the dregs of the town, the refuse of the population, entered into the Kingdom of God, hailed it with joy and were received into it with welcome, while Scribes and Pharisees, the upper circle of society, the chief and representative men of the synagogue, clogged and bound with their self-righteousness, scorned the sinner's hope, refused the Savior-King, and perished in their infatuation! And oh, *how many are there upon whose hearts a willful unbelief lays its icy chains?* They ask for evidences and proofs, only to rebut them. They are shown signs and wonders, but they merely cast discredit on them till their hearts grow more callous. No reasons will weigh with them. To give *reasons* may be easy enough for us, but to impart *reason* to them is difficult. Indeed, to furnish motives that would suffice to move their understanding to discern Him were a miracle! Cut the ground from under their feet. Let them look confused. No, let them acknowledge themselves non-suited—

***“Convince a man against his will,
He is of the same opinion still.”***

His conversion is as far off as ever. A new difficulty and a fresh dilemma will they start. Making sport of matters too weighty to be trifled with, they raise another question and argue another point. So perverse do they become that they could argue themselves into Hell! At issue with their own mercies, they contend with all the might of logic against the Cross of Christ. Unwilling to yield obedience to the precepts, they cast discredit on the promises of the Gospel. How hard it is to rescue men that are thus manacled and fettered, whose heads and hearts are alike enslaved!

We have known sad cases—and those not among the most hopeless—of persons carried away and led a prey to despair because they are too guilty in their own apprehensions to obtain mercy, therefore they will not repent! Supposing that there can be no pardon for them, they sit down in sullen rebellion against God—they will not believe in Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Because they have sinned so much, therefore they will even sin more! And because the disease is so dreadful, they will, therefore, decline to adopt the remedy. Oh, miserable souls! To what a plight do such arguments reduce you! Yet how many unhappy creatures are subject to such thralldom, we, who have to deal with them, find out! And how hard it is to take the prey from the mighty and to deliver these lawful captives, we know too well.

And are not full many of you chained hand and foot—fastened, as it were, in the stocks—*your spirits so crushed that you cannot move?* You have forgotten the meaning of spiritual liberty, if you ever had an idea of it. By nature, lost, by practice, lost, by custom, led astray, by evil habits, bound and fettered, by all manner of vice, enslaved, you are under the dominion of Satan! But the worst remains to be told. That which aggravates the horror of the situation is this—that such persons are lawful captives to the Law of God. They have violated the precepts, transgressed the ordinances, offended the Divine Majesty—therefore, they must be punished! It is inevitable that every offense against God's Law should ensure the penalty due to the offender. God will by no means spare the guilty! From Sinai's summit there sounds no note of mercy. Justice and judgment hold undisputed sway. "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law, to do them." That curse falls on everyone of us by nature—it leaves us bruised and mangled, and incapable of rescue! Who can deliver the man who is God's lawful captive? Who can claim exemption for him that has broken God's Law? Such is the helpless, hopeless case of the sinner! Believe me, I do not overstate it. Though my words may sound rough, they do not fully describe the state that you are in, my unconverted Friend. You are in such a state, that unless One interpose for you whom I will tell you of soon—you will have but a short reprieve! From the haunts of your folly, from the scenes of your toil, from the home of your affections, you will, before long, be taken to the place where hope will never dawn upon you! You are lost—now you are already condemned! If Infinite Mercy prevents not, the Pit will soon shut its mouth upon you. Although my words were never so weighty, they could not be weighty enough to fitly describe your momentous peril! It is not possible for human language to set out the horror of an impenitent soul, the terrible condition of a sinner at enmity with his God! Oh, you may dress up your person, you may make merry and spend your little day in frivolity, but you cannot avert the summons that awaits you! Were you wise, you would consider this and you would heed the voice that says, "God is angry with the wicked every day." Nor would you ever rest till that anger was appeased and you were reconciled to God by the only method through which reconciliation can be found!

The more we consider this question before us, the more does *the hopelessness of finding any answer to it, apart from the Revelation of the Gospel, appear*. “Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive be delivered?” Answer—no, no, most emphatically no! The thing is beyond all human power. Look first at the man, the hapless victim—he has lost the will to be delivered—like you may have seen, sometimes, in the Zoological Gardens, a small creature given to a voracious serpent for food. The reptile fixes its eyes upon its prey, which seems to be quite unconscious of what is coming. Calm, still, motionless, it is fascinated—charmed either by the brightness of the serpent’s eyes, or by some kind of influence unknown to us exercised over it—until the monster darts at him and devours him! Even so does the unconverted man offer no resistance to the Destroyer! It has been said that birds have been so fascinated by serpents as to fly to their foe and put themselves within his reach. Who can save the man that is determined to venture life and soul upon a hazard that every onlooker sees must end in death? Sitting, sometimes, in your little chamber with an open window on a summer’s evening, you may have watched a moth that has dashed into your candle. In vain you have taken it up and put it away, but no sooner has it recovered strength enough than it darts back again to the flame! You put your hand out and stop it—it is but for a little while that you can keep it from its destruction, for it is desperately set on mischief and bent on suicide! So it is with man. Either with naked overt sin, or else with covert lust and ill pretense, he is so besotted and fascinated that he will plunge his soul into ruin! Who can deliver the man who resists deliverance? Who can save the man who will not avail himself of succor? Can the prey be taken from the mighty? Will eloquence avail? It has been tried and it has failed over and over again! There was never a soul divorced from his sins by the blandishments of rhetoric! You cannot persuade men to give up their favorite passions by goodly words. The trembling pathos or the withering scorn of your address will prove, alike, unavailing.

Beza once preached to a heap of stones, and, I doubt not, that the result was quite as happy as any that I could anticipate from an audience like the present, unless the Spirit of God shall move upon the hearts of those who lend their ears. Melancthon thought that he might convert everybody by the force of his argument and the fervor of his manner, but after a while he said that old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon. The devil is not to be driven out of his stronghold by music’s melting mystic lay, nor yet by the declaimer’s subtle art, though he is like one that plays well upon an instrument. “Cannot evil be dislodged,” some will ask, “and cannot the captive be set free by sacred rites and ceremonies?” The experiment is attempted in our day all over this country! With what success judge you? We are told that men can be regenerated by baptism—and we have seen these regenerated infants develop into what, to our minds, was nothing more than “baptized heathens, washed to deeper stains.” All the ceremonies that can possibly be practiced, with the sanc-

tion of antiquity or the invention of modern priestcraft to recommend them, can have no effect in changing the bias of the human will, or in renewing the qualities of human nature! The disease is too deep and too irritable for the prescription to grapple with as a remedy. As well hope to vanquish Leviathan with a straw as to drive out the devil with a ceremony! Oh, no, the captive is not delivered thus. But could not a man deliver himself from his sins if he were to desperately strive? Yes, Brothers and Sisters, there is the pinch—that, “*if*.” Therein—in that, “*if*”—you touch the seat of the delinquency! Men do not, will not, cannot strive! They are so held by the morbid vein and malevolent propensity of their own nature, and by the fatal obstinacy of their own disposition, that they treat the Gospel of the Grace of God with the most bitter aversion—and the “*if*” becomes the master! They do not, will not, cannot be induced to strive! What says Christ about it? “You will not come unto Me that you might have life.” Well, but could not they have come if they would? Yes, but there is the rub—they *would* not if they could! “How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not.” There, Sinners, is the pith of the indictment! Were it said you *could* not, you might find an excuse, but it is charged against you that you *will* not, and this is damnable!

Did man sin by compulsion, I see not how he could be blamed, but since his sin is voluntary and he recklessly chooses the evil, clings to it and will not give it up, the slavery becomes the more obnoxious! When the iron enters into the soul and the man becomes a slave, not merely through misfortune, but through very baseness of heart and prostitution of his nature till he is ground down to be a serf of Satan and a drudge of sin, his wretchedness entitles him to little pity! The man is so far sunk that he cannot, will not deliver himself! No others can deliver him. Bound hand and foot, the prey of the mighty and the lawful captive—oh, Lord, what can be done for him? Do I hear anyone say, “Perhaps as he grows older the power of sin will grow weaker”? I have heard that suggestion many times but my solemn conviction is that if you want the worst of man, you will find them among the oldest of men! And if you seek a confirmed criminal, you most generally find him with gray hairs upon his head. Have you never noticed in the annals of the Church who were the men that fell most grievously? I never read in all of God’s Book of such instances of foul defection among young Believers as I do among the venerable sires whose names have come to be like a tower of strength in their generation! The youths were weak and knew it—and God kept them. But Lot was an old man when he committed incest, even as Noah before him had long years, ripe experience, and rich honors on his side when he defiled himself with drunkenness! David was far past the prime of life when he coveted Bathsheba and slew Uriah, her husband, with the sword of the children of Amman. Peter, when he denied his Master, was no raw recruit! His Master had pronounced on him high encomiums and endowed him with rich blessings. The fact is, when we begin to lean on experience, we grow weak! Temptation, instead of getting weaker with

our age, gets stronger. The passions which we thought would expire when the heat of youth had evaporated, become more fierce as we grow more infirm till some lusts are more rampant in those who have the least power to gratify them! In whose breast does avarice rage with the most unquenchable ardor but in that of the man who is lingering on the margin of life, about to quit the world? He, indeed, in the course of nature, is the most loath to part with the gold that he has scraped together! Portray the miser. Do you not picture to yourselves the skeleton with bald scalp, wan visage, and withered fists, knocking at death's door? Ah, no, the devil does not release his grasp because our eyes wax dim and our senses grow dull. Instead, thereof, he seems to hold the victim more tightly. The thralldom of a man does not slacken as his vital powers wane. If one passion expires, another takes its place. Could we imagine that the power of evil might sometimes sleep, we might imagine that the man might escape! Thus we read of Giant Despair in the *Pilgrims Progress*, that in the night Christian and Hopeful, when the Giant was taken with a shivering fit, made their escape. Yes, but they were children of God, and not mere natural men! In the case of the sinner there is no sleeping of the foe. The power of evil has the sinner under its control and never refrains its dreadful watch. He is held whether he is alone or in public—he is watched by night and by day, nor is it possible by accident or stratagem that the captive should get free.

So far the story is all black, and, like Ezekiel's roll, it is written within and without with lamentation. Remember, Friend, that while I speak to you, it is of you I speak, if you are not a Believer in Jesus! Unconverted men and women, to you I address these solemn words of God's own Truth! You are the prey of the Mighty, and the captive of God's Law! Can you be delivered? Can you be redeemed? We now turn to the brighter side of our picture—to the more cheerful aspect of our text—

II. CAN THE PREY BE RESCUED? CAN THE CAPTIVE BE DELIVERED? WE ANSWER, HE CAN.

Yes, Sinner, you can! Your nature can be radically changed. Your habits can be snapped. Custom can lose its spell. Your besetting sins can be put under your feet and those vices which you now cling to with tenacity, you can be made to hate with deepest abhorrence! And this can be done for you, done now, done without preparation. But where is He that can achieve it? Ah, He is present with us here, though not to be seen by the eye—the Holy Spirit of God! Be You worshipped, O most Holy Spirit! There is one whom God has been pleased to give to His Church, who has the power to enlighten the understanding, to renew the will, to change the affections—in a word, to make us “new creature in Christ Jesus.” That Holy Spirit is God! Know that unless the same God who first made Adam and Eve in the Garden comes and makes us new, we can never be saved! There must be as great a miracle performed upon you, dear Friend, as if you should be killed, put into the grave, and then be raised up again to live anew. God must create you a second time! He

must quicken you in Christ Jesus unto good works! “Is that ever done?” asks one. It is often done! There are hundreds here on whom that strange transformation has passed, so that they are no longer what they were. “Old things have passed away, and all things have become new.” You cannot work this of yourself. No priest can effect it, but the Holy Spirit can produce it. He can complete it NOW, so great is His power—so Divine!

I could give you many living proofs. Memorable, however, is one that the New Testament history will not suffer you to doubt. There was Saul, the hater of Christ! The persecutor of Christians—a Pharisee, desperately resolved to oppose and efface the Christian faith! He had hunted out the Brethren in Jerusalem. He had forced them to blaspheme by his cruelty. He had obtained letters from the high priest and he was on his road to Damascus, saying to himself, “I will harass them. I will make these professors of the Christian religion bite their tongues! I will scourge them in the Synagogues. I will weary them of trusting in the Nazarene.” He is proudly on his horse—it is about the noon of day—the orange groves of Damascus are just coming into view, when suddenly a light brighter than the meridian sun, shines round about him! Astonished and blinded, he falls to the ground. Soon a Voice rings in his ears, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” That Voice pierced his heart and entered into his understanding. He soon perceived that the Christ whom he was persecuting was God’s own Son and he quickly answered, “Who are You, Lord” To this question the Voice replied, “I am Jesus, whom you persecute. It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.” Thus he found out his mistake! He had been persecuting the Christ, the Messiah, ignorantly supposing that he had been hunting down an impostor! It was all he needed—he arose, blind, it is true, yet he saw more than he ever beheld before! So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.

Oh, what a change had passed over him! What an altered man was he! Within three days, Ananias, an obscure Christian Brother, is instructing him in the faith and saying to him, “Brother Saul, receive your sight.” He is baptized, and not many days after you find him in the synagogue, not to persecute, but to proselyte! Not to betray the saints, but to testify of the Savior! Through all his later life you can discern the sincerity of his profession, the fervor of his spirit, the unwavering attachment of his soul to the Person of Christ—and the steadfast confidence of his faith in the Atonement! “God forbid,” he says, “that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” For Him he could say, “I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ and be found in Him.” A like change must be worked in you! It can be worked in you! It has been worked in many of us! It can be worked in you at this good hour! “Oh,” says one, “I wish it were. What can I do towards it?” I will tell you. I spoke of a lawful captive. Now you are in the condition of a lawful captive. Since you have broken God’s Law, justice demands that punishment in full measure should be meted out to you. This is inevitable. Every sinner stands accountable for his sins and every sinner must

receive its due recompense! But listen. Listen to this and believe it—God, Himself, in the Person of His dear Son, out of pure love to you, came down into this world and He suffered what you ought to have suffered! For all who believe in Jesus, Jesus Christ suffered the penalty due for them! “What?” says one, “If I trust Jesus Christ to save me, do I understand you to say, then, all that is due to me on account of sin, Christ has already borne?” I do say that! I say, you are immediately forgiven and, henceforth, secure against the wrath of God—if you can trust Jesus Christ with your whole heart! Because He lived, and loved, and died for such as you are, you are forgiven! God loves you! The past is blotted out of His Book. “Oh,” you say, “is that true?” Most certainly true! Only put your trust in Christ, now, and this is true to you. Your sins are gone, your iniquities are blotted out!

Now I think I hear some dear soul say, “Well, I do believe it. Yet I can hardly realize it—the mercy seems so great. Oh, what love God must have to me! What tender melting pity the dear Son of God must have had towards me, that He should give Himself to die for me!” Are you favorable to this? Then it is done! You are changed! Already you are talking as you did not use to talk—your heart is now towards God, as it was not before—the Holy Spirit has blest the story of the love of Christ to you, and that love of Christ has been the key that has turned your heart right around! Have you believed this with all your heart? Then you will be a new man from this time forth! You will not love what you loved before. The people of God whom you once despised, you will honor, for you will say, “I am one of them! Christ has washed me in His blood. I was, I know not what in wickedness, but it is all gone! God has blotted out my transgressions. My God is reconciled. His love I feel within my heart! Oh, how I repent of all my sins against Him! Lord, help me to give up everything that is impure in thought, or word, or deed. The dearest thing I have, if it stands against You, O Lord, I will renounce it and away with it! Down with you, my sins! Down with you, my lusts! Away, you drunkard’s cups! Away, far away, be the company of the profane and the songs of the lascivious! From this time forth, be gone from me!—I cannot bear you any longer! My God has made me to love Him because He first loved me! Now, from this day on, I am a new creature, pardoned, purified, welcomed, accepted in Christ. Take me, Lord! Declare me to be Your own! You have bought me with Your blood, anointed me with Your Spirit, acknowledged me as Your child. Take me and make use of me to Your Glory. Whether I live or die, may I praise Your dear name.”

I recollect hearing an old sailor say, “I have had the devil’s black flag at my masthead for 60 years, but, by the Grace of God, I have run it down, tonight, and I put up the red Cross flag of the Lord Jesus.” Oh, Holy Spirit, come work this wonder in many hearts! So shall the “prey be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive be delivered.” Oh, would not some of your neighbors be surprised if you were to go home a Christian? Others of you, who have always been moral and outwardly reli-

gious—were you to declare to your companions the great things God has done for you, and show them the reality and power of saving Grace—they might laugh at you, and say, “Well, but where have you been? You must have been among the Methodists, I should think, and learned their cant.” How thunderstruck they would be at you! To this end is our preaching! May such miracles be worked in the name of Jesus. Let the sot become sober, let the churl grow kind, let the covetous man be generous, let the careless turn prayerful, let the formalist seek after that which is spiritual! Transformations of character like these tell their own story! And while the change is transparent, your kinsfolk and acquaintances will take care that it fails not to be talked about!

Glory to God! He can break chains of adamant and He often does deliver just those very people that we do not think He would take. I believe that in Infinite Mercy He often looks round to find out a ringleader. There he is! Conspicuous for his vice, proclaiming his own shame! The Gospel musket is leveled at him and down he comes! When an officer in the devil’s army falls there is a great cry! God is glorified, the man is saved, and the ranks of the enemy are weakened! Oh, that some such might be brought to Christ tonight—some proud formalist, some mere churchgoer or chapelgoer, whose whole religion lies in conforming to a few paltry sacraments, or in adopting a few Non-Conformist sentiments! Oh, that God would strike such an one’s heart right through and make real heart-work of it with him from this day forth, even forever!

I do hope, as I beat the recruiting drum, there will be some that will come to the standard that have been bold soldiers of the devil, and that they will be quite as bold soldiers of Jesus Christ! My heart longs to know if it is so! Be not slow at once to tell what Grace has done for you, and be not slack afterwards to fight for Him who lived, and loved, and died for you!

God bless the Word to everyone of you for His name’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 4:1-20.**

Verses 1-3. *What shall we say, then, that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he has whereof to glory, but not before God. For what says the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. He stands as the great Father of Believers, and this is the charter given to him, and given to all Believers in him. “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.”*

4. *Now to him that works is the reward not reckoned of Grace, but of debt. That is to say, to him who hopes to be saved by his works, to whom salvation is of merit, he has worked for the reward—has earned it—do not talk about Grace in that case!*

5. *But to him that works not, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. This is the man who does not*

go upon the line of works—who does not rest in his works at all, or bring them as a price to God. “His faith is counted for righteousness.” It is a very wonderful thing that faith should stand in the stead of righteousness, and should make righteous all those that believe in God by Jesus Christ!

6-8. *Even as David also describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputes righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.* Instead of being a worker, this man had been an offender—a sinner. God did not impute it to him. He was a Believer, and God imputed righteousness to him on account of his faith, and did not impute sin to him. Then comes a very important inquiry.

9. *Comes this blessedness, then, upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also?* Is circumcision so necessary that a man is justified by faith after he is circumcised, and could not be so justified if he were an uncircumcised man?

9, 10. *For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? When he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision?* Look back to the history. See in what condition Abraham was when faith was reckoned to him for righteousness. Was it when he was in circumcision or in uncircumcision? The answer is—

10, 11. *Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised.* But the sign is to follow the thing signified. He is, first of all, justified by his faith, and then afterwards he receives the token of the Covenant.

11. *That he might be the father of all them that believe, though they are not circumcised: that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.* It is a very remarkable fact. A great many readers of the Book of Genesis would never have noticed it if the Holy Spirit had not called attention to the fact that father Abraham was justified by his faith before he was circumcised! And this is the reason of it—that he might be the father of *all* Believers, whether they are circumcised or uncircumcised. “That righteousness might be imputed to them also.”

12, 13. *And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.* For the law was not even given when that Covenant promise was made! The Law was 400 years afterwards. The Covenant of Grace was the oldest Covenant of all, and it shall stand fast, whatever shall happen.

14. *For if they which are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void. And the promise made of none effect.* If you are upon that tack of salvation by the Law, then what have you to do with faith? And what have you to do

with promise, and what have you to do with Christ? You are on a different line altogether!

15. *Because the Law works wrath: for where no Law is, there is no transgression.* That is plain enough. You cannot break a law if there is not any. And thus, through our sinfulness, the Law becomes a cause of sin, and never does it become the cause of justification.

16. *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by Grace.* Salvation is by faith, alone, that it may be seen to be of the free favor of God, that we may not look to merit or look to human strength, but may look always to the abounding mercy of God in Christ Jesus.

16, 17. *To the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the Law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.* What a God we trust in—a God who quickens the dead! We have no faith unless we believe in such a God as this. We shall need such a God in order to bring us safely to His right hand at last.

18-20. *Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall your seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.* Men seem to think that only workers can give glory to God, but there is more glory given to God by one drachma of faith than by a ton of works! After all, works usually generate conceit and pride in us. But faith lays itself low before its God and gives to Him all the glory. God is never more glorified than He is by the believing confidence of His people when difficulties seem to come in the way. He was “strong in faith, giving glory to God.”

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

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

CHRIST IN THE EVERLASTING COVENANT

NO. 103

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 18, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

“I will give You for a Covenant of the people.”
Isaiah 49:8.

We all believe that our Savior has very much to do with the Everlasting Covenant. We have been accustomed to regard Him as the Mediator of the Covenant, as the Surety of the Covenant and as the Scope or Substance of the Covenant. We have considered Him to be the *Mediator* of the Covenant, for we were certain that God could make no Covenant with man unless there were a Mediator—a days-man who should stand between them both. And we have hailed Him as the Mediator, who with mercy in His hands, came down to tell sinful man the news that Divine Grace was promised in the eternal counsel of the Most High. We have also loved our Savior as the *Surety* of the Covenant, who, on our behalf, undertook to pay our debts—and on His Father’s behalf, undertook, also, to see that all our souls should be secure and safe—and ultimately presented unblemished and complete before Him. And, doubt not, we have also rejoiced in the thought that Christ is the *Sum and Substance* of the Covenant. We believe that if we would sum up all spiritual blessings, we must say, “Christ is All.” He is the Matter, He is the Substance of it—and although much might be said concerning the glories of the Covenant, yet nothing could be said which is not to be found in that one word, “Christ.” But this morning I shall dwell on Christ, not as the Mediator, nor as the Surety, nor as the Scope of the Covenant, but as one great and glorious Article of the Covenant which God has given to His children! It is our firm belief that Christ is ours and is given to us of God—we know that “He freely delivered Him up for us all,” and we, therefore, believe that He will, “with Him, freely give us all things.” We can say with the spouse, “My beloved is mine.” We feel that we have a personal property in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And I will, therefore, delight us for a while, this morning, in the simplest manner possible, without the garnishing of eloquence or the trappings of oratory just to meditate upon this great thought—that Jesus Christ in the Covenant is the Property of every Believer.

First, we shall *examine this Property*. Secondly we shall notice the *purpose for which it was conveyed to us*. And thirdly, we shall give *one precept* which may well be affixed upon so great a blessing as this and is, indeed, an inference from it.

I. In the first place, then, here is a GREAT POSSESSION—Jesus Christ, by the Covenant, is the Property of every Believer! By this we must understand Jesus Christ is many different senses. We will begin, first of all, by declaring that Jesus Christ is ours, *in all His attributes*. He has a double set of attributes, seeing that there are two Natures joined in glorious union in one Person. He has the attributes of very God and He has the attributes of perfect Man. Whatever these may be, they are, each one of them, the perpetual Property of every believing child of God! I need not dwell on His attributes as God—you all know how Infinite is His love, how vast His Grace, how firm His faithfulness, how unswerving His veracity. You know that He is Omniscient. You know that He is Omnipresent. You know that He is Omnipotent and it will console you if you will but think that all these great and glorious attributes which belong to God are all yours! Has He power? That power is yours—yours to support and strengthen you—yours to overcome your enemies, yours to keep you immutably secure! Has He love? Well, there is not a particle of His love in His great heart which is not yours. All His love belongs to you! You may dive into the immense, bottomless ocean of His love and you may say of it all, “it is mine.” Has He justice? It may seem a stern attribute. But even that is yours for He will, by His justice, see to it that all which is covenanted to you by the oath and promise of God shall be most certainly secured to you. Mention whatever you please which is a characteristic of Christ as the ever-glorious Son of God and, O faithful one, you may put your hand upon it and say, “it is mine!” Your arms, O Jesus, upon which the pillars of the earth hang, are mine! Those eyes, O Jesus, which pierce through the thick darkness and behold the future—your eyes are mine to look on me with love! Those lips, O Christ, which sometimes speak words louder than ten thousand thunders, or whisper syllables sweeter than the music of the harps of the glorified—those lips are mine! And that great heart which beats high with such disinterested, pure and unaffected love—that heart is mine! The whole of Christ, in all His glorious Nature as the Son of God, as God over all, blessed forever, is yours, positively, actually, without metaphor, in reality yours!

Consider Him as Man, too. All that He has as perfect Man is yours. As a perfect man He stood before His Father, “full of Grace and Truth,” full of favor and accepted by God as a perfect Being. O Believer, God’s acceptance of Christ is your acceptance! Do you not know that that love which

the Father set on a perfect Christ, He now sets on you? For all that Christ did is yours. That perfect righteousness which Jesus worked out, when through His stainless life He kept the Law and made it honorable, is yours. There is not a virtue which Christ ever had, that is not yours! There is not a holy deed which He ever did which is not yours! There is not a prayer He ever sent to Heaven that is not yours! There is not one solitary thought towards God which it was His duty to think and which He thought as Man serving His God, which is not yours! All His righteousness, in its vast extent and in all the perfection of His Character, is imputed to you! Oh, can you think what you have gotten in the word, "Christ?" Come, Believer, consider that word, "God," and think how mighty it is. And then meditate upon that word, "perfect Man," for all that the Man-God, Christ, and the glorious God-Man, Christ, ever had, or ever can have as the characteristic of either of His Natures—all that is yours! It all belongs to you—it is out of pure free favor, beyond the fear of revocation, passed over to you to be your actual property—and that forever!

1. Then, consider, Believer, that not only is Christ yours in all His attributes, but He is yours *in all His offices*. Great and glorious these offices are. We have scarcely time to mention them all. Is He a Prophet? Then He is *your* Prophet. Is He a Priest? Then He is *your* Priest. Is He a King? Then He is *your* King. Is He a Redeemer? Then He is *your* Redeemer. Is He an Advocate? Then He is *your* Advocate. Is He a Forerunner? Then he is *your* Forerunner. Is He a Surety of the Covenant? Then He is *your* Surety. In every name He bears, in every crown He wears, in every vestment in which He is arrayed, He is the Believer's own! Oh, child of God, if you had Grace to gather up this thought into your soul, it would comfort you marvelously—to think that in all Christ is in office, He is most assuredly yours! Do you see Him yonder, interceding before His Father, with outstretched arms? Do you mark His ephod—His golden miter on His brow, inscribed with, "holiness unto the Lord?" Do you see Him as He lifts up His hands to pray? Hear you not that marvelous intercession such as man never prayed on earth? That authoritative intercession such as He, Himself, could not use in the agonies of the Garden? For—

***"With sighs and groans, He offered up
His humble suit below.
But with authority He pleads
Enthroned in Glory now."***

Do you see how He asks and how He receives as soon as His petition is put up? And can you, dare you, believe that that intercession is all your own, that on His breast your name is written? That in His heart your name is stamped in marks of indelible Grace and that all the majes-

ty of that marvelous, that surpassing intercession is your own—and would be all expended for you if you did require it? He has not any authority with His Father that He will not use on your behalf if you need it! He has no power to intercede that He would not employ for you in all times of necessity! Come now, words cannot set this forth—it is only your *thoughts* that can teach you this. It is only God, the Holy Spirit, bringing home the Truth that can set this ravishing, this transporting thought in its proper position in your heart—that Christ is yours in all He is and has! See Him on earth? There He stands, the Priest offering His bloody Sacrifice! See Him on the Cross, His hands are pierced, His feet are gushing gore? Oh, do you see that pallid Countenance and those languid eyes flowing with compassion? Do you mark that crown of thorns? Do you behold that mightiest of Sacrifices, the sum and substance of them all? Believer, that is yours! Those precious drops plead and claim *your* peace with God! That open side is *your* Refuge. Those pierced hands are *your* Redemption—that groan He groans for *you*, that cry of a forsaken heart He utters for *you*. That death He dies for *you*. Come, I beseech you, consider Christ in any of His various offices. But when you do consider Him, lay hold of this thought—in all these things, He is *your* Christ, given unto *you* to be one article in the Everlasting Covenant—your possession forever!

2. Then mark next, Christ is the Believer's in everyone of His *works*. Whether they are works of suffering or of duty, they are the property of the Believer. As a Child, He was circumcised and is that bloody rite mine? Yes, "Circumcised in Christ." As a Believer He is baptized and is that watery sign of Baptism mine? Yes, "Buried with Christ in Baptism unto death." Jesus' Baptism I share when I lie interred with my best Friend in the same watery tomb. See there, He dies and it is a master work to die. But is His death mine? Yes, I die in Christ! He is buried and is that burial mine? Yes, I am buried with Christ. He rises. Mark Him startling His guards and rising from the tomb! And is that Resurrection mine? Yes, we are "risen together with Christ." Mark again, He ascends up on high and leads captivity captive. Is that Ascension mine? Yes, for He has "raised us up together." And look, He sits on His Father's Throne—is that deed mine? Yes, He has made us, "sit together in heavenly places." All He did is ours! By Divine decree there existed such an union between Christ and His people that all Christ did, His people did—and all Christ has performed, His people did perform in Him, for they were in His loins when He descended to the tomb and in His loins they have ascended up on high! With Him they entered into bliss and with Him they sit in heavenly places. Represented by Him, their Head, all His

people, even now, are glorified in Him, even in Him who is the Head over all things to His Church! In all the deeds of Christ either in His humiliation or His exaltation, remember, O Believer, you have a Covenant interest and all those things are yours!

3. I would for one moment hint at a sweet thought, which is this—you know that in the Person of Christ “dwells *all the fullness of the Godhead* bodily.” Ah, Believer, “and of His fullness have we received—Grace for Grace.” All the fullness of Christ—and do you know what that is? Do you understand that phrase? I guarantee you, you do not know it and shall not just yet. But all that fullness of Christ, the abundance of which you may guess of by your own emptiness—all that fullness is yours to supply your multiplied necessities! All the fullness of Christ to restrain you to keep you and preserve you. All that fullness of power, of love, of purity, which is stored up in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, is yours! Do treasure up that thought, for then your emptiness need never be a cause of fear. How can you be lost while you have all Fullness to fly to?

4. But I come to something sweeter than this, *the very life of Christ* is the property of the Believer. Ah, this is a thought into which I cannot dive and I feel I have outdone myself in only mentioning it. The life of Christ is the property of every Believer. Can you conceive what Christ’s life is? “Sure,” you say, “He poured it out upon the Cross.” He did and it was His life that He gave to you, then. But He took that life again—even the life of His body was restored and the life of His great and glorious Godhead had never undergone any change, even at that time! But now you know He has immortality—“He only has immortality.” Can you conceive what kind of life that is which Christ possesses? Can He ever die? No—far sooner may the harps of Heaven be stopped and the chorus of the redeemed cease forever! Sooner may the glorious walls of Paradise be shaken and the foundations thereof be removed than that Christ, the Son of God, should ever die. Immortal as His Father, He now sits, the Great Eternal One. Christian, that life of Christ is yours! Hear what He says—“Because I live, you shall live also.” “You are dead and your life”—where is it? It is “hid with Christ in God.” The same blow which smites us dead, spiritually, must slay Christ, too! The same sword which can take away the spiritual life of a regenerate man must take away the life of the Redeemer, also! They are linked together—they are not two lives, but one. We are but the rays of the great Sun of Righteousness, our Redeemer—sparks which must return to the great orb again. If we are, indeed, the true heirs of Heaven, we cannot die until He from whom we take our rise, also dies. We are the stream that cannot stop till the Fountain is dry! We are the rays that cannot cease until the Sun, also, cease to

shine. We are the branches and we cannot wither until the Trunk, itself, shall die! “Because I live, you shall live also.” The very life of Christ is the property of every one of His Brothers and Sisters!

5. And best of all, *the Person of Jesus Christ* is the property of the Christian. I am persuaded, Beloved, we think a great deal more of God’s gifts than we do of God. We preach a great deal more about the Holy Spirit’s *influence* than we do about the Holy Spirit. And I am also assured that we talk a great deal more about the Offices and Works and Attributes of Christ than we do about the Person of Christ! Hence it is that there are few of us who can often understand the figures that are used in Solomon’s Song, concerning the Person of Christ, because we have seldom sought to see Him or desired to know Him. But, O Believer, you have sometimes been able to behold your Lord. Have you not seen *Him*, who is white and ruddy, “the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely”? Have you not sometimes been lost in pleasure when you have seen His feet, which are like much fine gold, as if they burned in a furnace? Have you not beheld Him in the double Character, the white and the red, the lily and the rose, the God, yet the Man, the dying, yet the living—the perfect and yet bearing about with Him a body of death? Have you ever beheld that Lord with the nail-prints in His hands and the mark still on His side? And have you ever been ravished at His loving smile and been delighted at His voice? Have you ever had love visits from Him? Has He ever put His banner over you? Have you ever walked with Him to the villages and the garden? Have you ever sat under His shadow? Have you ever found His fruit sweet unto your taste? Yes, you have. His *Person*, then, is yours! The wife loves her husband. She loves his house and his property. She loves him for all that he gives her, for all the bounty he confers and all the love he bestows. But his person is the object of her affections. So with the Believer—he blesses Christ for all He does and all He is. But oh, it is Christ who is everything! He does not care so much about His office, as he does about *the Man* Christ.

See the child on his father’s knee—the father is a professor in the University. He is a great man with many titles and, perhaps, the child knows that these are honorable titles and esteems him for them. But he does not care so much about the professor and his dignity, as about the person of his father! It is not the college square cap, or the gown that the child loves. Yes and if it is a loving child, it will not be so much the meal the father provides, or the house in which it lives, as the father which it loves. It is his dear person that has become the object of true and hearty affection. I am sure it is so with you, if you know your Savior. You love His mercies, you love His offices, you love His deeds, but oh, you love His

Person best! Reflect, then, that the Person of Christ is in the Covenant conveyed to you---“I will give You to be a Covenant for the people.”

II. Now we come to the second—FOR WHAT PURPOSE DOES GOD PUT CHRIST IN THE COVENANT?

1. Well, in the first place, Christ is in the Covenant in order *to comfort every coming sinner*. “Oh,” says the sinner who is coming to God, “I cannot lay hold on such a great Covenant as that! I cannot believe that Heaven is provided for me. I cannot conceive that that robe of righteousness and all these wondrous things can be intended for such a wretch as I am.” Here comes the thought that Christ is in the Covenant. Sinner, can you lay hold on Christ? Can you say—

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

Well, if you have got that, it was put in on purpose for you to hold fast! By God’s Covenant, all mercies go together and if you have laid hold on Christ, you have gained every blessing in the Covenant! That is one reason why Christ was put there. Why, if Christ were not there, the poor sinner would say, “I dare not lay hold on that mercy. It is a God-like and a Divine one, but I dare not grasp it. It is too good for me. I cannot receive it, it staggers my faith.” But he sees Christ with all His great Atonement in the Covenant—and Christ looks so lovingly at him and opens His arms so wide, saying, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest,” that the sinner comes and throws his arms around Christ. And then Christ whispers, “Sinner, in laying hold of Me, you have laid hold of all.” “Why, Lord, I dare not think I could have the other mercies. I dare trust You, but I dare not take the others.” “Ah, Sinner,” says our Master, “but in that you have taken Me, you have taken all, for the mercies of the Covenant are like links in the chain.” This one link is an enticing one. The sinner lays hold of it—God has purposely put it there to entice the sinner to come and receive the mercies of the Covenant! For when he has once got hold of Christ—here is the comfort—he has everything that the Covenant can give!

2. Christ is also put *to confirm the doubting saint*. Sometimes he cannot read his interest in the Covenant. He cannot see his portion among them who are sanctified. He is afraid that God is not *his* God, that the Spirit has no dealings with *his* soul. But then—

**“Amid temptations, sharp and strong,
His soul to that dear Refuge flies!
Hope is his anchor, firm and strong,
When tempests blow and billows rise.”**

So he lays hold of Christ and were it not for that, even the Believer dare not come at all. He could not lay hold on any other mercy than that with

which Christ is connected. “Ah,” he says, “I know I am a sinner and Christ came to save sinners.” So he holds fast to Christ. “I can hold fast here,” he says, “my black hands will not blacken Christ, my filthiness will not make Him unclean.” So the saint holds hard to Christ, as hard as if it were the death clutch of a drowning man! And what then? Why, he has got every mercy of the Covenant in his hands! It is the wisdom of God that He has put Christ in, so that a poor sinner, who might be afraid to lay hold of another, knowing the gracious Nature of Christ, is not afraid to lay hold of Him and therein he grasps the whole.

3. Again, it was necessary that Christ should be in the Covenant because there *are many things there that would be nothing without Him*. Our great Redemption is in the Covenant, but we have no Redemption except through His blood. It is true that my righteousness is in the Covenant, but I can have no righteousness apart from that which Christ has worked out and which is imputed to me by God. It is very true that my eternal perfection is in the Covenant, but the Elect are only perfect in Christ. They are not perfect in themselves, nor will they ever be until they have been washed and sanctified and perfected by the Holy Spirit. And even in Heaven their perfection consists not so much in their sanctification, as in their justification in Christ—

***“Their beauty this, their glorious dress,
Jesus the Lord, their righteousness.”***

In fact, if you take Christ out of the Covenant, you have just done the same as if you should break the string of a necklace—all the jewels, or beads, or corals, drop off and separate from each other! Christ is the golden string whereon the mercies of the Covenant are threaded and when you lay hold of Him, you have obtained the whole string of pearls. But if Christ is taken out, true, there will be the pearls, but we cannot wear them, we cannot grasp them—they are separated and poor faith can never know how to get hold of them. Oh, it is a mercy worth worlds, that Christ is in the Covenant!

4. But mark once more, as I told you when preaching concerning God in the Covenant, [See Sermon No. 93—GOD IN THE COVENANT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at www.spurgeongems.org.] Christ is in the Covenant to be used. God never gives His children a Promise which He does not intend them to use. There are some Promises in the Bible which I have never yet used—but I am well assured that there will come times of trial and trouble when I shall find that that poor despised Promise, which I thought was never meant for me, will be the only one on which I can float! I know that the time is coming when every Believer shall know the worth of every Promise in the Covenant. God has not given us any part of

an inheritance which He did not mean us to till! Christ is given us to use. Believer, use Him! I tell you again, as I told you before, that you do not use your Christ as you ought to. Why, Brothers and Sisters, when you are in trouble, why do you not go and tell Him? Has He not a sympathizing heart and can He not comfort and relieve you? No, you are gadding about to all your friends, except your best Friend, and telling your tale everywhere except into the bosom of your Lord. Oh, use Him, use Him! Are you black with yesterday's sins? Here is a Fountain filled with blood—use it! Saint, use it! Has your guilt returned? Well His power has been proved again and again—come use Him! Use Him! Do you feel naked? Come here, Soul, put on the robe. Stand not staring at it—put it on! Strip, Sir, strip your own righteousness off and your own fears, too—put this on and wear it, for it was meant to wear. Do you feel sick? What? Will you not go and pull the night-bell of prayer and wake up your Physician? I beseech you go and stir Him up and He will give the cordial that will revive you. What? Are you sick? With such a Physician next door to you, a present help in time of trouble—and will you not go to Him? Oh, remember you are poor, but then you have “a kinsman, a mighty man of wealth.” What? Will you not go to Him and ask Him to give you of His abundance, when He has given you this Promise, that as long as He has anything, you shall go shares with Him, for all He is and all He has is yours?

Oh, Believer, do use Christ, I beseech you! There is nothing Christ dislikes more than for His people to make a show of Him and not to use Him. He loves to be worked. He is a great Laborer—He always was for His Father and now He loves to be a great Laborer for His Brothers and Sisters. The more burdens you put on His shoulders, the better He will love you! Cast your burden on Him. You will never know the sympathy of Christ's heart and the love of His soul so well as when you have heaved a very mountain of trouble from yourself to His shoulders and have found that He does not stagger under the weight! Are your troubles like huge mountains of snow upon your spirit? Bid them rumble like an avalanche upon the shoulders of the Almighty Christ! He can bear them all away and carry them into the depths of the sea. Do use your Master—for this very purpose He was put into the Covenant, that you might use Him whenever you need Him.

III. Now, lastly, here is A PRECEPT and what shall the precept be? Christ is ours—then *be you Christ's*, Beloved! You are Christ's, you know right well. You are His by your Father's donation when He gave you to the Son. You are His by His bloody purchase, when He counted down the price for your Redemption. You are His by dedication, for you have dedi-

cated yourselves to Him. You are His by adoption, for you are brought to Him and made one of His Brethren and joint-heirs with Him. I beseech you, labor, dear Brothers and Sisters, to show the world that you are His in practice. When tempted to sin, reply, "I cannot do this great wickedness. I cannot, for I am one of Christ's." When wealth is before you to be won by sin, touch it not—say that you are Christ's, otherwise you would take it. But now you cannot. Tell Satan that you would not gain the world if you had to love Christ less. Are you exposed in the world to difficulties and dangers? Stand fast in the evil day, remembering that you are one of Christ's. Are you in a field where much is to be done and others are sitting down idly and lazily, doing nothing? Go at your work and when the sweat stands upon your brow and you are bid to stop, say, "No, I cannot stop. I am one of Christ's. He had a Baptism to be baptized with and so have I—and I am straitened until it is accomplished. I am one of Christ's. If I were not one of His and purchased by blood, I might be like Issachar, crouching between two burdens. But I am one of Christ's." When the siren song of pleasure would tempt you from the path of right, reply, "Hush your strains, O temptress! I am one of Christ's. Your music cannot affect me. I am not my own, I am bought with a price." When the cause of God needs you, give yourself to it, for you are Christ's. When the poor need you, give yourself away, for you are one of Christ's. When, at any time there is something to be done for His Church and for His Cross, do it, remembering that you are one of Christ's. I beseech you, never belie your profession! Go not where others could say of you, "He cannot be Christ's"—but be you always one of those whose brogue is Christian, whose very idiom is Christ-like, whose conduct and conversation are so redolent of Heaven, that all who see you may know that you are one of the Savior's and may recognize in you, His features and His lovely countenance!

And now, dearly Beloved, I must say one word to those of you to whom I have not preached, for there are some of you who have never laid hold of the Covenant. I sometimes hear it whispered and sometimes read it, that there are men who trust to the uncovenanted mercies of God. Let me solemnly assure you that there is now no such thing in Heaven as uncovenanted mercy! There is no such thing beneath God's sky or above it, as uncovenanted Grace towards men! All you can receive and all you ever ought to hope for must be through the Covenant of Free Grace, the Everlasting Covenant, and that alone!

Perhaps, poor convinced Sinner, you dare not take hold of the Covenant today. You cannot say the Covenant is yours. You are afraid it never can be yours. You are such an unworthy wretch. Listen! Can you lay

hold on Christ? Dare you do that? “Oh,” you say, “I am too unworthy.” No, Soul, dare you touch the hem of His garment today? Dare you come up to Him just so much as to touch the very robe that is trailing on the ground? “No,” you say “I dare not,” Why not, poor Soul, why not? Can you not trust Christ?—

“Are not His mercies rich and free?”

Then say, poor Soul, why not for thee?”

“*I dare not come, I am so unworthy,*” you say. Hear, then, My Master bids you come and will you be afraid after that?—“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Why dare you not come to Christ? Oh, you are afraid He will turn you away! Hear, then, what He says—“Whoever comes unto Me, I will in nowise cast out.” You say, “*I know He would cast me out.*” Come, then, and see if you can prove Him a liar. I know you cannot, but come and try! He has said, “*whoever.*” “*But I am the blackest.*” Nevertheless, He has said “*whoever.*” Come along, blackest of the black. “*Oh, but I am filthy.*” Come along, filthy one, come and try Him, come and prove Him—remember He has said He will cast out none who come to Him by faith. Come and try Him! I do not ask you to lay hold on the whole Covenant—you shall do that, by-and-by. But lay hold on Christ and if you will do that, then you have the Covenant. “*Oh, I cannot lay hold of Him,*” says one poor soul. Well then, lie prostrate at His feet and beg Him to lay hold of you! Do groan one groan and say, “*Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner!*” Do sigh one sigh and say, “*Lord, save me, or I perish.*” Do let your heart say it, if your lips cannot. If grief, long smothered, burns like a flame within your bones, at least let one spark out. Now pray one prayer and verily I say unto you, one sincere prayer shall most assuredly prove that He will save you! One true groan, where God has put it in the heart, is an earnest of His love! One true wish after Christ, if it is followed by sincere and earnest seeking of Him, shall be accepted of God and you shall be saved!

Come, Soul, once more. Lay hold on Christ. “*Oh, but I dare not do it.*” Now I was about to say a foolish thing. I was going to say that I wish I were a sinner like yourself, this moment, and I think I would run before you and lay hold on Christ and then say to you, “*Take hold, too.*” But *I am* a sinner like yourself and no better than yourself! I have no merits, no righteousness, no works. I shall be damned in Hell unless Christ has mercy on me! And I would have been there, now, if I had had my just deserts. Here am I, a sinner once as vile as they were. And yet, O Christ, these arms embrace You! Sinner, come and take your turn after me!

Have not I embraced Him? Am I not as vile as you are? Come and let my case assure you. How did He treat me when I first laid hold of Him? Why, He said to me, “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Come, Sinner, come and try! If Christ did not drive me away, He will never spurn you. Come along, poor Soul, come along —

***“Venture on him, (‘tis no venture,) venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude!
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good!”***

He can do you all the good you need. Oh, trust my Master! Oh, Trust my Master! He is the precious Lord Jesus! He is the sweet Lord Jesus! He is the loving Savior! He is the kind and condescending Forgiver of sin!

Come, you vile! Come, you filthy! Come, you poor! Come, you dying! Come, you lost—you who have been taught to feel your need of Christ! Come, all of you—come now, for Jesus bids you come! Come quickly!

Lord Jesus, draw them, draw them by Your Spirit! Amen.

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

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

“OUT OF DARKNESS INTO LIGHT”

NO. 2397

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, JANUARY 27, 1895.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 13, 1887.**

*“That You may say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them
that are in darkness, Show yourselves.”
Isaiah 49:9.*

THIS, of course, is a prophecy of what the Messiah would do. The Lord Jesus Christ, when He came among the sons of men, was to open the prison doors and to say to the prisoners, “Go forth,” and to those who, in addition to being in prison, were in a dark cell, shut away from the light, He was to say, “Show yourselves.”

What wonders Jesus Christ has worked! There are many of us who are living proofs of what Jesus Christ can do, for, when we were in prison, He said to us, “Come forth,” and we are now free as the air, our spirits are buoyant and full of gladness and rejoicing! Some of us also sat in darkness—gloomy, thick, Egyptian night—but when Jesus came to us, that darkness fled away and now we walk in the Light of God as He is in the Light, and we have fellowship with Him, and with His Father, too, through the ever-blessed Spirit. Wonders of Grace belong to Christ! He has already worked enough to keep His redeemed amazed throughout all eternity with the splendor of the achievements of His Grace! Though He were never to work another miracle of mercy, He has already done enough to set all Heaven in amazement throughout all the ages that are yet to come, such a wondrous Savior has He proved Himself to be!

The liberty which Jesus gives to prisoners is something very marvelous. To be a prisoner for life must be a horrible thing—to be immured in a dungeon for all one’s days must be almost worse than death. Yet there is a slavery of the *soul* that is worse than wearing chains upon the wrist! There is an imprisonment of the *heart* that is far more terrible than being shut up within stone walls or iron bars. When Jesus comes to the soul, He delivers us from that direst of all bondages, fetches us out from that most cruel of all slaveries, the bondage of the spirit, the slavery of the heart!

Then we are told that if there are any who are in a worse state than that of mere captivity, namely, in darkness as well as in bondage, the Lord Jesus Christ comes to them and says, “Show yourselves; rise, and come out of the darkness; hide away no longer, come forth into the light, and enjoy it.” And when He speaks, His Words are effectual! When He says, “Come forth,” they come forth, and when He says, “Show yourselves,” they show themselves! He speaks and it is done, for every Word of Christ is the fiat of Omnipotent Love.

Now I am going to try and deal with those who are, spiritually, in the dark, in the hope that the time has arrived when they are to come forth out of the darkness and to show themselves. My business will consist, then, in two things. First, I want to *find out the characters mentioned in the text*. And, secondly, I will *repeat the exhortation that it contains*.

I. First, I have to try to FIND OUT THE CHARACTERS mentioned in the text—“Them that are in darkness.” Some of them are here tonight—let me see if I can, with my Lord’s gracious guidance, put my finger on them.

I observe, first, that *they were not always in darkness*. She was a bright young spirit once, after a fashion—up to all manner of fun and levity. And he—I know him very well—he seemed to be everything that mirth could make youth to be, sporting like a butterfly in summertime among the flowers. It was remarked of him that he seemed to enjoy life perfectly and, certainly, it was his intention to do so, even if he shortened his days in the process—he dashed at the flame, even though he singed his wings! But, all of a sudden, there came a cloud in the sky, both to her and to him—I mean, to *you*. It may be that some time ago a death happened in the family, or sickness came, or if it was neither of these things, at any rate, the mind suddenly grew strangely quiet and a stillness came down upon the spirit. And with that stillness there fell a gloom over the whole being. The fun and levity which had been enjoyed before were like the bubbles and froth upon the cup—there was nothing substantial or real in them at all—so, when the man or woman began to think, the bubbles and froth disappeared and then life grew flat, stale, dull and unprofitable.

What, do you think, were those thoughts that brought such a sobering influence into your life? They were somewhat like this—I can tell you about them from my own experience, for they happened to me while I was yet a boy. I thought, “I have not lived as I ought to have lived. God made me, yet I have never truly served Him. He is my mother’s God, but I have forgotten Him. He is my father’s God, yet I have never sought Him. Ah, me! What shall I do? God must punish me. He must punish me! If He does not do so, He ought to—He cannot be *God* if He does not act justly and I cannot, in my heart of hearts, reverence Him if He winks at my wrongdoing, for much wrongdoing has been mine. What is to become of me?” So I cried out in my agony and I struggled to be right. I thought it would be easy work to do that which would please God. I went to the helm of my ship and hoped to reverse its course. But I soon drifted into the old courses, again, and what I thought to be very easy I found to be extremely difficult—no more—absolutely impossible! I seemed soft as wax towards evil, yet hard as cast-iron or steel towards anything that was good! I could not be molded, or fashioned aright. Then I grew sad in soul and heavy of spirit—I forsook the ways of the mirthful and stole away from my companions that I might get alone. I read my Bible a great deal and the more I read it, the more the darkness thickened about me. Then I tried to pray and, ah, me, I know now that they were true prayers, but then it seemed as if my prayers were no better than the barking of a dog!

I could not hope that God would accept such prayers as *those*—and so the darkness increased around me.

I think I hear someone say, “Yes, that is my experience.” So you *are* here, though your spirit is in the dark! I am right glad to meet you and while you are there in the dark, I give you my hand, for I sympathize with you—I know what this darkness means! You were not always in that condition, but I thank God you are now where you are. Perhaps you think me cruel to thank God for your misery, but I do, for this is the gateway into a joy that will be worth your having! This loss of the sham will be the finding of the real thing! This nailing of the counterfeit upon the counter will be giving you the minted gold that shall be current in the markets of Heaven!

Beside this, *a sense of sin has settled upon you*. I know it did upon me. I ate my bread at the table, but I sometimes wondered it did not choke me. I walked the earth and sometimes I was under such a sense of sin that I marveled it should continue to bear me up. I thought of the wrath of God and it did, indeed, seem to me to be “the wrath to come.” I thank God that I did not, in those days, hear any of those fine preachers who tell you there is no wrath to come and you need not want to meet with such servants of the devil, for his emissaries they really are. When my conscience convinced me of sin, I verily believe that if I had heard any of these men, I would have loathed them from my very soul! The arrows of God stuck fast within my heart and I knew there must be a wrath of God against sin, for I was angry, even, with myself on account of my guilt! If God had taken me to Heaven with unforgiving sin still within my spirit, I would not have been happy! I was utterly miserable and I felt that I must continue so unless, by a Divine miracle of Grace, some great change could be worked upon me. The conscience of man, when he is really quickened and awakened by the Holy Spirit, speaks the Truth of God—it rings the great alarm bell and if he turns over in his bed and says, “A little more sleep, and a little more slumber”—that great alarm bell rings out again and again, “The wrath to come! The wrath to come! The wrath to come!”

The soul I am describing is in the dark and the darkness settles down in conviction of sin and, dear Friend—for I am speaking to you (though I do not know you, I am speaking straight at somebody—God knows who—who is in the dark), *you have no hope*. You go to hear sermons, longing that some Light of God may break in upon you. Some of you have been hearing the Gospel for a very long time, yet no Light has come to you. Why is it? One reason is because you shut out the Light of God. There are some of you who *refuse to be converted*—you are like sick men who, when meat is brought to them, refuse it. They turn against it, as the Psalm says, “Their soul abhors all manner of meat.” I am not going to blame you, dear Heart, but I do deeply pity you, for I know that now you are hardly in your right senses, like the men at sea, of whom the Psalm says, “They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit’s end.”

You hear and yet you do not hear! You have had the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached to you, and very plainly, too, but you know that it is one thing to hold a lantern to a man’s eyes and it is another thing to take the scales off those eyes and make him see. So is it with you—your eyes are covered with scales and you do your utmost to keep them there! You will not come to Christ that you might have life and, therefore, there is no star visible to you! There is not even the faintest rim of the new moon, much less is there any light of the sun shining upon you. You are in the dark and, at present, there is nothing to break through that darkness or to drive it away.

Worse still, *you fear future and eternal night*. I think I hear you say, “I am afraid, Sir, that I shall die in the dark.” I trust not, I trust not, for I have something to say to you which, I hope, may be God’s voice to pierce that darkness and disperse it! It would be an awful thing, certainly, to pass out of this world without a hope, and to take the last dread plunge into the unutterable blackness without so much as a single spark of light to guide you on your way. And, since you may die at any moment—(remember how our friend was taken away, two Sabbaths ago, just as he entered this House of Prayer)—since you may die at any moment, see to it that you do not die in the dark! You have but one little candle—do not waste even a fragment of it, but use every beam of light it gives you—

**“While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return,”**

but if that lamp is once quenched, then will you be forever beyond the reach of hope, for the Gospel is not preached in Hell—where your soul will be found if you die unforgiven! Here, mercy is offered to you, but pass away rejecting it and you have sealed your doom forever!

I am not going to dwell any longer upon the seamy side of my subject, because that might only increase your darkness. Yet I know that you would feel a kind of mournful satisfaction if I were to do so. Do I not remember how I read through the Book of Job and its blackest pages seemed suitable to me? How did I take to heart the language of Jeremiah in his Lamentations and how did I roll those unsavory morsels under my tongue again and again! But I rejoice to believe that it is to people in such a state as this that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is sent. Christ did not die to save the righteous, but to save the *unrighteous*! Salvation is not meant for men who are not lost, but for men who *are* lost! It is not because of your *riches* that Christ came, but because of your *poverty*—not because of your *worthiness*—but because of your *unworthiness*! He has not come because you do not need Him, but because you *do* need Him! And the more terrible your necessity, on account of the thick darkness in which your spirit is enshrouded, the more am I encouraged to believe that Jesus Christ has come to save YOU—yes, even *you*, for the text says—“To them that are in darkness, Show yourselves.”

II. Now, secondly, I am going to REPEAT THE EXHORTATION of the text—“Show yourselves.” What does that mean?

First, it means that *you are running away from Divine Justice* and that your wisest course will be to *go and deliver yourself up*. I have been thinking, several times this week, of that unhappy man who is believed

to have committed a murder and who has been going from place to place to escape detection. What a miserable week he must have spent! How he must have trembled every time anyone looked at him! The sight of a policeman must be terrifying, indeed, to him. I know not where he has been, nor apparently does anybody else, but he is seeking to hide himself from the officers of justice. There was a murderer, some time ago, who escaped for a time from those who were searching for him, but what a wretched life he lived while he was hiding! Now to any of you who are trying to hide away, thus, God says, “Show yourselves; come out of your hiding place.”

“But what am I to do?” asks one. Give yourself up. “What? Give myself up to justice?” Yes, to Almighty Justice. Come and surrender yourself. Do you not know that you are not really hidden? God sees you wherever you are! There is no hiding away from Him! I might not ask you to give yourself up to your fellow man, but I do pray you guilty sinners, who do not like to think of sin and are trying to hide yourselves, to abandon that folly and come out and give yourselves up. “Give myself up to God?” you ask. Yes, that is the first thing for you to do—to submit yourself to God, to lie at His feet pleading for mercy! I have heard of one who found that his life was sought for on account of a frightful crime that he had committed. When it was announced that whoever would bring that man’s head, even though he, himself, had been a traitor, he would be pardoned, he did a very sensible thing—he obtained admittance to the king and said, “I have brought this man’s head and I demand to be pardoned, for I have complied with the condition mentioned in the proclamation.” So he had, though it was his own head that he had brought and, somehow, the grim humor of the action seemed to touch the heart of the king, and he said, “Well, you must live.”

I want you to do the same thing as that criminal did—come to God, and say, “Lord, I am a wicked sinner. If there is a man upon the earth who deserves to be cast away from Your Presence, forever, on account of sin, I am that guilty one.” Deliver yourself up to God, surrender at discretion! Say, “You must do with me as You will, Lord, but I cannot run away from You, nor do I wish to do so. I know that all the earth is but one great prison when You are seeking me, for You can see me anywhere. You can spy me out in the darkest night and find me in my most secret hiding place—therefore I will deliver myself up into Your hands. Do with me as You will.” Now then, you that are in the dark, come and deliver yourselves up! Say, as Esther did, when she resolved to go into the presence of Ahasuerus, “So will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.” I wish I might be privileged to bring you to that point! May the Lord, Himself, bring you there! In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom God anointed to save sinners, I command you who are in darkness to show yourselves, by surrendering yourselves *now* to your God, submitting yourselves unreservedly to Him! “Kiss the Son lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.”

The next way of showing yourselves is somewhat different—“Say to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves,” that is, *you are very lonely and you have been avoiding your best friends*. You like to get away into a secluded corner and you do not care to be spoken to about religion—yet all the while you have the heartache and know not how to get it cured. To you who wish to be always alone, you who are so retiring, so nervous and so sensitive that you never speak to anybody about the sorrow you so keenly feel, thus says the Lord to you, “To them that are in darkness, Show yourselves.” Come out of your retirement! If you cannot speak to any mortal man, yet speak to the Immortal Man, the Christ of God! Go and tell all your sorrows to the best of friends! You remember that we sang just now—

**“Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Your bosom fly.”**

O you lonely one, I want you to speak thus to Jesus and to fly to His bosom and tell Him all that ails you! You cannot speak to mother, you say, dear girl? Then speak to the Lord Jesus Christ! “Oh, I cannot speak to my father!” says the boy. No, I have often found that children cannot talk to their earthly father, but you can go and speak to the Lord Jesus Christ! He will meet you in your little room. He will be by your bedside tonight! Get somewhere, alone, and say to Him, “Lord Jesus, I have not a friend to whom I can go for relief. Perhaps there are many who would be my friends, but I am so frightened and so timid that I dare not go and speak to them. Even when I go to the Tabernacle, I am afraid lest someone should talk to me about my soul.” Speak thus to the Lord Jesus, first, and it may be that He will give you courage to allow some Christian person to converse with you and help you “out of darkness into light.” Even if you have not courage enough for that, it shall be an all-sufficient help to you to show yourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. Seek His acquaintance and if only like one groping in the dark you do but touch Him and lay hold of Him by faith, you will be saved! And in due time you will come forth into the light of His Countenance.

Thus I have given you two meanings of the text, but I want, now, to tell you another—“Say to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves.” This passage may be applied *to you who are sick, who are concealing your disease*. I want every man here who is troubled about the state of his heart, and every woman, too, to come and show themselves to Christ, just as they are, in all their sin. I remember a friend of mine who was, for years, suffering from an ailment that I need not name. And after a while his malady reached a very sad condition and he was most seriously ill. A physician was called in and when he had examined my friend, he said, “This ought to have been seen to years ago! Why was it not properly attended to before? Have you no doctor?” “Oh, yes! The doctor has been in and out of the house many times. He has been here almost every month.” “Well, what did he do for you?” “Oh, he prescribed, different things.”

Then the physician asked, “But did he never examine you to find out what was the matter?” And my friend replied, “Oh, I always shrank from a medical examination!” “But,” rejoined the physician, “you will soon be dead unless God deals very graciously with you—and if you had been ex-

amined and rightly treated, a few years ago, probably this mischief was then such a very small affair that your life might have been saved.”

Do you not think that such a thing as that often happens—that we are afraid of a thorough examination and do not want to know our real condition—and, therefore, it continues to get worse? Well now, I want you who are in darkness to come to God and to say to Him, “Lord, examine me thoroughly.” Go and exhibit to the Lord your sins and your sores, yes, though they are putrefying sores! He is accustomed to seeing such things, therefore hide nothing from Him. Go and tell Him the tale of all your sins and your sorrows. In your prayers to Him, make a full confession of your sin. I remember one who used to pray, “Lord, pardon my sin,” and he went over a list of a number of sins that he had *not* committed—but he used to say very little about those that he *had* committed! “I am afraid I take a little drop too much,” he would sometimes confess, but he never obtained peace until he said straight out, “Lord, I am a hard drinker, I am a drunk—but by Your Grace I will take no more strong drink.” Then he was delivered from the evil!

If I were a priest and you were fools enough to come and confess your sins to me, I would not ask you to call a spade a spade, for some spades are better called by another name—but when you go to God, pour out all that is in your heart, confess all your wrong-doing! Acknowledge that you are proud and conceited! Admit that you are murmuring and rebellious! Confess that you do not want to be converted! Acknowledge that you have companions you would not like to give up! Confess that you are living in the practice of a secret sin! Admit it all! Show yourselves, exhibit yourselves to God just as you are! It will be a dreadful sight, but the Great Physician will then operate upon you with His wonderful power which cures and cleanses, too! Remember this text, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” You who are in darkness, show yourselves to God by a full and wholehearted confession of your sin—and a humble acknowledgment that you deserve to suffer His righteous wrath!

Thus I hope I have, in another sense, put this matter plainly enough—

**“Say to them that are in darkness,
Show yourselves.”**

The next thing you have to do is to show yourselves *as healed ones bound to confess Him who has cured them*. If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, then you are healed of the leprosy of sin! If you trust Christ, your sins are forgiven—but remember that this is the *full* Gospel message—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” “If you shall confess with Your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” When the 10 lepers were cleansed, our Lord Jesus Christ said to them, “Go, show yourselves to the priest,” in order that he might examine and see whether it was a real cure that had been worked, and so might bear testimony that Christ had healed the leprosy.

Now, if Christ has saved you, you are required to come out and show yourself! Come to the Church of God, and ask to be admitted to its fel-

lowship. “Oh but I mean to go to Heaven in the dark!” Do you? Do you expect to find a dark Heaven when you get there? “But,” says one, “there are a great many secret Christians!” How do you know that there are? Did you ever know one? “Yes,” says somebody, “I remember one.” But, if you knew him, how could he be a *secret* Christian? I do not know whether there ever was a secret Christian! I will not say anything about that matter because I am out of the secret in such a case as that, but this I know, *nobody has a right to be a secret Christian*. Our Lord Jesus said, “Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.” “Lord,” says one, “I am Your disciple, but I am going to take it easy on the sofa.” “No,” says Christ, “that kind of life will not do for one of My disciples, for he that takes not his cross and follow after Me, is not worthy of Me.” You who were in darkness, if Christ has brought you into light, show yourselves! Stand forward and say, “Here is a proof of what the Grace of God has done—

***‘I am the chief of sinners,
Yet Jesus died for me’***

and I desire to come out boldly and publicly to acknowledge what He has done for me! It is the very least that I can do to show my gratitude to Him.”

I have sometimes called some of you, who say you love Christ, but do not confess Him before men, “rats behind the wainscot.” You just come out, as it were, to nibble a bit of cheese, and then go back, again, into the darkness. But is that the way that a Christian man or woman ought to act?—

***“Jesus! And shall it always be?
A mortal man ashamed of Thee!”***

No! Let it not be so! You who have been brought out of the darkness, show yourselves and confess your Savior and your Lord!

But I am going to carry the text a little farther. There are some young men here, perhaps some young women, also, who have been saved. They are no longer in the dark and God has given them Grace and talents—yet still they are hiding themselves away! They are *chosen ones loath to take their place of service*. Remember when Saul was elected king, the people could not find him. He was a fine tall fellow, who stood head and shoulders above the rest of his countrymen, and though they ought to have spied him out even if he had been sitting down, they could not find him. Where was he? Hidden away among the stuff. He did not appear to like that idea of being king, so he hid himself away, and the people cried, “Come out, Saul! Come out!” And they brought him forth and proclaimed him king.

There are certain Brothers and Sisters whom God means to place where they do not want to be placed. There is one who ought to be a Sunday school teacher, but he is not willing. Where is he? Come out, Sir, come out! I must fetch you out from among the stuff. “Say to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves.” There is a young fellow who ought to be preaching the Gospel—he made a very pretty speech, the other night, at the Mutual Improvement Society. He can speak well enough as a politician and if there were an election, we would find him talking fast

enough. But he is dumb so far as the Church of Christ is concerned! Come out, Brother! If the Lord has saved you and if He is pleading for you in Heaven, it is time you began to plead for Him on earth! Perhaps it is for the mission-field that the Master wants you and, my Brother, my Sister, if it is so, the message of the Lord comes to you tonight, “You that are in darkness, hiding yourselves away, Show yourselves.”

And, mark you, our text also applies to *persecuted ones who shall be acknowledged and honored of God*. There will come a day when God’s people, who have long been in the dark through persecution, slander and misrepresentation, shall hear the Lord speaking to them out of Heaven, and saying, “Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.” “Say to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves.” What a change will come for God’s poor despised people in that day! “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.” And, “They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever.” Oh, I know that they sneer at you and call you names—“a Methodist, a Presbyterian, a cant, a hypocrite.” Stand fast for Christ and the day will come when He shall say, “You that are in darkness, Show yourselves.”

Lastly, these words also relate to *dead ones called to resurrection*. It may be that most of us shall go down to the grave before Christ comes and we shall lie—

“In beds of dust and silent clay,”

and leave these poor bodies of ours in some cemetery or other. Perhaps in the depths of the sea, or far away in New Zealand, or in the United States or Canada, we shall leave our bones far from the spot where our fathers sleep. But there shall come a day when the silver trumpet of the Resurrection Morning shall sound and this shall be its note, “You that are in darkness, Show yourselves!” And out from the dark we shall come, the redeemed of the Lord, in Resurrection Glory! In the prospect of that day, I feel that I must show myself for my Lord *now*—I must come to the front and bear the brunt of the battle for the Truth of God! I must be bold for Christ, for He has brought me out of darkness into His marvelous Light and He deserves that I should not shrink away and hide myself!

He who has prepared a crown of life for every faithful one, expects that you and I will be faithful even unto death, in the hope of obtaining that crown of life which fades not! Up, up, you who are hiding yourselves! Come out of the bushes in which you are skulking away! If Jehovah is God, serve Him! If Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of God, acknowledge Him! If the Gospel is worth preaching, proclaim it with trumpet tongue! If the Church of God is for Him, be numbered with it and take your part in its service and in its suffering! God help you, and God bless you by this message which seems to me to come direct from Himself to you! You that are in sorrow, show yourselves! And all you that are cowardly, show yourselves! And God bless you, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 49:1-17.**

In this chapter, we have not merely Isaiah speaking concerning the Christ of God, but it is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who here speaks concerning Himself.

Verse 1. *Listen, O isles, unto Me; and hearken, you people from far.* It is very remarkable how constantly the isles are spoken of in this Book of Isaiah, as if it had been foreseen that, in these far-off islands of the sea, the name of Jesus would be greatly magnified. “Listen,” says the Messiah, “O isles, unto Me; and hearken, you people, from far.”

1. *The LORD has called Me from the womb; from the matrix of My mother has He made mention of My name.* Christ Jesus our Lord was spoken of by the Spirit of prophecy from His very birth—and long before it—and when He did come into the world, and was born of the Virgin Mary, the stars of Heaven spoke concerning Him and guided the wise men from the East to the place where the young Child lay.

2. *And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword.* There are no words anywhere so piercing as the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. When you are giving quotations from various authors, you need never write the name, “Jesus,” at the bottom of any of His words, for they proclaim their own origin. “Never man spoke like this Man.”

2. *In the shadow of His hand has He hid Me and made Me a polished shaft. In His quiver has He hid Me.* The great weapon of God against sin is His Son, Jesus Christ! God has no such means of smiting evil, or effecting His purposes of love as His own dear Son! This is the “polished shaft” which Jehovah delights to use.

3. *And said unto Me, You are My Servant.* Above all others, Christ is the Servant of God. He is a Son by nature, a Servant by His condescension, a Servant for our sakes.

3. *O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.* It is very wonderful that the Redeemer should here be called, “Israel.” It is not more wonderful, however, than that in another place His people should be called by His name! You remember those two passages in the prophecy of Jeremiah—“This is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” and, “This is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.” There, the people of God take their Lord’s name! And here, Christ takes the name of His people and He deigns to be called Israel. Nor is this an unsuitable name for Him, for it is He who wrestled on our behalf and prevailed, even as Israel did at Jabbok. Jesus is a greater Prince with God than Jacob ever was! Well, then, does Jehovah say to Him, “You are My Servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”

4. *Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent My strength for naught, and in vain: yet surely My judgment is with the LORD, and My work with My God.* The Messiah, prophetically looking forward, complained that, during His life on earth, He seemed to labor in vain. The nation was not saved—“He came unto His own and His own received Him not.” He wept over the guilty city of Jerusalem, but those tears did not put out the fires of vengeance! He entreated men to turn to God, but they did not and they would not repent. He seemed to labor in vain and spend His strength for nothing, and in vain.

5. *And now, says the LORD that formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, Though Israel is not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and My God shall be My strength.* Even though the Jewish nation was not yet gathered to Christ, His labor was not in vain. God will not suffer His Son to spend His strength for nothing!

6. *And He said, It is a light thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give You for a light to the Gentiles, that You may be My salvation unto the end of the earth.* What a blessed word of cheer this is for us poor Gentiles! The favored children of Israel thought us to be little better than dogs. But, behold, we have been lifted up into the children’s place! If Israel is not gathered, the Messiah has become a light to the Gentiles, and God’s salvation unto the ends of the earth! Yet we cannot help fervently praying, “Oh, that Israel might soon be gathered to Christ!” Her gathering in will be the time of the fullness of the Gentiles.

7. *Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One, to Him whom man despises, to Him whom the nation abhors.* Who is this but our Divine Lord, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God? These words are spoken of Him whom man despised, of Him who was despised and rejected of men, of Him whom the nation abhors, for that favored nation still, alas, abhors the name of Jesus of Nazareth and will not cherish towards the Christ anything but thoughts of contempt!

7. *To the Servant of rulers.* For, though He was the King of kings, and Lord of lords, He submitted to be a Servant to the kings of the earth and obeyed the rules of human governors. Yet—

7. *Kings shall see and arise, princes, also, shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and He shall choose You.* The day is coming when He that was spit upon shall be the admired of all mankind! No more the crown of thorns, but many diadems of Glory shall rest upon His blessed head! And *all men*, with loud acclaim, shall salute Him as King of kings and Lord of lords!

8. *Thus says the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard You, and in a day of salvation have I helped You; and I will preserve You, and give You for a Covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.* It is the Lord Jesus Christ who shall establish all that is good—and cast down everything that is evil. He shall staunch earth’s bleeding wounds and repair her wilderness wastes. Where He comes, flowers spring up all around His blessed feet!

9. *That You may say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.* When Christ leads His flock, wherever they go they shall feed. And even if He leads them to the very tops of the hills, He shall make the pastures grow there for them! There is never a place where Christ leads us but what it is safe for us to go there. The Shepherd’s feet make pasturage for the sheep that follow Him—therefore, be not afraid to go wherever He leads you, but rather rejoice that He puts

forth His own sheep and goes before them, for—“they shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.”

10, 11. *They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for He that has mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them. And I will make all My mountains a way.* Where, naturally, there could not be a way, on those pathless summits of the loftiest Alps, the Lord says, “I will make all My mountains a way”—

11. *And My highways shall be exalted.* “I will throw up causeways.” God will make a way for you to get at Him if you want to get at Him! If you are willing to make a way for God, He will make a way for you! The gulf shall be bridged, the mountain shall be leveled!

12. *Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.* “The land of Sinim” signifies China. Is it not strange that, in this Book, we should find mention of the land of Sinim, the country of China? God has a people there and they shall come to Him! I was delighted, last Tuesday, to meet with a Brother who had broken bread with us at the Lord’s Table—he was a poor Chinaman, so he had helped to fulfill this *prophecy*—“*These shall come from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.*”

13-15. *Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD has comforted His people, and will have mercy upon His afflicted. But Zion said, The LORD has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Will God ever forget His ancient people, the Jews? Never! They forget their God, but Jehovah never forgets His chosen people—“They may forget, yet will I not forget you.”*

16. *Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.* “I cannot work, I cannot even open the palm of My hands without seeing the names of my chosen people—I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.”

16, 17. *Your walls are continually before Me. Your children shall make haste; your destroyers and they that made you waste shall go away from you.* For God is full of kindness to His people, and cannot forget them. Oh, that they would never forget Him!

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

THE CHILD OF LIGHT WALKING IN DARKNESS NO. 1985

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 25, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Who among you fears the Lord? Who obeys the voice of His servant?
Who walks in darkness and has no Light?
Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and rely upon his God.”
Isaiah 50:10.*

SEE how the Lord inquires of His people? In every congregation He asks this question—“Who among you fears the Lord?” These are the wheat upon the threshing floor. As to the thoughtless, “What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord.” The Lord’s heart is towards the hearts that fear Him and He makes enquiry concerning them because He loves them, cares for them and helps them in their day of trouble.

Observe how clearly the Lord describes His own people. The description is brief, but remarkably full—“Who among you fears the Lord? Who obeys the voice of His servant?” Holy reverence within the heart and careful obedience manifested in the life—these are the two Infallible marks of the true man of God. He fears his God and, therefore, he obeys that heavenly messenger whom God has sent. No servant of God except One has such authority over us that we are bound to obey Him in all things—that *Servus servorum*, that Servant of servants—who was also *Rex regum*, the King of kings! It is the mark of the child of God that he has a holy awe of the Father and that he pays gracious obedience to the Son of God. The Lord knows them that are His and from that perfect knowledge He draws this short but sufficient outline of the character of His own. May holy fear and constant obedience be in us and abound!

Note that the Lord not only makes an enquiry of these people, but He takes note of their condition. He is not indifferent to their state. When they walk in darkness, He is with them. And when they have no light, He still beholds them. The Lord is very sensitive to the sorrows of His chosen and very quick to help them. When He finds them walking in darkness, He graciously counsels and advises them, so that He may most effectually help them. Thus says the gracious Lord to the benighted one—“Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and rely upon his God.” That same God who says of His vineyard, “I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment lest any hurt it. I will keep it night and day,” also spies out His children in the dark and, looking upon them with an eye of tender love, He di-

rects their course. This is the Word of Wisdom by which He directs each one of them through the darkness—"Let Him trust in the name of the Lord, and rely upon his God."

To come at once to the text without further preface, I shall notice, first, *what is this condition* in which some of God's people are found? They walk in darkness and have no light. Secondly, *what is there to trust to when a man is in such a condition?* All is dark and there is no light—and he is then bid to trust. What is there to trust to? Thirdly, *why should we thus trust?* What is the warrant for trusting at such a time? And fourthly, *what will come of such a trust?* If a man really exhibits confidence in God when he has no light, what will be the end of his confidence?

I. First, then, WHAT IS THIS CONDITION INTO WHICH A CHILD OF GOD MAY COME? The person described is one that fears the Lord and obeys the voice of His servant, yet "walks in darkness, and has no light."

To many who know nothing of Christian experience, *this condition might seem to be a surprising one.* Shall the child of light walk in darkness? The normal condition of a child of God is to walk in the light, as God is in the light, and to have fellowship with Him. How comes he, then, to have no light? He that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has passed from darkness to light and he shall never come into condemnation—how, then, does he come into darkness? In the darkness of *sin and ignorance* we no longer walk, but with the darkness of *trouble and perplexity* we are sometimes surrounded.

The Lord is our Light and our Salvation and, therefore, we do not walk in that darkness wherein the Prince of Darkness rules supreme. But yet, at times we are in the gloom of sadness and we see no light of consolation. It is not always so. Many Christian people go on year after year in uninterrupted sunshine—and I do not see why we should not all look upon continued joy in the Lord as possible to ourselves. Why should not our peace flow on like an ever-widening river? Those of you who are always bright, need not be afraid of your gladness. O Lord, we are now and then in the dark, but we do not wish others to be so! Spiritual darkness of any sort is to be avoided and not desired and yet, surprising as it may seem to be, it is a fact that some of the best of God's people frequently walk in darkness! Yes, some of them are wrapt in a sevenfold gloom at times and, to them, neither sun, nor moon, nor stars appear.

As the pastor of a large Church, I have to observe a great variety of experiences and I note that some whom I greatly love and esteem, who are, in my judgement, among the very choicest of God's people, nevertheless, travel most of the way to Heaven by night. They do not rejoice in the light of God's Countenance, though they trust in the shadow of His wings. They are on the way to eternal light and yet they walk in darkness! Heirs of a measureless estate of bliss, they are now without the small change and spending money of comfort which would make their present existence delightful. It is idle to attempt to judge a man's real character before God by his present state of feeling. You may be full of mirth and yet it may be the

crackling of thorns under a pot, which is noisy for the time, but is soon over.

On the other hand, you may be bowed down with sorrow, and yet it may only be that “light affliction which is but for a moment,” which works out, for you, “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” We should have thought, judging after the manner of men, that the good were always happy, as one of our children’s songs so positively declares. When first brought home to the great Father, we thought that henceforth it would be all music and dancing and fatted calf, world without end! But it is not so—we have heard the elder brother’s ungenerous voice since then—and we have found out many things which we wish we could forget. We dreamed that the year would be summer throughout all its months—the time of the singing of birds was come—and we reckoned that it was to continue through the year. Alas, the birds have ceased their songs and the swallows are pluming their wings to depart! And in a few days we shall be walking among the falling leaves and preparing our winter garments with which to meet the biting frosts. We have not found perfect bliss beneath the moon.

If, instead of judging by the sight of our eyes, we had turned to the records of the family of God, we would long ago have been made aware of our ideal Heaven below. It is written, “Whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” Between the head of the way and the Celestial City, the road is rough and the nights are long. They that go on pilgrimage tell us of the Delectable Mountains and they dilate upon the glittering hilltops of glory which they have seen from afar when gazing from Mount Clear—but they also warn us of the Hill Difficulty and especially of the Valley of the Shadow of Death—through which all those must force their way who are resolved to go on pilgrimage to the City of God. Be not, therefore, surprised as though some strange thing had happened to you, if you find yourself in darkness, for this text warns you of what you may expect. We may fear God and carefully obey His servant—and yet we may be out after dark and find the streets of daily life as foggy and obscure for us as for others!

This condition is a severe test of Grace. Now we shall see how far the man’s courage is of the right sort. Darkness is an evil that our soul does not love and, by it, all our faculties are tried. If you are in your own house in the dark, it does not matter, though children do not like to be put to bed in the dark even in their own little room. But if you are on a journey and you come to a wild moor, or a vast forest, or to terrible mountains, it appalls you to find that the sun is setting and that you will be abroad in the dark. Darkness has a terrible power of causing fear—its mystery is an influence creating dread. It is not what we see that we dread so much as that which we do *not* see and, therefore, exaggerate!

When darkness lowers down upon the Believer’s mind, it is a great trial to his heart. He cries, “Where am I? How did I come here? If I am a child of God, why am I thus? Did I really repent and obtain light so as to escape the darkness of sin? If so, why am I conscious of this thick gloom? Did I

really joy in Christ and think I had received the Atonement? Why, then, has the sun of my joy gone down so hopelessly? Where are, now, the loving kindnesses of the Lord?" The good man begins to question himself as to every point of his profession, for in the dark he cannot even judge himself. What is worse, he sometimes questions the Truth of God which he has received and doubts the very ground on which his feet are resting! Satan will come in with vile insinuations questioning everything, even as he questioned God's Word when he ruined our race in the Garden.

It is possible, at such times, even to question the existence of the God we love, though we still cling to Him with desperate resolve! We undergo a life and death struggle while we hold on to the Divine Truths. We are, at times, sorely put to it and scarcely know what to do. Like the mariners with whom Paul sailed, we cast four anchors out of the stern and look for the day. Oh, that we could be certain that we are the Lord's! Oh, that we could apprehend the sure promises of the Lord and our portion in them! For a while the darkness is all around us and we perceive no candle of the Lord, or spark of experimental light with which to break the gloom. This darkness is very trying to faith, trying to love, trying to hope, trying to patience, trying to every Grace of the spiritual man. Blessed is the man who can endure this test!

While it is thus trying, *it is also very sorrowful*. It is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun and a painful thing to be without it. We are in heaviness at such times. The darkness which is spoken of in the text includes Providential trial of many sorts. At the present moment, many of God's people are in the dark in reference to their temporal circumstances. Business used to prosper and things went well with them, but everything runs the other way at this season. They were not ambitious to accumulate great riches—they were perfectly satisfied if they had bread to eat and raiment to put on—but now even this seems to be denied them. They are out of work, or business is gradually dying out and their means of support will soon disappear. This is a new trial for those who have had abundance and, naturally, it makes them walk in darkness. Oh, you that have a superfluity of this world's goods, you little know the darkness which comes over the hearts of God's servants when they are not able to provide things honest in the sight of all men—and are afraid that the Lord's name will be evilly spoken of because they cannot meet their engagements! When parents look at their dear children and wonder where the next meal of bread will come from, times are dark, indeed! Still, mark you, this is not *the* darkness—the darkness which might be felt. Many of God's people, by reason of a strong faith, are happier in their adversity than they were in their prosperity. I have known them ride on the crest of the wave which threatened to wreck them. They have also rejoiced in tribulations, finding that in them the Lord blesses them with special favor.

The real darkness has come when our evidences of Grace are no longer visible and Conscience pronounces an adverse verdict. As the Psalmist says, "We see not our signs." The marks of Grace are hidden. Self-examination fails to reveal to the conscience the Infallible marks of the

Holy Spirit's work within the soul—and then the child of God feels that he is in an evil case. While I know I am the son of God, I am undismayed—but when my sonship is in doubt, I am distressed, indeed. If a clear sense of God's love is also withdrawn from the soul, darkness follows. He that used to rejoice in that love which passes knowledge now feels his heart to be as hard as a stone, without tender emotion and almost without living desire. To be dull and dead—stupid and unfeeling—is sad, indeed, to one who, before, could dance for joy.

To have the life and energy of Grace decline is a grievous matter—better to see the flock cut off from the fold than Grace from the heart! At such times the Holy Spirit seems to suspend His comforting and quickening operations—and in that case the outward means are of small avail. We read the Bible and we are not cheered by the promises. We attend public services and the silver bells of the sanctuary seem to have lost their music. The rain does not fill the pools and when the cisterns are empty, what is the good of them? The Holy Spirit is leaving us for a while that we may know what poor things we are apart from Him—and how useless are ordinances without His Divine Presence in them? At such times Satan is sure, coward as he is, to avail himself of his opportunity. When he finds us in the dark lane, he falls upon us like a cutthroat. When the Lord is manifestly with us, he sulks off, but when he sees that darkness is round about us, he seeks to drive us from our faith.

“This is your hour,” said Christ, “and the power of darkness”—and we have had to say the same. Satan makes earnest use of his hour and it is no fault of his that we do not die in the dark and utterly perish from the way. Let it be clearly known that some of us who can, this day, speak with fully assured confidence, have, in days gone by, been sorely shaken and have cried unto the Lord out of the low dungeon! Every particle of the faith which I have, this day, in the Lord, my God, has passed through fire and through water. This flaming torch of confidence which burns before you this day was lighted for me when I was in darkness! Though we joy before the Lord as with the joy of harvest, yet we look back upon the time when we went forth weeping, bearing precious seed! All are not equally made to sorrow, but many of us are familiar with the wine of astonishment. Surely, at some time or other, all the children of God walk in darkness!

Perhaps the worst feature of this darkness is that *it is so bewildering*. You have to walk and yet your way is hidden from your eyes. This is hard work. God will help His children, will He not? Yes, that He will, but we cannot see how! We look upward and see no twinkling star—downward—and do not even find a glowworm. Surely we shall see a candle in some window! But no, we are lost in a dark forest. Have we not, somewhere about us, a match that we can strike? We fumble for it. We find it—it is damp—we have no light! The question that now chills the heart is—How can God deliver me? We do not see how He can make a way of escape. What simpletons we are to fancy that if *we* do not see a way of deliverance God does not see one, either! If you have ever steamed up the Rhine, you

have looked before you and it has looked as if you could go no further—the river seemed to be a lake—great mountains and vast rocks blocked up all further advance. Suddenly there has been a turn in the stream and, at once a broad highway has been before you, inviting you to enter the heart of the country! Perhaps in Providence you are in one of those parts of the river of life where no progress appears possible. You are quite blocked up and this causes you darkness of mind. Cease from this unbelieving bewilderment! Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him—and He shall give you your heart's desire.

Worse, still, is that bewilderment which comes upon us in the darkness as to what we ourselves ought to do. Men of God know, as a broad principle, that they are to do right, but the question is, what is right? Which of many courses should I take? We beg the Lord to make our path straight, but we cannot discover the road. We look for a signpost which we had seen long ago, but it is gone! We hasten to a friend, but he is as much perplexed as we are. This suspense is the hardest part of the ordeal. Not to see our way—no, not to see a foothold for the *next step* is a specially trying position! If we knew what to do, or of what to prepare for, we would gird our loins for the occasion. But knowing nothing, we are shut up and cannot go forth.

Yet you notice in the text that *this does not absolve us from daily duty*. The text says, "Who *walks* in darkness and has no light." The walk has to be continued, though the light has departed! When it is quite dark, it is safe to sit down till the day dawns. If I cannot sleep, at any rate I can quietly rest till the sun is up. He that believes shall not make haste—and in the dark it is best to tarry till the day dawns and the shadows flee away. That was a grand word which the Lord gave to Moses, "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." But what if you cannot stand still? What if you may not remain where you are? Something has to be done—and done at once—and thus you are compelled to walk on, though you cannot see an inch before you. What but a Divine faith can do this? Here lies the stress of the difficulty—inaction might be simple, but activity in the *dark*—this must be the Lord's doing and we must cry to Him to work this work in us!

But enough of this. I have given you a picture which some of you will recognize as a portrait of yourselves. Personally I have often passed through this dark valley—there is a bog on the right hand and a deep gulf on the left—and all along the murky way, the howling of the dogs of Hell and the hissing of evil spirits are never out of one's ears! And, worst of all, the whispers of the fiend make you think his vile suggestions to be your own thoughts. The sword in the hand becomes useless, for in the dark you do not know where to strike. No weapon remains except that of All-Prayer. To walk on all through the night and not to see a step before you is anxious work—and yet thousands of God's pilgrims who are now yonder among the shining ones, praising and blessing His holy name—have traversed this dreadful road. Lord, help us when we, also, penetrate its blackness!

II. But now, secondly, I am going to turn to a practical part of this matter—WHAT IS THERE TO TRUST TO WHEN YOU ARE IN SUCH A CONDITION AS THAT? What is there to trust to? Well, says the text, “Let him trust in the name of the Lord,” or, as it should be read, “in the name of Jehovah.”

What is there to trust in *the name of Jehovah*? It is, “*I Am*,” and signifies His existence! This is a fine foundation for trust! Your friend is dead, but Jehovah is still living as the “*I AM*.” Those who could have succored you have forsaken you, but He says, “I am with you.” Trust in Him, for He is and always will be. He says to you, “Be still and know that I am God.”

The name of the Lord contains within it, Immutability. The Lord calls Himself, “I am that I am”—the unchanging God! Remember how He said, “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed”? When you cannot see an inch before you, trust in Him that is, that was and is to come. He is our dwelling place in all generations. He is the “same yesterday, today and forever” and, therefore, our confidence in Him should not abate. Here is a Rock under your feet. If you trust in an unchanging God, whose love, faithfulness and power cannot be diminished, however dark your way may be, then you have a glorious object for your faith to rest upon!

But we understand by the name, *the revealed Character of God*. When you cannot see your way, then open this Book and try to find out what sort of God it is in whom you trust. See what He did in the ages past. See what He has promised to do in all time present. Behold His infinite love in the gift of His dear Son. Think of all the immeasurable blessings which He has prepared for them that love Him, which He has laid up for the golden age. As you remember what the Lord is and how He deals with His people, you will find light springing up in the midst of the thick darkness! What a joy it must have been to Moses when God proclaimed before him the name of the Lord! Moses had asked to see God’s Glory and we read, “The Lord passed by before him: and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.” As you study the glorious Character of the Lord God, whose mercy endures forever, I think you will find your spirit rising above the floods of your trouble and floating joyously upon the waters, even as the ark of Noah, in the day of the deluge! The name of the Lord is a strong tower. “They that know Your name will put their trust in You.”

By “the name of the Lord” is also meant *His dear Son*, for it is in Jesus Christ that Jehovah has proclaimed His name. Jesus says, “He that has seen Me has seen the Father.” When it is dark around you and within you, then get to your Savior and think of Him—and all His sorrow and His victory. Picture Him before your eyes bleeding His life away upon the Cross for you, offering Himself up a glorious Sacrifice to put away your sin. And as you hear His cries and perceive the flowing of His blood, you will gain comfort and joy such as will turn your darkness into day!

It is also good, dear Friends, when you are thinking of the name of the Lord, to remember that to you it signifies *what you have seen of God in your own experience*. This is His memorial or name to you. A grand thing it is, when at present you have no consolation, to recollect the consolation you enjoyed in years gone by. Oh, the days when He did help us, when His arm was made bare on our behalf! I remember that morning—you remember it, too—when the Lord brought you up out of the horrible pit. You said, “Blessed be His glorious name! What a deliverance I have had! I shall never doubt Him again!” O poor stupid, you are now doubting Him! But why? Do you not think that if you would revive those songs of the Red Sea, when you sang, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously,” you would, today, be ashamed to doubt the Lord? Did not Israel pass through the sea on foot, even in the darkness of the night, when Pharaoh could not see his way? The Lord God, Himself, in the pillar of fire was the light of His people! But apart from that, they had no other light. And it is so with you—all other light is gone, but Jehovah is with you, therefore be not afraid—

***“His love in time past forbids us to think
He’ll leave us at last in trouble to sink.
Each sweet Ebenezer we have in review
Confirms His good pleasure to help us quite through.”***

“Let him trust in the name of the Lord.”

But, furthermore, the text says, “Let him rely upon his God.” Let him lean upon his God; make God his stay, his prop, his rest. This is a variation from the former sentence. He was to trust in the name of Jehovah, but now he is to *rely* upon “*his God*.” You have taken God to be your God, have you not? If so, He has also taken you to be His own. There is a covenant between you—rely on that covenant. Treat it as a valid covenant in full force. Surely you are not dealing with a liar! That Covenant of the Lord which was sealed and ratified by an oath—surely you do not think little of it? Well, now, lean wholly and fully upon Him who is your Covenant God.

Brothers and Sisters, I am often brought to this pass, that I say to myself—“Lord, if these Scriptures are not, indeed, a Revelation of God and Inspired, then it is all over with me, for I have no other hope.” But if this Book is a faithful record of what God has said to me—and I am sure it is—then I cannot too confidently rest in what He has here recorded! I will prove the truth of His Gospel. I will rely upon His promise with all my might. I have never yet hung a weight upon God’s promise too heavy for it to bear! I have never trusted God in prayer with a confidence beyond what I have known Him to justify. Up to now we have used innumerable tests and superabundant proofs—and we find the old Book to be true! As silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times, so have we found the promises and the Covenant of God! Therefore I say to you, in the language of the text, if you walk in darkness and have no light, trust in the name of the Lord and rely upon your God.

III. Thirdly and with great brevity, WHY SHOULD WE TRUST GOD AT SUCH TIMES? If the Lord has taken away the light and is trying us so se-

verely, why should we trust Him now? I answer, *if you do not trust Him now, you will have cause to suspect whether you ever trusted Him at all.* When your children were about you and you were healthy, honored and prospering, you said, "I have faith in God." Was it faith if it departs from you, now that your children are buried, your home is desolate—and you are sick, old and poor? Was it faith in God at all? Was it not a cheerfulness which arose out of your surroundings? If you cannot bear to be stripped as Job was, have you the same precious faith as that man of God? Fair weather faith is a poor imitation of the real Grace! I entreat you to play the man and say, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him," for if you cannot do so, your strength is small and your faith is questionable.

You are now bound to trust in the Lord in the time of darkness because *His promises were made for dark times.* When a shipwright builds a vessel, does he build it to keep it upon the stocks? No, he builds it for the sea and the storm. When he was making it, he thought of tempests and hurricanes—if he did not, he was a poor ship builder. When God made you a Believer, He meant to try you—and when He gave you the promises and bade you trust them—He gave such promises as are suitable for times of tempest and tossing. Do you think God makes shams like some that have made belts for swimming which were good to exhibit in a shop, but of no use in the sea? We have all heard of swords which were useless in war and even of shoes which were made to sell, but were never meant to walk in! God's shoes are of iron and brass—and you can walk to Heaven in them without their ever wearing out! And His lifebelts, you may swim a thousand Atlantics in them and there will be no fear of your sinking! His Word of promise is meant to be tried and proved. O man, I beseech you, do not treat God's promises as if they were curiosities for a museum, but use them as everyday sources of comfort! Trust the Lord whenever your time of need comes.

Besides, notice that *here a permit is especially issued for you to allow you to trust in God in darkness.* Thus says the Lord, "Let him trust." Satan says he shall not trust, but the Lord says, "Let him trust," and if the Lord gives us permission to trust, we will not suffer the world, the flesh, or the devil to keep us back from our privilege! "Let him trust" is our Divine warrant for reposing on the Lord—and we mean to use it! This is the password which lets us through the gates of the promise into the royal chamber of rest!

More than this, I understand this verse to be a *command* to trust in the name of the Lord. It is an *order* to trust in our God up to the hilt, for it bids us *rely* ourselves upon our God. We are not fitfully to trust and then to fear—but to come to a reliance upon God, even as ships enter a haven, cast their anchors and then stay there till the tempest is past. Let us say, "This is my last dependence. This is my reliance and here I will remain forever." O Brothers and Sisters, we often act very foolishly, for we try to get a reliance upon ourselves! Did you ever hear of a captain of a vessel driven about by rough winds who needed anchorage and tried to find it on board his vessel? He desires to place his anchor somewhere on board the

ship where it will prove a holdfast—he hangs it at the prow, but still the ship drives! He exhibits the anchor upon deck, but that does not hold the vessel! At last he puts it down into the hold, but with no better success.

Why, man alive, anchors do not hold as long as they are on board a ship! They must be thrown into the deep and then they will get a grip of the bottom of the sea—and hold the vessel against wind and tide. As long as ever you have confidence in yourselves, you are like a man who keeps his anchor on board his boat—and you will never come to a resting place. Over with your faith into the great deeps of eternal love and power—and trust in the infinitely Faithful One! Then shall you be glad because your heart is quiet. Rely upon your God because He *commands* you to do so. Do not dare to hesitate!

Look, Sirs, if you do not rely upon God in the dark, *it would seem as if, after all, you did not trust God, but were trusting to the light*, or were relying on your own eyesight! Too often we think we believe, but all the while we are miles off from believing. Unless we trust only in God, and in God wholly, we do not trust Him at all! Faith is the opposite of sight. When a man sees, he has no need of faith. Blessed is he to whom God, Himself, is all the Light he needs.

Remember one thing more, that you and I, in times of darkness, may well trust in God that He will not fail us, for *our blessed Lord and Master was not spared the blackest midnight that ever fell on human mind*. He, too, cried out, “What shall I say?” Distraction seized upon His mind, also, and He was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. Do you expect that you shall be treated better than the Head of the house, the “first-born among many brethren”? If He trusted in God and was delivered, do the same and you shall follow in His footsteps into the brightness of the light, even as you have followed those footsteps into the blackness and the darkness!

IV. So I finish with this last point—WHAT WILL COME OF IT IF WE TRUST IN GOD IN THE DARK? Now, whether you are saint or sinner, I want you to lend me your ears for a minute or two while I try to show what will come of trusting in God when you have nothing else to trust.

In the first place, *such a faith will glorify God*. It does not glorify God to trust Him when you have a thousand other props and assistances. No, we glorify Him when we trust His bare arm. It honors God when, in darkness, despondency and despair we can bravely say, “Still I believe Him. I take hold upon His strength in the midst of my feebleness. If I perish, I perish. But I know He will not let me perish trusting in Him.” The cherubim and seraphim glorify God with their endless songs, but not more than a poor downcast soul can do when, in its distress, it casts itself only on God. See what you can do! Will not this argument move you to trust, to trust even now, when all things seem to go awry? Some of you can sincerely say, “We would gladly do or suffer anything to glorify God.” Well, do this—believe in the Lord and in Jesus Christ, whom He has sent!

In the next place, it is true that very likely through this darkness of yours, *you will be humbled*. Walking in darkness and seeing no light, you

will form a very low idea of yourself and this will be a choice blessing. We undervalue humility, but it is one of the most golden of the Graces. Perhaps some of us need humbling more than any other operation of the Holy Spirit. I believe that those who despond and despair are all the happier when humility has had her perfect work upon them. We are so great! So big! That letter, "I"—there seems to be a kind of sarcasm in the form of it—it is such a straight, unbending letter, it never bows its knee or its back! Perhaps our darkness is sent to us to make our pride stoop towards the ground while it gropes its way. Deliverance from pride will be a lasting gain to us! O my Friend, you are getting good by the painful process which reveals to you your littleness! Do not fret because you now see your folly, your helplessness, your emptiness—all this will be a mine of wealth to you.

Next to that, if you can trust God in your trial, *you will prove and enjoy the power of prayer*. The man that has never needed to pray cannot tell whether there is anything in prayer or not. You that have always had your bread every morning scarcely know the value of that request, "Give us this day our daily bread." But there are poor people here at this hour to whom that petition is peculiarly sweet. He that has prayed for his breakfast values the Providence which sent it. If you were never in your life in any sort of trial, what do you know you about prayer? Why, then, do you speak lightly of that which you understand not? He that has carried his need to the Lord—a great and urgent need which could not have been supplied by all the world besides—he, I say, who has gone with that need to his heavenly Father and pleaded the promise and obtained a heavenly reply, he is the man who can witness that, verily, there is a God that hears prayer!

Those philosophers that sneer at prayer, what do they know about it? They are strangers to prayer and, therefore, unable to judge its power. Suppose a dozen of them should swear that they have prayed and that God has not heard their prayers? We would believe it and we would also come to the conclusion that prayers from men of their order ought *not* to be heard! Surely, he that comes to God must believe that He is! And these gentlemen will not even accept that point as certain. But when we pray and the Lord hears us, can any form of argument disprove a *fact*? A fact will stand against all reasoning—it is an unyielding rock against which the waves of skepticism hurl themselves in vain! Brothers and Sisters, it is the prayer *in the dark* which brings us most light when we perceive that it is surely heard! How could you pray, O man, if you had all your desires fulfilled without making request unto God? If you had nothing to pray for, how could you prove the efficacy of prayer? If you are so wise, good and great that you can do without God, go and do without Him if you dare! But the poor and needy will still be glad to cry unto Him. May God empty you and drive you in agony to your knees—then shall you be able to test whether He is a God that hears prayer or not!

If in your darkness you will go to God and trust Him, *you will become an established Christian*. Yours will not be that timid bulrush faith which bows before every wind—you will be rooted and grounded in assurance of

faith. These trials of yours will help to root you fast in the good soil of confidence in God. In days to come you will bless God for the clouds and the darkness, since through *them* your tried faith grew into strong faith—and your strong faith ripened into full assurance! Doubtless faith will make our nights the fruitful mothers of brighter days.

And let me close by saying, that by-and-by—and perhaps much sooner than we think—*we shall come out into greater light than we have as yet hoped for*. Perhaps half-a-mile ahead you will find light springing up, even light which has long ago been sown for the righteous. Your weeping is nearly over—joy comes in the morning. You shall sit down and say, “I did not think the day would break so soon, but now the sun is up I perceive that even in the night I have been preserved from a thousand dangers—and I have passed safely where none but the Lord, Himself, could have held me up.”

Brothers and Sisters, let us even now sing unto the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things! He has led the blind by a way that they knew not. He has given us treasures of darkness. He has turned our mourning into dancing. He has made us glad in His name! Praise to Him forever, yes, praise forevermore!

How loudly some of us will sing when once we get to Heaven! When we leap ashore upon the golden strand, how we will magnify that Omnipotent Love which kept us from 10,000 devouring waves! Surely in the heavenly choirs certain voices reach to higher notes than all others, for they have known the heights and depths of Divine Love. There will be a fullness, roundness and sweetness of tone about certain voices which shall make them notable among the celestials, even as Heman and Asaph, and Ethan were notable among the sweet singers of Israel in the Temple below. Who are these and from where did they come? Surely the one answer will be, “These are they that came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

Therefore be of good cheer, O you people of God who walk in darkness, for you will have a full reward!

And you poor troubled ones who have, as yet, no hope—and are afraid that God has cast you away forever—come and rest in Jesus Christ this morning! Trust in Jesus and defy the darkness and the devil who rules over it. As soon as you dare to trust in Christ Jesus our Lord, your salvation is secured! Do but trust—and your Savior is bound to answer to your trust—and make it good by saving you! The Lord bless you for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 50.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—181, 689, 691.**

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OUR LEADER THROUGH THE DARKNESS

NO. 3370

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1913.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MILD MAY PARK CONFERENCE, 1890.**

***“Who among you fears the Lord? Who obeys the voice of His Servant?
Who walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the
name of the Lord and rely upon his God.”
Isaiah 50:10.***

***“Behold I have given him for...a leader.”
Isaiah 55:4.***

I DESIRE to speak to you, dear Friends, not only of Jesus as our Leader, but of following Him *in the dark*. Can you see Jesus in the dark? Yes. We sometimes see Him better in the dark than in the light. If you will go outside in the daytime and look up, you will not be able to see a single star. But if you will get into the bucket of a well and go down into the darkness, very soon you will behold the stars. To descend may sometimes be the shortest way to ascend. Certainly, to suffer is the road to the land where there is no suffering—and to be in present darkness may be the nearest way to eternal light. All light, but that which comes through Christ, Himself, hinders rather than helps our sight of Him. He is best seen by His own light. Begone, sun! Begone, moon! Begone, you candles! He is the Sun of Righteousness and where He is, there is light enough! All earth-born light hinders the vision of His face. I fear that many, trusting in the greatness of their mental light, have become blind to the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Blessed is he who sees Christ by Christ—the Crucified in the light of His five wounds—the Risen One by the brilliance of His own life!

Darkness—can it fall upon a child of God? He is a child of light—shall he walk in darkness? Not in darkness in the sense of ignorance, sin and death, but in the sense of gloom and sorrow! Saints may have much of it. The heir of Heaven sometimes knows a midnight. But if he is with Jesus, following Him as his Leader (and that is my topic), then he is in a safe condition. The words of one of our songs are ringing in my ears—

***“Anywhere with Jesus!
Anywhere with Jesus!”***

Better in the dark with Jesus than in the light, yes, than in Heaven, itself, without Him—

***“Not all the harps above
Can make a heavenly place,
If Christ His residence removes,
Or but conceals His face.”***

Give us Christ and we will make no hard terms about darkness, or light! Only let us be with Him and it is enough. “Forever with the Lord” is only another word for glory everlasting!

Adam, I suppose, was created in the daylight and he wandered about in the Garden enjoying his God and the fair works which surrounded him. When night came on, darkness was a new phenomenon to him. He must have wondered at it, but since he had no sin, his childlike trust in God would not permit him to be afraid. He laid himself down to rest without a fear. It was a memorable night for him. In the dark he lost something, but the loss was a great gain. In the morning, when he woke up, he found someone there—the very one he needed. She was there, whom the Lord had made for him, since, “it was not good that man should be alone.” So have you and I found the darkness coming on and we have been distressed for a moment—but when we have thought of God we have found rest. Then we may have lost a good deal in the darkness, as we thought, for we were conscious of an inward pain taking away what we thought to be a vital part of ourselves—but when we came out of the gloom into the morning light, a joy was ours which we had not known before—a joy that has been our companion and our comfort to this very day! Brothers and Sisters, I have lost nothing by the darkness. I say, “I,” for everyone must bear witness for himself. I believe every child of God can say the same. Do not the dews fall at eventide? Could we bear the perpetual shining of the burning sun? Is not the morning freshness so great a joy that it compensates us for the night by which we reach it?

As I thought over my theme, “Jesus, our Leader in the Dark,” I began to fall in love with the dark. There are two parts to my subject—if one seems gloomy, the other is bright enough! Following Christ is a lightsome theme! The darkness may be very dark, but I say I have almost fallen in love with it when Jesus comes to me therein and makes it His pavilion! Rutherford declared that the cross which he carried for his Lord at last came to be so dear to him that he was half jealous of it, lest he should begin to love the cross with a love rivaling his love to his Lord! Darkness of soul in itself is horrible, but the rich fruit it has brought to us has made us cease to dread it. We now can thank God that the evening and the morning make up the day—and the evening is as much a part of the day as the morning. The nights of our lives are as rich as the days. The agony is as useful as the rapture. The depression as instructive as the exaltation. Let us think, then, of—

I. THE DARKNESS THAT CHRISTIANS MAY KNOW.

Well, surely we may say, first, that in some respects we are always in the dark while here below. We must wait with patience “until the day breaks and the shadows flee away.” Our Lord here on earth may be said to have been always in the dark in comparison with the Glories which He left, in contrast with the bliss that He has reassumed. To be here at all, was to Him to be in the dark. The ever-blessed Son of the Father was away from the home country and its splendor—he was among sinners and His heart was pained with human sin, His ears were vexed with ungodly speeches, His eyes were filled with tears because of obstinate rebellions! He was all tenderness and yet His soul was among lions. It must have been a constant trial to His holy, sensitive spirit to have dwelt in the midst of sinners. So in a certain sense we, also, are always in the shade compared with what is coming. “It does not yet appear what we shall be.” He is coming! He is coming! The axles of His chariot are hot with speed. He cries, “Behold, I come quickly.” When He comes, the Glory of His Presence will make the greatest joys that we have ever known to seem but twilight, as compared with the full day of His appearing! If His life was so truly in darkness, we must not wonder if our lives are the same.

We are not, however, dependent upon natural light any more than He was. If a Christian can only be happy when his feelings are right, I should be afraid that he is trusting in his feelings! If you are only confident when your frames are delightful, I should be afraid that you are resting in your frames and feelings! Faith is a principle which has its root, deeper feelings. We believe whether we see or not. We believe whether we feel or not. We believe in Christ upon the testimony of the Father concerning Him—that testimony is enough for us even if there are no attendant signs. Our happy experience of salvation is a pleasant confirmation of the Word of the Lord! And when it seems to fail us, we still believe. God is not changed because we tremble! Christ is not altered because we are in fear! The ground on which we stand for salvation is not our attainments, nor our experiences, nor our communions. We stand upon the finished work of Christ in which we believe, whether it is dark, or whether it is light. The young Christian will say, “I believe that I am saved because I am so happy.” He is no more correct than the old Christian would be if he should say, “I believe that I am saved because I am unhappy.” Let me explain myself. The value of feeling depends upon its *cause*. All happiness in the young man is not a proof of piety. He might be happy if he had received a large legacy, or had been invited to a party of pleasure. All unhappiness in the old Christian is not good evidence of Grace—by no means would such an assertion stand! And yet, if we sigh and cry because of the abominations of the city, we have therein a strong evidence of our being on the side of Christ and righteousness. If we mourn our imperfections and lack of spotless holiness, our very sighing

and crying are proofs of heavenly life and salvation! The heart is clean, and the course of the soul is heavenward when the heart can never be satisfied with anything short of perfect holiness.

Had we not been quickened, and quickened to a high degree, too, we would have been content with dim signs of holiness. But now nothing but perfection will content us—we are unhappy when even the least mist comes between us and God—and these feelings prove how much we love Him and how our very element is to dwell in unbroken communion with Him. We are not dependent, therefore, upon happiness or unhappiness as the ground of our confidence. Christ loved me and gave Himself for me—this is the Rock upon which I stand! He died effectually for every soul that trusts Him. I trust Him and this is the token that He has redeemed me from my sins. I am His. Here is my rock of refuge! I stand on Christ's righteousness, be it dark or light. The ground of a Christian's faith is not moved in the least degree by the time of his spiritual day, or the state of wealth in his experience. Could we sit forever on the top of Tabor, we would be no safer than if we were made to dwell always in the Valley of Humiliation, longing for brighter days. Christ! Christ! Christ! In Him we are safe!

Yet, dear Friends, there are glooms which fall to the lot of some of God's best people. I would have you beware, my Brothers and Sisters who have made a great advance in Grace, and are very joyful in the Lord, of judging your fellow Christians. I have noticed with sorrow on the part of some, whose shoelaces I am not worthy to unloose, that, nevertheless, they are hard towards the lambs and the lame of the flock. Because they have not reached your own high attainments, do not condemn them! If you have strong faith, you may condemn unbelief, but do not condemn weak Believers, who may have beautiful points of character, although they are as yet mere babes in Grace! Have you never heard of the strong cattle, of whom the Lord said, "Because you have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns till you have scattered them abroad; therefore will I save My flock and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle." Beware lest you become proud of your attainments and unkind to those beneath your level! I believe that there is such a thing as being so long in the light that you do not believe that others are in the dark. Or, if they are, you judge them to be weak and foolish and you are apt to scold them. Brother, you cannot scold the darkness into light! A little sympathy will do far more than what you are pleased to call *faithful* upbraiding. That word, "faithful," sometimes means, "cruel."

None can doubt that some excellent children of God are often in gloom through *bodily sickness and weakness*. There are forms of sickness which bring no depression with them. You might suffer from them through life and never be saddened. But there are certain forms of dis-

ease which touch not only the bone and the flesh, but also the mind. The pain of the mind encroaches upon the spirit and the spirit is darkened with trouble. "Oh, but they ought not to be troubled." Granted, but they *are* troubled, and I have noticed this—that your very strong men, yes, and your very strong ministers, too, who can say rather sharp things about the weak—and may be justified in saying them, yet, nevertheless, are not themselves beyond incurring the same rebukes! Great teachers may not make good sufferers. When the hot iron touches them, it is another thing from what it seemed to be. It sounds fine for them to say that we ought not to be cast down, but ask their wives what these strong men are like when their head aches, or their heart is out of order! When nights grow long and weary with sleeplessness, do they show all the faith of which they now speak? Ah, Brothers, the flesh is weak!

But our Lord knows all about sickness—"He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses." No form of sickness is beyond the sympathy of Jesus. Nothing is sweeter or more reviving than His fellow feeling. One does not know how sympathy works so effectively, but it does operate marvelously. A little girl said to her mother, "Mother, poor Widow Brown has asked me to come in every day and see her. She says that I comfort her so! Mother, I don't know anything that I do to comfort her. I would wipe all her tears away if I could, but when she sits and cries, I go and put my cheek against hers and I cry, too. And she kisses me and says that I comfort her." Just so. One poor human being can cheer another by fellow feeling, but how much more can Jesus do it! Oh, to feel your Master's tears drop on your cheek! When you are weeping, then you read that "Jesus wept."—

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

Another cause of great gloom is frequent with us—it is *bereavement*. I will not say much about it, lest I needlessly draw up the sluices for many a widow, or wifeless husband, or fatherless child. How often does the mourner judge that he has laid the best part of himself in the grave! However dear they were, they could not stay with us—perhaps, because they were so good that it was necessary that Christ should have them away from earth. He prayed for them, "Father, I will that they be with Me where I am"—but we kept on praying the other way—"Father, we will that they be with *us* where we are." Our Lord's prayer conquered ours! It should do so, for they were more His than ours since He had bought them with His blood. We should never pray against our Lord, but when we do, may His prayer always have the preference, as it will. Yet bereavement has brought many a Mary and Martha very low.

"Jesus wept" at the grave of Lazarus. Here, too, we see that the Master is near akin unto us. I believe that if we want to know the weeping Sa-

avior, we must weep. We always see our Lord, to a great extent, like ourselves. If we are pilgrims, He comes to us as a wayfarer, as He did to Abraham. If we are in conflict, like Jacob, He comes to wrestle with us. If we are in trouble, He meets us, like Moses, at the burning bush. If we are soldiers, like Joshua, He meets us as Captain of the Lord's host. If Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are in the furnace, the Son of God makes the fourth in the fire! As we are, so does He become, that as He is, so may we become! Our bereavements are a part of the way in which we see and follow our Lord.

And *poverty*, too. Many of you have never known poverty. I do not wish that you should, for poverty is a very heavy cross to many of the children of God. It hinders them when they would give to the Lord's cause and hampers them in their work for Him. This, perhaps, is not so lamentably true as they think. When poverty involves crushing toil, long hours of labor and scarcely enough bread to keep body and soul together, then it is, indeed, a burden. Dire poverty has hung like a cloud over many a child of God. There is a poverty which the poets love—it dwells in a thatched cottage whose porch is overgrown with woodbine. Perhaps if the poets had rheumatism through the wind blowing through the decaying walls, they might not sing of it quite so sweetly. But in London we have a poverty that has neither porch nor woodbine—poverty that has no cottage, but a single room where scarcely the decencies of life can be preserved. Beloved, if you have to suffer from this gloom, remember that the Son of Man had not where to lay His head.

Another gloom has shadowed many here present in their measure and upon some, in special, it has loomed tempestuously. It is the cloud of *slander and reproach*. If you have preserved your garments unspotted. If you have sought nothing but the Glory of God and yet you find everything that you do misrepresented, your words misconstrued and yourself abused—this is truly a trial. Slander is no bed of roses, nor a test to be desired but, oh, how easy is it then to see Jesus and how sweet it is to follow Him! “He was despised and rejected of men.” If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, they have not left another name that is bad enough for us! We might in very modesty wish to have a name a little lower than our Lord's, guided by the same motive which made a great saint consider ordinary crucifixion too great an honor and, therefore, entreated to be nailed to the cross with his head downwards! Would you not be content to be called something worse than Beelzebub? Might you not gladly accept such a name as winebibber and madman, that you might come in behind your Leader? “Consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself,” and then sing—

***“If on my face, for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach may be,
I'll hail reproach, and welcome shame,***

For You'll remember me!"

Gloom also falls upon the Christian in *time of desertion*. I do not know whether Judas had sons and daughters, but I have seen several persons who bear a family likeness to that son of perdition. "He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me," is a sentence often repeated. "It was not an enemy that reproached me—then I could have borne it—but it was you, a man my equal, my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together and walked unto the house of God in company." This, also, is an oft-told tale. Yet fret not too much because of ingratitude, fickleness and treachery. Is it not written, "Cursed is he that trusts in man"? All men are liars! Can you not be content to take the inevitable? Your Master had His Judas. Shall not you have yours? "Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled." It may be so with you all the more because you desire to be faithful to your Lord.

The worst cloud of all, I think, is *deep depression of spirit* accompanied with the loss of the Light of God's Countenance. Sickness, poverty, slander—none of these things are comparable to depression! "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Do you know what exceeding heaviness means? I pray that you may have but very little of it, but if you do have it, remember Him who said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Those words were once a great comfort to a child of God dying in despair. Though an eminently gracious man, he was in the dark. He could not find his God and he knew that he was soon to pass into eternity. I do not think our heavenly Father often puts His children to bed in the dark, but if He does, they will wake up in the Light of God in the morning! This man of God said to the minister who visited him, "O Sir, although I have trusted Christ for years and have served His cause, I have lost Him. What will become of a man who dies feeling that God has deserted him?" The wise pastor answered him, "What became of the Man who, just before His death, cried, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' Is He not on the highest Throne of Glory even now?" The sick man's mind was lightened in a moment! He began to say, as the Lord Jesus did after the dark sentence, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit," and he died in peace. Yes, God loves His people quite as much when He leaves them in the dark, as when He sets them at His right hand in the Light! Measure not God's love by His Providences, nor even by His manifestations of them. Measure it by the gift of the Only-Begotten, for Jesus is the only measure of the immeasurable love of God our Father! Yes, a child of God may be in depression for many a year. Timothy Rogers was the victim of despondency for many years and yet he came out into the Light and then wrote his experience in his memorable book, *Trouble of Mind*, which has been of great service to others in like condition. I hope that none of you will wish to be

in soul darkness. Some trembling people acquire a sort of perpetual palsy of fear. They have become so shut up in doubt that they are afraid to come out of it into the light of faith. Come out of your hiding places, you troubled ones! Do not make yourselves one line lower in spirits than you can help! But if you should be long in depression and that depression should turn to despondency, and that despondency should curdle into despair, believe in God! Say with Job, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him." If I cannot see His face with delight, yet in the shadow of His wings will I rejoice!

I come now to the more specially practical part of my sermon.

II. THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH THIS DARKNESS IS PERMITTED.

There were three aspects of the darkness which our Lord endured in which we should resemble Him. First, He was in darkness *for education*. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." Our Mediator went to school and His schoolbooks were "the things that He suffered." Do we learn much out of any other books? Is not our best schoolmaster the one named Adversity? Are not our best schoolbooks printed in the old black letter? We make but small account of any other. Our Lord Jesus learned obedience. Some people, when they get into the dark, think that they can make no progress, but must lie still. Say not so! Our greatest progress should be made in the dark. We should grind most when the wind blows hardest. A friend of mine went to Australia and on board of his ship there were a number of gentlemen of different degrees of ignorance, one of whom was a complete greenhorn. He had never been to sea before. I do not think he had been anywhere else. When it came to be night, he said, "Where do they put up tonight?" My friend said, "What do you mean?" He replied, "You do not mean to say that they will go on sailing in the dark?" "Certainly," replied my friend. But the other said, "Why, they may run into something, for they cannot see their way." "No," my friend answered, "and they will not see their way till we get to our destination, unless they touch at the Cape! And they will travel as fast in the night as in the day." So they did. Who but a fool would have thought otherwise?

Growth in Divine Grace must go on in the dark, as well as in the light. I have been told that plants do most of their growing at night. Surely, Christ's plants grow very fast after a period of darkness which has been sanctified to them. I half wish for some friends that I know that they might have just a day or two of darkness. I hope I am not unkind. I know one who would wish to sympathize if he could, but he has never had an illness. And when he does sympathize, it is a remarkable thing that he should be able to do it. You think of him with wonder, as you would think of an elephant picking up a pin! He does it, but it seems out of his line—it does not come to him naturally. Our Lord learned *obedience towards God* through His sufferings. If you think of it deeply, it was a very

great lesson for Him to learn. The Ruler of Heaven and earth, whose will was Law, had to learn obedience! He speaks, and legions of angels fly at His commands—and yet He has to learn to obey! Now that He is here on earth, in the fashion of a man, He becomes an obedient Servant. Have you and I ever learned that lesson? It is not every Christian that has learned obedience of the commonest sort. I know some Christians who would think it dreadful to obey ecclesiastically. “Obey them that have the rule over you,” is not a pleasant Scripture to them. They will have no pastor. Nobody ever was set over them. I am sure I am devoutly grateful that I was not, for it would be a very uncomfortable office to guide such unruly spirits! Obedience is one of the lessons of wisdom which this age needs to learn, for everybody must be master or mistress nowadays. We all desire to rule and we all feel that we could do it far better than the present leaders are doing! He who has the least wisdom and has failed in business half a dozen times, is the very person who believes himself to be the most fitted to be Prime Minister! We do not love obedience, but we have to learn it. The rod is our Teacher’s instrument—this darkness, this heaviness, is pressing us into true service. We are now to follow Jesus in the dark by learning obedience as He learned it. The Lord prosper us in this!

We have next to learn *sympathy*. I have hinted at that already. “We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Our glorious Elder Brother learned sympathy by suffering! By His passion He learned compassion. Whenever we suffer, let us regard it as a part of our education and so follow Christ closely to learn of Him, as He learned of the Father. See yonder text, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; and you shall find rest unto your souls!” First we come to Him by faith and He *gives* us rest. That is one sort of rest. Then, by obedience, we take His yoke upon us and we learn of Him, and we find rest—another degree of rest. The one is given and the other is found, but there is no finding the second rest except with the yoke upon our shoulders and learning of Christ!

Education in the dark helps to keep us from self-dependence. I sometimes sing—

***“If today He deigns to bless us
With a sense of pardoned sin,
He tomorrow may distress us,
Make us feel the plague within—
All to make us
Sick of self, and fond of Him.”***

The Angel wrestled with Jacob. We usually speak of Jacob’s wrestling with the Angel. I suppose that he did so wrestle, for there cannot be a wrestle at all without two being in it. But the main point of the conflict

was that the Angel wrestled with Jacob. What wrestling God has had with us to get our self out of us! We are such Jacobs—we are plotting, scheming—and crafty. God would beat us down as to this fleshly wisdom and when He has laid us low as Jacob and made us lame, then He will knight us, and we shall come off the field as prevailing princes, or Israels! The death of self-dependence is the joy and triumph of faith! And this often comes through darkness. God bless the darkness, then, for our education—and may we follow Christ by complete obedience to God!

I spoke of three things. The second is for *usefulness*. Our Lord went into the dark to save the guilty sons of men. We cannot follow Him in the central darkness, where all the storm clouds gathered, for that was Substitutionary. Into that awful winepress, where He went alone as our Sacrifice, we would not think of intruding! But nevertheless, there is a cup of which He has said—“You shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall you be baptized.” We have no atonement to make. “It is finished.” Yet for the ingathering and saving of the elect of God, it is necessary that the Church of God, in many of its members, should pass into the darkness.

I will tell you a story. It shall be none the worse because it is of myself, for we are gathered here to bear and hear personal testimony. One Sunday I preached a sermon from this text—“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” What I then spoke was in the agony of my heart, for I felt that I was, myself, for a while, forsaken. Such was the sorrowful dread of my spirit.

I could not tell why I should have been made to feel in this way. I was not sick. I could see no physical cause. I had not wandered from God and I could see no moral cause. But after the sermon there came into the vestry a man of about sixty, whose very hair seemed to stand on end and his eyes were bright with a strange luster. He took my hand and stood and held it, and wept. I looked at him and I saw that I had before me a man dazed, if not crazed. “Birds of a feather will flock together.” It struck me that he was a madman and I was not much mistaken. Then he said to me, “Nobody ever preached my experience before! I have now been for years in a horrible gloom of great darkness and could not find God, but this morning I learned that I was not the only man in the thick darkness, and I believe that I shall get out.” I answered, “Yes, that was the reason why I was put into the dark, that I might help you. And now that I know the reason, I am already out of the prison!”

I had many interviews with that man. I piloted him back from the gulf of insanity. I was enabled, by God’s Grace, to lead him into joy and peace, so that he could resume his daily calling. The Lord’s servants have to experience many things which are not so much for themselves as for usefulness towards others—and we ought to be content to have it so. You cannot help a man if you know nothing about him and, therefore, the

Lord sends you into many a thick wood and dark valley that you may meet with His own redeemed in their wanderings. If you did not know the wilderness, how could you act as a guide through it? So it is for usefulness that God calls us there—and as Jesus went there to save, let us learn from Him the great Grace of self-sacrifice!

I have done when I have added the third thing. Darkness may come over the soul that we *may give glory to God*. Our Lord Jesus passed through the darkness that He might glorify the Father's name. The lesson which He set before us was that He still believed. Read the 22nd Psalm. See there the faith of the much hunted "hind of the morning." He goes back to his early infancy, when God cared for him. "You are He that took me out of the womb." He goes back to ancient history—"Our fathers trusted in You: they trusted, and You did deliver them." Read that Psalm carefully and mark that the sufferer's faith never failed him. Dear Friends, can your faith stand in trial? "I have great faith," says one. Yes, there was a staff that stood by a brook and looked at the reflection of his antlers in the water, and said, "What fine horns I have! My friends in the herd no sooner hear the bay of a dog than they take to their heels. But I, with such fine horns, will fight any dog, or, for that matter, any pack of hounds! Let them come up and they shall see what my horn can do." So he said—and he was a fine fellow, was he not? Landseer might have been proud to sketch him! That is the very picture of a man full of untried faith. Presently there was heard the yelp of some poor puppy—and where was our stag? His heart was not as strong as his horns and his legs were carrying him far away from the dog! So it is with untried faith. You must not be sure of it for a moment. Fear will destroy it in the day of trouble.

Our Lord had abundant and abiding faith. I will only quote one instance of it—His faith in prayer to God in Gethsemane. There are two parts in that wonderful prayer of His in the garden. "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." We dwell too exclusively upon the full surrender at the end—please notice the prayer itself. "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." When you are in the dark, go to God and plead with Him to take the gloom away! Ask Him to take the cup from you—and be bold to go as far as your Lord did—which is a very long way, indeed, for He said, "If it is possible." Go to that length! I would encourage the child of God in the dark to "possess his possessions," to make real use of promises and expect help. We do not always trust God as being what He declares Himself to be, but sometimes if we would but do so, our darkness would come to an end! I remember in my own case, after a period of continued pain with little sleep, I sat up, as best I could, one morning in my bed, in an agony of pain—and I cried to the Lord for deliverance. I believed fully that He could deliver me then and there, and I pleaded my sonship and His Fa-

therhood. I went the length of pleading that He was my Father and I said, "If it were my child that suffered so, I would not let him suffer any longer if I could help him. You can help me. And by Your fatherly love I plead with You to give me rest." I felt that I could add, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." But I did the first thing, first—I pleaded with my Father and went first where Christ went first, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me." I shall never forget my success in this appeal! In real earnest I believed God to be my Father and threw myself upon Him—and within a few minutes I dropped back upon the pillow, the pain subsided, and very soon I slept most peacefully. God loves us to believe Him and to plead earnestly with Him, for even if He does not think it best to grant our request, He will be pleased for us to go on to number two and, with full submission cry, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

You can hardly prove that you have any will to surrender if you have not first brought it before the Lord in fervent prayer! Pray about the matter up to the hilt, and then sheathe the prayer in submission, if it is not the Lord's will. O Brothers and Sisters, let us learn this last virtue! Faith healing is grand, but faith enduring is grander! Glorify God by believing that His will is right and that the strokes of His rod are kind. Use both edges of the sword of faith! Believe for deliverance *from* sorrow, or for deliverance *in* sorrow. Anyhow, honor the Son by fully trusting Him. This is the way to follow your Leader, who said, "I will put my trust in Him."

Oh, that the Lord our God may be with you all in the hour of darkness! If it is not so now, may it may be very soon! I would have you lay by these Truths of God in store for future use. When one is very happy, the suspicion lurks at our feet that this is too good to last. Therefore, the poet of experience said—

***"We should suspect some danger near
When we perceive too much delight."***

Let it, then, be settled in your minds that you will trust only in the Lord and keep your expectation only upon Him. Come fair, come foul, come wind, come rain, come hail, come tempest, or come all the brightness of a fruitful summer, it shall make no difference to us, for ours is not the confidence which changes with the weather, but that which has its foundation among things eternal and immutable—

***"And when your eye of faith is dim,
Still hold on Jesus, sink or swim!
Still at His footstool bow the knee
And Israel's God, your strength shall be!"***

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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 1, 1877.

“Why, when I came, was there no man? Why, when I called, was there none to answer? Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stink because there is no water, and die for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakens Me morning by morning, he wakens My ears to hear as the learned. The Lord GOD has opened My ears, and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away. I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.”
Isaiah 50:2-6.

WE spent this morning at the foot of the Cross. [Sermon #1362, Volume 23—MOURNING FOR CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] I hope that some of us, at least, were helped by the Spirit of Grace and of Supplication to look unto Him whom we have pierced by our sins, and to “mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son.” I thought that as we then found it so good to be there, we would go there, again, the more especially as we are afterwards to gather around the Communion Table where we shall again be reminded of the sacrificial death which the sacred Supper so clearly symbolizes. Let us come, then, under the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit, very near to our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that the Spirit of Christ may aid our meditations while I try, once more, to speak about His glorious and matchless Person, and the wondrous condescension which made Him undertake such gracious offices on our behalf and bear for us such awful and shameful griefs.

I shall need no further preface to my discourse except to say that in my opinion these verses run on without any break, so that you are not to separate them and ascribe one to the Prophet, another to the Messiah, and another to Jehovah, Himself, but you must take the whole as the utterance of one Divine Person. That Jehovah-Jesus is the One who is speaking here is very clear from the last verse of the previous chapter—“I the Lord” (“I, Jehovah,” it is,) “am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.” It is Jehovah, as the Savior and Redeemer of His people, who is here manifesting Himself to us—and we must take the whole chapter as being uttered by Him.

I. So, then, to begin with, let us BEHOLD THE MESSIAH AS GOD—"I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering."

I ask you again to link this 3rd verse with the 6th—"I clothe the heavens with blackness and I make sackcloth their covering...I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting." He, then, who suffered thus and whom we regard as redeeming us by His death, and as saving us by His life, is no less than the Almighty God who clothes the heavens with blackness, at whose rebuke the sea is dried up and the rivers become a wilderness!

I think the first reference in these words is to the miracles which were worked by the plagues in Egypt. It was Jehovah-Jesus who was then plaguing His adversaries. It was He who stood by the border of the Red Sea and dried it up. In a later chapter Isaiah says that "the Angel of His Presence saved them." And who is that great "Angel of His Presence" but the Angel of the Covenant in whom we delight, even Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior? It was He who struck the rivers of Egypt till they began to stink and the fish died from thirst. It was He who called for an unusual darkness—even darkness which might be felt—and which lasted three days and nights—a supernatural darkness such as had never before been known. Think of the greatness of that God who can darken the great orb of day! The strongest eyes of man cannot bear to gaze upon the sun, for fear of producing blindness, yet Jehovah-Jesus does not only look the sun in the face, but He lifts His hand and shuts the light of the sun from off the face of the earth! And He bids the sun—"which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race"—to take off his bridal attire and to put on the garments of mourning, for thus said the Lord, "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering." This mighty miracle, which was worked of old, was worked by that same Jesus who, in the days of His flesh, was despised and rejected of men! Learn this lesson and adore the Lord who is so great in power and as gracious as He is great.

But we must not restrict the text to that which happened in the land of Egypt, for it has a far wider reference than that. All the great wonders of Nature are to be ascribed to Him upon whom we build all our hopes for time and for eternity. There are channels of great rivers to be found that are now perfectly dry. Travelers tell us of vast lakes and riverbeds that have become mere pans of salt. How came they to be dried up? "By the action of the laws of nature," some people say. But laws have no power to act by themselves—they need force at the back of them to make them operate. And whose force is that? It is the energy of God—and that same energy dwells in the adorable Person of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. When the storm clouds come hurrying up, driven by the winds, and the crash of Heaven's dread artillery is heard, and the dashes of forked lightning follow each other in rapid succession, we tremble at the power of the Lord who thus makes the earth to quiver before Him. But who is He that is thus driving in His conquering car? It is Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior! All the elements of Nature are under His control

and He rules all things according to the good pleasure of His own will. He sits at the right hand of God, even the Father, being Himself very God of very God!

The last miracle recorded here, namely that of covering the heavens with sackcloth, was performed by our Lord even when He was in His death agony. We read that at high noon the sun was veiled and there was darkness over all the land for three black hours. Wonder of wonders! He who hung bleeding there had worked that mighty marvel! The sun had looked upon Him hanging on the Cross and, as if in horror, had covered its face and traveled on in tenfold night. The tears of Jesus quenched the light of the sun! Had He been wrathful, He might have put out its light forever, but His love not only restored that light, but it has given to us a light a thousand times more precious, even the Light of God—the light of everlasting life and joy!

I cannot preach worthily upon so sublime a doctrine as this, so it is no use for me to attempt to do so. I always feel, when I begin to speak of the Deity of our blessed Lord and Master, as if my heart were too full for me to give utterance to my deepest feelings and convictions. My heart is indeed inditing a good matter when I am speaking thus concerning the King, but I cannot say that my tongue is as the pen of a ready writer when it has so vast a theme to dwell upon. What I want to bring before your minds most clearly is the blessed Truth of God that you are not depending for your salvation upon a mere man. He is Man—certainly Man—Man of the substance of His mother. But He is just as truly Divine. In trusting Him, you are resting your souls upon One who is Infinite and Almighty. Nothing can be too difficult for Him to do. It is He who asks these questions in the second verse—“Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?” You may depend upon it that you are absolutely safe in His hands! What you commit to Him, He will securely keep, rest assured of that. Even when you draw nearest to Him in the familiar union which He graciously permits to those whom He loves, never think of Him as being less than the Eternal God. So worship Him, trust Him and rejoice in Him!

II. Now let us turn to the next verse of our text and BEHOLD THE MESSIAH AS THE INSTRUCTED TEACHER—“The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakens Me morning by morning, He wakens My ears to hear as the learned.”

Our Lord veiled His Godhead in the robe of Manhood and He came and dwelt here, among men, that He might proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that were bound. He came in fact as it was foretold concerning Him, that He might save His people from their sins. But before He began to teach, it was necessary that, as Man, He should be prepared for His work. I call your special attention to the condescension of our Lord in coming here on purpose to care for the weak—to speak consoling and sustaining words to them and also to the fact that before He performed that service, He learned the sacred art from His Father. It seems, according to this verse, that His chief work was to

Speak words in season to the weary ones. How sweetly He has learned that blessed lesson and how graciously He has turned it to practical account! Have not many of you found His words to be exceedingly reasonable to you when you have been weary? When you have been most depressed, have not the consolations of Christ been more precious to you than at any other time? Have you not, often, in seasons of sorrow, wiped away your tears at the sound of His cheering voice? As for you who have beat upon your breasts in deep contrition of heart because of the burden of your sin, has not Jesus removed your load from you when you have heard Him speak? We do well to treasure up every sentence that He has uttered, for there is not ever a word that has fallen from His dear lips, by way of promise and encouragement, but exactly suits our experience at some time or other! Whatever our distress or difficulty may be, He knows how to speak a word in season to everyone who is weary. To us He says, as He said to His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me." He knows, even to perfection, the blessed art of consoling the sad and sorrowful.

The most condescending part of this Truth of God is that He received from His Father the power to deliver such words of consolation. He says, "The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." He became a disciple, sitting at His Father's feet. For 30 years, He was learning much in Joseph's carpenter's shop. Little do we know how much He learned there, but this much we do know, for Luke records the fact, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." And afterwards, when He entered upon His public work among men, He spoke with the tongue of the learned, saying to His disciples, "All things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." All through His time of teaching, He was still listening and learning. Notice the words in the 4th verse—"He wakens Me morning by morning, He wakens My ears to hear as the learned."

The Lord Jesus was often up early in the morning—even when He had not been all night in prayer—that seemed to be the special season in which He communed with His Father. He first went and enjoyed most intimate fellowship with the Lord, refreshing Himself by talking of heavenly things and receiving new strength for service. And then, with the dew of Heaven fresh upon Him, He came forth and taught the people. They, very likely, were still sound asleep, but He was awake early, receiving renewed Inspiration in prayer and fellowship. And then He came forth, fragrant with the savor of His union with His Father and the sweet odor of His consecration was shed abroad among the sons of men through the blessed Truths of God that flowed from His lips! I ask you again to think of this wonderful condescension, that He who clothes the heavens with blackness and makes sackcloth their covering, should, for our sake, stoop to learn in His Father's school. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience." And though He was "over all, God blessed forever," yet did He increase in wisdom and stature, as a Boy and as a Man, and He con-

descended to be a Learner that He might speak as the learned and know how to utter words that would be in season to us when we are weary.

III. Now I want you to go down a step lower, to the next verse, in which we BEHOLD JESUS CHRIST AS THE SERVANT OF THE LORD—“The Lord God has opened My ears, and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away.” He stood upon earth, not like a prince but as the *Servant* of God! He was made to be under the Law and in all things to be subservient to the Father’s will.

Notice that first of all, He speaks of Himself as being *prepared by Grace*, for He says, “The Lord God has opened My ears,” as if there had been a work worked upon Him to fit and prepare Him for His service. Yes, and so it was—and the same Spirit which rested upon Christ must also open our ears. It often amazes me that our Lord should have been willing to be baptized in Jordan even though that Baptism was attended by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him, for, albeit that He was truly Human, we know that He was also just as truly Divine. Being found in fashion as a Man, He received of God the Holy Spirit the same anointing which is now bestowed upon His people. God forbid that our tongue should ever speak a word concerning Him that should confound His Deity and His Humanity, but, still, we do assert that He did need that the Spirit should rest upon Him, for, otherwise, the Spirit would not have come, for He never does anything unnecessarily. This is matchless condescension on His part—that He should, voluntarily, put Himself into such a condition of necessity for our sake!

Being thus prepared by Grace, He was *consecrated in due form* so that He could say of Himself, “The Lord God has opened My ears.” Brothers and Sisters, there was never such an ear as Christ had! He heard the faint whispers of His Father’s voice. He never neglected the will of God, nor needed to be reminded of it, or to be pressed and persuaded to do it. See how different it is with us. Our ears are dull of hearing, or, if the precept is plain to our apprehension, we often do not yield obedience to it. There are some professors who know their duty—they have been wakened to know it morning by morning, but, nevertheless, they pretend not to be aware as to what is required of them. The sound of God’s voice has only reached their outward ear—it has never penetrated as far as the inward ear—their heart has not perceived its Divine force and power. But it was never so with our blessed Lord. Whatever His Father willed, He at once rejoiced to do. He could always say, “I always do the things that please Him.”

That is the next point, for He not only heard His Father’s voice, but *He was obedient to it in all things*. He says, “I was not rebellious.” I cannot find anything in the life of Christ that even *looks* like rebellion. From the day when, as a Child, He said to His parents, “Know you not that I must be about My Father’s business?” till the hour when, on the Cross, He cried, “It is finished!” He was always obedient to the will of God. “Being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.” His obedience was absolutely perfect in all things. Think of this and remember that this is the same

Divine Being who clothes the heavens with blackness and makes sack-cloth their covering when it so pleases Him!

In that obedience, *He was persevering through all trials*. He says that He did not turn away. Having commenced the work of saving men, He went through with it. He steadfastly set His face to go up to Jerusalem, though He knew that He was going to His death. He asked not that He might be delivered from completing the work that He had undertaken. There was a time when, in the horror of His spirit, He cried, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me," yet He never flinched from any suffering that was necessary to our redemption. It was Human weakness that spoke for a moment, but His inmost soul was fully set upon the work of redeeming His people unto Himself. He set His face like a flint and He would not turn back. Even in His direst agonies, His thoughts were all for others. He saved others—Himself He could not save—for it was impossible for Him to draw back from the work which He had once undertaken.

You know all this, Beloved. I do but remind you of what has been familiar to you ever since you have believed in Jesus, but I pray you to think of it again and again, for it must have been a matter of the utmost amazement to the angels to see their Lord acting as a Servant—to see Him, without whom was not anything made that was made, here below, dressed in a peasant's garb and, as a humble, way-worn Son of Poverty, sitting on a well to talk to a poor sinful woman about the Water of Life. You know what lowly service He rendered, even to the washing of His disciples' feet. There was nothing too menial for Him to perform, yet, all the while, He was truly Divine. Oh, this is a Truth that needs to be meditated upon by the hour, together, and to be considered again and yet again! This is one of the things which angels desire to look into and we may try to look into it as long as we will, for, beyond and above all controversy, great is this mystery of godliness—*God* manifest in the flesh!

IV. The last step in this wondrous ladder is revealed to us in the next verse—"I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting." **BEHOLD THE MESSIAH AS THE PEERLESS SUFFERER.** And this Sufferer, on whom men spat, was the Eternal God!

Scripture sometimes speaks concerning Christ in such a way that fastidious critics seek to correct it. There is a hymn, by Dr. Watts, in which there is this verse—

***"Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut his glories in,
When God, the mighty Maker, died
For man, the creature's sin."***

It has been asked, "Did God really die?" No, for God cannot die, yet He who died was God. So, if there is confusion in your mind, it is the confusion of Holy Scripture, itself, for we read, "Feed the Church of **GOD**, which He has purchased *with His own blood*." He who purchased the Church with His own blood was, indeed, God. There are clever men who could draw up this particular Truth of God as clearly as Athanasius drew up his Creed, and finish it up with a curse as loud as his, yet those men,

nevertheless, might make a great blunder, while another, who might not speak exactly according to logic, would nevertheless hit the mark which they missed. How are we to speak upon such a wondrous theme as this? How *can* we speak upon it? It belongs not to mortal man to comprehend Deity—and if Deity complicates its own incomprehensibility by taking into alliance with Itself, our humanity, who is he that may not be made an offender for many and many a word, and yet, for all that, may not have offended against the Truth of God?

He who was a prisoner in Pilate's Hall, accused of sedition, was the King of kings—He who was taken from that Hall and covered with an old red cloak, and set up in a chair as on a mimic throne—He who had a reed put into His right hand, was none other than the Almighty Lord who said, "Light be," and the light flashed forth out of the darkness! And He upon whose sacred shoulders fell the cruel flagellation of the Roman scourge till the plowers made deep scarlet furrows down His blessed back—He was that God who created and who still sustains the heavens and the earth and all things that exist, or ever have existed! He was a suffering Man, but, at the same time, He was the Son of God—and He is the Son of God, today—and God, the Son, too! As you think of His pain, couple with it the thought that He bore all that agony voluntarily that we might be saved—"I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting."

Even if God becomes Incarnate, yet none can touch Him unless He permits them to do so, but Jesus said, "I lay down My life for the sheep...No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." No man could have scarred that blessed back of His unless Christ had been willing, out of mighty love, to suffer thus on His people's behalf! None could have plucked His hair unless He had put Himself into the position to have it plucked, in order that He might redeem us from all our iniquities! Many a martyr has suffered much, but he could not avoid it, for he was bound and he was not able to strike his foes or to escape. But here sat One to be spit upon, who could, if He had willed it, have withered into nothingness all who stood about Him! With one glance of those eyes of His, had He but grown angry, as He well might have done, He could have burned up their very souls, for it was He who dried up the river and who clothed the heavens with blackness, who was thus despitely used! Blessed be the majesty of that Omnipotence which controlled omnipotence—that mighty love which bound the Godhead so that it came not to the rescue of the Manhood of the suffering Savior!

In addition, however, to the pain, we are asked, in this verse, to particularly notice the contempt which the Savior endured. The plucking of His hair was a proof of the malicious contempt of His enemies, yet they went still further and spit in His face. Spitting was regarded by Orientals and, I suppose, by all of us, as the most contemptuous thing which one man could do to another, yet the vile soldiers gathered round Him and spat upon Him. It is almost too terrible to think of or to speak of, but what must it have been for Jesus to endure it? I think you can realize the utter uselessness of human speech in trying to describe this scene. If the

Divine thought of the text could leap out among you, like some mystic fire, *then* you might feel it, but as for our poor words, they cannot convey the sacred flame to you. But there stands the mysterious Truth. Enlarge upon it as we may, we can never fathom it, nor half fathom it—that He, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, here declares that He hid not His face from shame and spitting!

I must again point out to you the beautiful touch of voluntariness here—“I hid not My face.” Our Savior did not turn away or seek to escape. If He had wished to do so, He could readily have done it, but He hid not His face from any of the contempt that the most malicious and wicked of men wished to heap upon Him. Even when He came to die and they brought Him a drink which was customarily given to criminals—a strong, stupefying draught which would have somewhat relieved the pain—when He had tasted it, He would not drink it. The vinegar He did taste, but that wine mingled with myrrh He would not drink because He did not come here to escape any pain or any shame that His people deserved to suffer. He must go through with it all to the bitter end and, therefore, He will not, in any sense or way, endeavor to escape. “I hid not My face from shame and spitting.” Oh, splendor of voluntary condescension and of marvelous love on the part of Him before whom the nations are as a drop in the bucket—who takes up the isles as a very little thing and to whom time is but a span compared with His own eternity! The express image of His Father, yet He bows to shame and spitting! Blessed be His holy name forever and forever!

I will close when I have noticed three combinations which the verses of my text will make. I will but mention them and ask you to meditate upon them at your leisure.

First of all, put the first and the last together, as I have already done—“Behold, at My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stink because there is no water, and die for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering...I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.” Those verses together show you the full ability of Christ to save. Here we have *the God and the Sufferer*. What a wondrous Christ He is—Divine and, therefore, able—Human and struck and suffering and, therefore, full of compassion! “It behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren.” And see how like His brethren He is, yet He is God! The ladder that Jacob saw had its foot upon the earth and its top reached to Heaven. It would have been of no use if its foot had not been upon the earth, for what man on earth could have climbed it? It would have been of no use if, with its foot upon the earth, it had not reached to Heaven—there would not have been any connection, after all. Behold, then, in the Humanity of Christ, how the foot of this ladder rests upon the earth and see, in His Deity, how the top reaches to Heaven! Happy are the feet that tread the rungs of this celestial ladder—they shall climb into eternal rest! Glory, O Believers, in the Divine and Human Person of your Lord, and rest in Him in confidence and peace!

Now put the two middle verses together—"The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned," and so on. And then, "The Lord God has opened My ears, and I was not rebellious." Here you have *the Teacher and the Servant*, and the two together make up this Truth of God—that Christ teaches us, not only with words, but with His life. What a wonderful Teacher He is, who Himself learned the lessons which He would have us learn! Let us take His yoke upon us and learn of Him. Let us study His precepts, but also imitate His example. His track I see—I have not merely a map of the road, but His footsteps show me which way I am to go. Watch in all things that you follow Christ, for He still says to His redeemed ones, "Follow Me."

Now put the whole text together and think of Jesus Christ in all those various views which I have so feebly set before you and I think the result will be—at least, to God's people—that they will say, "This God shall be our God forever and ever! And it shall be our delight to do His bidding at all times." It is a high honor to serve God—and Christ is God. It is a great thing to be the servant of a wise teacher—and Christ has the tongue of the learned. It is a very sweet thing to walk in the steps of a perfect Exemplar—and Christ is just that. And, last and best of all, it is delightful to live for Him who suffered and died on our behalf. Those wounds of His have marked us as His own. That scourge, those bleeding shoulders, and that face so marred have won us altogether to Him and, henceforth, for us to live shall be Christ, that to die may be eternal gain! The Lord grant that it may be so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ISAIAH 53.

This is one of the chapters that lie at the very heart of the Scriptures. It is the very Holy of Holies of Divine Writ. Let us, therefore, take off our shoes, for the place whereon we stand is especially holy ground.

This fifty-third of Isaiah is a Bible in miniature. It is the condensed essence of the Gospel. I thought that our Beloved Friend, Mr. Moody, answered with extreme wisdom a question that was put to him when he came to London some years ago. A number of ministers had come together to meet Mr. Moody and they began to discuss various points, and to ask what were the evangelist's views upon certain doctrines. At last, one Brother said, "Would Mr. Moody kindly give us his creed? Is it in print?" In a moment the good man replied, "Certainly. My creed is in print, it is the 53rd of Isaiah." It was a splendid reply. How could a man come closer to the very essentials of the faith than by saying, "My creed is in the 53rd of Isaiah"? I trust that many of you, dear Friends, cannot only say, "This is my creed," but also, "This is the foundation upon which I have built all my hopes for time and for eternity. This is the source of my sweetest consolation. This is the sun that makes my day and the star that gilds my night." In these 12 verses there is everything that we need to teach us the way of salvation. God, the infinitely-wise Teacher, has re-

vealed to us, within this short compass, all that is necessary to bring peace to troubled spirits.

First, the Prophets speak—

Isaiah 53:1. *Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?* This is a cause for sorrow upon sorrow—for the Prophets to have God’s message to deliver and yet for men to reject it—for them to have to tell it, but to tell it in vain. Yet, dear Friends, this has been the lot of some of God’s most faithful servants in all ages and we must not complain if it should be our lot, also. I should not have voluntarily chosen to be Jeremiah, the weeping Prophet, yet, I think not one of God’s servants deserves greater honor than he does, for he continued to bravely deliver his Master’s message even when none believed him and all rejected his testimony. Isaiah links himself with all the other Prophets who had been rejected and he says, “Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”

2. *For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground.* This is why Christ was not received by those to whom He came—and why the testimony of the Prophets concerning Christ was rejected by those to whom it was delivered—because He was not revealed to them as a towering palm tree or widely-spreading cedar, but, like the humble yet fruitful vine, He was “as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground.”

2. *He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.* To carnal eyes there was no apparent beauty in Christ—nothing of the aesthetic, as men call it, and nothing of the pompous, nothing outwardly attractive. He came here in the utmost simplicity. Remember the angel’s message to the shepherds—“And this shall be a sign unto you; you shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” There was nothing of pomp or show about Him—“no form nor comeliness.” He made no display of scholarship, no presence of deep philosophy, nothing that the carnal mind hunts after. But the all-glorious Deity, revealed in Human form, spoke simple but sublime Truth and, therefore, men rejected Him.

3. *He is despised and rejected of men.* This was written long before He came to earth—“He is despised and rejected of men” and, truly, though He is now in Heaven, I need not alter the tense of the verb. I do not say, “He *was* despised,” though that would be true, for, alas, it is still true, “He is despised and rejected of men”!

3. *A Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.* What an amazing expression that is! Our blessed Lord had made the acquaintance of grief. He knew it, understood it, was familiar with it—slept with it—rose with it—walked the livelong day with it and, therefore, my Brothers and Sisters, He knows your grief and He can meet it! He is such a master Comforter because He was such a mighty Sufferer.

3. *And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him.* Shame upon us that we, who have been redeemed by Him—we, who He has loved from eternity—we, who now delight in Him—“we hid, as it were, our faces from Him.”

3. *He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.* Even we, to whom now He is all our salvation and all our desire—we, unto whom He is now most precious—“we esteemed Him not.”

4. *Surely He has borne our griefs.* Can all of you say this? Can everyone of us unite in the reading of this sentence, “Surely, He has borne our griefs”? If you have truly learned that He bore your griefs, you may indeed bless His name, for it is the best news that ever reached your ears! Go and tell it to your fellow sufferers—“Surely He has borne our griefs.”

4. *And carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.* They thought that God had smitten Him, and so He had, but they wrongly supposed that there was something of sin in Him that caused God to strike Him, whereas He was “holy, harmless, undefiled,” and He was only stricken and smitten because He was bearing the sins of His people.

5. *But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.* Milton, Shakespeare, Cowper and the whole of the poets that were ever or are, all put together, could not write four sentences like those in this verse! There is more meaning, more deep philosophy, more music, more to charm and satisfy the human heart in those four sentences, than in the sweetest of merely human language. Let me read them again—and as I do so, let everyone of us take each line to himself—“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.”

6, 7. *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.* These words have been the means of the conversion of multitudes. You recollect in the Acts of the Apostles, what that rich Ethiopian said to Philip when he read these words—“I pray you, of whom speaks the Prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?” If we read this chapter over and over again, and so read it as to find Christ, it will, indeed, be a blessed thing for us!

8, 9. *He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken. And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth.* All that He suffered was not because He was guilty, but because He was innocent! The only crime which I have ever heard rightly laid to His charge is that which the poet sweetly describes as “found guilty of excess of love.” It was indeed so. He loved us beyond all measure and because of that love He died for us.

10. *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief.* The Lord was at the back of it all. Not Pilate, nor Herod, nor Judas, nor Jew, nor Roman, but Jehovah bruised Him.

10. *When You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed. He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.* Here the strain changes altogether. From the depths of woe, we begin to rise with hopes of a glad result of all the suffering and sorrow and shame. Glory be to the name of Christ, He has a mighty right hand into which God has placed that work which is according to His own good pleasure—even the work of saving guilty men—and that work, in His prolonged days, until the end of time, shall prosper in the hand of the Christ of God!

11. *He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.* Christ did not die at haphazard, as some seem to think. A sure and glorious result must come of “the travail of His soul.” Such precious blood as His could not fall to the ground at a chance. Whatever the design of His cross was, it shall be accomplished. I could imagine failures in Creation, if so it pleased God, but never in redemption!

11. *By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities.* That is the top and bottom of it all—“He shall bear their iniquities.” The red line of Substitution runs through the whole chapter.

12. *Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He has poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—282, 269.

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

THE SHAME AND SPITTING

NO. 1486

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 27, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.”
Isaiah 50:6.***

OF whom does the Prophet speak? Of himself or of some other? We cannot doubt but what Isaiah wrote here was concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Is not this one of the prophecies to which our Lord Himself referred in the incident recorded in the 18th chapter of Luke's Gospel at the 35th verse? “Then He took unto Him the twelve and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spit on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death.”

Such a remarkable prophecy of scourging and spitting as this which is now before us must surely refer to the Lord Jesus. Its highest fulfillment is assuredly found in Him alone. Of whom else, let me ask, could you conceive the Prophet to have spoken if you read the whole chapter? Who else could say in the same breath, “I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair”? What a descent from the Omnipotence which veils the heavens with clouds to the gracious condescension which does not veil its own face, but permits it to be spit upon! No other could thus have spoken of Himself but He who is both God and Man!

He must be Divine—how else could He say, “Behold, at My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness”? (v. 2). And yet He must, at the same time, be a, “Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief,” for there is a strange depth of pathos in the words, “I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.” Whatever others may believe, we believe that the Speaker in this verse is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, the Son of God and the Son of Man—our Redeemer. It is the Judge of Israel whom they have struck with a rod upon His cheeks, who here plaintively declares the grief which He has undergone! We have before us the language of prophecy, but it is as accurate as though it had been written at the moment of the event. Isaiah might have been one of the Evangelists, so exactly does he describe what our Savior endured!

I have already laid before you, in the reading of the Scriptures, some of the passages of the New Testament wherein the scourging and the shame of our Lord Jesus are described. We saw Him first at the tribunal of His own countrymen in Matthew 26 where we read, “Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their

hands.” It was in the hall of the High Priest, among His own countrymen, that the shameful deeds of scorn were first worked upon Him. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” His worst foes were they of His own household—they despised and abhorred Him and would have none of Him. His own Father’s farmers said among themselves—“This is the heir; let us kill Him and let us seize His inheritance.” This was His treatment at the hands of the house of Israel.

The same treatment, or the like thereto, was accorded Him in Herod’s palace where the lingering shade of a Jewish royalty still existed. There, what I might venture to call a pattern mixture of Jew and Gentile power, held court, but our Lord fared no better in the united company. By the two combined, the Lord was treated with equal derision (Luke 23:11). “Herod with his men of war set Him at nothing, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe.” Speedily came His third trial and He was delivered altogether to the Gentiles. Then Pilate, the governor, gave Him up to the cruel process of scourging.

Scourging, as it has been practiced in the English army, is atrocious! It is a barbarism which ought to make us blush for the past and resolve to end it for the future. How is it that such a horror has been tolerated so long in a country where we are not all savages? But the lash is nothing among us, compared with what it was among the Romans. I have heard that it was made of the sinews of oxen and that in it were twisted the hucklebones of sheep with slivers of bone in order that every stroke might more effectually tear its way into the poor quivering flesh which was mangled by its awful strokes. Scourging was such a punishment that it was generally regarded as worse than death, itself, and, indeed, many perished while enduring it, or soon afterwards. Our blessed Redeemer gave His back to the smiters and the plowers made deep furrows there. O spectacle of misery! How can we bear to look?

Nor was that all, for Pilate’s soldiers, calling all the troop together, as if there were not enough for mockery unless all were mustered, put Him to derision by a mock enthronement and a mimic coronation. And when they had finished that, they again buffeted and smote Him and spit in His face. There was no kind of cruelty which their heartlessness could invent just then which they did not exercise upon His blessed Person. Their brutal sport had full indulgence, for their innocent Victim offered neither resistance nor remonstrance. This is His own record of His patient endurance, “I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.”

Behold your King! I bring Him forth to you, this morning, in spirit and cry, “Behold the Man!” Turn, here, all your eyes and hearts and look upon the despised and rejected of men! Gaze reverently and lovingly, with awe for His suffering and love for His Person. The sight demands adoration. I would remind you of that which Moses did when he saw the bush that burned and was not consumed—fit emblem of our Lord on fire with grief and yet not destroyed! I bid you turn aside and see this great sight, but first attend to the mandate—“Take off your shoes, for the place where you stand is holy ground.”

All round the Cross, the soil is sacred. Our suffering Lord has consecrated every place where He stood and, therefore, our hearts must be filled with reverence while we linger under the shadow of His passion. May the Holy Spirit help you to see Jesus in four lights at this time. In each view He is worthy of devout attention. Let us view Him, first, as *the Representative of God*. Secondly, as *the Substitute of His people*. Thirdly, as *the Servant of Jehovah*. And fourthly, as *the Comforter of His redeemed*.

I. First, I invite you to gaze upon your despised and rejected Lord as THE REPRESENTATIVE OF GOD. In the Person of Christ Jesus, God Himself came into the world, making a special visitation to Jerusalem and the Jewish people, but at the same time coming very near to all mankind. The Lord called to the people whom He had favored so long and whom He was still intent to favor. He says, in the second verse, "I came," and, "I called." God did in very deed come down into the midst of mankind! Be it noted that when our Lord came into this world as the Representative of God, He came with all His Divine power about Him. The chapter before us says, "Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness."

The Son of God, when He was here, did not perform those exact miracles because He was bent upon marvels of beneficence rather than of judgment. He did not repeat the plagues of Egypt, for He did not come to smite, but to save. He did greater wonders and worked miracles which were far more apt to have won men's confidence in Him because they were full of goodness and mercy. He fed the hungry, He healed the sick, He raised the dead and He cast out devils. He did marvels equal to those which were worked in Egypt when the arm of the Lord was made bare in the eyes of all the people. It is true He did not change water into blood, but He turned water into wine! It is true He did not make their fish to stink, but by His word He caused the net to be filled, even to bursting, with great fishes.

He did not break the whole staff of bread as He did in Egypt, but He multiplied loaves and fishes so those thousands of men and women and children were fed from His bounteous hands. He did not slay their first-born—He restored the dead! I grant you that the Glory of the Godhead was somewhat hidden in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, but it was still there, even as the Glory was upon the face of Moses when he covered it with a veil. No essential attribute of God was absent in Christ and everyone might have been seen in Him if the people had not been willfully blind. He did the works of His Father and those works bore witness of Him that He came in His Father's name. Yes, God was *personally* in the world when Jesus walked the blessed fields of the Holy Land, now, alas, laid under the curse for rejecting Him.

But when God thus came among men He was unacknowledged. What says the Prophet? "Why when I came was there no man? When I called was there none to answer?" A few, taught by the Spirit of God, discerned Him and rejoiced, but they were so very few that we may say of the whole generation that they knew Him not! Those who had some dim idea of His excellence and majesty still rejected Him. Herod, because he feared that

He was a king, sought to slay Him! The kings of the earth and the rulers took counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed. He was emphatically and beyond all others, “despised and rejected of men.” Though, as I have said, the Godhead in Him was but scantily veiled and gleams of its Glory burst forth here and there, still the people would have none of it and the cry, “Away with Him! Away with Him, let Him be crucified!” was the verdict of the age upon which He descended.

He called and there was none to answer. He spread out His hands all day long unto a rebellious people who utterly rejected Him. Yet our Lord, when He came into the world, was admirably adapted to be the Representative of God—not only because He was God, Himself, but because as Man His whole Human Nature was consecrated to the world—and in Him was neither flaw nor spot. He was untouched by any motive other than the one desire of manifesting the Father and blessing the sons of men! Oh, Beloved, there was never one who had His ear so near the mouth of God as Jesus had! His Father had no need to speak to Him in dreams and visions of the night, for when all His faculties were wide awake there was nothing in them to hinder His understanding the mind of God and, therefore, every morning when His Father awakened Him, He spoke into His ear.

Jesus sat as a scholar at the Father’s feet that He might learn, first, and then teach. The things which He heard of the Father He made known unto men. He says that He spoke not His own words but the words of Him that sent Him and He did not His own deeds, but, “My Father,” says He, “that dwells in Me, He does the work.” Now, a man thus entirely agreeable to the mind and will of the great God was fitted to be the Representative of God! Both the alliance of His Manhood with the Godhead and its perfect Character qualified it to be the fittest dwelling of God among men. Yes, dear Friends, our Savior came in a way which should at once have commanded the reverent homage of all men. Even His great Father said, “They will reverence My Son.”

Enough of the Godhead was manifested to impress and no more, lest it should alarm. With a soul of gentlest mold and a body like our own, He was altogether adapted to be the Representative of God. His errand, too, was all gentleness and love, for He came to speak words in season to the weary and to comfort those that were cast down. Surely such an errand should have secured Him a welcome! His course and conduct were most conciliatory, for He went among the people and ate with publicans and sinners. So gentle was He that He took little children in His arms and blessed them—for this, if for nothing else—they ought to have welcomed Him right heartily and rejoiced at the sight of Him.

Our text tells us how contrary was their conduct towards Him to that which He deserved—instead of being welcomed, He was scourged—and instead of being honored, He was scorned! Cruelty smote His back and plucked off the hair from His face, while decision jeered at Him and cast its spit upon Him! Shame and contempt were poured upon Him, though He was God Himself! That spectacle of Christ, spit upon and scourged, represents what man virtually does to his God—what he would do to the Most High if he could. Hart puts it well —

***“See how the patient Jesus stands,
Insulted in His lowest case!”***

***Sinners have bound the Almighty hands,
And spit in their Creator's face.***

When our parents broke the command of their Maker, obeying the advice of the devil rather than the Word of God and preferring a poor apple to the Divine favor, they did, as it were, spit into the face of God! And every sin committed since has been a repetition of the same contempt of the Eternal One.

When a man will have his pleasure even though it displeases God, he as good as declares that he despises God, prefers himself and defies the wrath of the Most High. When a man acts contrary to the commands of God, he does as good as say to God, "This is better for me to do than what You bid me do. Either You are mistaken in Your prohibitions, or else You do willfully deny me the highest pleasure and I, being a better judge of my own interests than You are, snatch at the pleasure which You refuse me. I judge You either to be unwise or unkind." Every act of sin does despite to the Sovereignty of God—it denies Him to be supreme and refuses Him obedience. Every act of sin does dishonor to the love and wisdom of God, for it seems to say that it would have been greater love to have permitted us to do evil than to have commanded us to abstain from it. All sin is, in many ways, an insult to the majesty of the thrice-Holy God and He regards it as such.

Dear Friends, this is especially the sin of those who have heard the Gospel and yet reject the Savior, for in their case the Lord has come to them in the most gracious form and yet they have refused Him. The Lord might well say, "I have come to you to save you and you will not regard Me. I have come saying to you, 'Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth,' and you close your eyes in unbelief. I have come saying, 'Let us reason together: though your sins are as crimson, they shall be as wool,' but you will not be cleansed from your iniquity. I have come with the promise, 'All manner of sin and iniquity shall be forgiven unto men.' What is your reply?" In the case of many, the answer is, "We prefer our own righteousness to the righteousness of God." If that is not spitting in the face of God, I know not what is, for our righteousness is well described as "filthy rags" and we have the impudence to say that these are better than the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus!

Or if we do not say this when we reject the Savior, we tell Him that we do not want Him, for we do not need a Savior—this is as good as to say that God has played the fool with the life and death of His own Son! What greater derision can be cast upon God than to consider the blood of Atonement to be a superfluity? He who chooses sin sooner than repentance prefers to suffer the wrath of God rather than be holy and dwell in Heaven forever! For the sake of a few paltry pleasures men forego the love of God and are ready to run the risk of an eternity of Divine wrath! They think so little of God that He is of no account with them at all. All this is, in reality, a scorning and despising of the Lord God and is well set forth by the insults which were poured upon the Lord Jesus.

Woe's me that it should ever be so! My God! My God! To what a sinful race do I belong! Alas, that it should treat Your infinite goodness so despitely! That You should be rejected at all, but especially that You should be rejected when dressed in robes of love and arrayed in gentle-

ness and pity is horrible to think upon! Do you mean it, O Men? Can you really mean it? Can you deride the Lord Jesus who died for men? For which of His works do you stone Him when He lived only to do good? For which of His griefs do you refuse Him when He died only that He might save? “He saved others, Himself He cannot save,” for He had so much love that He could not spare Himself! I can understand your resisting the thunder of Jehovah’s power, for I know your insanity! But can you resist the tenderness of Jehovah’s love? If you do, I must charge you with brutality—but in doing so I wrong the brutes to whom such crimes are impossible!

I may not even call this cruel scorning *diabolical*, for it is a sin which devils never committed and, perhaps, would not have committed had it been possible for them to do so! They have never trifled with a Redeemer, nor rejected the blood of Atonement, for our Lord took not up the fallen angels—He took up the seed of Abraham! Shall the favored race spit upon its Friend? God grant we may be brought to a better mind! But there is the picture before you. God Himself set at nothing despised, rejected, put to shame, perpetually dishonored in the Person of His dear Son. The sight should breed repentance in us. We should look to Him, whom we have scourged, and mourn for Him! O Holy Spirit, work this tender Grace in all our hearts!

II. And now, secondly, I want to set the Lord Jesus before you in another light, or rather beseech Him to shine in His own light before your eyes—AS THE SUBSTITUTE FOR HIS PEOPLE. Remember, when our Lord Jesus Christ suffered, it was not on His own account nor purely for the sake of His Father, but He “was wounded for *our* transgressions, He was bruised for *our* iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed.” There has risen up a modern idea which I cannot too much denounce—that Christ made no Atonement for our sin except upon the Cross—whereas in this passage of Isaiah we are taught as plainly as possible that by His bruises and His stripes, as well as by His death, we are healed.

Never divide between the life and the death of Christ. How could He have died if He had not lived? How could He suffer except while He lived? Death is not suffering, but the end of it! Guard, also, against the evil notion that you have nothing to do with the righteousness of Christ, for He could not have made an Atonement by His blood if He had not been perfect in His life. He could not have been acceptable if He had not first been proven to be holy, harmless and undefiled. The victim must be spotless, or it cannot be presented for sacrifice. Draw no nice lines and raise no quibbling questions, but look at your Lord as He is and bow before Him! Understand, my dear Brothers and Sisters, that Jesus took upon Himself our sin and being found bearing that sin, He had to be treated as sin should be treated.

Now, of all things that ever existed, sin is the most shameful thing that can be. It deserves to be scourged, it deserves to be spit upon, it deserves to be crucified—and because our Lord had taken upon Himself our sin—therefore He must be put to shame and He, therefore, must be scourged. If you want to see what God thinks of sin, see His only Son spit upon by

the soldiers when He was made sin for us! In God's sight sin is a shameful, horrible, loathsome, abominable thing—and when Jesus takes it, He must be forsaken and given up to scorn. This sight will be the more amazing to you when you remember who it was that was spit upon, for if you and I, being sinners, were scourged, smitten and despised, there would be no wonder in it—but He who took our sin was *God*, before whom angels bow with reverent awe and yet, seeing the sin was upon Him, He was made subject to the most intense degree of shame.

Seeing that Jesus stood in our place, it is written of the eternal Father that, "He spared not His own Son." "It pleased the Father to bruise Him: He has put Him to grief." He made His soul an offering for sin. Yes, Beloved, sin is condemned in the flesh and made to appear exceedingly shameful when you remember that even though it was only laid on our blessed Lord by imputation, yet it threw Him into the very depths of shame and woe before it could be removed! Reflect, also, upon the voluntariness of all this. He willingly submitted to the endurance of suffering and scorn! It is said in the text, "He *gave* His back to the smiters." They did not seize and compel Him, or, if they did, yet they could not have done it without His consent. He gave His back to the smiters! He gave His cheeks to those that plucked off the hair.

He did not hide His face from shame and spitting—He did not seek, in any way, to escape from insults. It was the voluntariness of His grief which constituted, in great measure, the *merit* of it. That Christ should stand in our place by force were a little thing, even had it been possible—but that He should stand there of His own free will and then, being there, He should willingly be treated with derision—this is Grace, indeed! The Son of God was willingly made a curse for us and at His own desire was made subject to shame on our account! I do not know how you feel in listening to me, but while I am speaking I feel as if language ought scarcely to touch such a theme as this—it is too feeble for its task!

I need you to get beyond my words, if you can, and meditate upon the fact that He who covers the heavens with blackness yet did *not* cover His own face! And He who binds up the universe with the belt which holds it in one piece, yet was bound and blindfolded by the men He had, Himself, made! He whose face is as the brightness of the sun that shines in its strength was once spit upon! Surely we shall need faith in Heaven to believe this amazing fact! Can it have been true, that the glorious Son of God was jeered and ridiculed? I have often heard that there is no faith needed in Heaven, but I rather judge that we shall need as much faith to believe that these things were ever done as the Patriarchs had to believe that they *would* be done.

How shall I sit down and gaze upon *Him* and think that His dear face was once covered with *human* spit? When all Heaven shall lie prostrate at His feet in awful silence of adoration, will it seem possible that once He was mocked? When angels, principalities and powers shall all be awakened to the rapture of harmonious music in His praise, will it seem possible that once the most abject of men plucked out His facial hair? Will it not appear *incredible* that those sacred hands, which are "as gold rings set with beryl," were once nailed to the Cross and that those cheeks which

are, “as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers,” should have been battered and bruised? We shall be quite certain of the fact and yet we shall never cease to wonder that His side was gashed and His face was spit upon!

The sin of man in this instance will always amaze us! How could you commit this crime? Oh, you sons of men, how could you treat such an One with cruel scorn? O you brazen thing called Sin, you have, indeed, as the Prophet says, “a whore’s forehead!” You have a demon’s heart! Hell burns within you! Why could you not spit upon earthly splendors? Why must Heaven be your scorn? Or if Heaven, why not spit on angels! Was there no place for your base deed but my Well-Beloved’s face? Was there no place for your spit but His face? His face! Woe is me! His face! Should such loveliness receive such shame as this?! I could wish that man had never been created, or that, being created, he had been swept into nothingness rather than have lived to commit such horror!

Yet here is matter for our faith to rest upon. Beloved, trust yourselves in the hands of your great Substitute. Did He bear all this shame? Then there must be more than enough merit and efficacy in this, which was the prelude of His precious death—and especially in His death itself—there must be sufficient merit to put away all transgression, iniquity and sin. Our shame is ended, for He has borne it! Our punishment is removed—He has endured it all! Our Redeemer has paid double for all our sins! Return unto your rest, O my Soul, and let peace take full possession of your weeping heart.

III. But time fails us and, therefore, we will mention, next, the third light in which it is our desire to see the Savior. Beloved, we desire to see the Lord Jesus Christ AS THE SERVANT OF GOD. He took upon Himself the form of a Servant when He was made in the likeness of man. Observe how He performed this service right thoroughly and remember we are to look upon this third picture as our copy which is to be the guide of our life. I know that many of you are glad to call yourselves the servants of God—take not the name in vain. As Jesus was, so are you, also, in this world—and you are to seek to be like He.

First, as a Servant, Christ was personally prepared for service. He was 30 years and more here below, learning obedience in His father’s house—and the last years were spent in learning obedience by the things which He suffered. What a Servant He was, for He never went about His own errands nor went by His own will, but He always waited upon His Father. He was in constant communication with Heaven, both by day and by night. He says, “He awakens Me morning by morning. He awakens my ears to hear as the learned.” The blessed Lord, before the day broke, heard that gentle Voice which called Him and, at its whisper, He arose before the sunrise and there the dawn found Him, on the mountain side, waiting upon God in wrestling prayer, taking His message from the Father that He might go and deliver it to the children of men.

He loved man much, but He loved His Father more and He never came to tell about the love of God without having as Man received it fresh from the Divine heart. He knew that His Father heard Him always and He lived in the spirit of conscious acceptance. Have you ever noticed that sometimes a passage will begin, “At that time Jesus answered and said,” and

yet there is no notice that He had been speaking to anybody, or that anybody had been speaking to Him? What He said was an answer to a Voice which no ear heard but His own, for He was always standing with opened ears listening to the eternal Voice! Such service did Jesus render and you must render the same. You cannot do your Lord's will unless you live near to Him. It is of no use trying to preach with power unless we get our message from our heavenly Father!

I am sure you, as hearers, know the difference between a dead word which comes from a man's own brain and lips and the living Word of God which the preacher delivers fresh as the manna which fell from Heaven! The Word of God should come from the minister like bread hot from the oven, or better still, like a seed with life in it—not as a parched grain with the germ dead—but as a living Seed which roots itself in your souls and springs up to a harvest. This made our Lord such a good Servant that He listened to His Father's voice and yielded Himself to the Father's will to perfection.

Our text assures us that this service knew no reserve in its consecration. We generally draw back somewhere. I am ashamed to say it, but I mourn that I have done so. Many of us could give to Christ all our health and strength and all the money we have, very heartily and cheerfully—but when it comes to a point of reputation we feel the pinch. To be slandered, to have some filthy thing said of us—this is too much for flesh and blood. We seem to say, "I cannot be made a fool of! I cannot bear to be regarded as a mere impostor!" But a true servant of Christ must make himself of no reputation when he takes upon himself the work of his Lord. Our blessed Master was willing to be scoffed at by the lewdest and the lowest of men. The objects jeered at Him—the reproach of them that reproached God—fell upon Him.

He became the song of the drunk and when the rough soldiers detained Him in the guard room they heaped up their ridicule as though He were not worthy of the name of Man—

***"They bow their knees to Me, and cry, 'Hail, King'!
Whatever scoffs or scornfulness can bring,
I am the floor, the sink, where they it fling—
Was ever grief like Mine!
The soldiers also spit upon My face
Which angels did desire to have the Grace
And Prophets once to see, but found no place—
Was ever grief like Mine?"***

Herod and Pilate were the very dross of men and yet He permitted them to judge Him! Their servants were vile fellows and yet He resigned Himself to them. If He had breathed upon them with angry breath, He might have flashed devouring fire upon them and burned them up as stubble—but His Omnipotent patience restrained His indignation and He remained as a sheep before her shearers. He allowed His own creatures to pluck His facial hair and spit in His face!

Such patience should be yours as servants of God! We are to be willing to be made nothing of and even to be counted as the offscouring of all things. It is pitiful for the Christian to refuse to suffer and to become a fighting man, crying, "We must stand up for our rights." Did you ever see Jesus in that posture? There is a propensity in us to say, "I will have it

out.” Yes, but you cannot picture Jesus in that attitude! I defy a painter to depict Him so—it is somebody else and not Christ. No! He said, “I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.”

There is something more here than perfect consecration in the mere form of it, for its heart and essence are manifest in an obedient delight in the will of the Father. The words seem to me to express a cheerful willingness. It is not said that He *reluctantly* permitted His enemies to pluck His hair, or smite His back, but it is written, “I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.” He could not delight in it—how could He *delight* in suffering and shame? These things were even more repugnant to His sensitive Nature than they can be to us. And yet, “For the *joy* that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame.” He was ready for this dreadful treatment, for He said, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it is accomplished!” He was ready for the cup of gall and willing to drink it to its dregs, though it was bitterness itself to Him! He gave His back to the smiters.

All this while—now follow me in this next point—there was no flinching in Him. They spit in His face, but what does He say in the seventh verse? “I have set my face like a flint.” If they are about to defile His face, He is resolved to bear it! He girds up His loins and makes Himself more determined. Oh, the bravery of our Master’s silence! Cruelty and shame could not make Him speak. Have not your lips sometimes longed to speak out a denial and a defense? Have you not felt it wise to be quiet, but then the charge has been so excessively cruel and it has stung you so terribly that you hungered to resent it? Base falsehoods awakened your indignation and you felt you must speak and probably did speak, though you tried to keep your lips as with a bridle while the wicked were before you.

But our own beloved Lord, in the Omnipotence of His patience and love, would not utter a word! No, but like a lamb at the slaughter He opened not His mouth! He witnessed a good confession by His matchless silence. Oh, how mighty—how gloriously mighty was His patience! We must copy it if we are to be His disciples. We, too, must set our faces like flints, to move or to sit still, according to the Father’s will—to be silent or to speak, as most shall honor Him. “I have set My face like a flint,” He says, even though in another place He cries, “My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels.”

And do you notice, all the while, the confidence and quiet of His spirit? He almost seems to say, “You may spit upon Me, but you cannot find fault with Me. You may pluck My hair, but you cannot impugn My integrity. You may lash My shoulders, but you cannot impute a fault to Me. Your false witnesses dare not look Me in the face to let Me know who is My adversary—let them come near to Me. Behold, Adonai Jehovah will keep Me! Who is he that shall condemn Me! Lo, they all shall wax old as a garment, the moth shall eat them up.” Be calm then, O true servant of God! In patience possess your soul. Serve God steadily and steadfastly though all men should belie you. Go to the bottom of the service—dive, even, to the

very depth—and be content, even, to lie in Christ’s grave, for you shall share in Christ’s Resurrection!

Do not dream that the path to Heaven is up the Hill of Honor! It winds down into the Valley of Humiliation! Imagine not that you can grow great eternally by being great here! You must become less and less and less—even though you should be despised and rejected of men—for this is the path to everlasting Glory. I have not time to expound the last two verses of the chapter but they read us a noble lesson. “He gave His back to the smiters.” If, then, any of you walk in darkness and have no light, this is no new thing for a servant of God!

The Chief of all servants persevered, though men despised Him. Follow Him, then. Stay yourselves upon God, as He did, and look for a bright ending of your trials. He came out into the light, ultimately, and there He sits in inconceivable splendor at His Father’s right hand! And so shall all the faithful come out of the cloud and shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father! Only bear on with resolute patience and Glory shall be your reward, even as it is His!

IV. Lastly, I am to set Him forth in His fourth Character, as THE COMFORTER OF HIS PEOPLE—but I must ask *you* to do this, while I just, as it were, make a charcoal sketch of the picture I would have painted. Remember, first, our blessed Lord is well qualified to speak a word in season to him that is weary because He, Himself, is lowly, meek and so accessible to us. When men are in low spirits they feel as if they could not take comfort from persons who are harsh and proud. The comforter must come as a sufferer. He must come in a lowly, broken spirit if he would cheer the afflicted. You must not put on your best dress to go and visit the daughter of poverty, or go with your jewels about you to show how much better off you are than she.

Sit down by the side of the downcast man and let him know that you are meek and lowly of heart. Your Master “gave His back to the smiters, and His cheek to them that plucked off the hair” and, therefore, He is the Comforter you need. Remember not only His lowliness, but His sympathy. Are you full of aches and pains this morning? Jesus knows all about then, for He “gave His back to the smiters.” Do you suffer from what is worse than pain—from scandal and slander? “He hid not His face from shame and spitting.” Have you been ridiculed of late? Have the graceless made fun of your godliness? Jesus can sympathize with you, for you know what unholy mirth they made out of Him! In every pang that rends your heart, your Lord has borne His share. Go and tell Him. Many will not understand you. You are a speckled bird, differing from all the rest and they will all peck at you—but Jesus Christ knows this, for He was a speckled bird, too. He was “holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners,” but not separate from such as you. Go to Him and He will sympathize with you!

In addition to His gentle spirit and His power to sympathize, there is this to help to comfort us—namely, His *example*, for He can argue thus with you, “I gave My back to the smiters. Cannot you do the same? Shall the disciple be above his Master?” If I can but get on the doorstep of Heaven and sit down in the meanest place there, I shall feel I have an in-

finitely better position than I deserve and shall I think of my dear, blessed Lord and Master giving His face to be spit upon and then give myself airs, and say, "I cannot bear this scorn! I cannot bear this pain"? What? Does the King pass over the brook Kedron and must there be no brook Kedron for you? Does the Master bear the Cross and must your shoulders never be galled? Did they call the Master of the house, "Beelzebub," and must they call you, "Reverend Sir"? Did they laugh at Him, scoff at Him and must you be honored? Are you to be "gentleman" and "lady" where Christ was, "that Fellow"? For His birth they loaned Him a stable and for His burial He borrowed a grave. O Friends, let pride disappear and let us count it our highest honor to be permitted to stoop as low as ever we can!

And, then, His example further comforts us by the fact that He was calm during it all. Oh, the deep rest of the Savior's heart! They set Him up upon that mock throne but He did not answer with an angry word. They put a reed into His hand, but He did not change it to an iron rod and break them like potters' vessels as He might have done. There was no wincing and no pleading for mercy. Sighs of pain were forced from Him and He said, "I thirst," for He was not a stoic. But there was no fear of man, or timorous shrinking of heart. The King of Martyrs well deserves to wear the martyr's crown, for right royally did He endure—there was never patience like His!

That is your Copy, Brother! That is your Copy, Sister! You must write very carefully to write as well as that! You had need for your Master to hold your hand, in fact. Whenever children in Christ's School write according to His Copy, it is always because He holds their hand by His Spirit. Last of all, our Savior's triumph is meant to be a stimulus and encouragement to us. He stands before us, this morning, as the Comforter of His people. Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself lest you be weary and faint in your minds, for though He was once abased and despised, yet now He sits at the right hand of God and reigns over all things! And the day is coming when every knee shall bow before Him and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. They that spat upon Him will rue the day!

Come here, you that derided Him! He has raised you from the dead! Come here and spit upon Him now! You that scourged Him, bring your rods and see what you can do in this day of His Glory! Look! They flee before Him! They invoke the hills to shelter them! They ask the rocks to open and conceal them! Yet it is nothing but His face—that same face they spat upon—which is making earth and Heaven flee away! Yes, all things flee before the majesty of His frown who once gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off His hair!

Be like He, then, you who bear His name. Trust Him, live for Him and you shall reign with Him in Glory forever and ever! Amen.

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THE REDEEMER'S FACE SET LIKE A FLINT NO. 2738

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 4, 1901.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 28, 1880.

*“For the Lord God will help Me; therefore I will not be
disgraced: therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I
know that I shall not be ashamed.”
Isaiah 50:7.*

THESE are, in prophecy, the words of the Messiah. This is the language of Jesus of Nazareth, the promised Deliverer, whom God has sent into the world to be the one and only Savior. We know that this is the case because it is to Him, and to Him alone, that the verse preceding our text must refer—“I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.” This is the declaration of Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews—and it is He who said of old in prophecy, and afterwards carried it out in actual life, “I set My face like a flint.” Luke seems to have had this passage in his mind when he wrote the 51st verse of his 9th Chapter, in which he says of our Lord that, “when the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.” There is the same meaning in the two passages, and one cannot help feeling that the words recorded by Isaiah were brought by the Holy Spirit to the memory of Luke when he penned that expression. The fact is that our Master, even from *eternity*, resolved to save His people, and nothing could keep Him from the accomplishment of His purpose. From eternity He foresaw that they would fall from their first estate and He entered into Covenant engagements to redeem them—and from the pledge He gave of old, He never turned back.

Time rolled on and men fell, and afterwards multiplied upon the face of the earth, but Christ's delights were still with the sons of men and often did He, in one form or another, visit this earth to converse with Abraham, or to wrestle with Jacob, or to speak with Joshua, or to walk in the burning fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. He was always anticipating the time when He would actually assume human nature and fulfill His Covenant engagements. At last, the appointed hour arrived and then He did not disdain the virgin's womb, or the Bethlehem manger, or the workshop of Nazareth where He became subject to His reputed father. Even as a child, He said, “Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?” The set purpose to redeem His people was

an all-consuming passion that always burned within His soul—for what He said once to His disciples He always felt, “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it is accomplished!” He felt bound and hampered until He could get to His chief work—He longed to be at it. With ardent desire He had desired to eat that last of Passovers on the eve of Himself becoming the Lamb of God’s Passover, for He had set His face like a flint upon the accomplishment of the task He had undertaken and He had resolved to go through with it even to the end!

I may not be able to say much that is fresh upon this theme, but I hope that I shall be helped by the Spirit to “stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.” My great objective is to lead you to love Him who so loved you that He set His face like a flint in His determination to save you! O you redeemed ones, on whose behalf this strong resolve was made—you who have been bought by the precious blood of this steadfast, resolute Redeemer—come and think awhile of Him, that your hearts may burn within you and that your faces may be set like flints to live and die for Him who lived and died for you!

First, I am going to speak to you upon *His steadfast resolve tested*. Secondly, upon *His steadfast resolve sustained*. And, thirdly, upon *His steadfast resolve imitated*.

I. First, our Lord said, “Therefore have I set My face like a flint,” and we are to think of HOW HIS STERN RESOLVE WAS TESTED.

Our Lord was tempted to turn aside from this purpose, first, by *the offers of the world*. The populace wanted to take Him by force and make Him a king. He was, at times, so popular among the multitude that the Pharisees did not dare to seize Him, for they feared the people. When He rode through the streets of Jerusalem in triumph, it appeared as if all the inhabitants of the city were, for a while at least, upon His side. They were, it is true, laboring under a great mistake. They supposed that He was about to set up a *temporal* sovereignty—and if He would do that and drive away their Roman conquerors, they would gladly follow Him. But when they perceived that He had no such designs, but that His Kingdom was purely spiritual, and not of this world—that He cared nothing for honor from men, but only sought to make them holy, then they changed their note and cried, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”

Yet many a man, possessed by a high resolve, has been turned aside from his purpose by the bauble of earthly honor. He might have become great in his Master’s esteem, but he chose to receive a worldly title and to wear a ribbon. He might have been a blessing to his fellow men, but he was dazzled by the glitter of a coronet, so he left the path of usefulness to pursue the road of earthly fame. There have been hundreds and thousands of cases in which men’s characters appeared to be opening like a rose—but the worm of wealth was gnawing at the root and before the rose could fully expand and flood the air with its perfume—it had been destroyed.

But Christ, when He was taken by Satan to an exceedingly high mountain and set upon a place where He could see all the kingdoms of the earth in a moment of time—and was offered all of them if He would

fall down and worship the power of evil—was not to be turned aside from His steadfastness! His zeal was too fervent, His purpose was too strong, His compassion for His people was too intense for Him to yield to the tempter! Had He not voluntarily left the thrones and royalties of Heaven and stripped Himself of the glorious array which He had worn within His Father's courts, to come down here to be a carpenter's son? So who could bribe Him to turn from His purpose? No one, for He had set His face like a flint to put off all thought of seeking earthly honor—and to endure the utmost depths of shame—that He might redeem His people from the wrath to come.

His steadfast purpose was tried, next, *by the persuasions of His friends*. It is very dangerous, when you are possessed by a high purpose, to go and consult with flesh and blood, for if you are worthy of such an honor, there are few who can match you. Men who live for God's Glory and the well-being of their fellow men, are like giants on the mountain-tops, while others are hidden away in the depths of the valleys, hoarding up their gold, or living only for self. He who would be a God's man, and such a Man as Christ was, must not consult with flesh and blood, or ask his dearest friend's advice when he once knows his Lord's will. Christ's kinsmen said that He was beside Himself and they would have laid hold of Him and confined Him if they could. They thought His zeal had carried Him beyond the bounds of reason—and when He told His disciples about His approaching death upon the Cross, "Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from You, Lord: this shall not be unto You"—and all the disciples would have persuaded Him to choose an easier path than that which led to Calvary and the grave.

In the present day there are many men who might have been both good and great if they had not been spoiled by their friends. They listened to what they thought was meant to be uttered in love to them, but which was really a siren song luring them away from their proper course on to the rocks—and thus they lost the opportunity which they might have had of serving God and man. But not so was it with Christ! He recognized the hand of Satan in Peter's temptation, so He said to him, "Get you behind Me, Satan: you are an offense unto Me: for you savor not the things that are of God, but those that are of men." Thus our Savior resisted all persuasions and, with His face set like a flint, went on with His work even until the hour of His death.

A far worse trial, however, to Christ's steadfast resolve was furnished *by the unworthiness of those He came to help*. "He came unto His own"—and how did they treat Him?—"His own received Him not." He came into the vineyard as God's heir, but what said the husbandmen who had been put in charge of it? "This is the heir; come, let us kill Him and the inheritance shall be ours." Look even at Christ's 12 Apostles when He was about to die. Judas betrayed Him and Peter denied Him—but what of the rest of the chosen twelve? "Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled." Yet these were the men for whom He was going to die and He might well have asked Himself, "Are they worth such a sacrifice?" There were others of mankind for whom He had come to die—what were they doing? If you

had been in Jerusalem at that time, you might have heard them in the streets crying, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Even when Pilate was convinced of His innocence and sought to deliver Him from the demented mob, they cried, "His blood be on us, and on our children"—little dreaming how terribly their imprecation would be fulfilled at the destruction of their beautiful city and its guilty inhabitants! These were the very people for whom Christ shed His precious blood, for, in that crowd there were thousands who, a few weeks afterwards, heard Peter preach on the day of Pentecost and believed in that Christ whom they had, with wicked hands, crucified and slain!

If you are about to do a man a kindness and you find that he is ungrateful and unthankful—or that he is even worse than that—a traitorous, treacherous villain, you stay your hand and ask yourself, "Why should I make any sacrifice for him?" The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, "scarcely for a righteous man will one die." But for unrighteous men, for rebels, for those who ill-treat you—who among men would ever think of dying? Yet our Lord Jesus Christ "died for the ungodly." Let me tell you what always appears to me to be the most amazing thing about Christ's death—it is that *He died for me*. And if you are a Believer in Him, you can also say, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." This is the crowning mercy of His death, that there is nothing in us that could have merited such a Sacrifice! On the contrary, there is everything in us which, if Jesus had been like other men, would have forced Him to say, "I will not give My life for such creatures as these." Yet He set His face like a flint to carry out His purpose—whatever His elect might do, He still determined to plead their cause and to support His plea even by the shedding of His own blood.

But all these things were comparatively small trials to the great-hearted and resolute Christ, for He was still more severely tested as to His steadfast resolve *by the bitterness which He tasted at His entrance upon His great work as our substitutionary Sacrifice*. The first drops of that awful tempest, which fell upon Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, were hot and terrible. His soul was sorrowful, even unto death, so He resorted to prayer. Yet He had little comfort even in that holy exercise, so He rose from His knees and went to His disciples that He might speak with them as men usually talk to their sympathizing friends in their direst agony. But He found them asleep, so back He went to His Father, and once again prayed, "If it is possible to achieve the salvation of My people, and yet for Me not to drink this cup, let it pass from Me." But when He found that it was *not* possible and that His thrice-repeated prayer received no response, He gave Himself up to die without murmuring a word and bade His slumbering disciples arise, for he who would betray Him was at hand.

If anything could have broken our Savior's resolution, it would have been the agony and bloody sweat of Gethsemane, yet all that could not turn Him from His purpose. Did you ever feel such exceeding sorrow or were you ever so terribly depressed in spirit that you wished, a thousand times over, that you had never been born, or that you could die? Have

you ever been subject to dire despair? Some of us have felt as though a sword had been thrust into our bones, slaying all the life of our joy. At such a time, resolves that have been wisely made are often unwisely broken. The strongest man can scarcely stand up against depression of spirit. Solomon truly said, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Yet Christ was so resolved to achieve the redemption of His people that, even when reproach had broken His heart and He was full of heaviness, He still set His face like a flint and determined that He would accomplish the work that He had undertaken.

I hope I somewhat stir you up to think with gratitude of my blessed Lord and of His great love to you, by thus reminding you of His steadfastness of purpose. O you who love Him, help me by giving your best thoughts to sacred meditation upon this wondrous Savior of ours! This morning, [Sermon #1570, Volume 26—THE LAMENTATIONS OF JESUS—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] in speaking upon the words, "When He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it," I showed you that there was no flint in the heart of Jesus. And I am now trying to show you what flint there was in His face—how steadfastly this tender-hearted Man could move in the direction which He had from eternity determined to take in order to procure the salvation of His people!

After our Savior's trial in Gethsemane, His resolve was further tested *by the ease with which He could have relinquished the enterprise if He had wished to do so*. I have known some people keep to their course of life merely because they could not get out of it. They had a certain purpose in view, to which they had committed themselves in such a manner that they could not withdraw from it. But our blessed Lord had many opportunities when He might have abandoned His purpose. For instance, when before Pilate, He had to deal with a man who might have been conciliated by a single sentence. Yet, "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." Pilate greatly marveled that Jesus answered him nothing—and if our Lord had spoken to him and fully explained matters, he might have released Him. It is clear that Pilate had no wish to let Him be put to death. In fact, he had a thorough distaste to the dastardly deed and tried all he could to prevent it. If Christ had wished to do so, He might easily enough have turned Pilate against His accusers and induced him to call for the Roman soldiers to disperse and even to slay the mob in the street! But He did not do so. Even after Christ had been betrayed, there was not a moment in which He might not, with a wish, have set Himself free and, with a word, have chased away all His adversaries! But, all the while, His face was steadfastly set upon His one great purpose of achieving the redemption of His people—and He resolved that the great deed of love must be done, cost what it might.

If He had not been so resolute as He was, He might have been turned from His purpose *by the taunts of those who scoffed at Him*. Wicked men have nailed Him to the accursed tree—do you see Him bleeding, suffering, dying? He utters an agonizing cry, "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani?"

and the heartless spectators pun upon it. He cries to El, the Strong One, and they mock Him by saying, "He calls for Elijah." The chief priests, scribes and elders joined in the mockery and said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross and we will believe Him." He could have come down if He had pleased, but His steadfast resolve held Him to the Cross. He might have leaped down into the midst of the ribald throng, like the destroying angel in Egypt, and have swept them all to Hell in an instant! Yet there He hung in order that He might redeem men from destruction—and all their taunts could not make Him move from His purpose. There was one who hung there dying by His side, who said to Him, "If You are Christ, save yourself and us," taunting Him even with the guilty, miserable lips of a dying thief! And, often, taunts are all the sharper when they come from mean, debased men—yet Jesus bore it all without flinching. Though all the devils from Hell might gibe at Him and men from all parts of the earth might gather to mock, and jeer, and leer at Him, yet still His face was set like a flint to accomplish the task which He had undertaken! It must be done! It shall be done! He will certainly die for His people and nothing can turn Him aside from that resolve!

But how shall I tell you of that last trying test to which He was subjected *by the full stress of the death-agony*? After all, the griefs of His body were but the body of His grief—but the sufferings of *His soul* were the soul of His sufferings. And who can adequately describe these? No mortal tongue ever can fully set them forth. Jehovah had permitted Him to stand in the place of guilty men and, finding Him there, where the actual sinners should have been, He smote Him! It was necessary that there should be concentrated into those strokes all the punishment that was due to the vast mass of guilt which was laid upon the great Sin-Bearer and, therefore, Christ bore—I cannot put it better than in Hart's words—

***"Bore all Incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare."***

That awful cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" was the concentration of the very essence of misery and woe! Then it was that the alabaster box was broken and the precious ointment was poured forth to perfume the air all the way from earth to Heaven, for God Himself smells a sweet savor of rest in the Sacrifice of His well-beloved and only-begotten Son! Death could not keep Him back from the accomplishment of His purpose to redeem His people! Well did Charles Wesley sing—

***"Stronger His love than death or Hell—
Its riches are unsearchable!
The first-born sons of light
Desire in vain its depths to see—
They cannot reach the mystery,
The length, and breadth, and height."***

Thus have I shown you how our Lord's steadfast resolve was tested.

II. Now, very briefly, notice HOW HIS STEADFAST RESOLVE WAS SUSTAINED.

Remember that we are now speaking of Jesus, not as God, but as Man, or, if you will, in the united Personality in which the two Natures find a wondrous and mysterious union in the God-Man, Christ Jesus, the Friend of sinful man.

According to our text and its connection, our Lord's steadfastness resulted, first, *from His Divine schooling*. This is described in the 4th verse—"The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakens morning by morning, He wakens My ears to hear as the learned." Christ never played at covenanting with God, nor did He ever play at saving men. He had given Himself up for us, even from eternity, as a whole Burnt-Offering, and when He actually became our Savior, He carried out His purpose to the full. This passage seems to teach us that in His earthly life, His Father was always near Him, awakening Him and teaching Him, morning by morning. As a Son, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered and, as the Holy Spirit rested upon Him without measure, His steadfast resolve remained strong and invincible. And, dear Friend, if you mean to be resolved to live as a Christian should, you must also be taught of God. You must go to the Word of God to learn what God the Lord has spoken, or else you will be ignorant and fickle—sometimes hot and sometimes cold—and changeable as the wind. Christ's resolution was sustained by Divine schooling and it must be the same with yours also.

Then, next, His steadfastness was sustained *by His conscious innocence*. That is a grand challenge in the 8th verse—"He is near that justifies Me; who will contend with Me?" Christ knew, all the while that He was suffering for sin, that He had personally done no wrong. Even when His Father forsook Him for a time, because He was occupying the place of the guilty, He knew that He was free from all guilt of His own. There is something wonderfully sustaining in the consciousness of innocence under false accusations. I do not think that Job could have survived his many trials if it had not been for the conviction that he was innocent of the charges that his accusers brought against him. And if God helps you to live a godly life, my dear Friend, there is nothing like it to enable you to persevere under all difficulties. "Conscience," when it is once defiled, "makes cowards of us all." But if we have a conscience void of offense toward God and men, that is a fountain of courage and the source of great strength. Well might our Savior's face be set like a flint when He could say, "He is near that justifies Me: who will contend with Me? Let us stand together: who is My adversary? Let him come near to Me."

But, according to our text, the Lord Jesus Christ's resolve was maintained *by His unshaken confidence in the help of God*. Read the whole verse—"For the Lord God will help Me; therefore I will not be disgraced: therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." How greatly the Father strengthened Christ in lonely midnight hours, we cannot tell, for we have no records of the fervent prayers to which the cold mountains could have borne witness. He went wearied to the mountainside—not to sleep, but to cry to God—and He came back

with the drops of dew still clinging to His locks, but He was strong to face the multitude, or to perform any task that might be required of Him, for He had been with His Father in the midnight hour and often the whole night through! It was God's own Spirit that came upon Him, when He was weary and faint, and strengthened Him for further service. His own testimony to His disciples, concerning this secret sustenance, was, "I have meat to eat that you know not of." The Father helped Him and the Spirit helped Him—and that is how you also need to be helped. If the "strong Son of God" put Himself into such a condition for our sakes, that He needed such aid as this, how much more must you and I need it, our weakness being so manifest and our fickleness so evident?

There was one thing more by which Christ's resolve was sustained. That was, *by the joy that was set before Him*. You know the passage in which Paul wrote to the Hebrews, "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame." What was that joy but the joy of saving immortal souls? The joy of vindicating the broken Law of God? The joy of breaking down the power of evil in the world and setting up a Kingdom of goodness and of love? The joy of bringing to men a remedy for all their diseases, a cure-all for their miseries? The joy of gathering unto Himself a multitude that no man can number, redeemed by blood out of every nation and kindred and tongue, who should glorify God, even the Father, forever and ever?

There have been mothers who have borne a thousand sorrows for the sake of their children. There have been brave warriors who have endured wounds and death, itself, for the sake of their country. But what shall I say of this glorious One, whose joy it was to lift us up who were so low, to cleanse us who were so foul, to find us who were lost and to save us who, without His saving Grace, would have been all cast away forever? There must have beamed, in the Savior's eyes, a light of supreme benevolence as He said to Himself in His last agonies, "I am dying, but I am, by My death, redeeming My people from destruction. I am suffering more than tongue can tell, but, by means of My sufferings, they shall be rescued from the wrath to come. The pouring out of My blood is scattering seeds of bliss in the furrows of earth that once were cursed by sin, and from them a seed shall arise to serve my Father and to be unto Him a chosen generation, a peculiar people. Multitudes of weary ones shall find rest by coming unto Me, and troubled spirits shall be filled with joy as, by faith, they behold Me dead and risen again." This was the joy that sustained our Savior under all He had to endure.

III. My time is almost gone, so I will say just a little upon the last part of my theme, which is, CHRIST'S STEADFAST RESOLVE IMITATED.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I speak especially to you. We serve a Master who steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem in order that He might accomplish the one great purpose for which He came to earth, and from which He could not be turned. Therefore it behooves us to be faithful to Him and to partake as far as we can of His spirit. Does He not seem to accuse us, without saying a word, for His face was set like a flint—while our faces are often made to blush with shame when we are

called upon to speak up for Him, or perhaps when we are ashamed to do so? O you fickle Christians, hot in a revival service and lukewarm afterwards, you who sing—

“Here, Lord, I give myself away”—

and yet do nothing of the kind! O you who say that you love the Lord with all your hearts and declare that you are willing to die for Him, yet go into the world to put Him to an open shame by your inconsistencies, look at your Lord and then blush to such a crimson hue as no one can take out of your face again! If we truly follow such a Lord as Christ is, we also ought to be flinty-faced for all holy purposes—and I ask you, dear Friends, to pray to God the Holy Spirit to make you so.

To attain this end, *if there is anything right in this world, be on the side of it.* No matter what it costs you, no matter whether you lose friends or not, if it is right, stand up for it, for Jesus would have done so. Policy would suggest that you might as well tack just a little—do not go over to the wrong side, but be a neutral—take the golden mean, which often is both “golden” and “mean” too! Do nothing of the kind, I implore you! Oh, that we might have Grace to say, “Gold or no gold, right is right and we are on that side even if death follows for the right and the true.”

Next, *if you have a right purpose that glorifies God, carry it out.* It is difficult to do that, you say. Well, then, you must be all the more determined in your resolve to do it! There is nothing in the world so hard but something harder will cut it. So, if your own resolve becomes harder than the difficulty you have to face, the thing can be done. It ought to be so with us, for it was so with Christ. Are you resolved, dear Friend, that being a Christian you will spread the Redeemer's Kingdom? Then break that cowardly silence which has so long held you in captivity—and speak for Christ! How can a dumb tongue glorify Him? How can you expect to win others to Him if you never speak about Him? If this is a cross to you, resolve that you will take it up and carry it bravely for Christ. I pray that not one of the members of this church may be barren and unfruitful!

Is there one of you who has never brought another soul to Christ? I am afraid there are some such members among us, yet I am very happy to testify that I have seen many of your faces in the sweetest possible association—by that expression I mean that I have seen you bring a friend to me and say, “Here is a soul that I have tried to comfort, that I hope I have really led to Christ. And I have brought him to you that he may confess his Savior and unite with the Lord's people in church fellowship.” There used to sit, in the left-hand gallery there, an old man who had a small annuity, who had his time to himself. He brought to me, one after the other, I can scarcely tell you how many persons whom he had induced to come into this place and sit in his seats. He took a whole pew in order that he might bring people into it, and he would walk in Hyde Park, from day to day, till he met with a likely gentleman who would accept the seat ticket and come here at the next service. And there are many who are now members of this church who gratefully remember old Mr. Hobson because they would never have been likely to be here if he had

not brought them where they could hear of Christ and learn to trust Him.

When our friend died, I greatly missed him, for I scarcely knew another who spent himself as he did. He had no powers of speech, but he bought the printed sermons and gave them to people, saying that he heard that sermon preached, and as he liked it, would they mind reading it? And when he brought the converts to join the church, I tell you that there never was any mother who showed her first-born child with such delight as he had when he said to me, "When can you see another, Sir? I have caught another, blessed be God!" Oh, if all of you with little ability or with great talents would try to live as Mr. Hobson, for Christ's sake, you would set your face like a flint in your holy resolve not to go to Heaven alone, feeling that you must have others to share its glories with you!

You barren Christian, I cannot bear to think of you remaining as you are, never having brought one soul to the Savior! What will you feel in Heaven when you get there? I have no doubt you will be happy, but there will be nobody to come up to you and say, "Blessed be God that I see you here, for you brought me to Jesus!" Oh, I am sorry for you, Brother, Sister! You will get up in a corner, all alone, I am afraid—I will try to come round your way, if I can, but I think that even in Heaven, those who have worked most for Christ will like to get together—and they will like to have around them a cluster of those of whom they can say to God, "Here am I and the children whom You have given me."

I must say just this closing word. There are some of you, working men, who come here, and who begin to fear the Lord. But when you get into the workshop, everybody jeers at you. Now, set your face like a flint and resolve not to mind it. I pray God that in the midst of the chaff and the foul language with which your ears will be assailed, you may be able to stand fast for God, even as Christ Jesus stood fast for you. The Lord bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C H. SPURGEON: ISAIAH 50.

This chapter might well have been written by our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, at the time when He was upon the earth.

Verse 1. *Thus says the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? Or which of My creditors is it to whom I have sold you?* There were some who said God had put away, like a divorced woman, His ancient people, that He had sold His children into slavery. But He says, "It is not so. Where is the bill of divorcement? To whom have I sold you?"

1. *Behold, for your iniquities have you sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.* That is to say, the nation, which was their mother, had lost the favor of God—not because of His fickleness, but because their sins had cried aloud for justice and for judgment.

It could not be that God should be in friendly relationship with such a people, so hypocritical, so false, so every way rebellious against Him!

2. *Why, when I came, was there no man? When I called, was there none to answer?* Christ came to this world at a time when there practically seemed to be none left on the earth who were good for anything. The Pharisees, who were, outwardly, the most religious of men, were proud formalists and base hypocrites—and the whole nation had gone astray from God, so that Christ might well ask, “When I came, why was there no man? When I called, why was there none to answer?”

2. *Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness—their fish stink because there is no water and die for thirst.* Here the Lord reminds them of what He did at the Red Sea. This same Christ, who came here and found none to answer to His call, is the true God who was the Redeemer of Israel. He led the tribes through the Red Sea, drying it up by the word of His mouth, that there might be a way for His ransomed to pass through! Yet, when this great Redeemer came to earth, as far as most of the men were concerned, there were none to welcome Him. Even though He came in love and tenderness, there were none to answer to Him.

3, 4. *I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakens Me morning by morning, He wakens My ears to hear as the learned.* Notice the wonderful contrast between the third verse and the fourth. It is the same, “I,” who says, “I clothe the heavens with blackness,” who becomes a scholar in God’s school and bows His ears to listen to the teachings of the Father! “Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience.” He was so great that He counted it not a prize to be grasped to be equal with God, dividing the sea, and covering the heavens with blackness, yet He condescended to take upon Himself the form of a Servant, and as a Servant He received His instructions from the great Lord of All.

5, 6. *The Lord GOD has opened My ears, and I was not rebellious, neither turned back. I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.* That same Divine One was, in due time, veiled in human flesh and, then, He who covered the heavens with blackness, gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair! Oh, wondrous condescension of our glorious Lord! I want you again to notice the contrast in this chapter—let me read two verses, one after another. “I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.” “I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.” I think anything I might say would only detract from the marvelous force of contrast which these words reveal between the Godhead and the Humanity of Christ!

7, 8. *For the Lord GOD will help Me; therefore I will not be disgraced: therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be*

ashamed. He is near that justifies Me; who will contend with Me? Let us stand together: who is My adversary? Let him come near to Me. Christ is innocent and, therefore, He defies all His accusers. Christ has suffered the penalty of the sin which He bore on our behalf, but He has so completely put it away that, notwithstanding our guilt, He defies all our accusers, and there rings through earth and Heaven this bold challenge, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”

9. *Behold, the Lord GOD will help Me; who is he that shall condemn Me? Lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.* The enemies of Christ shall all pass away. They shall be utterly destroyed. Now comes a blessed lesson for us. As Christ persevered in His great work even to the end, so let us do the same.

10. *Who is among you that fears the LORD, that obeys the voice of His Servant, that walks in darkness, and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and rely upon his God.* Let not the darkness keep you back any more than it did your Master—still go on, and rely upon your God.

11. *Behold, all you that kindle a fire.* Listen to this, you who live without God, yet think yourselves happy! You who have no hope of the great hereafter, yet are content with the present! “Behold, all you that kindle a fire”—

11. *That compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks that you have kindled. “Be happy while you may! Have ‘a short life and a merry one’ if that is your choice.”*

11. *This shall you have of My hand.* When your walking is done, see what will be the end of it—

11. *You shall lie down in sorrow.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—439, 942, 291.

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A BRIGHT LIGHT IN DEEP SHADES

NO. 1050

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 12, 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Hearken to me, you that follow after righteousness, you that seek the Lord. Look unto the rock where you are hewn, and to the hole of the pit where you are dug.”
Isaiah 51:1.

THE Israelites were commanded to remember all the ways which the Lord their God had led them in the wilderness. That precept was not given without reason. The remembrance of God's mercy in the past is helpful to us in many ways. To look back upon our past condition and upon the manner in which God befriended us at such times as we were reduced to sore straits will often prove salutary and bracing to our souls. For one thing, it tends to bring forth in us the meekness of wisdom. Should we become rich and increased in goods spiritually, it will humble us and keep us in our right place if we remember that once we were naked, poor and miserable.

Are we, today, rejoicing in the Lord, sitting down at our Father's table, enjoying the privileges of sonship? It will prevent our being proud if we remember that not long ago we gladly would have filled our belly with the husks that the swine ate, and in our rags and filth we were led to say, "I will arise, and go to my Father." Whenever, O child of God, you become self-complacent through beholding the excellence of your present estate, it will do you good to remember what you once were, how you have now become what you are, and to whom the glory of it is due. It will cool your hot blood, calm your feverish pulse and constrain you to bow in the dust of adoration before Him to whom your well-being, like your being, exclusively is due.

A remembrance of the past also will be sure to excite our thankfulness. God's people are always happy when they are grateful. We would be 10 times more full of bliss if we were proportionately more full of thankfulness. We bury God's mercies and then sigh for His comforts. If we remembered how near to Death's dark door we once laid, and how the gates of Hell were opened for us—and gladly would have closed upon us forever—we should bless that mighty arm which plucked us like brands from the burning, and adore that matchless Atonement which has delivered us from going down into the Pit because a ransom has been found!

If no other results came from a retrospect of our past condition but humility and thankfulness, these would be sufficient to justify the Prophet in bidding us look to the rock where we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit where we were dug. But, in this particular instance Isaiah had not in his mind's eye the cultivation either of humility or of gratitude. He was led by the Spirit of God to admonish the Israelites to look back for quite

another reason, though one of equal importance. It was this—that they might be cheered and encouraged in a time of gloom and sadness, and that they might be animated with fresh confidence in God’s power to bring them up again from their sad condition as they thought of all that He had done for them in times past, when they were equally low, or when, perhaps, they were even in a worse plight than they were at present.

Give ear, then, Beloved! Listen to this appeal, all you that follow after righteousness! There is a cheerful view for you if you will but look *back*—and brighter scenes will yet open up before you as you go forward! It is a great thing for people to be encouraged. Sometimes Satan makes the pendulum vibrate in one direction, and sometimes in another direction. If it swings this way, men become presumptuous in sin. Or, if he make it swing that way, they become desponding as to the pardon of their sin and the renewal of their heart. Quite as many souls are ruined by the latter as by the former. I desire, this morning, to speak so that every one of you that follows after righteousness and desires the Lord, may say, “There is hope for me, then. There is good cheer for me,” and with your face turned towards your Father’s house, may quicken your footsteps towards the place where pardon and love are awaiting you.

I. First, WE SHALL EXPOUND THE TEXT WITH GREAT BREVITY IN ITS APPLICATION TO ISRAEL LITERALLY. They are bid to look back to the origin of their nation, in order that they may be comforted. Abraham was the stock out of which the nation of Israel came. He was only one man. “Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bore you, for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.” He was a single individual. His wife and he made up but one family. One tent enclosed them—and yet the Lord said to him, “I will make of you a great nation; and I will bless you, and you shall be a blessing, and in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

Yes, more, the Lord said to him, “I will establish My Covenant between Me and you, and your seed after you, in their generations for an everlasting Covenant.” And God bade Abraham look towards Heaven and count the stars, and He said, “So shall your seed be.” A progeny that should be like the innumerable sand upon the seashore was assured to the Patriarch and Sarah, his wife! Moreover, the man was old, well stricken in years, and we read concerning him that his body was now dead—that is to say, he was too far advanced in years to be likely to become the progenitor of a race. As for his wife, she also, it is said, was barren.

And yet, from these two, who seemed the least likely of all flesh and blood, God was pleased to create a people countless as the stars! Abraham was not a man in a commanding position, with large armies at his feet who could make a show in the world. He was a dweller in tents, a Bedouin sheik, wandering through the plains of Palestine—yet he was never injured—for God had sent forth a secret mandate, which fell, though they knew it not, upon men’s hearts, “Touch not My anointed, and do My Prophets no harm.” And though in many cases it seemed as if this embryo of a race might have been crushed, and become extinct, yet Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, must live

on—they must survive because God's promise was that He would make a great nation out of these few men and women.

Now, the Prophet turns to the Israelites, and he says, "You say God can never restore us—we have been thinned out by innumerable invasions—the sword of war has slain the tribes. Judah and Israel can never rise again. But are there not more left of you than there were at first? There were but two, Abraham and Sarah, that bore you, and yet God made you a people! Can He not make you a people again? You are not lower, now, than you were then. You say that you are in poverty—true, but these, your progenitors, were not great in the earth. You say that you have no strength, that the men of valor have ceased, and that you are not skillful in the use of arms. Be it so. Neither were your first ancestors expert in war—they were but few and feeble in the land—yet God preserved them!

He worked great deliverances for them, and brought the country to great strength and power! And cannot He who did this for them do the same again for you, now that He promises to visit you and to restore you? I think you see that the thoughts which would be awakened in the heart of a Jew by these reflections would be eminently consolatory. They ought to be consolatory to us now with regard to the Jewish people. They are scattered—behold them wandering on the face of the earth without a country of their own. They are a people who have been oppressed and downtrodden almost beyond belief. The hand of the heathen and the hand of the so-called Christian has been very heavy upon them—they have been jeered and hooted at for ages—though they are, in truth, the very nobles of God, and their ancient lineage is like that of kings.

Let us not, however, despair for them. Abraham, their father, was but a heathen when God called him out of a family that had worshipped the seraphs and made him to be a witness of the living and true God, and honored his faith with exceedingly great rewards. Doubt not, then, that He can call Israel again from all her wanderings, cleanse her from all her profane traditions and her unbelief and separate her unto Himself to be a holy people in whom, once again, His power shall be made known! And it shall be made known in such a way that they shall not speak of the ark of the Lord, or the redemption out of Egypt as the chief symbol of their national glory or the grand theme of their patriotic song—for a greater redemption and a greater manifestation of the Divine Presence shall be in the midst of Israel than the wilderness of Sinai had ever known, or the mountains round about Jerusalem have ever witnessed!

God grant it to them, and hasten the fulfillment of the promises in which He has made us to hope. We are encouraged from the very origin of Israel to hope that great things shall yet be done for her.

II. But now, secondly, our text may be used in reference to the **CONDITION OF THE CHURCH, THE CHURCH OF GOD IN THE WORLD.** Let us look back to the rock where we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit where Christ's Church was dug. We shall see great encouragement under present discouragements if we do so. I know many of the people of God who scarcely dare look for brighter times because they say the people of God are few. Nominal professors abound, but vital godliness, they say, where shall we find it?

Behold, the faithful servants of the Most High are become like the gleanings of the grapes when the vintage is over! The spirit of Elijah in some Christians, while it makes them very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, makes them very uncharitable towards His people, and they say, "Only I am left, and they seek my life to take it away." Do I hear the bitter complaint of some Brother who is afflicted with the belief that there now are very few good and gracious people? Perhaps he may have sound reasons for his apprehensions in the Church with which he is connected, seeing that through many circumstances it may have been thinned and brought very low in numbers. My dear Brother, hope in your God! Trust in Christ! Cry mightily for the Spirit! Work heartily for a revival and have confidence in the power of the Gospel, for was not the Church very small at the first?

It could all be contained in one upper room! Has it not been very small many times since then? Had you looked well all over the Continent of Europe and been able to read all men's hearts, how very few of the faithful would you have found in the days of Huss, or Jerome of Prague! Here and there a godly monk in his cell had found the Savior. Here and there simple-minded men and women had heard the good tidings of the Cross, as it were, by chance, and rejoiced. But the people of God were very scant—so few, a little child might count them. They were like the trees of the woods when the axe has passed through and through the forest. But did not the Lord strengthen His Church in the Apostolic times? How speedily did the 120 grow to three thousand!

How soon had the 3,000 been scattered over the world and multiplied a hundredfold! How soon had all nations felt the growing power of the Church! And, in the Dark Ages, how very speedily did the time of the singing of birds come! How sweetly was the voice of the turtle heard in our land, and in all lands! God had but to speak by His servant, Luther, and brave men came to his side and right soon His Church sprang up. Though she is built of costly stones and hewn stones, and abides for the ages, yet she sprang up as though she had been the offspring of a dream, and like the gourd which comes up in a night, for the Lord was with her and He worked marvelously. Look back, then, if discouraged with the fewness of God's people—to the rock where the Church was hewn!

But, is it possible, you ask, while the Church of God in these days possesses so few men of influence, so few of the nobility throughout the land? Those that follow after Christ are, for the most part, recruited from the poor or the middle classes. The men of literary repute, where are they? Are they not opposed to the Gospel? Men of station and of rank—do they not look down with contempt upon the followers of the simple faith of Christ? There are no kings, nor princes, nor great ones of the earth to hold the standard and unfurl the banner of the Cross. But, dry your tears—yes—let them not even spring to your eyes, for this is a small matter of regret! Was it not said that it should be as of old? Did not Inspiration say, "Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty have been called, but God has chosen the poor of this world"?

Do you suppose that God has changed His plans, or that men's hearts have changed their bias? It will be so to the end of the chapter! Nor must

we expect otherwise. Albeit, when the Gospel spreads broadly and grows mightily, there will be more of all classes comprehended in it. Yet God looks not to the greatness of men, neither shall the triumph of the Gospel ever owe anything of its good speed to the prowess of man—the wealth of his intellect, the spell of his eloquence—or the multitude of his possessions. The Lord, alone, is to be exalted, and He will establish His right by multiplying His people from a class that shall not be able to claim eminence among the sons of men. Look, then, to the rock from where you were hewn, and you will no longer sorrow for lack of men of great influence and high standing.

“But alas,” one says, “I see grave cause for sorrow, even for sorrow like the lamentation of Jeremiah at the gates of Jerusalem, for in these days many have departed from the faith, and the Truth of God lies in the streets bespattered.” Alas, it is to be confessed that it is even so. False teaching is varnished with fair words. Lies long exploded are brought into the Church again. Error is taught in our pulpits—covered over with new phrases—and heresies that were once slain have had a resurrection and are living among us. You see in one Church rampant popery—popery maintained by men who eat the bread of a Protestant Church! You see in another place every doctrine of our holy faith practically denied by men who occupy the pulpits of the old Puritans.

We have certainly fallen upon evil days in this respect, nor do I think it would be possible for a man to be too censorious in the statement of this fact. The times are dark and ominous, and thick clouds are gathering. But for all this there is no room for fear—there is no place for trembling. Put not your hand upon the Ark of the Lord, like Uzzah, for God will preserve it—it is safe in His keeping. Look back to the pit where we have been dug. There have been eras and epochs in which gross heresies spread a contagion through the entire Church.

The period at which Arianism was so prominent comes at once to our recollection. That Christ was merely a man was almost the universal belief of Christendom. Only a few faithful ones maintained His Godhead at all hazards. But yet, today, where is Arianism? It has gone among the moles and the bats—the few that held the Truth of God survived the deadly epidemic and won the victory after all. God was with them, and in His name they became triumphant—and it will be so again. Error is like a hydra, as quickly as we cut off one of its heads another comes up in its place. But we must keep on killing till the last is slain.

In the Dark Ages, Romanism was not only predominant, but it seemed to be and it really was all but universal—yet by the bright shining of His revealed Word, did not God soon chase away the dense shades of ignorance and superstition? Once the sound was heard, “By the works of the Law there shall no flesh be justified.” “Being justified by faith we have peace with God.” Then the rolling thunder of that Gospel shook the Vatican and very soon its power over the nations had passed away never to be predominant again. So will it be again. Let us not fear, we have the same God, we have the same Gospel, we have the same Holy Spirit to make the Gospel effectual against error—we may say the virgin daughter of Zion has shaken her head at you, and laughed you to scorn, for the

Lord of Hosts is with her, the God of Jacob is her refuge, therefore shall she not fear.

Again, I hear the voice of lamentation from some Brother who cries, "It is not merely that error spreads in the land, but the Church is lukewarm in these times. Jesus does not seem to be loved as once He was. The heroic spirit, the martyr spirit, has departed from us. Christians seek to get gain and wrap themselves up in garments of fine linen and fare sumptuously every day. They are as earthly and as carnal as the rest of mankind. How is the fine gold become dim, how is the most fine gold changed!" Here, again, the warmest advocate for the Church must confess that the indictment is true. This is a lukewarm age. "I would you were either cold or hot," might be addressed to the Churches of this day as justly as to the Church of Laodicea.

We will neither insist upon it, nor bring proofs about it, nor will we argue against it—but we will admit the charge just as the accuser brings it—and what then? Though I see much cause for our grieved feelings, I see still no cause for our being dispirited. The Church has been in a like listless state before, and out of that languid condition God has roused her up and brought her forth. I am sure I need not unroll a page of history and ask you to glance your eye down it except for a second—for again and again you will see it has occurred that the Church has fallen asleep and her ministers have become as mute inglorious neuters—destitute of zeal, having no ardent passion and giving themselves up to no arduous enterprise. But it is only needed once more for God to make bare His arm, and His Church will be full of life and of power—renewing the vigor of youth—abounding in hope and intrepid in courage!

Must you have a modern instance? Think of the days of Wesley and Whitefield. When they began to preach, gross darkness had covered this land. They did not appear to be the men who were likely to remove the veil that covered the nation, yet God used their very feebleness and eccentricity. He used everything about the men to be the means of restoring the Church, reinforcing her ranks and augmenting her energies. Therefore, be of good cheer! Though the Church should slip and slide again, and disgrace herself by her lack of zeal, yet she is the spouse of Christ—and He will not divorce her—He will turn to her in mercy yet again!

There is a complaint made by some, and I fear there is some truth in it, that we have not many valiant ministers nowadays. Godly men will say if we had a Luther, then we might hope—if anywhere within the horizon we could find a man like Howe or Baxter—then we might be of good courage. But where are the champions for the Gospel now? We are a race of pigmies, they say, and the time of the giants has long since gone by. Perhaps so. It is likely enough, but for all that, there have been periods in the Church's history when she lacked men of valor and God has found them! Why should He not find them again? The Apostles were certainly eminent, but their fame was, to a great extent, posthumous—they were not eminent in the judgment of their own generation.

There seemed to be in the early Church no very remarkable person who was all on fire to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth. But one who

had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel—a Pharisee of the Pharisees, a persecutor of the Church. A man of great learning, a man of mighty reasoning faculties—an extraordinary man, one of the greatest men that God ever endowed with gifts—was summoned into the field of service! In a moment the Lord arrested that man, for He had need of him, and at the gates of Damascus He converted him by Grace and called him to be an Apostle! Nor was he a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles! And he became renowned among the sons of men for the brightness of the Revelation he received—for the magnitude of the labor he performed—and for the intensity of the sufferings he endured.

The Lord can work as extraordinary a miracle of Grace at this very hour! If He willed it, He could take from among the cardinals a man who should preach Christ's Gospel! He could find among the priests that now abhor Him, men that should be from now on so full of faith and power that their adversaries could not resist the wisdom and spirit by which they speak! Yes, and not from these only, but in the slums of Whitechapel and the dark corners of the Seven Dials, God could find a Paul and a Barnabas. From the very highest of the population, or from the lowest, whichever He willed, He could raise up men that should defend the Truth and carry the banner of the Cross into the very heart of the foe! Let us not fear! He that made the earth and man that is upon it, can make men for His Church! There are live coals upon the altar, still, and there are still seraphs to bring them to touch stammering lips and say to men who before had been silent, "Lo! This has touched your lips. Go and preach the Gospel in Jehovah's name, and the signs of His Grace shall follow."

Brethren, I see nothing whatever to discourage us when I look back upon the past—I see the days of the present at once transmuted into signs of hope. I know there is much to deplore, but so there always has been. I know there are hills to be leveled, and leveled they shall be. I know there are valleys to be filled up, and filled up they shall be. I know there are crooked things, but they shall be made straight! And there are rough places, but they shall be made plain. If the Gospel's progress were always smooth and easy, where were the glory of it?

But, inasmuch as the Church meets with opposition at her every step, this mighty maid that God has sent into the world armed from head to foot shall fight her way through the midst of all her enemies—and Truth and Righteousness, her sisters, shall go with her even to that Throne that shall be set up above the hills, on which she shall reign as queen in the midst of the people.

III. I leave that point because I am anxious to dwell upon another. **OUR TEXT MAY BE VIEWED AS INSTRUCTIVE TO OURSELVES.** Beloved Brothers and Sisters, our experience varies. Probably some of you may not be able to sympathize with an experience I am about to describe. I am sorry to say I am very cognizant of it and I am afraid that there are many here who know as much about it as I do, perhaps more. It sometimes happens to men who are truly saved and resting upon Christ, that they fall from the condition which they occupied when they were in their first love, and they get into a state of which I must give you some particulars.

They will say, "I have lost all enjoyment of religion. I could once sing for joy of heart in the precious love of Christ. When I went to the House of God the Word was like music to my ears. When I bowed the knee in prayer it was delightful to speak with my heavenly Father—

***'What peaceful hours I then enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still.'***

"But I do not enjoy these sacred exercises now. I follow after them. God forbid I should ever give them up. Still I am afraid there is very much that is mechanical in my devotion. Certainly I have not much inward peace. Alas, that I must confess it, my feelings seem to have become dull and blunt! At one time I wept if I thought I had sinned. The least touch of sin grieved me, I was like a sensitive plant—the very brush of evil I felt. But now, Sir, I cannot feel! Oh, what would I give for the tenderness of years gone by! I sometimes think—

***'If anything is felt, 'tis only pain,
To think I cannot feel.'***

"I read the story of Christ's death without a tear, and I think of sinners perishing without the shudder that used to thrill every nerve of my body. At one time it would have broken my heart, but now I treat it as a matter of course. Not only is the joy gone, but other Graces which were apt to bloom now droop as if there were a blight among all the flowers in the garden of my soul." Such a one may say, "I do not doubt the faithfulness of God, but I am afraid I have no interest in it. I do not doubt the power of Jesus' precious blood to cleanse from sin, but I am afraid I never had any faith in that precious blood, and that I cannot be one of His disciples. I feel, oh, I cannot tell you how—it is like a dead calm in my spirit—

***'No stir in the air, no stir in the sea,
The ship was as still as a ship might be.'***

"And so is my soul, till it seems to be like the deep described in Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner'—

'The very deep did rot,'

"Alas, that ever this should be! My soul seems in that awful calm, as though every good thing were rotting within her and I cannot help myself."

Well, dear Friend, I need you to follow the counsel of my text, "Look to the rock where you were hewn, and to the pit where you were dug." I need you to look back to what you once were. Time was when you were all you are now, but you did not know the wretchedness of it. You then loved sin, and the wages of it, and you found pleasure in your evil pursuits. It is not so with you now. Then you were an enemy to God by wicked works, and far off from Him. There was no heaving within your spirit, no desire for better things. Not only had you no feeling, but you did not *need* to have any feeling—you would rather not have had any, whereas now you would be glad enough if the Spirit of God would visit you again and rekindle the fire which has almost gone out.

Why, in those days, your sins had never been acknowledged nor confessed, and were not pardoned—they were heaped upon you, then, with all their aggravations. But you were brought by the precious power of Grace to wash in the "fountain filled with blood." My dear Brother. My dear Sister—why cannot you be washed again? What reason is there why the Lord should not bring you, a second time, to Himself and make you

stand and weep again at the Cross—weep for very *joy* because your sins were laid upon the Lord Jesus and were put to death in His death? Your state is bad, but it is not what it was! Oh, blessed be God, if I cannot feel, at least I *want* to feel! And if I cannot pray as I would, at any rate, I long to pray! And, if I cannot clasp Christ in my arms and say, “I have seen Your salvation,” I may say I shall never be happy till I do!

If I cannot, everyday, sit at His table, yet I know I cannot feel at home anywhere else! If Jesus is not mine, yet will I never be content till He shall be mine, for I will seek Him—and if I perish I will perish still crying to Him, “God be merciful to me.” Your present condition is not what your past one was, and yet the Lord visited you when in your lost estate! Beloved, there is the same God today as there was when you first sought Him. Your Father did welcome you with abounding love when you first came to Him confessing your sins. His heart is not hardened towards you—return to Him, for He will receive you yet again! There is the same purpose in God’s heart, now, as there was then. Then He resolved to save you, and He did. He never changes His resolve to save you. You are under the same Covenant as you were—it was not a covenant of works but of pure Grace!

He loved you because He would love you, and He saved you not because there was any good in you, for there was none! And He will place you now upon the same terms—He will receive you graciously and love you freely, for His anger is turned away from you. There is the same Savior today as there was then. Jesus revealed Himself to you as having bled in your place—His blood has not lost its efficacy, neither has He cast away the people whom He has redeemed. And remember there is the same Spirit now that there was then. It melted you then, it can melt you now. It wounded you then, it can wound you now. It healed you then, it can heal you now. The Spirit has not lost His might nor lost His love. He still can work upon you according to the wonders of His Grace.

“If,” says the Apostle, “when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” If the enemy were brought in, shall not the child be kept in? If when I had no thoughts of God He had thoughts of me, will He not think of me now? If when I strove against His Grace He constrained me with His sweet attractions, will He not visit me now? If I feel dead today, yet when I was dead as the dry bones of the valley years ago and the breath of His Spirit came upon me and made me to live, why should I dispute the power, the Grace of my Heavenly Father?

My dear Brothers and Sisters, when the Lord first looked upon you in love, and you had not even a trace of any goodness in you, was it not all Grace? Did not He deal with you just on this footing—“I mean to save this undeserving wretch just because I will, and for no other reason”? Will you listen to me for one minute? God will deal with you today just as He dealt with you the first day! You fancy that you have got under a Covenant of Works, some of you. You think the Lord will not love you unless you are faithful. The old Hagar covenant, which genders bondage is enthralling you! The fact is He did not see anything good in you at first and He does not discern any merit in you now! That has nothing to do with His eternal

purpose to save you—He saves you because He will do it! Because He will love you He loves you, and not for anything else!

If I thought the Lord only loved me because He saw some beauty in me, I should know it was only He who had put it there, and I should fear that it would fade in an hour or two and then He would despise my image. But, when I know that He has chosen us in Christ Jesus, and that the beauty He sees in *us* is the beauty of *Christ*, and not any natural charm of our own, then I see His love stands on a stable foundation that cannot be shaken, even the Covenant of Grace, which will stand when yon sky and this poor earth shall both have gone! The Lord our God will rest in His love because He loves us on the blessed terms of His own will and His own Grace. When the Lord first saved you, was there anything in you to help or assist?

A poor man once told his minister that the Holy Spirit did much for Him and he did the rest. “And pray, what did you do,” said the minister. “Why,” said he, “the Holy Spirit did it all, and I stood in His way—that was all I did.” And I can truly say that was all I could do in my own salvation. He did it all from first to last! There was nothing in me to help Him. Suppose there is nothing in me to help now, even so I am not in a worse plight than I was then, and so, as I look to the hole of the pit where I was dug, my soul takes comfort! It was a dead lift then, it is a dead lift now. Grace had to do it all then and Grace must do it all now! And, if the eternal and ever-blessed God could save a dead sinner, a hateful sinner, a hardhearted, loathsome sinner that despised Christ, and could bring him to the foot of the Cross, why, then, blessed be His name! He can save him now that he stands at the same hallowed spot, and says, “Jesus, my All, I trust in You.”

There is much comfort to be had in looking to the rock where we were hewn.

IV. But now, to close, I think OUR TEXT MAY BE FITTINGLY USED TO ENCOURAGE OUR HOPE FOR OTHERS. I thank God that I have a working Church about me, and that the most of you are engaged in soul-winning. Brethren, launch this afternoon into the deep and let down your nets for a catch! Let not this day pass over your heads till you have lovingly sought to introduce to the Savior someone who has been a stranger to Him. Suffer not any thoughts about the character of the person you are brought in contact with to dampen your ardor. Do you say of some sinner, “I am afraid his is a hopeless case”?

My dear Brothers and Sisters, look unto the rock where *you* were hewn, and to the hole of the pit where you were dug! Where is that sinner? I will tell you. He is where the whole race is naturally. What sort of a sinner is he? I have his likeness drawn here—if you turn to Romans 3, you will see the photograph of the man you are intended to bless, “There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one.” That poor sinner is where *all* other sinners are! He is without any goodness. The imagination of the thoughts of his heart are evil, only evil, and that continually—and there is nothing in the individual that you are sent to,

this afternoon, that is at all unusual—he is in the same Fall where our father Adam left him!

He was born in the same corruption. There is the same evil in his heart—no more, no less—and therefore you must go to him with that upon your mind. Remember, too, that the sinner is where *you* were. You look down and see him in a horrible pit—it looks a long way down, and the pit is full of mud and mire and dirt. He is not deeper down than you were—at least the sinner who is further gone than I was must be an extraordinary one! Though not in outward actions, yet in my inward soul I was as far from God as any man could be not to be actually in Hell! And yet His Grace has brought me near. Since the Lord saved *me* I never despair of *anybody*—and I think there are some of you, who, in your olden times, before you knew the Lord, were perhaps given to actual vice and sin and have been reclaimed. And I am sure when you go out to talk to sinners that are now what you were, you may very well feel, “The Lord that saved me can save them. The Gospel that came with power to my soul can come with power to their souls, and therefore I will go to them remembering the hole of the pit where I was dug, and feel encouraged concerning them.”

Remember, again, that that poor sinner whose soul you are going to seek this afternoon is where the best and brightest of the saints were. Peter was there! Paul was there! They were all in the same condemnation. By nature they were all heirs of wrath such as that sinner is. In all the glorious company of the Apostles, the noble army of the martyrs, and the goodly fellowship of the Prophets there is never one that was not born in sin as that sinner is, and prone to break God’s Laws—and all alike needed the eternal power and Godhead of Christ to put forth all its strength—or else *none* of them would have been saved!

And remember that that sinner you are going to speak with this afternoon, perhaps a child in your class, perhaps a drunkard in the street, is, today, where those that are in Heaven once were! Their robes are white, but they washed them in the blood of the Lamb! They are without fault, but they were once under condemnation! There is nothing to prevent the Lord from taking the drunk, the blasphemer, the adulterer, yes, and the murderer, and washing such in the fountain that is open for sin and uncleanness, and robing them in the immaculate garment and making them to take their place among the host of the blessed at the right hand of the Eternal Throne! Be of good comfort, and if you ever do despair of any, look to the rock where you were hewn and the hole of the pit where you were dug.

Of all the saints that ever were saved there was nothing in their human nature, physical or mental, that aided their salvation—nothing! Some of them were more moral than others, but their whole head was sick and their whole heart faint—they were *all* lost, utterly lost, utterly undone! It was the work of the Spirit in every case and of the Spirit, *alone*. But, on the other hand, in the case of no soul has there ever been found any evil power which has absolutely been able to defeat the Spirit of God when He has put forth His Omnipotence! It is impossible to conceive of anything that can resist the Spirit of God when He operates on the heart with

purpose and with power! His ordinary ministrations are resisted, and effectually, too—but when He puts forth His might to quicken the dead—in that regenerating operation He works, and what is there that can stand against Him?

In the case of every soul that was saved, God's only revealed motive was His Grace—He saved the man not because he deserved it, not because it would be any advantage to God to save him—but simply because He delights in mercy, and He has put it on record—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Now, in bad cases there is the same room for Divine Grace. And when the man is deeply sunk in sin, it will glorify the mercy of God all the more to save him, and therefore I would rather expect that man to be saved than gather from his sin that he was unlikely to be blessed of God. I would go with confidence to the chief of sinners if I knew him. I would preach to him the Savior, Christ the Lord, and bid him look to Him, and I would hope that God would bless that word to him, none the less, because he *had* become so ingrained in sin and so rank in corruption!

Brothers and Sisters, I am sure it will be a great help to you in working for God at any time if you keep in remembrance what the Lord has done for *you*. Have it fresh on your own mind. Oh, we never teach so well as when we teach from the heart! We never preach so well as when we preach about what we, ourselves, have experienced, dipping every word in gratitude to God for what we have known and received from Him! I have heard of a lady who on one occasion was out in the street walking. The frost was severe, the snow was deep, and she felt so keenly for the poor that she resolved that when she got home she would write a check and have the money distributed to provide them with food and fuel.

After a short time she reached her home and sat down by the fireside. She felt so extremely warm and comfortable that she thought, after all, it would be a pity to waste money on the poor, for she had no doubt whatever if they kept by the fire. The cold was not so severe as she had imagined. Now, there are some of us who have got to be very comfortable in our religion—we sit down in it. It would be a great mercy for us, and probably a mercy for thousands of others if we were made to go out and feel the old discomfort and to know, once again, what we were and where we were before the Lord brought us into the house of His mercy and sat us down before the fire of His love! Oh, it is a dreadful thing because one feels happy, himself, to have no care for the souls of others!

I earnestly pray you to live today as if you were only saved today! Go and try to bring others to Christ as if your own conversion had only been accomplished five minutes ago—with the blood fresh upon you—just fallen warm from those dear wounds. Go as if your sin was just gone and your soul astonished at the miraculous change worked in you! Go as if the love of God were just newly shed abroad in your own soul, in all the freshness of new-found love, and all the recollection of the sorrow and the sin from which you have just escaped. Oh, if you so went, God would bless you, and many souls would be saved to the praise of the glory of His Grace! Amen.

A LOOK AND ITS LESSONS

NO. 3194

A SERMON
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 12, 1873.**

***“Hearken to Me, you that follow after righteousness, you that seek the LORD: look unto the rock where you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit where you were dug.”
Isaiah 51:1.***

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text, is #1050, Volume 18—
A BRIGHT LIGHT IN DEEP SHADES —

Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

THESE words were addressed to those who were already the people of God. No others could be thus exhorted to look unto the rock where they were hewn, since they have never been hewn from it. Nor to the hole of the pit where they were dug, for they still are in the hole of the pit. They are lost and ruined and they still remain in that condition. But the people of God have been broken off that rock by a blow from the Divine hammer. They have been brought up from the horrible pit by the might of the Divine arm and their feet are now firmly fixed upon the Rock of Ages!

The people of God are here described as those “that follow after righteousness.” That is the direction in which their life generally flows. They are not perfect, but they want to be. They do not love that which is unrighteous, but they desire to be right in all things both before God and before men. They are also said to be those “that seek the Lord,” that is to say, they are those who could not live without seeking the Lord in prayer, or in public or private worship. Their great objective in life is to glorify God, to make Him famous among the sons of men—and they desire to devote all their time, talents and powers of every kind to His service and honor!

It is to such privileged people as these that the message of our text is addressed! And surely they will give good heed to it. Yet the form in which the message is put implies that there is need for a special call to attention. Lest those who are addressed should fail to attend as earnestly as they ought, the command, “Hearken to me,” puts the message before them in urgent and impressive tones. Come then, Beloved, and listen to it and let your inmost souls hear what the text has to say to you—“Look unto the rock where you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit where you were dug.”

So, first, *let us look where we are told to look.* And secondly, *let us learn the lessons which that look is intended to teach us.*

I. First, then, LET US LOOK WHERE WE ARE TOLD TO LOOK—“unto the rock where you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit where you were dug.”

Look back then, first of all, to your *nature's origin in the Garden of Eden*. Look at that man and woman perfect in beauty, without blemish from head to foot, and altogether spotless in mind and heart as they came fresh from their Creator's hands! They are placed in a garden which is as perfect as they are. All that is fragrant to the smell, gratifying to the taste and lovely to the eyes, they have in the greatest profusion. The man's easy task was to dress and keep the garden which would have spontaneously yielded all that he and his required. And the tenure upon which he might have held that fair estate for himself and his heirs forever was very simple and clear—“Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die.” To eat of that tree would show that man had revolted from his allegiance to his Sovereign, that he had ceased to depend upon the God who had created him and set up on his own account. And it would be, in fact, a declaration of war by finite man against the Infinite Jehovah! Alas for us that our first parents were not immune from temptation! Mother Eve, deceived by the serpent, took of the forbidden fruit and ate of it and gave some to her husband, and he also ate of it—and then their eyes were opened and they perceived that they were naked to their shame before God—and they hid themselves when they heard His voice in the garden in the cool of the day.

Poor Adam, he was our Covenant head and there could not have been a Covenant that would have been more easy to keep—only leave the fruit of that one tree alone—and you and all your descendants shall enjoy perpetual happiness! Only be obedient to the God who made you, and you shall bring upon yourself and all your posterity continual holiness and joy! It is foolish for anyone to complain because Adam was made our representative, for had we all been present to chose the man who would stand as our federal head, we would certainly have selected Adam, for there has never been another man so well qualified as he was for such a responsible position. Yet, perfect man as he was, he fell—and terrible was the result of that fall both for himself and for all his posterity! Out of the garden he must go for he was no longer fit to remain in such a paradise as Eden was—and he must go where he would learn, by painful experience, the effects of his sin—where the earth would bring forth thorns and thistles and its scanty harvests (compared with the abundance of Eden) would only be gained by long and toilsome labor. This was a necessary discipline of love which was enforced by the very mercy of God, since Adam's nature was no longer what it had been before. He began by doubting the truth of God's word and then he went further and imagined that he might do as he pleased, and be his own god—that he might disobey God and yet be a gainer, for he believed the lie of the serpent—“You shall not surely die, for God knows that in the day you eat thereof, then

your eyes shall be opened and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

Our earthly father had set himself up as a rival to our Father in Heaven! And because he was our representative, we were all doomed to be born into this world rebellious in our very nature, prone to evil even from our birth. You, child of God, stand tonight at the foot of the Cross, “accepted in the Beloved,” but look back to the place where you once stood in the person of your representative, the first Adam. You then stood outside the Garden of Eden, and sorrowfully gazed upon the “flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the Tree of Life.” You do not fear that sword, now, for it has been sheathed in your Savior’s heart, and its flames have been quenched in His blood. And therefore you can now stand at the foot of the Cross and, by-and-by, you shall stand at the gates of pearl—no, more—you shall pass through that gate and stand before the Throne of the Eternal, a soul reclaimed, restored, perfected and made meet to dwell forever with the thrice-holy One! But while you think of your present privileges and of the bliss that is in store for you, do not forget to look back “unto the rock where you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit where you were dug.” Let us now look back and see our original in another light.

Let us look at *human nature as it is now* and see how it became tainted by our first parents. But when I say, “Let us look at human nature as it is now,” I remember that this is a sight which I am unable to reveal to you in all its horrors, for man, by nature, is exceedingly sinful and “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually.” Our heart, by nature, is a very forge of the devil—and when man speaks blasphemy, it is but the sparks flying out of the forge! And when he works iniquities, these are but the glowing coals which Satan has fanned into a flame. “The prince of the power of the air...now works in the children of disobedience, among whom we, also, all had our conversation in times past,” whatever change Divine Grace may have worked in us. Remember, Believer in Jesus, that your heart was, by nature, as black as the heart of Judas! Whatever sin there may have been in any other man, the germ of that sin was in your nature—there was no superiority about you, by nature, to any other member of the human race. However excellent your parents may have been—and God forbid that I should disparage them—it is still true, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” It must be so. From defilement—and that is in the parents—there can only come defilement. There cannot be a crystal stream from an impure fountain!

Your nature, then, whatever God may have made it now, was that of a fallen being, a revolted being, one who had gone astray from God. The heart is, naturally, a cage of unclean birds, a den of evil beasts. And he who has been taught to see all its abominations is the most horrified at them! We read of the fountains of the great deep that were broken up in the days of Noah, but there are deeps of iniquity and transgression in every human heart, which, if they were not restrained by education, by

the laws of the land and by the voice of conscience, would pour forth in a terrible flood that would ruin the sinner and ruin society at the same time! “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” We never do know it until the Spirit of God convinces us of sin, of righteousness and of judgment—and it is well for Christians, who have been thus taught of the Spirit, oftentimes to look back to the rock where they were hewn, and to the hole of the pit where they were dug.

Now let us look back upon *human nature as it has been seen in the history of mankind*. What a strange creature man is! How near akin to Deity when Divine Grace changes his whole nature—how near akin to devilry when he is left to himself! What crimes are there that men have not committed? The true story of the human race is a disgrace to us all. You cannot read the history of mankind without discovering the fact that for cruelty to men, no beast has ever equaled man and that for perfidy, treachery, and deceit, no serpent with its cunning, its fascination and its deadly venom can be compared with man! What fierce lion, ranging across the plains of Africa, has ever been equal in destructive force to a conqueror at the head of a victorious army? And what cobra, lurking by the wayside, ready to slay its victim, has ever been so full of venom as certain men have shown in the pursuit of their ambitions, utterly careless of the lives and happiness of their fellow men? There have been men who have let loose the cruel dogs of war and waded through rivers of human blood that they might sit upon a throne! The great ones of the earth have perpetrated horrible infamies and the lowest of the low have not been a whit better when the power has been in their hands. Sin has reigned equally among princes and peasants and every man, unless renewed by Grace, is capable of committing any crime that other men have committed! Some of you doubt that assertion and feel inclined to say what Hazael said to Elisha when the Prophet foretold what he would do when he had the power, “What? Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?” He did not believe that it was possible that he should do such deeds, yet he did them when he had the opportunity—and none of us know what we might have done if we had been placed in the positions that others have occupied and had been exposed to the temptations that assailed them. If the Grace of God has saved us, let us be the last people in the world to begin boasting! But, looking back upon the crimes of which others have been guilty, let us contemplate what we might have done if we had not been Divinely restrained—and so let us again look back unto the rock where we were hewn, and unto the hole of the pit where we were dug.

I must come still more closely home as I earnestly invite all here who love the Lord to look back upon *what we were and what we did in our unregenerate condition*. Some of us may well hide our faces and hold our tongues as we think of what we did before we were converted, “whereof we are now ashamed.” Some here can remember the time when “the seat of the scornful” was loved by them and they had not learned to love the place they now occupy in God’s House and among His people. Lips that

are now consecrated to the praise of God were then defiled with oaths and blasphemies. Blessed be God for saving the gross open offenders, “and such were some of you: but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” As you look back to that horrible pit, bless the name of the Lord that He brought you up out of it!

Others of us who were graciously restrained by God from falling into the grosser vices, can never look back without tears to our unregenerate days. We did evil as far as we could and if we did not go further into it, it was because there were blessed checks that held us in and even those bonds and restraints we hated and would have broken them had we dared to do so! How grieved we are now that we should ever have resisted as we did the appeals of Divine Mercy, the strivings of the Spirit, the admonitions of our godly parents and the warnings of Christian friends! However painful the process may be, I ask every Brother and Sister here to look back unto the rock where they were hewn, and to the hole of the pit where they were dug. It is very easy for you to get conceited and proud, but it would help to preserve you from such folly and sin if you would only remember what you used to be before the Grace of God made such a change in you. Then you would not want to sing to your own praise and glory, but you would walk humbly before the Lord and give all the honor to Him for what Divine has worked in you. This will make it a most profitable exercise for us to look back to see what we were before our conversion.

There is only one more look that I ask you to give, and that is the saddest and most terrible of all—*look, as far as you can, at the state of the lost*. There is a land of darkness and of the shadow of death where the very light is as darkness, and where despair reigns supreme. There are no sights to be seen in that land but such as cause the eyes to weep. And no sounds to be heard but such as grate upon the ears, for He who knows all about it has told us that there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth in that dead world of the lost! Stand at a distance from that place where the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever—and if you can bear it, try to think what must be the condition of spirits that are at this moment, while you are sitting here, banished from the Presence of God and condemned to reap the results of the deeds done in the body! Think, also, that but for Divine Grace, we would have been there too. There are some here, who but for a special interposition of Providence might have been there now! Had that fever proved fatal, you would have been there, my Friend! Had that vessel veered just a little from her course in that dense fog, you, being unregenerate, would have been there to weep and wail forever! There is one who, before his conversation, was at death’s door and at Hell’s gate scores of times. I want you, my Brother, to think of that, and then you will say, “Had it not been for Divine Grace, I would have been this night among those lost spirits instead of being here among my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, rejoicing in what the Lord has done for me and praising and magnifying His holy

name!" Great as is the distance between the heights of Heaven and the depths of Hell, as great is the Lord's mercy toward you whom He has redeemed. So, looking away even to the abode of the lost, and trying to realize from how terrible a doom the Lord has delivered you, remember the rock where you have been hewn and the hole of the pit where you have been dug.

II. Now, in the second place, LET US LEARN THE LESSONS WHICH THIS LOOK IS INTENDED TO TEACH US.

I have already hinted at one result of looking back in the way I have described, but may again remind you that it ought to humble us. How apt we are to be proud! If there is one man here who says, "I am not proud, I am very humble," I say to him, "My dear Brother, you must excuse me, but I would not be surprised if you are the proudest man here, for he who imagines he is humble proves by that every fact how very proud he is." We are all proud. Pride can hide under a beggar's rags as well as under an alderman's robes. Pride is a weed that will grow on a dunghill as well as in a palace garden, but it ought never to be allowed to grow in the heart of a Christian! Yet I think—yes, I *know* that I have seen it in some who profess to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ! Some professors are proud because they have got on in the world, and have raked together a big heap of money. But, of all kinds of pride, that is one of the most contemptible, for a man is no more of a man because there is more gold and silver in his house than in other people's. The man must be judged apart from his money. There is many a millionaire who is miserably poor, and many a truly rich man who scarcely ever has a shilling to spare. It is paltry pride that is proud of riches and, on the other hand, I have known others who had no money to make them proud, who were not a whit more humble than the purse-proud people, for pride can come in at the back door as easily as at the front!

It is a sad thing when a Christian gets proud of his graces and says, "I am a very different man from what I used to be, and very different, also, from most other Christians. I live nearer to God. I pray more, I think I walk more circumspectly than others do." Perhaps he adds, "I glorify God for this." Mind that you do, my dear Brother, for it is very easy to descend from glorifying God to glorifying yourself! You may even be bowing down before the detestable idol of self-righteousness at the very time that you imagine you are glorifying God. The great cure for this evil is to pray to God to keep you humble and it will tend toward that end if you often look unto the rock where you were hewn and to the hole of the pit where you were dug. I have often told you what an old plowman said to me long ago, "Depend upon it, Sir, if you and I get an inch above the ground, we get just that inch too high." And I am persuaded that he was right. Lying in the dust before God is the safest and best posture for us! If we think we have anything of which we have reason to be proud, we are only deceiving ourselves. Yet there are professing Christians who seem to have quite forgotten what they used to be—forgotten that they were purged from their old sins by a miracle of mercy—and that they were made Christians by the almighty Grace of God. If they remembered these

things, they would walk humbly before the Lord as they used to do. When they first joined the Church, they loved all their fellow members, and thought that each one of them was better than themselves. But now they are constantly picking holes in this or that Brother's character and finding fault with one Sister or another. When they first made a profession of religion, they were half afraid to unite with God's people lest they should be an injury to the Church and weaken it through their shortcomings—but now they look down with contempt upon those who are far better than they are ever likely to be! Such high looks and such proud spirits will have to be brought down if they are really the children of God! And though the process may be a very painful one, the result of it will be highly beneficial to them. They think themselves wonderfully fine fellows, but they forget that they would have been in Hell if it had not been for the Infinite Mercy and loving kindness of the Lord. It is a good thing when these who have been so proudly crowing over others get their combs cut by being made to feel that, after all, they are sinners just as others are and that if they are saved sinners, their salvation is not to be ascribed to themselves, but to the Grace of God through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior!

This backward look to what we used to be will not only help to humble us, *it will also tend to encourage us*. "To encourage us?" someone asks. Yes, for if when we were dead in trespasses and sins, the Lord quickened us by His Spirit, how is it possible for Him to cast us away, now that we are adopted into His family? If He has reclaimed us from the dominion of sin and Satan, will He not do for us what is, after all, a less work by keeping us from going back to the old state of bondage? Would He have saved us if He had intended us to be lost at the last? Oh, no, He who has brought us up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and has set our feet upon a Rock and put a new song in our mouth, even praise unto our God, will never let us go back to that state from which He delivered us! If we wander from Him, as we are so prone to do, He will heal our backslidings and cause us again to rejoice in the God of our salvation!

Then, dear Friends, this backward look tends to make us tender towards others and to encourage us to hope for *their salvation*. True Christians should never feel, "I am too good to associate with such sinful people as I see all around me." If he would look back to the rock where he was hewn, and to the hole of the pit where he was dug, he would never allow such a thought as that to linger in his mind for even a minute! I hear now and then of a minister who is said to have "a very select congregation." It seems to be the rule, whenever there is a very small number of people attending a place of worship, to say that the preacher is of such a high intellectual order that his ministry is not attractive to the masses, but that the few who go to hear him make up in quality what they lack in quantity. Well, I have occasionally had the opportunity of testing that statement, and I have come to the conclusion that such con-

gregations are neither intellectually nor spiritually better than others—nor half as good as some with which I am acquainted.

If I were to feel that I was too good to mix with the worst of men in the hope of being of service to them, or that I was too pure to have anything to do with my fellow sinners, I would be imitating the Pharisee who says, “Stand by, for I am holier than you,” and I would have forgotten the rock where I was hewn, and the hole of the pit where I was dug. O Beloved, if you recall your own condition as sinners, you will love those who are still “in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity,” and your great desire will be to bring them to Jesus even as you, yourself, were brought to Him! Sometimes, when I have been preaching, I have had this thought in my mind, “I will not tell my Hearers that God can save the greatest sinners because He saved John Bunyan and John Newton, but I will tell them that He can save all other sinners because He saved me.” When I have had that thought uppermost in my mind, I have found that I could preach with great tenderness to those who were out of the way. It was this feeling that led Charles Wesley to write—

**“He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He set the prisoners free!
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.”**

This ought also to be the thought and feeling of every Christian, “What He has done for me, He can do for others. There is no one living who is too far gone for His Sovereign Mercy. As He was able to save me, I will go to others with the hope and belief that He is able to save them. And I will try to encourage them to see whether there is not salvation for them, even for them.”

Now, lastly, I think that this backward look will *tend to make us faithful to the Savior* and fill us with a burning zeal for His Glory. I do not know anything better that I could suggest to you as the subject of your meditations, when you are at home alone and quiet for a little while, than to look back to the days of your impenitency and unbelief. I know that you will not ascribe your salvation to your own merits or your own good works, but that you will ascribe it to the Grace of God from first to last! And then the natural instinct of your renewed nature will make you fall down upon your knees and adore the Infinite Mercy of God in saving you. He might have left you to perish as He has left so many others, but in His Sovereignty, He looked with pity and love upon you and saved you. What did you do to help the Lord to save you? *Help Him to save you?* Why, you did all you could to hinder Him until, at last, His Omnipotent Love overcame the natural unwillingness of your heart and made you willing in the day of His power! Oh, you ought to praise God! Gratitude and adoration should constantly rise from your heart unto Him who has done such great things for you!

I close by reminding every sinner here that God is able to save him, into whatever depths he may have fallen, for God has saved other sinners who were just like him. If you, my Hearer, have been guilty of every crime in the book, you may still be cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus which cleanses from all sin! There is power in His blood to blot out the

blackest sin—and that power shall be realized by you if you give heed to this message—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” To believe is to trust, to rely upon, to depend upon. And if you do rely upon Jesus, all your iniquities shall not be reckoned unto you, but they shall be reckoned among those that were put away by Him when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree! Then all His merits shall be reckoned unto you—there shall be a clear exchange made—Christ taking your sin and you taking His righteousness! Oh, that you would believe on Him this very moment! May God give you Grace to do so! Then shall you be able, with us who also have believed in Jesus, to look back to the rock where you were hewn and to the hole of the pit where you were dug—and to adore and magnify the name of the Lord forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: GALATIANS 3.

Verse 1. *O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?* Paul writes as if they had come under some kind of witchcraft and been deluded by it. This seemed to astonish the Apostle, so he cries out to them “Who has bewitched you?”

1. *That you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth, crucified among you?* They had heard the plainest possible preaching from Paul and his companions. Jesus Christ had been so clearly set forth before them that they might, as it were, see Him as He hung upon the Cross of Calvary. Yet, under some unhallowed spell, they turned aside from the faith of Christ!

2. *This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?* [See Sermon #1705, Volume 29—THE HEARING OF FAITH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] “You profess to have received the Spirit—did the Spirit come to you by the works of the Law, or through hearing and believing the Gospel?”

3. *Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?* “Did you begin right, and are you going to finish in some other way? Is the foundation laid in the Truth of God, and will you build lies upon it? Is the foundation Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone, and is the superstructure to be wood, hay and stubble?”

4. *Have you suffered so many things in vain—if it is, indeed, in vain.* “Have you been made to suffer through conviction of sin? Have you even been persecuted for the Truth’s sake? And are you going to give it up after all that?”

5. *He therefore who ministers to you the Spirit, and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?* “Have those miracles been worked in your midst by the power of faith or by the works of the Law?”

6. *Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.* That is the Scriptural Doctrine—faith is counted or imputed for righteousness.

7. *Know you therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.* Those who are justified by faith in Jesus. Those whose faith is counted for righteousness—they are the children of believing Abraham—not those who are under the Law of Moses.

8. *And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In you shall all nations be blessed.* Just as Abraham was blessed, so are the nations to be blessed, that is, by faith. By faith they become his spiritual seed. By faith they enter into his Covenant. By faith, they receive the blessings of Grace.

9. *So then they which are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.* Just as the believing Abraham was accounted righteous, so believing men who are the spiritual seed of Abraham, are also accounted righteous.

10. *For as many as are of the words of the Law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.* Can any man perfectly keep the whole Law of God? Has any man ever continued in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them? No and, therefore, all that the Law does is to bring the curse upon those who are under its dominion—none of them can obtain salvation by the works of the Law!

11. *But that no man is justified by the Law in the sight of God is evident: for the just shall live by faith.* [See Sermons #814, Volume 14—LIFE BY FAITH and #2809, Volume 48—FAITH—LIFE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] This passage is again and again repeated in the Scriptures—“The just shall live by faith.” There are no other just men living! There cannot be any other just men living, but those that live by faith!

12. *And the Law is not of faith: but, the man that does them shall live in them.* The law demands *doing*. The Gospel enjoins *believing*. The believing man comes in as an heir of the blessing, but the man who trusts to his own doing is an heir of the curse.

13. *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.* [See Sermons #873, Volume 15—CHRIST MADE A CURSE FOR US and #2093, Volume 35—THE CURSE AND THE CURSE FOR US—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] What a wonderful Doctrine this is! We should have hesitated to use such language as this had not the Holy Spirit, Himself, moved Paul to write that Christ was “made a curse for us.” He who is most blessed, forever. He who is the fountain of blessing and the channel of blessing to all who ever are blessed was, “made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree”—

14. *That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.* Dear Friends, are you living by faith upon the Son of God? Are you trusting in God? Are you believing His promises? Some think that this is a

very little thing, but God does not think so. Faith is a better index of character than anything else. The man who trusts his God and believes His promises is honoring God far more than is the man who supposes that by any of his own doings he can merit Divine approval and favor.

15. *Brethren, I speak after the matter of men. Though it is but a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no man disannuls, or adds thereto.* If a covenant is once made, signed, sealed and ratified, no honorable man would think of drawing back from it. Whatever happens afterwards, the covenant having been once made, is regarded as an established fact and it must remain.

16, 17. *Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He says not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to your Seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the Law which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the Covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.* This is sound reasoning. God made a Covenant with Abraham and said that in him and in his Seed all nations would be blessed. All Believers are in Christ, who is here called Abraham's Seed and, therefore, they must be blessed! Whatever the Law may say or may not say, it was not given until 430 years after the Covenant was made with Abraham and, therefore, cannot affect it in any way.

18. *For if the inheritance is of the Law, it is no more of promise.* God gave it to Abraham by promise. It was a free gift—He did not bestow it upon the condition of merit on Abraham's part. Isaac was born, not according to the power of the flesh, but according to promise—and the whole Covenant is according to free Grace and Divine promise.

18, 19. *But God gave it to Abraham by promise. What purpose, therefore, does the Law serve?* [See Sermon #128, Volume 3—THE USES OF THE LAW—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] What was the use of it?

19. *It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made.* The law makes us know what transgression is. It reveals its true nature. Under the hand of the Holy Spirit, it makes us see the evil of sin. We might not have perceived sin to be sin if it had not been for the command of God not to commit it—but when the commandment comes, then we recognize sin and the evil of it.

19-21. *And it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the Law, then, against the promises of God? God forbid! For if there had been a Law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law.* There could not have been a better Law! Some talk about the Law of God being too severe, too strict, too stringent, but it is not. If the design had been that men should live by the Law, there could not have been a better Law for that purpose and, therefore, it is proved that by the principle of Law nobody ever can be justified, because even with the best of laws, all men are sinful and need that justification which comes only by Grace through faith!

22. *But the Scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.* [See Sermon #1145, Volume 19—THE GREAT JAIL AND HOW TO GET OUT OF IT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] All of us, by nature, are shut up like criminals in a prison that is so securely bolted and barred that there is no hope of escape for any who are within it. But why are all the doors shut and fastened? Why in order that Christ may come and open the one only eternal door of salvation—“that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”

23. *But before faith came, we were kept under the Law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.* [See Sermon #2402, Volume 41—UNDER ARREST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Well do I remember when I was “shut up” in this fashion. I struggled and strove with might and main to get out, but I found no way of escape. I was “shut up” until Faith came and opened the door and brought me out into “the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

24. *Therefore the Law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.* [See Sermon #1196, Volume 20—THE STERN TEACHER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The tutor was a slave who led the children to school and sometimes whipped them to school. That is what the Law did with us—it took us under its management, whipped us and drove us to Christ.

25. *But after faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor.* Now we go to Christ willingly, cheerfully, joyfully, trusting in Him with all our hearts. The tutor’s work is done so far as we are concerned.

26. *For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.* We hear a great deal about the universal fatherhood of God, but it is all nonsense! There is no Scripture for it whatever. Those only are the children of God who are “the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”

27. *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* “He is everything to you. He covers you, He surrounds you. You do not stand before God in your own filthy rags, but you have put on Christ.”

28. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* What a mercy it is to be in Christ, so that you are not seen any more, but only Christ, and you accepted in Him!

29. *And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.* “According to the promise”—not according to your works, or your gifts, but “heirs according to the promise.”

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NEEDLESS FEARS

NO. 3098

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 1908.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 11, 1874.*

*“Who are you that...have feared continually every day because of the
fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy?
And where is the fury of the oppressor?”
Isaiah 51:12,13.*

OBJECTS often influence us out of proportion to their value because of their nearness. For instance, the moon is a very small insignificant body compared with the sun, yet it has far more influence over the tides and many other matters in the world than the sun has simply because it is so much nearer to the earth than the sun is. The life that is to come is infinitely more important than the life that now is and I hope that in our inmost hearts, we reckon that the things that are seen and temporal are mere trifles compared with the things which are not seen and eternal! Yet it often happens that the less important matters have a greater influence over us than those which are far more important, simply because the things of earth are so much nearer to us. Heaven is infinitely more to be desired than any joy of earth, yet it seems far off and, therefore, these fleeting joys may give us greater present comfort. The wrath of God is far more to be dreaded than the anger of man, yet sometimes a frown or a rebuke from a fellow creature will have more effect upon our minds than the thought of the anger of God. This is because the one appears to be remote, while, being in this body, we are so near to the other.

Now, Beloved, it will sometimes happen that a matter which is scarcely worthy of the thought of an immortal spirit will fret and worry us from day to day. There is some oppressor, as the text puts it, whom we dread and fear continually, yet we forget the Almighty God who is on our side, who is stronger than all the oppressors who have ever lived and who has all people and all things under His control! The reason why we act thus is because we think of God as if He were far off, while we can see the oppressor with our eyes and we can hear with our ears his threatening words. I want, at this time, to be the means in the hands of God of turning the thoughts of His people away from the distress of the present to the joy and comfort which, though more remote, ought to still be more powerful over the mind and heart because of the real intrinsic greatness.

I. And first I want to speak upon this point—that MANY FEARS WHICH ARE ENTERTAINED BY GOOD MEN AND WOMEN ARE REALLY GROUNDLESS.

“You have feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy...and where is the fury of the oppressor?” The probable meaning of this verse is that the oppressor never came, so that they never did feel the force of his fury and, in like manner, many of God’s people are constantly under apprehensions of calamities which will never occur to them—they suffer far more in merely *dreading* them than they would have to endure if they actually came upon them! In their imagination, there are rivers in their way and they are anxious to know how they shall wade through them, or swim across them. There are no such rivers in existence, but they are agitated and distressed about them. Our old proverb says, “Don’t cross the bridge till you come to it,” but these timid people are continually crossing bridges that only exist in their foolish fancies! They stab themselves with imaginary daggers, they starve themselves in imaginary famines and even bury themselves in imaginary graves! Such strange creatures are we that we probably smart more under blows which never fall upon us than we do under those which do actually come! The rod of God does not smite us as sharply as the rod of our own imagination does—our groundless fears are our chief tormentors and when we are enabled to abolish our self-inflictions, all the indications of the world become light enough. It is a pity, however, that any who are taught of God and who have had faith in Christ given to them, should fall into so guilty and, at the same time, so painful a habit as this of fearing the oppressor who does not come and who never will come!

Some are much troubled by *the fear of man*. That is exactly the case mentioned in our text—“the fury of the oppressor.” He was a very oppressive man—hard, unfeeling, proud, strong, exacting—and they were afraid of him. In addition to this, he must have been a person of impetuous temper, one with whom you could not reason and so passionate that they were not merely afraid of the oppressor, but of “the fury of the oppressor.” He is the kind of person whom you do not know how to meet or how to escape from. If you flee from him, he will pursue you in his fury. If you remain quiet, your patience will not make him quiet—and if you resist him, his fury will be so much the greater. That appears to have been the character of the oppressor feared by those with whom the Lord was at that time reasoning. And we have known Believers who have been afraid of what such-and-such a powerful man might do if they acted as their conscience told them they ought to act. He would turn them out of their farm, or they could lose his business from their shop.

Perhaps the fearful one is some young person who has a relative who hates religion and what this relative in power may do she cannot imagine. Or the oppressor is an arbitrary employer and if his employees do not exactly obey his orders, even though those orders happen to be wrong, they will lose their employment. They may be for months without work and they and their children may be reduced to starvation. They picture a long vista of trials and troubles that will come upon them because of “the fury of the oppressor.” Now, sometimes there is a

foundation for this kind of fear, for men do act in very cruel manner to their fellow men—and the very persons who talk most about being liberal in their views are generally the greatest persecutors. If I must have a religious enemy, let me have a professed and avowed bigot, but not one of your “free thinkers” or “broad churchmen,” as they are called, for there is nobody who can hate as they do! And the lovers of liberal-mindedness who have no creed at all think it to be their special duty to be peculiarly contemptuous to those who have some degree of principle and cannot twist and turn exactly as they can. There is no doubt that there are still trials of cruel mockeries to be borne by those who are true to Christ. “The cold shoulder” is given in society. In other company, hard words are used and coarse jests are made. Christians must expect to have to bear the opposition of man. It always was so and it always will be so. If you turn from the way of the world and practically accuse the world of being wrong, the world will resent it. “If you were of the world, the world would love his own.”

But after all is there not a great deal more thought of this matter than there is any need to be, for, “where is the fury of the oppressor?” I have known young Christians afraid of somebody or other and not daring to avow their conscientious convictions—and when at last they have plucked up courage enough to do so, they have been surprised that the person they expected to oppose them has been quite favorable to them. The wife has been afraid to mention to her husband that she desires to unite with the Church, but when he hears of it, he thinks that he, too, will go and hear the minister. I remember a man and his wife who came to join the Church. They were each afraid to tell the other of what they had experienced—and when they met each other on the night that they were present with other candidates, they were greatly surprised to find that, instead of having any reason to be afraid of one another, they had the utmost cause to rejoice! They said that it was like a new marriage to them when each found the other to be in Christ Jesus, yet each of them had thought the other to be so strong in opposition to religion that they had not dared to mention their conversion till thus they made their mutual discovery! Perhaps, dear Friend, you have no more need to be afraid than they had. Go on—the giant that stands in your way may turn out to be only a shadow, or if he really is a giant—God will help you to fight against him and make you more than a conqueror!

Some have a fear of another kind—not of any opposition to themselves, but *they are afraid of the Church and the Truth of God being utterly destroyed by the opposition of men*. Have you not many times noticed a kind of panic going through the churches through some supposed discovery in science, or some new doctrinal error that has appeared? One Christian has met another and begun tremblingly to talk about what was going to happen. “The old times were so much better than these”—they begin with that note—“and here is a new danger, how are we to meet it?” It was anxiously asked a few years ago, “How are we to meet these discoveries of geology?” Yet we hardly ever hear about them now or, if we do, we do not trouble about them! Then Dr. Colenso had

made certain calculations which were very terrifying to timid folk! And Huxley tried to prove that we had descended or ascended from monkeys—but who cares about their theories now? Yet I have met with nervous people who greatly feared the fury of this tyrant, Science, which was utterly to destroy us! But what has it ever done against the Truth of God?

At this time, as you are well aware, it is the belief of a great many people that, owing to the spread of Ritualism, the candle that Latimer lit will be blown out and we shall all be in the dark—or at least shall have nothing better than candles made at Rome to light us! I constantly receive magazines that prophesy the most terrible times. According to them, some of us will no doubt be roasted alive at Smithfield. Well, I know that the devil can blow very hard, but I do not believe that he can blow out the candle that God lights—much less can he blow out the sun of the Gospel which has burned on now for over 1,800 years! Blow away, Satan, as hard as you can, but you will never be able to blow out this Light of God—it will still shine on to the end of time! You may blow away a cloud or two which obscures the Light, but the Light itself will be as bright as ever!

It may be that in the place where you live there has come up a new doctrinal error. Somebody has discovered that men are nothing but a species of large apes and that only those who believe in Christ are immortal—all the rest will die out eventually—annihilation is to be their doom! Many are dreadfully frightened by that doctrine, but I believe it to be too contemptible to alarm anybody who studies the Scriptures. It is a very pretty toy and many will play with it. And after a certain time there will come another pretty toy, and they will play with that! And so it will be till Christ, Himself, comes and breaks up all the toys and brings His Church back to the grand old Truth of God which will stand firm notwithstanding all the assaults of men or devils! But you and I need not fear, Beloved, because of any of these things! What is there, after all, to cause us to tremble for the Ark of God? Just nothing at all! Never let any member of this Church get to whining in this way and saying that the Gospel will die. The heavens and the earth will pass away, but the Word of the Lord shall endure forever! That which the Lord has declared in this blessed Book of His shall stand fast throughout eternity!

Another fear which sometimes comes over truly godly people is that, *perhaps, after all, they shall fall from Grace and perish*. There may come a temptation which will find out their weak point and overthrow them. The vessel has sailed well up to now, though not without much tossing and perils, but, perhaps it will strike upon a rock and be utterly broken in pieces. They know how weak and frail they are and how many temptations surround them. They know how treacherous and cunning the devil is. They know how potent is the world with its many allurements. David feared that he would perish one day by the hand of Saul—and these fearful souls, as they pass into some fresh phase of life, or encounter some new trial, dread lest, after all, Grace should not be sufficient for their needs and they should come to a miserable end! I

know this fear. Who among us has not felt it? Who among us can honestly examine his own heart and not feel it? Yet, dear Friends, there is really nothing in it to trouble the true child of God. If our religion is a religion of our own getting or making, it will perish—and the sooner it goes, the better! But if our religion is a matter of God's giving, we know that He never takes back what He gives and that if He has commenced to work in us by His Grace, He will never leave it unfinished! Were the Covenant founded upon works, it would fail! If it depended upon ourselves, it would surely break down! But if it is the "Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure," it cannot fail! If the promise is the promise of God who cannot lie, He will surely keep it unto the end. We ought not, therefore, to be burdened with this anxiety, but simply go on in the path of daily watchfulness and humble dependence upon the preserving power of the Lord Jesus Christ—and so we shall find that we shall get safely to Heaven after all!

We have known some, too, who have been afflicted with *fear of need coming upon them as to pecuniary matters*. One says, "The giant of poverty will surely seize me! I have not enough laid by to furnish me with a sufficient maintenance." I have known some even dread because they had not enough for their own funeral—as if that would not be sure to be settled somehow. The living will surely take care to bury the dead. I have known others say, "If I were to be out of work. If such-and-such a thing were to happen. If so-and-so were to die, what would I do?" Ah, and if we fret over all the "if's" that we can imagine, we shall certainly never be without fretfulness! But where is your dependence, Christian, for this world? Have you placed it upon *man*? Then I wonder not that you are full of fear! But why do you not trust your body where you trusted your soul? If you have trusted Jesus to be the Savior of your immortal spirit, can you not also trust Him to be the Provider for this poor flesh of the things which perish? God feeds the ravens—will He not feed you? Up till this moment the commissariat of the universe has never failed! The myriads of living creatures have received from His hand all they have required! Then is He likely to forget you? He has never done so yet—your bread has been given you, your water has been sure—why should He change His custom and leave His own dear child to starve? "Oh, but," you say, "the brook Cherith is dried up!" Yes, but when the brook dried up, God sent His servant Elijah to Zarephath where there was a widow woman who would sustain him. When one door shuts, another opens—and if one well goes dry, the water bubbles up somewhere else! The means may change, but the God of the means changes not! He will supply your needs. Stand in your proper place, do your duty, obey His will and He will not fail you, but bring you safely to the place where fears shall never come to you anymore.

Another fear (and I will mention but this one), is *the fear of death*. Some even among God's people hardly dare think of dying. It is a dreary necessity with them that they must die—and they fret and trouble about it quite needlessly. But, Beloved, if we have perfect peace with God, we should not fear dying! I have known some who have thought that they

would rather be translated, but I would rather not. If I were walking out tomorrow evening and I saw horses of fire and chariots of fire standing ready to take me up, I would feel a great deal more troubled about getting into a fiery chariot than about going home and lying down to die! If my Lord and Master shall choose to let me live till He comes and so prevent my death, His will be done, but the Spirit says, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," so let us be content with that blessedness. But there is a fear of death in some good people's minds and they cannot always shake it off. Yet, Beloved, there is nothing in it. If you are in Christ, you will never know anything about dying. I do not believe that Christians feel anything in death. If there are pains, as there often are, they are not the pains of dying, but of living. *Death ends all their pains.* They shut their eyes on earth and open them in Heaven! They have shaken off the cumbrous clay of this mortal body and found themselves disembodied, in a moment, before the Throne of the Most High—there to wait till the trumpet of the Resurrection shall sound and they shall once again put on their bodies, transformed and glorified like to the body of their Lord! Get rid of that fear of death, Beloved, for it is not becoming in a Christian. The Believer's heart should be so stayed upon the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Resurrection and the Life, that he should leave himself in his Heavenly Father's hands to live or die, or to wait till the Lord shall come—just as the Lord shall please.

II. My second observation is this. THERE ARE SOME FEARS WHICH WOULD DIE AT ONCE IF WE DARED TO QUESTION THEM.

Did you notice that the text is a question? "Who are you that...has feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? And where is the fury of the oppressor?" Did you ever question your fears, my dear Friends? I mean you, Miss Despondency over there, and you, Mr. Much-Afraid. Did you ever question your fear? If not, catechize it now—put it through the catechism. Suppose it is the Church of God that is afraid of the oppressor? Let the Church ask, *Where is the oppressor of which she needs to be afraid?* Is it a Doctrinal error? Well, the Church was once over-run with Arianism and it seemed as if the heretics had killed the Doctrine of the Deity of Christ! But the Lord was pleased to raise up His valiant servant, Athanasius, and very soon Arianism was put to the rout! The Church of Christ scarcely perceives the scars of all the conflicts through which she has passed. That which threatened to destroy her has never really injured her, but she has come out of the furnace all the purer! As for persecution, has it not commonly proved that the more the saints have been persecuted, the more they have prospered and that the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the Church? Suppose there should again come martyr days? Suppose there should again come days of heresy? Well, the Church has had such days before, yet she has survived them. The grand old vessel has been in many a tornado and storm before now, yet she has not even lost a spar or split a stitch of her canvas! Why, therefore, should she be afraid now?

Ask the question again, “Where is the fury of the oppressor?” And the answer comes, It is under the control of God. Even Satan, your fiercest foe—God created him, God governs him, God can do with him just as He pleases. Then as to that poverty of which you are afraid, it will not come unless God permits it! And if it does come, the Lord can alleviate it. You are afraid you will lose a very dear child—but you will not lose her unless the Lord takes her. You are fretting because you fear that a special friend of yours will soon be taken away—but he cannot be taken away till the Lord takes him. What are you afraid of? Is it your own death? Learn to sing good old John Ryland’s verse—

**“Plagues and deaths around me fly!
But till He bids I cannot die!
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of Love sees fit.”**

Then, again, the Lord asks, “Where is the fury of the oppressor?” as if it was so soon gone that one might look in vain for it. Some man oppresses you. Well, he shall die, perhaps soon. The trouble that now frets you will be gone in the twinkling of an eye. If not soon so far as this life is concerned, yet, when you get to Heaven (and that will not be long), how short a time will your trial seem to have lasted! “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment,” says the Apostle, “works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.” You fret about your trouble and worry yourself continually concerning it, but the text seems to ask you, “Where is it?” It is a meteor that flashes across the sky and is gone! Ask your troubles such questions as these and they will soon vanish.

I will ask you a few more questions. You have fears with regard to a great trouble that threatens you. Well, *will it separate you from the love of Christ?* If you cannot answer that question, let Paul answer it for you—“I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” You say that your enemies slander you, but will Christ believe them? They are trying to take away your character, but will your Lord think any the less of you? Will HE be deceived by their lies? You say that friends are forsaking you, but will they take Jesus away and make *Him* forsake you?

You say that your enemies are doing all that they can to destroy you, but *can they destroy the Divine promises?* The Lord has promised to give unto His sheep eternal life—can they take that promise from you, or make it of no value? They may frown at you, but can they keep you out of Heaven? They may threaten you, but can they make the Covenant of Grace to be of no effect? While eternal things are safe, we may well be content to let other things come or go just as God wills!

Again, *can anyone do anything to you which God does not permit?* And if God permits it, can any real harm come to you? “Who is he that will harm you, if you are followers of that which is good?” “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” Then how can anything work for your

hurt if you are really the Lord's? Can anyone curse those whom God blesses? Are you like those foolish persons who are afraid of a witch's curse, or of some spell that the wicked may cast over you? Even Balaam said, "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." Balak might summon Balaam to his aid and the two together might stand and look on Israel and wish to curse them—but they could not curse those whom God had blessed! If all the devils in Hell could fill your house and seek to injure you, there is no need for you to fear or tremble more than Martin Luther did when his friends were afraid for him to go to Worms, but he said, "If there were as many devils there as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses, I would face them all in the name of God." And you may say the same! If earth were all in arms abroad and Hell, in one vast hurry-burly, had come up to join with the world against you, you might still say, "The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge," and charge them in the name of the Most High, and put them all to rout, for greater is He who is with you than all those that are against you!

III. Now, lastly, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if these fears are groundless, and if a few questions will scatter them, I appeal to you who are cast down to CRY TO GOD TO DELIVER YOU FROM THIS STATE OF BONDAGE.

If there is no ground for your fears, *what is the use of tormenting yourself for nothing at all?* And if God is indeed with you, *do you not dishonor Him by your fretfulness and your fears?* What would you think of a little child, in its mother's arms, who was always afraid that it was not safe there? Would it not look as if there were some defeat in the child's loving confidence in its mother?—

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,"

you may well be—

"Safe from corroding care."

He is able to keep that which you have committed unto Him so, if you do not trust Him, you really dishonor Him! The commander of an army who saw his soldiers turning white with fear and trembling as they marched to the conflict, would say within himself, "These soldiers of mine are no credit to their leader." And will you, who have a Captain who is so well able to protect you, show the white feather? Shall a cowardly spirit be permitted in the service of God? Shall the Captain of our salvation have to lead a coward host to the fight with the powers of darkness? I have sometimes thought, when I have heard about the fears of God's people concerning the times in which we live, and what is going to become of us, that surely they did not know that the King is in the midst of us, that the Lord is as a wall of fire round about us and the Glory in our midst! For if they did but know that He is our Protector and Defender, they could not be so cast down as they are.

Besides, *you who are of a fretful spirit often grieve other Christians.* There are others who are like you and they get worse through coming into contact with you! Your complaint is one that is catching! Every now and then I meet with Christians who like to hear sermons that make them miserable. I had a letter from one, some time ago, who said that as

soon as he came here and saw how cheerful the people looked, he felt certain that he was not among the tried people of God, so he went away and turned into a little place where there were only 15 or 16 people—and he heard a good deep-experience sermon about the corruption of the heart—and there he felt at home! For my part, I like such texts as these, “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.” We have plenty of troubles and trials and if we like to fret over them, we may always be doing it. But then, we have far more joys than troubles, so our songs should exceed our sighs! We have a good God who has promised that as our days, so shall our strength be—

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

“Ah!” says one, “but this is a howling wilderness.” Yes, if you howl in it, it will howl in response—but if you sing, it will sing too! Remember the ancient promise, “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.”—

**“Then let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry—
We’re marching through Immanuel’s ground
To fairer worlds on high.”**

And once again, do you not think that *a dull, heavy, murmuring spirit is a great hindrance to the unconverted?* If they find you in this state, they will say, “This person’s religion does not appear to do him much good.” Worldlings often say that Christians are the most miserable people in the world. I think that is a great mistake on their part and that they do not really know us, for if they knew some of us, they would find that we have cheerful spirits notwithstanding a good deal that might depress us. Do not any of you Christians let the worldling say that Christ is a hard Master! I should not like to drive a horse that was all skin and bone, for people would say that it was because his master kept him short of corn. I should not like to have in my house, a servant who was always wringing her hands and whose eyes were usually full of tears. Visitors would say, “Her mistress is a vixen, you may be sure of that.” And if professing Christians are always seen to be in a wretched, unhappy state, people are sure to say, “Ah, they serve a hard Master! The ways of Christ are ways of unpleasantness and all His paths are misery and wretchedness.”

Sinner, that is not true! But it is true that “light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart,” and we earnestly wish that you would come and prove the truth of it for yourself! Believing in Jesus, you would have a perfect peace and a bliss that nothing can destroy! You would have a little Heaven below and a great Heaven above! You would be able to take your troubles to your God and leave them there! And you would march along with songs of rejoicing till you come to that blessed place where there are pleasures forevermore!

May God bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 43:1-19.**

Verse 1. *But now thus says the LORD that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel.* The Lord reminds us that He first created us, and that He afterwards molded us. We are like Jacob by nature, but He has made us Israel by Grace.

1. *Fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are Mine.* Redemption is a deep well of comfort. If the Lord has indeed bought us with His blood, He will not think lightly of us. And if He has called us by name and declared that we belong to Him, we may rest assured that He will not lose His own property, but that He will preserve it to the end.

2. *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overpower you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.* [See Sermon #397, Volume 7—FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The Lord does not promise us immunity from trial and trouble—we shall have to go through waters and rivers, and shall have to pass through fires and flames—it is through much tribulation that we must enter the Kingdom of God. But He does promise that no harm shall come to us from it all. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God”—that waters, rivers, fires and flames bring us benefits and blessings—and that they shall none of them bring a curse upon us.

3, 4. *For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior: I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you. Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable.* [See Sermon #917, Volume 16—PRECIOUS, HONORABLE, BELOVED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] God puts honor upon His beloved ones. They were in themselves dishonorable, for they had nothing of goodness about them until the Lord imparted it to them.

4. *And I have loved you.* God loved His ancient people Israel. He has always loved His Church and He still loves Believers.

4, 5. *Therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life. Fear not: for I am with you.* It is enough for a child that his mother is near him, or that his father is with him—then is it not enough for you, O child of God, that God is with you? Israel was scattered when Isaiah wrote this prophecy, and would be afterwards scattered far and wide over the face of the earth. So God gave this comforting assurance, “fear not: for I am with you.”

5, 6. *I will bring your seed from the east, and gather you from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth.* [See Sermon #2799, Volume 48—THE CHURCH ENCOURAGED AND EXHORTED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] God’s chosen ones have wandered very far away from Him, but the Great Shepherd of the sheep, who bought them with His blood, will gather them and there shall be one flock and one Shepherd.

7. *Even everyone that is called by My name: for I have created him for My Glory, I have formed him; yes, I have made him.* Three expressions are here used concerning the man who is called by God’s name. First, “I have

created him”—made him out of nothing. Then, “I have formed him”—fashioned him, made him into his proper shape. The last sentence may be read, “Yes, I have completed him.” When God begins His work in us, we are in the rough. As He goes on working in us, we gradually take the form of His dear Son and, by-and-by, He will complete us. And then we shall wake up in His likeness. Blessed be His name for this!

8. *Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.* Some think that the Lord refers here to those who were once blind, but to whom He has given eyes. And to those who were deaf, to whom He has given ears. Many of us are of that order. One thing I know is that, whereas I was once spiritually blind, now I can see! And another thing I know is that, whereas I was once spiritually deaf, now I can hear the voice of God!

9. *Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled.* As though there was to be a great debate as to who God is and what God is, He first summons all His people whose blind eyes and deaf ears He had opened, and then He calls for all the nations to be gathered together and gives them this challenge—

9. *Who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring forth the witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth.* Where else have we any true knowledge of God except in His Word and among His people? The myths and mysteries of the heathen, how dark, how indistinct and shallow they are! What true prophecy did their oracles ever give? Ask Greece and Rome, the most polished of the ancient nations, what did their so-called gods ever foretell? Let them bring any holy book of theirs which reveals the future and which is true.

10. *You are My witness, says the LORD.* The chosen people of God have become witnesses for Jehovah that He, and He alone, is the true God. That He, and He alone has truly foretold the future. Let the heathen prove that their gods have done the same if they can—we know that they cannot. “You are My witnesses, says the Lord.”

10. *And My servant whom I have chosen.* [See Sermon #644, Volume 11—GOD’S WITNESSES—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] That great Servant of God, you know His name, even Christ Jesus the faithful and true Witness, bears better witness for God than the whole nation of the Jews, or the Lord’s chosen people in all ages can bear!

10, 11. *That you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He: before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside Me there is no Savior.* Look the whole world over and see where there is any Savior for sinners except Jesus Christ. Does any other religion even profess to have a Savior? Destroyers they have, but where is their Savior?

12. *I have declared, and have saved.* “I said that I would save, and I have saved.”

12. *And I have showed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore you are My witnesses, says the LORD, that I am God.* When, in

Hezekiah's day, the idols had been destroyed, God told Hezekiah that He would deliver him from Sennacherib, and He did so.

13. Yes, *before the day was I am He*. When there was no day, there was the Ancient of Days.

13. *And there is none that can deliver out of My hand: I will work, and who shall let it? (who shall hinder it?)—*

**“When He makes bare His arm,
Who shall His work withstand?
When He His people's cause defends,
Who, who shall stay His hand?”**

14. *Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships. Up the broad river Euphrates, and down to the Persian Gulf, Babylon and Chaldea gloried in their greatness, but God sent the Medo-Persian power to break them in pieces for the sake of His people, that Cyrus might let them go free!*

15-17. *I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. Thus says the LORD, which makes a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters; which brings forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow. Like the wick of a lamp, soon put out. Here is, probably, an illusion to the overthrowing of Egypt at the Red Sea—they came out with their horses and chariots, but they were made to lie down together in the sea. God overcame His people's enemies then and He can and will do the same to the end of the chapter.*

18. *Remember you not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Do not look merely upon what God has done; but look to the future and remember that He is able to do the same again.*

19. *Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. O dear child of God, have you got into the wilderness and have you no comfort there? Are all your wells dried up? God will work a new miracle for you—you shall have a new manifestation of His gracious power!*

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

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

SARAH AND HER DAUGHTERS

NO. 1633

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 28, 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bore you.”
Isaiah 51:2.*

*“Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters you are,
as long as you do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.”
1 Peter 3:6.*

I DESIRE to thank God for having had the privilege of preaching in Exeter Hall, yesterday, to a large congregation from the whole of the second verse of the 51st of Isaiah—“Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bore you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.” [See No. 1596, *HEARKEN AND LOOK—OR, ENCOURAGEMENT FOR BELIEVERS* preached on behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society on the morning of April 27, 1881.] On that occasion I confined my remarks to Abraham and tried to make prominent the facts that God called him while he was a heathen man, one man and a lone man—and yet He blessed him and made him the founder of His people, multiplying his seed as the stars and as the sand of the seashore. I devoutly beseech the Lord to accept my testimony to His power and to increase the faith of the many of His servants to whom I spoke on that occasion. His Holy Spirit gave me the word—may He cause His saints to feed upon it!

Now, I never like to do an injustice to anybody and I feel that I did not, in that sermon, speak sufficiently about Sarah, though I did not quite forget her. Let us make up for our omissions. If we had Abraham at Exeter Hall yesterday morning, we will have Sarah at the Tabernacle, tonight, and maybe we shall learn a lesson from her holy character as well as from that of her husband. And the two lessons combined may go to the perfecting of each other. May our great Teacher, the Holy Spirit, now instruct us! To begin with, let us note what a happy circumstance it is when a godly, gracious man has an equally godly and gracious wife.

It is ill when there is a difference, a radical difference, between husband and wife—when one fears God and the other has no regard for Him. What a pain it is to a Christian woman to be yoked with an unbelieving husband! In a case which I remember, the husband lived all his life indifferent to Divine things, while the wife was an earnest Christian woman and saw all her children grow up in the ways of the Lord. The father lived unregenerate and died without giving any testimony of a change of heart. When our Sister speaks of him, it is with fearful anguish. She does not know what to say, but leaves the matter in the hands of God, often sighing, “O that by a word or a look I could have been enabled to indulge a hope that my poor husband looked to Jesus at the last.”

The same must be the case of a husband who has an ungodly wife. However much God may bless him in all other respects, there seems to be

a great miss there—as if a part of the sun were eclipsed—that a part of life which should be all light is left in thick darkness. Oh, let those of us who have the happiness of being joined together in the Lord thank and bless God every time we remember each other! Let us pray God, that having such a privilege—that our prayers are not hindered by irreligious partners—we may never hinder our prayers ourselves! God grant that we may give unto His name great glory because of His choice favor to us in this respect.

Abraham had cause to praise God for Sarah and Sarah was grateful for Abraham. I have not the slightest doubt that Sarah's character owed its excellence very much to Abraham. I should not wonder, however, if we discover, when all things are revealed, that Abraham owed as much to Sarah! They probably learned from each other. Sometimes the weaker comforted the stronger and often the stronger sustained the weaker. I should not wonder if a mutual interchange of their several Graces tended to make them both rich in the things of God. Perhaps Abraham had not been all that Abraham was if Sarah had not been all that Sarah was.

Our first text bids us, "Look to Sarah," and we do look on her and we thank God if we, like Abraham, are favored with holy consorts, whose amiable tempers and characters tend to make us better servants of God. We notice, next, as we look to Sarah, that God does not forget the lesser lights. Abraham shines like a star of the first magnitude and we do not, at first sight, observe that other star with light so bright and pure, shining with milder radiance but with kindred luster, close at his side. The light of Mamre, which is known under the name of Abraham, resolves itself into a double star when we apply the telescope of reflection and observation. To the common eye, Abraham is the sole character and ordinary people overlook his faithful spouse, but God does not!

Our God never omits the good who are obscure. You may depend upon it that there is no such difference in the love of God towards different persons as should make Him fix His eyes only upon those that are strong and omit those who are weak. Our eyes spy out the great things, but God's eyes are such that nothing is great with Him and nothing is little. He is infinite and, therefore, nothing bears any comparison to Him. You remember how it is written that He who counts the stars and calls them by name also binds up the broken in heart, and heals all their wounds. He who treasures the names of His Apostles, notes, also, the women that followed in their train. He who marks the brave confessors and the bold preachers of the Gospel also remembers those helpers who labor quietly in the Gospel in places of retirement into which the hawk's eyes of history seldom pries.

Let, therefore, those here present who count themselves to be of the tribe of Benjamin, to be little in Israel, never be discouraged on that account—for the Lord is too great to despise the little ones! You are not forgotten of God, O you who are overlooked by men! The Lord's eyes are upon innumerable the creeping things in the great sea as well as upon leviathan—He will observe you. If He sends the deluging showers that make strong the cedars, which are full of sap and adorn the brow of Lebanon, so does He send to each tiny blade of grass its own drop of dew. God forgets

not the less in His care for the greater! Sarah was in life covered with the shield of the Almighty as well as Abraham, her husband—in death she rested in the same tomb—in Heaven she has the same joy! In the Book of the Lord she has the same record!

Next, notice that it would be well for us to imitate God in this—in not forgetting the lesser lights. I do not know that great men are often good examples. I am sorry when, because men have been clever and successful, they are held up to imitation, though their motives and morals have been questionable. I would sooner men were stupid and honest than clever and tricky! It is better to act rightly and fail altogether than succeed by falsehood and cunning. I would sooner bid my son imitate an honest man who has no talent and whose life is unsuccessful, than point him to the most clever and greatest that ever lived—whose life has become a brilliant success—but whose principles are condemnable.

Learn not from the great but from the good! Be not dazzled by success, but follow the safer light of truth and right! But so it is that men mainly observe that only which is written in big letters. But you know the choicest part of God's books are printed in small characters. They who would only know the rudiments may spell out the words in large type which are for babes, but those who want to be fully instructed must sit down and read the small print of God, given us in lives of saints whom most men neglect! Some of the choicest virtues are not so much seen in the great as in the quiet, obscure life. Many a Christian woman manifests a glory of character that is to be found in no public man. I am sure that many a flower that is "born to blush unseen" and, as we think, to "waste its fragrance on the desert air," is fairer than the beauties which reign in the conservatory and are the admiration of all!

God has ways of producing very choice things on a small scale. As rare pearls and precious stones are never great masses of rock, but always lie within a narrow compass, so full often the fairest and richest virtues are to be found in the humblest individuals. A man may be too great to be good, but he cannot be too little to be gracious. Do not, therefore, always be studying Abraham, the greater character. Does not the text say, "Look unto Abraham, your father, *and* unto Sarah that bore you"? You have not learned the full lesson of patriarchal life until you have been in the tent with Sarah, as well as among the flocks with her husband.

Furthermore, another reflection arises, namely, that faith reveals itself in various ways. Faith makes one person this and another that. Faith in Noah makes him a shipbuilder and the second of the world's great fathers. Faith in Abraham makes him a pilgrim and a stranger. Faith in Moses makes him plague Egypt and feed a *nation* for 40 years in the wilderness. Faith in David makes him kill a giant, save a kingdom and ascend a throne. Faith in Samson makes him slay a thousand Philistines and in Rahab it makes her save *two* Israelites. Faith has many ways of working and it works according to the condition and position of the person in whom it dwells. Sarah does not become Abraham, nor does Abraham become Sarah.

Faith in Isaac does not make him the same royal man as Abraham—he is always tame and gentle rather than great and noble—he comes in like a

valley between the two great hills of Abraham and Jacob. Isaac is Isaac and Isaac has such virtue as becomes him whom the Lord loved. And Jacob, too, is Jacob and not his father. He is active, energetic and far-seeing. God does not, by His Grace, lift us out of our place. A man is made gentle, but he is not made a fool. A woman is made brave, but Divine Grace never made her masterful and domineering. Grace does not make the child so self-willed that he disobeys his father—it is something else that does that. Grace does not take away from the father his authority to command the child. It leaves us where we were, in a certain sense, as to our position, and the fruit it bears is congruous to that position.

Thus Sarah is beautified with the virtues that adorn a woman, while Abraham is adorned with all the excellences which are becoming in a godly man. According as the virtue is required, so is it produced. If the circumstances require courage, God makes His servant heroic. If the circumstances require great modesty and prudence, modesty and prudence are given. Faith is a wonderful magician's wand! It works marvels, it achieves impossibilities, it grasps the incomprehensible. Faith can be used anywhere—in the highest Heaven touching the ear of God and winning our desire of Him—and in the lowest places of the earth among the poor and fallen, cheering and upraising them. Faith will quench the violence of fire, turn the edge of the sword, snatch the prey from the enemy and turn the alien to flight.

There is nothing which it cannot do. It is a principle available for all times, to be used on all occasions, suitable to be used by all men for all holy ends. Those who have been taught the sacred art of believing God are the truly learned—no degree of the foremost university can equal in value that which comes with much boldness in the faith. We shall see, tonight, that if Abraham walks before God and is perfect—if he smites the kings that have carried Lot captive, if he does such deeds of prowess as become a man—the same faith makes Sarah walk before God in her perfectness and she performs the actions which become her womanhood. And she, too, is written among the worthies of faith who magnified the Lord!

We are led by our second text to look at the fruit of faith in Sarah. There were two fruits of faith in Sarah—she did well and she was not afraid with any amazement. We will begin with the first. It is said of her that SHE DID WELL, “whose daughters you are as long as you do well.” She did well as a wife. She was all her husband could desire and, when, at the age of 127 years, she at last fell asleep, it is said that Abraham not only mourned for her, but the old man wept for her most true and genuine tears of sorrow. He wept for the loss of one who had been the life of his house. As a wife she did well. All the duties that were incumbent upon her as the queen of that traveling company were performed admirably and we find no fault mentioned concerning her in that respect.

She did well as a hostess. It was her duty, as her husband was given to hospitality, to be willing to entertain his guests. And the one instance recorded is, no doubt, the representation of her common mode of procedure. Though she was truly a princess, yet she kneaded the dough and prepared the bread for her husband's guests. They came suddenly, but she had no complaint to make. She was, indeed, always ready to lay herself

out to perform that which was one of the highest duties of a God-fearing household in those primitive times. She did well, also, as a mother. We are sure she did, because we find that her son Isaac was so excellent a man—and you may say what you will, but in the hands of God the *mother* forms the boy's character!

Perhaps the father unconsciously influences the girls, but the mother has evidently most influence over the sons. Any of us can bear witness that it is so in our own case. There are exceptions, of course, but for the most part, the mother is the queen of the son and he looks up to her with infinite respect if she is at all such as can be respected. Sarah, by faith, did her work with Isaac, well, for from the very first, in his yielding to his father when he was to be offered up as a sacrifice, we see in him evidence of a holy obedience and faith in God which were seldom equaled—and were never surpassed. Besides that, it is written that God said of Abraham, "I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him."

There is one trait in Abraham's character that, wherever he went, he set up an altar unto the Lord. His rule was a tent and an altar. Dear Friends, do you always make these two things go together—a tent and an altar? Where you dwell, is there sure to be family worship there? I am afraid that many families neglect it and often it is so because husband and wife are not agreed about it. And I feel sure that there would not have been that invariable setting up of the worship of God by Abraham in his tent unless Sarah had been as godly as himself. She did well, also, as a Believer, and that is no mean point. As a Believer, when Abraham was called to separate himself from his kindred, Sarah went with him. She would adopt the separated life, too, and the same caravan which traveled across the desert with Abraham for its master had Sarah for its mistress.

She continued with him, believing in God with perseverance. Though they had no city to dwell in, she continued the roaming life with her husband, looking for "a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." She believed God's promise with all her heart, for though she laughed, once, because when the promise neared its realization it overwhelmed her—it was but a slip for the moment, for it is written by the Apostle in the 11th of Hebrews—"Through faith, also, Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised." It was not by nature, but by *faith*, that Isaac was born, the child of another sort of laughter than that of doubt—the child according to the promise of God. She was a believing woman, then, and she lived a believing life and so she did well.

She did well to her parents, well to her husband, well to her household, well to her guests, well before her God. Oh, that all professing Christian people had a faith that showed itself in doing well! But never let it be forgotten that though we preach faith, faith, faith, as the great means of salvation, yet we never say that you are saved unless there is a *change* worked in you and good works are *produced* in you, for "faith without works is dead, being alone." Faith saves, but it is the faith which *causes* men to do well. And if there is a faith (and there is such a faith) which

leaves a man just what he was and permits him to indulge in sin, it is the faith of devils!

Perhaps not so good as that, for, “the devils believe and tremble,” whereas these hypocrites profess to believe and yet dare to defy God! They seem to have no fear of Him whatever! Sarah had this testimony from the Lord, that she did well. And you are her daughters, all of you who believe, if you do well. Be no discredit to your queenly mother. Take care that you honor your spiritual parentage and maintain the high prestige of the elect family.

The point that I am to dwell upon just now is this—that she proved her faith by a second evidence—SHE WAS “NOT AFRAID WITH ANY AMAZE-MENT.” The text says, “whose daughters you are, as long as you do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.” She was calm and quiet and was not put in fear by any terror. There were several occasions in which she might have been much disquieted and put about. The first was in the breaking up of her house life. You see, her husband, Abraham, gets a call to go from Ur of the Chaldees. Well, it is a considerable journey and they move to Haran. There are some women—unbelieving women—who would not have understood that.

Why does he want to go away from the land in which he lives and from all our kindred, away to Haran? That would have been her question had she not been a partaker in her husband’s faith. An unbelieving woman would have said, “A call from God? Nonsense! Fanaticism! I do not believe it!” And when she saw that her husband would go, she would have been afraid with great amazement. When Abraham went to Haran with his father Terah, and Terah died in Haran, and then God called him to go further, they had to cross the Euphrates and get right away into a land which he knew nothing of, and this must have been a still sterner trial.

When they packed up their goods on the camels and on the asses and started with their train of servants and sheep and cattle, she might very naturally have said, if she had been an unbelieving woman, “Where are you going?” “I do not know,” says Abraham. “Why are you going? What are you going to get?” “I do not know,” says Abraham, “God has bid me go, but where I am going, I do not know. And what I am going for, I cannot exactly say, except that God has said, ‘Get you out from your country and your kindred, and I will bless you and multiply you, and give you a land wherein you shall dwell.’” We do not read that Sarah ever asked these questions, or was ever troubled at all about them. The things were put on the camels’ backs and away she journeyed, for God had called her husband to go and she resolved to go with him. Through floods or flames, it mattered not to her—she felt safe with her husband’s God and calmly journeyed on. She was not afraid with any amazement.

Then, though we do not hear much about her, we know that all those years she had to live in a *tent*. You know the man is out abroad attending to his business and he does not know much about the discomforts of home, not even in such homes as ours. But if you were called to give up your houses and go and live in *tents*, well, the master might not mind it, but the mistress would! It is a very trying life for a housewife. Sarah traveled from day to day and what with the constant moving of the tent, as

the cattle had to be taken to fresh pastures, it must have been a life of terrible discomfort. Yet Sarah never said a word about it. Up tomorrow morning; every tent-pin up; and all the canvas rolled away, for you must move to another station. The sun scorches like an oven, but you must ride across the plain, or if the night is cold with frost and heavy dews, still, canvas is your only wall and roof.

Remember, they were dwelling in tents as pilgrims and strangers, not for one day, or two, nor for a few days in a year, but for scores of years at a stretch! It was bravely done by this good woman that she was not afraid with any amazement. Besides, they did not live in a country where they were all alone, or surrounded by friends, for the tribes around them were all of other religions and of other tastes and ways—and they would have slain Abraham and killed the whole company if it had not been for a sort of fear that fell upon them—by which Jehovah seemed to say to them, “Touch not My anointed and do My Prophets no harm.” The Patriarch and his wife dwelt in the midst of enemies and yet they were not afraid! But if she had not been a believing woman, she must have often been afraid with great amazement!

And then there was a special time when the old man, Abraham, put on his harness and went to war. He hears that Chedorlaomer has come down with tributary kings and swept away the cities of the plain and taken captive his nephew, Lot. Abraham says, “I will go and deliver him.” And she might have said, “My husband, you are an old man. Those gray locks should not be touched with the stains of warfare.” She said nothing of the sort, but doubtless cheered him on and smiled as he invited some of his neighbors that dwelt near to go with him. She is under no distress that her husband is gone and all the herdsmen and servants round about the tents all gone, so that she is left alone with her women servants. No, she sits at home as a queen and fears no robbers, calmly confident in her God!

Abraham has gone to battle and she fears not for him. And she needs not, for he smites the kings and they are given like driven stubble to his bow. And he comes back laden with spoil. God was pleased with Sarah’s quiet faith, because in troublous times she was not afraid with any amazement. Then there came, a little while after, that great trial of faith which must have touched Sarah, though its full force fell on her husband. She observed the sudden disappearance of her husband and his servant. “Where is your master? He does not come into breakfast.” The servants say, “He was up a great while before day and he has gone with the servant, and with the ass, and with Isaac.”

He had not told her, for Abraham had struggled enough with himself to take Isaac away to the mountain and offer him! He could not bear to repeat the struggle in Sarah. He was gone without telling Sarah of his movements. This was a new state of things for her. He did not return all day. “Where has your master gone? I never knew him go away, before, without informing me. And where is Isaac?” Oh, that Isaac! How she feared for her jewel, her delight, the child of promise, the wonder of her old age! He did not come home that night, nor Abraham either. Nor the next day, nor the next. Three days passed and I can hardly picture the

anxiety that would have fallen upon any one of you if you had been Sarah, unless you had enjoyed Sarah's faith—for by *faith* in this trying case she was not afraid with any amazement.

I dare say it took three days for Abraham to come back, so that it was nearly a week, and no Abraham and no Isaac. One would have thought she would have wandered about, crying, "Where is my husband, and where is my son?" But not so. She calmly waited and said within herself, "If he has gone, he has gone upon some necessary errand, and he will be under God's protection. And God, who promised to bless him and to bless his seed will not suffer any evil to harm him. So she rested quietly, when others would have been in dire dismay. She was not afraid with any amazement. We hear so little said about Sarah that I am obliged, thus, to picture what I feel she must have been, because human nature is so like itself and the effect of events upon us is very like the effect which would have been produced upon the mind of Sarah.

Now, this is a point in which Christian women and, for that matter, Christian men, also, should seek to imitate Sarah. We should not let our hearts be troubled, but rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. What is this virtue? It is a calm, quiet trusting in God. It is freedom from fear, such as is described in another place in these words—"He shall not be afraid of evil tidings. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." Or, as we read in David's words, the other night, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me." It is composure of mind, freedom from anxiety, the absence of fretfulness and clean deliverance from alarm, so that, whatever happens, trepidation does not seize upon the spirit, but the heart keeps on at its own quiet pace, delighting itself in a faithful God.

This is the virtue which is worth a king's ransom and Sarah had it! "Whose daughters you are if you are not afraid with any amazement." When is this virtue to be exercised by us? Well, it should be exercised at all times. If we are not self-composed when we are happy we are not likely to be calm when we are sad. I notice that if I am at all pleased with the praise of a friend, I become in that degree open to be grieved by the censure of a foe. By so much as you are elated by prosperity, by so much are you likely to be depressed when adversity comes. But if you are calm, quiet, happy—no, more than that—when everything goes well, then you will be calm, quiet, happy—not less than that—when everything goes ill. To keep up an equable frame of mind is a thing to aim at, even as the gardener desires an even temperature for his choice flowers.

You ask, Who are to exercise this virtue? We are all to do so! But the text is specially directed to the sisterhood. I suppose women are exhorted to it because some of them are rather excitable, a little hysterical and apt to be fearfully depressed and utterly carried away. I am not saying that this fault is general or common among women, neither am I *blaming* them, but only stating the fact that some are thus afflicted and it is a happy, happy thing if they can master it so that they are not afraid with any amazement. But this virtue especially serves in time of trouble when a very serious trial threatens us. Then the Christian is not to say, "What shall I do? I shall never endure it. I cannot live through it. Surely God has

forgotten me. This trouble will crash me. I shall die of a broken heart." No. No. No! Do not talk so! My dear Friend, do not talk so.

If you are God's child do not even *think* so. Try in patience to lift up your head and remember Sarah, "whose daughters you are if you are not afraid with any amazement." And so must it be in times of personal sickness. How many are the pains and sufferings that fall to the lot of the sisterhood! But if you have faith, you will not be afraid with any amazement. I saw one, the other day, who was about to suffer from the surgeon's knife. It was a serious operation, about which all stood in doubt. but I was happy to see her as composed in the prospect of it as though it had been a pleasure rather than a pain. Thus calmly resigned should a Christian be! I went to see, yesterday, an aged Sister—a member of this Church, close upon fourscore years of age. She is dying with dropsy and, being unable to lie down in bed, is obliged to always sit up—a posture which allows little or no rest.

When I entered her room she welcomed me most heartily, which, perhaps was not amazing, for she is greatly attached to her minister. The wonder lay in the fact that she expressed herself as being full of happiness, full of delight, full of expectancy of being with Christ! I went to comfort *her* but she comforted me! What could I say? She talked of the goodness of God with an eye as full of pleasure as if she had been a maiden speaking to her young companion of her marriage day! Our Sister used to sit just there, in yonder pew. I seem to see her sitting there now, but she will soon sit among the bright ones in Heaven! I was charmed to see one with such evident marks of long-continued pain upon her face, but with such sweet serenity there, too! Yes, with *more* than serenity—with unspeakable joy in the Lord—such, as I fear, some in health and strength have not yet learned! A Christian woman should not be afraid with any amazement either in adversity or in sickness, but her holy patience should prove her to be a true daughter of Sarah and Abraham.

Christian women in Peter's day were subject to persecution as much as their husbands. They were shut up in prison, scourged, tortured, burned, or slain with the sword. One holy woman in the early days of the Church was tossed upon the horns of bulls. Another was made to sit in a red-hot iron chair. Thus were they tortured, not accepting deliverance. In the early days of martyrdom the women played the man as well as the men! They defied the tyrant to do his worst upon their mortal bodies, for their conquering spirits laughed at every torment! If persecuting times should come again, or if they are here, already, in some measure, O daughters of Sarah, do well and be not afraid with any amazement! And so, if you should be called to some stern duty; if you should be bound to do what you feel you cannot do, remember that anybody can do what he *can* do. It is the believing man who does what he *cannot* do. We achieve impossibilities by the power of the Almighty God. Be not afraid, then, of any duty, but believe that you will be able to do it, for Grace will be sufficient for you.

At the last, in the prospect of death, my dear Friends, may you not be afraid with any amazement! Oftentimes a deathbed is vantage ground for a Christian. Where others show their fear and, sometimes their terror,

there should the Believer show his peacefulness and his happy expectancy, not afraid with any amazement, whatever the form of death may be! Now, what is the excellence of this virtue? I shall answer that question by saying it is due to God that we should not be afraid with any amazement. Such a God as we have ought to be trusted. Under the shadow of such a wing, fear becomes a sin! If God were other than He is, we might be afraid. But while He is such a God, it is due to Him that fear is banished. Peacefulness is true worship. Quiet under alarming conditions is devotion. He worships best who is most calm in evil times.

Moreover, the excellence of this virtue is that it is most impressive to men. I do not think anything is more likely to impress the ungodly than the quiet peace of mind of a Christian in danger or near death. If we can be happy, then, our friends will ask, "What makes them so calm?" Nor is the usefulness confined to others. It is most useful to ourselves, for he who can be calm in time of trouble will be most likely to make his way through it. When you once become afraid, you cannot judge wisely as to your best course. You generally do wrong when you are frightened out of your confidence in God. When the heart begins palpitating, then the whole system is out of order for the battle of life. Be calm and wait for your opportunity. Napoleon's victories were, to a large extent, due to the serenity of that masterly warrior and, depend upon it, it is so with you Christian people—you will win if you can wait. Do not be in a hurry. Consider what you should do.

Do not be so alarmed as to make haste. Be patient; be quiet; wait God's time and so wait your own time. Wait upon God to open your mouth. Ask Him to guide your hand and to do everything for you. Calmness of mind is the mother of prudence and discretion. It gives the firm foothold which is necessary for the warrior when he is about to deal a victorious blow. Those who cannot be amazed by fear shall live to be amazed with mercy! "How," asks one, "can we obtain it?" That is the question! Remember, it is an outgrowth of *faith* and you will have it in proportion as you have faith! Have faith in God and you will not be afraid with any amazement.

Very early in my preaching days I had faith in God in times of thunderstorms. When I have walked out to preach, it has happened that I have been wet through and through with the storm and yet I have felt no annoyance from the thunder and lightning. On one occasion I turned in, by reason of the extreme severity of the rain, to a little cottage and I found a woman there with a child who seemed somewhat relieved when she had admitted me, but previously she had been crying bitterly with sheer alarm and terror. "Why," she said, "this is a little round lodge house and the lightning comes in at every window. There is no place into which I can get to hide it from my eyes."

I explained to her that I liked to see the lightning, for it showed me that an explosion was all over and, since I had lived to see the flash, it was clear it could now do me no harm. I told her that to hear the thunder was a splendid thing, it was only God saying, "It is all over." If you live to see the lightning flash, there is nothing to be afraid of—you would have been dead and never have seen it if it had been sent to kill you! I tried to console her on religious grounds and I remember well praying with her and

making her happy as a bird! It was my being so calm and quiet and praying with her that cheered her up and, by God's Grace, when I went on my way I left her in peace. You may depend upon it, my dear Friends, that unless our own souls have peace we cannot communicate it to others.

In this way we must believe in God about everything. It so happened that about that matter—the thunder and lightning—I did believe in God up to the very last degree and, therefore, I could not be alarmed on that score. So if you believe in God upon any other subject, whatever it is, you will have perfect peace with God about it. If you can believe God when you are in a storm at sea, that He holds the water in the hollow of His hand, you will be at peace about the tempest. It is the thing that troubles you that you must believe about—and when Faith makes an application of her hand to the particular trial—then will peace of mind come to you.

This holy calm comes, also, from walking with God. No spot is so serene as the secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High. Commune with God and you will forget fear. Keep up daily fellowship with Christ in prayer, in praise, in service, in searching the Word, in submitting your heart to the work of the eternal Spirit—and as you walk with God, you will find yourself calm. You know how our poet puts it—

***“Oh for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame.”***

These go together. If you would feed upon certain Truths of God which will produce this calm of mind, remember, first, that God is full of love and, therefore, nothing that God sends can harm His child. Take everything from the Lord as a token of love, even though it is a stroke of His rod, or a cut of His knife. Everything from that dear hand must mean love, for He has said, “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.” When you accept every affliction as a love token, then will your fear be ended.

Next, remember the faithfulness of God to His promises and the fact that there is a promise for your particular position. The Lord is, at this moment, under promise to you, and that promise is registered in His Book. Search it out and then grasp it, and say, “He must keep it! He cannot break His Word.” He has said, “In six troubles I will be with you.” Have you got to number six? He has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you,” and how can He run back from His Word? If He does not leave you nor forsake you, what can you fear? Whatever is coming—poverty, sickness, shame, slander—if all the devils in Hell are loosed and they are all coming up against us at once, yet, if the Lord is with us, we will smite them hip and thigh and send them back to the infernal deep as quickly as the swine of old ran down a steep place into the sea and were drowned in the waters!

“Oh,” says the devil, “I can overcome *you*.” We say nothing to him but this—“You know your Master! You know your Master. Lie down, Sir! You know your Master and that Master is our Covenant Head, our Husband and our Lord.” Neither the world, the flesh, nor the devil shall be able to overcome us since we have the promise of a faithful God to protect us! Many of you here tonight have gray hair, or bald heads. I have always such a large proportion of aged people in my congregation that I can say to you what I might not say to the young folk. We, dear Friends, ought not to be afraid, for trials are no novelties with *us*! We have smelt powder and

been grimed with the dust of the conflict times out of mind! We ought not to be troubled—we have been to sea before.

And has not the Lord helped us? Tell it for His honor! He has been a very present help. He has borne us through such things that to doubt Him would be an impudent slander upon His Character! As for myself—and I suppose the language I now use would come from the lips of many here—my way has been strewn with wonders of Divine mercy! Trials have abounded and I am glad that they have—they have been opportunities for the display of Divine Grace. Labors have been attempted of which some said, “these are visionary schemes.” But God has always been better than our faith! We have never been confounded and I think we ought, by this time, to have learned that trusting in God is the most reasonable thing that we ever do!

There are speculations in business, risks, even, in the most solid trading. But there is no speculation in believing God, no risk in trusting in Him! He that hangs the world upon nothing and yet keeps it in its place, can bring His people to have nothing and yet to possess all things! He that makes yon arch of Heaven stand secure without a buttress or a prop—a mighty arch such as no human engineer could ever contrive—He can make us stand without helpers, without friends, without riches, without strength and stand, too, when all other things except that which God supports shall have come down in the final crash! “Trust you in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.”

I pray for you who are most timid, that from this day you may be true daughters of Sarah and not be afraid with any amazement. God bless you with this gracious help and you will praise His name. Amen.

THIS SERMON is revised at Mentone, and the preacher is happy to say that he is receiving rapid restoration through perfect rest. The Lord’s goodness in moving friends to send in help to the various enterprises and His Grace in blessing special services, have kept the pastor’s mind free from anxiety, and thus supplied the best form of repose. Friends who read these sermons regularly are reminded that a Bazaar will be held at the Tabernacle during the first week of the coming year to provide further buildings for the Girls’ Orphanage. It is hoped that each reader will have a brick in the wall. Monies are to be sent to C. H Spurgeon, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood. And parcels of goods to V. J. Charlesworth, The Orphanage, Stockwell, London.

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HEARKEN AND LOOK—OR, ENCOURAGEMENT FOR BELIEVERS NO. 1596

**DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27, 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL.**

(The Annual Sermon on behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society).

*“Look unto Abraham your father and unto Sarah that bore you:
for I called him alone and blessed him, and increased him.
For the Lord shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her
waste places; and He will make her wilderness like
Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord;
joy and gladness shall be found therein,
thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.”
Isaiah 51:2, 3.*

THE second verse contains my actual text. It is the argument by which faith is led to look for the blessings promised in the third verse. It is habitual with some persons to spy out the dark side of every question or fact—they fix their eyes upon the “waste places”—and they study them till they know every ruin and are familiar with the dragons and the owls. They sigh most dolorously that the former times were better than these and that we have fallen upon most degenerate days. They speak of “shooting Niagara” and of all sorts of frightful things. I am afraid that a measure of this tendency to write bitter things dwells in almost all of us at this present season, for certain discouraging facts which cannot be ignored are pressing heavily upon men’s spirits. The habit of looking continually towards the wildernesses is injurious because it greatly discourages and anything that discourages an earnest worker is a serious leakage for his strength.

Perhaps a worse result than honest discouragement comes of depressing views, for they often afford an apology for indifference and inaction. The smallest peg suffices to hang an excuse upon when we are anxious to escape from the stern service of faith. “I pray you have me excused,” is a request which was supported in the parable by the flimsiest of pretences and discouragement makes one of the same sort. The sluggard’s argument is on this wise—“I will not attempt the work, for it is far too heavy for my poor strength. I fear the times are ill adapted to any special effort. Indeed, I am not quite certain that success will ever attend the general work.”

It is, therefore, a dreadful thing when the Christian Church begins to be discouraged and means must be used to stop the evil. Such means we would use this day. Lo, we lift the standard of the Divine Promise. “Comfort you, comfort you, My people,” sounds out like a silver trumpet in the front of the host! Be encouraged, O you of the faint heart—there are no more difficulties now than there were of old! The cause is no more in jeopardy than it was a thousand years ago! The result, the end, the consummation of *all* things is absolutely certain—it is in His hands who cannot fail—therefore be of good courage and in waiting upon the Lord renew

your strength! Remember, you that are cast down, that there are other voices besides those of the bittern and owl from the “waste places.”

My text has near to it twice, no, three times, “HEARKEN TO ME.” You have listened long enough to dreary suggestions from within; to gloomy prophecies from desponding friends; to the taunts of foes and to the horrible whispers of Satan! Now hearken to Him who promises to make the wilderness like Eden and the desert like the garden of the Lord! O you whose eyes are quick to discover evil, there are other sights in the world besides waste places and deserts and, therefore, my text has near to it twice over the exhortation, “Look”—“Look unto the rock from where you are hewn.” “Look unto Abraham your father.”

Why should your eyes forever ache over desolations? Probably you have seen as much in the wilderness as you are ever likely to see there. It does not take long to discover all the treasures and comforts of the burning sand—you have probably discovered them all by now. As for the discomforts and needs of the desert, you are, perhaps, as well acquainted with them as you need to be. Gaze no longer at the thirsty land and the burning sky! Turn your eyes where the finger of the Lord points by His Word. If we enquire what it is that the Lord would have us observe, He answers, “Look unto Abraham your father and unto Sarah that bore you”—for there we may find comfort.

O for the Presence of the Holy Spirit, that the Word of God may be full of the dew of Heaven to refresh our souls!

I. We shall first look towards Abraham that we may see in him THE ORIGINAL OF GOD’S ANCIENT PEOPLE, the foundation stone, as it were, of the dispensation by which God blessed the former ages. In Judah was God known. His name was great in Israel—let us look to the rock from where Israel and Judah were hewn. We observe, first, that the founder of God’s first people was called out of a heathen family. “Your fathers,” says Joshua, “dwelt on the other side of the flood in the old times, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and they served other gods.”

Abraham, the founder of the great system in which God was pleased to reveal Himself for so long a time and to whose seed the Oracles of God were committed, was a dweller in Ur of the Chaldees, the city of the moon God! We cannot tell to what extent he was actually engrossed in the superstition of his fathers, but it is certain that the family was, for years afterwards, tainted with idolatry, for in Jacob’s day the teraph was still venerated and Rachel stole her father’s images. Abraham, therefore, was called out from the place of his birth and from the household to which he belonged, that in a separated condition, as a worshipper of the one God, he might keep the Truth of God alive in the world.

Remember, then, that the first man from whom sprang that wondrous nation which God has not yet cast away was originally, himself, an idolater and had to be called out of his sinful state by effectual Grace. Why, then, might not the Lord, if the cause of Truth were, this day, reduced to its utmost extremity, again raise up a Church out of one man? If an almost universal apostasy should hide the Divine Light, could He not kindle a torch among the heathen and by its light illuminate the earth again? He could call out another Abraham and bless him and increase him and achieve the whole of His eternal purposes if all of us should sleep in the

dust and the visibly organized Church of today should pass away as the snow of Winter at the advent of Spring!

Is anything too hard for the Lord? Is He not able to raise up children unto Abraham from stones? As to anything like discouragement, it ought to *vanish* at the thought that not only out of your Sunday schools, your colleges and your pulpits can God raise up leaders for His Church, but He can find them in the very center of heathenism! Where Satan's seat is, even *there* can the Lord raise up advocates for His cause! The thick darkness of superstition shall not prevent the chosen one from seeing the light, neither shall the bondage of sin hold back the captive from finding freedom and proclaiming it to others.

"Ah," you say, "but men are not called now, as Abraham was, by miraculous calls from Heaven." I reply—The statement may be true, but God's visible means of calling men are now so many that there is seldom a need of a miracle. The Lord can, by His Spirit, make one of the millions of Bibles scattered over the world to be as powerful a means of calling as though He had sent an angel from Heaven! Yes, a solitary leaf of a printed tract, if blown by the wind, or carried by a wave, may be borne where God shall bless it to the calling forth of a champion ordained of old to do great exploits! Where ordinary means are so plentiful, wisdom resorts not to signs and wonders! Miracles were of admirable use while they were necessary—but now that they are no longer required—the prudence of God forbids an extravagant display of the supernatural.

Now that the Word of God is scattered, "thick as leaves in Valambrosa," everywhere by willing and ready hands, what necessity can there be of voices of the day or visions of the night? The same Spirit who called Abraham by a supernatural voice can call others by the Word of Truth. Instead of regarding it as a prodigy, that a man should be unexpectedly called out from among the heathen, I *look* for it and shall not be surprised to hear that in the remote provinces of China, or in the center of Tibet, or in the recesses of Africa, men have been raised up to found Churches for our Lord Jesus! God can, through the printed page or by hints and rumors passed from hand to hand, convey enough instruction to call out more Abrahams and bless them—and increase His Kingdom by them.

"Omnipotence has servants everywhere." Let us never dream that the God of Abraham is short of means for calling out chosen men to build up His Church! Surely Christian people should never doubt the power of God to raise up lights in dark places when we remember that the greatest preacher of the Gospel, namely, the Apostle Paul, was drafted into the army of Christ from the ranks of His direst foes! The proud Pharisee, a fanatic of the fanatics who was embittered against Christ and persecuting His people, became the earnest advocate of Christ Jesus! Before, his breath was threats and slaughter—yet on the road to Damascus he was conquered and transformed! As a lion roars over his prey, so did Paul rejoice that the saints in Damascus were now in his power! But the Lord struck him down and turned the lion to a lamb—and from now on where sin abounded Grace did much more abound! First in the ranks of Christian heroes stands the man who called himself the chief of sinners because he persecuted the Church of God.

My Brothers and Sisters, as Luther came from among the monks, so out of Rome, yes, from the Vatican, itself, can God, if He wills, call another

Luther! The darkness of the times cannot forbid it, for God is Light. The weakness of the Church cannot hinder it, for all power belongs to God. There may not be among us, today, one whom God will so greatly honor as to make him a spiritual father of nations, but there may be such a one in the courts of Whitechapel or in the rookeries of St. Giles. The Christ, who was, Himself, called the Galilean, despises no place or people! Our King is not particular as to the mine from which He digs His gold. The great Seeker of precious souls full often finds His purest pearls in the deepest and the blackest waters!

Take this, then, for encouragement, you who tremble for the Ark of God—He can build up a spiritual house for Himself out of dark quarries and find cedars for His temple in forests untraversed by the feet of missionaries. “Ah,” you say, “but Abraham was naturally a man of noble mold. Where do you find such a princely spirit as his?” I answer, Who made him? He that made him can make another like he! There is a Grace of God which goes before what we are accustomed to call Saving Grace—I mean a Grace of God which, in the creating of the nature, makes it a fit instrument for the Grace which is later to be bestowed. By such Sovereign favor, one man is, from his birth, endowed with a superior mind and character, being adorned, even as a natural man, with much that is excellent in its own order.

How often do you see among certain men of the world a generosity, honesty, open-heartedness and nobility of disposition which are not Divine Graces, but which mark men out as fit to be leaders in all that is good when Grace calls them into the Divine service? The Lord can just as soon make a man after the type of Abraham as after any other type—and doubtless He has such in store, even now, to whom His call will yet come. We may expect to see men of strong convictions converted into Believers who “stagger not at the promise through unbelief.” From among priests and pagans we may hope that the Lord will raise up pillars for His Church. Is not this hope encouraged in your breasts as you “Look unto Abraham your father and unto Sarah that bore you”?

Look again and observe that Abraham was but one man. Do not be startled at the sound which seems to have such terrors for certain brethren. I have heard the cant of those who object to a “one-man ministry,” a ministry to which all the while they usually submit in their own meetings. But to my ears there is music and not terror in the term, “a one-man ministry.” I bless God that all my hope of salvation hangs upon the Divine ministry of the One Man! Is not Christ, as the Servant of God, the very pattern of all ministries which are of God? Working out the Father’s eternal purpose by a life which was necessarily unique in many points, He trod the winepress alone in this, however. He causes many of His people to have fellowship with Him, even as in the case of Paul, who says, “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me.”

I am bold, also, to say that the Lord has, as a rule, worked more nobly by one man than by bands and corporations of men. He in whose seed all nations are blessed was but one. “I called him,” He says, “alone and blessed him, and increased him.” Nor is this a solitary instance. When the earth was utterly corrupt, God conserved the race by a solitary preacher of righteousness who prepared an ark for the saving of His house. See how one Joseph saved whole nations from famine and one Moses brought

out a race from bondage! Who was there to keep Israel right when Moses fell asleep but the one man, Joshua? What were the prosperous times in the era of the Judges but days when one man went to the front as a leader? When all the rest hid away in dens and caves, some Barak or Gideon, or Jephthah, or Samson came boldly forward and delivered Israel. One man, standing like a figure at the head of many ciphers, soon headed victorious, thousands, through faith in God!

What was there but one man in the days of David? The Philistines had triumphed over the land if the one lad had not brought back Goliath's head and if the one man had not again and again smitten the uncircumcised in the name of the Lord. Beloved, if we should ever be reduced, as we shall *not* be, to one man, yet by one man will God preserve His Church and work out His great purposes! I hope we shall never go into our chamber and shut the door and cry with Elijah, "I only am left and they seek my life!" No, my Brother, there are more faithful men in this world than you! The Lord has yet reserved to Himself His thousands that have not bowed the knee to Baal. We are, this day, not one man, but many, and we all desire to live for the Glory of God and for the spread of His Gospel—but if our hosts were so diminished that we could be numbered by a little child upon his fingers—still there would be no excuse for dismay, for the God of Abraham still lives, even He who created a people to His praise by one man, of whom He says, "I called him alone and blessed him, and increased him."

Think, my Brothers and Sisters, of the power for good or evil which may be enshrined in a single human life! What mischievous results may come of one man! One sinner destroys much good and if there were but one person left who had knowledge of the ways of vice and the words of blasphemy, that one man would suffice to infect the race with his abominations. If evil is so mighty, is not good, with *God* in it, quite as powerful? We may rightly measure quantities in reference to many things, but with others it is absurd! It would be ridiculous to measure the power of fire by the quantity which burns on your hearth. Give us fit materials and a single match and you shall see what fire can do! If ordinary fire, that may so readily be extinguished, is thus powerful, who shall venture to measure the power of the fire from Heaven which neither men nor devils can quench—the fire which fell at Pentecost and burns among us still?

You carry fire, you servants of God! You work with a Heaven-sent force of boundless energy! Why, therefore, should you despair? If all the lights in the world were put out except a solitary lamp, there is enough fire in one wick to kindle all the lamps in the universe! What inch of ground remains for despair to stand upon? Furthermore, we are bound to notice that this one man was a lone man. He had not only to do the work of God, but he had nobody to help him. "I called him alone." True, he was attended by Lot—a poor miserable lot *he* was, costing his noble uncle more trouble than he ever brought him profit! How little did he maintain or adorn the righteousness which, nevertheless, had saved him—true type of many a feeble professor in these days!

Abraham was not backed by any society when he crossed the Euphrates and afterwards traversed the desert to sojourn in Canaan as a pilgrim and a stranger. If ever man was fairly cut adrift and cast upon the Lord, it was the great Father of the Faithful! He certainly found no patronage in

his onward course except the All-Sufficient patronage of the Lord, his God. When he came near to kings, it was a source of trouble to him. It led to contention and once to war—or else he felt bound to refuse their offers of gifts and say as he did to the king of Sodom, “I will not take from you a thread or even a shoelace, and I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich.” That same boastful sentence might be uttered by the State concerning some churches that I know of, but not concerning us—may God preserve us, my Brothers and Sisters, from every desire to come under obligations to earthly sovereignties lest, becoming indebted to them, we should be bound to render suit and service at their bidding—such service being already due to “another King, one Jesus.”

Abraham had no prestige of parentage, rank, or title. If you had looked at the stately Patriarch when he trod the plains of Mamre, you would have seen about him a presence, a calm dignity, a truly regal manner—but that came to him solely through his faith in God and his communion with Heaven. Abraham was distinguished from other men only by the Grace of God. What grander difference can there be than that which is established by the existence of faith in the heart? Thus Abraham was, in the fullest sense, a lone man, unsupported by any of those outward distinctions which enable some men to do more than others. The fulfillment of his calling rested on his loneliness, for he must get away from his kindred and wander up and down with his flocks, even as the Church of God now does, dwelling in a strange land and feeding her flock apart.

When he was alone, God blessed Abraham—“I called him alone and blessed him, and increased Him.” The blessing did not come to him in Charran while he still had some connection with the old stock—he was not yet thoroughly nonconformist—but held in some small degree to the old house at home and till the last link was snapped, the blessing could not come. And now, my Brother, if in the town or district where you live you seem to lose all your helpers. If they die, one by one, and it seems as if nobody would be left to you—if even the Prayer Meeting fails for need of earnest, pleading men—still persevere, for it is the lone man that God will bless! “He sets the solitary in families.” In your present forlorn condition you are learning sympathy with that lone man in Gethsemane, with that lone man upon the Cross who there vanquished all your foes! Remember that your enemies are thus beaten before you encounter them and, therefore, you may readily overcome through the blood of the Lamb. Oh, be not afraid. Thus says the Lord—“I called him alone and blessed him, and increased him.”

Grasp that, you that dwell remote from human sympathy. Oh that our missionaries abroad may feel the rich comfort of this fact, for they full often, like lone sentinels, keep watch with eyes that long to see a friend! They are separated from communion with Brethren. They miss the friendships which tend to comfort and confirm, but it is *God* that calls them alone and He will bless them and increase them! The purer Churches of today, standing alone as they do, because they dare not make unholy alliances with any—standing alone, I say, in simple trust in the living Lord—ought not to be afraid with any amazement, but attempt great things for good and *expect* great things from God.

Once more, I cannot help asking your attention to the fact that Abraham was not only a man called from heathendom, one man and a lone man, but he was a man who had to be stripped, yet further. The blessing was—"Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you," but the manifest fulfillment of it was not by-and-by. As we have already seen, he must come away from his kindred and his father's house. And he must dwell in Palestine till the promised seed was born. And how long he waited for the expected heir! Twenty, yes, almost 30 years rolled away and the man, Abraham, was 99 years old! He is very old and yet he is to be blessed with a son! He must number the full tale of a hundred years before Isaac can be born!

This promised child was to be according to promise and, therefore, it could not be born till nature was recognized as spent. As for Sarah—it was not possible that she should become a mother at her advanced age and yet it must be so, for God had said it! The believing pair had waited on, till, in an evil hour, Sarah suggested a desperate attempt to fulfill the promise in which she still firmly believed. That artifice broke down—it was a part of the Divine plan that it should do so. The Covenant promise was not to the seed after the flesh. When that scheme had been set aside, the Lord, in His own time, fulfilled His word. Joy! Joy in the house of Abraham and Sarah! What a feast there was that Isaac was born, filling the house with laughter!

But he must die! "Get up," said God, "and take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and offer him for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you of." The grand old man will do it! He will get up early in the morning and the father and the son will journey together silently, for the aged heart is too full to talk. He believes God and is sure that even if he should actually slay his son at God's command, the promise would somehow be kept. Abraham could not tell how, but it was no business of his to tell how—he was fully persuaded that what God had promised, he was able to perform. God had said to him, "In Isaac shall your seed be called," and he believed that God could raise Isaac from the dead, or in some other way achieve the promise.

Thus he grasped the Resurrection! He laid hold on a Truth of God which was deeper than he knew—by his faith he realized resurrection for Isaac though, as yet, the Lord Jesus had not shown the way by His own rising from the dead! What a stripping Abraham had endured! Who can describe what would have been the wretchedness of that aged parent if it had not been for his faith! Men intensely love the children of their old age. See how a grandchild is fondled by his grandsire and thus must Isaac have been loved of Abraham—and yet he must die by his father's own hand! Oh, most miserable among the miserable must he have been who stood there on Mount Moriah, called to such a duty—his heart breaking while his soul obeyed! Such, doubtless, would have been the case had not faith been his stay.

Look, then, to Abraham, your father, and say, is he not the greatest of men, the grandest human representative of the great Father God, Himself, who in the fullness of time spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all? Like to God among mortal men are you, Abraham, and therefore well might you be His friend! In your trial, brought to such a stripping, we may yet envy you as we hear the Lord saying, "Now know I

that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from Me.” Now, if in all these trials, Abraham was yet blessed and God’s purposes were accomplished in him, can we not believe that the same God can work by us, also, in spite of our downcasting and humiliations? When we are utterly broken and crashed, may not the Lord’s strength be made perfect in our weakness? Let us not question the promise because of our personal deadness and inability, but believe God without wavering, for He has said, “My Grace is sufficient for you.”

Now, Brothers and Sisters, here is the sum and substance of this first head of my discourse—in looking to the rock from where we are hewn, we have to see the Lord working the greatest results from apparently inadequate sources. This teaches us to cease from calculating means, possibilities and probabilities, for we have to deal with *God* with whom all things are possible! Almighty God can assuredly do whatever He says He will do. Who is to hinder Him? Let the voice ring out over all the earth and let it be heard in Hell, itself—who shall stop the arm of God when He wills to achieve a thing? He fears no opposition and He needs no help! Of what did He make the world? With whom took He counsel? Who instructed Him? And, if all the things that are have been *spoken* into existence by God, by His mere *word*, can He not yet build up His Church, even if on her earthly side there should seem to be no material with which to raise her walls?

Consider Creation and remark what God has worked. See how all the millions of mankind have sprung from a single pair because God blessed them in the beginning. But I must not multiply illustrations from Nature or from history, for they rise spontaneously before your own minds. Refresh your faith by a reference to our own island history. If you would firmly believe in the conversion of the heathen, remember what your fathers were when bloody rites were performed in the oak woods or amid the huge monoliths of Stonehenge! The Druidic system was as cruel and degrading as any that now curses a savage people—but the heralds of Jesus conquered! Where are the gods of the Druids, now? Who reverences the golden sickle and the sacred oak? The thing is gone as though it never had been!

Why, then, should not other evil idolatries pass away? Look again at the triumph of Protestantism in this country. What was it at first? A thing utterly despised and hunted down. The stakes of Smithfield cannot be forgotten by those who dwell so near the spot. Yet, in spite of all, the Gospel of God triumphed—and rood and pyx and image were broken in contempt! Let the days of the Puritans, the palmy days when God was known in England, tell how thoroughly Bible Truths won the victory! Why not again? Why not everywhere? If you desire another illustration, look at our own body of Christians? History has, before now, been written by our enemies who never would have kept a single fact about us upon the record if they could have helped it—and yet it leaks out, every now and then, that certain poor people called Anabaptists were brought up for condemnation!

From the days of Henry II to those of Elizabeth, we hear of certain unhappy heretics who were hated by all men for the Truth’s sake which was in them. We read of poor men and women, with their garments cut short, turned out into the fields to perish in the cold and of others who were burnt at Newington for the crime of Anabaptism! Long before you Protes-

tants were known of, these horrible Anabaptists, as they were unjustly called, were protesting for the “one Lord, one faith and one Baptism.” No sooner did the visible Church begin to depart from the Gospel than these men arose to keep fast the good old way!

The priests and monks wished for peace and slumber, but there was always a Baptist or a Lollard tickling men’s ears with Holy Scripture and calling their attention to the errors of the times. They were a poor, persecuted tribe. The halter was thought to be too good for them. At times ill-written history would have us think that they died out, so well had the wolf done his work on the sheep. Yet here we are, blessed and multiplied! And Newington sees other scenes from Sabbath to Sabbath. As I think of your numbers and efforts, I can only say in wonder—What a growth! As I think of the multitudes of our Brothers and Sisters in America, I may well say, What has God worked? Our history forbids discouragement! Never was a cause more hopeless, once—and none more hopeful, today! It matters little what may yet happen—the cause is safe! What if all our Baptist organizations expire! What if but one man should be left faithful to the old banner? Our Captain would yet triumph gloriously, for He saves not by many nor by few. Though all else fails, the Lord shall reign forever and ever!

This is the lesson which, I pray, we may all of us learn and then, by faith, go forth to act upon it!

II. With great brevity I shall dwell, for a moment, upon the second point, namely—THE MAIN CHARACTERISTIC OF THIS CHOSEN MAN. The text says, “Look unto Abraham your father and unto Sarah that bore you,” and it must mean—consider him and see what he was, that you may learn from him. You perceive at once that his grand characteristic was his faith. In this faith many other most brilliant qualities are comprehended, but his faith lay at the bottom of all. Here is his epitaph—“Abraham believed God.” That was a mainspring of all his acts, the glory of his life, “Abraham believed God.”

The men that God will work by, whatever else they have *not*, must have faith in God! Though it is to be desired that the Believer should have every mental and moral qualification, yet it is astounding how, if there is real faith, a multitude of imperfections are swallowed up and the man is still a power. I would mention Samson as an extreme case. He was the feeblest of men and the least fitted to be a judge in Israel—but oh, what faith! And what wonders it achieved! A thousand men! He is like a child in his belief that God is with him. He never calculates at all—it is all the same to him whether there are a thousand or one! He flings himself upon the host and has slain them before we can realize the deadly odds.

A sword? No, he has no sword—an old jawbone of an ass is quite enough for an arm which God strengthens! Look how he smites them, hip and thigh, till they lie in heaps before him! I do not suppose that it would have made any difference to Samson if there had been a *million* Philistines—with a thousand to one, a man is so thoroughly outnumbered that numbers cease to matter! Here was an impossibility before him and what could be worse? Brethren, when you get off your feet and must swim, you may as well have 50 fathoms of water beneath you as not, for you can but drown. In the case of faith, drowning is out of the question and swimming is *good* in deep water, for there is no fear of striking against a rock!

Faith glories in difficulties and infirmities because the power of God does rest upon her. If the work is barely possible to her strength, Faith hardly likes it—she gets into her sphere when, in trials far beyond human strength, she laughs at impossibility and cries, “It shall be done!” Abraham’s faith was such that it led him to obedience. He was called to go out and he went, not knowing where he went. His faith through Grace led him to perseverance, for once in God’s way, he did not leave it, but still abode a sojourner with God. His faith led him to expectancy—he looked for the promised seed and not only for an Isaac but for the Messiah. So clear was the vision of his expectancy that before his eyes Christ was set forth, visibly!

Did not the Savior, who knew all things, say, “Abraham saw My day. He saw it and was glad”? The same faith also dwelt in the breast of Sarah and, as we are told in the text to look to Sarah as well as Abraham, let us not fail to do so. The faith of Sarah was not little when she left home with her husband, forsaking her kith and kin from love to God and to him whom she called, “Lord.” She acted as if she had said to the great Patriarch, “Where you go I will go. Where you dwell I will dwell, for your God is my God.” Nor did the trial of her faith end with the moving—she had to take up with tent-life and all its inconveniences. It is the woman that knows the discomfort of domestic life under such circumstances. We never hear that she complained for a moment, though the cold of winter and the heat of summer are, neither of them, warded off by a tent! How readily she entertained her husband’s guests. Though they might drop in at most unseasonable hours—or call her to bake bread in the heat of the day—she was glad to welcome strangers for, like her husband, she was given to hospitality.

I saw you smile, dear Friends, when I mentioned domestic matters. But to me it is the solemnity of faith that men and women can not only pray and sing, but can put up with household discomforts out of obedience to God. Certain people look upon faith as a fine, airy, sentimental thing with which to roam among the stars, anticipate millenniums and enjoy themselves in lofty contemplation. I believe far more in a faith which, whether it eats or drinks, does all to the Glory of God! Faith, which like Sarah, dwells in the tent and works there. Faith which is cheerful over a scanty meal and drives away the fear of need. Faith which can come down in life from the mansion to the cottage if Providence so decrees. The change must have been great from Abraham’s comfortable home at Ur, to his Gypsy wanderings in Palestine, but Abraham may not have felt it one half as much as Sarah, for men can rough it and live out of doors, but the housewife knows all about it and great was her faith that she never raised a question about the propriety of her husband’s course of life.

And though she laughed when she was told that she would bear a son, yet remember that in the 11th of Hebrews it is written—“Through faith, also, Sarah herself received strength.” She was the mother of Isaac, not in the power of the flesh, but through the energy of *faith*—therefore look at her as the text bids you. Christian men and Christian women, mark well this fact that the characteristic of the person whom God will bless is that he believes and acts upon his belief. Without faith it is impossible to please God—but the man of faith is God’s man! And why is this? I answer, because faith is the *only* faculty of our spirit which can grasp God’s ideal.

The greatest man, without faith, cannot tread in the Divine footsteps. The ideas of God are as high above us as the heavens are above the earth and, therefore, it is not by any fancied vastness of our feeble minds that we can ever rise into fellowship with God.

Faith in the sight of God's thought whispers to herself—"I cannot understand this great thing nor need I wish to do so. What is my understanding? Perhaps I trust to it too much already. I am called to do what God bids me without knowing why and I am glad it is so, for now I can worship Him by bowing before His sovereign will." There is a capacity about faith for grasping Divine promises and purposes—a width, a breadth, a height, a depth—which can hold the Infinite Truth of God as no other power can do. Love, alone, can rival it, for it embraces the Infinite God, Himself. With the far-reaching plans and promises of God, faith, alone, is fit to deal—carnal reason is altogether out of the question!

Faith, too, has a great power of reception and therein lies much of her adaptation to the Divine purpose. Self-confidence, courage, resolution, cool reasoning—whatever else they are good at, are bad at humbly *receiving*. Those vessels which are already full are of no use as receivers, but Faith presents her emptiness to God and opens her mouth that God may fill it. Mercy needs not a jewel, but a casket into which to put her gems and faith is exactly what she needs. Then, again, Faith always uses the strength that God gives her. Pride would vapor with it and doubt would evaporate it—but Faith is practical and economically uses the talent entrusted to her. Faith has already spent all her own strength and she so yearns to achieve her purposes that she uses all the power that God will lend her. Faith eats her manna and leaves not a morsel for worms to breed in.

Faith, too, can wait on the Lord's time and place. When faith is weak, men are in a dreadful hurry, but strong faith does not judge the Lord to be slack concerning His promise. As God achieves His purpose with infinite leisure, He loves a faith that is patient and looks not for its reward this day or the next. "He that believes shall not make haste"—that is to say he shall not be ashamed or confused by present trials so as to rush upon unbelieving actions. Faith leaves times and seasons with God to whom they belong! God loves faith and blesses it, too, because it gives Him all the glory. The true Believer will not allow a trace of self-glory to linger on his hands. "Where is boasting, then?" was a question once asked in the house of faith and the searchers examined every nook and corner in every chamber to find it, but they found it not.

Then they said to Faith, "Where is boasting?" She answered, "I shut him out." "It is excluded," shut out and the door fastened in its face. You do not believe God if you boast of what you are doing—least of all do you believe if you pride yourself in your faith, for Faith is not mistrustful of her God but of herself. Faith looks to God to keep her alive as well as to fulfill the promise that He has made to her. This, then, is the kind of faith which was characteristic of Abraham and the question is, have *we* got it? Have we so much of it that God can largely bless us? The comfort is that if we have it not, the Author of faith can give it to us! And if we have it in scant measure, He can increase our faith.

Is not this a solid reason why you and I should take heart? You, who do not believe that missions will succeed. You who readily become discour-

aged and discourage others. I beg you go home and seek more faith! We cannot go down to the battle with such soldiers as you—you do but encumber the host. The men that lapped are the only ones that Gideon will take to war. Send the frightened ones to the rear and let them take care of the baggage, so that when the battle is won they may have a share of the spoil according to David's law. But for actual service and warfare we must have men of faith!

Cromwell found that when his men came dressed in all sorts of suits and colors they were apt to injure one another in the melee and so he put them all in uniform. The uniform of the Prince Immanuel is *faith*—no man may call himself a soldier of the Cross who lacks faith. This is the victory which overcomes the world, even your faith. Brother ministers, let us take heed lest we be found qualified for our ministry in all respects except this one! You have learning, eloquence, industry, honesty—but do you so believe in God as to expect His Word to act divinely on men's hearts? Do you preach believingly? Do you pray believingly? I leave the question with you.

III. I have shown you, dear Friends, that God effected His purpose and raised up a chosen nation out of one man, whose chief characteristic was his faith. And now I want you to notice OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THAT ONE MAN. I dwelt upon that while reading the chapter (Romans 4). There is a relation between us and Abraham even as Paul assures us in the Epistle to the Galatians, "Know you therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." Something, surely, is expected of the children of such a man as Abraham! O, for shame, you unbelieving ones! Is Abraham your father? Are you one of the faithful seed? Great mountains are often succeeded by low valleys. Perhaps that is the case with you, but it should not be so.

The natural seed were cut off because they had no faith. Let not those who are grafted in think to do without it. It is by *faith* that you are a son at all. You disprove your pedigree if you tolerate unbelief. Oh, let nobody find fault with Abraham through you and surely they may do so if they find you staggering. That, "staggering," is a shocking business—staggering at God's promises is terrible. Abraham staggered not at the promise through unbelief. May we never dishonor the right noble Grace of faith, but so believe that all men may know Abraham's God to be our God. O for abounding spiritual life, for the God of Abraham is not the God of the dead but of the living! And we can only live unto God by faith.

Brethren, because we are the seed of Abraham, the Apostle declares that the blessing of Abraham has also come upon us. I pray that all the friends and laborers in our Missionary Society may grasp the blessing of Abraham. What is it? It is a Covenant favor that belongs to all who are the servants of God by faith. Here is the substance of it—"Surely blessing, I will bless you, and in multiplying, I will multiply you." That is the grand old Covenant promise and it belongs to the Church! Note that the blessing is attended with multiplying. Some friends are afraid of statistics which represent the increase of the Churches—I am far more afraid of those statistics which will show that we do not increase as we could wish! The blessing of the Church is the increase of the Church! The two go together—"Blessing, I will *bless* you, and in multiplying, I will *multiply* you."

How much are Christians to be multiplied in the world? At the present moment we do not seem to be increasing as fast as the population. I am

afraid that the number of converted persons relative to the population is scarcely as great as it was 30 years ago. We long to be multiplied at a very different rate from this and we shall be if we have faith in our God. Hear the Covenant words—"Look now toward Heaven and count the stars, if you are able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall your seed be. And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." These are lines from the Covenant which are sure to all the seed and can never be broken! We have been called and blessed and it is of necessity that we also increase. We are bound to increase! We are destined to overrun the nations—the Hittites, the Hivites, the Amorites of Popery, Muhammed and Idolatry are in the land, but their false systems are utterly to perish!

Jesus at the head of His people shall drive them out—I mean not the men, but their evil beliefs. They may take notice to quit, for He is coming, before whom all men must bow! O that before He shall appear His spiritual Presence in the midst of His Church might suffice for victory, that all mankind might call Him blessed. We are bound to increase till the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for us and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. Upon the Church in her vigor shall yet descend the blessings of the tribes of Joseph.

"His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth." The success of the Truth of God is the battle of the Lord—and the increase of His Church is according to His own promise! Therefore in quietness we may possess our souls.

IV. Last of all consider, for a minute, OUR POSITION BEFORE ABRAHAM'S GOD. Do not let anything that I have said about Abraham, for a moment, take your mind off from the Lord, Himself, because the pith of it all lies here—"I called him alone." Look to Abraham, but only as to the rock from which the Lord quarried His people. Your main thought must be Jehovah Himself. "I, I called him alone and blessed him." "I the Lord do all these things." Look unto the everlasting God who does great wonders and stay yourselves upon Him.

Let us joyfully remember that the Lord our God has not changed, no, not in one jot or tittle. He is "the same yesterday, today, and forever." There is, so far, a change in the revelation of Him, that it is brighter, now, in the Person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, than it could have been through Seer and vision. But that should be a motive for *increased* faith! "His arm is not shortened that He cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that He cannot hear." This God of Abraham is still almighty and still in the midst of the covenanted ones! If the ages that have passed over His awful brow could wrinkle it and His strength could decay, *then* might we also decline in our confidence, but it is not so. He faints not, neither is weary.

Our behavior towards Him, therefore, should resemble that of Abraham and especially, representing as we do, many of us, the Churches of Jesus Christ as ministers or deacons, we must never dishonor the Lord by unbelief. Doubt everything but God! Let God be true and every man a liar! This is the everlasting decree which none can change—Christ must reign—He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. The kings of the earth must bow before Him. Do not doubt it, for God has sworn by His

own life that all flesh shall see His Glory. Here is the grand argument for strong faith!

Notice, next, that the Covenant of God has not changed. God has not recalled His Words, nor taken a pen and struck out His promises from the record. Read the Covenant Words and write them upon the doorposts of your mission house—"In blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the Heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." This is the Covenant with the one spiritual seed of Abraham—this is the marrow of it—and it has never been revoked. As I have said before, we read it now in clearer light and understand better the fullness of its provisions, but the Covenant is not disannulled.

Let us go to God with any one promise of it and we can say to Him, "This is Your promise in Christ Jesus and You have not spoken in secret in a dark place and withdrawn Your Word and said to the seed of Jacob, Seek You My face in vain." Such pleading will prevail! He will never run back from His Word. Has He said and will He not do it? Therefore let us cry, "Remember Your Word unto Your servant upon which You have caused me to hope." But there is this, also, to be added, that this work which we desire the Lord to do is, in some respects, even less than that which He has done with Abraham.

What do we ask? That He should begin with one man to build up a nation, or create a Church? No, but that Zion, being built, He should comfort her and cause her waste places to rejoice. The field is the world and the seed is ready for the sowing! The Gospel is in the hands of those who have the best means of spreading it. Everything is ready for its ultimate triumph. The plan is laid—we only need the heavenly fire to touch it and the deed is accomplished. O that the work of the Lord may be speedily done! That the Lord may carry on His work of righteousness and make a short work in the earth! I say that if God has done this greater thing, if He has excavated a nation from the quarry of Abraham, we may well expect the same God to keep His Covenant, to multiply His Church and build her up after the similitude of a palace.

The time to favor Zion, even the set time, has come! Beside that, we have already been visited by God as Abraham had not been when he was first called. Abraham had not known the Lord till He called him, but our Sion is familiar with God, for she is the city of the great King! He dwells in our midst by His Holy Spirit and holy hymn and prayer rise every day from the multitudes that fear Him. The Lord has redeemed, justified and saved His people—and surely we may look to Him to refresh and revive His heritage! What marvelous things has God done on the face of the earth since Abraham's days! The stupendous marvel of Incarnation—the height and depth of which none of us can measure! The wondrous work of Redemption—the highest, most grand, Divine achievement of the Deity! All this is done—what may we not expect after this? You know more of God than Abraham could know! I beseech you, then, trust Him, at least up to the level of the Patriarch. How shall we forge an excuse if we do not? What can excuse us if we distrust so glorious a God?

Brethren, it remains for me to only add this practical word. Let us throw ourselves more and more upon our God. If you have any work appointed you of the Lord and it is within the compass of your strength,

shame upon you if you do not perform it at once! But if it is beyond you, God will be glorified if you do it in His power! If there remains no might, wit, or wisdom in you—if you are deeply conscious of your weakness—you are, by this experience, made more fit to be used of the Lord, for when we are weak then are we strong! If you have confidence in God, all things are possible to him that believes!

Oh, when will the Church cast herself upon her God as men throw themselves into the stream when they mean to swim? They seek no longer for foothold—their foot leaves the spot where it rested and they throw themselves trustfully upon the wave. The everlasting ocean of Love and power is ready to bear us up—we shall swim gallantly to shore if we will but trust this blessed sea of Love! Let us begin to believe God and then let us act in daily life as if we believed Him! The just shall live by faith. Some people have a faith which is for show, a Sunday faith, a faith that cannot bear the wear and tear of everyday life. It is varnished and gilded, but with no pure metal in it. The faith of Abraham could lead strings of camels and flocks of sheep away from Haran to Canaan! His was the faith which could drive the tent pin into a foreign soil, or roll up the canvas and seek another unknown stopping place.

The faith of Abraham is a faith that says to wayfaring men, “Turn in and I will get you a little water and wash your feet.” It is a practical, active, living, weekday, everyday faith! I will speak very broadly and plainly and say we need a bread-and-cheese faith—that is to say, a faith which believes that God, who feeds the ravens, will send us our daily bread—a faith which believes that the heavenly Father who clothes the lilies will much more clothe His children! We must have a faith that can believe God about the things that are actually around us and does not live in the region of fiction.

Look how God blessed Abraham with flocks and herds and everything temporal, as well as spiritual, because he walked in reference to these things along the line of faith. Abraham gave Lot his choice of pasturage, refused the offer of the king of Sodom and resolutely paid the children of Heth the full price for the cave and the field. If we walk by faith in business life God may not, in every case, bless us with abundance of temporal mercies, but assuredly we shall be blessed! He may send us adversity and poverty, but in these things faith is more than conqueror, glorying also in tribulations! In the Lord’s work of evangelizing the world, you must have a downright practical faith—not a faith that will sing when the organ begins to play and then be so busy fumbling the hymn paper as to forget the collection!

It is not the faith of those who boast of Carey and Marshman and Knibb, but whose own names never appear in the subscription list for a single shilling! It is not a faith which sings—

“Fly abroad you mighty Gospel”

but never lends a bit of down to make a feather for its wings! Let us hear the Scripture, as it says, “Hearken!” If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, “Hearken!” for you may hear the Sabbath bells ringing in the everlasting peace and angel songs welcoming the reign of Grace over all nations! Let the ears of deaf unbelief be unstopped, for the whole earth echoes with the praises of the Lord! Say not that the day is distant. Hearken! Let Faith be the listener and she will hear across the ages which

divide us from the gladsome period. Then shall you listen all day and all night long for many a year, but never hear the roll of drum or roar of cannon.

Hearken! You shall hear from the islands of the sea and from the once benighted continents, Psalms and hymns and holy songs ascending unto the one Jehovah and to His Christ. Hearken! Ears were never gladdened with sweeter music! Then look till you see the temples of false gods crumbling into dust! See how the shrines are tottering and the idols breaking as though struck with a rod of iron. Mohammed's crescent wanes, never to wax again and she, of the Seven Hills, is hated of the kings and they burn her with fire. "Come, behold the works of the Lord! What desolations He has made in the earth!" "Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed in pieces the enemy."

They fall! They fall! They are as the slain! The day breaks and the shadows flee away. O you watchers that look for the dawning, fall not asleep through sorrowful weariness! The morning comes. It shall not tarry. Do you doubt it? Know you not that the Lord reigns? Is He not the Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle? "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." If you doubt it, dissolve your Missionary Society and do not pretend to do a work in which you have no faith! But if you believe in the triumph of God's work and that you are called to it, behave worthily to so Divine an enterprise! God do so to you as you deal with Him in this matter. Amen.

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A PROSPECT OF REVIVAL

NO. 3514

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

*“For the Lord shall comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the Garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found in it, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.”
Isaiah 51:3.*

THE pedigree of God’s chosen nation Israel may be traced back to one man and one woman—to Abraham and Sarah. Both of them were well advanced in years when the Lord called them, yet, in the fulfillment of His promise, He built up of their seed a great nation, which, for number, was comparable to the stars of Heaven. Take heart, Brothers and Sisters—these things are written for our example and for our encouragement! His Church can never sink to so low an ebb that He cannot soon build her up again, nor in our own hearts can the work of Grace ever decline so grievously that the same mighty power which once quickened cannot revive and restore us! Think of Abraham and Sarah, childless till they were old, then rejoicing in one son who became their heir. Hence sprang the great multitude that peopled Palestine!

With such a panorama unfolding before you, there is no excuse for despair, but you may find ten thousand reasons for confidence in God! With such preface the Lord proceeds to unfold to His people a series of delightful promises. As we have no time to spare, and no words to waste, we will plunge at once into the heart of the text and observe, first, that you have before you—

I. HEAVENLY COMFORT PROMISED.

This is a promise to God’s Church. There are some who would have us always restrain Isaiah’s prophecies to the Jews, as though this was their exclusive application. I have no objection to your so understanding them in their original and literal sense, nor have I any objection to our friends laboring especially for the Jews, as a class—far rather would I commend them! Only I would have them recollect that no Scripture is of private interpretation that, in God’s sight, neither Jews nor Gentiles are recognized under this dispensation of the Gospel, for He has made both one in Christ Jesus. I, therefore, as a Christian minister, when I preach the Gospel, know neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, bond nor free, but I simply know men as men and go out into the world to “preach the Gospel to every creature.”

It seems to me that this is the order in which God would have His Church carry out every evangelical enterprise, forgetting and ignoring all fleshly distinctions, understanding that men are either sinners or saints. As to circumcision or uncircumcision, vast as its importance in the kingdom of Israel, it is of no account in the Kingdom of God! The text, we believe, whatever may be its relation to the Jews as a people, belongs to the Church of God and the disciples of Christ, for, "*all things are yours.*" Zion was the stronghold of Jerusalem. Originally a fortress of the Jebusites, it was taken by a feat of arms by David and his valiant men. It became afterwards the residence of David and there, too, was the residence of the Great King—for in it was built the Temple which became the glory of all lands. Hence the Church of God—which has been captured by Christ from the world, which is the palace where He dwells, which is the Temple where He is worshipped—is frequently called, "Zion," and the Zion of this passage, I believe, we are warranted in interpreting as the Church of the living God.

We are told here, then, that the Lord will comfort His Church. Let *the object of this comfort*, therefore, engage your attention. "The Lord will comfort Zion." Well He may, for she is His chosen. "The Lord has chosen Zion." He would have those upon whom His choice is fixed be glad and happy. The elect of a great king have cause for thankfulness, but the chosen of the King of Kings should rejoice continually in the God who chose them! He would have His Church rejoice because He has not only chosen her, but He has cleansed her! Jesus has put away the sin of His people by His blood, and by His Spirit He is daily renewing the nature of His children. Sin is the cause of sorrow and when sin is put away, sorrow shall be put away, too. The sanctified should be happy. The Lord will, therefore, comfort them because He cleansed them. The Church of God is placed where God dwells—

***"Where God does dwell sure Heaven is there—
And singing there should be!"***

What? Can you conceive of weeping and lamenting in the house where Jehovah dwells? It was a rule with one of the old monarchs that no one should come into his presence sad. In all our afflictions we may draw near to the Lord, but His Presence should dispel our sorrow and sighing, for the children of Zion should be joyful in their King. If the Lord dwells in the midst of His people, there ought to be shouts of joy! The Presence of the King of Heaven is the Heaven of their delight. Moreover, Zion enjoys her Monarch's love and, therefore, He would have her comforted. We know not how dear to the heart of Christ His Church is, but we do know this—that for His Church He left His Father's house and came down to earth! And He was poor, that she, through His poverty, might be made rich. A man leaves father and mother, and cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh—but what shall I say of the great mystery of this glorious Lover who left His Father's house and cleaved unto His Church—and became one flesh with her that He might lift her up and set her upon

His own Throne, that she might reign with Him as the Bride, the Lamb's Wife? Well may, therefore, the Lord desire His Church to be happy! Eternal Love has fixed itself upon her! Eternal purposes cluster around her! Eternal power is sworn to protect her! Eternal faithfulness has guaranteed eternal life to all her citizens! Why should she not be comforted? I do not wonder that the text says the Lord will comfort the people whom He has thus favored!

And the *Lord Himself is the Comforter*. "The Lord will comfort Zion." Beloved, we make but sorry comforters for God's people unless Jehovah puts His own hand to the work. I have sometimes tried to cheer up my Brothers and Sisters when they have been desponding, and I hope not without success. Yet I have always felt that to relieve and refresh a desponding saint, I must fetch the remedies from my Master's pharmacy. So, doubtless, those of you who have ever sought to obey the command, "Comfort you, comfort you My people," must have found that it was not *your* word that could comfort Zion, nor your sympathy, but God's Truth applied by God's Spirit, for this, alone, can comfort Zion! Oh, blessed promise! "The Lord will comfort Zion; He will comfort her waste places." He that made the heavens will become the Comforter of His people! The Holy Spirit, who brooded over chaos and brought order out of confusion—the mighty Spirit who came down at Pentecost in tongues of fire, with a sound like a mighty rushing wind—that same blessed Spirit will come to the hearts of the members of His Church and comfort them! There are sorrows for which there is no solace within the reach of the creature. There is a ruin which it would baffle any mortal to retrieve. Happy for us that the Omnipotent comes to our aid! It is "He who counts the number of the stars; calls than all by their names," who also "heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds!" There He is, rolling the stars along, filling Heaven with wonder as He creates majestic orbs and keeps them in their pathways, making the comet fling its gorgeous light across space and startle nations, holding the burning furnace of the sun in the hollow of His hand—yet He stoops down to minister to a desponding spirit and to pour the oil and wine of heavenly comfort into a poor distracted heart! Yes, it is Zion that is to be comforted, but it is Jehovah, Himself, who has promised to be her Comforter!

And how does the Lord propose to comfort Zion? If you read the verse through, you will find it is *by making her fertile*. He will turn her barren deserts into fruitful gardens and her unproductive wilderness into a blooming Eden. The true way to comfort the Church is to build her synagogues, restore the desolation of former times, to sow her fields, plant her vineyards, make her soil fruitful, call out the industry of her sons and daughters and fill them with lively, ardent zeal. There is an everlasting consolation for the Church in those grand Doctrines of Grace revealed to us in Covenant, such as Election, Particular Redemption, Effectual Calling, Final Perseverance, and the Faithfulness of God. Resting in His love, God forbid that we should ever keep back these grand Truths—

they are the wells of salvation from which we rejoice to draw the Water of Life! But there are other Truths of God besides these and we could not make full proof of our ministry if we overlooked the rain, even the former and the latter rain, which God gives in due season, or withholds in His chastening anger. I have often remarked that those persons who are always crying after the comfort that is to be derived from the stability of God's purpose are strangely lacking in that present joy and jubilant song which revels in the goodness of the Lord who clothes the pastures with flocks and covers the valleys over with corn. I have also remarked that the best way to make a Christian happy is to make him useful, plowing the fields which God has watered, and gathering the fruits which He has ripened. A Christian Church never enjoys so much concord, love and happiness as when every member is kept hard at work for God, every soul upon the stretch of anxiety to do good and communicate, every disciple a good soldier of the Cross, fighting the common enemy! Thus the Lord will comfort Zion and He comforts her by turning her desert into a garden and her wilderness into Eden.

And oh, my Brothers and Sisters, how happy is the Church when all the members are active, all the trees bearing fruit—when sinners are converted and daily added to the fellowship of the saved—when, instead of the thorn, there comes up the myrtle, and instead of the briar, there comes up the fir tree! When God is turning hard hearts that were, like rocks, into good soil where the corn of the Kingdom may grow! There is no joy like it! If you can be happy in seeking your own good, without caring for the welfare of others, I pity you. If a minister can be content to go on preaching without converts or Baptisms, the Lord have mercy upon his miserable soul! Can he be a minister of Christ who does not win souls? A man might as well be a hunter and never take any prey—a fisherman and always come home with empty nets—a farmer, and never reap a harvest! I wonder at some people's complacency. When God never blesses them, they never fail to bless themselves. "Divine Sovereignty withholds the increase," they say. But it really is their idleness that tends to poverty! The promise of God is to the diligent, not the indolent! Let Paul plant and let Apollos water, God will give the increase. It may not come today, nor tomorrow, nor the next day, but come, it must! The Word cannot return unto God void. It must prosper in the thing where He has sent it. Had God sent us on a listless, bootless errand, we might well complain, but He does not do so! Only let us preach Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven, and we shall, doubtless, come again rejoicing, bringing our sheaves with us! Although when we went forth we wept because of our inability and our lack of confidence, yet this is the way in which God comforts us.

The promise, you will observe, is given in words that contain an absolute pledge. He *shall* and He *will* are terms that admit of no equivocation. What an emphasis that man of God, the late Joseph Irons, used to lay on the words when he got hold of a, "shall," and a, "will," from the mouth of

the Lord! Though some people say we must not make too much of little words, I will venture to make as much as I can of these two potent monosyllables! “The Lord *shall* comfort Zion; the Lord *will* comfort all her waste places.” How much better and brighter this reads than an, “if,” or a, “but,” or a “perhaps!” He *shall* comfort Zion. Oh, how those dear saints, the Covenanters, when they were hunted about, and fled into dens and caves, said, “Ah, but King Jesus will have His own. He shall comfort Zion!” And our Puritan forefathers, when priests threatened to throw them out of the land, could see with prophetic eyes the time when the harlot church would yet be driven out and the true, legitimate children of God would take her place! They could say, “The Lord *shall* comfort Zion,” and they looked forward to happier, calm days. No less did those glorious Albigenses and Waldenses, when they stained the snows of the Alps with their blood, feel confident that the Church of Rome would not gain the day, that God would yet return and avenge the blood of His martyred saints and give the victory to His true people! And surely you and I may take comfort, too. “The Lord *shall* comfort Zion; He *will* comfort her waste places.”

Brothers and Sisters, there are brighter days to come! The day breaks and the shadows flee away! Our hope is in God! Never doubt the true progress of the Church. Believe that, notwithstanding every discouragement that checks our progress, the cause of God goes on—it must go on and it *shall* go on till King Jesus is universally acknowledged King of Kings and Lord of Lords! We have not to serve a Master who cannot take care of His own. To your tents, you Philistines, when the God of Israel comes to the battle! Where will you be? Your ranks are broken—you flee like thin clouds before a Biscay gale! When God comes forth, He has but by His Spirit to blow upon His enemies and they fly before Him, like the chaff before the wind! The Lord *shall* and the Lord *will*—who, then, shall disannul it? Though foes may hoot and fiends may howl, He will keep His Word—it *shall* come to pass, and He *will* get to Himself renown in fulfilling His own good pleasure! Having thus enlarged upon the heavenly comfort promised, we proceed to notice the—

II. MOURNFUL CASES FAVORED.

“*He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the Garden of the Lord.*” Now are there not to be found in the visible Church persons whose character is here vividly depicted? I think there are three sorts of people in such a case, to all of whom I trust the blessing will come. *There are those who once were fruitful, but are now comparable to wastes.* If God should visit His Church, He will be pleased to comfort the waste places. Do I not address some who must recognize their own portrait? You used to be Church members and then you did seem to run well. What hindered you? You were, apparently, once brave soldiers, but you deserted and went over to the enemy. Still, if you are the Lord’s people, one of the signs of God’s Grace to His Church will be the recovery of backsliders. I remember one Monday afternoon, when we had been wait-

ing upon the Lord in prayer ever since seven o'clock in the morning, that there came a most remarkable wave of prayer over the assembly. And then two backsliders got up and prayed, one after the other. According to their own account, they had been very bad fellows, indeed, and had sorely transgressed against God—but there they were, broken-hearted and fairly broken down! It was a sight to make angels rejoice as their tears flowed. Certainly their sobs and cries touched the hearts of all of us who were assembled. I thought to myself, “Then God is blessing us, for when backsliders come back, it is a proof that God has visited His people.” You recollect when it was that Naomi returned to Israel with Ruth, her daughter-in-law. They never came back during the time of famine—they stayed in Moab, then, but they came back when they heard that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread! Even then Naomi said, “Call me not Naomi.” She seemed to come back from her exile groaning and full of bitterness, and yet she came back because God was with His people! Backsliders, come back, come now, for God is with His Church and He has promised to comfort her waste places! Oh, you who have forgotten your Lord, remember your first Husband! It was better with you then, than now. Though you have gone astray, yet the Lord says, “Return, you backsliding Israel, for I am married unto you, says the Lord.” You may break the marriage bond with God, but He will not break it with you! He claims that He is married to you and He bids you return to Him. I hope that some backslider will be encouraged by this promise to return, with full purpose of heart, to the God of his salvation!

Then a second department of the promise is, “*He will make her wilderness like Eden.*” I take the wilderness here to be a place of scanty vegetation. The Oriental wildernesses are not altogether barren sand, but there is a feeble herbage which struggles for existence. We are told, you recollect, that “Moses kept His father’s sheep in the wilderness.” Oh, how many there are in the Church of God who are just like that! They are Christians, but they are sorry Christians. They love the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is with a moonlight love—cold, very cold, and chill. They have light, but it is dim and hazy. If they do anything for Christ, their service is scanty, their contributions mean, their charity grudging. They bring Him no sweet cane with money. They do not fill Him with the fat of their sacrifices, but they make Him to serve with their sins, and they weary Him with their iniquities! Ah, dear Friend, if you are, indeed, a child of God, then there is this comfort for you! He will make her wilderness like Eden. Even you who have borne so little for God shall yet be visited and made fruitful when the Lord comforts His people!

A third character is implied in the desert—the deserted places where no man dwells, where the traveler does not care to linger. How many professors of religion, how many who attend our Chapels answer to this description of the soil! They are like deserts. You not only never did bring forth fruit, but you never concerned yourself to do so! No man seems to care for you and you appear to yourselves as though you were like the

sand, which it would be a hopeless task to plow, for the gleaner would never fill his hand from the produce, much less the reaper his bosom with the sheaves! Ah, well, but God has a word for these desert souls! He will make her desert like the Garden of the Lord. I pray—no, I *know*—that during the gracious season which God has given us, we shall see many a desert heart made to blossom like the rose! These are they whom the Lord will specially transform—backsliders, scanty Christians—and those who have often heard, but never yet proved, the power of the Gospel!

Ask now, what does the Lord say He will do for them? He says (hear it and marvel!) that He will make the wilderness like Eden! You know what Eden was. It was the garden of the earth in the days of primeval purity. Fruit and flower, lofty trees and lively vegetation abounded there in profuse luxuriance! I know not how its groves and shrubberies were used by graceful creatures and lovely birds, but I can well imagine that every sense of man was regaled by its unfailing charms! No thorns or thistles cursed the soil, no sweating brow with arduous toll forced the crops from barren sods. The land laughed with plenty! The river, branching into many heads, watered the garden. God, Himself, was pleased to water it with the mists and to make the fruits grow, to swell in rich abundance and come early to mature perfection. So the Lord says that when He visits His Church, He will make these poor backsliders, these immature Christians, these nominal professors, like Eden! Oh, that the Lord would do it! Oh, that He would make them healthy, fruitful, prolific in fruitfulness and spontaneously bearing fruit, so that we would almost have need to say, “Hold, Lord!” just as Moses and Aaron did when the people brought in the offerings for the Tabernacle, until there was more than enough! Oh, that the Church of Christ may be enriched with all spiritual gifts, with all heavenly Graces, with all that can minister to the welfare of the saints, to the advantage of the world and to the glory of Him who created and redeemed us! God grant it may be so!

Moreover, as if to strengthen the volume of His Grace and our hope, He says that *He will make her desert like the Garden of the Lord*. He shall come to you and delight your heart and soul with His conversation. If ever you should be an Eden, you shall be like Paradise for a yet higher reason—because your fellowship shall be with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ! There shall be upon you the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed. The Lord shall water His Church, shall water it every moment! He shall make fat our bones and cause us to be as a watered garden, as a well of water whose waters fail not! Oh, some of you may well envy those happy days you once enjoyed! Would you like them back again? Then plead with God the promise of the text! You were once blessed with nearness to, and communion with Christ. You once prayed with fervor and your souls prospered. Go to God with this promise and say, “Lord, I am a desert. I am a wilderness. I am a waste place, but comfort your Church, and let me partake of the consolation by making me

fruitful in every good word and work to Your Glory!" The Lord will do it, for the promises of God shall certainly be fulfilled!

Who but Jehovah, Himself, can do this? I have already noted this. "He will make her wilderness like Eden." It is He only that can perform it. The minister cannot. The Church cannot, with all her efforts. Talk of getting up a revival! It were insufferable arrogance to make the attempt! It belongs not to us to do this. Unto the Lord our God alone does this belong. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." If He will but visit His Church, then we shall see the wilderness rejoice, but if not, we may plow, as is our duty, and we may work upon it, as is our calling, but there shall be no joy and no rejoicing. We conclude with the view of—

III. CERTAIN DESIRABLE RESULTS WHICH ARE PREDICTED.

"Joy and gladness shall be found in it; thanksgiving and the voice of melody." You notice the doubles. The parallelism of Hebrew poetry, perhaps, necessitated them. Still, I am prone to remember how John Bunyan says that "all the flowers in God's garden bloom double." We are told of "manifold mercies," that is, mercies which are folded up, one in another, so that you may unwrap them and find a fresh mercy enclosed in every fold! Here we have "joy and gladness, thanksgiving and the voice of melody." Just so, the Psalmist tells us of our soul being satisfied with "marrow and fatness"—two things. Elsewhere he speaks of "loving kindness and tender mercy"—two things again. The Lord multiplies His Grace! He is always slow to anger, but He is always lavish with His Grace. See here, then, God will give His people an overflowing joy, an inexpressible joy, a sort of double joy, as though He would give them more joy than they could hold—joy and then gladness—thanksgiving and the voice of melody!

Oh, *what a delightful thing must a visitation from God be to His Church!* Without God, all she can do is groan. No, she will not always do that. She sometimes indulges a foolish conceit and says, "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." After that will soon be heard the hooting of dragons and the cry of owls! Let God visit His Church, and there is sure to be thanksgiving and the voice of melody! It has been remarked that all revivals of true religion in ancient as well as modern times have been attended by revival of Psalmody and song. The joy that makes the heart grateful, enlivens the spirits and diffuses happiness will seek and must find some tuneful strains! Not only to speak of the Hebrew Psalter or of the Greek Hymnals. In Luther's day, his translation of the Psalms and his chorales did more, perhaps, to make the Reformation popular than even his preaching, for the plowman at his field of labor, and the housewife at the cradle, would sing one of Luther's Psalms. So, too, in our own country, in Wycliffe's day, fresh Psalms and hymns were scattered all over the land! And you know how, in the last century, Wesley and Whitefield gave a new impetus to congregational singing. The hymns were printed on little flysheets after each sermon and, at length, these units swelled into a volume! Collections and selections of hymns

were published. So fond, indeed, were the Methodists of singing, that it became a taunt and a byword to speak of them as canting Psalm singers! And this is the mark of a revived Church everywhere—new impetus is given to the service of song. When the Bridegroom is gone, we may well mourn and fast, and hang our harps on the willows. It is when the Bridegroom *comes*, that joy and feasting seek the aid of vocal music—and the people of God break forth into thanksgiving with the voice of melody! I do fervently hope, Beloved, that we shall have this thanksgiving and this voice of melody in our midst for many a day to come! Would God that all the Churches enjoyed it! Need I say that from all parts of the country there are tokens of it now? We do not desire at any time a monopoly of blessing. May every Christian denomination and every Christian community be favored with the dew of Heaven and have their roots watered by that river which is full of water! Oh, that all the Churches of Christ were fruitful! Instead of wishing any of them to be weak, I would say, with Moses, “Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets,” and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them! Oh, that Jesus might be extolled from the uttermost parts of the earth to the highest heavens! Brothers and Sisters, let us ask God to fulfill this promise to the Church at large! Let us say to Him, “Lord, comfort Your Zion! She has many waste places—comfort her! You know she has many barren spots—turn them into Gardens of the Lord! Oh, let the heavenly rain descend and the Divine dew come from You, that the wilderness and the solitary place may yet be glad!”

But what shall I say to those of you who are not saved? If you want to become as these Gardens of the Lord, it is only the Grace of God which brings salvation that can work in you this mighty change. Look to the Lord! He it is who must do it. He hears prayer. A Negro was once sent by his master on an errand that did not suit him. He did not want to go. So when he came to a river, he turned back, and said, “Master, I came to a river and I could not swim across it.” “Well, but was there not a ferry?” “Yes, there was a ferry, but the man was on the other side.” “Well,” said the master, “did you call to the ferryman to come and take you across?” No. He did not think of doing that, for, as he did not wish to go over, he was glad to find an excuse. Now it is true, Sinner, that you cannot save yourself, but there is One who can. There is a ferry and there is a Ferryman. Cry to Him! Cry to Him, “Master, across this river be pleased to take me. I cannot swim it, but You can bear me over it. Oh, do for me what I cannot do for myself! Make me to be accepted in the Beloved!”

If you seek the Lord, He will be found of you. He never did set a soul a-seeking but what He meant to bless it! But if you will not seek, what should be said of you but that on your head should lie your own blood? I know many of you to be greatly impressed this week. I hope the impression will not be blown away, like smoke out of a chimney. May God make a deep work in your souls! Oh, some of you were easily impressed, but you quite as easily forgot the impression! You are like Ephraim’s cake

that was baked on one side—you do not get thoroughly cooked. You do not feel the power of the Gospel permeating your whole nature in every part. You are like a cake not turned and God does not accept you because of this. Oh, that there might be a thorough work of the Spirit in your souls, a work of Grace that should bring you to Jesus to be rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, abounding therein with thanksgiving! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EZEKIEL 34:11-27.**

Verse 11. *For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, even I, will both search for My sheep, and seek them out.* Here is a Divine One come to seek and to save! The shepherds had neglected and scattered the flock. Now God takes it out of their hands and He says, “I, even I, will both search for My sheep, and seek them out.”

12. *As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.* He has a chosen people redeemed unto Himself by blood, and though they have wandered in the cloudy and dark day of their depravity and ruin, yet will He seek for them with ceaseless care, and bring them back with mighty power until He has put them into His fold again.

13. *And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.* This shall yet be done to Israel after the flesh—it is being done to Israel after the spirit, to whom these promises in their fullness belong. By the mountains of His immutable promises, by the rivers of His Spirit’s influences, shall His people be fed.

14. *I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.* When God works, He does nothing by halves, nothing scantily. There shall be a pasture and it shall be fat—His people shall feed—they shall feed until they lie down in the pasture through very fullness! Through the plenitude of His feeding they shall rest.

15. *I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, says the Lord God.* Happy sheep that have such a guardian! Happy Believer if you are realizing today the full meaning of this, “I will feed My flock.” Only God can do it, but He can do it very effectually until the heart is satisfied with favor and full of the blessing of the Lord!

16. *I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick. But I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.* Men that are proud and lifted up shall meet with no

blessing, but such as feel their poverty, their weakness, their nothingness, shall be the favored ones of God! Cannot some of you poor lost ones, driven away ones, broken ones, and sick ones, lay hold upon this promise? You may see daylight through it, however dark your condition may be. God says, "I will," and you may depend upon it He will make it good! There is never an "I will" of Jehovah that shall fall to the ground!

17, 18. *And as for you, O My flock, thus says the Lord God: Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats. Seems it a small thing to you to have eaten up the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? And to have drunk of the deep waters, but you must foul the residue with your feet?* Sometimes when God's people get very strong in themselves, they grow proud and they find great fault! Precious Truth of God is not good enough for them unless it is very daintily spoken. They have eaten and now they tread down the pasture and spoil it for others. This may seem a very small offense, but the Great Shepherd does not think so—He looks with indignation upon these fat and strong who foul the waters with their feet.

19-21. *And as for My flock, they eat that which you have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which you have fouled with your feet. Therefore thus says the Lord God unto them, Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. Because you have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns till you have scattered them abroad—*There is a way of doing that. Some are so big, so harsh, so wrapped up in themselves, that if they meet with a fellow Christian in trouble, who has less confidence than themselves, who seems to be less useful than themselves—they are all for pushing, poking, driving and doing I know what! Mind what you are doing when you meddle with the poor people of God! There are some doctrinal views, some pretensions to perfection, which amount to this.

22, 23. *Therefore will I save My flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one Shepherd over them.* You know His name! "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give unto My sheep eternal life." You know that voice! It makes you glad to think He is so near you. "I will set up one Shepherd." That is glorious! He is of God's setting up—who can put Him down again?

23. *And He shall feed them, even My servant David. He shall feed them, and He shall be their Shepherd.* The house of David shall still shepherd the people of God in the Person of great David's greater Son whom we adore!

24, 25. *And I the Lord will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it. And I will make with them a Covenant of Peace.* With you that were lost, that were driven away, that were sick, that were broken.

25. *And will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land.* So He will. There were once more wolves than sheep—now there are more sheep than wolves. And the day shall come when the saints shall possess the land. “The meek shall inherit the earth.” Meanwhile, in the ways of God, “no lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up from there.” “And they shall dwell safely in the wilderness,” where they seemed to be quite defenseless! There they shall be safe, and they shall “sleep in the woods,” in the very lairs of the wild beasts! There shall they be so safe that they shall feel safe, and shall even go to sleep. So “he gives His beloved sleep.” “And I will make them and the places round about My hill a blessing,” for God does not bless men that they may keep the blessing to themselves! If He blesses them, He makes them a blessing, and their surroundings become a blessing.

25-27. *And they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about My hill a blessing; and I will cause the showers to come down in its season; there shall be showers of blessing. And the tree of the field shall yield its fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hands of those that served themselves of them.* Oh, what a blessed day when all our yokes are broken by God’s own hands! We have worn them long enough—the sinful yoke, the legal yoke, the yoke of fear of man, a yoke heavy to bear—when they are all gone, we can sing, “You have loosed my bonds!”

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

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

THE GREAT REVIVAL

NO. 185

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 28, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“The Lord has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations. And all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.”
Isaiah 52:10.***

WHEN the heroes of old prepared for the fight they put on their armor. But when God prepares for battle He makes bare His arm. Man has to look two ways—to his own defense, as well as to the offense of his enemy. God has but one direction in which to cast His eye—the overthrow of His foe and He disregards all measures of defense and scorns all armor. He *makes bare* His arm in the sight of all the people. When men would do their work in earnest, too, they sometimes strip themselves, like that warrior of old who, when he went to battle with the Turks, would never fight them except with the bare arm. “Such things as they,” said He, “I need not fear. They have more reason to fear my bare arm than I their scimitar.” Men feel that they are prepared for a work when they have cast away their cumbrous garments. And so the Prophet represents the Lord as laying aside for awhile the garments of His dignity and making bare His arm, that He may do His work in earnest and accomplish His purpose for the establishment of His Church.

Now, leaving the figure, which is a very great one, I would remind you that its meaning is fully carried out whenever God is pleased to send a great revival of religion. My heart is glad within me this day, for I am the bearer of good tidings. My soul has been made exceedingly full of happiness by the tidings of a great revival of religion throughout the United States. Some hundred years ago, or more, it pleased the Lord to send one of the most marvelous religious awakenings that was ever known. The whole of the United States seemed shaken from end to end with enthusiasm for hearing the Word of God. And now after the lapse of a century, the like has occurred again.

The monetary pressure has at length departed, but it has left behind it the wreck of many mighty fortunes. Many men, who were once princes, have now become beggars and in America more than in England men have learned the instability of all human things. The minds of men, thus weaned from the earth by terrible and unexpected panic, seem prepared to receive tidings from a better land and to turn their exertions in a heavenly direction. You will be told by anyone who is conversant with the present state of America that wherever you go there are the most remarkable signs that religion is progressing with majestic abides. The Great Revival,

as it is now called, has become the common market talk of merchants. It is the theme of every newspaper.

Even the secular press remark of it, for it has become so astonishing that all ranks and classes of men seem to have been affected by it. Apparently without any cause whatever fear has taken hold of the hearts of men. A thrill seems to be shot through every breast at once and it is affirmed by men of good repute that there are, at this time, towns in New England where you could not, even if you searched, find one solitary unconverted person. So marvelous—I had almost said, so miraculous—has been the sudden and instantaneous spread of religion throughout the great empire, that it is scarcely possible for us to believe the half of it, even though it should be told us. Now, as you are aware, I have at all times been peculiarly jealous and suspicious of revivals. Whenever I see a man who is called a revivalist, I always set him down for a cipher. I would scorn the taking of such a title as that to myself.

If God pleases to make use of a man for the promoting of a revival, well and good. But for any man to assume the title and office of a revivalist and go about the country believing that wherever *he* goes he is the vessel of mercy appointed to convey a revival of religion, is, I think, an assumption far too arrogant for any man who has the slightest degree of modesty. And again, there are a large number of revivals which occur every now and then in our towns and sometimes in our city, which I believe to be spurious and worthless. I have heard of the people crowding in the morning, the afternoon and the evening to hear some noted revivalist and under his preaching some have screamed, have shrieked, have fallen down on the floor, have rolled themselves in convulsions.

And afterwards, when he has set a form for penitents, employing one or two decoy ducks to run out from the rest and make a confession of sin, hundreds have come forward, impressed by that one sermon and declared that they were, there and then, turned from the error of their ways. And it was only last week I saw a record of a certain place in our own country, giving an account that on such a day, under the preaching of the Rev. Mr. So-and-So, seventeen persons were thoroughly sanctified, twenty-eight were convinced of sin and twenty-nine received the blessing of justification. Then comes the next day, so many more. The following day, so many more. And afterwards they are all cast up together, making a grand total of some hundreds who have been blessed during three services, under the ministry of Mr. So-and-So.

All that I call a farce! There may be something very good in it. But the outside looks to me to be so rotten that I should scarcely trust myself to think that the good within comes to any very great amount. When people go to work to calculate so exactly by arithmetic, it always strikes me they have mistaken what they are doing. We may easily say that so many were added to the Church on a certain occasion, but to take a separate census of the convinced, the justified and the sanctified is absurd. You will, therefore, be surprised at finding me speaking of revival. But you will,

perhaps, be not quite so surprised when I endeavor to explain what I mean by an earnest and intense desire which I feel in my heart, that God would be pleased to send throughout this country a revival like that which has just commenced in America and which, we trust, will long continue there.

I should endeavor to mark, in the first place, *the cause of every revival of true religion*. Secondly, *the consequences of such revival*. Then, thirdly, I shall *give a caution or two* that we make no mistakes in this matter and conceive that to be God's work which is only man's. And then I shall conclude by making an exhortation to all my Brethren in the faith of Christ to labor and pray for a revival of religion in the midst of our Churches.

I. First, then, THE CAUSE OF A TRUE REVIVAL. The mere worldly man does not understand a revival. He cannot make it out. Why is it that a sudden fit of godliness, as he would call it, a kind of sacred epidemic, should seize upon a mass of people all at once? What can be the cause of it? It frequently occurs in the absence of all great evangelists. It cannot be traced to any particular means. There have been no special agencies used in order to bring it about—no machinery supplied, no societies established and yet it has come, just like a heavenly hurricane, sweeping everything before it. It has rushed across the land and of it men have said, "The wind blows where it lists. We hear the sound thereof but we cannot tell from where it comes or where it goes."

What is then, the cause? Our answer is, if a revival is true and real it is caused by the Holy Spirit and by Him alone. When Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost and preached that memorable sermon by which three thousand persons were converted, can we attribute the remarkable success of his ministry to anything else but the ministry of the Holy Spirit? I read the notes of Peter's discourse. It was certainly very simple. It was a plain narration of facts, it was certainly very bold, very cutting and pointed and personal, for he did not blush to tell them that *they* had put to death the Lord of Life and Glory and were guilty of His blood.

But on the mere surface of the thing, I should be apt to say that I had read many a sermon far more likely to be effective than Peter's. And I believe there have been many preachers who have lived, whose sermons when read would have been far more notable and far more regarded, at least by the critic, than the sermon of Peter. It seems to have been exceedingly simple and suitable and extremely earnest, but none of these things are so eminently remarkable as to be the cause of such extraordinary success.

What then, was the reason? And we reply, once more, the same word which the Holy Spirit blesses to the conversion of one, He might, if He pleased, bless to the conversion of a thousand. And I am persuaded that the meanest preacher in Christendom might come into this pulpit this morning and preach the most simple sermon, in the most uneducated style and the Holy Spirit—if so He willed it—might bless that sermon to the conversion of every man, woman and child, within this place. For His

arm is not shortened, His power is not straitened and as long as He is Omnipotent, it is ours to believe that He can do whatsoever seems Him good.

Do not imagine, when you hear of a sermon being made useful, that it was the sermon itself that did the work. Conceive not, because a certain preacher may have been greatly blessed in the conversion of souls, that there is anything in the preacher. God forbid that any preacher should arrogate such a thing to himself. Any other preacher, blessed in the same manner, would be as useful and any other sermon, provided it is truthful and earnest, might be as much blessed as that particular sermon which has become notable by reason of the multitudes who by it have been brought to Christ. The Spirit of God, when He pleases, blows upon the sons of men. He finds a people hard and careless, He casts a desire into their minds—He sows it broadcast in their spirits—a thought towards the House of the Lord and straightway, they know not why, they flock in multitudes to hear the Word preached.

He casts the seed, the same seed, into the preacher's mind and he knows not how, but the preacher feels more earnest than he did before. When he goes to his pulpit, he goes to it as to a solemn sacrifice and there he preaches, believing that great things will be the effect of his ministry. The time of prayer comes round. Christians are found meeting together in large numbers. They cannot tell what it is that influences them, but they feel they must go up to the House of the Lord to pray. There are earnest prayers lifted up. There are earnest sermons preached and there are earnest hearers. Then God, the Almighty One, is pleased to soften hard hearts and subdue the stout-hearted and bring them to know the Truth of God. The only real cause is His Spirit working in the minds of men.

But while this is the only *actual* cause, yet there are *instrumental* causes. And the main instrumental cause of a great revival must be the bold, faithful, fearless *preaching* of the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. Why, Brethren, we want every now and then to have a reformation. One reformation will never serve the Church. She needs continually to be wound up and set afresh. For her works run down and she does not act as she used to do. The bold, bald doctrines that Luther brought out begin to be a little modified, until layer after layer is deposited upon them and at last the old rocky Truth of God is covered up.

And then there grows upon the superficial subsoil an abundance of green and flowery errors that look fair and beautiful, but are in no way whatever related to the Truth of God, except as they are the products of its decay. Then there come bold men who bring the Truth of God out again and say, "Clear away this rubbish. Let the blast light upon these deceitful beauties. We want them not—bring out the old Truth of God once more!" And it comes out. But the tendency of the Church, perpetually, is to be covering up its own naked simplicity, forgetting that the Truth of God is never so beautiful as when it stands in its own unadorned, God-given glory.

And now, at this time, we want to have the old Truths restored to their places. Therefore the subtleties and the refinements of the preacher must be laid aside. We must give up the grand distinctions of the school-men and all the lettered technicalities of men who have studied theology as a system, but have not felt the power of it in their hearts. And when the good old Truth of God is once more preached by men whose lips are touched as with a live coal from off the altar, this shall be the instrument, in the hand of the Spirit, for bringing about a great and thorough revival of religion in the land.

But added to this, there must be the earnest prayers of the Church. All in vain, the most indefatigable ministry, unless the Church waters the seed sown, with her abundant tears. Every revival has been commenced and attended by a large amount of prayer. In the city of New York at the present moment, there is not, I believe, one single hour of the day, wherein Christians are not gathered together for prayer. One Church opens its doors from five o'clock till six for prayer. Another Church opens from six to seven and summons its praying men to offer the sacrifice of supplication. Six o'clock is past and men are gone to their labor.

Another class find it then convenient such as those, perhaps, who go to business at eight or nine—and from seven to eight there is another Prayer Meeting. From eight to nine there is another, in another part of the city and what is most marvelous, at high noon, from twelve to one, in the midst of the city of New York, there is held a Prayer Meeting in a large room, which is crammed to the doors every day, with hundreds standing outside. This Prayer Meeting is made up of merchants of the city, who can spare a quarter of an hour to go in and say a word of prayer and then leave again. And then a fresh company come in to fill up the ranks so that it is supposed that many hundreds assemble in that one place for prayer during the appointed hour.

This is the explanation of the revival. If this were done in London—if we for once would outdo old Rome, who keeps her monks in her sanctuaries, always at prayer, both by night and by day—if we together could keep up one golden chain of prayer, link after link of holy brotherhood being joined together in supplication—then might we expect an abundant outpouring of the Divine Spirit from the Lord our God. The Holy Spirit as the actual Agent—the Word preached and the prayers of the people as the instruments—and we have thus explained the cause of a true revival of religion.

II. But now what are THE CONSEQUENCES OF A REVIVAL OF RELIGION? Why, the consequences are everything that our hearts could desire for the Church's good. When the revival of religion comes into a nation, the minister begins to be warmed. It is said that in America the most sleepy preachers have begun to wake up. They have warmed themselves at the general fire and men who could not preach without notes and could not preach with them to any purpose at all, have found it in their hearts to speak right out and speak with all their might to the people. When there comes a revival, the minister all of a sudden finds that the usual

forms and conventionalities of the pulpit are not exactly suitable to the times. He breaks through one hedge. Then he finds himself in an awkward position and he has to break through another.

He finds himself perhaps on a Sunday morning, though a Doctor of Divinity, actually telling an anecdote—lowering the dignity of the pulpit by actually using a simile or metaphor—sometimes perhaps accidentally making his people smile and what is also a great sin in these solid theologians, now and then dropping a tear. He does not exactly know how it is, but the people catch up his words. “I must have something good for them,” he says. He just burns that old lot of sermons. Or he puts them under the bed and gets some new ones, or gets none at all, but just gets his text and begins to cry, “Brothers and Sisters, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

The old deacons say, “What is the matter with our minister?” The old ladies, who have heard him for many years and slept in the front of the gallery so regularly, begin to rouse and say, “I wonder what has happened to him, how can it be? Why, he preaches like a man on fire. The tear runs over at his eye, his soul is full of love for souls.” They cannot make it out. They have often said he was dull and dreary and drowsy. How is it all this is changed? Why, it is the revival. The revival has touched the minister. The sun, shining so brightly, has melted some of the snow on the mountaintop and it is running down in fertilizing streams, to bless the valleys. And the people down below are refreshed by the ministrations of the man of God who has awakened himself up from his sleep and finds himself, like another Elijah, made strong for forty days of labor.

Well, then, directly after that the revival begins to touch the people at large. The congregation was once numbered by the empty seats, rather than by the full ones. But on a sudden—the minister does not understand it—he finds the people coming to hear him. He never was popular, never hoped to be. All at once he wakes up and finds himself famous, so far as a large congregation can make him so. There are the people and how they listen! They are all awake, all in earnest. They lean their heads forward, they put their hands to their ears. His voice is feeble. They try to help him. They are doing anything so that they may hear the Word of Life. And then the members of the Church open their eyes and see the chapel full and they say, “How has this come about? We ought to pray.”

A Prayer Meeting is summoned. There had been five or six in the vestry—now there are five or six hundred and they turn into the chapel. And oh, how they pray! That old stager, who used to pray for twenty minutes, finds it now convenient to confine himself to five. And that good old man, who always used to repeat the same form of prayer when he stood up and talked about the horse that rushed into the battles and the oil from vessel to vessel and all that, leaves all these things at home and just prays, “O Lord, save sinners, for Jesus Christ’s sake.” And there are sobs and groans heard at the Prayer Meetings. It is evident that not one, but all, are praying. The whole mass seems moved to supplication. How is this again?

Why, it is just the effect of the revival, for when the revival truly comes, the minister and the congregation and the Church will receive good by it.

But it does not end here. The members of the Church grow more solemn, more serious. Family duties are better attended to. The home circle is brought under better culture. Those who could not spare time for family prayer, find they can do so now—those who had no opportunity for teaching their children, now dare not go a day without doing it. For they hear that there are children converted in the Sunday-School. There are twice as many in the Sunday-School now as there used to be and what is wonderful, the little children meet together to pray. Their little hearts are touched and many of them show signs of a work of grace begun. And fathers and mothers think they must try what they can do for their families—if God is blessing little children, why should He not bless theirs?

And then, when you see the members of the Church going up to the House of God, you mark with what a steady and sober air they go. Perhaps they talk on the way, but they talk of Jesus. And if they whisper together at the gates of the sanctuary, it is no longer idle gossip. It is no remark about, “how do you like the preacher? What did you think of him? Did you notice So-and-So?” Oh, no, “I pray the Lord that He might bless the word of His Servant—that He might send an unction from on high—that the dying flame may be kindled and that where there is life, it may be promoted and strengthened and receive fresh vigor.” This is their whole conversation.

And then comes the great result. There is an inquirers’ meeting held. The good Brother who presides over it is astonished! He never saw so many coming in his life before. “Why,” says he, “there is a hundred, at least, come to confess what the Lord has done for their souls! Here are fifty come all at once to say that under such a sermon they were brought to the knowledge of the Truth. Who has begotten me these? How has it come about? How can it be? Is not the Lord a great God that has wrought such a work as this?” And then the converts who are thus brought into the Church, if the revival continues, are very earnest ones. You never saw such a people.

The outsiders call them fanatics. It is a blessed fanaticism. Others say they are nothing but enthusiasts. It is a heavenly enthusiasm. Everything that is done is done with such spirit. If they sing, it is like the crashing thunder. If they pray, it is like the swift, sharp dash of lightning, lighting up the darkness of the cold hearted and making them for a moment feel that there is something in prayer. When the minister preaches, he preaches like a Boanerges and when the Church is gathered together, it is with a hearty good will. When they give, they give with enlarged liberality. When they visit the sick they do it with gentleness, meekness and love. Everything is done with a single eye to God’s glory. Not of men, but by the power of God. Oh, that we might see such a revival as this!

But, blessed be God, it does not end here. The revival of the Church then touches the rest of society. Men who do not come forward and pro-

ness religion, are more punctual in attending the means of grace. Men that used to swear, give it up. They find it is not suitable for the times. Men that profaned the Sabbath and that despised God, find it will not do. They give it all up. Times get changed. Morality prevails. The lower ranks are affected. They buy a sermon where they used to buy some penny tract of nonsense. The higher orders are also touched. They, too, are brought to hear the Word. Her ladyship, in her carriage, who never would have thought of going to so mean a place as a religious meeting, does not now care where she goes so long as she is blessed.

She wants to hear the Truth of God and a drayman pulls his horses up by the side of her ladyship's pair of grays. And they both go in and bend together before the Throne of Sovereign Grace. All classes are affected. Even the senate feels it. The statesman himself is surprised at it and wonders what all these things mean. Even the monarch on the throne feels she has become the monarch of a people better than she knew before and that God is doing something in her realms past all her thought—that a great King is swaying a better scepter and exerting a better influence than even her excellent example. Nor does it even end there. Heaven is filled.

One by one the converts die and it even gets fuller. The harps of Heaven are louder, the songs of angels are inspired with new melody, for they rejoice to see the sons of men prostrate before the throne. The universe is made glad. It is God's own summer. It is the universal spring. The time of the singing of birds is come. The voice of the turtle is heard in our land. Oh, that God might send us such a revival of religion as this!

I thank God, that we, as a people, have had great cause to thank Him—that we have had a measure of revival of this kind, but nothing compared with what we desire. I have heard of revivals, where twenties and thirties and forties and fifties were gathered in. But, tell it to the honor of our God, there is never a month passes, but our baptismal pool is opened and never a communion Sabbath, but we receive many into the fold of the Lord. As many as three hundred in one year have we added to the Church and still the cry is, "They come! they come!"

And were but our new sanctuary built, I am persuaded, that in six months from its erection, instead of having twelve hundred members, I should be the pastor of at least two thousand. For I believe there are many of you who attend this hall in the morning, who find it quite impossible to crowd into the chapel in the evening and are only waiting and anxious, that you may tell to me and to the Brethren what God has done for your souls. This I know, the Lord has been very gracious to us and to Him be the honor of it. But we want more. Our souls are greedy—covetous for God. Oh, that we might be all converted—

***"We long to see the Churches full,
That all the chosen race,
May with one voice and heart and tongue,
Sing His redeeming grace."***

And we have to thank God, too, that it has not ended there, for we had last Sabbath evening, Exeter Hall full, Westminster Abbey full and this place full, too. And though we may not altogether agree in sentiment with all that is preached, yet God bless them all! So long as Christ is preached, I rejoice, yes and *will* rejoice. And I would to God that every large building in London were crowded, too, and that every man who preached the Word were followed by tens of thousands who would hear the Truth of God. May that day soon come! And there is one heart which will rejoice in such a day more than any of you—a heart that shall always beat the highest when it sees God glorified—though our own honor should decrease.

III. Now we shall have to turn to the third point, which was A CAUTION. When Christmas Evans preached in Wales during a time of revival, he used to make the people dance. The congregation were so excited under his ministry that they positively danced. Now I do *not* believe that dancing was the work of the Spirit. Their being stirred in their hearts might be the Holy Spirit's work, but the Holy Spirit does not care to make people dance under sermons—no good comes of it. Now and then among our Methodist friends there is a great commotion and we hear of a young woman in the middle of a sermon getting on the top of a form and turning round and round in ecstasy, till she falls down in a fainting fit and they cry, "Glory be to God."

Now we do *not* believe that *that* is the work of the Spirit. We believe it is ridiculous nonsense and nothing more. In the old revivals in America a hundred years ago, commonly called "the great awakening," there were many strange things, such as continual shrieks and screams and knockings and twitching, under the services. We cannot call that the work of the Spirit. Even the great Whitfield's revival at Cambuslang, one of the greatest and most remarkable revivals that were ever known, was attended by some things that we cannot but regard as superstitious wonders.

People were so excited, that they did not know what they did. Now, if in any revival you see any of these strange contortions of the body—always distinguish between things that differ. The Holy Spirit's work is with the *mind*, not with the body in that way. It is not the will of God that such things should disgrace the proceedings. I believe that such things are the result of Satanic malice. The devil sees that there is a great deal of good doing. "Now," says he, "I'll spoil it all. I'll put my hoof in there and do a world of mischief. There are souls being converted. I will let them get so excited that they will do ludicrous things and then it will all be brought into contempt." Now, if you see any of these strange things arising, look out.

There is that old Apollyon busy, trying to mar the work. Put such vagaries down as soon as you can, for where the Spirit works, He never works against His own precepts and His precept is, "Let all things be done decently and in order." It is neither decent nor orderly for people to dance under the sermon, nor howl, nor scream, while the Gospel is being

preached to them and therefore it is not the Spirit's work at all, but mere human excitement.

And again remember that you must always distinguish between man and man in the work of revival. While, during a revival of religion, a very large number of people will be really converted, there will be a very considerable portion who will be merely excited with animal excitement and whose conversion will not be genuine. Always expect that and do not be surprised if you see it. It is but a law of the mind that men should imitate one another and it seems but reasonable that when one person is truly converted, there should be a kind of desire to imitate it in another who as yet is not a possessor of true and Sovereign Grace. Be not discouraged, then, if you should meet with this in the midst of a revival. It is no proof that it is not a true revival. It is only a proof that it is not true in that particular case.

I must say, once more, that if God should send us a great revival of religion, it will be our duty not to relax the bonds of discipline. Some Churches, when they increase very largely, are apt to take people into their number by wholesale, without due and proper examination. We ought to be just as strict in the paroxysms of a revival as in the cooler times of a gradual increase and if the Lord sends His Spirit like a hurricane, it is ours to deal with skill with the sails lest the hurricane should wreck us by driving us upon some fell rock that may do us serious injury. Take care, you that are officers in the Church, when you see the people stirred up, that you exercise still a holy caution, lest the Church become lowered in its standard of piety by the admission of persons not truly saved.

IV. With these words of caution, I shall now gather up my strength and with all my might labor to stir you up to seek of God a great revival of religion throughout the length and breadth of this land.

Brothers and Sisters, the Lord God has sent us a blessing. One blessing is the earnest of many. Drops precede the April showers. The mercies which He has already bestowed upon us are but the forerunners and the preludes of something greater and better yet to come. He has given us the former. Let us seek of Him the latter rain that His grace may be multiplied among us and His glory may be increased. There are some of you to whom I address myself this morning who stand in the way of any revival of religion. I would affectionately admonish you and beseech you, not to impede the Lord's own work. There be some of you, perhaps, here present today who are not consistent in your living. And yet you are professors of religion.

You take the sacramental cup into your hand and drink its sacred wine, but still you live as worldlings live and are as carnal and as covetous as they. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, you are a serious drawback to the Church's increase. God will never bless an unholy people and in proportion to our unholiness, He will withhold the blessing from us. Tell me of a Church that is inconsistent, you shall tell me of a Church that is un-

blest. God will first sweep the house before He will come to dwell in it. He will have His Church pure before He will bless it with all the blessings of His grace. Remember that, you inconsistent ones, and turn unto God and ask to be rendered holy.

There are others of you that are so cold-hearted that you stand in the way of all progress. You are a skid upon the wheels of the Church. It cannot move for you. If we would be earnest, you put your cold hand on everything that is bold and daring. You are not prudent and zealous. If you were so, we would bless God for giving you that prudence which is a jewel for which we ought ever to thank God, if we have a prudent man among us. But there are some of you to whom I allude, who are prudent, but you are cold. You have no earnestness, you do not labor for Christ, you do not serve Him with all your strength. And there are others of you who are imprudent enough to push others on, but never go forward yourselves.

O you Laodiceans, you that are neither hot nor cold, remember what the Lord has said of you—"So then, because you are neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth." And so will He do with you. Take heed, take heed, you are not only hurting yourselves but you are injuring the Church. And then there are others of you who are such sticklers for order, so given to everything that has been, that you do not care for any revival, for fear we should hurt you. You would not have the Church repaired, lest we should touch one piece of the venerable moss that coats it.

You would not cleanse your own garment because there is ancient dirt upon it. You think that because a thing is ancient, therefore it must be venerable. You are lovers of the antique. You would not have a road mended, because your grandfather drove his wagon along the rut that is there. "Let it always be there," you say. "Let it always be knee deep." Did not your grandfather go through it when it was knee deep with mud and why should not you do the same? It was good enough for him and it is good enough for you. You always have taken an easy seat in the chapel. You never saw a revival. You do not want to see it. You believe it is all nonsense and that it is not to be desired.

You look back. You find no precedent for it. Doctor So-and-So did not talk about it. Your venerable minister who is dead did not talk so, you say. Therefore it is not needed. We need not tell you it is Scriptural—that, you do not care for. It is not orderly, you say. We need not tell you the thing is right. You care more about the thing being ancient than being good. Ah, you will have to get out of the way now, it isn't any good. You may try to stop us, but we will run over you if you do not get out of the way. With a little warning we shall have to run over your prejudices and incur your anger. But your prejudices must not, cannot, restrain us. The chain may be ever so rusty with age and ever so stamped with authority. The prisoner is always happy to break it and however your fetters may shackle us, we will dash them in pieces if they stand in the way of the progress of the kingdom of Christ.

Having thus spoken to those who hinder, I want to speak to you who love Jesus with all your hearts and want to promote it. Dear Friends, I beseech you remember that men are dying around you by thousands. Will you let your eyes follow them into the world of shades? Myriads of them die without God, without Christ, without hope. My Brothers and Sisters, does not their fearful fate awake your sympathy? You believe, from Scriptural warrant, that those who die without faith go to that place where “their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched.” Believing this, is not your soul stirred within you in pity for their fate?

Look around you today. You see a vast host gathered together, professedly for the service of God. You know also how many there are here who fear Him not, but are strangers to themselves and strangers to the Cross. What? Do you know yourself what a solemn thing it is to be under the curse and will you not pray and labor for those around you that are under the curse today? Remember your Master’s Cross. He died for sinners. Will not you weep for them?—

**“Did Christ over sinners weep,
And shall your cheek be dry?”**

Did He give His whole life for them and will not you stir up your life to wrestle with God that His purposes may be accomplished on their behalf? You have unconverted children—do you not want them saved? You have brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, fathers, that are this day in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. Do you not want a revival, even if it were only for *their* sakes? Behold, how much of robbery, of murder, of crime stains this poor land. Do you not want a revival of religion, if it were merely for quenching the flames of crime? See how God’s name every day is blasphemed.

Mark how, this day, trades are carried on as if it were man’s day and not God’s. Mark how multitudes are going the downward course, merry on their way to destruction. Do you not feel for them? Are your hearts hard and stolid? Has your soul become steeled? Has it become frozen like an iceberg? O Sun of Righteousness arise and melt the icy heart and make us all feel how fearful it is for immortal souls to perish—for men to be hurried into eternity without God and without hope!

Oh, my Hearers, will you not now, from this time forth, begin to pray that God may send forth His Word and save them, that His own name may be glorified? As for you that fear not God, see how much ado we are making about you. Your souls are worth more than you think. O that you would believe in Christ, to the salvation of your souls!

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THE VANGUARD AND REAR-GUARD OF THE CHURCH NO. 230

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 26, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“The Lord will go before you. And the God of Israel
will be your rear-guard.”
Isaiah 52:12.***

THE Church of Christ is continually represented under the figure of an army. Yet its Captain is the Prince of Peace. Its object is the establishment of peace and its soldiers are men of a peaceful disposition. The spirit of war is at the extremely opposite point to the spirit of the Gospel. Yet nevertheless, the Church on earth has and until the second advent must be, the Church militant, the Church armed, the Church warring, the Church conquering. And how is this? It is in the very order of things that so it must be. Truth could not be truth in this world if it were not a warring thing and we should at once suspect that it were not true if error were friends with it.

The spotless purity of the Truth of God must always be at war with the blackness of heresy and lies. I say again, it would cast a suspicion upon its own nature—we should feel at once that it were not true—if it were not at enmity with the false. And so at this present time, the Church of Christ, being in herself the only incarnation of the Truth of God left upon this world, must be at war with error of every kind of shape. Or if she were not, we should at once conclude that she was not herself the Church of the living God. It is but a rule of nature that holiness must be at enmity with sin. That would be but a mock purity which could lie side by side with iniquity and claim its kinship. “Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with you?” Shall Christ and Belial walk together? Shall the holy be linked with the unholy? If it were so, Beloved, we might then not only suspect that the Church was not the holy, universal and apostolic Church. We might not only *suspect* it, but we might beyond suspicion pronounce a verdict upon her, “You are no more Christ’s bride. You are an antichrist, an apostate. Reprobate silver shall men call you, because you have not learned to distinguish between the precious and the vile.”

Thus, you see, if the Church is a true Church and a holy Church, she must be armed—there are so many untrue things and unholy things, that she must be perpetually with her sword in her hand, carrying on combat against them. And every child of God proves by experience that this is the land of war. We are not yet come to the time when every man shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, none daring to make him afraid. The

mountains do not bring peace to the people, nor the little hills righteousness. On the contrary, the children of God hear the sound of war. The shrill clarion is constantly sounding in their ears. They are compelled to carry with them the sword and the shield and constantly to gird their armor on, for they are not yet come to the land of peace. They are in an enemy's country and every day will convince them that such is their position.

Now, how comforting is this text to the Believer who recognizes himself as a soldier and the whole Church as an army! The Church has its vanguard—"Jehovah will go before you." The Church is also in danger behind—enemies may attack her in her hinder part, "and the God of Israel shall be her rear-guard." So that the army is safe from enemies in front—and God alone knows their strength and it is also perfectly secure from any foes behind, however malicious and powerful they may be. For Jehovah is in the front and the Covenant God of Israel is behind—therefore the whole army is safe.

I shall first consider this as it respects the Church of God and then, in the second place, I shall endeavor to consider it as it respects us, as individual Believers. May God comfort our hearts while considering this precious Truth of His!

I. First, consider THE WHOLE CHURCH OF GOD AS AN ARMY. Remember that part of the host have crossed the flood. A large part of the army are standing this day upon the hills of Glory, having overcome and triumphed. As for the rear, it stretches far into the future. Some portions are as yet uncreated. The last of God's elect are not perhaps yet in existence. The rear-guard will be brought up in that day when the last vessel of mercy is full to the brim of Grace, the last prodigal is restored to his Father's house and the last of Christ's redeemed ones redeemed by power, as they were of old redeemed by blood. Now, cast your eyes forward to the front of the great army of God's elect and you see this great Truth of God coming up with great brilliance before you—"Jehovah shall go before you." Is not this true?

Have you never heard of the eternal counsel and of the Everlasting Covenant? Did that not go before the Church? Yes, my Brethren, it went before manhood's existence, before the creation of this world that was to be the stage whereon the Church should play its part—before the formation of the universe itself—when as yet all things that we now behold were unborn. When God lived alone in solitary majesty without a fellow, when there were no creatures. If there were such an eternity, an eternity filled with the Creator and not one creature with Him, even then it was that God determined in His mind that He would form a people to Himself who should show forth His praise.

It was then that He settled how men should be redeemed. It was then the Council of Peace was held between the three Divine Persons and it was determined that the Father should give the Son, that the Son should give Himself, that the Holy Spirit should be the active agent to fetch out all the lost sheep and restore them to the fold. Oh, think, Beloved, of that

great text which says, "His goings forth were of old, even from everlasting." Do not think that the Gospel is a new thing. It is older than your hoary mountains, no, it is older than the firstborn sons of light.

Before that "beginning," when God created the heavens and the earth, there was another "beginning," for, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." And assuredly, the Gospel was ever in the Word, for Jesus was set up from everlasting as the great head of the Covenant of Grace. Behold, then, the glorious Jehovah in the Trinity of His Persons, treading the pathless depths of eternity, that a way for His elect might be prepared. He has gone before us. Take another view of the case. Jehovah shall go before you. Has he not gone before His Church in act and deed? Perilous has been the journey of the Church from the day when first it left Paradise even until now. When the Church left Paradise, I say, for I believe that Adam and Eve were in the Church of God. I believe that both of them were redeemed souls, chosen of God and precious. I say God give the Promise to them before they left the garden and they went out from the garden, the Church of God.

Since that time, what a path has the Church had to tread, but how faithfully has Jehovah led the way. We see the floods gather round about her, but even then she floats safely in the ark which Jehovah had provided for her beforehand, for the Lord had gone before her. I see the Church going out from Ur of the Chaldees. It is but a little Church, with the Patriarch Abraham at its head. I see that little Church dwelling in an enemy's country, moving to and fro. But I observe how the Lord is its constant leader—"When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people He suffered no man to do them wrong. Yes, He reproved kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not My anointed and do My Prophets no harm."

I see the Church afterwards going down to the land of the cruel Pharaohs. It was a black part of her pilgrimage, for she was going to the lash of the taskmaster and to the heat of the burning fiery furnace. But I see Joseph going down before, Jehovah's great representative. Joseph goes down into Egypt and he said, "God sent me before you to provide a place for you in the time of famine." So sings the Psalmist, "He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant—whose feet they hurt with fetters—he was laid in iron—until the time that His Word came—the Word of the Lord tried him. The king sent and loosed him, even the ruler of the people and let him go free. He made him lord of his house and ruler of all his substance—to bind his princes at his pleasure. And teach his senators wisdom. Israel also came into Egypt. And Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham."

But now the Church has to come up out of Egypt and God goes before her still. "But made His own people to go forth like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. And He led them on safely, so that they feared not—but the sea overwhelmed their enemies." The Red Sea is before them—Jehovah goes in front and dries up the sea. The desert must then be trod—Jehovah marches in front and scatters manna with both

His hands. He splits the rock and sends out a living stream. For forty years the Church wanders there. Jehovah is with them, the fiery cloud-pillar leads them all their journey through.

And now they come to the banks of Jordan. They are about to enter into the promised land—Jehovah goes before them and the Jordan is driven back and the floods are dry. They came into the country of the mighty ones, the sons of Anak, men that were of the race of giants. But Jehovah had gone before them. The hornet was sent and the pestilence, so that when they came they said it was a land that did eat up the inhabitants thereof, for God Himself with the sword and the pestilence was mowing down their foes that they might be an easier victory. “And He brought them to the border of His sanctuary even to this mountain, which His right hand had purchased. He cast out the heathen also before them and divided them an inheritance by line and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.”

But why need I go through all the pages of the history of the Church of God in the days of the old dispensation? Has it not been true from the days of John the Baptist until now? Brethren, how can you account for the glorious triumphs of the Church if you deny the fact that God has gone before her? I see the Church emerge as it were, from the heart of Christ. Twelve fishermen—what are these to do? Do? Why, they are to shake the world, to uproot old systems of paganism that have become venerable and whose antiquity seems a guarantee that men will never renounce them. These men are to blot out the name of Jupiter, they are to cast Venus from her licentious throne. They are to pull down the temple of Delphos, scatter all the oracles and disrobe the priests—these men are to overthrow a system and an empire of error that has stood for thousands of years—a system which has brought in to its help all the philosophy of learning and all the pomp of power—these twelve *fishermen* are to do it.

And they have done it, they have done it! The gods of the heathens are cast down. They only remain among us as memorials of men’s folly. Who bows down to Jupiter now? Where is the worshipper of Ashtaroth? Who calls Diana a Divinity? The twelve fishermen have done it. They have erased from the world the old system of superstition. It seemed old as the eternal hills yet have they dug up its foundations and scattered them to the winds. Could they have accomplished it unless Jehovah had been in the front and led the way? No, Beloved, if you read the history of the Church, you will be compelled to confess that whenever she went forward she could discern the footsteps of Jehovah leading the way.

Our missionaries in these later times tell us that when they went to the South Seas to preach the Gospel there was an evident preparedness in the minds of the people for the reception of the Truth of God and I believe that at this time, if the Church were true to herself, there are nations and people and tribes that are just in the condition of the ancient Canaanites—the hornet is among them making way for the Lord’s army to win an easy conquest. But sure I am that if ever a minister ascends the pulpit, if he is a true minister of Christ—if ever a missionary crosses the sea, if ever a

Sunday School teacher goes to his work—but that Jehovah goes before him to help him if he goes in earnest prayer and constant faith.

If I were a poet I think I have a subject that might suggest a grand epic poem—the march of the Church through the world, with Jehovah in her forefront. See, when first she comes forth, “the kings of the earth stand up and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed.” Alas poor Church, what is now your fate? But I hear a voice ahead. What is it? It is a laugh. Who laughs? Why the leader of the army laughs. “He that sits in the heavens shall laugh at them. The Lord shall have them in derision.” And shall we that are behind be mourning? Shall the Church tremble? Let her call the days of old and comfort herself, that the Breaker has gone up before her and the King at the head of her.

But the enemy approaches. They bring out the rack, the bloody sword, the burning fire wood. The march of the Church lies through the flames, the floods must be forded, torments must be endured. Did the Church ever stop a moment in its march for all the martyrdoms that fell upon her like the drops of a fiery shower? Never, never did the Church seem to march on with feet so ready, never were her steps so firm as when she dipped her foot each time in blood and every moment passed through the fire. It was the marvel of those days that men were better Christians then and more willing to make a profession of Christ than they are even now. And whereas this seems to be the day of cravens, the time of persecution was the age of heroes—the time of the great and the bold. And why? Because God had gone beforehand with His Church and provided stores of Grace for stores of trouble, shelter and mercy for tempests and persecution, abundance of strength for a superfluity of trial. Happy is the Church because God has gone before her! Whether it were over the tops of the mountains, where her pastors fell frozen by cold, or whether it were in the depths of the dungeon where her confessors expired upon the rack—whether it were in the flame or at the block—everywhere God went before His Church and she came forth triumphant because her great Vanguard had cleared the way.

And now, Beloved, we have come to the sweet part of the text, which said, “And the God of Israel shall be the rear-guard.” The original Hebrew is, “God of Israel shall gather you up.” Armies in the time of war diminish by reason of stragglers, some of whom desert and others of whom are overcome by fatigue. But the army of God is “gathered up.” None desert from it if they are real soldiers of the Cross and none drop down upon the road. The God of Israel gathers them up. He who goes before, like a shepherd before the flock, providing pasture for them, comes behind that He may gather the lambs in His arms—that He may gently lead those that are with young. “The God of Israel is your rear-guard.”

Now the Church of Christ has been frequently attacked in the rear. It often happens that the enemy, tired of opposing the onward march by open persecution, attempts to malign the Church concerning something that has either been taught or revealed or done in past ages. Now, the God of Israel is our rear-guard. I am never at trouble about the attacks of infi-

dels or heretics, however vigorously they may assault the doctrines of the Gospel, I will leave them alone. I have no answer for their logic. If they look to be resisted by mere reason, they look in vain. I have the simple answer of an affirmation, grounded upon the feet that God had said it. It is the only warfare I will enter into with them. If they must attack the rear let them fight with Jehovah Himself. If the doctrines of the Gospel are as base as they say they are, let them cast discredit upon God who revealed the doctrines. Let them settle the question between God's supreme wisdom and their own pitiful pretensions to knowledge. It is not for Christian men to fear about the rear of the Church.

The doctrines of the Gospel, which are like the heavy baggage carried in the rear, or like the great guns kept behind against the time when they are wanted in the hour of battle, are quite safe. The Amalekites may fall upon the stuff, or the Philistines may attack the *ammunition*—all is safe—for God is in the rear-guard. And let them but appear against our rear and they shall instantly be put to the rout. But I am thinking that perhaps the later trials of the Church may represent the rear-guard. There are to come, perhaps, to the Church, in days that are approaching, fiercer persecutions than she has ever known. We cannot tell, we are no pretenders to prophecy, but we know that it always has been so with the Church—a time of prosperity and then a period of persecution. She has a Solomon and she reigns in all her glory under his shadow. But in after years Antiochus oppresses her and she needs a Judas Maccabaeus to deliver her.

Perhaps we are living in an age too soft for the Church. The Capuan holidays that ruined the soldiers of Hannibal may ruin the Church *now*—ease and lack of persecution may put us off our guard. Perhaps there may come yet fiercer times for us. I know not what is meant by the battle of Armageddon, but sometimes I fear we are to expect trial and trouble in years to come. But certain I am, however fierce those troubles shall be, that God, who has gone before His Church in olden times, will gather up the rear and she who has been Ecclesia victory—the Church, the conqueror, will still be the same and her rear shall constitute at last a part of the Church even as already glorified.

Can you now conceive the last great day when Jehovah, the rear-guard, shall gather up His people? The time is come. The last of the salt is about to be removed. The Church of God is now about to be carried up to dwell with her Husband. Do you see the Church moving upwards towards Heaven? Behind her she leaves a world in flames. She sees the earth destroyed—God removes it as a shepherd's tent—the inhabitants thereof are gone and the tent must be folded up. As a vesture shall they be folded up and they shall be changed. But between the Church and a blazing world, between the Church and the terrible destruction of Hell, there is the bright pillar of God's presence—black to His enemies behind, but bright to His Church in front.

The close of the great dispensation of the Mediator shall be that the God of Israel shall be all in all, his Church shall be completely safe. He shall have gathered up all things in one, whether they be things in Heaven

or things on earth. Then shall the sonnet of the poet be more than fulfilled to the rejoicing and perfected Church—

***“Daughter of Zion, awake from your sadness,
Awake, for your foes shall oppress you no more.
Bright over your hills dawns the day-star of gladness—
Arise, for the night of your sorrow is over.
Strong were your foes, but the arm that subdued them,
And scattered their legions, was mightier far.
They fled, like the chaff, from the scourge that pursued them,
Vain were their steeds and their chariots of war.
Daughter of Zion, the power that has saved you
Extolled with the harp and the timbrel should be—
Shout, for the foe is destroyed that enslaved you,
The oppressor is vanquished and Zion is free.”***

II. Let us turn to the second part of the sermon. We are now come to the last Sabbath of the year. Two troubles present themselves—the future and the past. We shall soon launch into another year and up to now we have found our years, years of trouble. We have had mercies, but still we find this house of our pilgrimage is not an abiding city, not a mansion of peace and comfort. Perhaps we are trembling to go forward. Foreseeing trouble, we know not how we shall be able to endure to the end. We are standing here and pausing for a while, sitting down upon the stone of our Ebenezer to rest ourselves, gazing dubiously into the future, saying, “Alas, what shall I do? Surely, I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy.”

Brothers and Sisters, arise, arise! Anoint your head and wash your face and fast no longer. Let this sweet morsel now cheer you. Put this bottle to your lips and let your eyes be enlightened—“The Lord Jehovah will go before you.” He has gone before you already. Your future path has all been marked out in the great decrees of His predestination. You shall not tread a step which is not mapped out in the great chart of God’s decree. Your troubles have been already weighed for you in the scales of His love. Your labor is already set aside for you to accomplish by the hand of His wisdom. Depend upon it—

***“Your times of trial and of grief,
Your times of joy and sweet relief,
All shall come and last and end
As shall please your heavenly Friend.”***

Remember, you are not a child of chance. If you were, you might indeed fear. You will go nowhere next year except where God shall send you. You shall be thrust into the hot coals of the fire, but God shall put you there. You shall perhaps be much depressed in spirit, but that heaviness shall be for your good and shall come from your Father. You shall have the rod, but it shall not be the rod of the wicked—it shall be in God’s hand. Oh, how comfortable the thought that everything is in the hand of God and that all that may occur to me during the future years of my life is fore-ordained and overruled by the great Jehovah, who is my Father and my Friend!

Now stop, Christian, a moment and realize the idea that God has gone before, mapping the way. And then let me ask you if you could now this morning be allowed to draw a fresh map, would you do it? If He should condescend to say, "Now your circumstances next year shall be just what you like. You shall have your own way and go your own route to Heaven"—would you dare, even with God's permission, to draw a new chart? If you should have that presumption, I know the result—you would find that you had gone the wrong way. You would soon be glad enough to retrace your steps and with many tears you would go to your heavenly Father and say, "My Father, I have had enough to do with the helm of this ship. It is hard work to hold it. Do what You will with it—steer which way You pleases, though it be through the deepest floods and the hottest flame. I am weary, I sleep at the tiller, I cannot guide the ship. My tears fan fast from my eyes—for when I think to be wise I find myself to have committed folly. When I thought I was promoting my own advantage in my scheme, I find I am rushing into a sea of losses." God, then, has gone before you in the decree of His predestination. And remember, God has gone before you in all your *future* journey in the actual preparations of His Providence.

I do not think I am capable this morning, for my mind seems to wander far more than I could desire, of sketching how it is, but so it is, that God always makes a Providence beforehand ready for His people when they get to the place. My God does not hastily erect a tent over me when I come to a certain spot. No. He builds an inn of mercy and before I get there He provides a bed of comfort and stores up the old wines of Grace, that I may feast upon them. And all this is done long before I come to the actual necessity. None of us can tell how the future leans on the past, how a simple act of today shall bring about a grand event in a hundred years. We do not know how the future lies in the heart of the past and how what is to be is the child of that which is. As all men spring from their progenitors, so the Providence of today springs from the Providence of a hundred years past.

The events of next year have been forestalled by God in what He has done this year and years before. I am certain of this, that on the road I am to travel during the next year, everything is ready for me. I am not going on a road of hills and deep valleys, but I have heard the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare you the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill shall be made low—and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain—and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together—for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." "I will open rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of the valleys—I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water." "And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not. I will lead them in paths that they have not known—I will make darkness light before them and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them and not forsake them."

I say again—you are not going through a land that God has not prepared for you. O Israel, there is a well of Elim made for you long before you came out of Egypt and there are palm trees that have been growing there that they might just come to the fruit-bearing state and have fruit upon them when you come there! O Israel, God is not going to extemporize a Canaan for you. It is ready made, it is even now flowing with milk and honey. The vines that are to bear you grapes of Eshcol are already there and coming to perfection. God has forestalled your trials and troubles for the next year. The Lord Jehovah has gone before you.

There is also another phase of this subject. Jehovah has gone before us in the incarnation of Christ. As to our future troubles for next year and the remnant of our days, Jesus Christ has borne them all before. As for temptation, He “has been tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.” As for trials and sorrows, He has felt all we can possibly feel and infinitely more. As for our difficulties, Christ has trod the road before. We may rest quite sure that we shall not go anywhere where Christ has not gone. The way of God’s people in Providence is the exact track of Christ Himself. The footsteps of the flock are identical with the footsteps of the Shepherd, so far as they follow the leading and guiding of God.

And there is this reflection, also, that inasmuch as Christ has gone before us, He has done something in that going before, for He has conquered every foe that lies in His way. Cheer up, now, you faint-hearted warrior! Not only has Christ traveled the road, but He has slain your enemies. Do you dread sin? He has nailed it to His Cross. Do you dread death? He has been the death of Death. Are you afraid of Hell? He has barred it against the advent of any of His children. They shall never see the gulf of perdition. Whatever foes may be before the Christian, they are all overcome. There are lions, but their teeth are broken. There are serpents, but their fangs are extracted. There are rivers, but they are bridged or fordable. There are flames, but we have upon us that matchless garment which renders us invulnerable to fire. The sword that has been forged against us is already blunted—the instruments of war which the enemy is preparing have already lost their point. God has taken away in the Person of Christ all the power that anything can have to hurt us.

Well, then, the army may safely march on and you may go joyously along your journey, for all your enemies are conquered beforehand. What shall you do but march on to take the prey? They are beaten, they are vanquished. All you have to do is to divide the spoil. Your future life shall be only the dividing of the spoil. You shall, it is true, often dread combat. And you shall sometimes have to wield the spear, but your fight shall be with a vanquished foe. His head is broken. He may attempt to injure you, but his strength shall not be sufficient for his malicious design. Your victory shall be easy and your treasure shall be beyond all count. Come boldly on, then, for Jehovah shall go before you.

This shall be our sweet song when we come to the river of death—black are its streams and there are terrors there of which I cannot dream. But shall I fear to go through the dark stream if Jehovah goes before me?

There may be goblins of frightful shape, there may be horrors of a hellish hue, but You, Jehovah, shall clear the way, You shall bid each enemy be gone and each fiend shall flee at Your bidding. I may march safely on. So confident would I feel in this great vanguard, that should You bid me go through Hell itself, I need not fear all the terrors of the place of doom. For if Jehovah went before, He would tread out even to the last spark the fire. He would quench even to the last flame that burning. And the child of God might march safely through the flame that had been quenched and the ashes that were extinguished. Let us therefore never be troubled about the future. It is all safe, for Jehovah has gone before.

Now I hear one say, "The future seldom troubles me, Sir. It is the past—what I have done and what I have not done—the years that are gone—how I have sinned and how I have not served my Master as I ought. These things grieve me and sometimes my old sins start up in my recollection and accuse me—'What? shall YOU be saved?' they say, 'Remember us.' And they spring up in number like the sands of the sea. I cannot deny that I have committed all these sins, nor can I say that they are not the most guilty of iniquities. Oh, it is the rear-guard that is most unsafe. I dread most the sins of the past."

O Beloved, the God of Israel shall be your rear-guard. Notice the different titles. The first is "the Lord," or properly "Jehovah"—"Jehovah will go before you." That is the I AM, full of omniscience and omnipotence. The second title is "God of Israel," that is to say, the God of the Covenant. We want the God of the Covenant behind, because it is not in the capacity of the I AM, the omnipotent that we require Him to pardon sin, to accept our persons, to blot out the past and to remove iniquity by the blood of Christ. It is as the God of the Covenant that He does that. He goes behind—here He finds that His child has left a black mark and He takes that away. He finds here a heap of rubbish, a mass of broken good works and here another load of evil, of filth—and He carefully removes all—so that in that track of His children there is not a spot or a blemish. And though they have trod the road, the most observant of their foes at the Last Great Day shall not be able to find that they have done any mischief on the journey, or one wrong thing in all their march—for the God of Israel has so swept the way that He has taken away their iniquities and cast their sins behind His back.

Now let me always think that I have God behind me as well as before me. Let not the memories of the past, though they cause me grief, cause me despair. Let me never bemoan because of past trial or past bereavement. Let me never be cast down on account of past sin. But let me look to Christ for the pardon of the past and to God for the sanctification of my past troubles. Let me believe that He who has cleared the way before me, has removed all enemies from behind me, that I am and must be perpetually safe.

And now, are there any here today whose hearts God has touched, who desire to join this great army? Have I one here who has been enlisted in the black army of the devil and has long been fighting his way against God

and against right? I pray that he may be compelled this day to ground his arms and surrender all discretion to God. Sinner, if the Lord inclines your heart this day to yield up yourself to Him, the past shall all be blotted out. God shall be your rear-guard. As for your innumerable sins, leave them to Christ. He will make short work of them. By His blood He will slay them all. They shall not be mentioned against you forever.

And as for the future, you chief of sinners, if now you enlist into the army of Christ by faith, you shall find the future shall be strewn with the gold of God's Grace and the silver of His temporal mercies. You shall have enough to spare, from this day forth even to the end and at the last you shall be gathered in by the great arms of God, that constitute the rear-guard of His heavenly army. Come, you chief of Sinners, come away to Christ. He now invites you to come to Him. He asks nothing of you as a preparation. Christ's regiment is made up of men that are in debt and are discontented—the rag-tag of the world Christ will take. The scum, the dross, the offal of the universe Christ loves. The sweepings of our dens of iniquity, the very leavings of the devil's mill, Christ is willing to receive—the very chief of sinners—those who have been ministers in guilt, abortions of iniquity. Come to Him. Lay hold of Him by faith. Look to Him as He hangs upon the tree. Believe in His merits and then shall this promise be yours with innumerable others that are rich beyond all estimation. And you shall rejoice that Jehovah is gone before you and that the God of Israel shall be your rear-guard.

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THE SURE TRIUMPH OF THE CRUCIFIED ONE NO. 1231

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 25, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled,
and be very high. As many were astonished at you, His visage was so
marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men:
So shall He sprinkle many nations;
the kings shall shut their mouths at Him: for that which had not
been told them shall they see; and that which they had
not heard shall they consider.”***
Isaiah 52:13-15.

MODERN Jewish writers refuse to see the Messiah in this passage, but their predecessors were not so blind. The Targum and the ancient Rabbis interpreted it of the Messiah and, indeed, all attempts to explain it apart from Him are palpable failures. Christian commentators in all ages have seen the Lord Jesus here. How could they do otherwise? To whom else could the Prophet have referred? If the Man of Nazareth, the Son of God, is not right visible in these three verses, they are dark as midnight itself! We do not hesitate for a moment in applying every word to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear Brothers, when our Lord ascended on high, He gave us this commission, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” Our duty is to obey that command, whether men will hear or whether they will not. The commission is unconditional and is not dependent upon our success. If up to this date, 1875, there had never been a solitary convert through Christian ministry. If the whole of the Church of God had, until this time, labored in vain and the succession of saints had only been kept up by miracle, it would not affect our duty one iota. Our business is to preach the Gospel, even to those who are driven to persecution thereby. We are to sow, whether a harvest follows or not. *Success* is with God—service belongs to us.

I believe, therefore, that true faith, when it is in a healthy condition, will enable us to go plodding on, carefully scattering the seed even by the wayside and on stony places. But there is flesh about us all—and faith is not always unalloyed with sight—and consequently we occasionally flag and almost faint if we do not see some present usefulness. This passage may cheer us if we fear that we have spent our strength for nothing, for such certainly was the condition of the Church of God at the time when this passage was addressed to it.

There is a break made, in our version, between the 52nd and 53rd chapters, but no such break should have been made. And if we read straight on we shall see that these consoling words are meant for mourning work-

ers. We hear even Prophets saying, “Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” Even the bravest of the Prophets lamented that the offense of the Cross hindered men from seeing the comeliness of the Messiah. All-Glorious as He was to the Prophets, when they beheld His substitutionary griefs, He was not understood by the multitudes who only saw in Him a man smitten of God and afflicted, having no beauty that they should desire Him.

To support them under circumstances so dispiriting, there comes, in this comfortable word of our text in which the marred visage and disfigured form of the great Servant of the Lord are fully recognized, encouragement from the voice of the Lord that the shame and contempt caused thereby will be temporary—and the ultimate result will be sure! The issue of the great scheme of Redemption is by no means uncertain. His cause must prosper, His Throne must be established and the will of the Lord must be done. Let us brace ourselves up, this morning, with the delightful prospect of the predestinated triumph of the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ!

In handling our text we shall note, first, that in directing us to the Lord Jesus Christ, it dwells upon *the character of His dealings*—“My servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.” Then, secondly, it mentions *the stumbling block which lies in His way*, the great hindrance to the progress of His work—“As many were astonished at you, His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.” Thirdly, we see in the verses before us *the certainty of the removal of this hindrance*—“So shall He sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at Him.” And, fourthly, *the manner of its accomplishment*, namely, by instruction in the Gospel—“For that which had not been told them they shall see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.”

I. THE CHARACTER OF OUR LORD’S DEALINGS. He is called in the text, “*My Servant*,” a title as honorable as it is condescending. The Lord Jesus has undertaken, in Infinite Love, to become the Servant of the Father for our sakes. And He is a Servant like unto Moses, who was set over the Lord’s house to manage the affairs of the dispensation. Jesus, though a Son and, therefore Lord, has deigned to become the great Servant of God under the present economy. He conducts the affairs of the household of God and, as it is said in the text and it is to that we have to draw attention—that *He deals prudently*.

He who took upon Him the form of a Servant, acts as a wise Servant in everything. And, indeed, it could not be otherwise, for, “In Him are hid all the treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge.” This prudence was manifest in the days of His flesh, from His Childhood among the doctors in the Temple, on to His confession before Pontius Pilate. Our Lord was enthusiastic—there was a fire burning within Him which nothing could quench—He found His meat and drink in doing His Father’s will. But that enthusiasm never carried Him into rashness, or forgetfulness of sound reason. He was as wise and prudent as the most cold-hearted calculator could have been.

Our Savior was full of Love and that Love made Him frank and open-hearted. No frigid reserve kept Him at a distance from the people, or shrouded Him in a cloud of mystery. He was a Man among men, transparent, childlike, "the holy Child Jesus." But for all that He was ever prudent and "committed Himself unto no man, for He knew what was in man." Too many who aspire to be leaders of the people study policy, craft and diplomacy—and think it necessary to use language as much for the concealment as for the declaration of their thoughts. Such men watch their own words till their very soul seems withered within them.

The Friend of Sinners had not a fraction of that thing about Him and yet He was wiser and more prudent than if diplomacy had been His study from His youth up! You see His wisdom when He baffles His adversaries. They think to entangle Him in His speech, but He breaks their snares asunder as with a wave of our hand we sweep cobwebs from our path. You see His wisdom when He deals with His friends—He has many things to say to them, but He perceives that they cannot bear them—He, therefore, does not overload their intellects, lest undigested Truth should breed mischief in their souls. Little by little, like the increasing brightness of the dawn, He lets Light into their souls, lest their eyes should utterly fail before the brilliance.

He does not send them upon difficult errands at first—He reserves for their riper years and stronger days the sterner tasks and more heroic deeds of daring. As we see His career in the light of the four Evangelists, it is distinguished for His prudence—and in that respect, "never man spoke like this Man." He who on earth became obedient unto death has now gone *into Glory*, but He is still over the House of God, conducting its affairs. *He still deals prudently.* Our fears lead us to judge that the affairs of Christ's kingdom are going amiss, but we may rest assured that all is well, for the Lord has put all things under the feet of Jesus and made Him to be Head over all things to His Church. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in the hand of Jesus!

We err, but He does not. No, the very points in which we err are overruled by Him for the display of His unerring wisdom and consummate skill. The storms and tempests which surround the Church serve only to illustrate the wisdom and power of our great Pilot. He has ultimate designs which are not apparent upon the surface which He never fails to accomplish. Brethren, all along through the history of the Church the dealings of the Lord Jesus with His people have been very remarkable. The wisdom in them is often deep and only discoverable by those who seek it out. And yet frequently it sparkles upon the surface like gold in certain lands across the sea.

Note how the Lord has made His Church learn the Truth of God by degrees and purified her, first of one error, and then of another. The Church has fallen, first, into one folly and then into another, but her Lord has borne with her and delivered her. Full often He has allowed her to work her folly out so as to see its result. And by this process He has stamped out the error effectually, so that it will never again gain power. At the present time the gross folly of uniting with the State is being practically

proved before the eyes of all men—and when it has come to its fullness it will end— never to be revived again.

We wonder, sometimes, why He allows this or that error to exist, and we ask how it can be that the Church should be so despoiled of her purity and weakened in her strength. We wonder that our Lord does not judge the evil and punish it at once, or that He does not raise up some strong voice to protest against it and, sending His Holy Spirit, destroy the evil at once. I know He might, but there is prudence in the withholding of His power. The wise physician tolerates disease until it shall have reached the point at which he can grapple with it, so as to eradicate it from the system. So has the good Lord allowed some ills to fester in the midst of His Church, that He may ultimately exterminate them.

We wish to see great success following all forms of ministry. We would see our missionary societies prosperous to such a degree that a nation should be born in a day! But the Lord withholds success in a great measure and herein He is dealing prudently. He keeps us back from prosperity till we have learned that it does not, after all, arise out of *our* plans, schemes, resources and energies—He would strip us of *pride*—He would put us in such a condition that it would be safe to give us success and would be glorious to Himself, also.

Often has a Church, like Israel of old, to suffer defeat till it discovers and destroys the Achan who troubles the camp. The Church has been foiled and humbled till at last, in sheer despair, she has fallen upon her face in prayer and lifted up her heart to the Strong for strength! And then her strength has returned and victory has waited on her banners. As rivers filter and purify in their running, so does the Church, in her course, become pure through the manifold wisdom of her Lord. Study the pages of ecclesiastical history and you will see how Jesus Christ has dealt wisely in the raising up of men for all times. I could not suppose a better man for Luther's age than Luther, yet Luther, alone, would have been very incomplete for the full service needed had it not been for Calvin, whose calm intellect was the complement of Luther's fiery soul.

You shall not find a better age for Wickliffe to have been born in than the time in which he shone forth as the morning star of the Reformation. God fits the man for the place and the place for the man! There is an hour for the voice and a voice for the hour! Our Lord has done all things well, even unto this day, but now, perhaps, we are getting a little tired. It is near 2,000 years since He died and there has been a lot of talk about its being the end of the 6,000 years since Creation, and we murmur to each other that the great Sabbath must surely be very near. I am not much in love with this chronological theory, for I think we cannot be certain that we have not long ago passed beyond the 7,000 years.

It is very questionable to me whether we do not altogether misunderstand the chronology of the Old Testament. Certainly nothing is more perplexing than the ancient Hebrew numbering. Still, the many will have it, and possibly so it is. A portion of the Church not only expects the Lord's Second Advent, but gets into a state of feverishness about the matter. Surely, they say, His delays have been very great—why are His chariots so

long in coming? Ah, Brothers and Sisters, the Master knows best! It may please Him to finish up the present dispensation today! If so, He will doubtless deal prudently in so doing. But it may be that myriads of years are yet to elapse before His appearing—and if so, there will be wisdom in the delay!

Let us leave the matter alone, for while the general fact that He will come is clearly revealed in order to quicken our diligence—the details are veiled in mystery—since they would only gratify our curiosity. If I knew that our Lord would come this evening, I should preach just as I mean to preach. And if I knew He would come during this sermon, I would go on preaching until He did. Christian people ought not to be standing with their mouths open, gazing up into Heaven and wondering what is going to happen—they should abide with loins girt and lamps burning, ready for His appearing whenever it may be. Go straight ahead upon the business your Lord has appointed you and you need be under no apprehension of being taken by surprise.

On one occasion I called to see one of our friends and I found her whitening the front steps. When she saw me she jumped up and blushing said, “Oh dear, Sir, I am sorry you caught me like this. I wish I had known you were coming.” “My dear Sister,” I said, “I hope that is how the Lord will find me at His coming—doing my duty.” I should like to be found whitening the steps when the Lord comes, if that were my duty. Steady perseverance in appointed service is far better than prophetic speculation, especially if such speculation leads us to self-conceit and idleness. We may rest assured that the future is safe, for Jesus will deal wisely and come at the right time! Therefore we may leave all matters in His hands. If the times are dark, it is right they should be. If the times are bright, it is right they should be. I, at least, cannot change the times and, therefore, my duty is to do the work God has given me to do, whether the times are dark or bright. For all practical purposes it is enough for us that Infinite Wisdom is at the helm of affairs. “My Servant shall deal prudently.”

Another translation of the passage is, “My Servant shall have prosperous success.” Let us append that meaning to the other. *Prosperity will grow out of our Lord’s prudent dealings.* The pleasure of the Lord prospers in the hands of Jesus. The Gospel will prosper in the thing which God has sent it. The decrees of God will be accomplished. His eternal purposes will be fulfilled. We may desire this or that and our wish may or may not be granted, but whatever the Lord has appointed, in His Infinite Wisdom to be done, will come to pass to the last jot and tittle. The blood of Jesus Christ will not miss of its foreseen result in reference to any individual under Heaven—and no end that was designed in the eternal plan of Redemption shall be left unaccomplished. All along the line the Captain of our salvation will be victorious and in every point and detail of the entire business the will of the Lord shall be done—and all Heaven and earth shall be filled with praise as they see that it is so.

In consequence of this, the text tells us the Lord shall be exalted and extolled. How well He deserves to be exalted and extolled for His matchless prudence! He cannot be esteemed too highly. At the present time you will

say the name of Christ is not honored. But wait awhile and He shall be very high. His name is, even now, more honored than in former days when it was the jest of the nations. The prudent plans which the Lord has adopted are surely working out the growth of His kingdom and will certainly result in bringing to the front His name, Person and teaching. Perhaps you think that certain doctrines are hindrances to the success of the Gospel—you know not what you say! In the end it shall be seen that every part of His teachings and procedure—and every act of His life, and all His government in Providence—were so wisely ordered that, as a whole, they secured in the best and speediest manner the exalting and extolling of His holy name.

The star of Jesus rises higher every hour! The twilight of Calvary brightens towards Millennial Day! He was despised and rejected of men, but now tens of thousands adore Him and, according to the Omnipotent promise of the Father, to Him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord! The Spirit of God is at work glorifying Jesus and Providence is bending all its forces to the same end. In Heaven Jesus is exalted and extolled. In His Church He is very high. And even in the world, itself, His name is already a word of power and destined to be supreme in ages to come. Thus much, then, upon the character of Messiah's dealings.

II. Now let us view THE STUMBLING BLOCK IN THE WAY OF OUR LORD. It is His Cross, which to Jew and Greek is always a hindrance. As if the Prophet saw Him in vision, he cries out, "As many were astonished at you, His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." When He was here, His personal position and condition and appearance were very much against the spread of His kingdom. He was the son of a *carpenter*. He wore the smock frock of a peasant. He associated with publicans and sinners. Is He the Son of David? We looked for a great prince. We hoped for another Solomon. Is this He?

Therefore the Jews rejected the meek and lowly Prince of the house of David and, alas, they persist in their rejection of His claims. Today He has risen from the grave and gone into Glory, but the offense of the Cross has not ceased, for upon His Gospel there remains the image of His marred visage and, therefore, men despise it. The preaching of the Cross is foolishness to many. The main doctrine of the Gospel concerns Jesus Crucified—Jesus, the Son of God, put to an ignominious death, because, for our sakes, He was numbered with the transgressors and bore the sin of many. Many will tell you they could believe Christianity if it were not for the Atonement, that is to say, if Jesus will come down from the Cross, modern scoffers will believe in Him, just as the ancient ones tauntingly promised to do.

But of the Gospel we may say that the atoning blood is the pledge and if you leave out the substitutionary work of Christ, there is no Gospel. It is a body without a soul. This, then, seems to be the impediment to the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom—He, Himself, with His marred visage—and His Gospel with a visage equally uncomely in the eyes of carnal men. The practical part of the Gospel is equally a stumbling block to ungodly

men, for when men inquire what they must do to be saved, they are told that they must receive the Gospel as little children, that they must repent of sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

These are very humbling precepts for human self-sufficiency! And after they are saved, if they do what they should, the precepts are not those which commend themselves to proud, hectoring human nature—for they are such as these—“Be kindly affectionate, one to another.” “Forgive one another and forbear one another even as God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven you.” To the world which loves conquerors and blasts of trumpets—and wreaths of laurel—this kind of teaching has a marred visage and an uncomely form. Then, what seems even more humbling, the Lord Jesus Christ, in His prudent dealing, not only brings before us an offensive Gospel, because of the Doctrine of Atonement and offensive in its practical precepts, but He sends this Gospel among us by men who are neither great nor noble, nor even among the wise of this world!

The proud say, “We would submit ourselves to men of master minds, but we cannot endure these foolish ones! Send us philosophers and orators combined. Let men overcome us by cogent arguments. Let them master us by words whose splendor shall dazzle our intellects.” Instead of which, the Lord sends a man who talks humbly, plainly and, perhaps, even coarsely. Very simple is what he says—“Believe and live. Christ, in your place, suffered for you. Trust Him.” He says this and little more. Is not this the fool’s Gospel? Is it not worthy to be called the foolishness of preaching? Men do not like this. It is an offense to their dignity. They would hear Caesar if he would officiate in his purple, but they cannot endure Peter preaching in his fisherman’s coat!

They will hear a pope in his sumptuous array, or a cardinal in his red hat! And they would not object to listen to a well-trained dialectician of the schools, or an orator from the forum. But they are indignant at the man who disdains the excellency of speech and styles the wisdom of this world folly! How can the Gospel spread by such means? How, indeed, unless the Lord is with it, using human weakness to display the power of His Grace? Worse still, if there can be worse, the people who become converted and follow the Savior are generally of the poorer sort and lightly esteemed. “Have any of the rulers believed?” is still the question.

With what scorn do your literary men speak of professed Christians! Have you ever seen the sneer upon the face of your “advanced thought” gentleman and of the far-gone school of infidels, when they speak of the old women and the semi-idiots who listen to the pious platitudes of evangelical doctrines? They know how to despise us if they know nothing else! But is such scorn worthy of men? It is only another version of the old sneer of the Pharisees when they said, “Do you hear what these say?” and pointed to the boys and the rabble who shouted, “Hosanna, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.” Contempt has always followed at the heels of Jesus and it always will till the day of His Glory. If the great ones of the earth despise the Lord Jesus, on their own heads be their blood! To Him it is a Glory rather than a shame that “the poor have the Gospel preached to them.”

He is the people's Christ whom it was written of old—"I have exalted One chosen out of the people." He rejoices to be called a Leader and Commander of the people and He is glad that "the common people hear Him gladly." But here stands the head and front of the difficulty—the Cross, which is the soul of Christianity—is also its stumbling block. If any here are offended with Christ because of His Cross, I beg them to dismiss the prejudice. Should it lead any man to doubt the Savior or withhold his heart from Him because He comes with a visage marred with sorrow? If He came to teach us to be unhappy and to prescribe to us rules for increasing misery, we might be excused if we shunned His teaching. But if He comes *bearing* the grief, Himself, that we may not bear it, and if those lines of agony were worked in His Countenance because He carried our griefs and our sorrows, they ought to be to us the most attractive of all beauties!

I reckon that the scar across the warrior's face, which he gained in defending his country, is no disfigurement to him—it is a beauty spot! If my brother had, in saving my life, lost an arm or received a hideous wound, he would be all the more beautiful in my esteem. Certainly I could not shun him on that account. The wounds of Jesus are precious jewels which should charm our eyes. They are eloquent mouths which should win our hearts. Be attracted by Him, all of you! Hide not your faces from Him! Look on Him and live and love!

That crown of thorns has far more true glory about it than any crown of gold! Those hands pierced and nailed should be your delight to kiss! Before that once sorrowing Person you should bow with joyful alacrity. Jesus, O marred One, your Cross, instead of being a stumbling block to us is the Glory of our faith! That the Gospel is spoken very plainly and that God blesses very simple people ought not to offend anybody! Ought it not, rather, to make us hopeful for the conversion of men because God may so largely bless commonplace instruments? Ought the conversion of the poor and the illiterate be an offense to us? It shows a need of humanity! It looks as if pride had dried up the milk of human kindness in us if we can begrudge those who have so little of this present world but the priceless gifts of another.

III. THE CERTAINTY OF THE REMOVAL OF THIS STUMBLING BLOCK and the spread of Christ's kingdom. As His face was marred, so surely, "shall He sprinkle many nations," by which we understand, first, that the Doctrines of the Gospel are to fall in a copious shower over all lands! Jesus shall, by His speech which drops as the dew and distils as the rain, sprinkle not the Jews only, but Gentile nations everywhere! Your brethren abhorred You, O Immanuel! They despised You, O Man of Nazareth! But all lands shall hear of You and feel You coming down like showers upon the mown grass! The dusky tribes afar off and the dwellers in the land of the setting sun shall hear Your doctrine and shall drink it in as the fleece of wool sucks up dew. You shall sprinkle many nations with Your gracious Word!

This sprinkling we must interpret according to the Mosaic ceremonies. Remember there was a sprinkling with blood, to set forth *pardon* of sin,

and a sprinkling with water to set forth purification from the *power* of sin. Jesus Christ with—

**“The water and the blood
From His riven side which flowed,”**

has sprinkled not only many men but many nations! And the day will come when *all* nations shall feel the blessed drops which are scattered from His hands and know them to be “of sin the double cure,” cleansing transgressors both from its guilt and power. Dr. Kitto explains the passage by an Oriental custom. He says that kings, when they invited their subjects to great festivals, would employ persons to sprinkle with perfume all who arrived as they passed the palace gate. I scarcely think that that is the meaning of the text, but at any rate it supplies an illustration of it.

Jesus invites men of all nations to come to the Gospel feast—and as they enter He casts upon them the sweet perfumes of His Love and Grace, so that they are fragrant before the Lord. There were no perfumes for You, O Jesus, upon Calvary! Vinegar and gall were all they offered You, but now, since You have gone to Heaven, You provide perfumes for multitudes of the sons of men! And nations north and south and east and west are refreshed with the delicious showers of fragrance which, through the Gospel, fall upon them!

The text, then, claims for Jesus Christ that the influence of His Grace and the power of His work shall be extended over many nations and shall have power not over the common people only, but over their leaders and rulers. “The kings shall shut their mouths at Him.” They shall have no word to say against Him. They shall be so subdued by the majesty of His power that they shall silently pay Him reverence and prostrate themselves before His Throne. Kings, remember this! I am always glad to hear of noblemen being converted, though I am by no means inclined to flatter the great, or to think more of one man’s soul than of another’s. I am glad, however, to hear of the salvation of peers and princes, for it indicates the wide spread of the Gospel, when all classes are affected by it, and when those who usually stand aloof yield themselves to its power.

“Kings shall shut their mouths at Him.” This promise has not been fulfilled yet. There are those who think that the Biblical prophecies are pretty nearly accomplished and that we are passing into a new dispensation. Well, I dare not dogmatize, but I dare question most of the talk I hear nowadays about the future. Scores of prophecies are not yet fulfilled! Kings have not yet shut their mouths at Him! They have mostly opened their mouths wide *against* Him and reviled and blasphemed Him and persecuted His saints. There will be brighter days to come for this poor world when even princes shall humbly obey our Lord!

The more I study the Bible, the more sure I am of two things which I cannot reconcile. First, that Christ will come at such an hour as men look not for Him and may come right now. And secondly, that the Gospel is to be preached in all nations and that “all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord.” I do not know which of the two things I am surest of—neither do I know how to reconcile them. They are both in the Word and in due time they will be reconciled by history itself. Assur-

edly the day will come when the mightiest prince shall count it his highest honor to have his name enrolled as a member of the Church of Christ. "Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him. All nations shall serve Him."

The little handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains is yet to increase till the fruit shall shake like Lebanon. "They shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for all shall know Him from the least to the greatest." We look for this, and it will come! O thorn-crowned King of Calvary, kings shall yet be Your courtiers!

IV. Let us consider THE MANNER OF ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT. How will it come to pass? Will there be new machinery? Will the world be converted and the kings be made to shut their mouths by some new mode of operation? I do not think so. Will the saints take the sword one day? Will it be accomplished by that wonderful implement of civilization, a gunboat? Shall we convert the Hottentots by gunpowder? We have had a little trial of these carnal weapons and some admire the success, but they may live to regret it. The Prince of Peace bids us put the sword into its scabbard. His weapons, like His kingdom, are not carnal. The way which has been from the beginning of the dispensation will last to its close.

I believe that this battle is to be fought out on the line upon which it began. It pleases God, by the foolishness of *preaching*, to save them that believe. To conceive that our Lord will end the present mode of warfare, as though it were admitted that evil could not be conquered by the use of instrumentality, is to my mind to do Him great dishonor. To me it is plain that, as He has chosen to magnify His power by using feeble instruments, He will continue to do so till the victory is won. He has never yet relinquished His work so as to give the enemy an opportunity of claiming a victory. To change weapons is to lay one's self open to the charge of being unable to conquer with those first used—but it is not so with our Lord.

The very same grain of mustard which is now so small is yet to become a tree with far-spreading branches. The leaven is yet to leaven the whole lump. The last harvest will be the result of sowing by men and not by some miraculous agency. The dividing of the people, at the last, will be made from the contents of one and the same Gospel dragnet, which we are bound to use till the heavens are no more. According to this passage, these kings and nations are, first of all, to *hear*. "Faith comes by hearing." They are to hear something. Well, Brothers and Sisters, if they are to hear, we must preach and teach so that our clear line of duty is to go on spreading the Gospel! Jesus Christ would have His servants preach and teach the Gospel! Are you doing it? Go on doing it, Brother, in the power of the Holy Spirit, no matter what happens!

Have you *not* done it? Begin to do so *now*, as one of Christ's servants, and pray for Divine help. Do you say you cannot do it? You can! You are hiding your talent in a napkin! Take it out, you unfaithful servant, lest your Lord comes and judges you! But you cannot teach many? Who said you could? Teach one! Oh, but you cannot preach? Who said preach? Teach! Teach somehow. Cause the people to know the story of the Cross.

But you cannot teach kings, you say. Why need you? Teach servants and children—only spread the Gospel!

The world is to be won to Christ, if it is ever won at all, by hearing the glad tidings of a dying Savior's love. And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent? Christ sends you, for He says, "Let him that hears say, 'Come.'" In the power of that commission say at once—

***"Now will I tell to sinners round
What a dear Savior I have found,
Point them to His redeeming blood
And say, Behold the way to God."***

These people appear not only to have heard, but to have *seen*. "That which had not been told them shall they see." This seeing is not with their *bodily* eyes, but by the perceptions of their *minds*. Faith comes by the soul perceiving what the Gospel means. We cannot believe in that which we do not understand. Therefore we must go on telling people the Gospel till they see what the Gospel is.

Many men will never know the Gospel till they have been told it a thousand times—and you must keep on telling it to them till you get to that thousandth time. "What do you mean by that?" you ask. I mean this, that it must be line upon line and precept upon precept almost to the exhaustion of patience. It must be a mother's prayers, a teacher's anxieties, Providences, sicknesses, twitches of conscience, ministries of all sorts and much pleading. And it is only at the last stroke that the Word will be achieved, though all the other efforts will have contributed towards it. Go on, dear Brother, go on and teach Jesus Christ till the people see Him! That sight will come all of a sudden. How many times have I heard the young convert say, "I knew all about this before, Sir. I had heard it many times, but I could not see it. Now I see it."

O, how it makes a man shut his mouth at Christ in humble silence, when he perceives, at last, that His marred visage and suffering form were tokens of Divine Love—and that by such sorrows sin is purged away! Would to God you all saw Him! After they had seen, it appears from the text that they *considered*. "That which they had not heard shall they consider." This is how men are saved—they *hear* the Gospel, they *catch* the meaning of it, and then they *consider* it. Let us pray, dear Friends, that God would set unconverted people considering! If we can but get them to think, we have great hopes for them. If any of you, here, have never yielded to Jesus Christ, I would ask you to hear or read about Him. Spend this afternoon in carefully reading one of the Gospels. Turn to Matthew, or Mark, or Luke, or John and read the story of His passion and ask God to let you see what it all means.

And when you see it, turn it all over in your minds. Think of it. Think how wonderful it is that God should become Man to suffer in your place. See if it is reasonable to disbelieve it or right to refuse to love the Savior. There are a thousand reasons why you should rush into His arms and say, "Incarnate Deity, how can I resist You? Bleeding Omnipotence, how dare I doubt You? Immortal Love, crucified for my sins, I yield myself to You! I would be Your servant forever." It is clear that those people, when

they had seen and considered silently, accepted the Lord as their Lord, for they shut their mouths at Him. They ceased all opposition! They quietly resigned wills and paid allegiance to the great King of kings.

Brothers and Sisters, we want to see hundreds, here, doing this for Christ! There is a great religious stir, just now, and we desire that this Church and all the Churches abroad, should use the favorable breeze. You know how, in harvest time, the farmer gets all the men he can to work and they toil on through long hours. I have seen them working briskly beneath the bright moonlight to get the wheat in. This is our harvest time and we must get our sheaves in! The Lord has much corn and it needs to be garnered. I pray you make long hours and work hard for Jesus! Let the subject expounded this morning inspire you. The success of the Gospel is in no jeopardy whatever. Jesus must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.

If the devil can persuade you that Christ is going to give up the war, or is going to fight it out on another line and dispense with your efforts, you will soon grow idle. You will find an excuse for laziness in some supposed conversion of the world by miracle, or some other wonderful affair. You will say the Lord is coming and the war will all be over at once, so there is no need of your fighting it out now. Do not believe it! Our Commander is able to fight it through on this line—in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, by the power of the Eternal Spirit, we are bound to keep right on till this world yields before God. You remember the American general who, when the nation was eager for speedy victory, said he did not know when that would come, but that he would keep on pegging away? That is what we are bound to do—to keep on “pegging away.”

No gunner may leave his gun, no subordinate may disperse his band, no officer may suggest a retreat. Brothers and Sisters, Popery must fall! Mohammedanism must come down! All the idol gods must be broken and cast to the moles and to the bats! It looks like a task too gigantic, but the bare arm of God—only think of that—His sleeve rolled up, Omnipotence, itself, made bare—what can it *not* accomplish? Stand back, devils! When God’s bare arm comes into the fight, you will all run like dogs, for you know your Master! Stand back, heresies and schisms, evils and delusions! You will all disappear, for the Christ of God is mightier than you!

O, believe it! Do not be downhearted and dispirited! Do not run to new schemes and fancies and interpretations of prophecy. Go and preach Jesus Christ unto all the nations! Go and spread abroad the Savior’s blessed name, for He is the world’s only hope! The Cross is the banner of our victory! God help us to look to it ourselves and then to hold it up before the eyes of others till our Lord shall come upon His Throne. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 53.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—72, 418, 302.**

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A CALL TO THE DEPRESSED

NO. 3422

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1914.

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

***“Shake yourself from the dust, arise and sit down, O Jerusalem:
loosen yourself from the bonds of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion.
Isaiah 52:2.***

I SHALL not attempt at this time to decipher the history of the prophecy with which these words are associated. To the Hebrew nation they were big with counsel, bright with hope. Apart, however, from the connection in which it stands, this verse supplies a pointed practical address of sterling value not to be limited by any private interpretation. Such a charge was well fitted for Israel of old. Such counsel would be suitable to any Church in a low condition. Such advice is equally adapted to any Christian who has fallen into a low state, who is groveling in the dust or among the ashes of Sodom. He is told to rise from the ground and sit down upon a throne, for Christ has made him a king and a priest. He is admonished to unbind all the cords that are upon him, that he may be free and happy in the Lord. To those of you, then, who have sunk into this distressing plight, my text contains a vigorous appeal! Let me try to interpret it. First of all, I notice the obvious fact—

I. SOME OF GOD'S TRUE PEOPLE ARE IN A VERY SAD CONDITION.

This is an important consideration to us just now. If just on the eve of battle a commander should discover that an epidemic has broken out among his troops, he will be extremely anxious that any available remedy shall be tried, for if the soldiers are sick, how can they be expected to behave well on the morrow? So it will sometimes happen that when we mean to serve our Master most, we are impeded in Church action by the prevalence of some spiritual disease among the members of the Church. Perhaps I may be the means, tonight, of finding out the sick ones, and indicating their symptoms, and—who can tell—perhaps this very night, before you come to the Table, the blessed remedy may be applied, and at the Table, while you are feasting with Christ, your souls may become perfectly restored!

Sometimes the children of God fall into a grievous state *as to their faith* and their assurance of their own interest in Christ. They doubt whether they are Christians at all, whether their experience is genuine, whether they ever did really repent with a truly broken heart, whether they have received the precious faith—the faith of God's elect. At such times they question all their graces and they are not able to get a satisfactory answer from anyone. At the same time these people of God may

be so walking in outward consistency that everybody else thinks well of them. No one has any suspicion of them, but they grievously suspect themselves and are tormented with the fear that they have a name to live, and are dead. I have known at such times that there will come at the back of all this some terrible doubts about the substantial Truths of our faith. "What?" You say, "doubts about the Godhead—doubts about the Savior—doubts about the world to come?" Yes, yes, and to the true people of God! They will hate these doubts and, in their hearts they will still believe all the great fundamental and cardinal Truths—but yet will they be sore put to it and be frequently distressed. Thoughtful minds, and men of reading will have philosophical doubts buzzing about them like mosquitoes on a summer's day. Others who are ignorant of philosophy and, perhaps, it is well that they are, will be troubled with doubts of a rougher, coarser quality. Although they will not permit them so to dwell in their hearts so that they actually become unbelievers—yet they will be sorely distressed with questions which they cannot answer, with enigmas which they know not how to solve, and with strange intertwistings of difficulty which they know not how to untie. Perhaps, too, at such a time as this, there will be over all and worse than all, a state of dreadful indifference creeping over them. They want to feel, but cannot feel. They would gladly wring tears of blood out of their eyes, but not even an ordinary tear will drop. They want to be cut to pieces! They would welcome the most poignant sorrow, but they can only say—

***"If anything is felt, 'tis only pain,
To feel I cannot feel."***

In such cases, true Believers are sure to resort to the extraordinary use of the means of Grace. I mean they will add to their ordinary use, something more. Have you never been in such a state that the Bible has become uninteresting, or the only passages of Scripture that seemed to strike you were dreadful threats concerning your Own coming doom, as you thought—not a word of comfort, not a syllable that makes glad your spirit? You have gone to prayer and the heavens have seemed to be brass! And worse still, your own heart seemed to be brass, too, and you could not stir it up to anything like an intensity of desire. You did not wonder that you got no answer. You would have wondered if such a prayer as yours could be heard at all! Ah, and then you have gone up to the assembly of God's people where at other times your heart has danced within you with holy joy! The minister was not changed. Perhaps at first you thought he was, but on more attentive bearing, you noticed that there was the same Truths of God and spoken in the same honest fashion, but you could not hear it as you once did. Clouds without rain and wells without water—all the ordinances seemed to be to you. And all the while, though you felt that you could not live like this, and said—

***"Dear Lord, and shall I always live,
At this poor dying rate?"***

yet somehow or other you could not get out of it. You felt like one manacled, as though a nightmare were upon you. You were distressed. You

could not stir to break the spell! Your spirit cried out as best it could, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” But the worst of it was that you did not feel that you were wretched enough, and you did not seem to cry enough! You were afraid you would sink into a terrible lethargy which would be the forerunner to a spiritual death altogether.

Well, my dear Friends, I should not wonder but you brought this very much upon yourselves. If you are in this state tonight, I would exhort you to question whether this is not the result of what you have often been warned of. Perhaps you slackened prayer. Perhaps in your happier days you grieved the Holy Spirit just when you were most joyful and happy in His love. It may be that you grew worldly, or, perhaps, a long succession of little things, none of which you noticed at the time, have contributed to swell the stream of your present distress. At any rate, whatever may be the cause of this state, I grieve that you are in it—grieve for my own sake, for your sake, for the sake of this Church—and for the sake of the world around you, for, my Brothers and Sisters, your testimony is, to a great extent, silenced and your strength to bear it weakened. That face of yours, once so happy, was a living advertisement of the Gospel! Your cheerful temperament under trial was an invitation to sinners to come and find a like joy. But now you are distressed and you go mourning without the light of the sun. What can you do while you abide in such a state as that? You are like the bruised reed out of which no music can come, or like the smoking flax that yields no light, but only a dolorous and nauseous smoke. I am grieved that it should be so, because were you now to attempt a verbal testimony for Christ, it would be feeble and could not produce any great result. I remember when I began to teach in the Sunday school. I was very young in Grace then, having said to the class of boys whom I was teaching that Jesus Christ saved all those who believed in Him. One of the boys asked me the question, “Teacher, do you believe in Him?” I replied, “Yes, I hope I do.” And he enquired again, “But are you not sure?” I had to look to myself to know what answer I should give. The lad was not content with my repeating, “I hope so.” He would have it, “If you have believed in Christ, you are saved.” And I felt at that time that I could not teach until I could say, “I know that it is so.” I must be able to speak of what I had tasted and handled of the good Word of Life! So, Brothers, you will find that you only perplex those whom you gladly would persuade if, by your doubts, you provoke them to say, “How can you expect us to believe at our mouth what you hesitate to seal with the witness of your own heart?” Unless the joy of the Lord is your strength, your soul will breathe a heavy atmosphere and your utterance will be checked, if it is not *choked* by your misgivings! It is your confidence in Christ and the peace it brings you, that helps you to speak to others as a true witness, because you are an experimental witness of the power of true religion. Your verbal testimony, I say, is weakened—I fear to a very great extent by the fog and vapor of

your scruples, the scruples of a conscience that droops and flags. It is sad to think that while you are looking to your own soul in doubt whether you are saved or not, you have but little energy to spare in caring about the souls of others! Indeed, it is your first concern to see that you, yourself, are saved. Till that all-important matter is resolved, your zeal for your neighbor's welfare is ill-timed. Why busy yourselves to keep other men's vineyards, while your own is left to be overgrown with weeds? And then, my dear Friends, another melancholy aspect of this disability is that all this while you are a detriment to your fellow Christians. It is hard enough to fight with Satan, but it is all the harder work for the army to have to carry so many sick folk with it, for it involves much more toil. You, whose faith is all but gone, are like the baggage of an army—you hinder the rapid march of the brave soldiers of the Cross! How you depress others that are around you! Once your voice was that of a brave hero and you encouraged the troops, but now you pine and cry, and make others hang their harps upon the willows and learn the same doleful tune as your own! It is a sad thing. I do not condemn you, but I greatly pity you, and I also greatly pity the Church of God, and the cause of God, that it loses so much by you who ought, in gratitude to Christ, do so much for Him. Alas, that the people of God should be sunk into so mournful a condition!

II. THERE IS A SPECIAL EXPECTATION FOR THEM.

This is pressed in all earnest. Hear, it, oh, ailing Christian! "Shake yourself from the dust, arise and sit down, O Jerusalem: loosen yourself from the bonds of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion."

Now, my Brother, content not yourself any longer with the state into which you have fallen. May the Holy Spirit come to you and prompt you to strike. Strive to get out of this condition into one of happiness and strength. Let me try to encourage you a little, and may God enable you to the utmost.

Remember, my dear Friend—suppose I am now talking to you, alone. I almost wish I could grip your hand and look you close in the face—*remember from where you have fallen*. Think of the peaceful hours you once enjoyed. Oh, your stony heart was not always so cold! The Word of God was not always so dry! The sanctuary was not always so unprofitable! You have wrestled and prevailed—you know you have! You have pleaded with God and you have had the desire of your heart. You have communed with Christ and your soul has been like the chariots of Amiinadab! And can you bear to think of this and not cry—

***"Return, O Holy Dove, return,
Sweet Messenger of rest!"***

Can you once have known these things and had the flavor of them in your mouth, without hungering and thirsting after them again? Think of them and, perhaps, while you are musing upon the past, you may be helped by strong desires to return unto the place from which you went out.

Think of the danger you are in at present. Who are they that are most likely to fall into open sin? They are those who walk at a distance from Christ. If you live in close communion with Jesus, you shall so share of your Shepherd's company that you shall hear the wolf's howl, but you shall not be likely to feel his fangs. I believe that when any professor falls into a filthy sin, it is not the beginning, but the culmination of a process and growth in iniquity! The open sin comes at the heels of a long succession of neglected prayers, of neglected worship of God in the family, a neglect of all communion with Christ and negligence of every good thing. It is the fruit, not the seed of the evil, which poisons the air and excites the public contempt. Beware, then, O professor!—you who have lost the light of God's Countenance—beware! Beware, I pray you, of that ill-condition of soul which is the prolific parent of all distempers!

Remember, too, that there is real cause for apprehension *that you never were safe.* It is just possible that those doubts you feel are no insinuations of Satan, but the suggestions of an enlightened conscience, or even the whispers of the Holy Spirit! Unless you are, indeed, a Christian, in all probability, unless you now turn to God, you will become the willing servitor of the Devil. Unless you now, with full purpose of heart, seek Christ, perhaps the time has come when you will turn aside, like Balaam, for reward, or perish in the gainsaying of Korah. In some of those shapes in which wicked men have perished, you may despondingly or presumptuously rush on to destruction and precipitate your final doom! Beware again, I say, O cold professor—in God's name, beware of trifling when you have so much reason to tremble!

My dear Friend, I would put another thought into your mind which may help you. Perhaps you may think it is rather hampering than helping you and tends more to depress than to deliver you. Remember *how justly you might now be left to your own devices.* You became carnally secure. You sinned away the light of God's Countenance. You grieved His Spirit. What if He were now to say, "He is given unto idols, let him alone"? What if from this day the Spirit should no more strive with you? What if, after all, though you have talked and preached to others, you yourself should be a castaway? I do but mention this to awaken you, my Brother, if you are insensible. You know how sometimes the surgeon fears that a man should sleep himself to death, and he will even drive pins into him, or make him walk and drag him about the chamber so as to awaken him. I would say anything, however sharp, if I might but wake you out of your lethargy! I know you would welcome it and, in due time, thank me for the severity of the operation.

But I shall refrain, for I think there is a better way than this. I want you to arise and shake yourself from the dust, my poor desponding Friend, because if the worst is the worst and you are no Christian, no true Believer, yet, "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be white as snow." What if it has been all a

mistake and you never ought to have made a profession? Remember *Jesus Christ receives sinners*—come to Him now! I always find this the short way out of a long dreary road, a quick relief for acute maladies, a ready antidote for doubts and fears. The Devil has been arguing with Christians for so many years that he understands the case against them a great deal better than any of us do, and if we begin to controvert with him, we shall soon find that that old hater of man will soon get the mastery over us! But if we say, “I give in, Satan—I give in. I am a sinner—the chief of sinners—have you anything more to say? I give in, but I answer you with this—“The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. I believe in Him and my sins are, therefore, washed away!” This is the high road to perfect comfort! I beg you, my dear Brother, to take it at once! Hear the Word of the Spirit, which says, “Repent, and do your first works.” The very first works were repentance and faith, and so even begin again! Away to the Fountain filled with blood! Away to the Cross, and give that life-look once more! Away to the finished Substitutionary Sacrifice and beneath the crimson canopy of the Atonement, hide your guilty head! Oh, if you do this, your light shall break forth as the morning, and your glory as the noonday! The Lord help you to do this, now, and end the strife!

Let me also remind any Christian here who is full of doubt and with the bands of his neck tight upon him, *that the blood has not changed its power to cleanse*. If it cleansed you 20 years ago, it can cleanse you still! Remember, Jesus has not lost His power to save, nor has He changed His Character for willingness to save to the uttermost—

**“Jesus sits on Zion’s hill,
He receives poor sinners still.”**

Come, then, to the unchanging Savior! You who have been treacherous—you whose hearts have played the harlot to Christ—come back, for His love to you has not waned! “Return unto Me, O backsliding daughter, says the Lord; for I am married unto you.” The prodigal’s heart may change towards his Father, but his Father’s heart never changes towards him. Return, then, for mercy waits you, and not judgment! He is God and not man, else you had been consumed! Return tonight, for He will put away your sin like a cloud, and your transgressions like a thick cloud. Duly acknowledge your wandering. Humble yourself because of your treachery and say, “My Father, You shall be the guide of my youth,” and you shall be restored perfectly, and your former joy shall come back to you!

Do I hear you say, “But I am not fit to come back to Christ, and have joy in Him at once”? Oh, Sir, were you fit at first? No! And you are not fit now, but come and welcome! Christ wants nothing from you! Come and trust Him and perfect salvation is yours. “Oh, but I cannot bear to look Him in the face, for I have lived so long without walking in His counsel.” So much the more reason that you should not live another hour without Him! I charge you, my poor distressed Brother—I charge you, my troubled Sister—by the love that Christ has to you, come to Him now!

Behold, He stands at the door and knocks! If you will open to Him, though the house is not furnished, nor the table covered with a festival for Him as it should be, yet will He come in and sup with you, even with you, and you shall sup with Him tonight! I see no reason why the most desponding Christian, here, should not rejoice before he comes to the Table of the Lord! I do not know why the most barren among us should not be made fruitful! This I do know, that we are not straitened in Him, we are not straitened in His willingness to bless, nor in His ability to comfort! Oh, believe in Him, Christian! Believe Him. If you are not a Christian, cast yourself at His feet. He will not let you perish! Lay hold, if it is but of the hem of His garment and do not let Him go! Even now shake yourself from the dust and put on your beautiful garments.

III. A GLAD OBLIGATION HENCEFORTH RESTS UPON THEM.

I must close with this remark. I know there are many of God's people in the state I have been describing. I have the pain, sometimes, of trying to cheer them. I only hope that what I have said tonight may be blessed of God to them. I fully anticipate it. Here, then, is the practical point. "*When you are converted, strengthen your Brothers and Sisters.*"

Look out for those who are in the same state as you have been in—and be very tender toward them. As you know their case, and have traversed that howling desert, you will be able to direct them. I have described your case because I fear that I have sometimes been on the verge of it myself. I have found recovery by a fresh resort to the love of Christ and a simple renewal of my trust in Him. I can, therefore, enter into your feelings and ask you to try the same remedy. After you have found the remedy to be a good one, it is but a small return, and certainly it is due from you, to tell others how you have been restored!

Some of you, Beloved, have never been thus carried into captivity. I pray God you never may be. There is no necessity for it, but let me entreat you to walk very tenderly with your God. We serve a jealous God. He will wink at many an act of insubordination done by His enemies, the one-tenth of which, if done by His favorite ones, His elect, His darlings—He will hide His face from them at once! "You, only, have I known of all the people of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities." Says He not, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten"? A sinner may go on wantonly unrebuked. He may add house to house and field to field, and he may think himself secure—God will deal with him in the next world. But the heir of Heaven is under a discipline of Divine Love and God will deal with him in this world! And among the chastisements of departure from Christ will be the loss of comfort, the loss of power to do good and I know not what other affliction added thereunto in his soul or in his circumstance. Dear Brothers and Sisters, walk carefully, then—while you have the Light of God, walk in the Light! Oh, prize the sweet love of Christ! Never, never let it go. Say unto your soul, when Christ is in your heart, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up nor wake my Love until He

pleases.” Introduce no rival’s love, and no worldliness! Fall into no inconsistencies, but pray for Grace that with holy jealousy you may still dwell in the Light of God and find favor in His eyes.

And being thus kept near to God, and being strong in the power of His might, *come and give back the strength to Him from whom you derived it.* Stand up for Christ! I believe we are never happier than when we have plenty to do. Idleness is the mother of vexation. A Christian who does but little for Christ, unless he is prevented from doing it by suffering, will, as a rule, be a miserable man or woman! You active Christians, active in body and nimble in spirit—you joyous Christians who walk in the Light of God’s Countenance—“work while it is day, for the night comes when no man can work.” Let us pledge each other tonight that we will now seek the good of Zion. Members of this Church, none of you be unfaithful to the loyalty which you owe to Christ in this, the hour when we seek to press forward as one man in the battle of our Master! I would stand side by side with you to take my share—but what can one do if he works alone? My Brothers in office will not be backward, I know, but what can we do? Keep step with us, my Brothers and Sisters, in pleading for souls, in proclaiming the Gospel, in seeking to win the many to the knowledge of the Savior—and the Lord will bless us, even our own God will bless us! Shaking ourselves from the dust, and breaking off the bands of our own sloth, God will come with His crown of benediction and place it on His Church’s head! And when we get that coveted prize, let us hold it fast, that no man take it from us. Let us go forward as a Church in indissoluble union and in unwearied service, until He shall come whose, “Well done!” shall be our best reward!

The Lord bless you! And at His Table may the King’s sweet spikenard give forth a delightful perfume to every spiritual heart. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 138; ISAIAH 55:1-11; ROMANS 8:28-39.**

Verse 1. *I will praise You with my whole heart; before the gods will I sing praise unto You.* We cannot be too much occupied in the praises of God. He rightly deserves all the thanksgivings we can bring to Him. It is the great engagement of Heaven. Let us begin the music here. If we would be heavenly-minded on earth, we must be filled with the praises of God! Notice how David resolves that in praising God it shall be done heartily. “I will praise You with my whole heart.” If there is ever a thing that ought to be done enthusiastically, it is the praising of God! I cannot bear to hear God’s praises chirped out elegantly by polite people—as if they were ashamed of what they were doing. Nor can I bear to see a mass of pipes and bellows left by itself to blow the praises of God by machinery—instead of men and women praising Him with their heart! Oh, how acceptable it must be to God to hear the heart speak! As for the tongue and voice, however sweet their sound, there is little in it. It is the heart! Soul music is the soul of music. “I will praise You with my whole heart.”

See how bold the Psalmist is about this. “Before the gods,” he says, “will I do it. Before the angels, before the kings and great ones that think themselves little gods. I will speak to the honor of Jehovah’s name. Yes, and in the idol temples, where their worshippers will be greatly angry about it. I will praise You with my whole heart. Before the gods will I present praise unto You.”

2. *I will worship toward Your holy Temple.* That was God’s way of worship. In the old times there was the shrine of God—there was the one altar which would render praise acceptable. David takes care to render praise to God in God’s way. And that is a great principle in worship—to avoid will-worship and to endeavor to present sacrifices such as God prescribes. “I will worship toward the holy Temple.” What blessed reasons are here given for praising. “I will praise You for Your loving kindness.” Is not that the grandest word in any language—loving kindness? It is a compound of perfect sweets to make up yet more perfect sweetness—kindness and love mixed together. A marvelous blend! Loving kindness gave the promise, but truth takes care to see it fulfilled. “So will I praise Your name.”

2. *And praise Your name for Your loving kindness and for Your truth, for You have magnified Your Word.* That is, “Your Word of promise—Your Gospel which You have applied with power to my soul. You have made it to seem lustrous beyond anything else I have ever seen of You, O my God! Therefore will I magnify You, because You have magnified Your Word.”

2, 3. *Above all Your name. In the day when I cried, You answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul.* Ah, this is what ties a man to praise. Answered prayer is sure to lead us to adoring gratitude. Notice that he says that God answered him not by taking away his trouble, but by strengthening him! With strength in his soul. You see it does not matter whether He takes away the load, or strengthens the back to bear it. And that is often the method by which He answers His servants’ cries. Not strength of body—perhaps he would have liked that—but strength of soul. And oh, when the soul is strong, bodily weakness is but a very small drawback. No, the weakness of the body may sometimes tend to illustrate the more the greatness of the power of God. Let us read that verse again, for some of us can set our seal to it. “In the day when I cried, You answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul.”

4, 5. *All the kings of the earth shall praise You, O LORD, when they hear the words of Your mouth. Yes, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD.* David was a king, and kings would learn from him. You and I are not kings, but we may exercise a very beneficial influence in our own circle of acquaintances if we make bold to praise God when others can hear us. Let us speak well of His name. Wherever we go, let us have a good word for our Master. When others want to know what sort of God we serve, may they gather it from our holy joy and exultant confidence at all times!

6. *Though the LORD is high, yet has He respect unto the lowly; but the proud He knows afar off.* A glance of them is quite enough for Him. He has no wish to know any more about them, He so hates them! Nothing can separate God from a soul so much as pride. It is that which causes the rejection of the Gospel. Men will not have the humbling Gospel—the sinners' Gospel. They are too fine, too good, too lofty—and so they do not want God, neither does His soul desire them. “For the proud He knows afar off.”

7. *Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me.* He was a king but he had his trouble. A throne is not a place wherein we can shelter ourselves from trial. “Though I walk in the midst of trouble”—like a man that is to rush through a fire—“yet I shall be safe,” he says, “for You will revive me—give me new life. When it seems as if my life would be destroyed, You will quicken me again.”

7, 8. *You shall stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and Your right hand shall save me. The LORD will perfect that which concerns me: Your mercy, O LORD, endures forever: forsake not the works of Your own hands.* Note the confident spirit that runs through all this. There is a childlike trust in God and there is a gladsome praise of God for what has been already received at his hands. Oh for more of this spirit—the spirit that makes music to the Lord for the past and trusts Him for the present and the future. Some more blessed words of comfort from—

ISAIAH 55:1-11.

Verse 1. *Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat: yes, come buy wine and milk without money and without price.* Remark the wonderful condescension of God, that though the gifts of His Grace are so precious that all the world could not buy them, yet He condescends to ask His creature to have those gifts. He stands, as it were, like One who has goods to sell, and He cries, “Ho! Such-and-such a passerby, turn here: give ear in this way. Ho! Everyone that thirsts.” If, then, there is any soul that wants God, O Soul, God desires you infinitely more than you desire Him! And He invites you to come to Him. Do not delay!

2. *Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not?* Seeking happiness in a thousand ways with much toil and trouble, but with bitter disappointment.

2. *Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* God invites His creature to listen to Him. “Do,” He says “but lend Me your ear a little. Do but hearken diligently to what I have to tell you.” Oh, should not God’s message of love command the attention of all mankind?

3. *Incline your ear and come unto Me! Hear, and your soul shall live.* Salvation does not come to men through the eye, but through the ear. Not what you see in the finery of the priest or the altar. That can do you no good. But listen to the Gospel. It is by ear-gate that God’s mercy

comes triumphant into the soul of man. "Incline your ear and come unto Me. Hear and your soul shall live."

3. *And I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* Here God will strike hands with the sinner and enter into a compact with him—a Covenant of Mercy and of Grace through Jesus Christ, the Savior!

4. *Behold I have given Him for a witness to the people.* To bear witness to men of what God is.

4. *A leader and commander to the people.* For Christ loves the people and He leads them rightly. He will lead them to Glory!

5. *Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that know not You shall run unto You because of the LORD, Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You.* The promise is to Christ! Today are these words fulfilled in our ears, for in calling these British Isles to know Christ, God has given to the Lord Jesus a people that knew Him not. What did our forefathers know of Jesus when He was here below? And yet in this land He has multitudes of hearts that love His name! Oh, that God would give this whole house full of souls to Christ tonight! What a box it would make full of jewels! Oh, that the gracious Father would bestow it on His Son!

6-11. *Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so the rain comes down, and the snow from Heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater. So shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth—it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.* Therefore, we are not at all afraid about the success of the preaching of the Gospel. Some will be saved tonight wherever Jesus Christ is preached! My dear unsaved Hearer, will it be you? I pray it may be. May the Lord grant that this may be the last night of your unregeneracy, and be your spiritual birth night! Some *will* be saved! Will *you* be of the number?

ROMANS 8:28-39.

Verses 28-30. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.* No breaks between the links of this chain! Foreknowledge is welded to the predestination—the predestination is infallibly linked with

the calling! The calling with the justification and the justification with the glorification. There is no hint given that there may be a flaw or break in the series. Get a hold of any one and you possess the whole! The called man is the predestinated man. Let him be sure of that. And the justified man shall be a glorified man. Let him have no doubt whatever about that.

31. *What shall we say, then, to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? A great many, but they are all nothing. If God is for us, all they that are against us are not worth mentioning! They are ciphers. If He were on their side, then the One would swell the ciphers to the fullest, but if He is not there, we may put them all into the scale and reckon them as less than nothing!*

32, 33. *He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who, indeed?*

33, 34. *It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? No one can, for—*

34. *It is Christ that died. And so put our sins to death.*

34. *Yes, rather, that is risen again. And so has justified us.*

34. *Who is even at the right hand of God. And so has carried us into Heaven by His representing us there.*

34. *Who also makes intercession for us. Whose everlasting pleas, therefore, silences all the accusations of the devil!*

35. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? They have all been tried. In different ages of the world, the saints have undergone all these, and yet has never one of them been taken away from the love of Christ! They have not left off loving Him, nor has He left off loving them. They have been tried, I say.*

36. *As it is written. For Your sake we are killed all the daylong; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. What is the result of it?*

37-39. *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Halleluia! Blessed be His name!*

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

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

THE DEATH OF CHRIST

NO. 173

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 24, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.”
Isaiah 53:10.***

WHAT myriads of eyes are casting their glances at the sun. What multitudes of men lift up their eyes and behold the starry orbs of Heaven! They are continually watched by thousands—but there is one great transaction in the world’s history which every day commands far more spectators than that sun which goes forth like a bridegroom, strong to run his race. There is one great event, which every day attracts more admiration than do the sun and moon and stars, when they march in their courses. That event is the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. To it the eyes of all the saints who lived *before* the Christian era were always directed. And backwards, through the thousand years of history, the eyes of all modern saints are looking.

Upon Christ the angels in Heaven perpetually gaze. “Which things the angels desire to look into,” said the Apostle. Upon Christ the myriad eyes of the redeemed are perpetually fixed. And thousands of pilgrims, through this world of tears, have no higher object for their faith and no better desire for their vision, than to see Christ as He is in Heaven and in communion to behold His Person. Beloved, we shall have many with us, while this morning we turn our face to the Mount of Calvary. We shall not be solitary spectators of the fearful tragedy of our Savior’s death. We shall but dart our eyes to that place which is the focus of Heaven’s joy and delight—the Cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Taking our text, then, as a guide, we propose to visit Calvary, hoping to have the help of the Holy Spirit while we look upon Him who died upon the Cross. I would have you notice this morning, first of all, *the cause of Christ’s death*—“It pleased the Lord to bruise Him.” “It pleased *Jehovah* to bruise Him,” says the original. “He has put Him to grief.” Secondly, *the reason of Christ’s death*—“When You shall make His soul an offering for sin.” Christ died because He was an offering for sin. And then, thirdly, *the effects and consequences of Christ’s death*. “He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.”

Come, Sacred Spirit, now, while we attempt to speak on these matchless themes.

I. FIRST, we have here THE ORIGINS OF CHRIST'S DEATH. "It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief." He who reads Christ's life as a mere history traces the death of Christ to the enmity of the Jews and to the fickle character of the Roman governor. In this he acts justly, for the crime and sin of the Savior's death must lay at the door of manhood. This race of ours became a deicide and slew the Lord and nailed its Savior to a tree. But he who reads the Bible with the eye of faith—desiring to discover its hidden secrets—sees something more in the Savior's death than Roman cruelty or Jewish malice. He sees the solemn decree of God fulfilled by men, who were the ignorant, but guilty instruments of its accomplishment.

He looks beyond the Roman spear and nail, beyond the Jewish taunt and jeer, up to the Sacred Fount, from where all things flow and traces the crucifixion of Christ to the breast of Deity. He believes with Peter—"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." We dare not impute to God the *sin*, but at the same time the *fact*, with all its marvelous effects in the world's redemption, we must ever trace to the Sacred Fountain of Divine love. So does our Prophet. He says, "It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him." He overlooks both Pilate and Herod and traces it to the heavenly Father, the first Person in the Divine Trinity. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief."

Now, Beloved, there are many who think that God the Father is at best but an indifferent spectator of salvation. Others do belie Him still more. They look upon Him as an unloving, severe Being, who had no love to the human race and could only be made loving by the death and agonies of our Savior. Now this is foul libel upon the fair and glorious grace of God the Father, to whom forever be honor—for Jesus Christ did not die to make God loving—He died because God was loving—

***"It was not to make Jehovah's love
Towards His people flame,
That Jesus from the Throne above,
A suffering Man became.
It was not the death which He endured,
Nor all the pangs He bore
That God's eternal love procured,
For God was Love before."***

Christ was sent into the world by His Father as the consequence of the Father's affection for His people. Yes, He "so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The fact is that the Father as much decreed sal-

vation, as much effected it and as much delighted in it, as did either God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit. And when we speak of the Savior of the world, we must always include in that word, if we speak in a large sense, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit—for all these three, as one God, do save us from our sins. The text puts away every hard thought concerning the Father by telling us that it pleased Jehovah to bruise Jesus Christ. The death of Christ is traceable to God the Father. Let us try if we can see it is so.

1. First it is traceable in decree. God, the one God of Heaven and earth, has the book of destiny entirely in His power. In that book there is nothing written by a stranger's hand. The penmanship of the solemn book of predestination is from beginning to end entirely Divine—

***“Chained to His throne a volume lies,
With all the fates of men
With every angel's form and size
Drawn by the eternal pen.”***

No inferior hand has sketched even so much as the most minute parts of Providence. It was all, from its Alpha to its Omega, from its Divine preface to its solemn finis, marked out, designed, sketched and planned by the mind of the all-wise, all-knowing God. Hence, not even Christ's death was exempt from it. He that wings an angel and guides a sparrow, He that protects the hairs of our head from falling prematurely to the ground was not likely, when He took notice of such little things, to omit in His solemn decrees the greatest wonder of earth's miracles—the death of Christ. No. The blood-stained page of that book, the page which makes both past and future glorious with golden words—that blood-stained page, I say—was as much written of Jehovah as any other.

He determined that Christ should be born of the Virgin Mary, that He should suffer under Pontius Pilate, that He should descend into Hades, that from death He should rise again, leading captivity captive and then should reign forever at the right hand of the Majesty on high. No, I know not but that I shall have Scripture for my warrant when I say that this is the very eve of predestination and that the death of Christ is the very center and mainspring by which God did fashion all His other decrees—making this the bottom and foundation stone upon which the sacred architecture should be built. Christ was put to death by the absolute foreknowledge and solemn decree of God the Father, and in this sense, “it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief.”

2. But a little further—Christ's coming into the world to die was the effect of the Father's will and pleasure. Christ came not into this world un-sent. He had lain in Jehovah's bosom from before all worlds, eternally delighting Himself in His Father and being Himself his Father's eternal joy.

“In the fullness of time” God did rend His Son from His bosom, His only-begotten Son and freely delivered Him up for us all. Herein was matchless, peerless love—that the offended Judge should permit His co-equal Son to suffer the pains of death for the redemption of a rebellious people.

I want your imaginations for one minute to picture a scene of olden times. There is a bearded Patriarch who rises early in the morning and awakes his son, a young man full of strength, and bids him arise and follow him. They hurry from the house silently and noiselessly, before the mother is awake. They go three days’ journey with their men until they come to the mountain, of which the Lord has spoken. You know the Patriarch. The name of Abraham is always fresh in our memories. On the way that Patriarch speaks not one solitary word to his son. His heart is too full for utterance. He is overwhelmed with grief. God has commanded him to take his son, his only son, and slay him upon the mountain as a sacrifice. They go together. And who shall paint the unutterable anguish of the father’s soul, while he walks side by side with that beloved son of whom he is to be the executioner?

The third day has arrived. The servants are bid to stay at the foot of the hill, while they go to worship God yonder. Now, can any mind imagine how the father’s grief must overflow all the banks of his soul, when, as he walked up that hillside his son said to him, “Father, behold the fire and the wood. But where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?” Can you conceive how he stifled his emotions and, with sobs, exclaimed, “My son, God will provide himself a lamb”? Look! The father has communicated to his son the fact that God has demanded his life. Isaac, who might have struggled and escaped from his father declares that he is willing to die if God has decreed it. The father takes his son, binds his hands behind his back, piles up the stones, makes an altar, lays the wood and has his fire ready. And now where is the artist that can depict the anguish of the father’s countenance when the knife is unsheathed and he holds it up—ready to slay his son?

But here the curtain falls. Now the black scene vanishes at the sound of a Voice from Heaven. The ram caught in the thicket supplies the substitute and faith’s obedience needs go no further. Ah, my Brethren. I want to take you from this scene to a far greater one. What faith and obedience made man do, that love constrained God Himself to do. He had but one Son, that Son His own heart’s delight. He covenanted to yield Him up for our redemption, nor did He violate His promise. For, when the fullness of time was come, He sent His Son to be born of the Virgin Mary that He might suffer for the sins of man.

Oh, can you tell the greatness of that love which made the everlasting God not only put His Son upon the altar but actually do the deed and

thrust the sacrificial knife into His Son's heart? Can you think how overwhelming must have been the love of God towards the human race when He completed in act what Abraham only did in intention? Look there and see the place where His only Son hung dead upon the Cross—the bleeding Victim of awakened Justice! Here is love indeed. And here we see how it was that it pleased the Father to bruise Him.

3. This allows me to push my text just one point further. Beloved, it is not only true that God did design and did permit with willingness the death of Christ. It is, moreover true, that the unutterable agonies that clothed the death of the Savior with superhuman terror, were the effect of the Father's bruising of Christ in very act and deed. There is a martyr in prison: the chains are on his wrists and yet he sings. It has been announced to him that tomorrow is his burning day. He claps his hands right merrily and smiles while he says, "It will be sharp work tomorrow. I shall breakfast below on fiery tribulations, but afterwards I will sup with Christ! Tomorrow is my wedding day, the day for which I have long panted, when I shall sign the testimony of my life by a glorious death."

The time is come. The men with the halberds precede him through the streets. Mark the serenity of the martyr's countenance. He turns to some who look upon him and exclaims, "I value these iron chains far more than if they had been of gold. It is a sweet thing to die for Christ." There are a few of the boldest of the saints gathered round the stake and as he unrobes himself, before he stands upon the fire wood to receive his doom, he tells them that it is a joyous thing to be a soldier of Christ—to be allowed to give his body to be burned. And he shakes hands with them and bids them "Good bye," with merry cheer.

One would think he were going to his wedding, rather than to be burned. He steps upon the fire wood. The chain is put about his middle. And after a brief word of prayer, as soon as the fire begins to ascend, he speaks to the people with manful boldness. But hark, he sings while the fire wood is cracking and the smoke is blowing upward. He sings and when his nether parts are burned he still goes on chanting sweetly some Psalm of old. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed and the mountain be carried into the midst of the sea."

Picture another scene. There is the Savior going to His Cross, all weak and wan with suffering. His soul is sick and sad within Him. There is no Divine composure there. So sad is His heart that He faints in the streets. The Son of God faints beneath a Cross that many a criminal might have carried. They nail him to the tree. There is no song of praise. He is lifted up in the air and there He hangs preparatory to His death. You hear no shout of exultation. There is a stern compression of His face, as if un-

terable agony were tearing His heart—as if over again Gethsemane were being acted on the Cross—as if His soul were still saying, “If it is possible let this Cross pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”

Hark! He speaks. Will He not sing sweeter songs than ever came from martyr’s lips? Ah, no—it is an awful wail of woe that can never be imitated. “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” The martyrs said not that—God was with them. Confessors of old cried not so when they came to die. They shouted in their fires and praised God on their racks. Why this? Why does the Savior suffer so? Why, Beloved, it was because the *Father* bruised Him. That sunshine of God’s countenance that has cheered many a dying saint was withdrawn from Christ. The consciousness of acceptance with God which has made many a holy man espouse the Cross with joy—was not afforded to our Redeemer and therefore He suffered in thick darkness of mental agony.

Read the 22nd Psalm and learn how Jesus suffered. Pause over the solemn words in the 1st, 2nd, 6th and following verses. Underneath the Church are the everlasting arms. But underneath Christ there were no arms at all. His Father’s hand pressed heavily against Him. The upper and the nether millstones of Divine wrath pressed and bruised Him. And not one drop of joy or consolation was afforded to Him. “It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him; *He* has put Him to grief.” This, my Brethren, was the climax of the Savior’s woe, that His Father turned away from Him and put Him to grief.

Thus have I expounded the first part of the subject—the origin of our Savior’s worst suffering, the Father’s pleasure.

II. Our second head must explain the first, or otherwise it is an insolvable mystery how God should bruise His Son—who was perfect Innocence—while poor fallible confessors and martyrs have had no such bruising from Him in the time of their trial. WHAT WAS THE REASON OF THE SAVIOR’S SUFFERING? We are told here, “You shall make His soul an offering for sin.” Christ was thus troubled because his soul was an offering for sin. Now I am going to be as plain as I can while I preach over again the precious doctrine of the atonement of Christ Jesus our Lord. Christ was an offering for sin, in the sense of a Substitute. God longed to save. But, if such a word may be allowed, Justice tied His hands. “I must be Just,” said God. “That is a necessity of My nature. Stern as fate and fast as immutability is the Truth that I must be Just. But then My heart desires to forgive—to pass by Man’s transgressions and pardon them. How can it be done?”

Wisdom stepped in and said, “It shall be done thus.” And Love agreed with Wisdom. “Christ Jesus, the Son of God, shall stand *in man’s place* and He shall be offered upon Mount Calvary *instead of man.*” Now, mark—

when you see Christ hurled upon His back upon the wooden Cross, you see the whole company of His elect there. And when you see the nails driven through His blessed hands and feet, it is the whole body of His Church who there, in their Substitute, are nailed to the tree. And now the soldiers lift the Cross and dash it down into the socket prepared for it. His bones are every one of them dislocated and His body is thus torn with agonies which cannot be described.

'Tis manhood suffering there. 'Tis the Church suffering there in the Substitute. And when Christ dies, you are to look upon His death not as His own dying, but as the dying of all those for whom He stood as the Scapegoat and the Substitute. It is true, Christ really died Himself. It is equally true that He did not die for Himself, but died as the Substitute, in the place of all Believers. When *you* die you will die for yourselves. When Christ died, He died for you, if you are a Believer in Him. When you pass through the gates of the grave, you go there solitary and alone. You are not the representative of a body of men—you pass through the gates of death as an individual—but, remember, when Christ went through the sufferings of death, He was the representative Head of all His people.

Understand, then, the sense in which Christ was made a sacrifice for sin. But here lies the glory of this matter. It was as a Substitute for sin that He did actually and literally suffer punishment for the sin of all His elect. When I say this, I am not to be understood as using any figure whatever, but as saying actually what I mean. Man for his sin was condemned to eternal fire. When God took Christ to be the Substitute, it is true, He did not send Christ into eternal fire, but He poured upon Him grief. Grief so desperate that it was a valid payment for even an eternity of fire.

Man was condemned to live forever in Hell. God did not send Christ forever into Hell. But He put on Christ punishment that was equivalent of that. Although He did not give Christ to drink the actual Hells of Believers, yet He gave him a *quid pro quo*—something that was equivalent thereunto. He took the cup of Christ's agony and He put in there—suffering, misery and anguish—such as only God can imagine or dream of, that was the exact equivalent for all the suffering, all the woe and all the eternal tortures of everyone that shall at last stand in Heaven, bought with the blood of Christ. And you say, “Did Christ drink it all to its dregs? Did He suffer it all?” Yes, my Brethren, He took the cup and—

**“At one triumphant draught of love,
He drank damnation dry.”**

He suffered all the horror of Hell—in one pelting shower of iron wrath it fell upon Him with hailstones bigger than a talent. And He stood until the black cloud had emptied itself completely. There was our debt, huge and

immense. He paid the utmost farthing of whatever His people owed. And now there is not so much as a farthing due to the justice of God in the way of punishment from any Believer. And though we owe God gratitude, though we owe much to His love, we owe *nothing* to His justice. For Christ, in that hour, took all our sins—past, present and to come and was punished for them all then and there—that we might never be punished—because He suffered in our place. Do you see, then, how it was that God the Father bruised Him? Unless He had so done, the agonies of Christ could not have been an equivalent for our sufferings. For Hell consists in the hiding of God’s face from sinners and if God had not hidden His face from Christ, Christ could not—I see not how He could—have endured any suffering that could have been accepted as an equivalent for the woes and agonies of His people.

Methinks I heard someone say, “Do you mean us to understand this atonement that you have now preached as being a literal fact?” I say, most solemnly I do. There are in the world many theories of atonement—but I cannot see any atonement in any one, except in this doctrine of Substitution. Many Divines say that Christ did something when He died that enabled God to be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly. What that something is they do not tell us. They believe in an atonement made for *everybody*. But then, their atonement is just this—they believe that Judas was atoned for just as much as Peter—they believe that the damned in Hell were as much an object of Jesus Christ’s satisfaction as the saved in Heaven. And though they do not say it in proper words, yet they must mean it—for it is a fair inference, that in the case of multitudes, Christ died in vain—for He died for them all, they say.

And yet so ineffectual was His dying for them, that though He died for them they are damned afterwards. Now, such an atonement I despise—I reject it. I may be called Antinomian or Calvinist for preaching a Limited Atonement. But I had rather believe a Limited Atonement that is efficacious for all men for whom it was intended, than an universal atonement that is not efficacious for anybody, except the will of man be joined with it. Why, my Brethren, if we were only so far atoned for by the death of Christ that anyone of us might afterwards save himself, Christ’s atonement were not worth a farthing, for there is no man of us can save himself—no, not under the Gospel. For if I am to be saved by faith, if that faith is to be my own act, unassisted by the Holy Spirit, I am as unable to save myself by faith as to save myself by good works.

And after all, though men call this a Limited Atonement, it is as effectual as their own fallacious and rotten redemptions can pretend to be. But do you know the limit of it? Christ has bought a “multitude that no man can number.” The limit of it is just this—He has died for *sinners*. Whoever

in this congregation inwardly and sorrowfully knows himself to be a sinner, Christ died for him. Whoever seeks Christ shall know Christ died for him. For our sense of need of Christ and our seeking after Christ are infallible *proofs* that Christ died for us. And mark, here is something substantial—the Arminian says Christ died for him. And then, poor man, he has but small consolation, for he says, “Ah, Christ died for me—that does not prove much. It only proves I may be saved if I mind what I am after. I may, perhaps, forget myself. I may run into sin and I may perish. Christ has done a good deal for me—but not quite enough—unless I do something.”

But the man who receives the Bible as it is, he says, “Christ died for me, then my eternal life is sure. I know,” says he, “that Christ cannot be punished in a man’s place and the man be punished afterwards. No,” says he, “I believe in a just God and if God is just, He will not punish Christ first and then punish men afterwards. No—my Savior died and now I am free from every demand of God’s vengeance and I can walk through this world secure. No thunderbolt can smite me and I can die absolutely certain that for me there is no flame of Hell and no pit. For Christ my Ransom suffered in my place, and therefore, am I delivered.” Oh, Glorious doctrine! I would wish to die preaching it! What better testimony can we bear to the love and faithfulness of God than the testimony of a Substitution eminently satisfactory for all them that believe on Christ?

I will here quote the testimony of that pre-eminently profound Divine, Dr. John Owen—“Redemption is the freeing of a man from misery by the intervention of a ransom. Now, when a ransom is paid for the liberty of a prisoner, does not justice demand that he should have and enjoy the liberty so purchased for him by a valuable consideration? If I should pay a thousand pounds for a man’s deliverance from bondage to him that detains him—who has power to set him free and is contented with the price I give—were it not injurious to me and the poor prisoner that his deliverance be not accomplished? Can it possibly be conceived that there should be a redemption of men and those men not redeemed? That a price should be paid and the purchase not consummated? Yet all this must be made true and innumerable other absurdities, if *universal redemption* be asserted.

“A price is paid for all, yet few delivered. The redemption of all consummated, yet few of them redeemed. The judge satisfied, the jailer conquered, and yet the prisoners enthralled! Doubtless, ‘universal,’ and ‘redemption,’ where the greatest part of men *perish*, are as irreconcilable as ‘Roman’ and ‘Catholic.’ If there be a universal redemption of all, then all men are redeemed. If they are redeemed, then are they delivered from all misery, virtually or actually, whereunto they were enthralled and that by the intervention of a ransom. Why, then, are not all saved? In a word—the

redemption wrought by Christ being the full deliverance of the persons redeemed from all misery, wherein they were enwrapped, by the price of His blood—it cannot possibly be conceived to be *universal* unless all are saved. So the opinion of the Universalists is unsuitable to redemption.”

I pause once more. For I hear some timid soul say—“But, Sir, I am afraid I am not elect and if so, Christ did not die for me.” Stop, Sir! Are you a sinner? Do you feel it? Has God the Holy Spirit made you feel that you are a lost sinner? Do you want salvation? If you do not want it, it is no hardship that it is not provided for you. But if you really feel that you want it, you are God’s elect. If you have a desire to be saved, a desire given you of the Holy Spirit, that desire is a token for good. If you have begun believingly to pray for salvation, you have therein a sure evidence that you are saved. Christ was punished for you. And if now you can say—

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

you may be as sure you are God’s elect as you are sure of your own existence. For this is the infallible proof of election—a sense of need and a thirst after Christ.

III. And now I have just to conclude by noticing the BLESSED EFFECTS of the Savior’s death. On this I shall be very brief. The *first* effect of the Savior’s death is, “He shall see His seed.” Men shall be saved by Christ. Men have offspring by life. Christ had an offspring by death. Men die and leave their children and they see not their seed. Christ lives and every day sees His seed brought into the unity of the faith. One effect of Christ’s death is the salvation of multitudes. Mark—not a chance salvation. When Christ died the angel did not say, as some have represented him, “Now by His death many may be saved.” The word of prophecy had quenched all “buts” and “perhaps.” “By His righteousness He *shall* justify many.” There was not so much as an atom of chance in the Savior’s death. Christ knew what He bought when He died. And what He bought He will have—that and no more and no less.

There is no effect of Christ’s death that is left to perhaps. “Shalls” and “wills” made the Covenant fast. Christ’s bloody death *shall* effect its solemn purpose. Every heir of grace *shall* meet around the Throne—

**“Shall bless the wonders of His grace,
And make His glories known.”**

The *second* effect of Christ’s death is, “He shall prolong His days.” Yes, bless His name, when He died He did not end His life. He could not long be held a prisoner in the tomb. The third morning came and the Conqueror, rising from His sleep, burst the iron bonds of death and came forth from His prison, no more to die. He waited His forty days and then with shouts of sacred song, He “led captivity captive and ascended up on

high.” “In that He died He died unto sin once. But in that He lives He lives unto God,” no more to die—

**“Now by His Father’s side He sits,
And there triumphant reigns,”**

the conqueror over death and Hell.

And, *last* of all, by Christ’s death the Father’s good pleasure was effected and prospered. God’s good pleasure is that this world shall one day be totally redeemed from sin. God’s good pleasure is that this poor planet, so long swathed in darkness, shall soon shine out in brightness like a newborn sun. Christ’s death has done it. The stream that flowed from His side on Calvary shall cleanse the world from all its blackness. That hour of midday darkness was the rising of a new sun of righteousness which shall never cease to shine upon the earth. Yes, the hour is coming when swords and spears shall be forgotten things—when the harness of war and the pageantry of pomp shall all be laid aside for the food of the worm or the contemplation of the curious.

The hour approaches when old Rome shall shake upon her seven hills. When Mohammed’s crescent shall wane to wax no more—when all the gods of the heathens shall lose their thrones and be cast out to the moles and to the bats. And then, from the equator to the poles Christ shall be honored. The Lord paramount of earth, from land to land, from the river even to the ends of the earth. One King shall reign, one shout shall be raised, Hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigns.” Then, my Brethren, shall it be seen what Christ’s death has accomplished. For “the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.” Amen. Amen. Amen.

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OUR EXPECTATION

NO. 2186

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

***“He shall see His seed.”
Isaiah 53:10.***

THE first thought suggested by this text is that Jesus is still alive, for to see anything is the act of a living person. *Our Lord Jesus died.* We know that He died. We are glad that there is overwhelming evidence that, not in appearance, but in fact, He died. His side was pierced. He was given up by the Roman authorities for burial—the imperial authorities were sure of His death. The soldier had made assurance doubly sure by piercing His side. His disciples buried Him. They would not have left Him in the cave if they had felt any doubt about His death. They went in the morning after the Sabbath to embalm Him. They were all persuaded that He had really died. Blessed be the dying Christ! Here our living hopes take their foundation. If He had not died, we must have died forever. The more assured we are of His death, the more assured we feel of the life of all who are in Him!

But, my Brothers and Sisters, He is not dead. Some years ago, someone, wishing to mock our holy faith, brought out a handbill which was plastered everywhere—“Can you trust in a dead man?” Our answer would have been, “No. Nobody can trust in a man who is dead.” But it was known by those who printed the bill that they were misrepresenting our faith. Jesus is no longer dead! He rose again the third day. We have sure and Infallible proofs of it. It is an historical fact, better proved than almost any other which is commonly received as historical, that He did really rise again from the grave. He arose no more to die. He has gone out of the land of tears and death. He has gone into the region of immortality. He sits at the right hand of God, even the Father, and He reigns there forever. We love Him that died, but we rejoice that He who died is not dead, but always lives to make intercession for us!

Dear children of God, do not be afraid that Christ’s work will break down because He is dead. *He lives to carry it on.* That which He purchased for us by His death, He lives to secure for us by His life. Do not let your faith be a sort of dead faith dealing with a dead man—let it be instinct with life, with warm blood in its veins. Go to your own Christ, your living

Christ—make Him your familiar Friend, the Acquaintance of your solitude, the Companion of your pilgrimage. Do not think that there is a great gulf between you, a living man, and Him. The shades of death do not divide you from Him. He lives, He feels, He sympathizes, He looks on, He is ready to help, He will help you even now. You have come in to the place where prayer is known to be made, burdened and troubled and you seek relief. Let the thought that your Lord is a living Friend ease you of your burden. He is still ready to be your strong Helper and to do for you what He did for needy ones in the days of His sojourn here below. I want even you, who do not know Him, to remember that He lives, that you may seek Him tonight—that before another sun shall rise you may find Him and, finding Him, may, yourselves, be found and saved. Do not try to live without the living, loving Friend of sinners! Seek His healing hand, then beg for His company. Get it. Keep it and you shall find that it makes life below like Heaven above! When you live with the living Christ, you will live, indeed! In Him is the Light of God and the Light of God is the life of men!

And now to the text itself, with brevity. I have to observe upon it, first, that *Christ's death produced a posterity*. "When you shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed." Evidently the death of Christ was fruitful of a seed for Him. Secondly, *that posterity remains*. Our Lord Jesus Christ does not look, today, on emptiness—He is not bereaved of His household, but He still sees His seed. And, thirdly and lastly, *that posterity is under His immediate eyes at all times*, for, "*He shall see His seed.*"

I. Well, first of all, THE DEATH OF CHRIST HAS PRODUCED A POSTERITY. We do not read, here, that the Lord Christ has followers. That would be true, but the text prefers to say He has a *seed*. We read, just now, that the Lord Jesus has disciples. That would be distinctly true, but the text does not so read. It says, "He shall see His seed." Why His seed? Why, because everyone who is a true follower or disciple of Christ has been born by a new birth from Him into the position of disciple. There is no knowing Christ except through the new birth. We are naturally sold under sin and we cannot discern the spiritual and real Christ until we have a spirit created within us by the new birth, of which He said, "You must be born again." This is the gate of entrance into discipleship! None can be written in the roll of followers of Christ unless they are also written in the register of the family of God—"this and that man was born there." Other men can get disciples for themselves by the means that are usual for such ends, but all the disciples of Christ are produced by miracle. They are all disciplined by being newly-created! Jesus, as He looks upon them all, can say, "Behold, I make all things new." They all come into the world, of which He is King, by being born into it. There is no other way into the first world but by birth—and there is no other way into the sec-

ond world, wherein dwells righteousness, but by birth—and that birth is strictly connected with the pangs of the Savior's passion, "when you shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed." See, then, the reason why we have here the remarkable expression—"His seed."

Learn from this that all who truly follow Christ and are saved by Him, *have His life in them*. The parent's life is in the child. From the parent that life has been received. It is Christ's life that is in every true Believer—"For you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God; when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you, also, appear with Him in glory." We have our natural life and this makes us men—we have our spiritual life and this makes us Christians. We take life from our parents—this links us with the first Adam. We have taken life from Christ—this joins us to the second Adam. Do not mistake me, that same life which abides in Christ, at the right hand of God, is that everlasting life which He has bestowed upon all those who put their trust in Him. That water springing up into everlasting life He gave us. He made it to be *in us* a well of water springing up. The first drops of that living spring, the whole outcome of the spring, and the spring itself, came from Him!

Let me put it to you, Beloved Hearers. Do you know anything about this new birth? Do you know anything about this Divine Life? There are multitudes of religious people, very religious people—but they are as dead as doornails! Multitudes of religious persons are like waxworks, well-proportioned and you might mistake them, by candlelight, for life. But in the Light of God you would soon discover that there is a mighty difference, for the best that human skill can do is a poor imitation of real life. You, dear Hearer, dressed in the garments of family religion and adorned with the jewels of moral virtue, may be nothing beyond "a child of nature finely dressed, but not the living child." God's living children may not seem to be quite so handsome, nor so charmingly arrayed as you are and, in their own esteem, they may not be worthy to consort with you, but there is a solemn difference between the living child and the dead child, however you may try to conceal it! Righteous men know themselves to be sinners—sinners believe themselves to be righteous men. There is more Truth of God in the fear of the first than there can be in the faith of the second, for the faith of the second is founded on lies. Beloved, we become, I say again, the followers of Christ by being made partakers of His life—and unless His life is in us, we may say what we will about Christ and profess what we like about following Him—but we are not in the secret! We are out of the spiritual world altogether—that world of which He is the Head, the Creator, the Lord. You see why the word, "seed," is used? We come to Him by birth—we are partakers of His life.

Furthermore, Believers in our Lord are said to be His seed because *they are like He*. I wish that I could say this with less need to qualify it, but the man who really believes in Jesus and in whom the diving life is strong and powerful, is like Jesus and especially like Jesus in this—that, as the Christ consecrated Himself wholly to God’s service and Glory, so has the Believer done. And as the Christ founded His successes on being dead and buried, surrendering honor, comfort and life, itself, for His work, so should the true Believer be willing to give up anything and everything, that He may achieve His life-purpose and bring glory to God.

“As He is, so are we in this world”—that is, we are bent upon the glory of God, filled with love to men and anxious for their salvation—that God may be glorified thereby. You know best, Brothers and Sisters, whether this is true of you. But if we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of His. If we are not like Christ, it is not possible that we are His seed, for the seed is like the parent. Surely, children are like their father—not all to the same degree—but still, there is the evidence of their sonship in their likeness to him from whom they came. Our Lord’s true people are like He, or they could not be styled, “His seed.” Alas, the old nature blots and blurs the resemblance! The stamp of the first Adam is not altogether removed, but it ought to grow fainter and fainter while the lines of the Divine portrait should grow stronger and clearer. Is this the experience of our life in Christ? I pray that it may be so. It should cause us great searching of heart if there is not in us an increasing likeness to our Lord.

There is also this to be said for those who are called His seed—that *they seek the same ends and expect to receive the same reward*. We are towards Christ, His seed, and thus we are heirs to all that He has—heirs to His business on earth, heirs to His estate in Heaven. We are to be witnesses to the Truth as Jesus was—and to go about doing good as He did—and to seek and save the lost after His example. This we must inherit, as a son follows his father’s business. All that Christ has, belongs to His seed. As a man hands down to his posterity, his possessions, Christ Jesus has made over to His people all that He is and all that He has—and all that He ever will be, that they may be with Him, behold His Glory—and shine with Him as the stars forever and ever! We are His seed in this respect—that He has taken us into His family and given us the family patrimony—and made us partakers of all things in Himself.

Now, Beloved, this is all through His *death*. We are made His seed through His *death*. Why principally through His death? Why, because it was by reason of His death for us that the Father could come and deal with us, and the Spirit could breathe upon us and new-create us! There was no dealing with us by a just God until the atoning Sacrifice had rolled away the stone that blocked the way, namely, the necessity that sin

should be punished. Christ, having died for us, we came into another relation to justice and it became possible for us to be regenerated and brought into the household of God. Beloved, I think that you know, in your own experience, that it was His death that really operated most upon you in the matter of your conversion. I hear a great talk about the example of Christ having great effect upon ungodly men, but I do not believe it and certainly have never seen it! It has great effect upon men when they are born again and are saved from the wrath to come—and are full of gratitude on this account—but *before* that happens, we have known men admire the conduct of Christ and even write books about the beauty of His Character, while, at the same time, they have denied His Godhead! Thus they have rejected Him in His essential Character and there has been no effect produced upon their conduct by their cold admiration of His life.

But when a man comes to see that He is pardoned and saved through the death of Jesus, He is moved to gratitude and then to love. “We love Him because He first loved us.” That love which He displayed in His death has touched the mainspring of our being and moved us with a passion to which we were strangers before. And, because of this, we hate the sins that once were sweet. And we turn with all our hearts to the obedience that once was so unpleasant. There is more effect in *faith* in the blood of Christ to change the human character than in every other consideration. The Cross once seen, sin is crucified! The passion of the Master once apprehended as being endured for us, we then feel that we are not our own, but are bought with a price. This perception of redeeming love, in the death of our Lord Jesus, makes all the difference—this prepares us for a higher and a better life than we have ever known before. It is His death that does it!

And now, Beloved, if by His death we have become His seed, (and I think I speak at this time to many who can truly say they hope that it is so with them), then let us consider the fact for a minute. We are His seed. They speak of the seed royal. What shall I say of the seed of Christ? Believer, you may be a poor person living in an obscure lane, but you are of the imperial house! You are ignorant and unlettered, it may be, and your name will never shine in the roll of science, but He who is the Divine Wisdom acknowledges you as one of His seed! It may be that you are sick—even now your head is aching, your heart is faint—you feel that, by-and-by, you will die. Ah, well, but you are of His seed who died and rose and is gone into Glory! You are of the seed of Him “who only has immortality.” You may put away your crowns, you kings and emperors—earth, yellow earth, hammered and decorated with other sparkling bits of soil—you may put them all away, as altogether outdone in value! We have crowns infi-

ninitely more precious and we belong to a royal house transcendently more glorious than any of yours!

But then it follows, if we are thus of a seed, that we ought to be united and love each other more and more. Christian people, you ought to have a clannish feeling! “Oh,” says one, “you mean that the Baptists ought to get together!” I do not mean anything of the kind! I mean that the seed of Christ should be of one heart and we ought to recognize that wherever the life and love of Jesus are to be found, there our love goes out! It is very delightful, at Christmas time, or perhaps at some other time in the year, for all the family to meet. And though your name may be, “Smith,” or, “Brown,” yet you feel there is some importance in your name when all your clan have met together. It may be a name that is very common, or very obscure, but, somehow, you feel quite great on that day when all the members of the family have joined to keep united holiday. Your love to one another gathers warmth as the glowing coals are drawn together.

So may it be in your heart towards all those that belong to Christ! You are of the blood royal of Heaven! You are neither a Guelph nor a Hohenzollern, but you are a Christian! And that is a greater name than all! He has a seed—even He whom, unseen, we, this night, adore. My inmost soul glories in the Head of my clan—in Him of the pierced hands and the nailed feet—who wears for His princely star the lance mark in His side! Oh, how blessedly bright is He! How transcendently glorious are the nail prints! We adore Him in the infinite majesty of His unutterable love! We are of His seed and so we are near akin to Him. Do not think that I am too familiar. I go not beyond the limit which this Word of God allows me, no, I have scarcely come up to the edge of it! We are truly of the seed of Jesus, even as the Jews are of the seed of Israel—not born after the flesh, for He had none born to Him in that way—but born after the Spirit, wherein His seed is as the stars of Heaven! We rejoice with exultation as we read the text, “He shall see His seed.”

Thus much on our first point.

II. Now, my second point is THAT POSTERITY OF HIS REMAINS. Our Lord always has a seed. That seems to me to be clear from the indefiniteness of the text. It does not say that He shall see His seed for so long and then no longer, but it stands as a prophecy fulfilled, always fulfilling and always to be fulfilled—“He shall see His seed.” Christ will always have a seed to see. His Church, then, will never die out while the world stands and, throughout eternity, that seed must still exist in the endless state, for world without end our Lord Jesus shall see His seed!

I notice that the word is in the plural—“He shall see His seeds,” as though some were truly His seed and yet, for a time, at least, differed from the rest. Our Lord said of those not yet converted, “Other sheep I have,

which are not of this fold: them also I must bring.” And again, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.” Christ will see generation after generation of those redeemed by His blood who shall be born into His family and shall call Him blessed! Instead of the fathers, shall be the children, whom He will make princes in all the earth! The Septuagint reads it, “He shall see a long-lived seed.” Though I do not think that the version is correct, still, it shows that it was thought and believed that the Messiah would have a perpetual seed. Certainly it is so. Beloved, if it had been possible to destroy the Church of God on earth, it would have been destroyed long ago! The malice of Hell has done all that it could do to destroy the seed of Christ—the seed that sprang from His death.

Standing in the Coliseum at Rome, I could not, as I looked around on the ruins of that vast house of sin, but praise God that the Church of God existed, though the Coliseum is in ruins! Anyone standing there, when the thousands upon thousands gloated their eyes with the sufferings of Christians, would have said, “Christianity will die out, but the Coliseum, so firmly built will stand to the end of time!” But lo, the Coliseum is a ruin and the Church of God more firm, more strong, more glorious than ever! Only read the story of the persecutions under Nero and under Diocletian, in the olden times, and you will wonder that Christianity survived the cruel blows. Every form of torture which devils could invent was inflicted upon Christian men and women! Not here and there, but *everywhere*, they were hunted down and persecuted. It makes one tremble with horror as he reads of women tossed on the horns of bulls, or set in red-hot iron chairs—and men smeared with honey to be stung to death by wasps, or dragged at the heels of wild horses, or exposed to savage beasts in the amphitheatre.

But I will say no more about it. The gallant vessel of the Church plowed the red waves of a crimson sea, her prow scarlet with gore, but the ship itself was the better for its washing and sailed all the more gallantly because of boisterous winds. As to our own country, read the story of persecutions here. You will have enough if you only read Foxe’s “Book of Martyrs.” I wish that every house had in it a large-typed copy of the “Book of Martyrs.” Well do I recollect, as a child, how many hours, how many days, I spent looking at the pictures in an old-fashioned “Book of Martyrs,” and wondering how the men of God suffered, as they did, so bravely. I remember how I used to turn to that boy of Brentford, who was first beaten with rods and afterwards tied to the stake, to cheerfully burn for Christ’s sake. I am reminded, by the effect which it had upon my mind, of what was said of a certain ancient Church in this city of London, which was greatly persecuted.

Many, many years ago, a number of persons were noticed to be going towards Smithfield, early one morning, and somebody said, "Where are you going?" "We are going to Smithfield." "What for?" "To see our pastor burnt." "Well, but what, in the name of goodness, do you want to see him burnt for? What can be the good of it?" They answered, "We go to see him burn that we may learn the way." Oh, but that was grand! "To learn the way!" Then the rank and file of the followers of Jesus learned the way to suffer and die as the leaders of the Church set the example! Yet the Church in England was not destroyed by persecution, but it became more mighty than ever because of the opposition of its foes!

Since then there have been laborious attempts to destroy the Church of Christ by error. One hundred years ago or so, throughout the most of our Dissenting Churches, a sort of Unitarianism was triumphant. The essential doctrines of the Gospel were omitted, the pith of it was taken away, the marrow was torn out of its bones. The Church of England was asleep, too, and everywhere it seemed as if there was a kind of orthodox heterodoxy that did not believe anything in particular, and did not hold that there was a doctrine worth anybody's living for or dying for—but that all religious teaching should be like a nose of wax—that you might shape whichever way you liked. It looked as if the living Church of God would be extinguished altogether. But it was not so, for God did but stamp His foot and, from all parts of the country, men like Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield came to the front—and hundreds of others, mighty men of valor—proclaimed the Gospel with unusual power! And away went the bats and the owls back to their proper dwelling place! The same mischievous experiment is being tried now, and there will be the same result, for the living Christ is still to the front. The King is not off the ground, yet! The battle will be won by His armies. Jehovah has declared His decree, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." Our Lord shall yet see His seed on the conquering hand.

Worldliness has gone a long way to destroy the Church of God. I judge it to be the worst cankerworm that assails us. Persons come into the Church with a profession which they never carry out. Have we not all around us persons who say that they are Christians and are not, but lie? And many who, we hope, are Christians, are but very poverty-stricken specimens of the race, with little love, little zeal, (indeed, they are afraid to be too zealous), little searching of the Word, little prayer, little consecration, little communion with God. They are enough to kill all hope of better things. The Lord have mercy upon His poor Church when she comes to be neither cold nor hot, so that He is ready to spue her out of His mouth! Yet, the lukewarm can still be heated! The cause is not dead! "He shall see His seed."

Take it as a standing miracle that there are *any* godly people on the face of the earth, for there would not be one were it not for the exertion of miraculous power! Christianity is not a natural growth—it is constantly a Divine creation. Christian life needs to daily have the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Church must perpetually receive fresh light and life from above, or else it would die—but still stands the promise, “He shall see His seed.” While sun and moon endure, there shall be a people who follow the Lamb! And even though they are so few that Elijah might say, “I, only I, am left, and they seek my life to take it away,” God will reserve to Himself *thousands* that have not bowed the knee to Baal!

III. And now I am to wind up with this third thought—THIS POSTERITY IS ALWAYS UNDER THE IMMEDIATE EYES OF CHRIST. “He shall see His seed.” Oh, I like this, “He shall see His seed”! He sees them when they are first born anew. I keep looking out from this pulpit for that small portion of them that may be born in this place—and there are many watchful Brothers and Sisters here who try to speak to all that come into the place in whom there are movings of the Spirit. If there is an anxious soul, they seek to find him out. *We* cannot see them all, but HE shall see His seed! Sometimes it is a question whether they are His seed or not—a very great question with themselves, but none with Him—He sees His seed! Some are seeking—they have hardly found. They are longing—they have scarcely realized the way of faith. Ah, well, He sees your first desires, your humble breathings, your lowly hopes, your trembling approaches. He sees you! There is not a child of His, born in any out-of-the-way place, but what He perceives him at once! He observes The first living cry, the first living tear. “He shall see His seed.” What a mercy to have such a Watcher! We poor earthly pastors are of small use, but this great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, with eyes that never miss a single new-born lamb of Grace—what a mercy to have such a Shepherd to look after the whole flock! “He shall see His seed.”

Yes, and ever afterward, wherever His seed may wander, He still sees them. Some of you, perhaps, have lived long in England, but you are contemplating going far away—to Australia or America. You wonder whether you will meet with any friend who will help you *spiritually*. Do not fear. “He shall see His seed.” “Rivers unknown to song are not unknown to God.” And if you should have to dwell quite alone in the bush, and have no Christian acquaintance, still go directly to the Son of God, for, “He shall see His seed.” The eyes of Christ are never off from the eye of faith. If you look to Him, you may rest well assured that He looks to you!

The beauty of it is that this look of Christ, whereby He sees His seed, is one of intense delight. I cannot preach upon that most precious topic, but I wish you to think it over—it is a Divine pleasure *to the Lord Jesus to look*

at you—it is promised Him as a *reward* for His death! Mother, you know, yourself, what a pleasure it has been for you to look at your daughter and watch her grow up. You would not like to tell her all you have thought of her—you have looked at her with intense delight. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ looks at *you* in just the same way! Love is blind, they say. Jesus is not blind and He sees in His people much more than they ever will see in themselves! He sees their hopes, their desires, their aspirations. And He often takes the will for the deed and marks that for a beauty which now may be half-developed and, therefore, not all we could wish it to be. It is, at present, the caricature of a virtue—but it is well meant and will come right. And the Lord sees it as it will be—and He rejoices in it! Oh, what blessed eyes those are of His that can spy out beauties which only He can see! Since He has created them and put them there, himself, He sees them! “He shall see His seed.” He suffered so much for our redemption that He must love us. We cost Him so much that He must delight in us—

**“The Son with joy looks down and sees
The purchase of His agonies.”**

“He shall see His seed.”

Brothers and Sisters, our Savior will always behold His redeemed ones! He will see all His seed to the last. When they come to the river which divides them from the celestial country, “He shall see His seed.” It may possibly be gloomy with some of you, but it is not often dark at death-time. Many of the Lord’s children have a fine candle to go to bed with. Even if they go to bed in the dark, they fall asleep the sooner. But in either case, their Lord will see *them* if they cannot see *Him*. When *you* can see nothing and the brain begins to reel—and thought and memory flee—He sees His seed!

But what a seed He will have to see in the morning! I am not yet an old man, as some suppose from the many years of my ministry, but I am often looking forward to that blessed morning when *all* the sacred seed shall meet around the Throne of God. I believe the Christ will come in to see all His beloved purchased ones and He will search to see whether we are all there. Then shall the sheep pass again under the hand of Him that counts them—and He will count them, for He knows whom He bought with His blood—and He will see that they are there in full tale. I think that I hear the reading of the register, the muster roll. Will you be there to answer to your name?

Dear Friends, all the Lord’s seed will be there—all that were born into His house with a new birth. They shall answer, “Yes, yes, yes, we are here! We are here!” Oh, but the joy we shall have in being there—the delight in beholding His face! Yet, if all our joys are put together, they will not equal the joy that *He* will have when He finds them all there for whom He shed

His blood—all whom the Father gave Him—all who gave themselves to Him—all who were born as His seed—not one lost! “Of all whom You have given Me, I have lost none.” Oh, the joy, the delight, of our Well-Beloved in that day! Then shall He see His seed!

And I believe that it will be a part of His Heaven for Him to look upon His redeemed. He is the Bridegroom, they make up the bride—and the bridegroom’s joy is not in seeing his bride for once on the wedding day, but he takes delight in her as long as they both live! A true husband and a true spouse are always lovers—they are always linked together by strong ties of affection. And it is so with that model Husband, the Lord Christ and His perfect Church above. He loves His people no less and He could not love them any more than when He died for them, and so, forever, “He shall see His seed.”

Thus have I talked with you in a very poor and feeble way, as far as my speech is concerned. But the doctrine is not feeble, the Gospel is not poor! O you that are the seed of Christ, go out and magnify Him by your lives! Be worthy of your high calling. Show the nobility of your pedigree by the magnanimity of your lives!

And you that are not among His seed, look where you are! What can you do? All that you can do will bring you no further—you *must* be born again—and this is the work of the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God works the new birth in His own way, but He works according to the Gospel. What is the Gospel? “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” I give you the Gospel without mutilating it, just as I get it in the Gospel by Mark, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Obey the precept and the promise is yours! God help you to believe in the Lord Jesus and so to have eternal life! The moment you believe in Jesus Christ you are born again. May He, by His Holy Spirit, seal the message with His blessing to everyone in this house, for His own name’s sake! Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 12:20-45.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—325, 332, 302.***

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“The pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hands.”
Isaiah 53:10.

You know that the whole verse says, “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief: when You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands.” The last words from our text—“The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands.”

It may be that the devil thought that the death of Christ was the defeat of Christ. If so, how greatly was he mistaken, for when Christ yielded up the ghost, He won an everlasting victory! Nor is He dead. Jesus, who died, has left the dead, no more to die. He died, but could not long be held a prisoner in the grave. Loosing His cerements, He came forth in life and immortality and now is the promise fulfilled, “He shall see His seed.” From the heights of Heaven He looks upon the multitude of His seed on earth. In eternal Glory He takes His solace in the society of His seed above. As many as the stars of Heaven, as countless as the dust of the summer are the seed of our Lord Jesus Christ! He indeed *lives* to see His seed—while others die and their children follow them, and they know not of their progeny—Jesus lives to see, one after another, all the souls that He has redeemed, born first to earth and then born a second time to Heaven.

“He shall prolong His days.” More than 1800 years have passed since He rose from the dead to His new life, yet He still lives. And His days, we know, shall be continued while this earth shall stand. Yes, and at the end, when He shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, He still shall prolong His days. “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.” *You shall endure, though the mountains perish and though the skies are rolled up like a vesture that is worn out.*

“He shall see His seed; He shall prolong His days.” Nor shall His life be a long one without usefulness. He shall have a work to do, Brothers and Sisters—He still has that work to do and oh, how well He does it! It is the joy of Heaven to know that Christ still stands hard and fast to His Covenant engagements! It is a comfort to us on earth that our Lord, for Zion’s sake, will not stay His hands nor hold His peace until He has perfected the Divine will and brought all the redeemed Home to Himself!

This evening I propose to speak of our Savior’s great work and of the way in which it prospers in His hands. Coming close to our text, we shall

first examine *this interesting description of Christ's work—it is “the pleasure of the Lord.”* We shall then notice *how, and in what respects, that work prospers in Christ's hands* and, having done so, we shall solicit a little consideration as to *our connection with that pleasure of God and that great “hand” and prosperity of which we here read.*

I. From our text it is very clear that THE WORK WHICH JESUS CHRIST HAS UNDERTAKEN IS THE FATHER'S GOOD PLEASURE. It is the work of bringing His elect out of darkness into light, from nature to Grace and from Grace to Glory. Why is this called “the Father's good pleasure”?

We answer, for many reasons. First of all, *because God's good pleasure is the source of all saving work.* For many centuries and ages, the source of the Nile has been a theme of wonder. Many travelers have spent their lives and lost them in endeavoring to track that mysterious stream to its first fount—at last the deed has been accomplished to the honor of our country. But the stream of Divine Grace, from where does *it* spring? In what mountain does *it* take its rise? Arminian theology, like all the ancient travelers, has failed to make the discovery. But the Gospel, as it is revealed in Scripture, plainly tells us that everything in salvation is according to the good pleasure of the Divine will. If you ask some good Brother who is rather muddled in his theology, “What is the cause why a man is saved?” He will say, perhaps, “Well, he is saved because he believes.” You will then ask, “But why does he believe?” He will say, “Because he hears the Gospel.” You will say, “Ah, but others hear it, too, and yet do not believe. How is it that his hearing produces faith in him?” He will say, “it is because he gives the more earnest heed.” You will say, “Yes, but why does he give the more earnest heed?” And there will come another question, and another, and another, and another, and you will keep on beating around the bush until, if you succeed in getting your Brother into a corner, he will say to you, “Well, I do not know, but I think it must be the Grace of God.” Happy is the man who begins *there*—who says, without going all the way round about to try and fight against a most precious and blessed Truth of God—“Yes, the good pleasure of God is that primeval source from where flows that first stream of electing love which goes widening on, forever manifesting itself more and more clearly—

**“Till, like a sea of Glory,
It spreads from pole to pole.”**

Grace is called, then, God's *pleasure*, because there it takes its source!

It is the pleasure of the Lord, in the next place, *because it is there it finds its direction given to it.* I see the spring welling up, but in which way shall it flow? To what man shall salvation come? There was even an opportunity for election in the choice of the *nation* to which it should come. What is there in this little island that we should be favored with the Gospel? Why might not New Zealand, at the other end of the world, have had it years gone by, and this nation been without it? Why should it come to the descendants of barbarians, while the inhabitants of Greece, who were cultured and enlightened when our ancestors were naked

savages, have *not* received the Light of the Gospel as we have? Why should it not have glanced on China, or found a congenial home amidst the islands of Japan? Why did it come here? It is the Father's good pleasure that gave the stream of Grace the direction toward this land! And in this land, why did Grace come to *me*? Why to *you*? Why to your brother yonder? Was it that we were better than others? In no wise! Did we seek it more than they? No, verily, for we resisted its influence and would have none of its blessings when it came to our door! Why, then, did it come to us? We know of no answer but this—the good pleasure of the Lord! I know no other reason why Abraham, an idolater, should be called out of the land of Ur. Or why, to take a later case, Saul of Tarsus should be taken out of the college of the Pharisees, while yet a persecutor, to be made an Apostle of Christ. If I am asked to solve the question why these men are made heirs of Heaven and distinguished possessors of Gospel Truth, I must reply, "It is the Father's good pleasure." I know no other answer. Therefore I think it is because God gives the direction and sends the Gospel where He wills, that it is called the good pleasure of the Lord.

Further, *the good pleasure of the Lord is the Gospel's vital force*. Upon what does the Gospel depend for its existence and its spread? Upon the zeal of its bishops? *Some* of them deny the Gospel! Upon the fervor of its ministers? *Some* of them are sound asleep! Upon the consistency and energy of its professors? *Some* of them are hypocrites, many of them lukewarm. Upon what, I say, does the cause of Christ depend? Upon the influence of kings and princes? The kings of this world know it not! Upon some alliance with the State—it scorns it! "*My Kingdom* is not of this world." Brothers and Sisters, the vital force which gives the Kingdom of God to the chosen flock is the Father's good pleasure! And it is because God wills it that daily His Church stands, grows and gathers strength. The world stands upon God's good pleasure—He may truly say, "I bear up the pillars thereof." He hangs the golden lamps of Heaven with their silver chains. He binds the Pleiades, or looses the bands of Orion. All things depend upon His will! Much more does His Church—His grandest, His most choice and peculiar work—depend, day by day, upon His good pleasure, His predestination, His purpose and His will for all its vital powers!

Nor is this all. *The consummation of the Gospel is the Father's good pleasure*. Not simply its origin, its direction, and its sustenance, but its consummation! Never—for we must now speak of God after the manner of men—never shall the eternal God rejoice more than when He sees all the company complete, the whole of His redeemed standing around His Throne. At the very prospect of it, He will break forth into singing! He will rest in His love. He will rejoice over them with singing and He will never rest until He shall behold this consummation. From North and South, from East and West, He will continue to send His heralds—nor will He pause in sending forth His ambassadors and in giving them His strength until He shall say, "Here they all are whom I gave to the Messiah—He has

lost none—the jewels of My crown *all* glitter here! The rubies of My breastplate are *all* here! ALL those choice things have been gathered by the hand of Jesus.”

And, dear Friends, I ought to add that *the great objective of all saving Grace is the Father's good pleasure*. What is God's objective in everything that He does? It must be an objective equal to Himself and there is no supposable objective equal to God, but God! God's Glory—that is the end and aim of all that He does. He saves His people. Why? For His great name's sake! It were unworthy of God to find a motive for His actions in anything lower than Himself. But there can be nothing but what is lower than God except God Himself! Therefore in His own heart He finds His motive, and in His own Glory we perceive the objective for which He acts. And you shall find, Beloved, in the whole of the great drama of the Fall and Redemption, which shall have been transacted when the curtain shall fall, that the result shall be, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!” from all worlds where creatures dwell, “unto that God who has manifested Himself to perfection in the wondrous work of Grace perfected in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ.” When I read these words and began to think of them for the first time, they ravished my heart with joy! To think that the salvation of sinners was God's pleasure—how sublime! I can imagine a physician taking pleasure in the healing of certain diseases and yet there must be something irksome about his constant toil. If the disease is something hideous, there must be an alloy mingled with the pleasure of his philanthropy. But, in God's case, it is all pleasure! We even read that “it pleased the Lord to bruise Him.” God takes Divine pleasure in everything which ministers to the salvation of His elect! Christian, do you not see the drift of this? If it is God's pleasure to save you, *who* shall destroy you? If it affords the Eternal delight to see *you* saved, *who* can stand in His way! *Who* shall match himself with Omnipotence? Will not God have His own way? Will He be thwarted in His pleasures? What? The Infinite God robbed of His desires, balked in His intentions, frustrated in His aims, foiled in His designs? It cannot—it must not be! If it is the Father's good pleasure to give *you* the Kingdom, “Fear not, little flock, be of good comfort,” the Kingdom of God you must and shall have!

Thus much, then, upon the first point—the work which Jesus Christ undertakes is the Lord's pleasure.

II. Now, secondly, THAT WORK GOES ON PROSPEROUSLY IN THE HANDS OF CHRIST since God has made His soul an offering for sin. Let me again give some subdivisions.

That work has prospered in Christ's hands thus far, that *all the great difficulties towards its accomplishment have already been surmounted*. That work prospers, indeed, which is complete as to its main point. In order that God's pleasure might be accomplished, it was necessary that the gulf should be filled between God and man. It is filled and there is fellowship this day between the almighty Father and His redeemed children! It was necessary that there should be a Sacrifice made to Divine Justice—the Sacrifice is made—Justice has received its full

demand and Mercy can now range without limit! It was necessary that the sinner should become clean—the bath is provided for his washing. It was necessary that he should be clothed with righteousness—the garment is woven from the top throughout without seam. In that gigantic enterprise which Jesus undertook—the forming of a great highway through the vast bogs and morasses of human guilt and inability, the constructing of that highway over the deep gulf of sin and across the very flames of Hell up to the Throne of God—all that, with His Cross in His hands, Jesus Christ has achieved and now, from the lowest depths to the loftiest heights, the way to Heaven has no break! It has been finished from the one end to the other—the great road that leads from the City of Destruction to the City of Refuge is finished by Jesus Christ! Child of God, see how this work prospers—you are ransomed, you are washed, you are clothed, you are adopted, you are accepted, you have been brought safely up to now—and all this has been accomplished through Jesus Christ who has made the way so clear that you need not miss it, but may rest assured that if you are trusting in Him, He has made your Heaven secure! In this respect the work prospers.

Further, the work prospers in Jesus Christ's hands *in the calling out of each of the chosen by Effectual and Sovereign Grace*. I was thinking, this afternoon, what a book of wonders will be opened at the Day of Judgment if the conversions of Believers shall all be published! In what strange ways have men been brought to Christ! A sailor, whose mother had been dead some 14 years, happened to have, one day, an idle hour in London, so he stepped into St. Paul's Cathedral. Well, there was not much there, I would think, except at the special services, that was likely ever to convert a soul. That way of singing out the prayers must always, one would think, rather excite a disgust at such religion than not. I wonder whether they suppose that when the penitent publican said, "God be merciful to me a sinner," he intoned it? It seems such a strange, strange thing. But it so happened, that day, a lesson was read in which these words occurred, "Pray without ceasing." Well, Jack went away and forgot St. Paul's, forgot the text, forgot the lessons and the prayers. Seven years afterwards, it was one bright moonlight night and he was walking up and down the deck on his watch and, all of a sudden something seemed to remind him of the words, "Pray without ceasing." And as he walked up and down, he thought, "Where did I hear these words—'Pray without ceasing?'" St. Paul's Cathedral came before his mind. "Pray without ceasing?" he said, "why, I have never *begun* to pray! I have lived 40 years and I have never prayed in all my life." It was the thin edge of the wedge. The consciousness that he did not pray led to his remembrance that there were many other things that he had left undone. He thought to himself, "I wish I had a Bible. I fear there is not one on board the ship." So he walked on his beat, up and down the deck, until he thought, "I wonder whether there is one in my chest? I should not wonder but what my old mother put one in there." It was over 21 years since the chest had been packed up—and at the bottom of it lay a Bible,

with a mother's prayer written in it. He took it out, and as he read it, God spoke the words of joy and peace to his soul and Jack became a believer in Christ! You would little have suspected that there was any connection between his idly strolling into St. Paul's Cathedral and his gloriously entering into the great Cathedral and Temple of the living God where they praise Him day and night!

Here is another case that shows how the Lord can make His work prosper in His hands. At Horselydown, a young man, in connection with a Religious Tract Society, went on board a vessel to distribute tracts. He saw nobody on board but one old gentleman who received his tracts very gladly and said he liked to see tracts and religious truth everywhere and anywhere. The tract distributor said he did not like to see the Bible used as it often was at the butter shops—he did not like to see pages of the Scriptures used to do up butter and cheese and such like things. "Well," said the old man, "I am of a different opinion from you upon that point. It is 12 years ago," he said, "and I was a wonderful smoker. One day I went into a shop—I was a godless, careless fellow—and bought an ounce of tobacco. It was done up in a leaf of the New Testament and, while I smoked my pipe, I looked at the leaf—and that was the means of making me a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so," he said, "I do not care what they do with it, as long as they put it where people may read it." This was a strange instance of one who would never have been caught by any ordinary means, but, just indulging in his own habit, God meets with him and the Word of God comes as truly from Heaven as though an angel had come into his chamber and delivered the message! Truly, the Lord's work does prosper in Christ's hands—by some means or other, He brings home His banished ones!

You may remember, perhaps, the case of good Mr. Wilberforce, one of the best, most excellent and noble of all modern Christians. When he was 23 years of age, Mr. Wilberforce was very far from being religious. He was said to be the crown and glory of Doncaster races! His affable manners and the geniality and humor of his bearing made him many friends among men of the world. He went to Nice on a journey and, while travelling there, he had for a companion, Dean Milner. They were talking about a certain clergyman in Yorkshire. Mr. Wilberforce said he thought that clergyman carried his religion a great deal too far. For his part, he considered religion a very good thing if it was kept within bounds, but he censured those who made too much of it. The dean said, "Mr. Wilberforce, if you read your Bible a little more, you would not think so, for I am persuaded there is no such thing as carrying religion too far." Mr. Wilberforce said, "Come, now, you and I are together—I will read the New Testament through if you will." "I will," said Milner, and being both of them excellent Greek scholars, during their journey they read the New Testament through in Greek. Happy, happy, happy thought for Wilberforce! He who was to speak with voice of thunder—

***"Thus says Britannia,
Empress of the sea,
Your chains are broken,
Africa, be free!"—***

must first hear the Scripture speak to him, and say, "Wilberforce, be free! Christ has borne your sins and carried all your sorrows. You are saved!"

There are, then, odd ways, strange ways, all sorts of ways, yet appropriate ways, fitting ways by which Jesus Christ brings His people to Himself! And as I look about, or read the narratives of their conversion, I can only say, "Truly, the pleasure of the Lord does prosper in His hands."

Furthermore, you may see the pleasure of the Lord prosper in the hands of the Savior *in the keeping and preserving of everyone that has been called*. If to call the saints is a miracle, to *keep* them is a long string of miracles! To what temptations and trials have not the saints been exposed? In the olden times, they suffered from fire, the rack, hot pincers, gloomy dungeons, the dropping of water—a most cruel form of punishment—drowning, death in all its shapes and yet they stood fast! They were more than conquerors through Him that loved them! In this age, the children of God have had to suffer laughter, scoffing, slander, obloquy, all sorts of shame—then the devil has thrown them over to the other side and tried them with prosperity, honor, esteem, worldly dignity—but still they have not yielded. They have been tried in the furnace of temporal distress, of bereavement, of mental despondency. They have been forsaken by friends and often been subjected to labor too severe for natural strength—but what can we say of the safeguard of all the people of God? Not *one* of them is lost! Christ has kept them—they have, all of them, been in the hollow of His hands. As the eagle covers her nest and flutters over her young, and will not suffer the spoiler to take away so much as one eaglet from the nest, even so has Christ always kept and preserved His people! And He holds them fast even to this day. In all this, we see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in His hands.

And dear Friends, no doubt we see this very conspicuously *in the constant growth of the Redeemer's Kingdom*. I sometimes feel sad to think how very slowly the work of conversion is going on, but, on the whole, this one thing we can say—if we do not make the progress we should like to make, at any rate we *are* on the progressing side! Idolatry advances not a step—it manifestly crumbles. Mohammedanism makes but few converts. If our religion does not increase as fast as we desire, it *does increase* and it seems to be, just now, in that state in which we are laying mines and trains of Heavenly gunpowder so that when the time comes and the match shall be struck, the work shall be done suddenly and the battlements of evil shall fall with a crash to the ground! But though I say we are not doing what we should, yet here and there we see fertile spots. The Master *is* causing His Kingdom to come! The seed does not rot under the clods. Heaven grants us revivals, seasons of refreshing in the Presence of the Lord. We believe that the good pleasure of the Lord is prospering in His hands.

And mark you, Brothers and Sisters, we shall see this, by-and-by, *when everyone among us shall begin to feel his own individual responsibility*. We shall, indeed, then see God's good pleasure prospering!

Suppose we were the House of Commons and some speaker should rise and tell us that there was a world of filth in the City of London, that the streets were very dirty, that people threw their rubbish out of the front door every morning and that the road was covered with all sorts of garbage? One wise member of Parliament would propose that there should be a troop of orderlies and another would say that there was a capital machine invented that ought to be tried. But what would you think if some common-place member of Parliament should rise and say, "Don't you think the quickest way to sweep all London is to make every householder sweep in front of his own door?" "Why," you would say, "that is the thing! It would take months to do it in any other way, but this would allow it to be done at once!" Now, when we have once got the Church of God to feel that every man is to sweep in front of his own door, that every convert is to try to make more converts, every Christian man and woman to bring others to Jesus—then I believe we shall see such a wonderful growth in the Church as we never anticipated! And then the pleasure of the Lord will prosper in Christ's hands.

Today there is too much leaving of the work to a few of us. I do not think that is right. I love to see our friends give something to the cause of God every week. I believe that principle of everyone giving something and everyone laying by in store every week will provide the Church with all the money that she needs. And then every Christian doing something and everyone doing it constantly out of zealous love to the Lord Jesus Christ—beyond a doubt we shall see a flood-tide of Grace and a beginning of the tides of Glory which are yet to cover the world! Only let us get the Church right and get the saints stirred up and we shall see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in Christ's hands!

Now mark these words, for they shall surely come true—the work is so sure to prosper in Christ's hands that *it will not fail in any one point*. All along the line of battle there shall be victory. In every point of His work there shall be success. The great Architect shall not bring out beauty here, and leave deformity there, but the plan shall be carried out without a single variance of the splendor of the first design. You shall see each stone, yes, the very stone that was chosen, dug out of the quarry, and put in its place. You shall see every sheep of Christ's fold brought safely to the pastures on the hilltops of Heaven. You shall see Christ defeated nowhere, but Conqueror everywhere! He shall stand, at the last, in the midst of all the troops that have fought by His side—they shall all wear the laurels of victory! They shall all be conquerors and more than conquerors, through Him that loved them! The cause of God is quite safe in the hands of Jesus—it *does* prosper, it *shall* prosper, it *must* prosper forever!

III. I conclude by asking, WHAT IS OUR RELATION TO ALL THIS?

Alas, *there are some who oppose the pleasure of God in the hands of Christ*. What we have to say to them is, "Mind what you are doing." He that falls upon this stone shall be broken, but upon whomever this stone shall fall, it shall grind him to powder! You who oppose Christ might as well lay yourselves down before the huge wheels of the car of Juggernaut

in order to stop it. As surely as you are a living man, if you stand in its way, Christ's chariot will go on and crush you to powder! If you choose to go down to the low-water mark on the shore and attempt to push back the sea, the sea will come rolling over you—and its great billows, as they swallow you up—shall seem to howl your funeral dirge. Had you not better change your side? Is it wise to oppose the Irresistible? Is it prudent to become an enemy of the Omnipotent? We sometimes hear a person say, "I cannot be on Christ's side, for how do I know that such-and-such a thing is true?" That excellent servant of God, Mr. John Williams, the martyr of Rumania, tells us that on one occasion, when a person of skeptical turn had been questioning about Scripture and so forth, he called together a number of the natives of the South Sea Islands. They stood around him, little knowing what was to be done. Mr. Williams put to them the question, "How do you know that the religion of Jesus comes from God?" They had never been asked that question—they had accepted it as Divine Truth without investigating evidences—but they were not long at a non-plus, for one of them very properly answered, "How can that religion be anything but Divine which has broken up an idolatry in which our fathers lived from time immemorial—which turned us from being cannibals to be Christians and which has brought us from the depths of vice of every kind to sit clothed, in our right mind, at the foot of the Cross?" And another of them said, "I know that this religion comes from God because I have hinges in my body. If I want to move my foot, there is a hinge to move it. If I want to move my hand, there is a hinge to move that—there is a hinge for everything. Now, the God who shows so much wisdom in the making of my body, shows just as much wisdom in the making of the Bible to suit my case. I conclude, therefore, it comes from the same place as my body did—that is, from my God." This was not bad reasoning for a South Sea Islander!

The best way, I believe, to get men to believe that the Bible is true is to get them to read the Bible. Someone asked me what book he should read in order to put an end to his skepticism. My answer was, "Read the Bible." But he said, "No, I need to know whether the Bible is true." I said, "Then, read the Bible. The Bible is its own interpreter and its own evidence. And, while you are reading it, may God breathe His Divine Spirit upon it and may the good pleasure of the Lord prosper in Christ's hands! Though you began by being an opposer, may you end by being a friend!" There was a club of gentlemen who used to meet together to discuss literary and scientific subjects and, after a long discussion, they had agreed to burn the Bible—and one of them was about to do it. They had selected about the boldest of them to do it, but, as he was going to take it to the fire, his hands trembled and, laying it down, he turned round and said, "I think we had better not burn this Book till we find a better one." And I think we may say of those who, in these days, are trying to kick against Scripture, they had better leave it alone until they find a better one, or else they will be something like Voltaire, who, when two of his disciples came to see him to talk about atheism, said, "Hush,

hold your tongue till my servant has gone out of the room. I do not want to have my throat cut.” This was a sure sign that he dared not talk about his own disbelief in the presence of those he thought not well instructed, lest they should by it become hardened to sin and made capable of any and every crime. Oh, you that oppose Jesus Christ, I wish you would just try Him! Take His Book and read it—search it through and through and if, after that, you still reject it, it is because you will do so, and on your head be your blood!

But there are some of us, thank God, who are on the side of God’s good pleasure—on the side that prospers in Christ’s hands! What, then, shall I say to such? Why, dear Friends, let everyone of us be doing something to make God’s pleasure prosper! Mothers, I have told you one story which should excite you to earnestness to do your children good. Let me tell you another. In the old war between England and America, there was a son who received a Bible from his mother. It was brought to him by a comrade who said to him, “Your mother told me to say that, out of love to her, she hoped you would learn one verse every day.” So he opened the Book and, with a laugh, he said, “Well, then, here goes.” Strangely enough, the verse that he opened was the only verse he ever learned at the Sunday school, for he had been a bad lad, and could not be made to learn. And he read it and it fetched tears in his eyes. It was this—“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” And the mother’s prayers were heard to a mother’s joy! Go on, mothers, keep praying for your children, that the pleasure of the Lord may prosper in Christ’s hands!

And you Sunday school teachers, be more earnest than ever in teaching your classes, but mind you keep to this point—the conversion of your children as children. Do not be content to sow seed that *may* spring up when they are fifty, but pray to God that it may spring up while they are as yet perhaps under fifteen! Pray, O you Sunday school teachers, that God’s pleasure may prosper in Christ’s hands with you! My dear Friends in the catechumen classes, go on laboring with greater earnestness than before. Young men who go forth from us to preach the Gospel, we look to you and we trust that God will be pleased to give you tongues of fire and hearts of flame. You that stand at the corners of the streets, you that labor anywhere, be more and more determined—let others loiter as they will—that you will labor with both your hands for Christ!

I am often afraid lest, with such a Church as this, we should not do what the Church at large and the world expect of us. We number 2300 or more in church fellowship [in the year 1863] but if you are all idle, or if the most of you are idle, it would be better for me to have had a hundred or so of earnest workers! There is nothing one dislikes so much as to be reputed to have what we have not. Why, I read, I should think, in a dozen newspapers, some time back, the information that I received from America £1,000 a year! I should like to see it! I said, as I read it, “If it had been a thousand pence, I might have been better content than to read it there and know it is not true.” But just that kind of feeling comes over

me when people say, "What a church there is there! What a deal they must do for Christ!" Ah, but if you do not, then what a poor man your minister is to have the reputation of being so rich in the efforts of his people, and then not to have them doing anything! Oh, don't do that! I know you may say I am not worthy of you, but I pray you, dear Friends, let us try to be worthy of one another! Let us fight side by side for Christ and for His cause! Let us proclaim Christ Crucified upon this neighborhood and let us make men know that there is a Church in London that does pray, that does wrestle with God, that does work, that does give to His cause and that will spend and be spent until the members are willing even to lay down their lives upon the altar of God for the promotion of His Kingdom!

May we all believe in Jesus and so be His friends! "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," He says. May we all be led to believe in Jesus and, believing, may we be enlisted on His side—and, being enlisted, may we fight even to the end and so be partakers of His great reward! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 17:1-10.**

Verse 1. *Then said He unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him through whom they come!* Since the Fall, we are so constituted that there are sure to be differences and disputes. It is a great mercy when men dwell together in unity. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is." It is a work of Divine Grace! But nature has its lusting and lusting leads to striving. And so, as long as the world is as it now is, "it is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him through whom they come." Let us not, therefore, be either offense givers or offense takers. When anyone offends us, let us say, "It is impossible but that offenses will come," and let us make light of it. And let us be very careful that we do not cause others to offend. As for him through whom the offense comes.

2. *It were better for him that a millstone were hung about his neck, and he be cast into the sea, than that he should offend. Or cause to offend—*

2-4. *One of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves: If your brother trespass against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he trespasses against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turns again to you, saying, I repent: you shall forgive him.* Perhaps someone remarks, "It looks as if he would do nothing else but keep on sinning and repenting." Well, suppose he does? That is precisely what you are doing, except that you do not go often to repent when you sin! So, possibly, the offender is rather better than you are, after all, and if God is gentle in His dealings with you, you may well be gentle in your dealings with your neighbor.

5. *And the Apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.* They seemed so struck with the severity of this command that they asked for more

faith that they might be able to obey it. And, dear Friends, that is always the best thing to do! Do not refuse obedience to the Lord's precept, but say, "Lord, increase my faith that I may be able to obey it. It can be done, or else You would not have given me the command. I cannot do it as I am without an increase of strength, therefore, as faith is the medium by which strength is received, Lord, increase my faith."

6. *And the Lord said, If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you might say unto this sycamore tree, Be you plucked up by the root, and be you planted in the sea; and it should obey you.* Meaning that anything and everything should be possible to our faith. But we need much more of it than the most of us have. Remember how holy Bernard said, "If you have a hard task, ask God to give you a hard resolution." The diamond is difficult to cut, but it can be cut if you can find something harder. So if there is a very difficult task set before us, if we get faith that is more than equal to it, it will be accomplished. "With God all things are possible," which means not only that God can do all things, but that we also can do all things when God is with us!

7, 8. *But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him, by-and-by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird yourself, and serve me till I have eaten and drunk; and afterward you shall eat and drink?* This world is the place of service—we are not to be expecting to have the festival here. The great supper comes at the end of the day. This is the time for us to serve, even as Jesus did when He was here—and we are to serve right on till the close of the day, even as Jesus did.

9. *Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not.* When the servant has done his day's work, his master does not say, "I am very grateful to you, John, for what you have done for me." He will have his wages—they will be his master's thanks.

10. *So likewise you, when you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.* "When you shall have done all those things which are commanded you." Ah, but we have not come *anywhere near* that yet! Even if we had, we would still be "unprofitable servants." In our mind we should expect no thanks from our Master, but we should sorrow that we had not served Him better.

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

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“You shall make His soul an offering for sin.”
Isaiah 53:10.

BOTH Jews and Gentiles knew pretty well what an offering for sin meant. The Gentiles had been in the habit of offering sacrifices. The Jews, however, had by far the clearer idea of it. And what was meant by a sin offering? Undoubtedly it was taken for granted by the offerer that without shedding blood there was no remission of sin. Conscious of guilt and anxious for pardon, he therefore brought a sacrifice, the blood of which should be poured out at the foot of the altar. He was persuaded that without sacrifice there was no satisfaction and without satisfaction there was no pardon.

Then the victim to be offered was, on all occasions, a spotless one. The most scrupulous care was taken that it should be altogether without blemish—for this idea was always connected with a sin offering—that it must be sinless in itself. And being without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, it was held to be a competent victim to take the offender's place. That done, the victim being selected, the offerer put his hand upon the sin offering—and this, indeed, was the essence of the whole transaction—putting his hand on the victim he confessed his sin and a transference took place, in type at least, from the offender to the victim. He did, as it were, put the sin from off his own shoulders on to those of the lamb, or the bullock, or the male goat which was now about to be slaughtered.

And, to complete the sin offering, the priest draws his knife and kills the victim which must be utterly consumed with fire. I say this was always the idea of a sin offering—that of a perfect victim, without offense on its own account—taking the place of the offender, the transference of the offender's sin to the victim, and the expiation in the person of the victim for the sin done.

Now, Jesus Christ has been made by God an offering for sin and O that tonight we may be able to do in reality what the Jew did in metaphor! May we put our hand upon the head of Christ Jesus and as we see Him offered up upon the Cross for guilty men, may we know that our sins are transferred to Him and may we be able to cry, in the ecstasy of faith, “Great God, I am clean! Through Jesus' blood I am clean!”

I. In trying, now, to expound the doctrine of Christ's being an offering for sin, we will begin by laying down one great axiom, which is, that SIN DESERVES AND DEMANDS PUNISHMENT. Certain Divines have objected to this. You are aware, I suppose, that there have been many theories of Atonement and every new or different theory involves a new or different theory of *sin*. There are some who say that there is no reason in sin itself why it should be punished, but that God punishes offenses for the sake of society at large. This is what is called the governmental theory—that it is necessary for the maintenance of good order that an offender should be punished—but that there is nothing in sin itself which absolutely requires a penalty.

Now we begin by opposing all this and asserting, and we believe we have God's warrant of it, that sin intrinsically and in itself demands and deserves the just anger of God and that that anger should be displayed in the form of a punishment. To establish this, let me appeal to the conscience—I will not say to the conscience of a man who has, by years of sin, dwindled it down to the very lowest degree. But let me appeal to the conscience of an awakened sinner, a sinner under the influence of the Holy Spirit. And are we ever in our right senses, Brothers and Sisters, till the Holy Spirit really brings us into them?

May it not be said of each of us as it was of the prodigal—"He came to himself"? Are we not beside ourselves till the Holy Spirit begins to enlighten us? Well, ask this man, who is now really in the possession of his true senses, whether he believes that sin deserves punishment and his answer will be quick, sharp and decisive—"Deserve it," says he, "yes, indeed. And the wonder is that I have not suffered it. Why, Sir, it seems a marvel to me that I am out of Hell and Wesley's hymn is often on my lips—

***'Tell it unto sinners, tell,
I am, I am out of Hell.'*** ”

"Yes, Sir," says such a sinner, "I feel that if God should strike me now, without hope or offer of mercy, to the lowest Hell, I should only have what I justly deserve. And I feel that if I am not punished for my sins, or if there is not some plan found by which my sin can be punished in another, I cannot understand how God can be Just at all! How shall He be the Judge of all the earth if He suffers offenses to go unpunished?" There has been a dispute whether men have any innate ideas, but surely this idea is in us as early as anything—that virtue deserves reward and sin deserves punishment. I think I might venture to assert that if you go to the most degraded race of men you would still find, at least, some traces of this—shall I call it tradition—or is it not a part of the natural light which never was altogether eclipsed in man?

Man may put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness, but this follows him as a dog at the heels of its master—a sense that virtue should be rewarded and that sin must be punished. You may stifle this voice, if you will, but sometimes you will hear it and terribly and decisively will it speak in your ears to say to you, “Yes, Man, God must punish you. The Judge of all the earth cannot suffer you to go Scot free.”

Add to this another matter, namely, that God has absolutely declared His displeasure against sin itself. There is a passage in Jeremiah, the forty-fourth chapter and the fourth verse, where He calls it, “That abominable thing which I hate.” And then, in Deuteronomy, the twenty-fifth chapter, at the sixteenth verse, He speaks of it as the thing which is an abomination to Him. It must be the Character of God that He has a desire to do towards His creatures that which is equitable. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” If there is anything in them which deserves reward, rest assured He will not rob them of it. And, on the other hand, He will do the right thing with those who have offended—if they deserve punishment—it is according to the Nature and Character of a just and holy God that punishment should be inflicted.

And we think there is nothing more clear in Scripture than the Truth that sin is in itself so detestable to God that He must and will put forth all the vigor of His tremendous strength to crush it and to make the offender feel that it is an evil and a bitter thing to offend against the Most High. Beware, you who forget God in this matter, lest He tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver you! Sin must be punished. The other idea that sin is only to be punished for the sake of the community involves injustice. If I am to be damned for the sake of other people, I object to it. No, Sir, if I am to be punished, Justice says, at any rate, that it shall be for my *own* sins. But if I am to be eternally a castaway from God’s Presence merely as a sort of trick of Government to maintain the dignity of His Law, I cannot understand the justice of this.

If I am to be cast into Hell merely that I am to teach to others the tremendousness of the Divine holiness, I shall say there is no justice in this. But if my sin intrinsically and of itself deserves the wrath of God and I am sent to perdition as the result of this fact, I close my lips and have nothing to say. I am speechless. Conscience binds my tongue. But if I am told that I am only sent there as a part of a scheme of moral government, and that I am sent into torment to impress others with a sense of right, I ask that someone else should have the place of preacher to the people and that I may be one of those whose felicity it shall be to be preached *to*—for I see no reason in justice why I should be selected as the victim.

Really, when men run away from the simplicities of the Gospel in order to make Jehovah more kind, it is strange how unjust and unkind they make Him! Sinner, God will never destroy you merely to maintain His government, or for the good of others. If you are destroyed, it shall be because you would not come to Him that you might have life! Because you would rebel against Him! Because sin from stern necessity did, as it were, compel the attribute of Divine Justice to kindle into vengeance and to drive you from His Presence forever. Sin must be punished.

The reverse of this doctrine—that sin *demand*s punishment—may be used to prove it, for it is highly immoral, dangerous, and opens the flood-gates of licentiousness to teach that sin can go unpunished. O Sirs, it is contrary to fact. Look! O, if your eyes could see, tonight, the terrible justice of God which is being executed now—if these ears could but hear it—if you could be appalled for a moment with—

***“The sullen groans and hollow moans,
And shrieks of tortured ghosts,”***

you would soon perceive that God is punishing sin! And if sin deserves *not* to be punished, what is Hell but injustice on a monstrous scale? What is it but an infinite outrage against everything which is honest and right, if these creatures are punished for anything short of their own deeds? Go and preach this in Hell and you will have quenched the fire which is forever to burn and the worm of conscience will die.

Tell them in Hell that they are not punished for *sin* and you have taken away the very sting of their punishment! And then come to earth and go, like Jonah went—though with another message than Jonah carried—through the highways and the broadways, the streets and thoroughfares of this exceeding great city and proclaim that sin is not to be punished for its own intrinsic desert and baseness! But if you expect your prophecy to be believed, enlarge the number of your jails and seek for fresh fields for transportation in the interests of society, for if any doctrine can breed villains this will. Say that sin is not to be punished and you have unhinged government—you have plucked up the very gate of our common prosperity. You will have been another Samson to another Gaza and we shall soon have to rue the day.

But, Sirs, I need not stop to prove it. It is written clearly upon the consciousness of each man and upon the conscience of every one of us, that sin must be punished. Here are you and I tonight brought into this dilemma. We have sinned. We all, like sheep, have gone astray and we must be punished for it. It is impossible, absolutely, that sin can be forgiven without a sacrifice! God must be just if Heaven falls. If earth should pass away and every creature should be lost, the justice of God must stand—it

cannot by any possibility be suffered to be impugned. Let this, then, be fully established in our minds.

You need not to be told, as for the first time, that God in His infinite mercy has devised a way by which Justice can be satisfied and yet Mercy can be triumphant. Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten of the Father, took upon Himself the form of man and offered unto Divine Justice that which was accepted as an equivalent for the punishment due to all His people.

II. Now, the second matter that I wish to bring under your notice is this, THAT THE PROVISION AND ACCEPTANCE OF A SUBSTITUTE FOR SINNERS IS AN ACT OF DIVINE GRACE. It is no act of Grace for a person to accept a pecuniary debt on my behalf of another person. If I owe a man twenty pounds, it is no matter to him, whatever, who shall pay the twenty pounds so long as it is duly paid. You know that you could legally and at once demand a receipt and a release from anyone who is your creditor so long as his debt is discharged, though it is discharged by another and not by you.

It is so in pecuniary matters, but it is not so in *penal* matters. If a man is condemned to be imprisoned, there is no law, there is no justice, which can compel the lawgiver to accept a substitute for him. If the sovereign should permit another to suffer in his place it must be the sovereign's own act and deed. He must use his own discretion as to whether he will accept the substitute or not, and if he does so, it is an act of charity. In God's case, if He had said in the Infinite Sovereignty of His absolute will, "I will have no substitute, but each man shall suffer for himself. He who sins shall die," none could have murmured.

It was Grace and only Grace which led the Divine mind to say, "I will accept a Substitute. There shall be a vicarious suffering and My vengeance shall be content and My mercy shall be gratified." Now, dear Friends, this Grace of God is yet further magnified, not only in the allowance of the *principle* of substitution, but in the *providing* of such a Substitute as Christ—on Christ's part that He should give up Himself, the Prince of Life, to die. The King of Glory to be despised and rejected of men! The Lord of angels to be a Servant of servants, and the Ancient of Days to become an Infant of a span long.

Think of the distance—

***"From the highest Throne in Glory,
To the Cross of deepest woe,"***

and consider the unexampled love which shines in Christ's gift of Himself! But the Father gives the Son. "God so loved the world that He gave His Only-Begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." To give your wealth is something, if you make yourself poor—but to give your *child* is something more. When the patriot

mother tears her son from her bosom and cries, "Go, my first-born, to your country's wars. Go and fight until your country's flag is safe and the hearths and homes of your native land are secure," there is something in it, for she can look forward to the bloody spectacle of her son's mangled body and yet love her country more than her own child! Here is heroism, indeed.

But God spared not His own Son, His Only-Begotten Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all. "God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." I implore you, do not look upon the Sacrifice of Christ as an act of mere vengeance on the Father's part! Never imagine, oh, never indulge the idea that Jesus died to make the Father complacent towards us! Oh, no, dear Friends, Jesus' death is the effect of overwhelming and infinite *love* on the Father's part. And every blow which wounds, every infliction which occasions sorrow, and every pang which rends His heart, speaks of the Father's love as much as the joy—the everlasting triumph which now surrounds His head.

Let us add, however, to this, that although Jesus Christ's dying as a Substitute does give to Him lawful right to all promised privileges and does make Him, as the Covenant Head of His people, a claimant of the Divine Mercy, yet it does not render any of the gifts which we receive from God, any the less *gifts* from God. Christ has died, but still, everything that we receive comes to us entirely as a gratuitous outflow of God's great heart of love.

Never think you have any claim to anything because Christ purchased it. If you use the word *claim* at all, let it always be in so humble and modified a sense that you understand that you are still receiving not of *debt*, but of Grace. Look upon the whole transaction of a Substitute and of Christ becoming the Second Adam as being a matter of pure, rich, free, Sovereign Grace and never indulge the atrocious thought, I pray you, that there was Justice and Justice only, here. Let us, rather, magnify the love and pity of God in that He did devise and accomplish the great plan of salvation by an atoning Sacrifice.

III. But now, to go a step further and with as much brevity as possible. The Lord established the principle of Substitution, having provided a Substitute and having through Him bestowed upon us gratuitously innumerable mercies. Let us observe THAT JESUS IS THE MOST FITTING PERSON TO BE A SUBSTITUTE, AND THAT HIS WORK IS THE MOST FITTING WORK TO BE A SATISFACTION. Let every sinner here, who desires something stable to fix his faith upon, listen to these simple Truths of God which I am trying to put as plainly as possible.

You do understand me, I trust, that God must punish sin. That He must punish *you* for sin unless someone else will suffer in your place.

That Jesus Christ is the Person who did suffer in the place of all those who ever have believed on Him, who do believe in Him, or ever shall believe in Him—making for those who believe on Him a complete Atonement by His Substitution in their place.

Now we say that Christ was the best Person to be a Substitute, for just consider what sort of a mediator was needed. Most absolutely he must be one who had no debt of his own. If Christ had been at all under the Law naturally. If it had been His duty to do what it is our duty to do, it is plain He could only have lived for Himself. And if He had any sin of His own, He could only have died for Himself, seeing His obligations to do and to suffer would have been His just due to the righteousness and the vengeance of God.

But on Christ's part there was no natural necessity for obedience, much less for obedience unto death. Who shall venture to say that the Divine Lord amidst the glories of Heaven owed to His Father anything? Who shall say it was due to the Divine Father that Christ should be nailed to the accursed tree, to suffer, bleed and die—and then be cast into the grave? None can dare to say such a thing! He is Himself perfectly free, and therefore can He undertake for others. One man who is drawn for the militia cannot be a substitute for another person so drawn, because he owes for himself his own personal service.

I must, if I would escape and would procure a substitute, find a man who is not drawn, and who is, therefore exempt. Such is Jesus Christ. He is perfectly exempt from service and therefore can volunteer to undertake it for our sake. He is the right Person. There was needed, also, one of the same nature with us. Such is Jesus Christ. For this purpose He became Man, of the substance of His mother, very Man, such a man as any of us. Handle Him and see if He is not flesh and bones. Look at Him and mark if He is not Man in soul as well as in body. He hungers! He thirsts! He fears! He weeps! He rejoices! He loves! He dies!

Made in all points and like unto us, being a Man and standing exactly in a man's place, becoming a real Adam, as true an Adam as was the first Adam, standing quite in the first Adam's place, He is a fit Person to become a Substitute for us. But please observe, (see if you cannot throw your grappling hooks upon this), the dignity of His Sacred Person made Him the most proper Person for a Substitute. A mere man could at most only be a substitute for one other man. Crush him as you will and make him feel in his life every pang which flesh is heir to, but he can only suffer what *one* man would have suffered. He could not, I will venture to say, even then have suffered an equivalent for that eternal misery which the ungodly deserve.

And if he were a mere man, he must suffer precisely the same. A difference may be made in the penalty, when there is a difference in the person; but if the person is the same, the penalty must be precisely and exactly the same in degree and in quality. But the dignity of the Son of God, the dignity of His Nature, changes the whole matter. A God bowing His head and suffering and dying in the Person of manhood puts such a singular efficacy into every groan and every pang, that it needs not that His pangs should be eternal, or that He should die a second death. Remember that in pecuniary matters you must give a quid pro quo—but that in matters of penal justice no such thing is demanded. The dignity of the Person adds a special force to the Substitution and thus one bleeding Savior can make Atonement for millions of sinful men and women. The Captain of our salvation can bring multitudes unto Glory!

It needs one other condition to be fulfilled. The person so free from personal service and so truly in our nature and yet so exalted in person, should also be accepted and ordained of God. Our text gives this a full solution in that it says, “He shall make His soul an offering for sin.” Christ did not make Himself a sin offering without a warrant from the Most High—God made Him so. “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” It was the sovereign decree of Heaven which constituted Christ the great Substitute for His people. No man takes this office upon himself. Even the Son of God stoops not to this burden uncalled.

He was chosen as the Covenant Head in election. He was ordained in the Divine decree to stand for His people. God the Father cannot refuse the Sacrifice which He has Himself appointed. “My son,” said good old Abraham, “God shall provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering.” He has done so in the Savior. And what God provides, God must, and will accept. I wish tonight that I had power to deal with this doctrine as I would. Poor trembling Sinner, look up a moment! Do you see Him there—Him whom God has set forth? Do you see Him in proper flesh and blood fastened to that tree?

See how the cruel iron drags through His tender hands! Mark how the rough nails are making the blood flow profusely from His feet! See how fever parches His tongue and dries His whole body like a potsherd! Do you hear the cry of His spirit which is suffering more than His body suffers—“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” This is none other than God’s Only-Begotten Son! This is He who made the worlds! This is the express image of His Father’s Person, the brightness of Jehovah’s Glory! What do you think, Man? Is there not enough there to satisfy God?

Truly it *has* satisfied God—is there not enough there to satisfy *you*? Cannot your conscience rest on that? If God’s appointed Christ could suffer in your place, is it not enough? What more can Justice ask? Will you

now trust Christ with your soul? Come now, Sir! Will you now fall flat at the foot of the Cross and rest your soul's eternal destiny in the pierced hands of Jesus of Nazareth? If you will, then God has made Him to be a sin offering for you! But if you will not, beware, lest He whom you would not have to be your Savior should become your Judge and say, "Depart you cursed one, into everlasting fire in Hell!"

IV. We come now to our fourth remark—THAT CHRIST'S WORK AND THE EFFECTS OF THAT WORK ARE NOW COMPLETE. Christ becomes a Substitute for us. We have seen how fit and proper a Person He was to be such. We hinted that from the dignity of His Person the pains He suffered were a good and sufficient equivalent for our own suffering on account of sin.

But now the joyous Truth of God comes up that Christ's work is finished! Christ has made an Atonement so complete that He never need suffer again! No more drops of blood, no more pangs of heart, no more bitterness and darkness with exceeding heaviness even unto death are needed—

"It is done, the great transaction's done."

The death-knell of the penalty rings in the dying words of the Savior, "It is finished." Do you ask for a proof of this? Remember that Jesus Christ rose again from the dead. If He had not completed His work of penalty-suffering He would have been left in the tomb till now. Our preaching would have been in vain and your faith would have been in vain—you and I would have been yet in your sins.

But Jesus rose! God's sheriff's officer let Him out of "durance vile" because the account had been discharged and God's great Court of King's Bench sent down the decree to let the Captive go free. More than that! Christ has ascended up on high. Do you think He would have returned there with unatoned sin red upon His garments? Do you suppose He would have ascended to the rest and to the reward of an accomplished work? What? Sit at His Father's right hand to be crowned for doing *nothing*? And rest until His adversaries are made His footstool when He has not performed His Father's will? Absurd! Impossible!

His ascension in stately pomp, amidst the acclamations of angels, to the enjoyment of His Father's continued smile is the sure proof that the work is complete. Complete it is, dear Brothers and Sisters, not only in itself, but, as I said, in its effects. That is to say, that there is now complete pardon for every soul which believes in Christ! *You need not do* anything to make the Atonement of Christ sufficient to pardon you! It wants no eking out. It is not as if Christ had put so much into the scale and it was quivering in the balance—your sins, for all their gravity, utterly ceased their pressure through the tremendous weight of His Atonement.

He has outweighed the penalty and given double for all your sins. Pardon, full and free, is now presented in the name of Jesus, proclaimed to every creature under Heaven, for sins past, for sins present and for sins to come! For blasphemies and murders, for drunkenness and whoredom—for all manner of sin under Heaven. Jesus Christ has ascended up on high and He is exalted that He may give repentance and remission of sin. You have no need of shillings to pay the priests. Nor is baptismal water wanted to effect the pardon. There is no *willing, doing, being, or suffering* of yours required to complete the task.

The blood has filled the fountain full—you have but to wash and be clean—and your sins shall be gone forever. Justification, too, is finished. You know the difference. Pardon takes away our filth, but then it leaves us naked. Justification put a royal robe upon us. Now no rags of yours are wanted—not a stitch of yours is needed to perfect what Christ has done! He whom God the Father has accepted as a Sin Offering has perfected forever those who are set apart. You are complete in Christ. No tears of yours, no penance, no personal mortifications—no, no good works of yours—are wanted to make yourself complete and perfect. Take it as it is!

O, Sirs, may you have Grace to take it as it is freely presented to you in the Gospel. “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” “There is, therefore, now, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” Trust Christ! Implicitly trust Christ, and all that He did shall cover you, while all that He suffered shall cleanse you. Remember, too, that acceptance is finished. There are the Father’s arms, and here are you—a filthy sinner. I do not know you, but it may be you have trod the pavements, or you have gone farther than that and added drunkenness to shame. Perhaps you have gone to the lowest vice, perhaps to robbery. Who knows what manner of person may step into this place?

But the great arms of the Eternal Father are ready to save you as you are because the great work of Christ has effected all that is wanted before God for the acceptance of the vilest sinner. How is it that the Father can embrace the prodigal? Why, he is fresh from the swine trough! Look at him! Look at his rags—how foul they are! We would not touch them with a pair of tongs! Take them to the fire and burn the filth! Take *him* to the bath and wash him! Those lips are not fit to kiss—those filthy lips cannot be permitted to touch that holy cheek of the glorious Father!

Ah, but it is not so. While he was yet a great way off, his Father saw him—rags and poverty, and sin and filth, and all—and He did not wait till his son was clean—but ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him, just as he was! How could he do that? Why, the parable does not tell us for it did not run on with the subject to introduce the Atonement. But this explains it—when God accepts a sinner, He is, in fact, only accepting Christ! He

looks into the sinner's eyes and He sees His own dear Son's image there and He takes the sinner in.

As we have heard of a good woman, who whenever a poor sailor came to her door, whoever he might be, would always make him welcome because, she said, "I think I see my own dear son who has been these many years away and I have never heard from him. But whenever I see a sailor, I think of him and treat the stranger kindly for my son's sake." So, my God—when He sees a sinner longing for pardon and desirous of being accepted—He thinks He sees His Son in him and accepts him for His Son's sake.

Do not imagine that we preach a Gospel in this place for respectable, godly people. No, we preach a Gospel here for SINNERS. I heard the other day from one who told me that he believed we were saved by being perfect—that when we committed sin we at once fall out of God's mercy. Well now, supposing that were true! It would not be worth making a large splutter about. It would not be worth angels singing, "Glory to God in the highest," about it, I should think. Any fool might know that God would accept a *perfect* man. But this is the thing of marvel for which Heaven and earth shall ring with the praises of the Mediator—that Jesus Christ died for the *ungodly*! That Jesus Christ gave Himself for their *sin*—not for their righteousness—not for their good deeds!

If He had looked to all eternity, He could not have seen anything in us worthy of so great a suffering as that which He endured. But He did it for charity's sake, for love's sake. And now, in His name—O that I could do it with His voice and with His love, and with His fervor—I do beseech you to lay hold upon Him! No matter who you may be, I will not exclude you from the invitation. Have you piled your sins together till they seem to provoke Heaven? Do your sins touch the clouds? Come, and welcome! God has provided a Sin Offering for you!

Has man cast you out? Say, poor Woman, does the dreary river seem to invite you to the fatal plunge? *God* has not cast you out! O you who feel in your own body the effect of your sin till you are loathing yourself and wishing you had never been born—perhaps you say, like John Bunyan, "O that I had been a frog, or a toad, or a snake, sooner than have been a man, to have fallen into such sin and to have become so foul!" Have courage, Sinner! Have courage! "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him. And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

Do not doubt this message! God has sent it to you. Do not reject it! You will reject your own life if you do. Turn at His rebuke! It is a loving voice which speaks to you and that would speak, perhaps, better and more forcibly if it were not choked with love. I do implore you, Sinner, come to

Jesus! If you are damned it is not for want of invitation! If you will perish, it is not for want of earnest pleading with you! I tell you, Man, there is *nothing* of your own needed! All this is found in the Sin Offering—for *you* need not find it. There is no merit of *yours* needed. There is merit enough in *Christ*!

Is it not the old proverb that you are not to take coals to Newcastle? Do not take anything to Christ! Come as you are—just as you are. Tarry not till you go out of this House! The Lord enable you to believe in Jesus NOW, to take Him NOW as a complete and finished salvation for you—though you may be the most sunken and abandoned and hopeless of all characters. Why did God provide a Sin Offering but for sinners? He could not have wanted to provide it if there was no necessity. You have a great necessity!

You have, shall I say, compelled Him to it. Your sins have nailed Christ's hands to the Cross. Your sins have pierced His heart and His heart is not pierced in vain—nor are those hands nailed there for nothing! Christ will have you, Sinner! Christ will have you! There are some of God's elect here and He will have you. You shall not stand against Him. Almighty Love will have you! He has determined that you shall not do what you have vowed. Your league with Hell is broken tonight and your covenant with death is disannulled. The prey shall not be taken from the Mighty, the lawful captive shall be delivered!

The Lord will yet fetch you up from the depths of the sea. Oh, what a debtor to Grace will you be! Be a debtor to that Grace tonight! You who are over head and ears in debt, purge yourself by a simple act of trusting in Jesus and you are saved! Pray, you who know how to pray, that this message may be made effective in the hands of God. And you who have never prayed before, God help you to pray now! May He now be found of them who sought not for Him and He shall have the Glory, world without end. Amen. Amen!

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“He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many.”
Isaiah 53:11.

IN these words we have God the Father speaking concerning His Son and declaring that since He had endured a soul travail, He would guarantee to Him a satisfactory reward. How delightful it is to observe the co-working of the various Persons of the sacred Trinity in the matter of salvation! It was so in the Creation. It was the Father who said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. But we read concerning the Eternal Son that, “without Him was not anything made which was made,” and we find express mention of the Spirit of God, who moved upon the face of the waters and created order out of chaos. Father, Son and Spirit worked together to make the world and, in the making of man, we all remember that gracious word, “Let Us make man in Our own image with Our own likeness.” Even so is it in our salvation. The Father has chosen a people unto Himself. These people He has given unto the Son. To these people He has also given the Only-Begotten to be their salvation. It is through the abounding Grace of the Father that salvation comes to the chosen, but only through Jesus Christ, for everywhere He is the Savior. We are redeemed by His precious blood. He it is that will bring the many sons unto glory and is the Author and the Finisher of their faith. Yet not without the Holy Spirit, for the blessed Spirit graciously condescends to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us. What God ordains, the Spirit executes. What the Son purchases, the Holy Spirit bestows. 'Tis He who makes us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light—and when we are so meet—we are introduced to the inheritance by the hand of the glorious Son, and are led up to the Throne of the Eternal Father. Christians, live much in contemplation upon the God of your salvation! Magnify Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Shun that ministry which dishonors either of these blessed Persons and seek to be fully built up and instructed in the Gospel teaching which glorifies Father, Son and Spirit in Divine equality, and leads your own hearts into “the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.”

With that by way of preface, we shall now come to the text at once, taking the words as well as the sense of them.

The Father says of the Son that, “He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.” The first point of consideration, very briefly, is—

I. OUR LORD’S PAINS AND SUFFERINGS, BY WHICH HE MADE AN ATONEMENT FOR OUR SINS.

These are described in the text as “the travail of His soul.” You know the meaning of the word, “travail.” I will not explain it—I will the rather do with it as the painter who drew the picture of Agamemnon and the sacrifice of his daughter, Iphigenia. He painted Agamemnon, but he threw a veil over his face, for he felt he could not express the grief that was in the father’s face and, therefore, the face was delicately concealed. Let us do the same. It may suffice for us to say that whenever in Holy Scripture a forcible word is needed to express fear, overwhelming pain, distraction and confusion, the word, “travail,” is used. For instance, when the kings looked upon Mount Zion and saw how safe it was from their attacks, “fear took hold upon them, there, and pain as of a woman in travail.” And in the description which is given by the Prophet of the men of Babylon when their city was overthrown—he represents them as being “full of pain as if they were in travail.” It is an unutterable amount of inward grief and trouble and a swelling of the inner man until it seems as if the whole fabric of nature, being delicately convulsed, would be utterly broken up to its ruin.

Observe the text says, “The travail of His soul.” We are not to depreciate the bodily sufferings of Christ, but still it has been well said that “the soul-sufferings of Christ were the soul of His sufferings.” Brothers and Sisters, there was so much in the outward agony of Christ, that my ears have tingled and my heart burned with wrath when I have heard certain theologians speak lightly of it! Speak lightly of the sweat of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane? Speak lightly of the flagellations by Herod and Pilate when the bloody scourges made the sacred drops to roll? Think lightly of the shame, spitting and the crown of thorns? Oh, Sirs, dare you think and speak lightly of the piercing of His hands and of His feet, and of the fever which those wounds engendered, and that thirst which the fever and the broiling sun together brought on, and the rending of those hands when the feet could no longer support the body and the iron tore through the nerves? Is nothing or little to be said of all this? God forbid, Brothers and Sisters! We believe that the body of Christ took its full share of the chastisement. By His stripes we are healed! By His scourging and bodily chastisements we get at least a portion of the healing balm which cures the disease of sin! Our sin was with the body and Christ’s Atonement was with the body. Our flesh was sinful and, therefore, His flesh must suffer. Had we been simply spirits and as spirits, alone, had sinned, a spirit might have made atonement for us—and a soul bereft of a body might have been a perfect substitute—but we are Sons of Adam and still wear this red earth about us! And as we sin in the body, so must the Savior, with hands, feet, brow and every member of His blessed frame, be made to suffer to make atonement for our guilt! Still, still, the travail of His soul was the chief matter and it is that the

text speaks about! Where shall I find a golden reed with which to measure this city, or where shall I find a plumb line with which to fathom the depths of agony which I now see before me? Jesus Christ suffered so that I despair of conceiving His sufferings, or of conveying them to you by any form of words.

And yet there are two lines of thought which might help us. And the first is this—*the perfection of our Lord's Nature*. Just think of this for a minute. Our Lord was utterly and altogether free from sin or any tendencies to sin—and yet He came into this world and He lived in the midst of sinners—and He must, in consequence of this, have suffered a torture to which you and I are utter strangers, except in some small measure! Now think for a while—inasmuch as Christ was perfect, He was capable of an amount of sympathy at which you and I have only made a guess. What a dreadful thing it is for us, sometimes, to have to go and walk through a hospital. I know I would feel it to be one of the most painful days in my life if I had to spend a day in the operating room of a hospital. I think I would have to be taken out within the first five minutes! But to be obliged to stay on and see my fellow creatures suffer beneath the knife, even when used most carefully, and tenderly, and wisely, would, I think, be too much! Some of you who have never seen the depths of poverty, if you were obliged to go to those parts and places where men are dying of starvation—if you were taken away just now to Orissa, or made to stop in the famine-stricken districts of Algeria, or even compelled to live for a while in some of the very poorest districts of this great, but just now, poverty-beaten city, you would feel it to be a great pain. I tell you, when sometimes there are half a dozen poor cases before us and we have to help them, and then there come half a dozen more, and we *cannot* help *them*, it is one of the pains of life! It is one of the worst ills a man can have to bear, to be so public as to have all this evil gathered round his feet, and yet be unable to relieve it! Now we will not say that our Savior was unable to relieve it, but some sufferings which men had brought upon themselves by their sin came before Him perpetually, and they must have pierced and penetrated His tender and sympathetic heart, riddling it, as it were, with the barbed arrows of grief. Still, He took upon Himself our infirmities and carried our sorrows all His lifetime.

But there was worse than this. Our Lord, being perfect, *must have shuddered as He came into daily contact with sinners*. Shut a good man up in a den with drunks, unchaste person, and swearers—and what worse Hell could you devise for him? Might not one prefer to be enclosed in a den of tigers or vipers sooner than with some classes of society? Now that kind of shuddering which comes over a chaste man when he is obliged to listen to the lascivious song, or the holy heart when it is compelled to hear blasphemy and horrid libels against the Most High—that existed to a pre-eminent degree in the pure and sensitive heart of Christ! Wherever He went, He either saw the profligacy of the publican, or the hypocrisy of the Pharisee, or the infidelity of the Sadducee, or the formal-

ism of the Scribe. There was not a step that He took but there was something to grieve Him! Even His own disciples—not merely by ignorance, but by worse than that—pierced Him to the very quick, so that He endured a soul travail in some respects during the whole of His life!

But the point I want to bring you to is this. He was such a perfect Being and yet *sin was actually laid upon Him*, and what must this have been! I would like to express myself cautiously and carefully. Jesus Christ never was a sinner, never could have been one, never was guilty of sin. In Him was no sin. Yet the sin of His people was imputed to Him, for so I understand the words, “The Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all.” What a word! “And He bore the sin of many.” This Chapter has the expression, I think, three or four times over that God actually laid upon Christ, human sin! Now what a load for Him to carry! What a pain for sin thus to come into contact with the perfectly holy soul of the blessed Jesus! You do not know what a very Hell is included in the thought that sin came to be laid upon Christ. Think of it yourselves. You are perfectly innocent, tonight, of anything like murder. Suppose yourselves arraigned tomorrow morning at the police court and accused of it? How would you feel? You may tell me that your innocence might and would, sustain you. I have no doubt it would, but still, what a shame it would be to stand before the vulgar crowd and to be pointed at as having been guilty of an infamous deed! And suppose that, although you had not committed the deed, you were, nevertheless, unable to plead guiltless, for, for certain reasons, it was necessary that the guilt of the action should lie upon you? Can you now conceive what strength you would need to keep your tongue from speaking so as to deny it—and to stand there like the sheep before the shearers—dumb to your own confusion?

Can you imagine yourselves being condemned to die, though the sin was not yours, yet out of some great love which you bore to another, you are condemned? And you can add another supposition—condemned to die justly, too, although you, yourselves, had not personally been guilty. Can you picture yourselves coming shuddering up the gallows stairs to face that dreadful throng assembled around the gallows, with no eye to pity you among them all, but the whole assembled multitude thrusting out the tongue, pointing, mocking, jeering and saying, “He trusted in God that He would deliver him. Let Him deliver him, seeing he delights in Him.” Now the mere dying you could bear, as martyrs have done, but not the dying with all that weight of sin legally placed upon you! Oh, who can tell what must have been the horror which took hold upon the Savior, and how true must have been His expression when He said, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death”? The Holy One in the sinner’s place! An angel in a dungeon! The God of Heaven veiled in human flesh to be hung upon the gallows as a malefactor—start as you think of it and then try to conceive, if you can, what must have been the horror of His soul!

But I have got another plumb line with which, perhaps, if the Holy Spirit helps us, we shall be able to fathom the depth better. Think, Be-

loved, *of what our sins deserved*. It is undoubtedly the teaching of Scripture that a single sin deserves death from God's hand. The very sparks of sin set Hell on a blaze but what do you deserve who have transgressed ten thousand times ten thousand times told? And Christ did not die for you, alone—He died for a multitude that no man can number! Will you multiply, then, the desert of the sin of one human being by that of all the countless myriads who are now before the Throne of God and the yet greater numbers that shall yet be brought there? Now I will not say that Christ suffered precisely and exactly what all these ought to have suffered as the result of their sin, but I will say that what He offered to God was certainly not a less vindication of His justice, but a greater one than all that would have been, for if all the myriads of the elect had laid in Hell forever and ever, their debt would have been no nearer payment after ten thousand times ten thousand years than at the first! And yet this Man, by His one offering of Himself, has put away all the sin and all the punishment to all the multitudes for whom He shed His blood! Transcendent mystery! Angelic minds shall fail to explore the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadth of this atoning Sacrifice! Can you now guess at it? You can, yet you cannot tell it, for it surpasses language—the travail of the Redeemer's soul!

I ask you now to think of your Lord in His bitter pangs and tormenting griefs. View Him prostrate in the Garden. See Him sweating great drops of blood for you. Behold Him tortured by Pilate and Herod, and then see Him, with broken heart, going up to the accursed tree and there being made a curse for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him! We must now pass on to observe that there are—

II. CERTAIN RESULTS GUARANTEED FROM THE SUFFERING OF THE LORD.

The Eternal Father says, "He shall see the fruit of the travail of His soul." That is, *He shall see the fruit of it*. Jesus is not dead! The travail was enough to kill Him, but He remembers no more His travail for the joy of the blessed fruit which is brought into the world thereby. He looks down from Heaven, tonight, as He has been looking down ever since He ascended there and He beholds the sweet results of all His pains and griefs. Now attentively observe one thing. It has always seemed to us, and I think it will seem reasonable to you, that if Jesus Christ is to see of the travail of His soul, and to be satisfied, then *whatever was His intention when He laid down His life will be given Him*. This is not far-fetched because if it is written, "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied," how is a man satisfied if he does not have the result, the full result of his labor, above all such labor—labor even unto death? If a man does not achieve by his dying all that he died for, then he cannot be satisfied—unless his first intention is amended, which would imply that he had been in error. Do you see the drift of this observation? Jesus Christ did not, then, on the Cross, intend to save every man! It is not true that Jesus Christ died with the intention of saving every man of the human

race. But this *is* true—Christ died that every man might be *spared*—and they are spared. You are here tonight as the result of His death. And in that sense He “tasted death for every man.” He died that every man might have the Gospel preached to Him, that there should be an honest declaration that whoever believes in Jesus Christ shall be saved. I this night, for the ten thousandth time, announce to you that Gospel—that if you believe in Jesus Christ, you shall be saved! And this Gospel is to be preached not to some, but to every creature under Heaven! And the proclamation of this Gospel comes universally to all mankind as the result of Christ’s death—and in that sense He tasted death for every man.

But, mark you, He stood as a Substitute for none of you unless you believe in Him, or shall believe in Him. He suffered for those who trust Him, but if you trust Him not, you have no part nor lot in this matter! He had no design to save you. If He had, neither you nor the devil in Hell could have frustrated that design. But this is His design, “God so loved the world that whoever believes in Him has everlasting life.” This is the mark of the people for whom Christ died—that they come and trust in Jesus! By this “broad arrow” are the blood-bought known, and the blood-redeemed discerned from the unregenerate mass—by their trusting in Jesus! He has redeemed us from among men. He loved His Church and gave His Son for it. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. All that the Father gives Him shall come to Him, and him that comes unto Him, He will in no wise cast out. We know and feel, then, that what was Christ’s intention by His death, He will certainly accomplish! And oh, what a blessed thought this is for those of us who have to preach the Gospel, that the Gospel will not be preached in vain, that we do not preach it at haphazard, or perhaps, or casting dice, as it were, for men’s souls! He bought them and He will have them! They were given Him of old in the decree, and He will have them, snatching them from between the lion’s jaws by the power of His own Irresistible Grace. Christ sees of the travail of His soul whenever a sinner touches the hem of His garment and receives the virtue that comes out of Him. He is satisfied as saints advance in Grace, as they make progress in the Divine Life. He is most of all satisfied as, one by one, they go up the glittering pathway to the gates of pearl and enter into rest. He will be completely satisfied when all the chosen company shall be on the streets of gold like unto transparent glass and shall, without the lack of a single voice in the Divine Choir, sing, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever.”

Dear Brothers and Sisters, comfort one another with these words, that Christ will have His own! He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. Up with the red flag once again! Sound the trumpet, you heralds of the Cross! Defy the hosts of Hell! You may defy modern rationalism and modern Popery, too. You may despise the sneers of the critics and the banter of the ignorant, and the threats of the persecutors! None of these can trample that flag beneath their feet. The King sits upon the Throne of God in Zion, working His way and having His will. Has He said

and shall He not do it? Shall He purpose and shall it not come to pass? Over your heads there sounds, like the trumpet of doom, the sound of Jehovah's words, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion upon whom I will have compassion." He does as He wills among the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower world! He shall see His seed! He shall prolong His days and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands!

But again we must pass on. One of the results of the Savior's passion is now specified in the text, "By His knowledge shall my righteous Servant *justify many*."

The former part of my discourse has been addressed to Believers. I should now like to catch the ear of the unbeliever. Do you know what it means to be justified? It means, very simply, to be made just—to be accepted by God—as if you were always just. You have not been just, but a very long way from it! You have done the things you ought not to have done. Now if ever you are to be saved, you must be, before God, righteous. How can you be made righteous? The only way is the way mentioned in the text—by the knowledge of Christ shall Christ justify many. "What?" says one, "I thought we were to be made holy through what we do!" No, not by what you do, but through what you know! "But I know a great many things," says one. Do you know Jesus Christ? You know *about* Him, you say. Do you know this about Him—that He came into the world to save sinners? Do you know that you are a sinner and do you know that, therefore, if you cast yourself upon Him, He will save you? "Well," you say, "we do know that." Well, I want to know whether you know it in your heart, not merely as a common piece of news, but whether you know it by experience in your soul? In other words, do you trust in Him? Do you know Him so as to believe Him? When you know a man well, if he is a good man, you trust him. You cannot help trusting him when you know him. So do you know Christ so as to trust Him? If you do, you shall be justified—that is, God will treat you as if you were perfectly just and look upon you as if you never did wrong in all your life! And He will bless you and take you to Heaven as if you had been an innocent from your mother's breast. "But am I not to *do* something?" Nothing. "But am I not to *feel* something?" Nothing. The doing and the feeling will come afterwards—the way to be justified is by *knowing*.

"How can I know, then?" asks one. Well, listen. Incline your ears and come unto me. Listen, and your souls shall live, for faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Attend much where the Gospel is preached, and when you hear it, do not reject it, but accept it! Oh, my dear Hearer, I wish you would accept the Gospel now—tonight! It all lies in a nutshell. It is just this—Jesus Christ put Himself into the sinner's place and whoever will trust Him, Christ put Himself into that man's place. And that man's sins are not his sins any more. They were put on Christ and Christ's righteousness belongs to that man. "What? Even if he has been a drunk?" Yes, if he has been a drunk ever so deep. "What? If

he has been a swearer?" Yes, yes! If he trusts Christ, his blasphemy shall not be imputed to him. It was laid on Christ. Christ suffered on the red Cross where He poured out His life's blood, suffered for that man's blasphemies. "Well, but he has been in sin all this afternoon." I care not if he has been in sin up till the last tick of the clock—if he comes and casts himself upon what Christ has done, with a simple, hearty, earnest faith—he may come in, for his sins, which are many, are all forgiven him. "Will he go and do as he did before?" Not if his sins are forgiven him, for he will love God and he will so love God that he will hate the things he once loved. He will turn his cups bottom upwards. And his oaths he will vomit forever. And he will begin now, once and for all, to walk in the ways of holiness, serving God whom once he despised. Yes, yes—it is by *knowing Christ* that men are justified, and only by this!

"Oh," says one, "I wish I were justified so!" Well, look at the text, "By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many." Justify many! Then why not you? "Lord, are there few that shall be saved?" And the answer comes, "He shall justify many." Oh, that He would justify all in this Tabernacle! And why not? The justifying righteousness of Christ has an unbounded efficacy about it, just as His blood has—and He will justify not only many—but all who know Him and rely upon Him shall be found just in the sight of God!

The last clause of the text explains the reason of it all, "*For He shall bear their iniquities.*" Three or four sentences upon this will be enough, for the clause is so very plain that it needs no explanation. The reason why Jesus Christ is able to forgive sin and to make unjust men, just, is this—because He bears their iniquities. My dear Brothers and Sisters, you know that in these modern times it is thought to be very old-fashioned and very ignorant to teach the literal Substitution of Christ in the place of sinners! And to say that Christ actually bore our sin and that we bear Christ's righteousness is thought to be an absurdity! Well then, absurdity or not, God is responsible for it, for these are His very words, "By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many, for"—for this very reason—"for He shall bear their iniquities." Then if Christ did not bear their iniquities, there is no justifying sinners! This is the very top, and bottom, and basis of Christ's power to justify—that He, Himself, took the iniquity of those whom He justifies! There are gentlemen we sometimes meet with who bring forth new theories of the Atonement—very pretty and very philosophical ones—and I have sometimes felt inclined to endorse those theories, for there was a great deal of attractiveness and glitter about them. But I now tell you my own experience in the matter. I never find my conscience made peaceful by any theory of the Atonement, except this, that my sins were actually laid upon Christ and that His righteousness is put upon me—and it is only when I firmly believe in that Divine exchange and blessed Substitution that I find quiet and rest within! And as long as this is the case, I shall cling to the old anchorage and let who will, try new-fangled ways! If Christ really did suffer for sinners, then God is just in not punishing sinners. But if He did not actually suf-

fer for sinners, then there is no Atonement, the justice of God is not satisfied and there is no basis for a sinner to rest upon at all!

Now what say you, my Hearers? Can you look to Christ upon the Cross, with a load of sin upon Him, and can you say, "I lay my guilt there"? Can you look to Him in the throes of death, bruised beneath His Father's rod, and can you say, "He was bruised for me—my sins I have confessed and laid them upon Him"? Then are you happy! But if there has been none to bear your sins, then remember, I beseech you, that you will have to bear them yourselves! And if they gave Christ a travail, oh, what will they give you? Oh, impenitent ones, if the imputed sins that were laid on Christ made Him sorrowful, even unto death, what will your actual sins do with you when you are made drunk with the wormwood and God makes you to break your teeth with gravel—when you are cast out into outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth? If the veil were lifted, we might hear, tonight, the cries of spirits that are banished far from God without a hope. Within an hour that may be your portion, unconverted Hearer! In a few more years, which will seem as short as an hour when you have looked back upon them, that will be your portion if you die impenitent! And if you do not repent tonight, what cause have you to hope that you will repent tomorrow? Hearts do not soften by delay! Spirits are not rendered more susceptible of gracious influences by procrastination! Christ's word is, "now." Cast it not off with the devil's word—"tomorrow." You must suffer, or Christ must be your Surety. What shall it be? Shall it be the hands fastened to the wood, yonder, or shall *your* hands be tormented in the flame? Shall it be that tongue which said, "I thirst," or shall it be *your* tongue which shall long for a drop of water in vain? Shall it be those feet that were fastened to the tree, or shall it be *your* members which have been servants to unrighteousness, and which shall be partakers in the Divine Wrath? As the Lord lives who once was crucified, I ask you to remember that I bade you this night in His name, close in with Him and trust Him! There is no door of hope for you but this—believe and live! So stands the Scripture. But if you laugh at this, if you despise this, if you forget this, if in any shape—

***"Your ears refuse
The language of His Grace
And hearts grow hard like stubborn Jews,
That unbelieving race.
The Lord, in vengeance,
Will lift His hand and swear—
'You that despised My promised rest
Shall have no portion there.'"***

If you believe not, it will be because you are not of His sheep, as He said unto you. But think not that you will make void His purpose, or disappoint the bleeding Lamb! Ah, no! If you will not come, others will. If you perish outside the ark, others shall enter and shall be saved. Perhaps your own wife, your own child shall be made willing, while you still

reject. Oh, then, I pray you pause awhile this Sabbath evening, when the year is going on apace. When we have not long since passed, as it were, through the gates of the spring, and all the flowers are beginning to bloom, and the buds to burst forth, just ask whether it is not time for your hearts to open and your souls to bud—and your spirits to bring forth some hope, some love, some obedience to your Lord! And oh, may you do it! His shall be the praise, but yours shall be the great joy! And He shall have joy, too, as He shall thus see of the travail of His soul!

I could wish, and I do wish, that some of you would believe in the Lord Jesus Christ before you go home tonight. You may not have many more times to go home. This may be the very last time that you shall ever come here. It will not make you wretched on earth. It will increase your happiness here. It will help you to live and help you to die. It will make those eyes brighter and put that heart at greater ease. And as for eternity, this is the true Lamp for its darkness, this is the true Light for all its gloom! What will you do without Christ? Oh, get Him and you shall be eternally blest! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 72:1-16.**

“A Psalm for Solomon”—much more for one who is greater than Solomon, the true Prince of Peace!

Verse 1. *Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness unto the king's Son.* So it is decreed, and so it has been accomplished, that Jesus, who is both a King and a King's Son, should have all judgment delivered into His hands. And now, at this time, Christ is the Judge. It is He who discerns between the precious and the vile. He sits as King in the midst of Zion.

2. *He shall judge Your people with righteousness, and your poor with judgment.* The Kingdom of Christ has a special eye to the poor. They are generally passed by and forgotten in the scope of legislature among men, but Christ makes even His poor people—the poor in spirit, also—to be the objects of His judgment.

3, 4. *The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.* In the reign of Christ there shall be no treading down of the little by the great—no pressure put upon the feeble by the strong—but His right hand shall get to the weakest cause, the victory!

5. *They shall fear You as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.* For the Kingdom of Christ renews itself. It is never broken in pieces by the power of the enemy, but every piece becomes a new root, and it springs up again. There are some plants of which they say that the more you tread upon them, the more they will spread, and certainly it is the case with the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. As long

as there is a sun in the heavens, and a moon to gladden the night, so shall the Kingdom of Christ endure!

6. *He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.* Christ shall not come like fire to burn up and to destroy, for His Kingdom is one of mercy and Divine Grace. When the grass has just been wounded with the scythe, He shall come down to bring it refreshment that it may spring up again. In plenteous showers of Grace shall He visit wounded spirits.

7. *In His days shall the righteous flourish: and abundance of peace so long as the moon endures.* There have been empires which have been propitious to the flourishing of great wrongs. Some of the worst and vilest of men have flourished under certain empires which have but lately passed away. But in the Empire of Christ, the righteous alone shall flourish. Everything about Him and about His power shall make it go well for them, and His Empire is the most truly peace —“abundance of peace so long as the moon endures.”

8. *He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.* Universal monarchy is to be the Monarchy of Christ! This is the fifth great Monarchy, and there shall never be another! No king or potentate that shall ever rise can possibly have universal dominion again. We need not fear that, for the fifth Empire is that of the Christ of God, and behold He comes to claim it!

9. *They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him and His enemies shall lick the dust.* The most distant tribes—those that wander and have no settled dwelling place—shall, nevertheless, bow before Him. The Arab boasts that he never knew a master—that even Caesar could not penetrate into his deserts and subdue him! But Christ shall be his Lord, and he will be glad to acknowledge Him!

10. *The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.* We need not be afraid if this Psalm refers to Christ—and we do not doubt that it does. He must reign. The end of the world is not coming until there shall be a conquest for Him. He may come before that time, but certainly there shall be no winding up of history until this shall be literally true! “The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents.”

11, 12. *Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him. For He shall deliver the needy when he cries; the poor also, and he that has no helper.* The Psalmist seems glad to dwell upon that. It seems to be the joy note in his mind—that the Great King—the greatest of all kings—will care for the lowly and the humble. Let us rejoice in this, dear Friends. Christ is chosen out of the people and exalted by God—and He is the Christ not only ready to save the highest, but to save the lowest! From His Kingdom we may say—

**“None are excluded hence but those
Who do themselves exclude!
Welcome the learned and polite,**

The ignorant and rude.”

13-15. *He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in His sight. And He shall live.* They say, “O king, live forever.” It can never happen to their kings, but to our King it will happen! “He shall live.”

15. *And to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba—*He shall have the best the world can find willingly given to Him. I am sure that we who know His love think that we have nothing good enough for Him. We would render to Him all that we have.

15. *Prayer also shall be made for Him continually.* With the gold shall come the golden prayer—the prayer for Christ. But how can we pray for Him? Why, that He may have the reward of His sufferings and see of the travail of His soul—that His Kingdom may come and that His name may be dear in the hearts of men!

15. *And daily shall He be praised.* He shall have praise as well as prayer and gold.

16. *There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.* It was corn—good seed corn, but there was only a handful of it. So there were saints in the world, but there were very few of them. And where were they? On the tops of the mountains! A strange place for corn—not a likely place for a harvest. So have God’s servants been pushed into the corners of the earth. There they were in the valleys of Piedmont for many a year fighting for dear life. And in all lands, those that have been faithful to God have been put away into the corners—driven, as it were, to the mountaintops. But what has come of it, and what will come of it? Why, the fruit shall shake like Lebanon. The golden corn, standing upright in its strength, adorned with its ear, shall wave in the breeze as pleasing a sight even as the cedar of Lebanon!

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

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

OUR MAGNIFICENT SAVIOR

NO. 3554

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 8, 1917.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 28, 1872.

“He shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.”
Isaiah 53:11.

EVERY word of the text is peculiarly full of meaning. There are passages of Scripture which are like the rooms of a royal palace which may not have in them gold and silver, though there are precious things. But this text is the strong-room of the King's house—the richest, rarest treasures are here! When we preach the Doctrine of our text, we are preaching the very marrow of all theology—the very pith of the Gospel—the essential oil of the good news which brings salvation! I shall not, tonight, therefore, have any time to give you illustrations, nor shall we have any time for anything like oratory—but simply to speak right on, in explaining the deep Truths of God which lie before us. May God open our ears and may every heart receive the Truth which is able to save your souls, for I may truly say when preaching upon this text, “Incline your ears and come unto me. Hear, and your soul shall live,” for we are upon the main business of your souls, and treating upon that which God sets forth as the only way of redemption for the sons of men!

There are two points in the text. You observe there are two persons. There is the Lord Christ, and there are the many. We will take these two persons in order and you will perceive in a moment that these are both represented in a threefold character. And our first point will be *the Lord Jesus in His threefold Character*. And the second will be the many in their threefold character. To begin, then, where all *must* begin—

I. OUR BLESSED LORD HIMSELF IN HIS THREEFOLD CHARACTER.

You have Him here in a threefold Character. First, *the Servant*—“My righteous Servant.” Secondly, *the Sin-Bearer*—“He shall bear their iniquities.” Thirdly, *the Justifier*—“He shall justify many.”

To begin, then—*Christ, the Servant*—“My righteous Servant.” Be astonished, O you heavens! He that distributes crowns and thrones and is,

“God Over All, Blessed Forever,” designs to become a Servant! He came into this world and “was made in fashion as a Man and, being found in fashion as a Man, He became obedient”—obedient to His Father’s will, “obedient even unto death.”

Think of Christ for a few minutes and you perceive that first, He is a *Servant unto God*. In a certain sense He became the *Servus servorum*—the Servant of servants—washing our feet and wiping them with a towel. But now in the text He is represented as serving God. Whereas we were servants that ran away from our Master, Christ came to take our place! Whereas we were disobedient servants, He came to fulfill our obedience for us—took our position of service of which we had proved ourselves to be unworthy. He served His Father and did His will. According to the verse which precedes the text, He served God not only with His body, but—with His soul—and yet again in the verse in which our text is found, “He shall see of the travail of His soul.” The service that Christ rendered to God was partly that of His body, for He suffered weariness in the diligent obedience to His Father’s will. But His mind went with it—every power and every passion of His Nature was sweetly obedient to the Divine Will! The zeal which He had for God’s Glory ate up not only His body, but His very soul! He served God, as alas, we do not as we should—with all His heart, and soul, and strength!

And note He was *an ardent Servant*, for the text speaks of the travail of His soul. Read it as the *labor* of His soul, as if He threw His soul so fully into it that His soul labored in the service of God! Or read it, if you will, as *travail*, and you know the meaning of that word, which we will cover with a veil. The whole of His powers and faculties were full of pain that He might serve His God. He suffered in His service and He served in His suffering—not only with all the power He had, but bowing the fullness of His strength into the service which He rendered unto God. In the text He is called a *righteous Servant*, as if He had rendered an account unto God, and God had found it in every jot and tittle to be correct—a righteous Servant, fulfilling all righteousness, carefully doing so—a righteous Servant without any need to add a word about some little slips or failings, for in Him was no sin—no sin in His life and no sin in Himself. The prince of this world searched Him, but he found nothing in Him—He was without the slightest offense—“holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.” Christ, then, as a Servant to God was *an accepted Servant*. We know He was, for God Himself calls Him, “My righteous Servant.” Now think—I will not enlarge further—think, Beloved, of this. This is your Lord, whom angels worship, become an obedient Servant unto God for your sake and discharging His work so as to get the reward of,

“Well done, good and righteous Servant!” His merits are yours, Believer! All that He has done is yours! You are “accepted in the Beloved.” The Lord receives you for Jesus’ sake and in Christ He is well-pleased with you. There is a sweet Truth of God to begin with! Roll it under your tongue as a dainty morsel. “He is My righteous Servant.”

But the text takes Christ in His second Character and we must be brief on each—as *the Sin-Bearer*. “He shall bear their iniquity.” The most wonderful thing in all this Book of wonders is this—that God should become Man and then, as Man, should bear the sin of His people. We have heard, sometimes, foolish persons ask, “Where is the Doctrine of Substitution in Scripture?” to which I would answer, “Where is it not?” Take it out of the Scriptures and there is positively nothing left! It is the main and cardinal Doctrine of Revelation that Christ stood in the sinner’s place! And throughout this Chapter it is the wonderful teaching, over and over, and over and over again. “The chastisement of our peace was upon Him.” “He was numbered with the transgressors.” “He bore the sin of many,” or, as in our text, “He shall bear their iniquity.” It does not say, “He shall bear the punishment of their iniquity”—that is true and follows as a matter of course—but the iniquities of His people were in very truth laid upon Him! And as in type upon the scapegoat, the sins of Israel were laid, so in truth, and not in type, nor metaphor, nor figure, but in very deed and of a truth—the sins of God’s people were transferred from them and laid upon the head of Christ, the Son of God, who stood in their place. Words cannot be more plain! “He shall bear their iniquities.” When did He bear their iniquities? I answer, in a certain sense He bore them from of old, for He was the Lamb *slain before the foundation of the world*—but in actual fact He bore them through His painful life. Read these words—“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” That thirst, that hunger, those pangs He felt often throughout His life of weariness and woe—those were caused by sin being laid upon Him! It was not possible that He should be perfectly happy while sin was upon Him—it would have been impossible for Him to have been unhappy had not *sin been imputed to Him*.

He bore our sins, next, *at the judgment seat of Pilate and of Herod*. I beg you to follow the words of the text, “He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare His generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living.” And why? “For the transgression of My people was He stricken.” He was

numbered with the transgressors when He stood at Pilate's bar. He was condemned to die a malefactor's death and on the Roman records there stood the name of Jesus of Nazareth, condemned to die because He had been accused of saying that there was another King, and that another Kingdom was about to be set up. He was bearing our sins before Pilate's bar.

But especially *upon the tree*, for there we have it, "When You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed." "He, His own Self, bore our sins in His own body up to the tree," and on the tree, always being a Sin-Bearer up to that moment when He said, "It is finished"—for then He bore sin no longer. He cast it all away into His own sepulcher! Into the wilderness of forgetfulness did He hurl it—and now the sin of *His people* cannot be found! It has ceased to be. Christ has "finished transgression." He has made an end of sin and brought in everlasting righteousness *for His people*.

Now let us pause here a little and think over this wondrous mystery. The way in which God is pleased to save us from our sin is by laying our sins on His own Son and making Him suffer for those sins as if those sins had been His own! Why, do you think, did He choose such a method? Was it not thus? First, *thus He satisfied His own Justice*. Why, Brothers and Sisters, if we had lain in Hell forever, yet Divine Justice would not have been fully justified, for after thousands of years of suffering, there would still remain *an eternity of debt due to God's Justice*, and the debt would not be paid! And let me say, if God had annihilated all the sinners that ever lived in one stroke, He would not have so honored His Justice as He did when He took sin and laid it on His Son—and His Son bore Divine Wrath which was due to that sin! For now there has been rendered unto Divine Justice a full equivalent, a complete recompense for all the dishonor which it suffered—and I know of no other conceivable way by which such a recompense could have been rendered—

***"He to the utmost farthing paid
Whatever His people owed."***

He suffered what they should have suffered, and now God's Law stands in all its integrity. It has not dismissed the penalty. The penalty has been executed! The sword has awakened against the Shepherd, although the stroke was due to the flock!

Moreover, God, in choosing Christ to suffer in our place has been pleased to lay help *upon One that is mighty, upon One that is mighty to save*. O my Soul, delight in the thought that Christ was my Substitute! If I had been told that an angel had done his best to save me, I would feel unsafe. If I had been told that all the holy men in all the world had stri-

ven to save me, I would have felt insecure. But if the very Christ of God, Himself, the Eternal One, has deigned to bear my iniquities, why, then, should I fear? The mighty Savior, the Almighty Savior, can surely put away my sins! There is help laid upon One that is mighty!

The Lord also laid our sins upon Christ because *it was Christ's desire that it should be so*. Do you remember how He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with"? It was the baptism of His sufferings! "And how am I straitened till it is accomplished!" And long before that He had said, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O God, yes, Your Law is in My heart." And then He adds, "Sacrifice and offering You would not, but a body have You prepared Me." And He longed to come, and in that body, bear His people's sins! And in that body prove that He had a love for them which many waters could not quench, and floods could not drown, for down into the deeps He would go with His beloved Church and never come up again until He could bring her up with Him, as He has done, to the praise of the Glory of His Grace! Therefore, you see, God is honored, His Grace is honored, we, ourselves, are comforted by have a mighty Savior, and Christ's own longings are contented by having sin laid upon Him.

Moreover, Beloved, the forgiveness of sin, through laying it upon Christ, is made to show to all mankind and to all other created intelligences *the tremendous evil of sin*. Here were a people whom God desired to save, but He could not. His Justice did, as it were, tie the hands of His Mercy. Sin was so hateful to Him that He could not blot it out and forget it. He must punish it and I know not of any way by which He could have shown His abhorrence of sin so greatly as when He bruised His own Son! A man may show his indignation about a crime in many ways, but surely in none so much as when he sees that crime upon his son, and he says, "No, I cannot reveal my love to you. While that crime is upon you, you must suffer for it," and—

"Heaven's Eternal Darling bleeds."

Because sin was laid on Him and the Father would not smile! He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" A greater Abraham unsheathed His knife to slay a greater Isaac, and no angel intervened! The Savior died the death! These are words that we speak. Do we know their meaning? When you are racked with pain, you begin to guess the pain the Savior suffered and, perhaps, when we are, ourselves, in the pains of death, we shall begin to have a little more fellowship with Jesus. But all for our sakes the blessed Lord bore the Wrath of God that God might show that sin, even when laid upon His Son by imputation, was so horri-

ble to Him that He would not let Him escape! He must be bruised. “It pleased the Father to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief.”

And don't you think, Beloved, that God chose this way of pardoning sin *to show His great love* as well as His great abhorrence of sin? Behold how He loves us! What manner of love is this that God has shown to us—that when we were yet enemies, He gave His Son to *die* for us? There is one sweet reason that Jesus gives why He died for His people. You remember it. He loved His Church and gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself, “without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.” There is no washing for His Church like the washing in His blood! Even if you, Believer, should wash your face in your tears, you would stain your face in the washing! But washed in the blood of Jesus, there remains no trace or speck of sin! Surely the very angels are not so comely as the Church is, now that Christ has cleansed her. The heavens are not pure in His sight and He charged His angels with folly—but the blood-washed Church is pure and no folly is charged on her! Her righteousness is the righteousness of her Creator, and her purity is the holiness of God, Himself!

Surely the Lord was pleased to adopt this way of pardon for one other reason—that you and I might have strong consolation and that, having strong consolation, we might also *have strong reason for devoting ourselves to Christ's service!* There are those who think that pardon through atoning blood will make men live in sin. They little know what is in the heart of the redeemed, for, being bought with such a price, we would be perfect if we could! So much has been done for us that if we could do for Christ ten thousand times more than we have ever done, we would only rejoice to do it, cost what it may! You know when a man is under burden of sin, he cannot serve his God well, because, he says, “I would serve Him but my sins are so many.” But when his sins are laid on Christ, then he says, “Now I can give all my strength to the Glory of God. I have no sin to fret about, now—it is laid on Jesus. There is nothing, now, to make me dread an angry God, for the anger of God is turned away and in Jesus Christ I am a justified man.” This I might enlarge, but I must not. You see Christ as the Sin-Bearer, bearing our sins on the Cross.

Now the third aspect under which He appears is this—He is seen in the text *as a Justifier*. “By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.” Christ is Himself just, and yet the Justifier. Jesus Christ needed not to have worked out a righteousness! He needed not to have become Man! He needed not to have been obedient to the Father. “God Over All, Blessed Forever.” He has, therefore, a righteousness to give away—one which He does not need for

Himself. This is the root and bottom of it—He has a righteousness which He does not need for Himself and He, therefore, gives it to us and becomes the Lord, Our Righteousness! And every soul to whom Jesus gives His righteousness is righteous at once! This is God’s way of making men righteous, not by their own deeds, but by the deeds of Jesus. He imputes to us what Christ has done! He takes the righteousness of the Lord Christ and gives it to the sinner, blots out the sinner’s sin and makes the sinner righteous in a moment before His sight! The text says He shall do this to many—not to all, for, alas, tens of thousands die condemned—but to *many*. Blessed word is that! Why not to me? If it is God’s decree that Christ shall justify many, why should not I be one among them? And if He will justify all who know Him—(by His knowledge shall He justify them)—O my Soul, study Christ! Endeavor to be His disciple! Sit at His feet! Learn of Him! Know Him, for then He will justify you and make you just in the sight of God!

Remember, Beloved, that this is the reward that Christ has for His death. “He shall see of the travail of His soul.” How? Why, “by His knowledge shall He justify many”! It is Christ’s delight to take a sinner and to make him just. This is the spoil which He divides with the strong! Because He poured out His soul unto death and was numbered with the transgressors, and bore the sin of many, He makes men just! And this is His sure reward—He asks no better—He who believes on Him who justifies the ungodly is saved by that belief! This is Christ’s Glory, Christ’s delight, the fullness of Christ’s satisfaction—that He justifies many! Oh, that He might get that satisfaction in this house tonight that many poor condemned souls might know Him and be made just by Him! Then would His heart leap for joy! The joy that was set before Him when He died would then come to Him!

I have thus briefly set forward Christ in His threefold capacity—a Servant, a Sin-Bearer and a Justifier. Now, with brevity, we are to look at—

II. THE MANY IN THEIR THREEFOLD CHARACTER.

And in the text we see them, first, as *needing Justification*. Secondly, as *receiving knowledge*. And thirdly, as justified. Now we begin, tonight, this second head where God began with us. We see the many needing Justification. Christ would not have come to justify the just—they do not need it. The whole have no need of a physician. Suppose a man is brought up before a court of justice. He is justified, or reckoned to be just, if he is proved not guilty. But we, before the court of God, are all guilty! Therefore, Justification cannot come in that way to us. Our only hope of Justification lies in this—God says, “That man’s sins I laid upon Christ. I punished Christ for that man. He is not guilty. Christ was ob-

edient in that man's behalf. Christ's obedience is that man's obedience. He is just in Christ's Righteousness. I take him not as what he is, but as what his Sponsor is, even Christ! What his Surety is, what his Substitute is." As, for instance, in the old ballot days, when men had to go to war, if the number was called out and a substitute was provided, the person providing the substitute was said, by the law, to discharge his duty to his country. I believe that some time ago in the Northern States a person who had found a substitute to go to fight in the South, heard after a while that his substitute was dead. On a second drawing being made, this man was drawn, but he said, "No, I am dead. Number so-and-so went to the war and is dead. That is me. My substitute is dead." So when God's justice calls to me, a sinner, I do not answer to it! Why? Christ answered on my behalf long ago and died for me! I am dead with Christ. "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." There is no legal charge that can be brought because Christ has stood in my place, been punished in my place, been reckoned as if He were I, and now, this day, I am reckoned as if I were in Christ's place, even as He was reckoned to be in my place. You see where we begin, then. We begin needing Justification, for we have, first of all, the sin of our first parents. "All we like sheep have gone astray." We have, next, our own sins. "We have turned, everyone, to his own way." We have many sins of omission and of commission. "The Lord has laid on Him our iniquities." Whether they are iniquities of excess or of shortcoming, they are both laid upon Jesus Christ's head. We were guilty—we were so guilty, that by ourselves considered, we were under condemnation! "He that believes not is condemned already," and if we had remained as we were, we were heirs of wrath, even as others! And our sin deserved the same punishment as others.

O you who are guilty, hear tonight what good news there is in this for you! Christ came to justify the ungodly. The Redeemer died for those who have no righteousness of their own. "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commends His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly." Christ came to bring a righteousness to those who have none—to save the sinful, the vile, the Hell-deserving—He came to give them His Righteousness, and to take upon Himself their sins. Oh, the wonders of Divine Grace—that whereas we need Justification, we are the very people He came to justify!

And now note, in the second place, these people in their second stage. *They are instructed*—they are made to know. The text says, "By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many." That is to say—(you may read it as you have it in our version, if you like, but you will under-

stand it better if you read it—and it will be quite as correct —thus)—“*by the knowledge of Him shall My righteous Servant justify many.*” That is to say, when the soul knows Christ, knows Him, believes Him, learns Him and trusts Him, then it is justified! You see there are no *doings* in the process—there are no *feelings* in the matter. It is knowing, which is another word for *believing*—for we know Him when we believe Him! And we inevitably believe Him when we truly and really know Him. The heart understands Christ through hearing—and through the hearing of Him, it comes to believe Him! And when the heart knows Christ and believes Him, it is then justified. But suppose the text means this, “By His knowledge”—(that is, the knowledge which He gives)—“He justifies many.” That knowledge is contained in His Word—it fell from His own lips—you have heard it tonight! We have preached it to you! It is not the knowledge Moses brought—it is the knowledge that Christ brought. “Whoever believes on Him is not condemned.” May it be knowledge to your soul by His teaching it to your soul! By His Divine Spirit, He teaches to profit. But, dear Hearer, do see this—the whole way of my getting the result of Christ’s Sacrifice is by knowing and believing—not by *doing*! We are justified by faith, and not by the works of the Law. “By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.” “By the Law is the knowledge of sin.” “Grace and peace come by Jesus Christ,” and they come to us through believing or through knowing—by knowing Him, by being made to know, through Him, that we are justified!

And please notice the peculiar Character in which Christ is known to the justified. They know Him as God’s Servant and they know Him as bearing their iniquities. Some persons think a great deal of Christ in His Glory, and of Christ in His Second Advent. God forbid that I should have you forget Him in those Characters, or in any other! But the soul-saving aspect of Christ is not His Glory, nor His Second Advent, but Christ the Servant and Christ the Sin-Bearer. It is from the Cross that the words come, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.” “I, if I am lifted up”—not on the Throne, but on the Cross—“I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.” “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Let who will preach Christ exalted, “we preach Christ Crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, but unto us who are saved, the Wisdom of God and the Power of God.” Do let me make this very clear, for, perhaps, some soul might get the Light of God tonight! You have many sins upon you, Man. You can never get them off by any doings of your own! No obedience, or tears, or anything else which you can do, can make one spot of sin stir an inch! You are black as night, black as Hell, and you cannot

make yourself white! But here it is—if you will know Jesus, if you will hear of Jesus, if you will believe on Him—believe what He teaches. If you will believe that He is God’s sent Servant, that He is the Propitiation for sin, that He is the Sin-Bearer—and if you will trust Him with your sin, and with your soul—you are saved! No spot of sin remains on you! This moment you are saved, for He shall justify, that is, make just, and that is an instantaneous work! A man may have been a condemned sinner five minutes ago, but the moment that he knows Christ, he is a justified soul! By that very knowledge, or, as I have said, by that faith, by that simple dependence on the Christ whom he has learned to know, the man is just and he may go on his way rejoicing!

So I shall close with that third aspect of the many. It is said, “*He shall justify them.*” What a grand word it is! “He shall justify them.” He shall make them just. It is a forensic, legal term. He shall make them just before the Court of God. Now notice in the text the sins mentioned were real. The bearing of sin by Christ was real. Therefore the Justification in the text is real. You see that thief on the cross? What a wretch he is! He has been guilty of every crime. His sins are real. But he believes in Jesus, Jesus the dying Savior, and his sins are forgiven! Now listen. That thief is a just man. “Why,” you say, “He has done no just action.” I grant you that. He would if he could. He is now willing to confess the Master, for he speaks a word of rebuke to the thief on the other side of the Cross. *But I do not say he is just because of that.* He is just because of nothing that he has done, but he is just because he believes in the dying Savior! And you, poor Sinner, though you have never done a good work in your life, though you deserve to be damned to all eternity, though you have lived in everything that is vile, if you, this night, trust your soul to Jesus, and know Him, Jesus justifies you and you are really just!

And, what is more, *you are forever just.* You have a Justification that will never wear out, a Righteousness that will outlast time itself! The tooth of decay shall never harm it, nor rust corrupt it, nor moth consume it. You are just and just forever! Do you understand me? I will make it plain, and put it in words that cannot be misunderstood. The soul that believes in Jesus is so justified that none can even lay anything to his charge. “Why,” says one, “the man has been a very guilty man and lived a horrible life.” So had Paul. He had been a foaming persecutor, raging against God’s saints. But listen to Paul—“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” Is not he afraid to say that? No, because he goes on to say, “It is God who justifies.” Suppose the judge says in court, “That man is clear.” It is no use anybody getting up and saying, “Let me come into the witness box—I have something against him.” You are out

of order, Sir. The judge says he is clear and that is enough. God says of the guiltiest soul, "I laid that man's sins on Christ. I punished Christ for that man and that man is clear." And if God says you are clear, who shall lay anything to your charge? Listen again. A Believer cannot be condemned. Do you doubt it? Paul shall speak again "Who is he that condemns?" Why, Paul, you have done much that you deserve to be condemned for! Oh, but here it is. "It is Christ who died; yes, rather, that is risen again, who sits at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." He means this—"How can you condemn me? Christ was condemned for me! He died. He rose again. That proved that I, myself, am not condemned! He had paid the debt, otherwise He had not been allowed to rise! He has gone into Heaven to plead for me, and He will be the Judge. And if He died for me, do you think that He who alone can condemn will condemn those whom He died for? Will He cast away His own chosen—condemn a limb of His own body and reject out of His own mouth the very soul to whom He said, 'I have forgiven you, and blotted out your sin.'"? It cannot be!

The Believer, then, cannot be accused. He cannot be condemned and, consequently, he cannot be punished. What shall he be punished for? "For his sins," says one. He has not any! He has not any—they were laid on Christ! "He shall bear their iniquities." Can a sin be in two places at once? If my sins are on Christ, they cannot be on me. If God has laid the weight of my guilt on Christ and Christ bore it and made an end of it, then I am clear of it as though I never sinned! Glory be to God for such a Gospel as this—to think that a soul, condemned and lost by nature, should be made completely clean through the purging of the great atoning Sacrifice of our dear Lord and Master! For, mark you, there is more than that, for when Christ justifies a man, He not only blots out his sin, but he is a just man, and *the man is treated henceforth as if he were just!* Now the just shall be rewarded—the just shall have the favor of God! The just shall enter Heaven—and so shall you, poor guilty Sinner! If you trust Christ, that Righteousness of Christ becomes yours! I could preach all night upon such a subject, but I should weary you. I should not weary myself in thinking it over, though, nor should you in meditating upon it! It is enough to make Heaven ring again and again with melody! I am sure it is God's Gospel, for nobody could have invented it—a plan so just to God, so safe to man!

And I am all the more sure it is God's Gospel because there are many that hate it! They cannot bear it! How can they? They are righteous in themselves and hope to enter Heaven by their own works! They go about to establish their own righteousness, but this is as it always has been. As

it was in Paul's day, so it is now—and this only confirms our confidence in the Gospel that we preach! Believing this, I can go to my bed and fall asleep in peace, not caring whether I wake again or not this side Heaven. Believing this, doubts and fears prevail not, for my soul flies to the atoning Sacrifice, again, and tells the devil that my sins are no longer mine, but Christ's, or rather that they were imputed to Him, and laid upon Him and that He was punished for them in my place, and I am clear for Christ has suffered for me! Believe this, dear Heart—believe it! You have never heard a better Gospel! You have heard it better preached—but never better news came to your ears than this! And until you get to Heaven, you will never hear music that can beat this—the music of a Savior's wounds, groans and death in a poor sinner's place! I know what you will do if you believe it. You will go home glad of heart and the moment you get home you will say, "I am a saved soul, for I have done with my former sins."

***"Now for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain I count my loss,
My former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to His Cross."***

Oh, you will have done with your old companions! The love of Christ will constrain you. Nothing cleanses the Augean stable of human nature like a stream of love and blood made to run through it! When Christ's sacrifice comes to a soul, it casts out sin and Satan, sets the man working at once—and none can work so vigorously as those who feel that they owe all to the Grace of God, who feel that they have nothing to do to save themselves—they are saved! That work is all done forever! And now, out of gratitude, they give their whole life, and soul, and strength to spread abroad the Gospel of Jesus, now, and make God's names famous, even to the end of time! God bless you, dear Hearers. May this all be yours, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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

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

JESUS INTERCEDING FOR TRANSGRESSORS NO. 1385

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 18, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And made intercession for the transgressors.”
Isaiah 53:12.*

Our blessed Lord made intercession for transgressors in so many words while He was being crucified, for He was heard to say, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” It is generally thought that He uttered this prayer at the moment when the nails were piercing His hands and feet and the Roman soldiers were roughly performing their duty as executioners. At the very commencement of His passion He begins to bless His enemies with His prayers. As soon as the Rock of our salvation was smitten, there flowed forth from Him a blessed stream of intercession. Our Lord fixed His eyes upon that point in the character of His persecutors which was most favorable to them, namely, that they knew not what they did.

He could not plead their innocence and, therefore, He pleaded their ignorance. Ignorance could not excuse their deed, but it did lighten their guilt and, therefore, our Lord was quick to mention it as in some measure an extenuating circumstance. The Roman soldiers, of course, knew nothing of His higher mission—they were the mere tools of those who were in power—and though they “mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar,” they did so because they misunderstood His claims and regarded Him as a foolish rival of Caesar, only worthy to be ridiculed. No doubt the Savior included these rough Gentiles in His supplications. And perhaps their centurion who “glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous Man,” was converted in answer to our Lord’s prayer.

As for the Jews, though they had some measure of light, yet they, also, acted in the dark. Peter, who would not have flattered any man, yet said, “And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance you did it, as did, also, your rulers.” It is doubtless true that, had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory, though it is equally clear that they ought to have known Him, for His credentials were clear as noonday! Our Redeemer, in that dying prayer of His, shows how quick He is to see anything which is, in any degree, favorable to the poor clients whose cause He has undertaken. He spied out in a moment the only fact upon which compassion could find a foothold and He secretly breathed out His loving heart in the cry, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Our great Advocate will be sure to plead wisely and efficiently on our behalf! He will urge every argument which can be discovered, for His eyes, quickened by love, will suffer nothing to pass which may be in our favor.

The Prophet, however, does not, I suppose, intend to confine our thoughts to the one incident which is recorded by the Evangelists, for the intercession of Christ was an essential part of His entire lifework. The mountain's side often heard Him, beneath the chilly night, pouring out His heart in supplications. He might as fitly be called the Man of Prayers as, "the Man of Sorrows."

He was always praying, even when His lips moved not. While He was teaching and working miracles by day, He was silently communing with God and making supplication for men. And His nights, instead of being spent in seeking restoration from His exhausting labors, were frequently occupied with intercession. Indeed, our Lord's whole life is a prayer! His career on earth was intercession worked out in actions. Since "He prays best who loves best," He was a mass of prayer, for He is altogether Love. He is not only the channel and the example of prayer, but He is the life and force of prayer. The greatest plea with God is Christ, Himself! The argument which always prevails with God is Christ Incarnate, Christ fulfilling the Law and Christ bearing the penalty.

Jesus Himself is the reasoning and logic of prayer and He Himself is an ever living prayer unto the Most High. It was part of our Lord's official work to make intercession for the transgressors. He is a Priest and as such He brings His offering and presents prayer on behalf of the people. Our Lord is the Great High Priest of our profession and in fulfilling this office we read that He offered up prayers and supplications with strong cries and tears. And we know that He is now offering up prayers for the souls of men. This, indeed, is the great work which He is carrying on today. We rejoice in His finished work, and rest in it, but that relates to His atoning Sacrifice. His intercession springs out of His Atonement and it will never cease while the blood of His Sacrifice retains its power.

The blood of sprinkling continues to speak better things than that of Abel. Jesus is pleading now and will be pleading till the heavens shall be no more. For all that come to God by Him He still presents His merits to the Father and pleads the causes of their souls. He urges the grand argument derived from His life and death and so obtains innumerable blessings for the rebellious sons of men.

I. I have to direct your attention, this morning, to our ever-living Lord making intercession for the transgressors. And as I do so I shall pray God, in the first place, that all of us may be roused to admiration for His Grace. Come, Brothers and Sisters, gather up your scattered thoughts and meditate upon Him who alone was found fit to stand in the gap and turn away wrath by His pleading! If you will consider His intercession for transgressors, I think you will be struck with the love, tenderness and graciousness of His heart when you remember that He offered intercession verbally while He was standing in the midst of their sin.

Sin heard of and sin seen are two very different things. We read of crimes in the newspapers, but we are not at all so horrified as if we had seen them for ourselves. Our Lord actually saw human sin—saw it unfettered and unrestrained—saw it at its worst. Transgressors surrounded His Person and, by their sins, darted 10,000 arrows into His sacred heart—

and yet while they pierced Him, He prayed for them! The mob compassed Him round about, yelling, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," and His answer was, "Father, forgive them." He knew their cruelty and ingratitude, and felt them most keenly, but answered them only with a prayer.

The great ones of the earth were there, too, sneering and jesting—Pharisee and Sadducee and Herodian—He saw their selfishness, conceit, falsehood and bloodthirstiness, yet He prayed! Strong bulls of Bashan had beset Him round and dogs had compassed Him, yet He interceded for men! Man's sin had stirred up all its strength to slay God's Love and, therefore, sin had arrived at its worst point—and yet Mercy kept pace with Malice and outran it, for He sought forgiveness for His tormentors! After killing Prophets and other messengers, the wicked murderers were now saying, "This is the Heir! Come, let us kill Him that the inheritance may be ours." And yet that Heir of all things, who might have called fire from Heaven upon them, died crying, "Father, forgive them"!

He knew that what they did was sin, or He would not have prayed, "forgive them," but yet He set their deed in the least unfavorable light and said, "they know not what they do." He set His own Sonship to work on their behalf and appealed to His Father's love to pardon them for His sake. Never was virtue set in so fair a frame! Never goodness came so adorned with abundant love as in the Person of the Lord Jesus—and yet they hated Him all the more for His loveliness and gathered around Him with the deeper spite because of His infinite goodness! He saw it all and felt the sin as you and I cannot feel it, for His heart was purer and, therefore, more tender than ours.

He saw that the tendency of sin was to put Him to death and all like He, yes, and to slay God, Himself if it could achieve its purpose, for man had become a Deicide and must crucify his God—and yet, though His holy soul saw and loathed all this tendency and atrocity of transgression—He still made intercession for the transgressors! I do not know whether I convey my own idea, but to me it seems wonderful beyond measure that He should know sin so thoroughly, understand its heinousness, see the drift of it, feel it so wantonly assailing Him when He was doing nothing but deeds of kindness—and yet with all that vivid sense of the vileness of sin upon Him—even then and there He made intercession for the transgressors, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Another point of His graciousness was clear on that occasion, namely, that He should thus intercede while in agony! It is marvelous that He should be able to call His mind away from His own pains to consider their transgressions. You and I, if we are subject to great pains of the body, do not find it easy to command our minds and especially to collect our thoughts and restrain them so as to forgive the person inflicting the pain and even to invoke blessings on his head! Remember that your Lord was *suffering* while He made intercession. He was beginning to suffer the pangs of death, suffering in soul as well as in body, for He had freshly come from the Garden where His soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.

Yet in the midst of that depression of spirit which might well have made Him forgetful of the wretched beings who were putting Him to death, He forgets *Himself* and He only thinks of them and pleads for them! I am sure that we should have been taken up with our pains, even if we had not been moved to some measure of resentment against our tormentors. But we hear no complaints from our Lord, no accusations lodged with God, no angry replies to them such as Paul once gave—"God shall smite you, you whited wall!" Jesus uttered not even a word of mourning or of complaint concerning the indignities which He endured, but His dear heart all ascended to Heaven in that one blessed petition for His enemies, which then and there He presented to His Father.

But I will not confine your thoughts to that incident, because, as I have already said, the Prophet's words had a wider range. To me it is marvelous that He, being pure, should plead for transgressors at all! For you and for me among them—let the wonder begin there. Sinners by nature, sinners by practice, willful sinners, sinners who cling to sin with a terrible tenacity, sinners who come back to sin after we have smarted for it—and yet the Just One has espoused our cause and has become a suitor for our pardon! We are sinners who omit duties when they are pleasures and who follow after sins which are known to involve sorrow. We are sinners, therefore, of the most foolish kind—wanton, willful sinners—and yet He who hates all sin has deigned to take our part and plead the causes of our souls!

Our Lord's hatred of sin is as great as His love to sinners. His indignation against everything impure is as great as that of the thrice holy God who revenges and is furious when He comes into contact with evil. And yet this Divine Prince, of whom we sing, "You love righteousness and hate wickedness," espouses the cause of transgressors and pleads for them! Oh, matchless Grace! Surely angels wonder at this stretch of condescending love! Brothers and Sisters, words fail me to speak of it. I ask you to adore!

Further, it is to me a very wonderful fact that in His Glory He should *still* be pleading for sinners. There are some men who, when they have reached high positions, forget their former associates. They knew the poor and needy friend, once, for, as the proverb has it, poverty brings us strange bedfellows. But when they have risen out of such conditions, they are ashamed of the people whom once they knew. Our Lord is not thus forgetful of the degraded clients whose cause He espoused in the days of His humiliation. Yet though I know His constancy, I marvel and admire! The Son of Man on earth pleading for sinners is very gracious, but I am overwhelmed when I think of His interceding for sinners now that He reigns yonder where harps, unnumbered, tune His praise and cherubim and seraphim count it their glory to be less than nothing at His feet!

I am amazed to think that where all the Glory of His Father is resplendent in Himself and He sits at the right hand of God in Divine favor and majesty unspeakable, He is still interceding for transgressors! How can we hear without amazement that the King of kings and Lord of lords occupies Himself with caring for transgressors—caring, indeed, for you and me?! It

is condescension that He should commune with the blood-washed before His Throne and allow the perfect spirits to be His companions! But that His heart should steal away from all Heaven's joys to remember such poor creatures as we are and make incessant prayer on our behalf—this is like His own loving Self—it is Christ-like, Godlike!

I think I see at this moment our great High Priest pleading before the Throne. He is wearing His jeweled breastplate and His garments of glory and beauty—wearing our names upon His breast and His shoulders in the Most Holy Place. What a vision of incomparable love! It is a fact and no mere dream. He is within the Holy of Holies, presenting the one sacrifice. His prayers are always heard and heard for us—but the marvel is that the Son of God should condescend to exercise such an office and make intercession for transgressors! This matchless Grace well near seals my lips, but it opens the floodgates of my soul and I would gladly pause to worship Him whom my words fail to set forth.

Again, it is gloriously gracious that our Lord should continue to do this, for lo, these 1,800 years and more He has gone into His Glory, yet He has never ceased to make intercession for transgressors. Never on Heaven's most joyous holiday, when all His armies are marshaled and, as their glittering squadrons pass in review before the King of kings, has He forgotten His redeemed ones! The splendors of Heaven have not made Him indifferent to the sorrows of earth. Never, though, for all we know, He may have created myriads of worlds, and though assuredly He has been ruling the courses of the entire universe, never once, I say, has He suspended His incessant pleading for the transgressors!

Nor will He, for the Holy Scriptures lead us to believe that as long as He lives as Mediator He will intercede—"He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." He lived and *lives* to intercede, as if this were the express objective of His living. Beloved, as long as the great Redeemer lives and there is a sinner still to come to Him, He will still continue to intercede! Oh, my Master, how shall I praise You? Had You undertaken such an office, now and then, and had You gone into the royal Presence only once in a while to intercede for some special cases, it would have been divinely gracious on Your part. But that You should *always* be a Suppliant and never cease to intercede, surpasses all our praise! Wonderful are His words as written in prophecy by Isaiah—"For Zion's sake will I not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof goes forth as brightness and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns."

As the lamp in the temple never went out, so neither has our Advocate ceased to plead day nor night! Unwearied in His labor of love, without a pause, He has urged our case before the Father's face! Beloved, I will not enlarge. I cannot, for adoration of such love quite masters me! But let your hearts be enlarged with abounding love to such an Intercessor as this, who *made*, who *does* make and who will *always* make intercession for transgressors! I have said, "will make," and, indeed, this is no bare assertion of mine, for my text may be read in the future as well as in the

past—indeed, as you will perceive upon a little thought—it must have been meant to be understood in the *future* since the prophecy was written some 700 years before our Lord had breathed His intercessory prayer at the Cross!

Although the Prophet, in order to make his language pictorial and vivid, puts it in the *past* tense, it was actually in the future to him and, therefore, we cannot err in reading it in the future, as I have done—“He *shall* make intercession for the transgressors.” Constant love puts up a ceaseless plan! Endless compassion breathes its endless prayer. Till the last of the redeemed has been gathered Home, that interceding breath shall never pause, nor cease to prevail!

II. Thus have I called you to feel admiration for His Grace. And now, secondly, I do earnestly pray that we may be led of the Holy Spirit to view His intercession for transgressors as to put our confidence in Him. There is ground for a sinner’s confidence in Christ and there is abundant argument for the Believer’s complete reliance in Him from the fact of His perpetual intercession. Let me show you this, first, because, Beloved, His intercession succeeds. God hears Him, of that we have no doubt, but what is the basis of this intercession? For whatever that is, seeing it makes the intercession to be successful, we may safely rest on it.

Read carefully the verse—“Because He has poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors and He bore the sin of many.” See, then, the success of His plea arises out of His *Substitution*. He pleads and prevails because He has borne the sin of those for whom He intercedes! The main stay and strength of His prevalence in His intercession lies in the completeness of the Sacrifice which He offered when He bore the sin of many. Come, then, my Soul, if Christ’s prayer prevails because of this, so will your faith! Resting on the same Foundation, your faith will be equally secure of acceptance. Come, my Heart, rest on that Truth of God—“He bore the sin of many.” Throw yourself with all your sin upon His substitution and feel that this is a safe resting place for your believing, because it is a solid basis for your Lord’s intercession. The perfect Sacrifice will bear all the strain which can possibly come upon it—test it by the strongest faith and see for yourself! Plead it with the boldest requests and learn its boundless prevalence! You may urge the plea of the precious blood with the Father, seeing the Lord Jesus has urged it and has never failed.

Now, again, there is reason for transgressors to come and trust in Jesus Christ, seeing He pleads for them. You never need be afraid that Christ will cast you out when you can hear Him pleading for you! If a son had been disobedient and had left his father’s house and were to come back, again, if he had any fear about his father’s receiving him, it would all disappear if he stood listening at the door and heard his father praying for him. “Oh,” he would say, “my coming back is an answer to my father’s prayers! He will gladly enough receive me.”

Whenever a soul comes to Christ it need have no hesitancy, seeing Christ has already prayed for it that it might be saved. I tell you transgressors, Christ prays for you when you do not pray for yourselves! Did

He not say of His believing people, “Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them, also, which shall believe on Me through their word”? Before His elect become Believers they have a place in His supplications! Before you know yourselves to be transgressors and have any desire for pardon—while as yet you are lying dead in sin—His intercession has gone up even for such as you! “Father, forgive them,” was a prayer for those who had never sought forgiveness for themselves! And when you dare not pray for yourselves, He is still praying for you! When, under a sense of sin, you dare not lift so much as your eyes toward Heaven. When you think, “Surely it would be in vain for *me* to seek my heavenly Father’s face,” He is pleading for you!

Yes, and when you *cannot* plead. When, through deep distress of mind you feel choked in the very *attempt* to pray. When the language of supplication seems to blister your lips because you feel yourself to be so unworthy. When you cannot force, even, a holy groan from your despairing heart—He still pleads for you! Oh, what encouragement this ought to give you! If you cannot pray, He can! And if you feel as if your prayers must be shut out, yet His intercession cannot be denied! Come and trust Him! Come and trust Him! He who pleads for you will not reject you—do not entertain so unkind a thought—but come and cast yourself upon Him. Has He not said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out”? Venture upon the assured truth of that Word and you will be received into the abode of His love.

I am sure, too that if Jesus Christ pleads for transgressors as transgressors, while as yet they have not begun to pray for themselves, He will be sure to hear them when they are, at last, led to pray. When the transgressor becomes a penitent. When he weeps because he has gone astray—let us be quite sure that the Lord of Mercy, who went after him in his sin, will come to meet him, now that he returns! There can be no doubt about that! I have known what it is to catch at this text when I have been heavy in heart. I have seen my sinfulness and I have been filled with distress, but I have blessed the Lord Jesus Christ that He makes intercession for the transgressors, for then I may venture to believe that He intercedes for *me* since I am a transgressor beyond all doubt.

Then again, when my spirit has revived, and I have said, “But yet I am a child of God and I know I am born from above,” then I have drawn a further inference—if He makes intercession for transgressors, then depend upon it—He is even more intent upon pleading for His own people! If He is heard for those who are out of the way, assuredly He will be heard for those who have returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. For them, above all others, He will be sure to plead, for He lives to intercede for all who come unto God by Him! In order that our confidence may be increased, consider the effect of our Lord’s intercession for transgressors. Remember, first, that many of the worst of transgressors have been preserved in life in answer to Christ’s prayer.

Had it not been for His pleading, they would have been dead long ago. You know the parable of the fig tree that cumbered the ground, bearing no fruit and impoverishing the soil? The master of the vineyard said, “Cut it

down,” but the vinedresser said, “Let it alone this year, also, till I shall dig about it and fertilize it: and if it bears fruit, well.” Need I say who He is that stops the axe which, otherwise, had long ago been laid at the root of the barren tree? I tell you ungodly men and women that you owe your very *lives* to my Lord’s interference on your behalf! You did not hear the intercession, but the great Owner of the vineyard heard it—and in answer to the gracious entreaties of His Son, He has let you live a little longer!

Still, are you where the Gospel can come at you and where the Holy Spirit can renew you? Is there no ground for faith in this gracious fact? Can you not trust in Him through whose instrumentality you are yet alive? Say to your heavenly Father—

***“Lord, and am I yet alive,
Not in torments, not in Hell!
Still does Your good Spirit strive—
With the chief of sinners dwell?”***

I do not doubt but that between the prayer of Christ for His murderers and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, there was an intimate connection. As the prayer of Stephen brought Saul into the Church and made him an Apostle, so the prayer of Christ brought in 3,000 at Pentecost to become His disciples. The Spirit of God was given “to the rebellious, also,” in answer to the pleading of our Lord!

Now, it is a great blessing to have the Spirit of God given to the sons of men. And if this comes through Jesus’ prayers, let us trust in Him, for what will not come if we rely upon His power? Upon sinners He will still display His power—they will be pricked in their hearts and will believe in Him whom they have pierced. It is through Christ’s intercession that our poor prayers are accepted with God. John, in Revelation, saw another angel standing at the altar, having a golden censer, to whom there was given much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the Throne.

From where did all the incense come? What is it but Jesus’ merits? Our prayers are only accepted because of His prayers. If, then, the intercession of Christ for transgressors has made the prayers of transgressors to be accepted, let us, without wavering, put our trust in Him and let us show it by offering our supplications with a full assurance of faith and an unshaking confidence in the promise of our Covenant God! Are not all the promises, yes and amen, in Christ Jesus? Let us remember Him and ask in faith, nothing wavering.

It is through the prayers of Christ, too, that we are kept in the hour of temptation. Remember what He said to Peter, “I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not,” when Satan desired to have him and sift him as wheat. “Father, keep them from the Evil One” is a part of our Lord’s supplication—and His Father always hears Him! Well, if we are kept in the midst of temptation from being destroyed because Christ pleads for us, let us never fear to trust ourselves in His kind, careful hands! He can keep us, for He has kept us! If His prayers have delivered us out of the hands of Satan, His eternal power can bring us safely home though Death lies in the way. Indeed, it is because He pleads that we are saved at all! He is

“able, also, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.”

This, also, is one grand reason why we are able to challenge all the accusations of the world and of the devil, for, “Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who, also, makes intercession for us.” Satan’s charges are all answered by our Advocate! He defends us at the Judgment Seat when we stand there like Joshua in filthy garments, accused by the devil and the verdict is always given in our favor— “Take away his filthy garments from him.” Oh, you that would bring slanderous accusations against the saints of God, they will not damage us in the court of the great King, for, “if any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.”

Think, my dear Brothers and Sisters, of what the intercession of Jesus has done, and you will clearly perceive great inducements to place your sole reliance in your Lord. You who have never trusted Him, will you, this very morning, begin to do so? Come, weary Heart, take the Lord Jesus to be your confidence—what more do you need? Can you desire a better Friend than He is, a more prevalent Advocate before the Throne? Come, leave all other trusts and yield yourselves to Him this morning! I pray you, accept this advice of love! And you, you saints, if you are foolish enough to have doubts and fears, come, see how Jesus pleads for you! Give Him your burden to bear, leave with Him your anxieties at this moment that He may care for you. He will carry your case before the Eternal Throne and carry it through to success!

He who engages a solicitor to manage his legal business among men leaves his affairs in his hands. And he who has such a pleader before God as Christ Jesus, the Wonderful Counselor, has no need to torment himself with anxieties! Rather, let him rest in Jesus, and wait for the result with patience—

**“Give Him, my Soul,
Your cause to plead,
Nor doubt the Father’s Grace.”**

So much, then, for the duty of exercising confidence in Him. May the Holy Spirit fill you with faith and peace!

III. And now, in the third place, I pray that our text may inspire us with the spirit of *obedience* to His example. I say obedience to His example, for I take the example of Christ to be an embodied precept as much binding upon us as His written commands. The life of Christ is a precept to those who profess to be His disciples. Now, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, may I put a few practical matters before you and will you endeavor, by the help of God’s Spirit, to carry them out?

First, then, your Lord makes intercession for the transgressors—therefore imitate Him by forgiving all transgressions against yourself. Have any offended you? Let the very recollection of the offense, as far as possible, pass from your minds, for none have ever injured you as men injured Him! Let me say as *you*, yourself, have injured Him! They have not nailed you to a cross, nor pierced your hands, feet and side. Yet, if He

said, "Father, forgive them," well may you say the same. Ten thousand talents did you owe? Yet He forgave you all that debt, not without a grievous outlay to Himself—your brother owes you but a hundred pence—will you take him by the throat? Will you not, rather, freely forgive him even to 70 times seven?

Can you not forgive him? If you find it to be impossible, I will not speak to you any longer as a Christian, because I must doubt if you are a Believer at all! The Lord cannot accept you while you are unforgiving since He, Himself, says, "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has anything against you; leave there your gift before the altar and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift." If peace is not made, you will not be accepted! God does not hear those in whose hearts malice and enmity find a lodging! Yet I would speak to you in tones of love rather than with words of threats—as a follower of the gentle Christ, I beseech you imitate Him in this and you shall find rest and comfort for your soul.

From the day in which Christ forgives you, rise to that nobility of character which finds pleasure in forgiving all offenses fully and frankly for Christ's sake. Surely, the Atonement which He offered, if it satisfied God, may well satisfy you and make amends for the sin of your brother against you as well as against the Lord! Jesus took upon Himself the transgressions of the second table of the Law, as well as of the first—and will you bring a suit against your brother for the sin which Jesus bore? Brothers and Sisters, you must forgive, for the blood has blotted out the record! Let these words of Scripture drop upon your hearts like gentle dew from Heaven—"Be you kind, one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you."

Next, imitate Christ, dear Friends, in pleading for *yourselves*. Since you are transgressors and you see that Jesus intercedes for transgressors, make bold to say, "If He pleads for such as I am, I will put in my humble petition and hope to be heard through Him. Since I hear Him cry, 'Father, forgive them,' I will humbly weep at His feet and try to mingle my faint and trembling plea with His all-prevalent supplication." When Jesus says, "Father, forgive them," it will be your wisdom to cry, "Father, forgive *me*!" Dear Hearer, that is the way to be saved! Let your prayers hang like the golden bells upon the skirts of the great High Priest! He will carry them within the veil and make them ring out sweetly there. As music borne on the breeze is heard afar, so shall your prayers have a Listener in Heaven because Jesus wafts them there. Since your prayers are feeble, yoke them to the Omnipotence of His intercession! Let His merits be as wings on which they may soar and His power as hands with which they may grasp the priceless blessings.

What shall I say to those who refuse to pray when they have such an encouragement as the aid of Jesus? Tones of tenderness are suitable when addressing the ungodly when we would persuade them to pray. But if they refuse the intercession of Jesus Christ, Himself, then must we add our solemn warnings! If you perish, your blood is on your own heads—we must say, Amen, to your condemnation and bear witness that you deserve

to be doubly punished! Rejecters of great mercy must expect great wrath. The intercession of your Savior, when refused, will be visited upon you most terribly in the day when He becomes your Judge.

Let us imitate our Lord in a third point, dear Friends, namely, if we have been forgiven our transgressions, let us now intercede for transgressors, since Jesus does so. He is the great Example of all His disciples, and, if He makes it His constant business to supplicate for sinners, should not His people unite with Him? Therefore would I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance to come together in your hundreds and in your thousands to pray. Never let our Prayer Meetings decline! Let us, as a Church, make intercession for transgressors and never rest from seeking the conversion of all around us. I trust that every day, so often as you bow the knee for yourselves, you will make intercession for the transgressors!

Poor things, many of them are sinning against their own souls, but they know not what they do! They think to find pleasure in sin! In this, also, they know not what they do. They break the Sabbath. They despise the sanctuary. They reject Christ. They go downward to Hell with mirth, singing merry glees as if they were going to a wedding feast! They know not what they do! But you know what they are doing. By your humanity—scarcely shall I need to urge a stronger motive—I say, by mere humanity I beseech you, do all you can for these poor souls and especially pray for them! It is not much you are asked to do—you are not pointed to the Cross and bid to bleed there for sinners! You are but asked to make intercession.

Intercession is an honorable service. It is an ennobling thing that a sinner like yourself should be allowed to entreat the King for others. If you could have permission to frequent the Queen's courts, you would not think it a hardship to be asked to present a petition for another. It would be a delight to be enjoyed, a privilege to be snatched at eagerly that you should be permitted to present requests for others. Oh, stand where Abraham stood and plead for sinners! Sodom could scarcely be worse than many portions of the world at this hour. Plead, then, with all your hearts! Plead again and again, and again with the Lord, though you are but dust and ashes—and cease not till the Lord says, "I have heard the petition. I will bless the city. I will save the millions and my Son shall be glorified."

I have not quite done, for I have a further duty to speak of, and it is this. Let us take care, dear Friends, that if we do plead for others, we mix with it the doing of good to them, because it is not recorded that He made intercession for transgressors until it is first written, "He bore the sin of many." For us to pray for sinners without *instructing* them, without exerting ourselves to *awaken* them, or making any sacrifice for their *conversion*—without using any likely means for their impression and conviction—would be a piece of mere formality on our part. According to our ability, we must prove the sincerity of our petitions by our *actions*. Prayer without *effort* is falsehood—and that cannot be pleasing to God. Yield up

yourselves to seek the good of others and then may you intercede with honest hearts.

Lastly, if Christ appears in Heaven for us, let us be glad to appear on earth for Him. He acknowledges us before God and the holy angels—let us not be ashamed to confess Him before men and devils. If Christ pleads with God for men, let us not be backward to plead with men for God. If He, by His intercession, saves us to the uttermost, let us hasten to *serve* Him to the uttermost. If He spends eternity in intercession for us, let us spend our time in intercession for His cause. If He thinks of us, we ought, also, to think of His people and especially supplicate for His afflicted. If He watches our cases and adapts His prayers to our necessities, let us observe the needs of His people and plead for them with understanding.

Alas, how soon do men weary of pleading for our Lord! If a whole day is set apart for prayer and the meeting is not carefully managed, it readily becomes a weariness of the flesh. Prayer Meetings very easily lose their flame and burn low. Shame on these laggard spirits and this heavy flesh of ours which needs to be pampered with liveliness and brevity or we go to sleep at our devotions! “Forever” is not too long for Him to plead and yet an *hour* tries us! On and on and on through all the ages His intercession rises to the Throne of God and yet we weaken and our prayers are half dead in a short season!

Look, Moses lets his hands hang down and Amalek is defeating Joshua in the plain! Can we endure to be losing victories and causing the enemy to triumph? If our ministers are unsuccessful. If our laborers for Christ in foreign lands make little headway. If the work of Christ drags, is it not because in the secret place of intercession we have but little strength? The lack of prayer is the weakness of the Church! If we awakened ourselves to lay hold upon the Covenant Angel and resolutely cried, “I will not let You go, except You bless me,” we should enrich ourselves and our age! If we used more of the strong reasons which make up the weapon of all-prayer, our victories would not be so few and far between!

Our interceding Lord is hindered for lack of an interceding Church! The kingdom comes not because so little use is made of the Throne of Grace. Get to your knees, my Brothers and Sisters, for on your knees you conquer! Go to the Mercy Seat and remain there! What better argument can I use with you than this—Jesus is there—and if you desire His company you must often times resort there. If you want to taste His dearest, sweetest love, do what He is doing—union of work will create a new communion of heart. Let us never be absent when praying men meet together! Let us make a point of frequenting assemblies gathered for prayer, even if we give up other occupations. While we live, let us be, above all things, men of prayer! And when we die, if nothing else can be said of us, may men give us this epitaph, which is, also, our Lord’s memorial—“He made intercession for the transgressors.” Amen.

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CHRIST'S CONNECTION WITH SINNERS THE SOURCE OF HIS GLORY NO. 2070

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"Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great. And He shall divide the spoil with the strong. Because He has poured out His soul unto death. And He was numbered with the transgressors. And He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors."

Isaiah 53:12.

WE may regard this verse as a kind of Covenant made between the everlasting God, the infinite Jehovah on the one part, and our great Representative, Mediator and Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, on the other part. The incarnate God is to be bruised and wounded. He is to pour out His soul unto death and by a travail of soul He is to bear the sin of many. And then His ultimate reward is to be that God will divide Him a portion with the great and He Himself shall divide the spoil with the strong.

Note the double recompense and joyfully distinguish between the two divisions—that which Jehovah makes for Him and that which He makes Himself. Our champion, like another David, is to confront and conquer the great enemy of the Lord's people, and then He is to have His reward. Unlike David, He is to pour out His soul and die in the conflict, and then He is to receive a glorious portion from the Father, and He is also Himself to seize upon the spoil of the vanquished foe.

At this moment, our Lord Jesus is enjoying the reward which His Father has allotted Him—"Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great." He is no more despised and rejected. Who dares to dishonor a majesty so surpassing? See how the whole host of Heaven adores Him! All the pomp of

glory is displayed around Him. To Him the cherubim and seraphim continually cry in their ceaseless worship and undivided adoration. The four-and-twenty elders, representing the ancient and the present Church cast their crowns at His feet. And the myriads of the redeemed whose robes are washed in His blood pour forth their love and life at His feet. He has His portion with the great—none are so great as He.

He is not only King but kingmaker for He has made His most humble followers priests and kings unto God and His royalty is multiplied in each of them. How much His Father honors Him, it is not for my tongue to tell you. And if it were possible for me to tell it in words, yet the inner meaning could never be compassed by such narrow hearts as ours. He has infinite Glory from the great Father God. He lives forever, King of kings and Lord of lords and all hallelujahs come up before Him. Imagination cannot reach the height of His immeasurable majesty and happiness.

And why these honors? What has He done to merit these immeasurable glories? The answer is that He has done these four things—"He has poured out His soul unto death. And He was numbered with the transgressors. And he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors." In addition to what His Father gives Him, it is worthy of contemplation that our Lord has taken, in His life-conflict, great spoils with His own hands. "He shall divide the spoil with the strong." He has spoiled sin, death and Hell—each one the vanquisher of our race, the spoiler of the entire world.

He has overcome these three, and in each case has led captivity captive. What must be the spoils of such victories? All the processions of triumph that ever went up the Sacra Via to the Capitol of Rome we may dismiss as empty pageants. All the glories of Assyria, Babylon, Persia and Greece are blots of the cruel past which sicken us in remembrance. These led liberty captive. But when He ascended on high He led captivity captive. Jesus blesses all by His victories and curses none. He spoiled no man of his goods—He only brought death on death, destruction on the Destroyer and captivity upon captivity.

In all His spoils men are gainers. And therefore, when the incarnate God divides the spoil with the strong, all His people may joyfully shout without the reservation of a sigh for the conquered and the spoiled. That was a rich triumph and the spoils He won are spoils that enrich myriads of Believers today and shall enrich them throughout all the ages that are to come.

And why these spoils? What has He done? These trophies—where were they won? What was the conflict? Here is the answer—"Because He has poured out His soul unto death. And He was numbered with the transgressors. And He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors." It is a strange fact that I am going to declare, but it is no less true than strange—according to our text the extraordinary glories of Christ, as Savior, have all been earned by His connection with human sin. He has gotten His most illustrious splendor, His brightest jewels, His most Divine crowns out of coming into contact with this poor fallen race.

What is man? What are all men? Nothings, nobodies. This great globe itself—what is it in connection with the vast creation of God? One grain of the sweepings of dust behind the door. The small dust of the balance bears a larger proportion to the eternal hills than this little globe to the great worlds which speak to us across the midnight sky. Yet all those glittering worlds that we can see with the telescope bear an extremely minute proportion to the illimitable fields of Divine creation. We know not that anywhere Christ ever came into contact with sin, except upon this little ball. We have no Revelation of any other redemption. This obscure star is faith's great marvel!

How shall we comprehend that here the eternal Deity did take the nature of a man and here did suffer in the sinner's place, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God"? All the eyes of all the angels turn this way. This mystery is too great for them. They cannot compass its full meaning but desire to look into it. We know not that anywhere in all the vast creation of God there has ever been seen the likes of this matchless,

unparalleled deed of Divine Grace—that the Son of God, in mighty love, should come down to earth and come into contact with human *sin* that He might put it away.

No one imagines that our Lord has *often* suffered. No, He has been incarnate once and has been sacrificed but once. “Once in the end of the world has He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” And this for guilty men! I am overwhelmed. I would gladly sit down in silence and give way to adoring wonder.

May the Holy Spirit, Himself, now aid me, for my need is great! I am going to speak about these four things very briefly. I have nothing of my own to say about them. I only want to put them before you as much as I can in their naked simplicity—there is a beauty in them which needs no describing, which would be degraded by any adornment of human speech. Here are four flints out of which you may strike sparks of Divine fire if you are but willing to see their brightness. These four things that Jesus did, the four reasons why He is crowned with such superlative honor, are connected with *you*, if you have but faith to perceive the connection—so connected that they will save you—will even make you partake in the glory which has come of them.

I. The first source of the Mediator's glory is, that He, out of His love to guilty men, has **POURED OUT HIS SOUL UNTO DEATH.**

Remember that the penalty of sin is death. “The soul that sins, it shall die.” “For in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.” As God made us, we should not have died. There is about man, when he is in connection with God, no reason for death. But as soon as man touched evil he was divided from God and he took into his veins the poison which brings death with it and all its train of woes. Jesus Christ, our Substitute, when He poured out His soul unto death, was bearing the penalty that is due to sin. This is taught in the Bible—in fact, it is the chief theme of Holy Scripture. Whenever sin was to be put away, it was by the sacrifice of a life.

All through the Jewish Law it stands conspicuous that, “Without shedding of blood is no remission of sin.” God has so impressed this Truth upon humanity that you can scarcely go into any nation, however unenlightened, but there is connected with their religion the idea of sacrifice, and therefore the idea of the offering of a life on account of a broken Law. Now, the Lord Jesus came into such connection with men that He bore the death penalty which guilty men had incurred.

Remember the expression—“He has poured out His soul unto death.” It is deliberate. “He has poured out His soul.” It is a libation presented with thought and care. Not the mere spilling of His blood but the resolute, determinate *pouring out* of His whole life unto its last drop—the pouring it out unto *death*. Now, Christ's resolve to die for you and for me was not that of a brave soldier who rushes up to the cannon's mouth in a moment of excitement. But He was practically pouring out His life from the day when His public ministry commenced, if not before. He was always dying, by living, at such a rate that His zeal consumed Him—“The zeal of Your house has eaten Me up.” Deliberately and as it were, drop by drop, He was letting His soul fall upon the ground—till at length, upon the tree of

doom—He emptied it all out and cried, “It is finished,” and gave up the ghost. “He poured out His soul unto death.”

As it was deliberate, so it was most real and true. I pray you do not think of Christ as pouring out His soul as though the outpouring was a kind of sentiment of self-abnegation. As though it made Him spend a sort of ecstatic life in dream-land and suffer only in thought, intent and sympathy. My Lord suffered as you suffer, only more keenly. For He had never injured His body or soul by any act of excess so as to take off the edge from His sensitiveness. His was the pouring out of a whole soul in all the phases of suffering into which perfect souls can pass. He felt the horror of sin as we who have sinned could not feel it, and the sight of evil afflicted Him much more than it does the purest among us. His was *real* suffering, *real* poverty, *real* weariness.

And when He came to His last agony, His bloody sweat was no fiction—His exceeding sorrow unto death was no fancy. When the scourges fell upon His shoulders it was true pain that He suffered. And the nails and the spear and the sponge and the vinegar—these tell of a real passion—a death such as probably you and I shall never know. Certainly we shall never experience that pouring out of our soul unto death which was peculiar to Jesus—in which He went far beyond martyrs in their most extreme griefs. There were points of anguish about His death which were for Himself, and for Himself, alone. “He has poured out His soul unto death,” in grief most weighty—so weighty that it can never be fully weighed in any scales of mortal sympathy.

And He did this, remember, voluntarily. If I were to die for any of you, what would it amount to, but that I paid the debt of nature a little sooner than I must ultimately have paid it? For we must all die, sooner or later. But the Christ needed not to die at all so far as He, Himself, was personally concerned. There was no cause within Himself why He should go to the Cross to lay down His life. He yielded Himself up a willing sacrifice for our sins. Herein lies much of the preciousness of His propitiation to you and to me. Love, love immeasurable, led the immortal Lord to die for man.

Let us think it over and melt into loving gratitude. A death endured out of *pure love*. A death which was altogether unnecessary on His own account and, indeed, a superfluous act, save that it behooved Him to suffer that He might fulfill His office of a Savior and bring us near to God. This is a matter which should set our hearts on fire with fervent gratitude to the Lord who loved us to the death. “He has poured out His soul unto death.” I will say no more about it, except that you see how complete it was.

Jesus gave poor sinners *everything*. His every faculty was laid out for them. To His last rag He was stripped upon the Cross. No part of His body or of His soul was kept back from being made a sacrifice. The last drop, as I said before, was poured out till the cup was drained. He made no reserve—He kept not back even His innermost soul—“He has poured out His soul unto death.”

Consider these two Truths of God together. He is the Lord God Almighty before whom the hosts of angels bow with joy. Yet on yonder Cross He pours out His soul unto death. And He does it not because of anything that is in Him, that renders it needful, but for *your* sake and for *mine*—for

the salvation of all those who put their trust in Him. Put your trust in Him, then, without reserve. Pour out your souls in full *trust*—even as He poured out *His* soul unto *death*. Come and rest in Him and then see the reason why He is crowned with majesty.

His death for your sins is the reason why He divides the spoils with the strong. He has His portion with the great because He “died, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” This, which brought Him so much shame, has now brought Him all His glory. Come and trust Him! Come and trust Him wholly! Come and trust Him *now!*

II. Secondly and somewhat briefly. It appears in the text that our Lord did not only bear the penalty due to sinners but HE WAS NUMBERED WITH SINNERS. “He was numbered with the transgressors.” There is a touch of nearness to the sinner about this which there is not in the first clause. He bears death for the sinner. But you would not suppose, if you had not read it, that He would be written in the sinners’ register. He was not and could not be a *sinner*. But it is written, “He was numbered with the transgressors.” O Sinner, see how close Jesus comes to you? Is there a census taken of sinners? Then, in that census, the name of Jesus is written down. “He was numbered with the transgressors.”

He never was a transgressor—it was impossible that He could be. It would be blasphemy to say that the Son of God ever was a transgressor against His Father’s Laws. In Him was no sin in any sense, or shape, or form. His spotless birth, His perfect nature, His holy life, all make Him, “separate from sinners.” How, then, was He numbered with the transgressors? This makes it the more marvelous because it is so hurtful to a man who is pure, to be numbered with the impure. What would any woman with a delicate purity of mind think if she were numbered with the harlots? What would any honest man among us think if he were numbered with thieves?

But that would be nothing compared with the holy Lord Jesus being numbered with the transgressors. And yet to this He submitted for our sakes. I said that He could not be a transgressor. But we are not like He in this. Anyone of us could be either unjust or dishonest. For, alas, sin dwells in us, and the possibilities of its still greater development are rich! But Jesus was clean in nature and pure in heart and therefore He could never be tainted with evil. And yet the inspired Prophet says, “He was numbered with the transgressors.” This was a humiliation, indeed! This was coming down to where the sinner lay and bowing over him to lift him up.

Our Lord Jesus was numbered with the transgressors, first, by the tongue of slander. They called Him a drunken man and a wine-bibber—they even called Him Beelzebub. That was sharp enough for Him to bear, whom all the angels salute as “Holy, holy, holy!” Accused of blasphemy, sedition, and so forth, He had enough to bear from evil lips. Nothing was too vile to be cast upon Him by those who said, “Let Him be crucified.” Reproach never spared the Spotless One but spent its utmost venom on Him. Like the Psalmist, He was the song of the drunkard. The very thieves who were crucified with Him reviled Him.

He was numbered with the transgressors in the earthly courts of justice. He stood at the bar as a common felon though He was Judge of all. Though they could not find witnesses whose testimony agreed, yet they condemned Him. Though Pilate had to say, "Why, what evil has He done?" yet He was taken out with two malefactors that He might die side by side with them. And then, we are told by the Evangelist, the Scripture was fulfilled—"He was numbered with the transgressors" (Mark 15:28).

To go a little farther, our Lord Jesus Christ on earth was treated, in the Providence of God, as transgressors are treated. Transgression sometimes brings on men poverty, sickness, reproach and desertion. And Jesus Christ had to take His share of all these with sinful men. No wind was tempered for this shorn Lamb. No winter's frost was stayed, no night dews dried to comfort His secret agonies—

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

All things in this world that are so keen and terrible to man, because man has become so guilty, were just as keen and terrible to Him. The sun shone on Him till His tongue was dried up like a potsherd and did cleave to His jaws and He cried, "I thirst."

The nails that pierced Him tore His tender flesh as they would have torn that of the sinful. Fever parched Him till His tongue cleaved to His jaws. There was no softening of the laws of nature for this Man because He had never offended. But He had to stand as a sinner where we sinners stand—to suffer from the common laws of a sin-cursed world—though He was not, and could not, be a sinner. "In Him was no sin." Yet He was numbered with the transgressors.

And look, my Brethren. Oh, that I may know how to speak properly on it! The Holy God treated Him as if He were one of *us*—"it pleased the Father to bruise Him. He has put Him to grief." God not only turned His back on transgressors but He turned His back on His Son, who was numbered with them. God never can forsake the perfectly innocent, yet He who was perfectly innocent said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Sinking and anguish of spirit, even to soul-death, cannot come to a man who is numbered with the perfectly righteous. It was because Jesus voluntarily put Himself into the sinner's place that He had to bear the sinner's doom.

And He being numbered with the transgressors, the justice which smites sin smote Him. The frown that falls on sin fell on Him. The darkness which comes over human sin gathered in sevenfold night about His sacred brow. In the day of the Lord's anger, "He was numbered with the transgressors."

As this is the reason why He is now exalted, it seems to me that you and I ought to feel a mingling of grief and joy at this time to think that the Lord Jesus would condescend to put His name down with transgressors. You know what a transgressor is, don't you? One who has done wrong. One who has broken laws. One who has gone beyond bounds and committed evil. Well, Jesus Christ says, "Father, that I might save these transgressors, put My name down among them." It was necessary that it

should be so, that He, standing in our place, might lift us into His place, transferring His righteousness to us, as He took our sin upon Himself.

I could weep as I tell you that "He was numbered with the transgressors." I cannot preach. This theme baffles me altogether. I wish that you would look into it yourselves. Never mind my words. Think of my Lord and of these two things—"He has poured out His soul unto death. And He was numbered with the transgressors."

III. That leads me to the third matter by which the Lord Jesus Christ has won His victories and earned reward of God. It is this—"HE BORE THE SIN OF MANY."

Now do not think that these words are mine, and therefore find fault with them. Deliberately observe that these are the words of the Holy Spirit. "He bore the sin"—"He bore the sin of many." They quibble with us for saying that He bore the chastisement of sin. We shall say it none the less plainly. But we shall go much further and insist upon it that, literally, Jesus bore the sin of man. Or else why did He die? Why did He die at all? "He was Man," you say, "and, therefore, He died." There was no reason why the Christ should die because He was a Man—for being born without the taint of sin and having lived a spotless life and having never violated the Law of God—there could be no justice in Christ's dying at all, if there was not some reason for it apart from Himself.

It is an act of injustice that Jesus should be permitted to die, at all, unless there can be found a *reason* apart from His own personal conduct. If death is the consequence of sin, there being no sin in Christ, the consequence could not follow without the cause. You tell me that by wicked hands He was crucified—it was so, and yet the Scripture assures us that this was by the determinate purpose and foreknowledge of *God*. How could this have been, had our Lord had no connection with sin? It was not necessary that He should die because He was Man. He might have been taken to Heaven in a chariot of fire. Or it might have been said of Him, as of Enoch, "He was not, for God took Him." If the rough Elijah ascended to Heaven, how much more the gentle, tender, perfect, absolutely perfect Christ might have been expected to do so! There was no reason, then, in His personal nature, why He should die.

"He died," said one, "as an example." But, my dear Friends, I do not see that. In His life He is an example to us through and through, and so He is in His death. If we must die, it is an example to us that we should die as bravely, as patiently, as believingly, as He did. But we are not bound to die at all unless God requires it at our hands. Indeed, we are bound to shun death if it can virtuously be avoided. Self-preservation is a Law of nature—and for any man to voluntarily give himself up to die without some grand purpose would not be justifiable.

It is only because there is a Law that we must die that we may judge ourselves permitted to volunteer to die. The Savior does not set us an example in a sphere into which we cannot enter. In that case He goes beyond us altogether and treads the winepress alone. He is a Being whom we cannot follow in the higher walks in which He is both God and Man. In His great voluntary self-surrender unto death, the Son of God stoops from a position which we, who are mortal, because of sin, have never held.

“Well,” you say, “but Jesus Christ died as an exhibition of Divine love.” This is true in a certain sense, but from another point of view, of all the things I have ever heard, this does seem to me to be the most monstrous statement that could be made. That Jesus Christ, dying because of our sins, is a wonderful example of Divine love, I know, admit and glory in. But that Christ's dying was an instance of Divine *love*, if He did not die because He bore our sins, I entirely deny. There is no exhibition of Divine *love* in the death of Christ if it is not for *our* sins. But an exhibition of a very different sort. The death of the perfect Son of God, per se, without its great object, does not exhibit love but the reverse.

What? Does God put to death His only begotten Son, the perfectly pure and holy Being? Is this the finale of a life of obedience? Well, then, I see no love in God at all. It seems to me to be the reverse of love that it should be so. Apart from sin-bearing, the statement that Jesus must die the death of the Cross to show us that his Father is full of love, is sheer nonsense. But if He died in our place, then the gift of Jesus Christ by the Father is undoubtedly a glorious instance of Divine love.

Behold and wonder, that “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” This is love, if you please. But not the mere fact that the Son of God should be put to death. That were a thing altogether unaccountable, not to be justified, but to be looked upon as a horrible mystery never to be explained—that the blessed Son of God should die—if we did not receive this full and complete explanation, “He bore the sin of many.”

If our Lord's bearing our sin for us is not the Gospel, I have no Gospel to preach. Brothers and Sisters, I have fooled you these thirty-five years, if this is not the Gospel. I am a lost man, if this is not the Gospel. For I have no hope beneath Heaven, neither in time nor in eternity, save only in this belief—that Jesus, in *my* place, bore both my punishment and sin. If our Lord did so bear our sin we have a firm and joyous confidence. God would not accept a Substitute in our place and then punish us. If Jesus suffered in my place, I shall not suffer. If another has gone to prison and to death for me, I shall not go there. If the axe has fallen on the neck of Him that took my place, justice is satisfied, the Law is vindicated, I am free, happy, joyful, grateful—and therefore, bound forever to serve Him who loved me and gave Himself for me.

I do not know how you look upon this doctrine, but it seems to me to be something worth telling everywhere. I would like to make every wind bear it on its wings and every wave waft it on its crest. There is a just and righteous way to forgive sin—Jesus bearing the death penalty in the sinners' place—that whosoever believes in Him should be justified from all things from which the Law could not deliver him.

Now, these three things—that He poured out His soul unto death and so bore the sinner's penalty. That He was numbered with the transgressors and so stood side by side with sinners. And next, that He actually bore their sin and so came into a wonderful contact with sin which did not defile Him, but which enabled Him to put away the sin which defiled men—these three things are the reasons of the glory of our Lord Jesus.

God, for these three things and one more, makes Him to divide the spoil with the strong, and divides Him a portion with the great.

IV. The last thing is this—"HE MADE INTERCESSION FOR THE TRANSGRESSORS." You see, all along Christ gets His glory by standing side by side with guilty men. A curious mine it is to get gold out of. I will not venture to say what Augustine, in a burst of enthusiasm, once uttered. When speaking of Adam's Fall and then describing all the glory that comes to God out of the salvation of the guilty, that holy man could not help using the unguarded expression, "Beata culpa!" "Happy fault!" Yet, though I would not say so much as that, I do see that out of this dunghill of sin Christ has brought this diamond of His Glory by our salvation.

If there had been no sinners, there could not have been a Savior. If no sin, no pouring out of the soul unto death. And if no pouring out of the soul unto death, no dividing a portion with the great. If there had been no guilt, there had been no act of expiation. In the wondrous act of expiation by our great Substitute, the Godhead is more gloriously revealed than in all the creations and Providences of the Divine power and wisdom—

***"Sin, which strove that love to quell,
Woke yet more its wondrous blaze;
Eden, Bethlehem, Calvary, tell,
More than all beside, His praise."***

In the person of His dying Son, bleeding for human guilt, the Lord God has focused the splendor of His infinity. If you would see God, you must look to Calvary. God in Christ Jesus—this is God, indeed. God in Christ Jesus—bearing sin and putting it away—here you see what a God can do in boundless love! "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

But this is the finale of it. He makes intercession for the transgressors. Who among us will take up the part of the guilty? Who will plead for the guilty? I know, in certain cases, the lawyer will sell his tongue to the most polluted. But if a man were perfectly pure you would not find him saying a word in defense of the guilty, would you? So far as the man was guilty he could not be defended. Unless there were a fear of too severe a punishment, no one would take his part. And even in that case, the offender is viewed as so far deserving that he is not guilty enough for so heavy a penalty. For the guilty we could not plead so as to deny or extenuate evil.

A just man would plead for innocent persons who might be falsely accused—but our Lord made intercession for transgressors. When He was here on earth how tender He was with transgressors! Women that were sinners came around Him and He never bade them be gone. She that was taken in adultery, oh, how He dealt with her! When Peter was about to deny Him, He said, "I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." Those nights out there on the cold mountains were not spent for Himself, but for sinners. He bore on His heart the names of guilty men.

He was always pleading their cause and when He came to die, He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He took their part, you see. He would clear them of guilt if He could. I dare say that He has often prayed like that for you. When you have been despising religion and saying vile things about your Lord, He has said, "Ah, poor Soul! It is like

the ravings of a man in a fever who does not know what he is talking about. He does not know what he is saying. Father, forgive him.”

Our blessed Lord pleaded thus when He was here. And now He has gone up yonder He is pleading still for the same persons. Though we cannot see through that veil which hides the invisible from us, yet the eye of faith, I hope, is strong enough to see that He is at the Father's side at this moment making intercession for transgressors. I do not picture Him up yonder as using entreaties or pleading to an agony. Oh, no! With authority He intercedes, for He has finished the work and He claims the reward. I do not even picture Him as using words. Those are the poor tools with which *men* plead with men. But the death which our Lord endured for the guilty is pleading with the Father.

The death of Christ is a well-spring of delight to God. The Father thinks of what Jesus has suffered in vindication of the Law, even of His obedience unto death. And *that* thought has power with the Judge of all the earth. In effect, the wounds of Jesus perpetually bleed. Still His cries of the great Sacrifice come up into His Father's ear. The Godhead, delighted to bless, is charmed to find the way of blessing men always open by the fact that the propitiation has been made, the sin has been put away.

I cannot continue longer, for strength and time fail me. Only it does seem to me so delightful to think that Jesus pleads for sinners. If you see Him die, He is dying for sinners. If you see Him with His name written down in a register, that register is the sinners' census book—His name is written there that He may be in a position advantageous for sinners. If you see Him pleading now that He is risen, He is the advocate for sinners. Did you ever read this text in the Bible—“If any man does not sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous”? No, you never did! But I will tell you what you *do* read there—“If any man *sin*, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.” “If any man *sin*.”

Is there anybody here that never sinned? Then there is no Christ for you. He never did anything for you and never will. Are you guilty? Do you feel it? Do you confess it? Do you own it? Christ is for *you*. If a doctor were to set up in the town he would never think of sending out a circular in such terms as these—“Henry Smith, M.D., invites healthy persons to call upon him, for he is proficient in the healing arts.” There will be no business for “Henry Smith, M.D.,” among the healthy folks—let him be as learned as he may. And if he is known as an eminent physician, he does not need to intimate that sick persons are welcome to call upon him. For the very fact that he *is* a physician means that he lives to serve the sick.

My Lord Jesus Christ, with all His saving power, cannot save those who do not need saving. If they have no sin He cannot cleanse them from it. Can He? What, then, have some of you to do with the Savior? You are very good, respectable people that have never done anything wrong in all your lives—what is Jesus to you? Of course, you go your own way and take care of your own selves and forget the idea of being beholden to Free Grace. Alas, this is folly! How foolish you are to think you are such characters! For you are nothing of the sort. If you look within, your heart is as foul as a black chimney that has never been swept.

Our hearts are wells of defilement. Oh, that you could see this and quit your false righteousness! If you will not, there is nothing in Jesus for you. He derives His glory from sinners, not from self-conceited folks like you. But, you guilty ones that will admit and confess your guilt may cheerfully remember that those four things which Jesus did, He did in connection with sinners—and it is because He did them in connection with sinners—that He is this day crowned with glory and honor and majesty.

Jesus Christ does not shrink from sinners. What then? O you Sinners, do not shrink from Him! If Jesus does not shrink from sinners—(let me say it again)—you Sinners, do not shrink from Him. If we were to go today to some of those unhappy parts of the world in the north of Europe (it makes one's blood curdle to think that there are such places), where poor decaying lepers are made to live alone. And if these poor creatures came our way, we should wish them every blessing and should desire for them every comfort. But while we were *expressing* our kind wishes we should be gradually edging off and leaving a distance between ourselves and their horrible pollution.

That is *not* the way in which Jesus acts towards sinners—He draws near and never sets a hedge between Himself and them. You need not undergo a quarantine before you may enter the port of salvation by Christ. Yonder is a filthy leprous sinner—as full of filth as an egg is full of matter—but Jesus comes right up to him and lays His hand upon him and says, “I will. Be you clean.” Jesus never keeps at a distance from the sinner.

But suppose this poor leper began to run away from Him. It would be natural that he should, but would also be very foolish. No, poor Creature, stop your running! Stay at Jesus' feet! Look to Him! Trust Him! Touch His garment and be healed! O my dear Hearers, in this pulpit I seem to stand a long way off from you and talk to you from afar but my heart is with you. I wish I knew how to persuade you to come to Jesus. I would use some loving logic that I have not yet hit upon. How heartily would I entreat you to trust the Son of God, made flesh, bleeding and dying for guilty men! If you will trust Him, He will not deceive you, but you shall be saved, and saved at once, and forever!

And, O you that love Him and know Him, will you learn one lesson, and then I will send you home? As Jesus does not shrink from sinners, do not yourselves shrink from them. You are not so pure and holy as He was and yet He came into the world to save sinners. Go, each of you, into the world to seek them. Be in earnest after sinners. You get so good, some of you, that there is no living with you. You forget the dunghills where you grew and fancy yourselves angels, but you are nothing of the sort. God has made something of you, and now you are too respectable to look after those who are no worse than you once were.

If a man sins, you do not speak to him lest you should be disgraced by his society. What pride! A man is known to be a drunkard and there are some, even of you, that are teetotalers who would not talk with such, but leave them till they are improved, and then you would speak to them. You will do them good if they come to you for it but you will not *go to them*—

you cannot bring your souls to handle the wound while it bleeds and touch the filthy while they are foul. Some are too fine and finicky to look after roughs. But I venture to say to the rough, the ragged, the graceless, the godless—that they are more likely to get a blessing than the self-righteous.

I believe that there is more likelihood of converting a downright out-and-out sinner than of reaching the consciences of your very nice, neat, hypocritical people. Do not, therefore, shrink from sinners, for Jesus did not. And as from them He won His brightest trophies, even so may you. Be not ashamed, even if, by talking with sinners, you should come to be taken for one of them, for your Lord Himself, “was numbered with the transgressors. And He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

Let it be your vocation, as a man redeemed by blood, to be “the sinners’ friend,” henceforth and forever. God help you to do it! O my Beloved, may God send a blessing upon us at this hour. Pray for it. Pray for it. Lord, send it, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS—With great pleasure I have prepared this sermon upon that Truth of God which lies at the heart of the Christian faith. The denial of the substitutionary sacrifice of our Lord is the enemy of Christianity. Without atonement by the death of the Savior there is no Gospel. I do not conceive “substitution” to be an explanation of atonement, but to be of the very *essence* of it. Those of us who have received the Lord Jesus as our expiation and righteousness know what Divine power dwells in that precious Truth.

In a few days I hope to be on my way home—indeed, I may be so when this sermon is published. I crave a kindly remembrance in the prayers of the faithful. May there be years of useful preaching and fruitful hearing in store for preacher and readers!

Yours, in Christ Jesus,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Mentone, February 11, 1889.

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**“EVER THIS OUR WAR CRY—
VICTORY, VICTORY!”
NO. 3279**

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1911.**

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

***“Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He has poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors: and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors”
Isaiah 53:12.***

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #2070, Volume 35—
CHRIST'S CONNECTION WITH SINNERS THE SOURCE OF HIS GLORY—
read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

OUR great concern is concerning Christ. “For Him shall constant prayer be made.” It does not much matter what becomes of us, the common soldiers, so long as our great Captain is to the front. As the men of Napoleon’s Old Guard could defy death for themselves, but were always anxious about the emperor, so every loyal soldier of Christ feels that the one question in the present conflict is, “How goes it with the King?” Is He crowned? Is He exalted? Is He winning His way among the sons of men? Brothers and Sisters, it may be that our star is waning. Does it matter if *His* sun is reaching its noon? It may happen that the company with which we are associated is not so much to the front as it used to be, and the regimental flag is in the rear, but what of that? Let us do the best we can to retrieve its honor but, after all, the main consideration is the royal standard. Where is that? “Let my name perish,” said Whitefield, “but let Christ’s name last forever.” Such a feeling should actuate us all! What are we, my Brothers and Sisters, and what is our father’s house? What if ten thousand of us should fall merely to fill a ditch for Him to march over? What if He took the whole of us and crushed us to the dust—if He were lifted an inch higher, it were none too costly for such an One as He is who has redeemed us unto God by His precious blood!

Our first and last concern is about the result of our great warfare in regard to Christ. And my text will be consoling to your hearts in proportion as you are consecrated to Christ. If you are a worker for Jesus and your heart is tremulous for the cause of God—if you feel dismayed at times and often anxious about the progress of the Kingdom—such an assurance as this will be like a voice from the Comforter, Himself! It is the Father who speaks and He says, concerning the Well-Beloved, “Therefore

will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong.”

I. The first great Truth of God taught us here is that THE VICTORY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IS SURE!

Sure, first, because *these words are a Divine promise* and every word of promise that comes from God is established. “Has He said, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?” God has said, “I will divide Him a portion,” that portion shall be divided. If the Lord has declared that He shall divide the spoil with the strong, who is he that shall keep Him back from the prey? We might have doubted if His Word had been a prediction as to the probabilities of the life of this religion or of that. We might have supposed that the religion of Christ would be crushed out by rougher faiths that could use carnal weapons, or that its exceeding spirituality might cause it to wither away in an atmosphere so uncongenial. We might, I say, have had some trembling because of the Ark of the Lord if this had been a mere influence or opinion! But we have none, now, for as surely as this Book is the Infallible Word of God, so surely must Christ win the day! As surely as God cannot lie, so surely must He, upon whom the Lord laid the iniquity of men, rise from all His sorrows to a glorious victory!

The text is a promise placed very singularly in connection with facts which have been accomplished. We are told that Christ shall divide the spoil with the strong, but that promise is set side by side with the declaration that He is “brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth.” Just as surely, then, as that part of the prophecy is fulfilled in which Christ suffers, so surely shall that be fulfilled in which He triumphs! You have no doubt whatever about His being taken from prison and from judgment, about His making His grave with the wicked and with the rich in His death. Well, the same Book and the same Chapter which contains the prophecy of those sorrowful facts contains this prophecy—that He shall divide the spoil with the strong! Therefore the ultimate victory of Christ is made sure by a Divine promise!

Notice, moreover, that *it is the Father, Himself, who here puts forth His hand to guarantee the victory.* He writes, “Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great.” “I will do it. I will see that He conquers. I will see that He has the reward of His labor. My own right hand and My holy arm shall so be with Him that He shall tread down His enemies and He shall take from them mountains of prey.” Who is this that says, “I will divide Him a portion”? It is He at whose voice the earth trembles—

**“The pillars of Heaven’s starry roof
Tremble and start at His reproof.”**

When He says, “I will do it,” who shall stay His hand, or resist His will? God, the Everlasting Father, has staked His honor and His Glory upon the success of Christ! I make bold to say that if Christ wins not the world, and if He is not crowned King of kings and Lord of lords, it is not

Jesus that is dishonored so much as the Great Father by whom He was ordained, sent and anointed! The stain would not only be upon the manhood but upon the Godhead, too, for God, Himself, appointed the Lord Jesus and said of Him, “This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” He must see the Messiah through with it! It is the pleasure of the Lord that is in His hand—and that pleasure must prosper there, or else God’s name would be dishonored. I am sure that Jesus will win the victory!

I am delighted to notice a change of expression in the next sentence. *The Son of God Himself also puts His hand to the work of ultimate victory.* Read the text again—“Therefore will I divide Him a portion,” “and He shall divide.” God gives Him the victory and He takes it Himself. The Father grants it and the Son grasps it by His own right hand. The glorious Jehovah cries, “He shall divide,” and the ever-blessed Son of the Highest, as a conqueror, comes forth actually to divide the spoil. O my Brothers and Sisters, Jesus is as gentle as a lamb, but I might say of Him as they at the Red Sea said of Jehovah, “The Lord is a Man of War: the Lord is His name.” The Lamb is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and who shall stand before Him when He goes forth to war? Who shall rouse Him? They that came against Him to take Him in the days of His humiliation stumbled and fell when He uttered the words, “I AM.” And if the full power of that, “I AM,” had been let loose upon them, they had not merely staggered to their falling, but each man among them had stumbled into his grave! It is He that stilled the waves upon Gennesaret! It is He that ruled the powers of the deep and made the devils fly at His bidding! If He puts His hand to the battle, woe to those that strive against Him! The defeat of Christ? Laugh the idea to scorn! No, the thorn-crowned Prince is victorious! Well spoke the apostate Julian in his dying moments, “Nazarene, You have conquered.” All His foes will have to admit it. In the Day of Judgment, trembling, and in the lowest pit of Hell, despairing, they shall acknowledge His supremacy! The despised and rejected of men, with a rod of iron shall break His enemies in pieces! Yes, He shall break them in pieces like potters’ vessels. “Be wise now, therefore, O you kings: be instructed, you judges of the earth. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.”

That is the first thing, then—the Christ will conquer. It is a Divine promise! Its fulfillment is guaranteed by the Father! It will certainly be achieved by the Son!

II. Secondly, THE VICTORY IS AS GLORIOUS AS IT IS SURE. “Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great.”

The great King rewards our Champion. You have heard of great champions who have been knighted on the battle-field by their sovereigns—deeds of special prowess have been thus rewarded. Others, amid the acclamations of their troops, and while yet their hands were unwashed

from gore, have been crowned on the field only because of their superior valor and the decisive nature of the battle. Now, what is it to be knighted or crowned by kings or nations? It is as nothing! But to be crowned of God? For God Himself to give the reward in the light of eternity? What must such a victory be? I know that many an act which man applauds is despised by the Most High—and many a fierce fight that has stirred the heart of nations and made the poets ring out their hymns for centuries—has been not only despicable but abominable in the sight of the Most High! But when God rewards, what must be the Glory of the achievement? And here we have it—God, even the Father, the same One whom it pleased to bruise His son when He made the iniquity of us all to meet upon Him—that same God who knows all things and weighs all things aright, and is the very source and soul of honor, He shall crown our Lord Jesus! Must it not be a glorious victory? He *has* crowned Him! He *is* crowning Him! He *shall* continue to crown Him, for thus it is written, “Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great.”

The Glory of this victory may be seen, next, not only in the reward coming from so high a source, but from *its being manifestly a great reward in the esteem of men*, since our Lord is to have “a portion with the great.” It is difficult to say what makes a great man. When I look over the lists of great men, some of them seem to be to be very little. But still, men have among themselves a sort of standard by which to measure, and they say of such-and-such persons that they are “great.” From different points of view they are. Now, Christ is to have a portion with the great. Perhaps you have been grieved to see how certain ungodly men in these times make nothing of Christ—like Herod, they set Him at nothing—but these people are mostly very second-rate individuals, of small account even among their own order. Almost all intelligent men, even if they do not accept all that Christ says, agree that He is a great Man and many confess that there never was such another man as He. There have been skeptics whose admiration of Christ has been extreme. I, for one, cannot understand how any honest mind can do other than reverence His marvelous Character and the grandeur of the Truths which He has revealed. He is great, inexpressibly great, and the day will come—*must* come, is every day *coming nearer*—when Christ will be seen even by His enemies to be supremely great. His Cross today towers over the wrecks of time and He, Himself, rises before my faith’s vision so much above all the sons of men that I see all philosophies, theories, and human dogmas crouching at His feet! His victories are not victories among pigmies, but victories among the great, such as shall make all men see that He, Himself, is the Great—such as shall make all men see that He is the Greatest of the great!

My Brothers and Sisters, think for a minute what a battle Christ has waged with all the powers of evil. With all the wit, and craft, and unbelief, and pride, and lust of man. With all the foul devices and cruelties, and wickedness of the devil, and all the principalities and powers that obey

his bidding. And with death and all that goes with it, and shall come of it—against all these He has set the battle in array, and over all these He has triumphed, so that He divides the spoil with the great! Your adversaries, O Prince Emmanuel, are not such as a common warrior might rout. They are foemen worthy of your steel! What desperate tugs they gave You when they forced the bloody sweat from out of You in the moment of your sternest wrestling. But you have flung them to the ground!

Of course, this language can only be used as speaking part of the Truth of God because the portion which God has given to His dear Son is indisputably greater than the greatest things that earth can hold! I take it that the question that Christ has come to answer is the greatest question that ever moved eternity. The work that Christ has come to do is the grandest work that ever stirred the ages. It is God’s work and God’s question—how shall evil be driven out of the world? How shall Justice, without a stain, smile on a sinner? How shall God be seen as the Holy One with all the Glory of His Character manifested, receiving to His bosom the guilty sons of men? The grandest work that ever was done of God, Himself, Christ has come to perform, and not only has He His portion with the great, but of all the great He is the greatest, and His portion is above their portion! They are not to be mentioned in the same breath!

Notice, too, that a part of the description of this victory represents *the Lord as Himself dividing the spoil “with the strong.”* Not merely with great enemies did Christ wrestle, but with strong powers. I might give you a hundred illustrations of this, but I prefer to give you just one. When the Lord Jesus Christ came into my heart—came to battle there—He did, indeed, divide the spoil with the strong, for I was strong-willed and desperately set on mischief—and for a while I was in the hands of strong despair, out of which it seemed impossible that I could escape. The bands which held me were of iron, tough as steel, hardened in the fires of Hell! And yet this day I am His, for He has won me and taken the prey from the mighty! I have been, just now, to see our venerable Elder White. He is dying. I looked at his venerable beard as he sat up in bed, and I looked at the bright face that shone above it—and I was charmed at the joyful sight! He said, “I have no trouble. I have not a troubled thought. I am the happiest man in the world—I am going Home and I rejoice in it! Though I am perfectly satisfied to wait.” Death is just nothing at all to him! Just like a dear Sister who went from us some time ago. When I went to see her, you might have thought she was going to be married, she was so happy in prospect of departing! Charles Wesley once said, “They may say what they will about Methodism, but our people die well.” That is my comfort—our people die well—they die gloriously triumphant in the Lord! When I think of it, I can see how my Lord divides the spoil with the strong. Death comes and he says, “That is mine.” He has taken the poor, wrinkled body! And Christ smiles, and lets him have it, for He takes for His share, the soul, the life! And as He bears him off, He takes the best

part of the spoil! He has left Death the husk, but He has, Himself, secured the kernel! Yes, the day will come when He will take the body, too, out of the custody of Death, for not a wreck or a rag of all His saints shall remain in the domains of Death. There is a resurrection of dead bodies as well as an immortality of spirits! Glory be to Christ! In this way, here and hereafter, He divides the spoil with the strong! Strong is Death, but still stronger the Omnipotent Son of God!

There is another aspect under which we may speak of the Glory of Christ's victory, *He will share it with His people*. The second paragraph of the text is, “He shall divide the spoil with the strong.” That is, He will divide it out, and allot portions to all those who came to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Just as David after Ziklag, when he had taken the prey from the Amalekites, sent portions all round to his friends in Judah, so, when the King Eternal takes the spoil, He will give a share to you and to me if we have been faithful to Him. There shall be a portion even for us whom the Lord made strong for Himself in the day of battle. Does it not make your heart laugh to think of it? Jesus wins the victory, but He will not enjoy it alone—He will glorify His people. Even the sick folk that go not down to the battle, shall have their share of the spoil, for this is David's Law, and the Law of the Son of David, that they that abide with the stuff shall share with those that go down to the fight. He will give to each faithful sufferer or worker a portion of the prey. Make haste, O Champion, make haste to give to everyone of us a prey of divers colors, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil!

III. Thus we have seen that Christ *will win the victory, and the victory will be glorious*. Now let us declare, thirdly, that **THE RESULTS OF THIS VICTORY WILL BE VERY SUBSTANTIAL**.

Let me remind you that in consequence of what our Lord has done, *myriads of souls will be redeemed*. How many will escape from sin and death and Hell to live forever is not revealed. We have every reason to believe that a number that no man can number out of every nation, and people, and kindred, and tongue shall praise their redeeming Lord. Christ's death will not spend its force in the conversion of here and there one, but He will see of the travail of His soul and will be satisfied. And we are convinced that no little thing will satisfy Him. The great result of our Lord's death will be the eternal salvation of untold myriads!

Next to that will be the overthrow of every form of evil which now reigns in the world, and the extermination of religions falsehood, vice, drunkenness, war and every horrible mischief born of the Fall and of human depravity. Christ will conquer these and there shall be new heavens and a new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness. Forever and ever boundless honors shall be given to Christ for His victory over every force of evil. The Seed of the woman shall trample on the serpent.

As the result of Christ's death, Satan's power will be broken. He will no longer go forth to rule among the nations.

Death also will have lost its dominion over the sons of men. The Son of David shall restore that which He took not away. More than our first father lost, shall Christ bring back. There shall be substantial Glory to Himself in the lives of His people on earth, in their deaths and in their lives forever. Glory shall be brought to God of a new and unusual kind. A light will be shed upon the Character of God which so far as we know, could not have come to us by any other means except by the death of the Only-Begotten. Hallelujahs louder than before shall rise up before the Throne of God. Praises shall ascend unto God such as Creation never produced, “for You were slain, and have redeemed us unto God by Your blood, and we shall reign forever and ever.”

Now, my Brothers and Sisters, do not get into a state of fright and fear about the Christian religion. Do not go to your chambers and sigh, “Everything is going to the bad, and we shall all be eaten up by the devil.” Nonsense! There is a stronger arm yet than that black arm of Satan! In God’s eternal goodness resides a power and majesty that cannot be found in the infernal malevolence of the devil! I know which is the winning side—I am sure of it. Though we may drearily imagine that things go amiss and fancy that the vessel is ready to break up and become a wreck, she will enter the harbor yet with all her cargo safe—and from every wave that tossed her and every wind that beat upon her she shall derive eternal advantage! Courage, Brothers and Sisters, we are not beaten and we are not going to be beaten! We are succeeding all along the line. Shout victory, universal victory, from stem to stern of the good old ship! Not a foe has been able to live upon her deck. Give the enemy’s black hull another broadside. When you think that the crew of the Black Prince are about to board us, grasp your pikes and give them a warm reception! This good ship bears the Red Cross at her masthead, and shall never be taken, but shall win the victory as surely as God lives and His Son lives who has risen from the dead!

IV. So I close with this last remark. THE WHOLE OF THIS VICTORY RESULTS FROM CHRIST’S OWN WORK.

Lend me your best attention for two or three minutes, because this is the pith and marrow of it all. “*Therefore* will I divide Him a portion”—that is logic. Why this, “therefore”? What is the argument? Christ shall divide with the strong because—how does it run? “Because His Doctrinal teaching is singularly in keeping with the progress of the age”? I have heard that observation and smiled at it. “Because His Gospel is preached with such remarkable eloquence and singular clearness?” Indeed not! Why, then, will Christ win the victory? The answer is, “Because He has poured out His soul unto death.” If God, Himself, deigns to take upon Himself our Nature and in that Nature pours out His life like a libation even unto death—if, I say, He thus pours out His life—it is impossible to conceive that He will be defeated! Blasphemy may imagine it, profanity may speak it, but truth abhors the idea that Jesus can be baffled! A dying God? It is

an inaccurate expression, yet I know of no expression that is so accurate! God putting Himself into human form, so as to be capable of suffering and death, cannot suffer and die in vain! He must, He shall, He will win that for which He died! He must reign, "because He has poured out His soul unto death."

Listen again, here is the second reason, "*He was numbered with the transgressors.*" This is mentioned secondly, as if there was something even more in that than in the first. To die is wonderful condescension, but for the pure and Holy One to deign to be numbered with the transgressors, and stand as if He had, Himself, transgressed, though transgress He never did, nor could—I say this is more wonderful! If Jesus did that, then He must win the victory! When I am dispirited, where do I find encouragement? Where the stars of Bethlehem burn and where men make merry on their Christmas days? No, their mirth is weariness to a heavy heart! I will tell you where I go for comfort—to Gethsemane, to Golgotha, to the Garden and to the tomb. Christ cannot have suffered there in vain! Christ cannot have been despised, slandered and actually numbered with transgressors—and all for nothing! It cannot be! It cannot be! Death and Hell, you can defeat armies of men, but the Crucified treads you down! When our Champion of the pierced hands comes to the front, the battle no longer wavers! We glory in His death and in His making common cause with transgressors!

But this is not all. It is added, "*and He bore the sin of many.*" This denotes His actual and literal Substitution—His acting as the Sin-Bearer. This is something more than being numbered with the transgressors. He actually takes the sin of the transgressors and bears their burden upon His own shoulders by a wondrous system of Substitution which is easier to be believed than to be explained! Because He did this, He must conquer! He must conquer! Sin cannot be victorious if Jesus has carried it on His shoulders and hurled it into His sepulcher! If the darkest days were to come and all the Churches of Christ were to be extinguished, if there were left only one Christian and he as good as dead by reason of weakness, yet might he believe that God, from the dead, would raise up seed unto His Son and fulfill His Covenant, and keep His Word! It must be so. The offering of Christ's soul for sin secures to Him a seed forever!

And lastly, there is this fourth reason given, "*He made intercession for the transgressors.*" I can conceive you praying, my dear Friend, and God's not hearing you. But if the Man who was despised and rejected should say, "Rise, poor suppliant, rise, and I will take your place." And if the Blessed and Beloved of the Father whose eyes are as the eyes of the morning, and whose lips are as lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, kneels down and prays, "My Father, by My blood, and wounds, and agony, save this sinner," why, it must be done! And if He says, "Father, give Me those whom I have redeemed," it must be done! And if He pleads, "Father, keep them by Your Word," it must be done! And if He prays, "Father, make them one, as We are," it must be done! And when He shall

ask, “Father, give them power and victory,” it must be done! And when He shall ask, “Father, let My servants all become champions and send them forth, East, West, North, and South against idolatry, and infidelity, and Popery, and clothe them with the Holy Spirit,” why then it must be done! The power of Christ’s intercession is irresistible! Queen Mary reckoned the prayers of John Knox to be worth many regiments, but what shall I say of the prayers of Jesus, the Son of God? They are with us today! While we are sitting here, and troubling our minds about the Lord’s work, and saying, “What shall we do?” and, “What will come of it?” and all that, Jesus is pleading! Hush till your hearts leave off beating—till not a thought is heard! You may hear Him saying, “Father, I will.” Here is the power of the Church! The plea of Christ with authority before the Throne of God is the majestic force upon which the Church depends! “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Therefore pluck up courage. Jesus will yet win. You weak, faint-hearted ones, rejoice! The victory is sure, not because of anything you are, or of anything you can do, but for Jesus’ sake! In the name of the Lord we set up our banners. Hallelujah!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 19:14-37.**

Verse 14. *And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour: and he said unto the Jews, Behold your King!* [See Sermon #1353, Volume 23—ECCE REX—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] They had accused Him of being a king, or of pretending to be one. Pilate had scourged Him, the soldiers had mocked Him, and there He stood—a piteous spectacle of woe. What cruel sarcasm there was in the tones of the Governor when he said to the Jews, “Behold your King.”

15. *But they cried out, away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him! Pilate said unto them, Shall I crucify your King?* “How could you call Him, King, and bring against Him a charge of setting up a rival kingdom when you, who would be His subjects, are all crying out, ‘Crucify Him?’ ‘Shall I crucify your King?’” How false they were their own actions proved.

15. *The chief priests answered, we have no king but Caesar.* They said this with all the coolness in the world. The mob had been stirred up and excited, but the chief priests, the principal ecclesiastics of the day, coolly said, “We have no king but Caesar.” Did they not recollect that the scepter was not to pass away from Judah until Shiloh came, so that, as it had evidently passed away, Shiloh must have come? After all their Bible reading, did they not know that? Oh, how easy it is to read much of Scripture and yet to know little about its teaching! Dear Friends, let us not join the Jews in refusing to have Christ as King. They cried, “Away with Him, away with Him,” when He was set before them as King. Let us

not do that, but let us rather accept the Crucified as our Master and Lord, and cheerfully bow at His feet.

16. *Then delivered he, Him, therefore, unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led Him away.* [See Sermon #497, Volume 9—THE PROCESSION OF SORROW—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] So was He led as a sheep to the slaughter, as Isaiah had long before foretold that He would be.

17. *And He, bearing His Cross, went forth into a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha.* Probably a knoll of rock which today stands outside the city gate looking wonderfully like a skull, with two depressions in the rock which, at distance, appear like eyes. This was the common place of execution—the Tyburn, the Old Bailey of Jerusalem!

18, 19. *Where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, on either side, one, and Jesus in the middle. And Pilate wrote a title and put it on the Cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.* What could have moved Pilate to write that title? Perhaps he did it just to let the Jews know that they had forced him to put the Christ to death. He would put over Him their accusation without any endorsement of His own—“JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.” And so He is, and King of the Gentiles, too!

20. *This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was near to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.* So that everybody could read it, for someone or other of these languages would be known to everybody in the crowd—they were not dead languages, then, as they are now.

21, 22. *Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews, but that He said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.* He could sometimes be firm. Perhaps when there was least excuse for it but when there was need of firmness, this vacillating Governor was swayed by the will of cruel men.

23. *Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments.* It was the custom with executioners to take the garments of the criminal.

23. *And made four parts, to every soldier a part, and also His coat: now the coat woven without seam, woven from the top throughout.* The common robe of the country, for Christ assumed no garment or vesture that would make Him seem great. He was too great to need the adornment of any special style of clothes.

24. *They said, therefore, among themselves, Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which says, They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.* Those rough Roman soldiers knew nothing about the ancient Prophecy, yet a Divine destiny guided them! God’s Word must be fulfilled and they, in the freedom of their will, did exactly what God had ordained, and the Spirit had long be-

fore prophesied! There are two things that are true—that men act freely and are therefore responsible when they sin, but that there is a Divine Predestination that rules all things according to the purpose and will of God! It would have puzzled us to explain how such a prophecy could be fulfilled at all—parting Christ’s raiment among them, and then casting lots for his vesture—yet so it was, they divided what could be divided, and they cast lots upon what would have been spoilt if they had torn it! I think that no Christian will ever like the rattle of dice when he remembers that they were used at the Cross! All games of chance should be put away from us, for we can, as it were, see our Master’s blood spattered upon them.

25, 26. *Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus, His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He said unto His mother, Woman, behold your son! “See in John one who will act as a son to you.”*

27. *Then said He to the disciple, Behold your mother! “John, take her home and treat her as a mother should be treated.”*

27. *And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. He was the disciple whom Jesus especially loved, so as a token of Christ’s great love to him, He left His mother to his charge. Have you any poor folk dependent upon you? Do you know any of God’s very poor people? Take care of them and do not think the charge a burden, but do it for the sake of Him who loves you so much that He entrusts His poor ones to you. Oh, that everybody would look at this matter of caring for God’s poor in that light!*

28. *After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst! It seems a strange thing that Jesus should have said, “I thirst,” because, out of all the pains that He endured upon the Cross—and they were very many and very sharp—He never mentions one except thirst! A person in such terrible agony as He was enduring might have mentioned 50 things, but He singles out this one because there was a prophecy concerning it.*

29. *Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth. Why is hyssop mentioned here? You remember that the hyssop was used in the cleansing of the leper and that David prayed, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” The hyssop was also used in the sprinkling of blood under the Law of God, so it is introduced here with a set purpose. The sponge is introduced here, too—it always seems to me very remarkable that in the death of Christ the circle of life was completed. The sponge is the very lowest form of animal life and Christ is the very highest type of life of any kind. The sponge was lifted to the lips of the King of Glory and carried refreshment to Him—*

and you and I, like the sponge—the very least of God’s living ones, may yet bring refreshment to our Savior’s lips!

30. *When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished. And He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.* It is not that He died, and that then His head fell forward, but while He yet lived, having before maintained an erect, noble bearing even in the pangs of death, He now, to show His perfect resignation to His Father’s will, bows His head and yields up that saved spirit of His which dwelt within His body!

31. *The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain on the Cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.* The breaking of the legs was intended to hasten death—a very cruel method, but a very effectual one. Passing by Christ hanging in the center it was a strange thing for them to do, yet it had to be done, although they were quite unconscious of the reason why they so acted.

32-34. *Then came the soldiers and broke the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they broke not His legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side—To make sure that He would not survive—*

34-37. *And forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bares record, and his record is true, and he knows that he says the truth, that you might believe. For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again another Scripture says, They shall look on Him whom they pierced.”* So His side must be pierced, but His bones must not be broken! See how the hand of God carries out the Word of God—and value every line of Scripture! Our Lord Jesus Christ seemed to go out of His way so as to ensure that every single word in the Old Testament in reference to Himself should be fulfilled, so mind that you do not think little of the Old Testament which He so highly prized! [See Sermons #421, Volume 7—IT IS FINISHED!; #2344, Volume 40—CHRIST’S DYING WORD FOR HIS CHURCH and #1956, Volume 33—ON THE CROSS AFTER DEATH—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

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

THE FRIEND OF SINNERS

NO. 458

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 29, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He was numbered with the transgressors. And He bore the sin
of many and made intercession for the transgressors.”
Isaiah 53:12.***

A VAGUE notion is abroad in the world that the benefit of Christ's passion is intended only for good people. The preaching of some ministers, and the talk of some professors would lead the uninstructed to imagine that Christ came into the world to save the righteous, to call the godly to repentance, and to heal those who never were sick. There is in most sinners' consciences, when they are aroused, a frightful fear that Christ could not have come to bless such as they are, but that He must have intended the merit of His blood and the efficacy of His passion for those who possess good works or feelings to recommend them to Him.

Dear Friends, you will clearly see, if you will but open one eye, how inconsistent such a supposition is with the whole teaching of Scripture. Consider the *plan* itself. It was a plan of *salvation* and of necessity, it was intended to bless *sinners*. Why salvation if men are not lost? And for whom salvation but for the ruined? The plan was based in Divine Grace but how “Grace” unless it was meant for persons who deserve *nothing*? If you have to deal with creatures who have not sinned and have been obedient, what need of Grace is there? Build then, on *justice*. Let merit have its way.

But as the whole Covenant is a Covenant of Grace, and as in the whole matter it was ordained that Grace should reign through righteousness unto eternal life, it is plain enough from the very plan itself that it must have to do with sinners, and not with the righteous. Moreover, think of the *work* itself. The work of Christ was to bring in a perfect righteousness. For whom, do you think? For those who had a righteousness? That were a superfluity! Why should He weave a garment for those who were already clothed in scarlet and fine linen? He had, moreover, to shed His blood. For whom? Why the agony in the garden? Why the cry upon the Cross? For the perfect? Surely not, Beloved. What need had they of an Atonement?

Verily, Brethren, the fact that Jesus Christ bled for sin upon the Cross bears, on its very surface, evidence that He came into the world to save *sinners*. And then look at *God's end* in the whole work. It was to glorify Himself. But how could God be glorified by washing spotless souls, and by bringing to everlasting glory by Divine Grace those who could have entered Heaven by merit? Inasmuch as the plan and design both aim at laying the greatness of human nature in the dust, and exalting God, and making His love and His mercy to be magnified, it is implied as a matter of necessity that it came to deal with undeserving, ill-deserving sinners—or else that end and aim never could be accomplished.

Salvation needs a sinner as the raw material upon which to exercise its workmanship. The precious blood that cleanses needs a filthy sinner upon whom to show its power to purge. The Atonement of Christ needs guilt upon which to exercise itself in the taking of the guilt away. And it is absurd, it is ridiculous, it is unworthy of God to suppose a scheme of salvation, a work so tremendous as the Atonement of Christ, and an aim so splendid as the glorification of God, unless there are sinners to be the instruments of God's glory through being the partakers of God's Grace.

A moment's thought will be enough to convince us that the whole plan is made for sinners, and that "Jesus Christ died for the ungodly." Indeed dear Friends, it is only when we get this view very clearly before us that we see Jesus in His glory. When does the shepherd appear most lovely? It is a fair picture to portray him in the midst of his flock, feeding them in the green pastures and leading them beside the still waters. But if my heart is to leap for joy, give me the shepherd pursuing his stray sheep over the mountains. Let me see him bringing home that sheep upon his shoulders, rejoicing. Let me hear his song of mirth when he calls upon his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him because he has found the sheep which was lost.

And when does our God look most like a loving and tender Father? Truly He looks blessed when He divides His inheritance among His sons. But I never saw Him so resplendent in His Fatherhood as when He runs out to meet the prodigal, throws His arms about his neck and kisses him, crying—"My son that was dead is alive again." Indeed, for some offices of Christ, it is absolutely necessary that there should be a sinner for us to see any meaning in them at all. He is a Priest. What need of a priest except for the sins of the people?

Why, I dare to say it, Christ's priesthood is a mockery and Christ's sacrifice is ridiculous unless there is sin in the world and sinners whom Jesus came to save. Brethren, how is He a Savior except to the lost? How is He a Physician but to the sick? How is He like the brazen serpent if He does not save the sin-bitten, or how the Scapegoat if He does not bear the sin of transgressors?

Our text, in its threefold character, shows the intimate connection which exists between Jesus and sinners, for in none of its sentences is there meaning unless there is a sinner—and unless Christ has come into connection with him. It is this one point which I want to work out this morning, and may God bless it to many a sinner's troubled conscience. "He was numbered with the transgressors. He bore the sin of many and He made intercession for the transgressors." It is for transgressors all the way through. Bring in a company of righteous people who think they have no sin and they cannot appreciate the text. In fact, it can have no meaning to them.

I. We shall begin then, by taking the first sentence. To the sinner, troubled and alarmed on account of guilt, there will be much comfort in the thought that CHRIST IS ENROLLED AMONG SINNERS. "He was numbered with the transgressors." In what sense are we to understand this?

He was numbered with them, first, *in the census of the Roman empire*. There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should

be taxed, and the espoused wife of Joseph, being great with Child, must travel to Bethlehem that Christ may be born there, and that He may be numbered with the transgressing people who, for their sins, were subject to the Roman yoke.

Years rolled on, and that Child who had been early numbered with transgressors and had received the seal of transgression in the circumcision, which represents the putting away of the flesh—that Child, having come to manhood, goes forth into the world and is numbered with transgressors *in the scroll of fame*. Ask public rumor, “What is the character of Jesus of Nazareth?” And it cannot find a word in its vocabulary foul enough for Him. “This. . .,” they sometimes said. And our translators have inserted the word “Fellow,” because in the original there is an ellipsis. The Evangelists, I suppose, hardly liking to write the word which had been cast upon Christ Jesus.

Fame, with her lying tongue, said He was a drunk, and a winebibber, because He would not yield to the asceticism of the age. He would not, since He came to be a Man among men, do other than eat and drink as other men did. He came not to set an example of asceticism but of temperance. He came both eating and drinking, and they said at once, “Behold a man gluttonous and a winebibber.” They called Him mad. His warm enthusiasm, His stern and unflinching rebukes of wickedness in high places brought upon Him the accusation that He had a devil. “You have a devil and are mad,” they said. They called Him the Master of the house Beelzebub! Even the drunks made Him their song, and the vilest thought Him viler than themselves, for He was, by current rumor, numbered with the transgressors.

But to make the matter still more forcible, “he was numbered with transgressors in the *courts of law*.” The ecclesiastical court of Judaism—the Sanhedrim—said of Him, “You blaspheme.” And they smote Him on the cheek. Written down among the offenders against the dignity of God and against the security of the Jewish Church, you find the name of Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified. The civil courts also asserted the same. Pilate may wash his hands in water and say, “I find no fault in Him,” but still, driven by the infernal clamors of an angry people, he is compelled to write, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” And he gives Him up to die as a malefactor who has rebelled against the sovereign law of the land. Herod, too, the Jewish tetrarch, confirms the sentence, and so, with two pens at once, Jesus Christ is written down by the civil leaders among transgressors.

Then, *the whole Jewish people* numbered Him with transgressors. No, they reprobated Him as a more abominable transgressor than a thief and a murderer who had excited sedition. Barabbas is put in competition with Christ, and they say, “Not this Man, but Barabbas.” See, Brethren, His being numbered with transgressors is no fiction. Lo, He bears the transgressor’s scourging! He is tied to the whipping post, His back is marred and scarred. The plowers make deep furrows, and the blood flows in streams. He is numbered with transgressors, for He bears the felon’s cross. He comes into the street bowed down with the weight of His own gibbet, which He must carry upon His raw and bleeding shoulders.

He goes along to the place of doom. He comes to Calvary—the place of a skull—and there, hoisted upon the Cross, hanging in mid-air, as if earth rejected Him and Heaven refused Him shelter, He dies the ignominious death of the Cross and is thus numbered with transgressors. But will there be none to enter a protest? Will no eyes pity? Will no man declare His innocence? None. They are all silent! Silent, did I say? It is worse! All earth holds up its hands for His death! It is carried unanimously. Jew and Gentile, bond and free, they are all there. They thrust out the tongue. They hoot. They laugh. They cry, “Let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him.”

His name is written in the calendar of crime by the whole universe. For He is despised and rejected of men—*of all men* is He accounted to be the off-scouring of all things, and is put to grief. But will not Heaven interfere? O God, upon Your Throne, will You let the Innocent suffer? He is fast nailed to the tree and cries in agony, “I thirst.” Will You permit this Man to be numbered with transgressors? Is it rightly done? It is. Heaven confirms it. He has no sin of His own, but He has the sin of His people upon His shoulders. And God, the Eternal Judge, shows that He, too, considers Him to be in the roll of transgressors, for He veils His face. And the Eternal Father betakes Him to His hiding place, and Christ can neither see a smile nor a glance of His Father’s face, till He shrieks in agony so unutterable, that the words cannot express the meaning of the Redeemer’s soul, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

The only answer from Heaven being, “I must forsake transgressors. You are numbered with them, and therefore, I must forsake You.” But surely the doom will not be fulfilled? Certainly, He will be taken down before He dies? Death is the curse for *sin*. It cannot come on any but transgressors. It is impossible for the innocent to die, as impossible as for immortality to be annihilated. Surely, then, the Lord will deliver His Son at the last moment, and having tried Him in the furnace, He will bring Him out? No, not so. He must become obedient to *death*, even the death of the Cross. He dies without a protest on the part of earth, or Heaven, or Hell.

He that was numbered with the transgressors, having worn the transgressor’s crown of thorns, lies in the transgressor’s grave. “He made His grave with the wicked and with the rich in His death. Because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth.” It is a marvelous thing, Brethren, a marvelous thing! Who ever heard of an angel being numbered with devils? Who ever heard of Gabriel being numbered with fiends? But this is more marvelous than that would be. Here is the Son of God numbered, not with the sons of *men* (that were a gracious act) but numbered with *transgressors*. Numbered, not with the faithful who struggle after purity. Numbered, not with those who repel temptation and resist sin. Numbered, not with those who earn unto themselves a good degree and much boldness in the faith—that were a marvelous condescension. But here it is written, “He was numbered *with the transgressors*.”

I must pause here a moment, and get you to think this matter over a little. It is a strange and wonderful thing and ought not to be passed by in silence. Why, do you think, was Christ numbered with transgressors? First, surely, because *He could the better become their Advocate*. I believe,

in legal phraseology, in civil cases, the advocate considers himself to be part and partner with the person for whom he pleads. You hear the counselor continually using the word "we." He is considered by the judge to represent the person for whom he is an advocate. In some suits of law, there is, on the part of the bar and the bench, a perfect identification of the counselor with the client, nor can they be looked upon in the eye of the law as apart from one another.

Now Christ, when the sinner is brought to the bar, appears there Himself. The trumpet sounds. The great assize is set. Come, come, you Sinners, come to the bar to be tried! There stands the Man whose hands are pierced. He stands numbered with transgressors. Let the trial proceed. What is the accusation? He stands to answer it. He points to His side, His hands, His feet, and challenges Justice to bring anything against the Sinners whom He represents. He pleads His blood and pleads so triumphantly, being numbered with them, and having a part with them, that the Judge proclaims, "Let them go their way. Deliver them from going down into the pit, for He at their head has found a ransom."

But there is another reason why Christ was numbered with transgressors, namely, *that He might plead with them*. Suppose a number of prisoners confined in one of our old jails, and there is a person desirous to do them good. Imagine that he cannot be admitted unless his name is put down in the calendar. Well, out of his abundant love to these prisoners, he consents to it, and when he enters to talk with them, they perhaps think that he will come in with cold dignity. But he says, "Now, let me say to you first of all that I am one of yourselves." "Well," they say, "but have you done anything that is wrong?" "I will not answer that," says he, "but if you will just refer to the calendar you will find my name there. I am written down there among you as a criminal." Oh, how they open their hearts now! They opened their eyes with wonder, first, but now they open their hearts and they say, "Are you become like one of *us*? Then we will talk with you." And he begins to plead with them.

Sinner, do you see this? Christ puts Himself as near on a level with you as He can. He cannot be sinful as you are, for He is God and perfect Man. But He so puts His name down in the list, that when the roll is called, His name is called over with yours. Oh, how near does He come to you in your ruined state!

Then He does this that *sinners may feel their hearts drawn to Him*. What? Do You become poor as I am that I may be made rich? Jesus, Son of God, do You allow Yourself to be numbered among lost ones that You might find *me*? Oh, then, my soul shall open itself to give You a hearty reception. Come in, You loving Savior, abide with me, and go no more out forever. There is a tendency in awakened sinners to be afraid of Christ. But who will be afraid of a Man that is numbered with us, and put on the same list with us? Surely, now we may come boldly to Him and confess our guilt. He that is numbered with us cannot condemn us. He whose name is down in the same indictment with ours, comes not to condemn, but to absolve. Not to curse, but to bless.

He was put down in the transgressors' list *that we might be written in the red roll of the saints*. He was holy and written among the holy. We were

guilty and numbered among the guilty. He transfers His name from yonder list to this black indictment, and ours are taken from the indictment, foul and filthy, and written in the roll which is fair and glorious. There is a transfer made between Christ and His people. All that we have, goes to Christ, sin and all. And all that Christ has, comes to us. His righteousness, His blood, and everything that He has, belongs to us.

Dear Hearers, before I leave this point I want to put this to you. Is this yours by faith? Remember, faith is wanted here. Nothing else. "He was numbered with transgressors." Oh, Soul, can your heart say, "Then if He was numbered with me, if He put His name down where mine stands in that terrible roll, then I will believe in Him, that He is able and willing to save me, and I will trust my soul in His hands"? I bid you by the living God, do it, Man, and your soul is saved! Oh, by Him who from the highest Throne in Heaven stooped to the Cross of deepest ignominy, trust your soul with Him!

It is all He asks of you, and this He gives you. Blessed Master, would that You could stand here and say, "Sinners, full of iniquity, I stood with You. God accounted Me as if I had committed your sin and visited Me as if I had been a transgressor. Trust Me. Cast your souls upon My perfect Righteousness. Wash in My cleansing blood, and I will make you whole, and present you faultless before My Father's face."

II. We are taught in the next sentence, that Christ "BORE THE SINS OF MANY."

Here it is as clear as noonday, that Christ dealt with *sinner*s. Do not say Christ died for those who have done no wrong. That is not the description given. It is clear, I say, to everyone that chooses to look, that Christ could not bear the sins of those who had no sins, but could only bear the sins of men who were sinful and guilty. Briefly, then, but very plainly, to recount the old, old story over again—man stood with a load of sin upon his shoulders, so heavy that it would have crushed him lower than the lowest Hell. Christ Jesus came into the world, stood in the place of His people. And He did, in the expressive words of the text, bear their sins—that is to say, their sins were really, not in a legal fiction—but *really* transferred from them to Him.

You see, a man cannot bear a thing which is not on his back. It is impossible that he can bear it unless it is actually there. The word "bear," implies *weight*, and weight is the sure indicator of *reality*. Christ did bear sin in its fullness, vileness, and condemnation upon His own shoulders. Comprehend this, then, and you have the marrow of the subject. Christ did really, literally, and truly take the sins that belonged to all who do believe on Him. And those sins did actually and in very deed become His sins—not that He had committed them, nor that He had any part or lot in them, except through the imputation to which He had consented—and for which He came into the world—and there lay the sins of all His people upon Christ's shoulders.

Then notice, that as He did bear them, so other texts tell us that *He did bear them away*. "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes *away* the sin of the world." Sin being on His head, the Scapegoat took it away, away, away. Where? Into the wilderness of forgetfulness. If it is sought for, it

shall not be found. The Everlasting God sees it no more. It has ceased to be, for He has finished iniquity and made an end of sin. And when there is an end of it, what more can be said? Christ took our debts, but He was not long before He paid them all. Where, then, are the debts? There are no debts now. There is not one in God's book against His chosen, for Jesus died. If Christ has paid the debt, then there is no debt left. It is gone.

I can rejoice in its discharge. I can mourn that ever I cast myself into such a position, but the debt itself is gone. "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." "I will cast their sins into the midst of the sea." And yet again, "I will put away your sin like a cloud, and your iniquity like a thick cloud." Now, there were some clouds during the last week, but where are they now? They have turned to rain. They are gone—no strong-winged angel could find those clouds again. There are no such things. They are gone.

And so with Believers' sins. They were black, thick, thick clouds—full of storms—big with lightning and with thunder. But they are gone. The drops have fallen upon Christ. The thunder and the lightning have spent their fury upon Him—and the clouds are gone—for Christ has taken them away. "He bore the sins of many," and He bore them away forever. And then, Beloved, you must understand that if it is so, if Christ did really bear His people's sins, and did bear them away—and since a thing cannot be in two places at one time—*there is now no sin abiding upon those for whom Jesus died.*

"And who are they?" you ask. Why, all those who trust Him. Any man whatever, the wide world over, who shall ever trust Christ, may know that no sin can be with him because his sin was laid on Christ. Oh, I do delight in this precious doctrine! If anything could unloose my poor stammering tongue, this might, to see sin literally transferred so that there is none left! I cannot express the delight and joy of my soul at this moment, in contemplation of the blessed deliverance and release which Christ has given. I can only sing out again with Kent—

***"Sons of God, redeemed by blood,
Raise your songs to Zion's God—
Made from condemnation free,
Grace triumphant, sing with me."***

Now, do you not see that this must be for sinners? See, you filthy ones, you lost ones, you ruined ones, this is for sinners! You see it does not say it was for *sensible* sinners. No. No, but *sinners*. It does not say, "He was numbered with *awakened* transgressors." No, it is "transgressors." It does not say that He bore the sins of tender-hearted sinners. No, but, "He bore the sin of many." This is the only description I can find in my text. Jesus Christ came into the world to save SINNERS. And if in very deed and truth I know myself to be this day a sinner, I may trust Christ—and trusting Christ I may know, as surely as there is a God in Heaven—that Jesus Christ took my sins and carried them all away.

Now, I want to know whether you have got this by an act of faith this morning. "Oh," says one, "I am a sinner, but, but—" Well, but what? If you are a sinner, you are *commanded* to trust Christ this morning. "Oh, but—" I will have no "buts," Sir, no "buts" whatever. Are you a sinner?

Yes, or no? If you say, “No,” then I have nothing to say to you. Jesus Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. If you are a sinner, to you is the Word of this salvation sent. “But I have been a thief!” I suppose a thief is a sinner! “But I have been a drunkard!” A drunkard is a sinner. “But I have led an unclean life!” You are a sinner, then. “But I have such a hard heart!” Well, to have a hard heart is one of the greatest sins in the world.

“But I am unbelieving!” Well, that is a sin, too. You come in under the list of *sinners*, and I say that of such Christ contemplated, and the two sentences we have already considered prove this to a demonstration. He contemplated such as you are when He came to save, for, “He was numbered with transgressors,” and “He bore”—not the *virtues* of many, not the *merits* of many, not the good works of many—but, “the sin of many.” So, if you have any sin, here is Christ the Sin-bearer. And if you are a sinner, here is Christ numbered with *you*.

“Oh,” says one, “but what is faith? I want to know at once.” Faith, Sinner, is to believe in Jesus, and to trust in Jesus, now. Saving faith can sing this verse—

**“Just as I am and waiting not
To rid my soul of one foul blot,
To You whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.”**

It is as SINNERS, not as sensible sinners, not as repenting sinners, that Jesus died. Sinners as sinners, Jesus Christ has chosen, redeemed, and called. In fact, for them and for only such, Jesus Christ came into the world.

III. Our third sentence tells us that JESUS INTERCEDES FOR SINNERS. “And made intercession for the transgressors.” He prays for His saints but, dear Friends, remember that by nature they are transgressors, and nothing more. What does our text say? He intercedes for *transgressors*! There is a transgressor here this morning. He has been hearing the Gospel for many years—for many years. And he has heard it preached faithfully, too, by God’s Grace. He is growing gray now. But while his head is getting white, his heart is black. He is an old hard-hearted reprobate and by-and-by, unless Divine Grace prevents—but I need not tell that story.

What is that I hear? The feet of Justice, slowly but surely coming. I hear a voice saying—“Lo, these three years I came seeking fruit on this fig tree, and found none. Cut it down! Why cumberst it the ground?” The woodman feels his axe. It is sharp and keen. “Now,” says he, “I will lay to at this barren tree and cut it down.” But hark! There is One that makes intercession for transgressors! Hear Him, hear Him, “Spare it yet a little while, till I dig about it and fertilize it, and if it bears fruit *well*. But if not, after that you shall cut it down.”

You see there was nothing in that tree why He should plead for it, and there is nothing in you why He should plead for you, yet He does it. This very morning, perhaps, He is crying “Spare him yet a little while. Let him hear the Gospel again. Let him be entreated once more! Oh, let him have another sickness that it may make his conscience feel. Let Me have an-

other endeavor with his hard heart. It may be, it may be that he will yield." O Sinner, bless God that Jesus Christ pleads for you in that way.

But that done, *He pleads for their forgiveness*. They are nailing Him to the Cross. The wretches are driving iron through His hands. But even while they fasten Him to the tree, listen to Him—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Oh, I spoke to a Brother this week, whose heart all-conquering love has touched. He had been a great blasphemer, and when we were talking together about the fact that Jesus Christ loved him even when he was cursing, I saw how it broke his heart. And it broke mine, too, to think that I could rebel against Christ while He was loving me. That I could despise Him while He was putting Himself in my place in order to do me good.

Oh, it is this that breaks a man's heart. To think that Christ should have been loving *me*, with the whole force of His soul, while I was despising Him—and would have nothing to do with Him. There is a man there who has been cursing and swearing and blaspheming—and the very man whom he has cursed has been crying—"Father, forgive him, for he knows not what he does." O Sinner, I would that this might break your heart, and bring you to the Savior.

Nor does He end there. He next prays *that those for whom He intercedes may be saved and may have a new life given them*. "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever. Even the Spirit of Truth whom the world cannot receive." Every soul that is quickened by the Holy Spirit is so quickened as the result of Christ's intercession for transgressors. His prayer brings down the life, and dead sinners live. When they live He does not cease to pray for them, for by His intercession *they are preserved*.

They are still tempted and tried, but hear what He says, "Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you that your strength fail not." Yes, Brothers and Sisters, this is the reason *why we are not condemned*. As our Apostle puts it—"Who is he that condemns?" And the answer he gives is, "Christ has died, yes, rather, has risen again, who ever makes intercession for us." As if that intercession choked at once the advocate of Hell and delivered us from condemnation. And more, *our coming to Glory* is the result of the pleading of Christ for transgressors. "Father, I will that they also whom You have given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory."

There are a great many sermons preached that have not the Gospel in them, especially those sermons the drift of which is to tell the sinners, "Go home and pray. Go home and pray." That is very good advice, but it is not the Gospel. The sinner might answer me, "How can I come before God as I am? I cannot plead before Him, for I am a wretch undone. If I should stand in His Presence He would drive me from Him." Behold, Jesus Christ makes intercession for transgressors! It is a common saying in the world, that a man who pleads his own cause has a fool for his client. Certainly it is so in Heaven. But when Christ comes in, the Wonderful, the Counselor, He takes up the brief, and now the adversary trembles, for no sooner does he find that the suit is put into the hands of Him who is the Advocate of

His people, than he knows that his case is lost and that the sinner will go free.

So, Sinner, you are safe if He pleads for you. “Ah,” you say, “but if He asks me what He should plead I have nothing to tell Him.” You know the counselor goes into the cell, and he says to the prisoner—“Now, just tell me the case. What can I say in your favor?” The criminal replies, “Well, there is so-and-so, and so-and-so,” and perhaps he is able to say, “Why, Sir, I am as innocent as a new-born babe of the whole affair and I can prove it. I have an *alibi*, or I can do this or that.” Very well. The advocate, having grounds to go upon, pleads the case in the court right confidently.

But now I hear you say, “Ah, I cannot tell the Lord Jesus Christ what He is to plead, for I have nothing to plead. The fact is I am guilty and thoroughly guilty, too. I deserve to be punished and must be. I have nothing to plead.” Now what does our blessed Advocate say? “Oh,” says He, “but I have the plea in Myself.” And up He rises in the court of Law and when the accusation is read, He puts in this to that accusation—“In the name of the sinner for whom I intercede, and with whom I am numbered, I plead absolution and forgiveness through punishment already borne.”

“How?” says Justice. And Jesus Christ shows the nail prints in His hands, and lays bare His side and says, “I suffered for that sinner. I was punished with the sinner’s punishment, and therefore I claim, as the reward of My passion and My agony, that the sinner should go his way.” Do you not see that Christ is a precious Pleader because He can appear for us, and what is more, He can find a plea for us. “Ah,” I hear you say, “but I have no means of getting such an Advocate as that. I wish I had, but I have nothing to give Him. If He asks any fees I have nothing. I do not deserve the love of Christ, I do not know why He should take up My cause. If He would, I should be saved, but I cannot think He will, for I cannot hope to pay Him.”

“No,” says He, “but I will take up your cause freely, willingly, cheerfully. And I will make intercession for you, not because you deserve it, but because you *need* it. Not because you are *not* a transgressor, but because you *are*.” That very thing, Sinner, that makes you think Christ will not look at you, is the very reason why He will. You are full of disease. “Ah,” you say, “the physician will never look at such an arm as that.” But because the ulcer is reeking, that is why he stops and says, “I will cure that.” Your qualification is your disqualification. And what you think to be the reason why He never will look at you, is certainly the *only* reason you can plead why He should. You are nothing. You are utterly lost. You have no merit. You have nothing unless the Lord Jesus Christ makes prevalent, acceptable, and perpetual intercession for transgressors.

I come to a conclusion reluctantly. But I must say these few words. There are some of you that make very light of sinning. I pray you to be reasonable, and think this matter over. It was no light thing for God to save a sinner, for the Son of God, Himself, had to be numbered with sinners, and suffer, and DIE for sinners, or else they could not be saved. Touch not the unclean thing—hate it. If it is deadly to a holy Christ, it must be damnable to you. Oh, pass it by, and loathe it as the Egyptians loathed the water of the river when it was turned to blood in their sight!

To you who make but little of Christ, there is this word—you know what sin means. I do not think you can ever make too much of sin, but I pray you do not make too little of Christ. To you who think you have no qualifications for Christ, I say this closing sentence—I do beseech you get rid of that foul, that legal, that soul-destroying idea that Christ wants any preparation *by* you, or *in* you before you come to Him. You may come to Him *now*. No, more—you are *commanded* to come to Him now, just as you are. And to every man among you today, and to every woman and child, I preach this Gospel in the name of Jesus Christ—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

Trust Him now—in your seat—standing in the aisles—crowded in these galleries—trust Him now. God commands you. “This is *the* Commandment—that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent.” As Peter said, so say I, “Repent and be converted, every one of you.” And as Paul said to the Philippian jailer, so say I, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.” If you do not, this shall condemn you. Not your sin—but your *unbelief*. For they that believe not are condemned already. Why, why are such condemned? Because they *believe not*. That is the accusation. That is the damning crime and curse.

“Well,” says one, “then if God commands me to trust Christ, though I certainly have no reason why I should, then I’ll do it.” Ah, Soul, do it, then. Can you do it? Can you trust Him now? Is it a full trust? Are you leaning on your feelings? Give them up! Are you depending a little on what you mean to *do*? Give that up. Do you trust Him wholly? Can you say, “His blessed wounds, His flowing blood, His perfect righteousness—on these I rest. I do trust Him wholly”? Are you half afraid, you say, to do so? Do you think it is such a bold thing? Do it, then! Do a bold thing for once! Say, “Lord, I’ll trust You, and if You cast me away I’ll still trust You. I bless You that You can save me, and that You *will* save me.”

Can you say that? I say, have you believed in Him? You are saved, then! You are not in a salvable state, but you are **SAVED!** Not partly, but wholly saved. Not *some* of your sins blotted out, but **ALL**. Behold the whole list, and it is written at the bottom of them all—“The blood of Jesus Christ cleans us from all sin.” But I hear one say, “It is too good to be true!” Soul, will you be lost through thinking little things of Christ? “Ah,” says another, “it is too simple. If this is the Gospel, we shall have all the ragamuffins in the streets believing in Christ and being saved.” And glory be to God if it is so! For my part, I am never afraid of big sinners being saved.

I would have every harlot, I would have every whoremonger and adulterer to be saved. I would not be afraid that they would go on in their sins if they believed in Christ. Oh, no! Faith in Christ would change their nature. And it will change yours, too. For this is salvation—to have the *nature* changed—to be made a new creature in Christ and to be made holy. Come, Soul, will you trust Him? I do not want you all to go away after crowding in here without getting that blessing. Some of you have come up to the Handel Festival—but here is better music if you trust Christ—for you shall hear the bells of Heaven ringing and all the music of the angels as they rejoice over you as a redeemed Brother.

Many of you have come up to see the Great Exhibition—but here is a greater wonder than that—you came into this place this morning in a state of nature and go out in a state of Divine Grace! And, then, only to wait a little while, and reach a state of Glory! Some of you have come up to see the great Cattle Show. But here is something better to see than ever was reared on English pasture. Here is food for your *souls*. Here is that whereof if a man eats, he shall live forever! And here it is held out to you. Nothing can be plainer. Trust Christ and you are saved! Outside in the street there is a drinking fountain. When you get there, if you are thirsty go to it. You will find no policeman there to send you away. No one will cry, “You must not drink because you do not wear a satin dress.” “You must not drink because you wear a fustian jacket.”

No, no, go and drink. And when you have hold of the ladle, and are putting it to your lips, if there should come a doubt—“I do not feel my thirst enough,” still take a drink whether you do or not. So I say to you, Jesus Christ stands like a great flowing fountain in the corners of the street, and He invites every thirsty soul to come and drink. You need not stop and say, “Am I thirsty enough? Am I black with sin enough?” It doesn’t matter whether you think you are or not. Come as you are! Come as you are! Every fitness is legality. Every preparation is a lie. Every getting ready for Christ is coming the wrong way. You are only making yourselves worse while you think you are making yourselves better. You are like the boy at school who has made a little blot, and he gets out his knife to scratch it out, and makes it ten times worse than before.

Leave the blots alone. Come as you are. If you are the foulest soul out of Hell, trust Christ—and that act of trust shall make you clean. This seems a simple thing, and yet it is the hardest thing in the world to bring you to it. So hard a thing that all the preachers that ever preached cannot make a man believe in Christ. Though we put it as plainly as we can, and plead with you, you only go away and say, “It is too good to be true.” Or else you despise it because it is so simple. For the Gospel, like Christ, is despised and rejected of men, because it has no form and comeliness and no beauty in it that they should desire it.

Oh, may the Holy Spirit lay this home to you! May He make you willing in the day of His power! I hope He has. I trust He has, so that before we go we may all join in singing this one verse and then separate—

***“A guilty, weak and helpless worm
On Christ’s kind arms I fall.
He is my strength. My righteousness,
My Jesus and my All.”***

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

A ROOT OUT OF A DRY GROUND

NO. 1075

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 13, 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“A root out of a dry ground.”
Isaiah 53:2.***

THE Prophet is speaking of the Messiah. He declares of Him, “He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.” It is marvelous that with such plain prophecies concerning the Messiah the Jews should have made such a fatal mistake in reference to Him. They looked for a temporal prince who would come in splendor, notwithstanding that this and other Scriptures speak of His humiliation in express terms. Every unprejudiced person might have seen from this passage that the Messiah, when He came, was not to be surrounded with pomp but would come as “a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,” to be, “despised and rejected of men.”

Yet, though the Truth of God was written as with a sunbeam and the Jewish people were pretty generally acquainted with their own Scriptures so that they had the opportunity of knowing it, yet when the Messiah came unto His own, His own received Him not. And though favored with the clearest prophecies concerning Him, they rejected His claims and cried, “Let Him be crucified!” Does not this teach us that the most plain instruction, earnestly and forcibly delivered, will not be understood by the unregenerate mind? The carnal mind discerns not *spiritual* things—its eyes are darkened, its ears are heavy. Inspiration itself cannot put a spiritual Truth of God so clearly that men will see it unless their eyes are opened by the Holy Spirit. Vain is the best light to blind men!

Beloved, remember that what was true of the Jews is equally true of the Gentiles. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the simplest thing in the world, but no man truly understands it until he is taught of God. There are preachers who labor after simple words and seek out instructive similitudes by which to make the Gospel clear to every apprehension—but still, of the unregenerate it may be said, “Their foolish heart is darkened.” Sin has brought upon the human race a mental incapacity with regard to spiritual subjects. They rush on in darkness, though the Gospel creates a noonday around them—they grope for the wall like the blind, though the Sun of Righteousness shines with infinite brightness!

Alas, to what has our nature fallen! How is the image of God marred within us! How ardently should we adore the Holy Spirit, that He stoops to us even in this, our blindness, and is pleased to remove the scales and pour light into our souls! Whatever we have rightly discerned has been revealed to us by His teaching, for apart from His illumination we should have been as obstinately unbelieving as the Jews. Dear Hearers, how is it with you? Are you, also, blind? Though living in the Gospel day, it may be

you have never seen the Savior with the eyes of faith. Are you blind, also? Oh, if you are, may He who alone can teach you to profit, instruct you in the faith of Jesus and in His light may you see light!

Now, turning to the text itself, you will observe that Isaiah describes our Lord Jesus as growing up like “a tender plant,” a weak branch, a suckling, a sapling, a plant that very readily might be destroyed. We cannot pass over that comparison without a note or two, though we intend to dwell mainly upon the next clause. Our Lord Jesus Christ in His humiliation appeared in great feebleness. He was born a helpless Babe. He was, in His infancy, in great danger from the hand of Herod, and though preserved, it was not by a powerful army, but by flight into another land.

His early days were not spent amid the martial music of camps, or in the grandeur of courts, but in the retirement of a carpenter’s shop—fit place for “a tender plant.” His life was gentleness—He was harmless as a lamb. At any time it seemed easy to destroy both Him and His system. When He was nailed to the Cross to die, did it not appear as if His whole work had utterly collapsed and His religion would be forever stamped out? The Cross threatened to be the death of Christianity as well as of Christ—but it was not so, for in a few days the power of the Divine Spirit came upon the Church!

At its first setting up, how feeble was the kingdom of our Lord! When Herod stretched out his hand to vex certain of the Church, unbelief might have said, “there will be an utter end before long.” When, in later years, the Roman Emperors turned the whole imperial power against the Gospel, stretching forth an arm long enough to encompass the entire globe and uplifting a hand more heavy than an iron hammer—how could it be supposed that the Christian Church would still live on? It bowed before the storm like a tender shoot but it was not uprooted by the tempest—it survives to this day—and although we do not rejoice at this moment in all the success which we could desire, yet still that tender shoot is full of vitality!

We perceive the blossoms of hope upon it and expect soon to gather goodly clusters of success. Christianity in our own hearts—the Christ within us—is also a “tender plant.” In its springing up it is as the green blade of corn which any beast that goes by may tread upon or devour. Oftentimes to our apprehension it has seemed that our spiritual life would soon die. It was no better than a lily with a stalk bruised and all but snapped in two. The mower’s scythe of temptation has cut down the outgrowth of our spiritual life, but, blessed be God, He who comes down like rain upon the mown grass has restored our verdure and maintained our vigor to this day! Tender as our religion is, it is beyond the power of Satan to destroy it! Weak as we are, we have not utterly fallen, nor shall we—for the feeble shall be victorious and the “lame shall take the prey.”

Though Grace is often like the hyssop for its weakness, it is ever as the oak for endurance. Man threatens to crush the Church, or *hopes* to uproot true Grace from the heart of the timid Believers, but it shall not be done—the “tender plant” shall become a goodly cedar and the weakness of God shall baffle the power of man!

Now let us turn to the similitude which we have selected for our text—“A root out of a dry ground.” First, we will explain the meaning of the

metaphor. Then, secondly, we will speak of our experimental knowledge of its truth. Thirdly, we will dwell, for a while, upon the encouragements which it affords. And, fourthly, upon the glory which it displays.

I. First, then, this morning, our Lord Jesus is said to be “a root out of a dry ground.” What is THE HISTORICAL MEANING OF THIS METAPHOR? We believe that it applies to the Person of the Lord and also to His cause and kingdom—to Himself *personally* and to Himself *mystically*. He is “a root out of a dry ground.”

A root which springs up in a fat and fertile field owes very much to the soil in which it grows. We do not wonder that some plants thrive abundantly, for the earth in which they are planted is peculiarly congenial to their growth. But if we see a root or a tree luxuriating upon a flinty rock, or in the midst of arid sand, we are astonished and admire the handiwork of God. Our Savior is a root that derives nothing from the soil in which it grows, but puts everything *into* the soil. Christ does not live because of His surroundings, but He makes those to live who are around Him—and Christianity in this world derives nothing *from* the world except that which alloys and injures it, but it *imparts* every blessing to the place where it comes.

Note, then, this Truth of God—that Christ is always “a root out of a dry ground”—He derives nothing from without, but is self-contained and self-sustained in all the strength and excellence which He displays. Let us dwell on that Truth. It is quite certain that our Lord derived nothing whatever from His natural descent. He was the Son of David and lawful heir to the royal dignities of the tribe of Judah, but His family had fallen into obscurity, had lost position, wealth, and repute. Joseph, His nominal father, was only a carpenter. Mary, His mother, but a humble village maiden. The glory had altogether departed from Judah when Shiloh came. No crown was treasured amid the heirlooms of Joseph, and no scepter was comprehended in the scanty portion of Mary. He who was born King of the Jews inherited nothing from His parents by way of honor and dignity—His only portion was the danger of being sought out by the cunning and cruelty of Herod.

Now, had our Lord been descended from the Pharaohs; had He come into the world as the scion of a long line of Caesars, or as the heir to a wide-spread monarchy, it would have been said, “Every man respects pedigree and descent, and hence the triumphs of His teaching.” But who shall do otherwise than magnify the Lord alone, when the blessed and only Potentate is born in lowliest poverty?—

**“Lo God bedews old Jesse’s root
With blessings from the skies;
He makes the Branch of promise shoot,
The promised Prince arise.”**

Nor did our Lord derive assistance from His nationality. It was no general recommendation to His teaching that He was of the seed of Abraham. Why, to this day, to many minds, it is almost shameful to mention that our Savior was a Jew. Though certainly the Jew is of an honorable race, ancient and venerable—having been chosen of God of old—yet among the sons of men the name of Jew has not yet lost the opprobrium which long ages of cruel oppression and superstitious hate have cast upon it.

It is said that there was no nation, immediately after the time of our Savior, that the Romans ardently hated except the Jews. The Romans were peculiarly tolerant of all religions and customs—by conquest their empire had absorbed men of all languages and creeds and they usually left them undisturbed. But the Jewish faith was too peculiar and intolerant to escape derision and hatred. After the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, the Jews were hunted down and the connection of Christianity with Judaism so far from being an advantage to it, became a serious hindrance to its growth. Christianity was confused with Judaism and made to share the political disgrace of the Jewish nation as well as its own reproach.

Had our Savior been born in Greece, there is no doubt that as a religious teacher He would have commanded far more attention than as coming forward from Jerusalem or Nazareth. He owed nothing to His Jewish birth, for if anything good could have come out of Israel in former days, behold into what a state it had fallen—it was dead politically, religiously, and mentally! Look at Phariseeism—what shall I say of it but that it had perverted the noblest into the basest? Look at the Sadducees with their profession of superior wisdom, their intense unbelief, and, I may add, their consequent folly. Whatever power the Jewish Monotheism may have had in the world had perished beneath the destructive influences of a ritualistic Phariseeism and a broad church of the Sadducees. Our Savior, could He have disowned all connection with Israel, might have been rather *strengthened* than weakened by so doing. He was, in this respect, “a root out of a dry ground.”

Mentally, among the Jews nothing was left. No harp resounded with Psalms like those of David. No Prophet mourned in plaintive tones like Jeremy or sang in the rich organ tones of Isaiah. There remained not even a Jonah to startle, or a Haggai to rebuke! No wise man gave forth his proverbs, nor preacher took up his parable. The nation had mentally reached its dregs. Its scribes were dreaming over the letters of Scripture, insensible to its inner sense—and its elders were driveling forth traditions of the fathers—and so sinking lower and lower in an empty superstition. It was a “dry ground” out of which Jesus sprang.

Nor did the Savior owe anything to His followers. He might have selected, had He pleased, certain eminent persons as His first converts. Casting His eyes upon the reigning Caesar and his royal subordinates, He might have turned their hearts to serve Him and so have surrounded Himself with a discipleship culled from men of renown. But He did not do so, else would men have said, “His religion might well spread with such powerful men at its head.” The Man chosen out of the people passed by the noble and elected the base. He might have journeyed at once to Athens and have collected from the remnant of the old philosophic schools the choice thinkers of the age. There still survived the sects of the Stoics and the Epicureans—and the old learning of Socrates and Plato was not quite forgotten.

He might have called to His feet the leaders in the more potent schools of thought, but He did not so, else they would have said that Christianity might well triumph with such master minds to propagate it. He might have gone to the Forum at Rome and there have selected men of mighty

eloquence. He might have converted the orators of the tribune, or the persuasive speakers of the senate and have set such men to lead the van of the new faith—but He did not do so, else they would have said that rhetoric achieved the victory and eloquence, with her charms, had spell-bound the world.

See you not how He hastens to the fisher boats on the Lake of Genesaret and calls men of the roughest exterior and the least cultured intellect? Shall a world-subduing religion be disseminated by peasants and mariners? So did He ordain it! He selected men commonly known to be unlearned and ignorant, and made them Apostles of the faith! Whatever they became in later life, He made them that. Peter did not make Christianity, but Christianity made Peter what he was. Paul brought nothing to Christ, but Christ gave everything to Paul. I admit that the Apostles became great men—they were eloquent and learned in the truest sense of the term, being taught of God. But Jesus, as “the root,” bore *them*, they did not bear the root! This wondrous root fertilized the soil in which it grew! It derived nothing from the men, but gave the men all they possessed. But we will pass on.

Our Savior is “a root out of a dry ground” as to the means which He chose for the propagation of His faith. Nobody wonders that Mohammedanism spread. After the Arab prophet had for a little while himself personally borne the brunt of persecution, he gathered to his side certain brave spirits who were ready to fight for him at all odds. You marvel not that the sharp arguments of scimitars made many converts. *Any* religion will win assent when the alternative is either conversion or instant death! Give a man a strong right hand and a sharp saber and he is a fit missionary of Mohamed’s doctrine! Our Savior gave to His soldiers neither spears nor swords, but said, “Put up again your sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.”

He asked no aid from governments, He disowned the temporal arm altogether as His ally. Had our Savior been a State-churchman, and not, as He was, the grandest of Nonconformists, it would have been said that under the wings of the State His Church was fostered into power. If Caesar had said, “I will gather your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings,” it would not have been surprising if the brood of Christians had multiplied indefinitely. But our Savior sought no succor from potentates and rested not upon an arm of flesh. The people would make Him a king, but He hid Himself, for His kingdom *is not of this world*, and therefore His servants did not fight. Our Savior, as He used no force, so neither did He use *any* means which might enlist man’s lower nature on His side.

When I have heard of large congregations gathered together by the music of a fine choir, I have remembered that the same thing is done at the opera house and the music hall and I have felt no joy. When we have heard of crowds enchanted by the sublime music of the pealing organ, I have seen in the fact rather a glorification of St. Cecilia than of Jesus Christ. Our Lord trusted in no measure or degree to the charms of music for the establishing His Throne. He has not given to His disciples the slightest intimation that they are to employ the attractions of the concert

room to promote the kingdom of Heaven. I find no rubric in Scripture commanding Paul to clothe himself in robes of blue, scarlet, or violet—neither do I find Peter commanded to wear a surplice, an alb, or a chasuble.

The Holy Spirit has not cared even to *hint* at a surpliced choir, or at banners, processions and processional hymns. Now, if our Lord had arranged a religion of fine shows and pompous ceremonies, and gorgeous architecture, and enchanting music, and bewitching incense and the like, we could have comprehended its growth—but He is “a root out of a dry ground,” for He owes nothing to any of these. Christianity has been infinitely hindered by the musical, the aesthetic and the ceremonial devices of men, but it has never been advantaged by them, no, not a jot! The sensuous delights of sound and sight have always been enlisted on the side of error, but Christ has employed nobler and more *spiritual* agencies.

Things which fascinate the senses are left to be the chosen instruments of Antichrist, but the Gospel, disdaining Saul’s armor, goes forth in the natural simplicity of its own might, like David, with sling and stone. Our holy religion owes nothing whatever to any carnal means—so far as they are concerned, it is “a root out of a dry ground.” Neither did the Savior owe anything to the times in which He lived. Christianity, it is said by some, came upon the field at a time when it was *likely* to succeed. I utterly deny it! It was born at a period of history when the world, by wisdom, knew not God and men were most effectually alienated from Him. The more thinking part of the world’s inhabitants at the time of Christ’s coming were atheistic and made ridicule of the gods—while the masses blindly worshipped whatever was set before them.

The whole set and current of thought at the advent of our Lord was in direct opposition to such a religion as He came to inculcate. It was an age of luxury—Rome was full of wealth and the desire for self-indulgence. Wherever Romans settled, they built magnificent villas and used all the arts for the gratification of the flesh—was this a preparation for the doctrines of the Cross? It was an age of universal vice. It is a great mercy that most of the ancient cities have been destroyed and their works of art dashed to shivers—for many of them were unutterably vicious—and such as remain are doing not a little to degrade humanity.

Vices which now we dare not speak of were then perpetrated in public! Things that are now detested were performed as a part of sacred worship! The world was rotten through and through. If darkness is a preparation for light, I grant you the world did prepare itself for Christ. If an Augean stable, poisoned with a putridity which supersedes all common rottenness, is in readiness for the coming of Him who shall cleanse it, the world was prepared for Jesus, but not else. I deny that He owed anything to His times. He came when the times could not help Him in any degree whatever, and His religion was “a root out of a dry ground.”

Neither, again, let me say, did the religion of Jesus owe anything to human nature! It is sometimes said that it commends itself to human nature. It is false—the religion of Jesus opposes unrenewed human nature. In Christ’s day revenge was one of the most glorious things known—it was sung of, it was preached upon, it was the joy of men—and what religion

but Christianity ever taught men *never* to retaliate? Christ said, "Love your enemies, and pray for them that despitefully use you." Is this in human nature? Is there anything in the commands of Christ that at all flatters pride or conciliates lust? He judges our *thoughts* as well as our actions. "He that looks upon a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." Is that agreeable to human nature? Do you think that runs in the same vein as our passions?

Mohammed prospered because his religion pandered to human weakness! But there is in the religion of Christ no yielding to what are called the natural passions, no providing for sensual desires. "Take up," He says, "not your scimitar but your cross." He says not, "Increase your harem." No, but, "Crucify the flesh." Is there any glorification of human intellect in the religion of Jesus? Is not its invariable command, "Believe, and live"? If Christianity spreads, it spreads in opposition to human nature by *changing* human nature, by making it what it never was and never could have been had not the incorruptible Truth of God been planted in it like "a root in a dry ground." Thus much, and perhaps too much, upon the historical meaning of the metaphor.

II. Now, briefly, but earnestly, OUR KNOWLEDGE OF ITS TRUTH EXPERIMENTALLY. Beloved, you remember your own conversion? When Jesus Christ came to you to save you, did He find any fertile soil in your heart for the growth of His Grace? I must bear witness that to convince me of sin and humble me, He had need of all the mighty hammers of His power to break my rocky heart. Conviction of sin was no natural product of *my* mind. Repentance was a plant of the Lord's right hand planting and not a native of the soil. Remorse we might have had by nature, but repentance, never!

And, Brothers and Sisters, if now we have believed in Christ Jesus and are resting in Him, I am sure we must admit that faith never sprang up naturally in the garden of our hearts—the Holy Spirit taught us how to believe in Jesus and led us to look unto Him that we might be saved. So far from helping Christ, my whole soul was opposed to Him. If now I bow before His feet and delight to call Him my Master and my Lord, it is because I am *subdued* by His power, not because I have educated myself to it, or was at all inclined thereto. Religion, true religion, in the heart at conversion is "a root out of a dry ground."

Let me ask you who look into your own hearts—how have you found them since? Has there been anything in your natural humanity congenial with the new life which Grace has begotten within you? You have the higher life in your souls, has it found sustenance in your flesh? Ah, it is sadly the reverse. Christ's life has come into us like Israel into the wilderness and it finds in us no food. If manna does not drop from Heaven and water leap from the smitten rock, it must die in the desert of our soul. "In me, that is, in my flesh," said the Apostle, "there dwells no good thing." Our carnal nature is still as evil as ever it was—"The carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not reconciled to God, neither, indeed, can it be."

If you have Divine Grace in your hearts today, Beloved, you have been made to feel that it is "a root out of a dry ground." I bless the Lord that we have felt this at peculiar seasons. When you have had great joy in God,

great exhilaration and delight, has it not usually been at times when you might least have expected it? When the body is gradually pining away with sickness we have seen the spirit more triumphant than it was in health, deriving none of its joy from the strength of Nature, but flourishing upon a secret provender of which the world knows nothing—it has been “a root out of a dry ground.” Sometimes we have been desponding in spirit. Our animal spirits, as they are called, have been quite dried up and yet, before we knew it, our souls have been made like the chariots of Amminadab and we have flashed and glowed with sacred delight! “A root out of a dry ground” again.

Children have died and perhaps a beloved wife has been taken away. Possibly business has been against us, trials have multiplied and yet at that very season we have walked nearer to God than ever we did before, and had more delight in His company, and have known more of the power of the Holy Spirit in our souls than ever we did in days of prosperity—all to show us that the Grace within us lives by its own inward vigor and by *supernatural* help—and owes nothing to bodily health, nothing to outward circumstances—but is still a root flourishing best in a dry ground! There is much that is painful about this experience of the dryness of the ground, but there is something delightful in the experience of the growing of the root under such circumstances, for then all the glory is given to the Lord alone, and we dare not touch it, no, not so much as with one of our fingers.

III. But I will pass on. This whole subject appears to me to afford much ENCOURAGEMENT to many. And first, let me speak, as earnestly as I can, a word to those of you who are seeking after the Savior but are very conscious of your own sinfulness. You are depressed under a sense of being unworthy to be saved, and what is perhaps worse, you feel that though the Gospel is preached to you, you are unable to receive it of yourself. Deadness and powerlessness are the main thoughts upon your mind.

Now, Beloved, let this console you. Christ Jesus, when He saves a sinner, borrows no help whatever from the sinner himself. “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.” If there is all fullness in Him, He does not need any contribution from us, and, blessed be His name, He never waits for any. We can give none and He will receive none. Christ is all—does not that cheer you? Do you say, “I need power”? In Him is strength. “I need wisdom” you say—He is “made of God unto us wisdom.” “I need a tender heart”—who can give it to you but Christ? “But, ah, I need to repent”—is He not “exalted on high to give repentance?” “But I long for faith.” Well, and have you never read, “it is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God”? He is “a root out of a dry ground,” and your ground is very, very dry. He will come and put fertility into it, but remember He does not first need fertility in you.

Poor, helpless, hopeless, stripped, and emptied one, you need not look for, nor desire anything in yourself to prepare you for Jesus! He delights to come into empty hearts to fill them with His love—into cold hearts to warm them with His sacred flame—and into dead hearts to give them life. Now, the same thought which may thus comfort the seeker, and I pray it may, ought also to encourage any Christian who has been making discov-

eries of his own barrenness. It is not every child of God that knows himself thoroughly. We may go on a long time after our first conversion without any very deep understanding of what poor things we are.

Have you begun to see yourself in the looking glass of the Word and does the sight alarm and distress you? Are you crying, "My barrenness! My barrenness"? Beloved Brothers and Sisters, Christ "is a root out of a dry ground," and though you are thus barren now, you are not one whit more barren than you always have been! Your sin alarms you, but it was always there! Your natural death disgusts you, but it is no new thing. "Oh, but I seem to be less, now, than I was!" You never were *anything* and if you had begun by *understanding* you were *nothing*, you would have begun in a wiser and happier state than you are now.

Whenever the child of God says, "I find my total of natural strength is getting smaller," he is only approximating to the truth, for his strength is "perfect weakness." Beloved, when we get to realize the lesson taught us in our Baptism, we are drawing near to the Truth of God. What is that? you ask. Why, it is the burial of the creature in Christ's tomb! Circumcision signifies the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but Baptism teaches us the burial of it altogether, as an incorrigible and utterly corrupt thing, not to be reformed and mended but to be reckoned as dead and buried. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." Be nothing at all, and let Jesus be All in All. When at any time you are cast down by a sense of your nothingness, remember that your Lord is "a root out of a dry ground."

The same comfort avails for every Christian worker. You who work for Jesus in the pulpit, or in the Sunday school, or elsewhere, I am quite sure, if God blesses you, you do not always feel the same. Those machines that preach regularly in the same way accomplish very little. God means to use *men*, and while men are men they will be sensitive and changeable. Flesh and blood are not like marble—they change—and God means to use the *feelings* of His ministers and His servants for Divine ends and purposes. If God ever honors a man in public, He will whip him every now and then behind the door, and make him cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

Now, Brother, when you feel you are barren, do not fret or despair about it, but rather say, "Lord, here is a dry tree, come and make it bear fruit and then I shall joyfully confess, 'from You is my fruit found.' Lord, I am a withered branch by nature, come and put sap into me and make me bud and blossom like Aaron's rod—so shall men see a miracle of Grace and You shall have all the praise of it!" Do not think that your unfitness to be used is really a disqualification with God! The last thing a man might choose to fight with would be the jawbone of a donkey, and yet Samson found it handy enough and it made his victory the more famous!

The last instrument God might choose to use might be yourself, and yet if He pleases, there is a fitness in your unfitness and a qualification in your disqualification! A man's conceit that he is well prepared for God to use him will prove fatal to him. If a man is possessed of polished diction—very learned, a man of high family, a man of great repute, and so on—the

likelihood is that he will be esteemed by his fellows so much that the Lord will say, "I cannot use this man lest men glorify him."

Therefore God often uses young men because people know they are fools! He honors illiterate men that people may know that it is not by their learning. He chooses home-spun people who speak without the polish which others have gained, and He uses them because the world says, "He is an unlearned man, and a rough vulgar fellow." Do you not see that thus all the glory goes to God? The man's disqualifications are his fitness! "The rather, therefore," says the Apostle, "will I glory in infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Go on, dear Worker, for Jesus is "a root out of a dry ground," and in your dryness He will flourish!

Don't you think that this also ought to comfort all of us with regard to the times in which we live? They are said to be very horrible times—they always were ever since I have known anything of the world—and I suppose they always were in our fathers' time. We are always at a crisis according to some people. I am not about to defend the times—they are, no doubt, very bad—for the innumerable spirits of evil are bold and active, while good men seem to have lost their courage. We find amalgamations and compromises ad infinitum, and the precious Truth of God is trodden as the mire of the streets.

What about all this? Are we discouraged? Far from it! Bad times are famous times for Christ! When Wycliffe came the times were dark enough in England and therefore the morning star was the more welcome. When Luther came into the world the times were almost as black as they could be and therefore good times for reformation! The times were dead enough when Wesley and Whitfield came—but they proved glorious days for the Lord to work in! And if you discern now that there is not much prayerfulness, nor much spirituality, nor much truthful doctrine, nor much zeal—do not fret—it is thoroughly dry soil and now the root of Grace will grow!

John Bunyan once said that when he heard the young fellows swear so profanely in his parish, he used to think what men God would make of them when he converted them! Let us think like that! Suppose He saves those wretched priests who are trying to swallow down England? Suppose He converts these profane rationalists who almost deny God's existence—what penitent sinners they will make when He once breaks their hearts—and what preachers of the Word they will be when He renews them! Let us have good hope! Our faith does not rise when people say the times are improving, nor do we despond when men denounce the times as bad.

Eternity is the lifetime of God and He will work out His purposes. Time may ebb and flow, God is in no hurry. But if the world goes on for millions of years, God will triumph in the end and the poem of human history will not wind up with a dirge, but will end with a triumphant hymn after all. Let us be of good courage about that. And thus we may be encouraged concerning any particularly wicked place. Do not say, "It is useless to preach down there, or to send missionaries to that uncivilized country." How do you know? Is it very dry ground? Ah, well, that is hopeful soil! Christ is a "root out of a dry ground," and the more there is to discourage, the more you should be encouraged.

Read it the other way. Is it dark? Then all is fair for a grand show of light! The light will never seem so bright as when the night is very very dark. Come with the salt of Christ where there is most rottenness. Where is the scene for the triumph of the physician but where disease has reigned supreme? Go with Christ's Gospel in your hands where it is most required. The same is true of individual men—you should never say, "Well, such a man as that will never be converted." You parents do not say, "Now, there is Mary, she has a sweet temper. I expect to see her brought to Christ. And there is John, an open-hearted lad. He seems very attentive in the House of God, I expect to see him saved. But, as for Tom, he is such a wild daredevil fellow, I shall never see *him* saved."

I should not wonder that he is just the very one whom God will bring to Himself and make him to be the joy and gladness of your old age! Who are you that you should set up to elect God's people? He has done that years ago and He has often elected the very ones whom you would have cast out. Seek the conversion of *all* persons and *all* classes, *all* men, and *all* your relatives, and *all* your children for you do not know whether any shall be saved. He is "a root out of a dry ground." Look for the dry ground and rather rejoice when you see it *is* dry ground, with the comfortable hope that the root will spring up there.

IV. I must close with a few words upon THE GLORY WHICH ALL THIS DISPLAYS. Christ's laurels, Beloved, at this day are none of them borrowed. When He shall come in His glory there will be none among His friends who will say, "O King, You owe that jewel in Your crown to me." None will whisper among themselves that if the honor is given to the Captain yet it was a soldiers' battle, after all. No, but everyone will admit that Jesus was the Author and the Finisher of the whole work and therefore He must have all the glory of it, since we who were with Him were dry ground, and He gave life to us and borrowed nothing from us.

In the end of the world it will be seen how Christ has sedulously shaken off from Him everything that could have marred His victory. This is most prominent in history. The Church of God went on gloriously and subdued the nations till that unbaptized heathen Constantine thought, as a piece of State policy, that he would get the Christians on his side to secure for him a throne which else he would have lost. And that old sinner made Christianity a national religion and from that day Christianity was pure no more. You could not find pure religion except you went to the valleys of Piedmont, among the persecuted Waldenses, where it was maintained. Religion, as far as real, true, pure holiness was concerned, almost ceased to exist from the day when the royal hand inflicted a spiritual cancer upon the Church by its touch.

The Dark Ages were a chastisement to the Church for leaning upon an arm of flesh. Then came the Reformation and as long as men preached the Gospel and depended upon *spiritual* power only, even persecution made it spread. But those sinners, Henry the Eighth and Elizabeth, must needs extend the royal wing over it and it sickened almost to death. The despised Puritans became the representatives of the Crucified Lord. And then there came a time when these Puritans were multiplied, but they erred—they took the sword, (and if Puritans take the sword they can fight,

mark you), and they got the upper hand by the arm of flesh—and then down went the spirituality of Puritanism because whoever it is that thinks to bring glory to God in that way, God will have nothing to do with him.

And now, at this day the Lord may bless His dissenting people in this country, but if they seek political power and lean upon the education of their ministers, or any other earthly thing, God will cast them off as He has all the others. History shows that Christ blesses a humble, believing, trustful, spiritually-minded people. And history shows that when they cringe before the king, or use sword or bayonet—from that moment the Master puts them down and begins again at the first foundation—for it is “not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts.” And so it shall be. When at the last the entire Church shall rise in all its splendor, not a single stone shall bear the mark of the carver’s tool of human workmanship—from basement to pinnacle there shall be no token of human masonry!

No king shall be able to say, “I gave that glorious window of chrysolite.” No prince shall say, “I contributed that pinnacle of sapphire or chrysoprasus.” No minister shall be able to say, “My eloquence made yonder gate of agate and opened those windows of carbuncle.” No *angel*, even, shall be able to say, “I spread the sacred pavement of transparent gold like unto pure glass.” But it shall be to God, to God, to God alone—the foundations laid in the Divine decree, the stones cemented with the fair vermilion of the Savior’s atoning blood, each gem fashioned and placed by the mysterious Spirit of the living God and the whole temple fitly framed together—glowing with the Glory of God, bright with the Presence of God, from foundation to pinnacle, it shall speak of God, God, God alone!

When that palace shall be complete, then from the ends of the earth shall be heard the shout, “Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” Hushed will be every other acclamation! This anthem will drown them all. Let it in *our* hearts drown them all. “The Lord, the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day, for He is God and beside Him there is none else!” Amen and Amen!

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THE MAN OF SORROWS

NO. 1099

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 2, 1873,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“A Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”
Isaiah 53:3.*

POSSIBLY a murmur will pass round the congregation, “This is a dreary subject and a mournful theme.” But, O Beloved, it is not so, for great as were the woes of our Redeemer, they are all over now and are to be looked back upon with sacred triumph! However severe the struggle, the victory has been won! The laboring vessel was severely tossed by the waves, but she has now entered into the desired haven. Our Savior is no longer in Gethsemane agonizing, or upon the Cross dying—the crown of thorns has been replaced by many crowns of sovereignty! The nails and the spear have given way to the scepter!

Nor is this all, for though the suffering is ended, the blessed results never end. We may remember the travail, for the Man Child is born into the world. The sowing in tears is followed by a reaping in joy. The bruising of the heel of the woman's Seed is well recompensed by the breaking of the serpent's head. It is pleasant to hear of battles fought when a decisive victory has ended war and established peace. So that the double reflection that all the work of suffering is finished by the Redeemer and that, from now on He beholds the success of all His labors, we shall rejoice even while we enter into fellowship with His sufferings! Let it never be forgotten that the subject of the sorrows of the Savior has proven to be more efficacious for comfort to mourners than any other theme in the compass of Revelation, or out of it.

Even the glories of Christ afford no such consolation to afflicted spirits as the sufferings of Christ. Christ is in all attitudes the consolation of Israel, but He is most so as the Man of Sorrows. Troubled spirits turn not so much to Bethlehem as to Calvary—they prefer Gethsemane to Nazareth. The afflicted do not so much look for comfort in Christ as He will come a second time in splendor of state, as to Christ as He came the first time, a weary Man and full of woes. The passion flower yields us the best perfume. The tree of the Cross bleeds the most healing balm. Like in this case cures like, for there is no remedy for sorrow beneath the sun like the sorrows of Immanuel.

As Aaron's rod swallowed up all the other rods, so the griefs of Jesus make our griefs disappear. Thus you see that in the black soil of our subject, light is sown for the righteous—light which springs up for those who sit in darkness and in the region of the shadow of death. Let us go, then, without reluctance to the house of mourning and commune with “The Chief Mourner,” who above all others could say, “I am the Man that has seen affliction.” We will not stray from our text this morning, but keep to

it so closely as even to dwell upon each one of its words. The words shall give us our divisions—"A Man." "A Man of sorrows." "Acquainted with grief."

I. "A Man." There is no novelty to anyone here present in the doctrine of the real and actual Manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ. But, although there is nothing novel in it, there is everything *important* in it. Therefore, let us hear it again. This is one of those Gospel Church bells which must be rung every Sunday—this is one of those provisions of the Lord's household, which, like bread and salt, should be put upon the table at every spiritual meal. This is the manna which must fall every day round about the camp.

We can never meditate too much upon Christ's blessed Person as God and as Man. Let us reflect that He who is here called a Man was certainly "very God of very God." "A Man," and, "a Man of sorrows," and yet at the same time, "God over all, blessed forever." He who was "despised and rejected of men" was beloved and adored by angels! And He, from whom men hid their faces in contempt, was worshipped by cherubim and seraphim! This is the great mystery of godliness. *God* was "manifest in the flesh." He who was God and was in the beginning with God, was made flesh and dwelt among us.

The Highest stooped to become the Lowest. The Greatest took His place among the least. Strange, and needing all our faith to grasp it, yet it is true that He who sat upon the well of Sychar and said, "Give Me to drink," was none other than He who dug the channels of the ocean and poured into them the floods! Son of Mary, You are also Son of Jehovah! Man of the substance of Your mother, You are also essential Deity! We worship You this day in spirit and in truth! Remembering that Jesus Christ is God, it now behooves us to remember that His Manhood was none the less real and substantial. It differed from our own humanity in the absence of sin, but it differed in no other respect.

It is idle to speculate upon a heavenly Manhood, as some have done, who have, by their very attempt at accuracy, been borne down by whirlpools of error. It is enough for us to know that the Lord was born of a woman, wrapped in swaddling bands, laid in a manger and needed to be nursed by His mother as any other little child. He grew in stature like any other human being and as a Man we know that He ate and drank, that He hungered and thirsted, rejoiced and sorrowed. His body could be touched and handled, wounded and made to bleed. He was no phantom, but a Man of flesh and blood even as ourselves. He was a Man needing sleep, requiring food, and subject to pain—and a Man who, in the end—yielded up His life to death.

There may have been some distinction between His body and ours, for inasmuch as it was never defiled by sin, it was not capable of corruption. Otherwise in body and in soul, the Lord Jesus was perfect Man after the order of our manhood, "made in the likeness of sinful flesh," and we must think of Him under that aspect. Our temptation is to regard the Lord's humanity as something quite different from our own. We are apt to spiritualize it away and not to think of Him as really bone of our bone and

flesh of our flesh. All this is akin to grievous error—we may fancy that we are honoring Christ by such conceptions—but Christ is never honored by that which is not true. He was a Man, a real Man, a Man of our race, the Son of Man.

Indeed, He was a representative Man, the second Adam—“As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same.” “He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of Man.” Now this condescending participation in our Nature brings the Lord Jesus very near to us in relationship. Inasmuch as He was Man, though also God, He was, according to Hebrew Law, our *goel*—our kinsman, next of kin. Now it was according to the Law that if an inheritance had been lost, it was the right of the next of kin to redeem it. Our Lord Jesus exercised His legal right—seeing us sold into bondage and our inheritance taken from us—He came forward to redeem both us and all our lost estate.

A blessed thing it was for us that we had such a Kinsman! When Ruth went to glean in the fields of Boaz, it was the most gracious circumstance in her life that Boaz turned out to be her next of kin. And we who have gleaned in the fields of Mercy praise the Lord that His Only-Begotten Son is the next of kin to us. He is our Brother, born for adversity. It would not have been consistent with Divine Justice for any other substitution to have been accepted for us, except that of a Man. *Man* sinned, and man must make reparation for the injury done to the Divine Honor. The breach of the Law was caused by man and by man must it be repaired—man had transgressed—*man* must be punished.

It was not in the power of an angel to have said, “I will suffer for man”—for angelic sufferings would have made no amends for human sins. But the Man, the matchless Man, being the representative Man and of right by kinship allowed to redeem, stepped in, suffered what was due, made amends to injured Justice and thereby set us free! Glory be unto His blessed name! And now, Beloved, since the Lord thus saw in Christ’s Manhood a suitableness to become our Redeemer, I trust that many here who have been under bondage to Satan will see in that same human Nature an attraction leading them to approach Him.

Sinner, you have not to come to an absolute God. You are not bid to draw near to the consuming fire. You might well tremble to approach Him whom you have so grievously offended. But, there is a Man ordained to mediate between you and God, and if you would come to God, you must come through Him—the Man Christ Jesus. God out of Christ is terrible out of His holy places. He will by no means spare the guilty—but look at yonder Son of Man!—

***“His hand no thunder bears,
No terror clothes His brow;
No bolts to drive your guilty souls
To fiercer flames below.”***

He is a Man with hands full of blessing, eyes wet with tears of pity, lips overflowing with love and a heart melting with tenderness! See you not the gash in His side? Through that wound there is a highway to His heart and he who needs His compassion may soon excite it.

O Sinners! The way to the Savior's heart is open and penitent seekers shall never be denied! Why should the most despairing be afraid to approach the Savior? He has deigned to assume the Character of the Lamb of God—I have never known even a little child that was afraid of a lamb! The most timorous will approach a lamb and Jesus used this argument when He said to every laboring and heavy-laden one, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." I know you feel yourselves sad and trembling, but need you tremble in His Presence? If you are weak, your weakness will touch His sympathy, and your mournful inability will be an argument with His boundless mercy!

If I were sick and might have my choice where I would lie, with a view to healing, I would say, place me where the best and kindest physician upon earth can see me! Put me where a man with great skill and equal tenderness will have me always beneath his eyes—I shall not long groan there in vain—if he can heal me he will. Sinner, place yourself, by an act of faith, beneath the Cross of Jesus! Look up to Him and say, "Blessed Physician, You whose wounds for me can heal me. Whose death for me can make me live. Look down upon me! You are Man. You know what man suffers. You are Man, will You let a man sink down to Hell who cries to You for help? You are a Man and You can save, and will You let a poor unworthy one who longs for mercy be driven into hopeless misery while he cries to You to let Your merits save him?"

Oh, you guilty ones, have faith that you can reach the heart of Jesus! Sinner, fly to Jesus without fear! He waits to save! It is His office to receive sinners and reconcile them to God. Be thankful that you have not to go to God at the first, and as you are, but you are invited to come to Jesus Christ and through Him to the Father! May the Holy Spirit lead you to devout meditation upon the humility of our Lord and so may you find the door of life, the portal of peace, the gate of Heaven!

Then let me add, before I leave this point, that every child of God ought, also, to be comforted by the fact that our Redeemer is one of our own race, seeing that He was made like unto His brethren that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest. And He was tempted in all points, like as we are, that He might be able to succor them that are tempted. The sympathy of Jesus is the next most precious thing to His Sacrifice. I stood by the bedside of a Christian Brother the other day and he remarked, "I feel thankful to God that our Lord took our sicknesses." "Of course," said he, "the grand thing was, that He took our sins, but next to that, I, as a sufferer, feel grateful that He also took our sicknesses."

Personally, I also bear witness that it has been to me, in seasons of great pain, superlatively comfortable to know that in every pang which racks His people, the Lord Jesus has a fellow feeling. We are not alone, for one like unto the Son of Man walks the furnace with us! The clouds which float over our sky have aforetime darkened the heavens for Him, also—

***"He knows what temptations mean,
For He has felt the same."***

How completely it takes the bitterness out of grief to know that it once was suffered by Jesus! The Macedonian soldiers, it is said, made long forced marches which seemed to be beyond the power of mortal endur-

ance—but the reason for their untiring energy lay in Alexander's presence. He was accustomed to walk with them and bear the same fatigue.

If the king himself had been calcified like a Persian monarch in a palanquin in the midst of easy, luxurious state, the soldiers would soon have grown tired. But, when they looked upon the king of men himself, hungering when they hungered, thirsting when they thirsted, often putting aside the cup of water offered to him and passing it to a fellow soldier who looked more faint than himself, they could not dream of repining. Why, every Macedonian felt that he could endure any fatigue if Alexander could!

This day, assuredly, *we* can bear poverty, slander, contempt, or bodily pain—death itself—because Jesus Christ our Lord has borne it! By His humiliation it shall become pleasure to be abased for His sake! By the spit that ran down His cheeks it shall become a fair thing to be made a mockery for Him! By the buffeting and the blindfolding it shall become an honor to be disgraced, and by the Cross it shall become life, itself, to surrender life for the sake of such a cause and so precious a Master! May the Man of Sorrows now appear to us and enable us to bear our sorrows cheerfully! If there is consolation anywhere, surely it is to be found in the delightful Presence of the Crucified—"A Man shall be a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest."

II. We must pass on to dwell awhile upon the next words, "A MAN OF SORROWS." The expression is intended to be very emphatic. It is not "a sorrowful Man," but, "a Man of sorrows," as if He were made up of sorrows and they were constituent elements of His Being. Some are men of pleasure, others men of wealth, but He was "a Man of sorrows." He and sorrow might have changed names. He who saw Him, saw sorrow, and he who would see sorrow, must look on Him. "Behold, and see," He says, "if there was ever sorrow like unto My sorrow which was done unto Me." Our Lord is called the Man of Sorrows for peculiarity, for this was His peculiar token and special mark.

We might well call Him, "a Man of holiness," for there was no fault in Him. Or a Man of labors, for He did His Father's business earnestly. Or, "a Man of eloquence," for never man spoke like this Man. We might right fittingly call Him in the language of our hymn, "The Man of Love," for never was there greater love than glowed in His heart. Still, conspicuous as all these and many other excellencies were, yet had we gazed upon Christ and been asked afterwards what was the most striking peculiarity in Him, we should have said His sorrows.

The various parts of His Character were so singularly harmonious that no one quality predominated so as to become a leading feature. In His moral portrait, the eyes are perfect, but so, also, is the mouth. The cheeks are as beds of spices, but the lips, also are as lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh. In Peter you see enthusiasm exaggerated at times into presumption. And in John, love for his Lord would call fire from Heaven on his foes. Deficiencies and exaggerations exist everywhere but in Jesus! He is the *perfect* Man, a whole Man, the Holy One of Israel. But there *was* a peculiarity, and it lay in the fact that "His visage was so marked more

than any man, and His form more than the sons of men,” through the excessive griefs which continually passed over His spirit.

Tears were His insignia and the Cross His escutcheon. He was the warrior in black armor and not as now, the rider upon the white horse. He was the Lord of Grief, the Prince of Pain, the Emperor of Anguish, a “Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”—

**“Oh! King of Grief!
(A title strange, yet true,
To You of all kings only due)
Oh! King of Wounds!
How shall I grieve for You,
Who in all grief prevent me?”**

Is not the title, “Man of Sorrows,” given to our Lord by way of eminence? He was not only sorrowful, but pre-eminent among the sorrowful! All men have a burden to bear, but His was heaviest of all! Who is there of our race that is quite free from sorrows? Search the whole earth through and everywhere the thorn and thistle will be found—and these have wounded everyone born of woman.

High in the lofty places of the earth there is sorrow, for the royal widow weeps her lord. Down in the cottage where we fancy that nothing but content can reign, a thousand bitter tears are shed over dire penury and cruel oppression. In the sunniest climates the serpent creeps among the flowers. In the most fertile regions poisons flourish as well as wholesome herbs. Everywhere, “men must work and women must weep.” There is sorrow on the sea and sadness on the land. But in this common lot, the “First-Born among many brethren” has more than a double portion! His cup is more bitter, His Baptism is more deep than the rest of the family! Common sufferers must give place, for none can match with Him in woe.

Ordinary mourners may be content to tear their garments, but He, Himself, is torn in His affliction—they sip at Sorrow’s bowl, but He drains it dry. He who was the most obedient Son smarted most under the rod when He was stricken of God and afflicted! No other of the smitten ones have sweat great drops of blood, or in the same bitterness of anguish, cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” The reasons for this superior sorrow may be found in the fact that with His sorrow there was no mixture of sin. Sin *deserves* sorrow, but it also blunts the edge of grief by rendering the soul untender and unsympathetic. We do not start at sin as Jesus did. We do not tremble at the sinner’s doom as Jesus would. His was a perfect Nature which, because it knew no sin, was not in its element amid sorrow, but was like a land bird driven out to sea by the gale.

To the robber, jail is his home and the prison fare is the meat to which he is accustomed. But to an innocent man a prison is misery and everything about it is strange and foreign. Our Lord’s pure Nature was peculiarly sensitive of any contact with sin. We, alas, by the Fall, have lost much of that feeling! In proportion as we are sanctified, sin becomes the source of wretchedness to us. Jesus, being perfect, every sin pained Him much more than it would any of us. I have no doubt there are many persons in the world who could live merrily in the haunts of vice—could hear blasphemy without horror, view lust without disgust—and look on robbery

or murder without abhorrence. But to many of us, an hour's familiarity with such abominations would be the severest punishment.

A sentence in which the name of Jesus is blasphemed is torture to us of the most exquisite kind. The very mention of the shameful deeds of vice seizes us with horror. To live with the wicked would be a sufficient Hell to the righteous. David's prayer is full of agony where he cries, "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men." But the perfect Jesus! What a grief the sight of sin must have caused Him! Our hands grow rough with toiling and our hearts with sinning—but our Lord was, as it were, like a man whose flesh was all one quivering wound—He was delicately sensitive of every touch of sin.

We go through thorn brakes and briars of sin because we are clothed with indifference, but imagine a naked man, compelled to traverse a forest of briars—such was the Savior as to His moral sensitiveness. He could see sin where we cannot see it—and feel its heinousness as we cannot feel it. There was, therefore, more to grieve Him and He was more capable of being grieved. Side by side with His painful sensitiveness of the evil of sin was His gracious tenderness towards the sorrows of others. If we could know and enter into all the griefs of this congregation, it is probable that we would be of all men, most miserable. There are heartbreaks in this house this morning, which, could they find a tongue, would fill our heart with agony.

We hear of poverty here, we see disease there, we observe bereavement and we mark distress. We note the fact that men are passing into the grave and, (ah, far more bitter grief), descending into Hell! But, somehow or other, either these become such common things that they do not stir us, or else we gradually harden to them. The Savior was always moved to sympathy with another's griefs, for His love was ever at flood-tide. All men's sorrows were His sorrows. His heart was so large that it was inevitable that He should become "a Man of sorrows." We remember that besides this, our Savior had a peculiar relationship to sin. He was not merely afflicted with the sight of it and saddened by perceiving its effects on others, but sin was actually laid upon Him and He was, Himself, numbered with the transgressors.

And therefore He was called to bear the terrible blows of Divine Justice and suffered unknown, immeasurable agonies! His Godhead strengthened Him to suffer, else mere Manhood had failed. The wrath whose power no man knows spent itself on Him—"It pleased the Father to bruise Him, He has put Him to grief." Behold the Man, and marvel how vain it would be to seek His equal sorrow!

The title of "Man of Sorrows," was also given to our Lord to indicate the constancy of His afflictions. He changed His place of abode, but He always lodged with Sorrow. Sorrow wove His swaddling bands and Sorrow His winding sheet. Born in a stable, Sorrow received Him and only on the Cross at His last breath did Sorrow part with Him. His disciples might forsake Him, but His sorrows would not leave Him. He was often alone without a man, but never alone without a grief. From the hour of His Baptism

in Jordan, to the time of His Baptism in the pains of death, He always wore the sable robe and was “a Man of sorrows.”

He was also “a Man of sorrows,” for the variety of His woes. He was a Man not of sorrow, only, but of “sorrows.” All the sufferings of the body and of the soul were known to Him. The sorrows of the man who actively struggles to obey. The sorrows of the man who sits still and passively endures. The sorrows of the lofty He knew, for He was the King of Israel. The sorrows of the poor He knew, for He “had not where to lay His head.” Sorrows relative and sorrows personal. Sorrows mental and sorrows spiritual. Sorrows of all kinds and degrees assailed Him. Affliction emptied his quiver upon Him, making His heart the target for all conceivable woes.

Let us think a minute or two of some of those sufferings. Our Lord was a Man of sorrows as to His poverty. Oh, you who are in need, your need is not so abject as His—He had not where to lay His head, but you have at least some humble roof to shelter you. No one denies you a cup of water, but He sat upon the well at Samaria, and said, “I thirst.” We read more than once that He hungered. His toil was so great that He was constantly weary and we read of one occasion where they took Him, “even as He was,” into the boat—too faint was He to reach the boat Himself—but they carried Him as He was and laid Him down near the helm to sleep. But He had not much time for slumber, for they woke Him, saying, “Master, do You not care that we perish?”

A hard life was His, with nothing of earthly comfort to make that life endurable. Remember, you who lament around the open grave, or weep in memory of graves newly filled—our Savior knew the heart-rending of bereavement. Jesus wept as He stood at the tomb of Lazarus. Perhaps the bitterest of His sorrows were those which were connected with His gracious work. He came as the Messiah sent of God on a mission of love and men rejected His claims. When He went to His own city where He had been brought up, and announced Himself, they would have cast Him headlong from the brow of the hill! It is a hard thing to come on an errand of disinterested love and then to meet with such ingratitude as that.

Nor did they stay at cold rejection—they then proceeded to derision and to ridicule. There was no name of contempt which they did not pour upon Him. No, it was not merely contempt, but they preceded to falsehood, slander, and blasphemy. He was a drunk, they said—hear this, you angels, and be astonished! Yes, a wine-bibber did they call the blessed Prince of Life! They said He was in league with Beelzebub and had a devil, and was mad—whereas He had come to destroy the works of the devil!! They charged Him with every crime which their malice could suggest. There was not a word He spoke but they would wrest it. Not a doctrine but what they would misrepresent it. He could not speak but what they would find in His words some occasion against Him.

And all the while He was doing nothing but seeking their advantage in all ways. When He was earnest against their vices it was out of pity for their souls. If He condemned their sins it was because their sins would destroy them. But His zeal against sin was always tempered with love for the souls of men. Was there ever Man so full of good-will to others who re-

ceived such disgraceful treatment from those He longed to serve? As He proceeded in His life His sorrows multiplied. He preached and when men's hearts were hard, and they would not believe what He said, "He was grieved for the hardness of their hearts."

He went about doing good and for His good works they took up stones to stone Him! Alas, they stoned His heart when they could not injure His body. He pleaded with them and plaintively declared His love and received, instead thereof, a remorseless and fiendish hatred. Slighted love has griefs of peculiar poignancy—many have died of hearts broken by ingratitude. Such love as the love of Jesus could not, for the sake of those it loved, bear to be slighted. It pined within itself because men did not know their own mercies and rejected their own salvation! His sorrow was not that men injured Him, but that they destroyed themselves! This it was that pulled up the sluices of His Soul and made His eyes overflow with tears—"O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not."

The lament is not for His own humiliation, but for their suicidal rejection of His Divine Grace! These were among the sorrows that He bore. But surely He found some solace with the few companions whom He had gathered around Him. He did, but for all that He must have found as much sorrow as solace in their company. They were dull scholars, they learned slowly. What they did learn they forgot. What they remembered they did not practice and what they practiced at one time they belied at another. They were miserable comforters for the Man of Sorrows. His was a lonely life, I mean that even when He was with His followers He was alone.

He said to them once, "Could you not watch with Me one hour," but, indeed, He might have said the same to them all the hours of their lives, for even if they sympathized with Him to the utmost of their capacity, they could not enter into such griefs as His. A father in a house with many little children about him cannot tell his babes his griefs. If he did they would not comprehend him. What do they know of his anxious business transactions, or his crushing losses? Poor little things, their father does not wish they should be able to sympathize with him—he looks down upon them and rejoices that their toys will comfort them and that their little prattle will not be broken in upon by his great griefs.

The Savior, from the very dignity of His Nature, must suffer alone. The mountainside with Christ upon it seems to me to be a suggestive symbol of His earthly life. His great soul lived in vast solitudes, sublime and terrible, and there, amid a midnight of trouble, His Spirit communed with the Father, no one being able to accompany Him into the dark glens and gloomy ravines of His unique experience. Of all His life's warfare He might have said in some senses, "of the people there was none with Me" and at the last it became literally true, for they all forsook Him—one denied Him and another betrayed Him, so that He trod the winepress alone.

In the last crowning sorrows of His life, there came upon Him the penal inflictions from God—the punishment of our sin which was upon Him. He

was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane by God's officers before the officers of the Jews had come near to Him. There on the ground He knelt and wrestled till the bloody sweat poured from every pore, and His soul was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." You have read the story of your Master's woes and know how He was hurried from bar to bar and treated with mingled scorn and cruelty before each judgment seat. When they had taken Him to Herod and to Pilate, and almost murdered Him with scourging, they brought Him forth and said, "Ecce Homo"—"Behold the Man."

Their malice was not satisfied. They must go further, yet, and nail Him to His Cross and mock Him while fever parched His mouth and made Him feel as if His body were dissolved to dust. He cries out, "I thirst," and is mocked with vinegar. You know the rest, but I would have you best remember that the sharpest scourging and severest griefs were all *within*—while the hand of God bruised Him and the iron rod of Justice broke Him, as it were, upon the wheel. He was fitly named a "Man of sorrows!"

I feel as if I have no utterance, as if my tongue were tied, while trying to speak upon this subject. I cannot find goodly words worthy of my theme, yet I know that embellishments of language would degrade rather than adorn the agonies of my Lord. There let the Cross stand sublime in its simplicity! It needs no decoration. If I had wreaths of choicest flowers to hang about it, I would gladly place them there, and if instead of garlands of flowers, each flower could be a priceless gem, I would consider that the Cross deserved the whole. But as I have none of these I rejoice that the Cross, alone, in its naked simplicity, needs nothing from mortal speech. Turn to your bleeding Savior, O my Hearers. Continue gazing upon Him, and find in the "Man of Sorrows" your Lord and your God!

III. And now the last word is, He was "ACQUAINTED WITH GRIEF." With grief He had an intimate acquaintance. He did not know merely what it was in others, but it came home to Himself. We have read of grief. We have sympathized with grief. We have sometimes felt grief—but the Lord felt it more intensely than other men in His innermost soul—He, beyond us all, was conversant with this black letter lore. He knew the secret of the heart which refuses to be comforted. He had sat at Grief's table, eaten of Grief's black bread and dipped His morsel in her vinegar.

By the waters of Sarah He dwelt and knew right well the bitter well. He and Grief were bosom friends. It was a continuous acquaintance. He did not call at Grief's house, sometimes, to take a tonic by the way. Neither did He sip, now and then, of the wormwood and the gall, but the quassia cup was *always* in His hand and ashes were always mingled with His bread. Not only 40 days in the wilderness did Jesus fast—the world was always a wilderness to Him and His life was one long Lent. I do not say that He was not, after all, a happy Man, for down deep in His soul, benevolence always supplied a living spring of joy to Him.

There was a joy into which we are one day to enter—the "joy of our Lord"—the "joy set before Him" for which "He endured the Cross, despising the shame." But that does not at all take away from the fact that His acquaintance with Grief was continuous and intimate beyond that of any

man who ever lived. It was, indeed, a growing acquaintance with Grief, for each step took Him deeper down into the grim shades of sorrow. As there is a progress in the teaching of Christ and in the life of Christ, so is there, also, in the griefs of Christ. The tempest lowered darker and darker, and darker. His sun rose in a cloud, but it set in congregated horrors of heaped up night, till, in a moment, the clouds were suddenly torn in sunder and, as a loud Voice proclaimed, "It is finished," a glorious morning dawned where all expected an eternal night!

Remember, once more, that this acquaintance of Christ with Grief was a *voluntary* acquaintance for our sakes. He need never have known Grief at all, and at any moment He might have said to Grief, Farewell. He could have returned in an instant to the royalties of Heaven and to the bliss of the upper world, or even tarrying here He might have lived sublimely indifferent to the woes of mankind. But He would not—He remained to the end, out of love to us—Grief's acquaintance. Now, then, what shall I say in conclusion, but just this—let us admire the superlative love of Jesus. O Love, Love, what have You done! What have You *not* done!

You are Omnipotent in suffering! Few of us can bear pain. Perhaps, fewer still of us can bear misrepresentation, slander and ingratitude. These are horrible hornets which sting as with fire—men have been driven to madness by cruel scandals which have distilled from venomous tongues. Christ, throughout life, bore these and other sufferings! Let us love Him, as we think of how much He must have loved us! Will you try, this afternoon, before you come to the Communion Table, to get your souls saturated with the love of Christ? Soak them in His love all the afternoon, till, like a sponge, you drink into your own selves the love of Jesus! And then come up tonight, as it were, to let that love flow out to Him again while you sit at His Table and partake of the emblems of His death and of His love. Admire the power of His love and then pray that you may have a love somewhat akin to it in power.

We sometimes wonder why the Church of God grows so slowly, but I do not wonder when I remember what scant consecration to Christ there is in the Church of God. Jesus was "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," but many of His disciples who profess to be altogether His are living for themselves. There are rich men who call themselves saints and are thought to be so, whose treasures are hoarded for themselves and families! There are men of ability who believe that they are bought with Christ's blood, yet their ability is all spent on other things and none upon their Lord! And let us come nearer home—here are we, what are we doing? Teaching in the school, are you? Are you doing it with all your heart for Jesus? Preaching in the street? Yes, but do you throw your soul into it for Him?

Maybe you have to confess you are doing nothing—do not let this day conclude till you have begun to do something for your Lord! We are always talking about the Church doing this and that—what is the Church? I believe there is a great deal too much said, both of bad and good, about that abstraction. The fact is, we are *individuals*. The Church is only the aggregation of *individuals* and if any good is to be done it must be performed by

individuals. And if all individuals are idle there is no Church work done! There may be the semblance of it, but there is no real work done!

Brothers and Sisters, what are you doing for Jesus? I charge you by the nail-prints of His hands, unless you are a liar unto Him, LABOR for Him! I charge you by His wounded feet—run to His help! I charge you by the scar on His side—give Him your heart! I charge you by that sacred head, once pierced with thorns—yield Him your thoughts! I charge you by the shoulders which bore the scourges—bend your whole strength to His service! I charge you by Himself, give Him yourself! I charge you by that left hand which has been under your head and that right hand which has embraced you, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, by the beds of spices and the banquets of love, render yourself, your heart, your soul and strength to Him!

Live in His service, and die in His service! Lay not down your harness, but work on as long as you shall live. While you live let this be your motto—“All for Jesus, all for Jesus! All for the Man of Sorrows, all for the Man of Sorrows!” O you that love Him and fight for Him, you are summoned to the front! Hasten to the conflict, I pray you, and charge home for the “Man of Sorrows!” Make this your battle cry today! Slink not back like cowards! Flee not to your homes as lovers of ease, but press to the front for the “Man of Sorrows,” like good men and true. By the Cross which bore Him, and by the heavy Cross He bore. By His deadly agony and by the agony of His life, I cry, “Forward, for the Man of Sorrows!”

Write this word, “for the Man of Sorrows,” on your own bodies, wherein you bear the marks of the Lord Jesus! Brand, if not in your flesh, yet in your souls, for from now on you are servants of the Man of Sorrows! Write this on your wealth! Bind this inscription on all your possessions—“This belongs to the Man of Sorrows.” Give your children to the “Man of Sorrows,” as men of old consecrated their sons to patriotism and to battle with their country’s foes! Give up each hour to the “Man of Sorrows!” Learn, even, to eat and drink and sleep for the “Man of Sorrows,” doing all in His name. Live for Him and be ready to die for Him and the Lord accept you for the “Man of Sorrows” sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 53.

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WHY CHRIST IS NOT ESTEEMED

NO. 3033

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 28, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT MAZE POND CHAPEL, LONDON

“We esteemed Him not.”
Isaiah 53:3.

This must be the universal confession of the human race. From the highest monarch to the meanest peasant, from the loftiest intellect to the most degraded mind, from the admired of all men to the unknown and insignificant, this one confession must come—“We esteemed Him not.” Whether we examine the sensualist rioting in the delights of the flesh or the formalist starving his body to fatten his pride, the merchant laboring to acquire wealth or the spendthrift recklessly scattering gold with both his hands, the profligate black with profanity, the moralist rejoicing in his goodness, or even the devoted Christian, we shall make them all acknowledge that either now or at some past period, they esteemed not Jesus! We make no exception, for even the holiest of God’s saints, those who now are—

***“Foremost of the sons of light,
Nearest the eternal Throne”—***

those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb—even they once “esteemed Him not.” And the brightest saints still upon the earth, those who are most earnestly and faithfully serving the Savior, at one time “esteemed Him not.” I am going, first, *to prove that this was true*. Next, *to dive deeper and try to find out the reasons why we esteemed not Jesus*. And, afterwards, *I want to remind you of the emotions which this fact ought to create in our minds—the fact that at one time—and in the case of many of us it was true not many years ago that “we esteemed Him not.”*

I. First, then, I have TO PROVE THAT THIS WAS TRUE.

Look, then, my Friends, first, at *the overt acts of your transgression against the Lord Jesus Christ*. Go back in imagination to the scenes of your youth and recollect your former transgressions. Some of you have your heads covered with the snows of many a winter and you have been for 40 or 50 years wearing the harness of the soldiers of Jesus Christ. You have fought the good fight ever since you enlisted under the blood-stained banner of the Cross, yet you can never forget some things that happened before that happy day when you first sang from your heart—

***“Tis done! The great transaction’s done—
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine.”***

It might not be profitable to mention in detail those sins of long ago, yet some of you have a very vivid remembrance of them and, although the Lord has graciously forgiven them and blotted them out of His Book of Remembrance, your own conscience will not let you forget them.

There are others of you who were, either by your early associations, or by the restraints of Sovereign Grace, kept from openly sinning against God as many others did, yet you know that *your lives were not in accordance with the Law of God*. You were, in comparison with many of your fellows, moral, upright, amiable, yet, as far as Christ was concerned, you “esteemed Him not.” Your friends and companions could find no fault with your character, but you know, now, that all the while there was a fatal flaw which was plainly manifest to the eyes of God. In the case of some, the apparent excellence was all on the surface, but, underneath there was a mass of rottenness and sin of which they can only think now with shame and sorrow. That, too, has all been forgiven and forgotten by God—yet it lingers in their own remembrance in a most salutary fashion, for it makes them hate all forms of iniquity and turn from them with utter loathing.

Besides the overt acts of sin which some of you committed—and the less public but none the less deadly evils of which others of you were guilty—there was further evidence that you did not esteem Christ in the fact that *you did not esteem His Word as you should have done*. Possible, just to quiet your conscience, you read a chapter from it in the morning and another in the evening, or you listened to it while your parents read it at family prayer. But how dull and dry it seemed to you! You could revel in a novel and be completely fascinated with fiction, but the Inspired Truth of God was a weariness and a burden to you. I must honestly confess that before I knew the Lord, or was seriously seeking Him, although I found the historical parts of the Bible interesting, a great portion of the Scriptures appeared to me to be dull and meaningless. As for anyone reading the Word as a treat, I could no more understand how that could be done than a blind man could appreciate the beauties of the scenery that could be discerned by sightseers on the top of a mountain! I might perhaps be mentally charmed by some beautiful passages in the Bible, but as to its hidden spiritual meaning, I had no true perception. If I were sick and in fear lest I was about to die, down would come my Bible and I would read it diligently for a while! But as for taking it as my everyday companion—that idea never occurred to me until the Holy Spirit began to work conviction in my heart. And then I was glad enough to turn to the neglected Book to find an answer to the all-important question, “What must I do to be saved?” If you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, could each one relate your own experience, I expect you would, many of you, have to join with me in saying, “We esteemed Him not, for we did not hold in proper esteem the Sacred Scriptures in which He had been revealed to us.”

Another proof that we did not esteem Christ was the fact that *we did not esteem His people*. We may have thought that, as a class, they were a

harmless set of enthusiasts, or we may have reviled them as hypocrites and deceivers although we had no reason for applying such titles to them. As for myself, from my earliest days I had the priceless privilege of being associated with those who practiced what they professed and I had such gracious examples set before me, both in my father's house and while I was at my grandfather's, that I ought to have appreciated Christian people at their true value, as I do now, when I delight to sing, with good Dr. Watts—

***“My soul shall pray for Zion still,
While life or breath remains.
There my best friends, my kindred dwell,
There God my Savior reigns.”***

But why need I linger over the minor matters when you know, and I know, that *we did not esteem Christ Himself?* This is proved from the fact that we were so long before we sought Him as our Savior, before we came to Him and trusted Him as our All-in-All. How many years some of us lived without really praying to Him, or communing with Him! His name was not melodious to our ears, not entrancing to our heart. In those days, we might have adopted the Prophet's language as our own—“He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised and we esteemed Him not.” “O You adorable Jesus!” a Christian will say, “my life, my hope, my joy, my light, my way, my end, my all! There was a time when Your groans in Gethsemane, Your agonies in Gabbatha and even Your death on Calvary's Cross seemed to be things of no account to me. You were no more to me, then, than was Barabbas! And had I mingled among the crowd that surged around Pilate, I might have cried with the mad mob, ‘Away with Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!’ I heard Your Gospel preached, but it was only like a tale to which I had so often listened that it no longer had any interest for me. O Jesus, You wondrous Incarnation of the Grace of God to guilty men, how could You so long endure the neglect and enmity of him who now, with shame and confusion of face, confesses that he esteemed You not?”

Ah, Brothers and Sisters! I feel that I cannot preach as I gladly would upon such a theme as this which touches me in the very depths of my soul. If I could, by any means, bring the Truth of the text home to your hearts. If the Holy Spirit were but poured upon you so that you would all inwardly confess, even if you did not audibly say, “We esteemed Him not,” my objective would be gained and I would have proved the Truth of Isaiah's utterance.

II. Now, in the second place, we are TO TRY TO FIND OUT WHY WE DID NOT ESTEEM THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

The first reason that I would mention why we esteemed not Jesus is *because we esteemed ourselves so highly.* Self-esteem naturally keeps Jesus out of the heart. And the more our self-esteem increases, the more firmly do we fasten the door against Christ. Love of self prevents love of the Savior! The sinner sets up an idol-god—himself—on the throne where

God alone ought to sit! Hear this, O you heathen, and blush for the wickedness of men who live in this land of many privileges, in this enlightened age—and some of whom even profess and call themselves Christians! Instead of bowing down to blocks of wood and stone, or worshipping the sun, moon and all the host of heavenly bodies, they are worse heathens than even you are, for they prostrate themselves before *themselves* and adore their own merits, their own good deeds, their own charity, and so on! Christian, was not this the reason why you did not esteem Christ—because self was everything to you in the days of your unregeneracy? If anyone had then told you that your heart was corrupt to its very core, what would you have replied? You would have answered, “I feel that I am as good as anyone else whom I know and better than most of those I see around me.” If you had been informed that all your good works were but varnished sins and that the very best of them were foul and full of faults, would not your blood have boiled with indignation? Or if someone had told you that your best righteousness was only like a heap of filthy rags, fit for nothing but to be burned, you would surely have replied, “I have a righteousness of which I have no reason to be ashamed. And although I do not say that it is perfect, yet I hope I shall have as good a chance of standing before God’s Throne as anybody else will have.”

“Such were some of you” and, as long as you thus highly esteemed yourselves, of course you did not esteem the Lord Jesus Christ! Does the man who is in perfect health esteem the physician? If all were always well, who would care for the doctors? Would they not laugh them to scorn? Does the man who is rich hold in high esteem the one who would give him alms? “No,” he says, “give your alms to those who need them. I do not require them.” Will a man who has the proper use of his limbs care for crutches? “No,” he says, “hand them over to the lame. I have no need of them.” In like manner, we did not esteem Christ because we felt that we had no need of Him. We thought that we could do very well without Him, at least for the present. There might come a time when He might be able to give us a lift over a fence, or if we came to a muddy place in the road, He might be willing to lay His cloak down for us to step on so that we might not soil our feet. But as for the rest of our journey, we thought we could get on very well by ourselves, though we might be glad for Christ to help us into Heaven at the last. Perhaps no one of us would have put the matter quite so plainly as I have done, but that would have been the practical effect of our self-esteem—and that is why we did not esteem Christ, for self-love had completely engrossed our hearts. Self and the Savior can never live in one heart. He will have all, or none. So, where self is on the throne, it cannot be expected that Christ should meekly come and sit upon the footstool.

Another reason why we esteemed not Jesus was *because we esteemed the world so highly*. We were like the man of whom John Bunyan tells us, who was quite willing that others should have the joys of the world to come so long as he could have all that he wanted in the present life. The

worldling still says, “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,” and to him this present evil world is the bird in the hand—and he thinks of all the bliss of Heaven as though it were but a bird in the bush. “Let me live while I live,” he says, “and have all the happiness that I can here. And let them have the next world who can win it.” With some of us, it is not very long ago since we also talked like that—and scorned the glories that are everlasting! And we put far away from us Jesus Christ and His great salvation. “We esteemed Him not” because we loved the earth and all its follies, because we were so busy gathering its poisoned dust into heaps, or delighting ourselves in its unsatisfying pleasures. It is not until the rope is cast loose that the balloon can soar above the clouds—and it is not until the cord that binds us to the things of this earth has been cut that our soul can hope to mount towards the things which are unseen and eternal! Until we have been weaned from the world, we shall never esteem Jesus as the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely One in whom is all our delight!

A third reason why we did not esteem Christ was *because we did not know Him*. It is true that we knew a great deal *about* Him, but we did not know HIM. We had read what the Evangelists had recorded concerning Him. We knew much concerning His doctrines. Perhaps we had even tried to keep some of His precepts, yet we did not personally and savingly know Him. There is a great distinction between knowing about Christ and knowing Christ Himself—between knowing what He did and knowing Who and what He is—really knowing Him in the sense in which He used that expression when He said, in His great intercessory prayer to His Father, “This is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” Yet it is only through Him, by the Infallible instruction of His ever-blessed Spirit, that we can thus know Him! As the Apostle John writes, “We know that the Son of God is come and has given us an understanding that we may know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.” The poet was right when he wrote—

***“His worth, if all the nations knew,
Surely the whole world would love Him too.”***

And Rutherford said, “Surely, my Lord, if the whole world could see You, the whole world must love You. If You would but open only one of Your eyes and look upon them, they must run unto You, ravished with delight, for You are so fair, my precious Jesus, that You only need to be seen to be loved.” But the worldling has never seen Christ, so he does not know Christ and does not love Christ! Ah, poor worldling! If you had but seen my lord as I saw Him in the hour when He said to me, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins”—if you could, with the ear of faith, have heard that Divine declaration, sweeter even than the music of the harps of Heaven—in a single moment you would have loved the Lord Jesus with such an ardent passion that the bonds of life would scarcely have been strong enough to keep you in this clay tenement, but you would have longed to

fly away and be with your beloved Lord forever! And, Worldling, could you have such a visit from Jesus as, now and then, the Believer is privileged to have—if you could experience but five minutes of the bliss that a Christian has, “Whether in the body, I cannot tell. Or whether out of the body, I cannot tell. God knows”—if you could thus be “caught up to the third Heaven” and hear unspeakable words, which it is not possible for a man to utter. If you could once behold our blessed Savior, you would be compelled to love Him, for He is so lovely, so gracious, so glorious that you could not any longer think unkindly of Him! Those who think wrongly of Christ have never known Him. And we who *do* know Him, confess with shame that the reason why, for so long “we esteemed Him not,” was because we then knew Him not.

The last reason I will mention is the very core of all the other reasons. There need be no surprise that we did not esteem Christ, *for we were spiritually dead*. I will suppose that there sits, away yonder, a man over whom I want to exert a certain influence. I will further imagine that I am a skillful musician and that I touch the strings of my harp in such a manner as to bring forth the most delightful melody, yet the man takes no notice whatever of it. Then I turn to an instrument of quite another sort—a cornet or a bugle—and blow a blast that startles all of you—yet that one man still gives no heed to the sound! Why is it that, charm we ever so wisely, he is like the deaf adder and regards neither the sweetest nor the shrillest or loudest noise? I try to attract his attention in another way. I place before him the daintiest dish that the cleverest cook in all England can prepare, or I bring some rare delicacy from a distant land—but he regards the food no more than he did the music. I will try another plan to reach his senses. I will bring Him—

***“The choicest flowers that were ever grown
Since Eden’s joys were blasted.”***

I will hold them close to his face and let their fragrance ascend to his nostrils. Yet he heeds not! What will awake him? Let Heaven’s thunder peals roll like the drums in the march of some mighty war-lord, but the man moves not. Let the lightning flash all around us till it seems as though the end of the world had come, but the man stirs not. What shall I do to awake him? Shall I beat him with a whip, or strike him with a sword? All is in vain and, at last, I perceive that the man is dead and that all my efforts have been wasted! Now the riddle is solved, the secret revealed, the knot untied—*the man is dead*. And so I wonder no longer that he esteemed not music, or food, or flowers. Or that he feared not thunder, lightning, or the sword. And, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, though the Holy Spirit has quickened us, there was a time when we were “dead in trespasses and sins” and, like Lazarus in his grave, we were becoming more and more corrupt as every moment passed!

III. Now, having proved the Truth of the text, and given you various reasons why we did not esteem Christ, let me, in conclusion, ask WHAT EMOTIONS OUGHT THIS FACT TO CREATE WITHIN OUR SOULS?

First, I think that the recollection of this Truth of God, that “we esteemed Him not,” ought to produce in us *the deepest penitence*. I cannot understand that Christian who can look back upon his past life without a tear. If he can turn to the black pages of his history, which not only have no record of goodness, but are full of entries concerning his sins against his present Lord and Master, and yet not weep at the remembrance of them, surely he can never have learned the true nature of sin! O Christian, it would be becoming on your part to catch the spirit, if not literally to imitate the action of that “woman in the city, who was a sinner,” of whom we read that, “when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house,” she, “brought an alabaster box of ointment and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment.” Our Lord’s explanation of her conduct was that “she loved much.” Is it because you love your Lord so little that you do not manifest your grief over your past sin as that poor woman did? Recollect that although you did not esteem Him, He had loved you with an everlasting love and He had purchased your soul’s redemption at the great price of His own most precious blood! He stood before you, holding in His pierced hands the roll of the Eternal Covenant which set your soul at liberty and gave you a full discharge! Yet you did not esteem Him. O Christian, will you not weep even at the remembrance of the way in which you did treat the best Friend you have ever had? Recollect that you did virtually nail Him to the tree and pierce Him to the heart. Dr. Watts spoke for all Believers when he wrote the self-condemning words—

**“Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were!
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear.
‘Twas you that pulled the vengeance down
Upon His guiltless head—
Break, break, my heart, oh burst my eyes!
And let my sorrows bleed.”**

And now, beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, having for a while allowed our penitential sorrow thus to find suitable expression, let us strike a higher note and, remembering that there was a time when we did not esteem Christ, *let us now rejoice in the great salvation which He has procured for us*. It is true that we have great reason for sorrow that we should ever have been so vile as not to esteem Him to whom we owe everything for time and for eternity. Yet we have much more reason to adore the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of that love of Christ which passes knowledge and which carried out to completion the wondrous plan whereby all our iniquities have been blotted out and we have become “accepted in the Beloved!” It was right that we should weep at the remembrance that we were numbered among the fallen, yet it is equally right that we should rejoice over the fact that we have been reclaimed! And what should be the very key-note of our song of rejoicing?

Should it not be the Sovereign Grace of God? The reason why the Lord chose us unto salvation was certainly not because we esteemed His Son, Jesus Christ, more than others did, for, “we esteemed Him not.” If you ask me why God chose His people, I can only answer that it is for the same reason that Christ gave concerning the things that were hidden from the wise and prudent, but revealed unto babes, “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Your sight.”

There is one other emotion which every true Christian should feel—that is *hope for his fellows*. If I feel sorrow for my sin and joy for my deliverance, I ought also to have hope for other people! Perhaps someone here is saying, “I have brought my son to the House of Prayer time after time and I used to hope that God would have mercy upon him, but now I have given up all hope.” Stop, my Brother! Do not talk like that! Do you not remember the time when it might have been said, concerning you and me, that we did not esteem Christ and, although your son does not now esteem Him, is that any reason why he should not yet do so? On the contrary, is not the manifestation of Divine Grace in your own case an encouragement to you in hoping for your son’s conversion?

“Oh,” says another venerable father, “I have long prayed in vain for one of my children. These hands, which are now palsied with age, have been lifted up year after year to the God of Grace, but I have lost all hope of my child’s salvation.” But, my hoary-headed Friend, think not that your prayers have failed, even though they still remain unanswered! They are all filed in Heaven and when the required number shall be complete, when that petition which God has determined shall be the “effectual” one shall be presented, your child shall be saved! But why should you despair concerning your dear one? You know that for many years you did not esteem Christ, yet He is “altogether lovely” to you now! Then why should not your experience be repeated in the case of your child?

“Ah,” says another, “I live in such-and-such a district among many of the worst people in London. I have tried to bring them under the sound of the Word of God, but cannot induce even one of them to come! I feel as if I must give up even hoping for their salvation. They seem to me to be too bad to ever be saved.” But, my dear Friend, you and I at one time did not esteem Christ—and if we really know what was in our own hearts, we shall say that these people are not much worse than we were! Yet suppose they *are* as bad as you think they are—remember that striking saying of Whitefield’s—“Jesus Christ is willing to receive the devil’s castaways.” A very fastidious lady who heard that he said that, complained to the Countess of Huntingdon and said how sad it was that he should talk in such a vulgar way! The Countess said, “Mr. Whitefield is downstairs. I will send for him and let him answer for himself.” When he came up and heard the lady’s remark, he simply replied, “I had just been talking to a poor, sinful woman who had been to hear me preach, and the one thing that comforted her was the sentence to which this lady objects, ‘Jesus Christ is willing to receive the devil’s castaways.’” “Ah,”

said Lady Huntingdon and others who agreed with her, "That is quite sufficient justification for you."

I can testify from my own experience that God often blesses some of our rough expressions more than our highly-polished ones. I have seen so many souls saved through some of the odd and singular sayings that I have felt moved to utter that I intend, God helping me, to go on in the same style, even though some people may continue to find fault with me for doing so. I can certainly endorse Mr. Whitefield's remark, "Jesus Christ is willing to receive the devil's castaways." However vile and foul a sinner may be, I always feel, "That is just what I would have been but for the Grace of God." Therefore, instead of imitating the priest and the Levite who left the poor wounded traveler to die so far as they cared, I feel anxious to go to the very worst of my fellow men and to say to them, "Why, my dear Brother, there was a time when I did not esteem Christ, so I will not be angry with you because you say that you are not religious. I will not scold you because you do not read the Bible, or pray to God, or go to a place of worship. But I will try to win your esteem for my Master by telling you of His great love to sinners just like you. Though He was reigning with His Father in Heaven, He gave up all His Glory and came down to earth to live just as any other poor man might have lived, only that He was without sin. He went about doing good, healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead and, at last, He willingly gave Himself up into the hands of wicked men and died, 'the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.'"

So I would try to make the Gospel very plain to my poor friend and tell him what the Lord had done for *my* soul—and assure him that, having saved *me*, there was no limit to His Grace and mercy! I always admire the argument of Charles Wesley in those familiar lines—

***"His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me."***

That was the same kind of argument that Paul used when he wrote, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for the pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." Christian men and women, as you retire from this building, I leave these thoughts with you. At one time you did not esteem Christ, so now you have no right to be proud of your position as His followers, but should give to Him all the glory for your salvation! And you should hope for the salvation of others, even the very worst of your fellow creatures—

***"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."***

You may go to the very worst haunts of sin and vice in this city or anywhere else and, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit, you may proclaim the Gospel of Christ to be the most abandoned men and women whom you can find, knowing that He is able "to save them to the

uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.”

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 26:14-45.**

Verse 14, 15. *Then one of the twelve called Judas Iscariot went unto the chief priests and said unto them, What will you give me, and I will deliver Him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.* At what a price did the traitor sell our blessed Master! O you who have been redeemed with His precious blood, set a high value upon Him! Think much of Him, say much in praise of Him! Remember these thirty pieces of silver and never be guilty of despising the Lord of Glory, as these chief priests did when they paid the price of a slave for Him.

16-19. *And from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him. Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto Him, Where will You that we prepare for You to eat the Passover? And He said, go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover.* See the absolute control which Jesus has over the minds of men! He can have any man's house that He wants and He knows who will be glad to welcome Him. Yet this same Jesus was about to die—and this shows how perfectly voluntary was His Sacrifice. He was not forced to stand in our place, nor was He compelled to suffer except by the constraint of His own great love. All was free, as became the freedom of His Grace. Then shall not our heart's love flow out freely to Him? Shall we need to be scourged to obedience? Oh, no, Beloved! So let us think what we can voluntarily do in honor of our Divine Lord who gave His all for us.

20-22. *Now when the evening was come, He sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, He said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me. And they were exceedingly sorrowful. And well might they be sad.*

22. *And began, every one of them, to say unto Him, Lord, is it I? What anguish does that question always stir within the heart and mind of every true Believer! “Shall I ever betray my Lord and Master? Shall I ever deny or forsake Him?” God grant that none of us may ever do as Judas did!*

23. *And He answered and said, He that dips His hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me.* He who had been entrusted with the charge of the finances of the little band of Christ's immediate disciples—he who carried the bag—was the one who was about to betray his Lord. Since then, Christ has often been betrayed by those who have been in positions of trust, those who have led the way among the disciples of Christ, those who have, as it were, been so familiar with Christ as to dip their hand with Him in the dish!

24, 25. *The Son of Man goes as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, You have said.* Judas seems to have been the last to ask the question, “Master, is it I?” Yet he was the guilty one—the one who had already covenanted with the chief priests to sell His Lord.

26-31. *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and give it to them, saying, Drink you all of it; for this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s Kingdom. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then said Jesus unto them, All you shall be made to stumble because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.* Observe our blessed Lord’s habit of quoting Scripture. He was able to utter words of Infallible Truth which had never before been used, yet He constantly quoted from the Inspired Scriptures! Those who nowadays quibble at the Word of God and yet profess to be followers of Christ, find no excuse for their conduct in the example that He has left us, for He sometimes quoted Scripture when it might not have seemed to be necessary to do so! Brothers and Sisters in Christ, have your Bible first in your hearts, then at the tip of your tongue. I was going to say at your fingertips, so that you may always be able to give a good reason—a solid and Divinely-authoritative reason—for any statement that you may make!

32, 33. *But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto Him, Though all men shall be made to stumble because of You, yet will I never be made to stumble.* No doubt Peter said this from his heart, but “the heart is deceitful above all things.” Peter may have thought that he was stronger than his brethren, yet he was the very one who proved to be the weakest of the whole Apostolic band! “Though all men shall be *made to stumble* because of You, yet will I never be *made to stumble*.”

34. *Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, That this night, before the cock crow.* That is to say, before that period of time which was called the cock-crowing.

34. *You shall deny Me thrice.* According to *Mark’s* record, the cock was to crow once before Peter had denied his Lord thrice, and this it did. And when he had given his third denial, it crowed a second time. And then his slumbering conscience was awakened and, “He went out and wept bitterly.” Some persons who are well acquainted with the religious ceremonies of the Jews, say that the period called the cock-crowing was the time for the sacrifice of the morning lamb, and that it was about that time that Peter denied his Lord.

35. *Peter said unto Him, Though I should die with You, yet will I not deny You.* It is a great pity that Peter said this after he had received so plain a warning from his Master, yet he was not alone in his boasting.

35. *Likewise also said all the disciples.* They all felt quite sure that under no circumstances could they be so base as to forsake their Lord. And if you think of the washing of their feet by their Lord and Master, the wonderful words of Christ to which they had listened and that solemn Communion Service in the large upper room, you may not be surprised that they felt themselves bound to Christ forever—felt that they could never leave Him, nor forsake Him! Yet they all did.

36-39. *Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, Sit you here, while I go and pray yonder. And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then said He unto them, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death; tarry you here, and watch with Me. And He went a little farther, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.* Christ had to tread the winepress alone, yet He showed how complete was His Humanity by wishing to have a few choice friends near at hand. Yet even the chosen three failed Him in His hour of greatest need.

40. *And He came unto the disciples, and found them asleep, and said unto Peter, What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?* Peter had constituted himself the spokesman of the Apostolic company, so the Master addressed the question to him, though it also applied to his companions—“What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?” They had all declared their devotion to Him, yet they had fallen asleep while He had bid them watch.

41-45. *Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Your will be done. And He came and found them asleep again; for their eyes were heavy. And He left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then He came to His disciples, and said unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.*

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

A SAD CONFESSION

NO. 3530

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1916.

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

“We hid, as it were, our faces from Him.”
Isaiah 53:3.

You will find in the margin of some of your Bibles that this passage is rendered, “He hid, as it were, His face from us.” The literal translation of the Hebrew would be, “He was as a hiding of faces from him,” or, “from us.” Some critical readers think these words were intended to describe our Lord as having so humbled Himself and brought Himself to such a deep degradation, that He was comparable to the leper who covered his face and cried, “Unclean, unclean!” hiding himself from the gaze of men. Abhorred and despised of men, he was like one put aside because of his disease, and shunned by all mankind. Others suppose the meaning to be that on account of our Lord’s terrible and protracted sorrow, His face wore an expression so painful and grievous that men could scarcely bear to look upon Him. They hid, as it were, their faces from Him—amazed at that brow all carved with lines of anxious thought, those cheeks all plowed with furrows of deep care, those eyes all sunk in shades of sadness—that soul bowed down, exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death! It may be so. We cannot tell. So let it pass. I have a plain, practical purpose to pursue. Here is an indictment to which we must all plead guilty. Let us make the reflection our own, as we humbly bow at the dear pierced feet of our Lord and remember how cruelly we slighted our kindest Friend, when, “We hid, as it were, our faces from Him.”

At sundry times and in divers manners we may have done this. Where shall I begin? Alas, I fear that contempt and contumely, alone, will interpret some men’s sayings and doings. Their conversation is so profane that their crime becomes indisputable. Sometimes men hide their faces from Jesus—

I. IN COOL CONTEMPT OF HIM.

How astounding! How revolting! He, the Lord of Glory, the Creator of Heaven and earth, out of compassion to the children of men, condescended to take upon Himself our nature! Should we, therefore, slight

Him? Being found in fashion as a Man, He was subjected to all the pains and miseries of this mortal life and encountered the horrors of death, itself—should we, therefore, revile, or should we not revere Him? He ought surely to be esteemed by all mankind! I have sometimes felt that had He not redeemed my soul, I must reverence Him for redeeming others. Had I never tasted of His love at all, myself, yet the story of His love to His enemies is such that I think I could fall down and worship Him! His Character claims our admiration and appeals to the most tender feelings of our heart. So disinterested was the love of Christ, so self-denying, so unwavering in its constancy, He surpassed every instance on record and excelled any ideal that the most gifted imagination could paint!

Greater love has no man than this, that he laid down his life for his friends. There, creature generosity exhausts itself! Mere human love has reached its limit! But God commends His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. And this blessed Man, Christ Jesus, personally shows and makes evident this love to His enemies, His persecutors, His murderers! Still there are those who can revile His name while they scan His history. We can scarcely speak of Him but forthwith the vials of their wrath begin to distil. Strange is it that a name so lively, and a name so altogether lovely should so commonly set a man against his fellows and become the innocent cause of strife and persecution in the world! That name of Jesus—a name of highest heavenly Glory, a name of profound peace, a name of universal good will, a name to knit all mankind in one common brotherhood—has become, by the perversity of human nature, a by-word and a reproach! Their Savior in every age they have not known! Their day of visitation they have not heeded! Hence His name has excited wrath and opposition among the sons of men, where it should have excited reverence and love! Some show their opposition by attempting to ignore or to tarnish the dignity of His Person. These blatant infidels, I trust, are getting fewer and fewer. The rough, bullying speech of Tom Paine we sincerely hope will never be heard on earth again! There are thinkers (as they would have us call them) abroad in these days more courteous in their address and far more cautious in their language, than the disbelievers of former times—but too often they are as full of malignity and deadly venoms against the Christ of God as were the coarsest scoffers who uttered their blasphemy before we were born—so persistently is the Person of Christ held in contempt alike by Greek and barbarian!

And are there not others who affect great admiration for Jesus of Nazareth as an example of virtue and benevolence, who, nevertheless, reject His mediatorial work as our Redeemer? As a substitutionary Sacrifice they do not and cannot esteem Him! Isaiah, in the Chapter before us,

was holding up Christ as the Lamb led to the slaughter, the Victim of our transgressions, bearing our chastisement. How the anger of some men kindles at this representation of the Gospel! They sneer at the Doctrine of Substitution, Vicarious Sacrifice, Atonement—at the simple fact, indeed, that, “His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” That He was a true Philanthropist, an admirable Teacher and an Inspired Prophet, they will readily allow—but that our iniquities were laid on Him, that He was punished in our place, that He died, the Just for the unjust—they set aside as though it were an idle tale, a baseless fiction! This noblest of all Doctrines, the grandest of all conceptions is here brought down to the humblest capacity of the most simple understanding. The learned can find no flaw in the logic. But learning and logic have little enough to do with it. The heart that believes it, can tell its worth—“*He loved me and gave Himself for me.*” Angels have but to hear of it, and they sing of it! Marvel of marvels that there should be men on earth so wise that they hoot at it and count it worthy of nothing but their scorn! They hide, as it were, their faces from the Crucified Savior.

And then they will pour contempt upon other Doctrines of His Gospel. Not satisfied with opposing the main and cardinal Truth of God, they will hold up other parts of Revelation to ridicule. If a man likes to laugh, and wishes to scoff, he can find folly in Infinite Wisdom. No, he can, if he has eyes that are full enough of lies, discover faults even in the Immaculate God, Himself! Given but the desire to deride and parody, the occasions and opportunities will always be plentiful. And with what pitiful disdain the Lord’s people are slighted! The followers of Christ are, as it is commonly said, poor people—illiterate and uninstructed—and but few of the great ones of the earth, or the learned men, will give their names as adherents of the Savior! Well, so it always has been! And yet the day shall come when the Lord shall vindicate His own election and prove how infinitely superior it is to man’s reputation! What though He choose the base things of the world and the things that are not, yet by these will He be exalted when His enemies are rolled in the dust!

Do I address anybody who has despised the Lord Jesus Christ? Ah, my Friend, little do you consider what you have done! Your wantonness can offer no excuse but your ignorance. And as for your ignorance, it is without excuse! You are unacquainted with our Lord, or you would not decry Him. Think, I pray you! Have you really studied His Character? Have you looked into the proofs of His being the Messiah? Have you weighed the evidence of His Divinity? If you have not, surely you should be ashamed of your recklessness! Can it be that out of mere prejudice you have condemned One who, to us, is all our hope? One who has lifted

some of us out of despair and given us peace of mind? One who is now so dear to us that we feel we could cheerfully die for Him? Do not affront Him! Do not disparage His claim upon our tender regard! Do not speak ill of His blessed name! He is a Friend to some of us, the like of whom we never found elsewhere! Were it not wiser and fitter every way, that you should listen to our testimony and go to Him—and see whether He cannot and whether He will not save you and make you partakers of our joy? If He rejects you, or if you find Him false to His promises, then speak against Him! But we beseech you, do not begin to rail before you have any reason! He that builds upon this Stone builds securely, but alas, for the man that falls foul of this Stone, it will assuredly grind him to powder! As surely as Christ is God, those who oppose Him will one day wonder and perish! The peril is looming as the day is coming. The glorious apocalypse for which saints look will bring about a total eclipse of everyone that is proud and lofty, everything that is high and lifted up! I will not linger on so dreadful a subject, but I earnestly admonish you to lay it to heart!

A second and far more common way in which men hide their faces from Christ is—

II. BY THEIR HEEDLESSNESS, THEIR INDIFFERENCE, THEIR NEGLECT.

Alas, all of us are guilty, or have been guilty in this respect. Allow me to ask you, my beloved Friends in Christ, to look back a little while to the period before your conversion. Was not Jesus as worthy of your love, then, as He is now, as glorious, as admirable? And yet for how long a time did you hide your face from Him! Surely you must remember the days gone by when you did not care even to hear about Him! Any kind of amusement was more fascinating for you than discourse or converse concerning your Savior and your King! There is music in His name now—it was dull enough to you once. You heard sermons without heeding them. Perhaps some of you were compelled by force of circumstance to attend the sanctuary, though no part of the service was attuned to your taste. You mixed with the multitude, but you did not see or draw near the Master. They were dreary hours—you were glad when they were spent and you were liberated! You listened, but what came in at one ear went out at the other. Scarcely that, for you did not allow it to go far enough into your brain for that! Listlessly you listened, with no desire to learn anything about that Christ who is your only true Savior, your only rightful Sovereign. If you had been in the market and someone had been describing the prices of goods, telling you of the probabilities of a rise or fall, you would have been all attention and you would have no difficulty

in carrying home the bulk of what you had heard, especially that part which was about your own business! But oh, in those days Christ was nothing to you! The preacher might lift Him up with all his might and tell you with tears that if you rejected Him, you must perish. You took no heed. You did not care whether you perished or not! You did not give Christ a thought. He was put before you, but you hid, as it were, your faces from Him!

Although the Bible was in your house, bearing witness to Jesus Christ, you never searched it. You may have taken the Book down sometimes and read a Chapter here, or picked out a verse there, and congratulated yourself not a little upon your good deed—but as to searching the Scriptures through and comparing passage with passage, spiritual things with spiritual, that you might know Jesus Christ, who is hidden there like a pearl in the field—oh, no, you did not care to give any diligence in this matter! Why, some of you young men were studying hard years ago! You rose up early and sat up late over professional and profound books and, truly, if you were to be proficient in your secular calling, you had need to do so. But all that while you never sat up an hour later than usual to make a search concerning your soul and the Lord who bought it with His blood! Neither did you ever rise from your soft couch at daylight on purpose that you might bow the knee and seek your Lord and worship Him. No, everything was sought except the Savior, every duty you would scrupulously fulfill except that which you owed your Lord—all the world was fair except the Altogether Lovely! And, perhaps, at that very time there were pursuits that gratified you utterly unworthy of your preference! You had loves which have proved bitterness to you—things that fascinated your heart that did but degrade you. He was your best Friend—He who only meant you good, He who elevates the man that does but look to Him, He whose very name fills the soul with refreshment, He, the love of whose Person is Heaven begun—He was all this while cast into the background!

I am not speaking of you, my Friends, as if you had a monopoly of reproach. I speak of myself with many deep regrets of heart. I hid, as it were, my face from Him, and I let the years run round not without twitches of conscience—not without rebukes, when I knew how much I needed a Savior, not without the warnings which came from others whom I saw happy and rejoicing in Christ, while I had no share in His salvation! Still I put it off, as perhaps some of you are doing, from day to day, and month to month, and thought that Christ might come in some odd hour and when I had nothing else to do I might think of Him, whose blood could cleanse me! O my Soul, I could gladly smite you now! I have

heard of a minister who preached for several years before he was converted, and when converted he became a very earnest preacher of the Gospel. But one day as he rode along the street, he was observed to stop and cane a dog which was lying in front of a door. When they said to him, "Mr. McPhayle, why did you beat the dog?" He said, "He was so exactly like myself, lying in the sun sleeping—a dumb dog that didn't bark—that I could not but give him a touch of the rod, though I meant it all the while for myself." Truly I could lay this rod about my own heart to think that weeks and weeks should have rolled over my head and I should have hid, as it were, my face from Christ in willful neglect of my dear Lord, whose heart has bled for me! Does not this come home to anybody here? Are there not some who might justly chastise themselves?

But we pass on to a third form of this same folly. We hid, as it were, our faces from Him, many of us—

III. BY PREFERRING ANY OTHER MODE OF SALVATION TO SALVATION BY FAITH IN CHRIST.

The great Gospel fact is that whoever looks to Christ is saved. The moment Faith, with her intelligent eyes, beholds Christ on the Cross and depends on Him, the man that exercises that faith is forgiven, rescued, saved! Now when we were awakened to something like anxiety about our souls, we were told this. Some of us were told it very plainly, others perhaps not quite so clearly, but we did not like this way of being saved, simply by believing! Did not we try to merit salvation by our own good works? Oh, we would do this, and that, and the other! We would correct ourselves in this department, and we would push on and make progress in the other—or at least we *tried* to do so. Oh, I could pour scorn upon myself to think of some of the good resolutions I made! I blew them up like children with their pipes and their soap. Fine bubbles they were, reflecting all the colors of the rainbow. But a touch and they dissolved! They were good for nothing—poor stuff to build eternal hopes upon! Oh, that working of ours! What slavery it was, but what small results it produced! We came to grief whenever we began to get a little comfortable with ourselves. Just when we said, "Now my tower will stand," there came an earthquake and it all went to a heap of ruins. Then, if we remember well, we tried our feelings—we said, "It cannot be that if I believe in Jesus just as I am, I shall be saved—I must *feel* something." How we resorted to sharp books, terrible sketches of death, judgment and perdition—I know I did. Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted* cut me to the quick and harrowed up my gloomiest apprehensions. We expected to feel something indescribable, and when we began to feel a little alarm and distress of mind, we found it was not the thing that brought satisfaction to the

mind, or peace to the heart, for the more we did feel, the less we thought we felt! And the more we felt, the less we considered our feelings to be of the right kind! So, after tossing, and toiling, and rowing with feelings, we found we had got no farther than we did with works! And all this while there stood the Savior with this simple counsel, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth."

Still, we wrapped ourselves in our mantle and hid, as it were, our faces from Him. We kept looking at ourselves and enquiring in the biographies of good men after this feeling and after the other, while we hid, as it were, our faces from Him! And when we were beaten off from that false refuge, we took to a fresh conceit. Thinking we could pray ourselves into Heaven, we began to pray! This would have been quite right had not we put the exercise of prayer before the commandment to believe. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved"—that is the Gospel! We were reluctant to surrender ourselves to an implicit confidence in our Lord. We resolved to pray. Prayer seemed to us a proper performance—a religious duty acceptable to God and much to be commended. We did not understand that we must first be quickened into life before we could breathe freely. Looking upon daily prayer as a kind of ecclesiastical exercise, albeit there was no real heart in it, we thought some good would come of making it a habit. But no good came! Our prayers became a form, and we disquieted ourselves in vain. We found we could not pray. Oh, what fools we were! What fools all of us are to look anywhere for salvation but to Jesus Christ! God the Father has set forth Christ to be a Propitiation for sin. If God has done that, cannot I be content? If the Lord has accepted Christ instead of me, and promised that if I believe in Jesus I shall be saved, why need I go about to find some other way of peace, pardon and full salvation? Is not God's way good enough for me? If God accepts it, why should not I rejoice in it? Oh, dear Friends, if we have been covering our faces, let us uncover them right now! And if they are black as soot with sin, let us just look up to the Cross with a black face, and say, "Savior of sinners, I, the very chief among them, put my sole trust in You! Hiding my eyes no more from the Light of God, I will look to You and trust You with all my heart."

In yet another way we hid our faces from Him. After we were quite sure that we could not be saved other than by the one Mediator, do you remember how we continued to hide our face from Jesus—

IV. BY PERSISTENT UNBELIEF IN HIM?

I know it for myself. I held up the handkerchief before my eyes, saturated with my own tears. This sympathy for our sorrows I could not credit. It is the sullen sulk of sad souls. Their distress of mind has come be-

tween them and the Redeemer. Strange to tell, some men will reason against themselves. No doubt if there were a gift to be bestowed upon all the poor people in the parish, everybody who needed anything would try to prove himself to be in the parish. If there were a man who lived with half his house in one parish and half in another, I'll be bound to say he would try to prove he lived in the parish where the gifts were to be had! But somehow or other, awakened sinners try to prove that they are *not* the sort of people Christ died for! They used to have in Rome, when they were canonizing saints, an *Advocatus Diaboli*, or advocate of the devil, who used to plead against the person being canonized and offer all the objections he could. It seems strange that so many people should turn *Advocati Diaboli* against themselves! I can tell you how they argue, for I have talked with them by the hour, and this has been the fashion of their counterpleading—"But, Sir, *I don't* feel my need of it." We reply, "If you cannot go to Christ with a broken heart, go to Christ *for* a broken heart." "Oh, but, Sir, I don't feel that I am fit to go." "Your unfitness is the only evidence He needs." "But I don't think I have repented enough." "Granted. And you never will repent enough, could your tears flow forever. You cannot be saved by the merit of your repentance. Jesus Christ will forgive your impenitence as well as your other sins. Certainly if you need more repentance, you must go to Him for it." "Well, but, Sir, do you know I cannot help fearing that perhaps I am not one of the elect?" We have replied, "Perhaps you are. And anyhow, you had better go to Christ, because He has given an invitation to every creature. He says, 'Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.'" "Ah, Sir, but you don't know—I am so indifferent." "Well, but you will never be otherwise than indifferent as long as you stay away from the Savior. If you go to Him and put your trust in Him, He will remove your indifference. He alone can roll away this stone from the door of your heart." One moment they will say they do not feel—and almost in the same breath they will turn round and say they feel the horrors of despair! When they tell you of the dreadful blasphemies that come into their mind, you may answer that it is written, "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, and whoever believes in Him is not condemned," feel, or *not* feel as he may!

Well, I have pursued that business till I have been pretty nearly tired of it, when all of a sudden the person I have been trying to comfort has begun again where he commenced, as if he had never said those things before! He has gone over the same round of objections and I have, no doubt, would have continued to repeat himself, had I continued to answer him, 50 times over! And so did he encourage the morbid apprehen-

sion that he could not, himself, be saved. You see a man put into the condemned cell at Newgate and you go in and tell him that Her Majesty presents him with a free pardon. I guarantee you he will not put his hand to his brow and say, "Well, but I think there is this or that objection to my accepting it." "No," he thinks, "if there is any objection, let those find it out that like—it is no business of mine." And so with the soul that is bid to come to Christ! I say, let it come, objections or no objections, and if there are objections, let somebody else find them out, but as for you, poor Sinner, don't cover your face from Jesus, but come as you are, just as you are, and say, "Here I am, my Savior! If You can, save—and I believe You can—save me! At any rate, if I perish, I will perish trusting in You." Rather, Sinner, shall Heaven and earth pass away than even a soul perish that acts on this firm resolve! Hide not your eyes from the Savior! It is a dreadful temptation of Satan, this mistaken notion of humility. People think, or affect to think, that it would be arrogant or presumptuous on their part to believe in Jesus. I tell you solemnly that unbelief is not humility! It is a foul conceit. Humility trusts the Savior. Base, indeed, is the ingratitude which casts a slur upon His truthfulness and refrains from venturing to accept His promises! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, we once hid, as it were, our faces from Him—let us pray for others who are hiding their faces—and beseech the Lord to incline them to turn their faces right round to His dear Cross, and then let us gently take off the mantle that obscures their vision, and say to them, "Look, look through your tears! Look even now, for there is life in a look at the Crucified One."

But not to tarry, I am afraid there are some of us who must plead guilty to another charge. We have hidden, as it were, our faces from Him since He has saved us, and since we have known His love—

V. BY OUR SILLY SHAME AND OUR BASE COWARDICE.

Perhaps I speak to some Christians here, who, though they love the Lord, have never professed His name! Dear Brother, dear Sister, do you think this is right—is it loyal? Had He kept His love to you a secret and never openly espoused your cause, and given up Himself for your salvation, where would you now have been? Howbeit He boldly declared He was not ashamed to call us "brethren," and, true to His word, He acted a brother's part and carried through the work of our Redemption! Since Jesus Christ was not ashamed of us, surely we need never be ashamed of Him! "But I think I may go to Heaven by myself," said one, "for I am afraid I shall compromise other people if I dishonor Christ." And do you not think, my dear Brother, that you are dishonoring Him by such a suggestion? "Oh, but suppose I were to fall into sin?" Do you not think that

even *now* you are living in sin while you are refusing what He demands, that you should confess Him before men? His promise is that he that with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes the good confession, shall be saved. Or, as it is put in another form, we read, “He that believes and is baptized” (which is the open confession of Him) “shall be saved.” Do not, I entreat you, play the coward! “Suppose I should fall,” you ask, “after I have made a profession?” Which do you think the safer place—where your Lord bids you, or where you choose to be yourself? Come forward if you are His followers and put on His regimentals. I wonder what our Government would say if Her Majesty’s soldiers were to take off their red coats and protest, “We should be just as good soldiers, and as true, without this uniform, as with it.” They would be suspected of treason! They would be taken up as deserters And are there no deserters here? I would like to send the officer round and find you out—

***“Are you the soldiers of the Cross,
The followers of the Lamb?
How can you blush to acknowledge His cause,
Or fear to speak His Name?”***

Come out Brothers and Sisters, come out! If you want your Master’s blessing, come and join your Master’s servants! Yes, but some of us who have made a profession of our faith may, nevertheless, have sometimes hid our faces from Christ—

VI. BY COWARDICE.

Have you ever been in company where religion was jested at and felt, “Well, I had better hold my tongue here”? There are seasons when that is prudent, and even proper—when you are so weak a champion that you might damage the cause. At the same time, even the weakest champion had better have his lance broken than be altogether a coward! How often might we have spoken for Jesus when nothing has kept us back except cowardice? It was not prudence—it was cowardice, downright cowardice! We thought they would give us a bad name, and so we dishonored Christ lest we should encounter a rude joke or a coarse jest from a person whose opinion was never worthy of a moment’s thought! I wish there were more boldness for Christ everywhere. In the higher circles he that confesses Christ may have to run the gauntlet for it, but let him do so boldly! And among working men in the shop or factory there is a deal of “chaffing” goes on, often of a cruel kind, against the Christian, but he who is such a feather-bed soldier that he cannot bear the reproach is not worthy of such a Lord! Our sires were not so tame that they could be intimidated with a taunt. They never drew back at the stake, or in the fire! They were ready to die for the Lord Jesus. What do you think, then—should we play the coward—shall a little maid make us afraid, or shall

some silly fools who scoff at all that is holy, drive us to disown our Savior? Oh, Brothers and Sisters, do not surrender your souls so cheaply! Never mind their sneers! Never hide your face from Him. Come out and have no fellowship with the profane, the profligate, or the persecutors. Is Christ in the pillory? Put me in with Him, and then throw what you like at me! Is Christ's name rolled in the mud, and made a by-word and a proverb? Link my name with His and make a by-word and a proverb of it! Twist the two together and let us be the object of your slanders. I will glory in it! The reproach of Christ is greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt! Hide not, then, your faces from Him, Beloved, nor shrink from espousing His cause!

I feel sure that many, if not all of us, who are Believers will penitently confess that we have sometimes hidden our faces from Christ—

VII. BY NOT WALKING IN CONSTANT FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM.

I once asked a Brother how long it was since he had enjoyed fellowship with Jesus. His reply was remarkable. "I feel sorry," he said, "you have asked me that question, and yet I must thank you. Had you asked me whether I continued in prayer, I would have said 'Yes,' for, with more or less fervor, I do constantly pray. Had you inquired whether I endeavored to walk honestly and uprightly before my fellow creatures, I would have said, 'Yes, thank God I hope I have not slipped with my feet.' But when you say, 'How long is it since you really have had fellowship with Jesus?' I blush to admit that many a day has passed since I have known this high privilege." Is that so with you, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ? If so, it is very, very sad. Our heart, if we are Christians, is married to Christ. Say, then, would it not be strange if a wife should live with her husband and hide her face from him by the week and month together? Should there be scarcely a comfortable word between them? Should there only be just the decent civilities of a daily routine, without much concern or any confiding? Yet perhaps some of you pray a little every morning and every night because you think it is proper. At special times you do your reverence to Christ and then you go out into the world, and there, in a measure, you estrange yourselves from Him. And then you return home, far from being eager and anxious for communion with your Lord—so, not seeking His face for yourselves—you do, in effect, hide your face from Him. There is no face to face fellowship. Remember, I entreat you, that His love to you is constant, although your love to Christ may grow cold. If you can dispense with His company, remember that He delights in *your* company! There it stands in the Canticles, "Let Me see your face. Let Me hear your voice, for sweet is your voice and your countenance is comely." Now had you said that to Christ, it might be easily un-

derstood, but when He says that to *you*, it is most admirable! His love makes Him desire to hold fellowship with you—will you refuse it? Will you deny Him? Surely you will say, “Do You think so much of *me*? I ought to have said to You what You have said to me, ‘You have ravished My heart, My sister, My spouse, with one look of your eyes, and one chain of your neck.’ No, but these are the words of Him from whom I have often hid my face! And is this precious Christ so enamored of me? Has He, the Prince of Life, so fixed His affections on my spirit? Does He love to hear me speak with Him? Does He delight in my communing with Him? Oh, then I cannot forbear! I must cry, ‘Come to me, my Lord, and I will tell You my griefs, and my joys, and You shall tell me all Your heart, and we will thus confer and confide with secrets of which the world knows not!’”

The secret of the Lord is with them who fear Him. Let us, therefore, tell our heart’s love to Christ. We hid, as it were, our faces from Him. Say, when and how did you begin thus to act? You used to revel in the light of His Countenance, once—why did you hide your face? Did you get worldly? Did you dote too much upon some earthly object? Did you neglect prayer? Did you give way to temptation? Beloved, whatever may have been the cause, remember Jesus Christ has not divorced you! He has said, “Return, you backsliding children; I am married unto you, says the Lord.” Come back then! Come back, now, as we meet around the Lord’s Table, you that love your Lord, but have lost fellowship with Him! Pray—pray that this may be the beginning of a happier era. Oh, that we might keep looking on to Jesus, and Jesus looking to us! Oh, that we might maintain that dear fellowship and never have it broken till it shall melt into the yet nearer and more glorious communion on the other side of the river where nothing can disturb the profound enjoyment! Get up, get up, Believers, from your sorrows, from your cares, from your anxieties and distractions! Get up to the Master’s feet and sit there with Mary, and look up into His dear loving face, and listen to His gracious words of promise! Hide not your face from Him! He will not hide His face from you! Say, like the spouse in the Canticles, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine,” and He will answer your prayer, and make your heart burn within you with the holy ecstasy of fervent love! May it be ever so with us! Amen.

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

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

A SIMPLE REMEDY

NO. 1068

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 1, 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“With His stripes we are healed.”
Isaiah 53:5.***

EVER since the Fall, healing has been the chief necessity of manhood. There was no physician in Paradise, but outside that blissful enclosure professors of the healing art have been precious as the gold of Ophir. Even in Eden itself there grew herbs which should, in after days, yield medicine for the body of man. Before sin came into the world, and disease which is the consequence of it, God had created plants of potent efficacy to soothe pain and wrestle with disease. Blessed be His name, while thus mindful of the body, He had not forgotten the direr sicknesses of the soul—for He has raised up for us a Plant of renown, yielding a balm far more effectual than that of Gilead! This He had done before the plague of sin had yet infected us. Christ Jesus, the true Medicine of the sons of men, was ordained of old to heal the sicknesses of His people.

Everywhere, at this present hour, we meet with some form or other of sickness. No place, however healthful, is free from disease. As for *moral* disease, it is all around us and we are thankful to add that the remedy is everywhere within reach. The Beloved Physician has prepared a healing medicine which can be reached by all classes which is available in every climate, at every hour, under every circumstance and is effectual in every case wherever it is received. Of that Medicine we shall speak this morning, praying that we may have God's help in so doing. It is a great mercy for us who have to preach, as well as for you who have to hear, that the Gospel healing is so very simple—our text describes it—“With His stripes we are healed.”

These six words contain the marrow of the Gospel and yet scarcely one of them contains a second syllable. They are words for plain people and in them there is no affectation of mystery or straining after the profound. I looked, the other day, into old Culpepper's Herbal. It contains a marvelous collection of wonderful remedies. Had this old herbalist's prescriptions been universally followed there would not long have been any left to prescribe for—the astrological herbalist would soon have extirpated both sickness and mankind! Many of his recipes contain from 12 to 20 different drugs, each one needing to be prepared in a peculiar manner. I think I once counted 40 different ingredients in one single draught!

Very different are these recipes, with their elaboration of preparation, from the Biblical prescriptions which effectually healed the sick—such as these—“Take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaster upon the boil.” Or that other one—“Go and wash in Jordan seven times.” Or that other—“Take up your bed and walk.” One cannot but admire the simplicity of truth, while falsehood conceals her deformities with a thousand tricks! If you want to

see Culpepper's Herbal carried out in *spiritual* things, go and buy a Directory for the carrying on of the Ritualistic services of the Church of England, or the Church of Rome.

You shall find, there, innumerable rules as to when you shall bow and to what quarter of the heavens you shall look—when you shall stand up, and when you shall kneel—when you shall dress in black, in white, in blue, or in violet. There are instructions on *how* you shall pray and *what* you shall pray—a collect being appointed for today—and another for tomorrow. On the other hand, if you would know the true way of having your souls healed, go to the Word of God and study such a text as this: “With His stripes we are healed.” In the one case all is mysterious—in the other all is simple and clear. Quackery cannot live without mystery, show, ceremony and pretence. But the Truth of God is as plain as a pikestaff, legible as though it were written on the broad heavens and so simple that a babe may comprehend it. “With His stripes we are healed.”

I saw in Paris, years ago, a public vendor of quack medicines and an extraordinary personage he was. He came riding into the market place with a fine chariot drawn by horses richly adorned, while a trumpet was sounded before him. This mighty healer of all diseases made his appearance clothed in a coat of as many colors as that of Joseph! And on his head was a helmet adorned with variegated plumes. He delivered himself of a jargon which might be French, which might also be Latin, or might be nonsense—for no one in the crowd could understand it. With a little persuasion the natives bought his medicines, persuaded that so great and wise a man could surely cure them. Truly, this is one reason why there is an adoption in the Romish Church of the Latin tongue and why in many other Churches there is an affectation of a theological jargon which nobody can comprehend—and which would not be of any use to them if they did comprehend it!

The whole is designed to delude the multitude. To what purpose are fine speeches in the Gospel ministry? Sickneses are not healed by eloquence! It was an ill day in which rhetoric crept into the Church of God and men attempted to make the Gospel a subject for oratory. The Gospel needs no human eloquence to recommend it! It stands most securely when without a buttress! Like beauty, it is most adorned when unadorned the most. The native charms of the Gospel suffice to commend it to those who hate spiritual eyes and those who are blind will not admire it, deck it as we may.

I shall, therefore, content myself this morning with declaring the Gospel to you in the plainest possible language, forfeiting any attempts at excellency of speech. I know it to be the Gospel of God. I know it will save you if you receive it—it has saved me—it has saved thousands more! I shall put it before you in plain, unvarnished language. I beseech you to receive it and I pray that God's Holy Spirit may lead you to do so. Coming at once to our text, we observe, first, that these are sad words—“With His stripes we are healed.” We remark, secondly, that these are glad words! And, then, we shall notice, thirdly, that these are very suggestive words.

I. THESE ARE SAD WORDS. They are part of a mournful piece of music which might be called “the Requiem of the Messiah.” Hear its solemn

notes—"Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed." Do you not feel that the song so softly stated has touched your heart to pity and moistened your eyes with tears? "With His stripes we are healed."

This is not the brine of woe, but yet it is salt with sorrow. The sun is not eclipsed but it shines through a cloud. No one reads the inner sense of these words without feeling grief of soul. This is caused by the fact that the words imply the existence of disease and speak of great suffering connected with the remedy. I say these are sad words because they imply disease. "With His stripes we are *healed*. This, "we," comprehends within itself all the saints and hence it is clear that all the saints needed healing. Those who are today before the Throne of God without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, were once as defiled as the lepers who were shut out of the camp of Israel!

Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, David, Elijah, Hezekiah, Daniel—all these were once sick of the accursed malady of sin. All the excellent of the earth among us now who have been saved by Sovereign Grace were once heirs of wrath even as others—as surely shaped in iniquity and conceived in sin as the rest of mankind! There is a confession here, by implication, of all who are washed in the blood of Jesus that they *needed* washing—of all who are healed by His stripes—that they were sorely sick with sin.

This confession is true. Every child of God will join in it and he that knows himself best will make it with greatest emphasis. We were so diseased that nothing could have restored us but the precious blood of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is a dread fact that sin has infected the entire family of man. We are all sinful—sinful through and through—we are all corrupt with evil passions and depraved desires. Our fathers were fallen men and so are we, and so will our children be. The putting of bitter for sweet and of sweet for bitter, of darkness for light and light for darkness is engendered in us all. "Every one of them is gone back; they are altogether become filthy, there is none that does good, no not one."

Oh, mournful, miserable fact—in a fair world, "where every prospect pleases"—beneath a glorious sky where stars peer down upon us like the eyes of God, man lives a rebel to his God, a traitor to the Truth of God, an enemy of good, a slave of evil! He who was made to rule the world rules not himself! Fashioned for wisdom, he drivels like a fool! Ordained immortality, he labors for the wages of sin which is death! Sin has dimmed his eyes, hardened his heart, uncrowned his head, weakened his strength, filled him with putrefying sores and left him naked to his shame! The disease of sin is of the most loathsome character. Supposing it possible for every man to have had the leprosy and yet for no man to have had sin, that would have been no calamity at all compared with that of our becoming sinful!

If it could so have happened that we could have been deprived of our most useful faculties and yet had remained innocent, that would have been a small catastrophe compared with this depraving of our nature by

sin. To inoculate the parent stock with evil was the great design of Satan, for he knew that this would work the worst conceivable ill to God's creatures. Hell itself is not more horrible than sin. No vision, ghastly and grim, can ever be so terrible to the spiritual eye as the hideous, loathsome thing called sin. Remember that this dread evil is in us all! We are, at this day, every one of us, by nature only fit to be burned up with the abominations of the universe!

If we think we are better than that, we do not know ourselves. It is a part of the infatuation of evil that its victims pride themselves upon their excellence. Our infernal pride makes us cover our leprous foreheads with the silver veil of self-deception. Like a foul bog covered over with green moss, our Nature hides its rottenness beneath a film of suppositious righteousness. And, Brothers and Sisters, while sin is loathsome before God at the present time, it will lead to the most deadly result in due season. There is not a man or woman among us that can escape the damnation of Hell apart from the healing virtue of the Savior's atoning sacrifice. No, not one!

Your lovely little girl is defiled in heart, albeit that as yet nothing worse than childish folly is discoverable. Just leave that little mind to its own devices and the fair child will become an arch-transgressor! Yonder most amiable youth, although no blasphemous word has ever blackened his lips and no lustful thought has yet inflamed his eyes, must yet be born-again or he may wander into foulest ways! And yonder most moral tradesman, though he has as yet done justice to his fellow men, will perish if he is not saved by the Grace of God through Christ Jesus! Sin dwells in us and will be deadly in the case of everyone among us, without a solitary exception, unless we accept the remedy which God has provided.

Ah, dear Friends, this disease is none the better because we do not feel it. It is all the worse. It is one of the worst symptoms in some diseases, when men become incapable of feeling. It is dreadful when the delirious sick man cries out, "I am well enough! I will leave this bed! I will go to my business!" Hear how he raves—must we not put him under restraint? The louder his boasts of health the more sad the delirious patient's condition. When ignorance is known and felt it is not dense, but he who knows *nothing* and yet fancies that he knows *everything*, is ignorant, indeed.

Sin is also a very painful disease when it is known and felt. When the Spirit of God leads a man to see the sin which is really in himself, then how he changes his note! Oh, children of God, have you forgotten how acutely sin made you smart? Those black days of conviction! My soul still has them in remembrance—remembering the wormwood and the gall! The period of my conviction of sin is burnt into my memory as with a red-hot iron—its wounds are cured, but the scars remain. As Habakkuk has well put it, "When I heard, my belly trembled, my lips quivered at the voice, rottenness entered into my bones and I trembled in myself." Oh, 'tis a burden, this load of sin—a burden which might crush an angel down to Hell!

There I stood and seemed like another staggering Atlas, bearing up a world of sin upon these shoulders and fearing every moment lest I should be crushed into the abyss and justly lost forever. Only let a man once feel

sin for half-an- hour—really feel its tortures—and I guarantee you he could prefer to dwell in a pit of snakes than to live with his sins! Remember that cry of David, “My sin is ever before me”? He speaks as though it haunted him! He shut his eyes but he still saw its hideous shape! He sought his bed, but like a nightmare it weighed upon his breast. He rose and it rose with him. He tried to shake it off among the haunts of men—in business and in pleasure—but like a blood-sucking vampire it clung to him! Sin was ever before him, as though it were painted on his eyeballs—the glass of his soul’s window was stained with it!

He sought his closet but could not shut it out. He sat alone but it sat with him. He slept, but it cursed his dreams. His memory was burdened by it. His imagination it lit up with lurid flames—his judgment it armed with a ten-throged whip—his expectations it shrouded in midnight gloom. A man needs no worse Hell than his own sin and an awakened conscience. Let this be instead of racks and whips of burning wire. Conscience once aroused will find in sin the worm undying, the unquenchable fire and the bottomless pit. Though God Himself will punish sin, yet it is a wolf which tears its own flesh, a viper which turns its envenomed fang upon itself!

Perhaps many of you may reply, “But we do not feel this!” True, because you have contrived, for the present, to give sedatives to conscience. I pity you because you are not aware of the truth. I see how it is with you. You think your money making, or spending your days pleasantly, or your performance of your daily labor is all you need consider. But if you were not deceived by sin you would know better! You would understand that you are God’s creatures and that God did not make you to live for yourselves. Which among you builds a house and does not intend either to live in it or gain something by the letting of it? And do you think God made you without designing to glorify Himself in you?

Oh, men and women, did your Creator make you that you might live only for yourselves and make your bellies your gods? Do you dream that you may miss the end of your being and not have it required at your hands? Will He suffer you to rob Him of your service and wink at your rebellion, and treat it as if it were nothing? It shall not be so, as you will find to your regret! Oh, may you be taught, now, the evil of sin! Spirit of God, it is Your office to convict the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment—do Your office now, for none will apply for healing till they feel the smart—none will look to the stripes of Jesus till they feel the wounds of sin! When sin is bitter, Christ is sweet, but only then. When death threatens, then do men fly to Christ for life. No man ever loves Christ till he loathes himself! No man ever cares for Jesus till he comes to see that out of Jesus he is a lost, ruined and undone soul! Oh, may God grant that the sorrowful part of these words may ring in your ears till you mourn your grievous sin!

But there is a second sorrow in the verse, and that is sorrow for the suffering by which we are healed. “With His stripes we are healed.” I find that the word here used is in the singular and not as the translation would lead you to suppose. I hardly know how to fully translate the word. It is read by some as “weal,” “bruise,” or “wound,” meaning the mark or

print of blows on the skin. But Alexander says the word denotes the tumor raised in flesh by scourging. It is elsewhere translated, "blueness," "hurt," and "spots," and evidently refers to the black and blue marks of the scourge. The use of a singular noun may have been intended to set forth that our Lord was, as it were, reduced to a mass of bruising and was made one great bruise. By the suffering which that condition indicated we are saved.

Our text alludes partly to the sufferings of His body, but much more to the agonies of His soul. The body of our Lord and Savior was bruised. Scourging under the Jewish law was always moderate—there was a pause made at a point which mercy had appointed. Thirty-nine stripes were all that could be given. But our Lord was not beaten according to the Jewish law—He was scourged by Pilate and the scourging of the Romans was peculiarly brutal. They stopped not at the 40 stripes save one—they struck at random, according to their own will. The Savior endured a scourging which was intended to be a substitute for death—"I will scourge Him and release Him," said Pilate—but instead of its being a substitute for death it became a prelude to it.

Probably most men would prefer to die rather than to be scourged after the Roman fashion and might be wise in making such a choice. Sinews of oxen were intertwined with knuckle bones of sheep and these were armed with small slivers of bone so that every stroke gashed the flesh deeply and caused fearful wounds and tears—as says the Prophet, "the plowers made deep furrows." Our Savior's back was plowed and furrowed deeply in the day of His scourging. Now you may look at the Person of Jesus, your Substitute and Sacrifice, covered with livid bruises by human cruelty and say, "With His stripes we are healed."

But you must not stop there and think that flesh wounds were all His stripes, for our Lord bore more terrible stripes in His soul. He was struck in His heart each day of His life. He had to suffer the ills of Providence. Being a Man He had sympathy with us in all those stripes which are the inheritance of Adam's sons. He felt the stripes of poverty, stripes of weariness, stripes of sickness, stripes of heaviness, stripes of bereavement—above all others, He was a "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Moreover, He had to run the gauntlet of all mankind. Stripes fell upon our Savior from all sorts of men—for every man's sin laid a stroke upon His shoulders.

When He was here on earth, if He saw men sin, that smote Him. If He heard them speak a wrong word, that smote Him. Having sinned, we have been hardened by sin—but He was pure and perfect—and it was a bruise to Him to come into contact with sin. You remember how His adversaries called Him a drunk and a wine-bibber—how they said He had a devil and was mad? Thus they were all striking Him. Each man laying on his blow with all his might. Worse than all, He was wounded in the house of His friends. Was any blow equal to that which Judas lay upon those shoulders? And next to that, could anything surpass in pain the blows which Peter gave when he said, "I know not the Man"?

There was a cruel process in the English navy in which men were made to run the gauntlet all along the ship, with sailors on each side, each man

being bound to give a stroke to the poor victim as he ran along. Our Savior's life was a running of the gauntlet between His enemies and His friends who all struck Him, one here and another there. By those sorrowful and shameful stripes we this day are healed! Satan, too, struck at Him. I think I see the Arch-fiend ascend from the pit with haste and, lifting himself upon his dragon wings, come forward to strike the Savior, daring to inflict upon His soul the accursed temptations of Hell!

He struck Him in the desert and in the garden, till beneath that smiting great drops of blood crimsoned His face. But this was nothing compared with the fact that He was smitten of God! Oh, what a word is that! If God were to lay His *finger* on any one of us this morning, only His *finger*, we should be struck with sickness, paralysis, yes, and death! Then think of God smiting! God must strike sin wherever He sees it—it is just that He should do so—it is as much an essential part of God's Nature that He should crush sin as that He should love, for, indeed, it is only love in another form that makes Him hate that which is evil!

So when He saw our sin laid upon His Son, He struck Him with the blows of a cruel One till beneath that smiting His Son cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He was bearing, in that moment, all the crushing blows of that great sword of vengeance of which we read in the Prophets—"Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, says the Lord." Put these things all together as best you can, for I lack words with which to fitly describe these bruises from the ills of life—bruises from friends and foes, stripes from Satan, and blows from God—and surely it is the most sorrowful story that ever was told—

***"O King of Grief! (A title strange, yet true.
To You, of all kings, only due). O King of Wounds!
How shall I grieve for You
Who in all grief outruns me?
Shall I weep blood?
Why, You have wept such store,
That all Your body was one sore.
Shall I be scourged, flouted, boxed, sold?
'Tis but to tell the tale is told;
My God, my God, if You do part from me,
Is such a grief as cannot be."***

One needs to be a Niobe, a dripping well of tears, to mourn the Chief of among 10,000 made the Chief of sufferers! That the Ever-Blessed One should *suffer*! That the Lord of Life should *bleed*! The angels worship Him and yet Jehovah struck Him! He is so fair that nothing else is beautiful to any eye that has once gazed upon Him, and yet they spit in His face and marred His lovely countenance with cruel blows of brutal fists! He is all tenderness, but they are all cruelty! He is harmless as a lamb! He never thought nor spoke a thing of wrong to mortal man, but yet they strike Him as though He were a fierce beast of prey, fit only to be bruised to death.

He is all love and, when they strike Him worst, He does but pray for them, yet strike they still! No curses drop from those dear lips, but words of pity only, and of sweet intercession follow each blow, yet still they wound and buffet and blaspheme! Oh, grief far deeper than the sea! Oh, woe immeasurable! They strike Him for whom they ought to have gladly

died—Him for whom the noble army of martyrs counted it all joy to render up their lives—they despitefully entreat Him who came on errands of pure mercy and disinterested Grace. Oh, cruel whips and cruel hands and yet more—cruel *hearts* of wicked men! Surely we should never read such words as these without feeling that they call for sorrow—sorrow which if mingled with spiritual repentance, will be a fit anointing for His burial, or, at least, a bath in which to wash away the blood stains from His dear and most pure flesh.

II. Next—and may the Spirit of God help us with fresh power—THESE ARE GLAD WORDS. “With His stripes we are healed.” They are glad words, first, because they speak of *healing*. “We are healed.” Understand these words, oh Beloved, of that virtual healing which was given you in the day when Jesus Christ died upon the Cross. In the moment when Christ yielded up the ghost, all His elect might have said, and said with truth, “We are healed!” For, from that moment their sins were put away—a full atonement was made for all the chosen! Christ had laid down His life for His sheep!

He had redeemed His saints from among men—the ransom price was fully paid—a complete expiation for sin was made and the redeemed were clear. Let us, this morning, walk up and down with perfect peace and confidence, for from the day when Jesus died we were perfectly clear before the judgment seat of God! “With His stripes we are healed,” or rather, “we *were* healed,” for the words are in the past in the original Hebrew. “With His stripes we *were* healed.” My sins, they ceased to be *centuries* ago! My debts, my Savior paid them before I was born and nailed up the receipted bill to His Cross and I can see it there! The handwriting of ordinances that was contrary to us, He took away and nailed it to His Cross.

I can see it and while I read the long list of my sins—oh, how long, what a roll it needed to contain them—yet I see at the bottom, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” It matters not how long that roll was—the debt is all discharged. I am acquitted before God and so is every Believer in Jesus! Every soul that rests in Jesus was at the time when Jesus died, then and there absolved before the sacred Judgment Seat! “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” is a fit challenge to ring forth from the Cross where atonement was finished.

But, dear Friends, there is an actual application of the great expiation to us when, by faith, we receive it individually and it is that, also which is intended here. To as many as have believed in Jesus, His stripes have given the healing of forgiveness of sin and, moreover, it has conquered the deadly power of sin. Sin no longer has dominion over them, for they are not under the Law but under Grace. Nothing ever delivers a man from the power of sin like a sight of the suffering Savior. I have heard of a man who had lived a dissolute life, who could never be reclaimed from it by any means, but at last, when he saw his mother sick and die from grief at his ways, the thought that she had died because of his sins touched his heart and made him repent of his ungodliness.

If there was such efficacy to cause repentance in that form of suffering, much more is there when we come to see Jesus die in our place! Then our heart melts with love to Him! Then hatred of sin takes possession of the

soul and the reigning power of evil is destroyed! Christ's stripes have healed us of all love of sin! Faith in the Crucified One has healed our eyes—once they were blind—for “when we saw Him, there was no beauty that we should desire Him.” Now, since we have seen His stripes, we see all beauties unite in His adorable Person! I know, Beloved, if you have put your trust in the sufferings of Jesus, you think Him to be the most precious of beings—you see a loveliness in Him which all Heaven's angels could not rival.

The stripes of Immanuel have also healed our hearts. “We hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised and we esteemed Him not,” but now our hearts delight in Him and we turn our faces towards Him as the flowers look to the sun. We only wish that we could see Him face to face! And He has healed our feet, too, for they were prone to evil—note the verse that follows our text—“All we, like sheep, have gone astray. We have turned, everyone, to his own way.” A sight of His stripes has brought us back and charmed by the disinterested love which suffered in our place, we follow the great Bishop and Shepherd of our souls and desire never again to wander from His commands. From head to foot His stripes have bound up our wounds and mollified them with ointment.

He forgives all our iniquities, He heals all our diseases. Beloved, if you would be cured of any sin, however spreading its infection, fly to Jesus' wounds! This is the only way to be rid of the palsy of fear, the lever of lust, the sore blisters of remorse, or the leprosy of iniquity! His stripes are the only medicine for transgression. Men have tried to overcome their passions by the contemplation of death, but they have failed to bury sin in the grave. They have strived to subdue the rage of lust within their Nature by meditating upon Hell, but that has only rendered the heart hard and callous to love's appeals. He who once believingly beholds the mystery of Christ suffering for him shakes off the viper of sin into the fire which consumed the great Sacrifice. Where the blood of the Atonement falls, sin's hand is palsied, its grasp is relaxed, its scepter falls, it vacates the throne of the heart and the Spirit of Grace, and truth, and love, and righteousness occupies the royal seat.

I may be addressing some this morning who despair of being saved. Behold Christ smarting in your place and you will never despair again. If Jesus bore the transgressors' punishment there is every room for hope. Perhaps your disease is love of the world and a fear of man. You dare not become a Christian because men would laugh at you. If you could hear the scourges fall upon the Savior's back, you would henceforth say, “Did He suffer thus for *me*? I will never be ashamed of Him again.” And instead of shunning the fight you would seek out the thick of the fray. “With His stripes we are healed.” It is a universal medicine. There is no disease by which your soul can be afflicted but an application of the blue bruises of your Lord will take out the deadly virus from your soul.

Are you ambitious? This will bring you down. Are you desponding? This will lift you up. Are you hot with passion? This will cool you. Are you chill with indolence? This will stimulate you. The Cross! The Cross! The Cross of Christ! What power dwells in it! Full sure, if even for Satan that Cross had been set up on earth, it would have lifted him from Hell to Heaven!

But it is not for him—it is, however, for the vilest of the sons of men—and there are no sons of men so corrupt that the Cross of Christ cannot purge them of all evil!

Bear this Gospel into Africa, where superstitious sorcery holds men's minds in thralldom—it will uplift before all eyes the charter of Africa's liberty! Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands, liberated from her chains, when she shall see a Crucified Savior! Bear the Cross among the Brahmins or among the Hindus—preach the Cross among a race of men who boast their wisdom and they shall become ignorant in their own esteem but truly wise before the Lord—when they shall see the light that streams from Immanuel's wounds! Even Oriental cunning and lasciviousness are thus healed! Do not tell me that we ought mainly to preach Christ *exalted*—I will preach my Lord upon the throne and delight therein—but the great remedy for ruined manhood is not Christ in glory, but Christ in shame and death!

We know some who select Christ's Second Advent as their one great theme and we would not silence them yet they err. The Second Coming is a glorious hope for saints, but there is no cure in it for sinners! To them the coming of the Lord is darkness and not light! But Christ smitten for our sins—*there* is the star which breaks the sinner's midnight! I know if I preached Christ on the Throne, many proud hearts would have Him. But, oh, Sirs, you must have Christ on the Cross before you can know Him on the Throne! You must bow before the Crucified! You must trust a dying Savior or else if you pretend to honor Him by the glories which are to come, you do but belie Him and you know Him not. To the Cross, to the Cross, to the Cross! Write that upon the signposts of the road to the City of Refuge! Fly there, you guilty ones, as to the only sanctuary for the sinful for, "with His stripes we are healed." There is joy in this!

There is another joy in the text—joy in the honor which it brings to Christ. The stripes, let us lament them. The healing, let us rejoice in it! And then, the Physician, let us honor Him. "With His stripes we are healed." Jesus Christ works real cures. We are healed, effectually healed. We were healed when we first believed; we are still healed. Abiding cure we have, for still to His wounds we fly. An eternal cure we have, for never man was healed by Christ and then relapsed and died. "With His stripes we are healed"—by nothing else—by no mixture of something else with those stripes. Not by priestcraft, not by sacraments, not by our own prayers, not by our own good works. "With His stripes we are healed"—healed of all sin of every kind—of sins past, of sins present and sins to come! We are healed, completely healed of all, and that in a moment—not through long years of waiting and of gradually growing better but—"With His stripes we are healed," completely healed, even now. Blessed be His name!

Now, child of God, if you would give glory to God, declare that you are healed this morning! Be not always saying, "I *hope* I am saved." The man who he says hopes he is cured does not greatly recommend the physician. But the man who *knows* he is, he is the man who brings him honor. Let us speak positively—we can do so. Let us speak out in the face of all mankind and not be ashamed. Let us say, "As surely as we were diseased,

so surely are we healed through the stripes of our Lord Jesus Christ." Let us give Jesus all glory! Let us magnify Him to the utmost.

I see now in vision a company of men gathering herbs along the slopes of the Seven Hills of Rome. With mystic rites they cull those ancient plants whose noxious influence once drugged our fathers into deadly slumbers. They are compounding again the cup of Rome's ancient sorcery and saying—"Here is the universal medicine! The great Catholic remedy." I see them pouring their Belladonna, Monkshood and deadly Henbane into the great pot forever simmering on the Papal hearth. Do you think the nations are to be healed by this accursed amalgam? Will not the end be as in the days of the Prophets, when one gathered wild gourds and they cried out, "there is death in the pot"?

Yes, indeed, so it will be, even though Oxford and Canterbury set their seal upon the patent medicine! Come, you brave sons of protesting fathers! Come and overturn this witches' caldron and spill it back into the Hell for which alone it is fit! Pity that even old Tiber's tawny flood should be poisoned with it, or bear its deadly mixture to that sea across which once sailed the Apostolic boat. The wine of Rome's abominations is now imported into this island and distributed in a thousand towns and villages by your own national clergy! And all classes and conditions of men are being made drunk with its filth! You lovers of your race and of your God, stop the traffic and proclaim around the Popish caldron, "There is no healing here."

No healing plants ever grew upon the Seven Hills of Rome, nor are the roots improved in virtue if transplanted to Canterbury, or the city on the Isis. There is one Divine remedy and *only* one. It is no mixture. Receive it and live—"With His stripes we are healed." No sprinkling can wash out sin! No confirmation can confer Divine Grace! No masses can propitiate God! Your hope must be in Jesus! Jesus smitten! Jesus bruised! Jesus slain! Jesus the Substitute for sinners! Whoever believes in Him is healed, but all other hopes are a lie from top to bottom. Of Sacramentarianism I will say that its Alpha is a lie and its Omega is a lie! It is as false as the devil who devised it! But Christ and only Christ is the true Physician of souls, and His stripes the only remedy.

Oh, for a trumpet to sound this through every town of England! Through every city of Europe! Oh, to preach this in the Coliseum! Or better, still, from the pulpit of St. Peter's!—"With His stripes we are healed." Away, away you deceivers with your mixtures and compounds! Away you proud sons of men with your boasts of what you *feel* and *think* and *do* and what you intend and vow! "With HIS stripes we are healed." A crucified Savior is the sole and only hope of a sinful world.

III. Now, I said this is a VERY SUGGESTIVE text, but I shall not give you the suggestions for time has failed me, except to say that whenever a man is healed through the stripes of Jesus, the instincts of his nature should make him say, "I will spend the strength I have, as a healed man, for Him who healed me." Every stripe on the back of Christ cries to me, "You are not your own! You are bought with a price." What do you say to this—you who profess to be healed? Will you live to Him? Will you not say,

“For me to live is Christ. I desire now, having been healed through His precious blood, to spend and be spent in His service”?

Oh, if you all were brought to this it would be a grand day for London— if we had a thousand men who would *preach* nothing but Christ and *live* nothing but Christ, what would the world see? A thousand? No, give us but a *dozen* men on fire with the love of Jesus and if they would preach Christ out and out, and through and through and nothing else, the world would know a change before long! We should hear again the cry, “The men that turn the world upside down have come here, also.” Nothing beneath the sun is so mighty as the Gospel! Believe me, there is nothing so wise as Christ and nothing so potent over human hearts as the Cross! Vain are the dreams of intellect and the boasts of culture! Give me the Cross and keep your fineries!

You will know this when you come to die, Beloved. You will find nothing able to cheer your departing moments but the Savior on the bloody tree. When the man is panting for existence and the breath is hard to fetch, and the spirit faces eternity, you need no priest—no dead creed, no gaudy oratory, no sacraments, no dreams—you will *demand* certainties, verities, Divine realities! And where will you find them but in the Divine Substitute? Here is a rock to put your foot on! Here are the rod and the staff of God Himself to comfort you! Then nothing will seem more admirable than the simple Truth of God that God became Man and suffered in man’s place and that God has promised that whoever believes in His Son shall not perish but have everlasting life!

Beloved, if you know that Jesus has healed you, serve Him by telling others about the healing medicine. Whisper it in the ear of one. Tell it in your houses to the twos. Preach it, if you can, to the hundreds of thousands. Print it in the papers. Write it with your pen. Spread it through every nook and corner of the land. Tell it to your children. Tell it to your servants. Leave none around you ignorant of it. Hang it up everywhere in letters of boldest type. “WITH HIS STRIPES WE ARE HEALED!”

Oh, sound it! Sound it! Sound it loud as the trumpet of doom! And make men’s ears to hear it, whether they will or not! The Lord bless you with this healing. Amen.

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

“By His stripes we are healed.”
Isaiah 53:5.

BEING one evening in Exeter Hall, I heard our late beloved Brother, Mr. Mackay, of Hull, make a speech in which he told us of a person who was under very deep concern of soul and felt that he could never rest till he found salvation. So, taking the Bible into his hands, he said to himself, “Eternal life is to be found somewhere in this Word of God; and if it is here, I will find it, for I will read the Book right through, praying to God over every page of it, so, perhaps, it may contain some saving message for me.” He told us that the earnest seeker read on through Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and so on—and though Christ is evidently there—he could not find Him in the types and symbols. Neither did the holy histories yield him comfort, nor the Book of Job. He passed through the Psalms, but did not find His Savior there. And the same was the case with the other books till he reached Isaiah. In this Prophet he read on till, near the end, and then, in the 53rd Chapter, these words caught his delighted attention, “*By His stripes we are healed.*” “Now I have found it,” he said. “Here is the healing that I need for my sin-sick soul and I see how it comes to me through the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ! Blessed be His name, I am healed!”

It was well that the seeker was wise enough to search the sacred volume. It was better, still, that in that volume there should be such a life-giving Word and that the Holy Spirit should reveal it to the seeker's heart. I said to myself, “That text will suit me well and, perhaps, a voice from God may speak through it, yet again, to some other awakened sinner.” May He, who by these words spoke to the chamberlain of the Ethiopian queen who, also, was impressed with them while in the act of searching the Scripture, speak, also, to many who shall hear or read this sermon! Let us pray that it may be so! God is very gracious and He will hear our prayers.

The object of my discourse is very simple. I would come *to* the text and I would come *at* you! May the Holy Spirit give me power to do both to the glory of God!

I. In endeavoring to come to the full meaning of the text, I should remark, first, that GOD, IN INFINITE MERCY, HERE TREATS SIN AS A DISEASE. “By His stripes”—that is, the stripes of the Lord Jesus—“we are

healed.” Through the sufferings of our Lord, sin is pardoned and we are delivered from the power of evil—this is regarded as the healing of a deadly malady. The Lord, in this present life, treats sin as a disease. If He were to treat it once, as *sin*, and summon us to His bar to answer for it, we would, at once, sink beyond the reach of hope, for we could not answer His accusations, nor defend ourselves from His justice. In great mercy He looks upon us with pity and, for the time being, treats our ill manners as if they were diseases to be cured rather than rebellions to be punished. It is most gracious on His part to do so, for while *sin* is a disease, it is a great deal more!

If our iniquities were the result of an unavoidable sickness, we might claim pity rather than censure. But we sin willfully, we choose evil, we transgress in heart and, therefore, we bear a moral responsibility which makes sin an infinite evil. Our sin is our crime rather than our calamity! However, God looks at it in another way, for a season, so that He may be able to deal with us on hopeful grounds—He looks at the *sickness* of sin and not, as yet, at the *wickedness* of sin. Nor is this without reason, for men who indulge in gross vices are often charitably judged by their fellows to be not only wholly wicked, but partly mad. Propensities to evil are usually associated with a greater or less degree of mental disease—perhaps, also, of physical disease. At any rate, sin is a spiritual malady of the worst kind.

Sin is a disease, *for it is not essential to manhood*, nor an integral part of human nature as God created it. Man was never more fully and truly man than he was before he fell. And He who is especially called “the Son of Man” knew no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, yet He was perfectly Man. Sin is abnormal—a sort of cancerous growth which ought not to be within the soul. Sin is disturbing to manhood—sin unmans a man. Sin is sadly destructive to man. It takes the crown from his head, the light from his mind and the joy from his heart. We may name many grievous diseases which are the destroyers of our race, but the greatest of these is sin! Sin, indeed, is the fatal egg from which all other sicknesses have been hatched. It is the fountain and source of all mortal maladies.

It is a disease because *it puts the whole system of the man out of order*. It places the lower faculties in the higher place, for it makes the body master over the soul. The man should ride the horse, but in the sinner, the horse rides the man. The mind should keep the animal instincts and propensities in check, but in many men, the animal crushes the mental and the spiritual. For instance, how many live as if eating and drinking were the chief objects of existence? They live to eat, instead of eating to live! The faculties are thrown out of gear by sin so that they act fitfully and irregularly—you cannot depend upon any one of them keeping its place. The equilibrium of the life-forces is grievously disturbed. Even as a sickness of body is called a *disorder*, so is sin the disorder of the soul. Human nature is out of joint, out of health and man is no longer man—he is dead through sin even as he was warned of old, “in the day that you eat, thereof, you shall surely die.” Man is marred, bruised, sick, paralyzed,

polluted and rotten with disease—just in proportion as sin has shown its true character.

Sin, like disease, operates to weaken man. The moral energy is broken down so as scarcely to exist in some men. The conscience labors under a fatal consumption and is gradually ruined by a decline. The understanding has been lamed by evil and the will is rendered feeble for *good*, though forcible for evil! The principle of integrity, the resolve of virtue in which a man's true strength really lies, is sapped and undermined by wrongdoing. Sin is like a secret flow of blood which robs the vital parts of their essential nourishment. How near to death, in some men, is even the power to discern between good and evil! The Apostle tells us that when we were yet without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly—and this being *without strength* is the direct result of the sickness of sin which has weakened our whole manhood.

Sin is a disease which, in some cases causes extreme pain and anguish, but in other instances deadens sensibility. It frequently happens that the more sinful a man is, the less he is conscious of it. It was remarked of a certain notorious criminal that many thought him innocent because, when he was charged with murder, he did not betray the least emotion. In that wretched self-possession there was, to my mind, presumptive proof of his great familiarity with crime—if an innocent person is charged with a great offense, the mere charge horrifies him! It is only by weighing all the circumstances and distinguishing between sin and shame that he recovers himself. He who can do the deed of shame does not blush when he is charged with it. The deeper a man goes in sin, the less does he admit that it is sin. Like a man who takes opium, he acquires the power to take larger and larger doses till that which would kill a hundred other men has but slight effect upon him! A man who readily lies is scarcely conscious of the moral degradation involved in being a liar, though he may think it shameful to be called one. It is one of the worst points of this disease of sin that it stupefies the understanding and causes a paralysis of the conscience.

By-and-by, sin is sure to cause pain like other diseases which flesh is heir to—and when its awakening comes, what a start it gives! Conscience, one day, will awake and fill the guilty soul with alarm and distress, if not in this world, yet certainly in the next! Then will it be seen what an awful thing it is to offend against the Law of the Lord.

Sin is a disease which pollutes a man. Certain diseases render a man horribly impure. God is the best judge of purity, for He is thrice-holy and He cannot endure sin. The Lord puts sin away from Him with abhorrence—and prepares a place where the finally-unclean shall be shut up by themselves. He will not dwell with them here, neither can they dwell with Him in Heaven. As men must put lepers apart by themselves, so Justice must put out of the heavenly world, everything which defiles. O my Hearer, shall the Lord be compelled to put *you* out of His Presence because you persist in wickedness?

And this disease, which is so polluting, is, at the same time, *most injurious* to us from the fact that it prevents the higher enjoyment and em-

ployment of life. Men exist in sin, but they do not truly live. As the Scripture says, such an one is dead while he lives. While we continue in sin, we cannot serve God on earth, nor hope to enjoy Him, forever, above. We are incapable of communion with perfect spirits and with God, Himself—and the loss of this communion is the greatest of all evils! Sin deprives us of spiritual sight, hearing, feeling and taste and, thus, deprives us of those joys which turn existence into life. It brings upon us true death, so that we exist in ruins, deprived of all which can be called life.

This disease is fatal. Is it not written, “The soul that sins, it shall die?” “Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.” There is no hope of eternal life for any man unless sin is put away. This disease never exhausts itself so as to be its own destroyer. Evil men wax worse and worse! In another world, as well as in this present state, character will, no doubt, go on to develop and ripen—and so the sinner will become more and more corrupt as the result of his spiritual death. O my Friends, if you refuse Christ, sin will be the death of your peace, your joy, your prospects, your hopes—and thus the death of all that is worth having! In the case of other diseases, nature may conquer the malady and you may be restored, but in this case, apart from Divine interposition, nothing lies before you but eternal death!

God, therefore, treats sin as a disease because it is a disease! And I want *you* to feel that it is so, for then you will thank the Lord for thus dealing with you. Many of us have felt that sin is a disease and we have been healed of it. Oh, that others could see what an exceedingly evil thing it is to sin against the Lord! It is a contagious, defiling, incurable, mortal sickness!

Perhaps somebody says, “Why do you raise these points? They fill us with unpleasant thoughts.” I do it for the reason given by the engineer who built the great Menai Tubular Bridge. When it was being erected, some brother engineers said to him, “You raise all manner of difficulties.” “Yes,” he said, “I raise them that I may solve them.” So do we at this time dilate upon the sad state of man by nature—that we may the better set forth the glorious remedy of which our text so sweetly speaks!

II. God treats sin as a disease and HE HERE DECLARES THE REMEDY WHICH HE HAS PROVIDED—“By His stripes we are healed.”

I ask you very solemnly to accompany me in your meditations, for a few minutes, while I bring before you the stripes of the Lord Jesus. The Lord resolved to restore us and, therefore, He sent His only-begotten Son, “Very God of very God,” that He might descend into this world to take upon Himself our nature in order to our redemption. He lived as a Man among men and, in due time, after 30 years or more of service, the time came when He should do us the greatest service of all, namely, stand in our place and bear the chastisement of our peace. He went to Gethsemane and there, at the first taste of our bitter cup, He sweat great drops of blood. He went to Pilate’s Hall and Herod’s Judgement-Seat and there He drank draughts of pain and scorn in our place! Last of all, they took Him to the Cross and nailed Him there to die—to die in our place, “the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God.”

The word, “stripes,” is used to set forth His sufferings, both of body and of soul. The whole of Christ was made a Sacrifice for us—His whole Manhood suffered. As to His body, it shared with His mind in a grief that never can be described! In the beginning of His passion, when He emphatically suffered instead of us, He was in agony. And from His bodily frame a bloody sweat distilled so copiously as to fall to the ground! It is very rarely that a man sweats blood. There have been one or two instances of it and they have been followed by almost immediate death—but our Savior lived—lived after an agony which, to anyone else, would have proven fatal. Before He could cleanse His face from this dreadful crimson, they hurried him to the High Priest’s hall. In the dead of night they bound Him and led Him away.

Soon they took Him to Pilate and to Herod. These scourged Him and their soldiers spat in His face and buffeted Him. They put a crown of thorns on His head. Scourging is one of the most awful tortures that can be inflicted by malice. It is to the eternal disgrace of Englishmen that they should have permitted the “cat” to be used upon the soldier—but to the Roman, cruelty was so natural that he made his common punishments worse than brutal! The Roman scourge is said to have been made of the sinews of oxen twisted into knots—and into these knots were inserted slivers of bone and hucklebones of sheep, so that every time the scourge fell upon the bare back, “the plowers made deep furrows.” Our Savior was called upon to endure the fierce pain of the Roman scourge and this not as the *finis* of His punishment, but as a preliminary to crucifixion!

To this they added buffeting and plucking of His facial hair. They spared Him no form of pain. In all His faintness, through bleeding and fasting, they made Him carry His Cross until another was forced, by the forethought of their cruelty, to bear it, lest their Victim should die on the road. They stripped Him, threw Him down and nailed Him to the wood. They pierced His hands and His feet. They lifted up the tree, with Him upon it, and then dashed it down into its place in the ground, so that all His limbs were dislocated, according to the lament of the 22nd Psalm, “I am poured out like water and all My bones are out of joint.” He hung in the burning sun till the fever dissolved His strength and He said, “My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and My tongue cleaves to My jaws; and You have brought Me into the dust of death.”

There He hung, a spectacle to God and men! The weight of His body was first sustained by His feet, till the nails tore through the tender nerves—and then the painful load began to drag upon His hands and tear those sensitive parts of His frame. How small a wound in the hand has brought on lockjaw? How awful must have been the torment caused by that dragging iron tearing through the delicate parts of the hands and feet! Now were all manner of bodily pains centered in His tortured frame! All the while His enemies stood around, pointing at Him in scorn, thrusting out their tongues in mockery, jesting at His prayers and gloating over His sufferings! He cried, “I thirst,” and then they gave Him vinegar mingled with gall!

After a while He said, "It is finished." He had endured the utmost of appointed grief and had made full vindication to Divine Justice. Then, and not till then, He gave up the ghost. Holy men of old have enlarged most lovingly upon the bodily sufferings of our Lord and I have no hesitation in doing the same, trusting that trembling sinners may see salvation in these painful "stripes" of the Redeemer. To describe the outward sufferings of our Lord is not easy—I acknowledge that I have failed. But His soul-sufferings which were the soul of His sufferings, who can even *conceive*, much less express, what they were? At the very first I told you that He sweat great drops of blood. That was His heart driving out its life-floods to the surface through the terrible depression of spirit which was upon Him. He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death."

The betrayal by Judas and the desertion of the 12 grieved our Lord, but the weight of our sin was the real pressure on His heart. Our guilt was the olive press which forced from Him the moisture of His life! No language can ever tell His agony in prospect of His passion—how little, then, can we conceive the passion, itself? When nailed to the Cross, He endured what no martyr ever suffered, for martyrs, when they have died, have been so sustained of God that they have rejoiced amid their pain, but our Redeemer was forsaken of His Father until He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" That was the most bitter cry of all, the utmost depth of His unfathomable grief! Yet it was necessary that He should be deserted because God must turn His back on sin and, consequently, upon Him who was made sin for us! The soul of the great Substitute suffered a horror of misery instead of that horror of Hell into which *sinners* would have been plunged had He not taken their sin upon Himself and been made a curse for them. It is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree"—but who knows what that curse means?

The remedy for your sins and mine is found in the substitutionary sufferings of the Lord Jesus and in these only! These "stripes" of the Lord Jesus Christ were on our behalf! Do you ask, "Is there anything for us to do, to remove the guilt of sin?" I answer—There is *nothing* whatever for you to do! By the stripes of Jesus we are healed! He has endured all those stripes and left not one of them for us to bear.

"But must we not *believe* on Him?" Yes, certainly. If I say of a certain ointment that it heals, I do not deny that you need a bandage with which to apply it to the wound! Faith is the linen which binds the plaster of Christ's reconciliation to the sore of our sin. The *linen* does not heal—that is the work of the ointment! So faith does not heal—that is the work of the Atonement of Christ.

Does an enquirer reply, "But surely I must *do* something, or *suffer* something"? I answer—You must put *nothing* with Jesus Christ, or you greatly dishonor Him! In order to your salvation, you must rely only upon the wounds of Jesus Christ and nothing else! The text does not say, "His stripes *help* to heal us," but, "By His stripes we are healed."

"But we must repent," cries another! Assuredly we must and shall, for repentance is the first sign of healing! But the stripes of Jesus heal us—

not our repentance. These stripes, when applied to the heart, work repentance in us—we hate sin because it made Jesus suffer.

When you intelligently trust in Jesus as having suffered for you, then you discover the fact that God will never punish you for the same offense for which Jesus died. His justice will not permit Him to see the debt paid, first, by the Surety, and then, again, by the debtor! Justice cannot twice demand a recompense. If my bleeding Surety has borne my guilt, then I cannot bear it. Accepting Christ Jesus as suffering for me, I have accepted a complete discharge from judicial liability. I have been condemned in Christ and there is now, therefore, no condemnation to me anymore. This is the groundwork of the security of the sinner who believes in Jesus—he lives because Jesus died in his place—and he is acceptable before God because Jesus is accepted. The person for whom Jesus is an accepted Substitute must go free—none can touch him—he is clear! O my Hearer, will you have Jesus Christ to be your Substitute? If so, you are free. “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” Thus, “by His stripes we are healed.”

III. I have tried to put before you the disease and the remedy. I now desire to notice the fact that THIS REMEDY IS IMMEDIATELY EFFECTIVE WHEREVER IT IS APPLIED. The stripes of Jesus do heal men—they have healed many of us. It does not look as if it could effect so great a cure, but the fact is undeniable. I often hear people say, “If you preach up this faith in Jesus Christ as saving men, they will be careless about holy living.” I am as good a witness on that point as anybody, for I live every day in the midst of men who are trusting to the stripes of Jesus for their salvation—and I have seen no ill effect following from such a trust—I have seen the very reverse! I bear testimony that I have seen the very worst of men become the very best of men by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ! These stripes heal, in a surprising manner, the moral diseases of those who seemed past remedy.

The character is healed. I have seen the drunk become sober, the harlot become chaste, the passionate man become gentle, the covetous man become liberal and the liar become truthful—simply by trusting in the sufferings of Jesus! If it did not make good men of them, it would not really do *anything* for them, for, after all, you must judge men by their fruits—and if the fruits are not changed—the tree is not changed. Character is everything—if the character is not set right, the man is not saved. But we say it, without fear of contradiction, that the atoning Sacrifice, applied to the heart, heals the disease of sin. If you doubt it, try it! He that believes in Jesus is sanctified as well as justified—by faith he becomes an altogether changed man.

The conscience is healed of its smart. Sin crushed the man’s soul. He was spiritless and joyless, but the moment he believed in Jesus, he leaped into the Light of God! Often you can see a change in the very *look* of the man’s face—the cloud flies from the countenance when guilt goes from the conscience. Scores of times, when I have been talking with those bowed down with sin’s burden, they have looked as though they were qualifying for an asylum through inward grief. But they have caught the thought, “Christ stood for *me* and if I trust in Him, I have the sign that He did so,

and I am clear,” and their faces have been lit up as with a glimpse of Heaven!

Gratitude for such great mercy causes a change of thought towards God and *so it heals the judgment* and, by this means, the affections are turned in the right way and *the heart is healed*. Sin is no longer loved, but God is loved and holiness is desired. *The whole man is healed* and the whole life changed. Many of you know how light of heart faith in Jesus makes you—how the troubles of life lose their weight and the fear of death ceases to cause bondage. You rejoice in the Lord, for the blessed remedy of the stripes of Jesus is applied to your soul by faith in Him.

The fact that, “by His stripes we are healed,” is a matter in evidence. I shall take liberty to bear my own witness. If it were necessary, I could call thousands of persons, my daily acquaintances, who can say that by the stripes of Christ they were healed, but I must not, therefore, withhold my personal testimony. If I had suffered from a dreadful disease and a physician had given me a remedy which had healed me, I would not be ashamed to tell you all about it—I would quote my own case as an argument with you to try my physician. Years ago, when I was a youth, the burden of my sin was exceedingly heavy upon me. I had fallen into no gross vices and would not have been regarded by anyone as being especially a transgressor—but I regarded myself as such—and I had good reason for doing so. My conscience was sensitive because it was enlightened and I judged that, having had a godly father and a praying mother, and having been trained in the ways of piety, I had sinned much against the Light of God and, consequently, there was a greater degree of guilt in my sin than in that of others who were my youthful associates, but had not enjoyed my advantages.

I could not enjoy the sports of youth because I felt that I had done violence to my conscience. I would seek my chamber and there, sit alone, read my Bible and pray for forgiveness. But peace did not come to me. Books such as Baxter’s, “Call to the Unconverted,” and Doddridge’s, “Rise and Progress,” I read over and over again. Early in the morning I would awake and read the most earnest religious books I could find, desiring to be eased of my burden of sin. I was not always thus dull, but at times my misery of soul was very great. The words of the weeping Prophet and of Job were such as suited my mournful case. I would have chosen death rather than life! I tried to do as well as I could and to behave myself, but, in my own judgement, I grew worse and worse. I felt more and more despondent.

I attended every place of worship within my reach, but I heard nothing which gave me lasting comfort until, one day, I heard a simple preacher of the Gospel speak from the text, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” When he told me that all I had to do was to “look” to Jesus—to Jesus the Crucified One—I could hardly believe it! He went on and said, “Look, look, look!” He added, “There is a young man, under the left-hand gallery there, who is very miserable. He will have no peace until he looks to Jesus”—and then he cried—“Look! Look! Young man, look!” I did look and, in that moment, relief came to me and I felt such overflowing

joy that I could have stood up and cried, “Hallelujah! Glory be to God! I am delivered from the burden of my sin!” Many days have passed since then, but my faith has held me up and compelled me to proclaim the story of Free Grace and dying Love. I can truly say—

***“Ever since by faith I saw the stream
Your flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.”***

I hope to sit up in my bed in my last hours and tell of the stripes that healed me! I hope some young men, yes, and old men before me, will at once try this remedy—it is good for all characters and all ages—“By His stripes we are healed.” Thousands upon thousands of us have tried and proved this remedy! We speak what we know and testify what we have seen. God grant that men may receive our witness through the power of the Holy Spirit!

I want a few minutes’ talk with those who have not tried this marvelous heal-all. Let us come to close quarters. Friend, you are, by nature, in need of soul-healing as much as any of us. And one reason why you do not care about the remedy is because you do not believe that you are sick. I saw a peddler one day, as I was walking. He was selling walking-sticks. He followed me and offered me one of the sticks. I showed him mine—a far better one than any he had to sell—and he withdrew at once. He could see that I was not likely to be a purchaser. I have often thought of that when I have been preaching—I show men the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, but they show me their own—and all hope of dealing with them is gone. Unless I can prove that their righteousness is worthless, they will not seek the righteousness which is of God by faith. Oh, that the Lord would show you your disease and then you would desire the remedy!

It may be that you do not care to hear of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, my dear Friends! You will have to hear of him one of these days, either for your salvation or your condemnation! The Lord has the key of your heart and I trust He will give you a better mind and, whenever this shall happen, your memory will recall my simple discourse and you will say, “I do remember! Yes, I heard the preacher declare that there is healing in the wounds of Christ.”

I pray you do not put off seeking the Lord—that would be great presumption on your part and a sad provocation to Him. But, should you have put it off, I pray you do not let the devil tell you it is too late. It is *never* too late while life lasts. I have read in books that very few people are converted after they are 40 years of age. My solemn conviction is that there is but little truth in such a statement! I have seen as many people converted at one age as at another in proportion to the number of people who are living at that age. Any first Sunday in the month you may see the right-hand of fellowship given to from 30 to 80 people who have been brought in during the month—and if you take stock of them, there will be found to be a selection representing every age—from childhood up to old age! The precious blood of Jesus has power to heal long-rooted sin! It makes old hearts new! If you were a thousand years old, I would exhort you to believe in Jesus and I would be sure that His stripes would heal

you! Your hair is nearly gone, old Friend, and furrows appear on your brow, but come along! You are rotting away with sin, but this medicine meets desperate cases! Poor, old, tottering pensioner, put your trust in Jesus, for by His stripes the old and the dying are healed!

Now, my dear Hearers, you are, at this moment, either healed or not. You are either healed by Divine Grace, or you are still in your natural sickness. Will you be so kind to yourselves as to enquire which it is? Many say, "We know what we are." But certain, more thoughtful ones, reply, "We don't quite know." Friend, you ought to know and you should know! Suppose I asked a man, "Are you a bankrupt or not?" and he said, "I really have no time to look at my books and, therefore, I am not sure." I would suspect that he could not pay 20 shillings in the pound—wouldn't you? Whenever a man is afraid to look at his books, I suspect that he has something to be afraid of. So, whenever a person says, "I don't know my condition and I don't care to think much about it," you may pretty safely conclude that things are wrong with him.

You ought to know whether you are saved or not. "I hope I am saved," says one, "but I do not know the date of my conversion." That does not matter at all! It is a pleasant thing for a person to know his birthday, but when persons are not sure of the exact date of their birth, they do not, therefore, infer that they are not alive! If a person does not know *when* he was converted, that is no proof that he is *not* converted. The point is, do you trust Jesus Christ? Has that trust made a new man of you? Has your confidence in Christ made you feel that you have been forgiven? Has that made you love God for having forgiven you and has that love become the mainspring of your being so that out of love to God you delight to obey Him? Then you are healed! If you do not believe in Jesus, you can be sure that you are still unhealed—and I pray you look at my text until you are led by Grace to say—"I am healed, for I have trusted in the stripes of Jesus."

Suppose, for a moment, you are not healed—let me ask the question, "*Why are you not?*" You know the Gospel—why are you not healed by Christ? "I don't know," says one. And, my dear Friend, I beseech you not to rest until you do know!

"I can't get at it," somebody says. The other day a young girl was putting a button on her father's coat. She was sitting with her back to the window and she said, "Father, I can't see; I am in my own light." He said, "Ah, my daughter, that is where you have been all your life!" This is the position of some of you *spiritually*. You are in your own light—you think too much of yourselves! There is plenty of light in the Sun of Righteousness, but you get in the dark by putting *self* in the way of that Sun. Oh, that your self might be put away! I read a touching story the other day as to how one found peace. A young man had been, for some time, under a sense of sin, longing to find mercy, but he could not reach it. He was a telegraph clerk and, being in the office one morning, he had to receive and transmit a telegram. To his great surprise, he spelt out these words—"Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." A gen-

tleman out for a holiday was telegraphing a message in answer to a letter from a friend who was in trouble of soul.

It was meant for another, but he that transmitted it received Eternal Life as the words came flashing into his soul!

O dear Friends, get out of your own light and, at once, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world”! I cannot telegraph the words to you, but I would put them before you so plainly and distinctly that everyone in trouble of soul may know that they are meant for him. There lies your hope—not in yourself, but in the Lamb of God! Behold him and as you behold him, your sin shall be put away and by His stripes you shall be healed!

If, dear Friend, you are healed, this is my last word to you—then *get out of diseased company*. Get away from the companions that have infected you with sin! Come out from among them! Be you separate and touch not the unclean thing. If you are healed, praise the Healer and acknowledge what He has done for you! There were ten lepers healed, but only one returned to praise the healing hand. Do not be among the ungrateful nine. If you have found Christ, confess His name! Confess it in His own appointed way—“He that believes *and is baptized* shall be saved.” When you have thus confessed Him, speak out for Him. Tell what Jesus has done for your soul and dedicate yourself to the holy purpose of proclaiming abroad the message by which you have been healed!

I met this week with something that pleased me—how one man, being healed, may be the means of blessing to another. Many years ago I preached a sermon in Exeter Hall which was printed and entitled, “Salvation to the Uttermost.” A friend, who lives not very far from this place, was in the city of Para, in Brazil. There he heard of an Englishman in prison who had, in a state of drunkenness, committed a murder, for which he was confined for life. Our friend went to see him and found him deeply penitent, but quietly restful and happy in the Lord. He had felt the terrible wound of blood-guiltiness in his soul, but it had been healed and he felt the bliss of pardon. Here is the story of the poor man’s conversion as I have it—

“A young man, who had just completed his contract with the gas-works, was returning to England, but before doing so he called to see me and brought with him a parcel of books. When I opened it, I found that they were novels, but, being able to read, I was thankful for anything. After I had read several of the books, I found a sermon (No. 84), preached by C. H. Spurgeon, in Exeter Hall, on June 8th, 1856, from the words, ‘Therefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost,’ etc., (Heb. 7:25). [<http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols1-3/chs84.pdf>]. In his discourse, Mr. Spurgeon referred to Palmer, who was then lying under sentence of death in Stafford Jail and, in order to bring home this text to his hearers, he said that if Palmer had committed many other murders, if he repents and seeks God’s pardoning love in Christ, even he will be forgiven! I then felt that if Palmer could be forgiven, so might I. I sought and, blessed be God, I found! I am pardoned, I am free! I am a sinner saved by Grace! Though a murderer, I have not yet sinned ‘beyond the uttermost,’ blessed

be His holy name!” It made me very happy to think that a poor condemned murderer could thus be converted. Surely there is hope for every hearer and reader of this sermon, however guilty he may be!

If you know Christ, tell others about Him. You do not know what good there is in making Jesus known, even though all you can do is to give a tract, or repeat a verse. Dr. Valpy, the author of a great many class books, wrote the following simple lines as his confession of faith—

***“In peace let me resign my breath,
And Your salvation see.
My sins deserve eternal death,
But Jesus died for me.”***

Valpy is dead and gone, but he gave those lines to dear old Dr. Marsh, the Rector of Beckenham, who put them over his study mantel. The Earl of Roden came in and read them. “Will you give me a copy of those lines?” said the good earl. “I shall be glad,” said Dr. Marsh, and he copied them. Lord Roden took them home and put them over his mantel. General Taylor, a Waterloo hero, came into the room and noticed them. He read them over and over again, while staying with Earl Roden, till his Lordship remarked, “I say, friend Taylor, I should think you know those lines by heart.” He answered, “I do know them by heart. Indeed, my very heart has grasped their meaning.” He was brought to Christ by that humble rhyme!

General Taylor handed those lines to an officer in the army who was going out to the Crimean War. He came home to die. And when Dr. Marsh went to see him, the poor soul, in his weakness said, “Good Sir, do you know this verse which General Taylor gave to me? It brought me to my Savior, and I die in peace.” To Dr. Marsh’s, surprise, he repeated the lines—

***“In peace let me resign my breath,
And Your salvation see.
My sins deserve eternal death,
But Jesus died for me.”***

Only think of the good which four simple lines may do! Be encouraged, all of you who know the healing power of the wounds of Jesus! Spread this Truth of God by all means. Never mind how simple the language. Proclaim it! Proclaim it everywhere and in every way—even if you cannot do it in any other way than by copying a verse out of a hymnbook! Proclaim that by the stripes of Jesus we are healed! May God bless you, dear Friends! Pray for me that this sermon of mine, which is numbered, TWO-THOUSAND, may be a very fruitful one.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — *Isaiah 53.*
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 287, 534, 537.**

END OF VOLUME 33

NUMBER 2000—OR, “HEALING BY THE STRIPES OF JESUS” NO. 2000

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JANUARY 1, 1888,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“By His stripes we are healed.”
Isaiah 53:5.*

BEING one evening in Exeter Hall, I heard our late beloved Brother, Mr. Mackay, of Hull, make a speech in which he told us of a person who was under very deep concern of soul and felt that he could never rest till he found salvation. So, taking the Bible into his hands, he said to himself, “Eternal life is to be found somewhere in this Word of God; and if it is here, I will find it, for I will read the Book right through, praying to God over every page of it, so, perhaps, it may contain some saving message for me.” He told us that the earnest seeker read on through Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and so on—and though Christ is evidently there—he could not find Him in the types and symbols. Neither did the holy histories yield him comfort, nor the Book of Job. He passed through the Psalms, but did not find His Savior there. And the same was the case with the other books till he reached Isaiah. In this Prophet he read on till, near the end, and then, in the 53rd Chapter, these words caught his delighted attention, “*By His stripes we are healed.*” “Now I have found it,” he said. “Here is the healing that I need for my sin-sick soul and I see how it comes to me through the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ! Blessed be His name, I am healed!”

It was well that the seeker was wise enough to search the sacred volume. It was better, still, that in that volume there should be such a life-giving Word and that the Holy Spirit should reveal it to the seeker’s heart. I said to myself, “That text will suit me well and, perhaps, a voice from God may speak through it, yet again, to some other awakened sinner.” May He, who by these words spoke to the chamberlain of the Ethiopian queen who, also, was impressed with them while in the act of searching the Scripture, speak, also, to many who shall hear or read this sermon! Let us pray that it may be so! God is very gracious and He will hear our prayers.

The object of my discourse is very simple. I would come *to* the text and I would come *at* you! May the Holy Spirit give me power to do both to the glory of God!

I. In endeavoring to come to the full meaning of the text, I should remark, first, that GOD, IN INFINITE MERCY, HERE TREATS SIN AS A DISEASE. “By His stripes”—that is, the stripes of the Lord Jesus—“we are *healed.*” Through the sufferings of our Lord, sin is pardoned and we

are delivered from the power of evil—this is regarded as the healing of a deadly malady. The Lord, in this present life, treats sin as a disease. If He were to treat it once, as *sin*, and summon us to His bar to answer for it, we would, at once, sink beyond the reach of hope, for we could not answer His accusations, nor defend ourselves from His justice. In great mercy He looks upon us with pity and, for the time being, treats our ill manners as if they were diseases to be cured rather than rebellions to be punished. It is most gracious on His part to do so, for while *sin* is a disease, it is a great deal more!

If our iniquities were the result of an unavoidable sickness, we might claim pity rather than censure. But we sin willfully, we choose evil, we transgress in heart and, therefore, we bear a moral responsibility which makes sin an infinite evil. Our sin is our crime rather than our calamity! However, God looks at it in another way, for a season, so that He may be able to deal with us on hopeful grounds—He looks at the *sickness* of sin and not, as yet, at the *wickedness* of sin. Nor is this without reason, for men who indulge in gross vices are often charitably judged by their fellows to be not only wholly wicked, but partly mad. Propensities to evil are usually associated with a greater or less degree of mental disease—perhaps, also, of physical disease. At any rate, sin is a spiritual malady of the worst kind.

Sin is a disease, *for it is not essential to manhood*, nor an integral part of human nature as God created it. Man was never more fully and truly man than he was before he fell. And He who is especially called “the Son of Man” knew no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, yet He was perfectly Man. Sin is abnormal—a sort of cancerous growth which ought not to be within the soul. Sin is disturbing to manhood—sin unmans a man. Sin is sadly destructive to man. It takes the crown from his head, the light from his mind and the joy from his heart. We may name many grievous diseases which are the destroyers of our race, but the greatest of these is sin! Sin, indeed, is the fatal egg from which all other sicknesses have been hatched. It is the fountain and source of all mortal maladies.

It is a disease because *it puts the whole system of the man out of order*. It places the lower faculties in the higher place, for it makes the body master over the soul. The man should ride the horse, but in the sinner, the horse rides the man. The mind should keep the animal instincts and propensities in check, but in many men, the animal crushes the mental and the spiritual. For instance, how many live as if eating and drinking were the chief objects of existence? They live to eat, instead of eating to live! The faculties are thrown out of gear by sin so that they act fitfully and irregularly—you cannot depend upon any one of them keeping its place. The equilibrium of the life-forces is grievously disturbed. Even as a sickness of body is called a *disorder*, so is sin the disorder of the soul. Human nature is out of joint, out of health and man is no longer man—he is dead through sin even as he was warned of old, “in the day that you eat, thereof, you shall surely die.” Man is marred, bruised, sick, paralyzed, polluted and rotten with disease—just in proportion as sin has shown its true character.

Sin, like disease, operates to weaken man. The moral energy is broken down so as scarcely to exist in some men. The conscience labors under a fatal consumption and is gradually ruined by a decline. The understanding has been lamed by evil and the will is rendered feeble for *good*, though forcible for evil! The principle of integrity, the resolve of virtue in which a man's true strength really lies, is sapped and undermined by wrong-doing. Sin is like a secret flow of blood which robs the vital parts of their essential nourishment. How near to death, in some men, is even the power to discern between good and evil! The Apostle tells us that when we were yet without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly—and this being *without strength* is the direct result of the sickness of sin which has weakened our whole manhood.

Sin is a disease which, in some cases causes extreme pain and anguish, but in other instances deadens sensibility. It frequently happens that the more sinful a man is, the less he is conscious of it. It was remarked of a certain notorious criminal that many thought him innocent because, when he was charged with murder, he did not betray the least emotion. In that wretched self-possession there was, to my mind, presumptive proof of his great familiarity with crime—if an innocent person is charged with a great offense, the mere charge horrifies him! It is only by weighing all the circumstances and distinguishing between sin and shame that he recovers himself. He who can do the deed of shame does not blush when he is charged with it. The deeper a man goes in sin, the less does he admit that it is sin. Like a man who takes opium, he acquires the power to take larger and larger doses till that which would kill a hundred other men has but slight effect upon him! A man who readily lies is scarcely conscious of the moral degradation involved in being a liar, though he may think it shameful to be called one. It is one of the worst points of this disease of sin that it stupefies the understanding and causes a paralysis of the conscience.

By-and-by, sin is sure to cause pain like other diseases which flesh is heir to—and when its awakening comes, what a start it gives! Conscience, one day, will awake and fill the guilty soul with alarm and distress, if not in this world, yet certainly in the next! Then will it be seen what an awful thing it is to offend against the Law of the Lord.

Sin is a disease which pollutes a man. Certain diseases render a man horribly impure. God is the best judge of purity, for He is thrice-holy and He cannot endure sin. The Lord puts sin away from Him with abhorrence—and prepares a place where the finally-unclean shall be shut up by themselves. He will not dwell with them here, neither can they dwell with Him in Heaven. As men must put lepers apart by themselves, so Justice must put out of the heavenly world, everything which defiles. O my Hearer, shall the Lord be compelled to put *you* out of His Presence because you persist in wickedness?

And this disease, which is so polluting, is, at the same time, *most injurious* to us from the fact that it prevents the higher enjoyment and employment of life. Men exist in sin, but they do not truly live. As the Scripture says, such an one is dead while he lives. While we continue in sin, we cannot serve God on earth, nor hope to enjoy Him, forever, above. We

are incapable of communion with perfect spirits and with God, Himself—and the loss of this communion is the greatest of all evils! Sin deprives us of spiritual sight, hearing, feeling and taste and, thus, deprives us of those joys which turn existence into life. It brings upon us true death, so that we exist in ruins, deprived of all which can be called life.

This disease is fatal. Is it not written, “The soul that sins, it shall die?” “Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.” There is no hope of eternal life for any man unless sin is put away. This disease never exhausts itself so as to be its own destroyer. Evil men wax worse and worse! In another world, as well as in this present state, character will, no doubt, go on to develop and ripen—and so the sinner will become more and more corrupt as the result of his spiritual death. O my Friends, if you refuse Christ, sin will be the death of your peace, your joy, your prospects, your hopes—and thus the death of all that is worth having! In the case of other diseases, nature may conquer the malady and you may be restored, but in this case, apart from Divine interposition, nothing lies before you but eternal death!

God, therefore, treats sin as a disease because it *is* a disease! And I want *you* to feel that it is so, for then you will thank the Lord for thus dealing with you. Many of us have felt that sin is a disease and we have been healed of it. Oh, that others could see what an exceedingly evil thing it is to sin against the Lord! It is a contagious, defiling, incurable, mortal sickness!

Perhaps somebody says, “Why do you raise these points? They fill us with unpleasant thoughts.” I do it for the reason given by the engineer who built the great Menai Tubular Bridge. When it was being erected, some brother engineers said to him, “You raise all manner of difficulties.” “Yes,” he said, “I raise them that I may solve them.” So do we at this time dilate upon the sad state of man by nature—that we may the better set forth the glorious remedy of which our text so sweetly speaks!

II. God treats sin as a disease and HE HERE DECLARES THE REMEDY WHICH HE HAS PROVIDED—“By His stripes we are healed.”

I ask you very solemnly to accompany me in your meditations, for a few minutes, while I bring before you the stripes of the Lord Jesus. The Lord resolved to restore us and, therefore, He sent His only-begotten Son, “Very God of very God,” that He might descend into this world to take upon Himself our nature in order to our redemption. He lived as a Man among men and, in due time, after 30 years or more of service, the time came when He should do us the greatest service of all, namely, stand in our place and bear the chastisement of our peace. He went to Gethsemane and there, at the first taste of our bitter cup, He sweat great drops of blood. He went to Pilate’s Hall and Herod’s Judgement-Seat and there He drank draughts of pain and scorn in our place! Last of all, they took Him to the Cross and nailed Him there to die—to die in our place, “the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God.”

The word, “stripes,” is used to set forth His sufferings, both of body and of soul. The whole of Christ was made a Sacrifice for us—His whole Manhood suffered. As to His body, it shared with His mind in a grief that never can be described! In the beginning of His passion, when He em-

phatically suffered instead of us, He was in agony. And from His bodily frame a bloody sweat distilled so copiously as to fall to the ground! It is very rarely that a man sweats blood. There have been one or two instances of it and they have been followed by almost immediate death—but our Savior lived—lived after an agony which, to anyone else, would have proven fatal. Before He could cleanse His face from this dreadful crimson, they hurried him to the High Priest’s hall. In the dead of night they bound Him and led Him away.

Soon they took Him to Pilate and to Herod. These scourged Him and their soldiers spat in His face and buffeted Him. They put a crown of thorns on His head. Scourging is one of the most awful tortures that can be inflicted by malice. It is to the eternal disgrace of Englishmen that they should have permitted the “cat” to be used upon the soldier—but to the Roman, cruelty was so natural that he made his common punishments worse than brutal! The Roman scourge is said to have been made of the sinews of oxen twisted into knots—and into these knots were inserted slivers of bone and hucklebones of sheep, so that every time the scourge fell upon the bare back, “the plowers made deep furrows.” Our Savior was called upon to endure the fierce pain of the Roman scourge and this not as the *finis* of His punishment, but as a preliminary to crucifixion!

To this they added buffeting and plucking of His facial hair. They spared Him no form of pain. In all His faintness, through bleeding and fasting, they made Him carry His Cross until another was forced, by the forethought of their cruelty, to bear it, lest their Victim should die on the road. They stripped Him, threw Him down and nailed Him to the wood. They pierced His hands and His feet. They lifted up the tree, with Him upon it, and then dashed it down into its place in the ground, so that all His limbs were dislocated, according to the lament of the 22nd Psalm, “I am poured out like water and all My bones are out of joint.” He hung in the burning sun till the fever dissolved His strength and He said, “My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and My tongue cleaves to My jaws; and You have brought Me into the dust of death.”

There He hung, a spectacle to God and men! The weight of His body was first sustained by His feet, till the nails tore through the tender nerves—and then the painful load began to drag upon His hands and tear those sensitive parts of His frame. How small a wound in the hand has brought on lockjaw? How awful must have been the torment caused by that dragging iron tearing through the delicate parts of the hands and feet! Now were all manner of bodily pains centered in His tortured frame! All the while His enemies stood around, pointing at Him in scorn, thrusting out their tongues in mockery, jesting at His prayers and gloating over His sufferings! He cried, “I thirst,” and then they gave Him vinegar mingled with gall!

After a while He said, “It is finished.” He had endured the utmost of appointed grief and had made full vindication to Divine Justice. Then, and not till then, He gave up the ghost. Holy men of old have enlarged most lovingly upon the bodily sufferings of our Lord and I have no hesita-

tion in doing the same, trusting that trembling sinners may see salvation in these painful “stripes” of the Redeemer. To describe the outward sufferings of our Lord is not easy—I acknowledge that I have failed. But His soul-sufferings which were the soul of His sufferings, who can even *conceive*, much less express, what they were? At the very first I told you that He sweat great drops of blood. That was His heart driving out its life-floods to the surface through the terrible depression of spirit which was upon Him. He said, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.”

The betrayal by Judas and the desertion of the 12 grieved our Lord, but the weight of our sin was the real pressure on His heart. Our guilt was the olive press which forced from Him the moisture of His life! No language can ever tell His agony in prospect of His passion—how little, then, can we conceive the passion, itself? When nailed to the Cross, He endured what no martyr ever suffered, for martyrs, when they have died, have been so sustained of God that they have rejoiced amid their pain, but our Redeemer was forsaken of His Father until He cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” That was the most bitter cry of all, the utmost depth of His unfathomable grief! Yet it was necessary that He should be deserted because God must turn His back on sin and, consequently, upon Him who was made sin for us! The soul of the great Substitute suffered a horror of misery instead of that horror of Hell into which *sinners* would have been plunged had He not taken their sin upon Himself and been made a curse for them. It is written, “Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree”—but who knows what that curse means?

The remedy for your sins and mine is found in the substitutionary sufferings of the Lord Jesus and in these only! These “stripes” of the Lord Jesus Christ were on our behalf! Do you ask, “Is there anything for us to do, to remove the guilt of sin?” I answer—There is *nothing* whatever for you to do! By the stripes of Jesus we are healed! He has endured all those stripes and left not one of them for us to bear.

“But must we not *believe* on Him?” Yes, certainly. If I say of a certain ointment that it heals, I do not deny that you need a bandage with which to apply it to the wound! Faith is the linen which binds the plaster of Christ’s reconciliation to the sore of our sin. The *linen* does not heal—that is the work of the ointment! So faith does not heal—that is the work of the Atonement of Christ.

Does an enquirer reply, “But surely I must *do* something, or *suffer* something”? I answer—You must put *nothing* with Jesus Christ, or you greatly dishonor Him! In order to your salvation, you must rely only upon the wounds of Jesus Christ and nothing else! The text does not say, “His stripes *help* to heal us,” but, “By His stripes we are healed.”

“But we must repent,” cries another! Assuredly we must and shall, for repentance is the first sign of healing! But the stripes of Jesus heal us—not our repentance. These stripes, when applied to the heart, work repentance in us—we hate sin because it made Jesus suffer.

When you intelligently trust in Jesus as having suffered for you, then you discover the fact that God will never punish you for the same offense for which Jesus died. His justice will not permit Him to see the debt paid, first, by the Surety, and then, again, by the debtor! Justice cannot twice

demand a recompense. If my bleeding Surety has borne my guilt, then I cannot bear it. Accepting Christ Jesus as suffering for me, I have accepted a complete discharge from judicial liability. I have been condemned in Christ and there is now, therefore, no condemnation to me anymore. This is the groundwork of the security of the sinner who believes in Jesus—he lives because Jesus died in his place—and he is acceptable before God because Jesus is accepted. The person for whom Jesus is an accepted Substitute must go free—none can touch him—he is clear! O my Hearer, will you have Jesus Christ to be your Substitute? If so, you are free. “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” Thus, “by His stripes we are healed.”

III. I have tried to put before you the disease and the remedy. I now desire to notice the fact that THIS REMEDY IS IMMEDIATELY EFFECTIVE WHEREVER IT IS APPLIED. The stripes of Jesus do heal men—they have healed many of us. It does not look as if it could effect so great a cure, but the fact is undeniable. I often hear people say, “If you preach up this faith in Jesus Christ as saving men, they will be careless about holy living.” I am as good a witness on that point as anybody, for I live every day in the midst of men who are trusting to the stripes of Jesus for their salvation—and I have seen no ill effect following from such a trust—I have seen the very reverse! I bear testimony that I have seen the very worst of men become the very best of men by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ! These stripes heal, in a surprising manner, the moral diseases of those who seemed past remedy.

The character is healed. I have seen the drunk become sober, the harlot become chaste, the passionate man become gentle, the covetous man become liberal and the liar become truthful—simply by trusting in the sufferings of Jesus! If it did not make good men of them, it would not really do *anything* for them, for, after all, you must judge men by their fruits—and if the fruits are not changed—the tree is not changed. Character is everything—if the character is not set right, the man is not saved. But we say it, without fear of contradiction, that the atoning Sacrifice, applied to the heart, heals the disease of sin. If you doubt it, try it! He that believes in Jesus is sanctified as well as justified—by faith he becomes an altogether changed man.

The conscience is healed of its smart. Sin crushed the man’s soul. He was spiritless and joyless, but the moment he believed in Jesus, he leaped into the Light of God! Often you can see a change in the very *look* of the man’s face—the cloud flies from the countenance when guilt goes from the conscience. Scores of times, when I have been talking with those bowed down with sin’s burden, they have looked as though they were qualifying for an asylum through inward grief. But they have caught the thought, “Christ stood for *me* and if I trust in Him, I have the sign that He did so, and I am clear,” and their faces have been lit up as with a glimpse of Heaven!

Gratitude for such great mercy causes a change of thought towards God and *so it heals the judgment* and, by this means, the affections are turned in the right way and *the heart is healed*. Sin is no longer loved, but God is loved and holiness is desired. *The whole man is healed* and

the whole life changed. Many of you know how light of heart faith in Jesus makes you—how the troubles of life lose their weight and the fear of death ceases to cause bondage. You rejoice in the Lord, for the blessed remedy of the stripes of Jesus is applied to your soul by faith in Him.

The fact that, “by His stripes we are healed,” is a matter in evidence. I shall take liberty to bear my own witness. If it were necessary, I could call thousands of persons, my daily acquaintances, who can say that by the stripes of Christ they were healed, but I must not, therefore, withhold my personal testimony. If I had suffered from a dreadful disease and a physician had given me a remedy which had healed me, I would not be ashamed to tell you all about it—I would quote my own case as an argument with you to try my physician. Years ago, when I was a youth, the burden of my sin was exceedingly heavy upon me. I had fallen into no gross vices and would not have been regarded by anyone as being especially a transgressor—but I regarded myself as such—and I had good reason for doing so. My conscience was sensitive because it was enlightened and I judged that, having had a godly father and a praying mother, and having been trained in the ways of piety, I had sinned much against the Light of God and, consequently, there was a greater degree of guilt in my sin than in that of others who were my youthful associates, but had not enjoyed my advantages.

I could not enjoy the sports of youth because I felt that I had done violence to my conscience. I would seek my chamber and there, sit alone, read my Bible and pray for forgiveness. But peace did not come to me. Books such as Baxter’s, “Call to the Unconverted,” and Doddridge’s, “Rise and Progress,” I read over and over again. Early in the morning I would awake and read the most earnest religious books I could find, desiring to be eased of my burden of sin. I was not always thus dull, but at times my misery of soul was very great. The words of the weeping Prophet and of Job were such as suited my mournful case. I would have chosen death rather than life! I tried to do as well as I could and to behave myself, but, in my own judgement, I grew worse and worse. I felt more and more despondent.

I attended every place of worship within my reach, but I heard nothing which gave me lasting comfort until, one day, I heard a simple preacher of the Gospel speak from the text, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” When he told me that all I had to do was to “look” to Jesus—to Jesus the Crucified One—I could hardly believe it! He went on and said, “Look, look, look!” He added, “There is a young man, under the left-hand gallery there, who is very miserable. He will have no peace until he looks to Jesus”—and then he cried—“Look! Look! Young man, look!” I did look and, in that moment, relief came to me and I felt such overflowing joy that I could have stood up and cried, “Hallelujah! Glory be to God! I am delivered from the burden of my sin!” Many days have passed since then, but my faith has held me up and compelled me to proclaim the story of Free Grace and dying Love. I can truly say—

***“Ever since by faith I saw the stream
Your flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.”***

I hope to sit up in my bed in my last hours and tell of the stripes that healed me! I hope some young men, yes, and old men before me, will at once try this remedy—it is good for all characters and all ages—“By His stripes we are healed.” Thousands upon thousands of us have tried and proved this remedy! We speak what we know and testify what we have seen. God grant that men may receive our witness through the power of the Holy Spirit!

I want a few minutes’ talk with those who have not tried this marvelous heal-all. Let us come to close quarters. Friend, you are, by nature, in need of soul-healing as much as any of us. And one reason why you do not care about the remedy is because you do not believe that you are sick. I saw a peddler one day, as I was walking. He was selling walking-sticks. He followed me and offered me one of the sticks. I showed him mine—a far better one than any he had to sell—and he withdrew at once. He could see that I was not likely to be a purchaser. I have often thought of that when I have been preaching—I show men the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, but they show me their own—and all hope of dealing with them is gone. Unless I can prove that their righteousness is worthless, they will not seek the righteousness which is of God by faith. Oh, that the Lord would show you your disease and then you would desire the remedy!

It may be that you do not care to hear of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, my dear Friends! You will have to hear of him one of these days, either for your salvation or your condemnation! The Lord has the key of your heart and I trust He will give you a better mind and, whenever this shall happen, your memory will recall my simple discourse and you will say, “I do remember! Yes, I heard the preacher declare that there is healing in the wounds of Christ.”

I pray you do not put off seeking the Lord—that would be great presumption on your part and a sad provocation to Him. But, should you have put it off, I pray you do not let the devil tell you it is too late. It is *never* too late while life lasts. I have read in books that very few people are converted after they are 40 years of age. My solemn conviction is that there is but little truth in such a statement! I have seen as many people converted at one age as at another in proportion to the number of people who are living at that age. Any first Sunday in the month you may see the right-hand of fellowship given to from 30 to 80 people who have been brought in during the month—and if you take stock of them, there will be found to be a selection representing every age—from childhood up to old age! The precious blood of Jesus has power to heal long-rooted sin! It makes old hearts new! If you were a thousand years old, I would exhort you to believe in Jesus and I would be sure that His stripes would heal you! Your hair is nearly gone, old Friend, and furrows appear on your brow, but come along! You are rotting away with sin, but this medicine meets desperate cases! Poor, old, tottering pensioner, put your trust in Jesus, for by His stripes the old and the dying are healed!

Now, my dear Hearers, you are, at this moment, either healed or not. You are either healed by Divine Grace, or you are still in your natural sickness. Will you be so kind to yourselves as to enquire which it is?

Many say, “We know what we are.” But certain, more thoughtful ones, reply, “We don’t quite know.” Friend, you ought to know and you should know! Suppose I asked a man, “Are you a bankrupt or not?” and he said, “I really have no time to look at my books and, therefore, I am not sure.” I would suspect that he could not pay 20 shillings in the pound—wouldn’t you? Whenever a man is afraid to look at his books, I suspect that he has something to be afraid of. So, whenever a person says, “I don’t know my condition and I don’t care to think much about it,” you may pretty safely conclude that things are wrong with him.

You ought to know whether you are saved or not. “I hope I am saved,” says one, “but I do not know the date of my conversion.” That does not matter at all! It is a pleasant thing for a person to know his birthday, but when persons are not sure of the exact date of their birth, they do not, therefore, infer that they are not alive! If a person does not know *when* he was converted, that is no proof that he is *not* converted. The point is, do you trust Jesus Christ? Has that trust made a new man of you? Has your confidence in Christ made you feel that you have been forgiven? Has that made you love God for having forgiven you and has that love become the mainspring of your being so that out of love to God you delight to obey Him? Then you are healed! If you do not believe in Jesus, you can be sure that you are still unhealed—and I pray you look at my text until you are led by Grace to say—“I am healed, for I have trusted in the stripes of Jesus.”

Suppose, for a moment, you are not healed—let me ask the question, “*Why are you not?*” You know the Gospel—why are you not healed by Christ? “I don’t know,” says one. And, my dear Friend, I beseech you not to rest until you do know!

“I can’t get at it,” somebody says. The other day a young girl was putting a button on her father’s coat. She was sitting with her back to the window and she said, “Father, I can’t see; I am in my own light.” He said, “Ah, my daughter, that is where you have been all your life!” This is the position of some of you *spiritually*. You are in your own light—you think too much of yourselves! There is plenty of light in the Sun of Righteousness, but you get in the dark by putting *self* in the way of that Sun. Oh, that your self might be put away! I read a touching story the other day as to how one found peace. A young man had been, for some time, under a sense of sin, longing to find mercy, but he could not reach it. He was a telegraph clerk and, being in the office one morning, he had to receive and transmit a telegram. To his great surprise, he spelt out these words—“Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” A gentleman out for a holiday was telegraphing a message in answer to a letter from a friend who was in trouble of soul.

It was meant for another, but he that transmitted it received Eternal Life as the words came flashing into his soul!

O dear Friends, get out of your own light and, at once, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world”! I cannot telegraph the words to you, but I would put them before you so plainly and distinctly that everyone in trouble of soul may know that they are meant for him. There lies your hope—not in yourself, but in the Lamb of God! Be-

hold him and as you behold him, your sin shall be put away and by His stripes you shall be healed!

If, dear Friend, you are healed, this is my last word to you—then *get out of diseased company*. Get away from the companions that have infected you with sin! Come out from among them! Be you separate and touch not the unclean thing. If you are healed, praise the Healer and acknowledge what He has done for you! There were ten lepers healed, but only one returned to praise the healing hand. Do not be among the ungrateful nine. If you have found Christ, confess His name! Confess it in His own appointed way—“He that believes *and is baptized* shall be saved.” When you have thus confessed Him, speak out for Him. Tell what Jesus has done for your soul and dedicate yourself to the holy purpose of proclaiming abroad the message by which you have been healed!

I met this week with something that pleased me—how one man, being healed, may be the means of blessing to another. Many years ago I preached a sermon in Exeter Hall which was printed and entitled, “Salvation to the Uttermost.” A friend, who lives not very far from this place, was in the city of Para, in Brazil. There he heard of an Englishman in prison who had, in a state of drunkenness, committed a murder, for which he was confined for life. Our friend went to see him and found him deeply penitent, but quietly restful and happy in the Lord. He had felt the terrible wound of blood-guiltiness in his soul, but it had been healed and he felt the bliss of pardon. Here is the story of the poor man’s conversion as I have it—

“A young man, who had just completed his contract with the gas-works, was returning to England, but before doing so he called to see me and brought with him a parcel of books. When I opened it, I found that they were novels, but, being able to read, I was thankful for anything. After I had read several of the books, I found a sermon (No. 84), preached by C. H. Spurgeon, in Exeter Hall, on June 8th, 1856, from the words, ‘Therefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost,’ etc., (Heb 7:25). [<http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols1-3/chs84.pdf>]. In his discourse, Mr. Spurgeon referred to Palmer, who was then lying under sentence of death in Stafford Jail and, in order to bring home this text to his hearers, he said that if Palmer had committed many other murders, if he repents and seeks God’s pardoning love in Christ, even he will be forgiven! I then felt that if Palmer could be forgiven, so might I. I sought and, blessed be God, I found! I am pardoned, I am free! I am a sinner saved by Grace! Though a murderer, I have not yet sinned ‘beyond the uttermost,’ blessed be His holy name!” It made me very happy to think that a poor condemned murderer could thus be converted. Surely there is hope for every hearer and reader of this sermon, however guilty he may be!

If you know Christ, tell others about Him. You do not know what good there is in making Jesus known, even though all you can do is to give a tract, or repeat a verse. Dr. Valpy, the author of a great many class books, wrote the following simple lines as his confession of faith—

***“In peace let me resign my breath,
And Your salvation see.
My sins deserve eternal death,
But Jesus died for me.”***

Valpy is dead and gone, but he gave those lines to dear old Dr. Marsh, the Rector of Beckenham, who put them over his study mantel. The Earl of Roden came in and read them. “Will you give me a copy of those lines?” said the good earl. “I shall be glad,” said Dr. Marsh, and he copied them. Lord Roden took them home and put them over his mantel. General Taylor, a Waterloo hero, came into the room and noticed them. He read them over and over again, while staying with Earl Roden, till his Lordship remarked, “I say, friend Taylor, I should think you know those lines by heart.” He answered, “I do know them by heart. Indeed, my very heart has grasped their meaning.” He was brought to Christ by that humble rhyme!

General Taylor handed those lines to an officer in the army who was going out to the Crimean War. He came home to die. And when Dr. Marsh went to see him, the poor soul, in his weakness said, “Good Sir, do you know this verse which General Taylor gave to me? It brought me to my Savior, and I die in peace.” To Dr. Marsh’s, surprise, he repeated the lines—

***“In peace let me resign my breath,
And Your salvation see.
My sins deserve eternal death,
But Jesus died for me.”***

Only think of the good which four simple lines may do! Be encouraged, all of you who know the healing power of the wounds of Jesus! Spread this Truth of God by all means. Never mind how simple the language. Proclaim it! Proclaim it everywhere and in every way—even if you cannot do it in any other way than by copying a verse out of a hymnbook! Proclaim that by the stripes of Jesus we are healed! May God bless you, dear Friends! Pray for me that this sermon of mine, which is numbered, TWO-THOUSAND, may be a very fruitful one.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — *Isaiah 53.*
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 287, 534, 537.**

END OF VOLUME 33

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

CHRISTOPATHY

NO. 2499

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 10, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 30, 1885.**

***“With His stripes we are healed.”
Isaiah 53:5.***

Brothers and Sisters, whenever we come to talk about the passion of our Lord—and that subject is clearly brought before us, here, by the two words, “His stripes”—our feelings should be deeply solemn and our attention intensely earnest. Take off your shoes when you draw near to this burning bush, for God is in it! If ever the spirit should be deeply penitential and yet humbly confident, it ought to be when we hear the lash falling upon the Divine and human Person of our blessed Master and see Him wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.

Stand still, then, and see your Lord and Master fastened to the Roman column and cruelly scourged! Hear the terrible strokes. Mark the bleeding wounds and see how He becomes a mass of pain even as to His blessed body! Then note how His soul, also, is flagellated. Hark how the whips fall upon His spirit till His inmost heart is wounded with the tortures, all but unbearable, which He endures for us! I charge my own heart to meditate upon this solemn theme without a single wandering thought—and I pray that you and I may be able to think together upon the matchless sufferings of Incarnate Love until our hearts melt within us in grateful love to Him.

Remember, Brothers and Sisters, that we were practically there when Jesus suffered those terrible stripes—

***“Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were!
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear.”***

We certainly had a share in His sorrows. Oh, that we were equally certain that “with His stripes we are *healed*.” You smote Him, dear Friend, and you wounded Him—therefore do not rest until you can say, “with His stripes I am healed.” We must have a personal interest in this suffering One if we are to be healed by His stripes. We must lay our own hands upon this great Sacrifice and so accept it as being made on our behalf, for it would be a wretched thing to know that Christ was stricken, but *not* to know that, “with His stripes we are healed.” I would to God that no one should go out from this service without being able to say to himself as he retired, “Yes, blessed be His name, ‘with His stripes I am healed.’” The disease of sin is put away by the sacred balsam which drops from the side of the Crucified. From that mortal disease which otherwise would surely have destroyed me, I am restored by His sufferings, His

grief, His death.” And then, all together, may we be able to say, “with His stripes we are healed.”

I. Observe, dear Friends, first of all, that GOD HERE TREATS SIN AS A DISEASE.

There would be no need to talk about *healing* if sin had not been regarded by God as a *disease*. It is a great deal more than a disease—it is a willful *crime*—but it is still a disease. It is often very difficult to separate the part in a crime which disease of the mind may have and that portion which is distinctly willful. We need not make this separation ourselves. If we were to do so in order to *excuse* ourselves, that would only be increasing the evil! And if we do it for any other reason, we are so apt to be partial that I am afraid we should ultimately make some kind of excuse for our sin which would not bear the test of the Day of Judgment. It is only because of God’s Sovereignty, His Infinite Grace and His strong resolve to have mercy upon men that, in this instance, He wills to look upon sin as a disease. He does not conceal from Himself, or from us, that it is a great and grievous fault. He calls it a trespass, a transgression, iniquity and other terms that set forth its true character. Never in Scripture do we find any excuse for sin, or lessening of its heinousness, but in order that He might have mercy upon us and deal graciously with us, the Lord is pleased to regard it as a disease—and then to come and treat us as a physician treats his patients, that He may cure us of the evil.

Sin is a disease, first, because *it is not an essential part of man as he was created*. It is something abnormal. It was not in human nature at the first. “God made man upright.” Our first parent, as he came fresh from the hand of his Maker, was without taint or speck of sin—he had a healthy body inhabited by a healthy soul. There was about him no tendency to evil. He was created pure and perfect—and sin does not enter into the constitution of man, *per se*, as God made it. It is a something which has come into us from outside. Satan came with his temptation and sin entered into us, and death by sin. Therefore, let no man, in any sense whatever, attribute sin to God as the Creator. Let him look upon sin as being a something extraneous to a man, something which ought never to have a *locus standi* within our nature at all, a something that is disturbing and destructive, a poisoned dart that is sticking in our flesh, abiding in our nature—and that has to be extracted by Divine and Sovereign Grace.

And, secondly, sin is like a disease because *it puts all the faculties out of gear* and breaks the equilibrium of the life-forces, just as disease disturbs all our bodily functions. When a man is sick and ill, nothing about him works as it ought to do. There are some particular symptoms which, first of all, betray the existence of the virus of disease, but you cannot injure any one power of the body without the rest being, in their measure, put out of order! Thus has sin come into the soul of man and put him altogether out of gear. Sometimes a certain passion becomes predominant in a person quite out of proportion to the rest of his manhood. Things that might have been right in themselves, grow by indulgence into positive evils, while other things which ought to have had an open existence are suppressed until the suppression becomes a crime. It is sin that

makes us wrong and makes everything about us wrong—and makes us suffer, we know not how much!

The worst of the matter is that we do not, ourselves, readily perceive that we are the evil-doers and we begin, perhaps, to judge others who are right. And because they are not precisely in the same condition as ourselves, we make our sinful selves to be the standard of equity and consider that *they* are wrong, when all the while the evil is in ourselves! As long as a man is under the power of sin, his soul is under the power of a disease which has disturbed all his faculties and taken away the correct action from every part of his being. Hence, God sees sin to be a disease, and we ought to thank Him that, in His gracious condescension, He deals with it in that way, instead of calling it what it really is—a crime deserving instant punishment.

Further, my Friends, sin is a disease because *it weakens the moral energy*, just as many diseases weaken the sick person's body. A man under the influence of some particular disease becomes quite incapacitated for his ordinary work. There was a time when he was strong and athletic, but disease has entered his system and so his nerves have lost their former force and he, who would be the helper of others, becomes impotent and needs to be waited upon, himself. How often is a strong man brought down to utter helplessness! He who used to run like a hare must now be led out if he is to breathe the fresh air of Heaven. He who once could cut with the axe, or pound with the hammer, must now be lifted and carried like a child. You all know how greatly the body is weakened by disease—and just so is it with sin and the spirit. Sin takes away from the soul all power. Does not the Apostle speak of us as being, "without strength" when, "in due time Christ died for the ungodly"? The man has not the power or the will to believe in Christ, but yet he can believe a lie most readily! And he has no difficulty in cheating himself into self-conceit. The man has not the strength to quit his sin, though he has power to pursue it with yet greater energy! He is weak in the knees so that he cannot pray. He is weak in the eyes so that he cannot see Jesus as his Savior. He is weak in the feet so that he cannot draw near to God. He has withered hands, dumb lips, deaf ears and he is palsied in his whole system!

O Sin, you take away from man the strength he needs with which to make the pilgrimage to Heaven, or to go forth to war in the name of the Lord of Hosts! Sin does all this and yet men love it and will not turn from it to Him who alone can destroy its deadly power.

I know that I am speaking to some who are well aware that sin has thrown their whole nature out of order and taken away all their power to do that which is right. You, my Friend, have come into this place, which is like the pool of Bethesda with its five porches, and you have said in your heart, "Oh, that the Great Physician would come and heal me! I cannot step into the pool of His infinite mercy and love, though I would gladly lie there waiting upon the means of Grace. But I know that I shall find no benefit in the means of Grace unless the Lord, who is the Giver of Grace, shall come to me and say, as He said to the man at the pool, 'Rise, take up your bed, and walk.'" Oh, what an awful mass of disease there is all round us in these streets and in these myriads of houses! Sin

has done for mankind the most dreadful deeds—it is the direst of all calamities, the worst of all infections!

And, further, sin is like a disease because it either causes great pain, or *deadens all sensibility*, as the case may be. I do not know which one I might rather choose, whether to be so diseased as to be full of pain, or to be suddenly smitten by a paralytic stroke, so as not to be able to feel at all. In *spiritual* things, the latter is the worse of the two evils! There are some sinners who appear to feel nothing. They sin, but their conscience does not accuse them concerning it. They purpose to go yet further into sin—and they reject Christ and turn aside from Him even when the Spirit of God is striving with them—for they are insensible to the wrong they are doing. They do not feel. They cannot feel. And, alas, they do not even want to feel—they are callous and obdurate and, as the Apostle says—“past feeling.” When they read or hear of the Judgment to come, they do not tremble. When they are told about the love of Christ, they do not yield to Him. They can hear about His suffering and remain altogether unmoved—they have no fellowship with His suffering and scarcely know what the expression means! Sin is dear to them, even though it slew the Lord of Glory, Himself! This paralysis, this deadening of the powers is a very terrible phase of the disease of sin.

In some others, sin causes constant misery. I do not mean that godly sorrow which leads to *penitence*, for sin never brings its own repentance, but by way of remorse, or of ungratified desire, or restlessness such as is natural to men who try to fill their immortal spirits with the empty joys of this poor world. Are there not many who, if they had all they have ever wished for, would still wish for more? If they could, at this moment, gratify every desire they have, they would but be as men who drink of the brine of the sea—whose thirst is not thereby quenched, but only increased! Oh, believe me, you will never be content with the pleasures of this world if your mind is at all awakened concerning your state in the sight of God! If you are given over to spiritual paralysis, you may be without feeling, and that is a deadly sign, indeed. But if there is any sort of spiritual life within you, the more you sin the more uneasy you will become. There is no way of peace by plunging more deeply into sin, as some think they will do—drowning dull care in the flowing bowl, or endeavoring to show their hardihood by rushing into still viler forms of lust in order that they may, somehow or other, be satisfied and content. No, this disease breeds a hunger which increases as you feed it! It engenders a thirst which becomes the more intense the more you try to satisfy it!

Sin is also like a disease because *it frequently produces a manifest pollution*. All disease in the body pollutes it in some way or other. Turn the microscope upon the affected part and you will soon discover that there is something obnoxious there! But sin in the soul pollutes terribly in the sight of God. There are quiet, respectable sins which men can conceal from their fellow creatures so that they can keep their place in society and seem to be all that they ought to be. But there are other sins which, like the leprosy of old, are white upon their brows! There are sins that are to be seen in the outward appearance of the man—his speech betrays him—his walk and conversation indicate what is going on within his heart. It is a dreadful thing for the sinner to remember that he is a pol-

luted being—until he is washed in Christ’s precious blood, he is a being with whom God can have no sort of communion! Men have to put infected persons away from the society of other people. Under the Jewish Law, when men were in a certain stage of disease, they had to be isolated altogether from their fellow men and certainly could not come into the House of the Lord. O my Hearers, there are some of you, who, if your bodies were as diseased as your souls are, would not dare to show your faces in the streets! And some of us who have been washed in the blood of Jesus have felt ourselves to be so foul, so vile, so filthy, that if we could have ceased to exist, we would have welcomed annihilation as a gift!

I remember the time when, under a sense of sin, I was afraid to pray. I did groan out a prayer of a sort, but I felt as if the very earth must be weary of bearing up such a sinner—and that the stars in their courses must be anxious to shoot ominous fires upon the one who was so defiled! Perhaps some of you have felt as I did and now you join me in saying, “But we are washed! But we are sanctified! But we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God!” The disease that was upon us was worse than the foulest leprosy, more infectious than the most terrible fever—causing greater deformity than the dropsy and working in us worse ills than the most foul disease that can ever fall upon the bodies of men! I would to God that men did but see that although the picture I have tried to draw is terrible, indeed, yet it is most gracious *on God’s part* to treat them as diseased persons needing to be cured, rather than as criminals waiting to be executed!

Once more, sin is like disease because *it tends to increase in the man and will, one day, prove fatal to him*. You cannot say to a disease, “To here shall you come, but no further.” There are some diseases that seem to come very gradually, but they come very surely. There is the hectic flush, the trying cough, the painful breathing—and we begin to feel that consumption is coming. And very soon—terribly soon to those who love them—those who were once hale and hearty, to all appearance, become like walking skeletons, for the fell disease has laid its cruel hand upon them and will not let them go. So, my Friend, as long as sin is in you, you need not deceive yourself and think you can get rid of it when you will, for you cannot. It must be driven out by a higher Power than your own—this disease must be cured by the Great Physician or else it will keep on increasing until, at last, you die! Sin will grow upon you till, “when it is finished, it brings forth death.” God grant that before that awful ending is reached, the Lord Jesus Christ may come and cure you, so that you may be able to say, “With His stripes we are healed.”

Sin is a contagious disease which passes from one to another. It is hereditary. It is universal. It is incurable. It is a mortal malady. It is a disease which no human physician can heal. Death, which ends all bodily pain, cannot cure this disease—it displays its utmost power in *eternity*, after the seal of perpetuity has been set upon it by the mandate—“He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.” It is, in fact, such a disease that you were born with it and you will bear it with you forever and ever, unless this wondrous prescription, of which we are now to speak, shall be ac-

cepted by you and shall work in you the Divine good pleasure, so that you shall be able to say, "With His stripes we are healed."

II. Now, secondly, we see from our text that GOD HERE DECLARES THE REMEDY WHICH HE HAS PROVIDED. Jesus Christ, His dear Son, has taken upon Himself our nature and suffered on the Cross in our place—and God the Father has delivered Him up for us all—that we might be able to say, "With His stripes we are healed."

First, dear Friends, *behold the heavenly medicine*—the stripes of Jesus in body and in soul! Picture Him before your mind's eyes. He is scourged by the rough Roman soldiers till the sacred stream rolls down His back in a crimson tide. And He is scourged within as well as outside till He cries, in utmost agony, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He is fastened to the cruel Cross—His hands and feet and brow are all bleeding and His inmost soul is poured out even unto death—whatever that wonderful expression may mean. He bears the sin of many, the chastisement of their peace is upon Him. He is bruised for their iniquities and wounded for their transgressions. If you would be healed of sin's sickness, here is the Medicine! Is it not amazing surgery? Surgeons usually give us pain while trying to cure us, but here is a Physician who bears the pain, Himself, and thereby heals us! Here is no medicine for us to take, for it has all been taken by Him! He suffers, He groans, He dies—and it is by His grief and agonies that we are healed!

Then, next, *remember that the sufferings of Christ were vicarious*. He stood in our place that we might stand in His place. He took our sin upon Himself and, being found with that sin upon Him, He was made to bear the penalty that was due to it. And He did bear it—and this is the way whereby we are healed—by Jesus Christ, Himself, taking our infirmities and bearing our sicknesses. This Doctrine of Substitution is the grandest of all Truths of God and though all these years I have continued to preach nothing else but this, what better news can I tell a poor sinner than that the Savior has taken his sins and borne his sorrows for him? Take away the Doctrine of the Substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ and you have torn out the very heart of the Gospel! "The blood is the life thereof" and you have no living Gospel to preach if Atonement by blood is once put into the background! But, O poor Soul, if you believe that Jesus is the Christ and that Christ took your sins and bore them in His own body on the tree where He died, "the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God," you are saved, and saved forever!

This is how it is that "with His stripes we are healed." *Accept this Atonement and you are saved by it*. Does someone enquire, "How am I to get this Atonement applied to my soul?" Well, first, the patient shows his wounds and exhibits the progress of the disease. Then, prayer begs for the Divine surgery. Next, belief in Christ is the linen cloth which binds on the plaster. If you believe on Jesus Christ—if you will accept the testimony of God concerning His Son whom He has set forth to be the Propitiation for sin—and rely upon Him, alone, for salvation, you shall be saved! Faith, that is, *trust*, is the hand that brings the plaster to the wound and holds it there till the blessed balsam has destroyed the venom that is within us. Trust yourself with Him who died for you, and you are saved! And, continuing to trust Him, you shall daily feel the

power of His expiation, the marvelous healing that comes by His stripes! Repentance is the first symptom of that healing. When the proud flesh begins to yield. When the wretched gathering commences to break and the soul that was formerly swollen through trying to conceal its sin bursts with confession and acknowledgment of its transgression, then is it being healed by the stripes of Jesus! This is God's wondrous remedy for the soul-sickness of sin!

But let me beg you to notice that *you must let nothing of your own interfere with this Divine remedy*—"With His stripes we are healed." You see where prayer comes in—it does not heal, but it asks for the remedy. You see where trust comes in—it is not trust that heals—that is man's application of the great remedy. You see where repentance comes in—that is not what cures, it is a part of the cure, one of the first tokens that the blessed medicine has begun to work in the soul. "With *His stripes* we are healed." Will you notice that fact? The healing of a sinner does not lie in himself, nor in what he is, nor in what he feels, nor in what he does, nor in what he vows, nor in what he promises. It is not in himself at all, but there, at Gabbatha, where the pavement is stained with the blood of the Son of God, and there, at Golgotha, where the place of a skull beholds the agonies of Christ. It is in His stripes that the healing lies! I beseech you, do not scourge yourself—"With *His stripes* we are healed." I beg you, do not think that by some kind of spiritual mortification, or terror, or horror, into which you are to force yourself, you shall be healed—your healing is in *His stripes*, not in your own! In His grief, not in your grief. Come to Christ and even if you are tempted to trust in your repentance, I implore you, do not make your repentance a rival of the stripes of Jesus, for so it would become an antichrist!

When your eyes are full of tears, look through them to Christ on the Cross, for it is not wet eyes that will save you, but the Christ whom you may see, whether your eyes are wet or dry. In the Christ upon the Cross there are five wounds, but you have not to add even another one of your own to them! In Him and in Him, alone, is all your healing! In Him who, from head to foot, becomes a mass of suffering, that you, diseased from head to foot, might, from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet be made perfectly whole!

III. Now I must close with the third reflection, which is this—THE DIVINE REMEDY IS IMMEDIATELY EFFECTIVE. "With His stripes we are healed."

To the carnal mind it does not seem as if the sufferings of Christ could touch the case at all, but those who have believed in the stripes of Jesus are witnesses to the instant and perfect efficacy of the medicine. We can, many of us, speak from experience, since we can say that "we are healed." HOW are we healed?

Well, first, *our conscience is healed of every smart*. God is satisfied with Christ and so are we. If, for Christ's sake, He has put away sin without dishonor to Himself, then are we, also, perfectly content and full of rejoicing in the Atonement and we need nothing else to keep our conscience quiet.

By these same wounds of Christ *our heart is healed of its love of sin*. It was once in love with sin, but now it hates all iniquity. If our Redeemer

died because of our sin, how can we live any longer therein? All our past thoughts concerning sin are turned upside down or reversed. Sin once gave us pleasure, but now it gives us the utmost pain and we desire to be free from it, and to be perfectly holy—there is no evil that we would harbor in our bosoms. It did seem an amazing thing that we should look to Christ and so find pardon and that at that same moment we should be totally changed in our nature as to our view of sin, yet it did so happen! While sin was on us, we felt as if we had no hope and, therefore, we went on in sin. But when sin was pardoned, then we felt great joy and, consequently, gratitude and love to God. A sinner repents of his sins much more after they are pardoned than he does before, and so he sings—

***“I know they are forgiven,
But still their pain to me
Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on Thee.”***

Our cry is, “Death to sin, now that Christ has died for sin!” “If the One died for all, then the all died” and, as in Christ we died to sin, how shall we live any longer therein? You may preach mere morality till there shall be no morality left—but preach the Atoning Sacrifice of Christ and the pardoning love of the Father—and then the immoral will be changed and follow after holiness with a greater eagerness than ever possessed them while they followed after sin!

By this Divine remedy *our life is healed of its rebellion*. This medicine has worked within the heart and it has also worked outside in the life. Now has the drunk become sober and he hates the cup he used to love. Now has the swearer’s foul mouth been washed and his lips, once so polluted, are like lilies dropping sweet, smelling myrrh. Now has the cruel and unkind one become tender, gentle and loving—the false has become true, the proud bends his neck in humility, the idle has become a diligent servant of Christ! The transformation is wonderful and this is the secret, “With His stripes we are healed.”

Yet again, *our consciousness assures us that we are healed*. We know that we are healed and we rejoice in the fact—and we are not to be argued out of it. There seems to be a theory, held by some people, to the effect that we cannot tell whether we are saved or not. When we have had a disease in our body, we can tell whether we have been healed or not, and the marks and evidences of the supernatural change that takes place within the spirit are as apparent, as a usual rule, and certainly as positive and sure as the changes worked in the body by healing medicine! We know that we are healed. I am not talking to you of a thing which I do not know *personally* for myself. When the text says, “We,” my heart says, “I,” and I am longing that everybody here should be able to put his own seal to it and say, “That is true! With His stripes we are healed! With His stripes we are healed! With His stripes we *are* healed!” I will not go into the stories of some who are here—stories that I know of the marvelous change that Grace has made in your characters and lives—but you can bear witness, as can all the saints in Heaven, that, “with His stripes we are healed.”

My last word is, if you are healed by His stripes, you should go and live like healthy men. When a man is healed of disease, he does not con-

tinue to lie in bed! So, dear Friends, do not any of you be lazy Christians! When a man is healed, he does not sit down and groan about the disease that is gone. So do not any of you be continually groaning and croaking and sighing. When a man is healed, he likes to go and tell about the remedy to others. So, dear Friends, do not keep to yourselves the news of this blessed heavenly balsam, but go and tell the tidings everywhere, "With His stripes we are healed." When a man is healed, he is joyful and begins to sing with gladness. So, go and sing, and praise and bless the Lord all your days!

When Christ heals, you know, people do not get the sickness again. His cures are cures for life—and cures for eternity! If the devil goes out of a man of his own accord, he always comes back and brings seven others with him. But if Christ turns him out, I guarantee you that he will never be allowed to come back! When the strong Man armed has dislodged the devil, He keeps the house that He has won and takes good care that neither by the front door nor by the back, shall the old enemy ever come back again! Having by His own right hand and His holy arm gotten the victory, He challenges the foeman to take back his spoil, crying, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?" No, that shall never be! So you may go on your way rejoicing and sing as you go, "With His stripes we are healed."

This is not a temporary remedy—it is a medicine which, when it once gets into the soul, breeds therein health that shall make that soul perfectly whole, so that at last, among the holy ones before the Throne of God on high, that man shall sing with all his fellows—"With His stripes we are healed." Glory be to the bleeding Christ! All honor, majesty, dominion and praise be unto Him forever and ever!" And let all the healed ones say, "Amen, and Amen."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ISAIAH 53.

We will read, this evening, the 53rd Chapter of "the Gospel according to Isaiah," as we may very properly call it.

Verse 1. *Who has believed our report?* All the Prophets reported that which had been revealed to them concerning Christ. They testified what they knew with regard to Jesus of Nazareth, the suffering Savior. Yet how few, comparatively, of the Jewish people—how few, indeed, of *any* people, compared with the great mass of mankind—accepted their testimony and believed their report? No blessing can come through that report if it is not believed. And this is the sorrow of the Lord's servants in every age—that so many refuse to believe it. "Who has believed our report?"

1. *And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?* For God's power both produces and accompanies faith. No man believes in Christ except as the arm of the Lord is revealed, or made bare, so as to work faith in him. This is the great grief of God's ministers, today, that so often we have to go back to our homes and cry, "Who has believed our report?" It is not a doubtful report, it is not an incredible message, it is not a matter of indifference to our Hearers. It is an all-important declaration—the accuracy of which is guaranteed by the God of Truth—yet who has believed it? Oh,

that the arm of the Lord were made bare in the hearts of multitudes of men! What was the reason of this unbelief in the case of the Jews to whom the Prophet spoke, and of those to whom the Messiah, afterwards, came? It was the lowly estate of Christ that caused them to stumble! They asked, in contempt, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" They looked for external pomp and martial prowess, so they could not perceive the internal beauty and majestic holiness of the Lord Jesus.

2. *For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.* Christ has both form and comeliness to the *spiritual* eye. But to the carnal, He seems only like ordinary men, except that His visage is more marred than that of other men and His form than that of any of the sons of men. "He has no form nor comeliness." The ungodly look for something that can excite their admiration, or create mirth for them, but they see nothing of this in the Christ of God. But little can we blame them, for, not very long ago, many of us were, ourselves, just as blind as they now are! Do you not feel, Beloved, that you can smite upon your breasts with deepest regret for the length of time in which you were blind to the beauties of your Redeemer? Alas, that the Prophet's words were always true of us, "When we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him."

3. *He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised and we esteemed Him not.* It was not only Christ's humiliation, but His sorrow which became a stumbling-block in the way of the unbelieving Jews. How could they, who were looking for an earthly deliverer to come in regal splendor, believe in a weeping Messiah? How could they delight in Him from whom men hid their faces when they were expecting a mighty leader before whom all would submit themselves? Ah, Friends, there was a time when we did not esteem the Lord, when we despised Him! We also cared not for the Man of Sorrows! Though all His sorrows were borne on our account, we passed Him by with utter indifference. O wretched Heart! Well might I wish to tear you from my bosom as I think that you should have been callous to your Lord, the Well-Beloved! It was a death, indeed, which you did call life, when you did live without your Lord—"We hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised and we esteemed Him not."

4. *Surely He has borne our grief and carried our sorrows.* What a discovery this Truth of God seems to be! How it bursts upon the Prophet and his hearers and amazes them! "Surely," they say, "can it be really so, that, 'He has borne our grief and carried our sorrows?'" Yes, it is indeed so. There is no accounting for the sufferings of the perfect Christ except by this explanation—that He was bearing our grief and carrying the sorrows that we ought to have carried for our own sin.

4, 5. *Yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.* If this does not teach the Doctrine of a vicarious Atonement, what does it teach? If Christ's sufferings were not endured in our place, what do these words mean?

6. *All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way.* All sinning, but each one sinning in his own particular fashion. It is well to acknowledge the common guilt of all men, but it is the token of true repentance that it dwells mainly on its own special offense. Brothers and Sisters, we have no occasion to find fault with one another, for, “all we, like sheep, have gone astray.” But we have great reason for each of us to find special fault with ourselves, for, “*we have turned, everyone, to his own way.*”

6. *And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.* What a mercy it is that every sort of sin—the sin of the mass, and the sin of the particular sinner—has been laid by Jehovah, Himself, upon His only-begotten Son! “Jehovah has made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all.” Mark you, not merely, “the chastisement” of which the previous verse spoke, but “the *iniquity*,” itself! And, albeit there are some who say that this cannot be—and that iniquity cannot be shifted from one person to another—it has been done! And there is an end of it.

7. *He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth.* The sin laid upon Him was none of His and He might have repudiated it, but He did not. And even when the bitter result of sin came to Him and, “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth.”

7. *He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.* O Friends, what infinite patience is here—patience which endured woes unknown to us, for our Lord’s grief and agonies were deeper than we shall ever be able to fathom! Yet to the end He bore all without a struggle. I went to see a friend, the other day, who has had a great number of sore afflictions, yet I found her singularly cheerful and content. And when I was speaking with her about the matter, she said, “I have for years enjoyed perfect submission to the Divine will, and it was through what I heard you say.” So I asked her, “What did I say?” She replied, “Why, you told us that you had seen a sheep that was in the hands of the shearers and, that although all the wool was clipped off its back, the shears never cut into its flesh. And you said that the reason was because the sheep was lying perfectly still. You said, ‘Lie still, and the shears will not cut you. But if you kick and struggle, you will not only be shorn, for God has resolved to do that, but you will be wounded in the bargain.’” O Beloved, it is a blessed thing to lie still under the shears, so still as not even to bleat! “As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.” May the perfect example of the Lamb of God teach us a holy submissiveness to the will of God!

8. *He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation?* Are there none to speak up for Christ, none to bear testimony to the purity of His life and the sinlessness of His Character?

8. *For He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken.* Oh, dwell on that great Truth of God! The Doctrine of Christ’s Substitution for His people is the brightest star in the galaxy of Revelation! No more cheering light ever falls upon a tearful eye than this, “for the transgression of My people was He stricken.”

9. *And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth.* He died and was buried because He had done no violence. Most men who have perished by judicial sentence have had to die because they *have done violence* and because deceit was in their mouth. But here is One who is found guilty of nothing but excess of *love*—loving sinners so much that He must give His life sooner than that they should perish!

10. *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hands.* Death, in our Lord's case, was the way to the extension of life. He dies that He may see His seed, as He, Himself, said to His disciples, "Except a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit." For Christ, the path to prosperity was by way of adversity. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands because it pleased the Father to bruise Him. And, oftentimes, it shall be with the servant as it was with the Master—it shall please the Lord to bruise you and put you to grief, that in later days the pleasure of the Lord may prosper in your hands.

11. *He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.* This is a clear proof that He shall live and He shall triumph. All His grief shall come to an end and even the death pangs of His soul shall be the travail by which multitudes shall be born unto Him, so that His infinite heart shall be satisfied.

11. *By His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many.* By their knowledge of Him, by their so knowing Him as to trust Him, they shall find justification, and "many" shall find it.

11. *For He shall bear their iniquities.* We are told that the Doctrine of Substitution is a theory by which we explain the fact of Christ's death, but that it is only a theory. It is not so, for it is of the very *essence* of the fact! It is by no means our explanation—it is God's own declaration! "He shall bear their iniquities."

12. *Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great.* That is His Father's gift.

12. *And He shall divide the spoil with the strong.* That is the result of His own conquest.

12. *Because He has poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.* Forever blessed be His dear name! Amen.

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

“With His stripes we are healed.”
Isaiah 53:5.

I RECEIVED, one day this week, a short communication worded on this wise: “Wanted, a cure for a weak and doubting faith, especially when Satan disinclines to pray.” Anxiously desirous to prescribe cures for such maladies, and for any others which may vex the Lord’s people, I began to turn over in my mind what were the sacred remedies for such a case, and I could only remember one, “The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” Our Lord Jesus is to us a Tree of Life, and by the leaves, I suppose, the Holy Spirit means the acts, words, promises, and lesser griefs of Jesus—all of which are for the healing of His people. Then my mind reverted to this kindred text: “With His stripes we are healed.” Not merely His bleeding wounds, but even those blue bruises of His flesh help to heal us. Not alone the work of the nails and the spear, but the cruel handiwork of the rod and the scourge.

Out of all this throng of Believers, there are none quite free from *spiritual* diseases—one may be saying, “Mine is a weak faith.” Another may confess, “Mine is distracted thoughts.” Another may exclaim, “Mine is coldness of love!” And a fourth may have to lament his powerlessness in prayer. One remedy in natural things will not suffice for all diseases, and the moment that the quack begins to cry up his medicine as healing *all*, you shrewdly surmise that it heals *none*. But in *spiritual* things it is not so—there is a catholicon, a universal remedy provided in the Word of God for *all* spiritual sicknesses to which man can be subject to—and that remedy is contained in the few words of my text—“With His stripes we are healed.”

I. I shall invite you, then, first of all, this morning, to consider THE MEDICINE ITSELF WHICH IS HERE PRESCRIBED—the stripes of our Savior. Not stripes laid upon our *own* backs, nor tortures inflicted upon our own minds—but the grief which Jesus has endured for those who trust in Him. By the term “stripes,” no doubt the Prophet understood here, first, literally, those actual stripes which fell upon our Lord’s shoulders when He was beaten by the Jews, and afterwards scourged by the Roman soldiers.

But the words intend far more than this. No doubt with his prophetic eye Isaiah saw the stripes from that unseen scourge held in the Father’s hand which fell not upon the flesh of Jesus, but upon His nobler inner nature when His soul was scourged for sin—when eternal justice was the plow and made deep furrows upon His Soul—when the lash fell with aw-

ful force again and again, and again upon the blessed Soul of Him who was made a curse for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

I take the term, “stripes,” to comprehend all the physical and *spiritual* sufferings of our Lord, with special reference to those chastisements of our peace which preceded, rather than actually caused, His sin-atonement death. It is by these that our souls are healed. “But why?” you ask. First, then, because our Lord, as a Sufferer, was not a private person, but suffered as a public individual, and an appointed Representative. Your sins, in a certain sense, end with yourself. But the sins of Adam could not do so, for Adam stood before God as the representative of the human race—and everything that he did brought its dire effects upon all his descendants.

Now, our Savior is the second Adam, the second federal Head and Representative of men. And all that He did, and all that He suffered goes to the benefit of all those whom He represented. His holy life is the inheritance of His people, and His suffering death, with all its pangs and griefs, belongs to those whom He represented. They did, in effect, suffer in Him and offer in Him a vindication to Divine Justice. Our Lord was appointed of God to stand in the place of His people. A Divine decree had gone forth sanctioning His substitution so that when He stood forward as the Representative of guilty men, God accepted Him, having foreordained Him to that very end.

So then, Beloved, let us never forget that all which Jesus endured came upon Him not at all as a *private* individual, but fell upon Him as the great public Representative of those who believe in Him. Hence the effects of His griefs are applied to *us*, and with His stripes we are healed. His blood, His passions and His death make atonement for us, and deliver us from the curse. And His bruises, smarts, and stripes, make up a matchless medicine to allay our sicknesses—

**“Behold how every wound of His
A precious balm distils,
Which heals the scars that sin had made,
And cures all mortal ills.”**

Be it never forgotten, too, that our Lord was not merely Man, or else His sufferings could not have availed for the multitude who now are healed by them. He was *God* as well as Man and it is the most mysterious and marvelous of all facts that God should be manifest in the flesh, and seen of angels, and that in the flesh the Son of God should most really and certainly *die*, and be buried, and lie for three days in the tomb.

The Incarnation, with its after train of humiliation, is to be believed and accepted as an ever memorable display of condescension! From the highest Throne of Glory to the Cross of deepest woe the Savior stoops—neither cherubim nor seraphim can measure the mighty distance! Imagination wearies its wing in attempting the tremendous flight! In every stripe that falls upon our Emanuel you are to consider that it falls not merely upon a Man, but upon One who is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father! Though the Deity suffered not, yet was it in so intimate a connection with

the Humanity that it infused supernatural power into the human frame and no doubt added wondrous merit to all His bitter human foes.

Oh, what a Rock have we to rest upon—a Substitute covered with stripes—a Substitute appointed and accepted of God—and that Substitute Himself God, over all blessed forever, and therefore able to bear for us what we could never have borne except by lying forever in the lowest pit of Hell! Brethren, we all believe that our Savior's sufferings heal us of the curse by being presented before God as a Substitute for what we owe to His Divine Law. But *healing* is a work that is carried on *within*, and the text rather leads me to speak of the *effect* of the stripes of Christ upon our characters and natures than upon the *result* produced in our position before God.

We know that the Lord has pardoned and justified us through the precious blood of Jesus. But the question this morning is *how* these griefs and pangs help to *deliver* us from the disease of sin which before reigned within us. It was necessary that I should mention, first, the justifying power of Jesus' blood, because apart from our belief in Jesus as a Substitute, and as Divine, there is no power in His example to heal us of sin. Men have studied that example and admired it, but have remained as vile as before! They have criticized His beauty, but have not been enamored of His Person. It is only when they have rested in Him as *Divine* that they have afterwards come to feel the potency of those wondrous cords of love which His example always casts around forgiven spirits.

They have learned to *love* Jesus, and then their admiration has become a practical thing—but mere admiration, apart from love to Him and *faith* in Him—is a cold barren moonlight which ripens no fruit of holiness. Beloved, the stripes of Jesus operate upon our character, principally because we see in Him a perfect Man suffering for offenses that were not His own. We see in Him a glorious Lord, who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor. We behold in Him the paragon of perfect disinterested affection. We see in Him a fidelity never to be excelled, when, through the pangs of death, He followed on to work out the purpose of His heart—the salvation of His people.

And as we look at Him and study His Character as it is revealed by His griefs, we become moved, and the spiritual evils which had rule over us are dethroned—and through the power of the Spirit the image of Jesus Christ is stamped upon our natures. Jesus dying justifies us! Jesus smitten sanctifies us! His cruel flagellations are our refining! His buffetings are blows at our sins! His bruises mortify our lusts!

Thus much, then, upon the *medicine* that heals us—it is the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ as understood in our intellects and beloved in our hearts—and especially those incidents of ignominy and cruelty which surrounded that death with deeper gloom and revealed the patience and love of the Substitute.

II. I shall ask you, now, for a brief moment, to behold THE MATCHLESS CURES WROUGHT BY THIS REMARKABLE MEDICINE. Look at two pictures. Look at man without the stricken Savior. And then behold man

with the Savior, healed by His stripes. I say, look at man originally and apart from the Savior! Naked, he is driven out of Eden's garden, the inheritor of the curse. Within him lies concealed the deadly cancer of sin.

If you would see that evil which dwells in every one of us from our very birth developing itself upon the surface, you might soon behold it in all its horror near at home. A street or two would conduct you to sin's carnival, but perhaps it were better that you should not gaze upon a scene so polluting, in the gambling halls. In the haunts where drunkards congregate—where thieves assemble amidst oaths and blasphemies, and lewd language, and lascivious acts—it is there that sin stalks forth as a full-grown monster.

In the moral and educated natural man, sin apparently sleeps like a coiled up viper. It is a thing, in appearance, little to be dreaded—quiet and powerless as a poor worm. But when man is allowed to have his own way, before long he feels the viper's tooth—the poisoned fang envenoms all his blood and you see the proof of its deadly poison in overt and abundant sin. Men become covered with the visible blotches of iniquity, so that the *spiritual* eye can see in their character the leprosy upon them, and all manner of abominations, worse than the rottenness of the deadliest of fleshly diseases, constantly exuding from their souls.

If we could see sin as it appears to the all-discerning eye of the Eternal, we should be more shocked at the sight of sin than by a vision of Hell—for there is in Hell something which purity approves—the vindication of righteousness. It is Justice triumphant—but in sin, itself, there is abomination, and only abomination! It is a something out of joint with the whole system of the universe! It is a mist dangerous to all spiritual life—a plague—dangerous to everything that breathes. Sin is a monster, a hideous thing, a thing which God will not look upon—and which pure eyes cannot behold but with the utmost detestation.

A flood of tears is the proper medium through which a Christian should look at sin. If you would see what sin can do, you have but to look into your own heart with an illuminated eye. Ah, what mischief lurks there! You hate sin, my Brothers and Sisters, I know you do, since Christ has visited you with the day spring from on high. But with all your hatred of sin you must acknowledge that it still lurks within you! You find yourself envious, you who hate envy! You find yourself thinking hard thoughts of God, you who yet love Him and would lay down your lives for Him! You find yourself provoked to anger on a sudden against the very Friend to whose call you would cheerfully yield your all!

Yes, we do the thing we would not through the power of sin. And sin degrades and debases us—we cannot look within without being shocked at the meanness to which our mind, in secret, descends. If you anxiously desire to see sin at the full, come here and gaze down the fathomless abyss. Listen to those blasphemous curses! If you have the courage, hearken to those mingled cries of misery and passion which come up from Tophet, from the abodes of lost spirits! Sin is ripe there—*here* it is green. Here we see its darkness as the shades of evening, but *there* it is tenfold

night! Here it scatters firebrands, but there its quenchless conflagrations flame on forever and ever!

Oh, if we have but Divine Grace to be rid of sin, now, the riddance will save us from the wrath to come! Sin, indeed, is Hell—Hell in embryo, Hell in essence, Hell kindling, Hell emerging from the shell—Hell is but sin when it has manifested and developed itself to the fullest. Stand at the gates of Tophet and understand how full the disease for which Heaven's remedy is provided in the stripes of the Only-Begotten!

Now, Beloved, I said I would show you the cure, and I have but feebly talked of the disease, itself, to let you see the greatness of the change by contrast. Observe, Beloved, you who have believed in Jesus, observe already what a change the stripes of Christ have made in you! Since the dear hour that brought you to His feet, what different men have you been! Indeed, in your case, instead of the thorn, the fir tree has come up! And instead of the brier, the myrtle tree has come up. You who were once the blind slaves of Satan are now the rejoicing children of God. The things which you once loved, though God abhorred them, you, now, also detest right heartily.

God's mind and yours are now agreed as to darkness and light. You no longer put the one for the other. How changed you are! You are a new creature alive from the dead. And what has done it? What, indeed, but faith in the Crucified and contemplation of His wounds? Yet in you, dear Friend, the healing is very far from being perfect. If you would behold *perfect* spiritual health, look yonder to those white-robed hosts who jubilantly stand without fault before the Throne of God! Search them through and through, and they are undefiled. Let even the all-seeing eyes of God rest upon them, and they are without spot or wrinkle or any such thing!

How is this? Where washed they these snow-white garments once so much defiled? They answer, with joyful music, "We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Ask them from where their victory came over indwelling sin—

***"They with united breath
Ascribe their victories to the Lamb
Their conquests to His death."***

They will all tell you that the perfect healing which they have received, and which today they enjoy before the Throne of God, is the result of the Savior's passion. "With His stripes," say the 10,000s times 10,000s, with a voice that is loud as thunder and as sweet as harpers harping with their harps—"With His stripes we are healed."

III. I want now for you to note, dear Brothers and Sisters, in detail, and yet so briefly as not to weary you, THE MALADIES WHICH THIS WON-DROUS MEDICINE REMOVES. I shall not attempt to read you a full list, for they are more than I can count, but they are never so many there is not one which the stripes of Jesus cannot heal!

I would remind you, first, that the great root of all this mischief—the curse which fell on man through Adam's sin—is already effectually removed. Jesus took it upon Himself, and was made a curse for us, and now there can fall no curse upon any of those for whom Jesus died as a Sub-

stitute. They are the blessed of the Lord, yes, and they shall be blessed—let Hell curse them as it may. The curse has spent its fury. Like a thunderstorm which once threatened to sweep all before it, but is now lulled to calm, Divine wrath has passed away and showers of mercy are now following it, making glad the thirsty heart! Brothers and Sisters, Christ has cured us already, most effectually, of the curse of God upon us!

But I am now to speak of diseases which we have felt and bemoaned, and which still trouble the family of God. One of the first which was healed by the stripes of Christ was the mania of despair. Ah, well do I remember when I thought there was no hope for me! How was it possible, my heart asked, that my sins could be forgiven consistently with the justice of God? That question I propounded to my soul again, and again, and again, but no answer could I find from within. And even when I read the Word I perceived not—though it is most clearly there—the answer to that great question.

But, Beloved, when I first understood that Jesus Christ stood in the place of all those that believe in Him, and that, if I trusted Him, my sins were all forgiven because they had been already punished in the Person of my blessed Substitute, then I had no longer occasion for despair! Then I listened to the Word of the Gospel, feeling, “There is hope for me, even for me!” When I understood that there was *nothing* expected from *me* in order to salvation, but that all must come from Jesus—that *I* was not to be wounded, nor to be made to smart—but that *He* had been struck and had been made to bleed on my behalf. When I understood that my life must be found in His death, and my healing in His wounds—then hope sprang up—bright-eyed hope, and my soul turned unto her Father and her God with loving expectations!

Was it not so with you? Beloved, did you ever have a comfortable confidence in God until you had seen the stripes of Jesus? If you are wrapped up in a peace that did not come from Christ’s stripes, I implore you get rid of it, for it is a presumption which will surely destroy you! The only sure, solid, everlasting peace that can ever come to a palpitating human bosom heaving painfully under the pressure of sin is that which springs from looking at that blessed Son of God who on the Cross poured out His life—floods that we might be saved by Him! For the mania of despair the stripes of Christ are the true remedy.

Then if we suffer afterwards from any hardness of heart, and there is a complaint of the soul well-known as the stony heart, there is no obtaining tenderness except by standing long, yes, remaining *always* at the foot of the Cross. When I feel myself insensible to spiritual things (and I blush to say that it is no unusual feeling). When I would, but cannot pray. When I would, but cannot repent. When, “If anything is felt ‘tis only pain to find I cannot feel,” I have always found that I cannot flog myself into feeling by the threats of God, nor by the terrors of the Law. But when I can come to the Cross, just as I did years ago, a poor guilty one, and believe that the Redeemer has put all my sins away, black as I am—and that God neither

can, nor will, condemn me, hardened as I feel myself to be—ah, then the sense of blood-bought pardon soon dissolves a heart of stone!

I do not believe there is anything that can so effectually make the ice within us melt and so speedily thaw the great glaciers of our inner nature as the love of Jesus Christ. Oh, but that will touch you! It will create a soul within the ribs of death! There is a secret spring within the heart upon which the finger of the crucified hand is placed, and the soul arises from its deadly slumbers. Christ has the key of the house of David and He can open the door so that neither man nor devil can shut it. And out of that opened heart shall proceed godly thoughts, heavenly aspirations, sacred passions and Heaven-born resolves. The best cure for indifference will be found in the stripes of Jesus!

See the bloody sweat drops, O Believer, and will you not melt? See Jesus kissed of the traitor, led away with a rabble guard, slandered by deceitful witnesses, tried by cruel adversaries, buffeted by soldiers, defiled with spit—see Him afterwards hounded along the streets of Jerusalem, and then fastened to the transverse beam. Behold Him bleeding out His blessed life for love of us who were His enemies, and if this tragedy does not melt you, what will? O God of Heaven, if we feel no tenderness in the Presence of Your dying Son, of what Hell-hardened steel must our souls be made?

At times Believers are subject to the paralysis of doubt, and as my friend has said just now in his request for a remedy, that paralysis may be attended, also, with a stiffness of the knees of prayer. And when these two complaints go together we suffer under a complicated disease for which it is not easy to prescribe. And yet it is easy for the Lord to do so! See here the remedy—“With His stripes we are healed.” The blood of Christ is a deadly thing to unbelief. A sight of the Crucified strikes Unbelief dumb, so that it cannot mutter a single questioning word, while Faith begins to sing and to rejoice as she sees what Jesus did, and how Jesus died!

Who could not pray as he sees Jesus’ blood upon the Mercy Seat? Who could not pray when considering the new and living way which Christ has opened by His blood? A view of the veil of the Savior’s body torn by His death, will, if anything, induce men to pray. I think I could use arguments which might be blessed to drive men to their knees, such as the danger of a prayerless spirit. Such as the enriching influence of the Mercy Seat. Such as the delights of communion with God and many other things, but after all, if the *Cross* does not draw a man to his knees, nothing will. And if a contemplation of the sufferings of Jesus does not constrain us to draw very near to God in prayer, surely the chief remedy, itself, has failed. There are some saints who have numbness of soul—the stripes of Christ can best quicken them—deadness dies in the Presence of His death and rocks break when the Rock of Ages is seen as split for us—

***“Who can think, without admiring?
Who can hear, and nothing feel?
See the Lord of Life expiring,
Yet retain a heart of steel?”***

Many are subject to the fever of pride, but a sight of Jesus in His humiliation, contradicted of sinners, will tend to make them humble. Pride drops her plumes when she hears the cry, "Behold the Man!" In the society of One so great, enduring so much scorn, there is no room for vanity. Some are covered with the leprosy of selfishness, but if anything can forbid a man to lead a selfish life it is the life of Jesus, who saved others—Himself He could not save. Misers, and gluttons, and self-seekers love not the Savior, for His whole conduct upbraids them. Upon some the fit of anger often comes. But what can give gentleness of spirit like the sight of Him who was as a lamb dumb before her shearers, and who opened not His mouth under blasphemy and rebuke?

If any of you feel the fretting consumption of worldliness, or the cancer of covetousness—for such rank diseases as these are common in Zion—still the groans and griefs of the Man of Sorrows, the Acquaintance of Grief, will prove a cure. All evils fly before the Lord Jesus, even as the shadows vanish before the sun. Lash us, Master, to Your Cross! No fatal shipwreck shall we fear if fastened there! Bind us with cords to the horns of the Altar! No disease can come there—the Sacrifice purifies the air. Through Hell itself might we go, Savior, all unharmed with its pestilent vapor, if we could but have Your Cross before our eyes!

It were not possible that all the blasphemy of devils and of the vilest of men could pollute our spirits for so much as a moment if Your blood were always sprinkled on the tablets of our hearts, and Your deep humiliation always present in our minds. Forgetfulness of the stripes lands us in disease—but the sweet remembrance of the passion and a blessed absorption in the mystery of the Master's death will surely cast out all evils from us—and keep us from returning to them.

IV. I must now pass on to yet a fourth point. Observe carefully THE CURATIVE PROPERTIES OF THE MEDICINE OF WHICH WE HAVE BEEN SPEAKING. You have heard of some of the diseases in detail as well as the cure on a large scale. Now observe the curative properties of the medicine—for all manner of good this Divine remedy works in our spiritual constitution. The stripes of Jesus, when well considered, arrest spiritual disorder. The man is brought to view his Lord as suffering for him, and a voice says to his rising lusts, "This far shall you come, but no farther. Here at Calvary shall your proud waves be stayed."

My feet had almost gone, my steps had well-near slipped had not my Master's Cross stood before me as a most effectual barrier to stay me in my fall. Many a man has gone post haste onward unchecked by any power until a vision of the Man, the crucified Man, has appeared before his eyes—then he has been brought to a blessed halt. Read the memorable life of Colonel Gardiner, for what happened to him literally has happened to tens of thousands spiritually—they have been enlisted to sin and sold to Satan—but a sight of the Savior slain for sinners has made them pause—and from then on they have no longer dared to offend.

Now, it is a great thing for a physician to find a remedy which will hold the disease within bounds so that it reaches not the direst stage of malig-

nity. And this the Cross of Christ does! It binds in chains the fury of unhallowed passion. What a miraculous power the griefs of Jesus have upon the Believer! Though his corruption is still within him, yet it cannot have dominion over him because he is not under the Law but under Grace. It is a happier fact, still, that sin shall, before long, be utterly abolished. But to stay it, meanwhile, until it is eradicated is no small thing.

This medicine, in the next place, quickens all the powers of the spiritual man to resist the disease. "With His stripes we are healed," because a sight of Jesus Christ quickens our newborn nature. It forbids us to live at the poor, dying rate so natural to our sluggishness. We cannot have Christ before our eyes and yet go slumbering on to Heaven as though spiritual work were but a dream, or mere child's play. He that has really gone into the hall where Christ was scourged and seen the streams of blood as they poured down His furrowed shoulders, and felt that they were all for *him*, has had his spiritual pulse quickened and his whole spiritual life stirred! This fire has helped to burn sin out of its nest. This power within the soul has set up a counter-action and pushed back the advancing powers of iniquity.

The stripes of Jesus Christ also have another curative effect—they restore to the man that which he lost in strength by sin. There is a recuperative power in this sacred medicine. He brings my wandering feet back to the ways which I forsook, and the way back is by the Cross. He restores my soul, and the food He gives me to feed upon is His own flesh and blood. After sin has brought us into sickness, and sickness into weakness, there is no restorative under Heaven that is equal to living in a constant daily sense of the vicarious sufferings of Jesus Christ. His sweet love so clearly shown in His torments at Golgotha encourages us! We feel that with such a Savior always caring for us, we have no need to be alarmed.

This medicine also soothes the agony of conviction. Anguish of heart vanishes when Jesus is seen as bearing the chastisement of our peace. He who gets to Christ's Cross and trusts in Him feels that sin is still present in him, and mourns over it, but yet he rejoices because he understands that Christ has overcome his enemies and led them captive at His chariot wheels. "I shall overcome," he says, and the sharpness of the present struggle is not felt. "My sin is forever put away," he says, for Jesus died, and there is no room for remorse, or terror, or despair. Drink of the spiced wine of atoning love, and remember your misery no more, O you sin-burdened heir of immortality!

But best of all, the stripes of Christ have an *eradicating* power as to sin. They pull it up by the roots. They destroy the beasts in their lair. They put to death the *power* of sin in our members. I know not how near to perfection in this life a Believer may be brought, but God forbid that I should set up some low degree of Divine Grace as being all that a saint can reach this side of the grave! I dare not limit my Master's power as to how far He may subdue sin even in this life in the Believer, but I expect never to be *perfect* till I shuffle off this mortal coil. Yet the grand result is none the less glorious! Absolute perfection is our heritage—we shall be freed from

the least tendency to evil—there will remain in us no more possibilities of sinning than in the Person of our Lord Himself!

We shall be as pure as the thrice holy God Himself! As immaculate as the ever-sinless Savior! And all this will be through our Master's stripes! Sanctification, after all, is by the blood of Christ. The Holy Spirit works it, but the instrumentality is the *blood*. He is the Physician, but the sufferings of Christ are the medicine. Sin is never destroyed except by faith in Jesus. All your meditations upon the evil of sin, and all your shivering at the punishment of it, and all your soul-humbling and prostrations will never kill sin. It is at the Cross that God has set up a mighty gallows upon which He hangs sin forever, and puts it to death! It is there at Golgotha, and *only* there. The great execution ground, the Tyburn of our iniquity, is there where Jesus died.

Wrestling Believer, you must go to your Lord's agonies and learn to be crucified with Him unto sin, otherwise you shall never know the art of mastering your evil passions and being sanctified in the spirit. I have thus tried to open up the healing force which dwells in the stripes of Jesus.

V. Now just a moment or two in the fifth place—I am afraid you will think my divisions are very many and very dry, but still that I cannot help—I want you to review, for a minute, THE MODES OF THE WORKING OF THIS MEDICINE.

How does it work? Briefly, its effect upon the mind is this. The sinner, hearing of the death of the Incarnate God, is led by the force of the Truth of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to believe in the Incarnate God. The cure is already begun. The moment the sinner believes, the axe is laid at the root of the dominion of Satan. He no sooner learns to trust the appointed Savior than his cure has certainly commenced and will shortly be carried on to perfection. After *faith* comes *gratitude*. The sinner says, "I trust in the Incarnate God to save me. I believe He *has* saved me." Well, what is the natural result? The soul being grateful, thankful—how can it help exclaiming—"Blessed be God for this unspeakable gift!" And, "Blessed be His dear Son who so freely laid down His life for me!" It were not *natural* at all. It were something less, even, than humanity, if the sense of such favor did not beget gratitude!

The next emotion is love. Has He done all this for *me*? Am I under such obligations? Then I will love His name. The very next thought to love is *obedience*. What shall I do to please my Redeemer? How can I fulfill His commandments and bring honor to His name? See you not that the sinner is getting healed most rapidly? His disease was that he was altogether out of unison with God, and resisted the Divine Law, but now look at him! With tears in his eyes he is lamenting that he ever offended! He is groaning and grieving that he could have pierced so dear a Friend, and put Him to such sorrows! And he is asking, with love and earnestness, "What can I do to show that I loathe myself for the past, and that I love Jesus for the future?"

Now he goes a step farther and he burns with hatred against the sins which slew the Lord. "Did *my* sins slay Christ? Was it *my* iniquity that

nailed Him to the Cross? Then I will have vengeance upon my sins—there is not one that I will spare. Though it nestle in my bosom, I will tear it out! And if it shall entrench itself so that I cannot drive it forth except by losing an eye or an arm, it shall come forth—for not one of this accursed crew will I harbor within my spirit!” Now the man’s sacred zeal and burning indignation are issuing a search warrant, and he is going through and through his nature to search for sin, crying meanwhile, “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Now, Beloved, do you not see that all the healthy faculties of the new-born nature are by the griefs of Jesus set strongly at work, and even though sin may still remain within, there is a vitality about the new-born nature which will certainly cast out those baser powers, and, by God’s Grace, make the man meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light?

VI. It is scarcely necessary for me to say anymore except to remark, in the sixth place, that this medicine deserves to be commended to all of you, this morning, because of ITS REMARKABLY EASY APPLICATION. I have shown you how it works, and what it cures, and whom it cures.

Now, there are some material medicines which would be curative, but they are so difficult in administration, and attended with so much risk in their operation, that they are rarely, if ever, employed. But the medicine prescribed in the text is very simple in itself, and very simply received—so simple is its reception that, if there is a willing mind here to receive it, it may be received by any of you at this very instant, for God’s Holy Spirit is present to help you. How, then, does a man get the stripes of Christ to heal him?

Why, first he *hears* about them. Now, you have heard often of my Lord’s stripes. Next, faith comes by hearing. That is, the hearer *believes* that Jesus is the Son of God, and he trusts in Him to save his soul. Then, having believed, the next thing is, whenever the power of his faith begins to relax he goes to hearing *again*, or else to what is even better, after once having heard to benefit, he resorts to *contemplation*. He resorts to the Lord’s Table that he may be helped by the outward signs. He reads the Bible that the letter of the Word may refresh his memory as to its spirit. And he often seeks a season of quiet, such as David had when he sat before the Lord, closing his eyes and shutting up his heart to all beside the things of Heaven.

He views Christ groaning in the garden. He pictures Him upon the bloody Cross. He sees Him suffering—and so acquires for himself all the benefit which can be drawn from the stripes of the Crucified. All you have to do, poor Sinner, is simply *trust* and you are healed! And all you have to do, O backsliding Believer, is but to contemplate and to believe again! Beloved, we must let the old image be stamped fresh upon our soul! We must have the picture cleaned, as it were—it has been turned with its front to the wall—turn it round and sit and study it again! Renew your old acquaintance with the sweet Lover of your soul. Return to the love of your

Espousal. Repair to Calvary. Tarry in Gethsemane. Live with Jesus wherever you may be—in retirement, considering, meditating, reflecting upon what He has done for you. This is the simple mode of application.

VII. All I have to say in conclusion, is, since the medicine is so efficacious, since it is already prepared and freely presented, I do beseech you TAKE IT! Take it, Brothers and Sisters, you who have known its power in years gone by! Let not backslidings continue, but come to His stripes again! Take it, you Doubters, lest you sink into despair—come to His stripes again! Take it, you who are beginning to be self-confident and proud! You need this to bring you on your faces, again, in prostration before your Lord!

And, O, you who have never believed in Him! On this morning of clear brightness after the rain, may the Lord give you, also, to come and trust in Him, and you shall live! “Oh,” wrote one to me this week, “I have believed that Jesus died for me, but it does not keep me from sinning in anyway whatever! Our minister says that if we believe that Jesus died for us we shall be saved.” No, no, but that is *not* the Gospel, and such a belief is not faith at all! I do not wonder that a poor creature should have tried such a Gospel and found it fail. Do not these men say that Christ died for *everybody*, and then declare that if you believe He died for you, (which He must of necessity have done if He died for everybody), then that will save you? And yet there are scores and hundreds who are proof to the fact that it does *not* save them—because they can believe this universal redemption and live as they did before!

This is faith, namely to *trust Jesus Christ*. It is the *only* saving faith. You cannot rely on Him and remain unhealed! You cannot take Jesus for your confidence and remain just as you were! There is a potency about Christ, as applied by faith, which *changes the character*, and makes the sinner a *new man* to the praise and glory of God! May my Lord bless you for His own sake. Amen.

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A DIRE DISEASE STRANGELY CURED NO. 2887

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 9, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 28, 1876.

“With His stripes we are healed.”
Isaiah 53:5.

“By whose stripes you were healed.”
1 Peter 2:24.

IT is well for the preacher, every now and then, to go back to the very beginning and once again traverse the whole ground of the Gospel, just as the schoolteacher does when, after his pupils have advanced to some of the higher branches of study, he deems it desirable to make sure that they are well grounded in the very elements of knowledge, for he knows that it is quite possible for him to be doing mischief in leading them on to the higher forms of study unless they are thoroughly familiar with the first principles. So he goes back to the beginning over and over again—and a wise preacher will do likewise. As for myself, it is not at all grievous to speak, in the simplest terms, of Jesus Christ and the plan of salvation and, for you, it is safe as Paul said in writing “the same things” to the Philippians. I have always noticed that those who love Christ best and who know the most about His great salvation are just the very people who delight to hear again and again—

*“The old, old story
Of Jesus and His love.”*

To persons of that sort, the Gospel message never grows stale! It is like that familiar song, “Home, Sweet Home,” which had such a strange influence over our soldiers in the Crimea, only that whereas the playing or singing of that tune brought on such an attack of homesickness that the men who heard it, when far from their native land, were rendered quite unfit for duty! In our case, the familiar story of Jesus and His dying love, and His substitutionary sufferings will never cease to charm our ears and fire our hearts with holy ardor in His blessed service. I am also quite sure that to those who least relish the Gospel and who know the least about it, it is beyond measure important that they should hear it as often as they possibly can—for it may be that one of these days it will find an entrance into their hitherto closed hearts.

Therefore, preacher, ring that bell again and again! It may be that when you rang it before, their ears were stopped up, so that they did not catch its sweet silvery note. So, ring it again, Brother, for it may be that the next time you do so, the Holy Spirit will unstop those ears that have been so long shut to the Gospel—yes, even though the blessed bell has been ringing close to them for 70 years or more and they have grown

gray, or white, without having ever caught the sweetness of its melodious music! So, ring that bell again, Brother! Yes, even if they are dying, let them still hear it, for the dying have, through the mercy of God, at last heard and heeded it and so have begun to hear the harps of angels only a few moments afterwards!

I am going, at least on this occasion, to do what I urge other preachers often to do—that is, keep to the simplicities of the faith, trying to show how the dire disease of sin is strangely cured by the stripes that fell upon our Lord Jesus Christ—for both the Prophet and the Apostle say that we are healed by or with “His stripes”

I. So, I begin by saying THERE IS A DISEASE IMPLIED.

You cannot heal men who are not sick, or wounded. It matters not how matchless the medicine is—even though it is the substitutionary suffering of the Son of God, Himself—if it is to heal, it must heal some malady or other and, Brothers and Sisters, it is quite true that there is a dreadful disease which has attacked the whole human race! You scarcely need that I should tell you that it is the disease of *sin*. It came to this earth when that old serpent, the devil, tempted Mother Eve. Then did this dire disease begin to course through human veins and it has descended to every individual of the whole race and, at this moment, it lurks within each one of us. “Lurks,” did I say? No, it is worse than that, for it has manifested itself—it has displayed its venom and virulence, it has shown itself in the life and, like the leprosy upon the brow of the man suffering from that dreadful disease—it is visible upon us all!

The disease of sin is exceedingly injurious. There are some diseases that affect the heart and sin has turned the heart of man to a stone. There are some other diseases that afflict the eyes and sin has blinded man’s understanding—his mental and spiritual eyesight. There are some diseases that affect the hands and, in our natural condition, we cannot work for God’s Glory, or grasp Gospel blessings because the disease of sin has spiritually withered our hands. We never know at exactly what point the danger from any disease may be the greatest, for it is not always that which appears upon the surface which is most to be dreaded, as there are hidden places in the system which may be seriously affected without giving eternally any indication of the mischief. The Lord desires truth in our inward parts, but sin is the enemy of truth and it is only the Lord who can make us to know wisdom in our hidden parts, for sin has made us foolish, even as Solomon says that “foolishness is bound in the heart of a child.” Sin has injured us in more ways than I can tell. When man fell, it was no slight accident that happened—it was the utter ruin of humanity that occurred! There is something grand, at least in appearance, about humanity, even in its ruined condition, for it is the work of God, but, alas, the bat, the owl and the viper and many other unclean creatures have made human nature to be their foul den. “Lucifer, son of the morning,” is not the only one who has fallen as from Heaven, for this is also true of the whole race of mankind!

You see, then, that this disease of sin is most injurious. There are some diseases that make men quite helpless. We have seen a man who could not do a day’s work even if his very life depended upon it. He could

not lift so much as his hand—and he had to be fed, nursed and cared for by others, for he was paralyzed. And, in a *spiritual* sense, so far as anything in the nature of good works is concerned, sin has paralyzed man altogether. Indeed, it has taken his very *life* away from him so that he is truly said to be “dead in trespasses and sins.”

Sin is also a disease which frequently becomes loathsome. In some men who have had the opportunity of indulging their evil propensities and passions to the utmost, sin has become so loathsome that even their fellow men have had to put them away by themselves. What are our prisons and many of our asylums but moral morgues where we have to shut up leprous men and women lest they should ‘contaminate the whole race.’ I said that sin is a disease which frequently becomes loathsome—I meant loathsome to men—for it is always loathsome to God and to the holy angels. I suppose that the most lascivious ulcer which ever sickened the pitying gaze of a sympathizing onlooker could not be so disgusting to the mind of the most delicate man or woman as the slightest sin is to the mind of God. His righteous soul loathes and abhors it and He says of it, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!”

Frequently, also, sin makes men a source of danger to others. It is really always so, although we do not always know it, for every evil example is contagious, every foul word is infectious and there is something about even the most moral man which it would not be safe for others to copy. Certainly, if he has that dreadful disease of unbelief in his heart, it would be wrong for any other person to imitate him in that respect, whatever excellences may stand side by side with it!

In some cases this disease of sin becomes very painful. I wish it were painful to every unhealed man and woman, for they might then be anxious to be cured of it. And let me tell you that there is no disease to which our flesh is heir that can bring such pain to a man as sin can, when once his conscience is quickened by the Holy Spirit! I think I know, as well as most men, what physical pain means, but I would sooner lie bedridden, suffering all the pains that could be crowded into a human body and lie like that for 70 years than endure the tortures of a guilty conscience, or the pangs of a soul under sentence of condemnation! I know that when I was under conviction of sin, I could sympathize with Job when he said, “My soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life.” It is a terrible thing to see yourself as in a mirror with all your wounds bleeding and to feel that you must say, “They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.” It is a truly awful experience to see a devil in each wound and to realize that you are, yourself, the worst of devils—and to hear the curse of God, like distant thunder, rumbling far away, yet constantly coming nearer and nearer—and to live in dread of the storm of everlasting wrath beating upon your unprotected head! Yes, the disease of sin is painful to the last degree to men whose consciences are not “seared with a hot iron.”

Worst of all, this disease causes death. There is no human being in whom sin has not already caused spiritual death—and no one in whom it will not cause eternal death unless God, in His Almighty Grace, shall prevent it. “The soul that sins, it shall die,” is a declaration that is only

too terribly true! What that death will be, I shall not, at this time, attempt to show, but such words as these, coming from the lips of Christ, may tell you—"These shall go away into everlasting punishment," "into the fire that shall never be quenched; where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." May none of you ever have to endure that death which never dies—that dread eternal death of which the Lord of Life so positively speaks! Yet, as surely as God lives, you will experience even that dread doom unless this mortal malady is healed!

II. Now, turning from the disease, let me point out to you THE MEDICINE MENTIONED IN THE TEXT—"With His stripes we are healed."

Brothers and Sisters, you know right well that the medicine here meant is the substitutionary suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ on His people's behalf. I cannot imagine how anyone can read the chapter from which our first text is taken without seeing that "the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all," "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." This is strange medicine—that the wounds of Jesus should heal the wounds which sin has made—that the wounds upon His back and shoulders where the cruel scourge struck Him, should, by their blueness, bring spiritual healing to us—yet so it is. And this is the *only* remedy for the malady of sin. There have been many remedies recommended by various quacks—some have come with their so-called "sacraments." Some with their ceremonies, some with their philosophies—but they are all quacks and their medicines have no healing power! The only cure for the wounds of sin is to be found in the stripes of Jesus!

Let me put this point very plainly before you. Jesus Christ stood in the place of the sinner and bore—that the sinner might not have to bear—the righteous anger of God because of the sinner's guilt. They who say that we represent God as being angry and only to be appeased by the sufferings of His Son, know that they altogether misrepresent the Truth of God that we believe. What we say is that the Infinitely Holy God could not righteously have pardoned sin without having first vindicated His Justice and the majesty of His Law. I do not think that the enlightened conscience of man could ever have been contented without an atoning sacrifice. There is a necessity, not only with God, but also with us, for a sacrifice for sin—we must have it, or else our conscience cannot rest. This was the question I used to ask when I was in the depths of soul trouble—"How can God be just and yet forgive my sin?" I wanted Him to forgive me, but I did not want Him to do it unjustly, for, if I could have obtained the forgiveness of my sin at the expense of His Justice, I do not think that such forgiveness could ever have appeared to me to be consistent with the Character of God!

It was only when I understood that God could be both just and the Justifier of all who believe in Jesus that my soul rolled herself upon that blessed Truth of God and enjoyed such a luxury of rest as she had never even dreamt of before! Yes, God is infinitely just! His Justice is as stern as if it had never been blended with His Grace, yet He is as merciful and gracious as if justice had never been one of His attributes! This wonderful blending is gloriously manifested in the Atonement of Jesus Christ,

where, mark you, God Himself—for Christ is God, as He says, “I and My Father are One”—God, Himself, the righteous Judge, becomes the innocent Sufferer, standing in the culprit’s place and sheathing in His own heart the gleaming blade that must, otherwise, have been bathed in human blood! O Sirs, it is what Jesus bore that will heal you—what Jesus bore when He stood in the place of sinners and offered to Infinite and inflexible Justice a full recompense for the crime, guilt, sin and transgression of all who believe in Him!

Look away from your sin to the great Sin-Bearer! We will not trace Him through all His sufferings, but begin with the “stripes” He endured in the Garden of Gethsemane. Can you bear to look upon that terrible agony, to hear His piercing cries and to see His copious tears? Above all, can you bear to look upon His bloody sweat? His three favored disciples could not, for, “He found them sleeping for sorrow.” Can you bear to look upon Him as the rough men, guided by Judas, the traitor, seize Him and lead Him away to the various halls of judgment and charge Him with sedition and blasphemy? Can you endure to see Him forsaken by every friend He had and denied by that impetuous follower who had said, not, long before, “Though I should die with You, yet will I not deny You”? Can you bear to see Him surrounded by the brutal Roman soldiers—maltreated, mocked and spit upon by the unfeeling mob of railing legionaries? Can you bear to gaze upon His crown of thorns? Can you bear to listen to the blows from that awful scourge as they fall in quick succession upon His blessed back and shoulders?

I must not go on to tell the sad, sad story at full length—it is too sorrowful to relate—but you know how, at last, they fastened Him to the tree of the curse, then lifted Him up upon the Cross, dislocating all His bones as they dashed it into the socket in the earth which they had prepared to hold it. You have read of the fever which came upon Him till His mouth was dried up like an oven and His tongue clung to the roof of His mouth. Yet, after terrible as all this was, it was only the shell, the externals of His bodily suffering! The suffering of His soul was the very soul of His suffering. It was by the smiting of His body and the more terrible smiting of His soul—the suffering of His entire Manhood in unison with His Godhead—that He took away the sin of His people and opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers!

Let me urge all of you who are diseased through sin to go for healing to those blessed wounds of Jesus! Long ago I learned the secret of this wondrous way of healing and, now, whenever my wounds bleed afresh, I go again to the—

**“Fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins”—**

for it is “with His stripes” that I am healed.

III. Now, thirdly, I want to say a little about THE HEALING HERE MENTIONED.

Our second text speaks of it as a thing that was done in the past—“By whose stripes you *were* healed,” so I would like you, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, to remember when you were healed years ago. Do you recollect the place where Jesus met with you? I remember, to a yard,

where He revealed Himself to my soul. Some of God's saints do not, but that does not matter in the least! A living man must have been born, at some time or other, even if he does not know when his birthday was. And as long as we have been healed, we need not be anxious to know when it took place. Still, it is helpful if we can recollect when God gave us healing through the wounds of His beloved Son.

Let me try to describe the process of healing. First of all, the stripes of Jesus heal us *by taking away the guilt of sin*. That is the all-important work. By nature and by practice, too, we are guilty. But when we look to Christ's stripes, we see our guilt laid upon Him and, as it cannot be in two places at one time, we know that it is not on us any longer. The moment that a poor sinner sees Christ bearing His burden of guilt and trusts Christ as his Burden-Bearer, his burden is all gone. We sang, a little while ago, that blessed hymn about Substitution in which one line says—

“Now there's no load for me.”

There *was* a load on me, but Jesus took my load upon Himself, so—

“Now there's no load for me.”

That was the grandest of all God's transactions, when He took sin off the sinner and laid it upon His sinless Son! As the Prophet Isaiah says, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone to His own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Or as the Apostle Paul says, “He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Yes, the sinner who believes in Jesus is no longer accounted guilty by God! Though black as night, before, the moment he looks to Christ, he becomes white as the newly-fallen snow. Though he was a stranger to God and condemned for his sin, as soon as he believes, he becomes “accepted in the Beloved” and he may shout with the Apostle Paul, “Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us!”

The stripes of Jesus are also *an Infallible remedy for the disease of despair*. What thousands of men and women in this world have been ready to lay violent hands upon themselves while under a sense of sin! They never had even half a glimpse of comfort till they were told that Jesus took their sin and carried it, in His own body, up to the tree and there forever made an end of it, that they might be saved! I should like those who do not believe in Christ's substitution for sinners to have to deal with some troubled souls who have come to me. Ah, you may evoke, you may charm, you may use fine language and talk about the “moral influence” of the Sacrifice of Christ—but what use will all that be to those who are on the borders of despair? Will you take from us, who have to deal with sin-sick souls, the only balm we have to give them? I have done with Christianity, I have done with the Bible, I have done with all preaching if you can once convince me that the Substitution of Christ is not a fact! This Truth of God is, to me, the kernel, the core, the marrow, the vital essence of the Gospel! With this remedy in my hands, I can turn despair into confidence! But, take this away and there remains nothing for me to preach to the despondent and the despairing. Let the man who can

disprove it—if disproved it can be, and that I do not believe—recollect that he will have taken away from the sky of many of us the only sun that shines and from our life the only joy we have, for, if this Truth of God is gone, all is gone! O bleeding Savior, if You did not suffer in our place, it would have been better for us if we had never been born! But we know that Your stripes do heal the disease of despair, so we will still pass on the remedy to all whom we find in that terrible condition.

Bring the stripes of Jesus home to a man—they heal his soul of a thousand other ills, such as this—*the idea of trifling with sin*. That is a very common disease. It is incidental to sin that men sin and think nothing of it. “Oh,” they say, “What is sin? We are poor frail creatures and we make mistakes, but what of that?” That is man’s estimate of sin, but, O You bleeding Son of God, when we once get a clear view of Your wounds—

“Sin does like itself appear.”

See God’s only-begotten Son dying on the Cross that sin may be put away and you will never again think it a trifle! The Sacrifice of Calvary was upon a scale so vast that there is no human method of measuring it. God, the Creator, Provider and Judge of All, has taken upon Himself our Nature and made expiation for our sin by His own death in the midst of the utmost ignominy, shame and agony! Now, sin could not have been a little thing to need such an Atonement as that to put it away—and the man who believes in Jesus, henceforth looks on sin in the right light and never trifles with it again.

It also corrects his estimate as to eternal things. The other day he said, “What do I care about Heaven or Hell? What is the Day of Judgment to me? These are bugbears to frighten children! What is it to me whether God is angry or not? Eternal things are for old women to think about—I mind the main chance and make all the money I can.” Ah, but a sight of Christ on the Cross cures all that! Now eternity seems to be everything and time insignificant! Now to be reconciled to God, to live to His Glory seems to be the one thing necessary! The Cross of Christ is the great rectifier of human judgments. We trifle no longer with eternal things, but they become of infinite concern to us.

Then, next, *the wounds of Jesus cure us of the love of sin*. By nature, we love sin, but when we understand what sin cost Christ, we cannot love it any longer. If you had a very favorite knife which you prized much, but someone took it—and with it murdered your mother—you would loathe the instrument with which so foul a deed was done! And sin that you prized and played with has the blood of Christ on it. It cut Him to the very soul! So now you hate it. You say to yourself, “How can I love that cursed thing that made my Savior bleed?” There is no cure for the love of sin like the blood of Christ!

And it cures us, yet again, *because it awakens the dull, inanimate soul which had long been indifferent to God, into life and love*. When a man knows that Jesus died for him, he must love Him and serve Him. He cannot help doing so. You may tell him about the punishment of sin in terms of terror and you may describe the Glory of God in the most glowing language, but you cannot win a human heart. The deaf adder will not

hear with such charming, but, O Jesus, if You say to a sinner, with Your own lips, "I love you and I have given Myself for you," the iceberg-soul thaws into feeling, the granite begins to throb and the man says, "Love You, my Savior? Oh, how can I have lived so long without loving You? Love You?"

**“Yes, I love You, and adore—
Oh, for Grace to love You more!”**

Nothing cures the hearts of coldness towards God like a sense of blood-bought pardon—and that will dissolve a heart of stone!

And so, let me add there is no form of mischief which sin takes, but the stripes of Jesus, when we come to know them, will heal us of them. If you love the world too much—yes, if you love it at all—come and drink from my Master’s cup and it will make you feel yourself a stranger in the earth and you will set no store by this world any more. If you have been redeemed, you must have been a slave, so you will bow yourself in the dust with gratitude to your Redeemer. We see advertisements of medicines which are said to cure all diseases, but this is a medicine which *will* cure all ills. There is no form of the disease of sin upon which the stripes of Christ have not been tried—and the wondrous medicine has healed in every instance! Oh, whom has it not healed? We have seen the harlot healed and she has become a joyous Magdalene singing chastely and sweetly the love song unto Him that washed her from her sins in His own blood! We have seen the thief touched with this sacred heal-all and he has become a saint amidst the seraphim above! We have seen a persecutor who has but taken a draught of this medicine and he has begun to preach—and he has preached right on and he has said, ‘Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.’ Yes, we have seen men lying at the very gates of Hell, in their own estimation, despairing, feeling the serpents of remorse twisting their desperate coils about them everywhere and the venom coursing through their blood—and they have lifted up themselves and smiled—and the serpents have dropped off them, as they have looked to the Son of Man, as the bitten Israelites looked to the bronze serpent—and they have been healed at once! I would that any here who doubt this, would try it for themselves. “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good,” for there never was a soul yet that received this medicine of the stripes of Jesus who was not thereby healed!

IV. Now, to close, WHAT IS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO GET THIS HEALING?

The answer is, first, *you must believe this to be true*. You must believe in the wondrous mystery of God Incarnate. There were many witnesses to Christ’s Incarnation and death and there are four narrators of the story of His life and Sacrifice. There were many who saw Jesus risen from the dead and saw Him till He rose to Heaven—they knew that they saw Him and many of them died as martyrs because they said so. They were simple, honest witnesses—not ecclesiastics trained in twisting language and inventing fictions. They were fishermen and, many of them, poor men, with a few of another rank, but they all saw Jesus and they saw His mi-

acles. They saw Him tread the sea and they saw Him die—and saw Him after He was risen—and they tracked Him till He went up into Glory! And they received His Spirit and, in His name, they worked miracles—and they were quite sure that what they testified was true. Some of us have believed their testimony and we have been healed by this medicine. And if you would be healed, you must receive it yourselves.

I think I hear you say, “Why, I have always believed the Bible to be true.” Well, then, next, *you must take the medicine*. What does the physician put at the beginning of his prescription? A great “R,” which stands for the Latin word, “*Recipe*.” What does that mean? “Take.” “Take of such-and-such a drug so much, and of another, so much.” That is what the Gospel says—“Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” That word I leave with you, *Recipe*—take—receive. Take what? Why, take the sufferings of Christ to be instead of your sufferings! Trust in Him to save you now because He died for all who trust Him! Rest yourself on Him now!

“Suppose I should trust Him and He should not save me?” Ah, Soul, that were to suppose Him to be a liar—and that cannot be! He that believes in Him is not condemned. Or, as He put it Himself, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” You have to come to Him just as you are and trust Him to save you, relying upon the merit of His blood and righteousness to stand for you before the Justice of God. Can you do that? “Why,” says one, “it seems so simple!” And are you going to quarrel with it because it is simple? Are you as foolish as Naaman who would not wash in Jordan because it was so simple? He wanted the Prophet to perform a great many ceremonies, but he would not at first bring himself down to wash, that he might be clean! Surely, my Friend, you are not such a fool as that! I will give you credit for more sense. “But do you really mean that if I trust my soul with Christ, believing He can save me, I am saved?” Mean it? Mean it? If that is not so, I am not saved myself, for this is where I stand! I have believed in Jesus Christ and rested myself on Him. and if He does not, cannot, or will not save me and I should ultimately be ashamed of my hope, I must be damned—for I have not a second hope! You have heard of the fox that had three holes to run to—but the Christian has only one—and if that is stopped up, “There is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

I do not know what you think about sermons. Perhaps you imagine that preaching is very easy work. It is not so to me. After having been laid aside sick, I tell you that if I could crawl to this pulpit on my hands and knees, it would be a delight to me to once again proclaim my Master’s Gospel! But, at the same time, I feel that I may have very few more opportunities of preaching and, as the Lord lives, before whom I stand, my anxious desire is that every time I preach, I may clear myself of the blood of all men—that if I step from this platform to my coffin, I may have told at least all I knew of the way of salvation! I wish you unconverted ones could bring yourselves to take this Word of God home to yourselves, for, some day you will hear the Gospel for the last time—you will listen to

the last invitation—and *this* may be the last time you will hear the story of the dying Savior.

Will you have Him now, or not? With some of you, it is now or never! Hark to the ticking of the clock! As the pendulum swings to and fro, it says to some of you, “Now or never! Now or never! Now or never! Now or never!” Will you trust your soul with Jesus? If you will, the soft persuasions of His blessed Spirit are guiding you that way. Cast your guilty soul on Him and you are saved! But if you will have another Savior, or be your own Savior and reject Christ, I am clear of your blood! And when we stand before that dread tribunal when Heaven and earth shall shake, and reel, and pass away like a mist before the rising sun, you will have no one but yourself to blame that you are lost! God save you, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 27:27-54.**

Verses 27-30. *Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped Him and put on Him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head.* Ridicule is very painful to bear at any time and soldiers have been masters of that cruel art when they have been encouraged in it by their leaders. Remember, Brothers and Sisters, who it was that bore all this shameful treatment from these brutal men—your Lord and the angels’ Lord—the Maker of Heaven and earth who had deigned, for a while, to veil his Deity in human flesh! And there He stood, to be “set at nothing”—to be made nothing of—by those rough Roman legionaries, the creatures of His own hands whom He could have destroyed in a moment by a word or a wish! What matchless condescension our gracious Redeemer displayed even in His own deepest degradation and agony!

31, 32. *And after that they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; he they compelled to bear His Cross.* And I think that he must have been a glad man to have such an honor thrust upon him, yet you need not envy him, for there is a cross for you, also, to carry. Bear it cheerfully. If anything happens to you by way of ridicule for Christ’s sake and the Gospel’s, bow your shoulder willingly to the burden and, as knights are made by a stroke from a sword held in their sovereign’s hand, so shall you be made princes of the realm of Christ by bearing the Cross after Him!

33. *And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull.* We do not know why it was so called. There have been many conjectures concerning the name, but they are only conjectures. It was probably just a little knoll outside the gate of the city—the common place of execution for malefactors. The special points to be

noted are that Jesus suffered *outside* the gate, in the regular place of doom—the Tyburn or Old Bailey of Jerusalem—and so was numbered with the transgressors.

34. *They gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall.* A stupefying draught was usually given to the criminals who were crucified, to mitigate their agony. But Christ did not wish for that to be done in His case.

34. *And when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink.* He came to earth that He might suffer and He would retain all His faculties while suffering. He would have every nerve made into a straight road for the hot feet of pain to travel over, for He would drink, even to the last dregs, every drop that was in the cup of suffering for His people's sin.

35, 36. *And they crucified Him, and parted His garments, casting lots that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, They parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched Him there.* Some of them gloating their cruel eyes with the sight of His suffering. Others watching Him out of mere curiosity. But there were some, hard by the Cross, who stood there to weep in sympathy with Him—a sword piercing through their own hearts while the Son of Man was being put to death.

37. *And set up over His head His accusation written, THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.* And so He is. When will the Jews acknowledge Him as their King? They will do so one day. Perhaps they will do so when Christians begin to think and speak more kindly of them than they usually do. When the hardness of heart on our part towards them shall pass away, it may be that their hardness of heart towards Christ will also pass away. Long have they been despised, oppressed and persecuted in many lands, so that, by some means, they might be brought to look, in penitence, upon Him whom they crucified—and to claim Him as their Lord and Savior!

38-40. *Then were there two thieves crucified with Him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads and saying, You that destroyed the temple, and build it in three days, save Yourself. If You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross.* That is the devil's old Doctrine—"Save yourself. Look out for yourselves. Live for yourselves. Be selfish." But Christ could never act like that. He came to live and die for others. "Save yourself," was not the Doctrine that He either preached or practiced. And this is another old taunt of Satan and those who follow him—"If You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross and we will believe in You." There are plenty who would be willing to believe in Christ, but not in Christ Crucified. "He was a good Man," they say, "a great Prophet, no doubt far in advance of His times," and so on. But, if you talk like that, you are not on safe ground, for if Christ was not the Son of God, at any rate He professed to be and He made people think He was—and if He was not, He was an impostor and not a good Man at all! You must either repudiate Christ altogether, or take Him with His Cross—it must be Christ Crucified, or no Christ at all.

41-44. *Likewise also the chief priest mocking Him with the scribes and elders said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of*

Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God, let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also. Those who were crucified with Him and were sharers of His misery.

44-46. *Which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani? That is to say, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? This was the climax of His grief—not merely to suffer intense agony of body, not only to be mocked alike by priests and people—but to be forsaken of His God. Yet this was necessary as a part of the penalty that was due to sin. God must turn away from anyone who has sin upon him, so, as sin was laid upon Christ, God had to turn His face even away from His well beloved Son because He was bearing His peoples' sins upon the accursed tree.*

47-49. *Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calls for Elijah. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink. The rest said, Let Him be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him. Mocking Him even in His prayers, for they well knew the difference between Eloi and Elijah!*

50. *Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. You know what He said when He cried with a loud voice—"It is finished."*

51-54. *And, behold, the veil of the Temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks split; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept, arose, and came out of the graves after His Resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with Him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquakes, and these things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly that was the Son of God.*

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—439, 819.
AND FROM "SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS"—14.**

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

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

SIN LAID ON JESUS

NO. 694

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 10, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned, every one, to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”
Isaiah 53:6.***

THE verse opens with a confession of sin common to all the persons intended in the verse. The whole of the elect people of God seem to me to be here represented. They have all fallen. Those of them who have lived to years of responsibility have all *actually* sinned, and therefore in common chorus they all say from the first who entered Heaven to the last who shall enter there, “All we like sheep have gone astray.” But the confession, while thus hearty and unanimous, is also special and particular. “We have turned, every one, to his own way.” There is a peculiar sinfulness about every one of the individuals. All are sinful, but each one with some special aggravation not found in his fellow. It is the mark of genuine repentance that while it naturally associates itself with other penitents, it also feels that it must take up a position of loneliness.

“We have turned, every one, to his own way” is a confession importing that each man had sinned against light peculiar to himself, or sinned with an aggravation which he at least could not perceive in his fellow. This confession, being thus general and particular, has many other traits of excellence about it of which we cannot just now speak. It is very unreserved. You will observe that there is not a single syllable by way of excuse. There is not a word to detract from the force of the confession. It is, moreover, singularly thoughtful—for thoughtless persons do not use a metaphor so appropriate as the text—“All we like sheep have gone astray.” Not like the ox which “knows its owner,” nor even like the ass which “remembers its master’s crib,” nor even like the swine, which, if it wanders all day long comes back to the trough at night, but, “like sheep we have gone astray.”

Like a creature cared for but not capable of grateful attachment to the hand that cares for it. Like a creature wise enough to find the gap in the hedge by which to escape, but so silly as to have no propensity or desire to return to the place from which it had perversely wandered. Like sheep habitually, constantly, willfully, foolishly—without power to return—we have gone astray. I wish that all our confessions of sin showed a like thoughtfulness, for to say that we are “miserable sinners” may be an increase of our sin unless we have really felt it. To use words of general confession without our soul entering into them may be but a “repentance that needs to be repented of”—an insult and mockery to high Heaven vented in that very place where there ought to have been the greatest possible tenderness and holy fear.

I like the confession of the text because it is a giving up of all pleas of self-righteousness. It is the declaration of a body of men who are guilty, consciously guilty—guilty with aggravations, guilty without excuse—and here they all stand with their weapons of rebellion broken in pieces, say-

ing unanimously, "All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned, every one, to his own way." I hear no dolorous wailings attending this confession of sin, for the next sentence makes it almost a song—"The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

It is the most grievous sentence of the three but it is the most charming and the most full of comfort! Strange is it that where misery was concentrated mercy reigned, and where sorrow reached her climax there it is that a weary soul finds sweetest rest! The Savior bruised is the healing of bruised hearts. I want, now, to draw the hearts of all who feel the confession to the blessed doctrine set forth in the text—the Lord has laid on Christ the iniquity of us all. We shall take the text first by way of exposition. Then by way of application. And we shall conclude with serious, and I hope, profitable contemplation.

I. First, let us consider the text by way of EXPOSITION:

1. It may be well to give the marginal translation of the text—"Jehovah has made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all." The first thought that demands notice is the meeting of *sin*. I may compare sin to the rays of some evil sun. Sin was scattered throughout this world as abundantly as light and Christ is made to suffer the full effect of the baleful rays which stream from the sun of sin. God, as it were, holds up a burning glass and concentrates all the scattered rays in a focus upon Christ. That seems to be the thought of the text, "The Lord has focused upon Him the iniquity of us all."

That which was scattered abroad everywhere is here brought into terrible concentration—upon the devoted head of our blessed Lord all the sins of His people were made to meet. Before a great storm when the sky is growing black and the wind is beginning to howl you have seen the clouds hurrying from almost every point of the compass as though the great day of battle were come and all the dread artillery of God were hurrying to the field. In the center of the whirlwind and the storm, when the lightning threatens to set all Heaven on a blaze and the black clouds, fold on fold, labor to conceal the light of day, you have a very graphic metaphor of the meeting of all sin upon the Person of Christ!

The sin of the ages past and the sin of the ages to come—the sins of those of the elect who were in heathendom—and of those who were in Jewry. The sin of the young and of the old, original sin and actual sin all made to meet—all the black clouds concentrated and brought together into one great tempest that it might rush in one tremendous tornado upon the Person of the great Redeemer and Substitute!

As when a thousand streams dash down the mountainside in the day of rain and all meet in one deep swollen lake—that lake the Savior's heart—those gushing torrents are the sins of us all who are here described as making a full confession of our sins. Or to take a metaphor not from nature but from commerce—suppose the debts of a great number of persons to be all gathered up—the scattered bonds and bills that are to be honored or dishonored on such-and-such a day—all these laid upon one person who undertakes the responsibility of meeting every one of them without a single assistant. Such was the condition of the Savior. The Lord made to meet on Him the debts of all His people so that He became responsible for all the obligations of every one of those whom His Father had given Him, whatever their debts might be.

Or if these metaphors do not suffice to set forth the meaning, take the text in our own version, “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Put upon Him as a burden is laid upon a man’s back—all the burdens of all His people! Put upon His head as the High Priest of old laid upon the scapegoat all the sin of the beloved ones that He might bear them in His own Person. The two translations, you see, are perfectly consistent. All sins are made to meet, and then having met together and been tied up in one crushing load, the whole burden is laid upon Jesus Christ.

2. The second thought is that sin was made to meet upon the suffering Person of the innocent Substitute. I have said “the suffering Person” because the connection of the text requires it. “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.” It is in connection with this, and as an explanation of all His grief, that it is added, “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

The Lord Jesus Christ would have been incapable of receiving the sin of all His people as their Substitute had He been Himself a sinner—but He was, as to His Divine Nature, worthy to be hymned as, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth”—and as to His human Nature, He was by miraculous conception free from all original sin. In the holiness of His life He was such that He was the spotless Lamb of God—without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing—and therefore He was, on all accounts, capable of standing in the place and stead of sinful men. The doctrine of the text is that Jesus Christ, who was Man of the substance of His mother, and who was, nevertheless, very God of very God, most true and glorious Creator and Preserver—did stand in such a position as to take upon Himself the iniquity of all His people, remaining still Himself innocent.

He had no personal sin, was incapable of any, but yet taking the sin of others upon Himself—it has been the custom of theologians to say by *imputation*—but I question whether the use of that word, although correct enough as it is understood by us, may not have lent some color to the misrepresentations of those who oppose the doctrine of Substitution. I will not say that the sins of God’s people were imputed to Christ, though I believe they were. But it seems to me that in a way more mysterious than that which imputation would express, the sins of God’s people were actually laid upon Jesus Christ so that in the view of God, not only was Christ treated as if He had been guilty, but the very sin itself was, I know not how, but according to the text it was somehow laid upon the head of Christ Jesus. “For He has made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

Is it not written, “He shall bear,” not merely the punishment of their sin, nor the imputation of their sin, but, “He shall bear their iniquities”? Our sin is laid on Jesus in even a deeper and truer sense than is expressed by the term *imputation*. I do not think I can express it, nor convey the idea that I have in my own mind, but while Jesus never was and never could be a sinner—God forbid that the blasphemous thought should ever cross our lips or dwell upon our heart—yet the sin of His people was literally and truly laid upon Him.

3. It has been asked, “Was it *just* that sin should thus be laid upon Christ?” Our reply is fourfold. We believe it was rightly so, first, because it was the act of Him who must do right, for “the *Lord* has laid on Him the

iniquity of us all.” Jehovah, He against whom the offense was committed, has ordained that the sin of the people spoken of should be laid upon Christ. To impugn this, then, would be to impugn the justice of Jehovah and I pray that none of us may have the hardihood to do that! Shall the potsherd venture to strive with the potter? Shall the thing formed contend with the Creator of all things? Jehovah did it, and we accept it as being right, caring not what men may think of Jehovah’s own deed.

Remember, moreover, that Jesus Christ voluntarily took this sin upon Himself. It was not forced upon Him. He was not punished for the sins of others with whom He had no connection and against His will. He bore our sins Himself in His own body on the tree, and while bearing it said, “No man takes My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.” It was according to His own eternal agreement made with the Father on our behalf. It was according to His own expressed desire, for He had a baptism to be baptized with and He was straitened until it was accomplished. And therefore whatever of injustice might be supposed it is removed by the fact that He who was mainly concerned in it was Himself voluntarily placed in such a position.

But I would have you remember, Beloved, that there was a relationship between our Lord and His people which is too often forgotten, but which rendered it *natural* that He should bear the sin of His people. Why does the text speak of our sinning like sheep? I think it is because it would call to our recollection that Christ is our Shepherd. It is not, my Brothers and Sisters, that Christ took upon Himself the sins of *strangers*. Remember that there always was a union of a most mysterious and intimate kind between those who sinned and the Christ who suffered. What if I say that it is not unjust but according to Law that when a woman gets into debt her husband should bear it? And the Church of God sinning—it was but right that her Husband, who had espoused her unto Himself, should become the debtor on her behalf.

The Lord Jesus stood in the relationship of a married husband unto His Church, and it was not, therefore, a strange thing that He should bear her burdens. It was natural for the next of kin to redeem the inheritance. It was most seemly that Immanuel, the next of kin, should redeem His lost Church by His own blood. Remember that there was a union closer even than the marriage bond, for we are members of His Body. You shall not punish this hand of mine without making the sentient nature which dwells in the brain to suffer also! And does it seem strange to you that when the inferior members of the Body have transgressed, the Head should be made to suffer?

It seems to me, my Brethren, that while Substitution is full of Divine Grace, it is not unnatural but according to the laws of everlasting love. Yet there is a fourth consideration that may remove the difficulty of sin being laid upon Christ. It is not only that God laid it there, that Jesus voluntarily took it, and moreover was in such a union with His Church that it was *natural* that He should take it, but you must remember that this plan of salvation is precisely similar to the method of our ruin. How did we fall, my Brethren? Not by any one of us actually ruining himself. I grant you that our own sin is the ground of ultimate punishment, but the ground of our *original* fall lay in another.

I had no more to do with my fall than I have to do with my restoration! That is to say, the Fall which made me a sinner, was wholly accomplished long before I was born by the first Adam, and the salvation by which I am delivered was finished long before I saw the light by the second Adam on my behalf. If we grant the Fall—and we must grant the fact, however we may dislike the principle—we cannot think it unjust that God should give us a plan of salvation based upon the same principle of federal headship.

Perhaps it is true, as has been conjectured by many, that because the fallen angels sinned one by one there was no possibility of their restoration. But man's sinning, not one by one in the first place, but transgressing under a covenant head, provided an opportunity for the restoration of the race by another covenant headship. At any rate we, accepting the principle of the federal headship in the Fall, joyfully receive it as to the restoration in Christ Jesus. It seems right, then, on these four grounds, that the Lord should make the sins of all His people to meet upon Christ.

4. I beg you to observe in the fourth place, that lying upon Christ brought upon Him all the consequences connected with it. God cannot look where there is sin with any pleasure. And though as far as Jesus is *personally* concerned, He is the Father's beloved Son in whom He is well pleased, yet when He saw sin laid upon His Son, He made that Son cry, "My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?"

It was not possible that Jesus should enjoy the light of His Father's Presence while He was made sin for us. Consequently He went through a horror of great darkness, the root and source of which was the withdrawing of the conscious enjoyment of His Father's Presence. More than that, not only was light withdrawn, but positive sorrow was inflicted. God must *punish* sin, and though the sin was not Christ's by His actually *doing* it, yet it was laid upon Him and therefore He was made a curse for us.

What were the pangs which Christ endured? I cannot tell you. You have read the story of His Crucifixion. Dear Friends, that is only the shell—but who shall describe the inward kernel? It is certain that Christ not only bore all that humanity could bear, but there was a Deity within which added extraordinary strength to His Humanity and enabled it to bear far more than it would otherwise have been able to endure. I doubt not that in addition to this the Godhead within gave a peculiar sensitiveness to the holiness of Christ's nature so that sin must have become even more abhorrent to Him than it would have been to a merely perfect man.

His griefs are worthy to be described according to the Greek Liturgy as "unknown sufferings." The height and depth, the length and breadth of what Jesus Christ endured no heart can guess, nor tongue can tell, nor can imagination frame! Only God knows the griefs to which the Son of God was put when the Lord made to meet upon Him the iniquity of us all. To crown all, there came death itself. Death is the punishment for sin and whatever it may mean, whatever over and beyond natural death was intended in the sentence, "In the day you eat thereof you shall surely die," Christ felt. Death went through and through Him until "He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." "He became obedient to death, even to the death of the Cross."

5. Dear Friends, for a moment think of the result of all this. Sin meets on Christ and Christ is punished for sin! What then? Why then sin is put away! If the penalty is endured, Justice asks no more. The debt dis-

charged—there is no debt! The claim made and the claim met—the claim ceases to be! Though we could not meet that claim in our proper persons, yet we have met it in One who is so united and allied to us that we are in Him even as Levi was in the loins of Abraham. Jesus, Himself, is also free. Upon Him the gathered tempest has spent itself and not a single cloud lingers in the serene sky. Though the waters came, His love has dried them up! His suffering has opened the sluices and made the floods forever spend themselves. Though the bills were brought, He has honored them all and there is not one outstanding account against a single soul for whom He died as a Substitute.

6. We cannot close the exposition of this verse without remarking upon the “us” here intended. “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of *us* all.” It is usually conceded by us who hold the doctrine of particular redemption that there was in the death of Christ very much of generality and universality. We believe that the Atonement of Christ was infinite in value and that if Christ had decreed to save every man of woman born, He need not have suffered another pang. There was sufficient power in His Atonement, if He had so willed it, to have redeemed the entire race!

We believe, also, that by the death of Christ there is a general and honest invitation given to every creature under Heaven in terms like these—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” We are not prepared, however, to go an inch beyond that. We hold that from the very nature of the satisfaction of Christ it could not have been made for any but for His elect—for Christ either *did* pay the debts of all men or He did *not*. If He did pay the debts of all men they are paid, and no man can be called to account for them.

If Christ was the Surety of every man living, then how in the name of common justice is Christ to be punished and man punished, too? If it is replied that the man would not accept the Atonement, then I ask again, Was there a satisfaction given? For if so, it was given whether the man accepts it or not, or else satisfaction by itself is powerless until man puts efficacy in it, which is preposterous to suppose! If you take away from us the fact that Christ did really satisfy for those for whom He stood, we cry like Jacob, “If I am bereaved I am bereaved.”

You have taken away all that is worth having, and what have you given us in its place? You have given us a redemption which confessedly does not redeem! You have given us an Atonement which is made equally for the lost in Hell and for the saved in Heaven! And what is the intrinsic value of such an Atonement? If you tell us that Christ made a satisfactory Atonement for every one of the human race, we ask you how it was that He made an Atonement for those that must have been in the flames of Hell thousands of years before He came into this world?

My Brothers and Sisters, ours has the advantage of universality in its proclamation and in its bona fide offer, for there is no man living who shall believe in Jesus who shall not be saved by Christ! And it has a greater advantage than this, namely, that those who *do* believe are saved by it and they know that Christ made such an Atonement for them that for them to be punished for sin would be as much a violation of justice as it would of mercy! O my Soul! You know this day that all your sins were made to meet on Christ and that He bore the punishment for them all!—

“He bore that we might never bear,

His Father's righteous ire.

Here is a rock to stand on, a safe resting place for those who trust in Jesus. As for you who trust Him not, your blood be upon your own heads! If you trust Him not you have no part nor lot in this matter. You shall go down to your own punishment to bear it yourselves. The wrath of God abides on you! You shall find that the blood of Jesus has made no Atonement for your sins. You have rejected the invitation that was given and put far from you the Cross of Christ. Upon your heads the pardoning blood shall never drop and for you it shall never plead—you must perish under the Law because you refuse to be saved under the Gospel.

II. Let us come briefly to the APPLICATION. Dear Hearer, a friend now puts a question to you. There is a countless company whose sins the Lord Jesus bore. Did He bear yours? Do you wish to have an answer? Are you unable to give one? Let me read this verse to you and see if you can join in it. I do not mean join in it saying, "That is true," but feeling that it is true in your own souls. "All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned, every one, to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

If there is in you this morning a penitential confession which leads you to acknowledge that you have erred and strayed like a lost sheep. If there is in you a personal sense of sin which makes you feel that you have turned to your own way, and if now you can trust in Jesus, then a second question is not needed. The Lord has laid on Him your iniquity and the iniquity of all such as confess their sin and look alone to Christ. But if you will not trust Christ, I cannot say to you that the Lord has taken the sin from you and laid it upon Christ—for in my soul I know that living and dying as you now are—that sin of yours will rise up in judgment against you to condemn you!

Dear Friend, I will venture to ask you, Are you reconciled to God's way of getting rid of sin? Do you feel any joy in your heart at the thought of Jesus bearing sin for you and suffering for you? If you do not, I cannot offer you the consolation which the text gives to those who submit to it. But let me ask you, do you mean to bear your sin *yourself*? Do you know what that means? Jesus smarted when He bore the sin of His people—but what a smart shall yours be when you bear your own! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

There are some nowadays who are mighty angry at the doctrine of everlasting punishment. I, too, might be angry at it if it were an invention of man. But when it is most certainly threatened in God's Book, it is vain for me to kick against the pricks! My question should not be, "How can I dispute against it?" but "How can I escape from it?" Dear Hearer, do not venture into God's Presence with your sins upon yourself! Our God is a consuming fire and His fury will break forth against you when you come to stand there! Have you an imagination that your own merits may make atonement for sin?

I pray you think about what Christ had to do before He could cast sin off from Himself! What griefs He bore! Through what an ocean of wrath He passed! And do you think that your poor merits, if they are merits, can ever avail to do what the Savior suffered so much to accomplish? Do you hope to escape without a punishment? If you do, let me pray you to think

the matter over! For if God smote His own Son, do you think He will permit you to go scot-free?

If the King of Glory, when He only takes others' sins upon Him, must die, what do you think will become of you, poor worm of the dust? Do you think that God will be unjust in order to save *you*? Do you suppose that He will forego His own sentence because you do not choose to be saved by a plan which is both just to Him and safe to you? Shall God be unjust to pander to your fancies, or indulge your lusts? Sinner, bow the knee to this plan of salvation, for let it be known to you—and I speak now, knowing what I say, and coolly, too—there is no other plan of salvation under Heaven!

There may be other ways of salvation *preached*, but other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ the Righteous. If you shall struggle after salvation individually and hope to get to Heaven apart from the Head-ship of Christ, you may struggle, but you shall be like the Jews of old who had a zeal for God but not according to knowledge! If you shall be going about to establish your own righteousness, but not submitting yourself to the righteousness of Christ, you shall perish!

But let me ask you, Does not this plan commend itself to you? If I trust Jesus this is to me the evidence that He took my sins and suffered in my place! Oh the joy it gives me! I speak to you honestly of my own experience now—there is no doctrine that fires my soul with such delight as that of Substitution. The doctrine of Atonement, as it is often preached, is a hazy, misty doing of something by which the Law is honored, or perhaps dishonored, for I scarcely know which to call it—this yields me no joy.

But when I know that Christ was literally and positively, not metaphorically and by way of figure—but literally and positively the Substitute for His own people, and when I know that trusting in Him I have the evidence of being one of His people—why my soul begins to say, Now let me live! I'm clean, through Jesus' blood I'm clean! Now let me die! For I shall boldly stand in the day of resurrection through Jesus my Lord. Why, Soul, it seems to me as if it were enough to make you leap into the arms of Christ crucified! Covered with blood for you! Disinterestedly suffering for His own enemies that they might live! Oh stay not away!—

***“Come, guilty souls, and flee away
Like doves to Jesus' wounds!
This is the welcome Gospel-day,
Wherein free Grace abounds.
God loved the Church, and gave His Son
To drink the cup of wrath,
And Jesus says He'll cast out none
That come to Him by faith.”***

III. Now consecrate a few minutes to hallowed CONTEMPLATION. You do not want talk, you want thought—I will give you four things to think of. The first is the astounding mass of sin that must have been laid on Christ. Now do not jump at it, and say, “Yes, the sins of the millions of His elect.” Do not leap at that, get at it by degrees. Begin with your *own* sin. Have you ever felt that—your own sin? No, you never felt the full weight of it. If you did you would have been in Hell.

It is the weight of sin that makes Hell. Sin bears its own punishment in its own weight. Do you remember when you felt that the pains of Hell got hold upon you and you found trouble and sorrow? That hour when you

called upon the name of the Lord, saying, "O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul!" Then you only felt as it were the little end of your sins—but ALL your sins—what must they weigh? How old are you? You know not how old you may be before you enter into rest, but all the sins of all your years He carried! All the sins against light and knowledge! Sins against Law and Gospel! Weekday sins! Sunday sins! Hand sins, lip sins, heart sins, sins against the Father, sins against the Son, sins against the Holy Spirit! Sins of all shapes—all laid upon Him—can you get the thought now?

Now multiply that. Think of the sins of all the rest of His people! Persecutions and murders at the door of such an one as Saul of Tarsus! Adultery at the door of David—sins of every shape and size—for God's elect have been among the chief of sinners! Those whom He has chosen have not been the best of men by nature, but some of them the very worst! And yet Sovereign Grace delighted to find a home for itself where seven devils had dwelt before—no!—where a legion of devils held their carnival!

Christ looks abroad among the sons of men and while a Pharisee is passed by, Zaccheus the publican is selected—and the sins of all these with their full weight laid upon Him. The weight of sin would have crushed all these into Hell forever, and yet Christ bore all that weight. And what if I venture to say the very eternity and infinity of wrath that was due for all that mass of sin, the Son of God marvelously sustained by the infinity of the Godhead within, bore and sustained the whole? I would like to stop a minute and let you turn it over, but when you go home perhaps you will spend half an hour very profitably in thinking that—

***"The enormous load of human guilt
Was on my Savior laid.
With woes as with a garment He
For sinners was arrayed."***

2. The next subject I offer you for contemplation is this—the amazing love of Jesus which brought Him to do all this. Remember Paul's way of putting it. "Scarcely for a righteous (or strictly just) man will one die. Perhaps for a good (or benevolent) man one might even dare to die. But God commends His love towards us in that, while we were yet sinners, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly."

When Christ has renewed us by His Spirit, there may be a temptation to imagine that some excellency in us won the Savior's heart. But, my Brethren, you must understand that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. Not that infant washed and swaddled. Not that fair maiden with the jewel in her ear and with the pure golden crown upon her head! Not that lovely princess, presented like a chaste virgin to her husband! No, that was not what Jesus saw when He died. He saw all that in the glass of His prescience, but the actual condition of that fair maid was very different when He died for her—she was cast out, unwashed, unsalted, unwrapped, in her blood—a foul, filthy thing.

Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, there is no filthy thing under Heaven so filthy as a filthy sinner! When there was not a ray of beauty to be discovered in us. When neither without nor within a single thing could be found to commend us, but we were morally altogether abhorrent to the Holy Nature of Christ, then—oh wondrous Grace!—He came from the highest Heaven that the mass of our sin might meet on Him!

I met with this question the other day, which seemed a novel one to me. The question was asked thus: "Suppose you had a child that had leprosy, or some other foul disease. Suppose this dear child of yours was infected and contaminated to the most loathsome degree in every part till the eyes were blinded and the hands were rotting and the heart was turning to stone, and the whole body was covered with wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores. Now, suppose there were no cure for this child but for your perfectly sane and healthy *soul*, supposing it to be such, to be put into that child's body, and for you to bear that child's diseases instead of that child—would you consent to it?" I can suppose a mother's love yielding even to that. But the more disgusted you had been with those putrefying sores, the more terrible would the task become.

Now *that* only touches the fringe of the work which Jesus did for us when He Himself took our sins and bore our sicknesses. Such a wonderful union is there between Christ and the sinner that I venture to say there are some expressions in the New Testament and in the Old with regard to Christ's connection with the sin of man that I would not dare to use except as direct quotations from Holy Writ! But being there you shall see how wondrously the love of Jesus Christ induced Him to take upon Himself our sad condition and plight. But, oh the love! Oh the love! No, I will not speak of it! You must muse upon it. Silence is sometimes the best eloquence and it will be best for me to say to you, "oh the depths of the love of Jesus! Unsearchable, past finding out! God over all, blessed forever, should have laid on Him the iniquity of us all!"

3. Wonder of wonders that I need another minute to set you thinking on another subject—the matchless security which this plan of salvation offers. I do not see at what point a man is vulnerable who can feel and know that Christ has borne his sin. I look at the attributes of God and though to me, as a sinner, they all seem bristling as with sharp points, thrusting themselves upon me—yet when I know that Jesus *died* for me, and did literally take my sin—why do I fear the attributes of God?

There is justice, sharp and bright, like a lance. But justice is my friend! If God is just, He cannot punish me for sin for which Jesus has offered satisfaction. As long as there is justice in the heart of Deity it cannot be that a soul justly claiming Christ as his Substitute can, himself, be punished! As for mercy, love, truth, honor, everything matchless, Godlike and Divine about Deity, I say of all these, "You are my friends! You are all guarantees that my Jesus died for me so I cannot die." How grandly does the Apostle put it! It seems to me as if he never was worked up by the Holy Spirit to such a pitch of eloquence as when speaking about the death and resurrection of the Savior!

He propounds that splendid question, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" There, where eternal Justice sits upon a flaming throne, the Apostle gazes with eyes undimmed into the ineffable splendor! And though someone seems to say, "The Judge will condemn," he replies, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies." Can He justify and then condemn us? He justifies those for whom Christ died, for we are justified by His resurrection. How then shall He condemn?

And then he lifts up his voice yet again—"Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather that is risen again, who sits at the right hand

of God, who also makes intercession for us.” On other grounds a man must feel unsafe, but here he may know himself sure! Go, you that will, and build upon your sandy foundations! Run up your superstructures till they are as high as Babel’s tower and tumble about your ears unable to support their own weight! But as for me, my soul shall rest upon this solid rock of Substitution! And clinging to the Rock with confident resolve, I know that I have no cause for fear since Jesus died for me!

4. Lastly, I desire to give you, as a subject for contemplation, and I pray you do not forget it, this question, “What, then, are the claims of Jesus Christ upon you and upon me? Brothers and Sisters, I have sometimes wished to be eloquent. Never when I had a cause to plead in which I was myself involved, but when I have had to speak for Jesus. But indeed, there is no need of eloquence here. Your hearts shall be the pleaders! His agonies shall be the plea! Did our blessed Lord take your sin, my Brothers and Sisters, and suffer all its terrific consequences for you so that you are delivered?

By His blood and wounds, by His death, and by the love that made Him die, I implore you treat Him as He should be treated! Love Him as He should be loved! Serve him as He should be served! You will tell me that you have obeyed His precepts. I am glad to hear it. Are you sure that you have? “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” Have you kept the ordinances as He delivered them? Have you sought to be obedient to Him in all respects?

In all your Lord’s appointed ways have you scrupulously pursued your journey? If you can say this I am not content. It does not seem to me that with such a leader as Christ, mere obedience should be all. Napoleon singularly enough had power to get the hearts of men twisted and twined about him. When he was in his wars there were many of his captains and even of his private soldiers who not only marched with the quick obedience of a soldier wherever they were bid, but who felt an enthusiasm for him!

Have you never heard of him who threw himself in the way of the shot to receive it in his bosom to save the Emperor? No obedience, no law could have required that of him—but enthusiastic love moved him to it. And it is such enthusiasm that my Master deserves in the very highest degree from us! It is out of and beyond all categories of law! It is far exceeding all that law ventured to ask, and yet not supererogation for all that, for you are not under the Law but under Grace! And you will do more out of love than you would have done out of the compulsion of demand.

What shall I do for my Master? What shall I do for my Lord? How shall I set Him forth? My Brothers and Sisters, my highest aim before God, next to the conversion of the unconverted among you, is that you who do love Christ may really love Him and act as if you do! I hope you will never become a dead cold church. Oh may my ministry never help to lull you into such a state as that! If Jesus Christ does not deserve everything of you He does not deserve anything! You do not know anything of His claims if you do not feel that—

***“If you could make some reserve,
And duty did not call;
You’d love the Lord with zeal so great
That you must give Him all.”***

Christ stands for me! Oh may I learn to stand for Him, and plead for Him, and live for Him, and suffer for Him, and pray for Him, and preach and labor for Him as He may help me! May I remind you that each of you individually, as you all followed your own way and individually had some sin to increase that burden to pay Him individual service? Contribute of your substance to the common work of the Church, and do that constantly and as a matter of delight. Our College, which is doing so much service, greatly needs and demands the help of all who love our work, and love the Lord's Truth. But in addition to that, do something for yourself—speak for Christ yourself—have some work in hand on your own account.

Do, I say again, at all times assist the work of the combined body, for that will be a great work, God being in us as our life and stay, and let no man withhold of his substance from Christ's cause. But still that is not all. He does not ask your pocket only, but also your heart. It is not the pence, it is the activities of the soul! It is not the shillings and the guineas and so on, but it is your very inmost soul, the core of your spirit! O Christian, by the blood of Jesus devote yourself to Him again!

In the old Roman battles it sometimes happened that the strife seemed dubious, and a captain, inspired by superstitious patriotism, would stand upon his sword and devote himself to destruction for the good of his country. And then, according to those old legends, the battle always turned. Now, Brothers and Sisters, every one of you who have tasted that the Lord is gracious—devote yourselves this day to live, to die, to spend, and to be spent for King Jesus! You will be no fool, for no man ever had an ambition more worthy!

You will not be devoting yourself to One who does not deserve it. You know how much you owe Him! No, you do not know, to the fullest extent, the depth of your obligation. But you know you owe Him all that you have—your escape from Hell and your hope of Heaven! Follow me this morning in these verses—

***“Tis done, the great transaction's done!
I am my Lord's, and He is mine!
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice Divine.
Now rest, my long-divided heart.
Fixed on this blissful center rest.
With ashes who would grudge to part,
When called on angel's bread to feast?
High Heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear.”***

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INDIVIDUAL SIN LAID ON JESUS NO. 925

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 10, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned,
every one to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”
Isaiah 53:6.***

I THINK I addressed you from this text four years ago, (*“Sin Laid on Jesus,” No. 694, Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*), but I feel quite safe in returning to it, for we shall never exhaust it. It is a verse so wealthy in meaning that if I had, during the whole four years, dilated upon it every Sunday, it would be my fault if the theme were stale. On this occasion I desire mainly to draw attention to a part of the text upon which little was said on the former occasion. The vine is the same, but we shall gather clusters from a bough ungleaned before. The jewels are the same, but we will place them in another light and view them from another angle. May God grant that some who derived no comfort from our former word may be led to find peace and salvation in Christ this morning. The Lord in His infinite mercy grant it may be so.

I shall first give a general exposition of the text. Then in the second place I shall dwell upon the special doctrine which I wish to teach. And then, thirdly, we shall draw from that special doctrine a special lesson.

I. First, we will GIVE A GENERAL EXPOSITION OF THE TEXT. “All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned, every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” The text naturally breaks itself up into these three heads—a confession general to all penitents—“All we like sheep have gone astray.” A personal confession peculiar to each one, “We have turned, every one to his own way.” And then, the august doctrine of Substitution, which is the very soul and spirit of the entire Gospel, “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

Our exposition, then, begins with the confession which is universal to all penitents—it is acknowledged here by the persons speaking who call themselves “all we”—that they all had, like sheep, broken the hedge of God’s Law, forsaken their good and ever blessed Shepherd, and wandered into paths perilous and pernicious. A comparison is here used, and its use shows that the confession was a thoughtful one and not a matter of careless form. Man is here compared to a beast—for sin brings out the animal part of us. And while holiness allies us to angels—sin degrades us to brutes. We are not likened to one of the more noble and intelligent animals, but to a silly sheep.

All sin is folly. All sinners are fools. Sheep are dishonored by the comparison here used, for with all their silliness they have never been known to rush into the fire after having felt the flame. You will observe that the

creature selected for comparison is one that cannot live without care and attention. There is no such thing as a wild sheep. There could not long be sheep unless they were tended and cared for by a shepherd. The creature's happiness, its safety and very existence, all depend upon its being under a nurture and care far above its own. Yet for all that, the sheep strays from the shepherd. Man's happiness lies in being under the direction of the Lord, in being obedient to God, in being in communion with God. Departure from God is death to all his highest interests, destruction to all his best prospects. Yet for all that, as the sheep goes astray, even so does man.

The sheep is a creature exceedingly quick-witted upon the one matter of going astray. If there is but one gap in the hedge, the sheep will find it. If there is but one possibility out of five hundred that by any means the flock shall wander, one of the flock will be quite certain to discover that possibility—and all its companions will avail themselves of it. So is it with man. He is quick of understanding for evil things. God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions—the inventions being all to destroy his own uprightness and to do despise to the Law of God. And that very creature which is so quick-witted to wander is the least likely of all animals to return.

The ox knows its owner, and the ass knows its master's crib. Even the swine that will wander by day will return to the trough by night, and the dog will scent out his master over many a mile. But not so the sheep. Sharp as it is to discover opportunities for going astray, it seems to be bereft of all wit or will to come back to the fold. And such is man—wise to do evil—but foolish towards that which is good. With a hundred eyes, like Argus, he searches out opportunities for sinning. But, like Bartimaeus, he is stone blind as to repentance and a return to God.

The sheep goes astray, it is said, all the more frequently when it is most dangerous for it to do so. Propensities to stray seem to be developed in the very proportion in which they ought to be subdued. Whereas in our own land a sheep might wander with some safety, it wanders less in the Oriental plains, where for it to go astray is to run risks from leopards and wolves. Those very men who ought to be most careful, and who are placed in positions where it is best for them to be scrupulous, are those who are most prone to follow after evil—and with heedless carelessness to leave the way of Truth.

The sheep goes astray ungratefully. It owes everything to the shepherd, and yet forsakes the hand that feeds it and heals its diseases. The sheep goes astray repeatedly. If restored today it may not stray today if it cannot, but it will tomorrow if it can. The sheep wanders further and further, from bad to worse. It is not content with the distance it has reached, it will go yet greater lengths. There is no limit to its wandering except its weakness. Do you not see you own selves, my Brethren, as in a mirror? From Him that has blessed you, you have gone astray. To Him you owe your all, and yet from Him you continually depart. Your sins are not occasional—they are constant. Your wanderings are not slight, but you wander further and further—and were it not for restraining Grace which has prevented your

footsteps—you would have wandered even now to the utmost extremities of guilt and utterly destroyed your souls.

“All we like sheep have gone astray.” What? Is there not *one* faithful soul? Alas, no! “There is none that does good, no, not one.” Search the ranks of the blessed in Heaven and there is not one saint before the Throne who will boast that when on earth he never sinned. Search the Church of God below and there is not one, however closely he walks with God, but must confess that he has erred and strayed from God’s ways like a lost sheep. Vain is the man who refuses to confess this—for his hypocrisy or his pride, whichever may be the cause of such a base lie—proves that he is not one of God’s chosen. The chosen of God unanimously, mournfully, but heartily take up this cry, “All we like sheep have gone astray.” A general confession, then, is uttered in our text.

This confession by the mass is backed up by a personal acknowledgment from each one, “We have turned, every one to his own way.” Sin is general but yet special. All are sinners, but each one is a sinner with an emphasis. No man has of himself turned to God’s way, but in every case each one has chosen “his own way.” The very gist of sin lies in our setting up our own way in opposition to the way and will of God. We have all done so, we have all aspired to be our own masters, we have all desired to follow our own inclinations and have not submitted ourselves to the will of God.

The text implies that each man has his own peculiarity and special sin. All are diseased, but not all precisely with the same form of disease. It is well, my Brothers and Sisters, if each of us, in examining himself, has found out what is his own peculiar transgression. It is well to know what evil weeds flourish most readily in the soil of our heart—what wild beast that is most native to the forests of our soul. Many have felt that their peculiar sin was so remarkably evil and so surpassingly vile that it separated them altogether from the common rank of sinners. They felt that their iniquities were unique, and like lone peaks, lifted themselves defiantly towards the pure heavens of God provoking the fiercest thunderbolts of wrath. Such persons have almost been driven to despair under the belief that they were peculiarly great sinners—as Paul puts it—the very chief of sinners.

I should not wonder if this feeling which each one imagines to be peculiar to himself may have come over very many of us, and the shadow of despair may for awhile have fallen upon very many of us. It is no unusual thing for an awakened conscience to feel its own sinfulness to be above measure and parallel, the worst that has ever defiled mankind. This special sin happens to be the point to which I desire to call to your attention. I wish to show that the atoning sacrifice of Christ not only applies to sin in general, since “all we like sheep have gone astray,” but applies to special sin, for “we have turned, every one to his own way.”

I pass over it slightly now and introduce you further in the exposition of the text, to what I called the august doctrine of the Substitution of Christ, “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” We have seen the confession of sin made by the mass. We lightly touched the peculiar confession

made by each awakened individual—put all these together and you see a mass of sin—did I say you see it? It is a mass of sin too great to be beheld by the human understanding—an enormous load of iniquity against God. What is to be done with the offenders? The only thing that can be done with them, in the ordinary rule of justice, is to punish them for their offenses. And that punishment must be such as was threatened—indignation, wrath, destruction, death.

That God should punish sin is not a matter of impulse with Him. It was not with Him an alternative as to whether He might or might not punish sin. We speak always with holy awe when we speak of anything concerning Him, but with reverence we say it was not possible that God should wink at the iniquity of man. It was not possible that He should treat it with indifference. His attribute of Justice, which is as undoubtedly a part of His Glory as His attribute of Love, required that sin should be punished. Moreover, as God had been pleased to make a moral universe to be governed by laws, there would be an end of all government if the breaking of those laws involved no penalty whatever.

If, after the great King of all the earth had promulgated a Law, with certain penalties annexed to the breach of it, He did not cause those penalties to be exacted, there would be an end to the whole system of His government. The foundations would be removed. And if the foundations are removed, what shall the righteous do? It is infinitely benevolent of God, I will venture to say, to cast evil men into Hell. If that is thought to be a hard and strange statement, I reply that inasmuch as there is sin in the world, it is no benevolence to tolerate so great an evil. It is the highest benevolence to do all that can be done to restrain the horrible pest.

It would be far from benevolent for our government to throw wide the doors of all the jails, to abolish the office of the judge, to suffer every thief and every offender of every kind to go unpunished. Instead of mercy it would be cruelty. It might be mercy to the offender, but it would be intolerable injustice towards the upright and inoffensive. God's very benevolence demands that the detestable rebellion of sin against His supreme authority should be put down with a firm hand, that men may not flatter themselves that they can do evil and yet go unpunished. The necessities of moral government require that sin must be punished. The effeminate and sentimental talkers of this boastful age represent God as though He had no attribute but that of gentleness, no virtue but that of indifference to evil.

But the God of the Bible is glorious in holiness! He will by no means spare the guilty. At His bar every transgression is meted out its just recompense or reward. Even in the New Testament, where stands that golden sentence, "God is Love," His other attributes are by no means cast into the shade. Read the burning words of Peter, or James, or Jude, and see how the God of Sabaoth abhors evil! As the God who must do right, the Lord cannot shut His eyes to the iniquities of man. He must visit transgression with its punishment. He has done it, has done it terribly, and He will continue to do it. Even to all eternity He will show Himself the God that hates iniquity and sin.

What, then, is to become of man? "All we like sheep have gone astray." Sin must be punished. What, then, can become of us? Infinite Love has devised the expedient of representation and substitution. I call it an expedient, for we can only use the language of men. You remember, Brothers and Sisters, that you and I fell originally from our first estate by no act of our own—we, all of us, fell in the first Adam's transgression. Now, had we fallen *individually* and *personally*, in the first place, apart from another, it may be that our fall would have been hopeless. As the fall of the apostate angels, who having sinned one by one and not representatively, are reserved in chains of darkness forever under the condemnation and wrath of God—so might we have been.

But inasmuch as the first fountain of evil came to us through our parent, Adam, there remained for God a loophole through which His Divine love might enter without violation of Justice. The principle of representation wrecked us—the same principle of representation rescues us. Jesus Christ the Son of God becomes a Man and re-heads the race. He becomes the second Adam, obeys the Law of God, bears the penalty of sin, and now stands as the Head of all those who are in Him! And who are these but such as repent of sin and put their trust in Him? These get out of the old headship of the first Adam where they fell, and through the atoning sacrifice are cleansed from all personal guilt, brought into union with the second Adam, and stand again in Him, abiding forever in acceptance and felicity!

See, then, how it is that God has been pleased to deliver His people. It has been through carrying out a principle with which the very system of the universe commenced, namely, that of *representation*. I repeat it, had we been always and altogether separate units, there might have been no possibility of our salvation. But though every man sins separately, and the second clause of our text confesses that fact, yet we all sin in connection with others. For instance, who shall deny that each man receives propensities to sin from his parents, and that we transmit peculiarities of sin to our own children?

We stand in connection with race, and there are sins of races peculiar to races and to nationalities. We are never put on a probation of entire separation—we always stand in connection with others, and God has availed Himself of this, which I called a loophole, to bring in salvation for us by virtue of our union with another Man, who is also more than Man—the Son of God and yet the son of Mary—the Infinite who once became an Infant. The Eternal who lived, and bled, and died as the representative of all who put their trust in Him.

Now you will say, perhaps, that still, albeit this might have been at the bottom of the whole system of moral government, you do not quite see the justice of it. The reply to that remark is this—if *God* sees the justice of it you ought to be content with it. He was against whom every sin was aimed. And if He pleased to gather up the whole bundle of the sin of His people and say to His Beloved Son, "I will visit You for all these," and if Jesus, our Representative, joyously consented to bear our sins as our

Representative—who are you and who am I that we should enter any caveat against what God the infinitely just One consents to accept?

The text does not say that our sins were laid on Christ Jesus by *accident*, but, “the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” We sing sometimes, “I lay my sins on Jesus.” That is a very sweet act of faith, but at the bottom of it there is another laying, namely, that act in which it pleased the *Lord* to lay our sins on Jesus. Apart from the Lord’s doing it, our sins could never have been transferred to the Redeemer. The Lord is so just that we dare not think of examining His verdicts. He is so infinitely pure and holy that what He does we accept as being necessarily right. And inasmuch as we derive such blessed results from the Divine plan of Substitution, far be it from us to raise any question concerning it!

Jesus was accepted as the natural Substitute and Representative of all those who trust Him, and all the sins of these were laid on Him so that they were freed from guilt. Jesus was regarded as if all these sins were His sins. He was punished as if these were His sins. He was put to shame, forsaken of God, and delivered to death as if He had been a sinner. And thus, through Divine Grace, those who actually committed the sins are permitted to go free. They have satisfied justice through the sufferings of their Substitute.

Beloved Brethren, the most fit Person to be a Substitute for us was Christ Jesus. And why? Because He had been pleased to take us, His people, into union with Himself. If He were our Head, and He had made us to be members of His Body, who more fit to suffer for the body than the Head? If He had, and Scripture tells us so, entered into a mysterious conjugal union with us, who more fit to suffer for the spouse than her Husband? Christ is Man, therefore His fitness and adaptation to be a Substitute for man. The creature that sins must be the creature that suffers—man breaks God’s Law—and man must honor it. As by man came death, by Man also must come the resurrection from the dead—and Jesus Christ was undoubtedly Man of the substance of His mother.

He was fit to be our Substitute because He was a pure Man. He had no offense in Him. Neither Satan, nor the more searching eye of God could find any evil in Him. He was under no obligation to the Law except as He put Himself under the Law. He owed nothing to the great moral Governor until He voluntarily became a subject of His moral government on our behalf. Therefore, being without obligation Himself—having no debts of His own—He was fit to take upon Himself our liabilities. And as He was under no obligations for Himself, He was a fitting One to become under obligations for us.

Moreover, He did all this voluntarily, and His fitness much lies here. If a substitute should be dragged to death for us unwillingly, if such could be the case, an injustice would be perpetrated in the very act. But Jesus Christ, taking up His Cross, and going forth willingly to suffer for us, proved His fitness to redeem us. Once more—His being God as well as Man, gave the strength to suffer—gave Him the power to stoop. If He had not been so lofty as to be Fellow with the eternal God, He would not have stooped so low as to redeem us, but —

**“From the highest Throne in Glory
To the Cross of deepest woe,”**

was such a descent that there was an infinite merit in it. When He stooped, even to the grave itself, there was an infinite merit by which Justice was satisfied, the Law was vindicated, and those for whom He died were effectually saved.

I do not want to proceed to the other point until everyone here has got the thought, and grasped it, and received it. We have gone astray, but the straying of as many of us as believe, were laid on Christ. We have each chosen our own way of sin, but those sins are not ours now—they are laid on our great Substitute—if we are trusting in Him. He has paid to the utmost farthing all the debt of those sins. He has borne the fullness of Divine wrath, and there is no wrath against *us*. Just as the bullock was laid on the altar to be burnt, God’s wrath came like consuming fire and burnt the bullock, and there was no fire left. So when the wrath of God fell on Christ, it consumed Him, and there was no fire left, no wrath left—it spent itself.

God has no anger against a soul that believes in Jesus. Neither has that soul any sin, for its sin has been laid on Christ, and it cannot be in two places at once—Christ has carried it and the sin has ceased to be. The believing soul, though in itself as black as Hell, is now as bright as Christ Himself when He was transfigured, for Christ has finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. Thus we conclude our general exposition of the verse.

II. I now desire for a short time, but with all the earnestness of my soul, to dwell on THE SPECIAL DOCTRINE taught in the central clause of the text—“We have turned, every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Each man and each woman, from a natural difference of constitution, from the variations in education, and from the diversities of circumstances, has sinned somewhat differently from every other. Two brothers educated by the same parents will yet display diversities of transgression. No man treads exactly in the same footsteps as another, and some take roads which, though equally wrong, are diametrically opposite. One turns to the right hand, and another to the left, both equally renouncing the onward path.

Now, the glory of the text that I want to bring out is this—that if you believe in Jesus Christ, this special sin of yours was laid on Him, as well as all those other sins in which you stand on an equality with your fellow men. There was a publican—he had been a common, gross offender—rough and harsh to his brother Jews in demanding an inordinate tax. He was a man of low habits, indulging in drunkenness, fornication, and other defilements. Yet when that publican went up to the house of God and said, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” the Atonement just met the publican’s iniquity, and exactly took away the publican’s transgression.

But, on the other hand, there was a Pharisee—the opposite of the publican—proud and self-righteous, not submitting himself to the righteousness of God. He considered himself to be in all things better than other men. But remember that when he fell off his horse as he was riding to

Damascus, and heard a voice that said, "Why do you persecute Me?" that very same Pharisee said, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." There was in Christ precisely that which met the Pharisee's sin. In our Lord's day there were Sadducees, too—that is, men who said there was neither angel nor spirit. They were infidels, skeptics, free-thinkers—your Broad Church sinners.

Now these men neither went into coarse transgression with the publican nor into superstition with the Pharisee, but they had their direct antagonism to the Truth of God. And I doubt not cases occurred to prove that in the pardoning blood of Christ the Sadducee's case was met. No matter in what peculiar direction any one of the Lord's sheep has gone astray, the Lord has laid that particular straying upon the Savior.

I want to speak, now, so as to fetch forth some individuals here this morning. It may be that one here today is saying, "I sinned against an early Christian training. No one ever had a better mother or a more tender father. I knew the Word of God, like Timothy, from my youth—but I did despite to all this teaching and sinned with aggravation of infamy. I sinned against the clearest light."

Brothers and Sisters, your sin is very great, but the Lord has laid on Jesus your iniquity. Look to the Cross, and see it laid there. "Yes," says another, "but I have had the strivings of God's Spirit. In addition to an early Christian education, I have sat under an earnest Gospel ministry. I have often been impressed. I have been driven to my chamber to pray, but I have quenched the holy emotions, and have continued in sin." O guilty One, the Lord has laid on His dear Son your iniquity! Can you look to Jesus now and trust Christ—"The Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world"? Then this offense of yours against the Holy Spirit is put away.

"But," says another, "I am conscious of having had naturally a remarkable tenderness of spirit. From my early childhood I knew right from wrong, and when I sinned it cost me much trouble to sin. I have had to wound my conscience before I could speak an ill word, or commit an evil action." Ah, my Brethren, that is a very condemning thing, to sin against a tender conscience. It is a great benefit, and in this age a very unusual benefit, to have much sensitiveness and delicacy of moral constitution. And if you have violated it, it is certainly a great transgression. But though, "we have turned, every one to his own way, the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Let no despairing thought come upon you as though this sin were unpardonable. The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." Look, now, by faith to Jesus, and you shall find that your sin is blotted out.

There may be one in this place who says, "Sir, I committed a sin under certain remarkable circumstances which I would not, could not, mention. But the remembrance of that one sin rankles in my soul at this hour. If I had not deliberately, and with malice aforethought, having not the fear of God before my eyes, chosen that sin, there might have been hope—but that sin, like a millstone, is about my neck and will sink me forever and ever." Look, Soul! Can you see Christ on the Cross? Will you now confide

in Him? If so, though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as wool, though they are red like crimson they shall be as snow.

I know not what your sin may have been, but if it were murder itself, if you would now trust the Son of God, your sin should vanish quite away from you, and you should be clean, clean every whit, before the all-seeing Eyes of Eternal Justice. O that you would believe, and this should be true to you. "No," cries another, "but mine has been a *life* of peculiarly gross sin. I would not have my character unmasked before this congregation on any account." Consider then, my Friend, what it will be to have it published before a greater congregation, before the entire universe!

"Ah," you say, "I fear my condemnation is certain, for my transgressions have not been those of thought, merely, but of *act*. The members of my body have been the instruments of uncleanness." Listen, I pray, "All manner of sin and of iniquity shall be forgiven unto men." There is no sin so black, save only one, but it may find forgiveness. Yes, and without exception, there is no sin that is possible to man but what it shall be forgiven to any man who comes to Christ, and with simple trust, does cast himself on Him. Your extreme evil was laid on Christ. Though you have turned unto your own way, yet this, too, was laid on Him.

Do I not hear, here and there in the congregation, hearts sighing out, "He does not strike my case yet! Mine has not been gross sin, but I have hardened my heart. I used to feel at one time I had great drawings towards the Lord Jesus, but I gave Him up. I have backslidden. I have from time to time rejected Gospel invitations, until now, at last, the Lord has sworn in His wrath that I shall not enter into His rest. My transgressions have gone over my head like overflowing waters, I sink in them as in deep mire where there is no standing."

Yes, but Soul, I must bring you back to the text. You have turned to your own way, but, if you believe, the Lord has laid on Jesus even *this* iniquity, also. If you will trust Him, your hardenings of heart shall now be forgiven you. You are not too late—the gate of Mercy still stands wide open. If you trust in Jesus, this iniquity shall be blotted out. "Alas," says another, "but I have been a hypocrite. I have come to the Lord's Table, and yet I have never had an interest in Christ. I have been baptized, but yet I never had true faith."

Well, now, I will say this to end all matters—if you have perpetrated *all* the sins that ever were committed by men or devils. If you have defiled yourself with all the blackness that could be raked out of the lowermost kennels of Hell. If you have spoken the most damnable blasphemies and followed the most outrageous vices—yet Jesus Christ is an infinite Savior, and nothing can exceed the merit of His precious blood! "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin." Can you believe this? Can you do Christ the honor to believe this, and come and crouch at the feet that once were pierced? Ah, Man, you shall find mercy now, and you shall clap your hands and say, "He has blotted out my sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud my iniquities."

I am afraid I do not convey to you the pleasure of my own soul in turning over this thought, but it has charmed me beyond measure. Here were

Lot's sins, scandalous sins. I cannot mention them—they were very different from David's sins. Black sins, scarlet sins, were those of David, but David's sins are not at all like those of Manasseh. The sins of Manasseh were not the same as those of Peter—Peter sinned in quite a different track. And the woman that was a sinner, you could not liken her to Peter. And if you look to *her* character you could not set her side by side with Lydia. Nor if you think of Lydia, can you see her without discovering a great divergence between her and the Philippian jailer.

They are all alike. They have all gone Astray. But they are all different, they have turned, every one to his own way. But here is the blessed gathering up of them all! The Lord has made to meet on the Redeemer, as in a common focus, the iniquity of all these! And up yonder Magdalena's song joins sweetly with that of the woman who was a sinner. And Lydia, chaste, but yet needing pardon, sings side by side with Bathsheba and Rahab—while David takes up the strain with Samson and with Gideon! And these with Abraham and with Isaac—all differently sinners—but the Atonement meeting every case.

We always think that man a quack, who advertises a medicine as healing every disease. But when you come to the great Gospel medicine—the precious blood of Jesus Christ—you have there in very deed what the old doctors used to call a catholicon, a universal medicine. It meets every case in its distinctness. It puts away sin in all its separateness of guilt as if it were made for that sin, and for that sin, alone.

III. My time has gone, and therefore I must close with this, A SPECIAL DUTY ARISING OUT OF THE SPECIAL DOCTRINE. My dear Brothers and Sisters, if in my discourse I have at all described you, or if not having described you, I have yet from that very reason indicated you as an indescribable, look to Christ and find mercy! And then ever afterwards make it a rule with your soul that as you have been a special sinner you will have special love and special gratitude, and do your Lord special service.

Oh, if it takes twenty times the Grace to save me than it does another, then I will render to my Savior twenty times the love and twenty times the service. If I am an out-of-the-way straying sheep, peculiarly and specially black, defiled and disgraced—then if He loves me I will go upon this rule—that having had much forgiven I will love much.

Brothers and Sisters, I wish you did feel, I wish *I* did feel, more and more the peculiarity of the weight of our personal sin, for I am sure it is the way to drive us into manliness of Christian service. If you perform homage to Christ as one of a crowd, you do but little, and that little badly. For eminent service you need to get away from the crowd and serve the Lord *personally* by yourself, and as an individual. Get alone, I mean in a sense of obligation. Separate yourself, as if you were a marked man, and must serve Jesus Christ in a marked way. The separation of pride is detestable, but individuality of service is admirable. Those who stand steadily in the rank and file do well, but those who step forward to lead the forlorn hope do better.

O for more Davids to come forth and say, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" O that the

Christian Church had more self-sacrificing men, like old Curtius, who, when there is a chasm to fill up, leaps into it and feels it an honor to be swallowed up for Christ's sake and the Truth's sake. O for many a Christian who, like the Roman hero, will hold his hand in the fire if need be, and flinch not, feeling that all suffering were little to bear for one who bled for us. We want more consecrated men. May God raise them up. And He will if you who feel your special sinnership find special mercy—and then render to God special returns.

It has struck me that we need more and more in the pulpit, and in the pew, individuality in our Christian experience and service. You see, we are all individuals in sinning, we have turned, every one to his own way, and yet many Christian people want to have their experience modeled after the example of someone else. They do not like to grow like God's trees in the forest, with their gnarled roots and twisted boughs. They want to be clipped like Dutch trees into one uniform stiffness. Why, you lose the beauty of Christianity when you lose the individuality of Christians!

In preaching and Sunday school teaching, and everything else, the tendency is to go too much to ill ruts and grooves. One might fancy that men and women were made by machinery, like pens at Birmingham, all of a sort. We would have every man in Grace as individual as he was in sin. We need the originality of saintly life as well as of sinnership. It were well if a Christian man would step out of the beaten track and carry out his individuality and be what God especially meant him to be. Brethren, there is a part of this world which can never get a blessing except through *you*. Christ has power over all flesh, and He has given His servants power over their little portions of that great mass.

All the ministers that ever lived cannot bring to Christ those souls whom God has ordained that I shall be the means of turning to Christ. And neither I, nor my Brethren, preach as we may, can bring to Christ the man whom God has ordained to save through yonder obscure village preacher who is now standing on a log on the village green, or holding forth in a wooden shed in the backwoods of America. There is a place for every man—and the way for every man to find that out is to be himself and nobody else. As he used to be himself when he was a sinner, so let him be himself now he has become a saint, and follow out, under God's guidance, the movements of his own individualities, the singularities of his own nature.

Do not think about planing off your edges and getting rid of the points God has made in you distinct from other men. It will never do. You lose of Christianity the very beauty and excellence if you do this. Your fine critics would have Rowland Hill preach like Thomas Chalmers—Rowland Hill must never utter a witticism in the pulpit, yet he could not be Rowland Hill if he did not. He must, therefore, be transformed into someone else, for these superfine gentlemen will not allow that Rowland Hill as Rowland Hill can honor God. Wisdom will be of all her children. Whether you speak with the learning of Apollos, or with the eloquence of a Paul, or with the blunt homeliness of a Cephas, the Lord will get to Himself honor, if you speak sincerely.

And it is not for Paul to mimic Cephas, nor for Cephas to copy Apollos. As we have turned, every one to his own way, and our peculiar sin has been laid on Christ, so let each Believer now, in his own way, under the direction of Christ, seek to serve his Lord and Master. My great practical lesson from it is this—you are always seeing new inventions in the world, men are evermore bringing out some new system or scheme. We tunnel the earth, we split the clouds, we speak by lightning, we ride on the wings of the wind. But in the Christian Church how few inventors we have!

Robert Raikes invented the Sunday school. John Pounds invented Ragged schools—have we come to the end of gracious ingenuity? Oh, if we loved Christ better, every man would invent something—he would have a mode of action growing out of his own peculiar capacities. He would feel that God meant to meet a case by him that would never be met by anybody else. Men are all alive about this world, and all asleep about the world to come. I would urge you each to have a mission, to espouse a work, to obtain a calling. Ask God not to put you into the Sunday school as a matter of mere Providence, but as a matter of special ordination.

And if you are ordained to be a Sunday school teacher, ask Him to put you into some particular class, not as by an accident, but as a special sphere for your special character and taste, and mode of thought, and manner of action. Follow, as God the Holy Spirit shall help you, the promptings of the Divine life that God has put within you. And as you served Satan with all your individuality, even so serve Him upon whom the Lord of old did lay your iniquity. The Lord bless you for Christ's sake.

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THE SHEEP BEFORE THE SHEARERS

NO. 1543

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 20, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“As a sheep before her shearers is dumb,
so He opens not His mouth.”
Isaiah 53:7.***

It is very suggestive of the way in which our Lord Jesus took the sinner's place that we are here, in the context, compared to sheep—“All we like sheep have gone astray,” and then He who comes to take our place is also compared to a sheep—“As a sheep before her shearers is dumb.” It is wonderful how complete was the interchange of positions between Christ and His people so that what they were He became in order that what He is they may become! See how closely He became like His brethren? I can very well understand how we should be compared to the sheep and He to the shepherd, but I should never have dared to coin the comparison which likens Him to a sheep! I dare try to explain, but I should never have dared to utter it if I had not found it here.

To liken the Son of the Highest to a sheep would have been unpardonable presumption had not His own Spirit employed the condescending figure. Though the emblem is very gracious, it is by no means novel, for our Lord had been long before Isaiah's day typified in the Lamb of the Passover. To call Him, “the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world,” is a very frequent mode of explaining to us how He made expiation for our transgressions and, indeed, even in His Glory He is the Lamb in the midst of the Throne before whom angels and the redeemed are bowing. I delight to bring before your minds the amazing communion between yourselves and Jesus—you “like sheep” and He “as a sheep”—you like sheep in your wanderings, He like a sheep in His patience. You more like sheep—I mean myself and you—more like sheep for foolishness, but He only like a sheep for the sweet submissiveness of His Spirit, so that beneath the shearer's hand, “He opens not His mouth.”

I. I will not keep you with any preface, but invite you to consider, first, OUR SAVIOR'S PATIENCE under the figure of a sheep before her shearers. Let us view our Lord's patience by the help of the Holy Spirit. I do not think I will preach to you, but I will set before you as open a window as I can and ask you to look in and behold the Lamb of God. Our Lord was brought to the slaughter and brought, in another sense, by another figure, to the shearer. He was brought to the slaughter that He might die—to the shearers that He might be shorn of His comfort and of His honors—shorn, even, of His good name and shorn, at last, of life itself.

While He was before the slaughterers He was quiet as a lamb that is led—when He was under the shearers He was as silent as a sheep that lies to be shorn. You know the story of how patient He was before Pilate and Herod and Caiaphas and on the Cross. You have no record of His groaning, or of His uttering any exclamation as though impatient of the pain and shame which He received at the hands of wicked men. You have not one bitter word, one hard speech. Pilate cries, “Answer You nothing? Behold how many things they witness against You!” And Herod is bitterly disappointed, for he expected to see some miracle worked by Jesus. All that He says is like the bleating of a sheep, only so infinitely more full of meaning. He utters sentences like these—“For this purpose was I born and came into the world, that I might bear witness to the Truth” and, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” He is all patience and silence.

Now remember, first, that our Lord was silent and opened not His mouth against His adversaries and did not accuse one of them of cruelty or injustice. They slandered Him, but He replied not. False witnesses arose, but He answered them not. He did not say, like Paul, “God shall smite you, you white wall.” I am not going to condemn Paul, but I certainly am not going to commend him, either. In contrast with the Master, how differently he behaves! Jesus lets not fall a word against anybody, though they are doing everything that malice can invent against Him. For Pilate He even makes a half apology, “He that delivered Me unto you has the greater sin.”

One would have thought He must have spoken when they spat in His face. Might He not have said, “Friend, why are you doing this? For which of all My works do you insult Me?” But the time for such expostulations was over. When they struck Him on the face with the palms of their hands, it would have been understandable if He had said, “Why do you strike Me so?” But no, He speaks not. He brings no accusation to His Father. He had only to have lifted His eyes to Heaven, or to have felt a wrathful *wish* and legions of angels would have chased out the ribald soldiers—one flash of a seraph’s wing and Herod had been eaten by worms and Pilate had died the death he well deserved as an unjust judge!

The hill of the Cross might have become a volcano’s mouth to swallow up the whole multitude who stood there jesting and jeering at Him. But no, nothing of the kind—there was no display of power, or rather there was so great a display of power over Himself that He did not use His might against His most bitter foes! He restrained Omnipotence, itself, with a strength which can never be measured, for His mighty love availed even to restrain Divine Wrath! He kept back the natural indignation which must have come over His spirit against the injustice, the lies, the shameful malice of His foes. He held it all back and was patient, meek, silent to the end.

Again, as He did not utter a word against His adversaries, so He did not say a word against any one of us. You remember how Zipporah said to Moses, “Surely a bloody husband you are to me,” as she saw her child

bleeding? And surely Jesus might have said to His Church, “You are a costly spouse to Me, to bring Me all this shame and blood shedding.” But He gives liberally, He opens the very fountain of His heart and He upbraids not. He had reckoned on the uttermost expenditure and endured the Cross, despising the shame—

***“This was compassion like a God,
That when the Savior knew
The price of pardon was His blood,
His pity never withdrew.”***

No doubt He looked across the ages, for those eyes of His were not dim even when bloodshot on the Cross and He might have looked at your indifference and mine, at our coldness of heart and unfaithfulness—and He might have left on record some such words as these—“I am suffering for those who are utterly unworthy of My regard; their love will be a very poor return for Mine. Though I give My whole heart for them, how lukewarm is their love to Me! I am sick of them. I am weary of them and it is woe to Me that I should be laying down My heart’s blood for such a worthless race as these, My people, are.”

But there is not a hint of such a feeling, not a trace of it! He is silent before the shearers. They shear away everything from Him. They strip Him to the last rag, till, as He hangs upon the tree, He says, “I can count all My bones, they look and stare upon Me,” and yet He murmurs not against our cruel sins! He was stripped because we were naked, that He might cover our nakedness and yet He makes no complaint against us, nor utters a single syllable by way of regret that He had entered upon so severe an enterprise and that He was paying so heavy a price. No. “For the joy that was set before Him He endured the Cross, despising the shame,” and not a syllable is uttered that looks like murmuring, or wishing that He had not commenced the work.

And again, as there was not a word against His adversaries, nor a word against you or me, so there was not a word against His Father or of repining at the severity of the punishment of our sin. You know how Cain said, “My punishment is greater than I can bear,” and yet to me he seems to have been treated with strange leniency, that first red-handed murderer. Sometimes you and I have cried, when under a comparatively light grief, “Surely my grief cannot be weighed in the scales, nor measured in the balances!” We have thought ourselves treated very harshly. We have dared to cry out against God, “My face is foul with weeping and on my eyelids is the shadow of death; not for any injustice in my hands: also my prayer is pure.”

But not so the Savior. In His mouth were no complaints. And yet it is quite impossible for us to conceive how the Father pressed and bruised Him. How often did that olive press revolve? How was the screw tightened again and again and again, to bring the stones together, to bruise out of Him His very life! “It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief.” He, alone, of all mankind could truly say, “All Your waves and Your billows have gone over Me.” Yet there is not a complaint, for, “My God, My

God, why have You forsaken Me?" is a cry of *grief*—it is not a cry of repining. It shows manhood in its weakness, but not manhood in revolt! There is the cry of grief, but there is not the voice of rebellion there, nor even of despair.

We have the Lamentations of Jeremiah, but where are the lamentations of Jesus? Jesus wept and Jesus sweated great drops of blood, but He never murmured nor felt rebellion in His heart. Beloved, I feel as if I cannot preach upon this, but ask you just to look in there, within the open door and see Jesus, the Lamb, waiting in the shambles. He is not struggling when the knife is at His throat, but waiting there to die and dying with His own consent—laying down His life willingly for our sakes. Look again and see your Lord and Savior lying down stretched out in passive resignation beneath the shearers as they take away everything that is dear to Him and yet He opens not His mouth!

I see in this, in Christ our Lord, complete submission. He gives Himself up. There is no reserve about it. The Sacrifice did not need binding with cords to the horns of the altar. How different from your case and mine! He stands there willing to suffer, to be spit upon, to be shamefully treated and to die, for in Him there was a complete surrender. There was no reserve about His body, soul, or spirit. He was wholly given up to do the Father's will and work out our redemption. There was a complete self-conquest, too. In Him no faculty arose to plead for liberty and ask to be exempted from the general strain. No limb of the body, no portion of the mind, no faculty of the spirit complained—all submitted—a *whole* Christ giving up His *whole* being unto God that He might perfectly offer Himself without spot for our redemption.

There was not only self-conquest, but there was a complete absorption in His work. The sheep, lying there, thinks no more of the pastures. It just gives itself up to the shearer. And Christ forsook His Father that He might be one flesh with *us*—that was at the very first and, therefore, He came here and was joined unto us at Bethlehem. He kept up the union to the end and, therefore, He was one with us in *death*. The zeal of God's house did eat Him up in Pilate's hall as well as everywhere else, for there He witnessed a good confession. No thought had He but for the clearing of the Divine honor and the salvation of God's elect.

His powers were concentrated into one desire and the passion of love to men made His heart hot within Him till it melted and ran out in a stream of love and blood. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, I wish *we* could always get to this—to submit our whole spirit to God, to resign ourselves completely, to learn self-conquest and then the delivering up of conquered self entirely to God—the absorption of it all in one desire, the burning up of the sacrifice till it should be like Elijah's sacrifice on Carmel when the fire came down from Heaven and consumed not only the bullock, but the wood and the stones of the altar and licked up the water that was in the trenches and the whole sacrifice went up in one vast cloud of fire and smoke to Heaven, a whole burnt offering to the living God!

This is just what one could wish might happen to us, even as it happened unto the Lord's Christ on that day. The wonderful serenity and submissiveness of our Lord are still better set forth by our text, if it is, indeed, true that sheep in the east are even more docile than with us. Those who have seen the noise and roughness of many of our washings and shearings will hardly believe the testimony of that ancient writer Philo-Judaeus when he affirms that the sheep came voluntarily to be shorn. He says—"Woolly rams laden with thick fleeces put themselves into his hands [the shepherd's] to have their wool shorn, being thus accustomed to pay their yearly tribute to man, their king by nature. The sheep stands in a silent inclining posture, unconstrained under the hand of the shearer. These things may appear strange to those who do not know the docility of the sheep, but they are true."

II. Thus I have very feebly, indeed, set before you, dear Friends, the patience of our beloved Master. Now I want you to follow me, in the second place, to view our own case under the same metaphor as that which is used in reference to our Lord. Did not I begin by saying that because we were sheep, He deigns to compare Himself to a sheep? Now, just go back again. Our Lord was as a sheep under the shearers and as He is, so are we, also, in this world. Though we shall never be offered up like a lamb in the temple by way of expiation, yet the saints, for ages, were the flock of slaughter, as it is written, "For Your sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter!" Jesus sends us forth as sheep in the midst of wolves and we are to regard ourselves as living sacrifices, ready to be offered up.

I dwell, however, more particularly upon the second symbol—we can go and *do* go as sheep under the shearers' hands. I want to speak to you a little, this evening, about this figure, as I have no doubt it has been worked out in the lives of many here present and may perhaps be worked out at this present time and in future days in the rest of you. Just as a sheep is taken by the shearer and its wool is all cut off, so does the Lord take His people and shear them, taking away all their comforts at times—all their *earthly* comforts and leaving them bare as shorn sheep. I wish when it came to our turn to undergo this shearing operation it could be said of us as of our Lord, "As a sheep before her shearers, so He opens not His mouth."

I fear that we open our mouths a great deal and make no end of complaint. But now to the figure. We need to be reconciled to the shearing process and to that end I shall speak at this time. First, remember that a sheep rewards its owner for all his care and trouble by being shorn. There is nothing else that I know of that a sheep can do. It yields food when it is killed, but while it is alive the one payment that the sheep can make to the shepherd is to yield its fleece in due season. And so, dear Friends, a sheep, if it were intelligent, might well be reconciled to be shorn because it would say, "The shepherd deserves to be rewarded for his pains and so I am content to go down to the shearing house, to yield my fleece that he may be repaid."

Some of God's people can give to Christ a tribute of gratitude by active service and they should do so gladly every day of their lives, but many others cannot do much in active service and about the only reward they can give to their Lord is to give up their fleece by suffering when He calls upon them to suffer. They can submissively yield to be shorn of their personal comfort when the time comes for patient endurance. And mark you, those who serve Christ *actively* ought to feel that what they do in that way is all too little and if they can supplement it by passive service, by yielding themselves to be shorn as others are, they ought to rejoice that in this way they can show forth to Christ the more abundant gratitude for what He has done for them.

Here comes the shearer. He takes the sheep and begins to cut, cut, cut, cut, taking away the wool by wholesale. Affliction is often used as the big shears. The husband is taken away, or perhaps the wife. Little children are taken away, property is taken away, health is taken away. Sometimes the shears even cut off your good name—slander comes—everything seems to come and remove your consolations till all comforts vanish. Well, this is your shearing time and it may be that you are not able to glorify God to any very large extent except by undergoing this process. And if this is the case, do you not think that you and I, like good sheep of Christ, should surrender cheerfully and say, "I lay myself down with this intent, that You should take from me anything and everything and do what You will with me, for I am not my own—I am bought with a price and so I would cheerfully yield to anything by which You may get some honor out of me.

"O, You great Shepherd of the sheep, clip and shear me as You will, so long as You see some sort of return for all Your tender care and bitter woe." Notice that the sheep is, itself, benefited by the operation of shearing. Before they begin to shear the sheep the wool is long and old and every bush that catches it, every thistle with which it gets entangled, every briar that it passes by, tears off a bit of the wool and the sheep looks ragged and forlorn. If the wool were left on it when the heat of summer came, it would not be able to bear it—it would be so overloaded with clothing that it would be as we, ourselves, are when we have kept on our borrowed wool, our flannels and broadcloths too late.

After the heat of summer has come we have to throw off our thick clothes. We cannot bear them—and so the sheep is the better for losing its wool—it would become a hindrance to it and not a comfort if it had to retain it. So, Brothers and Sisters, when the Lord shears us, we do not like the operation any more than the sheep does, but first, it is for His Glory and secondly, it is really for our benefit and, therefore, we are bound most willingly to submit. There are many things which we should have liked to have kept which, if we had kept them, would not have proved blessings, but curses. Remember, a stale blessing is a curse.

The bronze serpent preserved as a relic became a snare to the people till it was broken up and called Nehushtan, a piece of brass. The manna, though it came from Heaven, was only good so long as God's command

made it a blessing and when they kept it over its due time it bred worms and stank and then it was no blessing. I do believe that many persons, if they could, would keep their blessings stinking in the house till they filled their cupboards with worms! But God will not have it so. Up to a certain point for you to be wealthy was a blessing—it would not have been a blessing any longer and so the Lord took your riches away. Up to that point your child was a gift, but it would have been no longer so and, therefore, it fell sick and died. You may not be able to see it, but it must certainly be that God, when He withdraws a blessing from His people, takes it away because it would not be a blessing any longer.

Remember this text, “No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly,” and if that is true, then this is true, “No really good thing will I take away from them that walk uprightly,” for that is something more than withholding. When the wool goes, it is because the sheep does not really need it—it is better without it. Mr. Jonatt, who has written upon sheep, tells us, “As the spring advances, the old wool is no longer needed to defend the animal from the cold and it becomes, from its weight and its warmth, a nuisance rather than a comfort.” When the Lord Jesus Christ sends affliction and trial to shear us, while we hope to glory Him in the process, it is also good for us that we should have it cut away. Though we do not like it at the time, it is working our lasting good.

You who know something about sheep will remember that before sheep are shorn they are always washed. Were you ever present at the scene when they drive them down to the brook, to the place where they have dammed up the stream to make a pool for washing? There the men stand in rows, while the shepherd stands in the water, breast high. The sheep are driven down and the men seize them, throw them into the water, keeping their faces above water and swill them round and round and round to wash the wool before they clip it off. You see them come out on the other side frightened to death, poor things, wondering whatever is coming, no doubt under the impression that they are going to be drowned. And when they escape, they stand bleating on the other shore as, one by one, they finish their swim.

I want to suggest to you, Brethren, that whenever a trial threatens to overtake you, before it actually arrives you should ask the Lord to sanctify you. If He is going to clip the wool, ask Him to wash it before He takes it off. Ask to be cleansed in spirit, soul and body. That is a very good custom Christian people have of asking a blessing on their meals before they eat bread. Do you not think it is even more necessary to ask a blessing on our *troubles* before we get into them? Here is your dear child likely to die—will you not, dear parents, meet together and ask God to bless the death of that child if it is to happen? Here are things going badly in trade—would it not be a good thing to hold a special meeting in the family and ask God to bless your declining business to you? There is a bad crop. The harvest fails—would it not be well to say, “Lord, sanctify this poverty, this loss, this year’s bad harvest. Cause it to be a means of Grace to us. The evil is coming and before it comes we would ask a blessing on it.”

Why not ask a blessing on the cup of bitterness as well as upon the cup of thanksgiving? Ask to be washed before you are shorn and if the shearing must come, let that be your chief concern. "Lord, if You are coming to take my wool, make it clean before You take it. Wash what You take and wash me, also, and I shall be clean. Yes, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." After the washing and the sheep has dried, the sheep actually loses what was its comfort. It is thrown down and you see the shearers. You wonder at them and pity the poor sheep. The sheep is losing what was its comfort. It will happen to you that you shall lose what is your comfort. Will you remember this? Because the next time you receive a fresh comfort you must say it is a loan.

Oh sheep, there is no wool on your back but what will come off! Child of God, there is no comfort in your possession but what will either leave you, or you will leave it! Nothing is our own except our God. "Why," says one, "not our *sin*?" That *was* our own, I admit that, but Jesus has taken that upon Himself and we call it no more our own. There is nothing our own but our God and there is no blessing that we have but what, when the Lord sends it to us, it is with the agreement that we shall have it only for a time. It is held on lease, terminable at the will of the Lord. We foolishly consider that our mercies belong to us and when the Lord takes them away we half grumble. If you borrow anything of a neighbor, you ought not to send it back with tears, or say, "I am sorry you need it back."

A loan, they say, should go laughing home and so should what God loans us. We should rejoice. He gives and, blessed be His name, He takes but what He gave. He does not take to Himself anything of ours—He takes to Himself what He lent us. All our possessions are but favors borrowed here to be eventually returned. So as the sheep yields up its wool and loses its comfort, so must we yield up all our comforts one by one. Or if they remain with us till we die, we shall part with them, then—we shall not take so much as one of them across the stream of death. Our spiritual riches are of another kind and they are laid up already in Heaven—but of all things here below we shall take not a thread with us.

The shearers, when they are taking the wool off the sheep, take care not to hurt the sheep. They clip as close as they can, but they do not cut the skin. If possible, they will not make a gash or a wound, or draw blood even in the smallest degree. When they do make a gash, it is because the sheep does not lie still. But a careful shearer has bloodless shears. Of this Thomson sings in his Seasons and the passage is so good an illustration of the whole subject that I will adorn my discourse with it—

***"How meek, how patient, the mild creature lies!
What softness in its melancholy face,
What dumb complaining innocence appears!
Fear not, you gentle tribes! 'tis not the knife
Of horrid slaughter that is o'er you waved.
No, 'tis the tender swain's well guided shears,
Who having now, to pay his annual care,
Borrowed your fleece, to you a cumbrous load,***

Will send you bounding to your hills again.

You can be sure that when the Lord is clipping and shearing us He will not hurt us. He will take our comforts away, but He will not really injure us, or cause a wound to our spirits. Has He not said, "In the world you shall have tribulation, but in Me you shall have peace"?

If ever the shears make us bleed, it is because we kick, because we struggle. If we were patient as the sheep, we should just lie still and the process would cost us very little pain. What pain there was would become delightful, seeing we had submitted ourselves entirely to the Divine will. Pain grows into pleasure when you come to feel that God wills it—you are glad to suffer because He ordains you should. It is the kicking and the struggling that make the shearing work at all hard. But if we are silent before the shearers, no hurt can come. The Lord may clip wonderfully close—I have known Him clip some very close who did not seem to have a bit of wool left, for they were stripped entirely, just as Job was when He cried, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb and naked shall I return there," but still, he was able to add, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away and blessed be the name of the Lord."

You will notice about sheep shearing that the shearers always shear at a suitable time. It would be a very wicked, cruel and unwise thing to begin shearing sheep in winter time. There is a proverb which talks about God "tempering the wind to the shorn lamb." It may be so, but it is a very wicked practice to shear lambs while winds need tempering. Sheep are shorn when it is warm, genial weather—when they can afford to lose their fleece and are all the better for being relieved of it. As the summer comes on sheep shearing time comes. Have you ever noticed that whenever the Lord afflicts us, He selects the best possible time? There is a prayer that He puts into His disciples' mouths, "Pray that your flight is not in the winter"—the spirit of that prayer may be seen in the seasonableness of our sorrows. He will not send us our worst troubles at our worst times.

I have frequently noticed and I have treasured it up with gratitude, that when I have had strong inclinations to sin, the opportunity has not come—that if ever I have had opportunities of sinning temptingly put before me—then I have had no inward longing towards the sin. When the inward desire and the opportunity meet, that is a very dangerous case, indeed, but the Lord keeps His people from that. So if you notice your soul is depressed, the Lord does not send you a very heavy burden but reserves such a load for times when you have had joy in the Lord and that joy has been your strength. It has got to be a kind of feeling with us that when we have much delight, a trial is near—and when sorrow thickens, deliverance is approaching. The Lord does not send us two burdens at a time, or if He does, He sends double strength.

It is an observation which I suppose no one would make but an Irishman and I am not one, that you never knew the west wind blow when the east wind is troubling you. You never knew the wind blow from the north when it was blowing from the south. As a rule, unless it is in a tornado or a cyclone, the wind blows from some one quarter. "He stays His rough

wind in the day of the east wind.” He knows how to prevent our suffering more tribulation than we can bear. He shears us, but not to injure us. He clips away the wool, but sends the genial temperature so that we may be able to flourish under our loss. Let that be noted and let God be thanked for it.

There is another thing to remember. When God takes away our mercies He is ready to supply us with more. It is with us as with the sheep—there is new wool coming. Whenever the Lord takes away our earthly comforts with one hand, one, two, three—He restores with the other hand—six, 12, scores, a hundred! He takes away by spoonfuls and He gives by carloads! We are crying and whining about the little loss and yet it is necessary in order that we may be able to receive the great mercy! Yes, it will be so—we shall yet have cause for rejoicing—“joy comes in the morning.” There is always as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it and when one set of favors is taken away there are more mercies to come. The great sea of Divine Love has bigger fish in it than ever we have taken out of it. If we have lost one position, there is another position for us.

If we have been driven out of one place, there is yet a refuge for us. God opens a second door when He shuts the first. If He takes away the manna, as He did from His people Israel, it is because there is the corn of Canaan for them to live on. If the water of the Rock did not follow the tribes any longer, it was because they could drink of the Jordan and of the brooks that flowed in that land of hills and valleys. Yes, there is new wool coming! Do not, therefore, fret at the shearing. I have given these thoughts in brief, that we may come to this last word.

III. Let us, in the third place, endeavor to imitate the example of our blessed Lord when our turn comes to be shorn. Let us be silent before the shearers, submissive, quiescent, even as He was. I have been giving, in everything I have said, a reason for so doing. I have shown that it glorifies God, rewards the Shepherd and benefits ourselves. I have shown that He measures and tempers our affliction and sends the trial at the right time. I have shown you in many ways that we are wise to submit ourselves as the sheep does to the shearer and the more completely we do so the better. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, we shall be happy when we have done with self! It will be well with us, whatever we may have gone through, when we learn that verse of Toplady’s—

***“Sweet to lie passive in Your hands
And know no will but Yours.”***

I know we struggle a good deal and we make excuses for struggling. Sometimes we say, “Oh, this is so painful, I cannot be patient! I could have borne anything else, but not this.” When a father is going to correct his child, does he select something that is pleasant? Oh, dear, no! The painfulness of the chastisement is the essence of it and even so the bitterness of your sorrow will be a blessing to you. By the blueness of the wound the heart will be made better. Do not rebel because your trial seems strange. It is as good as saying, “If I have it all my own way I will not rebel, but if everything does not please me I will not endure it.”

Sometimes we complain because of our great weakness. “Lord, were I stronger I would not mind this heavy loss. I am like a sere leaf driven by the storm.” But who is to be the judge of the suitability of your trial? You or God? Since the Lord judges this trial to be suitable to your weakness, depend upon it, it is so. Lie still, lie still, lie quite still! “Alas,” you say, “my grief comes from the most cruel quarter. This trouble did not arise directly from God, it came through my cousin or my brother who ought to have treated me with gratitude. I could have borne it if it had not come in that way, but since it was not an *enemy*, I am unable to bear it!” Then let me tell you, it is not a traitor, after all. *God* is at the bottom of all your tribulation—look through the second causes to the great First Cause!

It is a great mistake when we fret over the human instrument which smites us and forget the hand which uses the rod. If I strike a dog with a stick, he bites my stick—that is because he is stupid. If he thought a little, he would bite *me*, or else take the blow and bow in obedience. Now, you must not begin biting the stick! After all, it is God that uses that staff, though it is of ebony or of blackthorn. It is well to have done with all this picking and choosing and to leave the whole matter in the hands of Infinite Wisdom. A sweet singer has put this matter very prettily, let me quote the lines—

***“But when my Lord did ask me
On what side I were content,
The grief whereby I must be purified,
To me was sent,
As each imagined anguish did appear,
Each withering bliss
Before my soul, I cried,
‘Oh! Spare me here,
Oh, no, not this!’
Like one that having need of,
Deep within, the surgeon’s knife,
Would hardly bear that
It should graze the skin,
Though for his life.
No, then, but He, who
Best does understand
Both what we need,
And what can bear,
Did take my case in hand,
Nor crying heed.*”**

This is the pith of my sermon—oh sheep, yield yourself, yield yourself! Oh Believer, yield yourself, lie passive, lie passive, struggle not! There is no use in struggling, for our great Shearer, if He means to shear, will do it. If He means to send us trials and troubles He will not spare us for our crying. He will not listen to our whining—He will do His will and carry out His purpose. What is the good, therefore, of rebellion? Did not I say, just now, that the sheep, by struggling, might be cut by the shears? So you and I, if we struggle against God, we shall get two troubles instead of one

and after all, there is not half so much trouble in a trouble as there is in our kicking against the trouble!

The Eastern farmer, when he plows, has a goad and pricks the ox to make it move along. He does not hurt it much, but suppose the ox flings out the moment it touches him? He drives the goad into himself and bleeds. So is it with us. If we kick out against Divine Providences, we shall get a sore wound—much more than was ever necessary—we shall endure much more pain than would have come if we had yielded to the Divine will. What is the use of kicking and struggling, then, you fretful ones? You cannot make one hair white or black. You that are troubled, rest with us, for you cannot make shower or sunshine, rain or fine weather with all your groaning.

Did you ever bring a penny into the till by fretting, or put a loaf on the table by complaint, or get a shilling in your pocket by murmuring? Murmuring is wasted breath and fretting is wasted time. I wish that I could be more quiet, calm and self-possessed, but an active mind is apt to turn upon itself to its own wounding when all the cares of a Church and a great work press heavily. I long to cry habitually, “Lord, do *what* You will, *when* You will, *as* You will with me, Your servant—appoint me honor or dishonor, wealth or poverty, sickness or health, exhilaration or depression and I will take all right gladly from Your hands.” A man is not far from the gates of Heaven when he is fully submissive to the Lord’s will.

Though Heaven is uphill, the road to it is downhill—and when a man has gone down so much that he is dead to self, he is not far from entering into that Eternal Life where God shall be All in All, in bliss forever and ever. You that have been shorn have, I hope, received a word of comfort today through the ever blessed Spirit of God. May God bless it to you. Oh that the sinner, too, would submit himself to God, yield himself up and rebel no longer! Submit yourselves to God, let every thought be brought into captivity to Him and the Lord send His blessing, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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SONGS FOR DESOLATE HEARTS

NO. 649

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 10, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Sing, O barren, you that did not bear. Break forth into singing,
and cry aloud, you that did not travail with child:
for more are the children of the desolate than the
children of the married wife, says the Lord.”
Isaiah 54:1.***

IT was a great sorrow to an Eastern woman to be childless. In modern times that affliction is endured with cheerful equanimity, but in those days it was regarded as a dreadful curse and the feelings of those afflicted by it were of the most painful kind, as we find in the case of Hannah. Alas, for human nature! Those who were favored with children were often guilty of cruel haughtiness and taunting derision towards those who were not so blessed. We may instance the cases of Peninnah over Hannah and Hagar over her mistress, Sarah. We must therefore endeavor to bring our minds to the Eastern idea and we shall then have before us a case of very great, deep, constant, abiding, bitter sorrow. And yet the person in that case is bid to sing and to rejoice aloud, because the visitation of God's mercy should soon come to make desolation itself glad!

I. The text shall first of all be taken in its reference TO THE CHURCH OF GOD. For a long season before the coming of Christ the Church of God was desolate. Few were her sons and daughters. Her solemn feast days were attended by a multitude of hypocrites and her courts were crowded with formalists—the genuine children of Israel were sadly few. And when the Lord, the Husband of the Church, Himself arrived, the Church was in no happy condition. And even while He remained with her, her joy was not complete, for Christ's ministry was, with all reverence to His name, by His own appointment, doubtless comparatively an unsuccessful one.

After all His preaching there were but some hundred and twenty persons who believed on Him. “He came unto His own and His own received Him not.” The children of the married wife were but very, very few. Isaiah's wailing might have been heard all through the life of Christ, “Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form nor loveliness. And when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.”

What a dark night that must have been when the Savior was betrayed by Judas! Ah, Church of God, what will come of you now? While the Bridegroom was with you your children were but few and now that He is taken away to prison and to death, what will you do? As for your sons, you can not rely upon them. Yonder is Peter, denying his Master with oaths and curses. John—even the loving John—has forsaken Him and fled. They have all gone their ways. They have all turned their backs. Like the children of Ephraim, “being armed and carrying bows, they have turned their backs in the day of battle.”

Alas for you, Zion, for now you are desolate! Your Husband is led away captive. Your sons have forsaken you—your hour of mourning has come! Still darker must have been the hour when Salem's daughters wept around the Savior, led away to a shameful crucifixion along the via dolorosa. See Him as He dyes the streets of Jerusalem with drops of blood trickling from His thorn-crowned head. He is taken outside the camp to the mount of doom. They fasten Him to the wood. They lift Him high upon the Cross—His enemies compass Him about. The bulls of Bashan roar upon Him and the dogs of Hell bark about Him.

Where are you now, O Zion? But for a few that cluster round the shameful tree, where are your sons and daughters now? Your sun has set forever and your candle is gone out in darkness! So Unbelief whispers, but not thus speaks the Lord! For after the Lord had been lain in the grave and risen again and ascended and left the Church, then were the days of refreshing and the times of the visitation of the Spirit! Suddenly when the saints were met together in an upper room, for they were so few that they could all be enclosed within one room, there was heard a sound as of "a rushing mighty wind," and suddenly flames of fire sat on each chosen one.

Then was fulfilled the saying of the Prophet Joel, "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." Rejoice, O Zion! Sing you barren, you that did not bear, for three thousand are your children in one day and there are multitudes yet to come! There are added to the Church daily of such as shall be saved. And the multitude increases! Persecution scatters them, but as they scatter they grow—in every land the Church of God has its sons and daughters.

Even in the palace of the Caesars the Truth of God is confessed. Mountains cannot stay the progress of Messiah's kingdom. Goths and Gauls, uncivilized men of war, feel the potent power of the love of the Cross. From eastern coast to western, Jupiter and Venus fall from their thrones, and Jesus Christ is exalted. "From the river even to the ends of the earth" His name is known. Thus you see there was to the whole Church at Jerusalem a glorious fulfillment of this text, "Sing, O barren, you that did not bear." And more were the children of the desolate Church in the absence of her Lord than when she was as a married wife having Jesus Christ the Bridegroom with her!

Although this is a well-known fact, it ought not to be passed over without a little thought, because it is very pleasant to remember that at all seasons when the Church has been desolate and has become barren, God has appeared to her. In the dark ages when the children of the Church were a little and hidden flock—probably a few monks in monasteries holding a faith which they dared not confess, and feeding it by turning over the Bible in secret—a handful among the mountains of Piedmont. The Albigenses and Waldenses, a few scattered ones among the Nestorians and a few "even in Sardis" who had not defiled their garments.

The poor Church was barren. There were no ministers, but here and there one to preach the Gospel, and these were hunted like partridges upon the mountains by those who thirsted for their blood. She might have taken up her wailing and her heart might have sounded like a harp for her ruin and decay. But in her hour of dire necessity the Lord appeared to her and the children of the desolate were suddenly many! The monk of

Wirttemberg began to proclaim the Gospel. The mighty seer of Geneva stood up and declared the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, distinctly enunciating the glorious doctrines of Grace!

Zwingli, full of fire and energy, led on the saints in Switzerland. It is true the stakes began to flame with their victims—the racks were red with the blood of martyrs and prisons crowded with the elect of God—but what did it matter? The day was come when God had visited His people and, as in some desperate fight when suddenly a reinforcement comes with a mighty captain at its head and every man along the line gathers courage, every coward becomes a hero and every hero seems gifted with a thousand hands—each hand filled with a two-edged sword—even so it was in that day of struggle and of victory!

A song went up from earth even to Heaven, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! His own right hand and His holy arm has gotten Him the victory!” Nor has God failed since the days of the Reformation. We in England had gone to sleep. The Church of England was sleeping in the dark—Dissenters were sleeping in the light—that was the only difference between them. There seemed to be no breath of life throughout the whole of England. Spiritual death crept over all ministers and all professors. There were, of course, a few exceptions, but those were, alas, so weak and so isolated that they could effect but little.

Six young men were expelled from Oxford for the egregious crime of praying! Among those young men were three destined to carve their names in everlasting rock—the two Wesleys and George Whitefield. These men, little knowing why they were called, preached the Word. First of all in the regular and orderly fashion, but still with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven. They were driven by persecution to the gross irregularity of preaching in the open air. Blessed day! Whether they stood on the tombstone and preached to the living from the portals of the grave, or by the mountain-side, calling Heaven and earth to witness, it mattered not!

The Gospel had broken from the chains of lethargic propriety. And what a change, my Brothers and Sisters, came over the spirit of the age! “The Lord gave the Word: great was the multitude of them that published it.” The fire came down from Heaven like that of old in Pharaoh’s day and it ran along upon the ground and consumed the enemies of God! Irresistible as the lightning flash it descended and none could stand against it—for the day of the Lord was come and it was a day of burning and a day of might—and blessed be the name of God, “the children of the desolate” were many!

Now we know what has been said concerning the Church of God in England at the present time and here is the practical lesson I want you to gather. Some of our Brethren are perfectly contented, but I cannot number myself among those who think that the Church is flourishing and that vital godliness is abundant. It may be so, Brethren, it may be so. I wish I could thoroughly feel satisfied of it. I would not, however, on the other hand, unite myself altogether with the ranks of the alarmists who say that everything is wrong.

The Christian Church, according to some, is nothing but a mass of hypocrisy. We are all going post haste, as fast as ever we can, towards Romanism and Romanism is next door to the abode of Satan himself. We are supposed to be going down, down, down a most precipitous descent.

Well, I do not know. It may be so. I wish I was quite sure it was not so. I hardly think it, but I strike the balance between the two and rejoice with trembling. On this we may all be agreed—there is an abundant room both for mourning because we have not the Presence of God as once we had it and, on the other hand, for a hopeful anxiety that yet our desolation may be turned into fruitfulness.

Supposing—taking the worst view of the case—supposing it is so—and I am sure there is very much truth in the supposition—suppose it is so that the sturdiness with which we once held orthodoxy is giving place to a trifling latitudinarianism? Suppose it to be true that the enthusiasm which once made us worthy to be called fanatics, is gradually dwindling down into indifference? Suppose it to be so that the Puritan rigidity of morals which once made the professing Christian something awful to look upon, is now turning into a looseness and laxity of behavior? Well, then, we are like the barren and desolate woman! But, at any rate, we have a promise still to cling to and we will hold it fast—“Sing, O barren, you that did not bear. Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you that did not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the Lord.”

Doubt not but that the Lord will appear for His Church even yet. Let not your gloomy apprehensiveness cause your hands to hang down, for in your darkest night God will suddenly light a candle. It may be that He will let wickedness grow ripe and not send forth the reaper, the ordained man, with the sickle to cut it down, till it is ripe. It may be that He may let iniquity abound and the love of many may wax cold. But fear not! Though He never is before His time, He never is behind! He will come punctually at the moment, in a time which shall be best for His Church and most for His own Glory!

Once again we shall hail the happy days of revival and the seasons of gladness of heart—when “one shall say, I am the Lord’s, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob,” and the children of Zion “shall spring up as willows by the watercourses.” Let us hope and labor! Let us lament our desolation! Let us expect the gracious visitation and it shall yet come and we shall “sing together,” even we, “the waste places of Jerusalem.”

II. I now intend to use the text, as God helps me, in reference to ANY ONE CHURCH. I do not think that what I have to say now will have very special reference to the Church which meets in this place, for we have reason to thank God that through eleven years or more we have had about as high a flood-tide of revival as we could well endure. And I do not know if God had given us more conversions, what we should have done with them. He has already increased our numbers so marvelously that we scarcely know how we shall oversee the whole. And it has become almost a matter of necessity that some should swarm off to form other churches.

But still a part of what is said may, nevertheless, apply to our case. And as there are many Brothers and Sisters here from the country and yet, since some twenty or thirty thousand will read these words, I shall not speak without having an audience even though not a word may belong to the members of this Church. Let us observe, then, that there are some separate churches which are in a very sad condition and may most truly be said to be barren and desolate. Do we not know some in our land which are cursed with a lifeless ministry? A ministry which murders the

Truth of God by a drawling, careless utterance of it? A ministry without force or life?

Some ministries are not truthful. They may preach part of the Truth, but not the whole—ministries, which, for some reason or other, give prominence to one or two doctrines, while other parts of the Truth of God, equally precious, are kept back from the people. And the whole of what is preached is too often delivered in a cold, official, ministerial manner—without passion or earnestness and so the Church necessarily, I may say, becomes barren. And how many churches have to complain of worldly Church officers?

We cannot help observing with grief and regret that certain Church officers are far more active when they are in the world than they are in the Church! And that if they show some little common sense in conducting their own business, they show little enough in managing Christ's business. They put out both their hands and all their heart when the matter is one of personal gain. But when it is only that the Church of God may be fed, or that the boundaries of Zion may be enlarged, they go about it as though it were a thing of no consequence, or of very small importance.

And worse than this, for the Church might still live even with a lifeless ministry and a worldly deaconship and eldership, but often there is a lifeless membership! How many churches are there where a large portion of members scarcely think of assembling themselves together for supplication? Where, if there is any life, it seems to expend itself in quarrelling and fault-finding? They do not contend earnestly for "the faith once delivered to the saints," against the common foe, but they wrangle over that faith and make foes of one another!

Oh, how many Christians there are that can boast of respectability—there are no end of carriages at the door! They can talk of the wealth, the large subscriptions which they can give to God's cause! But where is their zeal and the sounding of their hearts over dying men? Where are the tears that move the heart of God? Where are the sighs and cries which bring down a blessing upon the preached Word? Alas, in many of our churches echo can only answer to the question "Where are they?" with the refrain, "Where are they?" for they are gone and gone so long that some Christians seem content that they should be gone forever!

They scarcely remember the time when they were in earnest—the period when the bedewing of the Holy Spirit rested upon them! I hesitate not to say solemnly that I know in our own denomination there are many, many churches in such a state of desolation—if the places where they worship were closed it would be small loss to the neighborhoods in which they stand. And if the ministry to which they listen were put out and silenced, it might be almost a gain—for it only enables the people to wrap themselves up in the idea that they are all right and that they have the Spirit of God among them when they have only the name to live and are dead!

This being their present state, Brothers and Sisters present this morning who are in earnest, will ask me what is their present duty as members of such churches? I reply, Brethren, your duty is very plain. Labor to be conscious of the sad barrenness of the Church to which you belong! Has the Baptism pool not been stirred for the last five or six years? Will you be easy about that? Have there been no additions to the Church for many

months? Can you be satisfied about that? Do you observe an absence of all earnestness, of all passion and vehemence for the promotion of the Savior's kingdom? Can you be quiet about that? If so, my dear Friend, I really cannot say anything to you about what you can do, for it seems to me that you are not the person to whom I ought to appeal in this matter.

But I will say, do labor, dear Brethren, if you are members of churches that are not prospering, to be conscious of the sad mischief that you are doing. If the salt has lost its savor it is therefore good for nothing! It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill and men cast it out. We can manage to struggle on with a bad trader, for he may make a good politician or philosopher—but a dead Church is good for nothing, good for nothing of any sort or in any way—it is only fit to be cast out.

Even the dunghill rejects a dead Church. Oh, if we did but know it, the existence of the devil is not more pretentious of evil than the existence of a Church that has lost spiritual life. Mind, I am not exaggerating, for I have a proof of it. What is the Church of Rome in its deadly operation upon the world but the greatest curse that could ever come from Hell itself? I question if Hell can find a more fitting instrument within its infernal lake than the Church of Rome is for the cause of mischief.

And your Church will, in its measure, be the same if bereft of the Spirit. I do not care if it is Wesleyan, Baptist, Independent, or what it is—when the life is gone it becomes good for nothing—it is not even fit to fertilize the ground, as the contents of the dunghill are—but men cast it out and tread it under foot. Get conscious of that and then let those of you who are humbled in the sight of God meet together and spread the case before the Lord. We ought to have great faith in the power of the twos and threes, for, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them," says the Lord.

The long thin red line, which has often won the battle, will yet win it in England—I mean the thin line of the few that sigh and cry for the desolations of the Church! If you, my Brother, an earnest man, are the only member of the Church that does really sigh and cry before God, God intends to bless that Church yet—for He has already blessed it in sending you to it! Look out for others of a kindred sort, and without murmuring, without raising divisions, without seeking to expel the minister or make any changes in the discipline, just set to work, and pray down, as Elijah did, the fire from Heaven upon the sacrifice.

This is the one thing which is needed. The wrong in organization, the mistakes in government, the unfitness of the Church officers—all this will come right enough if you once get the Divine Life. But without this, though you should rectify everything else, you would have done but little to any real purpose. Let me beg of you, therefore, to spread the case before Jehovah and be sure that you look away from everything that you, yourself, can do and look to Him and to Him alone. What can the barren woman do? What can she that is desolate do? Why, she can take this promise before God and say, "You have said, 'Sing, O barren'—Lord, make me sing! You have said, 'The children of the desolate shall yet be many'—Lord make our children many!"

The desolate woman can do this and your poor desolate heart, though you sigh and cry over the fewness of the congregation and the coldness of the Church members—your desolate heart can do the same! And doing it,

you shall get an answer of peace. But mind you, do not pray without proving the sincerity of your prayers by *action*. Do bestir yourself! I have noticed that many who complain of a want of brotherly love are just the people who have least themselves. And those who see no spiritual life in a Church are often the people who have no spiritual life themselves. They see outside what they see within.

But I hope I am addressing myself to nobler men than these. You feel that you would not willfully and willingly make any false accusation against God's saints, nor impeach them for anything in which they are not guilty. You love the Church too well! You would rather paint her with your finger upon her spots, than magnify her blemishes. Well, dear Brothers and Sisters, if such is your state of heart, live and labor for Jesus Christ yourselves and give the Lord no rest till this Word of His servant Isaiah is fulfilled to the very letter!

This my message may seem to be of no importance to some here present, yet I hope it may be fraught with usefulness to churches represented here by gracious and godly men.

III. By your leave, we will now turn to a third use of our text. Here the case is before us—THE POOR HELPLESS SINNER HAS HIS CASE WELL DESCRIBED BY THE PROPHET AS BARREN AND DESOLATE. I will speak for you and you will recognize your own words. "Barren! Ah, that I am. I have not one meritorious fruit that I can bring before God. As well might one expect to gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles, as to find any good thing in me! My heart is a fountain of polluted waters and all that comes forth deserves to be called Marah, Marah—for every drop is bitter. How is it possible that I can ever hope, while I see in myself all that is evil and nothing that is good?"

"Alas, I am not only barren of merit but I am also barren of feeling! I ought to be humbled on account of sin, but I am not. My eyeballs ought to be perpetual conduits of tears, but they are dry. My heart should be like Moses' rock when it was smitten! But alas, it is a flinty rock yielding no water. O that my heart would break! O that I were truly contrite! Unto the contrite and broken heart the Lord will have regard, but I am barren even of that! And alas, I seem to be barren even in prayer. If I get upon my knees I cannot pray! 'God be merciful to me, a sinner,' is as far as I can reach.

"And I am afraid I am so barren that I cannot even pray that prayer as the publican prayed it, so as to get acceptance. I come down from my closet with the sense that I have *tried* to pray, but that I have been so distracted both with doubts and with wandering thoughts that I have rather multiplied my *sins* than had any prevalence with God! I am commanded to believe in Jesus and I wish I could exert faith in Him—

'O could I but believe!

Then all would be easy.

I would, but cannot, Lord, believe—

My help must come from You!

"I have a will, but I have no power. I can say, 'To will is present with me'—and I am thankful to God for that—but 'how to perform that which I would, I find not.' I am barren of merit, barren of feeling, barren of power, barren of prayer, barren of faith. I am barren—barren with a vengeance."

Yes, and Sinner, it is very probable that I can *also* speak out your heart if I take the word “desolate.” You are desolate, too—no one can comfort you. The friend to whom you told your trouble tried his best, but he could not succeed in cheering your heavy heart. You have been up to this House, sometimes, hoping that I might say a word, but I have only added fuel to the flame, for the Truth preached has been far from comfortable to you! It has rather depressed you and brought you still lower. You have listened, you have read good books, you have turned over Scripture, but for all that there does not seem to be a text that speaks comfortably to you. But the threats leap up out of the page and seem as if they would drag you down, as the dogs drag down the stag when they seize him for their prey.

You are “desolate” as a poor lone wanderer who has lost his way far out in the desert. He looks around upon the horizon and sees not one single hope or glean of hope! But far above he sees the cruel vulture, waiting for his lifeless corpse. So it is with you—you see the vultures of Hell ready to devour you and there is no hope, no comfort whatever. You are barren and you are desolate. I will tell you one of your thoughts. You have often envied those whom you would not envy if you knew better. You poor barren souls have often envied “the married wife.” I mean the Pharisee—you have said of him, “Ah, I wish I could say that I was not as other men are! I wish I could say I had not sinned, but had walked in righteousness—‘All these things have I kept from my youth up’—O that I could say that!”

You have heard these married wives, as it were, boast of all their goodness and you have looked at them and thought, “What blessed people they must be! O that I could see what they can see!” There are some about in the world who preach up human ability. They tell us that men *can* believe and *can* repent and *can* do all sorts of spiritual actions. And there are some who think they *can* do them irrespective of the Holy Spirit. Well, then, I do not doubt but what you envy them! You say, “I wish I could feel as So-and-So. I wish I could rejoice as Such-and-Such does. Oh, if I could get as good a hope as he has.” Hark to this, he is a *hypocrite*.

“Oh, that I could be as full of peace as he is!” Mark, he is a mere *formalist*. “Oh, that I had his unbroken peace!” If you had such peace as he has it would be your eternal ruin! Poor, barren Sinner, let me say this much to you. Your help is to be found, not in your barrenness, not in your desolation—do not look to that as though it could help you! Your barrenness is barrenness forever if left to itself! And your desolation is utter and helpless unless someone shall intervene. May I ask you to look at the chapter which precedes my text?

I wish the Bible had never been chopped up into chapters at all, it spoils it so! It was not intended by the Holy Spirit that it should be—that is human device! If you read it right on you see how it runs—“All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way. And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” You know how it continues till it gets to this—“He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He has poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors. And He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.

Sing, O barren, you that did not bear. Break forth into singing and cry aloud, you that did not travail with child."

Do you see the drift of it? Jesus has taken the sinner's sin upon Himself and made a complete Atonement. Therefore, "sing, O barren." The mighty Redeemer has come out of His dwelling place, and has fought the enemy and won the victory. "Sing, O barren." Sin can be pardoned *now*, for Christ has died. "Sing, O barren!" Sinfulness can be conquered *now*, for Christ has won the victory over the hosts of Hell. You barren one! All barren as you are, stand here and see that wondrous sight. He comes from Edom "with garments dyed in blood."

Can you see the blood upon His garments? It is red as though He had trod the wine vats. Can you see that blood? It is the blood of all your sins! They are gone! They are gone! O Desolate! They are gone! The blood of all your foes—they are slain! O barren woman! They are slain! And now He who vanquished Hell, comes! Can He not rescue you? "The prey shall be taken from the mighty and the lawful captive shall be delivered." And though you stood bound in iron surrounded with darkness about you like that of Egypt, "which night he felt," He could set you free—

***"He comes the prisoners to release,
In Satan's bondage held.
The gates of brass before Him burst,
The iron fetters yield."***

Your hope is in a bleeding Savior who is now ascended up on high to receive gifts for men! Surely I myself will lead the strain, while I ask you now, you barren ones, to sing! Break forth into singing and cry aloud, for your Redeemer is mighty and will save! Whereas you envied the Pharisee, you shall have greater joy than he. "More are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife." Whereas you envied the proud man who said, "I can do this and I can do the other," you who could do nothing because you were so barren, shall be filled with such love and endowed with such Grace—you shall be admitted into such familiarity with Christ, such oneness with God, such glory with Him forever—that your joy, your glory, shall be far greater than the married wife could claim!

I pray the sinner, as he hears these gladsome words, to be obedient to them! Trust in the Savior and, "You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace. The mountains and hills shall break forth before you into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

IV. Does not this text, in the fourth place, belong to the DEPRESSED BELIEVER? Here, as before, I can speak experimentally. Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, you and I, though we have brought forth some fruit unto His name, and are still confident that we are "plants of His own right hand planting," yet sometimes feel very barren. I hope you do not feel it so often as I do. There are occasions when, having preached to others, I have to examine myself, "lest I myself should be a castaway."

I would, if I could, always weep for the sins and for the ruin of rebellions men. I would always feel tenderness of heart on account of those who reject His great salvation. But sometimes I am barren of all this. I feel my heart cold as a stone and hard as a rock. Do you ever feel, Brothers and Sisters, when you try to pray—you that have nearest access to God—that there are times when you *cannot* pray? You would wrestle with the angel, but it is as much as ever you can say, "Lord, I believe! Help my un-

belief.” You want to love Christ, but instead of a furnace of love, you can only find a spark in your soul.

Oh, how you want to burn! How you desire to grow, to mount, to reach to something higher and better than this poor dead level of a mere profession—but you cannot get up to it. O dew of Heaven, water my dry branch! O river of God, flow hard by my poor barren roots! For if not, I shall be always barren! Have you not often felt desolate? I know the righteous man never is desolate, but still he sometimes *thinks* himself so. His soul abhors all manner of meat and he refuses to be comforted. He was no bad man who said, “I watch and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop.” For those who have looked the sun in the face have, nevertheless, sometimes had to say, “Look not on me, for I am black, because the sun has looked upon me.”

Depressions of spirit, humiliating thoughts of one’s self, deep and grievous bondage—all these the children of God are well aware of. With Paul we have, at times, to cry, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Beloved, it is well for us to know, as I am sure we do know experimentally, that in this matter of barrenness and desolation the creature can do but little. It is the *Spirit* that quickens—the flesh profits little. When we get into this state, we feel like a man who cannot swim. And the more we kick and struggle the more rapidly we sink. It seems as if all human energy were but the energy to sin and a power to make us yet more dead to true spiritual life.

Well, what are we to do, then? Why, let us remember that the text is addressed to *us* in just such a state. “Sing, O barren! Break forth and cry aloud you that did not travail with child.” But what can I sing about? I cannot sing about the present. I cannot even sing concerning the past. Well, but yet I can sing of Jesus Christ, can I not? I can turn to that which precedes the text and I can sing of visits which the Redeemer has before paid to me! Or, if not of these, I can sing of the great love with which He loved His people when He came from the heights of Heaven for their redemption!

I will go to the Cross again. Come, my Soul, heavy laden you were once and you did lose your burden there. Come again, come again! Once you did wash in yonder fount and you were clean. O my poor bespattered Spirit, come and wash again! A prodigal I once returned—He fell upon my neck and kissed me then. I will go to Jesus yet once more. Though my sins rise like mountains, I will be obedient to the Word which says, “Return, you backsliding children, for I am married unto you, says the Lord.”

What is my barrenness? It is the platform for His Divine power! What is my desolation? It is the black setting for the sapphire of His everlasting love! I will go in poverty! I will go in helplessness! I will go in all my shame and backsliding! I will tell Him that I am still His child and in confidence in His faithful heart, I, even I, the barren one, will sing and cry aloud! Beloved, I think this is a very delightful text for us to think upon—especially when we remember that the joy of hardened hearts is, by-and-by, greater than the joy of those who never did feel their barrenness so much.

There are some Christians that seem to be like the married wife. They have an equable temperament. They are not much depressed. They keep the even tenor of their way. I know I often envy them. We have our ups and downs, but mark you, when our ups come, those who despised us

when we were in the downs might very well envy us! Though the valleys are dark and very gloomy, yet oh, the hilltops! The hilltops are so bright that when the Lord makes our feet to stand upon our high places, we no longer envy the married wife with all her ordinary calm and peace! We will take our trails for the sake of our joys—for as our tribulations abound, so our consolations abound in Christ Jesus!

V. And now, lastly, it strikes me that our text ought to have a very special voice TO THOSE CHRISTIANS WHO HAVE NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN DOING GOOD. As a Church I am sure it is our unanimous desire that we might bring forth spiritual children unto Christ Jesus. I hope I have not a single member of this Church who is content to go to Heaven alone. As far as I know you, I believe there is commonly among you this desire—that you may bring sinners to Christ.

Now it is possible that some dear Brothers and Sisters present have not yet been successful. You have been at work. You have been in prayer. You have depended upon Christ in simple faith and hoped for His Spirit, but still you have been denied the happy privilege of being made useful. Well, now, two or three words to you. You are barren and I am glad that while you are barren your heart feels desolate! You will not be barren long if you are unhappy in your barren state!

Now, my dear Friends, it may be possible that you are only barren in your own esteem. It is possible that God may have blessed you to *many*, though you think He has never blessed you to *one*. There may be, somewhere, precious jewels which you first brought up from the depths of sin—though you have not seen them glisten, Christ has! And though you thought you did not succeed the other day in your attempt, it is just possible that you are not a good judge of your own success!

Frequently I have gone home groaning over a sermon which God has blessed to never-dying souls. And those very discourses which I have thought the worst of, God has blessed the most. I think we are not to be judges of how we do our work—the Master knows better than we do the success of our enterprises. Beside, dear Friends, you do not expect to see fruit at once, do you? “Cast your bread upon the waters and you shall find it tomorrow”—is that the text? If I read rightly it is, “You shall find it after *many days*.” You have not had your “many days” to wait yet. The farmer, when he plants corn, may plow in October or November, but he does not expect to have a harvest in January! He will wait till the season comes. And you farmers of your Lord must wait and be patient for the precious fruits of your toil—“In due season you shall all reap if you faint not.” Therefore wait on.

Perhaps, however, your barrenness really is true and if so, ought not this greatly humble you? You were not always barren, my Brethren—when you were fruitful, did you give God all the glory? Were you very careful not to say, “Well done, I”? Possibly this barrenness has come upon you to make you feel your nothingness and to qualify you for yet greater success. It often happens that before God means to bless His servants He depresses them greatly. Whether or not it is absolutely necessary, I cannot tell. But this I know, it is generally the rule that there is a flogging behind the door for the man whom God means to honor in public. He will give him a thorn in the flesh either before or after He gives him marvelous revelations.

Dear Friend, perhaps this is the reason. “Well,” you say, “I do not know what the reason is, but I wish I could be rid of it, for I cannot bear to be useless, to be a tree cumbering the ground.” My dear Brother, I am thrice glad to hear you say that, because now that you are really ashamed of being barren, you will soon be fruitful! And now that God makes you loathe to be without fruit, He will soon cover you with precious clusters. One thing is certain—you cannot alter your being barren. You cannot, *yourself*, change your barrenness into fruitfulness.

But is it not significant that my text should stand just after the passage to which I have invited your attention just now? Just after the story of the despised and rejected Savior stands this note of joy for you poor barren ones! Let me invite you, then, to come to the Cross! Perhaps that very Cross which gave you life may give you fruitfulness. You have found help there before—may you not find vigor there now?

Brothers and Sisters—my fellow workers for Christ Jesus—let us look up and view the flowing of the Savior’s precious blood. Let us see the chastisement of our peace as it falls in cruel blows upon His blessed shoulders. Let us see the scourging. Let us mark the drops of blood as they roll down to the ground and what do we feel but this?—“Now for the love I bear His name.” Yes, and I must and will esteem what was my gain I count my loss, all things but loss for Jesus’ sake. My former pride I call my shame, O may my soul be found in Him. And nail my glory to His Cross. And of His righteousness partake.

O Beloved, there is nothing like a sight of the Savior! I have heard of a minister who was ready to give up his work but he fell asleep and dreamed that he saw the thorn-crowned Redeemer reaping with a sweat of blood upon His face. The Crucified One said to him as He saw him standing idly by, “Could you not reap with Me one hour?” He seized a sickle and worked on and on and on, with the Crucified One at his side and his strength grew as he continued at his work.

O servants of God, will you depart from your work when the pierced hand is at your side? Courage, my Brethren, courage! We cannot fail, for Christ is with us! And we must not cease, for Jesus ceases not. Together let us praise our Lord that He has sent us this morning such a promise to gird about our loins to make us strong even to the end. “Sing, O barren, you that did not bear. Break forth into singing and cry aloud you that did not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the Lord.”

The Lord grant it may be so to us for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“O you afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted! Behold, I will lay your stones with fair colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires. And I will make your windows of agates, and your gates of carbuncles, and all your borders of pleasant stones.”
Isaiah 54:11, 12.***

Who can doubt that this promise belongs to the Gentile Church, since it has been so richly fulfilled in her history? For many an age the light did not shine upon heathen lands. One spot, alone, upon all the earth received the genial beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Vast continents, thickly populated, full of life, bustle and enterprise, lay spread out as a moral waste, barren and neglected. But little Revelation of God had found its way among the teeming multitudes of the population. To them the dispensation of the Grace of God had not been proclaimed. The mystery of Christ was not as yet made known unto the sons of men. The Israelites had a monopoly of Covenant privileges. But now in these latter days, how wondrously are the tables turned! The branches of the wild olive have been grafted in “that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel.” Thus the Lord has taken unto Himself a numerous seed once ignored by Israel, “which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.” Not after the lineage of the flesh, but according to the nobler lineage of faith, the same are the children of Abraham—and with faithful Abraham do they inherit the Covenant mercy of God. This day the barren woman keeps house and is the joyful mother of many children. The Gentile Church has her stones of sapphire—God is in the midst of her to make her glad!

Not less fully persuaded am I that this promise belongs to the Jewish Church. Among the natural descendants of the old Hebrew Patriarch, the Lord has preserved to Himself a spiritual people. Glory be to His name, He has not cast off His people whom He did foreknow! Even at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of Grace. Of the Jewish race there is a certain number of disciples who are witnesses of the Truth of God, rejoicing in Christ Jesus and worshipping Him as their Messiah! But the day as yet is dark for Israel. Thick clouds encompass her. The veil is still upon the hearts of her children. The converts gathered from her tribes are few in number compared with those from dif-

ferent branches of the Gentiles. Seems it not as though her cup of sorrow were not yet drained? God has put the sons of Jacob for a while out of their place as a punishment for their great sin in rejecting Him, whom their own Inspired Prophets had foretold. But doubt not, Beloved, that their future is radiant with hope!

The day will come, and that day may come speedily, when the glory shall return to Zion and the excellence unto Judah. The fullness of the Gentiles, then, shall acknowledge the Lord when Jewish eyes shall behold and recognize Him, Messiah, Prince of Peace. Well may we look and long with eagerness for that happy era! If I rightly read the Scriptures, the lost tribes are to be converted, first, and gathered afterwards, while the people distinguished among us as Jews are to be restored to their own land, and then convinced by seeing the Man whom they pierced, enthroned with honor and majesty. Here the world's history reaches a majestic climax! Once with their day of fearful recompense came our day of grateful visitation. Yes, the Day-Spring from on high has visited us! What next is unrolled in the scroll of dispensations? If the casting away of them became the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them again be but life from the dead? So let the people to whom this great promise was originally spoken have all the good that was stored up for them in it!

May not, however, this rich consolation be applied to any Church that is passing through a time of depression? All the promises of God are like minted gold, of sterling value and intended for circulation. The general principles of the promises of God may be appropriated by those to whom they are appropriate. Let any faithful Church of Jesus Christ be passing through severe trial of persecution and declension, if there is a true likeness to Christ in it, the tempest and storm will eventually exhaust their fury and accomplish their end and afterwards a time of establishing and building up shall follow. It is said of some persons that they cannot fight losing battles. No such fatality need haunt us. We ought always to stand our ground, for when we have been worsted in the conflict, we have always before us the prospect that we shall at length be conquerors because our defeats are permitted for our discipline without peril to our destiny! "A troop shall overcome Gad, but he shall overcome at the last." Where would be the honor of a victory which was gained without a struggle? Is not the prize more welcome when it has been competed for with toil and strain? Do we not account any kind of success the sweeter for the toil expended and the difficulties mastered in reaching it? Are we to expect honor without labor? Take heart, then, you afflicted Church, and faint not in the day of adversity, for God has set over against it the day of prosperity when you shall be built up with all the riches and treasures of His Grace and when your mouth shall be filled with laughter, and your tongue with singing! And then shall you say, "The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

If, now, my text thus stands good to the Gentile Church, and to the remnant of Israel, and if it may serve to cheer and encourage the little

Christian Churches, not only in our own land, but in all the regions of the earth where Christ is preached, may it not in like manner be applied to the experience of individual Believers? And may we not find in it a rich draught of consolation for ourselves? Depend upon it, Brothers and Sisters, our period of trial and suffering will come to a close and it will be overruled in the gracious Providence of God to the promotion of our best prosperity and our highest interests! We may be afflicted and tossed with tempest, but for this very cause we shall ultimately have our foundations laid in sapphire and our stones with fair colors! I will endeavor to work out this one thought in respect to three kinds of distress which are known to raise a tempest in the Believer's soul.

The first is *the great life storm in which we are turned from darkness to light*, and from the power of Satan to God. The second, *the common life storms in which divers afflictions befall us*, and manifold temptations try our faith. And the third is *the last storm, which brings with it the wreck of our frail boat* after all its tossing on the troubled sea of life, *the death of the body*—then no more fatigue, no more distress—for we shall enter the haven of rest and enjoy an endless peace! Now, with regard to—

I. THE DAWN OF OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE. Is it not true that well near every Christian is born of a storm? We are driven to Christ through stress of weather. We look to Him because we have nowhere else to look for shelter. We drift to Christ, all of us, as mariners that are hard on rocks with all our righteousness wrecked, and all our other hopes gone to the fore. That first storm with some of you may have lasted long. For months or years it may have threatened your destruction. You remember it, and you think of it, now that the tempest has spent itself, that the sky is clear and you have come to rest calmly in Jesus Christ. Do you think that you lost anything by that storm? Do you not know that you gained much? You lost what it was good for you to lose! You gained the very blessings which you were most in need of. Do I speak to one who is at this hour in the very midst of such a trial? He that sits in the heavens looks down upon you through this storm and says to you, "O you afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted! Behold, I will lay your stones with fair colors." You are afflicted with a sense of sin, the direst and sharpest of all afflictions. The arrows of adversity are blunt in comparison with those of guilt! Afflictions, without sin to aggravate them, are as a knife without an edge—they do not cut deep. But when there is sin to whet the blade, then the knife cuts to the very bone. What are those sins which now wring your hearts with anguish, but the very same sins that once fascinated your hearts with delight? Feeling that God is angry with you, every incident or act of Providence seems to you a token of judgment. Terrors haunt you in every gust of wind that blows and you seek in vain to extricate yourself from your present forlorn condition! Hold on, Man, Woman, do not despair! Better to be stricken with pain and suffer the smart pangs of a wounded conscience, than go on with giddy step, frothy song and frivolous talk to enjoy the pleasures of sin for

a season, and then find out your mistake when it is too late because you are swept away like the chaff from the threshing floor! Your afflictions, if they lead you to God, will prove the healthiest discipline and the happiest circumstances that ever happened to you! “O you afflicted one,” says God, “I will lay your stones with fair colors,” as if, in the bitterness of repentance, you did meet with the blessedness of remission and the brightest sunbeams shone upon you just when the darkest shadows crossed your path and the heaviest clouds loomed over your head! Fly to your God, O Sinner! Hasten to Jesus! Look to His atoning Sacrifice! For such an afflicted conscience as yours, Jesus bled, He came to bind up the broken in heart, and to proclaim liberty to captives such as you are!

Note the next word—“O you afflicted, *tossed with tempest.*” Does this describe the heaving and flurry of your agitated breast? Are you tossed to and fro? Once you were at ease, becalmed aground, and you thought yourself as safe as you were quiet. You had a hope of your own and you said in your heart, “I shall never be moved.” But that hope of yours was no sure anchorage. It served you not in any place when the clouds began to gather and the fierce winds began to blow. Then were you tossed here and there. You have tried to find some stay, some anchor, but alas, you have sought it in vain! You are like a ship which has become the sport of the winds and waves and now your spirit sinks within you. You reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man, and you are at your wits’ end. All your wisdom is swallowed up. You cannot lay hold of a promise! You cannot take comfort from any Providence! You see not your signs, and yet all this tossing and all this tumult, with the peril in which it places you, are meant for your good! So, indeed, it shall prove when you cry unto the Lord in your trouble and He brings you out of your distresses, for notice the prophecy which is spoken by the mouth of the Lord, and say if it should not inspire you with confidence, “I will lay your foundations in sapphires.” When you shall have a foundation of God’s laying, it will be, verily, a safe foundation and, being of sapphire, this foundation is very precious! There will be no more sorrow and sadness for you, then, but a sacred satisfaction which it were beyond the power of any circumstance to mar! No more shall the buffeting of rough billows and rude breakers toss you to and fro, but throbs of deep joy, like waves of the mighty sea, shall swell their ceaseless anthem in your ears! Oh, how you will bless the Lord, then, that He ever drove you from your refuge of lies and drew you to a sure foundation upon which you might build, and be built up for eternity! You may be just now the sport of the tempest—high winds may rage within your breast—stormy passions may convulse your soul! Well do I remember when that same tempest howled through my spirit, sweeping away every fond hope and every fine conceit I had cherished. Before that I would gladly have contented myself with the world and the little ambitions it held out to my view. Ah, I would, but I could not! God’s tempest howled through my soul and as for me, I was as a tiny leaf in a strong breeze, or as a ball before the whirlwind! Are you passing through such an ordeal? Yield not to the misery and madness of despair—

***“Though plunged in ills, and harassed, too, with care,
’Twere treason to your soul did you despair!
When pressed by dangers and beset by foes,
God will His timely succor interpose!”***

When your present emergencies shall be gathered up into past experience, you will look back upon them as a meet preparation for your better destiny. Every vestige of your own righteousness must be taken away in order that He may “lay your stones with fair colors, and build up your windows with agate, and your gates with carbuncles.” Are not both in the promise—both the agitation and the salvation? The Lord has promised both. Mark that word *promised*, how it is used by Paul. “Now He has promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also Heaven.” Then observe the consequence. The removing of those things that are shaken makes way for another thing, namely, that those things which *cannot* be shaken may remain! Therefore it is that we who feel that everything earthly is drifting from under our feet are favored to receive a Kingdom which cannot be moved! Ought not this to reconcile our hearts to trial? Will it not make us rejoice in it, if we have only faith to believe that it will certainly turn out for our good?

The other part of the description—after being tossed with tempest—is this, “*not comforted.*” Is there nothing you can do to get out of this strait? Is there no solace to relieve the stress of your trial? Ah, poor Soul! No doubt you have been looking for light and, behold, there was darkness! While you have been seeking after relief, your sorrows have been aggravated. Did you go to the world and ask sympathy of your neighbors or kinsfolk, the best comfort they could offer you would but wound your feelings! Have you tried the merriments and gaieties of sin, as though you would forget the arrows of the Almighty? Lo, then, how visions of judgment to come should scare you!

Perhaps you feel you cannot be comforted on earth. Then you are in a fair way to get deliverance, for you shall be comforted by the God of Heaven! If your sore is such that no plaster of man could ever cure it, glory be to God, for, blessed be His name, He delights to find those cases which baffle all human skill! There shall be seen the power of His Grace, and then will He send His Word and heal you! Your extremity of anguish is a token for good—a token that God means to bless you! If your soul refuses to be comforted by man—if you are brought to a stand, in which you wait only for God—then of you is it spoken, “I will lay your stones with fair colors and your foundations with sapphires.” He will perform all things for you, and do on your behalf what you cannot do for yourself!

Every Christian will, I think, join with me in confessing that the dealings of the Lord with us have always baffled our own understanding, until we have been brought to see the end of the Lord, as Job saw it—that the Lord is full of pity and of tender mercy. Our heaviest losses have thus enriched us with our choicest gains. The things which, as they happened, caused us the most terror, have fallen out to the furtherance of our best interests! And, in the same manner, I believe the more you feel

the burden of sin, the majesty of the Law of God and the inflexible claims of Divine Justice, the sweeter, afterwards, will be your apprehension of guilt removed by the blood of Christ, of the Law fulfilled by His obedience and of Justice satisfied by His Suretyship. Did you sink as low as Jonah sank, when he was in the fish's belly, and cried by reason of his affliction unto the Lord, when, as he testifies, "Out of the belly of Hell cried I, and You heard my voice"? Then you might purge yourselves of all false confidence, as Jonah did, saying, "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy." Then, too, with the voice of thanksgiving, you would pay your vow as Jonah did, when he said, "Salvation is of the Lord." Take heart now, O you afflicted ones, tossed with tempest and not comforted! Pour no fresh bitters into your cup by murmuring against God and repining at His dispensations! Rather cry mightily and pray earnestly that the God who has made your experience tally with the first verse of the text may give you to realize the fullness of that recompense which is promised in the next verse! And so shall your sighs be turned into songs. So shall you sing with David, "You who has showed me great and sore troubles shall quicken me again, and bring me up again from the depths of the earth. You shall increase my greatness and comfort me on every side." Happy day, dear Soul, when you are delivered from this first storm! Yet there are—

II. OTHER STORMS OF LIFE WHICH THE CHILDREN OF GOD HAVE TO ENCOUNTER.

After we find Christ, we meet with many afflictions. We are "tossed with tempest, and not comforted." It seems to me that the Prophet has used a very remarkable metaphor. Suppose you have a home—a house rendered dear to you by a great many pleasant associations. Into this cheerful abode, one night, there comes a fire. You stand with tears in your eyes and see it all ablaze, and you watch it as it goes, story by story, room by room, till all your precious treasures are consumed. You go away and sit down, and wring your hands in agony, for all is burnt up—nothing remains. But with the first dawn of the morning an angel appears to you and says, "Come with me to the place where your home once was." You go and find that all the stones that made up your house have been turned into jewels—and all the lime and cement have been transmuted into bright lustrous colors, and the pavement and flagstones have become sapphire! You go to the door, there are jewels—carbuncles! You look out of the windows and instead of their being, as before, common sashes and sills, you find agates all sparkling! You are looking almost as if you had Aladdin's wonderful lamp, which transformed everything. Well, now, I think that is just the thought of this verse. Let us read it over again. "I will lay your stones with fair colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires. And I will make your windows of agate, and your gates of carbuncle, and all your borders of pleasant stones." "Well," you say, "that is the fact, and no fancy or dream to me, I have realized it. A fire kindled on me which raged in my soul till it reduced to ashes all the goods I prided myself in. My hopes were laid waste, and I was left deso-

late. My nights were sleepless and every bone in my body was full of pain—this have I proved. Then, all of a sudden, there has been worked in me a marvelous change! My soul has had such joy—such blessing—such nearness to Christ—such delight in His Word—such uplifting of a spiritual temple, far richer than all the palaces of Oriental imagination, springing up from a furnace of affliction as no common language would describe.” Let us just turn over these things, one by one, as they are painted to us by the tongue of Inspiration.

You are tossed and not comforted. Bear it patiently, knowing that good will come to you in a far better and richer shape. Observe how it begins with *edification*. “I will lay your stones in fair colors.” In the time of trial we not only get the proof, but we get the profit of experience—and these results are laid in fair colors. Do you think it possible for me to relate to you all the salutary lessons that I have acquired in affliction? The truth is learnt, thus, after quite a different manner from anything taught in the Sunday school! You may afterwards renounce all the credit you ever professed in the teaching, which stands merely on the authority of the teacher, but when God’s affliction brands the Truth of God into your inmost soul, then you are bulletproof against all heterodoxy and it is not possible that the Doctrine in which you have been rooted and grounded can ever forsake its hold upon you! It has found an entrance into your very soul—is not that a grand means of steadfastness? Such strong-holding cement binds the stones of which your spiritual temple is built, and by such personal experience your character becomes shaped and fashioned according to the Truths of the Gospel. Thus, as affliction is not sent without design, one benefit you are to expect from it is that a fundamental, solid groundwork shall be worked in you.

But, Brothers and Sisters, you will not fail to notice that while the Word of the Lord is addressed to the afflicted, *the hand of the Lord is engaged very particularly on their behalf*. “I will lay your foundations with sapphire.” Times of public calamity try our foundation and so do all times of private affliction. When the natural emotions are violently excited, all the beliefs and sentiments, all the hopes and aspirations to which men have clung in calmer days are put to the test. And if they are not well and truly based, they can easily be shifted. This, therefore, is one of the salutary effects of sanctified affliction—in the process of such discipline we get to have the foundation of our faith laid by a Divine hand. “I will lay your foundations.” The Lord draws near to us and works in us after His own Sovereign good will, imparting to us the true faith and the ardent love which are consonant with the Truth of God. Then we have foundations hard as sapphire and as precious, as unbreakable, as Divine! We feel that now we have received the Truth, not in the mere abstract, but in its vital power, its moral influence and its spiritual beauty, as the foundation of our souls and as a foundation of our hope which can never be removed.

What a lovely change, too, is made in our outlook! “Your windows of agate!” Before I was afflicted I looked through the lattices of carnal sense. I was well contented, though the things of this life and the objects near at hand bounded my view. But now I have been taught to look upwards and to long for the life to come and the land that is far off. Now my soul says, “Oh, that I had wings like a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest.” And as I open the window towards the new Jerusalem, I sing—

***“Brief life is here our portion,
Sorrow and short-lived care.
The life that knows no ending,
The tearless life is there.”***

It is wonderful how affliction cleans the windows of the soul! I find the word, “windows,” here might be much better translated “bulwarks,” or, “defenses,” as if to show the manner in which we are fortified against temptation and enabled to resist the destructive force of those strange changes and perilous waves that are common to this stormy life. Have you learned, Beloved, to fly to the Rock for shelter? Have you come to hide behind the dying Savior? Do you know the tune of David’s Psalm, “Blessed be the Lord, my strength, which teaches my hands to war and my fingers to fight, my goodness and my fortress; my high tower and my deliverer, my shield, and He in whom I trust” Then your godly sorrow has produced some happy results! Not in vain has your spirit been overwhelmed within you! This is a lesson to be acquired in the school of adversity whereby we are brought to rest in the Lord more abidingly than we ever did before—and thus we prove that He has made our fortifications of agate.

Still further it is said, “I will make your gates of carbuncle,” as if to intimate *more close and intimate communion with God*. We come nearer to Christ, think more of Him, spend more time in meditation, get to understand more of His work and His Person, set our hearts more fully towards Him and the good things of His Grace after the tempest has spent its fury and the clear shining has followed. Surely, if affliction did nothing more for us, it would be a great gift! It takes away the doors of iron and wood, and it gives us gates of carbuncle! And we say—

***“Come, then, oh, you sweet affliction,
Thus to bring our Savior near.”***

Right sure I am that many of our tossing and buffeting have produced a permanent benefit which has given tone to our character and shed a hallowed light over our whole career! Find me a Christian whose conversation is full of rich savor, whose judgment is tempered with charity, one whose fervent zeal is blended with the meekness of wisdom, and I will guarantee you, as a rule, he has seen much affliction! “They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep.” Physicians often recommend a sea voyage to their patients. Do you think it is merely for the fresh air they breathe? No, I can tell you there is more than that in the prescription. It breaks the links that bind one to everyday life. There is a solitude on that broad expanse of waters which does not admit of the

newspaper or the post office breaking in upon the stillness of your reflections! Your country, your office, your friends, your home are all at a distance. The communications you are known to hold with them are broken. And is it not so with Christ's disciples, when He compels them to get into a ship and leaves them a while to be tossed with waves in the midst of the sea? Do not they then feel a profound solitude which changes the hue of all their thoughts? Mind you not what he said who was the saddest of all the old Hebrew Prophets—Jeremiah in his lamentations bears this witness—"It is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth. He sits alone and keeps silence because He has borne it upon him." There is no room to doubt it, Friends—sorrow is favorable! God's brightest gems have had the most polishing on the lapidary's wheels. The purest, cleanest wheat is that which has had the most winnowing. We grow in Grace, doubtless, in our times of joy, but I think it is slow work. There are precious fruits put forth by the moon as well as precious fruits brought forth by the sun. Bright days would wither us if there were no shady nights to temper our gaiety. We are like the sycamore tree—unless we had trials, we would never come to spiritual perfection. Well, we have cause to be thankful if, speaking experimentally, we can say, "All the storms we have encountered up to now have been blessed to us—all our tossing and tempests have furthered our good speed, and all the convulsions that have shaken our house have thus far contributed to its being built up with stones laid in fair colors upon a foundation of sapphire. And now, lastly—

III. THE SAME HAPPY ISSUE OUT OF ALL OUR AFFLICTIONS WILL HAPPEN, IN A GRANDER SENSE, WHEN THE LAST HURRICANE SHALL BLOW.

Then shall this frail tabernacle totter and fall! Then eyes, and ears, and hands and feet shall fail us. Then back to mother Earth shall this feeble flesh return. I know the earthly house of my tabernacle shall be dissolved. I expect it. I look for it. The affliction may take the form of grievous disease—the tossing to and fro on my couch may be distracting—it may be that no medicine can relieve my pain or comfort me. But oh, the glory that is to follow! This very body of ours—who shall tell what it shall be like? We know that it shall be transformed and made like unto the glorious body of Christ Jesus, our Lord! We may patiently endure the cross, since we shall so soon receive the crown! We may placidly go down to the grave, since we shall so triumphantly come up from it! We may cheerfully take leave of our lodgings, here, since we have a home in prospect where our kindred shall all be gathered, and our Lord never absent! Brothers and Sisters, we are, as it were, in a ship at sea today, tossed with tempest, but we are to be in a palace before long! You observe how the figure changes, never tossed again, never again put forth on a tempestuous sea. Like buildings and mansions, we shall be fixed and permanent. In that land of our inheritance is a mansion with its foundation of sapphire, with its windows of agate, with its gates of carbuncle! What a

sweet surprise for the sons of poverty on earth! Those jewels, since jewels are always connected with rank or royalty, are meant to betoken the honors in the next world to those who are humble and faithful in their sacred calling here. You shall have such palaces as Oriental extravagance could never emulate! Does it belong to kings to dwell in palaces? You shall be kings and priests unto God! A few more days of languishing with your faint hopes and fretting fears, your throbbing temples and feverish pulse before Christ bids you come! The Master calls for you! You must obey the summons! And what next? Forever with the Lord!

I think I hear you say, "Amen, so let it be." Do notice how three times, here, it is repeated, "I will," "I will," "I will." God has said it and He will do it! Believe and rejoice therein, therefore, for it is no fiction, but a fact! Yet a little while and you shall leave your cottage for a mansion, your toil shall be exchanged for rest, your dishonor for glory, your pain for infinite pleasure! You shall find new company and better in yonder world of the Light of God! Though you close your eyes on fair prospects, below, fairer scenes await you above. Be comforted! Notwithstanding any distress, the last tempest may occasion you, depend upon it—"to die is gain." You shall lose nothing that it were worth your while to keep. You shall gain all your "capacious powers can wish, more than your imagination can paint." Press forward, Beloved, and may the confidence of a joyous future make you bold to brave the tempest and the storm! Peace be with you!

Alas, then, if you are not in Christ, if you are not a child of God, this promise melts away before your eyes! You have no part or lot in it. May God change your heart, renew your nature, lead you to receive Christ and believe in Him—then will He give you to be His sons and daughters and so shall your heritage be secure forever and ever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 54:1-16.**

Try and suck all the sweetness that you can out of this Chapter while we read it. The personal application of a promise to the heart by the Holy Spirit is that which is needed. The honey in Jonathan's woods never enlightened his eyes until he dipped the point of his rod into it and tasted it. Try and do the same. This Chapter is the woods wherein every branch drips with virgin honey. Sip and taste. Be satisfied.

Verses 1-3. *Sing, O barren, you that did not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you that did not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the LORD. Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of your habitations: spare not, lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes; For you shall break forth on the right hand and on the left; and your seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.* You see they are called upon to praise God before the mercy comes. "Sing, O Barren," while yet barren! Sing, O desolate one, while yet desolate! And you who are narrowed and confined for space, thank God

that He is about to enlarge you! Begin, already, to stretch your cords and strengthen your stakes. We ought to act upon faith and sing upon faith. The songs which are made at the sight of mercy are very sweet, but the songs that are sung *before the mercy comes* are those which are most acceptable to God! We may say of the sonnets of faith, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

4. *Fear not; for you shall not be ashamed: neither be you confounded, for you shall not be put to shame: for you shall forget the shame of your youth and shall not remember the reproach of your widowhood any more.* The dark past, the dreary past shall be so obliterated with abounding mercy that they shall forget it. Your memory of it shall not be painful. It shall only be as a foil behind the bright diamond of mighty mercy, if you remember it at all.

5. *For your Maker is your Husband—Bound to you by the dearest, closest and most enduring ties*

5-7. *The LORD of Hosts is His name; and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall be called. "For the LORD has called you as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth when you were refused, says your God. For a small moment. Not, "a moment," but "for a small moment."*

7, 8. *Have I forsaken you: but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment: but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you; says the LORD your Redeemer.* This belongs to the whole Church of God. I know we might refer it all to the Church in general, but I invite you tonight to remember that what belongs to the Church as a body belongs to every member of that mystical body. Therefore, feast here. Be not afraid. Take these words as spoken to you—even to you—by God the Holy Spirit!

9-10. *For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the LORD that has mercy on you.* What more can He say than to you He has said? What surer pledges can He give? Oh, rest, rest, rest, sweetly rest on this sure Word of Covenant love! Then let the mountains move. He told you they would. Then let the hills of your comfort sink. He told you they would. But even then, when the earth, itself, does reel, and the very pillars of the universe are snapped, He stands, still the same! "I have sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you."

11. *O you afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay your stones with fair colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires. Built with jewels.*

12. *And I will make your windows of agates, and your gates of carbuncles and all your borders of pleasant stones.* They must be rare sights if the windows are so rare. If the windows are of agate, what are the sights

that are seen through them? And if the very gates and doors are carbuncles what must there be in the house of love within? If the very borders and the outside fringes of the royal domains of Heaven are of precious stones, what must it be to be there? Remember that the best thing in this world is trodden under feet in the world to come, for we are told that the streets are paved with gold. Men hunt after it here and tread on it there, for they have nothing better, there, than this world can possibly afford them.

13. *And all your children shall be taught of the LORD.* It must be a greater privilege than windows of agates and gates of carbuncle, to see our children—to see all the children of God—taught by His own Spirit!

13. *And great shall be the peace of your children.* That is the most precious pearl of all, with its soft radiance, precious to the soul.

14, 15. *In righteousness shall you be established: you shall be far from oppression; for you shall not fear: and from terror, for it shall not come near you. Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by Me.* Enemies will come, but God will not be with them.

15, 16. *Whoever shall gather together against you shall fall for your sake. Behold, I have created the smith that blows the coals in the fire.* For he cannot blow any more than God lets him. He is God's creature. The Maker of the weapons of war is still in the hands of God.

16. *And that brings forth an instrument for his work: and I have created the spoiler to destroy.* When he does his worst, he is only doing what I meant he should do. The Divine decree of God still, with its mighty circle, does encompass the worst deed of man, and overrules it all for the good of His Church.

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

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

THE SAINT'S HERITAGE AND WATCHWORD

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“No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord.”
Isaiah 54:17.

This is the fifth of November, a day notable in English history. The events which transpired on it ought never to be forgotten. On this memorable day the Catholics, foiled in all their schemes for crushing our glorious Protestantism, devised a plot horrible and diabolical enough to render them forever hateful among upright men. The vast Armada of Spain on which they had relied had been, by the breath of God, scattered and given to destruction. And now the cowardly traitors attempted by the foulest means, the end which they could not accomplish by open warfare. Under the Houses of Parliament the deadly powder was concealed which they hoped would be the deathblow to both houses and so annihilate the power of Protestantism. But God looked from Heaven, confounded their knavish tricks, laid their secrets bare and exposed their treachery! Hallelujah to the King eternal, immortal, invisible who guarded us and guards us still from the devices of Rome and Hell! Praise to His name, we are free from the Pope of Rome, to whom—

*“Britons never will be slaves.
While for our princes they prepare,
In caverns deep a burning snare,
He shot from Heaven a piercing ray
And the dark treachery brought to day.”*

Nor is this the only event for which the fifth of November is notable, for in 1688 we as a nation experienced a deliverance equally as great. James II had attempted to revive the dying cause of Popery—and the hopes of Satan were great. But sturdy Protestants would not easily lose their dearly-bought liberties and, therefore, brought about the glorious revolution by which King William III ascended the throne—and from him the succession has been happily continued until the reign of our Queen for whom our earnest prayers shall rise—

*“Such great deliverance God has worked,
And down to us salvation brought,
And still the care of guardian Heaven,
Secures the bliss itself has given.”*

Blessed be God that on this fifth of November we can record such deliverances! Our Puritan forefathers never suffered this day to pass over without a commemoration service. So far from this day being forgotten, it ought to be remembered, not by the festival of striplings, but by the songs of saints! I think I have now in my possession a record of sermons preached on the fifth of November by Matthew Henry. Many divines of his time regularly preached on this day. I think the true Protestant feeling of this country which has so lately revived and which has shown itself so strongly, will scarcely forgive me if I do not, this morning, return most humble and hearty thanks to that God who has delivered us from the curse and enabled us to stand as Protestant men free to preach the Gospel of Christ.

I notice, in my text, two things—the first is *the saint's heritage*. The second *the saint's watchword*.

I. First, THE SAINT'S HERITAGE.

Now, do not suppose that this morning I shall have time, or opportunity, or talents, or power, to enter into an investigation of all the saint's heritages, especially when you remember that—

**“All things are ours—the gift of God,
The purchase of a Savior's blood.”**

Time would fail us to talk of all the possessions of the child of God. This world is his. Earth is his lodge and Heaven is his home. This life is his—with all its sorrows and its joys. Death is his—with all its terrors and solemn realities. And eternity is his—with its immortality and grandeur. God is his, with all His attributes. The saint has a prospective right to everything. God has made him the heir of all things, for we are co-heirs with Christ, joint-heirs with the Son of God! We have not time enough, in a life of 70 years, even to read over once the fair inventory of the saint's possessions! There is in it such an unfathomable depth, such an immeasurable height, such an intensity of value, such a wealth of preciousness that we would need to read it over an eternal number of times before we could ever be able to comprehend to the fullest, the love of God. So, you see, I am not about to describe the heritage of God's people at large. But I *am* going to speak of the one peculiar item of that bright heritage which is mentioned in my text—and that is *preservation*. “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn.” I shall speak of this as being the heritage, not only of the Church at large, but the personal and particular possession of every true Believer, every elect child of God!

First, then, there is the promise that *we shall have protection against the hand of men*. “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper.” Satan has always used the hand of man against the Church of Christ. The weapon of physical force has always been brought to bear against the Church of God. From the day when Cain, with his club, struck his brother Abel and laid him low, down to the time of Zacharias the son of Barachias and from that time until now, this weapon has been constantly used against the Church of God. There has never been a time when a weapon has not been forged against the Church of Christ. Yes, even at

the present moment, as I stand here and, with the eyes of fancy, survey our world, I see a fire blazing—fierce is the flame and high its pile of fuel! I see a monarch forging a weapon—a crowned tyrant longs to bring forth chains of iron for the liberties of Europe and smaller despots long to destroy the germ of all true liberty, “the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.” I see the armies ready against the Lord of Hosts, ready to do battle against the servants of God. [Singularly enough, the battle of Inkermann was at this moment raging, November 5, 1854.] Still, here is our sweet comfort—they may forge the weapon, they may fashion the sword, they may shut the prison door, they may confine the prisoners, they may make their instruments of torture—but they cannot prosper, for God has said it. “He breaks the bow, and cuts the spear in sunder. He burns the chariot in the fire.” “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper.” He will not let it do so!

Let us look back through history and see how God has fulfilled this gracious promise to His Church in past days. He has done it sometimes in this way—He has not allowed the sword so much as to touch His Church. At other times, He has allowed the sword to do its work and yet, out of evil, He has brought forth good. Sometimes, no weapon that has been formed against the Church has prospered because God has not permitted it so much as to touch His Church. Think of the overthrow of Pharaoh. Look yonder! There he is, at the head of all the chivalry of Egypt, pursuing the chosen race! The sea divides to give passage to the Lord's elect. Lo, they tread the pebbly bottom of the Red Sea while the waters stand like walls of snow-white crystal on the right and on the left! But the impious monarch, all unmoved by this mighty marvel, shouts, “On, on, soldiers of Memphis! Do you fear to tread where slaves are bold?” Look! They boldly dash between the watery heights—chariots and horses are in the sea, madly pursuing Israel. Ho, Israel! Fear not the uplifted spear, dread not the rattling chariot—they are marching to their tombs! Their weapons shall not prosper! Moses lifts up the rod of God—the parted floods embrace with eager joy and grasp the helpless foe within their arms—

***“Over horse and over car,
Over every man of war,
Over Pharaoh's crown of gold
The loud thundering billows rolled!
‘Mid the water dark and dread,
Down they sank, they sank like lead!”***

Again, my Brothers and Sisters, behold another glorious proof of the promise. Haman had conceived a hatred to Mordecai and for his sake the whole race of the Jews must perish. How cunningly he lays his plots, how readily he obtains the consent of the king, how sure he is of his revenge! Even now, in imagination, he sees Mordecai swinging on the lofty gallows and all his kindred given to slaughter. Ah, you enemy, delight in your imagination, for it shall be disappointed! Rejoice in your design, but it shall be utterly confounded! There is a God in the courts of Heaven and an Esther in the palace of Shushan! You shall be hanged on your own gallows and the race of David shall revenge the deed of the Agagite

upon, his sons! O Israel, well may you rejoice at the Feast of Purim, for the weapon of the mighty is broken! Nor here, alone can we see the promise fulfilled, for time would fail me to tell of conquered Amalek and routed Midian. Scarcely can I speak of Philistia and her giants given to the beast of prey, or Edom slaughtered by the sword. Let the armies witness who fled at the fancied rumbling of chariots, or that host who in one night became the inhabitants of the realms of death! Let the warriors who rest with their rusted swords beneath their earthy pillows rise from their long sleep and confess the futility of their efforts! Yes, let monarchs now in the chains of Hell bear witness to their own utter confusion when the Lord appeared in battle for His chosen! March on, despot! Bid your slaves rise against the free! Crush the helpless and usurp the dominions of your neighbor—but know that the Lord is mightier than you are! Your Northern hordes are not invincible! And Britons, with the help of God, shall teach you that in vain you lift the hand of robbery! You contend with a nation in whose midst the elect of God are praying against you—and you shall know that God has said unto her holy seed, “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper.”

But now another view of the subject presents itself. Sometimes God has allowed the enemy to exult over us and the sword has been used with terrible effect. There have been dark and gloomy days for the chosen Church of Christ when persecution has cried “Havoc, and let slip the dogs of war!” When blood has flowed like water over the land our enemies have triumphed. The martyr was bound to the stake, or was crucified upon the tree. The pastor was cut off and the flocks were scattered. Cruel torture, awful suffering was endured by the saints of God. The elect cried and said, “O Lord, how long? Let it repent You concerning Your servants.” The enemy laughed and said, “Ah, ah, so would we have it.” Zion was under a cloud. Her precious saints, comparable to fine gold, were esteemed as earthen vessels, the work of the hands of the potter. And her princes were trodden down like mire in the streets.

O my Soul, how was it, in that sad day, when the enemy came upon her like a flood and she could scarcely lift up the standard of the Lord against him? O God, there was an hour when You would not hear the cry of Your elect! It seemed as if Your ear was deaf. The plaint of the widow was unheeded. The groans, the agonies and the cries of martyrs were unnoticed and You did still allow the enemy to vex Your children. Persecution shook the land and set forth its burning lava of cruelty, devastating the fair fields of the Church of God. But did the enemy prosper? Did he succeed? Did persecution destroy God's Church? Did the weapon formed against us prosper? No! Each time that the Church had a wave of persecution pass over her, she rose out of it and lifted her fair countenance, “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.” She was all the more glorious for it all!

Every time her blood was shed, each drop became a man and each man thus converted stood prepared to pour out the vital current from his veins to defend the cause of God and the Truth of God! Ah, those were times when instead of the Church being diminished and brought low,

God did multiply her and persecution worked for her good instead of causing her evil! The persecutor did not destroy the Church. The ship of Christ's Church never sails so well as when she is rocked from side to side by the winds of persecution and when, at every lurch, she is well-near overwhelmed! Nothing has helped God's Church so much as persecution—she has been increased and strengthened by it!

You will remember that this is not only the heritage of the Church at large, but also of every individual Believer. And now I can speak to some poor souls who are in this place of worship. O Brother, O Sister, there is a word for you this morning! "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper." There are some dear Sisters who come into this House of Prayer under fear of brutal husbands. And there are sons and daughters who have cruel fathers. I know there are some here who meet with dire and terrible persecution because they come to the House of God. Little do some of us know, when we meet here, what our neighbor in the same seat has had to suffer through coming to this House of Prayer. I could unfold a tale that would ruffle up your spirits—a tale of persecution endured by some of the saints of God in this place. This is a word for you, my Friend—"No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper." The blow of a brutal husband shall not injure you—it may injure your body, but it cannot injure your soul! "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell." Why should you fear men when God is on your side? Remember that Christ has said, "Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you."

Hold on, young man! Hold on, young woman! Still continue in the fear of God and you shall find that persecution shall work for your good! But mark you, persecutor—if you are here this morning—there is a chain in Hell, of hot iron that shall be bound around your waist! There are fiends that have whips of fire and they shall scourge your soul throughout eternity because you dare to put a stumbling-block in the way of God's children! Remember what the Lord Jesus said—"Whoever shall offend one of these little ones, who believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

The second portion of the saint's heritage is "every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn." *Here is protection from the tongues of men.* Satan leaves no stone unturned against the Church of God. He uses not simply the hands, but what is more often a sharper weapon, the tongue. We can bear a blow, sometimes, but we cannot endure an insult. There is a great power in the tongue. We can rise from a blow which struck us to the ground, but we cannot so easily recover from slander that lays the character low. Yet the promise of the text is, "Every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn."

Look at the Church at large and see how she has condemned her adversaries. When she first came into the world, she had to oppose Judaism—but she has condemned it and its doctrines are now decadent. Then up started philosophers and they said that the Gospel was all foolishness because they found nothing of worldly wisdom in it. But what has become of the philosopher? Where is the Stoic who boasted of his wisdom? Where the Epicurean who lectured in the state of Greece? Where are they now? They are gone and their names are only used to describe things that have ceased to be! Then Satan invented Mohammedanism in order to oppose the Truth of God, but the Church of God has condemned that long ago. The Cross has made the crescent to decrease.

Where are the various systems of infidelity which have arisen, one after another? They are gone quite out of sight. Now and then we have felt rather alarmed because we have heard that some great people were going to prove that the Bible was not true and that our creed was not sound. I remember talking with an old man who said to me, "Ah, Sir, this geology will quite ruin man's belief in the Bible!" But, geology, instead of opposing the Gospel, furnishes many powerful confirmations of the facts of Revelation. Each one of the sciences has, in its imperfect condition, been used as a battering-ram against the Truth of God, but, as soon as it has been better understood, it has been made a pillar in Zion's citadel! Fear not, O sons of God, that the perversions of men of science can damage our cause! Lying tongues we shall condemn. O infidelity, abortion of the night, you have been condemned a thousand times! You are a changeable creature, changing your shape as the ages come and go. Once you were a laughing idiotic plaything for Voltaire—then a bullying blasphemer with Tom Paine! Then a cruel, blood-drinking fiend, fit mate for Robespierre, a speculating theorist with Owen and now a worldly, gross secularizing thing for impious lecturers and their profane admirers! I fear you not, Infidelity—you are an asp, biting at iron, depleting your spleen and breaking your fangs!

My Friends, did you ever, in imagination, walk the centuries and mark the rise and fall of various empires of unbelief? If so, you seemed to be on a battlefield and to see corpses all around you. You ask the name of the dead and someone replies that it is the corpse of such-and-such a system, or the carcass of such-and-such a theory. And, mark you, as surely as time rolls on, the now rampant style of infidelity will perish and, in 50 years, we shall see the skeleton of an exploded scheme and its epitaph will be, "Here lies a fool, called of old, a Secularist." What shall we say of Mormonism, the haggard superstition of the West? Or of Puseyism, the express image of Popery? Or of Socinian and Arian heresies, of Arminian perversions, or of Antinomian abuse? What shall we say of each of these errors but that their death-knell shall soon toll and these children of Hell shall sink back to their birthplace in the Pit. Yon old and crazy church upon the seven hills has dared to hurl its anathemas at the saints of the Lord—and she does still hold the wine-cup of abomination in her hands. And she is still robed in scarlet and her sway is over many waters—but she shall be condemned in judgment! Lo, the millstone in the hand of the

archangel hastens to its fall and Babylon the Great shall perish with a terrible overthrow! Then shall this cry go up from the Church of God, "Shout, O heavens, for the Lord has done it! Sing, O you inhabitants of the earth, for the promise is accomplished and every opposing tongue is condemned!"

This promise is the personal heritage of each child of God—"Every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn." What a sweet thought that is to me, for there are many tongues busy about me. Some say, "He is a good man." Others say, "He is deceiving the people." Well, if God will convert more sinners and bring more into His Church, men may say what they like about me! I am not careful to answer any of the self-thought Infallibles in this matter. You never hear of a preacher who gathers a crowd, or who is doing any good, but he is sure to be slandered and vilified! But here is a promise for him—"Every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn." Then the more accusers, the more acquittals! The more slander, the more honor! So let the enemy slander us as much as he pleases!

But I know that there are some of my hearers who believe and love the Doctrines of Grace and, sometimes, you are called to dispute and contend them. I trust you are. I hope you love to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." I know what is the case with many of you—when you come to talk with an infidel, you do not know what to say. Has it not been so with you many a time? You have said, "I almost wish I could hold my tongue, for the man has confounded me." Yet remember, "Every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn." The last time you had that dispute, you thought that your adversary conquered, did you not? You thought wrongly! He might glory in his intellectual prowess. He might say, "Oh, that man is nothing to me." But leave him alone till he gets to bed—and when darkness is all around him, he will begin to think seriously. He conquered you in appearance, but now you master him! Wait till he is sick and then your words shall ring in his ears—they shall come up again from the grave, if he should survive you—and then you will conquer him. Do not be afraid to argue for the Truth of God. Do not think that infidels are wise men, or that Arminians are so exceedingly learned. Stand up for the Truth—and there is so much solid learning and real Truth to be found in the Doctrines that we uphold [Doctrines of Grace] that none of you need be ashamed of them! They are mighty and must prevail! The mighty God of Jacob, by the demonstration of the Holy Spirit, make them triumphant!

There is one who has risen against me in judgment many a time and I daresay he has troubled many of the dear people of the Lord here—that is, Satan. He is always rising in judgment against us. Whenever we get into a little trouble, he comes and says, "You are no saint." If we commit a sin, he says, "You would not sin like that if you had been a child of God. You have no interest in the Covenant—you have deceived yourself." How many times Satan has risen against me in judgment and so risen that I have been fool enough to heed what he said! I have told him, sometimes, "You are a liar, and the father of lies," but, at other times, I have

believed his malicious accusations. It is no easy thing to stand against the insinuations of the Evil One. You, my Brothers and Sisters, are not ignorant of his devices. He has set conscience at you, the Hell-hounds of legal convictions have howled upon you and the drum of terrible doom has thundered in your ears! Then up has stood the fiend, himself, and denied your union with Jesus, claiming you as his own prey and portion! Ah, but how glorious was the moment when our Advocate entered the forum of conscience and assured us that He had pleaded our cause in the Court of King's Bench above! And, oh, when He showed us the adversary's brief spoiled by the nails of the Cross, we felt that the tongue of Satan was condemned and his calumnies hushed! Glorious Counselor, all praise be to Your adorable name!

Let the saints also know that they shall soon have a yet more public triumph over their cruel enemy. At the Day of Judgment, the foe of God and man shall be dragged from his cell, shall lift his bronze front scarred with thunder, receive his sentence and begin a Hell more terrible than all he has endured before. O saint, do you not know that you shall judge him? Know you not that you shall judge angels? You sons of God shall sit as co-assessors with His first-born Son and when He shall pronounce the doom of the old dragon, you shall solemnly say, "Amen," to the sentence. Rejoice, O poor tried one—you shall tread upon the lion and the dragon! Your foot shall be upon the head of your enemy and you shall know that the promise of this text is fulfilled in your own experience—"Every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn."

Now, Beloved, I think I have spoken sufficiently, for the present, on this glorious heritage of the saints of God. The weapons forged against us are not to prosper and the tongues raised against us are to be condemned.

II. Now I am to speak upon THE SAINT'S WATCHWORD. What is that? "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord."

In ancient times, as well as at the present time, armies used to have their watchwords by which they might recognize one another in the dark. We need a watchword now. It is very difficult to tell the children of God unless we have certain signs. God Himself gives us the watchword—"Their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord." You can always tell a saint of God by this watchword. If he says, "My righteousness is of God," you may safely believe that he is a disciple of Jesus Christ. If he does not understand our shibboleth, he may not have lived in that country where they speak the pure language of Canaan and that may excuse defects in his language. He may differ from us in some points, but if he sincerely says, "My righteousness is of God," you may safely conclude that he is not an enemy of the Truth. I mean "THE TRUTH as it is in Jesus."

We may understand this watchword in two senses. It may mean that *Christian justification in the eyes of the world is of God* and also that *their righteousness, their salvation, is of God*. There is to be a time when God's children shall come out clear of all slander, when falsehood shall be

swept away and they shall stand forth justified even by their enemies. Their slanderers shall have nothing to say against them then. They shall share in the admiration which an assembled universe shall be compelled to give to Him who does all things well. But this vindication will not be brought about by their own efforts. They have not been anxious to avoid reproach for Christ's sake. They have not wept and bemoaned themselves because they were counted the offscouring of all things. No, their righteousness—their entire clearing from the aspersions of malice and the calumnies of envy will come from Jehovah! The coat of arms of the Church is in the Lord's hands and He will wipe away every blot from it. The character of the saints, God, Himself, shall vindicate—and all liars shall have their portion in the Lake of Fire and brimstone. Let this be the motto on the flag on our lance! Let this be our cheering watchword—"Our righteousness is of the Lord."

Now for the second meaning. "Their justifying righteousness is of Me," says the Lord. If I wished to best you all—and might ask you only one question, I would ask this—"What is *your* righteousness?" Come along in single file. What is *your* righteousness "Oh, I am as good as my neighbors!" Go along with you, you are not my comrade. What is your righteousness? "Well, I am rather *better* than my neighbors, for I go to chapel regularly." Off with you, Sir! You do not know the watchword. And you next—what is *your* righteousness? "I have been baptized and am a member of the church." Yes, and so you may be, but if that is your only hope, you are still in the gall of bitterness! Now, you next. What is *your* hope? "Oh, I do all I can and Christ makes up the rest." Rubbish! You are a Babylonian, you are no Israelite! Christ is no make weight—away with you! Here comes the last. What is *your* righteousness? "My righteousness is filthy rags, except the righteousness which I have, which Christ worked out for me on Calvary, which is imputed to me by God, Himself, and which makes me pure and spotless as an angel." Ah, Brother, you and I are fellow soldiers! I have found you—that is the watchword—"Your righteousness is of Me, says the Lord." I do not ask whether you are Churchmen, or Methodists, or Independents, or Baptists! If you do but know this watchword—"Your righteousness is of Me, says the Lord." I can leave all those minor things if you can sing—

**"Jesus, Your blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress."**

Tell me that you have any other trust and I will have nothing to do with you! Tell me that you can work out your own salvation without God's help and I will not acknowledge you as my Brother. But if you tell me that, from first to last, you rely only on Jesus, then I acknowledge you as my fellow soldier and I am glad to see you wherever I meet you!

But, to wind up, we have had the heritage of the saints and we have had the watchword of the saints, what more shall I say? I will say—How well God has kept His promise! Has He not? You must know that it is just 249 years ago—it will be 250 next year—the fifth Jubilee—since under the Parliament House the train was laid and the gunpowder ready to blow up the Houses of Lords and Commons and utterly to destroy the

nation! Ah, how Satan gloated over the thought that he would destroy the Church of God and exalt his darlings to honor in the places of those who loved the Lord! The plotters said, "The foundations will be destroyed and then what will the righteous do?" They thought that surely their end would be accomplished, but how sadly were they disappointed! They were discovered. Down went the soldiers and found out the plot and Popery has been prevented from spreading throughout Great Britain! Blessed be the name of the Lord, "No weapon that is formed against His Church shall prosper." We glory because we can put our finger upon the page of history and exclaim, "God is true, and past events are witnesses of His faithfulness!"

O Beloved, has the Holy Spirit given you an inwrought knowledge of the Truth of this promise of God? Have you experienced blessed deliverances from the right hand of the Most High? Many of you, I fear, have neither part nor lot in this matter—and you have true cause to lament your terrible loss in being unable to grasp these Covenant blessings. But some of us may now anticipate the hour when we shall obtain complete redemption with all the blood-bought family and then, ah, then how shall we with rapture review delivering Grace in all its thousand instances! Hark! Hark! I thought I heard sweet music! I thought I heard a song descending from the regions up above, borne down by gales whose breath is sweet as that which comes from the spice groves of Araby! I hear a sound, not earthly—it is—it must be celestial, for no mortal sonnets can compare with these! O river of harmony, where are the lips from which you flow? The heavens are opened! I see a host in white robes, with crowns on their heads and palm branches in their hands! Who are these? And where did they come from? These are they who have passed through great tribulation and who tell us, "We have whitened our robes in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are we without fault before the Throne of God, and we serve Him day and night in His temple." Holy ones, repeat your song! Saints of God, re-echo the chorus! Repeat it yet again, that these ears may hear it! What do you sing? "No weapon that is formed against us has prospered; every tongue that has risen against us in judgment we have condemned. This is our heritage, our righteousness is of the Lord." Now, saints below, take up the strain and sing it by holy, joyous, confident anticipation—

***"No weapon has prospered, the foe is overcome!
No tongue has succeeded, the wise ones are dumb!
The Lord is our glory and each of the host
Shall yet shout 'Hosanna,' on Canaan's fair coast!"***

Glory be to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, world without end! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 43:14-28; 44:1-8.**

Isaiah 43:14-16. *Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships. I am the LORD, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King. Thus says the LORD, which*

makes a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty water. Great events in history all have some connection with the Church of Christ. We may not always be able to see it, but we may rest assured that it is so. The rise and fall of empires have a great deal to do with the chosen people of God. So here He reminds them of what He did in the ancient days when He smote Egypt at the Red Sea and made a path for His people through the mighty waters.

17. *Which brings forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as flax.* There is a little blaze and a little smoke and then all is over with the flax. So shall it be with those who set themselves up against the Lord—He shall confound their wisdom and humble their pride.

18, 19. *Remember you not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold I will do a new thing.* What God has done once, He can do again; but He can also make yet grander and more marvelous displays of His power and Grace than He has ever yet given!

19, 20. *Now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honor Me, the dragons and the owls: because I give water in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen.* If then, O child of God, you are in sore distress—if all around you is comfortless as a howling wilderness, yet do not despair! God can make a way for you even there, and can supply your needs. He can open up a way in the wilderness and rivers in the midst of the desert! Joy and rejoicing may come to you even in the depths of your distress.

21. *This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.* He will not be disappointed in His people. He made them that He might get glory out of them and He will surely have it—none shall be able to prevent it.

22-24. *But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of Me, O Israel. You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; neither have You honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense. You have brought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices: but you have made Me to serve with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities.* Remember that this is the wearied Lord who is speaking, the Lord whose patience seems to be well-near exhausted by the provocations of His people—yet how wonderful is His message to them!

25, 26. *I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins. Put Me in remembrance. Let us plead together: declare you, that you may be justified.* “If you have anything to say in your own defense, out with it! Come to Me and let the cause of this quarrel be removed. Let Me hear your plea if you have one.”

27, 28. *Your first father has sinned, and your teachers have transgressed against Me. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.* God justifies

himself for His heavy strokes upon Israel—He tells them that the reason lay in their own sin.

Isaiah 44:1-3. *Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant and Israel, whom I have chosen. Thus says the LORD, that made you, and formed you from the womb, which will help you. Fear not O Jacob, My servant; and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon your seed, and My blessing upon your offspring. "Think not that I am anxious to punish you for your sin. Only return to Me, and I will be delighted to bless you. I will help you out of your troubles. I will supply your needs and not only so, but I will bless your children, generation after generation."*

4, 5. *And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the LORD'S, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with His hand unto the LORD, and, surname himself by the name of Israel. God still has power over human hearts—He can bring back to himself His wandering children.*

6. *Thus says the LORD the King of Israel, and His Redeemer the LORD of Hosts; I am the First, and I am the Last; and beside Me there is no God. He gathered up all into Himself as He is the First and the Last, where is there space for any other god? He, therefore, would have all our hearts. He would have us love, adore and serve Him and Him alone.*

7. *And who can proclaim as I do? Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me. Since I appointed the ancient people and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show these to them. If these idols are gods, let them prophesy and tell what is to happen in the future! But they cannot even speak to one another.*

8. *Fear you not, neither be afraid: have not I told you from that time, and have declared it? You are even My witnesses, is there a God beside Me? Indeed, there is no other God; I know not any.*

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

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

FAT THINGS, FULL OF MARROW

NO. 1306

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 23, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“For a small moment have I forsaken you, but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord your Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you.”
Isaiah 54:7-10.

THIS precious passage is the property of all true Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We might not have ventured to say this if it were not for the last verse of the chapter, which assures us that it is so. “This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord.” The matchless promises and assurances of this chapter do not belong to the Jews, alone, nor only to the Gentile Church, nor even exclusively to the whole Church considered as a community—they are the property of all who are sons and servants of the living God. Isaiah speaks of both sonship and service. “This is the heritage,” or portion obtained by heirship, which implies sonship. The promise, then, is ours, if we have been born into the family of Grace.

But then, all God’s sons are also servants, even as the Firstborn among many brethren became a Servant of servants for our sakes. Judge yourselves, dear Friends, as to whether you are sons of God by birth and servants of God by choice, for if you are, then you may take these promises to yourselves. In the last clause it is written, “Their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord.” In this we can claim our part, for we have no righteousness of our own! But it has pleased the Lord to work a righteousness *for* us and a righteousness *in* us, since we stood in great need of both of these. Neither could we, by any means, have procured them for ourselves. If the Lord Jesus had not been made unto us both our justification and our sanctification, we could have had no hope of seeing the face of God with acceptance.

If we are sons by regeneration and servants by the renewal of our nature. And if our righteousness, both imputed and imparted, is found in God, alone, then the text is ours most richly to enjoy! Stand not back from a table so richly spread, but eat and drink abundantly of its dainty provisions. If this is our heritage, the Lord says to us as He did to Abraham, “Lift up, now, your eyes, and look from the place where you are, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which you see, to you will I give it.”

Before going further I would call your attention to the position of the wonderful chapter now before us. It may seem to be a commonplace remark, but its position is remarkable as following the 53rd Chapter of Isaiah—that clearest of all prophecies concerning our Lord! The 53rd of Isaiah is the saying of the great minstrel Prophet concerning the sufferings of the despised and rejected of men! And it is followed by this golden chapter. By the way of the Atonement we come to enjoy Covenant blessings. Fresh from the woes of Calvary we are able to bear our own griefs without repining—and with the great Ransom in full view we are convinced of our security before the Lord.

You will never have faith enough to comprehend the extent of the heritage prepared of the Lord for you, except as your eyes are strengthened by gazing upon Him whom it pleased the Father to bruise for us. When we have the fullest sense of the sufferings of Jesus and of the love which brought Him to bear the iniquities of His people, we are then in the most fit state to comprehend the wonders of Covenant Grace and to appreciate the priceless mercies which come to us by the way of His substitutionary Sacrifice. Carrying in your hearts such words as these, “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions and He was bruised for our iniquities,” let us draw near to the treasures which are spread before us. May the Holy Spirit assist us!

The people of God are often very severely afflicted. They are tried in Providence and they are vexed by the wicked among whom they dwell. At times it seems as if their lot were far less desirable than that of the ungodly. The best of saints have been tempted to envy the worst of sinners when they have seen them in great power, spreading themselves as a green bay tree, while they, themselves, have been as withered plants. The saints are chastened and the sinners are enriched—this is no small test of faith! What is worse, at times the children of God are the subjects of great *spiritual* griefs and derive no comfort from their religion. They judge themselves to be deserted by their God and they enquire within themselves, “Is His mercy clean gone forever? Will He be favorable no more?”

Then the joy of their heart ceases and their music is turned into mourning. At such times there is powerful comfort for the child of God in the fact that, whatever the Lord may do with him, He cannot be angry with him, nor rebuke him in the weightiest sense of those words. Since Jesus has made complete atonement on our behalf, there may be much that is bitter in our cup, but there cannot be in it even a single *drop* of judicial *punishment* for sin, because Christ has borne all that Justice could indict! It would be inconsistent with the integrity of the Most High, first to execute vengeance upon the Surety, and then to call His people to account for the sin which that Surety has put away! There is not, therefore, in all the chastisements which God lays upon us so much as a single trace of punitive wrath—

***“Death and the curse were in our cup—
O Christ, Christ, ‘twas full for You!
But You have drained the last dark drop,
‘Tis empty now for me:
That bitter cup, love drank it up,***

Now blessing's left for me."

The punishment for sin has been executed once and for all upon Jesus Christ our Savior! And now, if ever there is wrath on God's part towards His people, it is of quite another kind from that with which He visits the unbelieving world. Towards the ungodly He is a *Judge* and He summons them to judgment and executes His righteous sentences upon them. But we who are in Christ have virtually died in Him and upon us Justice has executed its sentence in the Person of our great Substitute. Therefore the Law cannot make any further demands upon us. We are, from now on, the children of God and have come under another discipline altogether—the discipline of a loving father towards his family. The Lord may be angry with us as a father is angry with his child, but never as a judge is angry with a criminal.

In that respect His anger is forever turned away from the redeemed. Our subject is to be God's little wrath and God's great Wrath—the little wrath may light upon the Lord's beloved, for He says, "In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment." But there is a great Wrath which burns as a consuming fire and this cannot fall upon the redeemed, for the Lord has sworn that He will not be angry with them nor rebuke them.

I. The first subject, then, is what the Lord calls His, "LITTLE WRATH." Let us speak of it and its modifications and, perhaps, the Holy Spirit will bless our meditation to the comfort of His afflicted. Our first remark shall be that *our view of that wrath and God's view of it may very greatly differ*. To a child of God in a right state, even the most modified form of Divine anger is very painful. A loving child dreads the smallest displeasure on his father's part. He may be right well assured that his parent will not kill him, or disown him, or deliver him over to the magistrate to be put in prison, but it is sorrow enough for him that his father's heart is grieved.

The terrors of a slave are not needed to keep the children of God in order. The filial fear which trembles at a father's frown is quite sufficient. Let God but hide His face and we are troubled. We do not, therefore, despise the chastening of the Lord, or think little of His fatherly anger. On the contrary, we are weary with crying, our eyes fail while we wait for our God. Our entreaty is, "Hide not Your face from Your servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily." It breaks our hearts to think that we should grieve our God! This pain of heart is a very proper feeling, but it may be perverted by unbelief into the occasion of sin. We may conclude from the chastening rod that the Lord is about to destroy us—though He has plainly said, "Fury is not in Me."

We may falsely conclude, as the text seems to hint, that God has utterly forsaken us and hidden His face forever. When we prayed, we enjoyed no liberty and felt no access to the Mercy Seat. When we tried to sing, our hosannas fell flat from our tongues. When we went to the assembly of the saints, we no longer beheld the Glory of the Lord as we had, before, seen Him in His sanctuary. When we opened the Bible, its choicest promises appeared to be as dry bones from which the marrow is taken and, therefore, we concluded that all was over with us, that God had for-

saken us! And we, therefore, feared that nothing remained for us but eternal destruction—

***“If sometimes I strive, as I mourn,
My hold of Your promise to keep,
The billows more fiercely return,
And plunge me again in the deep.
While harassed and cast from Your sight,
The tempter suggests with a roar,
‘The Lord has forsaken you quite:
Your God will be gracious no more!’”***

This dark estimate of our affairs is not God’s view of them! He knows that He has not utterly or finally withdrawn, but He puts it thus—“For a small moment have I forsaken you.” It is but a partial departure under which the saint is suffering—the small moment will soon be over. The tried one is enduring only a partial and transient withdrawal of the light of His Countenance, for the Lord says, “In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment.”

I suppose if we were quite new in this world and had never seen the sun descend below the horizon, we should conclude at his setting that we were about to be plunged into everlasting darkness! We have now become so accustomed to see him set and rise again, that evening causes us no alarm. Well, child of God, I trust you will not, for an instant, lose the light of your Father’s countenance, but if you should do so, it will return again—He has not forsaken you altogether nor forever! Weeping shall have its night, but joy’s bright morning will follow, for the Lord will not cast off forever. And though He causes grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies.

When we are under the hiding of God’s face, we cannot judge rightly. We are too agitated, too distressed, too distracted to see matters in their true light. At such times we are in fear where there is no fear and also magnify that which is legitimately a cause of anxiety. Unbelief is so natural to us and the propensity to write bitter things against ourselves is so very common, that we are not to be trusted with the scales of judgment. Let us not be too positive that our conclusions are the truth—let us, rather, take God’s estimate of His own dealings. And if we are, at this time, walking in darkness and seeing no light, let us trust in the Lord and rest ourselves upon His Word, for all that God has done towards us, if we are, indeed, His servants, amounts to this—that for a small moment He has forsaken us and in a little wrath He has hidden His face from us.

I will now call your attention to two or three things which should greatly modify the view we take of the hiding of God’s face. First, *as to time*. The time during which our God withdraws Himself is very short—“for a moment,” He says. But He puts it less than that, “For a *small* moment.” Do any of you know what a *small* moment is? Yet that is the Lord’s own expression! Think of how long He has loved us, even from before the foundation of the world! The time in which He hides His face is very short compared with that. Think of how long He *will* love us—when all this universe shall have subsided into its native nothingness He will love us for-

ever! The time during which He chastens us is, compared with that, a very small moment!

Think of how long we deserved to have been in Hell, to lie forever beneath His indignation! The little moment in which His heavy hand is upon us, is, indeed, as *nothing* compared with the eternal misery which our sins have merited. Dear Brothers and Sisters, when you come forth from the hiding of His face into the light, again, this gloom will seem to have been but a small moment! You shall forget the shame of your youth! You shall not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore! Sorrows past are slight and short when followed by boundless, endless joys. An eternity of Heaven makes even a lifetime of pain to shrivel into a small moment!

When you have noticed the time, then I would call your attention to *the recompense which is promised*. "For a small moment have I forsaken you, but with *great mercies* will I gather you." The Lord will make up to you all your losses, your afflictions, your crosses and your chastisements! God's dealings with us never seem to be so merciful as after a time of trial. Then every blessing is a mercy, indeed, and we adore the love which grants it to us. When the taste of the wormwood and the gall is still on the palate, then the wines on the lees well-refined have a peculiar flavor, and we drink of them with a special zest. The bitterness makes the sweet the sweeter and the sorrow makes the joy the more abounding.

The text does not say that God will give us mercy after He has, for a while left us, but the word is in the plural, "mercies," multitudes of *mercies*! No, it does not merely say, "mercies," but, "*great mercies*," for they are all the greater because we so greatly need them, are plunged in such great distress for need of them, and filled with so many great fears as to our future estate. With great mercies will the Lord come to us, silence our fears and help us to gather up our scattered hopes and confidences! The Lord not only promises us these great favors, but He promises that He, Himself, will bring them. They are not to be sent to us by angels or by external Providences, but He declares, "With great mercies *will I* gather you."

The work of restoration shall be the Lord's own personal work! His own right hand shall be laid to it and, after downcastings and scatterings of many different sorts, the Lord Himself shall arise for the gathering of His people. "He that scattered Israel will gather him and keep him as a shepherd does his flock." "Thus says the Lord, as one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you." The Lord Himself will devise means to bring back His banished ones! He will turn away His wrath from them and they shall sing, "O Lord, I will praise You, for though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away and You comfort me."

It would be far better to walk with God in one long continuous fellowship throughout life, but if fellowship is broken, you may return, and return at once. It is a great thing to have your joy continued even under trouble, but if the trouble should be too much for you and all God's waves and billows should roll over you, yet He will restore you, for He has said, "I will bring you, again, from Bashan, I will bring My people, again, from the depths of the sea." You shall see how little His wrath was, for love's

binding up shall make you forget the wounds—and the heavenly oil of consolation shall effectually remove the bruises.

Though the Lord may shut you up in the dark, yet afterwards He will give you light, again, and the light will be all the brighter because of the darkness! When comforts are restored, we see the reason for their withdrawal. And like good old Jacob, when he found his long lost Joseph, we admire the love which afflicted us as much as the Grace which restores our comforts! Bear, then, with patience the little wrath of God because of the shortness of its duration and the greatness of its recompense!

The text further declares that *the wrath is, in itself, little*. I should hardly have used such a term if I had not found it written here by an Infallible pen. “In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment.” God’s wrath against His own people, as compared with that which burns against the ungodly, is but little, and it never can get beyond that point! If you read the context you will see that it *must* be little wrath, for first it is the wrath of a husband against his wife. “Your Maker is your Husband.” Yes, good Lord, You may be angry with me, but You are my Husband, still. You may forsake me for a while, but You have betrothed me unto Yourself forever in faithfulness and in mercy. And in Your Word it is written, “The Lord, the God of Israel, says He hates putting away.”

Observe with delight that the Lord’s wrath against His chosen is not the anger of a king against rebellious subjects, nor that of an enemy against his foe, but the tender jealousy, the affectionate grief of a loving husband when his bride has treated him ill. Note an instance of this in the book of Jeremiah, where even when He banishes His people, He shows His love at the same time and sighs, “I have given the dearly beloved of My soul into the hands of her enemies.” Observe, also, that the wrath is that of a Redeemer against those He has redeemed. We read at the end of the eighth verse, “Says the Lord, your Redeemer.”

It is such anger that, nevertheless, He died for us! It is such anger that, still, He puts forth His power to win what He has purchased. It is such anger that He values us far too well to lose us. Is not that a *little* anger which, nevertheless, calls to remembrance the blood with which it redeemed the offending one? O Savior, Son of God, my Lord, my Life, my All, if I cannot see the smiles of Your face, I can still look to the wounds of Your hands! If I may not be ravished with Your love as it is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit, yet I know it as it was shed abroad from Your dear wounded side, when the spear cut Your heart! Here is consolation to those who are under a cloud! It is only in a little wrath that a Redeemer can hide Himself from the purchase of His agonies!

It is, moreover, the anger of One who pities us, for the passage at the end of the 10th verse is thus, “Says the Lord, that has mercy on you.” And in the Hebrew it is, “Says the Lord your Pitier.” It is the wrath of One who is tender and compassionate and pities while He smites! It is the anger of a father who takes the rod and scourges the child, but feels more of the smart than the child does, for every twig seems to lacerate his heart while he makes his child to cry and weep. It is such wrath as is consistent with love—“for a while I spoke against him. I do earnestly remember him still.”

Our names are engraved on the very hand which buffets us—and the rod which bruises us is steeped in mercy.

I have not time to linger where there is so much to detain us, but we will notice, next, that the expression of His little anger is not, after all, so extremely severe, for what does it say? “I hid My face.” The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. But our text does not say, “I turned My face against you,” but only, “I hid My face *from* you.” I grant that this is painful, but still, there is this sweet reflection—why does He hide His face? It is because the sight of it would be pleasant to us! It is a face of love, for if it were a face of anger He would not need to hide it from His erring child! If it were an angry face and He wished to chasten us, He would unveil it. And, therefore, we may be sure that He covers it because it is so bright with everlasting love that if it could be seen, no chastisement would be felt by us.

See, then, that—

**“Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face.”**

His hidden love is true love and it hides itself because it is so. Remember that we might have been plunged in outer darkness and have felt the crushing blows of the iron rod. But, as it is, we are only put under His frown for a time—“He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.” Be it ours to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, but let us not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when we are corrected by Him, for whom the Lord loves He chastens and scourges every son whom He receives. Let us neither despair nor distrust our God, nor think that we are the objects of His great Wrath when, indeed, we are only feeling His fatherly anger, which is only a form of His wise and deep love.

Observe, too, for we must not leave out a word here, that this little wrath *is perfectly consistent with everlasting love*. “In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you.” The Lord is filled with everlasting kindness at the very time when He is making the promise, for if you promise a person that you will love him, you love him already! Love, alone, could prompt a promise such as that which I have read. O you from whom God has hidden His face, when He promises that He will have mercy on you with everlasting kindness, is not love already ruling His heart? Our heavenly Father loves His children as much when He chastens as when He caresses! The Lord’s own people are as dear to Him in the furnace of affliction as on the mount of communion! They are just as precious in His sight when He slays them and seems, in His fierce anger, to destroy their joys and wither their hopes, as when He lifts them to His own right hand!

The Lord does not rise and fall in His love like the waves of the sea, but His firm affections stand fast like the great mountains and are as stable as the everlasting hills. You have no right to infer from the greatness of your griefs that God is ceasing to love you, or that He loves you less! On the contrary, I am persuaded that if all the griefs which are possible to men could be heaped upon one child of God. If all God’s waves and billows

went over him. If he were to descend into the deeps of affliction so low that the earth, with her bars seemed to be about him forever. If not one ray of light came into his soul, but he was tormented with temptation and afflicted by Satan, and deserted by man—and body and soul were, alike, in grief and pain—yet would all this only be a token of Divine love to him and part of the process by which love would supremely bless him!

The utmost that can be truthfully said on the dark side of a *Believer's* worst estate is this, "In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment." O children of God, you ought to be comforted by this! But I know you will not be unless the Divine Comforter shall lay these heavenly Truths of God home to your souls. I can but speak them in my own feeble manner. He can speak them with power! Our duty, then, under the Lord's little wrath, is to *feel* it and *grieve* about it and to *search* ourselves and put away our sins! But we must not dishonor the Lord by unbelief, nor fancy ourselves to be under the Covenant of Works, or speak as if the Atonement had failed and left us as much the heirs of wrath as before.

We are not under the Law and cannot, therefore, be under the wrath which the Law works. We are not accounted as guilty before the Lord and, therefore, cannot be obnoxious to His great anger. Let us remember this and be of good courage when we are enduring the chastisements of the Lord.

II. We are now to consider THE GREAT WRATH OF GOD AND OUR SECURITY AGAINST IT. Our security against it is this—"This is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you." Until God drowns the whole world, again, He never can let out His great Wrath against His people! Many centuries have gone by since Noah was saved in the ark and there has been no other universal flood. There have been partial floods, here and there, but the earth has never been completely destroyed with water.

I should not wonder but what the first shower of rain that fell, after he came out of the ark, frightened Noah! And if it had not been that he saw the rainbow of God in the clouds, he would have trembled lest, once again, the fair world would be buried in the deeps. But his fears were all in vain—generations have followed generations in perfect safety from a deluge—and I do not suppose that there is now a man existing who is afraid of a general flood. Now, child of God, you must get rid, once and for all, of all fear that God's great Wrath can ever be let loose upon you! It can never come upon the *justified*. Be sure of this, that as the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord will never be angry with you nor rebuke you, so as to destroy you, or count you His enemy!

His great Wrath is over. The flood of old lasted six months and more and, during that time, there was neither sowing nor reaping, but the Lord has said that never again shall a flood interrupt the operations of Nature. "Seed time and harvest," said He, "summer and winter shall not cease." And they have not ceased! Go, now, into the fields and see how loaded they are with the fruits of the earth which are ripening for the sickle! Note,

then, that as God has not suffered the seasons to be suspended by another flood, though thousands of years have passed away, so it is certain that He will not spend your *spiritual* life, nor take from you the blessings of His Covenant by letting out His great Wrath against you. He says He will not, and, Brothers and Sisters, it were something like blasphemy to indulge a doubt about this.

My text suggests to me that we have ample security that the great Wrath of God will never break out against us, *for it has broken out against us once*. The waters of Noah did go over the earth once, but never twice. Now, the great Wrath of God can never break forth against His redeemed because it has already broken forth against them! Do you not remember it? It was on that dark, that doleful night, when our great Covenant Head and Representative was in the garden all alone. And then the flood began to rise and rage and He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." There was a sight in the garden that night such as none of us have ever seen—

***"Immanuel, sunk with dreadful woe,
Unfelt, unknown to all below—
Except the Son of God—
In agonizing pangs of soul,
Drinks deep of wormwood's bitterest bowl,
And sweats great drops of blood."***

The floods lifted up their voice, the cataracts of wrath descended and the great deeps opened up from beneath to overwhelm His spirit! The waters came in, even unto His soul! You know what happened to Him in Pilate's Hall and among the soldiers—how He hid not His face from shame and spitting while He bowed His back to the smiter's lash. And you remember, well, how they took Him to the Cross and nailed Him there, your Lord and mine. "It pleased the Father to bruise Him: He has put Him to grief." He made His soul an offering for sin and laid on Him the iniquities of us all. The Father hid His face from Him and refused to smile on the sinner's Substitute! The tempest had come to its highest! The floods were out 20 cubits above the tops of the mountains when our Lord cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

The flood was then at its height, even that flood of great Wrath which was due to us for sin! In the death of the Lord Jesus we died! We were crucified in Him! In Him *we* bore the punishment for sin! The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Take it for a stable maxim which can never be denied, that two judgments can never be meted out for the same offense. Neither the laws of earth nor Heaven will permit that the Substitute should bleed and then that the penalty should, a second time, be demanded! Where would be the value of the Atonement if such could be the case? Jesus has paid our debts and, therefore, we are out of debt! He has taken the handwriting of ordinances which were against us and nailed it to His Cross—there is the receipt for all our debts, fastened up before Heaven and Hell upon the Cross of Christ!

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died." Is not that answer enough for all the charges of Hell? Let us put together two or three texts

and drink in their sweetness. “Once in the end of the world has He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” Get hold of that. Sin is put away forever. “He came,” another Prophet tells us, “to finish transgression and make an end of sin.” Now, if He has made an end of sin, where is it? What reason can we have to fear its return? Think how David puts it—“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

Does anybody know how far in the broad heavens east is from the west? In the vastness of space no boundary can be imagined in either direction and, therefore, the distance is inconceivable. If the great enemy were to try and bring back our sins, it would take him an eternity to do it and, meanwhile, we shall be safe in Heaven! What is said concerning the Lord in the Book of Micah? “He will subdue our iniquities; and You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.” Does anybody know how deep the sea is? In some places it is said to be unfathomable! Can we find, again, that which is cast into the deeps? Our sins are cast by our Lord Jesus into deeps where no line will ever reach them. Glory be to His name for this!

Another text flashes upon my memory. “In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.” Take this again—“I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins.” The texts which speak to this effect are many! Time would fail us to mention them all, but their sum and substance is that Jesus Christ, our great Covenant Surety, was made a curse for us and has, thereby, redeemed us from the curse of the Law. You see, then, my drift. The floods of great Wrath have been out—they have rolled over the dear Redeemer’s sacred Person and spent their fury!—

***“The tempest’s awful voice was heard!
O Christ, it broke on You!
Your open bosom was my ward,
It braved the storm for me.
Your form was scarred, Your visage marred;
Now cloudless peace for me.”***

It is absolutely certain that there never shall be a second flood, either of water to drown the world, or of Divine Wrath to overwhelm the souls of the redeemed! What joy is this!

But this is not all. Note that *the text gives us, next, the oath of God as our security.* “As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.” It is always a solemn occasion when Jehovah lifts His hand to Heaven and swears. Then is a matter confirmed, indeed, when it is secured by the oath of God! To my mind nothing is more full of awe! I cannot grasp the thought to the fullest and yet I love to dwell upon it! He swears by Himself because He could swear by no greater and thus, adding His oath to His promise, He gives us two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie!

He has pledged Himself, saying, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” The sin which was buried in Christ’s tomb shall never rise

again, or be mentioned against us anymore forever! The iniquity which was borne by Christ shall never be laid to the charge of those for whom the Savior bore it. How could it be? So long as truth and holiness remain, how can it be imagined that the Atonement can be accepted and yet the sinner punished on his own account? If God can break His oath, may this thing be, but this is inconceivable and so we rest secure.

But next we have before us the fact that *the Lord has guaranteed our security by a Covenant*, for in the 10th verse He says, "Neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed." The passage should be read, "Neither shall My Covenant of peace be removed." The eternal Father has entered into covenant with Christ that He would give to Him a seed for whom He should be the Covenant Head and Surety. Christ has fulfilled His side of the Covenant by bearing all the penalty for His people's sin and fulfilling all righteousness. And now that Covenant stands fast to be assuredly executed on the Father's side.

Thus runs the Covenant, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." "I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from Me." God has said, "I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." This is the Covenant from which the Lord cannot and will not draw back, for He never alters the thing which has gone forth out of His mouth! This Covenant was signed and sealed and ratified by the blood of Christ—and it is, in all things, well ordered and sure—and therefore the people of God may rest in perfect security of their everlasting deliverance from the deluge of righteous wrath.

And now, to close, *what blessed illustrations of our security are added* in the further declaration of the Lord's mind and will. The Lord looks on the mountains and the hills and declares that these and all things visible will pass away, for time's grandest birth shall perish when eternity surges its sway. The mountains and the hills may represent the most stable of earthly hopes and confidences—but these all must fail us when most we need them. The Lord Himself assures us of this and, therefore, does not at all guarantee to us any security in the things which are *seen*, nor any peace that can be drawn from the creature. Our consolation lies elsewhere. "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, said Jehovah, the Pitier."

Melt, you mountains and dissolve, you hills! Perish, O Earth, and flee away you heavens, but the Lord cannot forget His oath nor forsake His chosen! Should our dearest friends die. Should we traverse, many times, the sorrowful path to the sepulcher. Should those who survive become unkind. Should our substance be swept away and our honorable name be unjustly questioned. Should we be driven by persecution into banishment and should weakness and sickness cast us upon the bed of languishing. Should consumption mark us for her own, or painful maladies come upon us as armed men. Should we see the mountains depart and the hills re-

move—should all this happen, I say—even then we would triumph in almighty love, for thus says the Lord, “My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall My Covenant of peace be removed.”

The sick chamber shall be a palace! The sickness, itself, an angelic messenger! Poverty shall make us rich! Shame shall increase our honor! Banishment shall bring us nearer Home! Death, itself, shall enlarge the boundaries of life! Under no conceivable circumstances shall the Covenant fail! The Lord who made it cannot change! Jesus who sealed it cannot die! The love which dictated it cannot cease! The power which executes it cannot decay and the Truth of God which guarantees it cannot be questioned! In the eternal provisions of that Covenant of peace, which is sure to all the seed, we may rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory!

My Brothers and Sisters, do you believe this? If you do, you ought to be as happy as the angels are! Our lot is supremely blessed. What a loving God we serve and what great things has He spoken concerning us! The soul is filled with wonder that the Almighty God should, in very deed, enter into Covenant engagements with the insects of a day who are crushed before the moth! Whatever may be our outward sorrows, yet when we consider these choice favors and enjoy them in our own souls, we may count ourselves, of all men, the most happy! How can we be so cold, so dead as we are? Such favors are enough to melt rocks and make hills sing! O my Soul, awake, and from now on and evermore pour forth loud hallelujahs unto the Lord!

As for you who have no portion in Divine realities, what do you possess that is worth having? O you who are seeking the world, but are despising Covenant mercies, it were better for you that you had never been born! “What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose his own soul?” Think upon this, and consider your ways. And there is this encouragement for you, that all through our text the leading note is *mercy*. Look at the seventh verse, “With great *mercies* will I gather you.” Look at the eighth verse, “Will I have *mercy* on you.” The Word of God drips with mercy! Remember, also, that if any of us have obtained these Covenant promises, we were no better than you by nature and we had no more meritorious right to them than you have!

But God, in infinite distinguishing Grace, was pleased to bring *us* into the enjoyment of these privileges—why should He not bring *you* also? If salvation were by merit, there would be no Gospel! But as it is of mercy, free mercy, rich mercy—here is good news for you! Dear heart, if you would be forgiven, Christ is ready to forgive! If you would have peace with God, that peace is made! If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you shall be saved, even as they are who are, this day, rejoicing in His complete redemption! The Lord bring you this day to confess your sin humbly, to look up to Christ believingly and to find salvation through the blood of the Lamb! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 54.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—245, 738.**

THE LORD NO MORE ANGRY WITH HIS PEOPLE

NO. 2176

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 7,
1890.

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

***“For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.”
Isaiah 54:9.***

BEFORE any person could feel himself safe in applying such a word as this to himself, he would naturally read the chapter and study the connection in which it stands to see whether it would be a wresting of Scripture for any private Believer to understand it as being spoken by God to himself. Doing this, you will very soon be satisfied that every true Believer has his just portion here. Observe the closing words of the chapter—“This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord”—not of Jews or Gentiles as such, but of the *servants* of the Lord, be they of what race they may. It is not written that this was their heritage in some past dispensation, or shall be their heritage in some brighter era yet to come, but “This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord.”

Each one, therefore, may conclude that if he or she is a servant of the Lord this is his own heritage. But how are we to know these servants of the Lord? What is the distinguishing mark set upon them? The next words tell us this—“And their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord.” If there is anyone among us whose righteousness is his own, worked out by himself, he is excluded from this heritage—but whoever in our number has learned personally and for himself to call the Lord Jesus, “The Lord Our Righteousness,” he may claim the blessings of this chapter as his own. Without committing a spiritual robbery, everyone who is justified in Christ Jesus may feel that every sentence in this chapter belongs to him. “This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord.”

Am I a servant of the Lord? Do I serve Him out of love? The Prophet further adds, “And their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord.” Have I a righteousness that is Divine in its origin and character? If so, then, my Soul, come boldly to the Master's table and whatever dainties the Lord may heap thereon, feed upon them freely—for this is the children's meat which the heavenly Father has here set before them—and they will be guilty of no presumption if they take it all to themselves and feast to the fullest! May the Holy Spirit work in us this holy liberty!

In trying to deal with the text in a somewhat superficial manner—for it would be impossible, in the short time we have this evening, to explore its depths—we shall notice two things. First, *what men have the most cause to fear* and secondly, *what the saints need never fear*.

I. And, first, WHAT MEN HAVE THE MOST TO FEAR. All men who are unsaved ought, with fear and trembling, to *dread the wrath of God*—the wrath present and the wrath to come. The text speaks of the Lord's being angry, as of an evil to be feared. Man has cause to be afraid of *the rebuke of God* which is named in our text—that stern rebuke of the Holy One which is the prelude to the lifting up of His unsheathed sword and the destruction of His adversaries. God's anger and rebuke make up the utmost form of terror and if men were not maddened by sin they would confess that it is so.

God's wrath is matter for fear, because, dear Friends, *to be in union with God is necessary to the happiness of the creature*. To have God for its enemy is for the creature to be removed from its foundation and placed where it cannot abide. The whole universe stands because God's power supports it—only because it is so far in unison with the will of God does it exist in order, peacefulness and joy. Take God away from the world and the world would become dark, dreary, desolate and dead. No, I correct myself—there would be no world! This great sun, the moon and stars would all subside into their native nothing, even as a moment's foam melts back into the wave that bears it and is gone forever.

In the same way, an intelligent being, a spiritual nature without its Creator, is lost—lost as a sheep which has strayed from the shepherd—lost to all that renders life worth having. It were better for such a creature that it had never had an existence, for the wrath of God, when it goes forth in the form of a rebuke upon a thoughtful man, is as a seven-fold plague! God's rebuke on any creature is a withering thing, but on an intelligent being it is Hell! Some have felt it to a fearful degree in this life. Remember Cain, who went forth from the Presence of God a marked man. Who among us would like to have known his dread—living in fear that whoever should find him would kill him—a man accursed of the Most High and marked among his fellow men?

We read of Pashur, in the days of Jeremiah, who had the rebuke of God dwelling upon him so that he became a terror to himself. Remember the words of the Lord in the book of Deuteronomy, where the Lord threatens His erring people—“And among these nations shall you find no ease, neither shall the sole of your feet have rest: but the Lord shall give you there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: and your life shall hang in doubt before you; and you shall fear day and night, and shall have no assurance of your life.” What a rebuke is this! The voice of God had gone forth against him and his soul trembled!

Think of that proud mortal who heard God's voice of rebuke in the midst of his revelry and mirth—that God-defying monarch, Belshazzar, whose knees knocked together and the joints of his loins were loosed be-

cause he had seen the handwriting of God upon the wall. The rebuke of God burns up a man's spirit. It turns his moisture into the drought of summer and withers him like a flower broken off at the stalk—or like the hay that has fallen in the sun beneath the scythe! Oh, if such a calamity should ever come upon us, we shall have reason, indeed, to say, “Who knows the power of Your anger? Even according to Your fear, so is Your wrath”!

This wrath of God is to be feared, my Brothers and Sisters, all the more *because there is no escaping from it*. A man who is under the wrath of a monarch can escape to another kingdom. A man who has incurred the anger of the most mighty enemy can find, somewhere in this great world, a nook where he can conceal himself from his relentless pursuer. But he that has exposed himself to the wrath of *God* cannot save himself from the Almighty hand. Though you hide yourself on the top of Carmel, yet there the Omniscient eye shall see you! And though you fly to the clefts of the rock, like the eagle, yet God will find you out! There is no escaping from His Presence. Even though the beams of the morning sun should lend us wings, He would arrive before His fugitive. There is no place, even should we dive beneath Hell's profoundest wave, where He could not reach us.

It was said, in the days of the Caesars, that the whole world was but one great prison for those who were the enemies of the emperor. It is so. Earth, itself, and Heaven and Hell are but one vast dungeon for the man who is the object of the wrath of God and against whom the sentence of doom has gone forth from the eternal lips. A rebuke that withers! A rebuke from which there is no escape! Well may sinners who deserve it admire the long-suffering which invites to mercy and tremble lest the word of wrath should take its place and pursue them to the death! There is this, also, to be dreaded in the wrath of God, that, as there is no escape from it, so *there is no cure for it*.

Nothing can possibly give a man ease or safety when the rebuke of God has gone forth against him. He may be surrounded with temporal comforts, but his riches will only mock his inner poverty. Friends may utter words of cheer, but miserable comforters shall they all be—

**“When HE shuts up in long despair,
Who can remove the iron bar?”**

If God speaks the word in wrath, none can reverse the sentence. He shuts and no man opens. Instead of the mercies of this life becoming any comfort to him, when a man has the wrath of God resting upon him, it is written, “I will curse all your blessings.” Oh, terrible words! When the curse follows a man in his basket and in his store, in the fruit of his body and in the object of his life—follows him to his bed, to his board, to his work and to his rest—O wretched being! It were better for him that a millstone were hung about his neck and he were cast into the sea.

Blessed God! We thank You that You have not yet so spoken against us, but have left us yet on praying ground and pleading terms with You, and sent us once again the voice of inviting Mercy, saying, “Turn you,

turn you, why will you die, O house of Israel?" Had Your rebuke gone forth against us, we had been utterly consumed with terrors! Worse still, my Brethren, the rebuke of God, if we live and die impenitent, is *one against which we cannot harden ourselves*. We cannot gather strength to endure when God strikes at the heart and dries up the spirit. There are some pains of the body which, at first, are so tormenting that patience, while suffering from them, seems impossible. But after a certain season the nerves grow dull, or, at any rate, blunts the edge of pain, or the faintness of the flesh comes to the assistance of the sufferer.

But it is not so with the wrath of God. No shield can ward off the arrows of Almighty Justice. The Lord knows how to smite a man, not merely in hand, or foot, or head, but in the heart. The arrows of God stick fast in the man's inner self—they wound his spirit—and "a wounded spirit, who can bear?" Some of those who have been the most impudent braggarts against God have whined like cowards, and cried out—or, as the Prophet puts it, "howled upon their beds"—when He has but touched them with His finger! They cursed God until it came to dying and then they changed their tune to one of cowardly fear.

How often have atheists turned into trembling confessors when eternity has been in view! They could say once, "Who is the Lord that we should serve Him?" But, when they saw death approaching and sin pursued their soul with furies, they cried and entreated the Lord that He would have mercy. He knows, O you stout-hearted ones! He knows how to find out the joints in what you think to be your invulnerable harness! He can pierce you so that you can no longer stand up against Him! He can break the point of your spear and turn the edge of your sword—and then you will lie at the mercy of the God whom your sins have provoked! Beware how you dash yourselves upon the bosses of His shield, for you will only slay yourselves. In vain do you boast yourselves, for by strength shall no man prevail.

Oh, the wrath to come! The lapse of years shall never help a man to harden himself against the punishment of sin which will forever be "the wrath to come." Hell shall be as intolerable when it has been borne a thousand years as it was when first the soul was cast there! Throughout eternity there will be no relief to condemned spirits from the burden of their sinfulness, for as they will cling to sin, so will sin cling to them! No drop of consolation will fall into the cup of eternal woe—the impenitent shall drink *forever* of the wine of the wrath of God.

Here remember, my Brothers and Sisters, the tremendous and overwhelming fact *that the wrath of God does not end with death*. This is a Truth of God which the preacher cannot mention without trembling, nor without wondering that he does not tremble more! The *eternity* of punishment is a thought which crushes the heart. You have buried the man, but you have not buried his sins. His sins live and are immortal—they have gone before him to judgment—or they will follow after him to bear their witness as to the evil of his heart and the rebellion of his life. The

Lord God is slow to anger, but when He is once aroused to it, as He will be against those who finally reject His Son, He will put forth all His Omnipotence to crush His enemies. “Consider this,” He says, “you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver.” It will be no trifle to fall into the hands of the living God!

He will by no means clear the guilty. Forever must His anger burn! We have nothing in Scripture to warrant the hope that God’s wrath against evildoers will ever come to an end. Oh, the wrath to come! The wrath to come! The wrath which after ages and ages will still be to come and still to come and still to come! Well might that mighty pleader, Whitefield, when he preached, lift up his hands and with streaming eyes and breaking heart cry to the crowds—“Oh, the wrath to come, the wrath to come!”

This, then, is what men have most to dread. Did you ever dread it? He that never dreaded it nor felt in his spirit a trembling and a fear concerning it—alas for him—he has the strongest cause for alarm! Well do I remember when this awful Truth of God rolled over my spirit like the huge car of Juggernaut. I then thought myself to be utterly crushed and lost—and in a hopeless state—and, truly I would have been but for amazing Grace! Happy was it for me that I did see myself to be obnoxious to the Divine anger because I had never laid my sins upon Christ. If I could have carried them myself I would have never leaned upon His strength! If it had not been a hopeless, helpless case with me, I had never closed in with the Lord Jesus and made Him to be all my hope and help. When the wrath of God, burning in my spirit, had consumed every other hope, oh, then it was sweet to come to Christ and find in Him all consolation and salvation!

II. Enough upon this point. The delightful theme I wish to enlarge upon is this—WHAT THE SAINTS NEED NEVER FEAR. Dreadful as it is and more than sufficient to overwhelm the spirit with dismay, a fear of the wrath of God need never disturb the Believer’s heart! Let us read—“For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.”

God has *sworn* that He will never be angry with His people! He does not say that He will never be so angry with their sins as to chasten them sharply—for anger with our sins is love to us. He does not say that He will not be so angry as to punish us, although there would be great mercy, even in that. He goes much further and says that He will never be so angry with His people as even to rebuke them! He will not let His wrath rise so high as to draw an angry word from Him! “What?” you say, “then does not God rebuke His people?” Ah, verily, that He does and chastens them, too! But those rebukes and those chastisements are in *love* and not in wrath! The text before us is to be read thus: “I will not be angry with you so as to rebuke you in indignation.”

There shall never be so much as a word of wrath from the lips of God touching any one of His servants whose righteousness is of Him. So does He love those who are in Christ Jesus! So completely has He absolved

them that He will not speak in anger so much as one word against them! Now, this, to make us sure of it, is first of all *confirmed by an oath*—"So have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you." We ought to believe God's bare Word—we are bound to accept His promise as certainty itself—but who will dare to doubt the *oath* of the Eternal? You cannot accuse a man of anything more horrible than perjury!

Can you be so profane as to lay this at the door of God? To suspect Him of having sworn dishonestly, or dream that He can make a breach of that Covenant which He has sealed by an oath—this would be a crime against the thrice-holy Lord! Shall we tarnish the Glory of God by a suspicion that He will break His oath? And yet, perhaps, we are doing so. Under heavy chastisement you are saying—"The Lord is angry with me. He has turned His heart against me." While you are feeling in your body the smart of fierce disease, or in your estate a gradual decay of your property—or in the person of that dear dead child, or in the decease of that beloved wife or husband—you are seeing the hand of God going out against you.

It may be you say, "*This cannot be love! The Lord must be angry with me—so angry with me as to be striking me with cruel blows.*" But, dear child of God, you must not think so for a moment. The Lord has sworn that He would not be angry with you and He cannot break His oath. Nothing but love can guide the hand of His Providence. It is not possible that there is even a mixture of motives in His dealings with you. Undiluted affection arranges every step and perhaps it is because of the greatness of His affection that you are called upon to suffer so grievously. We all acknowledge that when a father strings up his nerves at last to chastise his darling child, he then gives clearest proof of wise love since every blow of the rod falls heavier on the father's heart than ever it can on the child's flesh.

It is true love which whips the erring heir of Glory from his sin. To fondle and spoil a rebel were folly and cruelty and would show that the father had not enough love for his child to study his best interests. But we see the triumph of love when a wise parent, out of supreme affection, grieves himself by chastening his child. Your heavenly Father does not afflict willingly—He has a loving reason for every stripe. In all your affliction He is afflicted and He brings Himself to afflict you—if I may use such a term—as you bring yourself to the chastening of your child. Love seems to behave itself strangely when it wields the rod and bruises its darling—but, indeed, it is then most truly love. I charge you, as you love your God and would not dare to accuse Him of falsehood, do not believe for an instant that He is angry with you, or will rebuke you in anger. The rebuke He sends is a rebuke of undiluted *love*. Not a grain of Divine anger is to be found in a mountain of Divine affliction. Jehovah swears there is not—can you do other than believe Him?

As if still further to illustrate the certainty of this, *He is pleased to draw a parallel between His present Covenant oath and that which He made in the days of Noah, the second great father of the human race.* He said to

Noah that the waters should no more go over the earth so as to destroy all flesh from off it—and He gave Noah the rainbow as a sign that this should never be. Observe that *the Covenant made with Noah was a Covenant of pure Grace*, for Noah found Grace in the sight of the Lord. The Lord will deal with us, also, according to His Grace. God destroyed the earth because it was corrupt—and assuredly it is corrupt today!

Many times since Noah's day the earth has been polluted with crying sins that might well have provoked God to turn the torrents upon our race. Those were horrible days when all men did as seemed good in their own eyes in the days of the Judges! You cannot read the histories of the kings of Israel without feeling sick at heart. The other nations were no better than the Jews and probably were much worse—yet the *chosen people* were as vile as vile could be! What horrible days were those of the Roman emperors when those who governed the world were monsters in iniquity and all lands reeked with vice! What cloudy days were those of the Middle Ages when to be a genuine Christian was to be hunted to death—when every kind of superstition and villainy had sway! The Lord might well have drowned the world in any one of those times quite as justly as He did in the days of Noah. It was of His Grace, then, that although He foresaw that the world would still be corrupt and that every imagination of man's heart would still be evil, He yet said that He would not destroy the earth, but that His long-suffering should patiently wait till the end should be.

Now, Beloved, this Covenant of pure Grace is paralleled by the Covenant we have been speaking of in your case. He has said, "I have sworn that I will not be angry with *you*, nor rebuke you." "Ah!" you say, "but my sins, my many imperfections, my shortcomings, my glaring failures, my frequent backslidings, my coldness of heart, my laxity in prayer, the mistakes into which I fall through carelessness, my unbelief, my thousands of sins—surely He will be angry with me on account of these?" But have I not shown you that He might a thousand times have been angry with the world so as to destroy it with water, but because of His Covenant He has not done so?

The Covenant was not made on account of what men *would* be, for the Lord foresaw that they would be evil continually! He made a Covenant because His mercy is great and His tenderness is infinite. He has made the same Covenant with you and your sins shall not disannul it! Sinner as you are, it is written—"If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." Defiled as you are, yet fly to the Fountain and you are washed—and the Lord is not angry with you—neither does He rebuke you. As He made a Covenant of pure Grace not to destroy the world with water, so He has made a Covenant of pure Grace with you not to be angry with you—and until the one fails, the other will not! Oh, rejoice that God has put your freedom from wrath upon so sure a footing!

But, *that first Covenant with Noah was made after a sacrifice*. Noah offered a sacrifice of clean beasts unto God and it is said that the Lord

smelled a sweet savor, or a savor of rest, and shortly after that it was that He made the Covenant not to destroy the earth. So, you see, the flood is kept away from us through a Covenant of *sacrifice*. Now, Beloved, the same reason works with God that He will not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. There is a Sacrifice in which God always smells a sweet savor of rest and therefore you are secure. Ah, it is not *you* that are acceptable to Him in yourselves—oh, no—you are “accepted in the Beloved.” Oh, that precious sentence—“Accepted in the Beloved”!

We have no personal sweetness, but because of the savor of our Lord’s good ointments, therefore are His members fragrant unto God. Christ is as precious Incense unto God at all times and this is the reason of our salvation! You recollect how the Israelites were preserved in Egypt on the night of the Passover? It was not said to them, “When *you* look at the blood I will pass over you,” or, “When *I* look at *you* I will pass over you.” God said, “*When I see the blood, I will pass over you.*” God’s eyes were fixed on the blood on the lintel—and He saw in that the *type* of the precious blood of Jesus—and therefore He passed over His people.

And so the Lord’s eyes are fixed on Jesus and His precious Sacrifice. And God is, for Jesus’ sake, well-pleased with us and utters no condemning word. When your sins rise in your conscience and you repent most bitterly of them and are downcast in your spirit concerning them—let not your sense of sin cause you to question this solemn declaration, sworn to by God’s own mouth—“I will not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.” Be sure of God’s favor, for you see the Reason of it—He does not look at you as you are in yourself, but as you are in Christ! He answers that sweet prayer we sometimes sing—

**“Him, and then the sinner see,
Look through Jesus’ wounds on me.”**

As He is not angry with the earth so as to drown it, so, because of the Sacrifice, He will not be angry with us so as to rebuke us in anger.

Remember, again, *that Covenant which God made with Noah was openly propounded in the ears of the whole race*. Noah and his sons heard it and we have all heard it. God has openly said, “I will no more cause the water to cover the face of the earth.” Now, when a man makes a promise, if it is in private he is bound by it and his honor is engaged thereto. But when his solemn promise becomes *public*, he stakes his character among men upon the fulfillment of his word. We are accustomed to say—“If he didn’t mean to do it, why did he make it so public? Why did he say it in this place and in that place?” Now, since the Lord has made public this gracious Word—“I will not be angry with you, nor rebuke you,” does He not intend to do as He has said?

Would He write it thus, as it were, across the sky, if He did not mean to keep it? Has He spoken in secret and disannulled this which He spoke in public? His answer is—“I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek you Me in vain.” His promises are yes and amen in Christ Jesus. Not the dot of an “i,” nor the cross

of a, “t,” shall ever fail! None of His Words shall fall to the ground. Christ has not come to put any one of God’s Words away, but that they all may be established! And, my Brothers and Sisters, Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of the promises of our God shall fail!

Let it be remembered, also, concerning the parallel between the one promise and the other, that *God never has broken the Covenant which He made with Noah*. There have been partial deeds which have carried off the inhabitants of a valley. But the race of man has never been swept away with water since the days of Noah and the ark—and I do not think there is any man here who suspects that they will be. When the showers begin to fall, it is always delightful to mark that radiant bow set there in the sky, that God may look upon it and remember His Covenant—and that we may look upon it and remember that Covenant, too. How gloriously is it painted on the darkness of the clouds! How plainly it says to us, “Fear not!”

Now, Beloved, if the Lord is so faithful to one Covenant, why should we imagine, even in our worse moments, that He will be unfaithful to His other Word which He has spoken concerning our souls? Dear Heart, He that is true in one will be true in another! When you have trusted a person and found him scrupulously upright in one instance, it would be a shame to mistrust him in another till you have a cause. You have never had any cause to doubt your God! Has He forgotten His oath? Has He pulled up the sluices of the great deep and bid the secret fountains leap up from their ancient lair? Has He unstopped the bottles of Heaven by the month together and bade them pour out floods which should cover the tops of the hills and drown the whole race of Adam? You are living witnesses that it is not so! Well, then, this is the proof to you of the truthfulness of the Lord our God. Doubt not His love to you until He shall have broken the Covenant that He made with Noah, since He says, “This is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.”

If you can, any of you, fully drink in the Lord’s meaning, you do not need any more words of mine—the Lord’s Words are more than enough! Drink in the Divine Truth and let it saturate your inmost spirit. God says, “I will not be angry with you, nor rebuke you,” by which He intends to say, “Whatever I do to you, it shall not be in wrath. Wherever I cast you—into the wilderness, into the furnace, into the grave—there shall be no wrath in My act—no, not to the extent of a rebuke. All that I do to you shall be love, love, love—nothing but love from first to last.” Surely this word is marrow and fatness! What more could the Lord say to us? What more could we desire? God grant that the wines on the lees well-refined stored up in this text may make a feast for all Believers!

Now, I want to say to you, dear Friends, that if this is the case, that God will not be angry with us, nor rebuke us, then *the greatest fear that can ever fall upon us is gone and it is time that all our lesser fears were*

gone with it! For instance, there is *the fear of man*. This man says that, and that man says the other—and some people attach a wonderful deal of importance to what other people say—and so they are carried away with the fear of man's opinion. Why can they not catch the spirit of that brave nobleman who had carved over his castle gates the words—"They say. What do they say? Let them say." We do not always attain to such independence of mind, but we ought to do so. Ordinarily we tremble because of man, though he is but grass and withers like the flower of the field. But, when we clearly understand that God is not angry with us, we feel raised above the rage of mortals!

Now, Herod, mock at your pleasure! Now, Pilate, ask your sarcastic questions! Now, scribes and Pharisees, meet in your councils! The Lord is not angry with us and what do we care for you? Let the earth be removed, let the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, let the waters thereof roar and be troubled—since God is not angry with us and does not rebuke us—we can stand like solid rocks in the midst of the storm and laugh to scorn the turmoil! Towards the anger of men we turn the armor of believing endurance now that the Lord's anger is turned away from us once and for all. So, too, *we need not fear the devil*. He is the most cunning of our adversaries and being exceedingly angry with us, he goes about to deceive and to devour.

But, Brothers and Sisters, if God will never be angry with us, the teeth of the old dragon are broken! His only hope is that God will be angry with us and for this purpose he leads us, if he can, into sin. But if he cannot effect his design, to what purpose are all his arts? O fool of fools, Prince of Darkness! A mass of cunning and folly are you! O you Fiend of Hell!—the very children in Zion laugh you to scorn and shake their heads at you—for they shall tread you beneath their feet shortly—and gloriously shall they triumph over all your power. If God will not be angry with me, nor rebuke me, why should I fear, though all Hell's legions should march against me?

Dear Brethren, if God will never be angry with us, nor rebuke us, we need not fear any of *the chastisements which He may lay upon us*. There is a vast difference between a blow that is given in anger and a pat that is given in love. Your children soon perceive the difference. A little one is in your arms and if you do but pat it lightly in anger it begins to cry. But if your hand fell heavily in sport and it saw that you only meant a love-pat, it would laugh! So we *rejoice* in tribulations and *glory* in afflictions because they come from the deep love of God. When we perceive that love is written on our trials, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. "Whom the Lord loves He chastens."

I am glad the text does not say, "I will *never* rebuke you, even in love." It would be an awful text if it said that! Blessed be God, He does rebuke us! If it had been said, "I will never rebuke you, nor chasten you," why, what would follow? Is it not written, "If you are without chastisement, which all are partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons"? If there

were no rebukes, no chastisements, it would be a sure sign that the Lord had cast the reins off our necks and had said, "He is joined to idols; let him alone." We do not desire that the Lord should promise us freedom from trial. The true-born child of God must not escape trouble and, if he is wise, he would not if he might.

Since there is no anger in affliction, let the Lord chastise His servants even as seems good in His sight—all our souls shall say is this, "Rebuke us not in anger and then Your will be done!" The sorrows of this mortal life lose all their sharpness when we believe that the Lord will not be angry with us, nor rebuke us. My Brethren, how *this alters the look of death*. If death is a punishment to a Believer, then death wears gloomy colors. But if it is not so—if death, itself, has changed its character so as not to be to the Believer a punishment for sin—how delightful is this! The Believer's punishment was fully borne by His Substitute, so that the bitterness of death is past!

It is not death to die—it is only undressing. These poor garments are dusty with toil and, in some cases, they are ragged with age and therefore we may be well content to put them off. "Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon with our house which is from Heaven." Dying—why, it is only going to our bed chamber to sleep a while and then to wake up, at the sound of the trumpet, in the likeness of our Lord! Dying—why to our souls it is the entrance into the joy of our Lord! It is passing into the ivory palaces wherein they have made Him glad and wherein we shall be made glad in His blessed company! O Brothers and Sisters, the smell of His garments at a distance—how overpowering it is! The myrrh, the aloes and the cassia delight our souls!

What will be the fragrance when we are in the Beloved's arms? What must be the Glory when we stand at His right hand clothed in the gold of Ophir? What must it be to be *there*? Since, then, death is changed from a foe to a friend and in death the Lord does not even so much as rebuke His people—it has become a *gainful* thing to die—a blissful thing to depart and be with Christ! After death shall come *the judgment* and in that last great day of judgment the Lord will not be angry with His people! And if the reading out of all His people's sins before an assembled world must imply a rebuke, then it shall not be done for He will not rebuke them! In no way shall rebuke come to them.

Besides, there are no sins to be charged on His people now, for if they are searched for they shall not be found. Christ has put their iniquities away and cast them into the depths of the sea. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." His people shall not, even in that awful day, know anything of rebuke from Jehovah's lips. Oh, the blessedness of this glorious promise which is confirmed to us by the oath of God! So, then, what should we fear? What, indeed? The Lord grant us Divine Grace to be afraid of being afraid! May the Holy Spirit give us Grace to be ashamed to blush or doubt! And may we trust Him with a firm confidence that cannot be moved!

These four words, and I have done. If it is so, that God has sworn that He will not be angry with us, then, first, *believe it*. The inference is clear—Jehovah swears—shall not His children believe? For any man to doubt me is to dishonor me, but for my child to mistrust my oath would be the unkindest cut of all. Believe without hesitation. That is one word. The next is, *rejoice*. If He will not be angry with you, nor rebuke you, then be glad! Here is constant theme for song. The nightingale sings in the dark and so may you. Midst darkest shades, with such a word as this, your dawning is begun! Rejoice evermore!

The third word is, *be resigned*. If the Lord will not be angry with you, meekly bear without repining whatever His will ordains. You see the cup is sweetened with love—why do you make wry faces over it? Will you not accept what perfect love proffers? Oh, do not kick against a God so gracious! Lastly, *impart*. If you have learned this love in your own heart, then tell it to others. If, indeed, it is glad tidings to you, proclaim the happy message and say to every sinner you meet with, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters.” “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

You can prove your knowing this for yourselves by your desire to make it known to others—and you have need to doubt whether you truly understand the salvation of the Lord in your own soul if you feel no inward impulse to make others know the glorious promise of your Lord. May God bless you, dear Friends, by putting this text right into your souls! I can only lay it near the open door of your ears, but the Holy Spirit can place it in the inner depths of your hearts. May He do so at once, for His name’s sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 54.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—733, 226, 748.**

I am unable to write even a line or two to my dear sermon readers. I am better, but so weary in brain and weak in body, that, instead of preaching to others, I must hope that they will be praying for me. So soon as I can compose, I will write a letter to follow each sermon.
Mentone, November 30, 1890.

C. H. SPURGEON.

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DIAMOND HINGES—“AS” AND “SO”

NO. 2962

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 1, 1875.

“For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.”
Isaiah 54:9.

THERE are some people in the world who, the moment we begin to speak of a type, try to disparage that style of speech by calling it “spiritualizing.” They seem to be far too wise to be able to learn anything by that mode of teaching. Yet the Holy Spirit has given us, in the Old and New Testaments, abundant instances of spiritualizing and, though He could have used new metaphors and fresh phrases in His Infinite Wisdom, He preferred to use the old historical allusions and the old historical types for the instruction of God’s people. It is a pity that we should crave that which is new when it can truly be said, “the old is better.” In the case before us, the Holy Spirit uses Noah’s flood and the Lord’s Covenant—that it should no more return to destroy the earth—as symbolical of the Covenant of Grace which is made with the people of God in Christ Jesus. Surely He did this for our instruction! Oh, that He would shine upon the Word and make it to be both for our edification and our comfort! His Divine Treasure House is full of blessings, but He must give us the key or we shall not be able to enter. Open it, blessed Spirit, to all Your believing people!

There are two things in our text for us to consider. The first is *that there are, in Noah and the Flood, and the Covenant, many symbols illustrating the Covenant of Grace.* And the second is that *there is one main symbol here* which was certainly intended first and chiefly, whether the rest were intended or not. On that main point I hope to speak at some length.

I. But, first, IN NOAH, THE FLOOD AND THE COVENANT, THERE ARE MANY SYMBOLS ILLUSTRATING THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

First, *Noah’s name signified, “rest.”* We know where our rest is to be found and who is our Noah. Of our Lord Jesus Christ, we can truly say, “He is our peace.” It is through Him that “the peace of God, which passes all understanding,” keeps our heart and mind at rest evermore. We rest in Him and nowhere else. Did He not say, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”? And has He not fulfilled His promise?

Further, *Noah, in a time of general corruption, was the only man who was found righteous before God.* If you turn to the Book of Genesis, at your leisure, you will see that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth." But you will also read that "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." It is also written that "Noah found grace (or favor) in the eyes of the Lord." Noah was, in his day, the one man who was told to prepare a hiding place from the storm and a refuge from the tempest. Noah's ark was the one place of refuge for our race in which eight persons were preserved, or, otherwise, the whole race would have been destroyed!

Now, we know that Jesus Christ is pre-eminently the one lone Man of the human race whose perfect righteousness has given God infinite delight. When all the rest of mankind had gone astray like lost sheep, He walked with God. Here upon earth He was found, tempted, but never sinning. He was compassed with infirmity, but never transgressing—the one Man upon whom God could look with complacency as the type of what the race ought to have been. He could not look thus on the first Adam, for, when He looked upon him, He cursed the ground for his sake. The blessing came through the Second Adam, upon whom the Lord always looks with joy, and for whose sake He blesses all those who are in Him. If I might call Noah the second father of the human race—and I might properly do so—I might with still greater propriety call Jesus the Second Father of the ever-living race—the race that is quickened into newness of life by the power of the Holy Spirit!

Again, Noah, thus standing out in solitary grandeur, as a type of the lone Redeemer, was *a preacher of righteousness* and therein, also, he was a type of our Lord Jesus, for never did any mere man preach righteousness as He did, for He not only preached it—He created it! We must not forget that Noah preached righteousness in vain, for no one except the members of his own family would believe his testimony. In this respect, also, he was a type and symbol of Him who was to come. The cry of Jesus and of His faithful servants in all ages has been, "Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

But that wondrous man, *Noah, was also a builder.* Probably all that he had of worldly abundance and wealth went into that strange ark in which the survivors from the deluge were to be preserved. And you know how our blessed Master gave all that He had in order that He might build a spiritual Church out of which the new world should be peopled. He laid down His life that He might be the Redeemer of His chosen race, and He still lives to be the great Master-Builder of His Church.

You know also that when the right time came, *Noah went into the ark and was shut up in it, away from all the rest of mankind.* When the flood came, it spent itself upon the ark as well as upon all people and things outside it. The ark must endure the long pelting of the rain and go through the terrible deluge as through the waters of death, itself, as though it were a coffin, floating over the world's grave—from a dead world into a new world. "The same figure," says the Apostle Paul, "whereunto

even baptism does also now save us." That is to say, Baptism is a type and symbol of salvation, just as Noah's ark was, for therein we, being spiritually dead with Christ, are buried with Christ in the outward symbol and rise from the water, even as Christ rose from the grave, to live henceforth among the twice-born race who fear not the second death! After the deluge, *Noah came out into a new world* and Jesus rose into a new world to which He had brought life and immortality to light. Noah survived a flood that had spent all its force—and Jesus stands among us and we, His people, stand with Him to look upon a flood of Divine wrath that has spent all its force so far as we are concerned. It is true that it will sweep away the ungodly who are not of the twice-born race, but it will not injure any who belong to the race that is allied to this Second Adam, this more glorious Noah! For them, the flood of wrath has spent itself forever. Noah came out into a new world which was very different from that which existed before the flood. And he came out of the ark with a sacrifice of thanksgiving, even as Jesus presented Himself to His Father as the appointed Offering which made all His people acceptable in Him.

And, lastly, *it was with Noah that the Lord's Covenant was made*, even as the Covenant which most concerns us was made with Jesus Christ. And, as the Covenant with Noah still stands, so stands the Covenant with Christ. The world, preserved today from destruction by flood, is a symbol of the Church of Christ preserved forever from all the wrath of God which was due to it because of its sin, but which was borne by its great Substitute and Surety, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I have just hurriedly mentioned these various points in which Noah was a type of Christ. This is a subject which is worthy of being thought out another time—and it deserves your earnest consideration and constant remembrance.

II. But in the second place, I want to deal more fully with the chief point of the text. THERE IS A MAIN SYMBOL HERE—"This is as the waters of Noah unto Me; (for this reason, that) as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you."

The text turns on the two hinges of, "as," and, "so"—two precious diamond hinges upon which it hangs! And these mean, I think, first, "*as surely as*," and then, "*in the same manner as*."

First, as surely as God has sworn that a devouring flood shall never again cover the earth, so certainly has He sworn that His wrath and rebuke shall never go forth against His redeemed Church, or against one of His redeemed people. And you may rest assured that as the one is a fact, so is the other, and as the one shall never be altered, so the other never shall be! The first oath is irrevocable and so is the second—"As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you."—

***"My God, the Covenant of Your love
Abides forever sure***

***And in its matchless Grace
I feel My happiness secure."***

But it not only means "as surely as," it also means, "in the same manner as," and there I notice two points of resemblance. As God has sworn, absolutely, that He will not again destroy the earth with a flood, so has He sworn absolutely that He will not pour forth His wrath against any Believer, or against the Church of Christ as a whole. And the second point is that as God has promised with a symbol that He will not destroy the earth a second time by water, so has He also promised to His people, with a symbol, a token, a sure sign—that He will not be angry with them or rebuke them.

First, then, *in both cases God has promised absolutely what He will not do.* You observe that there is not a single, "if," in either of these Covenants. The Lord said absolutely, "I will not again destroy the earth with a flood." He did not say, "Unless such-and-such contingencies arise, I will not send another flood." He supposed no contingencies, or else, regardless of all contingencies, He said, "I will never again destroy the earth with a flood—under no circumstances, at no time, and for no reason whatever will I do so." In like manner, God has sworn that His wrath shall never be let loose upon you who believe in Jesus Christ and are saved, in time or in eternity, or under any supposable circumstances whatever—"As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you." There may be dark rain clouds—there have been many such. There may be partial floods—there have been many such—but these have not invalidated the Covenant that the waters shall never again cover the earth as the flood did in the days of Noah. That Covenant stands fast forever!

In like manner, the Church of God may be very severely tried. Fierce persecutions may break out against her. She may be torn with schisms and poisoned with heresies—but God will not forget her or forsake her! And you, child of God, may have many trials and, indeed, you will have them because you are a child of God. You may have to go through deep waters, and sometimes unbelief will say—

***"The Lord has quite forsaken you!
Your God will be gracious no more."***

But that can never be true! You must not judge of God's love by any outward Providences any more than you would judge of His Covenant not to destroy the earth with a flood by the fact that there are heavy showers of rain now and again. God stands true to His Covenant with Noah, let it rain as heavily as it may! And God stands true to His still greater Covenant of Grace, let your trials and troubles be as numerous and severe as they may be! Get a firm grip of this glorious Truth of God, that there is not a drop of Divine wrath in all your sufferings! You have an aching head and a palpitating heart. You have lost your property. You have buried the darlings that nestled in your bosom. You say, "I am the man that has seen affliction," but, for all that, not a drop of God's wrath,

nor even a rebuke, in the strong sense in which that word is used here, has fallen upon you! Gentle, tender, paternal rebukes you have had and can expect to still have—but no such rebuke as signifies fierce wrath, no such rebuke as brings a withering curse with it can ever fall upon you if you hide yourself in the Redeemer's pierced side, if you trust to the Covenant of Grace which Christ has made with His Father on your behalf!

There will yet come upon the earth greater convulsions than have yet been experienced, for, in the verse following our text, we read, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed." Before the history of the world is complete there will come dreadful shakings and upheavals. I am no Prophet, nor the son of a Prophet, but, as it has been in the past, so may we expect that it shall be in the future. Dynasties will die, empires will collapse, there will be wars, famines, pestilences and we know not what, for the earth is subject to all these things! But the Church of God shall never suffer from famine—her dynasty shall never be dissolved, the gates of Hell shall not prevail against her—and her King shall sit upon His throne forever! And you, dear Friend, may have such troubles that it shall seem to you as if the mountains had departed and the hills had been removed and you shall seem to have no resting place for the soles of your feet, but if you are trusting in Jesus, He will not be angry with you, nor rebuke you, for so God's promise stands! "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you." Ah, the most terrible convulsions may come—the star called Wormwood may fall and the seven vials be emptied out! And the earth may shake with the tramp of the armies gathered together for the last dread battle—but, whatever may happen, the people of God must forever remain—

"Safe in the arms of Jesus."

Stormy may be the outlook, but all are safe who are within the ark! The huge billows may threaten to overwhelm us, but, "with Christ in the vessel," we can "smile at the storm." His kindness shall not depart from us nor shall the Covenant of His peace be removed—

***"Firm as the lasting hills,
This Covenant shall endure,
Whose potent shalls and wills
Make every blessing sure.
When ruin shakes all nature's frame,
Its jots and tittles stand the same."***

I would like to sit down and think over these blessed Truths of God and enjoy them. May the Lord be pleased to give each of us the Grace to feed upon them and to know, by personal experience, the blessedness of them! Think, dear Brothers and Sisters, how can there be any wrath treasured up against God's people when it was all poured out upon the Lord Jesus Christ, their Surety and Substitute? For—

***"Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,***

And then again at mine."

If Jesus suffered in my place, how can God's wrath fall upon me? Does Infinite Justice demand two victims? Can God smite the Substitute and then smite the sinner for whom He stood as Substitute? I know, in my inmost soul, that this is utterly impossible! If Jesus really did suffer in my place—and well do I know that He did—if, in the place of all His believing people, He has bled and died, and well do we know that it was so—then, Beloved, the wrath of God cannot fall upon us, for there is none, it is all gone! Christ has borne it all so far as all His people are concerned!

Observe, too, that there is such a close union between Christ and all His people that if God's wrath did fall upon Christ's people, it would also fall upon Christ! If you were to scald one part of my body—the soles of my feet, for instance—you would scald *me*. You could not crush my little finger without hurting *me*. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we are so vitally united to Christ that if we were lost, Christ would not have a perfect body, for "we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones." So His Inspired Apostle assures us. Be comforted, then, you who are one with Jesus! How can wrath fall on any part of the body of Christ? And you are a part of that body and, therefore, you are safe from wrath forever—

***"If ever it should come to pass,
That sheep of Christ should fall away,
My feeble, fickle soul, alas,
Would fall a thousand times a day."***

That shall never be, for He will keep His own and preserve them in righteousness and true holiness, in faith, and love, and hope, until He brings them to His eternal Kingdom and Glory! When our Great Shepherd counts His sheep at the last, they shall, each one, pass under the rod of Him that counts them, and they will, every one of them, be there! That little lamb that was all but devoured by the lion shall be there. That poor weather-beaten ewe that was seized by the bear shall be there—the one that had the hardest lot of all shall be there, for the Lord will never let it be said that He kept the strong but could not keep the weak! He will not let it be said that He kept them that were not tried, but that He could not keep those that were! That cannot be! The Good Shepherd will never have to say of any of His sheep that He has lost them—but He will say to His Father, "Those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost." He will account for the full tale of His flock in the Presence of Him who gave them to Him. Oh, I think I hear the muster-roll being read out at the last! In it are the names of all those who ever put their trust in Christ. Let not any true Believer say—

***"What if my name should be left out,
When You for them shall call?"***

It will not be left out if you are one of His! If the question is put "Is Mrs. Much-Afraid here?" She will sweetly answer to her name and say, "Yes, Lord, I am here, by Your Grace, but I am afraid no longer!" "Is Little-Faith here?" And Little-Faith will sing out, "Yes, Lord, for Little-Faith's

grain of mustard seed has grown into a tree!" "And is Mr. Ready-to-Halt here?" "Yes, Lord, but without his crutches, for he no longer needs them!" "And Mr. Feeble-Mind—is he here?" "Yes, Lord, but he has left his feeble mind behind him and now he sings of the eternal love of Christ to such a poor sinner as he was!"

Besides, do you not know that "the Father Himself loves you," and that He loved you so much that He gave His only-begotten Son to die for you? Will He cast you away after doing that? Never! "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." If He so loved us when we were in the horrible pit and in the miry clay, when the filth of sin was all over us, as to lift us up into the bosom of Christ, do you think that He will not love us enough to keep us there? From eternity He has chosen us and by the precious blood of Jesus He has bought us! His is no child's love that burns brightly today and goes out into cold ashes on the morrow. His love is no spark of transient passion—it is an eternal flame and He will never allow it to burn itself out. Let us not be afraid, therefore, that the wave of His wrath will ever go over us, or that the torrent of His stern rebuke will ever sweep us away. Let us rest in the joyful assurance that if we are, indeed, in Christ, any question about the wrath of God falling upon us can be laid aside forever.

What you all need is to have that precious Truth of God brought home to your heart. Possibly some of you are like a sea captain to whom I was once talking about the precious things of the Kingdom. We were going up the river and he pointed to the great posts to which the barges and ships could be moored. "Ah," he said, "they would hold the forest if I could only get a rope over them. But, sometimes," he added, "we can't fling the rope so that it goes right over the head of the post and gives us a firm hold." If any of you, dear Friends, are in such a difficulty as that, I pray that the Lord, as He stands on the shore, may throw a rope to you and that you may lay hold of it and be moored fast to this sure Truth of God that as certainly as the waters of Noah will no more go over the earth, so will the waves of God's wrath never go over the man who is safely sheltered in the wounds of Jesus!

The other point we were to notice is that, *in both Covenants there was a sign*. As I read about the Covenant of Noah, I like to dwell upon that part where God said of the rainbow, "This is the token of the Covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations." So God has a sign for Himself, for us, and for every living soul that is in Christ. The rainbow is a very precious sign of the ancient Covenant. We cannot often see it, but now and then God hangs it out—often enough, I have no doubt. But He has given to us, in the Covenant of Grace, a sign which we can always see and I think it is this. Our Lord Jesus once said to His disciples, "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you." As certainly as the Father loves Christ, so certainly does Christ love His people. If you could look up into Heaven,

what would you see there? You would see Christ at the right hand of the Father—Christ the Beloved of the Father, Christ whom the Father delights to honor, Christ the very apple of the Father's eye! That is your token of the Everlasting Covenant made with Christ on behalf of all His people! Whenever you can see that sign—and you can always see it, for there is not a single child of God who has any doubt about the love which the Father bears to Christ—that is the token to you of the Covenant made with Christ for you. "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you."

And, in a minor sense, I think that this Communion Table, around which many of us will presently gather, furnishes us with another symbol of the Father's love as instructive as the rainbow itself. Let me speak of it for a minute or two. Child of God, the fact that your Father loves you and that He will not be angry with you, nor rebuke you, is certain, for there stands His Table furnished and prepared. For what purpose? Why, that you may feast with Him! At the institution of the Supper, Christ Himself sat and presided at the table—and it is no Lord's Supper if He is not there! "You are My friends," He says to you who believe in Him—and He invites you to come and sit at His Table and feast with Him. If He did not love you, He would not have spread the Table for you. As if you have had any doubt about the continuance of His love to you, see the Table spread for you. I am sure that the poor prodigal, when he came back from his wanderings, was comforted, among other things, by the killing of the fatted calf and the loading of the table at which he was a welcome guest. See how your Father loads the table for you—

***"Never did angels taste above
Redeeming Grace and dying love"—***

yet these items have been set before you. O Believer, rest assured that the Lord will not be angry with you, nor rebuke you—otherwise He would not have called you to sit with Him at His table! "Go to bed, Sir, without your supper," is what an angry father says to his disobedient boy. But "Eat, O Friends! Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved," is what your Father says to you! Therefore, be you greatly comforted!

If you look on the Table, what do you see there? You see the bread and the wine, the emblems of the body and the blood of Jesus, and as you see the two emblems separate from one another, they become to you the emblems of the death of Jesus, whose blood streamed out of His body through His many wounds. God bids you come here and think of Jesus, your Savior. He does not bid you come here and sit and groan because of your sins! He would have you think of the death of His dear Son by which all your sins were put away. Our Father in Heaven says to us who have believed in Jesus, "Come, My children, to this Table, and see how you were cleansed from all your guilty stains. Come and see how all that could provoke Me to wrath against you was forever put away. Come to My Table and take the tokens of the great propitiatory Sacrifice offered by My well-beloved Son on your behalf." When I look into the wine cup and think of the precious blood of Jesus shed for many for the remission of

sins—and when I realize that He means this emblem of His bloodshed to be a luxury, a source of exhilaration, a means of spiritual strength to us as we drink it—I understand that His mind is not full of thoughts of wrath against us, but rather of thoughts of a sacred hospitality which bids His children to be happy while feasting with Him at His Table!

I have not time to say more, except to remind you that *all who lived in the days of Noah did not enter the ark of safety*. They did not all have a share in that Covenant of which the bow in the cloud was the visible sign, for the vast mass of the population was swept away by that terrible flood. As I look upon my present congregation, I bless God that it will not be so with you, for the most of you have, I trust, believed in Jesus. It is a melancholy reflection, however, that there are many here who have not entered the Ark of Salvation, or, as far as we know, have any share in the Covenant of Grace. Every time the Communion Table is spread here, it seems to me that it would be a wonderful sermon even if I did not say anything. Tonight, as soon as I have finished preaching, many of us will begin to gather around the Communion Table and the congregation will at once begin to break up into its several parts. There are some of you who will be going home and others of you will be going upstairs to look on while we are gathered at the ordinance. I do not know how you feel about this division, but I do not like it, especially with regard to some of you whom I respect and esteem, and who, I believe, have many admirable points about you.

But you are not decided, you have never given your hearts to Christ so you will be lost forever if you die as you now are! You know you will and, years ago, it caused you quite a pang to have to go away when others remained for the Communion. You have to leave your wife, do you not?—and your sisters and some of you have to leave your father and mother. I grieve to say that there are some parents here who have to leave their children to sit at the Table while they, themselves, go away. There was a time when you could hardly bear to do that, but you are getting used to it, I am afraid—some of you. I pray God that you may not get used to it because, if you do, there will come a day when these partings will be final—when you will not merely be going home or going up into the gallery, but you will be driven from God's Presence, far away from the everlasting halls where His saints will be feasting—and be cast down to the prison of black despair where weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth must be your portion forever! What says that old-fashioned hymn that the Revivalists used to sing?—

***“Oh, there will be weeping!
Oh, there will be weeping!
Oh, there will be weeping—
At the Judgment Seat of Christ!”***

The sharp, two-edged sword will cut many families in two and sever the husband from the wife whom he so fondly loved, though he did not love her Savior! And the son will be cut off from the mother whom he truly loved, but whose God he did not. Why should we be divided thus? Why

should we be divided? Why should we not go hand in hand to Immanuel's land?

Dear Savior, put Your almighty arms right round this Tabernacle—it is only like a little box to You—and take the whole Tabernacle full of us, and let us all be Yours in the day when You shall make up your jewels! Oh, that You could then say, "They are all here, as they were all in the Tabernacle on that first night in August, 1875—all here and all Mine, and all saved." Oh, how fervently I pray that it may be so! Will you not yourselves all pray the same prayer? God will hear you if you do, for He waits to be gracious! There must be a separation, now, but let this be the last time that it shall happen and, between now and the first Sabbath in September, may God grant that you may all have resolved to cast in your lot with Christ and with His people, too! I can assure you that if you do so, we who love the Lord, will greatly rejoice—and you also will rejoice with us! God bless you all, and so grant us our heart's desire, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 8:20-22; 9:8-17; ISAIAH 54:1-10.**

Genesis 8:20, 21. *And Noah built an altar unto the LORD and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offering on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savor.—A savor of rest.*

21, 22. *And the LORD said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground anymore for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite anymore everything living, as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. So that you all live under a Covenant—a gracious Covenant and, by virtue of it, the day succeeds the night, the summer follows the winter and the harvest in due course rewards the labor of the seedtime. All this ought to make us long to be under the yet fuller and higher Covenant of Grace, by which spiritual blessings would be secured to us—an eternal day to follow this earthly night and a glorious harvest to follow this time of seed sowing!*

Genesis 9:8-10. *And God spoke unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish My Covenant with you, and with your seed after you. And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. Happy fowls, and happy cattle, and happy beasts of the earth to be connected with Noah and so to come under a Covenant of preservation! And we—though only worthy to be typified by these creatures which God had preserved in the Ark—are thrice happy to be in the same Covenant with Him who is our Noah, our rest, our sweet savor unto God!*

11-17. *And I will establish My Covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off anymore by the waters of a flood; neither shall there anymore be*

a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the Covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token for a Covenant between Me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud. And I will remember My Covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it. What a wonderful expression that is! It is similar to that remarkable declaration of Jehovah, recorded in Exodus 12:13. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." The blood was not to be sprinkled inside the house where the Israelites might be comforted by a sight of it, but outside the house where only God could see it. It is for our sake that the rainbow is set in the cloud and we can see it there. Yet Infinite Mercy represents it as being there as a refreshment to the memory of God—"The bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it."

16. *That I may remember the Everlasting Covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.* So when my eye of faith is dim and I cannot see the Covenant sign, I will remember that there is an eye which never can be dim—which always sees the Covenant token—and so I shall still be secure notwithstanding the dimness of my spiritual vision. For our *comfort* we must see it, but for our safety, blessed be God, it is only necessary that He should see it!

17. *And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the Covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is upon the earth.* Now let us read what the Lord says, through the Prophet Isaiah, concerning this Covenant.

Isaiah 54:1. *Sing, O barren, you that did not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you that did not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the LORD.* This promise is made to the long-barren and desolate Gentile Church. She may well sing, for God has visited her in mercy and, at this day, her children are more numerous than those of the Jewish Church. We have waited, but we have been well repaid for our waiting, for we have a larger and richer blessing than God's ancient people ever enjoyed!

2-4. *Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of your habitations: spare not, lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes; for you shall break forth on the right hand and on the left; and your seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. Fear not: for you shall not be ashamed: neither be you confounded; for you shall not be put to shame: for you shall forget the shame of your youth, and shall not remember the reproach of your widowhood any more.* O child of God, have you passed through a time of great sorrow in which the Lord seemed to desert you? Have all your hopes been blighted and have all your joys fallen, like untimely figs from the trees? Yet the days of your rejoicing shall be many! You shall soon

put aside your sackcloth and ashes and dancing and holy gladness shall be your portion!

5. *For your Maker is your Husband.* Rejoice, O Church of God, that you have such a Husband! Rejoice, every member of the Church of God, that you have such a Husband to help you!" Your Maker is your Husband."

5. *The LORD of Hosts is His name; and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. The God of the whole earth shall He be called.* Well might Paul write, in the Epistle to the Romans, "Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also." And here Isaiah says, Inspired by the same Spirit who taught Paul what to write, "The God of the whole earth shall He be called."

6, 7. *For the LORD has called you as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when you were refused, says your God. For a small moment have I forsaken you.* A moment is a small period of time, but it is made to appear still smaller by that little word, "small."

7, 8. *But with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the LORD, your Redeemer.* Oh, what a blessed mouthful this text is! I might rather say, What a heart full! What a soul full! It fills and overfills my soul and gives me sweet contentment—"With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer."

9. *For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth: so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.* See how our faithful and unchanging God lays the foundation for our hopes—

"In oaths, and promises, and blood."

10. *For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the LORD that has mercy on you.* Or, as the Hebrew has it, "says the Lord, the Pitier." Was there ever a sweeter title to comfort our hearts than this, "the Lord, the Pitier"?

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

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

WITHOUT MONEY AND WITHOUT PRICE

NO. 1161

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 8, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Without money and without price.”
Isaiah 55:1.

THE spiritual blessings promised and provided in the Gospel comprise all that man can need. They are described in the chapter before us as “*water*,” refreshing and cleansing—the “Water of Life,” of which if a man drinks he shall never thirst again. They are next described as “*wine*,” the wine of joy—exhilarating, comforting, “making good the heart of man”—a wine in which is no woe, but fullness of holy delight. These blessings are thirdly represented as “*milk*,” for milk is almost the only article of diet which contains everything that is necessary for the support of man, and therefore it is a type of the satisfying qualities of the Gospel. He who receives the Gospel of Jesus Christ has all that his soul can possibly need for time and for eternity, so that water, wine and milk set forth a full supply of life, joy and satisfaction for our spirits.

According to the text, this provision for our souls is presented to us free. We are to buy it, that is to say, we are to have it with as good as a right, and as full an assurance, as if we had purchased it—but the purchase is to be made “without money,” and lest we should make mistakes and suppose that although money literally might not be brought, some other recompense must be offered to God, it is added, “without price.” The double expression is most sweeping, clearing away, once and for all, from the mercies of God, all idea of their being purchasable by any method whatever. The Gospel is not to be bought with gold. Vain are your treasures if you should lavish them at the feet of Christ! What cares He for gold and silver?

Neither are they to be procured by knowledge and wisdom, which are the mind's wealth, the money of the soul. A man may know much, but his knowledge may only puff him up, or increase his condemnation. Neither are the gifts of God's Divine Grace to be obtained by human merit. Merit, connected with man is out of the question—call it *demerit* and you are correct. If we had done all that we ought to have done, still we ought to have done it, and even in that case we should still be unprofitable servants. Away with the notion of merit as possible to fallen man! The day which saw Adam driven out of Paradise blotted the words “human merit” out of the dictionary of the Truth of God. Every sort of gift to God with the view of procuring His favor is excluded by the term, “without price.”

Some have dreamed that they might barter if they may not purchase. They, therefore, bring to God, instead of inward holiness the beauty of outward ceremonies. And instead of a perfect righteousness they offer a baptismal regeneration and a sacramental sanctity. If they have not kept

the Law, yet, at any rate, they have observed the rubric. If they have not loved their God with all their heart, they have at least bowed the knee during the performance of a priest. Thus would they barter with the Lord and give Him *rites* and *ceremonies* in payment for His Grace!

They conceive that a kind of witchcraft rests in the use of certain words and postures—and that God is thereby moved to blot out their sins! Others, who are not quite so insane, have fallen into the same error under another form—they fancy that a certain amount of *feeling* will procure for them the gifts of Divine Grace—they must be distressed up to a certain point and made to tremble in a certain measure. They must become despairing or they can never hope for mercy. Thus they make *unbelief*, which is a sin, into a preparation for Grace—and despair—which is an insult to a merciful God, and magnify them into a fitness for the reception of His bounty!

Others have dreamed that *partial* reformation, the saying of prayers, the leaving of legacies, attendance upon orthodox teaching, or the performance of benevolent actions will surely procure for them the gifts of Grace! To one and all of them comes this Gospel declaration—the gifts of God's love are “without money and without price.” I wish I knew how to put this Truth of God into such words that everybody could understand me, and that nobody could *misunderstand* me. Whenever a man is saved, he is saved because God *freely* saves him, not because there was anything in him to *deserve* salvation, or any particular fitness in him why God should deliver him and not another. The gifts of God's Grace are absolutely free in the most unrestricted sense of that term.

Nothing good, whatever, is brought by man, or is expected from man, by way of recommendation to mercy. Everything is given gratis and is received by us “without money and without price.” Upon that one thought I shall dwell, hoping that the Spirit of God will make it plain to your minds.

I. And, first, I shall notice THE SURPRISING NATURE OF THIS FACT, for it is very surprising to mankind to hear that salvation is “without money and without price.” It is so surprising to them that the most plain terms cannot make them understand it. And, though you tell them a thousand times a day, yet they persist in thinking that you mean it costs *something*. They cannot be brought to accept it as *literally* true that they are to have everything for nothing—salvation gratis—and eternal life is the pure gift of Heaven's charity.

Why, there are those sitting in this house, this morning, who know the way of salvation and are saved—and they will tell you that for many years they heard the Gospel very plainly put—but that until God the Holy Spirit enlightened them, they did not really understand what was meant by simple faith in Jesus. They will admit that they could not bring themselves to the idea that, then and there, just as they were, they had but to accept the salvation of God and it would be their own! They were unable to believe that so simple a matter could be the Gospel! They looked for mystery, difficulty and a complex preparation. They understood the *words*, but missed the central sense—the Grace and the *freeness* of the Gospel surpassed their thoughts!

It is not an unusual thing to find children of godly parents who have heard the Gospel from their earliest youth still ignorant of the way of salvation, having failed to learn this simple Truth of God—that salvation is the free gift of God and can only be received as such! Now, why is it that man does not see this? Why is it that when he *does* see it he is surprised at it? I think it is, first, because of *man's relation to God and his wrong judgment of Him*. Man thinks that God is a hard master. That expression of the man who hid his talent in a napkin, "I knew that you was an austere man, gathering where you have not strewned," is precisely the idea which the mass of mankind have of the Lord. They Judge Him to be exacting, hard, severe—and that His Law claims more of man than it should.

They judge that He might have dealt more leniently with a poor, erring, fallible mortal like man. When the Holy Spirit convinces men of sin they still retain hard thoughts of God and fear that He cannot be so gracious as to blot out their sins. Judging the Lord by their own standard, they cannot think that He will freely forgive. And though they are reminded of the great Atonement which enables God to be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly, they still think that because they could not readily forgive offenses against themselves, God must be as slow to pardon as they are. They believe He must be urgently pleaded with, recompensed with penances, conciliated with promises, or moved by tears, before He will be brought into a loving state of mind so as to be willing to bestow His Grace!

Little do they know that mighty heart of love which throbs in Jehovah's bosom! Little do they understand that His heart yearns to clasp His Ephraims to His breast and that He has declared, "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Learn, then, you sons of men, that, "as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His ways above your ways, and His thoughts above your thoughts." He waits to be gracious and is abundantly willing to pardon the ungodly if they do but turn to Him. No doubt, also, *the condition of man under the Fall* makes it more difficult for him to comprehend that the gifts of God are "without money and without price," for he finds that he is doomed to toil for almost everything he needs. "In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread" is the sentence upon our race.

If man wants bread, the earth demands that he dig for it, or use some other form of labor. Under the artificial conditions of civilization scarcely anything comes to us of itself, but must be bought with money. Man finds that he is in a place where, if he buys, it certainly is not "without money and without price." Money and price must be in his hands in every market and store or else he must go away empty-handed and, therefore, he is apt to reckon that as it is so in this sin-blighted world, it must be the same in the kingdom of Christ. And when he finds that he is not by works to purchase Divine favor, he counts it strange and is long in believing that it can be true. He reads the words, "without money and without price," and thinks that there must be something written between the lines to modify the sense, for surely there must be *something to do* or to *feel* before a sinner can receive the gifts of Grace!

Again, man remembers *the general rule of men* towards each other, for in this world what is to be had for nothing except that which is *worth* nothing? Nothing for nothing is the general system! Nobody in trade thinks of trading except for profit. And if a man were urged to sell without a price he would open his eyes wide and declare that he would soon find himself a bankrupt! Dealing with our fellow men we must naturally expect, even according to the golden rule, that we should give them an equivalent for what we receive. Of course the Christian religion lifts true Believers into a condition in which they are willing to give, hoping for nothing, again—but the general rule all round is—you must pay for what you have. Can you clothe yourself? Can you warm your hands in the winter? Can you find a shelter for your children? Can you obtain a bed upon which to lay your weary bones without money? And so “without money and without price” is quite a novelty—and man is astonished at it and cannot believe it to be true!

Another matter puts man into this difficulty, namely, *his natural pride*. He does not like to be a pauper before God. The mass of mankind have generally some excellency or other which, in their own esteem, exalts them above others. You shall find a large proportion of the upper classes perfectly convinced that they are far superior to the poor—that the working classes are, indeed, an inferior order of beings compared with themselves. You shall find an equal pride among the working classes which leads them to think themselves the real backbone of the country—a sturdy independence, it is sometimes called—but when it intrudes into religion it is nothing better than evil boasting! Pride is woven into man’s nature.

The prodigal became a prodigal through his love of independence. He desired his own portion of goods to do with as he liked. After he became a prodigal his time was occupied with spending—he spent his money riotously—he loved to play the fine gentleman and spend. Even when the prodigal came to himself, the old idea of paying was still with him and he desired to be a hired *servant*, so that if he could not pay in *money* he would pay in labor. We do not like to be saved by charity—and to have no corner in which to sit and boast. We long to make provision for a little self-congratulation! You insult a moral man if you tell him that he must be saved in the same way as a thief or a murderer—yet this is no more than the Truth of God! For a woman of purity to be told that the same Divine Grace which saved a Magdalene is necessary for *her* salvation is so humbling that her indignation is roused, and yet it is the fact—for in every case salvation is “without money and without price.”

Once more, *all religions that have ever been in the world of manly making teach that the gifts of God are to be purchased or merited*. Draw a line and you shall find the Gospel on the one side teaches Free Grace, but the whole ruck of false religions—from heathenism down through Muslim to Popery—all demand a price for the promise of salvation! The Pharisee reckons that none can have it unless he shall wear a broad phylactery and fast twice in the week. The heathen will swing with a hook in his back, or roll over and over for hundreds of miles, or torture his body, or

make great sacrifices at the altar of his idol. The Muslim has his pilgrimages and a host of meritorious prayers. As for the Papist, his religion is merit and payment from beginning to end—not only for the soul while it is yet in the body, but when it is departed—for by means of “masses” for the dead a tax is still exacted!

Man would gladly bargain with God and make God’s temple of mercy into an auction where each man bids as high as he can and procures salvation if he can reach a certain figure. But here stands the open-handed Gospel with all the treasures of infinite Grace unlocked, and all the granaries of Heaven with the doors taken off their hinges—and it cries—“Whoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely.” It asks neither money nor price, nor anything of man! It magnifies the infinite Grace of the all-bounteous Father, in that He has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and reveals His Grace to the undeserving.

Thus I have spoken upon the surprising nature of this fact. But I need to add that though I have thus shown grounds for our surprise, yet if men would *think* a little they might not be quite so unbelievably amazed as they are. For, after all, the best blessings we have come to us freely. What price have you paid for your lives? And yet they are very precious. Skin for skin, yes, all that you have would you give for them! What price do you pay for the air you breathe? What price does a man pay for the blessed sunlight? I wonder they have not a game law to preserve the sunbeams so that the lords of the land, alone, might enjoy the genial rays—while the poor should be liable to punishment for poaching in pursuit of sunshine! No, they cannot pen in the sun’s light! God has given it freely—and to the pauper it is as free as to the prince!

Life and air and light come to us “without money and without price.” And our faculties, too—who pays for eyesight? The eye which glances across the landscape and drinks in beauty, what toll does it pay? The ear which hears the song of the birds at dawn, what price is given for it? The senses are freely bestowed to us by God—and so is the sleep which rests them. Tonight when we lay our heads down upon our pillows the poor man’s sleep shall be as sweet as the sleep of him who reclines on down. Sleep is the unbought blessing of Heaven, you cannot purchase it! All the mines of Potosi could not buy a wink—yet God gives it to the sea boy on the giddy mast.

It is clear, then, that some of the best blessings we possess come to us by the way of free gift. Yes, and come to the undeserving, too, for the dew shall sparkle tomorrow upon the grass in the miser’s field and the rain shall fall in due season upon the rising corn of the wretch who blasphemes his God. The influences which nurture wheat, barley and other fruits of the earth are given to the farm of the atheist as well as to the fields of the godly—they fall, alike, for the evil and for the good—for, “the Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works.” We ought not, therefore, to be so surprised, after all, that the gifts of His Divine Grace are free!

II. In the second place, dear Friends, I want to show you THE NECESSITY OF THE FACT mentioned in our text. There was a necessity that the

gifts of the Gospel should be “without money and without price.” A three-fold necessity. First, from *the Character of the Donor*. It is *God* that gives. Oh, Sirs, would you have Him sell His pardons? The King of Kings—would you have Him vend forgiveness to the sons of men at so much per head? Would you have Him sell His Holy Spirit? And would you come like Simon Magus and offer money to Him for it?

Would you have Him give to you as the reward of merit, *adoption* into His family, that you might become His sons, and brag, even in the halls of Heaven, that you climbed to this dignity by your own good works? Talk not so blasphemously proud! The great King has made a great supper—would you have Him demand a price for entrance and sit as a receiver at the gates of mercy—and stop each one who comes to see if he has brought a price to pay for entrance? No, no, it is not like our God! He deals not thus. When the prodigal came back, imagine the father keeping his son in quarantine to see if he had a clean bill of health! Imagine him saying, “My son, have you brought a gift to reconcile me?”

The parable would be spoiled by the hint of such a thing! Its glory lies in the freeness of the Father’s love which asked no questions, but pressed the repenting child to His bosom just as he was. God, the great Father, must not be so dishonored in your thoughts as to be conceived of as requiring a price of you! You displease Him when you think that you are to *do* something or *feel* something or *bring* something in your hands as a recommendation to Him. Can you picture Jesus going about Palestine selling His cures? Can you imagine Him saying to the blind beggar, “How much have you left of the alms of the charitable to give to Me for your eyesight?” Or saying to Martha and Mary, “Bring Me all you have and I will raise your brother, Lazarus.”

Oh, I loathe to speak of it! It makes me sick to imagine such a thing! How weary must the Lord be with your self-righteousness—with your attempts to traffic and to bargain with Him! Oh, Sirs, you are not dealing with your fellow men—you are dealing with the King of Kings, whose large heart scorns your bribes! Salvation must be given without price since it is God that gives! Again, it must be for nothing, because of *the value of the blessing*. As one has well said, “it is without price because it is priceless.” You could not conceive of a fit price for the blessing, therefore it must be left without price. I will suppose, this morning, that I am sent here by high authority to sell a diamond worth ten thousand times as much as the Queen’s crown jewels.

It is a jewel worth a thousand millions of pounds! I am bound to sell it to you now, but I am sure you cannot purchase it at any price worthy of it. All you could offer would be so small a portion of its value that I would sooner *give* it away than lower the reputation of the jewel by taking such a trifle for it. The Gospel is so precious a thing that if it is to be bought, the whole world could not pay for it—and therefore if bought at all it must be without money and without price. It cost the Lord Jesus His blood—what have you to offer? What? Do you imagine that you can buy it with a few paltry *works*? God Himself must become a man and bleed, and die to bring pardon and eternal life to sinners! And do you think that your tears,

bending your knees, gifts of money and emotions of your heart are to purchase this unpurchasable blessing? Oh, believe, because it is so rich, it must be given away if it is to belong to us!

And there is another reason arising from *the extremity of human destitution*. The blessings of Divine Grace must be given “without money and without price,” for we have no money or price to bring. I was, the other night, speaking to inquirers, and I put this matter in a very homely way, as I will again. I said, “I will suppose there is a terrible famine among you, as there is in India, and that all your money is gone—and that all of you together have not so much as a farthing between you. Now, I am sent with bread, and I want to sell it to you. I begin by saying, ‘Well, of course, now that there is a famine we must make a *little* profit out of you. You must expect the price to be raised, but we will be very moderate—we will let you have it for a shilling a quarter loaf.’

“You say, ‘We do not find fault with the price, but we have not a farthing to pay you with. Oh, Sir, we cannot buy from you.’ Well, well, we will reduce the price. You can have it at the ordinary price of household bread! Come, you cannot ask for anything more reasonable than this! Will you have it? ‘It is not unreasonable,’ you say, ‘the price is a very proper one, but still it is useless to us. We would gladly purchase, but we have not a penny between us. What can we do?’ Come, then, we will reduce the price a great deal more. We will let you have the best bread at two pence a quartern. Did you ever hear of bread at that rate? Surely you may fill your children’s mouths every day at this price. ‘Alas,’ you cry, ‘it is of no use! We cannot find even two pence.’

“Well, now, we will bring the price down to one farthing a loaf—and who has ever heard of bread at that rate before? Still, with tears in your eyes, you cry to me, ‘Oh, we can no more get it at a farthing than we could buy it at a shilling, for we have not a single farthing left.’ Come, then, I must come down to you altogether—you shall have it for nothing. Take it, I say, for nothing and I will give you a piece into the bargain—I will give you something over and above weight. I see you wonder what I mean by that. Listen to these words—‘Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.’ That is the piece over and above what you asked or even thought. Is not that good reasoning that God must give eternal life for nothing, because you *have nothing* which you could offer as a price?”

If you are to have eternal life, no terms but those of Divine Grace will meet your case. Think, dear Friends, when the dying thief was hanging at the side of Christ—suppose the Lord Jesus Christ had made a rule that a man should live a holy life for a *week* and *then* should have the blessing. Why, the thief must have died unblest! Suppose that He had said to all men, it is absolutely essential that you join a Church and be baptized, or else I cannot save you? Then poor bedridden sinners must perish hopelessly! A Gospel for *nothing* suited the dying thief. “I admit it,” says somebody. Ah, my Friend, then surely you cannot be in a worse condition!

Some years ago I had a very high compliment paid me by a gentleman who intended an insult. He ridiculed my preaching and remarked that it

would be eminently suited to the lowest class of the American slave. This I accepted as an honorable admission, for he who could reach and bless the black man will not preach in vain to white people. I have heard of a preacher of whom his detractors said that he might do very well to preach to old women. Ah, then, he will do for *anybody*! I suppose he would suit old women because they are on the borders of the grave and that it is where we all are—for we are all much nearer to the grave than we imagine. Free salvation suits the vilest of the vile and it is equally suitable for the most moral. If it is all for nothing, none can be so poor as to be excluded from hope! If it is to be had “without money and without price” no soul need be without it!

Surely the price is brought low enough. The difficulty is that the price is too low for human *pride*—sinners will not come down to it. Whereas every other salesman finds that he cannot get his customers *up* to his price, *my* difficulty is that I cannot get my customers *down* to mine! They will still higggle and haggle to *do* something, *be* something, or *promise* something. Whereas here are the terms, and the only terms upon which Gospel grace is to be had—“without money and without price.” You shall have it freely but God will have none of your bargaining! Take mercy—take it just as you are—you are welcome to it. But if you tarry till you are better, your very *betterness* will make you worse! If you wait until you are fit, your fancied fitness will be your unfitness!

Your hunger is your fitness for food. Your nakedness is your fitness for clothing. Your poverty is your fitness for the riches of mercy. Your sin, your loathsomeness, your hardness of heart and obduracy do but make you fit objects for wondrous Divine Grace, and for the amazing transformation which Divine power can work in men! It is absolutely necessary that the blessings of Grace should be “without money and without price,” and, glory be to God, they are!

III. My third point is this—THE SALUTARY INFLUENCE OF THIS FACT. If it is “without money and without price,” what then? Well, first, *that enables us to preach the Gospel to every creature*. Jesus Christ said, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believes not shall be damned.” If we had to look for some price in the *hands* of the creature, or some fitness in the *mind* of the creature, or some excellence in the *life* of the creature, we could not preach mercy to every creature—we should have to preach it to *prepared* creatures—and then that preparation would be the money and the price.

I am sorry that some of my Brothers entertain the idea that the Gospel is to be preached only to certain characters. They dare not preach the Gospel to everybody—they try to preach it only to the elect. Surely, if the Lord meant them to make the selection He would have set a mark upon His chosen. As I do not know the elect and have no command to confine my preaching to them, but am bid to preach the Gospel to *every* creature, I am thankful that the Gospel is put in such a way—that no creature can be too poor, too wicked, or too vile to receive it—for it is “without money and without price.” That is going to the very bottom!

Surely, that takes in the most degraded, debased and despised of our race—whoever they may be! If before I preach the Gospel I have to look for a measure of fitness in a man, then I cannot preach the Gospel to any but those whom I believe to have the fitness. But if the Gospel is to be preached *freely*, with no conditions or demands for preparations or prerequisites—if this is the Gospel, that “whoever believes in Jesus is not condemned”—then may I go to the most degraded Bushmen, or savage Ashantees, or untameable Modocs and tell them the Good News! We may speak of mercy to harlots and thieves—and we may carry the gladsome message into the Guilt Garden and Hangman’s Alley! We may penetrate the jungles of crime and cry with the same entreaty from Heaven—“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, for He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” The fact that the mercy of God is “without money and without price” enables us, by His Grace, to preach it to every man, woman and child of woman born!

Now, note secondly, that this fact has the salutary effect of *excluding all pride*. If it is “without money and without price,” you rich people have not a half-penny worth of advantage above the poorest of the poor in this matter! Your station may be very respectable, but God is no respecter of persons! You may be numbered among the rank and fashion of society, but in God’s esteem, one rank is as evil as another—and the fashion of all men passes away. Divine Grace comes to the Queen upon her throne and to the beggar in the street with this same message—“without money and without price.” The pride of wealth is utterly abolished by the Gospel and so is the pride of merit! You have been so good and so charitable, and you are so excellent and so religious—and so everything that you ought to be—and you fancy that there must be some private entrance, some reserved door, for persons of your quality.

But, Sirs, the gate is so strait that you must rub shoulders with thieves, drunkards and murderers if you are to enter eternal life! There is but one way and that is the way of Grace. “Where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By the law of works? No, but by the law of Grace.” Those who are saved never sing, “well done,” to themselves, but when they get to Heaven they glorify Grace alone—

**“Grace all the work shall crown
Through everlasting days,
It lays in Heaven the topmost stone
And well deserves the praise.”**

What a slap in the face this is for human glorying and how much it needs it, for it is impudent to the last degree! “Surely, surely you make some distinction, Sir, between the excellent and the moral, and those who are openly criminal.” Yes, I do make a *great* distinction when treating of our relations to one another, but we are now speaking of GRACE—and from the nature of things these distinctions are not available where *mercy*, not *merit* is the rule! To all men there is but one rule—“He that believes on Him is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God.”

Again, another influence of the fact mentioned in our text is that *it forbids despair*. Despair, where are you? I have a ten-thonged whip with which to flog you away! “Without money and without price.” Then who can despair? You are feeling in your pocket and you find nothing there—you do not need anything—salvation is “without money.” You have been feeling in your heart and you find nothing *there*! You do not need anything before coming to Jesus, for His Grace is “without price.” You have been looking back on your past history. It is all blank and black. That is true, but Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. But you cannot find a redeeming trait in your character! Ah, but God has found a Redeemer, mighty to save—and if you rest in Him, He will save you from your sins!

Whoever you may be, if eternal life is to be had for nothing, you are not too poor to have it! It is impossible that you can have fallen too low for the Gospel, for “Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.” I was, for a long while, pestered with this idea that I must have some extraordinary vision, or remarkable revelation, or singular experience and have something to tell, such as I had heard good people tell of. But when the glad tidings were made plain to me by the Holy Spirit, I was as if I had received a new revelation. “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth,” sounded like a new song in my ears! My heart leaped for joy at the news.

Christ was nailed to the Cross and I was to look at Him and be saved! Just as the serpent of brass was lifted on the pole and whoever looked was healed of the serpent bites, so was there, for me, eternal life and blessedness in *looking* to Jesus on the tree! Why did I not understand that before? Ah, why!? Why do not some of you understand it? I pray God the Holy Spirit make you see it this morning, for that is the great Truth of God which will save your soul! Everything for nothing! Christ Himself to be had for the *asking*. Surely this Truth should comfort the most desponding.

Next *it inspires with* gratitude and that gratitude becomes the basis of holiness. Look here. This man is saved for nothing! His sin pardoned according to the free mercies of God! What do you think he says? “Oh, my God, my God, how have I belied You! How have I slandered You! As for You, You have always been merciful to me. You have blotted out my sins. You have made me Your child. You have given Your Son to be my Redeemer. My God, I love You! What can I do to show that my heart is wholly Yours?”—

**“Make me to run in Your commands,
‘Tis a delightful road!
Nor let my head, nor heart, nor hands
Offend against my God.”**

They say that a free Gospel will make men think lightly of sin. It is the *death* of sin! It is the life of *virtue*! It is the motive power of holiness and whenever it comes into the soul it begets zeal for the Lord—

**“Speak of morality! You bleeding Lamb,
The best morality is love to You.”**

The best morality springs out of gratitude for pardon, Divine Grace and lively hope received as the gifts of Heaven.

Then note, again, that the receipt of salvation without money and without price *engenders in the soul the generous virtues*. What do I mean by that? Why, the man who is saved for nothing feels, first, with regard to his fellow men that he must deal lovingly with them. Has *God forgiven me*? Then I can freely forgive those who have trespassed against me. It is the first impulse of a soul which receives pardon from God to put away all enmity against his fellow men. I freely forgive the few pence that my fellow sinner owes me when I remember the thousand talents which were forgiven me by the infinite mercy of my God! The man who does not forgive has never been forgiven—but the man who has been freely forgiven at once forgives others.

No, he goes beyond it—he says, “Now, my God has been so good to me, I will be good to others. And as God is good to the unthankful and the evil, even so will I be.” When he finds that he has given his alms to an undeserving person, he does not, therefore, shrivel up within himself and say, “I will give no more.” “Why,” he asks, “does not God give life and light to men who are always cursing Him? Then I will bless the sons of men even if they curse me in return.” This breeds in him a spirit of benevolence. He longs to see others saved and therefore he lays himself out to bring them to Jesus Christ. If he had *bought* his salvation, I dare say he might be *proud* of it and wish to keep it to himself—like a little aristocrat, he would not want every one of the democracy to intrude into his privileges. But since the Gospel came to him freely, he hears the Master say—“Freely you have received, freely give,” and he goes forth to distribute the Bread of Life which Jesus Christ has so liberally put into his hands!

So then, as to our God, the free gifts of Grace, working by the power and energy of the Holy Spirit, create in us the generous virtues towards God. Now we can say—

***“Loved of my God, for Him again
With love intense I burn.”***

When we know that Jesus has saved us, we feel we could lay down our lives for Him. Self-denial springs of this. Yes, the death of self comes out of a rich experience of free and Sovereign Grace Did the Lord love me when there was nothing to love in me? Did He love me with spontaneous love before the world began? Did He give His son to die for me, a guilty sinner, lost and ruined in the Fall? Then I will give all that I have to God, and feel that—

***“If I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call
I love my God with zeal so great
That I would give Him all.”***

This is the natural outgrowth of the grand doctrine of “without money and without price.”

And, lastly, Beloved, I cannot think of anything that will *make more devout worshippers in Heaven* than this. The purpose of God in seeking His Glory by the way of Redemption was evidently this. There were spirits in Heaven who could worship Him. There were angels who could adore Him and remain faithful to Him, but He wished to create beings who should be nearer to Him than angels, though also in a certain sense still further off.

An angel is pure spirit, man is partly materialism. God resolved that a creature that should be both spirit and matter should be lifted up *above* angels, should come nearer to Himself than pure spirits have ever come—should, in fact, be *related* to Himself through His Son!

Thus His Son became a Man, that God, being All in All, next to God should stand man, made to have dominion over all the works of His hands, with all things put under his feet. Now, observe, that unless there had been some exercise of Omnipotence which would have taken away the high attribute of free agency from man, we do not know of any other way in which God could secure the eternal obedience, the reverent love and the perpetual humility of such creatures as we have spoken of, except by a remarkable experience of redemption—so that they should forever know that everything they had was the undeserved gift of Sovereign Grace.

When they look upon the crown and wave the palm, they remember that they were once snatched from the horrible pit and the miry clay. When they gaze upon their robes of splendor and stand before the Throne of God, peers of the universe, princes of the blood royal of Heaven, no pride will ever flit across their perfect souls because the memory of Redeeming Grace, dying love and blessings given without money and without price will keep them humble before the Lord. Oh, if *they* had given something, if *they* had done something, if *they* had merited something, this would have marred the whole, and left a gap whereby might enter the temptation to self-glory!

Every child of God will know eternally that he is saved by Grace, Grace, Grace—from first to last—from beginning to end. And so, without constraint, except that which is found within their own bosoms, all the redeemed will forever magnify the Lord in such notes as these, “Worthy are You, O Lamb of God! For You were slain and have redeemed us unto God by Your blood, and have made us kings and priests unto God.” May the Lord lead you all to receive His Divine salvation “without money and without price.”

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 55.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—199, 492, 552.**

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BUYING WITHOUT MONEY

NO. 1726

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 17, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“He that has no money; come, buy, and eat.”
Isaiah 55:1.

THERE is a semicolon in our translation, but we need not take notice of it. It should not be there, since the text is the second of two parallel sentences arranged according to the method of Hebrew poetry—

*“Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters,
And he that has no money, come, buy, and eat.”*

We have before us the figure of a merchant selling his wares and crying like a chapman in the market, “Ho!” To attract attention he calls aloud, “Come! Come! Come!” three times; and he adds to this the cry of, “Buy! Buy!” Shall the Great King thus liken Himself to a trader in the market, earnest to dispose of His goods? It is even so and I, therefore, call upon you to admire the mercy of the Lord! In the 53rd and 54th chapters, this Divine Merchantman has been spreading out His wares. What treasures they are! Look at the 53rd chapter—what do you see there?

Behold that Pearl of great price, the Lord Jesus Christ! Behold Him wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities! This is so costly a treasure that Heaven and earth could not match it! Where else could we find a Sacrifice for sin, a Justifier of many? This Anointed One of God, upon whom the chastisement of our peace was laid—who would not have Him to be his Savior? Surely with such a treasure to display, we ought not to cry long for buyers, for every truly wise man will exclaim, “This is what I need! Not only a Savior, but a great one! An atonement for sin is the one thing necessary for me.” To this you are invited in these words, “He that has no money, come, buy, and eat.”

In the 54th chapter the Divine Merchantman sets forth the rare possession of His everlasting love. Read from verse seven, “For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord your Redeemer. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you.” What more can be set forth to win men’s hearts? First, a full atonement and now, love everlasting, making a Covenant confirmed by oath! Should there be need, often, to cry, “Come and buy,” when such celestial wares are displayed before us?

Added to this, we see a little further on, the blessing of heavenly edification. Notice the 11th verse—“I will lay your stones with fair colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires. And I will make your windows of agates, and your gates of carbuncles, and all your borders of pleasant stones.”

This is a rare building, is it not? There should be a quick market for such an array of choice things! Sapphires and agates—what more would you have? Here are all manner of precious stones and all of these given freely! The only terms are, “everything for nothing! Heaven for the asking!” All the treasures of God are freely bestowed upon the sons of men who are willing to accept them as gifts of Grace!

As if this were not enough, the Lord brings out a fourth blessing, namely, everlasting safety by faith—“In righteousness shall you be established: you shall be far from oppression; for you shall not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near you. No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn.” Security is worth infinitely more than gold! To be protected by *Divine Wisdom* from every possible harm is the portion of Believers in Jesus! To be saved and made safe *forever*—is not this worth worlds? Never was there a market like the Gospel market! And never were such wares spread out before the eyes of men as those which are here presented to you!

I shall, therefore, with the more hopefulnes, speak to those who have not yet been buyers, and urge upon you the invitation of the text, “He that has no money, come, buy, and eat.” In handling this text we shall notice, first, the description of the buyer, “He that has no money.” Secondly, the selection of this particular buyer—why is he invited beyond all others? Thirdly, the invitation to purchase, “Come, buy, and eat.” And fourthly, we shall add the assurance that this Gospel market is no deception, for these things are really to be had.

I. First, then, here is A DESCRIPTION of the buyer. I believe he is here this morning. I hope he will recognize his own portrait, though it is by no means a flattering one. It is the Truth of God itself, a photograph taken by the sunlight of Heaven. It is the portrait of a poor, penniless, broken-down creature reduced to the extremity of need. Here it is—“He that has no money.” Of course, by this is meant, among other things, the man who *literally* has no money. Among the Jews of our Lord’s day there existed an idea that a man who had money was at a great advantage with regard to heavenly things, so that when the Lord said, “How difficult shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom,” they exclaimed with wonder, “Who, then, can be saved?” as if they thought that if the rich could not be *easily* saved then none could be.

The Word of God contains nothing to encourage such a notion. The rich man is never extolled in the Old Testament, but he is often spoken of most slightly. It is the glory of the Messiah that “the poor have the Gospel preached to them,” and it is the glory of the Gospel that it is freely provided by the bounty of God for the beggar on the dunghill! Let no man’s heart fail him this day because he says, “Silver and gold have I none.” Having *nothing*, you may yet possess all things! You are at no disadvantage in God’s market because your pockets are empty—you may come penniless and bankrupt and receive the exceeding riches of His Grace!

But we understand the reference of the text to be mainly *spiritual* and so the portrait, here, is that of a man who has no *spiritual* money, no gold

of *goodness*, no silver of *sanctity*—he it is that is invited to come and buy the wine and milk of Heaven. His fancied stock of natural innocence is spent. At first he thought himself to be pure as the newly fallen snow, forgetting the question—“How can he be clean that is born of a woman?” They told him that he was made “a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven” while he was yet a babe—and thus he was led to think that he had started life’s business with a respectable stock in trade.

He knows better now. He has seen this fancied goodness melt away like the mist of the morning. He has gone, like the prodigal, into the far country, and there he has wasted his substance till not a coin remains. If he searches himself through and through, he cannot find a relic of innocence. The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint—from the soles of his feet even to his head, he is all wounds, bruises and putrefying sores. There is no health in him. Innocence is utterly gone, if it was ever there. He thought that he had accumulated some little savings of good works, but his imaginary righteousness turned out to be counterfeit! Had he not been honest? Had he not been sober? Had he not attended a place of worship and repeated forms of prayer? Did not all this make up a little fortune of righteousness?

He thought so, but then he was ignorant and deluded. He knows better now, for he has found out that all his righteousness is base metal—he could not pass a penny’s worth of it in the shop of his own conscience, much less in the market of Heaven. He knows that it would at once be detected and nailed to the counter. He finds that his silver is white metal of the basest sort and that his gold is a sham—he has not the face to offer it anywhere! Yes, he is so afraid of being seized by justice as a counterfeiter that, like a wise man, he has hidden his sham righteousness in the earth and has run away from it. He is now more afraid of his righteousness than of his unrighteousness! He would think it just as possible for him to be saved by cursing and swearing as by the merit of his own works!

His good works are an ill odor with his conscience, for he sees them to be defiled within and without with sin—a rottenness is in the bones of his righteousness and thus he is without merit of any sort. Look at his poverty—his original stock is gone and all his savings have melted away! He is in a still worse plight, for he is also too poor to get anything, the procuring power is gone, for he has “no money.” Now that he has come to his sober senses, he would repent, but he cannot find a tender heart. He would believe, but he cannot find faith. He has no money—that is to say, nothing with which he can procure those good things which are necessary unto salvation and eternal life! He sees them all before him, like many a poor man who walks the streets of London and sees just what he needs behind the glass of the shop window—but he puts his hand into his pocket and despairingly passes on, for he has no money.

As without money nothing is to be bought in the world’s market, so is this poor man afraid that no blessing of Grace can ever be his because he has no good thing to offer, no righteousness to give in exchange. If God would sell him even a penny’s worth of righteousness, he has not the

penny to buy it! And if the Lord would pardon all his sins for one sixpenny worth of holiness, he has not so much as that to offer—he has no money! Moreover, his stock with which to *trade* is gone. Money makes money and he that has a little to begin with may soon have more—but this man, having no stock to start with—cannot hope to be rich towards God in and by himself. He cannot open the smallest shop, or sell the most trifling wares, for he has no money to start with.

Even the poorest will buy a few matches and hawk them about the streets, but this poor creature has “no money” and cannot even invest a two-pence in goods. He has no power, even, to *think* aright, much less to act aright, so as to become pleasing to God. He is as much without strength as without merit. Not only is he without good, but he appears to himself to be without power to get good. He is a broken trader who cannot, again, try his fortune, for he has “no money.” He is worse than a common beggar, for he does not even know how to beg—“We know not what we should pray for as we ought.” He even needs to be taught how to beg! What a pass to come to!

There is *your* portrait, my poor Friend! Do you recognize it? I hope you do. I hear you say, “Yes, that is myself. I am without money.” Then to you the word of this salvation is sent—“He that has no money, come, buy, and eat.” “No money!” Then he cannot pay his old debts. His sins rise up before him, but he cannot make amends for them. What a long file is needed to hold the record of his debts—it must be deep as the bottomless pit and high as Heaven! He owes 10,000 talents and has “nothing to pay.” He has not a sliver—he has no money whatever! He is reduced to bankruptcy and cannot pay a farthing in the pound.

Moreover, he cannot meet his present expenses. Poor man! He must live. He must eat the Bread of Heaven and he must drink of the Water of Life—but he has nothing with which to procure these good things. His soul hungers, yes, even faints after the Mercy of God, but he has no price with which to procure it. This day he would pluck his eyes out to be pleasing to God, but he has nothing to offer which the Lord could accept. He is reduced to such beggary that, like the prodigal, he cries, “I perish with hunger!” He cannot face the future. He hardly dares to think of it and yet the thought of it will come in. He remembers the needs which will surround him on a dying bed and the terrible demands of the Resurrection Morning when the ringing trumpet shall introduce him to the dread Assize and he shall stand before his God to render his account.

He knows that he cannot answer Him for one sin in a thousand. He dreads the thought of the world to come! He has nothing with which to meet the demands of the eternal future. He has “no money”—nothing that will pass current in the Day of Judgment. He is brought to the last stage of spiritual destitution—poverty has come upon him like an armed man. This is a terrible plight to be in, yet I wish that every sinner here might be reduced to it, for when he is so reduced and brought low, Grace will come in and the tide will turn! The only hope for a man who has “no money” must be *outside himself*. It is idle for him to look into his own coffers—he must look away from himself—and his only chance in thus looking is to

appeal to charity and plead for mercy's sake. He cannot buy—it is only God's mercy that talks about his buying—he must beg, he must entreat for love's sake.

This is an essential part of spiritual poverty and I would that every unregenerate person knew that in him there dwells no good thing—and that he were convinced that he must look out and look up for salvation—and that upon the ground of mercy since he cannot expect to obtain any blessing upon the footing of justice or as a matter of debt. This is the man who is called to buy Heaven's wine and milk! Do you need a fuller picture of him? Look at the 21st verse of the 14th chapter of Luke's Gospel, where He that made the feast said, "Bring in here the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind." This man is so poor that he cannot buy bread, so maimed that he cannot run for it, so halt that he cannot stand up to receive it and so blind that he cannot see it! Yet such a person we are to bring into the royal banquet of mercy!

If you would like another picture, turn to Revelation 3:17, 18—"You know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." This portrait was taken by John, who had an eagle's eye, and saw deep into the inward misery of the heart. To the "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," the Lord says, "I counsel you to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness does not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see." Gospel riches are sent to remove our wretchedness and mercy to remove our misery! It is to these wretches, these blind beggars, these naked vagrants, that the Gospel is sent!

This day I have to present the promise of God and the exhortation of mercy to those who have failed in life, who are down at the heel, broken and crushed. Oh, you utterly lost ones, to *you* is there opened a door of hope! The Lord has come into the market and He bids you buy of Him without money and without price!

II. Now a minute or two upon the second point—THE SELECTION of the buyer. It is a strange choice and it leads to a singular invitation—"He that has no money, come, buy, and eat." In the streets round about this Tabernacle, especially on a Saturday evening, you may note the salesmen standing before their shops and crying out vociferously, "Buy! Buy! Buy!" No one can refuse to hear their noise, but if they knew that a person had no money, I think they would save their breath so far as he is concerned. They need ready-money customers and plenty of them. What would be the use of crying, "Buy! Buy!" to a man whose purse is empty?

Yet these are the very persons whom the Lord selects and to them He cries, "Come, buy, and eat." What is the reason? Well, first, these need mercy the most. Oh, poor Souls, when the Lord Jesus looks on you, He does not look at what you *have*, but at what you have not! He does not look at your excellences, but at your necessities! He is not looking out for a man's fullness, but for his emptiness! The Lord Jesus never gave Himself for our righteousness—He "gave Himself for our sins." Salvation is by Grace and it is presented to those who are lost, for they are the people

whom it will suit—how should those who are *not* lost value salvation? I say that God selects the most poverty-stricken, first, because this character most needs His pitying love! The greatness of your necessity is that which gives you a first call from the God of all Grace. Not merit, but demerit! Not desert of reward, but desert of wrath is the qualification for mercy!

Again, this character is chosen because he is such an one as will exhibit in his own person the power of Divine Grace. If the Lord Jesus Christ takes one that is wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked—and if He satisfies all his necessities by being riches for his wretchedness, comfort for his misery, wealth for his poverty, eyes for his blindness and raiment for his nakedness, then all the world will see what a great Savior He is and how wonderfully His salvation meets the necessities of the case! If you and I were only little sinners, I do not see how Christ could be anything but a little Savior to us. And if He only met our smaller needs, a small supply would suffice. Ah, Friends, it pleased the Father that in Him should *all* fullness dwell and He wills that this fullness should be seen!

When He takes a man whose needs are as large as the sea and as many as the sands on the shore, whose danger is deep as the bottomless pit and whose sin is black as Tophet's midnight—when He makes that man into a child of God and an heir of Heaven, ah, then all intelligences are amazed and cry out, "What a Savior is this! What precious blood is this! What a fullness this must be which satisfies such immeasurable needs!" As it is one end of Christ's work to glorify Divine Grace, therefore He calls, first, upon those who have the most need, for in them His Grace will be best displayed.

Next, the Lord Jesus delights to make evident the freeness of His Grace. Now, if those were first called who have the money of merit, it might be imagined that they had paid their way. But if those are called who have no good thing in them, it is clear that Grace is free! When a poor wretch cannot do a stroke of work, or contribute a button to you, then your lodging him must be of pure charity and nothing else. The Lord Jesus is very jealous of the freeness of His Grace. He will not let a sixpence of our merit cross His hand lest we should glory in our flesh and think that we have made Jesus rich. If you ask me, yet again, why is he who has no money so expressly called, I would answer because he is the kind of man that will listen. The man who is needy is the man that will listen to the tidings of a full and free supply. It is the guilty man who loves to hear of pardon! It is the bond-slave whose ears are charmed with the word, "redemption."

If you are no sinner, you will not care about a Savior. Only real sinners rejoice in a real atonement! The Lord sends the Gospel to every creature under Heaven, but He knows, as we do, that the most of men will not regard it, for they fancy that they don't *need* it—but if there is one that has no merit or claim, *he* will listen with eagerness to the tidings of mercy! He that has no money is the man for Christ's money! He that is shivering in his nakedness will rejoice to be clothed! A wretched sinner jumps at mercy like a hungry fish leaping at the bait. When a soul is empty, then it longs for the fullness of Christ, but not till then. Full souls quarrel over

honeycombs—they are not sweet enough for them—but to the hungry man, even every bitter thing is sweet! A man who is conscious of sin will not quibble about the way of Grace, but if pardon is to be had, he will have it at once. Whoever may be silent, you will hear *his* voice crying aloud, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Let me add that such an empty, penniless soul, when he does get mercy, will prize it and praise it. He that has been shut up in the dark for years values the light of the sun. He that has been a prisoner for months—how happy he is when the prison doors are opened and he is at liberty again! Let a man once get Christ, who has bitterly known and felt his need of Him, and he will prize Him beyond all things and find his sole delight in Him! The impotent man at the beautiful gate of the Temple, when his ankles received strength, walked away and ran, yes, and leaped! He leaped, praising God, before all the people! He could not do enough to show his delight and his gratitude! Oh, for a few leaping Christians! The Lord Jesus loves us to prize the mercy which cost Him so dearly. Shall He die on the Cross and give us blessings to treat with contempt? No, no! We will love Him much because of His priceless gifts to us.

Therefore the Well-Beloved delights to invite those who manifestly have no merit and no spiritual power because He knows that when they taste of His love, they will overflow with praise to His name forever and ever! You have heard of the old woman who said that if ever she got to Heaven the Lord Jesus Christ should never hear the last of it? Many of us, by His Grace, are of that mind—we shall never praise the Lord sufficiently throughout eternity! If I do but once cross the golden threshold and stand within the pearly gate, my heart, my soul, my tongue shall extol my Redeemer, world without end! This shall be the one and only contention among the birds of Paradise—who shall sing the most sweetly to the praise of infinite compassion!

None of us will yield the palm in that contest—we will see which can sink lowest in sense of obligation, which can rise highest in adoring love. Singers are needed for the celestial choirs and there are no voices so sweet as those which have known the force of spiritual hunger and thirst! These take the alto notes and sing, “Glory to God in the highest.” In any case, be the reason what it may, it is clear that there are special invitations issued for the royal feasts and these are all directed to those whose need has reached the extremity of distress. But I may not linger. How I wish that I knew how to preach! I long with my whole heart to use great plainness of speech. I would not utter a single sentence which would seem to have the wisdom of words in it. I aim not at fine language, but only to get at poor sinners’ hearts!

Oh that I could bring the sinner to his Savior! Extravagant oratory has been the curse of the Christian Church—it has hidden the Cross under roses and taken men’s minds away from Christ. To strain after eloquence when preaching the Gospel is a sin worthy of eternal destruction! To point the sinner to Christ must be our only desire! Pray for me, Brothers and Sisters, as I go on, for I need aid from the Holy Spirit.

III. I have now, in the third place, to notice THE INVITATION. The man who has no money is to come, buy, and eat. It looks odd to tell a penniless man to come and buy, does it not? And yet what other words could be used? "Come and buy" has a meaning of its own not to be otherwise expressed. In buying there are three or four stages—and the first is desiring to have the thing which is exhibited. The man who buys has, first, the wish that the property in the article should be vested in himself. Will you not desire that Christ, that forgiveness, that eternal life, that salvation should become yours? Do you not long for the Lord to grant it to you?

Men in the streets, as I have said before, cry, "Buy! Buy!" because buying means business. They are not unwilling that people should stop and look at their goods—they even ask them to walk in and see for themselves—but they aim at finding *buyers* and not gazers! If a man were to come into the shop and turn over all the goods and never purchase anything, the tradesman would begin to cry, "Buy! Buy!" with quite another accent, for he does not want a crowd to look at *him*—he wants people to *buy* from him! Many of you who are here this morning have only come to hear what the preacher has to say—and to criticize his style and language. I pray you rise to something better than that! Come, and buy! Let us do business, this morning, for God and for our own souls!

Do not waste the precious market day of the Sabbath. People come and go. They hear sermons, read books and all for a sort of *amusement*—they do not come to do business with the Lord. Look how they select striking sentences and cull sparkling and delightful extracts and take notes of telling anecdotes! But all this is comparatively wasting time. "Come, buy! Buy! Buy!" Do you mean business? Then come and buy! Do not stand huckstering by the years together! Come to terms and make an end of hesitation. If you have no desire, you will not buy, and I shall effect no sales. Again I cry, "Come, buy, and eat." Oh that the Spirit may work in you that strong desire without which no man will ever buy!

Alas, there are thousands who are always discussing knotty points, not because they have a wish to understand the Gospel, but because they do not care to come to serious dealings! Perhaps you have read the story of a governor of one of the American States who called at an hotel where there was a black waiter who was well known to hold Calvinistic opinions and was, therefore, made the butt for many a jest. So the Governor said to him, "Sam, you do not really believe that doctrine of election, do you?" "Deed I do, Suh," he said. "Well, then," replied the Governor, "tell me whether I am elect or not." "Suh," said the Negro, "I did not know you were a candidate and I know nothing about a man's being elected if he has not put up for it."

Now, that is common sense! It is a business-like way of answering an absurd question. Certain people who are not even candidates for Heaven will yet shelter themselves behind wrong ideas of predestination—playing with the blessings of Grace instead of desiring them! Have you not seen a man with a pack stand at a door trying to sell a few trinkets to a servant? He does not mind half-an-hour's talk about his goods, but when, at last, he finds that the maid does not mean buying, see how he shuts up his

boxes, folds up his packages and indignantly takes off, saying by his gestures, "I wish I had not wasted so much time on you." It is just so with earnest preachers! They grow sick at heart when they see that men will not come to business. They cry, "Who has believed our report?" and are anxious to carry their heavenly burden to another people. Oh, dear Hearers, let us not have to shake the dust off of our feet for a testimony against you! Oh, that you would hunger and thirst after Christ and His salvation—and then we should soon do a trade with you!

"Buy!"—This means, next, to agree to terms, for there cannot be any purchasing, however much the buyer desires to buy and the seller to sell, till they agree to terms. Now, our difficulty with God's goods is this—whereas ordinarily the buyer cannot be brought up to the seller's price—in *our* case we cannot get men *down* to God's price. They will persist in offering something or other as a price. They talk to us thus—"I cannot be saved, for I do not see any good thing in myself. Sir, if I had a deep sense of need, then I could be saved." Or, "Sir, if I could pray better." Or, "Sir, if I had more repentance, or more love, I could then believe in Jesus."

Oh, yes, if you had a price in your hand, you would *pay* for Heaven's blessings, would you not? But then, you see, they are *not* presented to you upon such terms! Price is out of the question! God's terms are that there shall be *no terms* of purchase at all—you are to be *nothing*—and Jesus is to be your All in All. When you will come down to that, then take the goods—the bargain is made—Eternal Life is yours! The next thing in a purchase is that when the terms are carried out, the buyer appropriates the goods to himself. If I buy a thing, it is mine, and I take it into my possession. You do not see a man buy a thing and then leave it behind him for the seller to do as he likes with it, do you?

In the things of God you are to appropriate the blessing to yourself. Put out the hand of faith and say, "Here is Christ for a sinner. I am a sinner and I take Christ to be my Savior. Here is washing for the filthy. I am filthy and I wash. Here is a robe of righteousness for the naked. I am naked, I take the raiment to be mine." Make Christ your own and He has made you His own! Take the Lord by an appropriating act of faith to be yours forever and the bargain is struck! But the text says a little more than that—it says, "Buy, and eat," as much as to say, "Make it yours in the most complete sense." If a man buys a loaf of bread it is his, but if he *eats* it, then all the lawyers in the world cannot dispute him out of it—he has it by a possession which is not only nine points of the law, but all the law!

When a poor soul has confidence enough to take Christ and to live upon Him as his own, saying, "This Christ is able to save me. I take Him into me and I am saved," why, the devil, himself, cannot unsave him! What is to divide him from Christ? There is the bath and I wash in it and am clean! What then? Who can obliterate the fact that I have washed? The righteousness of Christ is bestowed upon me and put on by me—who can tear off that glorious dress? Christ fed upon is ours beyond all question. No method of possession is more sure and safe than that of eating what you have bought. Feed, then, on Christ, the Bread of Heaven, and though

you are, in yourself, the poorest of the poor, yet He is yours forever and ever!

See, then, the blessed invitation—the whole of God’s mercy in Christ—infinite love and boundless compassion are to be had for no price at all! They are freely *given* to every man who has no money with which to procure them! The height of love meets the depths of poverty and fills them up. He that has nothing is invited to have all things, for he is the person for whom they were provided in the eternal purposes of God.

IV. I conclude now by saying a few things by way of ASSURANCE, to show that this is all real and true, and no make-believe. Every needy, thirsty soul may have, this day, all the Grace of God! Oh, if the Spirit of God makes him willing, he shall have all the blessings of the Covenant of Grace to be his own forever and ever! This is no sham—there is an honest offer made to everyone who is conscious of soul-poverty! For, first, it is not God’s way to mock men. He has, Himself, declared, “I said not unto the seed of Jacob, seek you My face in vain.” God has not said one thing in one place and another in another to contradict Himself!

He has not, in the Scriptures, bid men come to Him with the promise that He will not cast them out, all the while meaning of *some* of them that He will cast out! No, there are *no* exceptions made in the promises of God to empty sinners who come to Him! You must not *dream* of exceptions, which do not exist. Jesus says, “He that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out,” and this includes *all* who come. I am speaking to some, this morning, who have come across the Atlantic and are not yet saved—you may have been careless and thoughtless all your lives—but if you come to Jesus Christ, this morning, He will not refuse you His salvation!

Many have come in from the country, today—oh, that this may become their spiritual birthday! Come to the Lord Jesus Christ, my Friend, and He will welcome you! He has never rejected one and He never will! He will not find pleasure in tantalizing you. He is too good, too true to become a deceiver even to one poor lonely seeker! His Word of promise to you is true and real—every word is full of meaning—sweeter meaning than you dream of! Grace shall be had by you at once if you will but take it “without money and without price.” Men mock men, but God never deludes. We may say of Him, “Your word is Truth.”

Note that these mercies must be really meant to be given free to the poor because God is under no necessity to sell His benefits. He is not impoverished! He is so rich that none can add anything to His wealth. All things are His, therefore He must give freely since it would be beneath His all-sufficiency to be chauffeuring for compensation, or demanding a price at a creature’s hands. He means the penniless to have everything for *nothing*, since *nothing* can be imagined to be a price to Him! If a poor tradesman began to give away his goods, you would say, “There is some trick about this.” But when the Most High God, the possessor of Heaven and earth—WHO HAS EVERYTHING—freely gives to us, then there can be no design for His own advantage! His motive must be pure compassion!

There is no adequate price that we could bring to God for His mercy. How could there be? Would it be mercy if it could be *bought*? Grace is

without price because it is *priceless*! You can buy gold if you will—there is some medium of exchange for the purchase of every finite thing—but what medium of exchange could there be for the purchase of infinite blessings? Huge heaps of such things as the native Africans call money would be of no value to us—and what self-righteous men call merit is utterly despicable to God! Is there any comparison between a man's giving all his wealth and the possession of eternal Glory? No comparison can be instituted between carnal and spiritual joys!

As you cannot bring *any* price, I pray you believe that God is honest when He declares that He will give you pardon of sin and all the blessings of His Grace without money and without price. You cannot have them otherwise! Believe that He means you to receive them by Grace! Remember that Jesus must be meant for sinners, for if sinners had not existed there never would have been a Savior. When the Lord Jesus Christ set up in business to save, He must have known that there was no sphere for His operations except among sinners and, therefore, He entered in His office with the view of saving sinners. If a doctor comes into a town and there is nobody ill—and it is certain that nobody ever *will be* ill—he had better drive off somewhere else! He will do most business where there is most sickness.

When Christ Jesus became a Soul-Physician, He had His eyes on the spiritually sick and on them, alone. They are the patients who make up His practice and they, only. If, then, you are sick even unto death, put your case into the hands of Christ, for He will heal you! Remember, too, that it must be true that God will give these blessings to men who have no merits—and will bestow them as gifts—because Jesus, Himself, is a Gift! Did anybody ever dream of buying Christ? Stand at the foot of the Cross and say to yourself, “Could I ever have procured this vast display of love by any merit of my own? Could I have done *anything* which could have merited that the Son of God should become Man and, being found in fashion as a man, He should die such a death as this for *me*?”

Salvation must be a gift, for Jesus is a Gift! Away with your sacraments, your ceremonies, your prayers, your alms, your good works! If these are made the brass penny with which you hope to buy such inestimable things as pardon, sonship, Heaven—forget it! Salvation is seen to be such when it is given to those who have no money of their own. Beside that, Christ is All in All. Men have no notion what Christ is when they talk of getting ready for Christ, or bringing something to Him. What would you bring to Christ? Everything is in Christ and, therefore, you cannot bring anything to Him. “Oh, but,” you say, “I must come with a broken heart.” I tell you, no! You must *go to Christ* for a broken heart! “Oh, but I must come with a sense of need.” I tell you that a true sense of need is His work in you! True repentance and a sense of need spring from His Grace—you must get them *from Him without money and without price*.

“Ah, but I must be *something*.” Say, rather, you must be *nothing*! We cannot drill this into men's brains! No, if we were to use steam power to work upon the mind, we could not get this thought fixed in their proud hearts! They will cling to merit! They must *be* something, *feel* something,

say something, *do* something! Away with your somethings! Subside into nothingness! The Spirit of God brooded, of old, over chaos, so that order was clearly His work—and when the mind seems to be all chaos and darkness, then the Spirit of God is sure to work—and the Lord’s voice is heard, saying, “Let there be light!” Go to the Lord Jesus just as you are! You will never be better—you may be worse! Go NOW, just as you are, to Jesus, and buy and eat without money, means, or merit!

One thing more I would say, and that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ is blessedly free from all clogging conditions because all supposed conditions are supplied in Christ Jesus. We have heard of men advertising to give things away, but when you read the advertisement, carefully, you find that you are to pay, after all. The Gospel is not so! Its freedom is real! Many a good thing is to be had, but when you see how it is to be obtained, you say to yourself, “the conditions shut me out.” But the conditions of Eternal Life shut no man out who needs to be saved and wills to be saved. Over the gate of Heaven is written, “Come, and welcome.”

But you remind me that it says, “Buy,” and you insist upon it that, therefore, you must *pay*. Not so! Salvation is already paid for—all the paying has been done by Him who opened His veins to find the only price that is current in Heaven—the sin-atonement blood! If price may be spoken of—that price was all paid long before you were born—the purchasing work was done nearly 1,900 years ago on Calvary’s Cross! Jesus bowed His head and said, “It is finished.” Will you *add* to that which is finished? Will you tag on your *rags* to the Lord’s glistening cloth of gold and add your base farthings to the infinite price which He poured forth so lavishly at the foot of the Eternal Throne? Oh, don’t do it!

To yoke you with Christ can never be! You and *Christ* together? An archangel and an ant would make a better pair than *you* yoked with Christ! No, my Friend, sink, sink, sink—by a mighty descent sink to *nothing*—and let Jesus rise, rise, rise, till He fills the whole horizon of your thoughts and hopes, for then are you saved! Let us sing—

**“Tis done! The great transaction’s done!
I am my Lord’s and He is mine!
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice Divine.”**

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

A FREE SALVATION

NO. 199

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON FRIDAY EVENING, JUNE 11, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
ON THE GRAND STAND, EPSON RACE COURSE.**

***“Yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”
Isaiah 55:1.***

YOU see, I have something to sell this evening, I have to invite you to come and buy that which, in the Gospel will this night be proclaimed. Now it is usual when persons have anything to sell, *to exhibit the article*, to describe its character—and speak of its excellencies—for until persons are made aware of the nature of that which you exhibit, it is not likely that they will be prepared to buy it. That shall be my first business this evening. Then the man who has anything to sell, in the next place, endeavors to bring those who hear him *up* to the price at which he desires to sell. My business tonight is to bring you *down to the price*—“Come buy wine and milk without money and without price.” I shall then conclude by addressing *a few sentences of earnest persuasion* to those who despise that glorious salvation—which it is our privilege to preach—and turn away from those generous stipulations—“without money and without price.”

I. In the first place, then, I have to preach, tonight, WINE AND MILK—“Come buy wine and milk.” There we have a description of the Gospel—wine that makes glad the heart of man. Milk, the one thing and the only thing in the world which contains all the essentials of life. The strongest man might live on milk, for in it there is everything which is needed for the human frame—for bone, for sinew, for nerve, for muscle, for flesh—all is there. There you have a double description. The Gospel is like wine which makes us glad. Let a man truly know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and he will be a happy man. And the deeper he drinks into the spirit of Christ, the more happy will he become.

That religion which teaches misery to be a duty is false upon the very face of it, for God, when He made the world, studied the happiness of His creatures. You cannot help thinking, as you see everything around you, that God has sedulously, with the most strict attention, sought ways of pleasing man. He has not just given us our absolute necessities, He has given us more—not simply the useful, but even the ornamental. The flowers in the hedgerow, the stars in the sky, the beauties of nature, the hill and the valley—all these things were intended not merely because we

needed them, but because God would show us how He loved us and how anxious He was that we should be happy.

Now it is not likely that the God who made a happy world would send a miserable salvation. He who is a happy Creator will be a happy Redeemer. Those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious can bear witness that the ways of religion, “are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.” And if this life were all, if death were the burial of all our life and if the shroud were the winding sheet of eternity, still to be a Christian would be a bright and happy thing for it lights up this valley of tears and fills the wells in the valley of Baca to the brim with streams of love and joy.

The Gospel, then, is like wine. It is like milk, too, for there is everything in the Gospel that you want. Do you want something to bear you up in trouble? It is in the Gospel—“a very present help in time of trouble.” Do you need something to nerve you for duty? There is grace, all-sufficient for everything that God calls you to undergo or to accomplish. Do you need something to light up the eye of your hope? Oh, there are flashes of joy in the Gospel that may make your eye flash back again the immortal fires of bliss.

Do you want something to make you stand steadfast in the midst of temptation? In the Gospel there is that that can make you immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. There is no passion, no affection, no thought, no wish, no power which the Gospel has not filled to the very brim. The Gospel was evidently meant for manhood. It is adapted to it in its every part. There is knowledge for the head. There is love for the heart. There is guidance for the foot. There is milk and wine, in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And I think there is another meaning in the two words “milk and wine.” Wine, you know, is a rich thing, something that requires much time to manufacture. There has to be vintage and fermentation and preservation before wine can come to its full flavor. Now, the Gospel is like that—it is an extraordinary thing for feast days. It gives a man power to use a vintage of thought, a fermentation of action and a preservation of experience, till a man’s piety comes forth like the sparkling wine that makes the heart leap with gladness. There is that, I say, in religion, that makes it an extraordinary thing, a thing for rare occasions, to be brought out when princes sit at the table.

But milk is an ordinary thing. You get it everyday, anywhere. If you just run out into the farm yard there it is. There is no preparation required. It is ready to the hand. It is an ordinary thing. So is it with the Gospel—it is a thing for everyday. I love the Gospel on Sunday, but, blessed be God, it is a Monday Gospel, too. The Gospel is a thing for the Chapel and it is a thing for the Church—there it is like wine. But it is a thing for the farm

yard, it is a thing which you may observe behind the plow and hum behind the counter.

The religion of Christ is a thing that will go with you into your shop, on to the Exchange, into the market, everywhere. It is like milk—an everyday dish—a thing which we may always have and upon which we may always feast. Oh, thank Heaven, there is wine for that high day when we shall see the Savior face to face There is wine for that dread day when we shall ford the stream of Jordan—wine that shall remove our fears and bid us sing in the midst of the dark billows of Death. But thanks be unto Him, there is milk, too—milk for everyday occurrences, for everyday actions, milk for us to drink as long as we live—and milk to cherish us till the last great day shall come.

Now I think I have explained the figure in my text. But still some will say, “What is the Gospel?” Well, the Gospel, as I take it, can be looked at in various ways, but I will put it tonight as this—the Gospel is the preaching of a full, free, present, everlasting pardon to sinners through Jesus Christ’s atoning blood. If I understand the Gospel at all, it has in it a great deal more than this. But still this is the substance of it. I have to preach tonight the great fact that while all have sinned, Christ has died and to all penitents who now confess their sins and put their trust in Christ, there is a full, free pardon—*free in* this respect, that you have nothing to do in order to get it. The meanest sin-stricken sinner has simply to pour out his plaintive griefs before God. That is all He asks. There is no fitness needed—

***“All the fitness He requires,
Is to feel your need of Him.
This He gives you,
‘Tis His Spirit’s rising beam.”***

There is no need to pass through years of penance, of hard labor and of trial. The Gospel is as free as the air you breathe. You do not pay for breathing. You do not pay for seeing the sunlight, nor for the water that flows in the river as you stoop to drink it in your thirst. So the Gospel is free—nothing is to be done in order to get it. No merits need be brought in order to obtain it. There is free pardon for the chief of sinners through Jesus Christ’s blood. But I said it was a *full* pardon and so it is.

When Christ does anything He never does it by halves. He is willing this night to blot out every sin and cleanse every iniquity of every soul present who is now prepared by God’s grace to seek His mercy. If now, Sinner, God has put it in your heart to seek Him, the pardon which He is prepared to give you is a full one—not a pardon for a part of your sins, but for all at once—

***“Here’s pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast,***

And, oh, my soul with wonder view,

For sins to come here's pardon, too."

Here is pardon for your drunkenness, pardon for your oaths, pardon for your lust, pardon for your rebellion against Heaven. For the sins of your youth and the sins of your old age, for the sins of the sanctuary and the sins of the brothel, or the tavern. Here is pardon for all sin, for "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleans us from all sin." But again, the pardon we have to preach is a *present* pardon. If you feel your need of a Savior, if *now* you are enabled to believe in Christ, you shall be pardoned *now*.

Those who have ordinary hopes say they hope to be pardoned when they come to die. But, Beloved, that is not the religion we preach. If you will now make confession of sin, now seek the Lord, you shall be pardoned now. It is possible for a man to have come in here with all his sins hanging about his neck like a millstone—enough to sink him lower than the lowest Hell—and yet to go out of this door with every sin blotted out. If now he is enabled to believe on Him, he may this night receive perfect pardon from the hand of God. The pardon of a sinner is not a thing done when he is dying—it is done when he is living—done now.

And there are some here, I trust and they not a few, who can rejoice tonight in the fact that they are pardoned. Oh, is it not a magnificent thing for a man to be able to tread God's earth with this for a song in his mouth, "I am forgiven, I am forgiven. I am pardoned"? I think it is one of the sweetest songs in all the world—scarcely less sweet than that of the cherubim before the Throne—

***"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing
Of His soul-redeeming blood!
With Divine assurance knowing,
He has made my peace with God."***

Oh, what would you give for such a salvation as this, you mourning souls? It is preached to you without money and without price, and I am bidden to cry "Ho! Ho! Everyone that thirsts! If you feel your need of Christ, if you are now ready to confess your sins, come and take it freely without money and without price." But the best remains for the last. The pardon which is proclaimed tonight is not only a free, and full, and present, but it is a pardon that *will last forever*. If the Queen pardons anyone—grants a free pardon—it is impossible that man should be punished for the same offense. Very often, however, the Queen grants a reprieve that is not a full pardon.

There are cases in which persons are so far pardoned that they are not *executed* for the crime, but confined during Her Majesty's pleasure. Now, our Lord never does that. He makes a clean sweep of it—there is not one sin that He allows to remain. When He washes a soul, He washes it whiter than the driven snow. God does things perfectly. But the best of it is that

what He does once is done forever. This is the very glory of the Gospel. If you get pardon tonight, you are saved now—but you never shall be condemned. If a man believes in Christ with all his heart, his salvation is secure beyond hazard. And I always look upon this as the very jewel of the crown of salvation, that it be irreversible.

If I commit my soul into the hands of God—

**“His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep.
All that His heavenly Father gave
His hands securely keep.
Not death or Hell shall ever divide
His favorites from His breast.
In the dear bosom of their God
They must forever rest.”**

God does not make you His child today, and turn you out tomorrow. He does not forgive you today, and then punish you the next day. As true as God is God, if you get your pardon tonight, Christian, the earth may melt away just as a moment’s foam dissolves into the wave that bears it and is lost forever—the great universe may pass away and be like the hoar-frost before the morning sun. But you never can be condemned.

As long as God is God, he who has got his pardon signed and sealed, is beyond the reach of harm. I would not preach any other—I dare not. It would not be worth your receiving. It would not be worth my taking the trouble to preach. But this is worth any man’s having, indeed, for it is a sure investment. He who puts himself into the hands of Christ has a sure Keeper, come what may—and there may come strong temptations and strong affections. And there may come strong pains and hard duties—but He that has helped us, bears us through, and makes us more than conquerors, too. Oh, to be pardoned once, with the certain assurance that we shall be pardoned forever, beyond the hazard of being cast away!

And now again, I will just preach this *salvation*, for this is the wine and milk which is proclaimed without money and without price. Beloved, all this is to be gained by faith in Christ—whosoever believes in Him who died upon the Tree and groaned away His life for us—shall never come into condemnation—he is passed from death unto life and the love of God abides in him.

II. And now, having thus exhibited the article, my next business is to BRING THE BIDDERS UP TO THE AUCTION BOX AND SELL IT. My difficulty is to bring you *down* to my price, as old Rowland said. He was preaching in a fair and he heard a man selling his goods. “Ah,” said he, “as for those people over there, their difficulty is to bring people *up* to their price; whereas, my difficulty is to bring you *down* to my price.”

Now, here is a Gospel fully preached, without money and without price. Here comes someone up to the sacred desk, transformed for the moment into an auction box and he cries, "I want to buy." What will you give for it? He holds out his hands and he has such a handful. He has to lift up his very lap with more, for he can hardly hold all his good works. He has Ave Marias and Pater Nosters without number and all kinds of crossings with holy water. He has innumerable bending of the knee and prostrations before the altar. He has reverence of the host and attendance at the mass and so on. In French, they call the mass the *messe* and a mess it is and no mistake, but there are a great many people who trust in it. And when they come before God, they bring all these things as the ground of their reliance.

And so, Sir Romanist, you are coming to get salvation, are you? And you have brought all this with you. Friend, I am sorry for you, but you must go away from the box with all your performances, for it is "without money and without price," and until you are prepared to come empty handed you can never have it. If you have anything of your own you can not receive it. "But," says he, "I am no heretic. Am I not true to the Pope? Do I not make confession and get absolution and pay my shilling?" Do you, my Friend? Then because you pay your shilling for it, it is good for nothing, for that which is good for something you can have "without money and without price." The light we pay for is a sickly thing, but that which we get from Heaven for nothing is the rich healthy light which makes the heart glad. So the pardon that comes from Christ is "without money and without price."

Then another comes up and says, "I am glad you have served the Romanist like that. I hate the Church of Rome, I am a true Protestant, and desire to be saved." What have you brought, Sir? "Oh, I have brought no Ave Marias, no Pater Nosters. I abhor the names. I do not like those Latin names, not I. But I pay the collection every Sunday. I am very attentive to my prayers. I go to Church almost as soon as the doors are open," or (if he is a Dissenter) "I go to Chapel three times on the Sabbath. And I attend the Prayer Meetings and beside that, I pay everybody twenty shillings in the pound. I had rather pay twenty-one shillings than nineteen. I would not like to hurt anybody.

"I do not tread upon a worm if I can help it. I am always liberal and assist the poor when I can. I may make a little slip just now and then. I may turn aside a little. Still, if I am not saved I do not know who will be. I am as good as my neighbors and I think, Sir, I certainly ought to be saved, for I have very few sins—and what few there are do not hurt other people. They hurt me more than anyone else. Besides, they are mere trifles. Only one or two days in the year I break loose—and a man must have a little

amusement after all. I assure you I am one of the best, most honest and sober and religious people going.”

Well, my Friend, I am sorry to hear you quarrelling with the Romanist, for I do not like to see twin brothers disagree. You are both of the same kith and kin, believe me, for the essence of Popery is salvation by works and ceremonies. You do not practice his works and ceremonies, but then you hope to be saved by your own—and you are just as bad as he. I will send you away. There is no salvation for you, for it is “without money and without price.” And as long as you bring these fine good works of yours you cannot have it.

Mark, I do not find any fault with them, they are good enough in their place, but they won't do here tonight and they won't do at the judgment bar of God. Practice those things as much as you like, they are good in their place. But still, in the matter of salvation you must leave them out and come for it as poor guilty sinners and take it “without money and without price.” Says one, “Do you find fault with good works?” Not at all. Suppose I see a man building a house and he were fool enough to lay the foundation with chimney pots. If I should say, “My dear man, I do not like these chimney pots to be put into the foundation,” you would not say I found fault with the chimney pots, but that I found fault with the man for putting them in the wrong place.

Let him put good solid masonry at the bottom—and then when the house is built he may put on as many chimney pots as he likes. So with good works and ceremonies—they will not do for a *foundation*. The foundation must be built of more solid stuff. Our hope must be built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness—and when we have built a foundation with that, we may have as many good works as we like—the more the better. But for a foundation, good works are fickle and feeble things—and he that uses them will see his house totter to the ground.

But see another man. He is a long way off and he says, “Sir, I am afraid to come. I could not come and make a bid for the salvation. Sir, I've got no larnin', I'm no scholar. I can't read a book, I wish I could. My children go to Sunday-School. I wish there was such a thing in my time. I can't read and its no use my hoping to go to Heaven. I goes to Church sometimes, but oh dear, it's no good. The man uses such long words I can't understand 'em. And I goes to Chapel sometimes, but I can't make it out. I knows a little of the hymns my child says, about—

‘Gentle Jesus meek and mild,’—and

‘Oh, that will be joyful, when we meet to part no more.’

I wish they would preach like that, and then, maybe, I could make it out. But I'm no sholar, Sir and I don't think I can be saved.”

O my dear Friend, you need not stand over there at the back. Come along with you. It wants no scholarship to go to Heaven. The more you know, the better it will be for you on earth, no doubt, but it will be of no particular use to you in Heaven. If you can “read your title clear to mansions in the skies,” if you know enough to know yourself a lost sinner and Christ a great Savior, that is all you want to know to get to Heaven. There is many a man in Heaven that never read a letter on earth—many a man that could not, if his life depended on it, have signed his name, but was obliged to write a cross as “Tom Stiles’s mark” and there he is among the brightest.

Peter himself has not a brighter place than any poor ignorant souls who looked to Jesus Christ and were enlightened. I will tell you something to comfort you. Don’t you know that Christ said, the poor had the Gospel preached to them and besides that, He said, “Except a man be converted and become as a little child, he cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven”? What does that mean, but that we must believe the Gospel like little children? A little child has not much learning—he just believes what he is told. And that is what you are to do. You are to believe what God tells you. He says that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. That is no hard thing, is it? You can believe that. And if you can, if you are destitute of all human knowledge, you shall without doubt, know hereafter what you know not now.

Now, I see a man come up to the stall and he says, “Well, I will have salvation, Sir, I have made in my will provisions for the building of a Church or two and a few almshouses. I always devote a part of my substance to the cause of God. I always relieve the poor and such-like. I have a pretty good share of money and I take care not to hoard it up. I am generous and liberal, I try to set up poor trades people and so forth. Won’t that carry me to Heaven?”

Well, I like you very much and I wish there were more of your sort. There is nothing like generosity and liberality, certainly, where it is exhibited towards the sick and the poor, the destitute and the ignorant and in the cause of God. But if you bring these things as your hope of Heaven, my dear Friend, I must undeceive you. You cannot buy Heaven with gold. Why, they pave the streets up there with it! Are we not told in the Book of Revelation, that the streets of the city were all of pure gold like unto transparent glass? Why, if you had twenty thousand pounds you could not buy a flagstone with it. Baron Rothschild could not buy a foot of Heaven if he spent all his money for it.

It is too precious a place to be bought with gold and silver. If all the wealth of the Indies could be shot out in order to buy one glimpse of Heaven, it would be useless. There is no man that could get so much as a

distant peep within its pearly gates for all the gold that heart could conceive or covetousness desire. It is given away for *nothing*. Christ will never sell it—never—because there is nothing that can be brought at all equal to its value. What Christ bought with His *blood* you cannot buy with *gold*. He redeemed us not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with His precious blood. And there is no other price that can ever be allowed. Ah, my rich Friend, you are just on a level with your poorest laborer. You may wear broadcloth and he fustian, yet he has as good an opportunity of being saved as you. Ah, my Lady, satin has no preference in Heaven above calico or cotton—

“None are excluded hence but those who do themselves exclude.”

Wealth makes distinction on earth, but no distinction at the Cross of Christ. You must all come alike to the footstool of Jesus, or else not come at all. I knew a minister who told me he was once sent for to the dying bed of a woman who was very well-to-do in the world and she said, “Mr. Baxter, do you think when I get to Heaven, Betsy, my servant, will be there?” “Well,” he said, “I don’t know much about you, but Betsy will be there. For if I know anyone who is a pious girl, it is she.” “Well,” said the lady, “don’t you think there will be a little distinction? For I never could find it in my heart to sit down with a girl of that sort. She has no taste, no education and I could not endure it. I think there ought to be a little difference.”

“Ah, you need not trouble yourself, Madam,” said he, “there will be a great distinction between you and Betsy, if you die in the temper in which you now are. But the distinction will be on the wrong side. For you will see her in Abraham’s bosom, but you yourself will be cast out. As long as you have such pride in your heart, you can never enter into the kingdom of Heaven.”

He spoke to her very plainly and she was mightily offended. But I believe she preferred to be found out of Heaven to submitting to sit with her servant Betsy. Let us respect rank and title here, if you please—but when we preach the Gospel we know no such thing. If I preached to a congregation of kings, I would preach the same Gospel that I would preach to a congregation of clodhoppers. The king on his throne, and the queen in her palace have no Gospel different from you and me. However humble and obscure we may be there stands the gate of Heaven wide open. There is the king’s royal highway for us. The highway is as much for the poor man as for the rich man—so is the kingdom of Heaven—“without money and without price.”

Now I hear my Friend the Calvinist over there say, “Well, I like that, but still I think I can come, and though I can say with you—

‘Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Your Cross I cling,’

yet I can say this—I have had a deep *experience*, Sir. I have been led to see the plague of my own heart and I have *felt* a great deal. When I come to Christ I rely a great deal upon my feelings. I do not think you are right in calling all kinds of sinners to come to Christ—but you are right in calling me—for I am one of the right sort. I am one of the publican sort. I am pharisaical enough to think that. I think that I most certainly have a special commission to come, for I have such an experience that if I were to write my biography, you would say, ‘This is a good experience—this man has a right to come to Christ.’ ”

Well, Friend, I am sorry to upset you, but I shall be compelled to do so. If you bring your experience to Christ when you come to Him, you are as bad as the Romanist who brings his masses and Ave Marias. I like your experience very well, if it is the work of God’s grace in your heart—but if you bring it when you come to Christ, you put *that* before Christ and it is an Anti-Christ. Away with it! Away with it! When we have been preaching to poor sinners and tried to describe their state by nature and their feelings, I have been afraid, after all, that we were fostering a spirit of self-righteousness and teaching our hearers to think that they must get certain *feelings*, before they can come to Christ.

Let me just, if I can, preach the Gospel in the broadest way possible—and that is the most truthful way. Christ wants your feelings no more than he does your money, and that is, not at all. If you want good experience you must come to Christ—

“All the fitness He requires, is to feel your need of Him.”

Yes, but stop—

“This He gives you, it is His Spirit’s rising beam.”

You are to come to Christ to get everything. You are not to say, “Well, I will *believe* first and then come.” No—go to Christ for faith. You must look to the Cross even to get a sense of sin. We do not feel our sins so much before we see the Cross, but we feel them most afterwards. We look to Christ first. Then repentance flows from both our streaming eyes. Remember, if you go anywhere else to find a Savior, you are on the wrong track. If you try to bring anything to Christ, to use a homely proverb, it is like bringing coals to Newcastle. He has plenty—he does not want any of yours. And what is more, as soon as Christ sees anything in your hands He will turn you straight away. He will have nothing to do with you until you can say—

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

I have heard of a Negro slave who was convinced of sin and at the same time his master was under conviction. The Negro found peace with God, but the master was a long time seeking without any hope. And at last he said, “I cannot make out how it is that you found comfort so soon and I

cannot get it at all.” So the Negro, after asking his master to excuse his speaking plainly, said, “Massa, I tink it is just dis. When Jesus say, ‘Come along,’ He say, ‘I give you a righteousness dat cover you from head to foot.’ I, poor Negro, looks down at myself, covered all over wid filthy rags and I say, ‘Lord, clothe me, I am naked,’—and off go my rags.

“Now, Massa, you not so bad as dat. When he say, ‘Come along,’ to you, you look at your coat and you say, ‘Well, it wants a little mending, but I tink it will wear a little longer. Dere is a great hole here, but a little darning and stitching will do it up again.’ So, Massa, you keep your old coat. You keep on darning and stitching and you never get comfort. But if you would take it off, you would get comfort at once.” That is just it, we will be trying to get *something before* we come to Christ.

Now I dare say in this congregation I have a hundred different phases of this singular stupidity of man—the desire to bring something to Christ. “Oh,” says one “I would come to Christ, but I have been too great a sinner.” Self, again, Sir. Your being a great sinner has nothing to do with that. Christ is a great Savior. And however great your sin, His mercy is greater than that. He invites you simply as a sinner. Be you big or little, He bids you come to Him and take His salvation “without money and without price.”

Another says, “Ah, but I do not *feel* it enough.” Self again. He does not ask you about your feelings He simply says, “Look unto Me and be you saved all the ends of the earth.” “But, Sir, I cannot pray.” Self again. You are not to be saved by your *prayers*. You are to be saved by *Christ*, and your business is simply to look to Christ. He will help you to pray afterwards. You must begin at the right end by clinging only to His Cross and trusting *there*.

“But,” says another “if I felt as So-and-So did.” Self again. What business have you to talk so? Christ is where you are to look, not to self. “Yes,” you say, “I think He would receive anybody but me.” Please, who gave you any leave to think at all in the matter? Does He not say, “Him that comes unto Me I will in no-wise cast out?” Why, you are *thinking* your soul into eternal ruin. Give up *thinking* and *believe*. Are your thoughts as God’s thoughts? Remember, His thoughts are as much higher than yours as Heaven is higher than earth.

“But,” says one, “I have sought Him and I have not found Him.” Dear Friend, can you truly say that you have come to Christ with nothing in your hands, and have looked alone to Him, and yet He has cast you away? Do you *dare* to say that? No, if God’s Word is true and you are true, you cannot say that. Ah, I remember how that struck my heart when I heard my mother say it once. I had been some years seeking Christ and I never could believe He would save me. She said she had heard many people

swear and blaspheme God, but one thing she had never heard—she had never heard a man say he had sought Christ and Christ had rejected him.

“And,” she said, “I do not believe that God would permit any man to live to say that.” Well, I thought I could say it. I thought I had sought Him and He had cast me away—and I determined I would say it—even if it destroyed my soul. I would speak what I thought was the truth. But, I said to myself, “I will try once more.” And I went to the Master, with nothing of my own, casting myself simply on His mercy. And I believed that He died for me—and blessed be His holy name! Oh, do try Him—

***“Make but a trial of His love,
Experience will decide.
How blest are they and only they,
Who in His love confide.”***

If you will come down to this price and take Christ for nothing, just as He is, “without money and without price,” you shall not find Him a hard Master.

III. Now, I have to use a FEW ARGUMENTS with you, and may God apply them to your hearts! I would first speak to some of *you who never think about these things at all*. You have come here to hear the Word today, because it is preached in a strange place—otherwise you might not have been in the house of God at all. Very seldom you vex yourselves with religious questions. You do not ask yourselves many questions about it because you feel it would be an awkward thing for you if you were to think much of religion. You feel there would be a necessity for a change of life in you—for thoughts about religion and your present habits would not suit well together.

My dear Friends, bear with me a moment if I press you very much home. Did you ever hear of the ostrich? When the hunter pursues it, the poor silly bird flies away as fast as it can. And when it sees that there is no way of escape, what do you suppose it does? It buries its head in the sand and then thinks it is safe, because it shuts its eyes and cannot see. Is not that just what you are doing? Conscience won't let you rest—and what you are trying to do is to bury it. You bury your head in the sand. You do not like to think.

Ah, if we could bring men to think, what a wonderful thing we should have done! That is one of the things, Sinner, that, without Christ, you dare not do. Do you think? We have heard of men afraid to be alone half an hour because of thoughts too terrible for them. I challenge any of you without God to spend one hour on that heath, or in this balcony, or in your own house at home and just chew these thoughts, masticate them—“I am an enemy to God, my sins are not forgiven. If I die tonight, I am damned to all eternity. I have never sought Christ and never found Him to

be mine.” I defy you to keep at that an hour. You dare not, you would be afraid of your shadow.

The only way sinners can be happy is by thoughtlessness. They say, “Cover it up. Bury my dead out of my sight.” They put such thoughts away. Now is this wise? Is there anything in religion? If not, it will be consistent in you to deny it. But if this Bible is true. If you have a soul that is to live forever—is it rational, is it sensible, is it prudent—to be neglecting your eternal soul? If you suffered your bodies to starve, you would not want much argument, would you, to induce you to eat? But here is your *soul* perishing and yet no mortal tongue can persuade you to attend to that.

Ah, is it not strange that men are going to live forever in eternity and yet they have never provided for it? I have heard of a certain king who had a fool in his court who made a great many merry jests. One day the king gave him a stick, and said, “Keep that till you find a bigger fool than yourself.” At last the king came to die, and when he lay dying, the jester came to him and said, “Master, what is the matter?” “I am going to die,” said the king.” “Going to die—where’s that?” “I am going to die, man, don’t laugh at me now.” “How long are you going to be there?” “Well, where I am going I shall live forever.”

“Have you got a house there?” “No.” “Have you made any preparation for the journey?” “No.” “Have you got any provision whatever, as you are going to live there such a long time?” “No.” “Here, take the stick—fool as I am, I have made preparation. I am not such a fool as to have to live in a place where I have not got a house.”

Christ has prepared for His people a mansion in Heaven. There was much wisdom in the jester’s language. Let me speak to you, even though it is in his language, but very seriously. If men are to live forever in Heaven, is it not a strange, wild, frantic freak of intolerant madness, that they never think of the world to come? *Today* they think—but *forever*—they put that away. Time and its poor baubles and its toys do fill the heart. But eternity—that hill without a summit, that sea without a shore, that river without an end, over which they are to sail forever—they never think of that.

Will you pause a moment and recollect that you have to sail forever and you must sail over the burning waves of Hell, or else over sparkling streams of Glory? Which shall it be with you? You will have to consider this soon. Before many days and months, and years are gone, God will say to you “Prepare to meet your God.” And it may be that the summons shall come to you. Then you are in the death struggle when the stream of Jordan is chilling your blood and your heart is sunken within you by reason of fear. And what will you do then? What will you do in the swellings

of sin in the day when you are spoiled? What shall you do when God shall bring you into judgment?

And I have now the pleasing task of closing by addressing men of another character. Ah, Friend. You are not careless. You have many thoughts and they pain you. But, although you would be glad to get rid of them, you would be afraid to do so. You can say, "Oh, I do feel it were well for me if I could rejoice in Christ—I do feel I should be happy if I could be converted." Friend, I am glad to hear you say so. Where God has put the work of an impressed heart, I do not think He will leave it till He has finished. Now, I want to speak to you very seriously tonight, but for a minute. You do feel your need of a Savior. Remember, Christ died for you.

Believe that—will you? There He hangs upon His Cross, dying. Look into His face, it is full of love, it is melting with forgiveness. His lips are moving and He says, "Father forgive them." Will you look to Him? Can you hear Him say it and yet turn away? All He asks you is simply to look and that look will save you. You do feel your *need* of a Savior. You know you are a sinner. Why tarry? Do not say you are unworthy. Remember, He died for the unworthy. Do not say He will not save you.

Remember, He died for the devil's castaways. The very dram and scum of the world Christ has redeemed. Look at Him. Can you look at Him and not believe Him? Can you see the blood streaming from His shoulders and trickling from His hands and side, and not believe Him? Oh, by Him that lives and was dead, and is alive forevermore, I entreat you to believe on the Lord Jesus. For thus is it written, "He that believes on the Lord Jesus and is immersed, shall be saved."

Once when Rowland Hill was preaching, Lady Ann Erskine happened to be driving by. She was in the outer ring of the circle and she asked the coachman, what all the people were there for. He replied, "They are going to hear Rowland Hill." Well, she had heard a great deal about this strange man, accounted to be the very wildest of preachers, and so she drew near. No sooner did Rowland Hill see her, than he said, Come, I am going to have an auction, I am going to sell Lady Ann Erskine. (She of course stopped, and she wondered how she was going to be disposed of).

Who will buy her? Up comes the world. What will you give for her? "I will give her all the pomps and vanities of this present life. She shall be a happy woman here. She shall be very rich, she shall have many admirers, she shall go through this world with many joys." You shall not have her. Her soul is an everlasting thing. It is a poor price you are offering, you are only giving *a little* and what shall it profit her if she gain *the whole* world and lose her own soul?

Here comes another purchaser—here is the devil. What will you give for her. "Well" says he, "I will let her enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

She shall indulge in everything her heart shall set itself unto. She shall have everything to delight the eye and the ear. She shall indulge in every sin and vice that can possibly give a transient pleasure.” Ah, Satan, what will you do for her *forever*? You shall not have her, for I know what you are. You would give a paltry price for her and then destroy her soul to all eternity.

But, here comes another—I know Him—it is the Lord Jesus. What will You give for her? Says He, “It is not what I will give, it is what I have *given*. I have given My life, My blood for her. I have bought her with a price and I will give her Heaven forever and ever. I will give her grace in her heart now and glory throughout eternity.”

“O Lord, Jesus Christ,” said Rowland Hill, “you shall have her! Lady Ann Erskine, do you demur to the bargain?” She was fairly caught. There was no answer that could be given. “It is done,” he said, “it is done. You are the Savior’s. I have betrothed you unto Him. Never break that contract.” And she never did. From that time forth, from being a reckless and volatile woman, she became one of the most serious persons, one of the greatest supporters of the Truth of the Gospel in those times. And she died in a glorious and certain hope of entering the kingdom of Heaven.

I would be well pleased if I might make a match of some of you this night. If you would now say, “Lord, I will have You,” Christ is ready. If He has made you ready He is never behind Himself. Whosoever is willing to have Christ, Christ is willing to have him. What do you say? Will you go with this Man? If you say, “Yes,” God bless you! Christ says, “Yes,” too, and you are saved—saved NOW, saved FOREVER!

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HO! HO!

NO. 3299

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 25, 1912.

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

***“Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters.”
Isaiah 55:1.***

THERE is a thirst which is peculiar to the Believer. He can say with David, “As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God.” Delightful thirst! Would God we had more of it! May we be longing and panting after our God in that sense until we shall be filled with His Spirit and shall dwell in His Presence to go no more out forever!

But I wish now to speak of another kind of thirst to another class of thirsting ones, who thirst they scarcely know for what. They have a sense of unrest, of longing, of yearning—yet they have a very indistinct idea of what it is their souls are pining for. It may be that they will find out presently what it is their thirst requires. Better still, if perhaps, by God’s blessing, that thirst shall be quenched by their drinking that Living Water of which they are bidden freely to take.

I shall not detain you with a long preface, nor, indeed, with a long discourse. I will try to make each portion of my address brief, practical and pointed. May the Holy Spirit make it effectual!

Learn from my text that *God has made plenteous soul-provision and that to every thirsty soul this provision is perfectly free and gratuitous.*

I. In the first place, GOD HAS MADE AN ABUNDANT SOUL-PROVISION.

We read here of “water.” Water has been pronounced the simplest, purest, fittest drink for all persons of all ages and temperaments. Now, there is a thirst in man’s body which makes him require drink. He drinks and that thirst is removed. There is a similar thirst in man’s *spiritual* nature. He needs something and he feels uneasy until he gets it. The Grace of God, which is proclaimed to us in Christ Jesus, is that which meets the longing of man. That is the spiritual water for man’s spiritual thirst. In the text, the word is put in the plural, “Come you to the *waters*,” I suppose to show the abundance thereof, as though there were many rivers of it, so that none might fear that they should require more than was provided—

***“Rivers of love and mercy here
In a rich ocean join.
Salvation in abundance flows,***

***Like floods of milk and wine.
Great God, the treasures of Your love
Are everlasting mines—
Deep as our helpless miseries are,
And boundless as our sins.”***

The mercy of God is not a little brook which can be almost drained up by a passing ox, but it is a vast river—it is many rivers, rivers to swim in! “Ho, everyone that thirsts!” Stand not back because you think there is not enough, but come you to the waters!

Or the word may be in the plural to signify variety. The soul needs many things. Viewing eternity, God and judgment from different points of view, it needs manifold and multitudinous mercies. They are all provided and the word, “waters,” indicates that many fresh springs of consolation are ready for those who thirst for all spiritual blessings as soon as the eye sees or the ear hears tell of them! You need not fear if you need the pardon of sin, or the renewal of your nature, or guidance in perplexity, or comfort in distress—you need not fear but what you shall find it. “Come you to the waters.” There is an infinite variety in the Grace of God! He is called “the God of all Grace.” All the Grace that all the sinners that ever come to Him can need, they shall find stored up in the Gospel provisions of the Covenant of Grace. “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters,” for God has provided for soul-needs in plentiful abundance and endless variety!

Now, are you thirsting? It surely is not the mere play of imagination, but the sober apprehension of a fact that convinces me there are persons here who are thirsting in a spiritual sense. I think one of them says, “I thirst, *I thirst to have my sins forgiven and to be reconciled to God.* I know that I have done wrong—for me to plead that I have been innocent would be to add a lie to all my other iniquities. I am sensible in my inmost heart that I have both by omission and commission, transgressed the Divine Law. I deserve punishment, but I would that, by some means, I might be put into the Divine favor. I cannot bear to think that God should be angry with me every day! Once I laughed at this, but now I feel its meaning and it is like an arrow sticking in my loins. Oh, that I could have my Maker to be my Friend! I cannot fight the battle with Him—He could crush me in a moment! I would, therefore, cast down the weapons of my rebellion and be reconciled to Him.” Come, then, you thirsty one, come and have what you need! Come and put your trust in Jesus and your sin is forgiven and you are reconciled—for, far off as you are, you shall be brought near by the blood of Christ! Do you know how? It is thus—God must punish sin. Your sin has incurred penalty, but He exacted your debt from your Surety. He punished Jesus for your sins which you have committed, if you believe in Jesus as your Substitute! He endured, that you might never endure, the whole of the Divine wrath! God can now, therefore, without marring His justice, reconcile to Himself the offending

sinner, be agreed with him, receive him into friendship, yes, receive him into *sonship* and adopt him as His child! That troubled conscience of yours will soon have peace if you will but trust in the bleeding Sacrifice of the Lamb of God for slain sinners! Put your hands upon His dear head, once crowned with thorns for you, and you shall prove that God is our Friend, and know that your sin is forgiven! Ho, everyone that thirsts for pardon and for reconciliation, come you to the waters, and have there your desire!

I think I hear another say, "I desire that same blessing, but I need something more. *I want to conquer the sin that dwells in me.* I want to be pure and holy! I cannot bear to be in the future what I have been in the past! I feel the chains of habit that bind me—I need to snap them off. I would no longer be an example of vice—I want to be a pattern of everything that is lovely and of good repute. But I have struggled against sin and it gets the mastery over me. I do for a time escape, but still I bear my fetters upon me and am dragged back to my prison. I cannot be what I would, oh, that I could escape from the power of sin!" Ah, you thirsty one, it is a blessed thing to desire as you desire! And let me tell you that God will give you the desire of your heart, for Jesus died that He might deliver His people from the power of Satan! He came on purpose that He might destroy the power of sin in His people and make them so free that they should not serve sin, but become a people zealous for good works. If you will come to Jesus and simply believe in Him—that is, rely upon Him, trust Him—His Grace will come and refine you, implanting a new nature, taking away the heart of stone and giving a heart of flesh—and you shall yet put your foot upon the neck of all your corruptions! You shall cast them out little by little, and you shall be made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light! Ho, everyone that thirsts for purity and virtue and for victory over indwelling sin, let him come to the waters that flowed with the blood from Jesus' side—and let him taste and his thirst shall be appeased forever!

In some persons this soul-thirst takes the shape of *an anxious desire for perseverance and security*. "I would like," says one, "oh, how I would like to know myself saved, and so saved that I never can be lost! Would that I could get on the Rock and feel the steadfastness of my refuge, that I might be able to sing—

***"My name from the palms of His hands
Eternity will not erase!
Impressed on His heart it remains
In marks of indelible Grace!"***

I recollect how I longed and panted after this, for no salvation ever seemed to me to be worth the having that would not last me to the end. No sign of Grace within seemed worth the having, but a sign that could never be cut off. The dread, "perhaps," haunted me lest the enterprise should be, after all, a failure, and the prospect of final deliverance should

be defeated by some superior power of evil. I wanted the indwelling of Eternal Life, of that incorruptible life which lives and abides forever! Now, such a life as this it is that we read of in the Bible. Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." You who want security, who wish to know that you are saved and to rejoice in it, may well listen to these words—"Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters." If you come to Christ for this blessed satisfaction, you shall have it! Give yourselves up to Christ and you shall sing, in the words of our song—

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

Yes, be your thirst for pardon, for reconciliation, for sanctification, for deliverance from sin, or for perseverance and safety, you shall have any and all of these in the waters which God has made to flow!

There are persons in the world, however, whose thirst takes another form. They have a *thirst for knowledge*. They want to know, to know infallibly. Through how many theories some people wade! There are minds so naturally inclined for cavil and controversy, for reasoning and reconsidering, that the more they study, the more skeptical they grow. Always learning, they never come to the knowledge of the Truth of God. "Oh," such a man seems to say, "if I could but get hold of something that was true, some fact, some certainty." Well, Sir, if you thirst for this, let your soul be given up to a belief in Christ and you shall soon find certainty! I believe that the religion of Jesus Christ is so certain a truth to that man who has believed it, that it is so verified to his inner consciousness, and so interweaves itself with his entire being that no proposition of Euclid could ever be more demonstrable, or more absolutely conclusive! We have known and believed the Revelation that this Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God. We have tasted, felt and handled the good Word of Life. I know, and many here know, that since we have believed in Jesus we have come to live in an entirely new world. We have broken through the veil that parted us from a kingdom of which we know nothing, and we have been brought into this new Kingdom and live in it, and are as conscious of new sensations, new emotions, new sorrows and new joys as we are conscious of the old sensations which we possessed before! It is true, Sirs, certainly true! Have not our martyrs stood at the stake and burnt for this Truth of God? That is a stern Truth for which a man will dare to burn! Twisted as their nerves and muscles were upon the rack, and their very hearts searched after with hot claws of fire by their tormentors, yet have they learned to sing in the midst of anguish, to tell of present enjoyment and to triumph in the absolute Truth of the Doctrine whereof they were the witnesses! If you need to get your foot upon a bit of rock, to

feel your footing and express your conviction—"Now, this is true whatever else is not"—you must believe in Jesus Christ! Then you will be no more shifted about like an unguided vessel by every wind and every current, but you will be sailing with the heavenly Pilot on board, directing you to the haven of everlasting peace!

But there are *those whose thirst is that of the heart*. It is not so much something to believe as something to *love* which they need. Well, my dear Friend, if you would have something worthy of your affection, a Person whom you may love to the fullest possible extent and never be deceived, whom you may adore and never become an idolater, let me say to you—Come you to the waters, and drink of the love of Christ, for they that love Him much may love Him more—they cannot love Him too much! He never disappoints any confidence that is reposed in Him. His dear, sweet love which He pours into the souls of those who love Him is recompense for any sorrow they may have endured for His sake—a recompense that makes them forget their wrongs and woes in the exceeding weight of glory which it entails!

Oh, did you but know my Master, you would find out that to know Him is to love Him! All things else in this world are insignificant in comparison with Him. As a candle is not to be compared to the sun at noon-day, so the joys of this world are not worthy to be mentioned in the same century as the joys of communion with Christ! Get this, and you shall have overflowing joy! You shall be satisfied with marrow and fatness and drink of the wines on the lees well-refined!

But time would fail me if I were to try to mention all the different forms of soul-thirst. Whatever they may be, God has provided a supply for them all. Sinner, you cannot need anything which God cannot give you! Your soul cannot crave for anything but He can bestow it. You cannot be so soul-sick but He has medicine that will heal you. You cannot be so naked but He can clothe you, nor so black but He can wash you, nor so devilish but He can sanctify you, nor so near being damned but He can save you! Christ is All-in-All. If you are just now ready to die. If you have brought yourself down to the gates of the grave by your sin. If you are suffering in the body the results of your iniquities. If your own conscience has pronounced on you the dread sentence of doom—know this—my Master's arm is strong, and long as well as strong! He is able to reach the worst, the vilest, and the most abandoned! And when He once reaches them, He will never let go of them till He has taken them out of the miry clay, out of the horrible pit and set their feet upon a rock and established their goings! I wish I had an angel's tongue, or could sound a trumpet that would be heard right round this world! How loudly, then, would I proclaim the glad tidings that God has in store for needy ones—everything they need! No sinner need die of famine, for there is no famine in this land of Grace. No traveler through this world needs to die of

thirst, for the well is deep, and it eternally springs up. No sinner needs to starve, for the oxen and fatlings are killed and the Gospel message is, "Come, for all things are ready." God grant that knowing how bountifully all these things are provided, we may, none of us, keep back, turn a deaf ear to the general call, refuse the special invitation, slight the Grace, or scorn the Gospel!

II. Observe, secondly, that THE GOSPEL PROVISIONS ARE FREE TO ALL THIRSTY SOULS.

Do you notice the first word of the text? "Ho!" That is like the cry of the salesman at a fair. He calls out to passersby, "Ho! Look! listen! Turn here! Here is a bargain—something worth your attention!" So God condescends, as it were, to cry out to those who are busy with this world's cares, its business and its barter, its buying and selling, "Ho! Ho! Ho! Here is something worth your minding, you that would be rich at little cost, you that are in want, you that are in need, you that would find something that shall exactly meet your case." Ho!—this is the Gospel note! A short, significant appeal, urging you to be wise enough to attend to your own interests. Oh, the condescension of God—that He should, as it were, become a beggar to His own creature and stoop from the magnificence of His Glory to cry, "Ho!" to foolish and ungrateful men!

Notice the next words, "Ho! Everyone"—not some of you that thirst, but everyone—you rich ones, you poor ones, you great men, you little men, you old people, you young folk. "Ho! *Everyone that thirsts.*" Now, it does not say, "Everyone except—except—except." No, no! Here is an amnesty published without exception or exemption. Here is an invitation given to every longing, thirsting one—and not a single name struck out—"Ho! Everyone that thirsts."

And then it is added, "come." Not, "make yourselves ready." Not, "bring your money," or, "prove your title," but, "come!" Come just as you are. The coming is believing, trusting. Believe, trust, then, while you are as you are! Rely upon Christ—"come you to the waters." Come now. Read the invitation for yourselves. It is written in the present tense. Obey the summons—come, come at once! Though you have no money, you may come and take a drink, for it is freely provided for you. As I walked over a long sandy road one day last week when the weather was sultry and the heat far beyond our common experience in this country—almost tropical—I saw a little stream of cool water and, being parched with thirst, I stooped down and drank. Do you think I asked anybody's permission, or enquired whether I might drink or not? I didn't know to whom it belonged and I didn't care! There it was and I felt, as it was there, it was enough for me. Nobody was there to call out, "Ho!" My inward craving called out, "Ho!" I was thirsty and water was there inviting to my taste! I noticed, after I had drunk, that two poor tramps came along and they stooped down and drank in like manner. I didn't find anybody marching them off to prison. There was the stream—and the stream being there,

and the thirsty men being there—the supply was suited to their need and they promptly partook of it. How strange it is that when God had provided this Gospel, and men need it, they should require somebody to call out to them, Ho! Ho! Ho! And then they will not come, after all! Oh, if they were a little more thirsty, if they did but know their need more, if they were more convinced of their sin—then they would scarcely need an invitation, but the mere fact of a supply would be sufficient for them and they would come and drink—and satisfy the burning thirst within.

Now, although the Gospel provision is free to all thirsty souls, there are many who cannot believe this. Some cannot believe it because they stumble at the Doctrines. What Doctrine frightens you, dear Friend? Is it the Doctrine of Election? Well now, I believe the Doctrine of Election, and I thank God that I do. It is a precious Doctrine. And let me tell you, dear Friend, that the Doctrine of Election shuts nobody out, though it shuts a great many in. “But I may not come and trust Christ.” How do you know that? God says you may—in fact, He says, “He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed,” thus making it a sin not to believe! So you really have such a right to believe that it becomes even your duty! Whatever the Doctrine of Election may be, or may be meant to be, we will not talk of that just at present, for it is quite certain that it cannot contradict any plain practical direction of Scripture. Here is a plain text, which no one can deny, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” If, then, you believe on Jesus Christ, you are not condemned—election or no election! But let me tell you, if you believe in Christ you are one of His elect! And it is because He elected you that you come to believe in Him—it is because He chose you that you are led to desire Him and made to accept Him! Let not that Doctrine ever terrify you, or provoke your distrust, for if you rightly understand the Revelation, it is rather a finger beckoning to Christ than a specter that should intimidate you, or drive you away from Him!

Then your spirit of legality will tell you that the Gospel is not free to you. Why not? Oh, because you are not fit to receive it. This, I say, is a spirit of legality and is clearly contrary to the Gospel! There is no fitness needed to receive Christ! You see men go to wash. What is the fitness for washing? Why, to be dirty—and that is no fitness. All the fitness a sinner can have for Christ is simply to need Christ. If you are empty, you are fit for Christ and He will come and fill you. If you are poor, you are fit for Christ to make you rich. He that is sick is fit for a physician. He that is needy is fit for pity. He that is guilty is fit for mercy. I beseech you, get rid of that pestilent and soul-destroying idea of fitness for Christ! You cannot come to *God* as you are, but you may come to the Savior as you are. All black and unwashed you may come and wash in the fountain which He has opened! Let nothing, then, by way of legality, make you think that the Gospel provisions are not free to you.

But what if your unbelief should tell you that the provisions of Grace are not for you because you have been such a great sinner? Did not Jesus come into the world to save the very greatest of sinners? He said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." You may have soared as high as the mountains in your sin, but God's flood, like, that of Noah, can go over the tops of all your iniquities! Do not limit the Holy One of Israel by your unbelief! Believe Him and you shall be forgiven, even though you were worse than you are!

Ah, Brothers and Sisters! Whatever the devil may say, and whatever your irritated conscience may say against the freeness of God's mercy, I tell you solemnly it is as free to every thirsty one as the drinking fountain at the street corner! It is as free as the air that blows over the mountain and into the valleys—free to every lung that breathes—so free is the mercy of God! God stints not His mercy when men need it. Be they but thirsty, let them but long for it, and they shall have it! If there is any difficulty, it is on your part, not on God's part. You are not straitened in Him—you are straitened in yourselves. O guilty Sinners, if you find no mercy, it is not because God is unwilling to give, but because you will not trust Him! Because you will not think that He can save you! The prodigal never could have believed his father's heart to be so kind as it was had he not tried and proved it. Come and try my Master's heart! I tell you that He will blot out your sins like a cloud and your transgressions like a thick cloud! Only rest on Him and you shall find Him better than you ever dreamed Him to be! As for my words, they cannot fully set Him forth. May you be brought to try Him, for then you will be sure to find that He is a mighty Savior!

The provisions of Grace must be free to thirsty ones, *why else were they provided?* Why should there be a Savior for sinners if God will not give salvation to sinners? Why those wounds? Why that bloody sweat? Why that crown of thorns, why those expiring throes if God will not receive sinners? The dying Savior is the best answer to the caviling of unbelievers. He must be willing to forgive who spared not His own Son! If the Gospel were not free to thirsty ones, why is it published? If it were not meant for you, why are we bid to tell it to you and to continue sounding it in your ears? If it were meant for a few in a corner, why publish it in the streets? Why gather the crowds together, as we are bound to do, and find out those in the highways and hedges with a mandate to compel them to come in? Why do all this if God intends to bar the door in their faces? The very fact that the Gospel is preached to the sinner is God's love-token that He will accept you if you will come to Him! Why is there a Mercy Seat? Why are you allowed to pray? Why are you bid to pray, if God will not hear? This were a mockery of which you cannot accuse God—that He should encourage a sinner to pray with no intention of hearing him! Let me ask you again—How is it that others have found God's mercy so free when they have come and trusted Christ? Why is

that multitude in Heaven, all once as guilty as you are, but all having washed their robes in the precious blood of Jesus? Why those on earth who have found peace? They had nothing to recommend them any more than you have. They will all tell you that they came just as they were, in all their rags and beggary, and Jesus did not reject them. No, glory be to His name, He received us freely!

Come, then, fellow Sinners, come! May the eternal Spirit draw you now! Even now, “come you to the waters.” Though you have no money and no price and no goodness, come and rest in Jesus and find everlasting life! Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters.” That is my message. There is your welcome. Come! Do come! So my errand will speed. So your souls will be blessed. So God’s name will be glorified! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ISAIAH 55.

Verse 1. *Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.* [See Sermons #1161, Volume 20—WITHOUT MONEY AND WITHOUT PRICE and #1726, Volume 29—BUYING WITHOUT MONEY—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The description of Gospel blessings grows sweeter as it advances. “Waters” first, “wine and milk” next, and still all “without money and without price.” We preach no narrow salvation—we rejoice in the Covenant of Grace—it is the backbone of our theology, but the Gospel has wide arms, a loud voice and persuasive tones! “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters.” In Christ there is a full supply for all our necessities—bread and water and yes, there are luxuries sufficient for our largest desires—wine and milk and He wants us to bring nothing in payment for them! “Without money and without price.” That is, indeed, Free Grace! Some people object to that expression and say that it is tautology, for Grace must be free—but we mean to keep on using it that all may know that Grace is free, gratis, all for nothing!

2. *Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not?* The less value there is in any religion, the more you have to pay for it. The pardon that costs a shilling is not worth a farthing, but that which costs us nothing is worth more than the whole world!

2. *Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* [See Sermons #2278, Volume 38—FEEDING ON THE WORD and #2786, Volume 48—THE SOUL’S BEST FOOD—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] All that your largest desires can long for, you will find in Christ. You shall have not only necessities, but delicacies, delights that shall satisfy you to the fullest! You shall not be able to con-

ceive of anything that shall be more rich and full than the Grace of God. The Gospel is “that which is good.” Yes, it is the best food our souls can ever eat! It gratifies, it satisfies and fills our spirits with holy joy and exhilaration!

3. *Incline your ear, and come unto Me*—[See Sermons #2092, Volume 35—GOD’S OWN GOSPEL CALL and #2316, Volume 39—TWELVE COVENANT MERCIES—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] This is the gate by which salvation enters into man—Ear-Gate—by hearing and believing. “Incline your ear,” bend it forward as if you would catch every word—“and come unto Me”—

3. *Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* Only think of a Covenant made with needy sinners, thirsty sinners! God striking hands with guilty men in the Person of Jesus Christ. It is a sure Covenant, too—not made up of “ifs” and “buts” and “perhapses,” but a Covenant sealed with blood and signed by Him who gives an oath with it that He will never turn from it, that you may have “strong consolation.”

4. *Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people.* [See Sermons #2534, Volume 43—THE GREATEST GIFT IN TIME OR ETERNITY and #2787, Volume 48—CHRIST’S TRIPLE CHARACTER—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He who is our greater David comes to us to bear witness to the Immutable Love of God and to be to us our Captain and our King! Happy are the souls that accept this David to be their Leader. You remember how David, in the Cave Adullam, gathered to himself “everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, and he became a captain over them.” Even so, the great Antitype, David’s Son and David’s Lord, is willing now to gather to Himself those who are spiritually bankrupt, discontented and weary with the world, and God says, “I have given Him for a witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people.”

5. *Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that know You not shall run unto You because of the LORD Your God and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You.* What joy this gives to you who love Him! Jehovah has glorified His Son, and given to Him the power to call to Himself a people that He knew not in a saving sense, and He shall so call nations that knew Him not that they shall run unto Him! We do not preach the Gospel at haphazard—we are sure of results. If we speak in faith, in the name of Christ, men must be saved, they must run to Christ. It is not left to their option—there is a Divine hand that secretly touches the springs of the will of men so that, when Christ calls them, they run to Him! Oh, that He would just now call them, even those that are furthest off, that they may run to Him and that He may be glorified! A Savior without souls saved by Him would be only a Savior in name. A head without a body would be a very ghastly thing. A shepherd without sheep would be a man without occupation. A Christ anointed to save the

lost, and yet no lost ones coming to Him—where would His Glory be? But sinners, drawn by His Almighty Grace, run to Him, and so God glorifies Him!

6. *Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near.* In those happy Gospel times when Christ is set forth on purpose that “He may be found,” seek Him, call upon Him! He is very near when the Gospel is preached with holy unction, when Christians are praying, when hearts are breaking for the conversion of sinners, and when His Spirit is working in their hearts that they may repent of sin.

7. *Let the wicked forsake his way*—It is a bad way, it is a downward way, it is a way that will end in destruction! Do not follow it any longer. “Let the wicked forsake his way.”—

7. *And the unrighteous man his thoughts.* “Thoughts!” says one, “We shall not be hanged for our thoughts!” Oh, but you may be damned for your thoughts! No man has really forsaken the way of wickedness until he hates the very thought of wickedness. If your thoughts run after evil, your tongues will soon utter evil and your hands will soon do evil.

7. *And let him return*—he is like one who has wandered from his father’s house—“let him return.” He is like the dove that flew away from Noah’s ark and was ready to faint. “Let him return”—

7. *Unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.* [See Sermons #1195, Volume 20—ABUNDANT PARDON and #2797, Volume 48—THE NEED AND NATURE OF CONVERSION—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] What a blessed word, “abundantly,” is here! Abundant pardon to cover abundant sin, abundant provocation, abundant rejection of His Word!

8. *For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My way, says the LORD.* “Says the Lord,” as if He would not leave the Prophet to speak any longer on His behalf! He Himself appears upon the scene and speaks—“For My thoughts are not your thoughts.” No doubt He refers here to the pardon of sin. Our thoughts are narrow! We find it hard to forgive great offenses, to forgive many offenses, to forgive many offenders, to continue completely to forgive—all this is very difficult to man.

9. *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.* Think of the biggest thought you ever had concerning God’s forgiveness of sins. Try again. Let your thoughts rise still higher—you cannot have reached the utmost height yet, “for as the heavens are higher than the earth,” so are His thoughts and ways higher than yours!

10, 11. *For as the rain comes down and the snow from Heaven and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing*

whereto I sent it. If you believe this great promise, you shall have the full benefit of it. Let this gracious rain drop on you, and it must refresh you. Let these blessed snowflakes come down on you, and they shall melt into your bosom, and remain there to bless you forever—they shall not go back to God with their mission unfulfilled! As for us who preach that Word, or teach it in the Sunday school—we may have a full assurance that we shall not labor in vain, nor spend our strength for nothing! No, no—the raindrops go not on an errand that can fail and the snowflakes that fall to the earth accomplish the end for which they are sent! Much more shall the purpose of God’s Word be accomplished! Behold, it drops like the gentle rain—like snowflakes fly the messages of mercy from the lips of the Lord, Himself, and they shall not fall in vain, blessed be His holy name!

12. *For you shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.* There shall seem to be joy everywhere when there is joy in your heart. When you receive Christ, you have put everything round about you into its true position. The whole Creation is a vast organ, and man puts his tiny fingers on the keys and evokes thunders of harmony to the praise of God! When the heart is filled with joy and peace, mountains and hills break forth before us into singing and all the trees of the field clap their hands!

13. *Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree.* The thorn is everywhere, today, pricking our feet and maiming our hands. But “instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree.” Where is the thorn, then? I see it upon the bleeding brow of Christ—He has taken it away and worn it as a crown!

13. *And instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to Jehovah for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.* [See Sermons #833, Volume 14—THE LORD’S NAME AND MEMORIAL; #2410, Volume 41—SPRINGTIME IN NATURE AND GRACE and #3044, Volume 53—SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATIONS—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It shall make men know what He is like, what gracious power He has, what goodness dwells in Him! “It shall be to Jehovah for a name”—“An everlasting sign.” That sign is exhibited today in the eyes of men. An evil and adulterous generation called for a sign, and this is the sign that God has given—His converting Grace in His Church. Instead of miracles, we have the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of sinners—and if any will not believe when this sign is sent to them, neither would they believe though one rose from the dead! It stands as “an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

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

SPRINGTIME IN NATURE AND GRACE

NO. 2410

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“For as the rain comes down and the snow from Heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”
 Isaiah 55:10-13.

THIS is a text for the springtime! If you read it through tomorrow morning, before the smoke has clouded the heavens, while yet the earliest birds are calling up their mates to sing, you will understand its meaning better than I can make you comprehend it by any words of mine. The whole four verses seem to describe a scene in nature which is only to be witnessed about this time of the year, yet I am not going to look into the poetical meaning of the text so much as to use it as a description of personal experience. I think, no—I am *sure* that there are many of us who have passed through our spiritual winter. We have also had our spring—we are even coming to our summer—and there are some whose ripe and mellow experience has the peacefulness of autumn about it. Our lives are, in miniature, like the years that so quickly follow one another and every year does but repeat the changes in our lives! I want, at this time, to speak about springtime in our spiritual experience—touching, however, upon a more advanced period, as it will be necessary to do—but my first word is to be concerning our springtime experience.

Brothers and Sisters, by nature we lie in the cold and death of winter—everything is frost-bound, withered, dead. We are nothing. We yield nothing. We can do nothing. The Word of God comes to us as the beams of the sun pour down their warmth from the heavens and, by a mighty and mysterious influence, that Word begins to work upon us and we soon feel that we have entered upon quite another season of life. We are no longer in the cold winter—we have come to a blessed springtime! That is the theme upon which I am going to now speak.

I. First, notice in the text the descent of the Word, THE DOWNCOMING—“As the rain comes down, and the snow from Heaven.”

Our spring begins with April showers alternating with rough winds. There is sure to be, at this period of the year, a rainy season to prepare

the earth for bringing forth fruit, to swell the buds on the trees and to work with sunshine to produce the spring. So is it *spiritually*—the coming down of the Word of God is, to our hearts, like the falling of the rain from Heaven.

Concerning this coming down, I may say, first, that *it is usually unpleasant*. We are accustomed to speak of rainy weather and especially of snowy weather, as, “bad” weather. We are the wisest people in the world in matters relating to the weather. Having, as some say, no “climate”—only “weather”—we talk a great deal about it and inform each other what kind of weather it is when one can see just as well as the other what it is! Now, when we spiritually begin to live, it is usually rough weather and we are apt to think it is bad weather. Drip, drip, drip, fall showers of repentance. Snowflake after snowflake falls and buries all our hopes. Our joys are covered as with a winding-sheet. It is bad weather with us and we are not slow to complain of it. Oh, dear Friends, if we did but know how God is blessing us—if we could but realize that these experiences are working out our lasting good—we would thank God that His Word comes down upon us as the rain and the snow fall from Heaven!

The work of Grace in our hearts, however, is like a spring shower in another respect. *It differs very much in its method*, for rain and snow do not always come down in the same way. Sometimes the rain falls very gently—we can hardly tell whether it is rain or not. Our Scotch friends would call it “a mist.” At another time, the rain, like Jehu the son of Nimshi, drives furiously. Big drops come pouring down and before we can reach a shelter we are wet through and through. So is it with the snow—it falls at times as gently as the dropping of tiny feathers, but it may descend thick and fast—a blizzard blowing it into our faces and almost blinding us. So, there are some to whom God’s Word comes very softly. It does come, but it comes without tempest or storm. There are others to whom it comes very terribly—the Word of the Lord is full of dread to them—it is a tempest, a whirlwind. The rain or the snow comes down to them and there is no mistaking it—they are shivered through and through with its cold, they are wet to the skin with its moisture! Therefore, learn this, you who have been comparing yourselves with others, that as the rain at one time differs from the rain at another time, and as the snow in one place varies from the snow in another place, and yet the rain is always rain, and the snow is always snow, so the entrance of Divine Grace into one heart differs from the way it enters into another, yet it is always the same Grace!

In like manner, Brothers and Sisters, the coming down of the snow and of the rain *differs, also, in time and in quantity*. One shower is quickly over and another lasts all day and all night. The snow may in one season fall heavily for a few hours only. At another time, a week of snow may be experienced. So, the work of Divine Grace, when it begins in the soul, is not very manifestly the same in different persons. Some of us were, for years, subject to the operations of God’s Spirit, and endured much pain and sorrow before we found peace in believing. Others find Christ in a few minutes and leap out of darkness into light by a single spring! I have known some whose convictions have been so brief and have been so completely swallowed up by their almost immediate faith,

that it has been a trouble to them to know whether they were ever truly convinced of sin at all! On the other hand, I have known many who have been so long shut up in Giant Despair's dungeons that they have thought that they were the men in the iron cage—that they were given over to destruction and could never find salvation! Judge nothing, I pray you, after this fashion, but remember that God's Word, as it comes down like the rain and the snow from Heaven, yet has varied methods of reaching different hearts.

One thing more I may say about this coming down of the Word of God and that is, *it is always a blessing, and never a curse*. If the rain should pour down very heavily and continue to fall until we might be led to think that the very heavens would weep themselves away, yet, Brothers and Sisters, it can never produce a flood that would drown the world, for yonder in the heavens is the rainbow of the Covenant! These rains *must* mean blessing, they cannot mean destruction. And if the snow should fall ever so deep, yet not even by snow will God destroy the earth any more than by a flood. So, when God's Grace comes streaming into the heart, it may produce deep conviction, it may sweep away the refuges of lies, it may cover up and bury beneath its fall every carnal hope—but it cannot be a flood to destroy you! There shall yet come a change of weather for you and your soul shall live. Let the Grace of God but come and let that Grace come how it may—it is always a benediction to the man who receives it.

Thus have I described to you the first part of our spiritual springtime, when, at last, our long winter begins to yield beneath the sunlight of Divine Grace. The Word of the Lord comes down upon us like the snow and the rain that fall upon the earth.

II. The second thing to notice in our text is, THE ABIDING. We have had the coming down—now follows the abiding of the rain or the snow that comes down from Heaven—"it returns not there, but waters the earth." So is it spiritually—when God's Grace falls from Heaven, it comes to stay!

My dear Hearers, this morning [Sermon #1961, Volume 33—S.S.—*Or, the Sinner Saved*—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] I had to complain of some that they were like the rock upon which the rain falls, but which it never enters. It drops upon the granite and runs down the side of it, but produces no result. But when God sends His Grace from Heaven, you may know it by this sign—soaks into your soul! Oh, how much of my preaching there is, and how much of other people's preaching there is, that reaches the ears and that is the end of it! Oh, for hearers who drink in the Word of the Lord! O rain from Heaven, would God that you did always find us like plowed fields ready to drink you in! This is how Grace works—it enters the soul, penetrates the heart, saturates the conscience, abides in the memory, affects the affections, gives understanding to the understanding and imparts real life to the heart—which is the seat of life! I wish that we always heard the Gospel in that fashion, but hearing is often mere child's play. If it were true hearing, it would be the most serious work under Heaven and it would be done in a reverential manner as a true part of Divine worship! Then we should find

the Word of God soaking into men's hearts as the snow and the rain from Heaven enter the earth.

It appears from our text that this downpour, instead of returning to Heaven, does this, also, for the soul into which it soaks—it fertilizes it, *it makes the soul bring forth and bud*. Yes, but the metaphor of my text cannot set forth the whole Truth, for this Word of God, which is the rain, is also the Seed. This Word of God, which is the snow, is the living Seed, itself. What would we think of clouds that rained down seeds? That would be a new thing beneath the heavens, yet it is the old thing, after all! The Word of God is the living and incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever and whenever that Seed is sown, God's Word comes soaking into the soul, making the soul live, and causing the heart to yield its life up to the living Seed. I cannot distinguish between the Seed and the soil in my metaphor, for it seems as if the very soil did breed the Seed and take it up into itself, and cause it to grow, causing it to bring forth and bud. O Beloved, if the Word of God has been to you like an uncomfortable shower, may it afterwards prove its living power, making you feel a new life that you never felt before, a something within, struggling, striving, a something which, of itself, was not previously there, but which comes with the heavenly Word and is, indeed, the sure evidence of the beginning of the new life within your soul!

And, again, the Word of God, when it comes into the soul and abides there, *works in the man whatever God pleases*—all His Divine purposes—“it shall accomplish that which I please and prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” It is a very wonderful thing to get the Word of God thoroughly into your soul, to get soaked and saturated with it. We have, none of us, any idea what that Word may yet do for us. Who among us knows the Infinite reaches of the Divine purpose? Who shall cast the lead and fathom all the Divine intentions concerning man? Verily, “it does not yet appear what we shall be,” but when the Word of God is truly in us, it will work whatever the Divine purpose is and carry it out to the fullest without fail, for the Word of God is living and powerful to effect the designs and purposes of the Most High!

My beloved Hearers, open your hearts to this Word—drink it in—do not stay its course, do not try to hinder its Divine operations. Pray to be completely under its influence, for you do not know how holy, how strong, how happy, how heavenly you may yet be! This, then, is how our spiritual springtime comes to us—first, showers under which we tremble and are troubled, but, afterwards, a Divine abiding which produces marvelous effects in our hearts and lives!

III. So, in the third place, I will briefly speak to you about THE RESULTS of the coming down and the abiding. The rain has come and the rain remains. Now what happens?

First, we are told, *it makes the earth to bring forth and bud*. I love the time of buds. There is nothing more beautiful than the rosebud—it is more charming, by far, than the full-blown rose! And the buds of all manner of flowers have a singular charm about them. But when the Grace of God has come into a young man's heart, we very soon see his buds—he has gracious purposes, he has holy resolves, he has the beginnings of prayer, he has the makings of a man of God about him! Child-

hood in Grace is a sweet budding time with many rare beauties and delights. Some of you, perhaps, are complaining of yourselves that you have not yet come to the perfection of flowering. Do not murmur on that account, but be thankful if you have only a bud. A little prayer, a faint desire after holiness, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness—these are buds—be grateful for them! There are some birds that like to eat the buds of trees and they do much mischief to the garden. And there are some old Christians who, I think, are rather too fond of nipping buds, and so doing damage to young beginners. May God keep these destructive birds away from you who, as yet, are but feeble.

Beloved, if you are what the Lord would have you to be, you will not long be content with buds. If you serve the Lord and the Lord continues to visit you with showers of blessing, you will soon *bring forth seed for the sower*. You, yourself, will become useful to others. Your experience, your knowledge, your service will become the seed of good for other people. The devil can never destroy the Church of God, or banish it altogether from the face of the earth, because, if there were only one Christian left in the world, he would be seed for other Christians, and I cannot tell you how many might spring from him! If all of us should die and there were only one of the dear children left who have lately joined this Church, yet the Church of God would spring up and flourish, again, from that one child! That Grace which first comes to you and fills you with conviction of sin, afterwards comes to you to make you to be the seed-corn for others!

Grace also makes us produce bread for the eater. I was thinking, today, that next Tuesday (May 3rd, 1887,) it will be just 37 years since I was baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit! Up to that day, I had never opened my mouth for Christ. I had not even engaged in prayer at a Prayer Meeting, for I was very diffident and I was afraid to speak of spiritual things! I was not very old, so perhaps my timidity might be excused, but, 37 years ago, when I gave myself to Christ, I could not have imagined that I should stand here, tonight, to preach the Word to these thousands of people. The “bud” of that day has been “seed to the sower” and, blessed be God, it is still “bread to the eater.” Oh, young men, you do not know what God can make of you! Young women, if you consecrate yourselves to Christ and come under the saturating influence of the Divine Word, you do not know how many your lips may feed, nor how many your word may even convert to Christ! You, too, shall furnish seed to the sower and bread to the eater. You may, perhaps, at first pass through a painful experience in which you will be made to see your own worthlessness, but you will, in due time, come out into a joyful experience in which God shall bless you, increase your usefulness and make you to be a blessing to those who are round about you!

There is one other thing that must be noticed under this head. The result of Divine Grace upon the heart is very amazing, so that I can hardly bring it under the metaphor of rain and snow, for *it works a transformation*. When rain falls on a plot of ground, if it is covered with weeds, it makes the *weeds* grow. But in the spiritual realm, the rain that comes down from Heaven, itself, sows the ground with good seed. What is more amazing, where it falls, it transforms the ground and the plants that come under its influence change their nature! “Instead of the thorn shall

come up the fir tree.” If you were in Australia, you might see leagues of land covered with huge thistles and thorns. Down comes this shower of Grace upon man’s nature, thus covered with thorns and, instead of thorns, come up fir trees—useful, delightful objects in the landscape—not gnarled and twisted thorns, but fair and comely fir trees!

“And instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree.” When the Grace of God begins to work, a change is made in those who are like briars and they become like myrtles! Out at Mentone there are large tracts of land covered with myrtles, rosemary and other odoriferous plants. Often have I thrown myself down upon them as upon a spring bed, for they grow close together, and, as you rest upon them, a delightful perfume is round about you everywhere. Now, when the Grace of God comes into the soul, it takes the obnoxious things in us and transmutes them into blessings. Here is a man who is naturally of an obstinate disposition. You know him. When the Grace of God comes into his heart, he becomes firm in his attachment to the Truth of God. A fine character can be made out of an obstinate man—he is the one of whom you can make a martyr if necessary—he would be willing to burn for Christ’s sake! You would never find him flinching.

Here is another person who is full of levity and trifling. The Grace of God comes and transforms that lightness into cheerfulness and amiability. He is the light of the house, you are glad to know such a person. “Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree.” This is wonderful Grace, is it not? I hope that some of us are now undergoing its transforming power in our hearts! This springtime of Grace is charming, far beyond that of nature, for nature, in her developments, still continues to bring forth the primeval thorns and thistles which our father, Adam, by his disobedience, brought to us. But the Grace of God changes these evil things and makes the soul to bring forth that which is good, pleasing, sweet and profitable—both to God and man!

IV. Now I have come to my last point. We have considered the coming down, the abiding and the result of the rain. Now let us notice THE REJOICING.

This is a time of joy—the music of the year is full in springtime. Birds get silent towards the end of autumn. That is the Sabbath of the year. God’s bounty, then, has become so manifold that nature seems to feel that she cannot express her gratitude and even the birds, as a rule, are silent, then, but now they are bursting into song as trees are bursting into leaves and plants are bursting into flowers! I want that to be your experience in this springtime. I saw, the other day, outside a certain place of worship (!), the notice of “a free and easy.” I wonder what kind of worship that is? However, though I do not know and cannot imagine, yet I should like you who are the Lord’s to feel wonderfully “free and easy” in the highest sense! Now that the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth and the time of the singing of birds is come, let every child of God enjoy himself, for our text says, “You shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.” Why should we be so happy? Why should every-

thing about us be so happy? Let us run the parallel between springtime in nature and in Grace.

In springtime, one cause of happiness is *new life*. Things have been dead, but they are now springing into life. The blood runs more quickly within our veins—our whole being now seems warm with the new life that courses through our nature! It is so spiritually. We have come into a new life, the Holy Spirit has breathed upon us and we live and, blessed be God, that life never gets old! After knowing the Lord these 37 years, as I have told you, I feel His love to be as sure as ever, and the power of His Grace as powerful as ever. There is a constant novelty about the life of faith. The mercies of God are new every morning and fresh every evening. Well, then, since you have a life of which you knew nothing before, since you can see all around you the tokens of a life which you never perceived before, be glad! Sing, tonight, you songsters of the Lord! Break out into sweet music because of the new life within you—that new life which can never die, but which shall, in due season, be enlarged and perfected into life forever before the Throne of God above!

Another source of joy in springtime is to be found in our *happy surroundings*. It is beginning to be warm. We hope, soon, to be able to sit out of doors in the sunshine. We trust that the dull and heavy clouds will not return and that the winds which pierced us to our very marrow will now be withheld from us. So we feel happy in the advent of spring and is it not so with us *spiritually*? We are no longer in bondage and no longer in fear! “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” Reconciled through the blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord, we joy in God. Let us be happy together and, coming to this table, whereon are spread the memorials of our Lord’s great love to us, let us not come with dull and heavy hearts, as though we were assembled at a funeral, but let us meet in joyful anticipation of the day when we shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb in Glory! New life and happy surroundings should make us clap our hands and rejoice before the Lord!

Springtime, I think, is peculiarly pleasant because of its *large promise*. We are thinking of the hay harvest and of the fruit of the fields. We are reckoning upon luscious grapes and upon the various fruits which faith sees to be hidden within the blossoms. Yes, but may not our hopes be disappointed if we reckon upon earthly fruits? But you and I have come, by Grace, into a land of hope most sure and steadfast! We have hopes grounded on God’s Word and they shall never be disappointed! Let us be happy, then, since we shall certainly one day be in Heaven! Let us begin the music of Heaven down here. Since our Lord is on His way back to us and may arrive before this assembly breaks up, let us anticipate the joy of His glorious appearing. May God the Holy Spirit help us to think of all these choice mercies, that we may be glad in the Lord!

In springtime, once more, there always seems to me to be a *peculiar sense of Divine Power and Divine Presence throughout all nature*. It is as if nature had swooned, awhile, and lay in her cold fit through the winter, but now she has been awakened. Her Lord has looked her in the face and charmed her back to life! I trust that you and I feel this peculiar Presence of God in the highest sense. Some say that there is no God. Ah, me! Ah, me! Blind men say that there is no sun, perhaps, but they must be very

blind if they think so. We *know* that there is a God, not only by the argument from design, which is a very strong one, but by better evidence than that. We have had dealings with God, *personal* dealings with Him, as when the sun, though it is ninety-five millions of miles away, has commerce with the earth, and the bulbs that sleep beneath the black mold begin to swell and grow and, by-and-by, the yellow cup is held up to be filled with the light of the sun! There must be a sun, we know, because of all its warmth and genial glow, and the life force with which it charms the earth into the revival of spring! And though we have not seen God at any time, neither can conceive of Him in all His Glory, for He is essentially inconceivable, yet have we felt His Power charming into life our hope, our faith, our love! Sometimes, as the sun may be, for a while, hidden from us, a cloud obscures our God. Ah, me! What darkness then returns to us—how do all the young shoots seem to droop in the blackness! But when that cloud is gone and the light comes streaming out, again, O Lord, how we rejoice, how strong, how bright, how happy we are! If we have not wings, yet do we learn to fly *without* wings—we soon mount aloft when God, Himself, draws us towards Himself.

If you do not know God, my dear Hearer, conclude that there is a life which you have not yet discovered. As Columbus found a new world when his ships steered across the Atlantic, so may you yet discover a new world which you have not seen as yet. May God, Himself, steer your ship and bring you there! But do not tell us that there is no God, and no such new world—you cannot prove a negative, but we can prove a positive—namely, that we have entered into a new life, we have been in the new world! Suppose that I were to try to teach astronomy to a horse. I could not make him understand me, but if I possessed the power to put an immortal soul into that horse, how easily would his eyes look through the telescope and how speedily would he begin to rejoice in sun and moon and stars!

You, my dear Hearers, who are without God, are nothing but a soulish man at present, almost a brute man in some respects. There is a higher spirit that you need—oh, that you had it! God the Holy Spirit can breathe it into you. That is what we mean by *regeneration*. When He imparts a new and higher nature and when you have received that nature, then you will be able to say, “There is a God, for I perceive Him. I also have entered a new world. Things are the same as they used to be and yet they are wonderfully different! I see nothing as I used to see it. Before, I saw it as a brutish man, but now I see it as a man twice-born, who has become so exalted as to be near akin to God, Himself.”

Then, dear Friends, when you reach that state, “You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.” God give you saving faith and this new life of which I have been speaking, through Jesus Christ His Son! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 55; PSALM 136.**

Hear these Inspired words, dear Friends, as though they came fresh from Heaven, as though God Himself spoke them at this moment out of the excellent Glory, for, indeed, He does so. The Word of God never grows old—these messages are just as new as if the ink on the pens of the Prophet and the Psalmist were not yet dry.

Isaiah 55:1. *Ho! Everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters.* This invitation is not given to you who are full, to you who can satisfy your own needs out of the buckets of your own righteousness. No, the Prophet speaks to you thirsty ones who feel an awful necessity which will not let you rest. Hunger you may appease, but thirst is terrible—none can long bear its pangs. “Ho, everyone that thirsts.” Whatever your age, sex, character, rank, or position in life, if you do but thirst, then the Gospel stands with uplifted finger, and cries to you, “Ho!” as do merchants and traders who want to dispose of their wares.

1. *And he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.* In the Lord Jesus Christ there is all you need and more than you know that you need! As yet you only thirst, but here is bread for your hunger as well as drink for your thirst. Whereas “waters” might seem to satisfy your thirst, here is a superfluity of Grace, an exceeding abundance of mercy—“Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” Christ is as free as the air! As you have only to take in the air by breathing, in order to live by it, so have you only to receive Christ into your soul and you live by Him! As flows old Father Thames through the green meadows, and every dog may come and lap, and every ox may stand knee-deep in the stream, for there is none to keep even an animal away, so is it with Christ—“Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

2. *Why do you spend money for that which is not bread?* Why are you so busy about your ceremonies, your works, your feelings—none of which can yield food for your soul? Come to Christ and buy without money the Bread of Life which came down from Heaven!

2. *And your wages for that which satisfies not? Listen diligently to me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* If we will but hear the Gospel, and attentively hear it, “faith comes by hearing,” and that faith leads us to Jesus Christ! And in Him we find that which is substantial, solid—the very thing we need. We find in Christ all that is super-excellent, so that our soul delights itself in fatness. I have no lean Christ to preach to you! No half-starved salvation that will drag you into Heaven and save you, “so as by fire.” But in coming to Christ, you are invited to “let your soul delight itself in fatness.” A Christian cannot be too happy—“the joy of the Lord” is beyond all description! You must taste it to prove its sweetness. As honey among the sweets, such is the joy of the Lord among joys! Yes, as the sun and the lesser lights in the sky, such is the joy of Christ compared with all other delights that men can ever know! “Let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

3. *Incline your ear.* You know what that means—bend forward to catch the faintest utterance of the voice that is speaking.

3. *And come unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live.* We do not live by sight. All the pretty things that you can see in a Roman Catholic place of worship will not save a single soul! The *preaching of the Gospel* is God’s

way of salvation— “Hear, and your soul shall live.” Christ rides into the City of Mansoul through Ear-Gate. Take heed *what* you hear and take heed *how* you hear!

3. *And I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* Think of God making a Covenant with you! This is a very wonderful thing. You may almost leap for joy at the thought that God should ever enter into Covenant with you. You think very little of yourself and reckon yourself to be among the most obscure of mankind. “Yet,” says the Lord God, “I will strike hands with you and be your Friend, and pledge My Word to you. Yes, and make a Covenant with you—and an Everlasting Covenant it shall be, too. Surely, blessing, I will bless you.” Oh, what a wonder of Divine Grace it is that God should enter into Covenant with sinful man! “Even the sure mercies of David.” You know what David this is—this is the Son of David, the inheritor of great David’s name, “great David’s greater Son.”

4. *Beheld, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.* Jesus Christ is a witness to you of His Father’s love. I do not know how God could show His love more fully than He does in the life and death of His Son, Jesus Christ. Christ is the great Witness of the Father’s love! Behold how He loves His people in that He gives His Son to die for them! Will you not clasp hands with God across this great Sacrifice of His only-begotten Son? Let us do so, now, again, as we have often done before. “I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.” If He leads, let us follow. If He commands, let us obey. His command is that we are to believe in His name and to be baptized in His name—let us not be disobedient to any part of His holy will. Now comes a promise made to our great Leader, our Covenant Head—

5. *Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that knew not You shall run unto You because of the LORD Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You.* That is, Jehovah has glorified Christ. It is promised that multitudes shall come to Him. “You shall call a nation that You know not.” He never saw you in His House before. He never knew you to fall on your knees in prayer, but He is calling even you, by His Grace and by His Gospel! You are here, tonight, and He is calling you, even you! Therefore, come to Him at once! There are some, here, who do not know Christ Jesus our Lord. They are strangers to His love and to His power to save, but the promise is that, “nations that knew not You shall run unto You.” That implies speed—it is a double quick march. Oh, that many sinners would at once run to Christ! Some who often hear the Gospel are very slow in coming to Christ, but I pray that some of you who do not know as much of it as they do, may run to Christ at once and be saved by Him. It is a blessed thing to take Christ at the first time of asking. Love to Christ at first sight is the wisest kind of love that can be! May it be largely bestowed on many of you! Listen to these next words

6, 7. *Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake His ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.* Hear the

music of the glorious message, “He will have mercy!” “He will abundantly pardon!” Return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon you! He will abundantly pardon you!

8, 9. *For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.* Perhaps you are thinking that He cannot forgive you, that He cannot possibly mean that He will blot out *your* sins? But He *does* mean it, yes, and He is willing to do it *now*! Oh, that you would come to your pardoning God through Jesus Christ His dear Son!

10-13. *For as the rain comes down, and the snow from Heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.* Now let us read the 136th Psalm.

Psalm 136:1-3. *O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good: for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords for His mercy endures forever.* In this Psalm we have the same refrain repeated 26 times! The words—“for His mercy endures forever,” were probably intended to be taken up as a chorus by all the people in and round about the Temple at their solemn festivals. But though there is repetition, there is no tautology, for the saints of God are so fond of God’s praise that they can never have too much of it. I am sure that if you have ever tasted the faithful mercy of God in Covenant with His people, you will never hear this sentence once too often! “For His mercy endures forever” will be a sound that shall be most welcome to your ears. You will observe that, first of all, the praise is to the Lord’s Person—“O give thanks unto Jehovah...the God of gods...the Lord of lords: for His mercy endures forever.” Next, the praise turns upon His works.

4-9. *To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever. To Him that by wisdom made the heavens: for His mercy endures forever. To Him that stretched out the earth above the waters: His mercy endures forever. To Him that made great lights, for His mercy endures forever: the sun to rule by day: for His mercy endures forever: the moon and stars to rule by night: for His mercy endures forever.* In the works of Creation and in the dispensations of Providence, we have abundant proofs of the perpetuity of God’s lovingkindness. No sooner have we experienced the blessings of the day than the mercies of the night follow quickly upon their heels! If we look up to the heavens, we have instances of God’s mercy, there, in kindling the stars and lighting the sun and moon. And if we look upon the waters, and the land that stands above them, we still see God’s lovingkindness. That man is intensely blind who can see nothing of love and kindness in Creation! You have but to open your eyes

anywhere to see that the whole earth is full of the mercy of God! Still, the loudest song belongs to God's dealings with His Church and, therefore, in the 10th verse, we come to God's deliverance of His peculiar people, His chosen Israel, in which we also have our share, for in Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth are blessed this day.

10-15. *To Him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for His mercy endures forever: and brought out Israel from among them: for His mercy endures forever: with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for His mercy endures forever. To Him which divided the Red Sea into parts: for His mercy endures forever: and made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for His mercy endures forever: but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea: for His mercy endures forever.* And you and I have experienced deliverances of the same kind! Our troubles have been overcome; our sins have been forgiven; we have been preserved by God's goodness and guided by His Wisdom. Let us, therefore, sing of that Covenant faithfulness and of that Immutable Truth of God which have never left us!

16-18. *To Him which led His people through the wilderness, for His mercy endures forever. To Him which smote great kings: for His mercy endures forever: and slew famous kings, for His mercy endures forever.* We are far too slow to recall the special mercies of God. We have, here, a bright example given us, not only to remember God's goodness in the lump, but in detail. We are, as it were, to take His mercies to pieces, that we may see fresh grounds for thanksgiving in every separate section!

19-23. *Sihon king of the Amorites: for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan: for His mercy endures forever: and gave their land for an heritage: for His mercy endures forever: even an heritage unto Israel, His servant: for His mercy endures forever. Who remembered us in our low estate: for His mercy endures forever.* Here is a song for us—"Who remembered us in our low estate." We were brought low by sin, by conviction, by ignorance, by our own powerlessness—but, low as we were, "He remembered us in our low estate: for His mercy endures forever."—

***“He sent His Son with power to save
From guilt, and darkness, and the grave!
Wonders of Grace to God belong,
Repeat His mercies in your song.”***

24-26. *And has redeemed us from our enemies: for His mercy endures forever. Who gives food to all flesh: for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks unto the God of Heaven for His mercy endures forever.* Thus the Psalm finishes upon its keynote—"for His mercy endures forever." May that be the keynote both of our daily song and of our eternal hymn of praise unto the Lord! Amen.

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

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

THE LORD'S NAME AND MEMORIAL NO. 833

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 27, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of
the brier shall come up the myrtle tree:
and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign
that shall not be cut off.”*
Isaiah 55:13.

THESE words are a poetical description of great moral changes which the Gospel works wherever it comes. It transforms human nature and makes society to become as though a desert suddenly blossomed into a cultivated field. At the same time, the words of the text are not solely and alone poetical, for it is a great Truth of God that wherever the *spiritual* change comes the physical change is almost sure to follow. As men are elevated the earth yields her increase more largely. The earth was cursed for man's sake, and in proportion as man forsakes his sloth, his drunkenness, his savageness, the ground rewards his diligence with plenteous harvests.

Look at the field of the sluggard and the garden of the industrious! Look over the wild wastes of Africa, and then see the fertility of the same soil when tilled by the missionary's converts! The surest way to benefit men in their *outward* circumstances is to bless them *spiritually*—for as they draw near to God in obedience to His will, He will, as a rule, bless and prosper them. England will always flourish while she honors the Word of God. If she departs from the Gospel to follow after Popery she may expect her prosperity to decline.

If we desire our land to maintain her eminent position among the nations, we must go on to do everything which is just and right towards all classes. We must break down every old abuse and build up the good and the true. Doing this, and upholding the Word of God, we may expect that this land will inherit a future brighter than the past. The text certainly touches upon changes in the soil, yet it has mainly to do with the great *moral* world. The Gospel transforms the whole state of man, so that instead of the thorn of sin comes up the fir tree of Divine Grace—and instead of the brier of lust comes up the myrtle tree of holiness.

I. I call your attention to THE EFFECTIVE AGENCY here spoken of, and I beg you to refer to your Bibles and read the chapter with me, for it gives a very full and minute description of the Gospel. I do not find in this 55th chapter of Isaiah that the cause of the spiritual miracles of my text is a gospel of forms and ceremonies—of altars and priests, genuflections and processions—images and incense, millinery and mystery. I find not a single word concerning any of these throughout the whole chapter!

Nor do I find here a gospel of dogmas and orthodoxies, of rigid creeds and infallible statements of which it is said that he who believes them not “shall without doubt perish everlastingly.” Instead I learn of a Gospel of quite another sort, more Divine, more glorious by far! We perceive in the chapter before us a Gospel revealing Divine provision for man's necessity and earnestly inviting man to partake of it. Look at the first verse—

observe its earnest "Ho!" and note the repetition of the entreaty, "Come." The soul has a longing, fitly described as *thirst*, and for this thirst the Lord provides abundant water—and if man thirsts for a drink more nourishing, here is milk. Or if he requires a draught more comforting and cheering, here is wine. And, inasmuch as the *soul* has hunger and needs to receive spiritual food, here is provision whereof the man is bid to buy and eat.

The Lord has fully provided for man's needs. The Gospel of Jesus says to man, "Man, all that you can possibly need Jesus Christ has prepared for you. Do you need sin forgiven? Behold a fountain filled with blood—wash in it and you are clean. Do you need sin conquered in you? Behold the Holy Spirit willing to dwell in you and to subdue inbred sin. Do you desire to grow in Grace and to be made in the image of holiness? Look unto Jesus! Behold the Spirit waiting to work the image of the Son of God in you, changing you from glory to glory as by the Presence of the Lord." What are the cravings of your nature? What are the deep woes and longings of your uneasy spirit? "Behold," said Jesus, "only come to Me, and I will give you satisfaction, and that satisfaction shall lead to rest."

The Gospel does not come to upbraid man, or say to him, "You ought not to have these needs," or, "You ought, by your own efforts, to supply them." No, it says, "Poor, abject, poverty-stricken man, come to Me. God has loaded both My hands with supplies for your great necessities. Only come and take what God freely presents to you without money and without price." The Gospel, then, which is to turn the thorn into the myrtle, is one which declares that God has made provision for the necessities of man, and which then heartily and earnestly invites man to partake thereof. I cannot understand the gospel of some of my Brothers who never dare to say to a sinner, "Come," and are afraid to bid him repent and believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

I know why they are so afraid, because they believe that man is not able, of himself, to repent and believe (in which belief I fully agree with them), and therefore they will not bid men do what is beyond their power. Yet if preaching is the Word of God, it should of right be something more than any and every simpleton might accomplish! Now, any fool has faith enough to tell a man to do what he knows he *can* do! But it takes a man full of faith and sent of God to command men, in God's name, to do things far beyond human reach! When a man dares speak as God would have him, the Holy Spirit puts force into the command and the hearer is enabled to do what he would not otherwise have attempted.

The Gospel which cries, "Awake, you that sleep, and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give you life"—this is the power of God unto salvation! We prophesy unto the dead, and cry, "You dry bones, live!" Any man in all Israel could have said to the living bones, "Live," but only an Ezekiel could say, "You dry bones, live!" This is one of the tests of the true servants of God—that they dare to bid men do what, of themselves, they cannot do! That, speaking in their Master's name they believe that the power of God, Himself, goes forth with the word of Gospel command, and that God's commands are God's enabling to His elect when listening to His Truth.

From the same verse it is most clear that this Gospel is as free as the air, for we read over and over again, "Buy without money and without price," and are not those invited to come who have no money? The meaning of this must be not merely that men *cannot purchase* salvation with

gold, but that they cannot merit it any way. Gospel blessings must be received gratis! The Lord stops not to bargain and quibble with sinners. You are not to dream of *deserving* mercy! You are not to think of making yourself fit for salvation! You are to come to Jesus just as you are. If you have no good feelings, you are to come to Christ to get them.

If you have no graces, or virtues, or right emotions, you may come to Jesus for all things. If you are so bad that if you were sifted there would not be found a grain of goodness in you, yet, nevertheless, he that has no money, let him come, let him come and freely take what God provides! The Gospel of Jesus is as free as the air we breathe—our lungs receive air without let or hindrance—and there is no toll or tax upon it. Divine Grace is as free as the water gushing from the rock, whereof every thirsty traveler may partake! Free, I say, to every man or woman born who is led by Grace to long for it. “Then why do they not take it?” you ask. Because their wills are perverse towards Christ, and it needs an act of Sovereign Grace to make men willing to receive Him! Yet remember if they will not receive the Grace of God, the fault lies wholly with themselves—their eternal ruin is of their own procuring.

Further observe that it is a Gospel of *hearing* and not of *doing*. See the second verse, “Hearken diligently.” Notice the third verse, “Incline your ear.” And yet again, “*Hear* and your soul shall live.” Death came to us first through the eyes, but salvation comes through the ears. Our first parent, Eve, looked at the fruit—she “saw that it was good,” and so she plucked, and so we fell. But no man rises to eternal life by signs and symbols appealing to the *eyes*—it is by the use of the ears that the joyful news is communicated! The soldiers of Emanuel would gladly carry Eye-Gate by storm, but it is not to be done. Ear-Gate is a far more accessible point of attack for the Gospel warrior. There we must sound the silver trumpet, and there we must keep the battering rams of the Gospel continually beating—for faith comes not by *seeing*—it comes by *hearing*, and hearing by the *Word of God*.

Dear Hearer, if you desire eternal life, you have not now to perform a dreary penance or to pass through tormenting horrors of mind. You do not have to live for years a meritorious life. You have but to *listen* to the Gospel with attention and faith! Listen to it and receive it into your soul and that Gospel will do for you what you never can do for yourself—it will change your nature! And when your nature is changed then good works will follow as a result. If you seek good works as a *cause* of salvation, you will make a gross mistake! But if you will take the Gospel to be in you the cause and root of holiness, then all manner of good things shall spring up to your comfort and to God's praise.

The first business of a sinner is to hear the Gospel. Note how it is, over and over again, “Hearken.” “Incline your ear.” “Hear, and your soul shall live.” I charge you, frequent a Gospel ministry! I beseech you, search the Scriptures! Be diligent in seeking to know what the Gospel is, for while you are waiting at the posts of Jesus' doors, you shall hear the good Word which says, “Your sins, which are many, are forgiven you.” Down with those gospels of gazing and staring! They will damn men, but they cannot save them! The gaudy idolatries, which every day are flaunted in our faces, are enough to make the martyrs start from their graves to curse their cowardly sons that tolerate such worse than fooleries!

The land must surely groan at its heart to see that here, again, on English soil, the pollution of crucifixes, and cross-bearings, and altars, and bald monks, and I know not what besides, multiplied in every corner! The Gospel says, "Look to Jesus and live." It does not say, "Look to crucifixes." Its message is, "Incline your ear, and come unto Me." Not, "Turn your faces and gaze upon a priest, acting like a fool in a pantomime." The Gospel heard by the heart and believed in by the soul is the great transforming agency of which Isaiah speaks.

Furthermore, running your eyes down the chapter you will notice that the great means God makes use of for turning deserts into gardens is the Gospel founded on a Covenant, a Covenant made with David's Lord and Son. "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." We were all lost through a covenant. God made a Covenant with Adam, a Covenant of *works*. It was on this wise—"This do, and you shall live. Abstain from eating of the forbidden tree, and you, and those whom you represent, shall live in My favor." Adam broke the condition of the agreement, and then and there, you and I, and all of us, fell down and perished by the fatal act of our first parent.

The Lord has now arranged a new Covenant of a different character. It is made with Christ Jesus, the second Adam, and with all whom He represents. It is on this wise—"You, Jesus, You shall keep the Law and You shall also suffer a penalty for all the breaches of My Law by all who are in You. If You do this, all those who are in You shall live eternally." At this hour this Covenant can never fail us because our Lord Jesus has fully and completely obeyed the Law and has suffered the penalty due for our guilt. The conditions of the Covenant of Grace have been fulfilled and the Covenant of Grace is henceforth unconditional! It consists only of promises on God's part to us, and not of legal obligations on our part to God—for Jesus Christ has fulfilled the obligations of His people towards God so far as the law of works is concerned.

The Everlasting and sure Covenant stands on this wise: "I will bless you. I will save you. I will be your God, and you shall be My people." Now, if there had been an "if" in the Covenant, turning upon something to be done by *us*, it could not have been called, as it is in the chapter, "an Everlasting Covenant," for it would have been quite sure to break down sooner or later. But Jesus, the Lord, having kept to the utmost jot and tittle His part of the Covenant of Grace and fulfilled the conditions, the eternal Father is now engaged to fulfill His portion of the Covenant towards Jesus Christ and all who are represented in Him. This is the Rock on which rests the blessed Gospel! Wherever a Covenant Gospel is preached, it will work wonders! But it must always be a Gospel based upon the Covenant of Grace, even the sure mercies of David.

Still proceeding in our investigation of the chapter, notice that Isaiah describes a Gospel whose success is guaranteed. See the fifth verse, "You shall call a nation that you know not." But we may call often and men will not come—in this case, however, they *shall* come. "Nations that knew not you shall run unto you." And again, in the 10th and 11th verses, "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from Heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall ac-

comply that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is an agency adapted to produce the results which God designed. And with the accompanying Spirit of Divine Grace, the ordained results are always produced. It is no chance involved as to whether the preaching of the Word this morning shall be useful or not. God has determined and settled its results from before the foundations of the world! What a consolation this ought to be to all of you who are serving your Lord Jesus! As far as *you* are concerned, everything depends upon your earnestness and fidelity. But, so far as *God* is concerned, He has decreed and determined all results, and you may go in confidence that God shall not be disappointed and the eternal purpose shall not be frustrated.

Brethren, come what may, the Gospel shall ultimately be triumphant! Even in our own land the Gospel will yet, like a blast from the Lord, sweep cardinals, and priests, and monks, and all the Popish crew down Albion's white cliffs and sink them in the sea! The day shall come when the ranks of superstition shall be broken like thin clouds before a Biscay gale. The gods of the heathens, shaking even now, shall fall from their pedestals! Celestial light shall scatter the infernal darkness once and for all. Only be of good heart, you soldiers of the Cross. The voice of Christ shall call the nations, and, rising up from their bondage, the nations shall come to Him! The Eternal Father shall send His quickening power into the hearts of myriads of men, and as though it were but one man they shall throw their idols to the moles and to the bats, and shall turn to the Lord and live! In this is our comfort! Let this be the encouragement of every fainting laborer.

One other remark only. The Gospel which Isaiah speaks of is one which is very full of gracious encouragement. Were there ever more inviting words written than these, "Seek you the Lord while He may be found. Call you upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon"? Those 8th and 9th verses—what drops of honey they are! How they must delight the trembling sinner! Yes, and when we preach Christ, we are to preach Him in this spirit.

Jesus did declare the judgment of God and warn men of Hell—nobody ever spoke more solemnly than He concerning the world to come and all its woes. But still it was all in gentleness, tenderness, and pity. Men are saved not so much by threatening them and making them to tremble with physical fear, as by gently wooing them with Jesus' mighty love, and reminding them of the great Father's pity, and the Holy Spirit's condescension. How tenderly the Lord deals with unbelieving, faint-hearted sinners! He puts language into the Bible which is so loving as almost to make fear impossible! The Holy Spirit searches for metaphors and illustrations, if I may so say, that shall by some means calm the perturbed spirit of poor tremblers.

"Look," He says, "your thoughts are very dark and despairing, and you conclude that you must be lost. But My thoughts are not as your thoughts. You know not how kind a God I am. You have no idea how ready I am to forgive the past, how willing to restore My rebel child to all that he has lost through offending Me." You slander the great Father who

is in Heaven! You dream of Him as a tyrant! You fancy that He bears always the sword in His hand. But know that like the father in the parable, He sees returning prodigals a great way off. And when they come towards Him He runs to meet them! His heart yearns for them and His tongue is ready to speak words of peace. Let us, dear Brothers, whether we preach in pulpits, or preach in parlors, or preach in kitchens (and I hope we preach somewhere if we know the Gospel experimentally), let us always talk encouragingly to those we meet!

“Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord”—what says the Apostle?—“We persuade men.” That is a very unexpected word, “persuade.” You expected the passage to be, “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we thunder at men, we threaten men.” It is not so, but, “We *persuade* men.” With all those terrors heavily pressing our minds, we still adopt the soft, tender and gentle method—we tell men of the great *mercy* of God, of the preciousness of the blood of Jesus—of the power there is in the atoning Sacrifice to take away human guilt, of the readiness with which a sinner at Hell's gate may yet be lifted up to Heaven!

It is the Gospel of encouragement which, after all, wins the day. We have spent enough time in noticing the efficient agency which produces the results spoken of in the text and must pass on to another point.

II. Secondly, observe THE BENEFICIAL RESULTS OF THE GOSPEL. The change depicted in this verse is very radical. A little observation will convince you that it is a change in the soil. The verse does not say, “Instead of the thorn God shall *plant* the fir tree,” no, but as the thorn coming up naturally by itself indicates such-and-such a condition of soil, so fir trees shall spring up by themselves spontaneously—indicating an altogether radical change in the earth beneath. Instead of the thorn, the fir tree shall come up, shall spring up *naturally*. The results and outgrowth of the soil are different, but it is clear from the use of the words, “shall come up,” that the soil itself is different, too.

I passed by a piece of common land yesterday. They had been enclosing it, as those rascals always will if they can, to rob the poor of their rights and filch every morsel of green grass upon which we may freely put our feet. But I noticed that they had only *enclosed* it. They had not dug it up, nor plowed it, nor planted it—and though they had cut down the gorse and furze, they were coming up again—of course they would, for they are a common bush, and a bit of fence or a rail could not alter them. The furze would come peeping up, and before long the enclosure would be as wild as the heath outside.

It is not so in the text. When God encloses a heart that has laid common, does He cut down the thorns and the briars, and then plant fir trees? No. No! He so changes the *soil* that from the *ground itself*—from its own vitality there spontaneously starts up the fir tree and the myrtle! This is a most wonderful result! You take a man and leave him at heart the same godless man. You mend his habits. You *make* him go to Church, or to the Meeting House. You clothe him. You break his wine bottles. You rinse his mouth out so that he does not talk so filthily. And after all that, you say, “He is now a respectable man.” Ah, but if these respectabilities and appearances are only skin deep *outwardly*, you have done nothing! At least what you have done is no great wonder—there is nothing in it to be proud of.

But suppose this man can be so changed that just as freely as he was apt to curse he now delights to pray? And suppose that just as heartily as he hated religion he now finds pleasure in it? And just as earnestly as he sinned he now delighted to be obedient to the Lord? Ah, then this is a wonder! It is a miracle which man cannot accomplish! It is a marvel which only the Grace of God can work, and which gives to God His highest glory! Note the poetic metaphor which describes the outward change. Originally the *natural* heart yields *thorns*.

A thorn is the conspicuous emblem of the *Curse*. Upon many ungodly men there is very *evidently* the Curse—while upon *all* it really rests—they toil hard but are yet impoverished. The Curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked. Drunkenness, gambling and uncleanness always carry a curse with them. You cannot enter some men's houses without seeing on the dirty walls and the bare floor the mark of the Curse. Listen to them. Hear them talk and their speech betrays them. They can hardly get through a sentence without some word which indicates the curse of sin. Or, sojourn among another class of society and you soon find the mark of the Curse either in the shape of discontent, or weariness of religious exercises, or fear of death, or hatred of the Gospel, or some other form.

But when Divine Grace displays its marvelous transformation, how different is the scene! Instead of the thorn there comes up the fir tree—a tree chosen to be used in the building of the House of God—where beams of cedar and fir were abundantly to be seen! The man blesses and magnifies, now, the Most High God, and though he feels (and mourns as he feels it) some of the effects of the Curse in his own corrupt nature, yet the longings of his soul are in the opposite direction—and the bent and bias of his spirit are towards the hearty and loving service of the Most High.

Observe, again, the man originally brought forth a thorn—that is, a fruitless thing—look at it and see how barren it is! God gets neither prayer nor praise from the ungodly man. Throughout his whole life the God who made him is forgotten. He never seeks to glorify his Maker. He looks upon that, perhaps, as cant. His great god is his money, and if he can increase his wealth he is satisfied! But O, good God! From this unconverted man You get nothing—he is a thorn, and bears no fruit. Now, as soon as he is changed by the Grace of God through the hearing of the Gospel, he becomes like a fir tree! The tree here described is one of the most useful growing in the East—and so the converted man becomes useful to his God—useful to his fellow man, useful to the Church, useful for spiritual things, useful to eternity!

A thorn, too, is a repulsive thing—there is nothing inviting about it. Nobody would choose to make it a pillow or a companion! An unconverted selfish man is frequently most repulsive. I say not so of all, for some people without Christ are persons naturally amiable. But many and many a man, especially when sin has come to a head with him, is a thorn-hedge, a churl, an unsympathizing selfish being. Sinners are as bad a company for true saints as thorns and briers would be for a naked man. “Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men,” says the Psalmist, as if he felt their company to be too irksome to be borne.

But when changed, sinners become beautiful and attractive like those stately firs which delight our eyes! Happy is that man who, though he was once like a thorn—pushing aside all Christian communion and standing in solitary rebellion by himself—has now become one of those who fear the

Lord and speaks often one to another, even as the pine trees of the forest speak often to one another in their sacred solitude when the wind sounds through their pillared shade. Again, the thorn is a ripping thing—offending and noxious. Pass over it with naked feet and what a laceration you receive! See how your garment is torn and the beauty marred by the thorn! So has it been with ungodly men, when unrestrained by Divine Grace. Like Saul of Tarsus, they breathe out vengeance against God and His people.

Persecutors are rending and tearing thorns, but when saved of God, they are not the same men. That which they once pulled down, they now seek to build up. And they are, now, as earnest to extend the kingdom of Christ as once they were to blaspheme His name. As for the metaphor of the brier used in the text, it was always the emblem of desolation. The brier came up on the desolate walls of Babylon and Nineveh. The brier covered the land of Israel when the inhabitants were carried away captive. In how many human hearts where the Gospel has not come is there desolation, sadness, despair? They want they know not what. Their cries are like the cries of the dragon and the owl amidst the broken palaces of kings—the heart is deserted of its God and therefore deserted of all happiness.

The brier, too, is a thing that cumbers the ground. It occupies the place of the palm or of the fig. And so, ungodly men cumber the ground—they do no good—they occupy spheres in which others might have served God. They are altogether wasters—they rob God—they bring Him no revenue of Glory. The brier is soon to be cut down, and when cut down no use can be made of it. It is burnt. It is put away. Such is the future history of the unconverted man. His sin will bring him sorrow and the halls of his soul shall be desolate. His life is a cumbering of the ground and his end shall be to be utterly destroyed among the refuse things which God casts away.

Blessed is such a one when God transforms him into the comely myrtle, nurtured and tended and cared for by the Lord—and made to celebrate the victory of all-conquering Divine Grace! All this the Gospel does! It enters a man's heart and finds him like a wild heath overgrown with thorns. It plows him through and through, and cross-plows him. Sin is made a bitter thing to him. In the sight of the Cross of Christ he is made to detest himself that he should have treated Divine love with such infamous and insolent ingratitude. And then, after the plowing comes the sowing! Living Truth is cast into the furrow! Up it springs—first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear—and God is glorified where once Satan ruled and mischief alone was worked!

There are many such cases of glorious transformation in this house this morning. It is our comfort to know that if we wanted proofs of our ministry, or seals to the power of the Gospel, here they are. Oh, how clearly can some of us testify what Divine Grace has done for our souls! Blessed be the name of our God, it was not priestcraft that saved us—but we heard the good news that Christ came into the world to save *sinners* and it exactly suited our case! We came to Jesus just as we were and we cast ourselves on Him! And now, being saved, our great concern is to show forth His praise who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light!

III. Our last exercise is to notice THE GLORIOUS ISSUE. "It shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." Je-

hovah might, if He willed, have taken other names. He might have selected other works of His hands to be the ensigns of His Glory, but He has chosen the results of the Gospel to be His proudest honors! He has, if I may use such a term, staked His eternal majesty upon the effects of Gospel of Grace!

With the heathen, *their* gods took names from what were thought to be their most glorious works. We read of Jove, the thunderer, because they imagined that he launched the bolt from his hand. They spoke of the far-darting Apollo—the rays of light flashing from the sun. They talked of the cruel Juno in the wars of Troy. Each god and goddess was allotted some particular name as indicating its individuality.

If Jehovah, the one and only true God, had chosen, He might have been “Jehovah, the Thunderer.” We might have read of the far-darting God. We might have had Him constantly portrayed in Scripture as the terrible and avenging Lord. But He has not chosen such a name. He has not been pleased to select anything that is terrible as His peculiar Glory, but that which is full of melting *mercy* and tender *pity*! The Gospel of mercy to guilty sinners, the Gospel of abounding mercy for abounding sin shall be His name—the Gospel of hearing and living—the Gospel of inclining the ear and being saved!

Now observe that the Lord was by no means necessitated to choose this to be His distinguishing sign, escutcheon, and Glory. See what His arm has done in days gone by—where He made the heavens and the earth, and stretched out the firmament, and filled the channels of the great deep—might not He have said, “These shall be unto Me for a name” when He spoke, and it was done, He commanded, and it stood fast? Or if the things of earth were too insignificant, lift up your eyes on high and behold who has created all *those* things! Those ponderous orbs which move in majesty—has not He made them all? If He had willed it, as He made those stars whose distance and magnitude are utterly inconceivable by us, might not He have said, “These shall be unto the Lord for a name”?

We are told by astronomers, and we do not doubt it, that the whole of the fixed stars visible by the telescope may be possibly nothing more than a little group somewhere in an obscure corner of the universe occupying a space perfectly inconceivable for immensity. They may yet be as the small dust of the balance compared with the whole of God's works. If it is so, and God has made worlds without number filled with countless inhabitants, all of which sound forth His praise, He might have said, “This creation which I have finished shall be to Me for a name.” But it is not so. The Lord has not chosen *Creation* to be His distinguishing Glory!

Beloved, there is the world of Providence, and in that Providence there are wheels within wheels evolving marvels of manifold wisdom. Surely these might have been to the Lord for a name, and for an everlasting sign! But it is not so declared. Those mighty acts which we read of in sacred story—surely these might have been unto God for a name! When He laid bare His arm and crushed the pride of Pharaoh—do you Hear Miriam's timbrel? Can you not, even now, catch the exulting strains of Israel's song, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He cast into the sea”? Surely, this might be to Jehovah for a name, but it is not so recorded!

The leading of His people through the wilderness, when He fed them with manna dropping like dew from Heaven. Or the destruction of the in-

habitants of Palestine, when He made the heathen kings to flee before the Israelites. Or the overthrow of Sennacherib. Or those 10,000 mighty wonders worked by Him, whose mercy endures forever—surely these might have been called His name, but it is not so! Turn your thoughts, for a moment, from that which we have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears, and think of another world.

There is a land of spirits, where weeping rules the day. No, let me amend my speech—where lamentation rules the night, unbroken by glimpse of light! There lie the enemies of God, defeated and bound in chains. Deep in the awful dungeons lie the princes and kings who said of the royal Son, “Let us break His bands asunder.” Behold the boasters! They are abject slaves in the lowest Hell! There lie the cruel persecutors of the Church—wicked popes, proud cardinals, lascivious monks and lying priests—what a heap of fuel for the fire! There, too, are the nations that forgot God, and the myriads who hated and despised Him.

See how Jehovah has conquered! See how all His enemies are overthrown! See how His foot falls heavily upon them all, crushing them eternally! How terribly He tears them in pieces, and there is none to deliver! An Alexander or a Napoleon might carve their names in conquest, and write up their glory in crimson lines of blood—and shall not the awful Jehovah who will by no means spare the guilty—shall He not make this to Himself to be a name? Not so, says the text, not so! MERCY is His name! PARDON is His Glory! FORGIVENESS of men is His everlasting sign!

Brothers and Sisters, observe that there is nothing material which God takes to be His Glory, because, although He made materialism, it is far beneath Him and not to be gloried in. God is a *Spirit*, and His highest Glory must always come from the *spiritual* world. To find Rome built of brick and leave it built of marble is a fit triumph for mortal man—but there is nothing in the loftiest material work worthy of an immortal Spirit! What is the difference between stone and marble, after all? Both shall pass away—and when the desolating wave rolls up, marble and brick shall, alike, be overthrown by its shock. God has made fairer things than these and worked mightier miracles than all the pomp of kings can imagine, or the skill of art can execute! And He delights not in material things—His name rises from a *spiritual* conquest—the Gospel reigning in men's hearts!

Observe, further, that out of spiritual things God has selected as His special fame a very peculiar case. He has not made unfallen spirits to be to Him for a name. There are probably many orders of beings who were never tempted. They are unconscious of anything like evil. They are always holy, they cannot be otherwise than pure. And while these spotless beings honor and glorify God, He has not selected *them* to be to Him for a name. Pure, untried, untempted virtue is fair, but there is something nobler yet! There are angels that have been tempted but did *not* fall—these are the elect angels, who when Satan fell, preserved their integrity—faithful among the faithless. They did well not to sin. They did better than Adam, who did sin—and yet these ever-faithful servants are not called a name unto God nor an everlasting sign!

But see, He has selected creatures who know good and evil and know them both by experience! And he has selected these fallen and defiled beings! He has entered into the arena of their hearts! And in them He has fought foot to foot the battle of love against moral evil! And His love has

conquered! And therefore to have won that creature once so enslaved to evil—to have overcome sin by the power of love, to have brought His creature back by His Grace to perfection—He reckons a greater honor than even to have upheld an angel or made a world!

The Lord has given evil a great opportunity. He has thrown down the gage of battle to it, and said, "Do your worst." He has suffered it to entrench itself in the very *nature* of man. He has suffered man to be a prey to the machinations of Satan and a slave to his own lusts—and yet He has delivered him and brought him to His feet. The Lord has ceded to the hosts of evil, for ages, all the wisdom of the world—its riches, its pomp and greatness. And He has put down in the world, a humble Man—despised, rejected and nailed to the Cross. And He has sent out, as followers of that Man, feeble men with no weapons but their tongues and their hearts, and no power except the force of the Truth of God and the aid of the Holy Spirit. And yet the Lord has overthrown Satan, utterly worsted and destroyed him! And the archangel of truth has put his foot upon his neck.

Moral evil has been defeated by the love of God! In the hearts of tens of thousands of men who believe in Jesus, evil has had the fullest sway but it has been dethroned—it has been cast from its royalty, its hands have been bound, it has been lashed to the chariot wheels of Christ—and He has led its captivity captive. Now, THIS is what is, "unto God for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." The Lord has acted wisely, as He always does, in selecting such a matter as this to be His name—to be a display of Himself, because it is *everlasting*. God might have made materialism everlasting if He had chosen to do so, but He has not done it.

It follows, then, if this world had been God's name, since it will be destroyed and burnt up, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the Lord would have been dishonored. If the sun, moon and stars had been the grandest illustrations of Deity—since they all shall pass away—where, then, were the glory of God? The sun shall grow dim with age, and the whole universe shall shrivel up like a scroll that is burnt in the flame. But God has selected immortal men who cannot die! And in these He has worked a work which they never can forget—a work which has plunged them under solemn obligations to Him which they never can discharge! He has bound them to Himself by grateful ties of affection which nothing can dissolve!

He has plucked us out of the horrible pit and put us into such a place that throughout eternity it shall be our delight, our very *life*, to praise and magnify His name! Oh, how will we tell angels what He has done! How will we show forth in every street to the sacred inhabitants what Divine Grace has done for us, and how the love of God accomplished a mighty triumph over our sins! We will tell the cherubim and seraphim what God has done, and make them think they never saw God before till they beheld Him working in *men*! Long down the ages, when the morning star is laid asleep, we will tell our fellow immortals of Golgotha, of Calvary, of Jesus and His love! We will repeat the story of the Cross! We will publish abroad the story of the God that loved and died, and of the triumph of the pierced and Crucified One when He entered the doors of our hearts and captured us by the force of His love! This, then, will be an everlasting sign unto the Lord our God!

Let this encourage Christians. If it is God's glory to save man, expect to have them saved and go to work to save them! Get to your knees, this afternoon, with great courage and confidence. Go out with tracts, my good Brothers and Sisters, expecting God to bless you! Preach in the streets, young men! Engage in all sorts of holy work, my Brothers and Sisters—for your labor is not in vain in the Lord! A man always likes to do what will honor himself. God also delights in that which will glorify Him. Expect Him, then, to save sinners!

To you who are unconverted, this last word. How this ought to encourage you to come to God in Christ Jesus! Is it to His Glory to save you? Oh, then He will do it! There is nothing in *you* that could be a motive for Grace—you do not deserve His pity. But then the greater your present sin is, the more the mercy of God will be seen in pardoning you! Come, then, with your sin! If you are the biggest sinner that ever lived, then God's mercy will be seen better in you than in any before. So come now, even now! Come to Jesus as you are, and let the infinitude of His mercy cover the vast extent of your sin.

As for you who have been saved, let the text encourage you to tell it to others. Do not be backward to profess your faith. If it glorifies God, you owe Him so much that you must not rob Him of His praise, but be bold at once to come forward and tell what God has done to your soul. May His blessing rest upon you, for His love's sake. Amen.

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FEEDING ON THE WORD

NO. 2278

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*“Listen diligently to Me, and eat what is good, and let
your soul delight itself in fatness.”
Isaiah 55:2.*

How important it is that we should hear God, that we should have an attentive ear to His Word and that it should, through our ears, reach our souls and become to us, consciously, the Living Word of the Living God! The great gate of commerce between Heaven and the town of Mansoul is Ear-Gate. We can see but little of the things of the Kingdom of God, but we can *hear* much concerning them.

We are told, not only to “listen” to God, but to “listen diligently.” You cannot have too much hearing of the right kind of truth, nor too much of the right kind of hearing. Some people like few sermons and those very short, but, when a soul is hungry after God and eternal life, it puts another meaning on this exhortation, “Listen diligently.” It cannot hear too much! It cannot hear too often! It cannot hear too intensely. Faith comes by hearing and, therefore, Satan tries to block up that gateway of mercy. If he can persuade men not to hear, then he can keep them out of the way of Grace. But the exhortation of our text sets wide open this door of salvation at which the Lord, Himself, stands and cries, “Listen diligently to Me.”

You, dear Friends, love to hear the Word of the Lord, therefore I need not dwell upon that exhortation. But I do pray that no one may hear in vain. “Take heed *what* you hear” and “take heed *how* you hear.” Do not be content merely to open Ear-Gate, but rest not satisfied until the King, Himself, comes riding through that gate right up to the very citadel of the town of Mansoul and takes possession of the castle of your heart!

With this brief introduction, we will come to the consideration of our main text which follows upon the exhortation. We are to “listen diligently” to this message from the Lord’s lips—“Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” Here are four things. First, the food. Next, the feeding. Then, the welcome and, lastly, the delight.

I. First, here is FOOD—“Eat what is good.”

I ask about this food, first, How is it presented to us? It is presented to us *freely*. The invitation is, “Come and eat.” There was a word about buying, but, as I said in the reading, that was soon covered up with, “Buy without money and without price.” Others are trying to get salvation by

their own efforts. The rich man spends his money. The poor man spends his labor. But both of these ways come from *self* and they mean self-salvation—every man his own savior. This is not the method to which you are called—you are, indeed, deceived by that way. “Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not?” You are called simply to *hear*, that your souls may live! And, having heard, you are bid freely to partake of that which is good and that which is rich, which God has provided. We still need to say that the Grace of God is free. No merit is asked, nothing to fit you for its reception, nothing as a compensation to God for the gift of it. Grace is free as the air you breathe! Eternal salvation comes without a penny of cost to every hungry, needy, bankrupt soul that is willing to receive it!

Further, while it is thus presented freely as to any labor with which to procure it, it is also presented freely as to its quality, its highest quality. You are not permitted to drink freely of water and then to purchase wine. You are not invited to come and eat freely that which is good and then to spend your labor for that which is fat. No, the richest dainties of God’s House are as free as the bread He gives to hungry souls! You think that you will be highly favored if you are allowed to partake of the crumbs that fall under the table and, indeed, you *will be*, but the daintiest morsels *on the table* are as free to you as those crumbs! Sanctification is as much a gift of God as justification, and the highest perfection in Heaven is as much the gift of Grace as the first cry of, “God, be merciful to me a sinner.” It is *all* graciously given and you are invited to come, not only to the waters, but to drink wine and milk, to eat that which is good and to delight yourselves in fatness!

This royal bounty is freely given and freely given to the most undeserving. The only limitation is no limitation at all! “Ho, everyone that thirsts!” All of you who are dissatisfied, or discontented. All of you who have not obtained what you want. All of you who are longing for something, you hardly know what it is you long for. All of you who have an insatiable thirst but yet indescribable. All of you who came here, tonight, saying, “I wish I had it. Others that I know have it. I hardly know what it is that they have, but oh, that I might have it!” All of you will find out what it is when you have received it! You hardly know what the taste of wine and milk may be. You hardly know what the fat things full of marrow, that are part of Christ’s great Gospel feast, can possibly be! You shall know them, by-and-by, but be who you may, come and welcome, Sinner, come! If you have nothing, Christ is everything. Though you are unworthy, He is infinitely worthy and so He presents to you food, tonight, on the freest possible terms—or, indeed, without *any terms or conditions at all*, for He puts it thus, “Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

I ask, next, What *is* this food? I answer, first, it is the Word of God. The soul can never feed to the satisfying of the understanding, the conscience, the heart, except upon Divinely-revealed Truths of God. You must know what God would have you know. Therefore attend and listen diligently, that the God-breathed Truth may become nutriment to your spirit.

Better still, the food is the Incarnate Word of God, for Christ Jesus, the Son of Man, the Son of God, is the Word! If men feed on Him, they shall find that His flesh is meat, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed. Remember His own words, "This is the bread which comes down from Heaven, that a man may eat, thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." This is God's Bread given to you, His Only-Begotten Son, clothed in human flesh, living and dying for the sons of men! Happy are they who feed on this heavenly Manna.

What is this bread? Well, it is the Grace of God. As you read this chapter through, you find that the Lord refers, first, to His Word, and bids you hear it. Next, He speaks of His Son, whom He has given to be a Witness to His people. Further on, He magnifies His Grace and speaks of wonderful changes which that Grace works in those to whom it is given. Oh, how satisfying is the Grace of God! "He gives more Grace." We live upon Grace! It is our daily bread. Grace for every trial, Grace for every duty, Grace for every sin and Grace for every Grace! "Of His fullness have all we received, and Grace for Grace." This is the food for you. Thirsty with sin, your sin is quenched with Divine Grace! May God grant us Grace to feed upon Grace, to live upon His Word and to feast upon His Son!

I ask yet another question, What is the *nature* of this food? It is good. It is good in every sense of the word, "good." It is satisfying. It is pure. No harm can ever come by eating it. This heavenly food is good and good for you—good for you, tonight, good for you at any time—good for you living, good for you dying. All other foods that men seek after are unsubstantial. They can surfeit, but they cannot satisfy. They can spoil, but they cannot content. The food that has come down from Heaven, if a man does but take it into himself, shall be the best food He ever ate.

Moreover, this food is described, here, as being fatness—"Let your soul delight itself in fatness." Within the Word of God, there are certain choicer Truths. In Christ there are certain choicer joys. In Grace there are certain choicer experiences than men, at first, realize. It is not merely bread and food, but it is marrow and fatness! There are "tidbits" for the Lord's children. "Let your soul delight itself in fatness." "In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." I hope that before we have done, tonight, we shall have introduced some poor soul to the fatness, the choice special parts of God's most holy Word! It is not lean meat that God gives you—not scrapings from a bone. He feeds us royally! He gives us of the best He has and plenty of it. "He daily loads us with benefits." He gives us meat to eat of which even angels do not know—

***"Never did angels taste above,
Redeeming Grace, and dying love."***

These things are our soul's daily nourishment.

II. But now, secondly, here is FEEDING. One of the most important words in our text is that little word eat, “Eat.”

Food is of no use until it is eaten and here, often, is the crucial question with seeking souls. “I see that Christ is the Bread of Life that I need, but how am I to *eat* Him?” Well, now, really, you ought not to need any instruction on this point. We take a great many orphans into the Orphanage and some of them are very ignorant. And we have to teach them a great many things, but we have no class for teaching them to eat! They all know how to do that—and to do it pretty heartily, too! If men were hungry, they would know how to eat if they had the bread. It is because men are not really hungry on account of sin that they come and ask us, “What do you mean by this eating?” Yet it may be that some are sincere in asking the question, so I will answer it.

To eat is, first, to *believe*. To “eat” a Truth of God, you must believe it to be true. To “eat” Christ, you must believe Him to be the Christ of God. To “eat” the Grace of God, you must believe it to be “the Grace of God, which brings salvation.”—

**“Artful doubts and reasonings be
Nailed with Jesus to the tree.”**

I will gladly lend you a nail or two—and the use of a hammer as well—for I dislike these doubts. They are in the air like gnats—they fly about everywhere and certain Brothers and Sisters endeavor to multiply the pests. But, oh, that you, poor Sinner, would have done with doubts and simply believe! Believe what is certainly true, for God cannot lie and what He reveals is Infallibly sure. Believe it!

Well, after you have done that, to eat is chiefly to appropriate. A man takes a piece of bread into his hand, but he has not eaten it till he has put it into his mouth and swallowed it—and it has gone down into the secret parts of his very self and has become his very own. When a thing is eaten and digested, it cannot be restored.

You may take away my house. You may take away my money. But you *cannot* take away yesterday’s dinner from me. You must take Christ in the same way that you eat your food, that is, appropriate Him. Say, “He is mine. I take Him to be wholly mine. This Christ, this Grace, this pardon, this salvation—I believe it and I now trust in it, rest in it, appropriate it and take it to be my own.” “Suppose that I should make a mistake in taking it,” one asks? Nobody ever did. If you can take it, God has *given* it to you. If you have Grace to grasp Christ, though you think yourself a thief in doing so, there is no evil in it. What God sets before you, take, and ask no questions! Oh, what a blessed thing it is when a soul is enabled to feed upon the Word of God, to feed upon the Christ of God, to feed upon the Grace of God! You cannot do wrong in doing so. It is written, “He that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” “Let him that is thirsty, come. And whoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely.” This is to eat—to *appropriate*.

But after you have eaten, you know, the full process of eating includes *digestion*. How do I digest the Word of God? I know what it is to read, and

mark, and learn—but how do I inwardly digest it? When you *meditate* upon it! Oh, what a blessed work is that of sacred meditation—turning the Truth of God over and over and over in the mind, throwing it into the winepress of memory, and treading it out with the feet of thought till the ruby juice flows out and you drink, thereof, and are satisfied! Meditate upon the Word! Think much of what God has done for you! Think over His thoughts! Turn over His Words and thus your soul will grow strong!

Feeding also means *trusting* yourself wholly to Christ. The man who eats his breakfast goes about his business trusting to the strength which that morning's meal will give him. And when noon comes and he feels faint, he eats again, without a doubt that what he eats will nourish him. And he goes back to his work and uses muscle and sinew, trusting his food to supply him with power. It is just the same with Christ. Take Him and believe that He will help you go about your business, to bear your trouble, to meet your adversary, to serve without weariness and to run without fainting! This is to eat that which is good—it is to take freely into your own self, Christ, His Grace, His Word—and to live thereon, that you may grow thereby!

I should like to make this plain to all of you, but I cannot make it any plainer than this. You have Christ before you—take Him. “Oh, but I am not fit,” says one. A man who is very hungry might say that he is not “fit” for dinner, but, if he is a sensible man, he just falls to and eats. So let it be with you—whatever your unfitness may be, you are welcomed by the invitations of this chapter! Come along with you! Enter the banquet hall at once and feed to the full!

III. My third head is WELCOME. What does the Lord say? “Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

Do you see, here is, first, no limit? “Eat, eat, eat, eat, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” It is not said, “Here is a pair of scales. Here is a plate. Here is a knife. The Law allows so many ounces of meat for you. Just so much and you must not have half-an-ounce over.” Nothing of the kind! You are just taken to the table and the exhortation is, “Eat to your heart's content. Let your soul delight itself in fatness.” There is no limit.

As there is no limit, so there is no reserve. It is not said, “Now you may eat those two things, but you must not touch that nice fat morsel over there. That is for Joseph—that is for the particular favorite, not for you.” No, poor Soul, when God invites you to His table, you may have anything on the table! No matter though it is Eternal Life. Though it is communion with Christ. Though it is Immutable Love, you may eat it. Take it, take it! You are not called to sit, as they used to have it, “below the salt,” among the inferior folk—you are called to sit at the table like any of the princes! And the great King, Himself, says, “Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

So, too, there is no end to the feast. “Eat! Keep on eating. Delight yourself in fatness! Keep on delighting yourself in fatness. You will never use it all up!” I read of a country, once, though I hardly believed the description of it, for it was said that the grass grew faster than the cows could eat it.

Well, there is a country that I know of where the grass grows faster than the *sheep* can eat it! You may eat all you will out of the Divine Word, but you will find that there is more left than you have taken. And it seems as if there were more after you had taken it, as if the grass grew deeper as you fed more ravenously upon it! You will find it so. God puts no reserve as to time. In the morning, feed on His Word. At noontide, drink to strengthen your life out of the Sacred Scriptures. And at night, feed your heart, yet again, upon your evening portion!

I want to talk to you a little about this feeding and especially in reference to the fatness of Divine Truth. There are some of God's people who do not live upon the richer meats of His Word. Poor souls, some of them never get a taste of them. Perhaps they attend a ministry where the richer meat is never brought out. The "clods and sticks" of the Gospel they will get, but not the prime joints—not the best parts of the Gospel. Well, well, if that is all that their ministers have to give them, it is well that they should give them that, but if any man has learned by experience to feed upon the deep things of God and the meat that sustains the soul, let him not fail to put it, in due season, upon the children's table. Why some of you dare not make a good meal on the Doctrine of Election! If you did, you would find it to contain "fat things full of marrow." The Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints, the Doctrine of the Immutable Love of God, the Doctrine of the Union of the Believer with Christ, the Doctrine of the Eternal Purpose that can never fail—why, I have seen many a child of God sniff at these things! Well, well, well, we must not find fault with them. Babes, of course, do not like meat. Poor creatures, they have not teeth enough yet to bite meat, so we must give them milk. Only let not the babes kick at us who can eat meat! We must eat the strong meat, for it is the very food of our souls.

Different foods are for different growths of Grace, but it is a pity that the children of God should habitually neglect the richer joints of the Gospel. There are some of them who measure themselves by others. I believe that some of God's people are afraid of being too holy—which fear need never haunt them much. Some of them are afraid of being too happy, because they know a dear soul who is a kind of weather-glass to them, and she is not very often happy—and so they are afraid that they must not be. How many a person has set up Mr. Little-Faith to be his model, or Mr. Ready-to-Halt, with his crutches, to be a kind of pattern to him! Now, Ready-to-Halt was a very sensible man. He would not advise other people to use crutches. They were good for *him*, but he wished that he had never needed them. So is it with a mournful child of God—there are some of the best who are of a sorrowful spirit—but I would not recommend you to be like they. If that man on the other side of the table dares not eat the marrow and fatness, that is no reason why *you* should not have your share if you can enjoy it!

There are some people, (I will not judge them), who always want to know, when they come to God's feast, how little food will be sufficient—what is the *minimum* upon which a person could live. Dear, dear, I never

tried that plan, and I do not recommend you to go, tonight, and consult a doctor to know what is the smallest amount of food upon which a man could live. There are, I fear, a good many of you working out that problem with regard to your *souls*. You say, "Well, now, do you not think that one sermon on Sunday is quite enough?" Then there is the Prayer Meeting, and you say, "It is only a Prayer Meeting, we will not go to that." So you go from Sunday to Sunday, sometimes, you one-sermon-a-week people, and you say, "I feel unhappy. I have many doubts and fears." I should think you have! If you had only one meal a week, you would feel a little hollow here and there. And if you only get only one *spiritual* meal a week, it is no wonder that you are weakly. The text says, "Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." It does not put to you that strange proposition of trying how little spiritual food you can live upon!

There are others, who are very sincere, who always ask how much they may take. "May I claim a promise? Poor soul that I am, may I dare to call Jesus *mine*? Why, I am the very lowest of the people of God, may I dare to think about everlasting love?" When you go to a feast, the question is not what *you* are, but what the *host* is and, if he has spread the table and invited you, make no "bones" about it, as men say, but eat what he sets before you. Ah, dear Hearts! If we had not more than we deserved, we should not even be alive in the land of mercy! Everything that God gives is of Grace, not of merit, therefore, unworthy though you are, take it!

"Oh, but," says one, "I am afraid of being presumptuous." Oh, yes, I know! There are a great many who are afraid of presumption and they make a mistake about what presumption is. I think I told you, one day, of two little boys to whom their mother said, "Now, John and Thomas, I shall take you out next Monday for a day's holiday." Well, it was Thursday or Friday and one of them began to talk about it with all his might—"I am going out for a holiday next Monday! I know I am! I am going out for a holiday next Monday!" His little brother was "afraid to presume." So he said that he thought, *perhaps*, he *might* go out for a holiday next Monday, but he was afraid to presume. The other little fellow, when he got up on Saturday morning, said, "Mother, is it Monday yet?" And he was as happy as a lark with the idea that the Monday must come very soon. Now, which of the two was presumptuous? I do not think that the boy who believed his mother's promise was presumptuous—I think that he was a good, humble, believing child. But I think that the other boy, who argued, "Well, you see, Mother cannot afford to take us out. Perhaps it will be wet and Mother, perhaps, will not keep her word. She will forget it." I say he was presumptuous and did not deserve to go at all! You who doubt are vastly more presumptuous than you would be if you would simply believe.

Let me encourage you, dear Friends, to put my text in practice, "Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Feed your souls on precious Truths of God. Do not say, "Oh, that is a high doctrine!" My dear Friend, you have no business to call doctrine high or low. If it is in God's Word, believe it and live upon it! "Oh, but those are deep things! Some people even say that they are 'Calvinistic.'" Never mind if they are—

they will not hurt you. I am of the mind of the old lady who said, when she heard a certain preacher, "I like to hear that kind of minister. He is a high Calvary preacher." That was a good mistake to make! I would like to be a "high Calvary preacher" and preach up Jesus Christ and Him crucified with all my might! Do not be afraid to feed on anything that Christ is, or did, or promised! Fall to with a glorious appetite, "and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." If there are any high enjoyments, raptures, ecstasies, delights—if you lose yourself in Heaven begun below—if you can feel the Lord very near you, well, be ready to dance for joy! "Let your soul delight itself in fatness."

But as to holy exercises, such as prayer and prayer continued, prayer strong and mighty, and such as praise, too—that is akin to the music of Heaven—do not hold back from them! Go in for them with all your might. "Let your soul delight itself in fatness." Oh, our poor starveling services! Our weak, impotent drawings near to God! May we be delivered from them and may we get into the marrow and fatness of real communion with the Most High!

Above all, do not neglect to feed on what you have not yet received, but what is yours in the hand of Christ. On the glory yet to be revealed, on the glories of the Second Advent, especially, dwell often. And let your hearts take fire as you think of them! And let your spirit grow strong with an intense delight because HE is *coming*. He is coming quickly and who knows when He may appear? Live upon the promise of His coming and rejoice therein. "Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

IV. Now, my time has gone and, therefore, I will not preach upon the fourth head, which was to have been DELIGHT. But I will just say these few words on this part of my theme.

There is no peril in holy joy, in delighting yourself in God's Word and delighting yourself in Christ. You may be as happy as ever you can be and there will be no danger in it, for "the joy of the Lord is your strength." The joy of the Lord is your safety. The joy of the Lord will be your restoration if you have wandered away from Him.

There will be no idleness, or selfishness produced by this fat feeding. The more you feed on God's Word, the more you will work for the good of others. You will not say, "I am saved and, therefore, I will let others perish." Oh, no! You will have an intense, burning desire to bring others in to feed upon "free Grace and dying love." There are none who love the souls of men as much as those who love their Lord much! When they have, themselves, had much forgiven and they know it, they go and seek their fellow sinners and try to bring them to the Savior's feet.

Dear Friends, may you get such meals upon the rich things of the Word of God that you may come to a sacred contentment till you shall not say, like Esau, "I have enough," but shall say, like Jacob, "I have all things"! May you be unable to wish for anything more! May you be so complete in Christ, so fully supplied in Him, that you can say, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want"!

May you also attain to a sense of holy security—not of *carnal* security, for that is dangerous, that is ruinous—but *holy* security, so that you can say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” “Of what persuasion are you?” said one man to another. “Of what persuasion am I? I am of this persuasion, that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him.” This is a blessed persuasion! May you have it and keep it all your days!

Then, next, may you come into a state of perfect rest! “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.” “We that have believed enter into rest.” “There remains, therefore, a rest to the people of God.” But there is a rest which they enjoy even *now*—may you get it! May you also come into a state of complete resignation to the will of God! If we sang with our hearts that beautiful hymn (Number 691) just now, we are able to leave everything with God and let Him do what He likes with us.

May you feel that your will is what God’s will would have it to be—and that God’s will shall be your will! And then, by God’s Grace, you will let your soul delight itself in fatness!

Lastly, may you be filled with a happy expectancy! May you be able to say with our poet—

***“My heart is with Him on His Throne,
And ill can brook delay.
Each moment listening for the voice,
‘Rise up, and come away.’”***

Oh, to live in the suburbs of Heaven! To get into the vestibule of God’s great Palace and to stay there and hear the singing of the seraphim inside the walls! There is such a thing as feeling, on the Hill Beulah, the breezes from the distant Celestial City. When the wind blows the right way, you may often smell the spices of the Glory Land where Emmanuel is King, and His beloved lie in His bosom forever! I pray that you may all have this. Do not say, “We cannot.” Do not fear that you cannot, but rather listen to the text and carry it out—“Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

Oh, that some poor soul would get his first mouthful of Christ tonight! Take Him! I have seen a hungry child sent by his mother to the baker’s. There is a little piece of bread put in as a “makeweight,” and the poor child eats it on the way home. I give you leave to do that tonight! Carry the Truth of God away with you and keep it! But eat a bit as you go home. Lay hold on Christ tonight—now—before you leave the Tabernacle. May His Grace enable you to do it! And then sit down and eat, and eat, and eat forever of this precious, inexhaustible provision of God’s Infinite Love—and to Him shall be Glory forever and ever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON
ISAIAH 55.**

Tonight we shall read that precious chapter of Gospel invitation, the 55th of Isaiah, which, I hope, you all know by heart.

Verse 1. *Ho, everyone that thirsts.* God would have the attention of sinners! He calls for it. Are not sinners eager for God? Oh, no! It is *God* who is eager for sinners and so He calls, “Ho!” Men pass by with their ears full of the world’s tumult and God calls, again and again, “Ho! Ho!” Be you rich or poor, learned or illiterate, if you are in need, and especially if you feel your need, “Ho, everyone that thirsts.”

1. *Come you to the waters.* There are only in one place waters that can quench your thirst—and God calls you that way—“Come you to the waters.”

1. *And He that has no money.* Water is a thing that is sold, not given away, in the East. And he that needs it must buy it. But he who buys from God, has nothing to pay—“He that has no money.”

1. *Come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.* See how God’s good things grow as we look at them! The first invitation was, “Come you to the waters.” The next was, “Eat.” But this one speaks of “wine and milk.” Our first idea of the Gospel is very simple, it is water for our thirst. Soon we find that it is *food* for our hunger. Presently we discover it to be wine for our delight and milk for our perpetual sustenance! There is everything in Christ and you need Him. Come and have Him! There is no other preparation needed but that you feel your need of Him—

“This He gives you!

‘Tis His Spirit’s rising beam.”

What a cheering verse this is to begin with!

2. *Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not?* If you spend your money for that which is not bread, you are likely to be disappointed. “Oh, but,” you say, “I have made many an effort.” Yes, I know you have, but, if you labor for “that which satisfies not,” I do not wonder that you are not satisfied! Let your past defeats drive you to your God! If you have failed hitherto, so much the more reason why you should listen to the Lord’s message. He says to you—

2. *Listen diligently unto Me.* Salvation comes through the ears, more than through the eyes. Listen! Listen! Listen diligently, with both your ears, with all your heart, listen to your God!

2. *And eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* If we will hear and will believe, we shall be satisfied. We shall be delighted. We shall be overjoyed. The Lord can take our thirst away and give, instead, a delight in fatness.

3. *Incline your ear.* Hold it near the mouth of the gracious Speaker. Be willing to hear what God has to say. Take out that wool of prejudice that has prevented you from listening to God’s voice—“Incline your ear.”

3. *And come unto Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* “When thus you live, I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you. I am not the God

of the dead, but of the living and, when once, through hearing the Divine Word, you have come to life, I will be your God.”

4. *Behold, I have given Him.* One greater than David, even the Beloved of the Lord, the Only-Begotten, the Messiah Prince, the King of Kings, even Jesus!

4. *For a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.* God did not give us an angel to lead us, but He gave us His Son! And He did not merely give us His Son to be an example, but to die for us, to bleed to death on our behalf, to be our Substitute, dying in our place. “I have given Him.” This is the greatest wonder that ever was! “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.” Not, “God so loved the *saintly*; God so loved the *earnest*; God so loved the *moral*.” But, “the world,” the common, sinful world—He so loved those who lay dead in trespasses and sins “that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” And the Father, in giving His Son, gives *Him* a promise.

5. *Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that knew not You shall run to You because of the LORD Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You.* So, Brothers and Sisters, the Gospel must succeed! Christ must have whole nations come to Him! They must come—they *shall* come—for God has glorified His Son and He glorifies Him in this, among other ways, in bringing nations to His feet! The Gospel is no experiment—there is not a question as to its success! There may be dark days, just now, and our hearts may sink as we look around, but the Father will keep His promise to the Son—and that encourages us to look up in the darkest hour. This fact, which is more than a promise, will never be altered, “He has glorified You.”

6. *Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near.* Oh, may the Holy Spirit make every word I read to be effectual with you! God, Himself, speaks to you, tonight, out of a Book which not only *was* Inspired, but *is* Inspired! And He says, tonight, freshly from His own lips to you that have not rest of heart, “Seek you the LORD while He may be found.” He may be found—therefore seek Him. “Call you upon Him while He is near.” He is near—therefore call upon Him.

7. *Let the wicked forsake his way.* Do not let him wait till he has finished this thing, or done the other, or till he has so much to bring in his hands. Let him run away from his old master, and from his old ways and from his old self at once. May God help him to do so!

7. *And the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God.* Whom we love, and in whom we trust, and who has pardoned us—“to our God.”

7. *For He will abundantly pardon.* The marginal reading is, “He will multiply to pardon.” He will pardon, and pardon, and pardon, and pardon, and pardon, and pardon, ad infinitum! Enormous as the sin may be, God’s pardon shall suffice to put it all away. Is this message too hard for you to believe? Oh, broken Heart, does this Divine Truth seem to you to be too good to be true? Oh, trembling one! Does it seem impossible that

the righteous God can cast all your sins behind His back and drown them in the depths of the sea? Listen, still, to our Lord's gracious words!

9-11. *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from Heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.* God's Word is not ineffectual! If you will hear it, it will bless you! When God sends snow and rain, they go not back again. The earth receives them. They sink into her pores. They refresh her secret life. Receive you, O black Heart, the Word of God, as the earth receives the snow! O you dry Heart, receive the Word as the dry ground receives the shower! It shall not go back again—it shall sink into your inmost soul—it shall save you! God can save you. Believe it! Receive His Word into your heart and it shall save you! Mark who you are, who are spoken to in the first and second verses—you who are thirsty, you who have no money, you who have labored and are disappointed with the fruit of your toil.

12. *For you shall go out with joy.* You poor people who are invited to come to the waters, you who have nothing of your own—"You shall go out with joy."

12. *And be led forth with peace.* To some places you can "go" by yourselves. To others you must be "led." But in either case you shall have "joy" and "peace."

12. *The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing.* They do not look like singing, do they? They look as if their only music would be the howling of the wild winds about their brow, or the roaring of the wild beasts along their sides. But for you, for you, you thirsty ones—they shall break forth into singing!

12. *And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.* Trees seem to have little sympathy with weary hearts, but when weary heads find peace with God in Christ, as I trust some will, tonight, then even the *trees* of the field seem to be in harmony with man—and they clap their hands in jubilant exultation!

13. *Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name.* Yes, it shall make God's name great when you are converted, for you will talk about what the Lord has done for your soul and that will bring God fame—"It shall be to the LORD for a name."

13. *For an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.* O you that thirst! O you hungry! O you unsatisfied! May the reading of this Word be blessed to you tonight! Amen.

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

THE SOUL'S BEST FOOD

NO. 2786

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 6, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 13, 1878.

*“Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”
Isaiah 55:2.*

ALL life here below needs to be sustained from without by food of some kind or other. We know not how the angels live, yet the Psalmist's expression, “Man did eat angels' food,” might lead us to imagine that even *they* need to be supplied with nourishment from without, but, certainly, all earthly life requires appropriate nutriment. The physical life of man cannot be sustained unless he has bread to eat. His mental life, too, though that is often forgotten, cannot be in a healthy condition without an adequate supply of understanding and knowledge. The poor creatures which have been confined in prison cells, year after year, with nothing to read or to think upon, have come forth to liberty as imbeciles—quite unfit to go into society because the mind has wasted away in starvation. You must feed the mental, as well as the physical man, if it is to be in a right and healthy state.

And this is pre-eminently true of the spiritual nature which God has implanted within His people at the time of their regeneration. That higher nature must be nourished—God has been pleased to give us an ordinance on purpose to remind us of this great fact. Baptism is the symbol of the entrance upon the new life by passing through death in the type of the Savior's tomb—“buried with Him by baptism into death.” And then, when that life is once obtained, there follows the sacred feast of the Lord's Supper wherein, under the emblems of the bread and the wine, we are taught that Jesus Christ must be, in a spiritual sense, both meat and drink to our souls. We derive our life from Him and He must sustain it. We receive spiritual life by hearing concerning Him and that life is to be sustained by our still hearing the truth concerning Him. Our spiritual life must have spiritual food—it cannot possibly do without it.

The great mercy is that, according to our text, there is abundant provision for sustaining the life of our souls. The Lord would not have said to us, “Listen diligently unto Me,” if He had not had something good to say to us. He would not have said, “Eat what is good,” in such a connection as this, if He had not provided it! Nor would He have said, “Let your soul delight itself in fatness,” if that “fatness” had not been already prepared by the great Host of the Gospel feast! So we are taught two things

on the very threshold of our subject—first, that our soul must be fed and, next, that God has provided the best food for our soul.

When God creates the beasts of the field, “he causes the grass to grow for the cattle.” He does not make a single bird without providing the seeds or the insects upon which that bird shall live. There is not a tiny minnow in the brook but has its own special provision—while the great leviathan, that “makes the deep to boil like a pot,” through his terrific and powerful activity, has all that he needs to feed his vast bulk, for God simply opens His hands and so satisfies the desire of every living thing. As this is so manifestly the case, it would not be conceivable that He should make spiritual life, which is the nearest akin to His own, in that it is the life of God in man, and yet not provide that it should continue to exist, expand, develop and become perfected! So, while the truth of our necessity can never be shaken off from our consciousness, the other great Truth of God of the Divine provision, which is the counterpart of it, must never be forgotten by us.

To stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, I am going to speak about the soul's best food. First, *let us note the reason for the exhortation of our text.* Then, secondly, *let us note the benefits which will flow from our obedience to that exhortation.*

I. First, then, LET US NOTE THE REASON FOR THE EXHORTATION IN OUR TEXT—“Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

The first reason which I shall mention is *the exceeding bountifulness of God in Christ Jesus.* The invitation here given is in accordance with the Character of the God who gives it. He is not stingy—He never stints His guests, or keeps His children on a low diet. He is so good that He delights to give to them of His goodness and to give of it freely. As it is of the very essence of the sun that it should not only be bright, but that it should scatter its beams far and wide, so is it of the very Essence of God that He should not only be Goodness intrinsically, but that He should generously bestow His goodness upon us. He delights to give out of His fullness and, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, that fullness is stored up on purpose that there might be human receivers of it. Blessed be His holy name, “of His fullness have all we received, and Grace for Grace.” The invitation in our text seems to me to come naturally from the very Nature of our Covenant God. He delights not in starving His creatures, nor in seeing them pining in need—but He rejoices in their being filled to the utmost fullness of satisfaction and, therefore, He says to us, “Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

This invitation, too, seems to me to come naturally from God when we remember the abundant provision that He has made for the supply of our needs. If any of you prepared a feast, it would be very grievous to you if your friends did not eat what you had provided. What host or hostess, with a bountiful heart and a liberal hand, ever felt pleased to see food remaining on the table untouched? It is an insult to us if we have taken care to provide fit provision for our guests and then that dish after dish should be brought in and carried back again—nobody caring, even, to

taste it. And the great Lord of All has, in the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, made such plentiful provision for our needs that He cannot bear the idea that it should be left neglected and that none should partake of it. So He says, "Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." It is the very heart of God speaking in these words—and it is the provision of God's Grace claiming to be consumed—God's love pleading that what He has provided so bountifully should not be lost or wasted! Blessed be His name, it cannot be!

It seems to me to also be *an expression of the Divine desire for fellowship*, for, almost always, when fellowship is spoken of in relation to God, expressions which concern eating are used. Fellowship begins, as it were, at the Passover, at the eating of the lamb. In the tabernacle in the wilderness, the offerings were not all burnt upon the altar—many of them were partaken of by both the offerer and the priest—and by God as represented by the devouring flame. Fellowship was thus established in eating and drinking and so, when Jesus instituted that blessed memorial Supper, He said to His disciples concerning the bread, "Take, eat." And, concerning the cup, "Drink you all of it." When, in the Revelation, He said to the angel of the church in Laodicea, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," you know how He goes on to say, "If any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me." This appears to be God's favorite image to express fellowship.

So, when I read, "Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness," I understand our great Father in Heaven to mean, "Come, My children, come into close communion with Me—come and eat with Me." I also understand the blessed Son of God to be saying to us, "Come, My Brothers and Sisters, and let our hearts be linked together in choicest fellowship, and let us feast together." I understand the Holy Spirit, too, as saying here, "Enter into the secret chamber of communion, shut the door and let your fellowship be with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." That seems to me to be the drift of the expression, "Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." So, you see, the exhortation is given to us for these reasons—it comes from the bountiful heart of God and is congruous with the provision made for us by Him and with the inward desire for fellowship which the great Father always feels towards His children.

A further reason for the exhortation is found *in our exceedingly great necessities*. You must eat, so "eat that which is good." Your soul needs the best food, so "let your soul delight itself in fatness"—in the fat and dainty morsels which the great God, who understands us even better than we understand ourselves, has so generously provided for us. He sees the present and the future necessities of His children and He knows that the main supply for those necessities must come through their inward partaking of the abundant provision made for them in His Everlasting Covenant. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, we must eat, or else hunger of soul will come upon us and we shall have a gnawing at the heart which will be insatiable. There will be the daughters of the horseleech within us

crying, "Give, give," and they will make their voices heard—and their craving will become more and more intolerable!

A true Believer, when he loses the company of his Lord, seems to have in his soul a wolf that is hungry to the last degree, and howls and cries after its food. Yes, Beloved, you must have spiritual food to satisfy your soul's hunger! No, I may go further than that and say that you will pine away unless your spiritual nature receives suitable nutriment. Need of food is the cause and the nurse of many diseases. When the constitution is not sustained by proper nourishment, the famished flesh becomes fit soil for disease to grow upon. And we, Beloved, shall soon be filled with all manner of inward doubts and fears if we do not fall into outward sin. Unless our spiritual constitution is kept strong and our inner man is built up with spiritual meat, we shall become like Pharaoh's lean cattle and who among us wishes to be in that condition? When the body is kept without food for a long time, it is liable to faint and swoon. Many a man has fallen into unconsciousness upon the very threshold of black death simply for lack of bread and, in like manner, and for a similar reason, the child of God may get into a state of *spiritual coma*, in which he will be insensible, indifferent, incapable. Prayer, even in its simplest form, and all spiritual exercises may become almost impossible to his fainting spirit. We must have food for our souls!

It is not enough for the minister to come into the pulpit and tell the child of God to do this and to do that—God's people must have suitable food, or they can do nothing of the kind. A farmer is always wise when he puts his whip in the barn—that is to say, when he makes his horses able to work by feeding them well—and this is the way in which God enables His children to perform their spiritual duties—by giving them spiritual meat.

I may go even further and say that if the child of God did not have spiritual meat, he would absolutely die. We must be fed upon Divine food, or else the life within us will expire. Will it ever expire? No, never, because we shall be fed. But, still, we must be fed, we must have the Word of God which lives and abides forever, to nourish our souls. I do not say that we may have it, but that we *must* have it—we must feed or die, depend upon that! The branch that is in the vine must have sap rising from the root and flowing to it through the stem or it will wither—so is it with us. We must have spiritual food, or spiritually we must cease to be—but that shall never come to pass. "The Lord is my Shepherd" and, therefore, "I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures." He will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish, but He will give us our portion of meat in due season, and so we shall be fed. The Bread of Heaven will continue to feed us until we need no more. Now, Brothers and Sisters, you see, at least in some measure, what are your spiritual necessities and the reason why the Lord says so emphatically, "Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

Another reason for the exhortation before us *is our extreme foolishness*. What a stupid animal man must be to need to be told to eat and be urged to eat that which is good! The little lamb in the meadow has

scarcely come into the world before it finds out where its mother's milk is and very soon it begins to crop the tender herbage and to find food for itself. Most creatures, by what we call, instinct, discover their own natural food, but here is man, so foolish, so mad, so much more wild than the wild ass's colt, that he needs to be told to eat, spiritually—and he will never eat until the Lord puts the bread into his mouth—and He never will, by any kind of discernment, eat that which is good unless the Lord shall teach Him to discern between the good and the evil and give him a spiritual appetite and taste by which he shall distinguish the wholesome from the poisonous!

One part of human foolishness lies in the fact that we so often seek that which is not good for us, so that the Lord has to say to us, "Why do you spend money for that which is not bread?" Man is described in Scripture as feeding upon ashes. That is strange food for a human being! We have heard of cases of insanity in which persons have swallowed ashes, eaten earth, devoured pins and needles and all sorts of strange things. That is only a feeble example of the absolute insanity of the unregenerate heart! You remember that the Prophet Hosea said, "Ephraim feeds on wind." He opens his mouth to eat nothing at all and thinks himself to be filled when there is nothing whatever that can satisfy his hunger. O strange bewilderment of man, who was made in God's image and once ate the fruits that grew in the paradise of the Most High! Yet, by nature, we choose the husks that the swine eat and would gladly fill our bellies with them if we could! But God's Grace will not let His people act so foolishly as that.

Then, again, it is not only that we are willing to eat that which is evil, but that we are unwilling to eat that which is good! Many persons will hear that which is good and will even assent to our declaration that it is good—yet they do not eat it. What is spiritual eating? It is the inward reception of the Truth of God into the soul. To *hear* the Truth is, as it were, to *see* the bread. To *think* upon the Truth is, as it were, to cut the bread and put it on the plate. But this will never nourish any man—he must *take* the bread into his inward parts and digest and assimilate it. And so, *by faith*, a man must take the Truth of God into his inmost soul and make that which was outward become inward to him till his soul eats it, drinks it and so absorbs it into its own self that it lives upon it. The most of mankind never do this with the sermons they hear. They criticize the preacher's manner of expression and mode of utterance, but they do not feed upon the Truths of God he sets before them. I like the Hearer who can say, "My soul was fed by that sermon. There was real spiritual nourishment in it for me, for that is the true way in which to receive the Word of the Lord. It is "bread for the eater" as well as "seed for the sower," and we must eat it, otherwise we do not put it to its proper use. God grant us Grace to be willing to feed upon the Word! But man, by nature, will not eat spiritual food.

Then, Brothers and Sisters, there is this folly about even God's own children, that they do not eat that which is good according to *the lavish inexhaustible fullness provided by God*—"Let your soul delight itself in

fatness.” How very few minutes in a day most of us spend in feeding our soul! There are some countries in which the people eat quickly—they bolt their food, instead of properly masticating and digesting it and, in consequence, they are easily angered and suffer greatly from indigestion. And there are some people who act in a similar fashion with regard to spiritual meat—they seem to bolt their food. They have two or three minutes for their morning prayer and just a few verses of Scripture. There are some who go all day without any spiritual meat at all! But among those of the better sort who feed their souls, how very little time is given to real feeding upon the Word of God—very little reading and much less meditation! Sermon-hearing we attend to rather better—some of us even come out on a wet weeknight, which is something to our credit—yet we do not feed enough, we do not go in for the fatness of which our text speaks. “Let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

I have known some Christians pick a sermon over, and eat nothing except the gristle—not a morsel of that “fatness” which is the very part that God’s finger points out. It is too rich for them. They leave the fat doctrines for those whom they call “the high-doctrine people.” But that is not the right way to feed—everything that God puts on His table is good to eat and it is a point of spiritual etiquette for everyone at the table of the Lord to eat all that Christ puts on his plate! You never do right unless you take it all, for it is all yours and especially that part which seems even too good for you! You are to be sure not to miss *that*—“Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” There is something of the touch of a gourmet about this verse. I wish that we would all learn how, spiritually, to be connoisseurs, for, if we were to go to that length, we would not go further than the emphatic expression of our text warrants. Go in for a thorough hearty meal and keep on eating! Devour the Word of God! Feast upon it and feed again and again and again—“Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

I must tell you one other reason why this exhortation is given in the text, and that is, *because of our fears*. There is many a dear child of God who longs for spiritual food, but he is afraid that he would be guilty of presumption if he ate it. So, when there is a very fat piece that is just going into his mouth, he says, “No, that cannot be for me,” and he draws back from it. Now, just look at the text—“Let your soul delight itself in fatness.” Do not restrain yourself from taking that to which you have a perfect right. Believe the message that the preacher brings you from his Master! When you hear it, do not say, “Oh, that I could believe that the eternal love of God were mine! Oh, that I could know that my name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life and engraved on His hands and heart!” Do not say that, but believe that it is so if you have really trusted in Jesus. “Let your soul delight itself in fatness.” Do not say, “Oh, that He would keep me to the end, even me!” A fat morsel is that precious Doctrine of unchanging love and final preservation—do not hold back from feeding upon it! “Let your soul delight itself in fatness.” You are like a flock of sheep close to a clover field, with the gate set wide open. Go in, go in! You cannot eat too much of that which is before you. It will not

hurt you—you may lie down in the pastures of tender grass and eat to the full.

I know that Satan, your own unbelief and especially that natural fear of presumption will combine to make you say, “But I dare not claim a share in such a privilege as that. I am afraid I have no right to it.” Then, listen to the exhortation of the text, “Let your soul delight itself in fatness.” Do not even the dogs under the table eat of the crumbs that fall where the children are feeding? They ask nobody’s leave, but they eat what they find. So, surely you, who are the children sitting at the table, ought to take as much liberty as the dogs! Eat what the Master gives you, just as the little dogs under the table eat what their masters (the children) give to them, for that is really the meaning of that passage. Be bold enough and trustful enough to take what your Lord so freely offers you! It is foolish to be poor when He invites you to be rich! It is a pity for you to starve when He entreats you to feast! With such an exhortation as this, it is sad, indeed, that any of us should not eat that which is good and let our soul delight itself in fatness.

II. Now, secondly, LET US NOTE THE BENEFITS OF OBEYING THE COMMAND OF THE TEXT.

The first benefit is *the pleasure of it*—“Eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” I remember the time when I used to look upon the precious things of God as many a poor street Arab has gazed at the dainties in a confectioner’s window, wishing that he could get a taste and feeling all the more hungry because of that which was stored behind the glass out of his reach. But when the Master takes us into His banqueting house and His banner over us is LOVE—and when He says to us, “Eat, Friends. Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved,” then we have a grand time of it and we feel almost as if Heaven had begun below! Have we not, sometimes, on a Sabbath, when the great King of Glory has feasted us to the full, felt so happy that we did not think we could be any happier unless we went straight away to Heaven? Each of us has been ready to sing, at such a time as that—

***“My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss.”***

O dear Friends, search out one of the exceeding great and precious promises of the Word—feed upon it, get it right into your soul and then you may feel that your soul can no more be troubled, for you believe in God and you believe in Christ and, therefore, you are full of gladness! “Let your soul delight itself in fatness.” There is this joy as one of the benefits of obedience to the exhortation of the text.

The second benefit is *the great preserving power of good spiritual food*. It helps to keep us out of temptation. I do not think a man is ever so likely to be tempted as when he has neglected to eat his spiritual meat. We have this Truth of God in a parable, in Christ’s own life on earth. Of course it is only a parable, for in Him there was no lack of spiritual meat, but, after He had fasted, when He was hungry, then it was that He was tempted of the devil. And if your soul has been, for a long time, without

spiritual food, you are very likely to meet the devil. I have known men go away for a holiday on the Continent and when they have been away, there has been no hearing of the Word, and, possibly, no private reading of the Word. Or they may have gone to live in a country town where the Gospel was not faithfully preached and they have made a terrible shipwreck of character because their inward strength was not sustained by spiritual meat—and then the Tempter fell upon them!

There is a rather interesting remark that someone makes, though I do not vouch for the truth of it. You know that when the Lord put Adam in the Garden of Eden, He said to him, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it." And, says one, "If Eve had availed herself of that gracious permission on that fatal day, and if she had eaten freely of all the other trees in the garden, of which she might have eaten, she would not have been so likely to wish to eat of that which was forbidden." I know this—when my soul is full of Christ, I can defy the devil, himself, for what can he bring me when I need nothing? He puts down poisoned meat to tempt us to eat, but when we are filled with all the fullness of Christ, we do not need his meat and we will not touch it except to fling it far from us! He who has Christ, has all things and abounds, and he is, by this Divine strengthening of his spirit, made strong to resist temptation!

I have heard people say that if they have to go through a feverish part of the city, there is nothing like having a good coating inside, well lining the interior—and I am sure it is so spiritually. Line your soul well with spiritual meat and, then, if you have to go through the most feverish parts of the earth where temptations fill the very air, you will be preserved from them by Divine Grace! Remember what happened when King Saul, in his folly, ordained that anyone who ate food would be accursed? The soldiers were not able to smite the Philistines as they might have done if they had not been so faint and, then, as soon as the sun went down, "the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew them on the ground," and devoured them raw, "with the blood," so breaking the commandment of the Jewish Law and bringing severe condemnation upon themselves. Hungry men will do such things as that, for hunger makes them break through stone walls and through God's Laws, too. But he who is filled with good things walks in the way of God's commandments.

A third blessing is this. *Spiritual food comforts mourners.* The analogy of this will be found in the Book of Nehemiah, the 8th Chapter and the 9th and 10th verses, where we read that Nehemiah said to the people, "This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep...Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared." A feast is a good way of breaking a fast. He that eats forgets his former misery and remembers his sorrow no more, especially if he eats the mystic meat which God provides so abundantly for His sorrowing children. It was of this that Mary sang, "He has filled the hungry with good things."

Spiritual meat has another excellence. It *revives the fainting ones*. Did you ever study the sermon that was once preached by an angel to a desponding Prophet? It consisted of only three words and he preached it twice. The Prophet was Elijah, who, after the wondrous victory and excitement on the top of Carmel, fainted in spirit and was afraid of Jezebel and said, "Let me die." And so he fled from the field of battle and longed to expire. In his weariness and sorrow, he fell asleep and an angel came and awoke him. And this was the sermon he preached to him, "Arise and eat." And when he opened his eyes, he saw that "there was a cake baking on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink and laid him down again." The very best thing he could do. But the angel awoke him the second time and preached the same sermon to him, "Arise and eat." And I pass on that little sermon to some of you who feel faint in heart just now. You do not know how it is, but you are very low-spirited—here is a message for you—"Arise and eat." I will not prescribe you any medicine, but I say, "Arise and eat." Get to the Bible and study it—search out the promises and feed upon them. Get away to Christ and feed upon Him! "Arise and eat." Often, the best possible cure for a poor, dispirited, fainting soul is a good meal of Gospel food! Your bright spirits will, in that way, come back to you. You will not be afraid of Jezebel and you will not say, "Let me die," but you will go, in the strength of that food, for many a day according to the will of God. So I give this as God's message to any discouraged, dispirited ones whom I may now be addressing, "Arise and eat."

This spiritual eating is also *a great strength for service*, for he who eats that which is good and lets his soul delight itself in fatness will be strong to run in the way of the Divine commands, or to perform any work that may be required of him. You recollect what Jonathan said, concerning that long day of fasting to which I have already alluded? Jonathan said, "My eyes have been enlightened because I tasted a little of this honey. How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found? For had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?" Quite right, Jonathan—as the old proverb puts it, "Prayer and provender hinder no man's journey." And, for a soul to wait upon God to be fed is to gather such strength thereby that it can do much more work than it could otherwise have done! Sunday school teachers are apt to think, "We cannot attend a weeknight service—we must be thinking about the lesson of our class." Your soul must be fed, my dear Brother! Young men are very apt to think that they can begin preaching and they have no need to stay even a few months after conversion to learn from those who might instruct them. You will be wrong, Brother, you will be wrong if you do so! He who begins to run a race and who thinks that it is a waste of time to pull on his boots, will make a great mistake! You had better not begin your journey till you are properly shod. You had better not go to the battle till you have put on all your armor. All the time that is taken to fit that armor on properly is time wonderfully well spent! It will be true economy in the long run. To keep men always working like slaves and to give them little to eat would be a

very wretched, as well as a very cruel, policy. Eat well, that you may work well. "Eat what is good," that you may be able to do good to others. "Let your soul delight itself in fatness," that you may have the delight of being useful in the service of your Lord!

I must very rapidly mention other blessings which result from our partaking of spiritual food. One is that *it fits us to feed others*. Ezekiel had to go and speak to the house of Israel in the name of the Lord. Do you remember his preparation for that task—the college to which he went? Well, he saw a hand which held a roll of a book—and a Voice said to him, "Son of man, eat what you find; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel." He cannot preach till he has eaten the roll! I believe that in the courts of law young men have to eat themselves into the profession—beside all other qualifications, they must eat a certain number of dinners before they can be fully certified. It is a strange regulation with regard to earthly courts, but it is a right and proper thing in the courts of Heaven.

Young Brothers in the College, you must eat your way into the ministry! You will never be able to say to others, "Eat what is good," unless you have feasted upon those things yourselves! Unless you have an inward appreciation of their sweetness and have sucked them into your very being, you will never be able to talk with power to others concerning them. Paul wrote to Timothy, "The husbandman that labors, must first be partaker of the fruits," so Christian ministers, Sunday school teachers, and all workers for Christ must eat that which is good if they are to be used in feeding others with spiritual food!

And, then, as I have already said—but I must mention it again to make my recapitulation complete—*this is the best mode of fellowship*. Christ's Word to you, Beloved, when He would most show His love is, "Take, eat." And your risen Master, when He spoke most familiarly to His disciples, said, "Children, have you any meat?" And then gave to them the invitation, "Come and dine." And again I repeat that gracious message to the lukewarm Laodiceans. "If any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me." Even throughout eternity this is to be the fashion of fellowship, for the glorified are to sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. So, Beloved, feed on the Word of God—especially feed on the Incarnate Word, Christ Himself—otherwise, you cannot possibly enter into true spiritual fellowship with God.

There is just this one more remark that I must make upon this point. *Feeding upon the Word of God is the best way of promoting praise*. You know how the 103rd Psalm begins—"Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name." Then, a little further on, the Psalmist says, "Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." A hungry soul cannot sing well—the soul that best sings the praises of God is the one that has delighted itself with the fatness of the Divine provision and, therefore, has its mouth filled with the praises of its God.

Now, dear Friends, I am sure that the topic on which I have been speaking is a very important one, yet it is a very neglected one. A great many young Christians and, I am afraid, some old Christian people, especially women, read no end of tales and novels. That is not eating that which is good—it is doing that which is worse than useless! There is no spiritual nutriment and little if any mental food in most of the stories that come out nowadays. We used to keep our tales for our children—our babies—but, now, the stories are written for grown-up people—and newspapers and magazines sell best if they contain pretty stories for the great babies of the present day. Nothing will suit them but stories. “Eat what is good.” But they eat ashes! They feed upon the wind—that is their spiritual meat. Sometimes we complain of present-day Christians that they have no backbone, no stamina, no strength compared with the Christians of past ages. I should think so—they do not eat the food out of which spiritual manhood can grow. They eat what would not nourish a mouse and then hope that they may be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.”

And, then, how common is the neglect of reading the Word of God itself! A great many persons take all their religion secondhand. They never go to the good old Book themselves. Years ago it was a very difficult thing to get milk—it was not milk that was called by that name. The only way to be sure of having milk was to keep a cow—and I recommend everybody to ensure getting the unadulterated milk of the Word of God by keeping his own cow, that is, by reading the Bible for himself. If you want to get pure water, go to the fountainhead. I was once going over the mountains in Northern Italy and I wanted to drink from a little stream, but my guide would not allow me to taste of it. I did not understand why, but he went on some considerable distance and then he allowed me to drink as much as I liked. And I noticed that I was drinking at a spring just where the water flowed out, but, the time before the stream had been running down the mountainside and was full of all sorts of impurities and, besides, it had lost its freshness and sweetness by travelling over the earth in the warm sun. The guide wanted me to have water that was worth drinking—to drink that which was good.

And so I would advise you, my Friends, to take no notice of anything I say that is not according to the Word of God! Put it away among the lumber, for it is good for nothing—and whoever it is that preaches and whatever book you read—if it is not according to this Book, say to yourself, “Well, I have not any time to try experiments. If I do eat, I want to eat that which is good. And if I do delight myself, I want to delight myself in what God calls fatness.” There is plenty of carrion about—plenty of religious carrion, I mean—tainted through and through with false doctrine. And unhappy is that man who has a taste for it—it looks as if he were no true child of God.

Dear Friends, what we need is to feed on the Gospel and nothing but the Gospel! To feed on the Scriptures and to keep to them alone! To feed on the promises—to get a promise and turn it over and over—to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest! To feed upon the teachings of the Holy

Spirit within our own soul and to feed upon Christ Himself, for His flesh is meat, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed! I would to God that some here present, who have never known what spiritual life is and, therefore, cannot know what spiritual feeding is, might be quickened, this evening, by the Divine Spirit! And if they are, the first thing that they will do will be to listen to Christ that they may live! "Incline your ears," He says, "and come unto Me. Hear, and your soul shall live." And as soon as you have heard His life-giving Word, then go on to hear it again and yet again! "Hearken diligently unto Me and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

And listen to this. If you believe in Christ Jesus, within a short time that head of yours shall wear a coronet of glory that shall outshine the stars of Heaven! Your feet shall be in sandals with light and your whole being shall be full of indescribable ecstasy. Then, though you deserve to be cast into the lowest Hell, you shall have a place above the angels, where the white-robed host forever chant their hallelujahs to the redeeming Lamb. Yes, as surely as that you now live, you shall be there! Now what say you with such a prospect before you? Will you walk any longer in the ways of dishonesty? Will you go home to your cups and be found among the drunks? Will you take upon you that dear name by which you are to be called in Heaven and yet be found among the ungodly? I know that you would sooner die than that should be the case, for your heart cries out to your Lord, "Deliver me from sin, O my gracious God! This great love of Yours which promises me Heaven and gives me a nature fit to live in Glory—how can I rebel against it? No, let it hold me fast, with golden chains, to obey You, my Lord, and to keep Your commandments from now and forever." The Lord grant it, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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GOD'S OWN GOSPEL CALL

NO. 2092

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JUNE 30, 1889,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"Incline your ear and come unto Me: hear and your soul shall live. And I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."
Isaiah 55:3.***

THIS very memorable chapter may be called God's own Gospel sermon. In reading it we forget Isaiah and only remember Jehovah. He speaks not here by the Prophet but in the first Person. God Himself says, "Incline your ear and come unto Me." Now, we value every single word of Holy Writ, but especially those words which come directly from the mouth of God Himself—not so much spoken for Him as *by* Him. Take heed that you turn not away from Him that speaks from Heaven. These are not my words but the Words of the living God—it is not I that invite your attention to myself. It is your Maker, your God, saying to you, "Incline your ear and come unto Me: hear and your soul shall live. And I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

From the very beginning, this chapter is a loving pleading with sinners—it is a lifting of stumbling blocks and a clearing away of objections. Perhaps someone laments thus—"Who am I, that I should come to God? I am a poor, penniless sinner." The Lord forestalls the lament, by saying, "He that has no money. Come you, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." If you have no merit, if you have no claims, still come. Free Grace sounds its golden harp and mercy sings to it these words—"Without money and without price."

If you stand back because you look upon your past life with sorrow and you say, "Alas, my God, I have wasted much time in another service," He tells you that He knows your past folly and He calls you to cease from it, saying, "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not?" He bids you now receive the substantial gifts of His Grace. For these will satisfy the soul.

If anyone cries, "My needs are exceedingly great. I want the largest and richest mercies, or else I am lost." The Lord God admits that necessity but meets it with a full supply, saying, "Hearken diligently unto Me and eat you that which is good and let your soul delight itself in fatness." He knows that nothing but great mercy will serve your turn. But great mercy is ready for you. He has not brought you anything lean or mean but "fat things full of marrow," a fullness of delight.

If there are any who feel timorous in the Presence of such astounding Grace and are ready to cry, "Lord, we cannot think that You would give so great a salvation to us, for we deserve destruction and wrath," see how He

meets that doubt by the fourth verse. The highest proof of God's love to men is this, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." He points to His dear Son and says, "Behold, I have given Him! In the manger, behold, I have given Him. On the Cross, in the sepulcher, in His resurrection, in His enthronement, behold, I have given Him!" What further proof of Divine love do you require? What surer proof can you imagine? Come without distrust and believe that since God spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, He will also, with Him, freely give us all things.

Furthermore, lest anyone should say, "I am a poor Gentile but the Old Testament was written for the chosen people, the Jews." The Father speaks to His dear Son, and cries, "Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not and nations that knew not You shall run unto You because of the Lord Your God and for the Holy One of Israel. For He has glorified You." To whatever race or nation you may belong, Christ calls you to run to Him and the likes of you shall run to Him. May that promise be fulfilled this very day in all the unconverted who hear these words!

Beloved, I have no need to preach this morning. I have only to follow the line of God's own Word. I do so with much confidence in the power of that Word. Gladly will I simply enlarge on what the Lord says and give you none of my own suggestions. My word? Ah, it is weakness itself! But the Lord's Word is potent as when it said, "Let there be light," and light flamed forth and scattered primeval night. It is as potent as when He made this dead, dull earth to teem with grass and afterwards with cattle and placed man over all. Speak, Lord, Your fiat. Where Your Word is, there is power.

Still, there may be some who say, "We feel ourselves to be with no strength and incapable." The gracious Lord meets you there by laying upon you no heavy yoke—the precepts which He puts before you are simple and easy. He has given you ears and He bids you use them, saying, "Incline your ear and come unto Me. Hear and your soul shall live."

At this time we will look to the saving precepts laid down in the text. And then we will consider the saving promises which go with the precepts—"Your soul shall live. And I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you." Lastly, as God shall help us, we will hearken to saving pleadings, such as abound in the rest of the chapter. Oh, to speak only in the power of the Holy Spirit! Oh, for salvation—salvation for ALL my Hearers!

I. Here are TWO SAVING PRECEPTS, which are pressed upon you at this time. For the Holy Spirit says in all His commands, "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." These precepts are of simple character. The first is, "Incline your ear." This is placed in another form, "Hearken diligently unto Me. Hear and your soul shall live." You have ears to hear with, therefore hear. Some of you would hear fast enough if the faintest jingle of a guinea should invite you to gain it. Oh that you would now hear the voice of God!

What does it mean—this "Incline your ear"? It means, consider and think upon eternal things. It is the fault and folly of worldlings that they reckon eternal things to be second-rate and unworthy of their immediate

thought. Even from the Cross our Lord complains, "Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me, wherewith the Lord has afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger." The greatest event that ever happened in time or in eternity was the death of Jesus to save men from eternal woe. And yet this prodigy of love is disregarded.

The soul-winner has to think of all sorts of ways by which to draw men's attention to that which is their chief blessing. They are taken up with their farm and their merchandise—any petty piece of news in the daily paper will win their thought and excite their talk. But this event which most nearly concerns them is forgotten. For passing pleasure they have ears enough. But when we speak of Heaven and Hell they will not hear—charm we ever so wisely. May the God of all Grace this morning arrest the careless one and constrain him to incline his ear!

O thoughtless man, be like the wedding guest who was spell-bound by the ancient mariner and kept from the joyous company while he heard the strange story of the sea. We have something of greater weight to tell than any romance of the salt sea. Do not deny yourself the benefit of hearing the Truth of God. Rob not your soul of salvation. Your God invites you to give earnest heed to your soul, your immortal soul, and the place where it will spend eternity—and the way in which alone that eternity can become one of blessedness. Since you are not dogs nor horses, think! And give most thought to that which is of most importance, namely, your eternal state. I should have hope for you if you would think.

O Souls, why will you trifle where everything is of such infinite weight? Why need I plead for that which is so much for your own good? But when you read, "Incline your ear," it means, think about Divine matters as God sets them before you. In these days those who judge themselves to be wise disdain to be taught by the Revelation of God but they elect to follow the conjectures of their own minds. They will not follow the Bible but their own brains, such as they are. They endeavor to make for themselves a chart of a sea they have never sailed over. The way of happiness they picture as they would wish it to be.

Surely the voice of Wisdom advises us to incline our ear to One who knows more than we do. God has spoken—we are to learn from His Words rather than from our own thoughts. Science is well enough but omniscience is better. God has spoken, we need not conjecture—God has revealed it. Would you be wise? This book is inspired by Him—bend your powers towards this infallible record. Am I asking too much? Does the Lord require an unreasonable thing? If He speaks, shall we not listen? Especially when He speaks only for our good.

Furthermore, remark that this attention to eternal things, this hearkening to what God, the Lord, will speak, must be hearty, honest, continual, earnest and believing. "Incline your ear," as men do when they reach forward to catch every syllable, fearful lest they shall miss the meaning. "Hearken diligently." Not as a man does who hears and forgets. Hearken as they did who were pent up and besieged and longed for deliverance.

How the Scotch woman rejoiced when she heard, or thought she heard, the sound of the Highlanders' bagpipes in the distance! Ah me, the bare hope of rescue from ferocious foes made them very quick of hearing.

Beloved, give the Gospel your best hearing. Hearken diligently—be attentive and intent. When your mind has been attentive during the discourse, let it be retentive afterwards. Try to catch God's meaning in His Word and see what Christ would show to you. I say again, I am asking here, in God's name, of you nothing more than is due to Him. I would come round these galleries and down these aisles and put it to every unconverted person—Is it not reasonable that you should consider your ways and hearken to your God? I pray you, my Friends, do not deny yourselves this favor—give attention, now, to your souls' best concerns.

The second precept grows out of the first—"Incline your ear and come unto Me." This is to be the outcome of your inclining your ear. Come unto God. "How can I come to God?" says one. Come to Him at least by thinking much of Him. At present God is not in all your thoughts. Some of you are busy just now with sightseeing but you seek not a sight of God—should it be so? Others of you are busy in making money. You go out to business early and come home late and all those hours you are as little mindful of Heaven as if there were no God at all. We have not much doctrinal atheism abroad but we are drenched with practical atheism. The nations forget God.

The Lord bids you turn your face Godward and seek after Him. Consider eternity and how you will spend it, and what it must be for you if you pass into it without God. When you have come to Him in thought, then come by your desires. The son in the far-off country began to return to his father's house, where there was bread enough and to spare, before he had put a foot on the ground to go there. His heart was on the road before his feet. If you feel as if you could not come to God any other way, come by desire, at least—desire to be reconciled to God—longing to become His child, hungering to taste of His love. This is a true coming.

Come to God by confession of sin. You have lived up to now without Him. Confess that neglect. You have thought that repentance and faith might safely be put off to a more convenient season and thus you have given your God a contemptuous putting-off. Confess the wrong you have done in this. You have violated the Law, for you have not loved the Lord, "with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind." Beside this, you have broken every Commandment. Thus have you insulted your Maker. Yet come to Him with filial sorrow and say, "Father, I have sinned."

Come to God in humble, believing prayer. Ask Him to save you and believe that He that asks receives. What? Will you not do that? He that will not ask when the blessing is to be had for the asking, how can I excuse him, how can I pity him, if he shall perish of want? Come to the Lord by prayer and let it not be said, "You have not, because you ask not." Oh, how I pray that you may come with your prayers while I am pleading with you by my preaching! Come and lay your burdens down at the feet of the

great Burden Bearer! Come with all your sins and leave the load at the Cross. Quit your evil ways and your wicked thoughts and turn to the Lord, who will abundantly pardon.

These are the two precepts—HEAR and COME. They are neither exacting nor unreasonable. How earnestly would I urge them upon you! I feel ashamed of myself that I do not preach with greater emotion. But let not my fault be the ruin of any of you. Be even more in earnest than I am, since it is your own soul that is in jeopardy. Gladly would I save you if I could. I am eager to win you for my Lord. Be persuaded to hearken diligently to your God and Savior even now.

I. To encourage you in this, I come to my second head, which deals with SAVING PROMISES. Here are two promises corresponding to the two precepts.

You are bid, in the first precept, to hearken and incline your ear and the promise given is this—"Your soul shall live." What? Live through *hearing*? Yes, live as the result of hearing. For "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." If any man would give himself diligently to the study of the Revelation of God, to the searching of the Word of God, and to the hearing of loving, earnest, truthful, spiritual preaching—he would not fail to find life for his soul. If with heart's resolve to find Christ in the Word a man hears it diligently, he has this promise, "Hear and your soul shall live."

Some sit down and say, "I cannot believe." Of course you cannot believe until you know what you have to believe. But while you are hearing what it is, the inspired Word acts upon you with a self-evidencing power and your conscience and mind and heart are affected thereby. The Holy Spirit quickens through the Word and fulfils the promise, "Hear and your soul shall live."

There is such a power about the Word of God, that when it comes into contact with the heart which is seeking eternal life, it breathes eternal life into it. I will try to sketch the manner of its operation. The man is an earnest hearer and he says to himself, "How I wish I could meet with the salvation of God!" While listening he feels a tenderness stealing over him. Perhaps a tear trickles down his cheek. He gets absorbed in the Truth of God to which he listens and becomes serious, anxious and impressible. The Word of God is like a fire which melts. Attended by the Holy Spirit, the influence of the Word upon the soul acts for the removing of the stony heart and the creation of a heart of flesh.

Be much in the hearing of God's Word and in thinking upon it and a better feeling will steal over you. There will follow upon this feeling a measure of hope in the Lord. At first it will be as a mere spark. You will whisper to yourself, "I think, after all, I may be forgiven and accepted." This little hope will be like the first drop of a shower. This trembling hope will be the egg of a great joy, or the mustard seed of the tree of holy confidence. Hope that comes by hearing the Word attentively is a living and growing thing and will increase to a blessed rest.

By-and-by hope will rouse the soul to pleading. You, who first of all heard the Word carelessly—and then heard it attentively, feelingly and hopefully—will commence to pray that it may be fulfilled to you. I think I hear you crying, “O God, bless your Word to me. I am come to a turning point, Lord lead me in the right way. Oh, that You would quicken me to run therein!” This prayer will continue to rise within the heart and will never cease till it is heard and the soul is made to live unto God. Having come thus far, the heart will soon possess a measure of trustfulness in the Lord Jesus, who is the Revelation of the Grace of God. Before you know it, you will find yourself trusting in the great Sacrifice for sin.

I do not know the manner in which faith is created by the Spirit in the human mind. In many it comes very gradually. Who can tell when the first light of the morning broke over this city? They that were wearily watching by the sick saw a gray light glide over the sky. But the sun was not yet risen. Then the light became clearer and yet more clear. But if there were clouds in the east, even the watchers could not tell exactly when the sun was above the horizon and the day had really dawned. The light came by degrees but it came in truth.

O my Hearers, I want you, while hearing the Word, to be praying—

***“While I see You wounded, bleeding,
Dying on the accursed tree,
Gladly I’d feel my heart believing
That you suffered thus for me.”***

Thus, by the light of the Word, the man becomes a Believer before he knows it. Is it not so in other matters? We feel that a thing is true and we believe it without effort.

With that little faith will come gleams of joy. Or if the faith is stronger, a full day will burst in upon the soul, lighting up the whole nature with heavenly brightness, Oh, that the Lord would give you joy and peace through believing at this very moment! I pray it may be so! I am glad that you are hearing the Word. “Hear and your soul shall live.”

I remember when I sought the Lord, I said to myself, “If the Lord is to be found by hearing, I will always be hearing.” Three times on the Sabbath you might have found me, as a lad, in some place of worship or other. And I never lost a word. I gave earnest heed to all that was spoken. As Gideon’s fleece drank in the dew, so did I receive the Word. The Divine life came to me at last, though not at the first. So will it be with you, for there is the promise—the promise of God, that cannot lie—“Hear and your soul shall live.” May you understand that first promise by having it fulfilled within yourself!

Now consider the second promise, which is something very wonderful—“I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you.” This joins on to the second precept—“Come unto Me.” The soul cries, “Lord, if I were to come, would You receive me?” “Receive you?” says the Lord, “I would enter into a covenant with you.” If you come to God, simple as that coming seems, it shall involve infinite results. For the Lord will do for you exceedingly abundantly above what you ask or even think. Listen to this promise, you

that are willing to hear God's Word, and pray the Lord to fulfill it to you at once.

First, observe how He promises condescending intercourse—"I will make a covenant with you." It is in the Hebrew, "I will *cut* a covenant." Covenants were made by cutting a victim in two and they who made a covenant passed between the two halves of the sacrifice to make the covenant sure. The Lord in effect says, "Poor, wretched Sinner, you that have not a penny to buy water with. If you will come to Me, I will enter into a sacred agreement and covenant with you!" "Covenant with me?" says one, "What? God and I become contracting parties?" Yes. He will make a covenant with you. O my Heart, how can you stay away? This means life! This means sure mercies! This means eternal blessedness! "I will make a covenant with you," with you, an obscure nobody, who can only look on yourself as a heap of dirt and filth. "I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you."

God is ready to enter into a binding contract with you. He will bind you to Himself and Himself to you. "I will make a covenant with you." If once you come to Him, He will put His fear in your heart so that you shall not depart from Him. He will cast about you the bands of His love and will betroth you unto Himself in a marriage union which shall never be dissolved. Do you enquire into the tenor of that contract? Well, I cannot tell you all about it this morning, for time would fail me. But it runs somewhat in this fashion—"I will be their God and they shall be My people. Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more forever.

"A new heart also will I give you and a right spirit will I put within you. I will take the stony heart out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed. But My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord, that has mercy on you."

This is a covenant of mercy. Yes, of "mercies" in the plural, as the text has it. God will enter into a contract with you to supply you with all manner of mercies between here and Heaven and to land you safely at His right hand. Oh, what a promise this! God will thus enter into an unending alliance with you. "I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you." I do remember how this attracted me to Christ. When I saw that His Grace was everlasting, I longed to enjoy it. If I once got to the Lord Jesus, He would never let me go away from Him. This created in me a vehement desire after Him—

***"Once in Christ, in Christ forever;
Nothing from His love can sever."***

The *eternity* of the mercy is an essential ingredient in the preciousness of it. I should not care to preach to you a trumpery, temporary Gospel, which would only yield hope for a short season. But I delight to proclaim my Lord's Everlasting Covenant. Come, poor Sinner, come to Jesus and you shall have life eternal. We do not offer you a ticket halfway from here to Heaven. But a ticket all the way through, with no return to it. If you get into this covenant train, it is running all the way and will never break

down. Yield yourself to the Lord, to be His forever and He will make with you an Everlasting Covenant.

“Oh,” you say, “but suppose I go to God and trust Him and yet these things should fail?” They cannot fail, for He calls them “the sure mercies of David.” If you believe in Jesus, you are now forgiven. As sure as God is God, if you come to Him through Christ Jesus you are saved, not for time only, but for eternity. The covenant is ordered in all things and sure. God has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” Oh, the mercy of God in this!

You see we liken what He gives to the sinner to what He did to David. The aged David lies dying. His strength is gone, he is a worn-out man, he will soon be in eternity. It is interesting to watch him. Tears are in his eyes as he thinks of Absalom and the rest of his wayward family and he exclaims, “Although my house is not so with God. Yet”—blessed “yet”—“yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” That is the kind of covenant which God will make with *you*. I am not talking of the man in the moon but of you who are around me, you guilty ones, who incline your ear to Him.

The Lord says to you, “I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” When you come to die, I hope you may not have the faults of David to confess. But I trust you may have his covenant to fall back upon. I am thankful that David was not a perfect man by a long way, because I can now take comfort from his confidence. He was full of infirmities and sins and yet he could rejoice in the Covenant of Grace. And I, also, with all my faults, may venture to do the same. I, too, can say, “Yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant.” What a mass of Gospel comfort lies in these words! Would God that all of you would so come to God that He would make with you an Everlasting Covenant!

The covenant is all in Christ Jesus, Immanuel, God with us. With Him this covenant is made. Great David's greater Son is given to us to be our leader. The covenant is with Him. He stood for us in that dread day when the Judge of all the earth executed justice upon our Surety. The storm was made to burst upon His head. The sword of justice found its sheath in His heart. And now He stands the Covenant Head of all Believers. And God has made with us in Christ, “an Everlasting Covenant, even the sure mercies of David.” Thus have I put before you the precept and the promise.

III. Our third work is to urge the Lord's own SAVING PLEAS. These are not to be mine but the Lord's. I keep to the chapter.

The first plea for which I would beg a hearing is—God Himself speaks to you. It is He that says, “Incline your ear and come unto Me.” Can you realize for a moment the Presence of God? Oh that He would make Himself apparent to you! I do not ask for thunder or lightning to make you feel the terror of His majesty. But may you know of a surety that the Lord is here! Suppose you were to hear a strange, mysterious voice from yonder

dome, saying, "Incline your ear and come unto Me. Hear and your soul shall live."

I am afraid the sole result would be that you would be startled rather than savingly impressed. But, indeed, it is the Lord God Almighty that says, "Incline your ear and come unto Me." I beseech you, refuse not Him that speaks from Heaven. By the long-suffering that has kept you in being until now. By the love that has borne with your ill manners and provocations, I beseech you, now, lend a willing ear to the Lord of Mercy.

You would hear your mother. Ah, how you wish that she were on earth to plead with you, though you despised her admonitions when she was yet alive! Soul, will you not hear your God, your Benefactor? Turn, I pray you, at His entreaty. Accept His tender invitation! Come now, without delay. Say, at once—

***"Lord, you have won, at length I yield;
My heart, by mighty grace compelled,
Surrenders all to You.
Against Your terrors long I strove,
But who can stand against Your love?
Love conquers even me."***

Furthermore, the Lord pleads with you by the fact that your day of mercy is not ended. Read the sixth verse—"Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near." God may be found. What a blessed fact! Have you been a drunkard? Yet God may be found. Were you last night in evil company? Yet you are not yet shut up in Hell and the Lord of Love may yet be found. Are you very old and have you long despised your Savior? He has not yet closed the gate of mercy—He may be found. Seek Him at once, while the search can be successful.

"Call you upon Him while He is near." God is still within call. He is not far from any of you. Even though you speak not, He will hear the pulsing of your heart. O Men and Women, call upon your God while His ear is inclined toward you. Death is on his way and may overtake you before this day concludes. Between the gathering of one congregation and another, someone among you will fall by death's javelin. Seek Him, my Hearers, while seeking time holds out. Before the death sweat stands upon your brow and your soul hovers upon the edge of a dark eternity, seek after the Lord with all your might. While He is near to you, call upon Him—while He may be found, seek Him. Does not the voice of wisdom plead with you to do this?

The Lord very graciously mentions yet another fact which should lead you to come to Him, namely, that He is ready and willing to forgive the whole of your past offenses. "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him. And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." I do not know what you think of those last words, "abundantly pardon." But to me they are so sweet that I would set the whole orchestra of the Handel Festival to the singing of them.

“Abundantly pardon! Abundantly pardon!” You have abundant sin—fatally abundant! But here is abundant *pardon*. You mourn your abundant hardness of heart! Yes, but abundant *pardon* will dissolve the stone. How abundant that pardon is the Lord does not tell. But certainly it is superabundant. “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Note the word—Divine Grace not only abounded but it did “*much more* abound.” What a God is this who calls us to Himself! Come, you blackened sinner—Jesus is both willing and able to make you clean!

Come, you chief of sinners. For He is the chief of all Benefactors and He can so bless you that your foulest stains shall be removed and every virtue and grace shall adorn your character. Such a gracious assurance should lead us to come to Him, should it not? What more sweet sounding bell can ring us unto God’s table than these silver notes—“abundantly pardon”?

Then comes in the great persuasive of the magnanimity of God. Hear the words—“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.” No man here knows what great things God designs for him. You poor Sinners who will incline your ears and come to your God—little do you know what great blessings and honors the Lord has decreed for you—nor what is His mind concerning you!

Shall I tell you a secret? Before you were born and before this round world was made, the Lord thought of *you*. Your name was in His book, your person was on His heart. The Lord loved you and chose you unto Himself from of old. Do you hear that? You are His elect—He ordained you to eternal life and that life He freely gives. Shall I tell you more of that secret? He gave you to His Son, to be His portion, His reward, His Bride. And that Divine Son undertook to redeem you, to save you and to bring you safely to His eternal glory.

At this moment God ordains for you His service here below and His Presence in the world to come. If you indeed hearken to His voice, He will make you His child. And, as a child, you shall be an heir of God, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. You think yourself to be the meanest of the mean and least deserving of men and so you may be. But the infinite Grace of God will put you among the royal seed. For He takes the beggar from the dunghill and sets him among princes, even the princes of His people. Hear his gracious word—“Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable and I have loved you.”

“Honorable? Why, I have lost my character!” Be it so, He is able to ennoble the fallen and it is He that says, “Since you were precious in My sight you have been honorable.” The Lord determines to do nothing less for you than to set you on His Throne, in the image of Christ, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Is it not true that His thoughts are high and His ways heavenly?—

**“You shall see My glory soon,
When the work of Divine Grace is done.**

***Partner of my throne shall be.
Say, poor Sinner, do you love Me?"***

Your answer must be, "O Lord, I must come to You. For You do draw me with such soft but mighty bonds." Oh, the glory of Divine Grace! Oh that you would come and learn how deep the mines of Jehovah's love, how high the blessings of His favor!

Did I hear one cry, "I feel so dull and stupid. I cannot come as I could wish"? Very well, come back to that first precept—"Hear and your soul shall live." "I have long been a hearer," says one. Have you been an earnest, attentive hearer? Have you heard the Word of God as sure and infallible Truth? Then be a more believing hearer. Expect the Word to bless you. Hear how the Lord pleads the power of His Gospel—"My Word shall not return unto Me void but it shall accomplish that which I please and it shall prosper in that thing whereunto I sent it."

Hearken to God's voice, and let it enter your heart. Then it will quicken and save you as surely as the snow and the rain water the earth. Snow does not melt at once but it turns to water before long and is then doubly effectual in watering the soil. The devil tempts you to give up hearing the Gospel. Do not hearken to him. Hear with double diligence. For if he does want you to hearken, it is because he is afraid of losing you. Hearken diligently and believe steadfastly and before long you shall be as much saturated with the power of Divine Grace as the earth is moistened with the snow and the rain, which fall from Heaven but return not there. Remember, it is *God's Word* and in that fact lies your hope of getting life by it.

Lastly, the Lord persuades men to come to Him by telling them of the joy they will obtain in coming. I know that I am addressing seeking souls who feel miserable and even despairing. "Alas," cries one, "I shall soon go out of the reach of hope." "No," says the Lord, "you shall go out with joy." "Alas," you sigh, "I shall be led forth to execution." "No," says the Lord, "you shall be led forth with peace." These are not *my* words. These are the very words of *the living God*. Hearken to them—"you shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

It is a long time since you clapped your hands. But you shall do it with rapture and all the trees shall join with you in your exultation. Up to now the world has seemed to be as dull as you are. But it shall brighten up. You walked, the other day, in the fields but you found little repose among the lambs and sheep, for you felt more like a wolf. The very birds on the bough seemed to taunt you with being silent and ungrateful towards God. At times the flowing river, with all its sparkle of joy, half tempted you to plunge into its depths and find a watery grave.

Earth is but the vestibule of Hell to an unquiet conscience. But if you hearken to your God, He can make it the porch of Heaven. Listen to this promise. Believe it and you shall find it true. You shall enter upon a new life and the world shall be a new world to you.

“Ah,” says one, “God will never make much of *me*. Even if I had a little joy and gladness, I should never be really an honor to Him.” He calls you to Him by the effectual nature of His work. True, you are a thorny bit of ground, covered with briars and thorns and thistles. If you were left to barrenness it would be your righteous due. But His thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are His ways your ways. This is what He is going to do with you—“Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

That thorny temper of yours shall become gentle and generous. That briery malice shall give place to forgiveness and compassion. Blasphemy shall yield to devotion, vice to holiness, falsehood to truth and pride to lowliness. That sin of drunkenness—which has been such a thicket of thorns to you and your wife and family—shall give place to sobriety, industry, thrift, godliness, love to God and joy in the Holy Spirit. If you hear and live and come to God so as to be in covenant with Him, the day will come when you will not know yourself, so great will be the change.

Mercy, in Bunyan's “Pilgrim's Progress,” laughed when she saw what the Lord was going to do for her. And if some of you could see what the Lord is about to make of you, you would laugh, too. You would not laugh like Sarah, who could not believe what was told her. But like Abraham, who felt the joy of the coming blessing by the realizations of faith. Beloved, at this moment I rejoice that I, an unworthy sinner, shall dwell with the Lord God in glory—

***“I shall behold His face,
I shall His love adore;
And sing the wonders of His Grace
Forevermore.”***

Yes, I shall do it, by His Grace. And so shall all of you who now believe the promise of our faithful God. May His sweet Spirit gently lead you to Himself! And if it is so, “it shall be to the Lord for a name.” He will get a great reputation out of His great Grace. Even as a doctor wins a name by curing grievous diseases, they will tell it in Heaven that you are saved and throughout eternity angels and principalities in the heavenly places shall see in you a monument of Divine Grace, a trophy of all-conquering love.

So may it be. And to the name of Jehovah, whose mercy endures forever, shall be glory and honor, world without end. Amen.

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TWELVE COVENANT MERCIES

NO. 2316

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 30, 1889.

*“Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live:
and I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even
the sure mercies of David.”*
Isaiah 55:3.

I GOT so far this morning [Sermon #2092, Volume 35—*God's Own Gospel* Call—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] as to plead with men to come to God to hear what He had to say, to give diligent and earnest heed to His teaching about their souls and about salvation. And while I pleaded, I can truly say, with all the strength I had, I made this one of the master arguments that, in hearing, their soul would live—and in coming to God, they would find Him ready to enter into Covenant with them, “an everlasting Covenant, even the sure mercies of David.”

That seemed to me to be one of the most astonishing Truths of God that was ever given to man to preach, that God would be a high contracting party with poor insignificant and guilty man, that He would make a Covenant with *man*! Yes, with you and with me—that He would bind Himself by a solemn promise, give His sacred pledge—and enter into a holy contract of mercy with the guilty sons of Adam! I thought that if men were in their right minds and God had taught their reason to be reasonable, they would be drawn to the Lord by such a wonderful promise as this, “I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”

Remember that there was a Covenant of old, which men broke—the Covenant of works, “This do, and you shall live.” Keep such and such commands, and you shall be rewarded. That Covenant failed because man did not keep God's commands and so did not earn the promised reward. We broke the terms of that contract and it is no longer valid, except that we come under penalty for the breach of it, and that penalty is that we are to be cast away from God's Presence and to perish without hope, so far as that broken Covenant is concerned.

Now, rolling up that old Covenant as a useless thing out of which no salvation can ever come, God comes to us in another way and He says, “I will make a new Covenant with you, not like the old one at all.” It is a Covenant of Grace—a Covenant made, not with the worthy, but with the

unworthy! A Covenant not made upon conditions, but unconditionally, every supposed condition having been fulfilled by our great Representative and Surety, the Lord Jesus Christ! A Covenant without an, “if,” or a, “but,” in it, “ordered in all things, and sure.” A Covenant of shalls and wills in which God says, “I will, and you shall!” A Covenant just suited to our broken-down and helpless condition. A Covenant which will land everyone who is interested in it in Heaven! No other Covenant will ever do this. I tried to expatiate upon that Covenant this morning and I thought that I would close the day by showing to any who desire to be in this Covenant of Grace what the blessings are that God promises to give to guilty men when they come to Him, when they accept His love and His mercy. What are these blessings?

I have little else to do, tonight, but to refer you, again, as I did this morning, to God’s Word. Beloved, if you had met together, after the death of some wealthy relative, and his will was about to be read to you, you would not require an eloquent lawyer—you would all be very attentive—and some of you who are a little deaf would recover your hearing! An important question would be, “What has he left?” A still more important enquiry would be, “What has he *left to me*?” Well, I want you to feel, tonight, that you do not need an eloquent preacher—I am only going to read God’s will to you, His Covenant, which is virtually the testament or will of Christ. And all that you have to do is to listen and say, “What has He left? What has He *bequeathed to me*? What does He Covenant to *give to me*?”

And remember that whoever you may be, if you are willing to be saved by Grace, you may be saved by Grace! If you give up all hope of being saved anyway else, you may be saved by the free mercy and love of God! “If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.” If you come and take Christ to be your Savior, then all the promises of God, which in Him are, yes, and in Him, Amen, are made to you! If you take Him, you take all that is in the Covenant, for *He is the Covenant*. Embodied in *Himself* is the whole Covenant of Grace and He who has Christ has all it contains!

I am going to point you to some of the passages in which we have this Covenant written out at length. I shall not say much upon any item, but I shall refer you to 12 wonderful mercies of the Covenant of Grace. Will you kindly look in your Bibles at the prophecy of Jeremiah, chapter 31, verse thirty-four? There is no music more sweet to me than the rustle of your Bibles. I sometimes preach, no, I *frequently* preach when I may read what I like and nobody follows me to see if I quote correctly. I have been inclined to buy you wheelbarrows, so that you may bring your Bibles to Chapel in them, since many of you do not seem to have any here. What is the best way of hearing the Word? Is it not to search and see whether what the preacher says is really according to the Word of God?

I. One of the first mercies of the Covenant is SAVING KNOWLEDGE. Turn to Jeremiah 31, and let us begin to read at verse thirty-one—“Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to

the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My Covenant they broke, although I was an Husband unto them, says the Lord: but this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, says the Lord, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the Lord.” There is one of the first blessings of the Covenant of Grace—*saving knowledge*.

Man by nature knows not God. He does not *want* to know God and when he is awakened to think of God at all, God seems a great mystery, a Being invisible, unreachable—and the man says, “Who shall make me to know God?” He reads his Bible, it may be, and even that he does not understand. He hears the preacher, but the Lord’s servant seems to talk a jargon which the unconverted man cannot comprehend! Brothers and Sisters, there is no knowing God except through God! The man’s neighbor cannot teach him, even though he may attempt it. Though he may say, “Know the Lord,” yet he cannot give knowledge of God. By nature our eyes are blinded—we cannot see. You may hold, even, the electric light to a blind man’s sightless orbs, but it will not give him sight. Blind Bartimaeus saw no light till Jesus spoke to him. Saul of Tarsus was blind enough, by his bigotry and self-righteousness, until God gave him a glorious light to shine into his soul.

Now, here is a Covenant that God will give the knowledge of Himself to the lost, the guilty and the ruined—to those who have provoked Him and gone astray from Him. Where are those to whom this Covenant shall be fulfilled tonight? I cannot tell you, save by marks and tokens, and this is one of the marks. Do you know that you are blind? Do you *know* that you cannot see apart from Divine Grace? Do you long to see? He is not totally blind, in a spiritual sense, who knows that he is so. He is not in the dark who feels that he is in the dark—there is already some degree of the Light of God that makes him perceive the darkness visible. O Soul, if you desire to know God, here is the Covenant, “They shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them”! All God’s chosen shall know Him! They shall not abide in ignorance. They shall not die in ignorance. They shall come to know the Lord and they shall grow in the Grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Oh, what a privilege this is! “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God.” If any man is ignorant of his God, let him hear the Word of the Lord and let him seek the Lord, and God will give him instruction concerning Himself, and make him to know the great Jehovah, the Father of our spirits, who passes by iniquity, transgression, and sin.

II. But I must not linger on any one blessing. The first Covenant mercy is saving knowledge. The next is, GOD’S LAW WRITTEN IN THE HEART. Let me read you verse 33, again—“After those days, says the Lord, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be

their God, and they shall be My people.” You know that the Law of Moses was written on two tablets of stone. Wonderfully precious those two slabs of marble must have been when the Divine finger had traced the solemn lines. Moses had a great charge to keep when he had those two Divinely written tablets, but he destroyed them because the people had, in spirit, broken them. It could not be that such Divine writing should ever be handled or looked at by such an unholy people!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, it was of no use writing the Law on tablets of stone except for the condemnation of the people! But when God comes in the Covenant of Grace, He does not merely give us the Law in a Book, the Law written in legible characters, but He comes and writes on the fleshy tablets of our *heart*. Then the man knows the Law by heart! What is better, he *loves* the Law. That Law accuses him, but he would not have it altered. He bows and confesses the truthfulness of the accusation. He cries, “Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep Your Law.” And this is the Covenant blessing—God makes men to love His Commandments and to delight themselves in the Truth of God, righteousness and holiness!

A very wonderful thing is this writing in our heart. Nobody but God can write in human hearts. We can write certain thoughts upon your minds as we appeal to your ears, but to get at the heart is another thing! He that has the keys of Heaven, He that has the keys of the heart, He that shuts and no man opens, or opens and no man shuts, can really get at the human heart! And He does so get at it that He writes, there, His Commandments, and this He does to men who formerly hated those Commandments! He makes them love them. Men who despised His Commandments, He makes to honor them. As for men who forgot His commandments, He writes them in their hearts, so that they cannot get away from them. As for men who would have changed the Commandments, He changes their hearts, instead, and then their hearts and the Commandments agree together.

This is a second Covenant blessing. Do any of you want these blessings? Would you like to know the Lord? Do you wish to have the Law written on your hearts? Be it unto you according to your faith! Believe that God can do this for you—trust in Christ that it may be done unto you—and even so shall it be!

III. The third Covenant mercy (we cannot dwell long on any item) is, FREE PARDON. You will find this at the end of the 34th verse—“For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” Oh, this is a great blessing of the Covenant! You people who have never sinned, or who *think* that you have not. You who believe yourselves to have always been good, or at least as good as you could be, and far above the average of mankind! You exceedingly excellent people who have never done anything that you need to repent of very greatly, well, I have nothing for you here! Only remember what Mary sang, “He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich” (that is you) “He has sent empty away.” But if there is a soul here that feels the burden of its guilt, one bowed down with grief

because of the heavy load of past iniquity that lies upon it, why, surely *you*, if you have the faith, will jump for joy as you read these words, “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” First, He will forgive it, blot it right out. “Be,” says He, “as if you had never offended. Come to Me, come to My heart, as if you had always loved Me. Guilty though you are, I will not impute iniquity to your charge, I will forgive it.” The great Judge will put on the white gloves and not the black cap! You shall be forgiven!

And then the Lord says, “I will remember their sin no more.” It is a wonderful thing when Omnipotence overcomes Omniscience, when Omnipotent Love will not allow Omniscience to remember—“I will remember their sin no more.” Satan comes and pleads against the sinner, “Lord, he did so and so.” God says, “I do not remember it.” Nor does He remember it, for He laid it all on Christ and Christ suffered the penalty due for it and, therefore, it is gone! It is never to be recalled! It stands not in the Book of Remembrance and, as the Lord looks over this man’s life, when He comes to the black pages, there is a blank—not a line of it is left—for He who died has made the scarlet sins as white as snow! “I will remember their sin no more.”

Oh, what a precious Covenant mercy is this! I do not feel as if I need to elaborate or garnish it in any way, or give you any illustrations, or tell you any anecdotes. Was there ever set before you such a glorious gift? Will you not have it—the perfect pardon of every sin and a Divine act of amnesty and oblivion for every crime, of every sort—as promised in the Covenant of Grace to every soul that is willing to receive it through Christ Jesus the Savior?

IV. Let us look a little farther and see if there is not something more. Look to the next chapter, Jeremiah 32, at the 38th verse—“And they shall be My people, and I will be their God.” That is the next Covenant mercy, RECONCILIATION. The offense is put away, the sin is pardoned. “Now,” says God, “they shall be My people.” “Lord, they are the people who worshipped Baal! They are the horrid wretches who gave their children up to be burned in the red-hot arms of Molech.” “They shall be My people,” says the Lord. “But, Lord, these are the men and women who committed adultery and fornication and were even guilty of murder!” “They shall be My people,” says the Lord. “But, Lord, they provoked You to anger year after year, and would not hearken to Your Prophets.” “They shall be My people,” says the Lord, “and I will be their God.”

Did you ever think how much there is involved in that expression, “I will be their God”? God is everything and when God gives Himself to us, He gives us more than all time and all eternity, all earth and all Heaven! “Fear not, Abram,” said the Lord to the Patriarch, “I am your shield, and your exceedingly great reward,” as if it was reward enough for any man to have God to be his God—and so it is! More riches than Croesus, more honor than the greatest conqueror, has that man who has this God to be his God forever and ever! “I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” The young people might look that text up, and find how many times

it occurs in the Word of God. I remember many times that God puts it, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

This is another grand Covenant blessing! Are you willing to be the people of God? Are you willing to take Him, even this God, to be yours forever and ever? If so, then the text is true concerning *you*, "I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

V. Will you follow me to the next verse for a fifth Covenant mercy, the blessing of TRUE GODLINESS? "And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them." See here, that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom! "The fear of God" is a description of true godliness and God says that He will give this to men. He might have asked it of you, and rightly, too, but you would never have yielded it. But when He says that He will *give* it, that is a very different thing! He is willing to *give* you His fear, to give you true religion, to bestow upon you that veneration of His sacred name which lies at the bottom of all godliness! He will give you that, give that to you who never had it, and even despised it, to any of you who have lived all your lives without it, but who are willing to come and take it, this night, as the gift of His Grace through Jesus Christ our Lord! May the Lord make you willing in this, the day of His power, for that is a part of the Covenant blessing! The *willingness*, itself, is His gift and this He gives freely to His own.

VI. Now look, dear Friends, to the next verse, which is more wonderful than anything that I have yet read. The sixth Covenant mercy is, CONTINUANCE IN GRACE—"And I will make an everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." Talk about Final Perseverance—is it not taught here? "I will not turn away from them, and they shall not depart from Me." What a Covenant blessing this is! It reminds us of the words of the Lord Jesus concerning His sheep—"I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." "Yes," I heard a man say, who did not believe what that verse teaches, "No man shall pluck them out of His hand, but they may crawl away from between His fingers."

No, they shall not! See how this text secures them both ways. "I will not turn away from them, to do them good: but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." Here are both gaps blocked—there is no getting out either way. God will not leave you and He will not let you leave Him! This is a Covenant blessing, indeed. Oh, for faith to grip it! The soul that comes to Christ and rests itself wholly upon Him, shall find two hands to grasp it, even these two gracious words, "I will not turn away from them," and, "they shall not depart from Me." And this is spoken of the guilty, of the very men who provoked God!—

***"Wonders of Grace to God belong,
Repeat His mercies in your song."***

If God saved the good, the meritorious and the righteous, then the proud Pharisees would swarm in every street in Heaven and God would

have no Glory! But when He saves the vilest of the vile—then the publicans, who are afraid to lift their eyes to Heaven when they think of their own unworthiness—will get near the Throne of God and sing! Oh, how they will sing of Free Grace and dying love! This Covenant would be great enough if there were nothing more in it than the six blessings that I have mentioned!

VII. I must trouble you to turn in your Bibles to another prophecy, to read about another of the mercies of His Covenant, namely, CLEANSING. Some poor soul says, “Well, I can see that God is going to do great things, but I feel myself so unclean, I dare not come near to God. Why, Sir, I am polluted all over, inside and out, I am altogether like a leprous man!” Come then, let me read this verse to you, the 25th verse of the 36th chapter of Ezekiel—“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.” God’s Word elsewhere says, “Wash you, make you clean.” That is your *duty*—but here you are told that the *Lord will wash you, and make you clean*. This is your *privilege*. “You are clean,” said Christ to His disciples, “through the Word which I have spoken unto you.” That is “the washing of water by the Word” of which Paul wrote to the Ephesians. The Lord sprinkles this “clean water” upon the leprous and the polluted sinner, upon him who lies covered with his own blood, a filthy thing in the sight of God and loathsome to himself. The Free-Grace Covenant runs, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean.” When God Himself says, “You shall be clean,” I know that we are clean, for He is the best judge of true cleanliness! His pure and holy eyes detect every spot of sin and every latent trace of disease. Though it is deep within the heart, He can spy it out, but He says, “I will sprinkle you, and you shall be clean.” Blessed be His name!

And then He goes on to enumerate that from which He will cleanse us—“From all your idols will I cleanse you.” Is drink your idol? Is some lust of the flesh your idol? “Oh!” you say, “I cannot get rid of these things.” No, but the *Lord* can cleanse you from them! Only come to Him, listen diligently to Him, trust Him, yield yourself up, surrender yourself to Him and He will dash your idols in pieces and tear them from their thrones! He will also cleanse you from whatever else there may be that is unmentionable, “from all your filthiness”—things not to be spoken of, not even to be mentioned—those things that are done in secret, “I will cleanse you from them,” says the Lord.

I may be speaking to somebody here who, as he listens to me, thinks that I am talking some novel, some romance. “Why,” he says, “I am a filthy creature. I am a great sinner. Can God bless *me*?” Yes, He can bless even you! Did you never hear of Colonel Gardiner? On the very night on which he had made an appointment to commit a filthy sin, Christ appeared to Him and he thought that he heard Him say, “I have done all this for you; will you never turn to Me?” He did turn to Jesus and he became noted as an eminent Christian—more noted than he had formerly been as a debauched officer in the army! The Lord Jesus Christ still works these won-

ders of Grace! He meets men often when they are desperately set on mischief, just as a horse might be rushing into the battle, and He comes and lays His hand on the rein and turns it, and leads it back wherever He wills! Such is the power of His almighty love! I pray Him to do the same, tonight, according to this wondrous promise, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.”

VIII. Nor is that all, for, if a man should be made clean once, he would soon get foul again if left to himself, so here follows the next astounding Covenant mercy of RENEWAL OF NATURE. Listen—“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.” It is not said, “I will *help* you to this,” but, “I will do it.” Not, “I will help you to make yourself a new heart.” No, nothing of the kind, but, “I will give you a new heart.” You know that if you cut off the branches of a tree, it will grow fresh ones, but if you could tear out its heart, it would never grow a new one. There are some creatures, like the lobster, that will shed their claws and the claws will grow again—but a lobster never grows a new heart.

If the center of animal or vegetable life is once destroyed, there is no renewing it. But God can work this miracle in *human* hearts, He can strike at the very center of man’s nature and change it! It is little to render pure the streams, but it is a great marvel to cleanse an impure spring so that a spring of bitter water suddenly turns sweet. This is a miracle that can only be worked by the finger of God and there is nothing short of this renewal of nature that is worth having! I know that some people fancy that Christians, when they do not go into such and such worldly amusements, deny themselves very much. Nothing of the kind! It would be an awful denial to us if we had to go with the worldlings. Those who frequent the theater and places of loose amusement perhaps think that it is a denial to us not to go with them. Oh, dear, dear, dear, they little know us!

When I go down to a friend’s farm, I see a man carrying to the pigs a couple of pails full of food, but I never *envy* the pigs! I like them to have all that they can, and to enjoy themselves, but do not suppose that I am denying myself in not wanting their food! My taste does not lie that way. But suppose that a man has a hog’s heart—what is the way to deal with him? To deny him his swill? Certainly not! Let him have it while he is like the hogs. The thing that is needed is a change of heart, and when his heart is turned into a renewed man’s heart, and is made to be a God-like heart, then it is no denial to him to loathe the things which once gave him so much pleasure! His tastes are entirely changed and that is according to the promise of the Covenant, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.”

The old heart is very hard in some. It seems to be altogether petrified—you cannot make any impression upon it. You are received with ridicule, however earnest you may be in your pleadings for God. But the Lord can change the stony heart—

“Our heart, that flinty, stubborn thing,

***That terrors cannot move,
That fears no threatening of His wrath,
Shall be dissolved by love!
Or He can take the flint away,
That would not be refined;
And from the treasures of His Grace,
Bestow a softer mind.”***

Then the man, who was just now as hard as flint, sits and weeps over his sins. See how watchful he is in the presence of all kinds of temptations. He is half afraid to put one foot before another! The very man who was called, “Devil-may-care,” is now the one who *does* care and who trembles lest he should in any way grieve the living God! What a blessed Covenant mercy is this!

IX. But I must hurry on. The ninth Covenant mercy is, HOLY CONVERSATION. Let me read verse twenty-seven—“And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them.” When God deals with a man in the way of Grace, He not only calls him to holiness, but He *gives* him holiness! He not only bids him walk in His way, but He makes him walk in His way—not by compulsion, not by any kind of physical force—but by the sweet influences of Infinite Love. The man’s entire life is changed externally, just as I have shown you that his heart is changed internally. “Oh!” says one, “this is very wonderful.” It is. It is the standing wonder of the Gospel. Certain miracles have ceased, but the miracles of turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, are being worked every day! I rejoice that they are constantly being worked in this very House of Prayer and I believe that they are going to be worked tonight on some who are listening to me! If this miracle is worked, you will not attribute it to me—I know you will not, for you will remember how feeble I am—but you will understand that there is the power of God working through the preaching of the Gospel making dry bones to live and turning black sinners into bright saints, to the praise of the glory of His Grace!

X. Once again, will you kindly look at the 31st verse? This will be the 10th Covenant mercy, HAPPY SELF-LOATHING. Perhaps you will wonder that I called this a mercy. Listen—“Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.” Free Grace makes men loathe themselves! After God has done so much for them, they feel so ashamed that they do not know what to do. “O Lord,” says the saint, “to think that ever I should have sinned against One who loved me so much! That I, the elect of God, should have acted like the elect of Hell! That I, who was God’s own, should have called myself the devil’s own! That I, who was chosen unto holiness and eternal life, should have passed it all by as if it were no concern of mine!” Oh, may God grant us this holy loathing, as He will do when we have once tasted of His Infinite Love!

XI. The next Covenant mercy, mentioned in the 37th chapter, verses 26 to 28, is the blessing of COMMUNION WITH God—“Moreover I will make a

Covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting Covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in the midst of them forevermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yes, I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them forevermore.” God promises to set up His tabernacle and His Temple in the midst of His people, and to make them His priests, His servants, His children, His friends. God will be no longer absent from you when this Covenant work shall have been worked in you; but you shall be brought to dwell in His Presence, to abide in His house, and to go no more out forever, until the day when He shall take you to His palace home above, to be forever in His Presence, and to serve Him day and night in His Temple.

And all this is promised to the worthless, to the vilest of the vile! All this without asking of you anything but that you will be willing to receive Him! All this without requiring of you anything but just your emptiness that He may fill it, your sinfulness that He may cleanse it! Only you must surrender to Him. What have you to surrender? Nothing but a lot of rubbish of your own your self-righteousness, especially, which is but filthy rags! The Lord bring you to this surrender even now!

XII. There is only one more Covenant mercy for me to mention and I put it last because you will be surprised, perhaps, when I read it. It is about NECESSARY CHASTISEMENT. For that I must ask you to turn to Psalm 89 and verse thirty—“If his children forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments; if they break My statutes, and keep not My Commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail.” There is a rod in the Covenant. Children of God, you do not like it—it were not a rod if you did—but it is good for you when you come under the fatherly discipline of God. Though He will never take His everlasting love from you, nor suffer His faithfulness to fail, yet, when you transgress, the rod shall be sure to fall upon you, and sometimes its strokes shall come upon you *before* you transgress, to keep you from sinning!

I often hear of some of God’s dearest servants suffering. I heard of one whom I am sure God loves very much. He is very useful. He spends himself in his Master’s work. He is also very prosperous—God gives to him great wealth, which he discreetly and wisely uses, but he has had a very sharp affliction come upon him, lately, which is enough to break his heart. And when I heard it, I said, “Yes, yes, God loves him. God loves him.” If you are a child of God, note this Truth of God and accept it with joy—our heavenly Father never pampers His children! We may spoil our girls and boys, but our Father never spoils His children. If He gives you great happiness, great success and makes you useful, He will, every now and then, give you a whipping behind the door. You think, sometimes, “That man is very happy. he has great blessing resting on his work.” Yes, this man is very happy to tell you that he has not all sweets to drink, to

make him sick and ill, but there are bitter tonics, sharp blows of the rod, to keep him right. If we have to bless God more for any one thing than for everything else, it is to thank Him that we have not escaped the rod.

Sickness is a choice blessing from God! I cannot measure the unutterable good that comes to us full often in that way—and losses in business, and crosses, and bereavements, and depressions of spirit are all, when we see them in the light eternal, so many Covenant mercies. The true-born child of God cannot escape the rod and would not if he might. He gets afraid when he does not sometimes feel it. He will not long have to be afraid about it, for it will come in due time. I think that I hear somebody say, “I do not want that.” No, just so—you want *worldly* pleasure. Perhaps God will let you have it till you have spent all your substance on it, as the prodigal did—and then you will find that it is all weariness and sorrow—and you will want something better.

But if tonight you will say, “I will take the Covenant of Grace, rod and all, for if I can be God’s child, I will very gladly take the rod as part of the mercies of the Covenant,” come along, and you shall have it! Seek the Lord tonight! Give not sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids till you have found Him! God grant you all the mercies of the Everlasting Covenant, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.
JEREMIAH 32:30-42.**

Verse 30. *For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before Me from, their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked Me to anger with the work of their hands, says the LORD.* Here were people who had done nothing else but evil. God had been very good to them, but they had been very bad to Him. From their youth, and without a break, they bad continued to rebel.

31. *For this city has been to Me as a provocation of My anger and of My fury from the day that they built it even unto this day; that I should remove it from before My face.* Jerusalem, which ought to have been a holy city, had been so impure that it had been a standing provocation to God from the day it was built.

32. *Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke Me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.* They seem to have been all alike. With scarcely an exception, from the highest class to the lowest, they were always disobeying God.

33. *And they have turned unto Me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction.* This is a fearful indictment! When men refuse to learn better, turn their back upon the King of kings, and will have nothing to do with Him, surely the time for vengeance has come.

34, 35. *But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by My name, to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech.* There was nothing so terribly bad but they would do it. There was nothing so unnatural, so detestable, but they must practice it.

35-38. *Which I commanded them not, neither came it into My mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. And now therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, of which you say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence; behold, I will gather them out of all countries, where I have driven them in My anger, and in My fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.* Is not this a wonderful passage? After all this sin, and all this provocation, when we expect the thunder and lightning of Divine judgment, behold, there is nothing but the sweet voice of pitying love—"They shall be My people, and I will be their God." Oh, the wonders of Divine Grace! See what the Covenant of Grace does for guilty men.

39, 40. *And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an everlasting Covenant with them, "With them"—with these very people who had provoked Him, and served Molech, and bowed before idol gods, and put the Lord to shame, and angered Him!*

40, 41. *That I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me. Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul.* A whole-hearted God, blessing those upon whom He looks with an eye of Grace! It is a wonderful thing. If He had set His whole heart to *destroy* them, it would have seemed natural, but God is far above any conception of ours and so, in the midst of extraordinary and almost immeasurable guilt, behold Love equally extraordinary and Grace altogether measureless!

42. *For thus says the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them.* Oh, for Grace to lay hold upon this Everlasting Covenant, even the sure mercies of David, and to be saved thereby!

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CHRIST'S TRIPLE CHARACTER

NO. 2787

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 13, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 16, 1878.

*“Behold, I have given Him for a Witness to the people,
a Leader and Commander to the people.”*
Isaiah 55:4.

THERE is no Gospel apart from our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the essence of it. He is everything in it. There would be no Gospel without Him. In this chapter the Holy Spirit had been speaking, very largely, through the Prophet, of Gospel bounties and privileges. He had bid the thirsty to “come to the waters,” and the penniless to come and “buy wine and milk without money and without price.” When He had commanded men to listen diligently to Him, to eat that which was good and to let their soul delight itself in fatness, you might be quite sure that He would not so speak without very soon mentioning Christ. For if, in His Gospel, there are waters for the thirsty, those waters do not exist apart from Christ! Is not the Gospel that which proceeds out of His lips—no, more—is not Christ Himself—the Water of Life? He still says, “If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me, and drink.” It is true that wine and milk are provided, but out of what cluster comes that wine—and where shall the unadulterated milk of the Word be found but in Him? Christ not only supplies the necessities of His people, but He gives them abundant and superabundant joy in the luxuries of His Grace. You do not really preach the Gospel if you leave Christ out—if He is omitted, it is not the Gospel! You may invite men to listen to your message, but you are only inviting them to gaze upon an empty table unless Christ is the very center and substance of all that you set before them!

Hence, it is not at all amazing that, after the glorious Gospel invitations, expostulations and exhortations of the first three verses of this Chapter, we should come, in the 4th verse, to these words—“Behold, I have given HIM.’ I have talked to you about waters, and about wine and milk, and about bread, and about fatness; but, behold, I have given HIM,’ for He is all these—water, wine, milk, bread, fatness. I have spoken to you about ‘an Everlasting Covenant, even the sure mercies of David,’ but I mean HIM, for He is the great Surety of the Covenant and I have given Him for a Covenant of the people.” Beloved, we cannot do without a *personal* Christ. The preacher must preach Him and we must trust in Him,

even in Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Son of God, the one and only Savior of sinners!

The first word in our text, "Behold," reminds us that this is a theme for wonder. It is a matter that calls for attention and admiration. "*Behold, I have given Him.*" Is not this something that is worth admiring? Is not this the great marvel of time—yes, and the miracle of eternity—that God should so love the world as to give His only-begotten Son? I can understand His giving light to a dark world. I can comprehend His giving life, that men might live—but that He should give His beloved Son to be Light and Life to a dark and dead race—that He should give Him to become Incarnate and to take upon Himself the form of a Servant—that He should give Him to be despised and rejected of men and, at last, should give Him up to die—oh, behold! Behold! Behold! This is a sight to gaze upon forever and we do not wonder that the Apostle wrote, "Which things the angels desire to look into."

A part of the wonder concerning Christ consists in the fact that His Father has given Him to the people—"I have given Him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people." Not to you, O kings and princes—not to you, a few aristocrats picked here and there—but, "I have given Him for a Witness to the people." "I have exalted One chosen out of the people." He is the people's Christ, the people's Leader, the people's Friend, the people's King. And the wonder increases when you recollect that the word translated, "people," might be just as accurately rendered, "nations." No doubt the Lord's intention, here, is to refer to the Gentiles—"Behold, I have given Him for a Witness to the Gentiles, a Leader and Commander to the Gentiles"—not to the chosen people, Israel, alone, but even to us, "sinners of the Gentiles," who were outside the favored family of the Jews!

The Gentiles seemed to have been passed by and left to perish. But now, behold this wonder—"more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife." Christ has been given as "a Light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as "the glory of His people Israel" and now, to us, in these far-off isles of the sea, where our forefathers worshipped gods that were no gods, even to us is Jehovah-Jesus preached! And He has come from the courts of God to be to us a Witness, a Leader and a Commander. All glory be to His blessed name! Well does the text say, "Behold," concerning the Giver, the Gift and the persons who receive the Gift. Take care that you pass not by without thought and admiration that which the Holy Spirit commends to your notice by the use of the word, "Behold."

I want you, dear Friends, to look upon Christ's triple Character as it is described in our text. And, first, *we may see Him, here, in three Characters or relationships in which we shall next see three excellencies, demanding from us three duties, and ensuring three benefits.*

I. First, then, let us, with believing eyes, SEE OUR LORD IN THREE CHARACTERS OR RELATIONSHIPS. First, He is a Witness for the Father. Secondly, He is a Leader for His saved people. And, thirdly, He is a Commander for those who, as yet, are not saved, of whom the next verse

says, "You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that knew not You shall run unto You."

Well, then, first, our blessed Lord, to whom be all honor and reverence, is *a Witness for the Father*—a Witness concerning the Father. We would never have known what God was like if it had not been that "the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." God was pleased to reveal Himself, to some extent, in types and emblems under the old Law of God, yet very little of Him was known in that way. The request of Thomas, "Lord, show us the Father," would still be the request of men if Christ had not made Him known to us. He came to show us the Father, for He that has seen Christ has seen the Father! If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus! Would you know what God thinks? Then, read what Jesus thinks! Would you know how God feels? Behold how Jesus feels! Would you know, in fact, as much of the Character of God as can possibly be revealed to men? You need not look upon the green fields and swelling floods in the hope of seeing God in His works—but study the Character of Christ, for there you have the fullness of the Godhead so manifested that it can be understood, as far as it is possible, by the finite mind. It is God in human flesh—Emmanuel, God With Us—whom you must study if you would know God!

And, oh, if, indeed, I do see God in Christ, then, what a blessed God He is to me! For who would not love Jesus? Even those who have denied His Deity have been fascinated by the beauty of His Character. Surely, everyone who has ever read the Gospels of the four Evangelists, must have been enraptured with their biographies of the Christ of God! What a matchless Character His was! Just and good, honest and tender, full of mental power and energy, yet all the while like a holy child—was there ever anything so unique as the life of Christ?

Nor is Christ merely the Witness concerning God's Character, but He is also a Witness concerning God's bearings toward us. How does God feel with regard to His rebellious creatures? Will He destroy them in His anger, or is He ready to restore them to His favor if they repent? Has He gracious feelings toward them? This is a question which might well subdue the whole world to a solemn hush until it was answered. But Christ has come to answer it—His very coming answers it. The angels thought so, for they came with Him and they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Their song clearly meant that, now, God delight in mercy! He has opened His stores of love to the unthankful and the undeserving. Since Jesus Christ has come to die that sinners might live, and to live again that sinners might not die, it becomes certain that God's bearing towards man is not that of wrath and indignation—of stern severity which refuses to accept the penitent—but that all is mercy, all is Grace and that Christ is the Witness that it is so! True, His death, as the Substitute for His people, revealed the Justice of God, but it also showed us how even Justice could no longer refuse that Mercy should have sway since all its demands had been satisfied by the great Sacrifice of Christ. So Christ is the Witness to us of how the Father feels towards the sons of men.

And He also came to be a Witness of another matter, namely, that God has set up a Kingdom among the sons of men. That was a faithful and true Witness of Christ when He said, "My Kingdom is not of this world"—witnessing a good confession before Pontius Pilate and, while claiming that He was a King, revealing the true Character of His reign. There is a *spiritual* Kingdom set up in the world and it comprises those who are born-again to a spiritual life, enlisted under spiritual laws, to serve God, who is a Spirit, and who must be served in spirit and in truth. Christ came to tell us all this. Do we know anything about it? He has told us how to enter that Kingdom—have we entered it? "You must be born-again," He said to Nicodemus, for, "except a man be born-again, He cannot see the Kingdom of God." "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." There is no way of entrance into the Kingdom of Divine Grace except by regeneration! And Jesus Christ is the Witness of that great Truth of God!

Having many things to say to you, I cannot fully describe the office of Christ as a Witness for the Father—that would be a sufficient theme for a whole discourse—and for many discourses. But I may briefly say that whatever Christ has taught concerning any Truth of God which has to do with our salvation, is His Witness upon that point. And if we want to know the truth about anything, we must go to Christ to learn it. If we want to know how we may be reconciled to God and effectually saved, we must sit at the feet of Jesus Christ and receive His testimony, for He is the Witness for the Father in all that affects our relationship to Him.

The second office of Christ mentioned in the text is *that of a Leader to His own people*. The word, "Leader," might be rendered, "the Foremost," and truly, beloved Brothers and Sisters, Christ is the Foremost of all His people—the Standard-Bearer among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. Christ is in the forefront of the whole army of the faithful. He leads the van. There is none like He among the sons of men, and none to be compared with Him. We delight to accord to Him His rightful pre-eminence in all things. In the Church of God, Jesus Christ is the Leader because His life is the perfect example of practical holiness. First, He is God's Witness revealing to us the Truth of God. Then, next, He is our Example, working out the practical part of that revelation in His own life. He who would be saved, then, must follow the lead of Christ. He who is saved does, by the help of the Divine Spirit, follow that lead. Wherever you see His footprint, there put down your foot. Wherever He bids you go, there go. Though the way may be rough, and treading it may cost you much self-denial, you must go that way, for the God who gave you Christ to save you, gave Him to you, not merely to enlighten your intellect as a Witness, but to affect your life as a Leader and Example. Have we accepted Him in both capacities? I know some who seem willing to take Christ for their Leader, but not as a Witness to the Truth. That will not do. "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder." I know others who are willing to follow Christ doctrinally, but not practically. They would accept Him as a Witness, but not as a Leader. That, also, will not do. A half-Christ is no Christ at all! You must have Christ as a whole and

take Him in all the Characters and relationships in which God gives Him to you, or you cannot have Him at all.

The third Character our Lord bears, according to our text, is that of *Commander*. There may be many meanings given to that title, but it seems to me that it must relate mainly to those of His people who are not yet saved. To them, He is a Commander. To them He issues laws as a Law-Giver, for such is also the sense of the term. What are the Laws which He has given? They are all in this blessed Book, but these are some of them. "Repent you, and believe the Gospel." "Come unto Me." "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me." "Go you," He says to His servants, "into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." This message is to be delivered to men, not as a request to them to do it if they will, but as a *command* from Christ which, if they obey, He has said that they shall be saved. But if they disobey it, He has declared that they shall be damned. I am afraid that sometimes we pitch the Gospel note in much too low a key—I like to reach the higher key, for I believe it to be the right one. In the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we say to you, O sons and daughters of men—you are to believe in Him, to trust Him, to rely upon His atoning death and so to take Him to be your Savior! If you will not do so, you will justly be condemned! But if you will do as He commands you, you shall be saved. The moment you have believed in Him and yielded to His Divine authority, you are, in fact, saved! But this royal proclamation must not be despised or neglected, for, "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

But I think there is more in this title of Christ than the mere fact of His making the Law and bidding us publish it abroad in His name. He is also a Commander because He has power to enforce His proclamations. He calls a nation that knew Him not and then they learn to know Him. He invites them and then they run to Him. There is never a sinner who comes to Christ till Christ calls him and makes him come. We are bound to preach the Gospel to every creature, but sinners unanimously reject the command till Christ effectually calls them by His Grace! But when He calls them, then they come to Him. Oh, it is delightful to think that if the preacher's voice is powerless, His Master's voice is not! If He will but speak, and say to the careless soul, "Turn from your wicked way, and begin to think," you shall see the careless one become thoughtful and repent of his sin and trust his Savior! If He shall find some Zacchaeus, and say to him, "Today I must abide at your house," He will abide at that house! If, tonight, Christ must go through Newington Butts—as it was written, "He must needs go through Samaria"—He will find some woman who little thought that she would ever meet with Him, and she shall afterwards say, as did that other woman, "Come see a Man, who told me all things that I ever did: is not this the Christ?" If there were no Divine Power over the will of man, no man would ever be saved. If, the Gospel being preached, it were left to men to accept it or reject it—and there were no exercise of Divine Power to lead them to receive it, we might preach our tongues out, we might weep our eyes out, we might pray till

our knees refused any longer to bear us up—but never a soul would come to Christ! But He is set forth, first, as a Witness to the Truth of God. Next, as an Example, setting that Truth before us in His life and then, further, clothed with Divine Authority and girt about with Almighty Power, making the Truth to be effectual so that men come to Him, and live! Witness, Leader, Commander—you see the range and compass of our great Master's work. God grant us Grace to accept Him in all three relationships!

II. Now, secondly, I am to speak briefly upon THE THREE EXCELLENCIES OF CHRIST IN CONNECTION WITH THESE THREE OFFICES.

First, is Christ a Witness? Then He is a true Witness. There are no falsehoods or mistakes in the Witness which Christ bears concerning His Father. He is intimately acquainted with the Father, for He came forth from the Father and, therefore, His testimony is wholly reliable. That which He had seen and heard of the Father, even that He made known to us. There is no possibility of the entrance of any error into the mind of Christ—all His utterances are Infallible Truths of God, for the Spirit of God was upon Him and in Him without measure. It is a trite saying, but a very comforting one, that whenever Christ speaks a good word to a sinner, He speaks according to the mind of His Father. Whenever He promises rest and peace, and pardon, to those that come unto Him, He promises all this in His Father's name and on His Father's behalf. So, if you have laid hold of Christ, you have not grasped a sham or a counterfeit. It is all true—in fact, He is the Truth of God as well as the Way and the Life! He will never deceive you, or mislead you—you can be sure of that!

We, His poor servants, make many a blunder in speaking of Him, but even the Jewish officers had to confess, "Never man spoke like this Man." He never makes a mistake in anything that He says, so if He lets fall any word that just suits your case and if you have caught hold of it, and lived upon it, let no one rob you of the consolation, for it is true! Jesus Christ is "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness." When He was upon the earth, He used to often say, "Verily, verily, I say unto you," because He knew that He was speaking the truth and you may be quite sure of it, too. We have had many who have called themselves God's witnesses, but we have had to question the truth of their testimony. Sometimes one of these witnesses has given the lie to another—and when the witnesses disagree, who is to decide between them? But Jesus Christ's witness is never self-contradictory. It is true throughout and he that will sit at His feet and drink in what Christ has spoken, has learned the Truth of God which he will never have to unlearn! He has laid hold of the substance—and not of a shadow.

Then, next, if our Lord is a Leader, He has, in that capacity, the quality of *holiness*. God has given Him to lead His people and you may safely follow wherever He leads you. Brothers and Sisters, be quite sure of this—Christ will never lead you into any sin and He will never conduct you into any folly, or error, or mistake. In His highest moods, Christ is never fanatical—and in His lowest He is never unbelieving. He meets with sinners of all sorts and even with publicans and harlots—yet there is no

one more pure than He is at all times! He gets away alone, but it is not in order that He may act the part of the cynic and skeptic, but that, there, He may commune with His Father and pray for both saints and sinners. If you will follow Him in His silence or in His speech—if you will follow Him in His honor or in His dishonor—if you will follow Him in private or in public, in His thoughts or in His words, you will never go amiss! Perfect holiness is written across the whole biography of the Son of Man. So, what a mercy it is that if we have a Witness, it is all the Truth of God that He speaks! And if we have a Leader, His leadership conducts us to perfect holiness and, therefore, we may gladly follow Him!

Then, further, if He is a Commander, which is the third Character mentioned in our text, you see Divine Power in Him. It is no use having a commander-in-chief who issues proclamations, but who has neither wit nor wisdom in the day of battle! It is no use having for a chieftain, one who knows nothing of war, and who, in the hour of conflict, is driven away like chaff before the wind. But, Beloved, if Christ is a Commander, there is no fear that we shall be defeated if we obey His orders. The strongest battalions are the battalions of God! The greatest force in all the world is the force of truth and righteousness! Men have not usually thought so, for fraud and plunder, cruelty and bloodshed have been the agents by which earthly monarchs have sought to win their victories. But the Lord has kept His great guns in the rear though He will bring them to the front, some day, and then it shall be seen that the might is with the right, for the Truth of God, love, Divine Grace and holiness shall be proven to have in them an Omnipotence before which all the powers of darkness and of sin shall fall defeated or fly confounded!

It is a grand thing, in time of battle, to have a commander who knows how to lead. When Oliver Cromwell came into the field, the Ironsides felt that his presence was worth more to them than that of ten thousand ordinary soldiers—and every man became a hero then! When Henry of Navarre rode down the French lines before the battle of Ivry, the courage of every warrior rose as he fastened on his white-plumed helmet and said to them, “Yonder is the enemy! Here is your king. God is on our side. Should you lose your standards in the battle, rally round my plume—you will always find it on the path of victory and honor.” Alas, his later history proved that this was an empty boast, for he became unfaithful to the faith, yet it availed to inspire his followers on that occasion. But our great King, when He comes to the front, as soon He will—when He comes to the front by His Spirit, as even now He does—gives courage to the coward and strength to the weak! And He makes each one among us, who treats Him as He should be treated—with implicit confidence—to feel that we shall conquer through His might!

So, you see, we have three grand excellencies in our Lord Jesus Christ. As a Witness, we have the Truth of God. As a Leader, we have holiness. And as a Commander, we have power. Physical, mental, moral, *spiritual* power—all this is in Christ, for He could truly say, “All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth.” And, therefore, He is a Com-

mander whose orders we may delight to obey, for He will certainly lead us to victory!

III. Very solemnly, though very briefly, I want to refer to the third division of my subject, which is that THESE RELATIONSHIPS AND EXCELLENCIES DEMAND FROM US THREE DUTIES.

Is Christ a true Witness? Then, *believe Him*. Generally, in this house, I speak to persons who believe in the Bible—who believe, therefore, in the Deity of Christ and who believe also in the Truth of all that Christ spoke. But, my dear Hearers, some of you are very inconsistent, for, while you believe all this, you do not believe in Jesus Himself! I mean that you do not trust Him as your Savior, which is the practical way of believing in Him. You may believe every Word in the Bible and yet be lost—it is *trusting Christ alone* that will save you! Now, if all that is in this Bible is true—and you say that it is, from the time when you were at your mother's knee, you believed it to be true—then, why do you believe it only with your brain? Believe it with your heart, “for with the heart man believes unto righteousness.” He who wishes to cross a river and who believes in the stability of the bridge that spans it, crosses by the bridge. Do you believe in Christ's ability to carry you over the river of Death and to take you to Heaven? Then, trust Him to do it! He who believes in the genuineness of gold will take it if it is offered to him. You say that you believe in the Truthfulness of Christ—then trust Him as your Savior!

The only way to have Christ is to take Him as your own—to accept Him. Some people seem to fancy that faith in Jesus is something very wonderful and mysterious—and they try to go round thousands of miles to get at it—but the Scripture says, “The Word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.” What does a man do, if he is hungry, and there is bread set before him? Does he begin to analyze it and see how many grains of this and how many of that there are in it? He may do so if he pleases, but that will not feed him! The greatest chemical analyst in the world is not one single inch ahead of the poorest child in the matter of feeding. If he will live by bread, he must eat it, and the poor beggar boy can do the same. He puts it into his mouth, lets it go down into his inmost being and so forms part of himself! Now, this is all you have to do in order to be saved!

Dear Hearer, you are bothering yourself about feeling this and feeling that, and going about trying to experience this wonderful sensation and the other. All this is folly, or something worse! Will you trust Christ, or not? God sets Him forth to bear Witness to His Truth—will you believe Him who is the Truth? That is, will you take Christ to be your Savior? His Word says that the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all—the context shows that it is His own people who are meant—and that He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Will you believe that it is so? Will you just take Christ as God gives Him? That is all you have to do! God says, “I have given Him.” What is the proper sequel to that? “Lord, I

take Him! If you have given Him as Witness, Leader, Commander, Lord, I take Him as Witness, Leader, Commander, and I am only too glad to have Him in all those capacities. 'Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief!'"

Next, the Lord Jesus is set forth as Leader. What is the duty arising out of that? If He is a Leader and holiness is the mark of His leadership, then, let us imitate Him! Christ will not blot out your sins in the past unless you are willing to be cured of the love of sin in the present and, of the pursuit of sin in the future! Are you willing, you who have been given to drunkenness, to be cured of the desire to drink as well as forgiven for your drunkenness? If your tongue has spoken that which is not true, do you wish to be made truthful, in the future, as well as to be forgiven the lies of the past? You who have been forgetful of God, and hard-hearted towards Him—are you as anxious to have new hearts and right spirits as you are to be saved from going down to Hell? You ought to be, for sin is the very essence of Hell—the eternal fire is a heart burning with iniquity! The worm that dies not is a conscience that shall forever torture the immortal spirit on account of its rebellion against God! We must be willing to be like Christ if we wish to be saved by Christ. He has not come to excuse or palliate human sin—He saves His people *from their sins*. He, who becomes to us our salvation from the punishment of sin, also becomes our salvation from the power of sin! Are you willing, then, to imitate Him—to live, as far as you can, as He lived—to be led by His Spirit? It should be so. If God gave Him to that end, let us take Him to that end.

Then, if He is a Commander, what does He require of us? Why, *obedience*, of course. There is an end to military power altogether if there is no discipline. Soldiers must obey their officers' orders. Then, if God gives Christ to be a Commander, the question is, are you willing to obey Him? Do you know of anything that has been said by Christ? Then, there must be no question about that—it must be obeyed by us. If we have trusted Christ to save us, it is not becoming for us to reason and argue, and question about it—the only enquiry we have to make is, "Is that the plain message of the Master?" Then, like the 600 who rode into the valley of death, it is—

***"Ours not to reason why,
Ours not to make reply,
Ours but to dare and die,"***

if so it must be—not turning to this book or that, but only to God's Book—"to the Law and to the Testimony"—not looking to this religious leader or that, but always to the King, Himself, the Captain of our salvation, the Christ of God. Thus it must be with us if we are His true followers.

Now, my dear Hearer, very earnestly do I put this question to you—Are you seeking in all things to obey Christ? There are great numbers of professing Christians who never think about whether a thing has Christ's sanction or not. If man has ordained it—if the denomination practices it—if it has the stamp of the bishop upon it and, especially, if it is fixed by the High Court of Parliament, which is a wonderful authority in matters of religion, then they yield to it. But true Christians care nothing for

all the high courts under Heaven—they go by the Laws of the highest Court of all—the Word of the Lord Jesus—the will of the Most High God, for, in the Church of Christ there is but one Head, and that is Christ. To us, there is but one Master, and one Law-Giver—and that is the great Son of David—and His will we will do, and before His scepter we will bow. And unto no one else will we yield obedience in this matter—no, not for an hour!

What is that which brings men to Christ's Church sooner than anything else in the whole world? It is the Presence of Christ Himself. Today the only true and worthy attraction which the Church has for the world is Christ's Cross. We may gather people together, if we please, by fine sermons and gorgeous dresses. We may charm their ears with sweet music, but when we have done so, what have we accomplished more than might be done in the theater or the music hall? And even if we delight their nostrils with the smell of incense and their eyes with an abundance of flowers, what have we done more than could have been accomplished by the chemist or the florist? The real attraction of the Church is Christ Crucified, according to His own saying, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." And when the charms of everything else shall have faded and passed away, the charms of Christ will be as fresh as ever!

The spouse said of Him, in the Song of Solomon, "His locks are bushy and black as a raven." But, in the Book of the Revelation, John speaks of Him as having His head and His hairs white like wool, as white as snow! The one symbolizes His antiquity—the other, His perennial youth—for He is always young, always strong, always beautiful, always attractive and, if the Church will but preach Christ, she will always have the best attraction for the ears and for the hearts of men that even God Himself could send down here below!

So, Beloved, I put it to you—Christ being true, do you believe Him? Christ being holy, do you imitate Him? Christ being clothed with Divine Authority and Power, do you obey Him? May those questions sink into your souls—and may you be able to answer each one of them in the affirmative!

IV. For, lastly, there are THREE BENEFITS WHICH WILL BE SECURED BY THE PERFORMANCE OF THESE DUTIES.

The first is this. If you believe Christ, "the faithful and true Witness," then you have this benefit—*you have certainty as to what you believe*, and that is something that is worth having! The other day a gentleman uttered to another a skeptical expression which is very common just now. Many men seem to think it is a sign of great wisdom not to believe anything at all. When he had made his skeptical remark, the other pretty sharply rebuked him by saying, "Now, look here, I must believe something! And I would sooner believe in Jupiter and Juno than be as you are and believe nothing, at all." So would I, but, blessed be God, we have no need to believe in fabled deities, for we have the God of Truth and the Truth of God in which we may always safely believe! Whenever you can say, concerning any matter, "Jesus says such-and-such," do not you stir

an inch from that! Stand there, for you are safe enough on such a rock as that!

I do not wonder that Roman Catholics wanted infallibility, but I do wonder that they ever believed the Pope had it—especially the last one—who made more blunders than almost anybody else who ever lived! Poor soul, how could he ever imagine himself to be Infallible? If he had but been married, he would have known better, I am quite sure, but, perhaps living all alone, and quietly, in his big palace, he may have thought himself so, but it was a grave mistake. Still, we must have infallibility somewhere. The Romanist has his infallibility in the Pope—where have I mine? In Christ, for, whatever He said is Infallibly true! And I also have Infallibility in this Book. If anything is but in the Bible, I never for a single moment think of questioning it. Miracles? Strong historical statements? I believe them all! I can almost go as far as the old woman who said that she not only believed that the whale swallowed Jonah, but that if the Bible had said that Jonah swallowed the whale, she would have believed it! It says nothing of the kind, but I would go even to that length if it were a clear, positive statement of the Scriptures.

This is my Master's Book and I accept it all. I say, sometimes, that there are things in it that I do not understand, but then I do not need to understand everything. I do not see what good it does to have such a wonderful understanding. I would sooner not understand some things, because it gives me the more reason to show reverence to my God by believing what I cannot comprehend. If I could comprehend God, He would not be a God to me. If I could understand all that He tells me, I would feel sure that He had either left something out of His Revelation, or that there must be some mistake, somewhere, for the Infinite things of God cannot be grasped by finite beings!

There, then, is our Infallibility. Some have gone off to bold blatant infidelity in order to get something sure. And others have turned to Popery in the attempt to get something sure, but as for us, we cast our anchor down where the Cross stands above the surging billows—and there we rest! Christ says, "I am the Truth." We believe that, and we take every Word He says as being Infallibly true, and so we secure absolute certainty. That is a great thing to have in these unsettled times—and a comfortable thing to have in these disturbed times. It is a very practical benefit, too, for when we have once thoroughly made up our mind upon any point, we can say, "That is so. Now we do not need to keep on bothering and questioning about that matter and we can go on with our work—and also seek to make advances in the Divine life." So, the first benefit we secure is that of certainty.

Then, secondly, if Jesus Christ is our Example and we imitate Him, the next benefit that we obtain is *safety*. The way of holiness is always the path of safety. When a man is in the wrong, he is in danger. When he is doing wrong, his conscience generally tells him that he is in some kind of peril. If you and I were perfectly holy, we must, necessarily, be perfectly happy unless we voluntarily put aside that happiness for the good of others. And even the putting of it aside would not involve our altogether

losing it, for I do not doubt that Christ was perfectly happy even when He was, Himself, “a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief,” and that He found an intense under-current of delight in laying aside His own joy for our sakes. Brothers and Sisters, if you are right all round, you are safe all round. There cannot be any power that can hurt the man who has become right in his relationships with God, with time, with eternity, with all things! Not even evil can injure the man who is perfectly holy, for it finds nothing in him on which it can operate. It strikes its sparks, but there is no tinder to ignite. It hurls its darts and shoots its arrows, but the man is cased in triple steel and the points of the barbed shafts cannot pierce his armor. Happy, then, is the man who follows the leadership of Christ. Following the Lamb wherever He goes, he may go to his bed and rest, for he dwells under the wings of the Eternal. He may go forth into the midst of the world without fear, for neither the arrow that flies by day, nor the snare which is placed in secret, shall be able to hurt him, for the Lord covers him all the daylong!

The last blessing that comes to us is *victory*, for, if Christ is our Commander and He has all power and we obey Him, then victory is sure and every human heart loves to get the victory. The dying General Wolfe, when he heard those round him say, “They run,” anxiously asked who they were that ran. And when they said, “The enemy,” he could close his eyes in peace. I have no doubt that the dying Admiral, Lord Nelson, rejoiced when he knew that Trafalgar was won. Only let a man know that in the low and carnal sense, he is to be a victor, and his spirit is revived. But what will it be to hear the exultant shouts when we shall be passing into the next world? “Victory! Victory! Victory through the blood of the Lamb!” How awful would it be to hear that dreadful dirge, “The last fight has been fought and the campaign is lost forever.” Will that happen to any of you? Not if Christ is the Captain of your salvation and you are one of the rank and file of His army! But dying and, by faith even now living, you may hear the triumphant shout, “The battle is fought and the victory is won forever! From now on enter into the joy of your Lord and rest in Him, world without end!” The Lord bring us all there, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—720, 372, 236.

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**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 20, 1884.**

*“Behold, I have given Him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people. Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that knew not You shall run unto You because of the LORD Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You. Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.”
Isaiah 55:4-6.*

We are met together with two objectives. First, there is the preacher's objective, that is, to set forth and to proclaim the blessings of the Covenant of Grace. It is my duty and it is my delight to stand here and cry, “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money, come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” Then, there is the objective of the hearers—oh, that everyone here were heartily in pursuit of it! No, what is even better, I would that everyone here might *attain* this objective, for it is that you may feed upon the blessed Covenant provisions mentioned in our text. If there is water, my Brothers and Sisters, let us drink it! If there is wine and milk, let us be satisfied with it. Let us pray that every soul in this place may even now delight itself in fatness!

You who have already partaken of the provisions of the Covenant, receive them again! Come once more to the table which the Lord's Grace has so richly spread. You have a daily hunger—let that hunger be again appeased. Your appetite grows if you are in good spiritual health—come, then, and let the appetite be again satisfied! If you do, it will grow again, and again you will want still more of the same heavenly food, for you will still hunger—blessedly hunger—after the royal dainties which the Lord has so bountifully provided for you! And oh, that some here, who have never feasted on the luxuries of true godliness, might get a taste of them while I am talking about them! It is my design to speak very plainly—not to try to say anything of my own, but just to set forth the Master's words, explaining them and making them as clear as I can, that all who run may read, and yet speaking of them so earnestly that those who read may straightway run!

Why do we come to our places of worship? What is the objective of our Sunday gatherings? Surely not merely to hear a man talk and then to go

away and ourselves talk about that talk! But this is a place of heavenly business where something real is to be done! Where men are to be lifted into a higher life and where those who as yet have not been quickened may come and receive that life! I pray that some may receive it this very hour! Time is flying. Death is near. Eternity is close at hand. It is time that we should be in earnest about these things if we have trifled up to now! It is time that we should come to a right and wise decision and partake of what God has so graciously provided! Without any further preface, I bid you notice that the three verses of my text speak of *a Divine gift*, *a Divine promise* and *a Divine exhortation*. These will be the three divisions of my subject.

I. First, here is A DIVINE GIFT—"Behold, I have given Him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people." We are not now talking about payments or about what people deserve—the Gospel and all that it brings must be regarded as a *gift*. Men rightly say that there is nothing freer than a gift and, truly, there is nothing freer than the free gift of God! What is that Divine gift of which our text speaks?

Well, first, the *Father has given His Son*. The words I have just spoken are very simple, but there is an infinite meaning in them. So great is sin, so tremendous is evil as to be unfathomable. So great is the ruin which sin has brought upon us that it is truly indescribable! And equally great, yes, even greater is the Remedy for the evil! He who made all things and who fills all things, willed not that we should perish and, therefore, He must give a redemption price to ransom us out of bondage. He must provide a Sacrifice to take away our guilt and, to do this, He gave His Son. He had but one, His Well-Beloved, equal with Himself, and One with Himself in all things. Yet He gave us His Son! What if I say He gave us Himself? That is also true, for there is such a mysterious Unity between the Father and the Son that, in giving the Son, the Father gave us Himself! Oh, listen, then, you who are lost in sin, and seem to be helpless! Must there not be hope for you when such a gift as this is given? Not simply, mark you, a gift of Grace, or a gift of love, or a gift of power, but the gift of the Godhead's own Self, the gift of all there is in Him of whom we read, It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." "Behold," says the Father, "I have given Him."

When Isaiah wrote those words, they could not be read quite as clearly as you and I can read them, for now, holding up this Scripture to the light of the Cross, and reading it by the lamps of those five wounds, I can see a marvelous meaning in it—"I have given Him." Yes, the Father has given a Redemption for the bond-slave! He has given a Sacrifice for the guilty! He has given His Son! The words in which I speak of this great fact are very simple and they may seem very poverty-stricken, but the Truth of God, itself, is such as made the angels stand in amazement! All Heaven was bewildered with wonder that God, the Infinite, should give His Son for poor, sinful, dying worms like ourselves! It seemed too much to give—the infinitely-holy God to die for guilty sinners! The everlasting

and eternal Son of God to suffer that His feeble, finite creatures might not perish!

And if it is a wonder that God the Father should give His Son, it is an equal wonder that *the Son consented to be given*. The Father said, "I have given Him," yet it is equally true of the Son, "He loved me, and *gave Himself* for me." The Father's gift was no violation of the will of the Son, but the Son said, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart." Oh, to think that Jesus should give Himself for you and for me! To take our nature, to descend from Heaven to the manger was a great stoop—but to take our sin, to come down from the Throne of Glory to the Cross of Calvary was a still greater proof of His condescending love!

Oh, think of this, Beloved! He so completely gave Himself that He gave to us His Deity and His Humanity—His soul and His body, His life and His death—and though He is now risen from the dead, He still gives Himself to us, for He has never recalled the gift He once bestowed! And this is the very glory of His gift—that He is still ours by a constant gift of Himself to us! Clutch at this blessed Truth of God, you despairing ones! God has given His Son and the Son has given Himself and if, by an act of faith, you trust Him, He is at once yours! And He is yours forever. What more can you possibly need?

In this fourth verse, we also have *the purposes of this gift avowed*. "I have given Him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people." First, Christ is given for a *Witness*. What does that mean?

Surely, Christ is given, first, to show us what God is. If you want to know what God is, study the life of Christ, for Jesus said, "He that has seen Me, has seen the Father." In Christ, the Godhead shines, as it were, through a merciful medium, so that the excessive Glory of the Deity is toned down to meet the weakness of our poor minds, lest we should be blinded by the ineffable splendor! God in human flesh is a Witness to human flesh of what God is.

Next, Christ is a Witness in this sense—that He bears His testimony to us concerning the Father's will, the Father's love and the Father's Grace. He declares what He has seen in secret of the Father's purposes of mercy, so that what He testifies, He speaks not of Himself, but what He has seen with the Father, that He declares unto us. He is the Witness of what God is and of what God has done for us. His name is put to the Everlasting Covenant in many ways—as the Surety of it, and as a Partner in it, but also as a Witness to it. He bears witness to us that in His Person, God has entered into covenant with men, saying to them, "Inasmuch as you have broken the first Covenant of Works and now cannot possibly keep it, I have made another and a better Covenant. Christ has undertaken to magnify My Law and to satisfy My Justice. And I have undertaken to save all those whom I have given to Him." And Jesus bears witness that it is so! He is, Himself, the Pledge and Seal of the Covenant! I am so glad that I have not to talk with an invisible, impalpable God who has never been seen of man—it seems too much for one, veiled in human

flesh, to be able to speak with the unseen Jehovah, the God who is a Spirit! But I *can* speak to the Man, Christ Jesus. I feel now that I have Mediator, one of a thousand, who can lay His hands upon both parties to the Covenant because He belongs to both of us, and is both God and Man. My heart rejoices as I behold God in human flesh, the Witness for God to the people! O poor Sinners, be glad, be glad! God has given His dear Son to bear witness to you that He wills that you should be saved, that He is able to save you without a violation of His Justice, that He is willing to save you, and willing to save you now, if you will but trust His Son!

Our text also tells us that the Father gives Christ, not only as a Witness, but as *a Leader and a Commander*. That is just what we need! Men in any country where they are greatly oppressed, sigh for a leader. “Grant a leader bold and brave,” is the prayer that has gone up from many a down-trodden nation. Well, the Lord has appointed His Son to be a Leader and a Commander, and if we will but yield to Him, to be led by Him, to be commanded by Him, He will lead us safely. He will lead us on to victory and to conquest—and Heaven, itself, shall be ours in due time! He who puts himself under this Leader shall go forth conquering and to conquer. He shall war against his sin and win the day. He shall fight against the devil and overcome him by the blood of the Lamb! He shall do battle with Death, itself, and be more than a conqueror over the last enemy! I would to God that as I speak some of you would say, “Christ is given as a Leader and a Commander, therefore we will enlist beneath His banner. Henceforth, the Son of David, the Son of God, shall be both Leader and Commander to us.” Happy, happy, happy day for you and for all of whom that shall be true!

Now notice who are *the persons thus favored*. To whom is the Lord Jesus given as a Witness and a Leader and Commander? Twice we are told that it is to the people—“A Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people.” I have known some people sneer at “the common people.” Ah, yes, but it was the common people who gladly heard Christ, and it is for the people that He died! “I,” says God, “have exalted One chosen out of the people.” The Lord Jesus Christ is the Christ of common people! If any of you are so high and mighty that you must go to Heaven fashionably, you will be lost! The unfashionable way to Heaven, by trusting in Jesus Christ, is the *only* way that will take you there. He is the people’s Witness, the people’s Leader, the people’s Commander!

That means, does it not, that He is the Leader and Commander of a great host, not merely of a select few? Perhaps you have read about us poor Calvinists—what a wretched, miserable sect we are—how we are always trying to keep salvation to ourselves and how we believe that only a very few will ever be saved! Put all that down among the lies that our enemies tell about us! It is not true and it never was true, for there are no people under Heaven who are more anxious that all men should be saved than are we who believe that, nevertheless, the Lord has a people whom He will save. Our hearts, we trust, are full of love to men, despite

all that is said about us. It is my hope that the Lord Jesus Christ will save so many, that at the last, those who are lost will bear no greater proportion to the whole mass of mankind than do the persons in prison to the multitudes that are outside of it in any well-ordered state!

“There will have to be a great change,” says somebody, “to bring *that* about.” Yes, there *will be* a great change! There are glorious times yet coming, notwithstanding all that tends to the contrary! There is a day to dawn when the Lord Jesus shall be acknowledged as King of Kings and Lord of Lords and, “He shall reign forever and ever”—and the overwhelming multitudes of His redeemed shall prove that He is not the Witness and Leader and Commander to a miserable few, a mere handful—but that He is Witness and Leader and Commander to the people! In all things He shall have the pre-eminence.

“To the people.” Then, surely, that means all sorts of people? It does. Our Lord is a Leader and Commander to all classes and conditions of men! Kings may follow Him if they will. And peasants and paupers *do* follow Him in great multitudes! He is willing to receive the lost and the low, the poorest of the poor. He is willing to lift up the most sunken. “Whoever will,” He says, “let Him take the water of life freely.” He is a Leader and a Commander to the people! Then follow Him, my Friend, obey Him! You never thought of doing so, before, but may God’s Grace move you to say, “If He is a Leader and Commander to the people, I am one of them, and I will go with Him. He shall be my Leader and my Commander.” If it is really so with you, Heaven shall be yours! Christ will bring you to Heaven and you shall bring glory to His name forever and ever as you bless and praise Him who has saved you by His Grace!

So much, then, upon the Divine Gift—God has given His own Son to be a Savior to men, and Christ has given Himself to be a Witness, and Leader, and Commander! Oh, that none of us may refuse Him, but may all accept Him as God’s Gift to us!

II. The second thing in our text is A DIVINE PROMISE made to this Leader and Commander.

It is, first, a promise *to call those whom He does not know*. “Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not.” That must be a strange nation, must it not, which Christ does not know? There will be people at the last to whom Christ will say, “I never knew you.” And there are such people, now, whom Christ has never known in this sense. He never spoke with them, He never heard their voice in prayer, He never heard their hearts cry to Him, He never had anything to do with them. He never knew them by mutual acquaintance. And there are nations of this kind of people. I might almost say that there is a nation of this sort in London whom Christ does not know—millions with whom He has had no dealings at all! They never come near His courts, they do not recognize His day, they scarcely even know His name. What a promise this is to Christ—“You shall call a nation that You know not!” The people are so far sunk in sin that it seems as if Christ, Himself, never knew them!

Did you ever cross the threshold of a house—or if not of a whole house, perhaps of one room—where there was a number of persons herded together in poverty and misery? Drunkenness was there, vice was there, filth was there. Perhaps you were the first visitor who ever went there upon an errand of mercy and you said to yourself, “What a dreadful place this is! Surely, the blessed Savior has never been here, there is no trace of His footprints here.” I think it is a most blessed thing that the Father should say to Christ, “You shall call this sort of people.” Such degraded and sinful men and women as these are yet to be called and yet to be saved! Oh, be of good courage, you who try to labor in the very worst parts of London—or, for that matter, in the worst parts of Africa, or wherever you may go! The people may seem to be so far gone in sin and degradation that even the great Lover of Souls does not know them, yet the promise is that He shall call them—and call them effectually—and they shall come unto Him!

The next part of the promise declares that Christ is to *make run those who do not know Him*—“and nations that knew not You shall run unto You.” People who did not know anything about Christ and who did not want to know about Him, shall, all of a sudden, hear of Him, and they shall run to Him! I have often noticed that when such people do come to Christ, they always *run* to Him. I hope that some of you who have been hearing me for many years, will yet come to Christ though you have long stayed away from Him. And if you do, it will be, with you, pretty much as it was with the snail that got into the ark! I think he must have started very early to be able to get in before the door was shut, for he traveled so slowly. And you hearers of the Gospel who have grown accustomed to it, are as slow in coming to Christ as some boys are when they are going to school. But when a man has never heard the Gospel and, at last, somebody has induced him to come in and sit in the aisle, or in a back seat, it is all so new to him that he begins talking to himself about it. “Christ died for the guilty? I have only to trust Him and my sins shall be pardoned, and I shall be saved?” He jumps at the idea! It is the very thing he needs and he grasps it at once! He is saved in a moment and he rejoices with a joy unspeakable in the Christ whom he has found in the space of half-an-hour—while others have for years been hearing in vain the glad tidings of salvation! “Nations that knew not You shall run unto You.”

Do you notice how God talks here? He speaks like a God! Who is this that says, “They *shall*”? someone asks. “Man has a free will, has he not?” Yes, and God has a free will, too, and when these two come into conflict, it is *God’s* free will that wins the day! Man will do what God wills that man shall do—the will of the Eternal shall get the victory over the poor transient human will! When I come to preach in this pulpit, I do not say to myself, “Perhaps somebody will make himself willing to be saved.” No, but I think to myself, “I shall have a picked congregation to listen to my Master’s message. The Lord will pick them out and bring the right people to hear His Word and, when I preach it, His Word shall not return unto Him void. Those whom He has determined to bless shall be blessed,

whatever the devil may try to do to the contrary. God will have His way and storm their hearts and carry all before Him.” “Well, but,” asks someone, “you *do* believe in man’s free will, don’t you?” Yes, I do. As much as you do and perhaps more! But I also believe in God’s eternal purpose and in God’s all-conquering will, so that, without violating the will of man, He can still have His own way and He can make this promise true to Christ, “Nations that knew not You shall run unto You because of the LORD Your God.”

Now, lastly on this point, here is a Divine promise *to exert an amazing motive power*. What is it that makes people run to Christ? The text tells us, “Nations that knew not You shall run unto You because of the LORD Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You.” A glorified Christ makes men run to Him! When Christ is glorified in your hearts, dear Friends, you will run to Him! The Son of God, to whom you have been an enemy, nevertheless, out of mighty love, came here, lived, labored and died, giving His whole life away that the ungodly might be saved through Him. Not to gain anything for Himself, but out of sheer pity and abounding love, He passed under His Father’s rod. He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. He suffered anguish even unto death for men’s redemption. And it was the Son of God who did this—God over all blessed forever! Having died, He was buried. He rose again and now all power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth—“Therefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” He can save the drunk, the swearer, the profligate, the 80 year-old sinner steeped up to his neck in filthiness and vice! He is able, with a word, to deliver the most corrupt from the power of sin! He can make the most abandoned pure and chaste, and clean. Through His precious blood, He can save them from all the guilt of their sin and all the power of their sin, and all the penalty of their sin! Yes, and ultimately, from the very existence of their sin, so that even those who were all black from head to foot shall be “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” Oh, that the Holy Spirit would, with one glorious ray, light up the Cross till you could all see it! Oh, for one beam of light to let the sin-bitten see the bronze serpent lifted high! There is life in a look at Christ!

O Friends, I wish that you would all believe this as I say it, for I would say it not only with my lips, but with my heart! It is the best news that mortals did ever tell. Yes, even angels from their glory never descended to earth with a message so sweet as this—Christ is lifted high to be a great Savior of great sinners! Help is laid upon One who is mighty! He sits upon the Throne of God above that He may reign over sinners! He holds the scepter of all worlds that He may stretch it out in mercy towards the guiltiest of the guilty! Only trust Him, fall at His feet in penitence, confess your transgression, ask to be delivered from it, for this is God’s promise to His Son—that you and such as you shall come to Him and, coming to Him, shall be drawn by the fact that He is such a glorious Christ, so every way adapted to your need! God give us Grace to rightly

set forth a glorified Christ! Then shall we soon have saved sinners who have been made to run to Him!

III. And now, finally, the last verse of the text furnishes A DIVINE EXHORTATION. “Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near.”

Notice the connection between verses five and six—“Nations that knew not You shall run unto You.” There is the absolute, unconditional promise. And then the very next verse says, “Seek you the Lord while He maybe found.” There is the unlimited exhortation to men, so that *an exhortation to men is not inconsistent with the strongest Doctrine of Grace*, Yes, more, *the decree of God in no sense renders the effort of man unnecessary*. “Nations shall run unto You,” says the Father to His Son. And when He has said that, He turns round to the nations and He says to them, “Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near.” Salvation is free and it is the gift of God’s Grace, but oh, my Hearer, *you must seek it, you must call upon God for it* and I would, in God’s name, stir you up to seek Him and call upon Him now! Before you go to your bed, seek Him who is ready to be found! Call upon Him who is waiting to hear!

Notice that there is put here *a plea of a very encouraging kind*—“Seek you the Lord *while He may be found*,” that is the Gospel day! “Call you upon Him *while He is near*,” that is Mercy’s day. I believe that in such a congregation as this, when the Gospel is being earnestly preached, there is a kind of propitious interval allowed to men. There is in Grace, as well as in the matter of making a fortune, a “tide” which must be “taken at the flood,” and I think that there is a flood-tide just now for some of you! Listen to the music of the waters—“He may be found.” It is not true that Christ has gone away and shut the door of Mercy—“He may be found!” “Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him!” He is not far off! He has not gone away, shut the door behind Him and declared that He will never hear prayer again—“Call you upon Him while He is near!” He is very near you just now! He is pleading with you! He has been blessing your neighbor! He has, by His Grace, called one who sits in the same pew with you! “Call you upon Him while He is near!”

There is also *a warning*, as well as an encouragement, in these words, “While He is near.” While Mercy’s sun has not yet set. While yet the 12 hours of the day are not all counted out—I mean, the day of the Lord’s long-suffering mercy—seek Him, I pray you, for there is a day coming when you shall seek in vain! There is a day coming when you shall knock in vain—when once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door. That is clearly implied in our text, “Seek you the Lord while He may be found.” There will come a time when He *cannot* be found—I do not believe such a time is ever reached in this life or, if so, very rarely—but this life is very frail and may end at any moment. Therefore, while it lasts, seek the Lord. For when this life is once over, you can never find Him.

I, at least, will have no complicity in that atrocious treason against God’s Word which leads men to believe that they may, perhaps, seek and

find Him in another state. I believe that of all lies that were ever preached, this is the most dangerous and likely to do the most hurt to men's souls! It is very popular, I know, but what do I care about that? God's servant is not to preach smooth things, but true things! It is this which we have to preach and we dare not go an inch beyond it—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not"—shall have another chance in a future state? Not so said the lips of perfect Love and Mercy—the lips of Christ, Himself! He said, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not *shall be damned.*"

There it stands in His Word and there is nothing after it! There is no hope—smaller or "larger"—offered to any man who believes not in the Lord Jesus Christ! Reject the Son of God and what hope can there be for you? "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" God Incarnate bleeds and dies and yet you will not be saved by Him? Then what can become of you? What must await you but "a certain fearful looking for judgment and fiery indignation"? He who will not have God, Himself, to save him has deliberately committed spiritual suicide—and on his own head must be his blood! Therefore, I pray you, heed the message of the text, "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near."

Make sure work of it and do it at once! Trust Jesus! Trust Him wholly! Trust Him fully! Leave your sin, leave your self-righteousness, quit it all! Give yourself up to Christ to be made holy, to be taught to do His will and to be His servant all your days! Then, blessed be His name, He will save you, for God gave Him on purpose that He might do so, and He will, and the will of the Lord shall be done in you! Amen and Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 53; 55:1-7.**

Isaiah 53:1. *Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* It is no new thing for Gospel ministers to be disappointed. Even Isaiah, the most evangelical of all the Prophets, who might well be placed at the head of the College of Preachers, feels compelled to say, in the name of all that sacred brotherhood, "Who has believed our report?" The report was a very plain one, a very earnest one and full of noble matter. Men ought to have believed it, but they did not, and they never will unless God's arm is revealed, for faith is the product of Omnipotence—and men never believe in Christ till God stretches out His arm! Where was the difficulty of believing the report about Christ? Isaiah tells us about Him and, as we listen, we understand why so many believe not on Him.

2. *For He shall grow up before Him*—That is, the Messiah shall grow up before God—

2. *As a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we*

should desire Him. When Christ came, He was very lovely to those who could judge of spiritual beauty. In form and comeliness, He was unrivalled, but not to carnal men! They said, "Where is His royal splendor? Where is the majesty of His Kingdom?" As they looked upon the carpenter's Son, they said, "Where are His riches?" They heard Him say that He had no where to lay His head and they despised such a Messiah! As He spoke in simple parables to the people, they asked, "Where is His wisdom?" So, to carnal eyes, the Savior had "no form nor comeliness."

3. *He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.* Oh, how sad it is that the Son of the Most High God, when He condescended to wear our nature, received such base treatment as this from the hands of men! How equally sad is it that His glorious and ever-blessed Gospel should still be the object of contempt to multitudes of men! They will not have it! They will have their own philosophy—rather their own *lies*, let us say—but Christ they despise and they esteem not His Gospel.

4. *Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.* Listen, you sad ones, you sorrowful ones! Let this sweet note charm you into joy—"He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows."

4. *Yet we.* We, for whom He was the Substitute, for whom He smarted—"Yet we"—

4, 5. *Did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.* Wonderful medicine! Marvelous healing! Where shall we find the like? The Physician drinks the bitter draught and so cures the patient! Who ever heard of such a wonder as this? The Physician is put to death and that great Sacrifice heals the patient! Who ever heard of such a thing as this? The whole Gospel, in a nutshell, lies in this verse—"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Now comes another wonderful verse, such as Luther was accustomed to call "a little Bible." It begins with, "all," and it ends with, "all."

6. *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.* There is your only hope of eternal life, Sinner! You are among the, "all," who went astray. If you are a Believer in Christ, you will be found among the, "all," whose iniquities were laid upon Him and carried away by Him.

7. *He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.* Oh, the majesty of His silence! Never was eloquence equal to this—"He opened not His mouth."

8. *He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken.* They ought to have been

stricken—their transgressions deserved the heavy blows of the rod of God’s wrath! Yet, “for the transgression of My people was He stricken.”

9. *And He made His grave with the wicked.*—He was crucified between two malefactors.

9. *And with the rich in His death.* He was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

9. *Because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth.* For that very reason He was qualified to bear our sin! Because He had no sin of His own, therefore He could bear ours, and He did bear ours, and died, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”

10. *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief: when You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands.* Do not be afraid, then, about the Kingdom of Christ. Its interests are safe enough, for they are in His hands, and God has given the promise that His pleasure shall prosper there.

11. *He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.* His death-pangs were our birth-pangs and Christ shall see that which is born of His soul-anguish and, “shall be satisfied.”

11. *By His knowledge.* Or, “By the knowledge of Him.”

11. *Shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities.* There is no meaning at all in this chapter if it does not teach that Christ took upon Himself the sin of His people and suffered in their place. Let who will object to this doctrine—it is the Gospel, the very heart and marrow of it—and there is nothing that can make a heavy heart glad until it sees sin removed by the death of Christ! “He shall bear their iniquities.”

12. *Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He has poured out His soul unto death.* He not only died, but He poured out His very soul unto death.

12. *And He was numbered with the transgressors: and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.* We shall also do well to read part of the 55th chapter of Isaiah after this 53rd—the one is an admirable preparation for the other

Isaiah 55:1. *Ho, everyone that thirsts; come you to the waters.* To the waters which flowed from that smitten Rock of which we have been reading.

1-3. *And he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto Me.* See, the way of salvation is through Ear-Gate? We must hear the Gospel, for it is not what we are to do, but what we are to receive that will save us. And we must come to God to hear it before we can receive it. “Faith comes by hearing.” Give a very earnest ear, then, to the preaching of the Gospel of Christ! “Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat you that which is good, and

let your soul delight itself in fatness.” Again the Lord says, “Incline your ear, and come unto Me.”

3. *Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* Says someone, “I can understand God making a Covenant with David, but will He make a Covenant with *me*?” Yes, and after the same sure tenor, too—“I will make an *everlasting* Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” God will promise to bless you, save you, keep you and present you in Glory in the day of Christ’s appearing. And this shall be a Covenant which shall never be broken. Though all things else are changed, yet that Covenant shall stand secure forever. It will fill you with joy when you understand that such a Covenant as this is made with you and you will say, as David did, “Although my house is not so with God; yet He has made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.” Oh, what a blessing it is to have a share in this Covenant!

4. *Behold, I have given Him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people.* “I have given him,” that is, David’s greater Son, the true David, “I have given Him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people.”

5. *Behold, you*—That is, Jesus, the Son of David: “*Behold, You*—

5-7. *Shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that knew not You shall run unto You because of the Lord Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You. Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.* Oh, that many may put this blessed promise to the proof even now, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—199, 554, 660.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
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CHRIST GLORIFIED

NO. 3436

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1914.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 4, 1869.

“He has glorified You.”
Isaiah 55:5.

GOD has glorified His Son. How deeply we ought to regret that we glorify Christ so little, bought with His precious blood, owing all we have to Him. We make but a very poor return and even when we are helped by the Spirit of God to glorify Christ, yet I am sure we should always feel an insatiable desire to do it yet more. To glorify Christ is so sweet a thing that when a man has once tasted of it, he pants and pants within his spirit for a greater capacity to glorify Christ—and this is one of his griefs, that he cannot praise his Savior as he would—hence it is that oftentimes the Prophet and the Psalmist, when they were most full of praise, would bid the earth, the sea, the heavens, and the Heaven of heavens, help to praise the King in whom they saw such ravishing beauties and delights! Hence it is that godly men, whenever they are stirred up and feel that they could magnify and bless the Lord, always want their fellow creatures to join them—and their sorrow is that Jesus does not reign in every heart and that He has not a throne in every soul!

Now it must be a great comfort to lovers of Christ, who mourn that He is not honored as He should be, that God has taken care of His Son's honor. “He has glorified You,” and you know when God glorifies, He does the work perfectly! He does it after His own Spirit and that an Infinite One, so that the Glory of Christ, after all, is safe. And though He is blasphemed by rebels, dishonored by apostates and grieved by ourselves, yet God, after all, shall not suffer Christ's fame to be tarnished for a single moment by all this, for He has said, “He has glorified You.” I don't know that I can preach from the text, but I do know what I can do. I can feel thrice happy at the thoughts which it raises in my mind! It is so delightful to think that the crown is safe upon His head, though the nations rebel and the kings take counsel against Him, that his shield is forever glorified and untarnished, let men do what they may! Him has God the Father exalted and given Him a name which is above every name, which is first and chief and shall never be second, but shall forever reign and must reign till He has put all His enemies under His feet.

Now glancing across the subject, as some skiff flies over the sea, we will talk about what God has done by way of glorifying His Son, Jesus—

I. GOD HAS GLORIFIED HIM IN THE ENTIRE ECONOMY OF SALVATION.

From first to last, Christ glorifies His Father, and the Father glorifies Him. Begin with that which has no beginning, namely, everlasting love, and we find that we are chosen in Christ Jesus from before the foundation of the world. The love of God which comes to us through Jesus Christ always is the channel—and it is connected with Jesus Christ before the heavens were stretched abroad! He was glorified in our election! Now with Christ Jesus in the mind of the Eternal Father, there is no election to eternal love except through Jesus Christ! And if you and I are chosen, it is—

***“Because Christ is My first elect, He said,
He chose our souls in Christ our Head.”***

We dare not look into that council chamber unless we knew that Christ was there. We dare not think of the Infinite Wisdom of God in the arrangement of all things from the beginning, if we did not remember that Christ was the center of these arrangements and that as many as have believed on Him were represented in Him in those days before the daystar knew its place, or planets ran their round. God has been pleased to glorify Christ afterwards in all the promises which, one by one, revealed the glorious Grace of God, from that first promise at the gates of Eden concerning the Seed of the woman, right on until He appeared—the hand that drew back the black curtain that hid the face of God was always the hand of the Crucified—and whenever men come to see anything of the marvelous love and goodness of God, they always behold it in connection with the Messiah, the Anointed One yet to come.

God has glorified His Son in *the matter of redemption*. There is no redemption out of Christ, and there is none to help Christ in the matter of redemption. Albeit that Calvary seems to have a black cloud of shame hanging over it, yet is there no spot on earth or Heaven more glorious, for there it was that God permitted His Son to bear, without assistance, the Divine Wrath which was due to our sins, allowed Him to tread the winepress alone and would not permit that of the people there should be one with Him, lest the glory should in any way be divided. Christ, and Christ, alone, must pay the price of our souls with His own soul!

So onward, if you come to the matter of *our justification* or our acceptance which sprang out of redemption, God glorified His Son. We are, if pardoned, only forgiven through His blood! If justified, entirely by virtue of His righteousness! If accepted, it is always in the Beloved! If perfected, we are completed in Him, perfect in Christ Jesus! There is not a single Covenant blessing—as I begin at the beginning so may I continue to the close—there is not a single blessing in the economy of Christ which comes to us apart from Christ! And as we receive these gifts, one by one,

the Holy Spirit takes care to make us know this—He empties us of self that we may see the fullness of Christ. He kills our pride that we may see the excellence of Christ. He takes away our strength that we may behold the power of Christ. In the operations of the Holy Spirit within our soul, while they aim at destroying sin and at many other blessed results, yet they have for their first and chief purpose, the making Christ glorified in the heart of all His people, in every gift that comes from the hand of the Most High! Brothers and Sisters, our preservation, our final perseverance and every other blessing which is secured to us, and about which we have no doubt—all this comes to us in Him! We are preserved in Christ Jesus. Because He lives, we live, also, and only because He lives and by virtue of our union with Him—we who are the branches continue to bring forth fruit—but if we were separated from Him, we should be only fit to be cast into the fire to be burned! Right away from the gates of Hell, up to the pearly gates of Heaven, it is Christ Jesus who is glorified! In every step the Believer takes, right out of the slough of despondency, up to the Beulah hilltop of full assurance and still onward beyond the clouds, and beyond the stars in the palace of eternal glory, it will be Christ, and Christ Jesus, alone, who shall have all the praise! God has taken care in the planning of the whole economy of Christ, that Jesus Christ should have the pre-eminence. There is much to talk of here, but *think* of it—that will be better than my speaking. Turn it over as Abraham Booth wrote a book showing the Grace of God in all the ways of salvation, so somebody else might write a book showing the glory of Christ in every single part of the way. And if we cannot write such a book, yet at least we must feel precious emotions as we contemplate the whole. In the next place, God has glorified His Son—

II. IN THE MIDST OF THE CHURCH.

The Church is to Christ what Eve was to Adam. She was taken out of Christ—she is bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. As the Apostle says, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.” This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning what? Concerning matrimony? Yes, in one sense, but not in another sense. Concerning Christ and His Church, for your cause did Christ leave His Father and He came into your world that He might be one flesh with His Church—she owes all to Him—her very existence is owing to Christ. As Eve springs from Adam, the Church springs out of the loins of Jesus Christ!

Now, Beloved, it is meet that seeing this is the case, *Christ should have no second place in His Church*, and certainly no such place has been allotted to Him by the eternal Father. As I can now but speak of the Church of God, at large, I think I am guided for a moment by an evil spirit standing at my left hand, who points with black fingers over to the city of the Seven Hills, and he says to me, “There is one great supreme

ruler, the Vicar of God on earth—behold his splendors! See how they bear him through the streets of Rome upon the shoulders of men, with canopies of silk, smothered with jewels and with peacock and ostrich feathers! Mark how they swing their censers and how the multitudes fall down before him, for him has God exalted, for him has God glorified.” Ah, but this is a vain and idle boast, for we read not in any page of this Book of any such exaltation to any being! And where will be found the being that shall dare to take it, unless he shall first become the victim of Satan? Satan said to Christ, “All this will I give You if You will fall down and worship me.” And he that has it, must have first fallen down and worshipped Satan, or he has no such power among the sons of men!

Now, Beloved, Christ did not redeem His Church with His blood that the Pope might come in and steal away the glory! He never came from Heaven to earth and poured out His very heart that He might purchase His people so that a poor sinner, a mere man, should be set upon high to be admired by all the nations and to call himself God’s representative on earth! Christ has always been the Head of His Church. Why, we have read in history that kings at different times have wished to play the Head of the Church, and that we owe our Protestantism, as we call it over here—that we owe much of that to the desire of a certain crowned head to become a little Pope over certain dominions! This is very true, but not Henry the Eighth, nor his successor, nor any of those who now live, are more the Head of the Church than he is God, Himself! It is not possible for any to be Head in the Church of Christ, but Jesus! Has God exalted Him and made Him to be the Head over all things—and it is usurping the prerogative of Christ for any to suppose they can be Head of the Church of Christ, for Jesus Christ is the Head and He, alone, holds power over ecclesiastical organizations! Over the sacred mystical, blood-bought, redeemed, regenerated Church of Christ there never can, by any possibility, be any other Head but Jesus Christ, the Lord Himself! Now mark, *God has exalted the Lord Jesus Christ in the government of His Church*. All authority, all authoritative rules in Zion come through Jesus Christ. All true teaching in Zion comes from His lips. We call no man, master, upon earth, for One is our Master, and that One is Christ. No man is Rabbi in the Church, but He is our Rabboni, our Teacher, and all other teachers are thieves and robbers if they teach on their own authority. They only are accepted as the Lord’s shepherds, who speak Christ’s Truth in Christ’s name—and in the power of His own Spirit. God has made Christ to rule supremely throughout the Church, and in this He has glorified Him!

He has made Him the Head of the Church in another respect—*He is the head of all light in the Church*. There is no true light in the Christian Church, not a single spark of it, but what comes from Christ. All life comes to us from Him. There may be energy in the Church of a carnal and fleshly sort—she may have force and power which she derives from men—but this will die and perish, like the grass and the flower of the

fields. Vital godliness always proceeds from Jesus Christ, as the branch's life comes from the vine. "Without Me, you can do nothing, but because I live, you shall live, also." He is the life of men! He quickens whom He will and it is not possible that there should exist even a grain of spiritual life in any human heart, but that which comes to that heart through Jesus Christ! He is also *the Head over all things in the Church—all spiritual things*. The Spirit of God resides in Christ without measure—and He sends forth the Spirit—He gives a Comforter to us. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell," and the continuance of the Church, and the growth of the Church, and the edification of the Church—all sorts of beneficial influences which come to the Church—proceed to us through Jesus Christ, the Church's covenanted Head!

Now I wish that we should form parts of the true Church of Christ to whatever denominations we may belong. Let us cling closer and closer to our blessed Master, for the secret of union in the Church is union with Christ. It is utterly hopeless, Brothers and Sisters, for us to expect, as the world now is, and as men now are, that we shall ever, all of us, agree in our opinions about all things. God never made us such creatures that we could agree in all things. He has so constituted us, and wisely so, that we, some of us, catch one angle of the Truth of God, and others another. To me one Doctrine, perhaps, will always stand out much more clearly than certain others. I wish it were not so. I should like to have a mind comprehensive enough to grasp all Truth—to attain the completed picture of the Truth of God without ever caricaturing a single feature. But I am deeply conscious I am far from being able to do that! And I think, without being censorious, I may say I do not know any of my fellow creatures who do! But there is in them a warp somewhere or other in the judgment of good men. Some mistake of some man which is not an offensive mistake at all. This is rather an infirmity than a sin, for he follows what he thinks is the Truth of God. His eyes are not right. He has got a little squint and he thinks Truth is a thing that it is not. He shoots well, mark you, if the mark were where he thinks it is, but it is not just there and, therefore, his arrow does not quite hit the center of the target. The true place of union will be, mark you, never in the Creed but in Him who is the Truth! If we believe in Him, love Him, cling to Him, follow Him, imitate Him, glorify Him, we shall get nearer each other than ever we were, closer to the common center! We must be closer to one another. "I would preach up nothing but Christ and preach nothing down but sin," said a good old Divine, and the good man was right! Some old lady who heard of certain high Calvinistic preachers coming to a certain place did not know who they were, or what they were, but she said she thought she liked them because of their names. She misunderstood the words—she thought they were high *Calvary* preachers—and anybody who preached high Calvary would suit her if they lifted up the Cross of Jesus,

preached up the Master and glorified His name! If in doubt, this should be the test of the Doctrine—does it glorify Christ? This should be the test of all our opinions—do they glorify Christ? For nothing is fit to be within the walls of Zion but that which bows down before Zion's King!

To change the tone, again, ringing the same peal of bells, in the third place—

III. GOD HAS HIGHLY EXALTED HIS DEAR SON IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE CROSS.

Oh, for a poet's mind and seraph's tongue to speak of the wonders of the Cross where Christ, the Savior, hung and died! He died in shame—this never dimmed His Glory—it reveals it to the admiring eyes of all the aged saints who delight to look thereon. What did Jesus, by His dying a painful death, do for us? Why, first, as you all know, *He put away all His people's sins*. There are some that think that Christ died to make all men salvable. They may keep their doctrine—it has no charms for me! That Christ died, some think, for all men, and it is a death for every man, I know the Word of God declares, but there is a Redemption, there is a Redemption far other than that which is universal. He laid down His life for His sheep. He loved His Church and gave Himself for it—and there is a people spoken of who are redeemed from among men in quite another sense in which any redemption was ever made for all men. Now, Beloved, as many as Christ stood for as a Substitute, for so many did He take their sins. And although it is written, “The Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all,” for, “He was made sin for us,” says the Apostle, and the sin of His people was actually laid upon Him—imputed to Him, though it was not His—yet He took it for His people and here is the Glory, that all that mass of sin no longer exists! It is gone! He has vanquished the tyrant and “made an end of sin.” What a wonderful word—made an end of it, and brought in everlasting righteousness! He has cast our iniquities into the depths of the sea. The blood of Christ exterminated our sins when He stood in the place of His people! He suffered an equivalent for all that was due by them and from them to God, and the debts have ceased to be, for they are all paid and disposed of, no charge being brought against Christ's elect, for, says the Apostle, “It is Christ that died; yes, rather that has risen again.” In the morning when the Father raised His Son from the dead, and Jesus stood once more upon earth, no more to die—in that day the sentence went forth—“None shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect.” Oh, what a blessed work was this to do, to take sin away where it never can be found again! To make it to cease to be! To cover it over forever! To blot it out! But this was not all—our Lord, by His death, destroyed death and he that has the power over it—the devil!

But let us think—*He disposed of death* first of all. He slept in the tomb. When the morning came, the prison door was opened and He rose, the First-Born from the dead, the First Fruits of them that sleep and the

harvest sheaf of all who shall come henceforth from the sepulcher! And so now the tomb is no more a prison, a place of ruin! The big imprisoning stone is rolled away. "He that lives and believes in Christ shall never die, and he that believes in Him, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Over yonder cemetery with its holy memories and long lamented departed, I hear a voice ringing, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; yes, says the Spirit, for they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." And in another case, Beloved, "I am the resurrection and the life; death is dead." Jesus Christ has accomplished this and the Father has glorified Him!

And now He has also vanquished, once and for all, for His people, *all the hosts of Hell*. Satan is a cruel enemy to the Lord's people. He molests them, he worries whom he cannot devour. But here is our consolation, that he has an invincible enemy. Christ gave Satan every advantage. He met him, as an old Divine says, "on his own dunghill." He bearded the lion in his den—no, He bearded him on his own hill. "This is your own hour," He said—Satan's own hour, and the hour of darkness—but Jesus triumphed, triumphed when the whole artillery of Hell was discharged against Him—when all the floods out of the mouth of the dragon were vented forth upon Him! He vanquished all the hosts, and bears the banner of a glorious triumph this day, "having led captivity captive, and ascended up on high."

To tell of all the wonders of the Cross of Calvary would take far longer than the time we can allot to it now, but we may sum it all up in the words of the text, "He has glorified You." The Father has put many crowns upon the head of Him that wore the crown of thorns!

I wish to ask a minute's attention to the next, namely, that the Father has glorified Christ *in His present power*. The Father sustains Him in the highest heavens among the saints. It is no small glory that Christ should sit at the right hand of the Father, as He does. He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, but now is crowned with Glory, honor and the loftiest created beings delight to do His commands! He reigns in Heaven with scepter undisputed. He says to this one, "Go, and he goes! To another, come, and he comes!" His intercession in Heaven is part of the Glory He has received. As He pleads there like a high priest, He pleads with authority, with a power that is always felt. The blood of Jesus Christ speaks to the heart of God, and no desire of Christ's is ungranted when heard. A case put into Christ's hands always speeds—if we ask the Father in Christ's name, He will do it for us. I am sure very few of us know this, that if we ask in Christ's name, we ask for Christ's sake, and that is right and good, and that is as far as we get. But do you know the difference? If you go to a man and say, "Give me such-and-such for the sake of such a friend, he deserves it of you," that is a good plea. But suppose that friend arms you with this power, and he says, "Now you

may go and ask for it in my name—say I sent you—use my name,” why, that is more powerful by far! And when each Christian becomes clothed, as it were, with that power from Christ, so that he asks God in Christ’s name as though Christ asked, what power is there! And it is part of the Glory of Christ that His intercession should thus be so powerful for His people this day.

And, Brothers and Sisters, think how the Father has exalted Christ in that at this time *He is receiving every hour some of the purchase of His blood*. I have sometimes tried to picture in my eyes the delight of Christ, the gleaming of His eyes of love, as His blood-bought ones come Home one by one. You know it is His prayer, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am.” Here they come, one after another! Some from this Church—one yesterday—usually two or three a week they go up into the bosom of Christ! You know how the farmer rejoices as he sees the loaded wagons coming, one by one, to the barn—but he has sowed, not with blood, though he may have sowed with tears. You know how you and I rejoice as we think we have been the means of the conversion of someone—but what is the joy of Christ as He sees the perfection of His goodness? Christ is exalted, fresh crowns are laid at His feet—the Eternal Spirit, as He brings and conducts the chosen spirit up to Christ, glorifies Him! And here, below, Brothers and Sisters, let us add, as we leave this point, Jesus Christ is glorified *in the power which He possesses in the conversion of souls*. Wherever His name is preached, it becomes like ointment poured forth. I have no belief in the preaching of Christ unsuccessfully. I think a dear Brother may preach the Gospel for years and see no conversions and, perhaps, there may be none just then, but they will come! I won’t say this to myself to comfort myself. I would be afraid I was on the wrong tack if I did not see them, and I would say to those who preach the Master’s Word faithfully, “It shall not return unto Him void.” Christ is greatly glorified when His Gospel becomes a heart-breaker, like a hammer when it dashes the rock in pieces and becomes like a fire. Christ is glorified when a harlot gives up her evil trade, when the thief casts down the tools of his infamy, when the drunk lifts his last dram to his lips, when the blasphemer washes out his mouth and resolves to drink no more of the wine of cursing! God grant us that we may always pray that God will glorify Christ in marvelous and manifest conversions of extraordinary sinners being snatched from between the teeth of the old lion and made to dedicate the rest of their days to King Jesus! Now to close—

IV. GOD HAS GLORIFIED CHRIST IN HIS KINGDOM.

We have already said that Christ is glorified in His spiritual Kingdom in the midst of Zion. One is tempted to enlarge on that. The King is always glorious when he rules his people by good laws, when he has a happy and prosperous people. And our Lord Jesus Christ rules us with the best of laws, and happy are the citizens of the new Jerusalem—

***“The King is glorious,
When in war He is victorious.”***

And when He is beloved of His subjects, He certainly is victorious in war. The spoils belong to Him. All the virgins love Him and the saintly sons consecrate their purest affections to Him. Jesus Christ is exalted in His Church, then, as a King upon His Throne—and there God gives Him Glory for the present among the nations. Christ’s Glory is not revealed as we desire it, though He rules by moral influence and the government is upon His shoulders. Perhaps if our eyes were opened, we would see in the progress of civilization and the various changes which have taken place in this world, much more of the influences of Christianity and certainly more of the power of Christ than we have been able to perceive at all times. Perhaps God is now writing and has been, during this last 6,000 years, a wonderful drama at the clearing up of which it will be seen from the first stroke of His pen to the last, God has glorified Christ! It may be so that the shaking of the nations, the revolutions and even the bloody wars shall all be compassed, and the one great whole of which it might be said at the commencement, as Virgil does in song—

“Arms and the man I sing.”

It may be that He has written a great epic concerning the warfare of the righteous against evil, and the conquest of the mighty men. He has yet to restore this world and make it brighter than it was before and, Beloved, that *God will exalt Christ in the latter days*, let us never doubt that for a moment! And though men prophesy, making a profit by their prophecies and are always muddling and unsettling weak minds by their silly predictions, let us still hold to it that this world belongs to Christ, who bought it with His precious blood! And He will have it, every inch, and there is not a corner where the dark places of cruelty shall remain, not a spot where an idol shall hold its throne, not a hill or valley where superstition shall be permitted to linger! We have but to wait. Maybe we shall be gathered to our Father to wait in serener places than this, for it is ordained and none shall stay its coming, when Christ shall reign upon earth with His ancient Glory, and the whole earth, once an Augean stable, shall be cleansed by its Hercules, who shall make the stream of His blood to run through it, and make it pure, glorified and consecrated! And in that day the scepters shall be gathered with them who remain and crowns of kings shall be joyfully laid at His feet—and we shall understand the full meaning of the title, “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.” Oh, how we will salute Him in that day when we shall rise to participate in the splendors with those who are alive and remain! Dear Friends, those who are asleep shall rise to participate in all the splendor of that blessed land of King Jesus! My Father has exalted You! To You, Your Master’s children bow! The sun and the moon bow down before You! You shall reign and we shall reign with You—our reign being to behold Your reign—our glory being to participate in Your Glory! We shall be like You,

for we shall see You as You are! May God grant us Grace to have our share in that blessed Advent and He shall be blessed!

But now just one more word. God will glorify Christ, mark you, as He has done. Are we prepared to do the same, my dear Brothers and Sisters? Let us aim to glorify Christ—and shall I tell you how you may do it, for there are many small ways of doing it, not small in themselves, but only small comparatively? You can glorify Christ by your holy living, by your labors for His Kingdom, by your generosity, or, if you want to do the greatest work to glorify Christ, you know what it is! Why, it is to trust Him altogether with all your concerns! Nothing glorifies Christ more than that. Now just lean your whole weight on Him and, with a faith that does not stagger, rely on the efficacy of His blood, the power of His arm, the love of His heart, the immutability of His affections and the divinity of His Presence! Lean on Him! Rest on Him! A poor dependent creature cannot glorify God any better than by trusting Him! This is the work of God, you know—this is a Hebraism, for the greatest work of all, this is *the* work of God, the God-like work, the work! But what a mercy it is that there is such a way for poor creatures like we are, of glorifying Christ by trusting Him—

***“The best return for one like me,
So wretched and so poor,
Is from His gifts to draw a plea,
And ask Him still for more.”***

One other remark, and that is, if you don't glorify Jesus Christ willingly and cheerfully by such a trust, He will be glorified even in your condemnation! In the day of His appearing, you that have heard the Gospel—for I speak to you, only, if you reject Him, you will have yet to minister to His honor. “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way if His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.” But if you trust Him not, here is the alternative—“He shall break the nations with a rod of iron, He shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.” How stands it with you? Will you be able to endure that iron rod? Will you be able to endure the breaking, when first the body shall be broken, and then the soul to shivers, like a potter's vessel? Be wise, therefore, oh you kings and you men, sons of the earth! Be wise, bow before Him, accept Him as your King! God will thus be glorified by the work of Christ, and if it is not so, He will be glorified by the aid of justice, which may the Lord forbid in the case of any one of us! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 53.**

Verse 1. *Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?* The Prophet seems to speak in the name of all the Prophets, lamenting the general unbelief concerning Jesus Christ, the

Son of God. The report concerning Him is very clear. It comes from God—it is for our salvation—and yet how many disbelieve it! In fact, all do until the arm of the Lord is revealed—until He works upon the hearts of men and they are led to believe in Jesus. And here is the difficulty of belief.

2. *For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.* There was nothing about Jesus Christ to attract the attention of those who look for pomp and splendor. His religion is all simplicity. It is the plain Truth of God—there is nothing about it that is gorgeous to attract those who look after ritualistic vanities. To the most of men there is no beauty in Him that they should desire Him.

3. *He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.* It was so with Jesus when He was here. He was the greatest of all sufferers—there were few that followed Him—some of those who did, betrayed Him. There were few who would stand up for Him. He met everywhere with a repulse, and yet He came on an errand of love. He needed not to have come at all. Heaven surely was large enough for Him, but such was His pity for the dying sons of men that He must strip off His royal robes and put on the robes of our mortal flesh!

4, 5. *Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.* He had not a pang to suffer on His own account, nothing to cause Him grief in anything He had done—

***“For sins not His own, He died to atone—
Was love or was sorrow like this ever known?”***

Scarcely for a righteous man will one die. Yet, perhaps, for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commends His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

6. *All we, like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned, everyone, to his own way and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.* Taken the full load of sin, the whole mass of human guilt, and placed it upon Him! He was perfectly innocent, and yet was the sin of man heaped upon Him. He was our Substitute, standing in our place—a wondrous Truth of God is this!

7. *He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth.* And you know right well that our Master would not speak when He was charged before Pilate and Herod. He was eloquent—more eloquent in His silence than if He

had used His ordinary language, which was amazing, for, “never man spoke like this Man,” and yet never man was silent as He for our sake.

8-10. *He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken. And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief: when You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.* Our blessed Lord and Master is to have a full reward for all His griefs—and an earnest of that reward is here tonight! He will receive, this very night, some born unto Him by the new birth, who shall henceforth be His children and who shall gladly say, “Here, Lord, I come myself to You, for You have bought me with Your precious blood.” It is the joy of some of us that we belong altogether to Christ. We would not have another honor—we wish to live to Him, loving Him and serving Him as long as we have any being! And there are some here tonight who have not felt this, whom God, nevertheless, will make to feel it, for so runs the promise—

11. *He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities.* That is the way He justifies them—takes their iniquities upon Himself—and since a thing cannot be in two places at one time, when Christ takes our iniquities, they are gone and we are just in the sight of God! He takes the burden, and we are unloaded, blessed be His name! “He shall bear their iniquities.”

12. *Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong.* The dying Christ has risen again, and He is now a great conqueror and divides the spoil. Those spoils are human hearts, and the true love and deep devotion of those He has redeemed. He shall have this—

12. *Because He has poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors: and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.* And He is doing it now—pleading this very night that old prayer of His, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Oh, let you and I be pardoned with that plea!

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

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

ABUNDANT PARDON

NO. 1195

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 27, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“He will abundantly pardon.”
Isaiah 55:7.*

IN our childhood we learned from Dr. Watts' Catechism that Isaiah was that Prophet who spoke more of Jesus Christ than all the rest. In the chapter before us Isaiah had been declaring in the name of the Lord the coming and the character of the Redeemer, speaking of Him thus, “Behold I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and a commander to the people.” No sooner had he thus proclaimed the appearance of the Christ, than he beheld whole nations of the heathen rushing to Him and, inspired by that sight, he began at once to address himself to the sinners around him bidding them fly to Him, too. As there is a natural connection between the physician and the sick, so is there between the Savior and the sinner.

The Prophet can hardly think of Christ as coming to be a leader, a witness and a commander without at once turning to the wicked and the unrighteous—bidding them forsake their ways, enlist beneath their Commander's banner—and participate in the blessings which He brings. Jesus is a grand attraction for guilty men! “Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him.” Christ is always welcomed by those who know they need Him. The self-righteous Pharisees and Scribes murmur at Him, but those who are humble and contrite, because conscious of their guilt, approach Him, wishing, as it were, but to touch the hem of His garment that they may be made whole! As the sun is attended by his planets who borrow all their light from him, so is the Lord Jesus waited on by crowds of sinners who find in Him their hope, their all! As the thirsty harts resort to the water brooks, so do needy souls hasten to Jesus—and it is according to the Divine order that it should be so.

Notice what the Prophet has to say. He speaks to the unrighteous and the wicked, and invites them to immediate faith and repentance, for so I understand the passage to mean. “Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near,” is an exhortation to prayer and faith. We cannot approach God in prayer without faith, for a prayer that has no faith in it must die on the road. To seek the Lord aright we must believe that “God is, and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” I take that sixth verse, coupled with the third, to be a plain exhortation to faith. Faith comes by hearing and for this reason it is written, “Incline your ears and come unto Me; hear and your soul shall live.”

As for repentance, that is clear in the seventh verse. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts.” The whole passage reads like a paraphrase of the Gospel message, “repent and believe the Gospel.” It seems as if Isaiah were an Evangelist rather than a Prophet—as if he had lived before his time and preached the Gospel like an Apostle who had seen the Lord! Like the morning star, which shines upon the earth before the sun has risen, Isaiah rejoiced the hearts of Believers with his clear radiance! The gladness of his soul in the thought of the coming Messenger of the Covenant, even Jesus Christ, kindled his spirit and the light shone forth from him! He was so glad within his heart that his tongue was loosed and straightway he addressed himself to those that “sat in darkness and the valley of the shadow of death.”

He bade them arise and quit the shades and go unto their God, for there was no reason for despair. There was mercy, great mercy, abounding pardon to be had and he bade them obtain it then and there! “Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near.” The motive which he urged upon men was the certainty of their finding pardon. This was the tempting bait with which this ancient fisher of souls endeavored to “catch men.” May the Holy Spirit aid me while I use the same, and invite you to consider with me—*the abundant pardon which God bestows upon the guilty*. Having discoursed upon that at length, we shall, in the second place, *consider what fair inferences may be drawn from this encouraging Truth of God*.

I. First then, according to the text, God does ABUNDANTLY PARDON. We will turn that Truth over and over and see it in many lights. The pardon of God may well be abundant, for *it wells up from an infinite fountain*. “Mercy, which endures forever,” is the attribute from which that pardon springs. Pardon is the child of Mercy, not of Justice—and we may reckon that God will give abundant pardon because He delights in mercy! All the attributes of God are well balanced—like Himself they are infinite—and not one of them entrenches upon or dims the luster of another. He is infinitely just, yet infinitely good! He is infinitely powerful, yet infinitely tender!

We are quite sure that whenever an attribute of God comes into action it will be sufficiently revealed to make its glory manifest. There could be no mercy exercised by God until there was sin. Where all was blameless, Mercy had no sphere. As soon as the angels fell, the Lord might have exercised mercy had He pleased. But He did not choose to provide salvation for Satan and his rebellious hordes. As if to teach us that it is not necessary that God should forgive, He suffered the fallen angels to fall irretrievably—and gave them up to everlasting fire as their due desert. Deceived by the old serpent, *man* also fell—and again there was space for Mercy. Man was an inferior creature to the angels—should he be allowed to perish or should Divine Grace step in?

In this case Mercy bowed the heavens and came down, and the Lord of All, as if to show that He “will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion,” though He

had passed the angels by, took up the race of men and determined that His pardons should be bestowed upon them! Now, when He had resolved to let Mercy come to the front and be seen—which I again say could not have been if there had been no sin—it was most amazing that He allowed that blessed attribute to come forth in all the fullness of its might! In the Creation you see power in its majesty and wisdom in its grandeur. In Providence you see goodness unbounded and faithfulness unlimited. In the gulf to which the Lord has condemned the wicked you see Justice in all its awful glory—and therefore when He determined to let Mercy come forth from her ivory palaces it seemed but natural that He should give ample room.

It was not according to His mind that from the unfathomable depths of His love there should trickle forth a stinted stream of mercy which might wash out a little sin—and water a scanty patch of the desert of our nature! No, He poured floods upon the dry ground! When our sin abounded, His Grace did yet more abound! He opened the sluices of His mercy! He let down the cataracts of His infinite love from above and drowned the mountains of our sin in a deluge of Divine Grace so that we sang rightly just now—

***“See here an endless ocean flows
Of never-failing Grace.
Behold a dying Savior’s veins
The sacred flood increase.
It rises high and drowns the hills,
Has neither shore nor bound,
Now, if we search to find our sins,
Our sins can ne’er be found.”***

“God is love” implies that love has a predominance in His Character—not so as to mar other attributes, much less to destroy them—but as the consequence and blending of the whole, and, therefore, we may be sure that this most conspicuous of all the attributes, this summing up of them all, will have full range and distribute abundantly its peculiar gifts.

But, secondly, as the attribute from which the pardon comes is abundant, so we know for sure that *the objects to which this pardon has been expended are abundant, too*. Well is it said, “He will abundantly pardon,” for God has already pardoned sinners more numerous than can be estimated by human arithmetic! From the first sinner down to the last that has ever fled for refuge to the hope set before him in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, what incalculable numbers have looked to Him and have been lightened! Think, my Brothers and Sisters, of the myriads that have lived and died forgiven! Heaven is not scant of inhabitants! If you could now lift up your eyes, you should see that the old Covenant promise has been in part fulfilled—“your seed shall be as the sand, and the offspring of your bowels like the gravel thereof.”

The promised seed in Covenant with God, of which Covenant God spoke to Abraham, is already as many as the stars in Heaven and as the sand upon the sea shore, innumerable. They have come from every land, yes, from the uttermost parts of the earth have they come! Of every hue

has their skin been and their raiment of many different colors. Their language has been varied and their condition, also, but they have alike found Divine Grace in the sight of the Lord. Multitudes of the poor and needy, yes, of the outcasts have come—the women that ground at the mill and the captives that fretted in the dungeon! God's wondrous eye of love has found out broken hearts by the millions and He has abundantly pardoned them. Yes, and even on the face of the earth, now, what a multitude there are whom God has pardoned! Blessed be His name!

There may not be so many as latitudinarianism imagines, but there are certainly more than bigotry conceives. God has pardoned a great multitude of the sons of men and He intends to pardon yet more, for the Gospel will spread—and brighter days are coming! The halcyon period is on the wing when nations shall be converted at once and, like the flocks of doves that come to the dovecot, souls shall fly to Jesus for forgiveness! When the whole earth shall be filled with His Glory in the multitude of repentant and forgiven sinners of the golden age, men shall see that God does "abundantly pardon."

His pardon is, in the third place, abundant, when we consider *the abundance of the sins which the love of God blots out*. Oh, what a subject I have now before me! Here is a river for depth, unfathomable, and for breadth, a river which cannot be passed over—it is a river to swim in! I must correct myself and call it an *ocean*! Indeed, what shall I say of this sea of sin? There are innumerable creeping things in it, both small and great beasts! There is that leviathan who does mightily disport himself and there are fierce tempests and horrible storms which well may sink the ships which tempt them. I am overwhelmed with the thought of the abundance of transgression!

Sin! From your fruitful womb what myriads of ills proceed! What countless hosts of evils are the fruits of sin! How many are the sins, themselves! Sins of *thought*—rebellious thoughts, proud thoughts, blasphemous thoughts, atheistical thoughts, covetous thoughts, lustful thoughts, impatient thoughts, cruel thoughts, false thoughts—thoughts of ill memory and dreams of an unholy future—what swarms are there! However, the *omission* of thoughts which should have been, such as thoughts of repentance, gratitude, reverence, faith and the like—these are equally numerous! With the double list, my roll is written within and without with a hideous catalog. As the gnats which swarm the air at eventide, so numerous are the transgressions of the mind!

Then there are sins of word. I should have to repeat the list again. What words have vexed the pure and holy ear of God! Words against Himself, against His Son, against His Law and Gospel, against our neighbor, against everything that is good and true! Words proud and hectoring, words defiant and obstinate, words untruthful, words lascivious, words of vanity and words of willful unbelief. Oh God! How many are our sinful words! The sins of our tongue—what man is there who is able to reckon them up?

Then come the sins of deed, which in very truth are but the fruits which grow out of sins of thought. Can any man here estimate the number of his own sins from the first transgression of his childhood until gray old age, or to his present period of life? "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults." Perhaps the sins we do not know are more numerous than the sins we are conscious of! Conscience may not be properly enlightened and hence many a thing may not *seem* to be sinful which really is so. But God's clear eyes perceive everything that is obnoxious to His holy Law and all our errors are written down against us until the whole is wiped away by an abundant pardon through the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Our sins are as the countless horde of locusts which descend upon the fertile land and devour everything, leaving nothing for man but famine and despair.

But as it was in Egypt so it is at this day—the Lord commands the wind of Mercy to blow every locust from off the face of the land—and as they all depart at once, our hearts rejoice and are glad. Our sins are countless as the drops of dew in these autumn mornings when every leaf is wet, for every tree is weeping tears of sorrow over the dying year. And yet when the sun has risen, with a little of his heat, the moisture is gone, the dews are all exhaled—they are as if they had never been. Our sins are countless—but the removal of our transgressions is complete when the infinite love of Jesus shines upon us and God in His Son has reconciled us by His atoning blood! Innumerable sins are forgiven by one word from the life of Divine Love.

In the fourth place, we can see the truth of this in *the abundant sin of those sins which are pardoned*. Just think of the abundant sinfulness of any one transgression, for every sin has a myriad of sins in its heart. Did you ever find a spider's nest just when the young spiders have all come to life? It is a *city* of spiders! Now, such is any *one* sin—it is a colony of iniquities, a living mass of offenses! You have but to stir it and you will see countless sins running out of it—it is an aggregation of evil! I remember once studying, with much care, various works upon the sin of Adam. I was convinced by each writer that it was a different sin and came, at last, to the conclusion that the sin of Adam, simple as it was, had all sorts of sins hidden within it.

Sin is not only a double flower, but it blooms sevenfold! It is a complicated mischief, in a thousand ways abhorrent to the holy God, and yet He pardons it! Abundantly pardons it! Some sins are plotted and planned and performed with presumptuous deliberation so that when the act, itself, is perpetrated, it is only one part of a whole mass of transgression! The man has first to consider *how* to do it—there is sin in the consideration. If it were a sin of revenge, for instance, the anger which first suggested it was a sin. Then the malice which preyed upon the supposed injury and turned it over was sin. And then the prostitution of wit and wisdom to the scheming of some cunning mode of vengeance—all this was sin!

Many a sin is a development from a long succession of sins and may have a genealogy far longer than the pedigree of the man himself—and be

intensely full of sin all along. Some sins have in them strange contradictory mixtures. We have known men sin from pride and covetousness, and yet fall into that which was at once mean and ruinous to their hope of gain. We have seen self-righteousness and dust riding on the same saddle. What are you, O Sin! A monster of forms uncouth and contrary! I see you one moment as an angel of light and the next you are a fiend, black as the midnight of Gehenna! You grovel like a serpent and soon you shine like a seraph! You are “all things to all men,” if by any means you may deceive some and cast them down into the Pit! Yet this vile thing the Lord forgives of men for Jesus’ sake! Does He not abundantly pardon?

In addition to there being many sins in one sin, I want you to remember how much virus of sin we sometimes manage to stow away in a sin. A man has done wrong and smarted for it, yet he does the very same thing again willfully, against his own conscience and against the warning he has received. A man will sometimes acknowledge what a fool he has been and yet play the fool again. Some men sin for no motive whatever—for mere wantonness of sin. It is very astonishing to read in the newspapers of crimes that persons will sometimes fall into who appear to have had no inducement to do so at all—persons in good circumstances who might have purchased readily enough the very things they steal! This increases guilt and makes sin the more heinous, if we do it in sheer willfulness.

If any of us have been blessed with a tender conscience and with pious training have heard the sound preaching of the Gospel and have had light and knowledge—if we go deliberately into sin—there is in that sin a degree of obnoxiousness to God which is not to be found in the transgressions of the poor and the ignorant who have lived in darkness and scarcely know what they do. Yet, sins against light and knowledge God pardons! Deliberate and presumptuous sins He forgives! Blasphemous, impudent and provoking sins—sins that would otherwise sink us low as the lowest Hell—His mighty mercy sweeps away in one single moment when we believe in Jesus Christ! At the foot of the Cross not merely sins vanish that are a little stain upon us—but the deep and double crimson of deliberate guilt and the staring scarlet of gross iniquity—all disappear when we are washed in the “fountain filled with blood” which is open for sin and for uncleanness. Abundance of sinners are forgiven the abundance of sins and the abundance of the sin which lies in each one of the sins is removed. “He will abundantly pardon.” Our text grows, does it not?

Let us notice, next, that the Lord “abundantly pardons,” when we consider *the abundant means of pardon which He has been pleased to provide for sinners*. It was not possible that God should so pardon sin as to leave a slur upon His moral government! If a judge sitting on the bench should pass over great crimes without any kind of retribution, it would be a great misfortune to a country, for very soon crime would be regarded as a mere trifle. Leniency to the wicked would turn out to be cruelty to the just. When a man who commits violence in the streets has the lash used upon him, we may pity him if we like—but if that lash were not used, we should

have a greater need to pity those good and honest citizens who are half killed when they are seeking their homes at nightfall!

A judge must never so pass by offenses as to increase them. God will not show pardon in such a way that men shall think of sin, or question the vigor of His justice. What, then, was He to do? Why, He must provide a way by which He could be “just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly.” And He did provide it! His own Son became the Substitute for the guilty—and in their place He suffered the wrath of God for man—so that now the severity of God is upheld in the death of Jesus and the mercy of God in the forgiveness of those for whom He died! That there is abundant pardon may be clearly seen from the fact that the Substitute was not an *angel*—was no creature of bounded power and merit—but He who came to save us was none other than God Himself—“very God of very God”!

The fountain filled for us to wash in is not a fountain which can only cleanse a little and then will be exhausted of its virtues. The Son of God has filled it from His pierced heart and the merit of the atoning blood is without limit. There was a limit to the purpose for which it was shed, for He loved His Church and gave Himself *for it*. But it is blasphemous to imagine that there is any boundary to the merit of the Atonement, itself. There is in the sacrifice of the Son of God a degree of power which seraphim cannot conceive! Were all the stars, worlds, and were they all filled with myriads of inhabitants who had revolted against God—if an Atonement had been minted for them all—it is not within my power to conceive that a greater Atonement could be required for the whole host of creatures than that which Christ presented upon the Cross! The boundless merit of it, therefore, makes us rejoice—for our God “will abundantly pardon.”

Sinner, if there had been a *little* Savior, you might have despaired! Sinner, if the Savior had offered a *small* Sacrifice, if there had been but a *narrow* degree of merit in His agonies and cries, I might have spoken to you with bated breath. But I know He is “able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him” and, therefore, I am warranted to declare to you that God, even our God—in Christ Jesus—“will abundantly pardon.” May God send these things home to the hearts of those who are laboring under a sense of guilt.

And now I must notice, in the sixth place, the *abundant ease of the terms of pardon*. When a man says he will forgive another and does not mean it, he puts hard conditions and says, “I will forgive him under certain circumstances, if he does this, and if he does that.” This is *not* abundant pardon. It is a little spirit of forgiveness—ill fact—it is no forgiveness at all! But look how God puts it. Does He say to a man, “I will forgive you if you weep for seven years, or do penance for a lifetime”? Or, “I will forgive you if you bring so much gold or silver, or promise this or promise that”? No, no, no! It is a hearty forgiveness and therefore the terms are simple and easy. When I say, “terms,” I merely use the word from lack of a better, for, indeed, the terms are not terms at all!

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, for He will have mercy upon

him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” That is all! No man can expect to be forgiven if he goes on with his sin! You cannot expect God to pardon that which you continue to provoke Him with! That would be absurd! The sin must be given up. The Gospel says, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” You cannot expect a medicine to cure you if you will not take it! Neither can you expect God to pardon you if you will not accept pardon from His Son, Jesus Christ. So all that He asks is that you ask and are willing to receive. And even that He gives you—for the power to pray, to repent and to believe—all come from Him!

And though He bids men believe, and so makes it a *duty*, yet He gives them faith and so makes it a *privilege*. What a God He is! He gives to His enemies—to the rebellious, to revolters that go aside more and more—the Divine Grace which makes them repent of their sin and believe in His Son! And this puts their sin forever behind His back and casts it into the depths of the sea. “He will abundantly pardon.”

Observe, again, the *abundance of this pardon may be seen in the fullness of it*. God’s pardons are no shams, no superficialities. “He will abundantly pardon”—that is to say, He will *really* pardon! Have you that are pardoned ever asked yourselves this question, “Is it really true? Can it be so? Am I really forgiven?” Yes, it is true! God does not *pretend* to forgive. He does not play at pardoning. When once He says, “*I absolve you*,” He does, indeed, absolve. The forgiveness is valid! It is valid on earth, in the court of conscience, and above, in the court of Heaven! The pardoned sinner is truly pardoned and no one shall ever condemn him! His sin is not merely *supposed* to be gone, it *is* gone. It is not put a little way off from him, but as far as the east is from the west—so far has He removed our transgressions from us. “I will cast their iniquities into the depths of the sea,” He says. “I will cast them behind My back,” is another of His strong expressions.

Ah, Soul, if you believe in Jesus, your sins do not exist! For it is written, “He has finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness.” And here is the consequence of it—that when God puts away sin He so abundantly pardons that He even *imputes righteousness* to those who were unrighteous! He does not impute *sin*, but He gives to us the righteousness of Christ—with which we are rendered acceptable in His sight—and Christ Jesus is made unto us “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.”

Our Lord does nothing by halves. He found us black in sin. He washes us white—we are naked and He clothes us.—

**“And lest even shadow of a spot
Should on our souls be found,
He took the robe the Savior worked,
And cast it all around.”**

For filth there is washing, for nakedness dress, for deformity adornment, for uncomeliness beauty, for all our possible needs a boundless supply! Is not this pardon plenteous, when we see what is bound up with it? I am sure I do not know how to speak well enough of this glorious pardon

which our God gives. But one point is always full of joy to me—that it is irreversible! Those whom the Lord forgives He never condemns. “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” He does not play fast and loose with His creatures—forgive today and condemn tomorrow. Once let Him blot out the sin, the sin is gone *forever*. “If they search for it, it shall not be found; yes, it shall not be, says the Lord.”

How I delight to preach about everlasting salvation and irreversible pardon! My God and King changes not—therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed and the Covenant blessings are yes and amen in Christ Jesus! “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” Once more only. There is so much to say that I am obliged to multiply particulars.

The eighth point is, He does “abundantly pardon,” because of *the abundant blessings which attend that pardon*. See how He takes the poor imprisoned soul out of bondage and delivers it—takes off every chain from its hands and feet—and makes it rejoice in Christ Jesus! Oh, you that have once been set in the stocks of conviction on account of sin and made to cry out in your sore bondage, you now know, since you are forgiven, what the glorious liberty of the children of God is! You are not now in “duration vile,” but being justified by faith, you have peace with God through Jesus Christ your Lord! The Lord gives us freedom from the *power* as well as from the *guilt* of sin. Those dear lips of Christ are put to the wounds of our sin to suck the poison out lest the virus of our old transgressions should breed a fresh disease. The blessed dove descends with a healing branch from the Tree of Life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations—and our soul is made to seek after holiness till it perfects it in the fear of God. This is abundant pardon, indeed!

If a king were to forgive rebels, it would certainly be a great mercy. But to take those rebels and make them his friends—that is *more* abundant mercy. Then to adopt them and make them his *children*—yes, to put crowns on their heads and make them kings and priests in his empire—this were abundant pardon, indeed! To take the rebels and provide them royal sustenance. To place them at his table. To educate and train them. To admit them to his palace. To grant their requests, commune with them and take them into his palace with him—that would be an abundant pardon! And yet all this God does for sinners! He makes them His children! He hears their prayers! He gives them fellowship with Himself and His dear Son!

He employs them in offices of trust! He sets them about bringing their fellow sinners to Himself and, by-and-by, He takes them home to Heaven where they shall dwell forever at His right hand in all the bliss and Glory of His only-begotten Son. Oh, is not this abundantly to pardon?! I would to God some seraph could descend with burning tongue to take my place and speak to you, this morning, on such a theme as this! But no, perhaps I am a better speaker to you in such a case, for—

**“Never did angels taste above
Redeeming Grace and dying love.”**

But I have tasted it! This forgiveness is mine, today, and I rejoice in it! And, as I preach it to you, I preach that which I know and set before you that which I have enjoyed! Oh, that others may come and participate in this amazing pardon—this boundless forgiveness of boundless sin!

II. We shall consider next, very briefly, what are THE INFERENCES WHICH FLOW OUT OF ABUNDANT PARDON. The first inference is this—*There is no room for anybody to despair.* If there is here, this morning, one who has been a drunk, a man of filthy and unclean life, a thief or worse, if worse can be—there is no reason why he should despair! Suppose I were only able to say this morning, “God does *sometimes* pardon *some few* sinners. There are a few people who have been guilty of great sin who have been forgiven and are in Heaven”? Why, if men were in their senses they would find hope even in *this* and would exclaim, “Who can tell? Who can tell? Perhaps He will pardon me?” Even on such a slender thread as that, they would have hope—and if they were wise they would go and seek mercy.

Jonah could only go through Nineveh and say, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” Nothing about *mercy*—not a word of it! But the people of Nineveh said, “Who can tell? He may turn from His fierce anger that we perish not.” And on the strength of, “*Who can tell?*” they tried it and the God of Mercy spared the guilty city! Oh, poor Sinner! If you had only a, “Who can tell?” it were worth while to go and try it! But look at my text—there is no, “Who can tell?” in it! “He will abundantly pardon.” “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts,” for it must be heart-work—“and let him turn unto the Lord”—let him seek His face by repentance and faith, that is the meaning—“and He will abundantly pardon.”

The Lord has great mercy for great sinners! I will set the big bell ringing and I will let it ring and ring again, “Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come and welcome, for the great gates are set wide open! The tables are long and the oxen and fatlings upon them are plentiful, and myriads are coming! Come along with you!” The great bell rings out again, “Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come and welcome! For He will abundantly pardon.” Would God some soul would hear the proclamation of this best of news and fly to Christ for pardon this very day!

Another inference from my subject is this—that *there is a loud call to everyone who has not repented to do so*, for who would be so base as to offend so good, so kind a Lord? I think that ought to touch each man’s heart. Here is one whom you have offended. You think he is very angry and you feel very angry, too—and therefore you offend again! You count him an enemy and you keep up the quarrel. You do more mischief to him. You damage his estate and speak against his reputation. You suppose that all this while he is preparing to deal a very heavy blow at you and avenge the injuries he has sustained. So you grow more angry, still, and hate him more and more.

You chew the cud of malice and you get such bitterness out of it that you become worse and worse until you find, one day, that you have been

mistaken all along. A friend meets you and says, "Why do you speak so ill of your neighbor?" "I hate him, abhor him." "What for?" asks the other. "Do you know that when he hears of all that you do he only says, 'I am very sorry for him. I never did him any hurt and I never will.'" Do you know he has often done you great service? You were in debt and you would have been in prison, only he called and paid your debts for you! When you were very ill he sent the physician to you! Although you never knew that he sent him, it was so, and you were restored. Do you know that he has been buying an estate for you against the time of your trouble which is creeping upon you? He has settled it in your name and entailed it on you—and he means that you shall live in a mansion forever?"

The man says, "I never thought that—I could not have believed it and I do not believe it now." "Yet it is true," replies the other. "Does he know of all that I have done against him?" "Oh yes! He has been behind the door often and heard you call him all sorts of bad names." "What did he say, then?" "All he said, was, "Poor soul! He will be sorry for what he did one of these days, when he knows me better." "Do you mean to say that is all he said?" "Yes." "But did he not grow red in the face and threaten a lawsuit, or anything of that kind?" "No—he said he should win you one of these days, when you came to know him."

Now, I am sure if you had thus treated any one of your fellow creatures, you would be ashamed of yourself and want to hide your face. Would you not? If you then received an invitation from the person whom you had so badly treated and he said, "You need not have any fear to come. I shall never say a word of upbraiding to you as long as you live." "Well," you would say, "bad as my nature is, I will go and make up with him." So I pray God that He may plead with you ungodly ones and turn you to Himself. What hurt has God ever done you? His Laws—is there anything wrong in them? Are they hard, harsh, severe? They are only meant for your good. They are nothing but danger signals, telling us not to hurt ourselves. Would God we would not persist in going where we should not. God has prepared for some of you full, unqualified forgiveness—and He means to bring you to Himself and bless you and carry you safely to Heaven!

Oh, hold not out against Him, but yield by mighty Grace subdued! Can you resist its charms? Come, now, and reason with God while He thus reasons with you. Let your conscience say, "Lord, You are full of mercy. We come to You. We would be reconciled to You through the death of Your Son." God grant that the words of the text may have power with many of you!

Another inference is this. *If there is anybody in this house the text specially calls this morning, it is the biggest sinner here* because there cannot be abundant pardon where there is not abundant sin. If anyone here feels that he or she is an abundant sinner, you are the person this text is meant for! Where are you, dear Soul? Way back there in the fog? My Master calls you! "He will abundantly pardon." Mary! You who have been a Magdalene, you are the woman! John, there! You who have been a perse-

cutor and opposed of the Gospel, you are the man! There is room for abundant pardon in you! You that have never cared for God or devil! You who feel your hearts so hard and stubborn that you think you can *never* be saved—you are the very people the text is for—for there is room for abundant mercy in you!

While my text invites each sinner, it has a special finger with which to beckon, this morning, to those who have abundant sin—“Come here, come here, come here! For the Lord will abundantly pardon.” Now, *for such a forgiving God as this we ought, in return, to have great love.* If He “abundantly pardons,” we ought to be abundantly grateful—

***“Love I must, I’ve more forgiven—
I’m a miracle of Grace.”***

You believe God has done much for you—never think you can do too much for Him! Evil sinners, when they get saved, make the fairest saints! In proportion as they earnestly rebelled, they often throw the same vigor into the service of God and become desperately in earnest for that dear Lord who loved them and gave Himself for them!

But to close, dear Friends. What if that mercy should be slighted? What if there should be such abundant mercy and it should be rejected? What if we reject the mercy of God and the blood of His dear Son? Those that are unwilling to be forgiven doubly deserve to be left to their own deserts. If God speaks to you with mercy and you will not have Him, you must not wonder if, by-and-by, He changes His tune. The lamp holds out to burn and while it burns you may have mercy. But remember it will soon burn out! The longest life is short and after that there will be no further mercy, no terms of Divine Grace. The Mercy Seat will be gone and the Judgment Throne will fill its place!

Oh, if God only gave us five minutes to find mercy in, surely, if we were not fools, we should avail ourselves of it! But while He has lingered with some of you for 50 years, and still lingers, do not provoke Him! But, “to-day, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts,” but turn unto Him. Oh, may the Spirit of God turn you, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

***PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Isaiah 1:10-20; 43:22-28; 48:1-11.***

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THE NEED AND NATURE OF CONVERSION NO. 2797

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 13, 1878.

*“Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
and let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him;
and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”*
Isaiah 55:7.

SOME years ago [Sermon #1195, Volume 20—ABUNDANT PARDON—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] I preached from the last four words of this verse, laying special stress upon the abundant pardon which is given to repenting sinners through the rich mercy of our God. On this occasion, I am going to put the emphasis upon the first part of the verse, speaking more upon the necessity of the sinner forsaking his evil ways and of the unrighteous man abandoning his evil thoughts. There is urgent necessity for us to continually insist upon this course of action. This Chapter, as we noticed in our reading, is full of Gospel teaching and it expresses, under the most striking and cheering metaphors, both the fullness and the freeness of the Gospel. But the Prophet also insists most clearly that the wicked man must forsake his ways and the unrighteous man must turn from his thoughts and return to the Lord that he may obtain the mercy and pardon that God is waiting and willing to bestow.

This is not a merely legal demand—it is a Gospel demand found in the center of a Gospel Chapter in the writings of the most Evangelical of all the Prophets. The Chapter begins with a number of gracious and wide invitations and so, naturally, leads on to the promise of the coming Savior. Only God Himself could find a Savior for our ruined race and none but God's own Son could be that Savior. Then there follows, in due order, the promise of a people to be saved. The Savior shall not come to the earth in vain. He shall call a people unto Himself and “nations” shall run to Him. Then, following the promise of a Savior and the declaration of the certainty that many shall be saved by Him, there comes in this loving invitation, “Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near.” Since He is to have a people who shall be His, forever, put in your claim to be among them! And since, as a Savior, He is near to you, call upon Him and He will hear your call!

This brings us to our text which is consistent with the rest of the Chapter even though some people think it is not. Here we are told, first, that the wicked must forsake his ways. There is no Savior for the man

who will not forsake his sin. Such a man can never be among the people who shall run to Christ, for how can he run to Christ while he continues in the way of sin? Such a man shall seek the Lord in vain and call upon Him in vain, for, while he hugs his sin, he cannot embrace the Savior who hates sin with a perfect hatred. This is the theme upon which I am going to now speak and I want to do it in the spirit of the Master, of whom Malachi wrote, "For who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire, and like the fuller's soap, and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." May the Master bless His own searching Word—and He shall have all the praise!

I. First, then, let us meditate a while upon THE NECESSITY OF CONVERSION. If a man is to be saved, he must turn from his sins. "Right about face!" is the marching order for every sinner! There is no hope of forgiveness for him if he will continue with his face as it now is. He must turn from his sin if he would be saved.

This will be at once evident to you when I ask the questions, "*How would it be consistent with the holiness of God for Him to put aside our past sins and then to allow us to go on sinning as we did before?* How could He be thought to be just and pure if He should remit the punishment for past transgressions without seeing in us any determination to abstain from such sins in the future?" Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, but He never came here to spare their sins. God would never have sent His Son to this earth to be the messenger of sin, yet Christ would be nothing better than the messenger of sin if He had come and said to men, "You may continue in your sin, yet I will forgive you. You may live as you like, yet you shall find mercy with the Lord at the last." It must strike you, in a moment, that such a course as this would be inconsistent with the Character of the Judge of all the earth who must do right! There is no such teaching as that in the whole of the Scriptures—and he who dares to believe it, believes a lie! Nowhere in the whole compass of Revelation is there a promise of forgiveness to the man who continues in his iniquity!

There is a promise of pardon to the sinner who forsakes his wicked way and turns from his evil thoughts. There are many promises of forgiveness to those who confess their sins in humble penitence and who seek to live new lives under the power of the Holy Spirit. Possibly someone would remind me that the greatest promises are given to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is quite true, but the faith which believes in Jesus is a living and active faith which works in the soul a *hatred of sin*—and if a man says, "I believe in Christ," and yet continues to delight in sin, he is a liar and the truth is not in him, for, "faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone." Only that faith alone which is proved to be a vital and real faith by bringing forth "fruits meet for repentance" will save us! It is no use wanting or trying to be saved without a change of heart and a change of life. "You must be born-again," is Christ's own word to all unregenerate sinners! Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows,

that shall he also reap.” There has never been any revocation of these Truths of God and I repeat again that in the whole compass of the Word of God there is no promise of pardon to the man who continues in his iniquities!

Neither, dear Friends, is there *a single case in fact, nor one emblem in parable that would lead any man to hope that he could keep his sins and yet be saved*. If you remind me of the woman in the city who was a sinner, I also remind you that her life had been completely changed, otherwise our Savior would not have permitted her to wash His feet with her tears and wipe them with the hairs of her head. Saul of Tarsus was guilty of the great sin of persecuting the saints, but see what a changed man was Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles! Zacchaeus, the rich tax-gatherer, offered to make full restitution and recompense to any whom he might have wronged. So it always is where the Grace of God works effectually. When the Lord Jesus Christ saves a sinner from the *punishment* of sin, He also saves him from the *love* of sin—He makes him holy as well as makes him happy and safe!

The same lesson is taught in our Lord’s parables. For instance, there was no rejoicing over the lost sheep while it was still wandering away from the fold—the joy began when that lost sheep was *found* and was brought home on the shepherd’s shoulder! A more striking example is that of the prodigal son. There was no joy over him while he was in the far country and no kiss for him from his father while he was feeding the swine. He must come back. He must say, “Father, I have sinned.” There must be the forsaking of his former evil ways or else there could be no enjoyment of his father’s forgiveness. We must always say, as plainly as we can possibly say it—If you will keep your sins, you shall go to Hell. And if you would go to Heaven, you must part company with your sins. He who would be married to Christ must first be divorced from sin. There is no possibility of walking in the way of the Lord and, at the same time, treading the pathway of evil. “No man can serve two masters.” No one can, at the same time, be a servant of the Savior and a servant of Satan.

Besides, dear Friends, our common sense tells us that it *would be highly dangerous to society* if men were to be pardoned and yet were not to be renewed in character and life. If Christ should meet with a man and say to him, “I forgive you because of the precious blood I shed for you on Calvary—go and be a drunkard still! Go and be unchaste! Go and be a thief!” This would be the way to undermine the very pillars of society and, very soon, we would not be safe in our beds. If there were no laws, or if the laws had no system of punishment for the guilty, human society would cease to be endurable! He who rules all things righteously will never set up such a scheme as this! The Judge of all the earth must punish sin! He will by no means clear the guilty.

Moreover, *it would be a serious injury to the man himself* if he could be pardoned and yet not be changed. For God to forgive us without renewing us would be a frightful peril to ourselves. A man, finding himself so easily forgiven and having no change of heart, would plunge into sin worse than ever and, so far as my observation is concerned, I have come to the conclusion that the very worst form of character is produced in a

man who, for some reason or other, thinks himself to be a favorite of Heaven and yet continues to indulge in sin. I remember the horror which passed through me, in my youthful days, when I heard a man who was accustomed to be drunk boast that he could say what none of his drinking buddies could say, namely, that he was one of the elect of God! I felt, child as I was, that he was one of the devil's chosen followers and I do not doubt that he really was. If a man once gets into his head such a perverted notion of the Free Grace of God as to imagine that it is compatible with the love of sin, and a life of sin, he is on the high road to being made into the worst conceivable character! And if such a man as that could be delivered from all the consequences of his sin, from all such consequences as might be looked upon as arbitrarily fixed by the punishing hand of God, (I know that I am talking of an impossibility), even then he must be miserable! Such a man must go on from bad to worse and sin, whatever we may think of it, is misery! The worm that never dies is sin. The fire that is never quenched is sin. And Hell is sin fully developed. "Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death," and that second death is Hell. O Sirs, if you could get rid of the disease, the pain, the headaches which follow upon indulgence in the qualms of conscience sin, it would be a mischievous riddance for you, for the very pain that is caused by sin is part of God's way of calling to you to come back to Him. As long as you are in this world, the consequences that follow after certain forms of sin are really, with all their bitterness—and they are bitter—but a healthful tonic that should make you give up sin and turn to God.

If you go on sinning, you cannot be saved. If you continue to love sin and to practice it, you cannot be saved. Think, for a moment, what any other result would involve. If it were possible for a man to live in sin and yet be forgiven, what would be the value of the work of the Holy Spirit? He has come in order that we may be born-again and have new hearts and right spirits. But if men could be forgiven without having new hearts and right spirits, of what service would the Holy Spirit be? This would be contrary, also, to the whole design of Christ in our salvation. The angel said to Joseph, before our Savior's birth, "You shall call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins." But if they can be saved *in* their sins, where is the meaning of His name? When He hung upon the Cross and one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, "forthwith came there out blood and water." But what is the use of the purifying water if we need not be purified and can be pardoned without being cleansed? Paul wrote to Titus that Christ "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." But how can that purpose be accomplished if men can be pardoned and yet continue to live in sin?

Beside that, the very character of Heaven prevents such a thing being done! We know that the unholy cannot enter there—nothing that defiles can pass the watchers at the pearly portals. Therefore, be you sure of this—that you can never enter Heaven and you can never have forgiveness if you continue to cling to your sins! You must forsake them, or mercy cannot be yours.

II. Having spoken thus upon the necessity of conversion, I turn, for a little while, to the second part of our subject, THE NATURE OF THIS CONVERSION. How is it described here?

First, *it deals with the life*—"Let the wicked forsake his ways." Observe that it is, "his ways" that he is to forsake. That is, his natural way, the way in which he says he was brought up, the way that his natural affections, propensities and passions lead him. He must forsake his ways, even though it is the way in which he has walked these thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, or even 80 years! He will have to get out of his ways, however much he may delight in them! Possibly, he now loves sin so much that he says he could not give it up. There are some sins which men roll under their tongues as dainty morsels—but if you are to be saved, you will have to give them up. If you would have the mercy of God, you must give them all up! You must give up your old sins, your sweet sins, your pet sins. The sins of the flesh with all their pleasure and the sins of the mind with all their pride must be given up, for notice that word, "forsake." "Let the wicked *forsake* his ways." It does not say, "Let him admit that his ways are bad."

There are some who will say, "Oh, yes, I know that my way is very wrong," and there they stop. Such an admission as that will not save you, my Friend! You must *forsake* your way as well as admit that it is wrong. To know that it is wrong and yet to go on in it will double your sin! This kind of confession will not help you in the least. On the contrary, it will only increase your guilt. You must forsake your wicked way if you are to be forgiven. "Oh, Sir," you say, "I am very sorry for all the sin that I have committed!" I am glad that you are and I hope that you will be still more so, but that sorrow, alone, will never save you. It is not saying, "I am sorry," nor yet your being sorry for your sin that will save you! That is right as far as it goes, but you must *forsake the sin as well as be sorry for it*.

"I must forsake it? Well, I resolve that I will do so." Yet that resolve by itself will not save you, for there are plenty of good resolutions that are good for nothing! You have to actually *forsake your wicked ways* before you have complied with the requirements of our text. I know how the devil will try to deceive you, when you have made a good resolution. He will say, "Ah, you are a fine fellow and that is a splendid resolution of yours!" Yet mere resolutions are not worth a penny a thousand! We must *act*, not simply resolve what we mean to do. We must not be like the man who owes a lot of money and has not a penny to pay, yet who keeps on saying to his creditors, "I hope I shall be able to pay you tomorrow." Then, when that day comes, he says he is very sorry, but he missed the friend he expected to see, so he must postpone the payment for a few days. Yet, when the few days have passed, there is still nothing forthcoming. So it is with many who resolve to forsake sin—they are like those who promise—but never pay. This will not do! You must forsake your sin if it is to be forgiven!

"I will tell you what I will do," says one, "I will still keep to my old ways but I will not travel quite so rapidly in them. I will not live such a fast life as I have done." I tell you, Friend, that you must forsake that old way of

yours altogether if you would be saved. If you stand still in it, if you are decent and respectable in it, all that will avail you nothing! You must clear right out of it, for so our text puts it, "Let the wicked forsake his ways." In plain terms, the Prophet means just this. Is your way the way of the drunk? Now, no drunkard can ever inherit the Kingdom of God as long as he continues a drunk, so you cannot be saved if you remain in that condition. Are you a thief? Do you privately cheat in business? All that kind of thing must be given up! It is no use for you to say, "I will do it and yet go to Heaven." You will be damned unless that sin, as well as others, is given up. Or have you been a blasphemer? Do you talk profanely or filthily? You must wash all that foulness out of your mouth if you would be saved. "Let the wicked forsake his ways." Am I addressing any who have practiced vice in unmentionable forms? Oh, how many there are who do that and yet are not ashamed! You must forsake all that, young man, or old man, too—it is no use mincing matters with you. If you mean to go to Hell, go on with your wickedness! But if you would be forgiven for the past, you must cut all connection with these evil things for the future. I most solemnly assure you, in the name of God, that there can be no compromise about this and every other sin. "Let the wicked forsake his ways," whatever the ways may have been. If it is a filthy way, a fleshly way, a way of lust, a way of self-indulgence—any way of sin—it must be forsaken. You must abandon it, or else you must abandon all hope of ever getting to Heaven!

"That is pretty strong language," someone says. Do you think so? I shall have to use still stronger expressions presently, for the next point concerning the nature of this repentance is that *it deals with the man's thoughts*—"Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." "But thoughts are free," says some unthinking person, "I shall never be hanged for my *thoughts*." No, perhaps not, but have you never heard that old saying, "A man may not be hanged for his thoughts, but he may be damned for his thoughts"? For in thought is often the very essence of sin. A deed might in itself be colorless, but the motive for doing it—the thought at the back of it—puts the venom, virus and guilt into the deed.

As that is the case, what sort of thoughts must the unrighteous man give up? He must give up a great many fine opinions of which he is very proud—his opinion about God, for instance. It is possible that he has thought nothing of Him, or if he has thought of Him at all, he has dared even to judge his Creator and to find fault with what God does! Ah, Sir, you must give up all such thoughts of God and you must come to reverence Him and to regard Him as so great that you are less than nothing in comparison with Him! You will also have to give up your opinion concerning God's Law. You thought it was too severe, too stringent and that you could improve it a great deal. You will have to confess, with the Apostle Paul, that the Law is *spiritual* and that you are "carnal, sold under sin." You will have to change your mind upon a great many subjects if you really wish to be saved. You will have to forsake your old thoughts concerning sin. You said, "Oh, it is a mere trifle—a peccadillo! Poor helpless creatures as we are, God won't be angry with us for such a little

thing as that!" You will have to feel that sin is exceedingly sinful—a great and deadly evil—or you will never be likely to seek and to find peace with God! You will also have to change your mind about the Lord Jesus Christ. He is nothing to you, now, but He will have to be everything to you if you are to be saved by Him. You will have to change your mind about yourself—you fancy that you are a fine fellow, now, but you will have to regard yourself as less than nothing before you come to your right position before God. If ever you are to find mercy at His hands, you will have to forsake your present thoughts on all these matters.

Do you ask, "What other thoughts shall we have to forsake?" I reply—a whole set of thoughts in which many people indulge. To the ungodly man it is often quite a treat to sit down and think of what he calls the jolly days of his youth when he sowed his wild oats. He wishes that he had a handful or two of them left. Ah, Sir, you will have to give up all thoughts of that sort—and you will have to think of those past days with bitter tears of sorrow over the sins that you then committed. The ungodly man often pictures to himself scenes of carnal delight and if he cannot have a share in such scenes, he often wishes that he could. I would remind any of you who have ever done so, that you may commit every sin forbidden in the Decalogue—without having actually committed any one of them—by simply reveling in them in your thoughts! Remember that solemn affirmation of the Lord Jesus Christ concerning the Seventh Commandment, "I say unto you, That whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." And learn from it how our Lord meant His interpretation to apply to the whole Law of God, so that we should understand that the very thought of evil is sin—and to suck it down as a sweet morsel to think upon, even though we never dared to perpetrate the act is still a gross evil—and if we would be forgiven, we must forsake all these vile, flesh-delighting thoughts!

We must also forsake our thoughts in the sense of turning from all *purposes* of evil. That, indeed, is the main meaning of the Hebrew word used here—"Let the unrighteous man forsake his *purposes*." You say that you will do this or that, without any thought of whether God would have it so or not. Possibly it is your purpose, as you express it, "to have your fling." You have come up from the country, young man. You are pleased that you have gotten away from your mother's apron strings and now you are going to have your own way. Forsake all such thoughts, I implore you! And, if any whom I am now addressing have formed any purpose of sin—if you have resolved to indulge in this or that evil, whatever it may be, I charge you, if you desire to have eternal life—to hate all such purposes and thoughts of sin. The garment spotted by the flesh must be flung away from us and the very thought of evil must be banished from our minds as far as it is possible for us to do so!

Nor is this all, for the text further says, "and let him return to the Lord," so that this conversion *deals with the sinner in his relation to God*. He who would find mercy must return to God to obtain it. Do you ask how you are to do so? Well, first, you must begin to *think* about God. I really believe that some of you do not think half as much about God as you do about the Sultan of Turkey! And with some of you, almost any-

body is a greater factor in your life than God is. With some of you it would not make any difference if there were no God at all, except that you would be rather glad if that could be proved to be the case, for you would feel easier in your mind and could, in such a case, go on in your sin without any of the compunction that you now feel. Yet, is it not a singular state of mind for a man who knows that he is a creature made by God, but who really cares so little about Him that if he could be assured that there were no such Being, he would be better pleased than he is now? Oh, what a wretched state your heart must be in if it feels like that! It will have to be greatly altered if you are ever to be saved!

So, first, you must begin to think of God and then, thinking of Him, you must yield to Him—give up your will to His will and, doing that, you must pray to Him, cry to Him for mercy and then you must trust Him. Especially you must accept His ways of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. And when you do that, then you will be sure to love Him. When you get as far as that, you will be altogether a new creature! Then God will delight in you! Then it will be misery to you to be out of His Presence and it will be the highest joy of your life to have constant communion with Him.

III. Now I finish with the third part of our subject, that is, THE GOSPEL OF THIS CONVERSION.

Possibly somebody says, “You have been preaching the Law to us, Sir.” No, I have not! The Law says nothing about *repentance*. The Law curses you from the very first moment when you have broken it. That gracious message, “Repent you, therefore, and be converted, that your sin may be blotted out,” is not the utterance of the Law of God, but of the Gospel!

I will try briefly to show you the Gospel of it. It lies, first, in the fact that *God has promised that He will abundantly pardon those who turn from their evil ways*—“Let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” To the man who confesses his guilt, the Law says, “Yes, you are guilty, and you must suffer the penalty attached to your crime.” If a person pleads “guilty” in a court of law, the judge does not say to him, “If you will promise amendment, you may go free.” No, he pronounces sentence upon him! And God, the righteous Judge might justly have done the same to us but, instead of doing so, He says, “Forsake your wicked ways, and your evil thoughts, and turn to Me, and I will abundantly pardon you. Only repent of your iniquity and abandon it, and it shall all be blotted out. All the evil of your past life shall be forgiven and forgotten and your sins and your transgressions I will not remember against you any more forever.” Oh, precious Gospel messages! Who would not turn from his sin when such a gracious promise awaits him in the turning?

Yet there is even more than that, a great deal more, for not only does God bid men turn to Him, *but He enables them to turn to Him!* So the Gospel of this passage is that God the Holy Spirit is freely given to sinners to turn them, first in their hearts and then in their lives. What you cannot do of yourself, the Holy Spirit will enable you to do! There is no form of sin which you cannot conquer by the power of the Spirit of God—and that Spirit is freely given to all who sincerely seek His aid. He is still

here on earth. On the day of Pentecost He descended from Heaven and He has never gone back. "But," says someone, "the Holy Spirit was given to the saints." Yes, I know He was, but He was also given to sinners like yourself, for Peter said to those who were awakened on the day of Pentecost, "Repent, and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." I wish that many of you would pray the prayer, "Turn us, O God, and we shall be turned." You must be turned, by Sovereign Grace, if you would really turn unto the Lord—and you must forsake your wicked ways and your evil thoughts if you are to be saved—but you cannot do this of yourself—the Holy Spirit has been given on purpose to enable you to do it!

There is a further Gospel message in the fact that *Jesus Christ Himself came into the world on purpose that this Divine Spirit might be given in connection with the exercise, by men, of faith in Him.* One of the simplest declarations of the Gospel is, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." And one of the last sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ before He went back to Heaven was, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." To believe is to trust—and whoever trusts Christ Jesus depends upon the merit of His death, relies upon the excellence of His atoning Sacrifice and proves the reality of his faith by confessing it in the Scriptural way—such a man shall be assuredly saved. And, in order to his being saved, he shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit by whose almighty power he shall be enabled to conquer the sin that still dwells within him!

Once more—and this is the part of the Gospel that is the best of all—in order that you might be able to believe that God can have mercy on the guilty and in order that you might be saved, *God gave His Son, Jesus Christ, to offer a full and complete atonement for sin.* I never weary of preaching that glorious Truth of God to you, but I long that when I have done so, you may close in with Christ and that Christ may close in with you, that you may be eternally saved. According to the righteous Law of God, sin must be punished. Conscience tells you that it is not possible that guilt should go without its due penalty. Therefore it was that Jesus came and bore the dread penalty that was due to sin. The lash of the Law of God must fall on someone, so He bared His shoulders to its terrible blows. The sword of Divine Justice was unsheathed and it must smite someone—so Jesus gave His heart to that sword's point and quenched the flaming blade in the crimson fountain of His own blood! Now that this has been done, God can be just and yet the Justifier of everyone who believes in Jesus! And the effect of that atoning Sacrifice upon everyone who truly trusts to it is that he finds himself so changed that he hates the sin he formerly loved! And he rushes out of the wicked ways in which he once delighted, he abhors the thoughts that once charmed him and he turns to the Savior whom he once despised!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 55.**

This chapter might very well have been found in the Gospel according to Matthew, or Mark, or Luke, or John, for it is so plain, so simple and so full of Gospel teaching.

Verse 1. *Ho, everyone that thirsts come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.* Oh, the freeness of Gospel provisions! And, at the same time, their fullness, their plenty, their variety, their sufficiency! Here is a mention of “wine and milk.” It is not enough for the Lord to bid us “come to the waters,” but He invites us to partake of the choicest luxuries upon which the soul can be fed—He calls us to be filled even to the full and to accept everything for nothing—“without money and without price.”

2. *Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not? Why do you act thus? Can you give any explanation of such folly? The Gospel is consistent with the highest reason. And to believe in Christ is not a thing for which we need make any apology. It is a foolish thing not to believe in Him—a foolish thing to be living for the world—to be spending our time and strength for our attainment of some inferior objective which can never satisfy the soul. This “why” is not applicable to the Christian—it is applicable to the worldling. Yet he often thinks himself the only wise man on the face of the earth! “Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not?”*

2, 3. *Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto Me.* What a stress these Gospel passages lay upon hearing the Word! “Faith comes by hearing.” All the sights, all the shows, all the gorgeous processions and all the external ceremonies in the world will never convert a single soul! But God says, “Hearken diligently unto Me. Incline your ear, and come unto Me.”

3. *Hear, and your soul shall live.* Do not quibble, but hear. Do not come to find fault with the Word of God—but “Come unto Me,” says the Lord. “Hear, and your soul shall live.”

3. *And I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* What a surprising promise this is for God to make to men who are so poverty-stricken that they have “no money” in their hand or in their pocket—nothing in fact, that they can bring to Him! Yet the Lord says, “I will make an everlasting Covenant with you.” Will God enter into Covenant with a poor sinner and pledge Himself by promise and by oath to do him good forever? Yes, poor troubled, sinful Soul, I trust the Lord, in infinite mercy, is even now calling you by His Grace! And as surely as you come to Him, He will make with you “an everlasting Covenant, even the sure mercies of David.”

4. *Behold, I have given Him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people.* God’s Witness of His great love to us is His own Son! You cannot doubt God’s readiness to receive guilty men, since Christ has come in the flesh. You cannot doubt His love to sinners, since His only-begotten Son has come to be a Witness to it. Oh, for Grace to range ourselves under His banner and to follow His footsteps, for God

has given Him to be “a Leader and Commander to the people”! Nor shall He be a Leader without followers, nor a Commander without an army. Where is He to get His followers and His army? Read the next verse.

5. *Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that knew You not shall run unto You because of the LORD Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You.* Observe, there was no communion between Christ and these people, for He knew them not and they knew not Him. It is the Scriptural mode of expressing the great gulf between these. Yet, He is to call them and they are to run to Him. He is to find His subjects and His soldiers among those who have up to now been ignorant of Him. What a gracious Covenant promise this is! Under the guise of a declaration made to Christ, this is really a promise made to the elect of God that they shall be brought back from all their wanderings and be ranged in their ranks beneath the banner of their Lord!

6, 7. *Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.* There must be conversion—that is, a turning of the soul, and that must be manifest in the outward life. The wicked must forsake his evil ways, but the change must go much deeper than that—there must be a real spiritual conversion. The unrighteous man must forsake his sinful thoughts and, oh, how glorious it is when, after such a generous exhortation and such a gracious invitation, God sends His Spirit to those whom He calls, to enable them to forsake their own ways and their own thoughts, and to turn to Him! Wherever there is any such a turning as that, it is certain that “He will abundantly pardon.”

8, 9. *For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.* I think, dear Friends, that not only may the unconverted pick up many crumbs of comfort as they hear about the abundant provision of Divine Mercy, but that the tried people of God may also be much cheered as they think upon the greatness of the Lord’s plans for them! You do not understand, tried child of God, what your Heavenly Father is doing with you. A child cannot always comprehend his father’s purposes of love—it is not necessary that he should. Every father may say to his son, “My thoughts are not your thoughts,” but with what an emphasis does our Divine Father say it to us! “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

10, 11. *For as the rain comes down, and the snow from Heaven, and returns not there but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing to which I sent it.* Such a promise as this ought to help us to preach in faith! How full our sermons ought to be of the Word of God, for it is not *our word*, but God’s Word that is certain to be effectual to the salvation of

our hearers! I remember McCheyne saying that you will generally find that it is God's Word, not man's comment on God's Word, that is blessed to the conversion of souls. There is a Divine charm—a mystic power—about the very Words of the Lord. I can never doubt the Doctrine of Plenary Verbal Inspiration since I so constantly see, in actual practice, how the very words that God has been pleased to employ are blessed to the souls of men—not merely their sense, but the very language! Sometimes a plural instead of a singular noun, or one particular word instead of its synonym, will be made, in the hands of the Spirit of God, the means of reaching some character who, otherwise, would not have been reached. Blessed be God that we believe in His Book! We cannot, we will not give up a jot or a tittle of it—the dot of an I, or the cross of a T. We believe that no part of the Word of the Lord will return to Him void, but it shall accomplish all His good pleasure and prosper in the thing whereunto He has sent it.

12. *For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace.* That shall be your happy condition when you have once fed upon Christ! When you have entered into Covenant with God, you “shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace.”

12. *The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.* And many of us can testify that it is so. Once reconciled to God, all Nature seems to wear another aspect. Whatever the weather is, it pleases us because it pleases Him who sends it to us and when we look upon the beauties of Nature beneath the sunlight, there is a peculiar glory upon them, for the Light of God that shines more brightly than the sun, is, to the believing eye, upon everything!

13. *Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.* Wherever God's Word is, there are transformations. Miracles, though we see them not in the natural world, are abundant in the spiritual realm. Conversion is the great standing proof of the Presence of the Holy Spirit—and His abiding Presence is the perpetual Witness to the truth of the Gospel. Beyond all arguments from internal or external evidence, stands this one—the Word of God is effectual in the salvation of sinners. Thorns are turned into fir trees and briars into myrtles and, so, God is glorified and “an everlasting sign” is thus preserved among us, “that shall not be cut off.”

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—708, 103 (Version 2), 722.

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

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

GOD FORGIVING SIN

NO. 2181

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 6, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”
Isaiah 55:7-9.***

AT first men have very low ideas of sin. It is a trifle, a mere mistake, a failure of judgment, a little going aside—but when the Holy Spirit begins to deal with them sin grows to be an intolerable burden—a fearsome thing full of horror and dismay. The more men know of the evil of sin, the more astounded they are that they ever should have found any pleasure in it, or could have made any excuse for it. Now, it is well when men begin to see the truth about themselves, for even if that truth breaks them into pieces and grinds them small as the dust of the threshing floor, it is well that they are delivered from the dominion of falsehood.

At this time, however, while the thought of sin becomes clear, the thought of pardon is not at first so clear. Sin is great and for that reason the sinner thinks it cannot be pardoned, as if he measured the Lord by his sin and fancied that his sin was greater than the mercy of God! Hence our difficulty with men who are really awakened, is to raise their thoughts of God’s mercy in proportion to their raised idea of the greatness of sin. While they do not feel their sin, they say that God is merciful and talk very flippantly about it, as if pardon were a trifle. But when they feel the weight of sin, then they think it impossible that sin should be forgiven!

In our text God in condescension helps the sinner to believe in pardon by elevating his idea of God. Because God is infinitely superior to man, He can abundantly pardon. “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” He can abundantly pardon because His Nature is not on our level. May God bless what I shall say and enable doubting ones to have confidence in Divine mercy and at once receive the pardon of our God!—

***“Pardon for crimes of deepest dye,
A pardon bought with Jesus’ blood.”***

I. YOUR OWN THOUGHTS JUDGE PARDON TO BE IMPOSSIBLE. Let me show you why. To some it seems impossible that there can be forgiveness for them, because of *some special, secret, gross and grievous sin.* Most persons, when they remember their past lives, see a certain spot blacker than the rest. Perhaps more light falls upon that spot than upon

any other, but certainly the eye of memory constantly returns to it. And when they take a view of their lives, they are overwhelmed by the remembrance of certain enormous transgressions. In conversing with enquirers, it has been my painful lot to hear many an awful story which will never be repeated by me.

They weep over sins inexcusable, sins foul and terrible, but oh, it has always been a delight to me to be able to say, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men!" I have never heard in secret of any special action that has seemed to me—even *seemed* to me—to be beyond the reach of Divine Grace! "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." Those convicted of sin who think their cases heinous beyond all others are sometimes astonished when we tell them that many such have been forgiven and remind them how the Apostle, after he had mentioned all manner of enormities, says, "And such were some of you; but you are washed."

They fancy Christ only came into the world to save *saints*—but He came into the world to save *sinner*s. They imagine that He saves those who think themselves sinners and are not truly such—but it is not so. Jesus did not come to save sham sinners, but those that have committed real sin and ought to be ashamed of what they have done. Jesus died for the guilty. Do you think that the ransom paid in His blood on Calvary was for trifling offenses? No, verily, the Infinite One died because enormous sin was to be put away. Believe, then, in a great Savior for great sinners!

To others the difficulty of pardon seems to lie not so much in some special offense as *in the number of their sins and the long continuance of them*. "Look," says one, "I now perceive that I sinned when I did not think I was sinning. I sin in word, I sin in thought, I sin in motive, I sin in spirit, whereas I thought I had but few sins." In your room the air seems clear and pure enough till you let in a beam of sunlight through a hole in the shutter. Look! Look! Look! Why, dancing up and down in that ray of sunlight there are myriads of objects! So, within the action which appears quite innocent, there may be myriads of evils which are discovered to us by the light of God when the eyes of conscience have the scales taken from them.

To have lived in sin for 20, 40, 60, or 80 years appears to the awakened conscience to be a very dreadful thing—and a dreadful thing it is. It is cruel to provoke a person for five minutes—to go on provoking him for an hour is abominable—but to provoke *God* year after year, as sinners do—is a tremendous crime which might seem to be beyond mercy. So the heart feels and hence the need for such a text as mine. Others have been grievously oppressed with the idea that they could not be pardoned because of *the willfulness of what they have done*. "I did, on such-and-such an occasion," says one, "distinctly prefer sin to righteousness. I sinned against great light. I had to do violence to myself to go into evil company and to commit sin. I sinned by an awful constraint which I put upon my conscience."

Certainly this is a very grievous evil. To sin willfully is dangerous to the last degree. Willfulness is the very damnableness of sin. Sin committed of malice aforethought, against light and against knowledge, is sin, indeed. I do not wonder that you think it impossible that you should be forgiven—but I would have you remember that your judgment is nothing as compared with God's Word and God's Word declares that if you forsake your way and turn to the Lord, "He will abundantly pardon." Be not astonished when I tell you that you are much worse than you *think* you are! Even though you have a very terrible idea of yourself, that idea does not come up to the truth. But, notwithstanding this, if you were 10,000 times worse than you are, still God, the infinitely merciful, is able, for Christ's sake, to forgive you all trespasses and to blot out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins!

Behold, in the name of God I publish this great Truth of God—"He will abundantly pardon." "Sir," says one, "I sinned *with a great falseness and treachery of heart*, for I was baptized and joined a Church. I professed to be a follower of Christ and I have broken my covenant. I did know something of the salvation of Christ and I sinned against it. I did rejoice at one time in the light of God's Countenance and I wickedly went astray from Him." Yes, this is very, very, very grievous. But there is a text that says—"Return, O backsliding daughter," and I cannot go further until I have sounded it in your ear. May the Spirit of God send it into your heart! "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for My anger is turned away from them." "He will abundantly pardon" for as high as the heavens are above the earth, so are His ways higher than your ways.

I hear one say, "But, Sir, there is about my sin this peculiar heinousness, that *I have injured myself and others by my sin.*" Many a man has to carry in his bones the sins of his youth and though the physical consequences may not be averted, yet I would have him trust in Christ, that the guilt is, notwithstanding, blotted out. We may lead another into sin and that other may *perish*—and yet, amazing Grace—we may be saved. When David was forgiven, he could not restore Uriah to life, who had been slain through his wicked device. Worst of all, we may have led another into *Hell*. "Oh," says one, "if I have damned another, can I yet be saved myself?" Yes, yes, but as I say it I feel inclined to stop and ask you to sing—

***"Who is a pardoning God like You,
Or who has Grace so rich and free?"***

We cannot undo the mischief of our ungodly lives. The drunkard may become as sober as he pleases, but he cannot bring back those young lads whom he taught to drink. The man who was an unbeliever and who spoke against God and His Christ may turn and repent and be a faithful follower of Jesus—but the wicked things he taught may still linger in many minds—and go on poisoning them to their destruction. Sin is a spreading plague! It is a horrible evil! Were it not for the Cross, it would be a despairing business to talk with sinful souls—but the Cross, the Cross—it rises high above all the hills of sin and they that look to it shall find that God does abundantly pardon!

Perhaps one may even say, “But, Sir, my sin was of this kind, that *I dishonored God*—I denied the Deity of Christ! I used to grow red in the face against God’s electing love and justification by faith. I hated the Gospel and I said all manner of contemptuous things about God’s servants and about God Himself.” It is a sorrowful case, my Friend—but remember, there was one who was a persecutor and injurious. But he says, “I obtained mercy.” When you hear the cock crow tomorrow morning, remember how Peter was forgiven and hope for mercy! Though sinners have defamed Him and blasphemed Him, profaned His Day and hated His Gospel, Jesus can wash them whiter than snow!

It is mine to proclaim at this time pardon for every form of transgression and iniquity. David said, “Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight”—and though you may be compelled to feel that your sin is peculiarly of that kind, yet the Lord will abundantly pardon, for He says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

II. But, secondly, GOD’S THOUGHTS OF OTHER THINGS ARE FAR ABOVE YOURS. I am not going to keep you long on that. It is quite certain that the best thoughts—the most logical thoughts, the most original thoughts, the most correct thoughts you have ever had—are not worthy to be compared with God’s thoughts. Look in *nature*. The things you see in nature were, at first, thoughts in God’s mind and He embodied them. Did you ever think such thoughts as God has thought in creation?

You take the wing of a fly, an insignificant thing and simple enough—but you put it under a microscope and you see it to be a fabric of great beauty, of exquisite delicacy and of marvelous adaptation to the end for which it was made. Many a person who has looked in a microscope has been overwhelmed with wonder! You put a needle under it, the best Red-ditch needle and it is a rough bar of iron—but you take any of the works of God and magnify them as much as ever you will, you never detect any roughness. Nothing can be better finished than God’s little things. Even in minute matters His thoughts are not as your thoughts!

You fancy that you are so insignificant that He will not forgive you. Oh, but He that spends infinite wisdom upon the wing of a fly will care for you and spend infinite thought upon you that He may forgive you! You look up at the stars and your thoughts are that they are mere points of light. His thoughts are not your thoughts, for when you look through the telescope you discover that these are majestic orbs and you can hardly get God’s great thought of the heavens into your head! An astronomer is compelled to *worship*. He is unable to compass the stupendous thoughts of the creating God! God’s great thoughts in nature are infinitely above our noblest conceptions.

God’s thoughts in *Providence*—how wonderfully they are above ours! You read history and everything seems to be a tangle. The stories of the nations look like “confusion worse confounded” and yet, before you have read through the chapter, you see in it all a plan and a method—

***“From seeming evil still educing good,
And better still, and better still,
In infinite progression.”***

God works wonderfully in Providence in ways that we look not for. His thoughts are above our thoughts. It has even been so in your own mind as to *the future*. Read the prophecies and see what is yet to be. God’s thoughts about a new Heaven and a new earth—how far above ours!

The book of Revelation, which gives us parts of God’s thought about the future, is not to be understood by us as yet. We have to wait till facts explain it, for God’s thoughts are above our thoughts. Why, take a simple matter like the resurrection of the dead. We bury the departed and their bodies are dissolved. God’s thought is that they shall rise again! The seed shall become the flower. God’s thoughts are far above any thoughts that can arise in your soul.

III. I merely throw that in as an interjectory head, to come to this—that HIS THOUGHTS ABOUT PARDON ARE ABOVE YOURS. God’s ways of pardon are far above anything you can ever think. Look at yourself. *Are you not slow to forgive?* Some are sadly slow! It is a long time before they can get over an injury. God forgives readily. Through the death of His dear Son, He is able, without the violation of His justice, to forgive at once, freely, readily. There are no compulsions with Him—“He delights in mercy.” It is His very Self to pardon, for God is Love!

Do not judge God’s heart by that hard heart of yours! He is a God ready to pardon. *You come to an end of your forgiveness before long.* After being offended seven times, you do not go on to 70 times seven. If you did so, surely you would make a great wonder of it and think that you deserved great praise. But God goes on to 70 times 70 times—on, and on, and on, and never comes to the end of pardoning mercy so long as a soul cries to Him for forgiveness. *Some things you find hard to forgive.* You say, “Well, now—now, this is really very provoking. I am of a forgiving spirit and I have overlooked offenses a great many times, but you do not expect me to endure such *treatment* as this? Surely, nobody can expect me to be always trod on.”

No, nobody does expect it of you and if he did he would be disappointed! God does far more in the way of pardon than we ask, or even think. He argues not at great offenses, but as soon as we cry to Him for pardon, He answers with forgiveness. I am afraid I must say of some of you that *you forgive, but you do not forget.* Now, God promises to forget our iniquities. It is more than Omniscience can do to forget and yet God declares that He does forget. “I will cast all their sins behind My back,” He says. “I will cast their iniquities into the depths of the sea. They shall not be remembered against them any more forever.”

We forgive and yet feel some return of anger. You forgive, and mean it—but there are times when you get to chewing over the old offense and you feel grieved again. The offense sticks in your throat, does it not? It floats up again, though you thought you had drowned it. But it is never so with God—there are no back reckonings with the All-Merciful. “I have blotted

out,” says He, “your transgressions.” Once blotted out, they are done with forever. “The day comes, says the Lord, when the sins of Judah shall be sought for and shall not be found, yes, they shall not be, says the Lord.” He has annihilated our sins. Is it not written, “He has made an end of sin”?

Dear Friend, I do not slander you when I say that you are *not very eager to pardon*. Are you? When you have been offended, you think a good deal of yourself, if, after persuasion and humble apology, you are ready to give your hand to the aggressor and end the dispute. You are not pining to forgive, but God is. It is He, the offended One, who seeks the offender and proposes to make peace with him. It is He that cries, “Hold,” and bids transgressors come to Him—yes, pleads with them—“Be you reconciled to God.” “As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.”

Do you think that any of us would suffer much for the sake of being able to forgive another? “No,” you say, “I do not see that I ought to suffer for his wrong. I will forgive him if I can do so freely, but I could not consent to be a loser thereby.” Should there be a very serious difficulty in the way, so that you cannot rightly forgive without some atonement being made, would you make the atonement yourself? You exclaim with astonishment, “I make the atonement! How can you propose such a thing?”

Some time ago, a case did occur in which I tried to imitate the Savior and did so with a measure of success. Two Brethren had greatly grieved each other. One had acted very shamefully. I entreated the other to forgive him and as he did not feel willing to do so, I said, “There are certain consequences involved in what he has done. I will bear all those consequences and you may regard me as the guilty party if you please.” Well, he said he could not be angry with me because I had done no wrong. However, I did bear the consequences of the wrong action and thus I made peace between the two.

The aggrieved Brother was able, by my interposition, to overlook the injury and yet to keep his word—but he regretted that I should be the scapegoat until I assured him I was pleased to do it, that I might bring them together again. It would not have been wise for me to ask the offended Brother to suffer *himself* the consequences of the other’s offenses—but this is what God has done. He bears the consequences of our sin—and Jesus *dies* because our sin involved death. Miracle of mercy!—

**“Who is a pardoning God like You,
Or who has Grace so rich and free?”**

All this was done because all the wisdom of God had been engaged to find out the way of doing it—*you and I do not thus plot and plan how to forgive*. If God were freely to forgive sin without atonement, it would not manifest His love so much as does that plan by which He, Himself, in the Person of His Son, suffered in our place that we might be reconciled to God.

If I can end a quarrel as soon as I speak a word, there is little in it. But if it needs plotting and planning and contriving to make a way by which my pardoning the offender will not cause him to offend again, or will not

lead other members of the family to think lightly of his offense and will prevent any mischief coming from the freeness of my pardon to him, then you see how I love. And if it comes to this—that I must die, myself, before I can, without damage, freely forgive the offender—and if I do die, myself, for him, herein is love amazing—love beyond degree! O Souls, you that are listening to me now and think that God cannot forgive you, I hope that all this is sufficient to make you feel that you have made a mistake!

You have measured God's corn with your own bushel! He is greater at forgiving than you ever dreamed. Oh, He is a great forgiver! Wonderful is God in every position which He assumes, but when He takes to pardoning through the bleeding Sacrifice, then is He glorious, indeed! The silver scepter is the most majestic ensign of His royalty.

IV. I might finish here, but I wanted to say, had there been time, that GOD'S THOUGHTS ARE ABOVE YOURS IN ALL THINGS WHICH CONCERN HIS GRACE. Would you mind reading the chapter through again? Just see the very first verse as to the freeness of His Divine Grace. Your thought is that you can get nothing without paying for it—God's thoughts are, "Come to the waters, and he that has no money; come, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

But you think that if God were to save you He would perform it in a second-rate style. Not He! He will have no cheap salvations. If He supplies His people, it shall be most richly and freely. Listen to this—"Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." It is not a sip of the water, or a crust of the bread, or a drop of the milk—when Christ invites poor sinners to come—He invites them to a high festival! You that are the guiltiest may come to Christ and be among the happiest and the best of His saints! Nobody would ever imagine that a sinner could ever enter into covenant with God—that God should strike hands with guilty men and pledge Himself to Divine Grace.

Listen to this—"Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." I remember a man, shut up in prison, under a long sentence and he was so violent that he was put into a solitary cell. The chaplain had done all he could as to bringing him to repentance. But one day he read to him this verse: "I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you." The man said, "I never heard of such a thing. Can God make a covenant with such a wretch as I am? Sir," he said, "it will break my heart." And it did break his heart and he became a new man in Christ Jesus under the power of that amazing thought—that God would enter into covenant with such a wretch as he was.

Ah, well! I know your thoughts, poor Sinner! You think that if Christ will save you, yet He will never get much glory out of you! Listen! This is His Glory, that He should call a nation that He knows not, and people that know not Him should run to Him! He mentions a people who were so bad that our Lord Himself did not know them! A people so ignorant that, for certain, they did not know Him! This is to be His Glory, that He is to call them by His Grace—"For He has glorified you." There's a thought! It is

not one of *your* thoughts, but one of the thoughts of *God*—that He will glorify Christ in the saving of great sinners.

“Ah, well!” says one, “I will go home and cry to God for mercy.” That is *your* thought. Listen to God’s thought! “Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near.” Breathe a prayer to Him *now*. Look to Jesus with the eye of faith at once! The Lord help you to do so! Your thought is that salvation is to be won through months or years of labor and prayer. But pardon is given as quick as a lightning flash! The sin is there! The sin is gone! The dead soul lives! The lost soul is saved! While I speak the word, it is done and God is glorified!

Ah, still you think, “How can I be pardoned?” Listen to this—“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” Read the rest of the chapter and say to yourself, over each verse, “This was not *my* thought. This was not *my* way.” End all your doubts with the last verse—“Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

Ah, my God! This is not my way and this is not my thought—

***“Who is a pardoning God like You,
Or who has Grace so rich and free?”***

The Lord bring all of you, who are not saved as yet, to believe unto eternal life! And you that are His people, I beseech you, pray God to bless this word for His name’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 55.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—537, 512, 202.**

Permitted to complete 36 years of consecutive sermons, the full heart of the Preacher exclaims, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul!” The spring has never ceased to flow. The Bible seems fuller and more rich in subject, now, than when we began to select themes from it. A few beauties here and there are all that we have been able to depict of “Your land, O Immanuel!” We have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God, but that “whole counsel” is, in its fullness, as much beyond us as the sea surpasses the hollow of a child’s hand! Yet has God set His seal upon our testimony in many conversions and edifications. Above all, to Him be Glory, that an afflicted and poor people, detained from public service, have by these sermons been refreshed. So may it be while this pulpit remains! “Brethren, pray for us.”—C. H. S.

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END OF VOLUME 36.

GOD'S THOUGHTS AND WAYS FAR ABOVE OURS

NO. 1387

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”
Isaiah 55:8, 9.***

VERY often must the great Truth of God expressed by this Scripture have forced itself upon every thoughtful mind. Though we think and are so far like God because, being intelligent beings, we have thoughts of our own, yet our thoughts must forever be weak and fragmentary as compared with His thoughts. And though, as free agents, we have ways of our own choice—in some of which we move with great show of wisdom—yet our ways are upon the earth and cannot attain to the ways of the Lord which are far above us. This is true as to His proceedings in Providence. God's designs are vast and far-reaching and His methods are frequently strange and inscrutable, though always wise.

We have little plans to suit our little foresight and power, but His ways are unsearchable! Oftentimes He brings light of excessive brightness out of darkness more dense than usual and produces superior joys out of extraordinary sorrows. In infinite wisdom He causes the most furious storms to cast up upon the shore the pearl of peace. He is wonderful both in counsel and in working and always chooses that way in which His Glory is most abundantly displayed. Our way, which for a time we think to be the best, when scanned by the enlightened eye soon turns out to be as much beneath God's way of accomplishing the desired purpose as the earth is beneath the heavens. Compared with Him our wisdom is folly and our prudence madness.

Indeed, we may not compare ourselves with the Lord, for there is no comparison! Call it a contrast and you have the word. So sublime is Providence that we do not comprehend it! So good is it that we are filled with wonder as we see its designs unfolded. We see its bright side at times and sun ourselves in its warm light and then we adore and magnify the Lord. Yet, we never knew the half of the hidden benefits which He is working out for us, nor do we suspect the Lord of a tenth of the goodness which He stores up for us. At other times we have felt the night side of Providence and have sorrowed in its chill shade. Yes, and perhaps we have even rebelled against it. And yet at that very time the Lord's purposes have been divinely rich toward us and the night has been the choicest season of benediction.

We have not the wings of eagles on which to soar to the exceeding height of the dealings of the Lord. We walk below and look up wonder-

ingly, as men gaze on the stars—we are sure that we are safe beneath the sublime all-covering power, but we are equally clear that the longest experience and the most profound thought will never measure the height of the thoughts and ways of the Eternal! The words, “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways,” are equally true in reference to the things of Divine Grace, for there the Lord of Love has altogether left our thoughts behind.

Could man have dreamed that he was the object of eternal love and that God would assume his nature? Could we have imagined that the Almighty would give His only-begotten Son to die for guilty man? The Atonement was a thought which never would have crossed man's mind if it had not, first of all, been revealed to him by the great Father. The Divine way of lifting up the poor from the dust and the needy from the dunghill, by His rich, free, Omnipotent Grace, is not of man nor by man! The Lord's thought of choosing the base things of this world, and things that are not to bring to nothing the things that are—His thoughts of sovereignty and thoughts of Grace—all consistent with His thoughts of justice, are far above human invention and out of man's range of thought.

Even when the Lord explains His thoughts and ways to us, and brings them down to our comprehension as far as they can be, yet we cannot fail to wonder at their elevation and grandeur—

**“Great God of wonders! All Your ways
Are matchless, Godlike, and Divine.”**

Have you not often stood in mute astonishment as you have discovered some fresh blessing of the Covenant unknown to you before? Like a miner who turns over another nugget in the mine and stands in amazed delight, so have you mingled faith with astonishment! Have you not known what it is to do as David did when Nathan brought him tidings of the Lord's Covenant with him—“Then went king David in and sat before the Lord, and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me up to now? And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?”

Have not such fits of astonishment been upon you, also? Have you not cried with the Apostle, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!”? Hundreds of times between now and Heaven will the same glad astonishment seize us—and perhaps in Heaven, itself, wondering will be a leading part of our enjoyment! We shall—

**“Sing with wonder and surprise
At His loving kindness in the skies.”**

Do not the victorious hosts which stand upon the sea of glass, having the harps of God, sing the song of Moses, the servant of the Lord and of the Lamb, saying, “Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty”? The thoughts of God will even, in Heaven, be above our most sublime thoughts and His ways, even then, above our most heavenly ways. How exalted is the Lord! His glory is above the earth and heavens!

How tenderly does He overpower us with the splendor of His goodness, soothing where He might confound! In Grace and love, who is like You, O Lord? Among the gods who is like You? Understanding faints in attempting to ascend to You! Imagination, to which You have given a half-creative

faculty, cannot beget a thought of equal height to Your thoughts, nor conceive a way which may bear comparison with Your ways! What better can we do, great God, than bow our heads and reverently adore?

This morning, in trying to discuss our text, we will endeavor to illustrate it by its own connection. There are many ways of handling Scripture, but to my mind the freshest and most instructive is to expound it by its *surroundings*. To pick out a plum here and there is the children's method, but hardly satisfies students of the Word of God. "Let us not tear it," is exceedingly good advice with regard to Scripture, which is, in some sense, the garment of God. I will take hold of the central part of the rich piece of silken Truth contained in this chapter and I will lift up the whole fabric before you and bid you observe its texture and note how wonderfully it is worked throughout.

Exposition is ever nourishing to the Lord's people and this it is which we shall aim at. I think there are three things which are very clear in the text if viewed in its connection. First, in the text there is *rebuke administered*. Secondly, there is *repentance encouraged*. And, thirdly, there is *expectation excited*.

I. First in the text there is REBUKE ADMINISTERED, for thus it runs—"Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways." Do you not observe a sort of ringing of the changes upon the words, "thoughts," and, "ways"? This proves to my mind that the connection mainly lies in this first point.

The Lord says, "Forsake your ways, for they are not My ways. Leave your thoughts, for they are not My thoughts. Your ways ought to be My ways. Your thoughts ought to be My thoughts, so far as the weakness of creaturehood will allow. But it is not so. You have wandered away from Me. You think not such thoughts as I would have you think. You walk not in such a way as I would have you choose—therefore forsake your ways and your thoughts and turn unto your God." It is a remonstrance tenderly administered, mixed up with such sweet exhortation that no degree of bitterness is perceptible in it. The rebuke is enveloped in love and made into a sugar-coated pill. The sweet promise of abundant pardon conceals the reproof.

Now let us take the rebuke and notice, first, the fault of man's thoughts—"My thoughts are not your thoughts." As between each other, God's thoughts are not man's, though they ought to be. God's thoughts are love, pity, tenderness. Ours are forgetfulness, ingratitude and hard-heartedness. He thinks of us as lost sheep are thought of by the shepherd, as a prodigal child is thought of by his father. But our thoughts are not of the same kind. In its wandering state, the sheep has no thought of returning to the shepherd and the prodigal son, until converting Grace meets with him, has no reciprocal affection towards his father. It is sad that the God of Love should have to say, "My thoughts are not your thoughts."

God's thoughts to us are thoughts of love, but not so ours to Him. He is tender of our comfort, but we are not tender of His honor. He considers

our interests, but we think not of His Glory. He watches over our safety, but we are not watchful to keep His statutes. He loads us with benefits, but we only load Him with our sins. He has given us all that we have, but we bring Him cold thanks in return. You love, O ungodly men, to live without remembering God! He is not in all your thoughts. You have no consideration for your Maker, no deference for your Preserver, no care for your best Friend. He feels your ungenerous conduct, for He says, "If then, I am a Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My fear?"

Alas, man returns not according to the benefit received, but often renders evil for good! When the Lord deigned to visit earth as the Incarnate God, the acts of man proved that His thoughts are not God's thoughts. God's thoughts were all goodness to men, but men found Him here in human form and their thoughts and ways were full of enmity and murder towards Him! They cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" How terribly has man departed from His God! Your thoughts as to your conduct are not God's thoughts. He considers that the creatures He has made should obey Him, but you judge that it matters not what a man does towards His Maker so long as he is just towards his fellow men.

God declares that no conduct can justify a man unless it is absolutely perfect and wholly conformed to His Law. But man imagines that if he does his best it will suffice and that even if he does *not* do his best, a little profession of repentance will wipe off old scores and he may stand self-justified before God. Man thinks that he has done wondrously if he gives, now and then, a little attention to outward religion, even though his heart may be far from God. But the Lord looks at the heart and searches the secret places of the mind. He values nothing but what is done out of love to Him. Man slights the inward and only regards the outward, for God's thoughts are not his thoughts. Oh you that are satisfied with your own conduct and perfectly content that things are well enough with you, I beseech you to remember that your self-congratulatory thoughts are not the thoughts of God! He looks into the soul's secrets and He is not deceived by the words and professions of those who draw near to Him with their lips, but in secret continue in their iniquity!

God's thoughts, again, as to the life which a man needs in order to salvation are very different from man's thoughts. Did you notice how in this chapter He says, "Hear, and your soul shall live"? He reckons, then, that man is *dead* till he has heard the Word of God in his soul. Man reckons that he is alive enough—he is perfectly satisfied with the mental life which he possesses and does not desire spiritual life—for as yet he cannot apprehend it. Here is a wide difference! God thinks of you, O Sinner, as *dead* and beginning to corrupt! He thinks of you as we think of a corpse when we cry, "Bury my dead out of my sight."

But you think of yourself as of a creature fair to look upon, filled with beauty, abounding with ability and able to perform all spiritual acts at pleasure. Your boast is that you have freedom of will and force of heart to set all things right whenever it pleases you—and courage and resolution to right every wrong which may assail you. You are as strong as Goliath and as brave as David in your own esteem! But God doesn't think so. His

eternal Spirit knows that you are dead—and He has come to bring you life—take heed that you do not reject it! Do not say in your heart, “I have life enough and need nothing from the Most High,” for this would be your sure destruction!

God's thoughts are not our thoughts, again, in reference to the Truth of God. God's thoughts of His Truth are evidently not man's, for nothing but Divine Grace can bring man to believe the doctrines of the Gospel, or keep him faithful to them. Each generation seems to bring forth its own set of men who set themselves to oppose God's Truth from some fresh point. These scribes and counters of the towers are wonderfully busy just now. We have among us a great company of men who have attained repute through daring to assail established Truths of God—wise men if we take their own judgment of themselves—for they are never more at home than when sounding the praises of their own culture and breadth of mind.

These Philistines have intruded into the temple under the pretense of trimming our lamps but their aim is to put them out. Evangelistic light is too clear for them and they seek to obscure it—therefore they give new readings to texts which are translated by better scholars than they will ever be and put new interpretations upon the doctrines which their fathers held—interpretations which their sires would indignantly repudiate! Roughly speaking, these men deny everything which faith holds dear and yet expect to be considered to be Christians! They tear the vitals from every Truth of God and yet pretend to believe it! Their advanced thought, like a vampire, sucks the blood out of the veins of Truth and he who would drive away the foul thing is called a bigot and a fool!

These reverend infidels are to be tolerated as our ministers, or if we decline to reckon those to be Christian ministers who spend all their energies in undermining Christianity, we are in danger of being ridiculed by the sage party which now clamors in the public ear. Well, it was always so! Man thinks himself so wise and good that he does not like God's thoughts concerning himself—his fall, his guilt and his danger. He tries to think Revelation over again. He places it upside down and then he calls his maundering, “culture,” and, “thought.” To get away from the plain teaching of Scripture he babbles about advancement—an advancement which consists in going away from the Light—an advancement which will bring us back to stark naked infidelity unless God, in infinite mercy, shall stop it. Man likes not the thoughts of God!

If God thinks of man as depraved, he will not have it—he feels that it is a shameful thing to speak thus of such a noble being as himself! If God declares that man is so fallen that he must be born again, he will not have it—he will sprinkle a few drops of water on a baby's face—say some mumbo jumbo and presto!—The thing is done! If God thinks that the sinner shall be cast into Hell where their worm dies not—men's fears are quieted by being assured by some great Divine that there is no Hell—that he cannot find mention of it in the Bible and that at the worst, he will only cease to be. Thus do they think, in opposition to the Divine thinking, for it is always true, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord.”

In the matter of salvation, God's thoughts are not man's thoughts, for God thinks that man has so sinned that he must be condemned unless a Substitute is found. Man doesn't think so. God sets before him pardon, freely presented through the precious blood of Jesus Christ—man thinks to *buy* it by his devotions, or to win it by his merits! Therefore the language preceding our text—"Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And why do you labor for that which satisfies not? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat that which is good and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live" and so on. Those verses hold in solution the thought of our text—"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord."

See then, dear Friends, that this is a call to *repentance*! Man, if you think rightly, you will submit to think as God thinks! If your thoughts are what they should be, they will not contradict God's thoughts, for He knows more than you and knows better than you. The Infinite, the Eternal—is He to be judged by man's judgment? Is He to be analyzed in the chemist's laboratory? Are His thoughts to be ridiculed because they are contrary to the reigning philosophy which is probably no more true than the many other forms of human ignorance which have come and gone in the centuries of the past? Will not the present dreams of mortal wisdom melt like a mist before the sun of Gospel Truth? Is God's great system of Salvation and Providence to be called to the bar of the *scientists*, who can do no more than dote after the manner of their predecessors?

Shall Divine Revelation be judged and condemned as men try a thief? No, worse than this—these sages so despise the teaching of the Lord that one would think they were a committee of doctors examining a maniac! Let us abhor the presumption of skepticism and let us be wise enough to know our folly! We must be rational enough to feel that God is to be *obeyed* and not questioned—and that His Revelation is to be believed and not criticized. Though we think crookedly, God's thoughts are upright. Though we think grovellingly, God thinks sublimely. Though we think upon a finite and erroneous scale, God thinks infinitely and Infallibly! It is our lot to continually correct our thoughts by the Infallible Word of God so that our minds are kept in harmony with the sure utterances of the Holy Spirit.

Now, the text advances to say that man's *ways* are not like God's—"My ways are not your ways." Our ways are the outward actions which spring out of our thoughts. God's ways are ways of holiness and purity. God has never done anything unjust to His creature or unrighteous to Himself. But our ways are not so—they are full of error, marred with evil, polluted with impurity. By nature we love that which we ought to hate! We often put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, when you think of the Character of God and then think of the best man that ever lived—truly "as high as the heavens are above the earth" are His ways above our ways!

God's ways are ways of love and tenderness. He is very loving and full of compassion. But our ways are not so—we are often very harsh to one another and we do not return a filial love to God. I mean not unless His

Grace meets with us. And even then we fall far short of walking in the love of God as He walks in love toward us. God's ways are ways of truth—He never lies, He has never been unfaithful to us or untrue to His promises. But we, on the other hand, have proved false to Him many times. "You have dealt very treacherously," said the Prophet of old, and the charge lies against us to this day. We have been traitors to God, but He has been fidelity, itself, to us!

Our good resolves have dissolved in air. Our promises have been broken. Our vows have all been forgotten. God is all truth and faithfulness to us and we are all mistrust and doubt and treachery towards Him! Were it not for His Divine Grace we would have even fallen into apostasy—and been like the son of perdition who betrayed his Lord! God's ways are ways of forgiveness and peace. He does not desire the death of the sinner. He is very patient, He suffers long, He bears continually with our provocations. He is desirous that men should acquaint themselves with Him and be at peace. His ways are ways of reconciliation, ways of forgiveness, ways of love and kindness!

But you can see, can't you, that the ways of the natural man are perverse? By nature we do not desire to be at amity with God. On the contrary, we seize upon anything that can aggravate our transgression and widen the breach between ourselves and our offended Lord! We have no patience—we cannot even bear with a little suffering or trial from Him without complaint and murmur. There are men around us who will turn round and curse Him to His face when His hand is smiting and correcting them for their own good—yes, and they will do it wantonly without a shadow of reason. Our ways are not God's ways. This is true of every sinner under Heaven and, in some measure, true of the best of men— "My ways are not your ways, says the Lord."

Well, now, Beloved, two cannot walk together in Heaven except they are of one mind! Therefore our ways and God's ways *must* be made to be alike in character. Now, it is not possible for us to conceive of God's making His thoughts to be like our thoughts. Who would wish such a thing? Who would desire that the wise and good should stoop to think our folly and act our madness? Who could wish that the Glorious and the Perfect should come down to think and act after the manner of unjust, unrighteous man? His thoughts cannot be reduced to ours—what then? Why, we must rise to Him! Not, of course, to His majesty and sublimity, but we must rise to His holiness, truth and love. Therefore the command which comes before our text, "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord."

If infinite purity cannot be expected to become impure, let us ask that our impurity may be taken away and that we may be made clean in the Lord's sight so as to hold fellowship with Him! And now I ask you to consider the difficulty of this. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways." Turn your eyes here, O Self-Sufficiency! Can you vault into Heaven? Standing here upon this lower earth can you, with a spring, leap above yon stars, ascend into the holiness of God and become a partaker of the Divine Nature?

Surely you have a task set before you which will make you confess your inability! Yet such a rising up must be accomplished if we are to dwell with God and have fellowship with Him! These miry, filthy ways of earth must become like the pure and perfect path of the thrice Holy One or we cannot walk with Him! How, then, are we to be lifted up from earth to Heaven? The word that answers the question is that matchless syllable, "Grace." God in Christ Jesus, by His almighty *Grace*, must raise us up together with Christ! He who brought, again, from the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ, must stoop down to lift us up from the grave of sin and quicken us into eternal life—or we shall never think His thoughts or follow His ways!

Into the Light wherein He dwells, we can never go except by the operations of His Divine Spirit. Jesus says, "No man comes unto the Father but by Me," and, "No man can come unto Me except the Father which has sent Me draw him." The Holy Spirit must quicken us out of our trespasses and sins! He must deliver us from the ways in which we walk according to the course of this world! He must redeem us from the dominion of the carnal mind which is enmity against God! By sanctification He must deliver us from our indwelling corruption and continue the process till He conforms us *perfectly* to the image of the peerless Son of God! And likeness to Jesus He *will* work in all Believers! And it shall be said of us—"They are without fault before the Throne of God!" And Christ, Himself, shall say, "They shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy." It is clear, then, that our text is a gentle but earnest rebuke, veiled in abounding love!

II. Now, secondly, we shall view the text under another aspect. Here we have REPENTANCE ENCOURAGED. Kindly look at the 7th verse—"Let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts." It is clear that there is a connecting link between the abundance of pardon and the lofty Character of God—and that men are encouraged to forsake their ways and thoughts by the hope of pardon derived from the greatness of the Divine thoughts and ways.

First, O Sinner, turn from your ways at once, and seek the Lord! Do not stand back because you cannot *understand* God. It is not necessary that you should comprehend His ways and thoughts—you are not asked to do so! In fact, you are told in the text that you cannot do anything of the kind! You are bid to forsake *your* ways and receive mercy by hearing His Word and believing it, for as the heavens are high above the earth, so high are His ways above your ways. You cannot understand it—you waste time while raising this question and that, prying into God's eternal purposes, gazing into the dazzling light of sovereignty—questioning electing love, diving into mysteries of the Trinity and the like! You are to "hear, and your soul shall live."

Return unto your God and He will abundantly pardon you. Though you cannot grapple with His sublimity, submit to His mercy! You may conclude that it is not intended that you should understand the Infinite, for you are told that His thoughts and ways are far above you. But you *are* required to seek Him while He may be found and call upon Him while He is near! Come and close with His free invitation to give you wine and milk

without money and without price! Forsaking your sin, come and be at peace with Him at once! Do not stand back because you cannot find a parallel to the Grace which God declares that He will display towards you. What if you have looked over all the history of man and you can find nothing among men that can equal the abundance of Divine pardon? Do not, therefore, hesitate to believe, for God's thoughts are above all human thoughts.

Man finds it hard to forgive at all. One of the sternest lessons which some men have to learn is to forgive their brothers unto 70 times seven. Man can, with difficulty, forgive repeated offenses—but he usually draws an argument for anger from the repetition of the provocation. Nor can he forgive a large number of offenders—he might pardon *one*—but to forgive many is more than most men will even attempt to do! They are filled with indignation and resist those who annoy them. When offenses are aggravated willfully, when they provoke by being committed against love and against kindness, men will not forgive. Even the most forgiving become, at last, incensed—but God passes by myriads of transgressions! Do not wait until you find a man who will forgive you—God can do what man never dreams of doing. His thoughts are above your thoughts and His ways above your ways.

Perhaps conscience has been busy as to your shortcomings and you feel yourself to be self-condemned. In the honesty of your judgment you have felt compelled to cry, "I could not do otherwise than pass sentence of condemnation upon myself if I were made my own judge." 'Tis a right verdict, but do not forget that Jesus died for sinners and now, far above all thoughts of ours, Mercy's wing can mount! Yes, for time everlasting, mountains of Jehovah's forgiving love are above the heavens—Divine Grace is above all things! Think of this, O repenting Sinner, and be encouraged! Man's forgiveness is seldom free, like that of God's, who delights to pardon sin! No sooner do we transgress than God is ready to forgive!

Man's forgiveness is never so full as God's, for the Lord harbors no resentment. He preserves no memory of our transgressions—He casts them into the depths of the sea and remembers them no more! Man's forgiveness is seldom so real as God's, for though man *says* he has forgiven, he does not, afterwards, delight in the offender as he may have done before. There is a chill in his heart towards the person who injured him and by his cautious dealing he shows that he remembers the wrong. But the Lord God so effectually and wholly forgets transgression that He presses the offender to His heart, adopts him into His *family* and lifts him up to dwell forever with Him above!

Now, Beloved, according to our text, whatever your ways towards God shall be in the future, He will exceed them! Are your ways now right towards your Father? Do you begin with trembling footsteps to seek His house? Lo, He runs to meet you! The prodigal's Father meets him far more than half way, for His ways are above our ways! Do you stand before Him weeping? It is well—these ways of repentance are good, but better are the ways of God—for Jesus stands before *you, bleeding for your sake*. He gives *blood* instead of tears! Do you love the Redeemer because of His dying for you? Alas, you do not love so greatly as He loves you—His love is a sea

and yours a tiny brook. Will you, from now on, give Him all your life? Yet not such a life as He gives to you—a life perfect and eternal—and all for you!

He lives for you and says, “Because I live, you shall live, also.” Come back, O Penitent, for when you do come back, if Divine Grace has put some goodness into your ways, yet there shall still be infinitely more goodness in the ways of God! And as to your thoughts—can you think of how He will receive you? Oh, you cannot *dream* how gladly He will meet you and how kindly He will receive you! You are about to cry, “I am not worthy to be called Your son,” but He will say to His servants, “Bring forth the best robe and put it on him! Put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet!” You hope that there will be gladness when you are restored, but you have no idea of the music and the dancing which will flood Heaven, itself, with rejoicing!

You faintly hope that God will love you, but you have no idea how much, nor what great things His love will do for you! The half has never been told you by the most faithful witness for God. Those who have experienced most of the Divine Love have never been able to communicate to you any idea of what that love is! God's thoughts are above your thoughts as much as the heavens are above the earth! Come, then, to Him! Infinite Grace awaits you. A tender reception, a perfect cleansing, a Divine adorning—eternal security and endless bliss shall all be yours! Why do you linger? The life of God shall be in you and the joy of Christ shall fill you to the full! If this does not encourage men to repent, what can?

III. And now let us touch upon the third point, which is this—EXPECTATION EXCITED. I said I was going to keep to the connection of the text and so I will. But this time the link is forward instead of backward. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For”—you see *there* is the link word, “for,” to join our text to that which follows—“*For* as the rain comes down and the snow from Heaven and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall My Word be.”

Now, if you listen to the Lord and take His thoughts to be your thoughts—and earnestly pray Him to make His ways to be your ways from this time forth and forever—you may justly indulge the highest expectations and they shall be exceeded! This chapter tells you what to expect. First, you are to expect that the Lord's Word will be unfailing to you. What is this “Word”? You see we have had “thoughts” and “ways” and now we come to “Word.” God's Word is His thoughts spoken, and God's Word is, also, His ways, for, “He speaks and it is done. He commands and it stands fast.” His “Word” is “thoughts” and “ways” put together!

Now that “Word” of His shall never be broken to you, poor Sinner. Forsake your ways, forsake your thoughts—and come and trust in God and His Word shall be like Himself—Immutable, Eternal, Infallible and full of boundless blessing to you! It shall be powerful to bless you, mighty to grow you—it shall be like rain and snow which go not back to Heaven, but sink into the earth to make it bring forth and bud. From that day forward, when you are reconciled to God, you may take any promise you find in the

Word of God and say, "Lord, fulfill this Word unto Your servant which You have caused me to hope," and it shall be so. Come and trust Him—and promises which now appear before you as far too rich for such a poor worm as you are, shall be fulfilled! They shall come down upon your soul like gentle showers and make you full of gladness. Such is the fullness of its power that you shall be able to respond to God's Word by a holy and gracious life—and your soul, barren as it now is—shall be made to bring forth and bud. That is one blessed thing which you may confidently expect, for you are coming to a God of great ways and thoughts!

The next is that you are returning to a God whose ways are so much above your ways and His thoughts so much above your thoughts that your heart shall be filled with joy—"you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace." God will not merely break off your chains and say in cold accents, "You are free," but He will release you amid the music of the spheres! And angels shall lead you forth in peace and your tongue shall sing, "I am forgiven! I am forgiven! I am accepted! I am redeemed! Behold, now do I go forth out of my captivity with joy and God's angels lead me forth with peace." Who would not be a penitent if such things may be expected from the sublime grandeur of the goodness of God?

Next to this, all your surroundings shall minister to your gladness. "The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing. And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." In your journey through life, mountains have, up to now, been hard to climb and forests tangled and dark have been your dread. But now so greatly good is God to those whose ways become His ways, that the mountain which you feared shall break forth into song and the forest at which you trembled shall become an orchestra in which every tree shall clap its hands for joy! You do not know what awaits coming sinners!

You that are willing to hear that your soul may live—you that are willing to accept the Covenant which God made with great David's greater Son—you shall see the whole world robed in the garments of praise and your heart shall be so filled with gladness that it shall overflow and flood all Nature with joy! And then there shall happen to you wonderful transformations. Because God's ways are above your ways, He will do what you never thought could be done! The thorns shall be transmuted into fir trees and the briars into myrtles! There shall be a change in you, such a wonderful change, that all things shall become new! There shall be a change in all that concerns you—the Bible shall become a treasure and the Sabbath a delight! The Mercy Seat a loved resort and the path of obedience a way of pleasantness!

Sin shall be uprooted and virtue shall be implanted! Evil habits shall be withered and holy principles shall be nourished! You do not know and you cannot *guess* what honor, pleasure, dignity and glory it is to be in Christ! You who have never come to God cannot conceive the bliss of life with God by Jesus Christ! As a deaf man can have no notion of music. As a man born blind can have no conception of the splendor of the rainbow, so you deaf and blind, you do not know what the Christian life is for excellence and happiness—but you may *guess* that it is surpassingly delightful when

you hear that as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are the Lord's ways above our ways!

Last of all, this mercy is to endure forever. Man's thoughts are temporary and his ways but for a season. God is eternal—when He thinks, His thoughts abide forever—and when He acts, His ways are everlasting. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance—He never changes His mind! Perhaps you think that salvation is a thing to be found and lost, to be gained and forfeited, to be enjoyed today and deplored tomorrow—and truly, there are some who tell us so. But so speaks not the Word of the Lord, for it is written, “It shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

Once come and walk in the ways of God and His Grace will keep you in them and you shall find a growing delight in them! Once come and learn the thoughts of God and surrender your intellect and heart entirely to His supremacy—and if it is a sincere surrender—His Holy Spirit will, from now on, guide your thoughts and direct your beliefs so that you shall continue steadfast in His fear and your path shall be that of the just which shines more and more unto the perfect day. Oh, who would not yield to such a God as our God, whose goodness excels our largest desires? If I were engaged upon the wretched errand of charging you to submit to a remorseless tyrant who would never forgive, my message would be hard to deliver! But because Jesus, the Son of God, has died and by His death has expiated sin, we are authorized and empowered to cry in the name of God, “Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts! And let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

If all this should seem to be too good to be true, as often it has done—the sinner should feel unable to believe that he can obtain immediate forgiveness for a long life of transgression—we are then commanded to tell you that you must not measure God by *yourself*. You must not calculate what *He* can do by what your fellow man can perform. The Lord can forgive what otherwise could never be forgiven. He can pour out mercies so multiplied as to baffle human arithmetic! He can bless you beyond your desires. He can delight you beyond a dream and He can finally give you a Heaven which “eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man.”

Close in with Him, Soul, at once, while yet in the Person of the Lord Jesus He commands your faith! Go not about by good works and prayers and tears to obtain forgiveness! Spend not your money on that which is not bread, but come, penniless and poor as you are, and buy the wine and milk of Covenant blessings without money and without price!! Lend the willing ear and yield the believing heart. “Hear, and your soul shall live!” Believe, and you shall be saved! Through Jesus Christ we proclaim the Good News and, for His sake, we implore a blessing upon it. Amen.

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MAN'S THOUGHTS AND GOD'S THOUGHTS

NO. 676

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 18, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”
Isaiah 55:8, 9.

THE text speaks of thoughts. It mentions the thoughts of man and the thoughts of God. The power of thought is one point in which man is made in the image of God. Other animated creatures which are put in subjection to the thinking, intelligent creature, man, have no fellowship with God in thought—into His world of pure spirit they cannot enter. To the majestic lion or to the monstrous leviathan, no speech could be addressed by God involving the terms, “My thoughts,” and “your thoughts.”

But the Lord is here speaking to a creature of another mold which He has made a living soul, capable of fellowship with the invisible, the spiritual, and the Divine. When men do not think, and especially when they do not think of the highest and most important matters, they degrade themselves from the true position and occupation of immortal minds. The beast's spirit goes downward—and frivolous, thoughtless persons do as much as they can to descend to the groveling level of the mere animal.

Thought is that which likens us unto God. The powers of mind, when rightly exercised upon eternal things, are the means of uplifting us to the highest point to which unaided human nature can attain. And low as this point is, it is vastly better than brutish carelessness. I see the thoughtless soul yonder moving on all fours with the beast looking for nothing more than food and drink. The thoughtful I see walking erect with his brow toward Heaven seeking for something which clods of clay cannot yield him. I am thankful this morning if you have begun to think upon spiritual things, and though there should unhappily be a spice of skepticism about your thoughts—though they should be mournfully far from being God's thoughts—yet I shall hail it as no ill omen if you think at all.

The man who begins to think about God, and his soul, eternity, sin, and righteousness, is becoming like the bones in the vision when there was a noise and a shaking. And there is a prospect that before long bone will come to his bone and the dead shall live. As for you who never think at all, my text can scarcely yield you a single ray of comfort. It is my first duty to pray that the Lord may lead you to exercise the royal prerogative of thought and to shake you from the terrible lethargy into which you have fallen.

In the text we have two persons thinking—and the result—man's thoughts and God's thoughts. God's thoughts are declared by Himself to be exceedingly above man's. And yet if ever man is to dwell with God he must think as God thinks. "How can two walk together except they are agreed?" If my thoughts run this way, and God's thoughts are in an opposite direction, I cannot have any fellowship with Him. My thoughts must be conformed to God's thoughts or I cannot be like He and walk with Him.

Yet He tells me that His thoughts are not my thoughts, but are as high above mine as the heavens are above the earth! What, then, can I do to rise to Him? Think as much as I please it only sets me on my feet, and so far does me service—but it still leaves me on earth, and God is yonder far above me! My thoughts can no more attain unto Him than an infant can touch the stars with his finger. Still, it is a comfort to me if I am sincerely thoughtful after God, that He is thinking about me—for if my thoughts cannot bear me up to Him—His thoughts can bring Him down to me! And when He has established a connection between the Heaven which is above me and the earth which is beneath Himself, then I, laying hold on His thoughts, and believing what He has thought out for me, shall be drawn up to His elevation—and I shall come to think His thoughts and so be in communion and fellowship with the Most High.

This morning I want, as the Holy Spirit enables me, to speak to those who have been led so far as to have thoughts concerning eternal things, and especially thoughts upon forgiveness of sin. You have as yet only your own thoughts, and these are troubling and misleading you. I desire to contrast your thoughts with God's thoughts in the hope that you may lay hold on God's thoughts by faith. And, then, by holding them fast you may be drawn up by them as by a Divine hand into a clearer atmosphere, and into a happier state than that in which your soul now sits, weeping and disconsolate. It may be that into perfect peace and joyous confidence God's thoughts may lift you as on eagle's wings this morning—a work which your deepest and most anxious thoughts can never achieve for you.

I shall attempt first, this morning, to contrast your thoughts as to the possibility of pardon with God's thoughts. Then, secondly, your thoughts as to the plan of pardon shall be set in the same light. And thirdly, your thoughts as to the present possession of personal pardon shall pass in brief review.

I. May the Holy Spirit help me while I endeavor to compare your thoughts of THE POSSIBILITY OF PARDON with God's thoughts about it. You naturally form your ideas of God's ways from what you conceive would be yours if you were in *His* position. I take you on that ground this morning, and we will suppose that some wicked person has very grossly injured you—and that the question of your forgiving him is now before you. We will suppose you to be of a generous, frank, forgiving disposition and in a calm and judicious state of mind.

You are ready to act most leniently, but still, the case in hand is no trifle and requires consideration. After well pondering and considering the matter, you feel bound to say, "I could forgive this person, but his offense is of a peculiarly grievous kind. Had he robbed me of my purse or my estate I could have overlooked it. But he has despoiled my *character*. He has

touched my person in its most tender part and injured me to the highest extent possible. I could forgive ten thousand other forms of trespass, but the form of evil from which he has made me suffer is peculiarly offensive and injurious to me. The person under consideration has perpetrated the worst conceivable form of wrong against me. With the most sincere desire to pass over it I feel that I must not, but must let the law take its course."

There have been many occasions when persons aggrieved have thus spoken and when no reasonable person could have blamed them. Such, O awakened Sinner, is your case before the Lord! And if He should think of you as one man would think of another, you must admit Him to be just. It is certain, dear Friend, that you have offended God in the most tender point—you have denied His right to you, though you are His creature. You have denied your Maker's right to command you, saying, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?"

Though you have been a pensioner upon His daily bounty, you have constantly insisted upon it that you were your own master and had a right to do just as you pleased. You have thus invaded the crown rights of the King of kings, and committed treason against His sovereignty which He guards most jealously. Worst of all you have committed sin against His only begotten and most dear Son, the Lord Jesus. You may not have persecuted His people, or spoken against His Deity—but you have slighted the precious blood and you have passed by the crucified Savior as though His Atonement were nothing to you.

You have thus perpetrated the most provoking offense against God and touched Him in the apple of His eye. If it were your case, you could not forgive—but be astonished as you hear that your thoughts are not God's thoughts—and His ways of forgiveness are as high above your ways as the heavens are above the earth! If you trust in the Lord Jesus, your iniquity, although most heinous and detestable, shall be blotted out forever! It is supposable that when you are weighing the case of an offender you decide upon it thus: "I could forgive him, bad as the sin is, if I thought he had fallen into it from inadvertence or carelessness, or if I supposed that he was moved by some great hope of gain for himself. But the offense was intentional, malicious, and wanton, and therefore I cannot remit it."

Naturally you transfer these thoughts of yours to the Lord of Heaven, and you say, "He will never pardon me for I have trespassed willfully. I knew the right, but I chose the wrong. I was never a gainer by my sins—I was often made to smart through them. And even when I became like a burnt child, I wanted only to thrust my finger into the fire again. I had no conceivable motive for sin except the determined and incorrigible love of evil! I drank down iniquity as the ox drinks down water—but the ox drinks to slake his thirst—I only gratified my passions and hardly that, for the more I sinned, the more unhappy I became! The more I drank of that ill stream, the more my horrid thirst came upon me. I have sinned without excuse."

My dear Friend, such language as this befits a penitent's tongue, but since you have Jehovah in Christ Jesus to deal with, do not despair! Men cannot forgive their fellows when they perceive wanton malice in their crimes, but God can forgive YOU! And though you have intentionally

slighted, aggrieved, vexed, and even blasphemed Him as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His ways above your ways! You will in some cases also be obliged to say, "I could very readily have overlooked this fault but it has been repeated. It was not once, nor twice, nor even twenty times, but this person has so hated me that he has purposely spited me every day of his life! He has teased and worried me with his insolence till I cannot do other than let my wrath loose against him! Forgive him? I might have done it if it were seventy times seven, but he has outdone Herod and gone beyond all number in his insults and injuries. You cannot expect me to forgive."

Such, exactly, is your case, O troubled Sinner, with regard to God. It is certain that your offenses are as many as the sands on the seashore. You have, through a life of twenty, thirty, forty, perhaps sixty or seventy years, done nothing else but sin! Your transgressions have been as numerous as the beats of your pulse, but still, though you hardly dare to think of forgiveness, God can not only *think* of it, but *bestow* it! The sins of twice ten thousand years He can blot out in a moment if there could be supposed a sinner who had them all heaped upon himself! God's thoughts are not your thoughts with regard to the number of sins, neither are His ways your ways.

I can conceive a person greatly injured saying, "I would overlook all these injuries which have been hurled against me, but I cannot see any reason why I should have been the particular object of this man's spite. It has been quite undeserved on my part, and unprovoked. I never gave this enemy of mine any occasion to speak against me. I never did him an ill turn—on the contrary, if he has asked me for any help I have always given it cheerfully and liberally." That would be a very excellent reason in a court of justice for insisting on the punishment of an offender. A judge would allow very much weight to it, and everyone would admit its reasoning.

Powerful, indeed, would it be in your case, O guilty Sinner, if the Lord should plead it! Listen, I pray you, to the voice of the good God whom you have injured. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider." What do you think is the sequel to this very just but sad complaint? Is it, "Because of this ingratitude I will never forgive"?

No. "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Dear Friend, you have received nothing from God *but* mercy, and though you have been very ill, what a mercy it is that you are spared! You brought on your sickness by your own sin, and tender mercy might have been worn out with your rebellions and have let you destroy yourself outright! But God has spared you! He has been provoked, but He has kept back His mighty hand, and you are a trophy of His wonderful longsuffering. Oh why do you continue to sin against Him? Why do you rebel against One so kind? How can you be so ungenerous to a God so full of Grace? Let His love melt you, for although men cannot forgive the un-

grateful wretches who wound their benefactors, yet the Lord's thoughts are as much above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth!

"Yes," says an offended person, "I might overlook the fault if I thought the man were wholly humbled. You see he asks me to pardon him, but he has not a sufficient sense of his guilt. He has no idea of how much I have had to smart—it has been sport to him, but it has been death to me—and he does not seem to be rightly aware of the really heinous nature of his sin. He asks for pardon very glibly, with a very smooth tongue, but I believe if he were left to himself and had an opportunity he would do the same again—how can you expect me to forgive him?"

Troubled Sinner, this is very much *your* case. You are somewhat broken down this morning, but you must confess that your heart is still hard compared with what it ought to be. I do not think any of us have such a sense of sin as could be called a *perfect* sense of it. The most grieved, broken, and contrite sinner does not perceive all the blackness of sin as God perceives it. And I am afraid the most of us, though we do come to Christ, must mourn that we do not mourn more thoroughly and bitterly over our sins.

We have sometimes made an excuse for not pardoning an offender because of his want of humbling, but God does not do so—He says, "I will take away the heart of stone and I will give them a heart of flesh." He does not say, "I will have nothing to do with that sinner because he has a stony heart." No, "I will take away the heart of stone out of his flesh and give him a heart of flesh." Here is mercy, indeed—mercy looking upon the heart of adamant and melting it until it becomes as wax—long-suffering bearing with impenitence, and then putting its own hand to the work to turn impenitence into contrition of soul. Truly is it written, "My thoughts are not your thoughts."

"Still," exclaims the aggrieved party, "I think the man ought to make me some compensation. He speaks of forgiveness, but then look at the mischief he has done me all these past years. He ought to propose something by way of making amends to me for the ill which he has done." This principle is very properly recognized in courts of justice. It is always thought that when a man has sustained a wanton injury he is not to be expected to overlook it unless compensation is offered.

Now, poor Sinner, you feel that you cannot bring any compensation. If you know yourself aright, you perceive that you can do nothing to undo what you have done. You have dishonored the Law of God in such a way that there is no hope of your ever removing the affront. But our loving God does not ask you for any compensation! He says, "Only return unto Me." "Only confess your iniquity which you have committed." Only acknowledge, as David did to Nathan, the sin you have done, and you shall receive, through Jesus, a word like that which Nathan brought to David—"The Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die."

He that confesses and forsakes his sin shall find mercy. No compensation is needed. Sin is freely forgiven for Jesus' sake. Naturally many a just-minded person would say, "If I were most gracious, yet I could not find it in my heart freely to forgive when I see the consequences always before my eyes." Suppose that somebody had wantonly injured your child.

Suppose he had broken one of your child's limbs, for instance. I think I hear you say, "I could forgive him, but look at my poor limping child! Do you expect a father freely to forgive when he sees that poor limping one constantly before him to remind him of this man's wanton cruelty? Can I forgive?"

But, Sinner, God sees before Him daily tokens of what you have done! Frivolous, dissolute man, there is that poor girl's ruined body and soul through you, in years gone by, and nothing you can ever do can undo that mischief! Could your tears flow forever you can never undo the past, nor restore the lost one. Could you bring that wandering soul back by Divine Grace, even then the bitter past could not be unwritten, for she, too, has spread the poison. All that accursed past of sin must live on. God forgives sin, but much of the *consequences* of sin God Himself does not prevent. If you light the fire, it will burn on to the lowest Hell! God may forgive your evil deeds, but the fire itself still continues.

You spoke a word against the Lord Jesus in the ears of some youngster years gone by which turned him aside from the right path. You cannot unsay it, and that youngster's infidelity and unbelief you cannot now destroy. The perpetual mischief which you have done to others might fitly be a reason which the Most High should not forgive you—but yet He says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts." With all this before Him, with all the consequences of your sin before Him, He forgives you freely if you rest on Jesus!

Ah, it is a wonderful thing—we may have been the instrument of sending others down to the pit, and alas, we cannot restore them from their endless woe—yet we may, by Grace, amazing Grace—be delivered ourselves from the horrible doom of sinners! The *mercy* of God may be extolled in *us*, and His *justice* in *them*. There is the infidel, the atheist who has poisoned the minds of others and sent them down to Hell, and yet almighty mercy saves him at the last hour! He cannot save his dupes—he cannot pull up his followers from the pit—but he is himself saved! What a stupendous wonder of Divine Sovereignty and Grace! Well did we sing just now—

***"Who is a pardoning God like you?
Or who gives Grace so rich and free?"***

Furthermore, I can conceive a case in which the offended party can fairly say, "I do feel from my heart fully prepared to forget this offense against me, but it was *public*, and therefore highly obnoxious and injurious. If no one else had known it, I think I might have overlooked it. But this was done in the marketplace, and not in a corner. I was put to public shame before a company of those whose respect I deserved. I was laughed at in the streets through the infamous villainy of this man. Do you expect me to pass by such an affront as that?"

Trembling Sinner, you also may well think, "Surely God will never forgive me, for against Him only have I sinned, and done this evil in His sight. I sinned in the face of the sun. My iniquities were open and visible to all. I sinned unblushingly, and gloried in my shame." Rejoice, poor Mourner, that this is no reason why the Lord should not forgive you, for as high as the heavens are above the earth so high are His thoughts above

your thoughts! Only turn to Him with a simple confession upon your heart, and put your trust in His dear Son and He will put all this away!

I will not prolong this talk, but only mention one more dark line of guilt. I can imagine it possible that an offended person might add, by way of clenching all his arguments against pardon, this one—"My forgiveness he has already despised. I have often asked this man to be at peace with me. I have put myself out of the way to be at peace with him. Notwithstanding all his malice and mischief I have said to him, 'Come, let us make a treaty and be friends. Why should this enmity continue? Why should there not be peace between us?' And when I have done this, he has turned scornfully on his heels and has said that he defied my mercy, and cared not for my love. I have acted thus generously many times. I have put myself to a great expense in order to subdue his hatred and set him right with me. And yet he has stood out against me! How can reason and justice expect me to do any more?"

I might, perhaps, answer, "No, neither of them can well expect more of you. But what we cannot expect of *you*, the guilty penitent may yet expect of *God*." After all these years of rebellion, after these many times in which you have rejected loving invitations given by a tender mother or an earnest minister in God's name—after these multiplied rejections—His mercy is not gone forever, neither does His loving kindness fail! It is astonishing that some of you are still on earth after the many, many times that you have been bestirred in soul to call unto God. I know it has not been this voice only which has called you, but there has been a voice within—your conscience, your awakened conscience has cried to you—"Return unto the Lord your God."

But you have silenced the thunder of conscience so many times that it is a marvel the Holy Spirit has not said, "Let him alone, he is given unto idols." Here you are, still on praying ground and pleading terms with God. Thank Him for it, and be grateful that all these rejections have not moved Him to swear that you shall not enter into His rest. He waits still to be gracious—

***"Still does His good Spirit strive
With the chief of sinners."***

May God grant that you may have made your last rejection, and may you, this day, yield to the Savior!

I should like to ask a favor of anyone here who is under conviction of sin and who has formed his thoughts of God from what he would do if he were in God's place. I would earnestly beg him to go out into the street, or the field, or the garden—wherever he best can this afternoon—and just look up and try, if he can, form an idea of how high the heavens are above the earth. Or if you prefer, when night comes on, stand under that starry canopy and think about how high those heavens are above the earth. You need not limit your contemplations to the planets and the nearest of the fixed stars—go beyond, beyond, beyond, beyond the most distant of the nebulae—and think how matchless the heavens are in height above the globe on which we tread.

Think over, if you will, what you know concerning astronomy. Measure the infinite leagues of space which lie beyond the narrow bounds of our solar system, or even of this universe of visible stars. And then remember

that as high as these heavens are above the earth, so high are the Lord's thoughts above *your* thoughts, and His ways above your ways! Indeed, there is no comparison between the two, for He says positively, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are My ways your ways."

II. Let us now turn to the second head and contrast your thoughts about THE PLAN OF PARDON with God's thoughts. If you have advanced far enough to believe that God can pardon, and have to this extent laid hold upon God's thoughts, it is well. But still another of your own thoughts drags you down, for you have a wrong idea of the *way* of pardon. I will suppose that there are persons here who ignorantly say, "If it is true that the Lord will pardon sin, let Him do it outright. Let Him just take the pen and mark through all my transgressions, and have done with them. He has but to say, 'I forgive you,' and that is the end of it."

But God's thoughts are not your thoughts in this case. You have evidently become so impure in heart as to look upon sin as a trifle. But the Judge of all the earth is of another mind. He is the Governor of all worlds and must maintain His government. There may be tens of thousands of races of creatures all subject to Him and governed by the same Law of immutable right and justice. If it were whispered throughout the universe that on so much as one solitary occasion the Judge of all the earth had winked at sin and exercised His Sovereignty to suspend His moral Law and to deny Justice its due—it would not matter how obscure an object the tolerated sinner might be—he would be quoted in every world and mentioned by every race of creatures as a proof that Divine Justice was not invariable and without respect of persons.

If it is right to punish sin at all, it must be right to do so in every case! And suffering sin to go unpunished in one case would be a sort of confession that the penalty was too severe. Now, therefore, the great Ruler cannot suffer sin to go unpunished. God as a moral Governor is such in all His actions, on the smallest scale, as it would be best for Him to be on the grandest scale. If God forgave sin without penalty, He would no longer be equally resplendent in every attribute since Mercy would eclipse Justice.

Princes may, on earth, exercise their sovereignty with a mercy which forgets justice. This is because of the imperfection of the laws which they administer, or of themselves as governors. But God, reigning as a perfect Governor, administering perfect Laws, never allows exceptions or does other than what is right. Jehovah is invariably the same, and if the angels that sinned were punished, so must every other sinning creature be punished or else God will have changed—which can never be—since He is the same evermore.

Now, Sinner, you think that God might forgive you and no hurt would come of it. I have hinted that there might be an universal evil spreading through unnumbered worlds by the forgiveness of the most obscure individual without the exaction of a penalty. The foundations would be removed and then what could even the righteous do? No, God will not forgive you without penalty. Your thoughts are not His thoughts. He will have stroke for stroke, and what the Law required it shall receive! He will not pass by your transgressions without exacting the full demands of His justice.

I have no doubt there are others here who have a notion that God may, perhaps, forgive them by putting them through a course of *affliction*. It is still a superstitious notion lingering in England that poor persons are the special subjects of Divine favor, and that hard work and poverty, and especially a long lingering sickness are a means of putting away sin. Persons so afflicted have had so much misery in this life that they do not deserve to suffer more!

This is a falsehood which is seldom mentioned in the pulpit because it is thought to be non-existent. But we know it to be very prevalent among certain classes. But oh, my Hearer, your thoughts on this matter are not God's thoughts! The eternal miseries of Hell are not a full expiation for the unutterable blackness of sin—much less can the miseries of this life be! You may be as poor as Lazarus and never lie in Abraham's bosom! You may endure as many sufferings here as fell to the lot of Job, and yet you may go from Job's dunghill to the flames of Hell. Cast out any idea that these sufferings or privations of yours can make atonement for sin! God's thoughts are not your thoughts.

A more current idea, still, is that God will put away the past and give men a new start. And that if they go on well for the *future*, then in their dying hour, when it comes to the end, God will pardon. But Soul, there is nothing of that said in the Word of God! That truthful Book tells us solemnly that as far as the matter of keeping the Law and being saved by our good works are concerned, we have, all of us, but *one* opportunity—and the moment we commit *one* sin that opportunity is over! No, before we began life our father Adam had spoiled that chance for us by his sin. The Word of God never speaks about giving us a second chance! The law says, "Cursed is every man that continues not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them."

It says nothing whatever of starting in business again in the hopes that you may at last make your spiritual fortune! Nothing of the kind! And those of you who are trying your hands at reformation and hoping that in a dying hour you will get peace to your souls are spending your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which profits not—for if you never sinned in the future—what would that have to do with the past? Will a man's paying ready money in the future defray the debts which he has already incurred? God has a right to the obedience of your whole life—do you suppose that giving Him the obedience of a part of it will be accepted as a satisfaction for the whole?

Moreover, who are you that you should be holy? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. You will only repeat your former life—you will go back again like the dog to its vomit—and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. As for peace in the hour of death, he who is not pardoned *living* is not likely to be pardoned *dying*. Nine out of ten, perhaps nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of professed deathbed salvations are a delusion! We have good facts to prove that. A certain physician collected notes of several hundreds of cases of persons who professed conversion who were supposed to be dying. These persons did not die but lived, and in the case of all but one they lived just as they had lived before—though when they were thought to be dying they

appeared as if they were truly converted. Do not look forward to that! It is a mere snare of Satan. God save you from it—for in this case His thoughts are not your thoughts.

There is a very current supposition, however, that God pardons sin in this way—that He says, “Well now. I forgive you the past. My Law was a little too severe for you, but I will try you again under a more lenient rule. Do us well as you can, attend a place of worship, pray and be very religious and I will save you.” Ah, but my dear Friend, God does nothing of the kind! He does not say to a sinner, “There, Sinner, I forgive the past. Now you must see how you can behave for the future.” The forgiveness which is given to a sinner reaches to the sins which are yet to be committed as well as to the sins which he has already done—

***“Here’s pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast.
And oh my Soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come here’s pardon too!”***

Jesus does not forgive a part, but He forgives the whole. He says, “I absolve you, none shall lay anything to your charge.” And this is not only for the present but for the future, too! It is a forgiveness which makes a clean sweep of all sin, since all the sin of all Believers is present sin in the sight of God though it is not present sin to them. If the Lord forgives you at all, dear Sinner, let me tell you what He will do—He *will* punish that sin of yours—no He *has* punished it in Christ! Christ stood for you and bore all that you ought to have borne from the wrath of God—therefore God is severely just while He is bountifully merciful to you!

In the next place, when God forgives you He does it unconditionally. He will not forgive you on the condition of this or that in the future. But He *now* speaks the word, “I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities.” All this He can do in a moment! Before that clock ticks yet again the sentence may go forth, “That soul has trusted My dear Son and I have made him whiter than snow, and whiter than snow He shall be in My sight in time and in eternity. I have cast all his sins behind My back. I have covered him with a robe of righteousness. He is now Mine, and he shall be Mine in the day when I make up My jewels.”

Here is a pardon which you have not to earn, but to *accept* freely. Here is a pardon *given* to you—not on the condition of anything you are to be, to feel, to do, or to give—but a pardon given freely to you out of the riches of God’s loving kindness and tender mercy. Jesus Christ has bought it! Jesus Christ has bought it for *you*! He brings it to you now, and oh, if you have Divine Grace to receive it, you may accept it and go on your way rejoicing in the Lord your God! This is a pardon worth receiving!

Let me ask you a second time to look up and consider that all your ideas of God’s pardon are but thoughts here on the earth—but His thoughts of love to you are as high above you as the heavens are above the earth.

III. To conclude—time seems to have traveled at double speed this morning—I wanted to have said, in the third place, a little as to THE PRESENT POSSESSION of this pardon. There is an idea in the mind of many of you that the plan of just trusting in Christ and being pardoned on the spot is too simple to be safe. You want a plan which involves a host of

Latin and Greek and all sorts of ornaments and garments. You want vestments, and altars, and prayers, and hymns, and chants, and Te Deums and all that kind of thing. You want a long ceremony of baptism, confirmation, confession, communion, penance, matins, vespers, festivals and I know not what!

But the Gospel is, "Trust Jesus and live." "Believe on Jesus Christ and you are saved." It is too simple, you think, to be safe. Now it is a well known fact that the simplest remedies are the most potent and safe. And, certainly, the simplest rules in mechanics are just those upon which the greatest engineers construct their most wonderful inventions! The moment you get to complexity you get into a snarl and are on the brink of weakness. Simplicity, how solid it is! See the old-fashioned plan of putting a plank across the village brook—that was the old way of making a bridge! Well, then, somebody came in and invented an arch—a grand invention, certainly, but not in all cases available, because in a measure complex.

What are the engineers coming back to? The old plan of the plank! The Menai tubular bridge is nothing more than the old plan of a plank thrown across the brook—and more and more great engineers revert to simplicities. When man grows wisest he comes back to where he was when he started. I suppose that when the swan first sailed across the lake it gave to the navigator the best possible model of a vessel to which navigation will always have to keep close if it would keep close to the true and beautiful. Now, as in nature simplicity is strength, so is it certainly in Divine Grace. Trust Christ and live! And let me say, simple as it looks, it is the most philosophical plan of salvation that could have been thought out—for faith is the mainspring of the entire man—and when faith is right all the powers are right.

Teaching men morals is as though I had a clock that would not go, and I turned round one of the cog-wheels. But faith takes the key and winds up the mainspring and the whole thing runs on readily. Do not despise the Gospel because it is simple! Trust Christ and you shall live now! Believe that Jesus Christ has made a full Atonement and rest yourself wholly on Him! Just as I rest wholly now upon this rail—with your whole weight rest on Christ! And if you are not saved the Word of God does not speak the truth, for it is written, "He that believe on Him is not condemned." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved."

I think I hear you say, "It is too good to be true." That is an objection I myself fought with for a very long time. But surely the best things about our good God must be the truest. If anyone should tell me a thing that was not very good about God, I might indignantly say, "That must be untrue! If it is about God it must be good, and as it is about the Most High it must be good in the highest degree." Oh Sinner, it does seem a very wonderful thing that you should be made a child of Heaven this morning—crimes of such horror and multitude be forgiven in a moment—it does seem too good to be true!

But then it is just like our God. "Is not it surprising," said one to a good old saint, "that God should forgive such sins?" "No," she said, "it is not surprising, it is just like Him." And it is just like Him—just like a God who gave His own dear Son to die that He should take the prodigal and fall

upon his neck, and kiss him, and feast him, and rejoice and be merry because His lost one was found!

Lastly, I think I hear your heart say, "It seems to me to be a plan too swift to be sure. What? In a moment? I can understand getting through a long treadmill of doubts that would take me a dozen years, and then getting into something like light and peace. But can all this be done in an instant?" "I do not believe in those medicines," says one, "which say 'cured in an instant.'" Very likely not, there are many quacks about! But this is no human cure—this is a Divine prescription. Believe and live! Have done with yourself and begin with Christ! From sin to holiness, from earth to Heaven is only one step—that one step is out of self and into Christ.

The thing is as simple as taking that step. "Why is it so hard, then?" says somebody. Because your hearts are hard. It is not hard in itself. If it were a harder thing you would like it better—but it is because it is so simple that your wicked heart will never take it till God the Holy Spirit breaks that heart. I never knew a man believe in Jesus Christ till he felt he could not do anything else. "Well," says he, "I cannot save myself and I will therefore let Christ do it." May the Lord pump you dry of all your self-sufficiency and then the stream of eternal mercy will come flowing down through the silver pipe of the atoning sacrifice and you shall rejoice and live!

I have now to say to every sinner here, in conclusion, that my God is a God willing to pardon, a God passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin! These are His words, not only to the whole of you as a mass, but to each unconverted person in particular, though I cannot point the finger to everyone. "Come now, and let us reason together. Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Do not those words melt you at all? I pray God that He may bless them to you. You have been restored, brought here again after much affliction. God has been gracious to you. He has passed by much sin in His long-suffering.

Oh, let Heaven's mercy melt you! He seems to me, this morning, to be standing here and to be saying, "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How can I set you as Admah? How can I make you as Zeboim? My heart is moved, my repentings are kindled together. I will not destroy you, for I am God and not man." Fly, then, to your Father's bosom! Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way! And may this day witness joy in Heaven because the prodigal has returned and the lost sheep is found! God bless this simple address to each of us, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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TAKING HOLD OF GOD'S COVENANT NO. 2762

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 19, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 5, 1879.

*“And takes hold of My Covenant.”
Isaiah 56:4.*

*“And takes hold of My Covenant.”
Isaiah 56:6.*

IT was generally supposed by the Jews that no one except the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob could be in Covenant relationship with God. You remember, however, how Paul says, in writing to the Romans, “But Isaiah is very bold,” and he is so in this instance. He declares that men may take hold of the Covenant of God though, heretofore, they appeared to be shut out from its privileges. There were certain poor mutilated beings who were despised by some because of their disabilities—yet they were to be encouraged to keep the Lord's Sabbaths, to choose the things that pleased Him and to take hold of His Covenant. Then there were the foreigners, of whom the Lord said, “Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to Jehovah, to serve Him and to love the name of Jehovah to be His servants, everyone that keeps the Sabbath from polluting it, and takes hold of My Covenant; even them will I bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon My altar; for My house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.”

It was thus clearly revealed that persons who appeared to be shut out from the Covenant because they were not of the seed of Abraham, were, in later days, to be encouraged to obey the commands of God and especially to obey His ordinance concerning the keeping of the Sabbath—which separated His people from the rest of mankind—and to take hold of His Covenant. It is of that particular action of taking hold of God's Covenant that I am about to speak as the Holy Spirit shall enable me.

I. And first, let us enquire, WHAT IS THIS COVENANT? We must know the truth concerning this point, for it has been well said, “He who understands the Covenants holds the key of all theology.”

Well, then, let us bear in mind the fact that there was, first of all, a Covenant made with our father, Adam—not, perhaps, in set terms, but virtually—that if he would do the will of God, he would live and that, if he did so, we also would live by virtue of his obedience. But, alas, our great Covenant head, Adam the first, could not keep that Covenant. He took of

the fruit of the tree which he was forbidden to eat and so the Covenant of Works, which had been made with him, was torn in pieces. We might say of that sad event what Mark Anthony said of the murder of Julius Caesar—

***“Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen!
Then I, and you, and all of us fell down.”***

I should think that none of us want to take hold of that Covenant, for we are already all sufferers by it. We are, all of us, the heirs of sorrow, travail and death as the result of that broken Covenant. Those of you who fancy that you can get to Heaven by obeying the commands of God should remember that even the perfect Adam could not keep the Law of God, so how shall his imperfect children do what he failed to accomplish? He, in whom was no sin, for he was created without taint of guilt, disobeyed his Maker—so, shall not we be sure to disobey Him when all our powers and faculties are debased by the guilt which we have inherited from him?

Yes, we have disobeyed Him already. We have broken His Law again and again! So any hope of happiness through the keeping of the Law which we may have cherished, is forever vain. The Covenant of Works is broken and all hope of our being saved by it is gone forever—

***“Vain are the hopes the sons of men
On their own works have built.
Their hearts by nature are unclean
And all their actions guilt.
Let Jew and Gentile stop their mouths
Without a murmuring word
And the whole race of Adam stand
Guilty before the Lord.
In vain we ask God's righteous Law
To justify us now,
Since to convince and to condemn
Is all the Law can do.”***

But, now, blessed be the name of the Lord, there is a *second Covenant, made with the Second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ!* And by that Covenant, made with Him on behalf of all His people, it was provided that He should Himself perfectly keep the Law and also that He should suffer the penalty due from His people for their breaches of the Law. And that, if He did both these things, then all those who were represented in Him should live forever! We rejoice to know that Christ has both kept the Law and paid the penalty that His people had incurred by breaking it! He has rendered both an active and a passive obedience to the Law of God so, now, according to the conditions of the Covenant, all those for whom He lived and died, inherit, by Divine right, all the blessings which Christ, their Covenant Representative, has procured on their behalf!

I have already read to you the Inspired record of what those blessings are. Let me just recall them to you—“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them.” All these are clear, definite, unconditional

promises—there is no, “if,” or, “but,” in the whole quotation. There is nothing to be done, on our part, in order to win the blessing! All that had to be done was done by Christ our Representative more than 18 centuries ago! We fell, by no act of our own, in the first Adam—and we rise, without any merit of our own, in the Second Adam. The only question about which we need to be concerned, is—Are we in Him? I know that question can be answered in the affirmative by many of us—and I trust that others of us will be able to lay hold on that Covenant by the life-grip of faith—then they will also be able to say, “Yes, we are among those over whom Christ is the Head and we have a share in all the privileges of the Covenant into which He entered on our behalf.”

The first Covenant was the Covenant of Works—“Do this and you shall live.” That Covenant, as I have shown you, was broken, but *the new Covenant is a Covenant of pure Grace*. Christ has fulfilled all its conditions on His people’s behalf and, therefore, all its privileges are theirs. Because He lives, they shall also live. Because He honored and kept the Law—because He bore the shame and death of the Cross—because He rose again from the dead and ascended to His Father’s right hand, where He always lives to carry on His glorious work of intercession, therefore all they who are in Him shall have their iniquities forgiven, their natures changed, their hearts renewed and their whole souls filled with the overflowing Grace of God!

Not only is it a Covenant of pure Grace, but it is also a “*Covenant ordered in all things and sure.*” The first Covenant failed because it rested upon Adam—the pivot of the machinery broke and the whole thing fell with a crash. The new Covenant stands because Christ did not fail. The ancient Prophecy concerning Him was, “He shall not fail nor be discouraged.” Nor was He. He went right on with the great work He had undertaken, treading the winepress alone, until He cried, “Consummatum est”—“It is finished!”—and then, and not till then, He gave up the ghost. Now, as every condition of the Covenant has been fulfilled by Christ, the whole of it stands fast as a clear matter of promise which a truth-speaking, ever-faithful God must keep. He cannot run back from it, nor does He wish to do so—

***“Engraved as in eternal brass
The mighty promise shines!
Nor can the powers of darkness erase
Those everlasting lines!”***

Yet once more, let me remind you that *the ensign of this Covenant is faith*. Under the old Covenant it was and always would have been, works. But, under the new Covenant, it is faith. Do you believe? Then you are in Christ and all the blessings of the Covenant of Grace are yours. Do you accept Christ to stand as your Substitute? Do you lay hold on this Covenant and claim an interest in it for your own soul? Do you cast yourself wholly upon Him who kept that Covenant for you? Then it is yours and God speaks to you, my believing Hearer, as though there were no other person in the whole universe—and He says to you—“I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean; I will put My Law in your mind, and write it on your heart; and I will give you a new heart and a right

spirit. From all your uncleanness will I cleanse you, and you shall be My child, and I will be your Father and your God.” What a Covenant of Grace this is! I have given you only a bare outline of its provisions, but I hope that outline will make many of you want to know how you can lay hold upon it for yourselves!

II. That is the next question I want to answer. HOW CAN WE LAY HOLD OF IT? My text speaks of “taking hold of My Covenant.” How can I do that?

Well, the first thing that I must do is, *I must loosen my hold of the old Covenant.* Oh, what dolts, what fools, men are to cling to the old Covenant which can never do anything but curse them! You say that you hope to be saved by keeping God's Law, but, Man, you have already broken that Law! If you had a beautiful vase in your home and it had the slightest crack or flaw in it anywhere, it would not be a perfect work of art. Now, the Law of God is so tender and delicate, and enters so into the spirituality of man's nature that even a sinful thought spoils the perfection of obedience to it! And you have had a great many more than one sinful thought, I know, whoever you may be. And many an idle word have you uttered and, I fear, many a wrong act have you done. You have broken the Law to shivers—it is clear that you cannot keep it. It is absurd and wicked for you to talk of doing so!

But you will try to do your best, you say. Well, then, if it is your deliberate choice to come under the Law of God, let me tell you what the Law requires of you. It says, “Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.” That is all you will ever get out of the Law of God—a curse. You may try to keep it till you wear the skin from your bones, but that is all it will ever give you, for you have not continued in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them, so your deficiencies and your transgressions must inevitably bring a curse upon your head. I pray you, if you are in your right senses, to have done with that old Covenant of Works. There is no hope for you there, so get away from it at once! You cannot be saved in that way, “for by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.” The Law brings sin to our knowledge as we see what its demands are, but it never *kills* sin. It never thinks of *pardoning* sin—it makes no provision for anything of the kind so, dear Friends, let all your good works go—let all confidence in your prayers—all confidence in your own repentance—all confidence in anything that you can do or be—let it all go!

Do not retain a rag of it! If you do, it will be like keeping something that is full of the seeds of disease and death. When a man dies of a foul fever, or the plague, burn every rag he has had on him! “Oh, but I would like to save that little piece of fringe—it is so beautiful!” It will bring a pest into the house if you do. Burn it all! Get rid of it all! So, let every rag of self-righteousness be destroyed. You cannot take hold of the Covenant of Grace till you have, once and for all, loosed your hold of the Covenant of Works!

“Well,” you say, “when this is done, how am I to take hold of the Covenant?” Well, the main plan is by *believing in Christ Jesus unto the salva-*

tion of your soul. Say, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I am a sinner, Lord, and I lay hold on You, and trust You to save me. I know that You bid burdened souls to come to You and I am a burdened soul so, Lord, I come and I hang upon that gracious invitation of Yours, 'Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'"

"But may I lay hold on Christ," asks someone, "and trust Him thus?" You had better ask me whether you may *refuse* to do so, and I will answer you in His own words, "He that believes not shall be damned." Now, if Christ pronounces condemnation upon the man who believes not, it is clear that you may believe in Him! Oh, dare to do it! Dare to do it! There never was one person yet who believed in Jesus Christ by mistake—never one to whom Christ said, "You had no right to believe in Me." He could not say so, for He has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Make a dash at it, then, Man—lay hold on Christ and say, "If I perish, I will perish trusting in His merit and His blood." And you shall never perish so, for He who has laid hold on Christ has laid hold on God's Covenant and that Covenant shall stand secure when earth's huge columns crumble! There is no fear of the Covenant failing, even when Heaven and earth shall pass away!

This is the way to lay hold on the Covenant by faith in Jesus. But I have known those laying hold on the Covenant begin in different ways. Some have laid hold upon it *by a confession of sin*—and you know that the Lord has said—"He that covers his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy." I earnestly advise any of you who are longing for salvation, to say, "I will confess my sin and forsake it, for God has said that then I shall have mercy." You know that if you get hold of the Covenant anywhere, you have got hold of it, and you shall be saved. Do but confess your sin and forsake it, looking to Christ alone as your Savior, and then you have secured a grip of the Covenant!

Another way of laying hold of it is *by seeking the Lord in prayer*. It is written, "Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Say, "Lord, I seek Your face. I cry to You, through Jesus Christ, for mercy. I come to Your Mercy Seat and fall prostrate before You, crying—

***"If I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there."***

You have got a hold of the Covenant, Friend, because you are clinging to God's promise and every promise of His is a part of the Covenant! So, if you get a grip, by faith, of any of God's promises, so that it becomes truly yours, you have laid hold of His Covenant and you shall be saved forever!

When you have once accepted Christ, I like you to get a hold of the Covenant in all sorts of ways. We have only two hands, but there are some creatures that have a great many hands, or feelers, or suckers—and when they want to be quite safe, they seize hold with all their hands! Well, now, Christ has made a Covenant with His Church and I like to lay hold of that Covenant by uniting with His people. I read that He loved His Church and gave Himself for it, so I say, "Lord, I will be a part of Your Church. I will, by Your Grace, put myself among Your people. If they are

laughed at, I will be laughed at with them. If they are a despised people, I will be despised, too, and I will not be ashamed of it. I will share with them now, hoping to share with them hereafter—

***“With them numbered I will be,
Now and through eternity!”***

It will be a great help to you to lay hold of the Covenant by availing yourself of all Church privileges. That should be your motive for being baptized. You should say, “Lord, I read in Your Word, ‘He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.’ I wish, therefore, having believed, to be baptized, that I may lay hold on that promise. I know that Believers, when they are baptized in the true Scriptural fashion, are buried with Christ. It is to them a type and symbol of their death to sin and resurrection to newness of life. They do not trust in the water, but they look at it as an emblem of their being buried to the world—and I wish to be all that. I will take that mark of Your people upon me and I will not be ashamed of it. I will go where Your people go and I will follow You wherever You lead me for I have got a hold of Your Covenant and I wish everybody to know that I have! I can truly say, with Paul, ‘I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.’ The watermark is on me. I am buried with You, my Lord and Savior.”

That is also the reason why we come to the Lord's Table—not that we have any superstitious reverence for the bread and wine, but we say, “Lord Jesus, You have told Your people to do this in remembrance of You, and You have promised to give them a blessing in so doing. I mean to do it, for I am in Covenant with You and what You bid Your servants do, I, Your servant, would do, for, ‘I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid. You have loosed my bonds and, be it little, or be it great, I will be obedient to all Your commands, as far as I know them, and so will take hold upon Your Covenant.’”

I like to see young Believers when they first take hold on Christ. I sometimes think that they do it better than the older ones do, for they just believe what Jesus says and take Him at His Word, and so they at once get “joy and peace in believing.” But, sometimes, older sinners come and they say to me, “May we lay hold on Christ?” I ask them, “What is to hinder you from doing so?” And they reply, “Because we are such sinners.” “Well,” I answer, “the Lord Jesus Christ did not come to save anybody but sinners, so you are just the right sort of persons for Him to save.” “Oh, but,” they say, “there is nothing that is good in us!” “But Jesus Christ did not come to call the good. He came to call sinners, so you are just the very ones whom He does call.” “Oh, but,” they reply, “we do not feel as we ought to feel.” “But Jesus Christ came to quicken those who are dead in trespasses and sins—and there is no feeling while we are dead. He came to give us life and to give us feeling—so you poor dead creatures are just the right sort for Him to bless.” So we try to argue with them but they still keep on crying, “But, but!”—raising all possible objections against themselves—yet, at last, they just dare to put out their little finger to lay hold of Christ and the mercy is that even a little finger con-

tact saves! There was one who only touched the hem of Christ's garment, but she was made perfectly whole!

The right thing for every sinner to say is just this, "The Covenant of Grace exactly suits my case. Jesus Christ has come to save the guilty and the needy—that is the sort of person I am, so I will lay hold of His Covenant. I have got a grip of it and there I hang. If His Gospel is true, I am a saved man! If it is not, I am lost, for I have nothing else to which I can trust. On Christ, and on Christ, alone, do I hang forever and ever. Sink or sail, I commit myself to this one boat which God has built and furnished to cross the seas of sin and temptation. And I believe that if it is but on a single plank or a broken piece of that boat, I shall surely come safely to land, for Christ has said, "He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." Oh, that we might all take hold of the Covenant in that blessed way! God help us to do so by His gracious Spirit!

III. Now I want briefly to answer a third question. WHAT IS THERE TO LAY HOLD ON?

I will tell you what I first laid hold on in the Covenant of Grace. First, I laid hold on *an atonement*. When I understood the meaning of that blessed word, "Substitution"—Christ standing in the sinner's place—Christ paying the sinner's debts that he might have a full discharge—when I saw God laying my sin on Christ and I knew that a thing cannot be in two places at one time—I said to myself, Then, if God laid my sin on Christ, it is no longer upon me! If He took that great mass of guilt which would have crushed me, and laid it on His Son, there cannot be any reason for me to try to carry it, since He carried it for me! So I first of all laid hold on the Covenant in the fashion described in the verse we sang just now—

***"My faith would lay her hands
On that dear head of Yours,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin."***

I believed that Christ died for me. I trusted Him and I found that He died for all who trust Him. I knew, therefore, that He died for me and that, in that death, He slew my sin and buried it, and that I was forgiven all my transgressions. That is a fine place in which to lay hold of the Covenant—that blood-red spot—and it just exactly suits the sinner's crimson-dyed hands.

There is another place where you can lay hold of the Covenant and that is *the Mercy Seat*. Go and bow before God in prayer. Christ being your Intercessor, plead with God for mercy through His atoning blood and then say, "I will never leave off praying till I get the blessing—

***'With You all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day'—***

but the blessing I must have, for You have promised it. Have You not said, 'Ask, and you shall receive'? I ask. Have You not said, 'Seek, and you shall find'? I seek. Have You not said, 'Knock, and it shall be opened unto you'? I knock, my God! I will knock and keep on knocking. I will bring the door down sooner than go without the blessing! I will knock,

and knock, and knock till Heaven's high arches ring with the sound of a poor sinner thundering away at the gate of mercy! I will not let You go except You bless me." Ah, you have got a hold of the Covenant and you are sure to be heard and answered! The horns of the altar and the corners of the Ark of the Covenant are your holdfasts upon the Covenant of God's Grace!

It is also a grand thing to lay hold of *a promise in God's Word*. I recommend some of you who say that you have been seeking rest, but that you cannot find it, to turn to some promise that just suits your case—such as that great one in Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Open your Bible, put your finger on that passage, and say, "Lord, I believe that this promise is made to all who believe in Christ. I believe in Christ. I trust myself wholly with Him—so this is a promise which You have made to me. Now, do as You have said. I am altogether unworthy of such favor, but that does not make Your promise to be of no effect. You have said it and You will keep Your promise. It is a wonder, O Lord, that You should ever have said, 'Come now, and let us reason together, said the Lord; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' But You have said it, Lord, and You will be true to Your promise." Hold on to that and never let it go, for a hold on a promise is a hold on the Covenant! As the spokes of a wheel all meet in the axle, so all the promises of God meet in the great center of the Covenant of Grace made with Christ Jesus on behalf of all His people.

There is one other thing which you should lay hold of and that is, *an invitation*. If a man has an invitation to a feast and there stands someone at the door who says to him, "You cannot come," he answers, "I beg your pardon, for I *can* come in." "But, Sir, you cannot come in. All the people who have entered have been good-looking people in evening dress—you are not like they, so you cannot come in." But the man says, "You will not be able to keep me out, for here is the invitation that I received, asking me to come. There is my name and there is nothing about good looks, or evening dress, so I mean to come in, for I have been invited." I wish, dear Friends, you would do the same with your doubts and fears—and with the devil himself when he says—"You cannot come to Christ, you must not lay hold of the Covenant." Say to him, "Look here, Satan. Christ has said, once and for all, 'Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Now, I labor and I am heavy laden—I have come to him, so I expect to have rest given to me. I have come to Christ because I was invited to come!"

Then you can further say, "There is also that gracious Word of God, 'Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' Now, I will! God knows how willing and desirous I am to find salvation in Christ. I do will it with all my heart and Christ's last invitation is, 'Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'" Take any other invitation that you please—there are plenty of them in the Word of God addressed to just such persons as you are—and when you find one suited to your case, say, "My God, I come to

You at Your own invitation; can You cast me out?" If anybody comes to your house by invitation from yourself, you are in honor bound to take him in and do what you can for him. And when you come to God, at His invitation, you have, in effect, taken hold of His Covenant, for all the invitations of our Covenant God are a part of that Covenant and are yes, and amen, in Christ Jesus!

IV. Now I must close with this last question. WHY SHOULD I NOT LAY HOLD OF GOD'S COVENANT? I put the enquiry to all whom I am now addressing—Why should you not take hold of God's Covenant?

One reason for doing so is this. *Others, who are like yourself, have done so.* What sort of person have you been? Self-righteous? So was Saul of Tarsus, but he cast aside his own righteousness and he laid hold on the Covenant! And so he became the great Apostle of the Gentiles. Perhaps I must look at you from another point of view. Have you been a thief? Well, there was a thief who laid hold on the Covenant, and Jesus said to him, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Are you a sinner fallen from virtue? There was a woman who was a public sinner and she took hold of the Covenant, and her sins, which were many, were all forgiven her! Whatever you may have been, there is somebody like you in Heaven. If you have been a blasphemer, if you have lived to old age in neglect of God, or whatever your sin has been, there has already been somebody saved who was just what you have been and who took hold of God's Covenant. If I, being a great sinner, see another great sinner come, and take hold of the Covenant, why should you not do the same?

Then, next, *out of all who have ever come to Christ, there has never been one rejected.* "Him that comes to Me," says Christ, "I will in no wise cast out." Perhaps somebody says, "But suppose I am not one of the elect." Christ says, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out," so election does not stand in the way. "Ah, Sir! But when I come to Christ, I come with many doubts and fears." But Christ says, "Him that comes to Me"—however he comes—"I will in no wise cast out." There lives no sinner on earth that Christ ever cast out and there is not in Hell a soul that ever came to Christ and Christ cast him out—and there shall never be such an one! If the world should grow gray with age and the sun should become black as a coal, there never shall be a sinner who comes to Christ, who shall be cast out! So, come along with you—if you do but come and take hold of the Covenant, that Covenant shall save you!

Besides, I am sure you may come, my Friend, because you are the very sort of character that is bid to come. "This Man receives sinners." Is not that your name? Does not the Lord say, "Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts"? Is not that you? Well, if it is you, then come to Him! He calls you—you distinctly, for so He describes you. So, surely, you may come to Him! I have often said that if I had read in the Bible, "Charles Spurgeon may come to Christ," there was a time when I would have said, "That must mean somebody else whose name is the same as mine. It is not meant for me." Then I would have wanted to know his address and if it had been Nightingale Lane, I would have said, "Ah, there was a man with the name of Spurgeon living there,

no doubt, years ago, so the promise may have been for *him*.” I would never have felt sure about the matter. But when it says, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—well, the devil is a great liar, but he never tried to make me believe that I was not a sinner! If he did, I would tell him I knew better than that. On the contrary, he is often telling me what a sinner I am—and I am much obliged to him for that, because, the more clearly he makes me out to be a sinner, the more certain I am that I am one of those whom Christ came to save!

Martin Luther used to say, “This is true wisdom, to cut off the devil’s head with his own sword. When he charges you with guilt, reply, ‘It is quite true,’ I am a sinner and, therefore, I am one whom Christ came to save.” We know that Christ gave Himself for our sins, but He never gave Himself for our virtues, so we, having sins and iniquities, come to Him as guilty sinners and He saves us from our sins!

The last reason I will give you why you should take hold of the Covenant is that *there is nothing else for you to hold to!* There is nothing else that you can take hold of but the Covenant of God’s Grace. Here is a man who hopes to get to Heaven because he has such blessed feelings. Oh, dear, dear, dear, dear! How many times would I be without any hope of getting to Heaven if I had to go by my feelings, for they are just as wretched as wretchedness can be! Here is another man who thinks he is going to Heaven because he has a sound creed, but the more I read the Bible, the more I find that I do not know everything and that there is something more to be learned and so, if my knowing everything and having a perfectly sound creed must save me, I shall be lost!

There are some who are hoping to go to Heaven because of this, and some because of that, but, as for you and me, dear Friends, we had better end all fancies and resolve, by God’s Grace, that we will go there because, “this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” So, casting everything else away, we lay hold of the Covenant, come what may. God bless you, Beloved, and enable you to do so, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JEREMIAH 31:31-34; EZEKIEL 36:25-32; HEBREWS 8:7-13.**

Jeremiah 31:31-33. *Behold, the days come, said the LORD, that I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My Covenant they broke, although I was an husband unto them, said the LORD. But this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, said the LORD, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.* The old Covenant was written on tablets of stone, but the Lord said concerning the new Covenant, “I will put My Law in their inward parts.” The old Law was hidden from sight when it was written a

second time and placed in the Ark of the Covenant. And God says of His new Law, "I will write it in their hearts." They were always rebelling against God and wandering away from Him, but in this new, gracious Covenant, He says, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

34. *And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, said the LORD.* God gives to all His people a knowledge of Himself. "Whatever else they know or do not know," said the Lord, "they shall all know Me." Though they differ as to their growth in Grace, yet "they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, said the Lord."

34. *For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.* If God has pardoned your sins, you will be sure to know Him. There will be no mistake about that point. Men shrink back and hide away from an angry God punishing sin, for they do not care to know Him. But when He comes forth, dressed in the silken robes of love to bestow free pardons upon the chief of sinners, then they know Him! God grant that all of us may have this blessed knowledge! Now kindly turn over the leaves of your Bibles until you come to then 36th Chapter of the Book of Ezekiel and the 25th verse, where you can read still further about this same gracious new Covenant of Jehovah.

Ezekiel 36:25. *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.* "You would not cleanse yourselves! You even went back to your idols, and so defiled yourselves still more! But I will cleanse you. I have a wondrous stream, such as no river or spring on earth can ever produce. It wells up from the heart of Jesus and this shall cleanse you from all your filthiness, and from all your idols."

26, 27. *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do them.* The old Covenant told us what to do and commanded us to do it—but the new Covenant enables us to do it! Yes, it works in us that obedience which we never could have rendered to the old Law, but which the new Covenant gives to us.

28-31. *And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be My people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleanness and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that you shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loath yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.* How sweetly the mercy of God melts the human heart! How graciously the goodness of God produces repentance! That blessed result was never produced by the terrors of the Law—but it is continually being brought forth by the loving kindness of the Lord as manifested in the Covenant of His Grace.

32. *Not for your sakes do I this, said the LORD GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. The Covenant is all of Grace, you see. Mercy is shown to the unworthy—not for their own sakes, but for God's own Glory's sake. Oh, how sweet it is to have a share in this blessed Covenant! Now turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews, the 8th Chapter, and 7th verse, where you have still more concerning the new Covenant.*

Hebrews 8:7-13. *For if that first Covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, He said, Behold, the days come, said the Lord, when I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in My Covenant, and I regarded them not, said the Lord. For this is the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, said the Lord; I will put My Laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that He said, A new Covenant, He has made the first old. Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish away. So the old Covenant has vanished away, with all its types, symbols and sacrifices. As the morning mists dissolve upon the rising of the sun—as darkness flies away when the light shines—so has the Covenant of Works departed forever and, in its place, stands out the Everlasting Covenant of God's unmerited mercy to the most guilty and vile of the sons and daughters of men! May He graciously grant to us the privilege of having an interest in that Covenant, for His dear Son's sake. Amen.*

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—555, 586.

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

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

OTHERS TO BE GATHERED IN NO. 1437

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 6, 1878,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“The Lord God which gathers the outcasts of Israel says,
Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him.”
Isaiah 56:8.***

GOD'S work flow is that of gathering. There was a time when it was scattering. Man built the tower of Babel which was intended to be the center of unity, the armory of power and the seat of dominion from where some mighty Nimrod might sway his scepter over all the human race. But the Lord would not have it so. Infinite wisdom baffled finite ambition! Man's center is not God's center and, therefore, He confounded their language and scattered them into nations by which the whole earth has been inhabited.

Now the Lord is gathering together in one the children of God which are scattered abroad. His Son Jesus Christ has descended and dwelt among us, working out our redemption and now, exalted in the highest heavens, He is God's appointed Center of His people! As Jacob said of old, “Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.” The Lord has made Him to “stand for an ensign of the people, to Him shall the Gentiles seek and His rest shall be glorious.” The great promise given by the mouth of Isaiah is to be fulfilled under the Gospel dispensation—“I will gather all nations and tongues, and they shall come and see My Glory.”

Jesus has made both Jew and Gentile one, breaking down every wall of partition, so that there is neither barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all. The power and Grace of God are continually drawing men from all nations and kindred and tongues to the common hope, even the Atonement made by the death of our Lord Jesus, and to the common service, even to service under the one and only Lord of whom it is written, “One is your Master, even Christ; and all you are brethren.” This ingathering process is going on every day by the testimony of the Word of God and it is to be continued until the end of time!

I trust it will be carried on in our midst today. May the Lord put the magnet down among us and draw towards the loadstone of Jesus' love all hearts made ready to feel its influence! It is my earnest hope that some who have never thought of being gathered to Christ may find themselves drawn towards Him today! May the mystic current of Divine Grace carry many of you away with its gentle force and bear you first to Jesus, who is Israel's Prince, and then to His Church, which is the true Israel of God!

I. Under our first head we shall notice a point of considerable encouragement to those who seek the Lord. Note well THE INSTANCES MENTIONED—instances of gathering by the hand of the Lord who is described as, “The Lord God which gathers the outcasts of Israel.” Outcasts have been gathered and this is the token that others shall be gathered. I sup-

pose Isaiah first alludes to the banished who had been carried away captive to Babylon and to all parts of the East, but who were at different times restored to their land.

The Israelites had been subject to many captivities. One tyrant after another invaded the country and carried them far away. But the Lord promised to gather them together and He did. The names of Ezra, Nehemiah and the like will remind you of the returning home from distant lands of various contingents of God's host who marched through the deserts and passed through hostile nations till they reached the city of their God. Very marvelous were these restorations, for kings that knew not God were used by Him to accomplish His designs—even as He said of Cyrus—"I have raised him up in righteousness and I will direct all his ways: he shall build My city, and he shall let My captives go, not for price nor reward, says the Lord of Hosts."

Now, God who brought His people out of Babylon can bring men out of sin! He who loosed captives from bondage can liberate spirits from despair! He who made the mighty tyrant relax his grip can cause Satan to loose his hold! And He who led His people by a way that they knew not till they came back to their land can lead the poor seeking sinner through all the devious paths of doubt and fear—and bring him to rest in Jesus Christ. Let Israelites returning from Babylon preach the Gospel to us this morning! Let them proclaim to us the word of hope—"If we who were carried captive far off from Zion are brought back, so also will the Lord devise means that His banished be not expelled from Him."

But I prefer to use the text in reference to our Divine Lord and Master, seeing that to *Him* shall the gathering of the people be! When He was here below He gathered the outcasts of Israel by His ministry. Look at the group around Him and mark carefully those who press nearest to Him. You need not notice those scribes and Pharisees in the outer circle—they would gladly entrap Him in His speech—let us leave them to themselves and only notice those who stand so quietly, who listen so eagerly, whose tears flow so freely and whose hearts are so deeply touched! Who are these?

It is written, "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him." His enemies said it in scorn, but we tell it to His honor—"This Man receives sinners and eats with them." All through His progress in the Holy Land He was seeking "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Not merely silly, defenseless sheep, but *lost* sheep—wanderers in sin—"for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." His eyes were always most ready to spy out the fallen and His glance was always kindest for those who were most erring, for, said He, "The whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." O blessed Master, "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners," the sinners came to You and coming to You found You to be Jesus, the sinner's Friend!

Moreover, our Lord did not merely gather outcasts to His ministry, but He gathered them by forgiving their sins. This brought them nearer, still, and held them there. You know who it was that washed His feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head—that woman whose memorial

shall never die out of the Church! She who loved Him much because much had been forgiven her! She was a sinner, a city sinner, a shameful sinner—but she came to Him for cleansing and it was granted her! I should not wonder if she had heard Him tell about the lost piece of money and the lost sheep and the lost son—and perhaps the parable, itself, and the way in which Jesus spoke it, touched her heart and made her hope and long to be sought and found. With her much sin she came to Him who had much Grace and her black sins were blotted out by His dear love and henceforth she, above all women, loved Him, for much had been forgiven her!

I suppose she was but a specimen of many others who clung to Him, because in Him they had found what an awakened heart needs above everything else, namely, forgiveness for transgression! At this present moment, in Jesus' name, I would set that woman before you and say as He did, "See you this woman?" Then learn that as Jesus received her, so also will He receive *you* if you come to Him, for He has said it, and He cannot lie, "Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out." Come unto Him, then, all you that labor and are heavy laden and He will give you rest! Let the one poor outcast, who wept at His feet, set the example and imitate her at once!

You know how, in the pursuit of game, men use decoys that they may attract the birds by one of themselves? So I would, this morning, use this woman as a decoy—if there are others like she, guilty of the very same sin, let them come to Jesus for pardon as she did! Others should come, also, who may not be guilty of the same form of evil and yet feel equally condemned in the sight of the Lord. If consciousness of guilt humbles you to that poor woman's level, come and accept her Savior! Jesus gathers together the outcasts of Israel! Dear Hearts, why should He not gather you? Why should not the glance of love which fell on the sinner of old fall, also, upon you? Why should not you also feel the same love and exhibit it in acts of penitence and deeds of humility? Jesus is ready to have His feet washed again by such as you!

Nor, indeed, was this all, for our Lord gathered some, yes *many*, by graciously helping them. He met with some whose great trial was sore affliction, temptation and sorrow. Magdalene is a chief instance—beloved name in the Christian Church! Magdalene, out of whom He cast seven devils! It was not her fault so much as her *grief* that seven devils had entered her. She struggled with those demons but they would not leave her. But when Jesus came, they fled at His rebuke and henceforth Mary of Magdala was foremost among the holy women who follow the Blessed One! Now, just as our Lord delivered Mary of Magdalene from seven devils, so can He deliver any of you who are sore beset by temptation!

Do the devils within you arise from *habit*? Such spirits are very powerful, but Jesus is more than a match for them! Habit becomes second nature to a man, but Jesus is greater than either first or second nature. Habits began to bind us as with spiders' webs, but they thicken and harden into meshes of iron—our Lord can, with a *breath*, remove the iron net and set the prisoner free! Or are you tempted by constitutional sin—some evil which has entrenched itself within the peculiarities of your be-

ing—finding, as it were, a rest within the special texture of your mind and fashion of your body? Jesus can dislodge the subtle foe and make this body of yours which has been a cage of unclean birds, to become a temple of the Holy Spirit!

Or are your surroundings very unfavorable? Does the devil molest you through the place where you dwell and the people among whom you reside? Jesus can help you there and make you fair as the curtains of Solomon, even while you dwell in the tents of Kedar! Or is your case of another kind? Are you beset with doubts and innumerable infidelities? Do you question this and question that? Has your mind a skeptical bias? My Master can gather you, also, and make you stronger in faith than your Brethren, even as Thomas, who doubted, became a firm and adoring Believer. Unbelief is a very tormenting spirit and causes much distress of soul—but the Lord can gather unbelievers and misbelievers and bring them to the true faith—and to the peace which comes of it. Since He gathered to Himself a woman out of whom He cast seven devils and a man from whom a whole legion were made to flee, why should He not deliver those of you who are under bondage now?

He gathered them, also, so as to enroll them under His banner. It was a marvelous moment for Levi, when he sat at the receipt of custom and Jesus called him! He had changed his name and tried to be a Gentile, calling himself Matthew, and there he sat, careful only for the coin. But Jesus said to him, “Follow Me,” and he obeyed the voice! He was no longer a gatherer of taxes, but a gatherer of souls! He enlisted beneath the banner of Christ and no longer engaged in the service of the Romans. Yes, and my Master can gather just such as he. You busy men who have almost brought your pens behind your ears into the house of God this morning—you, who as you take up your hymnbooks almost wish you had your daybooks and your ledgers with you! He can say to you, “Follow Me.”

He can make you use the pen of a ready writer in His cause! You shall do business in the most precious commodities and make many rich. Rising from the receipt of custom, you shall yield yourself to Jesus and become henceforth His steward! Those gathered by our Lord, when He was here among the sons of men, are specimens to allure your hope and to excite your desires that you, also, may be gathered into His Church and unto Himself. I will give one other specimen and then we will leave this point. You will, perhaps, think that my Master’s gathering power lay in His being here Himself. It is true there was a matchless charm about Him and yet, to let us know that we must know Him no longer after the flesh, there was not even in the charms of Christ’s most blessed Person enough of power to prevent the people crying, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!”

His power is *spiritual*—the power of His own Spirit and, therefore, it is exercised *now* though His bodily Presence is removed. It fell on a day when our Lord had gone home to His Father that His servants were all met together in one place with one accord for His worship and suddenly the Spirit burst in upon them as a rushing mighty wind and, in cloven tongues of fire, sat on each of them! Then they stood up and preached in His name and declared that Jesus, who had been crucified, was now the Savior! On that same day He gathered, for He was there by His Spirit,

though not in Person—He gathered, I say, unto His Church, 3,000 souls. Jesus can gather, indeed! The people flock unto Him! It is still true, “I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.”

Though He is not here, yet if we preach Him—if we tell of His love; if we speak of His death and of His atoning blood—His name is as ointment poured forth and the virgins will come together to enjoy the perfume! There is no name like His for gathering the people! He will gather others beside those which have been gathered to Him.

II. I now pass on to my second head, which is this, THE PROMISE UTTERED. “The Lord God which gathers the outcasts of Israel says, Yet will I gather others to Him, beside those that are gathered unto Him.” It is evident that this promise is very wide. It means, in the first place, that the Gentiles should be called to know the Lord. “Yet will I gather others to Him.” Not other *Jews*, but those others whom they called “Gentile dogs!” It was a bright day when, first of all, the centurion of Caesarea sent men to Joppa and received a visit from Peter and was baptized by him! Fair, also was the day when the Ethiopian eunuch was baptized by Philip. Then was the Lord “gathering others unto Him.”

How strange it must have seemed, at first, to the Apostles, who were all Jews and very strongly Jewish, too, especially Peter, to see the Gentiles gathered! One marvels that Paul was not more narrow in heart, considering his birth and education, but he had vanquished his old notions and gloried in being the Apostle of the Gentiles. It is delightful to my mind to think of men of different colors coming to Christ and in the best possible manner proving the unity of our race. What would the 12 have thought if they could have foreseen that the Gospel which they preached would bind in one brotherhood all races of men?

Jesus has gathered not merely Romans and Greeks and Jews, but the descendants of those barbarous people who lived in the white-cliffed island beyond Gaul which men called Britain! He has gathered those savage people unto Him! And now how pleasing to see the Red Indian bowing with the pale-face at Jesus’ name—to see China, once hermetically sealed, now open to the Gospel, and Japan inviting our missionaries to instruct her! Also to see the dwellers in the South Seas and the black races of Africa stretching out their hands to God! Strange and uncouth in appearance and in tongue are many of the tribes of mankind, but they shall be gathered as surely as the more civilized! There scarcely remains any nation out of which the Lord has not gathered some to His Church and our faith is that before long the Gospel shall be preached throughout all lands!

It has not come yet. We heard the other night of nations which have never yet received a Christian minister. There is Tibet, for instance, lying with its millions without a word of Christ ever having been spoken among them! To millions upon millions of people, the name of Jesus is as yet an unknown sound—yet they shall be gathered out of all nations, kindred, peoples, tongues and shall unite in one great family! The Gospel of Jesus is cosmopolitan. It suits so well with our own latitude that one would think that our Lord was born an Englishman—but the same is true in reference to every land! His name was fitly mentioned by the Jordan, but it loses none of its music by the Thames, the Ganges, or the Orinoco!

Jesus belongs to all lands, whether they are scorched by tropical suns or frozen by the long winters of the poles. Jesus is a Man and a man is a noble name, nobler than Jew, or Briton, or Roman! He is “the Man,” the Man of men, man’s Man, the Man for men! Let all men worship Him, for He is the Hope of our race, the Restorer of our ruin, the Gatherer of the new people and He shall gather others beside those that have been gathered unto Him. “God has made of one blood all nations of men that dwell upon the face of the earth” and that one blood also has, at the back of it, another blood still more precious by which one blood He has redeemed from among men a multitude which no man can number!

Now, let us look at the text and note that the promise is continuous “Yet will I gather others.” That was true when Isaiah stated it. It would have been true if Peter had quoted it on the morning of Pentecost. It was quite true when Carey acted upon it and started on what men thought his mad enterprise—to go as a consecrated cobbler to convert the learned Brahmins of India and to lay the foundation of Messiah’s kingdom there! It was true then and it is quite as true now! If the promise had been written this morning and the ink were not yet dry it would be no more true than it is now—“Yet will I gather others to Him.”

It will be true, whoever stands in this pulpit, when we are dead and gone and until the earth shall have completed the cycle of long-suffering. And when the Lord shall descend from Heaven with a shout it shall still be true—“Yet will I gather others to Him.” “Other sheep have I,” said Christ, “that are not yet of this fold. Them, also, I must bring in.” There are many yet who are unsaved, unregenerate, uncalled—who must be brought to Jesus—“Yet will I gather others to Him, that have not been gathered unto Him.” To him, that is to Israel or to the Church, and so to Him who is the head of Israel and the head of His Church, even unto Christ must others be gathered! While the promise is wide and continual, I cannot help remarking upon its being most graciously *encouraging*, because it evidently applies very pointedly to outcasts.

“The Lord God which gathers the outcasts of Israel says, Yet will I gather others.” Other outcasts are evidently intended! Does my voice reach anyone at this time who reckons himself an outcast? Has there strayed into this House of Prayer an outcast from society? Listen to this word—“Yet will I gather others to Him.” But if not an outcast from society, it may be you are an outcast in your own esteem. You judge that you have sinned beyond all hope; you consider yourself to be an unreasonable offender, an out-of-the-way rebel. Blessed be our great High Priest, He can “have compassion on the ignorant and on those that are out of the way”! That text meets your case, does it not? I hear you cry, “Oh, but there is no hope for *me*.”

Listen, “He gathers together the outcasts of Israel and yet will He gather others”—why, then, is there no hope for *you*? There is every hope for you! True, you have written your own condemnation and you have signed and sealed it and, therefore, you have made a covenant with Death, a league with Hell and given yourselves up to Satan—but your covenant with Death shall be broken and your league with Hell shall be disannulled! By God’s eternal Grace, far off as you are, you shall find God’s arm of mercy

long enough to reach you! And although weighed down with sin as you are, you shall find His hand of love strong enough to lift you up, for He will gather others such as He did gather of old—more Magdalenes, more Matthews, more publicans and sinners, more of those who have a special claim to the name of “sinner”! He will gather more of such, I know He will, blessed be His name, for so has He *promised* in His Word! How sweetly encouraging this should be to all of you that are sick of yourselves and sick of your sins! There is no hope elsewhere, but there is hope in Jesus, for He is mighty to deliver and “able to save to the uttermost.” Trust in His name!

I admire greatly in my text the fact that the promise is absolute—“The Lord God which gathers the outcasts of Israel says, Yet will I gather others to Him, beside those that are gathered unto Him.” He speaks like a king! This is the kind of language which only an Omnipotent Being can use as to men’s minds. “Yet will I gather others.” But they are free agents! “I will gather them,” He says. But suppose they will not come? “Yet will I gather others unto Him.” Certain of my Brethren are much taken up with the fact of man’s free agency. I believe that he *is* a free agent, but it is by his free agency that he is lost! For salvation we must look only to Free Grace, for there, only, is man’s hope!

God has a way and an art, without violating the free agency of man, of nevertheless accomplishing the purposes of His Grace without hindrance. He says, “Yet will I gather,” as if He knew Himself to be the master of the situation and able to effect His resolve. There may be some in this house who have never even thought of believing in the Lord Jesus up to this moment, yet He knows how to bring even these. Perhaps some have even said in defiance, “I will not come.” Have you not heard of one who said, “I will not,” but afterwards repented and went? Grace can turn you in the same manner and make you act as you never dreamed of doing! Does this annoy you? Do you put your teeth together and say, “No, I will never alter! I will never be a religious man”?

I advise you to be less obstinate, for you know not how soon you will yield and find yourself weeping over those hard speeches. Were you never subdued by human love? Did your mother never conquer you, young man—not with a threat, but just with a look and a tear? Did your wife never vanquish you in the same fashion? You were a free agent, but yet you were a complete captive and you could not help yourself! If my Master and Lord is but seen by you in all His love and loveliness, adorned not only with His tears of pity but with His wounds with which, in love, He redeemed mankind, I guarantee you your obstinacy will find itself dissolved! Oh, if you knew Him! Would to God He would manifest Himself to you now, and you would say—

***“I yield, by mighty love subdued,
Who can resist its charms?”***

This is why the Lord talks so positively, because He knows His own power and means to put it forth. “Yet will I gather others unto Him.” So shall it be with you, dear Hearer. With your full consent, against your own wicked will, the Lord will lead you to Jesus and there shall you be found rejoicing to be united to Him and to His people! May the promise thus Di-

vinely uttered be fulfilled in you who sit or stand before the preacher this day—and on those who shall read those words in days to come.

III. I desire for a little time, in the third place, to mention THE FACTS WHICH SUSTAIN OUR FAITH IN THIS PROMISE. We believe it, whether or not, fact or no fact to back it up—God’s Word is sure! But still this will help some of you who have but slender confidence. The facts which sustain our faith in the text are many—here is just a handful of them. The first is the perpetuity of the Gospel. Still is the Good News preached among you, dear Hearers. Still are we bid to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. Now, we feel certain that if all God’s people were already saved, our Master would say, “You need not go any further, there are no more to be gathered in.”

Suppose when the King came in to see the guests, every seat at the banquet was full? Then He would not say to the servants, “Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in,” but because our commission runs on, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned,” and “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,” we feel sure that there are more to be saved! If we are bid to preach the Gospel till the end of the world, it must be because to the very end of the world there are other souls to be called by Divine Grace! There are still to be harvests, for we are still sent to sow! There are still some fish to be caught, for we are still bid to cast the net!

The next fact which helps our faith is this—I will give it to you in verse and you will recognize it, none the less, distinctly—

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

The blood of Atonement has not lost its power and therefore all the ransomed Church of God is not yet saved. There are more to be washed, for the Fountain is still open. There are more to be healed, for the Balm of Gilead is still set before us. There are more to be liberated, for the redemption price has not exhausted its value. Our Lord Jesus has redeemed so great a multitude from among men and His precious blood is of such an infinite value that we know beyond all doubt that there must remain myriads more to be gathered into His Church! Do you think that He bought a miserable handful of men? Is your little Bethel a fold large enough to hold all the ransomed? No! A number that no man can number shall be the fruit of His travail and He has not as yet seen such a number following at His feet.

There is still power to save in the Atonement and a wondrous mint of merit in the righteousness of our Lord! Therefore its issues are not yet fully seen—much more must come of it. We are sure that our Lord’s sacred passion must have a grander result than we have yet seen and He will gather others besides those that have been gathered unto Him. My Brothers and Sisters, can your eyes look beyond the firmament and see the invisible? If so, mark that hard by the blazing Throne of the Eternal there stands a Man who is more than a man—

***“Adoring saints around Him stand,
And thrones and powers before Him fall!
The God shines gracious through the Man,
And sheds sweet glories on them all.”***

But how is this glorious One occupied? He is making intercession and pleading for His redeemed! “He is able, therefore, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” So long as there is an Intercessor at the Throne of God, there must be more sinners to be saved! If all were brought in He would cease His pleading! But while there is still a soul ignorant or out of the way, the great High Priest will continue to urge His suit before the Eternal Majesty. More souls must be brought in, for Jesus lives to plead for that end!

Nor is this all, for we are sure that these purposes of Grace are not yet fully accomplished because the Spirit of God is still with us. He abides in the Church and He has come to convict men of sin—there must be more souls to be convicted. He has come to quicken men and abides here and, therefore, there must be more dead sinners to be quickened, or else His mission would be ended. There must be more to whom the things of Christ are to be revealed, or else the Spirit would not linger here as our Illuminator. The Spirit has not gone away—in many of us He abides and we feel His power—the Presence of the Spirit is a sure token that the promise is not spent. It is still full of meaning and others must yet be gathered beside those that are gathered unto Him.

Nor is this all. The glory and majesty of the Gospel, or rather the greatness of the Glory of God in the Gospel, demands that many more should be gathered than have as yet been enfolded in the Church. At the largest computation, the Christian Church of the present day is a poor minority of mankind and we do not believe it to be consistent with the majestic purposes of Grace that at the winding up of affairs there should be a handful of saved ones against an awful multitude of the lost. No, in all things Jesus shall have the pre-eminence and He will have it in this, also—that His saved ones shall exceed the lost—this is our hope and confidence! Multitudes, multitudes, multitudes beyond all conception are yet to be brought to Messiah’s feet! They shall fly as a cloud; they shall hasten as doves to their dovecotes; they shall advance in strength like waves of the sea and they shall cover the earth, being as the sand on the sea-shore, innumerable!

One other argument I put last, though it is not so strong as it might be. It may seem to be an anti-climax to finish with the weakest reason, but then it is one that needs to be made stronger. And because I want each Believer here to strengthen it, I place it last, that it may not be forgotten. I know there must be many more souls to be gathered in because of the longings of the saints. They are not satisfied unless they see conversions! They are anxious to hear the cry of penitents! I wish they had far stronger longings and more intense anxieties. I know some Christians who are far too comfortable—inhumanly insensible I call it—though even their own children are not converted! True saints are hungry and thirsty after souls! Till men are saved they cannot rest.

No, it has come to be with some of us far more than a longing or a thirsting—it has sharpened and deepened down into the very pangs of birth for souls! Many saints travail for souls—their hearts are in anguish until Christ is formed in others, the hope of Glory. Beloved, you know that when Zion travails, she brings forth children—this, therefore, is a token for good—there are more souls to be gathered, for God must hear prayer and many are praying! Do not His elect cry day and night unto Him? Will He not hear them? Are there not multitudes of ministers, teachers and all sorts of workers hunting for souls with heavenly ardor and giving God no rest day nor night till He bring in the outcasts? There must, therefore, be many more souls to be gathered!

One thing I know, the Church needs more conversions. We never prosper as a Church unless we have a fresh stream of young blood running into us. Mark an old Church with no converts and see how diseased it is. It generally sours down into a crotchety, ill-tempered, bigoted little clique of very little use in the world, needing, rather, a pair of crutches with which to totter about its own floor than a sword with which to fight the foe. The Church of the living God needs young blood in its veins! Our strength for holding the faith may lie in experienced saints, but our *zeal* for propagating it must be found in the young! We greatly need new converts added to us and, therefore, because we need it and we feel confident that our God will supply all our need, we feel sure that He will increase us with men as with a flock!

To keep His Church alive and vigorous, He will lay hold upon Sauls and make Pauls of them! May this Church be set on fire by the burning love of new-born souls! Though we have enjoyed a constant increase for nearly 25 years, may the Lord give us a far larger addition! It is His promise, let us plead it! Others besides those that have been gathered unto Him we will ask Him to give us and, just in proportion, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, as you and I begin to trouble about this, groan about it, pray about it and cry about it, the Lord will fulfill His gracious promise and others shall be gathered beside those that are gathered to Him!

IV. I finish, therefore, with the fourth head, which is THE CONDUCT CONSISTENT WITH THIS PROMISE. Let us view this question with reference to God's people. I have already trenched upon that topic. The conduct congruous to the promise is to believe it and then to pray about it. Let us at once get together in little knots of twos and threes and seek to have the Word of God fulfilled. This very afternoon enter into your chambers alone, or gather your families and hold little Prayer Meetings with them. Remember this promise and speak with the Lord concerning it. Perhaps you have not noticed its gracious utterances before, but now that it has come before your eyes, be sure you make use of it!

If a man finds that a check has been lying by him for a good while and he comes upon it while turning over his letters, what will he do tomorrow morning? Why, he will go and get it cashed! Now, here is one of my Master's bills which you have not yet turned into actual money. Go and take it to the Lord! Take it today, for the Bank of Heaven is open at this moment—when is it closed? Go and get the Word fulfilled unto you by praying, "Lord, You have said, 'Yet will I gather others that have not been

gathered,' therefore fulfill this Word unto Your servant." Having done this, you will have lifted up your hands to the Lord and you cannot go back. If you pray, you must *work*, for prayer without endeavor is hypocrisy!

The next thing after prayer is to go and gather in the others by speaking to them concerning Jesus and the way of salvation by faith in His precious blood. Go and use the grand Gospel means and then, because God has promised it, *expect* to see others gathered in! Do not be thunderstruck when you hear of many being converted on a certain Sunday through your speaking of Jesus Christ! Expect it—wonder that it does *not* happen more often—and be on the look out for coming souls! Look out for them this morning! My Master has gathered some while I have been speaking, I feel sure of it! These new converts will feel quite lonely before long unless you speak to them. They are like little children that are just born and they need tender nursing—find them out and nurse them for the Lord and He will give you your wages!

Try and speak a word of encouragement to those who for the first time are found hovering near the Gospel. Do not drive them away, but cheer them on. "Oh, but I am afraid I shall not find them." If you speak so you will *not* find them—but if you are hopeful and believing, you *will* find them fast enough, for they abound in these parts! Has not the Lord said that He will gather? Then be sure He will! You have asked Him to fulfill His Word, have you not? Then He will do it beyond any doubt! Find out the hopeful ones; hear their troubles and help them in their difficulties. I am anxious that now, and for many months to come, all of you who are in Christ should be dwelling hourly on this Word and be continually saying, "Where are these others?"

The Lord said, "Yet will I gather others to Him, beside those that are gathered." Where are these others? Perhaps at this time they have not come to this Tabernacle at all—they may be at some other House of Prayer. Bless the Lord when other Churches have their full share of increase and souls are gathered into their ranks! But perhaps those whom the Lord will gather in are not at this time in *any* place of worship—go and find them in their homes and haunts! There are others to be gathered in—look for the others! The first question of a saved man should be, "What can I do for my Lord?" And the next should be, "What can I do for others?" The more he knows Christ—the greater his love, the higher his enjoyment—the more should he cry, "Where are the others? What can I do for the others?"

I am sure if you were all starving and ready to perish with famine and I were to come with a good store of bread and call out half-a-dozen of you and give you a good meal in the vestry, as soon as ever you had been fed you would cry, "Pray think of others! Thousands out there are starving, even as we were. Pray give us bread for them as well as for ourselves." How pleased you would be, each one, to go out and say, "There is a meal for all of you. There is no stint, you may eat to the full—come along." If they rejected your message you would feel very grieved and you would plead with them—"Look at us, we have been fed! Do not die here, but come and be fed also."

Someone would reply, "It is not good meat," and you would answer, "Taste and see." If one of you had a wife and she was hungry, but would not believe you and come to the feast, you would plead with her even unto tears and fear that she was insane! If you had children that would not come and were dying with hunger, I think I know how their mothers would weep over them; how they would seek with loving entreaties to turn them from their infatuation and be induced to feed upon the bread so lovingly provided. We would not let them die if love could persuade them to be wise. The case is much the same *spiritually*—let us show the same earnestness!

As to what conduct is consistent with this text on the part of those who have not yet been gathered, it will be clear that they should be encouraged to hope. If I were a thief and I read of the dying thief who rejoiced to see the Fountain of atoning blood in his day, I would rejoice, too, and say, "If one thief was cleansed, why not another? Why not I? In the Bible are cases of very great sinners who nevertheless were washed from all their sins. I am like them in their sins, why should not I be as they were? More outcasts have to be gathered, then why not I among them? What should shut me out? I will go and try."

In earthly things men seek promotion even when the hope is small. In the case of a vacancy in the Civil Service, I have heard of 800 applying for one job! This was a poor chance and yet many go in for it. But here we know that others are to be gathered and those others not ones nor twos but *thousands*—why, then, should not a seeking soul put in for it? There never was one that did seek the Lord by faith who was refused! Never a single soul! He who comes to Jesus by a simple faith has never yet been refused! Come, my Friend! Come now to Jesus! If He should cast you away, you will be number one upon the black list. We will place you here in the Tabernacle in a conspicuous seat and we will show you as the first sinner that our Lord Jesus could not save! See, we will say, "Here is the first man that came to Jesus and Jesus rejected him."

I shall alter all my preaching, for when I preach, I shall say, "Jesus will in no wise cast out any that come to Him, except one and that one man sits in the Tabernacle." I shall tell them, when I am preaching at Leeds during this week, that Jesus Christ receives all sinners except one man who was cast out at the Tabernacle last Sunday. I guarantee you I will make your name ring round the world! The saints shall know it in Heaven and the devils will soon know it in Hell—and they will triumph over the defeated Savior! Why, man, you would be the first proof that God was not true, that Christ was not gracious and His blood is not Omnipotent!

Shall this ever be? You know better! Come along and try the Savior now! Rejected you shall never be! Oh that you would, this morning, yield to the gentle drawing of His almighty love! May you, dear Brothers and Sisters, be among those who shall say, "It is true, it is true that He gathers other outcasts, for He has gathered *me* into His fold and I bless His Sovereign Grace, His irresistible love and will bless Him forever and ever." Amen.

HOPE, YET NO HOPE— NO HOPE, YET HOPE NO. 684

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 8, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“You are wearied in the length of your way;
yet you did not say, There is no Hope.”
Isaiah 57:10.*

*“And they said, THERE IS NO HOPE: but we will walk after
our own devices, and we will
everyone do the imagination of his evil heart.”
Jeremiah 18:12.*

WHO can understand the subtlety of the human heart? Well said the Prophet, “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” The physician of the body had need be skillful to track disease to its secret origin and to follow it through all its mysterious pathways in the mazes of the human body. But he who has to deal with *souls* has a task far harder, inasmuch as sin is more subtle than the virus of the most incurable disease, and the way in which it intertwines itself with every power of humanity is even more marvelous than the strange influences of plague and pest upon the human body.

Those whose business and office it is to deal with sick souls set it as their great object to be instruments in the hands of God of bringing diseased souls to trust in the great salvation which God has provided in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. And simple as such a work may seem to be, every truly experienced minister is brought to confess that it needs a Divine art and Omnipotent power to bring a soul to rest simply upon Christ. All the subtlety of the human heart exerts itself to the utmost to prevent that heart from trusting in the Savior—and while evil is always cunning, it shows itself to be supremely so in its efforts to guard the Cross against the approaches of sinners. By the Cross, as the Savior said, the thoughts of many hearts are revealed. The Cross develops the subtlety of man when we see his struggles and contortions to avoid resting upon its glorious provisions of Divine Grace.

There are two phases in spiritual life which well illustrate the deceitfulness of the heart. The first is that described in my first text, in which the man, though wearied in his many attempts, is not and cannot be convinced of the hopelessness of self-salvation but still clings to the delusion that he shall be able, somehow—he knows not how—to deliver himself from ruin. When you shall have hunted the man out of *this*, you will then meet with a new difficulty which is described in the second text. Finding there is no hope in himself, the man draws the unwarrantable conclusion

that there is no hope for him in God. And, as once you had to battle with his self-confidence, now you have to wrestle with his despair.

It is self-righteousness in both cases. In the one case it is the soul content with self-righteousness. In the second place it is man sullenly preferring to perish rather than receive the righteousness of Christ. I ask the children of God to pray that I may be enabled to simply but earnestly deal with men's souls this morning! It is their conversion that I am aiming at.

I shall neither strive to please your ears nor your tastes, nor do I court an opportunity for oratorical display. All I want is to lead the sinner, by God's Grace, out of himself and then afterwards to lead him up from his self-despair. And oh, may God the Holy Spirit bring some souls by my means this morning to the foot of the Cross, and may they look up and know themselves to be saved through the finished sacrifice of our Great High Priest!

I. Considering the first text, we have to speak of A HOPE WHICH IS NO HOPE. "You are wearied in the length of your way; yet you did not say, There is no hope. You have found the life of your hand; therefore you were not grieved." This well pictures the pursuit of men after satisfaction in earthly things. They will hunt the frequents of wealth. They will travel the pathways of fame. They will dig into the mines of knowledge. They will exhaust themselves in the deceitful delights of sin, and finding them all to be vanity and emptiness, they will become sorely perplexed and disappointed.

But they will still continue their fruitless search. Wearied with the length of their way, they still stagger forward under the influence of spiritual madness! And though there is no result to be reached except that of everlasting disappointment, yet they press forward with as much ardor as if a full assurance of success sustained their spirits. Worldlings seem far more resolved to die than some Christians are to live. They are more desperate in seeking their own destruction than Believers are in enjoying spiritual life. Indeed, they are content because they have found the life of their hand. Living from hand to mouth is enough for them. That they are still alive—that they possess present comforts and present enjoyments—this contents the many.

As for the future, they say, "Let it take care of itself." As for *eternity*, they leave others to care for its realities—the life of their hand is enough for them. Their motto is, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." They have no foresight for their eternal state and the present hour absorbs them. Carnal minds with all their might pursue earth's vanities, and when they are wearied in their pursuit they still say not, "There is no hope," but change the direction, and continue the idle chase! They turn to another and another of earth's broken cisterns, hoping to find water where not a drop was ever discovered before.

That, however, is not the subject of this morning. The text applies very eminently to those who are seeking salvation by *ceremonies*. This is a very numerous and increasing class. It is getting to be the current and fashionable belief that we are to be saved by going to holy places, receiving priestly baptism, Episcopal confirmation, eating consecrated bread, drink-

ing hallowed wine, and repeating devout expressions. We are going back to the beggarly elements of Rome about as fast as we can and in a very short time we shall see the whole of this country covered by an Anglican Popery which will be far more hard to deal with than the more manifest Popery of Rome.

It is surprising that in an age which was supposed to be one of thought and common sense, men should so soon be dazzled with the gaudy toys of Romanism! I marvel that the childish processions, the babyism, the effeminate millinery, the infantile nurseryisms of Rome should have charms for reasonable men and women! Some of the churches during the past week would have made little children scream with delight—they would have felt that they were in the prettiest nurseries and toyshops which they had ever seen! O it is an age of folly in which men think to worship God with displays fit only for children's sports!

There may be some hearer here who is pursuing salvation by outward ceremonies. Your path is certainly a very tedious one and it will end in disappointment. If you addict yourself to the fullest ceremony. If you are obedient to it in all its jots and tittles—keeping its fast days and its feast days, its vigils, matins and vespers, bowing down before its priesthood, its altars, and its millinery, giving up your reason and binding yourself in the fetters of superstition—after you have done all this you will find an emptiness and a vexation of spirit as the only result!

And it is probable that when you have once committed yourself to that course you will go on, wearied with the road, but too bewitched to be able to leave it! Pressing forward, you will be unwilling to confess that you have been mistaken. You will be conscious that you feel but little consolation but continue to pursue your downward course as if glory surely shone before you.

It is only Divine Grace that can enable us to follow Luther's example, who, after going up and down Pilate's staircase on his knees, muttering so many Ave Marias and Pater Nosters, called to mind that old text, "Therefore being justified by *faith*, we have peace with God." He sprung up from his knees and forsook once and forever all dependence upon outward formalities and quit the cloistered cell and all its austerities to live the life of a Believer, knowing that by the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified.

Yet, dear Friends, albeit that I know only Divine Grace can turn you from the delusive path of vain ceremonies, I would like to suggest a doubt or two to you which may be helpful one of these days to make you choose a wiser course. Does it not seem to you to be inconsistent with the Character of the God of Nature that He should have instituted a plan of salvation so singularly complicated and theatrical as that which is nowadays taught us by priests? Nature is simple! Her grandeur lies in her simplicity. If you walk in the fields of our own happy land, or climb the lofty ranges of the Alps, you are delighted with the beautiful simplicity of nature in which there is an utter absence of everything gaudy, showy, and theatrical.

Everything has a practical design, and even the colors of the flowers, which are not without intent and design, enable the plant to drink in cer-

tain rays of light which shall best satisfy its need. There is nothing in nature for mere display! But you step inside a place of worship dedicated to salvation by ceremonies, and I am persuaded that your taste will be outraged, if that taste has been formed upon the model of nature. Frequently, on the Continent, I turned with loathing from gaudily decorated churches daubed with paint, smothered with gilt, and bedizened with pictures, dolls, and all sorts of baby prettiness. I turned aside from them in uttering, "If your god accepts such rubbish as this he is no god to me! The God of yon rolling clouds and crashing thunder, yon foaming billows and towering rocks is the God whom I adore. Too sublime, too noble, too great-minded to take delight in your genuflections and stage-play devotions."

When I beheld processions with banners, and crosses, and smoking censers, and saw men who claimed to be sent of God, and yet dress themselves like Tom fools, I did not care for their god, but reckoned that he was some heathenish idol whom I counted it my glory as a man to scoff at and to despise! Do not fall into the notion that the God of nature is different from the God of Grace. He who wrote the book of Nature wrote the book of Revelation, and writes the book of experience within the human heart. Do not, therefore, choose a way of salvation utterly at variance with the Divine Character.

Has it never struck you that ceremonial salvation would be a very wicked way of salvation? What is there, for instance, about drops of baptismal water which could make men better? What is there about confirmation that should assure you of the forgiveness of your sins? What is there about receiving a piece of bread and drinking a drop of wine that should confer Divine Grace? Might you not remain as bad at heart and as wicked after all as ever you were? And is it not a violation of the eternal principles of morality that a man should be endowed with Grace while his soul still clings to sin?

Now, if there is no effect in water to make you hate sin, and no result from the priest's hands to make you love God, and no result from sacraments to make you holy and heavenly-minded—can you trust in them? Surely there must be some sort of congruity between the means and the result! Surely it is immoral in the highest degree to tell a man that by outward *things*, which cannot change the life, he shall have his sins forgiven! We shall have the iniquity of the Middle Ages back again if we have the faith of the Middle Ages proclaimed—and from all that may God in His Grace deliver us! The votaries of superstition have furnished us with a very solemn argument, for many of them, when they have lain dying, have turned their eyes to other places and have anxiously begged for full assurance of eternal life.

Superstition, strange to say, has been truthful enough to reply, "I have no rest to offer you." For what does Rome offer when you have done all? *Purgatory* and its pains! It tells you that when you have done all, you may have to lie for hundreds of years in a place full of misery till you have been purged from sin! How very different from the Gospel which the Word of God reveals to you—that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is saved not only from the *guilt* of sin but from the *love* of sin—is enabled to

be holy, is made a new creature, and without any purgatorial cleansing shall ascend to his Father and his God to dwell with Him forever!

So simple, so God-like, so Divine! How is it that so many cast it aside, and take up with these sillinesses which are the inventions of man? This whole Book through salvation is never said to be by anything done by *priests*—but salvation is everywhere spoken of as being by *Christ* through *faith*! There is not a place that gives a vestige of confidence to anybody who hopes to be saved by the performances of *rituals*—but everywhere salvation is presented to those humble, contrite souls who know and trust the Savior's blood.

Perhaps these words of mine may not apply to many of you, and therefore we will turn to another phase of the same thing. A great mass of people, even though they reject priest-craft, make themselves priests, and rely upon their good works. A poor and wretched man dreamed that he was counting out gold. There it stood upon the table before him in great bags, and as he untied string after string, he found himself wealthy beyond Croesus' treasures. He was lying upon a bed of straw in the midst of filth and squalor—a mass of rags and wretchedness—but he dreamed of riches!

A charitable friend who had brought him help stood at the sleeper's side and said, "I have brought you help, for I know your urgent need." Now the man was in deep sleep and the voice mingled with his dream as though it were part of it. He replied, therefore, with scornful indignation, "Get you gone! I need no miserable charity from you. I am possessor of heaps of gold. Can you not see them? I will open a bag and pour out a heap that shall glitter before your eyes." Thus foolishly he talked on, babbling of a treasure which existed only in his dreams till he who came to help him accepted his repulse and departed mournfully. When the man awakened he had no comfort from his dream, but found that he had been duped by it into rejecting his only friend.

Such is the position of every person who is hoping to be saved by his good works. You have no good works except in your *dreams*. Those things, which you supposed to be excellent are really defiled with sin and spoiled with impurity. Jesus stands by you this morning and cries, "Soul, I have come from Heaven to redeem you. If you had any good works there had been no need for Me to come to save you, but, inasmuch as you are naked, and poor, and miserable, I came to earth and this face was bedewed with sweat of blood, and these hands were pierced, and this side was opened to work out your salvation. Take it! I freely present it to you."

Will you, in your sleep this morning, make that sad reply, "Jesus, we are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing. We have neither cursed Your Father's name, nor broken your Sabbath, nor done anything amiss"? If so, dear Friends, you are resting upon a delusion and will find it so when it is too late! The way of salvation by works, if it were possible, would be a very wearisome way. How many good works would carry a man to Heaven would be a question very difficult to answer. It would be such a way that though a man should work his fingers to the bone, yet he would never be able to clamber up the precipice—for Sinai is too steep

and high for mortal feet to force a passage to the skies up its terrible battlements.

The way of salvation by works is totally contrary to that revealed in the Bible. If there is anything plain there, this is plain, “By the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified, for by the Law is the knowledge of sin.” The way of salvation by works is a proud, rebellious way, by which man hopes to avoid humiliating himself before his God. How should the Lord bestow His favor upon the man who refuses to trust in His own dear Son? Shall the Lord yield to save men, and yet let them remain proud and boastful? Shall He save a man who refuses to owe that salvation to Divine mercy? You weary yourself, my Hearer, in your resolutions, and doings, and works, in the greatness of your way, and yet you will not confess that, “There is no hope.” May the Lord force that conviction upon you till you shall turn aside from all self-confidence and rest in Jesus Christ alone!

Many persons are looking for salvation by another form of self-deception, namely, the way of repentance and reformation. It is thought by some that if they pray a certain number of prayers and repent up to a certain amount, they will then be saved as the result of their prayers and repenting. This, again, is another way of winning salvation which is not spoken of in Scripture. This is a way by which neither Law or Gospel receive honor. To repent is a Christian’s *duty*, but to hope for salvation by virtue of that, alone, is a delusion of the most fearful kind! The reason for salvation lies not in my repenting, but in Christ’s suffering—not in my renunciation of sin, but in Christ’s having borne my sin in His own body on the tree. Oh, that by God’s Grace I may have done with relying upon anything that comes from myself!

The idea of trying to repent in order to save yourself is so ridiculous that it has sometimes reminded me of the old story of the Dutchman, who, having no family, but having a great many cousins, left his estate in this way—all the cousins were to meet in the Town Hall on a certain day, and whoever could cry for him first, and could honestly say he wept out of sorrow for his death should have the estate. Now there was a very great difficulty here, because of the remarkable mingling of feeling. Could they get themselves into a state of mind so as to lament his death? Well, the largeness of the fortune and the desirableness of the estate at once dried up the tears!

I forget how the story ends, but it sufficiently shows the impossibility of lamenting in order to gain an object. The hopeful joy and the sorrow, if both possible in themselves, would effectually neutralize each other. The tears of true repentance must be as much the gift of God as Heaven itself, and if we were to have an offer to be saved on account of our repenting, repenting would be an impossibility to us. Repentance is a part of salvation, and when Christ saves us He saves us by making us repent! But repentance does not save—it is the work of God, and the work of God alone. Now why do you weary yourself in this way? For surely in it “There is no hope.”

My drift in all this rambling talk is just this—whatever it is, my dear Hearer, that you are looking to as a ground of confidence—if it is anything

in *yourself*— pray you give up all hope, for though you have not seen it to be true, it is nevertheless assuredly so that there is no hope whatever by it. Where you have to do with the work it will be marred and spoiled and will end in confusion. Salvation is of the Lord, and your deliverance from your present state of sin and guilt must come from the right hand of the Most High! It cannot in any degree, or in any measure, come from yourself. You have destroyed yourself, that is, in your works—your help must be found in Another from the first to the last.

I shall be accused, I know, of dispiriting you. I shall desire to plead guilty to the accusation! And if it shall even be urged again that I drive you to despair, I shall again plead guilty and glory in the result! I wish to preach everyone who would save himself into utter despair! If any man is hoping to save himself, I pray God that He may smite that hope dead on the spot—that it may be renounced forever. Sinner, oh that you would consent to yield up all confidence in yourself, for then there would be hope for you!

Most men must have a secret hope somewhere of a false kind, for, look at the way in which they are employing themselves. Most men are not seeking to escape from the wrath to come—they are busy in worldly things while Hell is near them. They are like idiots catching flies on board a ship which is in the very act of going down. Surely those men must have some fictitious hope *somewhere* or they would not act like this! We see many persons busy about their persons, decorating themselves when their soul is in ruin. They are like a man painting his front door when his house is in flames! Surely they must harbor some baseless hope which makes them thus insensible!

We see men who do not quail and tremble, though they profess to believe the Bible which tells them that God is angry with them every day. Surely their quietness of heart must arise from some secret hope lurking in their spirits! The rope of mercy is cast to the sinner and he will not lay hold of it! Surely he cannot be such a fool as to love to die—he must have some hope *somewhere* that he can swim by his own exertions and it is this hopefulness of the man in *himself* that is his ruin and his destruction. Until you are totally separate from all consciousness of hope in *yourself*, there is no hope that the Gospel will ever be any power to you!

But when you shall throw up your hands like a drowning man, feeling, “It is all over with me! I am lost, lost, unless a stronger than I shall interpose.” Oh Sinner, *then* there is hope for you! If we can once get you to say, “One thing I know, I cannot save myself. One thing I feel, I must have a stronger arm than mine to rescue me from ruin.” When you have come to *this*, O Soul, we will begin to rejoice over you and may God grant that our rejoicing may not be in vain!

II. We shall now turn to the second text. “And they said, THERE IS NO HOPE: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will everyone do the imagination of his evil heart.” Here we have NO HOPE—AND YET HOPE. When the sinner has at last been driven by stress of weather from the road of his own confidence, then he flies to the dreary harbor of despair. He is now convinced that there is no hope in himself, and like a simpleton

he goes to the other extreme, and concludes, “Then I cannot be saved at all.”

He acts as if there were nobody in the world but himself, and begins to measure God’s power and God’s Grace by his own merit and power. Some before me, convinced of their own powerlessness, are ready to lie down in a fit of despair and die. “The preacher has been telling us there is no hope, then we will give it up.” My dear Friend, I know what will be the result if you go away with that impression—you will go off to your sins—for despair is the mother of all sorts of evil. When a man says, “There is no hope of Heaven for me,” then he throws the reins upon the neck of his lusts and goes on from bad to worse.

You will thoroughly misunderstand me if you go away with that impression. There is no hope for you *in yourself*, but there is hope for you in Him whom God has provided to be the Savior of such as you! Hopelessness in self is what we want to bring you to, but hopelessness *in itself*, and especially in connection with God, would be a sin from which we would urge you to escape. If you are sitting down in despair, I want to speak to you, first, of the God of Hope. Dear Friend, there is that in God—Father, Son, and Spirit—which may remove your fears so that you need never utter a single doubting word again!

You are saying, “I am full of sin.” That is true—you are much more full of sin than you think you are. “But I have been a great sinner.” That is likely—and you are a greater sinner than you will ever know yourself to have been. “But I don’t feel my sinnership as I ought to do.” That is very likely—and you never will do so. No man on earth ever did feel sin in all its guiltiness, for God alone knows the blackness of sin. “But I am altogether such a one that there is nothing in me to recommend me. I could almost wish I had been a great sinner, that I might feel a great repentance. I have nothing to recommend me.”

Now think of the loving kindness of God the Father. Do you remember how He revealed Himself in that parable of the prodigal son? That prodigal son had been ungrateful, wicked—very wicked. He had spent his life in all sorts of vice and had become filthy in person and loathsome in character. His associates were of the lowest race of men, and then brutes themselves. Yet the goodness which he had not in himself his father had. He was all sin, but his father was all mercy. He was all iniquity, but his father was all loving kindness. Now can you not see, if the prodigal were here, we might say to him, “There is no hope for you in yourself. Those rags cannot recommend you. The swine trough cannot be used as an argument.”

But then that would not be a ground for his stopping where he is, for “there is hope for you in your father. He is so good, so tender. He rejoices to receive his returning children.” And, Sinner, there is hope in God for *you*. His name is God That Is Good. He delights in mercy—it is His soul’s highest joy to clasp His Ephraim to His bosom. This very morning He has sent me to say to you, “Come now, and let us reason together, said the Lord. Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

But you meet this invitation with another desponding suggestion. You say, “Why should I come before the Most High God? I have sinned, and what shall I bring as a recompense? Rivers of oil and ten thousands of the fat of fed beasts, if I could bring them, would not be acceptable to Him. If I had a mint of merits. If I had godly impressions. If I had high moral excellence I would come with that to God, and hope to obtain a hearing.”

But hearken, Sinner, do you not know the name of the second Person in the Trinity? It is Jesus Christ, the Son. Now, if you need merit, has He not enough of it? For what cause do you think He lived on earth three-and-thirty years and kept God’s Law? Did He keep that for Himself? What need for God to be a man and to become subject to Law at all? He must have kept that Law for someone, then—but not for *righteous* men, for such have kept the law themselves! He must have kept it for the *unrighteous*.

Now, can you not take that which Christ has worked out, and take it to yourself when He freely bids you take it? You talk of sin but have you never heard that my Lord Jesus died? Why Man, you have heard this hundreds of times! But I pray you open your eyes and see it! Do you see that Cross, the center one of the three? Thieves hang upon the other two, but God Himself hangs upon the one in the middle. God, in the form of Mary’s Son, hangs bleeding out His life in acute sufferings exquisite, unutterable! For whom does He die? Not for Himself! What cause that God should be a man and die? He suffers! He suffers for sin! For whose sin, then? Not for His own for He had none. For the sins of *good* people? What need of that? He dies for the sins of those who have committed sins—for the sins of transgressors such as you and I are!

Oh Soul, do you not hear the voice that said, “Look unto Me and live”? What? Jesus, am I not to *do anything* by way of merit? Am I not to *be* anything by way of preparation? Am I to stand and simply look at You and feel my sins forgiven? Blessed be Your name! What a simple plan of salvation! Now I feel my heart begin to melt. Now I hate the sins that nailed You there. Now do I give myself to You, to serve You all my life. This is good evidence of salvation when a man can thus speak: “I hate sin and I desire to serve Christ.” You can see that he is saved from the power of sin—the power of the Cross has made him a new man!

Oh Sinner, if you have no merit, you need not wish for any! Take Christ in your hands for He is made of God unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption! And all this for every soul of Adam born who trusts in Him alone! But I hear you complaining again, “Oh, but I have not the power to *repent*. You have told me this before and I cannot believe it—I cannot soften my heart—I am so powerless I cannot do anything! You have been teaching me that.” I know I have, but there is another person in the Trinity, and what is His name? It is the Holy Spirit. And do you not know that the Holy Spirit helps our infirmity?

Though we know not what to pray for as we ought, yet He teaches us to pray. It is true you are darkness, but then He is your light! It is true you are naturally dead, but the Holy Spirit gives us life! And the light of God is the Holy Spirit as He shows Himself to you. It is clear that you can do

nothing without that Spirit—that should make you despair of self! But you can do everything *with* that Spirit! Now, lift those eyes of yours with which He has already taught you to weep! Lift them up to the Throne and say, “My Father, if I may dare to call You by that name, help me to trust Your Son! My God, I see in Yourself a Father’s love, in Your Son a Savior’s power, and in Your Spirit the Quickener’s life. Oh give me to feel Yourself within me, or, O God, if I may not feel it I will still believe it, for You cannot lie, and whether I have a comfortable evidence or not, I do this morning—utterly hopeless of anything in myself—I do this morning cast myself on You. “Lord, I believe! Help You my unbelief.”

Why, Sinner, I do not know what it is that you may want, but I know one thing—it is provided for you in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and resting upon the great Savior whom God has provided, there is hope for you, my dear fellow creature! There is the brightness of a ray of hope this very morning, only may God turn it from a *possible* into an *actual* hope and give you a good hope of eternal life through believing in Jesus Christ!

Thus I have tried to turn you away from self to the Lord—but it may be I have some very hard cases to deal with—and so, two or three suggestions by way of smiting at the despair which some of you feel. A great Divine has said—and I think there is some truth in it—that a very great number of souls are destroyed through the fear that they cannot be saved. I think it is very likely. If some of you really thought that Christ could save you, if you felt a hope that you might yet be numbered with His people, you would say, “I will forsake my sins, I will leave my present evil way, and I will fly unto the strong for strength.”

Now though I have laid judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and sought to put the axe to the tree of all creature confidence, yet there is hope in Jesus Christ! There is hope in Jesus Christ, my dear Hearer, even for you! And I will give you these two or three reasons. In the first place, would it not be wise even if there were only a “perhaps,” to go to Christ and trust Him on the strength of that? The king of Nineveh had no Gospel message, He had simply the Law preached by Jonah, and that very shortly and sternly. Jonah’s message was, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” But the king of Nineveh said, “Who can tell?” And having nothing to rest upon—not a single word of promise—he humbled himself before God, he and his people, on the strength of a, “Who can tell?”

Ah, my dear Hearers, take care lest the men of Nineveh rise up in judgment against you! You have got much more than a, “Who can tell?” Oh Sinner, you are saying, “I cannot be saved.” But I ask you, Who can tell? “But I do not feel that there is hope.” Who can tell? “But I am such a sinner.” Who can tell? “Oh, but I am such a dull, heavy spirit! I cannot feel—there cannot be mercy for me.” But who can tell? Surely if but on the presumption of “Who can tell?” the men of Nineveh went and found mercy, you will be inexcusable if you do not act upon the same, having much more than that to be your comfort! Go, Sinner, to the Cross, for who can tell?

But, in the next place, you have had many clear and positive examples. In reading Scripture through you find that many have been to Christ and that there never was one cast out yet. If you had seen some repulsed, you might conclude that you must be among them, but not one has been rejected by the Savior. Why should you be? We need not turn to books—there are living people here saved by Divine Grace. I myself am one. I had no more preparation for Christ than you have. I had not the shadow of anything to trust to any more than you have. When I heard the Gospel precept, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth,” I did look, and I am saved!

Oh my Soul, I am the witness for my Master that He is true! In a moment, no sooner had I looked than I had joy and peace, and I can promise you the same! Those wounds of Christ still stream with mercy! That head crowned with thorns still beams with the splendor of Grace! Do but look into His pierced side and you shall see a fount most deep and full—still flowing with blood and water to cleanse you, even *you*, from sin! Do not say you cannot come to Christ for He is not here—you cannot come upon your feet, but then your thoughts are the feet of your soul! Come to Him in *thought*. Come to Him in confidence. Come to Him in trust, and you cannot trust Christ and yet be cast away. You have living examples.

Moreover you have comfortable promises in the Word of God. I was thinking much yesterday of this promise—I wonder whether God has sent it to my heart for any of you—“Your hearts shall live that seek Him.” I was wondering whether I should preach from it, but anyhow it kept following me about—“Your hearts shall live that seek Him.” If you seek Him your heart shall live! Leap on the back of that promise and let it bear you, as the Samaritan’s beast bore the dying man to an inn where you may rest—I mean to Christ—where you may have confidence.

Here is another. “Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Now you do call upon His name. There are many others. They have been quoted in your ears till you know them by heart. “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” And you know that precious one, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” You see I had some black things to say at first—I had to tell you that the disease was incurable by natural means—but then the supernatural Physician can remove it! I had to tell you that the ship was sinking and could not be saved, but I have now to point you to the lifeboat which can never be wrecked. I had to warn you that your own arm is palsied, but I have to assure you that the Lord’s arm is not so shortened that it cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that it cannot hear.

I had to remind you that you were hopeless bankrupts and could not pay a farthing in the pound, but I have to assure you that He has paid all Believers’ debts. I had to tell you that you were all so dirty in His sight that, in yourselves considered, you never could be accepted. But I have now to say, on the other hand, that every Believer is so clean and fair after being washed in Jesus’ blood that he is without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Away, you broken cisterns! Oh, for the hammer of God to dash you into shivers! But come, come, come you thirsty ones to the ever-

flowing, overflowing fountain! Here is nothing stinted! Here is no shortness of supply, no illiberality of gift—come as you are!

The fountain flows freely and richly for you, who, having nothing in yourselves, are willing to have everything in Christ Jesus! Do not be saying, “There is no hope,” for there IS hope! There is more—there is security—there is certainty to every soul that trusts in Jesus!

To conclude, do you not know, poor Sinner, you who believe in Jesus this morning—do you not know the news? Then I will tell you a secret. Do you not know that if you now prostrate yourself at the foot of the Cross, you are God’s chosen one? Your name is engraved on the hand of Jesus, on the heart of God! Before the daystar knew its place or planets ran their round—before the primeval darkness was pierced by the sun’s first ray you were dear to the heart of Deity! You are His elect, His beloved one! And do you not know that the mountains may depart and the hills be removed but the Covenant of His love shall never depart from you? Neither shall His Grace be removed, said the Lord, who this morning has manifested His mercy towards you!

Though you are but just now converted, there is laid up for you in Heaven a crown of life that fades not away. Jesus pleads for you this very day! He this day prepares one of the many mansions for your eternal dwelling place! Be of good courage! Angels are singing, Heaven is rejoicing over YOU! The Church on earth is glad concerning you! And one day, when the great Shepherd shall appear, you also shall appear with Him in glory—and all this for you, poor helplessly ruined sinner—helpless in yourself, but saved in Christ Jesus! May God add a blessing to this simple testimony this morning and His shall be the praise.

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

ROADS CLEARED

NO. 1579

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

(Preached on an evening when the Tabernacle was left to strangers).

***“Cast you up, cast you up, prepare the way, take up the
stumbling block out of the way of My people.”
Isaiah 57:14.***

WHAT is the way, the way of salvation, the way to Heaven? Jesus Christ says, “I am the way.” He is the Son of God and He left the glories of Heaven and took upon Himself our nature and lived here. In due time He took upon Himself our sin and made Atonement for it and now He has gone up into Heaven and sits at the right hand of God, even the Father, from where He will shortly come to judge the quick and the dead. The way to be delivered from sin—the way to Heaven is simply to trust in Jesus Christ! God has set Him forth to be a Propitiation for sin and whoever believes in Jesus Christ has his sin put away at once, whatever he may have done. Before Christ went to Heaven, He said to His disciples, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.”

This is the way of salvation which we preach, unaltered and unalterable, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” In other words, trust Him and you are saved! This is the entrance into the way of salvation and this is the track of that way even to the end—trust in Christ. “Are not good works needed?” asks one. They always flow *from* faith in Christ. He that would be saved from sin, trusts Christ and his *nature* is changed—and so he hates the sin that once he loved and endeavors to honor the Christ who has saved Him. But in the matter of our Salvation, the ground and bottom of it is not our works, or tears, or prayers, but simple reliance upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. He is A and He is Z in the alphabet of Grace.

He is the Beginning and He is the End. “He that believes in Him has everlasting life.” “He that believes in Him is not condemned,” and never shall be, for he has passed from death unto life. Such being the way, it is very simple. Straight as an arrow, is it not? And yet in this way there are stumbling blocks.

I. First, LET US SHOW WHY THIS IS. The first reason is that the way of believing is such an uncommon way. Men do not understand the way of trusting. They need to see, to reason, to argue—but to *trust* in “God made flesh,” dead, buried, risen, gone into Heaven—they do not like that. Man says, “I cannot trust.” How very difficult it would be for a cow that has always lived by the day, the short life that can be fed on grass, if it had to

live by *reason* as men do! It would be a new, strange way for the poor beast. And when man has to live by *faith*, he is as awkward as a cow would be at reasoning! He is out of his element. What? Am I to do *nothing* but *trust* the Savior and He will save me? Is that to be the top and bottom of it? It is so. "Then," says the man, "I cannot get at it—there are stumbling blocks in the road."

Another reason is that men, when they are really seeking salvation, are often much troubled in mind. They are conscious that they have done wrong. Conscience pricks them. They feel that if God is just, He must punish them for their wrong doing. They are well aware that He knows the secrets of their hearts and this alarms and distresses them. And when they are told that if they believe in Jesus Christ all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven, they wonder, "How can it be?" If we put it very plainly and say, "However great your guilt, however black your sin, wash in the Fountain filled with blood and you shall be clean"—it seems plain enough—but they cannot see it. A sense of sin blinds them and they grope in the noonday, like blind men, for the wall, stumbling over this and that which has no existence except in their own fears. Conscience makes unbelievers of us all and stumbling blocks are created by our trembling condition. I do not know how it is to be otherwise.

Besides this, men are often *ignorant* of the way of salvation. I am not speaking, now, as though I blamed them. I was brought up, myself, to attend the House of God regularly. I do not suppose that on any Lord's Day, except through illness, I was ever absent. Yet when I began to seek the Lord, I did not know the way of salvation. I knew the *letter* of it, but not the real meaning—how can a man know it till the Spirit of God reveals it to him? The sun itself may shine, but a man will never see till his eyes are open. Until Christ comes, who is the Light of the world, men will roam in darkness. Why, in this London of ours, the bulk of people are still without the knowledge that salvation is entirely of Grace—that it is an act of Divine Mercy that saves a man—that a man is never saved by his zeal, or his prayers, or his tears, or *anything* that he does, but is saved entirely by the mercy of God in Jesus Christ!

The Gospel is not believed or accepted in its real meaning and so men meet with stumbling blocks. Satan is always ready to prevent souls from finding peace in Christ. He will inject all sorts of thoughts into men's minds—infernal blasphemies—incredible thoughts he will make to pass through the minds of men who are seeking Christ. He does not meddle with some people—he knows they are his and will be his at last—but when a man once shakes himself up and flees for his life, then the Evil One raises all Hell about his ears and, by his efforts, many souls are made to stumble in a way which is smooth enough to the feet of faith.

II. Thus have I shown why there are so many stumbling blocks. Now, by God's help, I am going to TRY TO LIFT SOME OF THEM OUT OF THE WAY. The text says, "Take up the stumbling block." Now for a dead lift at some of them. Here is one of them. One man says, "I would gladly believe in this Jesus Christ of whom you tell me, but if I were to come to God

through Christ, would He receive me?" Yes, that He will. Here is a text—"Him that comes to Me I will in nowise cast out." In all the history of the human race there has never been found a man that came to Jesus Christ whom Christ rejected! If you will seek God in Christ with all your heart and He shuts the door of mercy in your face, you may turn round and say, "I am the first man that Christ refused to help and now His Word is broken, for He said, 'Him that comes to me I will in nowise cast out,' and He has cast me out."

Oh, my Friends, some will not come because they are afraid of being rejected, but there is no sense in that fear! Christ cannot, *will* not reject a single soul that comes to Him, so, out of the way with that stumbling block! "But," says another, "I am a very peculiar person. I could very well believe that any man in the world who trusted Christ would be saved except myself. I cannot think that He would save *me*, for I am so odd." Ah, my Friend, I am odd, myself, and I had the same feeling that you have. I thought that I was a lot left out of the catalog. I always had the notion that my brother and my sisters could readily enough find mercy but I—I could not see how I could be forgiven! I knew more about myself than I should like to tell and I knew this about myself—that there was a peculiar guilt about me, besides many odd ways that I could not well shake off.

Since then I have been the minister of a Church that numbers nearly 6,000 souls and that for many years—and I have found out that nearly all of them are about as odd as I am! And so I have cast off the idea of my being so singular. If you knew other people, you would find that there are other strange people besides yourself. And if God saves so many strange people, why should He not save you? "I should be a wonder," says one, "if I were saved." Then He will save you, for He delights to do wonders! He will crowd Heaven with curiosities of mercy! Heaven will be a museum of prodigies of Sovereign Grace and if you are one of that kind, be encouraged! You are the very man that is certain to be received. Go boldly to the gate—it shall not be shut in your face. Look to Jesus and live!

But I hear another say, "Sir, I have such a horrible sense of sin I cannot rest in my bed! I cannot think that I shall be saved." Wait a bit there, my Friend, wait a bit. Let me speak to this person over here. What is your trouble? "My trouble is, Sir, that I have no sense of sin. I know that I am a sinner and a great sinner, but I do not think that I shall be saved for I have no horrible thoughts." Will you change places with the other man? Will he change with you? I should not advise either of you to make any changes, for, in the first place, despairing thoughts are *not* necessary to salvation. And, in the second place, so long as you *know* yourself a sinner and are willing to confess it, such thoughts are untrue! Where is it written in Scripture that we are to *despair* in order to be *saved*? Is not the whole Gospel, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved"?

Where shall you find it recorded in God's Word that you are to be driven to remorse in order to find Christ? Repentance is quite another thing. To be *sorry* for sin, to *hate* sin, to wish to escape from it—this is a Gospel blessing! But remorse—that threatening to destroy yourself, those

tortures of mind—this is not desirable and you may neither wish for it, if you have it not, nor yet despair because you have it, for salvation lies in *Christ!* Despairing one, look to the Cross and live! And you who do *not* despair, look to the same Cross and live, for there is salvation for every eye that looks to Jesus Crucified! I see another stumbling block. A trembler cries, “I am afraid to come and trust Christ because I do not know whether I am one of the elect.” Well, I cannot tell you. I have never been to Heaven to search the roll. A young friend over yonder is starting in business. He opened his warehouse last Monday and he is in hopes that he may prosper in the world. My dear young Man, why did you open your shop? Why did you not sit down in idleness and moan, “I would open a shop, but I do not know whether I am predestinated to prosper.” If you do not try, you will never prosper—that is quite certain.

As to secret things we act upon the rule of common sense. When this service is over you will go home, will you not? But if you sit still and say, “I shall not go down the aisle because I do not know whether it is predestinated for me to get home,” you will not get home and some will think that you are predestinated to be a fool! Any man who talks about predestination as if it could be an *excuse* for living in sin and refusing the Savior is acting like a fool! If you trust Jesus Christ I will tell you, then, that you are God’s elect for a certainty, for whoever believes in Christ is called by the Spirit of God and none are called in that way but those whom God has chosen from before the foundations of the world!

“Ah,” says another person, “I think I have committed the unpardonable sin.” Pray, Sir, will you tell me what it is because I have read a large number of books to make that discovery and I have come to the conclusion that nobody knows what it is. Yet, though I am not sure as to what the crime may be, I can tell you whether you have committed it or not within a little time. Do you desire to be saved? Do you long to be delivered from the power of sin? Then you have *not* committed the unpardonable sin because it is a sin unto *death*—and after a man commits it, he never has a living wish or desire after God from that moment on. His conscience is seared as with a hot iron and he learns to defy God, or to be utterly indifferent with regard to eternal things.

But as long as there beats within your breast a desire after God. As long as you can heave a sigh of regret because of a wasted life. As long as one tear of penitence can dew your eyes, be not dismayed with the idea that you have committed the sin which is unto death, for you have done nothing of the kind! Let us lift that stumbling block out of the way altogether. “Oh, but,” says another person, “my stumbling block is this—that the whole thing seems too good to be true—that I, by simply believing in Jesus Christ, shall be saved.” I confess that it *does* seem too good to be true, but it is not! It is good, infinitely good, that your sin should be effectually pardoned, in a moment, freely and without price—and good as it is, it is just like our God! God in Christ Jesus is clearly capable of marvelous deeds of Grace.

Treat God like God and remember that His ways are as much above your ways and His thoughts as much above your thoughts as the Heavens are above the earth! All the sins of a whole life He can strike out, as a man cancels a debt in his account book. With one single mark of red ink He can write, "paid in full," at the bottom of the tremendous bill and it is all gone and gone forever! There is none like You, O God! There is none like You! As Creator, none can make the Heavens and earth like You! As Redeemer, none can fetch a soul up from the Pit as You have done and none can hurl sin into the depths of the sea as You did from the Cross! Only trust the Savior, then, and you shall see His great salvation!

This stumbling block about its being too good need not remain a moment. I will not stay upon any more of these things, but will just say that there are some stumbling blocks that I cannot remove—they must always stand there, I am afraid. An objector says to me, "I would believe in Jesus. I have no fault to find with Him, but then, look at His followers, many of them are hypocrites." Yes, we do look at His professed followers and the tears are in our eyes, for the worst enemies He has are they of His own household! Judas kissed Him and sold Him. Many are like Judas. Look here, my Friend—what have you to do with that? Suppose Judas does betray Christ—is Christ any the worse for that?

You are not asked to trust in Judas, you are asked to trust in Christ. "Oh," says one, "but they are all hypocrites." No, no, that will not do. A man takes a bad sovereign—takes half-a-dozen of them in the course of his lifetime. Does he say that all sovereigns are bad? If there were no good ones, the bad ones would never pass. The reason why it pays to make bad sovereigns is because good ones are so valuable—and that is why it pays certain people, as they think, to pass themselves off as Christians. If there were no real Christians, there would be no pretenders to that name! How, then, can you make the excuse that because there are some hypocrites you will refuse Christ?

"Ah," says one, "but I know a little about revival meetings and conversions. Don't you know what a lot were converted and what became of them?" I know what you are thinking about, but I heard a friend tell a good story in reference to that matter. He said that, notwithstanding that we have to strike off a discount from our converts of those that are not genuine, yet the revivals are worth having, for there is a real gain in them. For, he said, the objection is something like that of an Irishman who had found a sovereign which was short in weight, so that he could only get 18 shillings for it. The next time he saw a sovereign lying on the ground, he would not pick it up, for, he said, he had lost two shillings by the other.

Everybody laughs at him as acting ridiculously. So it is with objectors to revivals and special services. Suppose you do have to strike off the two shillings' worth—yet the 18 shillings are clear gain—and why should *you* be the bad two shillings, my Friend? Why should you? I dare say you know yourself better than I do and probably you may be the bad two shillings, but I did not say that you were and I do not wish that you may be! Why should you not be a *real* convert, a true gain to the Church of God?

Because there are imposters in the world, is that a reason why I am not to come to Christ? I made you smile just now. It was that you might laugh to scorn this foolery which is so much talked of! Am I to refuse to eat bread because there are bad bakers? Will you never drink milk, again, because some milk has been adulterated? Will you never breathe the air you live in because some air is tainted? Oh, talk not so! That stumbling block ought not to need moving. If it is any hindrance to you, I cannot help it—there it must be.

“But,” says another, “here is my stumbling block—if I were to believe in Christ and become a Christian, I would have to alter my whole life.” Just so. I do not dispute *that* assertion! There would have to be a turning of everything upside down! But then, He that sits upon the Throne of God says, “Behold, I make all things new.” Perhaps, my Friend, you would have to give up your trade, for there are some trades that cannot be followed by a Christian man. And, if yours is such, it is better to give it up than lose your soul! Or you might have to give up the tricks and dodges of your trade. You must give them up, then. If anything you do would keep you out of Heaven, it is better that you should become poor than that you should prosper in business by doing wrong and ruining your soul. “What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?”

That is putting an extreme case, for nobody gains the whole world. It is only a few fourpences or shillings that men get by cheating. What profit can there be in that, if the soul is to be lost for it? “Oh, but,” says one, “I should have to run the gauntlet in my family if I became a Christian.” Run the gauntlet, my Friend! It is better to go to Heaven under all opposition than to go to Hell with the flatteries of God’s enemies sounding in your ears! If you see a fish floating down the stream, you may know that it is a *dead* fish. Which way does a live fish go? Why, upstream! And that is the way a man must go to Heaven. “But I could not bear to be laughed at,” says one. Poor Soul! I have had, upon the whole, about as fair a share of ridicule as anybody living, but I do not remember that one of my bones ever ached a minute about it! And I think that if I can bear my share, which is tolerably large, you ought to be able to bear yours without being quite overcome by it.

Which is the better thing, do you think—to be sneered at for doing right or to be commended for doing wrong? Surely it is manly and honorable to say, “I will do the right and follow Christ, whoever may sneer.” What does it matter? Dogs bark—let them bark—but in God’s name, let us not give our souls away to find sops for them. “But my own parents and brothers and sisters would be against me!” Yes, Christ tells you that. He says, “He that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me: a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” You will conquer them by kindness and love—but I know there will be a wrench. In the higher classes, a Christian man gets the cold shoulder and among the lower orders, our working men who talk of liberty are the biggest tyrants alive! The moment a man becomes a Christian they point him out in the workshop. They jest

and jeer at him from morning to night and then call themselves true-born Englishmen!

They may swear as much as they like and use filthy talk till you can hardly go down a street without feeling sick at the language you hear—but if a fellow workman chooses to go to a place of worship and behave himself decently—then he is to be the butt of the workshop. This ought to come to an end and *would* if men were men! But, my dear Friend, I hope you are not to be cowed and kept down by opposition. If they laugh you *into* Hell, they cannot laugh you *out* again—remember that. And if to win a few poor smiles and escape a few silly sneers, you sell Christ, how will you answer for it when you have to stand before Him and He sits upon the Great White Throne at the last? Look at the martyrs—how they died for Christ!

Think of Bunyan when He is brought before the judge and the judge says, “You? A tinker? To go about preaching? Hold your tongue, Sir.” “I cannot hold my tongue,” said Bunyan. “Then I must send you back to prison unless you promise never to preach again.” “If you put me in prison till the moss grows on my eyelids, I will preach, again, the first moment I get out, by the help of God.” There is some grit in that man! Oh, that is the man that God loves—the man who against the whole world will do right and stand true to his Master! That stumbling block I would not move away if I could—it is good for us to meet with opposition. I think that even now I see the King upon His Throne at the Last Great Day—and as He sits there, surrounded by His courtiers and the blazing seraphim and mailed cherubim in all their brightness, He rises from His Throne and looks afar and cries—“Who comes there?”

“That is a man who suffered for Me! When I was despised and rejected of men, he was despised and rejected for My sake. Make way, angels! Make way, cherubim! Make way, seraphim! Stand back and let him come to Me! He was with Me in My shame and so he shall be with Me in My Glory! Come and sit here, at the right hand of God, with Me, for you dared to be despised for Me and now shall you be with Me in all the splendor of My reign.” Oh, I think we can leap over this stumbling block and be glad to think that it is there, for it will bring honor and glory and immortality at the Last Great Day!

The last stumbling block which I cannot move is this. A man will say, “But all this seems so new and strange to me. You want me to lead quite a new life. I do not comprehend it yet. I am to trust Christ whom I never saw?” Yes, that is where you are to begin. “And I am to see God whom I cannot see?” Yes, that is what you are to do. You are to live as in the daily consciousness of God’s Presence and that you *will* do if you begin trusting Christ. “But I cannot see what effect my trusting Christ would have upon me.” No, you cannot see it, but it will have a most wonderful effect upon you. You will not be the same man after you have trusted the Savior—the Spirit of God who *gives you faith* to trust Jesus will change your whole nature. You will be as though you had been born again!

“I don’t see it,” says one. No, but you might see it in this way. Here is a man that has a servant and that servant believes his master to be everything that is bad. Consequently, he does all that he can to annoy him. The master tries to mend the servant. He has spoken to him and chided him, but he goes on worse and worse. Now, suppose that I could go into the house and say, “My dear Man, I beg you to believe in your master. He wishes you well. You have misunderstood him”? Suppose that I could induce the servant to believe in his master? Why, my Friends, he would be an altered man altogether! Don’t you see that the moment he believed in his master, he would try to please him? If he said, “My master is a noble man. I love him.” From that moment the whole tenor of his life towards his master would be changed! And thus the great power of believing the Lord Jesus! The moment you trust Him, you obey His commands, you imitate His example and you give yourself up to His service!

Thus have I put before you, as best I can, the way of salvation. I thank you for coming on this special occasion. I may never see your faces again and, if I never do, this one thing is true—you have heard the way of salvation, even if you do not follow it. I shall be clear of the blood of every one of you in that great day of account when preacher and hearers will have to answer for how this Sunday night was spent. I have thought that if I could have been clearly told the way of salvation when I was anxious about my soul, I would have gained peace long before I did—and so I have resolved that I will never let the Sunday pass without preaching the way of salvation!

And it is this that for 26 years and more has held the multitude of people listening to me. I tell nothing but the old, old story. Why do people come? Do we deal in spiceries and knickknacks? No, but in *bread*—and people always need bread! I have given you, tonight no fineries or niceties, but the plain word of salvation. Will you have it, or not? God grant you Grace to receive salvation! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you are saved! And you may go on your way rejoicing in everlasting life! God grant it, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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CONTENTION ENDED AND GRACE REIGNING NO. 1490

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 17, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“For I will not contend forever, neither will I always be angry; for the spirits would fail before Me, and the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I angry, and smote him: I hid and was angry, and he went on backsliding in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will also lead him, and restore comforts to him and to his mourners.
Isaiah 57:16-18.*

The high and holy One that inhabits eternity is here speaking with Himself concerning Israel. The Lord is holding high soliloquy. He is not so much addressing the sons of men, bidding them do this or that, as speaking to Himself of what He intends to do among them. He allows His Prophet to stand where he can hear the sacred soliloquy of the great Supreme. And he hears it and then, under the dictate of the Divine Spirit, he records it in the Inspired Book where it remains to this day for our instruction. Hear, then, these words of the living God and let your hearts be satisfied concerning the secret purposes of Jehovah!

Although the Lord may say many things to Himself which we do not hear and which it were not well that we *should* hear, yet He never retracts in secret what He has spoken in public! So we may rest assured that He never speaks in the dark places of the earth concerning the house of Jacob, “Seek you My face in vain.” No decree of God is contrary to the Gospel—we may always be sure of that. Whenever He unveils before us His private thoughts, we never find them to be less gracious than His published Words. The same love which spoke itself through Prophets and Seers dwells in the silent heart of God and abides forever at the fullest even when it finds no voice.

In the verses before us we find words of exceedingly great mercy and special tenderness. And we see moving before our adoring eyes the eternal Wisdom, the infinite Patience and the immutable Love of the great Father. May it please the Lord, in very truth, to restore comforts unto His mourners by the subject which shall now engage our attention, for under the blessing of the Holy Spirit it is in every way calculated to cheer the contrite heart.

I. The first Truth of God to which I call your attention is that God contends with men and that THE DIVINE CONTENTION IS WELL DESERVED on their part. He says, “I will not contend forever,” in which it is implied that He *does* contend sometimes. Where He has purposes of eternal Grace, the Lord, at the opening of His saving work, comes into contention

with men. Smiting comes before saving. He bends His bow and points His arrow against the heart's sin before He pours out His balm for the heart's wound. He usually gives the spirit of bondage before He sends the spirit of sonship—He thunders by the Law before He waters the soul with the soft shower of the Gospel. Nor need we wonder at this, for there is so much in man that is altogether opposed to the Divine Nature and alien to the object and design of God, that there must be a conflict till the opposing principle is overcome and removed. The strong man will not go out except by force and neither will the Lord enter the soul except as a Conqueror.

First I would speak of this to *the seeking sinner*. It may be that there are, in this house, anxious persons who were once careless and at ease, but now there is a striving within them and a conflict which rages terribly. The Lord has a controversy with them. However unhappy it makes them, I am right glad that they are feeling the inward strife. Anything is better than the horrible calm of the dead sea of spiritual indifference! My Friend, your deadly peace is broken; your fatal sleep is ended; the magic spell of Satan has lost all its power; you are awakened and sadness rules the hour. Your wisest friends are glad of this—they welcome your return to feeling even as we rejoice to discover signs of life in one who has been snatched from a watery grave!

There is now some hope for you. The Spirit of God has come to you as a spirit of bondage and this makes you fear, but fear is often the outrider of faith. The Lord's design in contending with you is to *convince you of your sin*. You will never see sin to be exceedingly sinful unless the Holy Spirit throws His own light upon it. You love sin too much to deal with it impartially—you are so tainted by it in your nature that your conscience by no means censures you so much as your iniquity deserves. Though some say that conscience is the vicegerent of God, there is nothing in the Scriptures to prove that statement, neither is it true. Conscience is an *imperfect* guide and monitor—and like all the other faculties, it is weakened and vitiated by the Fall so that it is a very prejudiced judge of right and wrong—and too often it puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

Conscience is often blinded by self-love and at all times apt to slumber. Until the Holy Spirit quickens your conscience, you will never discover the enormity of sin. You may know it to be evil as a matter of dogma, but you will not feel it to be evil as a matter of experience, nor will you see how greatly, how continually, how wickedly you have offended the Law of God unless the Lord opens your eyes. This He intends to do and He will not cease to strive with you till His purpose is performed! My dear Friend, the Lord will probably keep up the controversy in your soul until your beauty consumes away and, instead of admiring yourself, you come to loathe yourself! Though you wash yourself with snow-water and make yourself ever so clean, yet will He plunge you in the ditch till your own clothes shall abhor you. You shall see your righteousness to be filthy rags and your person to be under the curse—and then *part* of the Lord's design will be accomplished!

The next reason for the Lord's contending with you will begin to operate when the first purpose has been accomplished. You will, in your self-

abasement, be driven to look to the Grace of God. It is hard to part a man from his sin. It is still harder to divorce Him from his self-righteousness and this is a part of the Lord's contention with awakened souls—He determines to rid them of all self-confidence because it is false confidence—and they, on their part, appear to be resolved to hold to self as long as there is a rag or a thread left. That our salvation is entirely of the Grace of God is a lesson which we are slow to learn and yet we must learn it or perish.

Dear anxious one, if ever you are saved it must be by an act of undeserved favor on God's part! I do not care who you are, you are guilty and if you escape execution, a free pardon will have to be given to you by the Great King for reasons found in Him alone, for there is nothing in *you* which can constitute a claim for mercy. You may never have fallen into adultery or murder, nor even have committed theft or false witness, but the same Grace is needed to save you as to save an adulteress or a murderer! You have no merit to plead, nor any claim upon God—such claims as you had as a creature you have forfeited and you have done nothing to create any other. You have committed treason against God and you are already condemned by His unquestionable justice. If you shall ever be saved, it must be by a high act of the Lord of Mercy, passed in His infinite Sovereignty, not because of anything in you deserves it, but because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion.

So stands the matter and this controversy between you and your God is meant to bring this fact before you and push the question to an issue with you. When the Lord contends with a Mansoul and the Law of the Lord enters his spirit, it hides pride from him and lays his glory in the dust. In fact, the truly awakened man cannot find a place low enough to lie in, nor words black enough in which to describe himself! He is driven to a deep spiritual despair of self and to a horror of soul at his presumption in having dared to offend against the God of Heaven—and a still deeper horror that he should have transgressed against the Christ of Love and should have rejected Him year after year! May God bring you down to this prostrate condition if He has not done so already!

If the Lord has now begun to trouble you, He will not have done with you till He has laid you even with the ground! This will not only make you know that you must be saved by Grace alone, but it will cause you to value Grace, itself, as more to be desired than much fine gold! A soul with whom God has entered into the lists prizes every Word of promise and every single look of Grace, for he sees himself to be in an evil plight unless Divine Grace shall intervenes. The tears of Jesus over sinners are very precious to hearts with whom God is contending. But more precious is the blood, the blood of Jesus with which He takes away sin. They can speak lightly of Grace who have never had a heavy heart on account of their transgression—but give a man to feel the burden of sin and the faint hope of Grace will be worth all the king's jewels to him!

O Sirs, sin is a burden such as an angel's shoulders could not bear! It crushes a man not only into the dust but into the grave! No, even *there* he

cannot find rest! If nothing else were prepared for the impenitent in the next world except a sight and sense of their own sin, it would, of itself, create a Hell within the human bosom! Stake and rack are *nothing* compared with the torments of remorse! It is God's design to make us feel something of this, that we may bless His name if He does but look upon us or think upon us in a way of Grace and that we may praise and magnify Him with all our hearts forever and ever when He freely pardons us for His own sake and accepts us in Christ Jesus. Do you wonder that God has a contention with seeking souls when such necessary and beneficent designs are answered thereby?

Moreover, no one can be surprised that the Lord lets forth a measure of His wrath upon seeking sinners when we see how they behave, even while they are seeking. We have known them red hot one day and icy cold another and, albeit that they long for mercy, you will see them, at certain seasons, acting as if they despised it! At times they tremble at God's Word and then they are hardened against it. I may be speaking to some of you who know that during the time of your conviction of sin you have tried to stifle your feelings and you have sought to kill the messenger within who has so effectually awakened you. Many of you have run after carnal amusements and evil pleasures in order to drown conscience and escape from rebuke. Others of you have run to this, that and the other pretended way of salvation instead of running to Christ, alone, for His free Grace. All this provokes the Most High and, therefore, it cannot be amazing that the Lord should have a contention with you.

But now I turn to *the people of God*. Sometimes, my Brothers and Sisters, our Lord has a contention with *us*. And then He covers the daughter of Zion with a cloud in the day of His anger and He burns against Jacob like a flaming fire which devours round about! This is not at all amazing when we consider how unworthy we often live towards His sacred name. Indeed, "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." His contention with us will show itself, occasionally, in adverse Providences. He will aim a deadly shaft at the beloved objects of our heart—perhaps not once, alone, does the arrow fly, but He seems to empty out His quiver and finds no other targets but the breasts of those who are our other selves. With one Believer the Lord contends by a sickness in his own person. With another by the pining away of a beloved wife or child.

The contention which the Lord has with His elect frequently displays itself in troubles connected with their temporal circumstances. Nothing prospers with them. They make a ship to go to Tarshish for gold and it is broken by a storm. A worm eats up all their increase. The caterpillar devours the garden and the locust, or the blight, or the drought, or the exceeding moisture destroys the produce of the field. When God has a controversy with His own people He smites again and again in this fashion. Nor does He stop at bruises and bleeding wounds. Our heavenly Father never spares the rod! No sin of Eli can be alleged against Him.

Even more severe are His blows when it comes to be a controversy carried on by His Spirit within the mind. When the light of God's Countenance is withdrawn. When conscience is allowed to point out inconsisten-

cies, hypocrisies and wanderings of heart. When the promises cease to be wells of comfort; when the means of Grace appear to be dry and barren. When private prayer becomes rather a task than a pleasure and communion with God seems to be little more than looking up to an angry Father who only frowns—this is much worse than any Providential chastisement! When God smites a man in the heart, the blow is a staggering one.

The affliction of the soul is the soul of affliction. God will touch His people in their bone and their flesh and in their very hearts. Ah, my Brethren, if you remember your laxity in life, your dullness in prayer, your forgetfulness of God's Word, your hardness of heart at times towards poor sinners, your indifference to the Lord's cause, the lack of life, the need of love, the absence of power, the need of holiness, the need of the mind of Christ within, the lack of delight in the Divine will—you will perceive that there is quite enough in us to lead the Lord to have a controversy with us! Has He not said that He will walk contrary to us if we walk contrary to Him? Is it not His special Word to us, "You only have I known of all the people of the earth; therefore I will punish you for your iniquity"?

Chastisement must come to the beloved child of a wise father. The *servant* may escape. The *bastard* may know no touch of the rod. But the true-born and well-beloved child of God must smart if he sins, not because his Father dislikes him, but because He loves him! The dearer we are to the heart of God the more jealous He is and the more does He resent any wandering of our heart from Him. His love is strong as death, blessed be His name! But as a natural consequence His jealousy is cruel as the grave! He will not endure impurity of heart in the beloved object of His eternal choice.

I have, however, said enough upon this topic, if we are now ready to confess that the Divine contention with us is well deserved.

II. We now advance to the next Truth of God, namely, that THIS DIVINE CONTENTION WILL COME TO AN END WITH THE CONTRITE. We know that it will be so, for the Words are very clear—"For I will not contend forever, neither will I be always angry." Oh, hear this, you humble and contrite ones with whom God has been contending! Here is a word of gracious, absolute, unconditional promise for you! May the Holy Spirit enable you to draw consolation from it!

The question arises—when may we expect that this promise will be fulfilled? Kindly notice the verse which precedes the text, for that assures us that God has no controversy with the humble and the contrite. This is self-evident, for He declares that with such He will dwell and the God of Grace will not dwell in a house that is full of contention! He contends where He does not abide, but where He abides there is peace. When a man is humble and contrite, then God's contention with him has come to an end. Omnipotence will not lift its hand to overthrow one who yields himself up. Greatness does not strike a fallen foe who craves forgiveness. Majesty will not wreak vengeance upon suppliant misery. Crouch in the dust and Jehovah's wrath, which like His thunderbolt smites lofty things, will pass you by!

Surrender unconditionally, be you saint or sinner! Throw down the weapons of rebellion, doff the plumes of pride and sue out a pardon on your bended knee. Cry out, “Lord, I am undone, for I have done ill! I am cast away, for I have cast Your fear away! I must die, for I have slain myself! But God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” Majesty is ever pitiful to misery. Nor is it majesty, alone, that you may look to with hope, but Mercy, also, is your friend. Mercy is very speedy where confession is complete. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” Be humbled, for to such God gives Grace. The river of His goodness flows along the low valleys. Talk no more of your good works. Boast no longer of your Christian experience, your bright profession, your precise religiousness—but fall at Jesus’ feet and lie down.

Tears for your eyes are more becoming than rings for your ears! Sackcloth suits your case rather than fine attire. Be humble because you are a nobody! Be contrite because you are a sinner. It is wonderful how the pity of God has, in some cases, been excited even by a temporary repentance. When wicked Ahab rent his clothes and put sackcloth upon himself, the Lord took note of it and said, “Do you see how Ahab humbled himself before Me? Because he humbled himself before Me I will not bring the evil in his days.” When the Ninevites repented, though probably there was very little *spiritual* about their humbling, yet it was sincere as far as it went and the Lord turned from His fierce anger and there was a reprieve for the wicked city! This plainly shows that the Lord is speedily moved by true humiliation—and if any soul will but lie before Him in self-abasement and lowliness—He will no longer contend, but will put away His anger.

Besides, His truth is compromised in this matter for He has given a promise of Grace which runs thus, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He shall lift you up” (James 4:10). He cannot spurn those who submit themselves before Him, for it is written, “Though the Lord is high, yet has He respect unto the lowly.” He is full of Grace and that Grace is for the poor and needy. Condescension to the lowly is His Glory, as the blessed Virgin sang of old, and as many fainting ones may sing at this moment if they will—“He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich He has sent away empty.”

The Lord delights in mercy and His mercy delights to come to those who are most abased in their own esteem and judge themselves to be least worthy of it. We are quite sure that the Divine contention will come to an end with the humble and contrite because, as we have said, the promise is, “I dwell in the high and holy place with him, also, that is of a contrite and humble spirit.” Do not say, dear cast down one, “God will never look at me. I have no hope, no strength, no merit.” This self-abasement *prepares* you for Him! By this is your house swept and emptied for God to dwell in! He has two houses—one is above, in Glory, and that high house above is none too high for Him.

His other dwelling is below in all His condescension and the lowliest heart is none too lowly for Him. He comes not to wholehearted men who bear their heads aloft and scarcely acknowledge their need of His favor—

He comes not to those who trust in themselves and think but little of His Grace—

***“He bids His awful chariot roll
Far downward from the skies,
To visit every humble soul
That low before Him lies.”***

Lowly roofs attract Deity. He comes to those who are broken in heart and when He comes, the contention is over. And what else does the Lord promise to do? He says He will dwell with the humble and He adds that He will revive them. You are fainting now, poor Soul. You are very feeble. You are as one that is slain—the Lord will come and revive you—that is, give you new life. He will give you life enough to hope in His mercy; life enough to believe in Jesus Christ, His dear Son; life enough to see your transgression covered forever, never to be laid to your charge. He will not contend forever, for, on the contrary, He will revive the spirit of the humble.

Perhaps He means, by adding a second, “revive,” to make us a promise of comfort, “to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” Weeping one, He will wipe away those tears! Despairing sinner or desponding saint, if you will lie low at His feet, He will stoop to you and cheer your heart! So anxious is He to cheer His mourners that the third Person of the blessed Trinity has undertaken this special work! The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, loves to come where there is comforting work to do! Look up, now, from your beds, you soul-sick ones, for the Great Physician comes to heal you! He ends the inner conflict of your nature by becoming, Himself, your peace! Look up now, you that sit in darkness, in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, bound with affliction and iron, for the time of your deliverance has come!

I know your plight, for I have been in it myself, and while I am speaking to you I am remembering the time when my chains clanked as I walked and when, as I lay down to sleep, they entered into my soul so that the visions of the night alarmed me! Job’s cry was mine—“I was at ease, but He has broken me asunder! He has also taken me by my neck and shaken me to pieces and set me up for His mark.” Thus was it with me once, but it was not so forever, for in tender pity my Lord laid down the sword and spoke comfortable words to me. Just when I had come to the worst and I thought no hope would ever visit me, I was made to realize the blessed Truth of the text, “I will not contend forever, neither will I be always angry,” and of that other promise, “With this man will I dwell, even with him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and that trembles at My Word.”

Encouraged by my own experience of great love, I feel bound to comfort others! Penitent hearts, He will revive you! He will give you comfort again! Your mourning He will turn to dancing and your sackcloth into beautiful array! Do not, I pray you, sorrow as those that are without hope! This is not the den of despair—so long as this life lasts, it is the hill of hope! Neither are you a person who has any cause to despair, since those whom the Lord chastens, He certainly has not cast away. Men do not prune the vine which they mean to root up and cast into the fire! This chastening is not unto death. There is a measure to your stripes which cannot be passed and there will be a speedy and happy end to the scourging!

The Lord's anger endures but for a night and that night will end in a hopeful dawn. When your proud spirit is conquered, the Lord's controversy with you is ended!

III. I would now ask your loving attention to this choice fact, that GOD HIMSELF FINDS REASONS FOR ENDING THE CONTENTION. We could not have found any, for in ourselves there is much cause for the Lord's anger and none for His Grace. A convinced sinner can give no reason why he should be saved. It is a part of his conviction that his mouth is closed as to self-justification. He can make neither apology nor appeal—he feels that he will have to say, "Amen," to his own damnation if God drives him away from the Mercy Seat. But the Lord Himself finds reasons for His Grace! Two of these He mentions in our text.

The first is found in human weakness, *and its inability to bear the Divine contention*. "I will not contend forever, neither will I always be angry; for the spirits would fail before Me, and the souls which I have made." The Lord's chastisement is meant to be corrective, not destructive! His intent is curing, not killing and, therefore, He will not make His medicine too potent, or His surgery too severe. He presses His heavy hand on the sinner until he cries out with David, "Day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." He felt as destitute of life-moisture as if God had wrung him out as men do a wet sheet and made him dry as cloth which has hung up in the hot sun. All his life and spirits were gone out of him and he felt that his bones were dried and fit only for the morgue.

When things have come so far, the merciful Lord says, "But I do not desire to kill him. I do not purpose his destruction, for I hate nothing that My hands have made. No, I love with all my heart this poor, troubled soul whom it is in My mind to bless." "The Lord does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." He aims at whipping self out of us, but it is not His will to crash the humble under His feet. In measure will He debate with us, for He aims at our conviction and conversion—not at our condemnation. If He were to go forth to fight against us, it would be as when fire enters into battle with briars and thorns! He would go through us and burn us all together.

Our weakness shall plead for us, even as it is said in the 78th Psalm, at the 38th and 39th verses—"But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity and destroyed them not: yes, many a time turned He His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath. For He remembered they were but flesh; a wind that passes away, and comes not again." Upon certain strong minds God lays a heavy lead of conviction, as, for instance, upon John Bunyan, whose five years of inward contention you will find mapped out in his, "Grace Abounding." But these cases are not the rule and in such instances the Lord means to make a peculiarly useful and experienced man. In the formation of a competent leader and a spiritual champion, the Lord exercises the man to make him expert in dealing with others.

But He does not do this with poor, weak minds which are rendered still weaker by the assaults of Satan and their inward fears. "He gathers the

lambs in His bosom and does gently lead those that are with young.” “I will not contend forever,” He says, “for the spirits should fail before Me, and the souls which I have made.” Some men, under a sense of sin, have been driven to lay violent hands upon themselves. Others have been scarcely able to eat or drink and many have been severely injured in their health by the inward corrosion caused by strong conviction. A sense of sin fills some souls with gall and wormwood to such a degree that they are drunk with it and are as men at their wits end—but God stays His rough wind and holds in the rage of His tempest.

In due time He says to Moses, “Stand back, and let your law-work cease; you have been faithful as My servant, now retire and let My Son come in, for He is meek and lowly in heart, and those who tremble at My Word shall now find rest unto their souls by His knowledge.” Yes, this is God’s reason for being gentle with His people—“For My name’s sake will I defer My anger, and for My praise will I refrain for you, that I cut you not off.” Sometimes when He sends them correction after correction, chastisement after chastisement, they can scarcely bear up under it. But it is never His intention to destroy His own children and, therefore, He stays His hand and says that He will not always chide, nor keep His anger forever, for, “Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him; for He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.”

If any of you are enduring such a variety of troubles that you are staggered and feel that you can hold up no longer, then you must appeal to the pity of the Lord. If your heart is like a lily when the stalk is bruised, drooping on its stem, and your soul is pining like a consumptive child and your heart is melted like wax in the midst of your bowels, let your weakness appeal to God! Yes, it is appealing even now! He says, “I know their sorrows. I have surely seen the affliction of My people and I have heard their cry. I have visited their transgression with the rod and they are brought very low, but they can bear no more, therefore shall the sighing of the prisoner come before Me.” The Lord marks man, “fragile,” as we do boxes of glass which must not be roughly handled lest they are broken. In this frailty He finds a reason for tenderness—let His name be adored for it!

His second reason is, to my mind, even more extraordinary. It is given in the next verse—“For the iniquity of his covetousness was I angry, and smote him: I hid and was angry, and he went on backsliding in the way of his heart.” This argument is founded on *the inoperativeness of the Divine contention upon the heart which is to be won*. The Lord says, “I was angry with him and smote him.” Did he repent? No. I hid My face from him. Did he humble himself? “He went on backsliding in the way of his heart.” What is the reason of this wicked petrifying of the heart? Here is the key to the cause—

**“Law and terrors do but harden
All the while they work alone.
Nothing but a blood-bought pardon
Can dissolve a heart of stone.”**

Affliction often drives the child of God into impatience and, of itself, it has a hardening and not a softening influence. Even the convictions worked in us by the Spirit of God are often perverted into causes of unbe-

lief and Satan comes in and drives the soul to unworthy thoughts of God. Such is our evil heart that it even curdles self-loathing and hatred of sin into a reluctance to go to God and into a persuasion of the impossibility of mercy! I have known humiliation and self-despair, which are so much to be desired, lead to unbelief which is the saddest of all crimes. “Therefore,” says the Lord, “I will not contend any longer; for My anger seems to excite rebellion rather than to subdue it.”

See a wise father when he has a proud and obstinate boy who has become estranged. He puts him under strict rule and discipline and he chides and chastens him. But if the child evidently grows more stubborn; if he is manifestly of such a spirit that the more you drive him, the more he will not be driven, his father says within himself, “I will try other methods with him and see what gentleness will do.” Such is the mind of God who says—“For the iniquity of his covetousness was I angry and smote him: I hid and was angry and he went on backsliding in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways and will heal him: I will also lead him, and restore comforts to him and to his mourners.”

If wrath will not humble us, the Lord may yet, in His Grace, try what love can do. He will love us to a better mind, till our heart sings—

***“And do You still invite my love,
And court me to be blessed?
Will You my friend and patron prove,
My refuge and my rest?
Convinced, ashamed, amazed, I now
Obey Your gracious call.
To love’s command I freely bow,
And offer You my all.”***

IV. This brings us to the fourth and last point which is this—God Himself, having found a reason why He should cease from contention, no, *two reasons*, the one in our weakness and the second in the failure of His own chastisement by reason of the flesh—HE INVENTS AND PROPOSES ANOTHER METHOD FOR ENDING HIS CONTENTIONS and making us right with Himself. Here it is and we note, in the first place, that it is an *astonishing* method—“I have seen his ways, and will heal him.” Hear this, O you heavens, and be astonished, O earth! God’s mercy is not blind mercy! He is merciful in spite of His clear vision of our sins! “I have *seen* his ways, and yet I will heal him.” If God had not seen man’s sin, His passing by it would be easy to understand. What the eye does not see, the heart does not regret.

But it is wonderful that it should be written, “I have seen his ways, and will heal him.” The Lord seems to say, “I see him become more obstinate the more I smite him. I see him provoking Me over and over again though I chide with him. I see not only his ways, but I see through his ways the rebellious heart which dwells within. I see that he is worthless, undeserving, ill-deserving and Hell-deserving! I see that his mind is set on mischief, that he is altogether estranged from Me, even from his birth, and that his whole nature is tainted with rebellion.” Yet the Lord adds that astonishing word of Grace, “I have seen his ways, and will heal him.” O Soul, God sees what you are! He knows your secret wickedness and you have not half

such an idea of your own sin and perverseness as He has! And yet, over the head of it all leaps the eternal, boundless mercy, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him."

Note that it is an *effectual method*. "I have seen his ways, and will *heal* him"—not, "I will smite him again," but, "I will treat his sin as if it were a disease." That is a very wise thing to do with persons who grievously offend you. When a man's action is very provoking, I like to hear people say, "Surely he must be a little wrong in the head. Poor man, he must be out of order or he would not act so." Put the best construction you can upon an offense and treat it as if it arose out of disease. It is true that sin is much *more* than a disease and God might treat us altogether and only from its criminal side, but still it is a disease and, therefore, He resolves to treat it as such.

Our great Lord in effect cries, "Oh, this wicked creature of Mine will not acknowledge its Creator! This sinful child of Mine will persist in rebelling against My love! Surely something ill's him. I will not chasten him again, but I will treat him as a sick man and I will heal him. I will change his nature. I will take away the heart of stone out of his flesh. I will give him a heart of flesh. I will take those dry eyes and fill them with tears. I will take that dumb tongue and inspire it with prayer. I will take that careless heart and melt it with holy penitence. I have seen his ways and will heal him." It is an astonishing way! It is an effectual way!

Notice further that it is a *tender* way—"I will also *lead* him." Observe that word. The sinner will have his own way and the Lord has been driving him into another, but he will not go. Now the Lord will come to him in gentleness and *lead* him. He will say, "Come now, let us reason together." He will appeal to him, and say, "Do not contend with Me any longer. I can strike hard and I could, if I would, strike you into Hell! Do not fight with Me. Let us make peace." "As I live," says the Lord, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but that he should turn unto Me and live." Come unto the Lord, you poor broken-hearted one! He has only strived with you to wean you from your sin and make it possible for Him to save you! Stand not up in your puny insignificance to contend against your God! Do not brazen it out with Him—the mere strap of His belt will break you—as for His *sword*, if He uses it upon you, you are utterly slain!

Come, for He will put your sin away. He will cease from His fierce anger and reveal His love. He proclaims pardon. Free Grace and dying love are the charming bells which ring you into the banquet of Grace. The Lord leads the contrite soul step by step—there is no driving—but like as a shepherd goes before his sheep, so the Lord Jesus goes before broken, humble and contrite spirits—and they know His voice and follow Him.

Observe, also, how *complete* is this method. As if all that went before were not enough, it is added, "I will restore comforts to him and to his mourners." How tender this is! He will take away the sorrow as well as the sin, the killing grief as well as the killing disease! He will give us the true balm of Gilead and will pour such wine and oil into our gaping wounds that all shall be healed and the bones which He had broken shall rejoice! I do not know whether I have succeeded in striking you all with an impres-

sion of my Master's great love, but it is very much upon my soul at this time. It amazes me that though He has been contending with us, after all it is no contention of His *heart*, but only of His hands!

When we have resisted and kept up the contention, He says, "I have struck you and you revolt more and more. Why should you be struck any more? Your whole head is sick and your whole heart faint with My striking you. I will chasten you no more, but change My method. I have brought you down almost to death's door by affliction and yet you still kick and struggle, as if the last breath in you should be spent in fighting against Me. I will conquer you, but if it cannot be accomplished by fear, it shall be achieved by love. If you will not yield to My thunder, you shall yield to My sunshine! If you will not bow before My Throne, you shall fall before My Cross. I will die for you and so I will win you. I will let My own heart be broken for you, that at last you shall look at Me and your heart shall be broken. I will love you. I will love you into life. I will love you up from the very gates of Hell. I will love you till you love Me."

O irresistible Love! Who can stand against You? O Lord, this morning Your people, if they have rebelled, come weeping back to You to ask You, again, to give the kiss of reconciliation! We yield! We yield, submitting ourselves without reserve to You! Many a poor sinner who has given up the hope of being saved under the crushing blows of conviction and chastisement, should now cry, "I can hold out no longer—

***"Lord, what hard heart can still withstand,
And still rebellious prove?
Refuse to bow to Your command,
Or to accept Your love?
O'ercome by glorious Grace,
I now my former war give over.
To Your command I gladly bow,
And would contend no more."***

Oh, come, you wanderers, and rest in Jesus! Come, you most lost, most ruined, most hopeless and find Heaven begun in Christ! Oh, you that sit on the edge of Hell, who have made a Covenant with Death and a league with Satan, whose death warrant seems to be signed and put into your hands so that you read it by the flames of Hell, whose fury you anticipate—come to Jesus and that handwriting of death shall be blotted out! The impending judgment seems even now to scorch your souls—come and find deliverance from it, for God Himself invites you! Tarry no longer! May Jesus sweetly lead you to Himself. Amen.

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AMAZING GRACE

NO. 1279

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

***“I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also,
and restore comfort unto him and to his mourners.”
Isaiah 57:18.***

THERE are a few objects in Nature which never cease to astonish the beholder. I think Humboldt said he could never look upon the rolling prairies without astonishment. And I suppose some of us will never be able to look upon the ocean, or to see the sun rise or set without feeling that we have before us something always fresh and always new. Now, I have been, not only for the love of it, but because of my calling of preaching it, a constant reader of Holy Scripture and yet after these 25 years and more I frequently alight upon well known passages which astonish me as much as ever. As if I had never heard them before, they come upon me, not merely with freshness, but even so as to cause amazement in my soul!

This is one of those portions of Scripture. When I read the chapter describing the wickedness, the horrible wickedness of Israel—when I notice the strong terms which Inspiration uses and none of them too strong to set forth the horrible wickedness of the nation—it staggers me! And then to see mercy following instead of judgment! It overwhelms me! “I have seen his ways, and”—it is not added, “will *destroy* him,” or, “I will sweep him away”—but, “I will *heal* him.” Verily, God’s Grace, like the great mountains, cannot be scaled! Like the deeps of the sea, it can never be fathomed and, like space, it can never be measured!

It is, like God Himself, wondrous, matchless, boundless. “Oh, the depths! Oh, the depths.” I shall try to set forth the astounding Grace of God, as His Spirit shall enable me, by showing, first, that *the sinner is beheld by God*—“I have seen his ways.” And yet *the sinner is nevertheless the object of Divine mercy*—“I will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.”

I. The text declares that THE SINNER HAS BEEN OBSERVED OF THE LORD. Many a man will relieve an unknown person in distress whom he would not think of helping if he knew his character. Some generous hearts are perpetually victimized this way—they deal out their money to those who are altogether unworthy—but if they knew of this unworthiness they would not be so free with their gifts. Now, the Lord is *aware* of the unworthiness of those to whom He deals out His Grace and it is the glory of that Grace that He pours it upon the utterly undeserving. He knows exactly what men are and yet He is kind to the evil and to the unthankful. He gives His Grace to those who, like Manasseh, and Saul of Tarsus, and

the dying thief, have nothing but sin about them and deserve His hot displeasure rather than His gracious love.

Notice, first, that *God's Omniscience has observed the sinner*. Man, while living in rebellion against God, is as much under his Maker's eyes as the bees in a glass hive are under your eyes when you stand and watch all their movements. The eyes of Jehovah never sleep. They are never taken off from a single creature He has made. He sees man—sees him everywhere—sees him through and through so that He not only hears his words but knows his *thoughts*! God does not merely behold his actions but weighs his motives and knows what is in the man as well as that which comes out of the man. One is often led to cry, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me! It is high, I cannot attain unto it." That God should know all, even all the little things about man's sin is a dreadful thing for unpardoned souls to think of.

I was reading, the other day, a very pretty observation upon one of our Savior's sayings and I cannot help telling it to you. You remember He says two sparrows are sold for a farthing and yet one of them does not light on the ground without your Father? But in another passage He says, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? And not one of them is forgotten of God." Do you notice that? Two for a farthing—five for two farthings, so there is an odd one thrown in for taking a double quantity.

Only a sparrow! Nobody cares about that odd sparrow, but not one of them is forgotten by your heavenly Father—not even the odd sparrow! And so no stray thought of yours, no imagination, no trifle which you have quite forgotten, which, indeed, you never took any heed of, has escaped your heavenly Father's notice. The text is true to the fullest possible extent. "I have seen his ways." God has seen your ways at home, your ways abroad, your ways in the shop, your ways in the bedchamber, your ways within as well as your ways without—the ways of your judgment, the ways of your hope, the ways of your desire, the ways of your evil lusting, the ways of your murmurings, the ways of your pride. He has seen them all and seen them perfectly and completely!

And the wonder is that, after seeing all, He has not cut us down, but instead of it, has proclaimed this amazing word of mercy, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him. I have seen all that he has done, and yet for all that I will not cast him from My Presence, but I will put My mercy and My wisdom to work with Divine skill to heal this sinner of the wickedness of his soul." While we were reading the chapter I could not help feeling that it was a chapter almost too strong to read in public! I looked it through and through, and I said, "Shall I read it?" Some of its allusions are so painful that one can *think* of them, but one would not like to *explain* them.

Divine Wisdom could not find anything but vices which are scarcely to be mentioned, to describe the wickedness of the human heart. It is so foul a thing that He must compare it to the lewdness and filthiness of those who are given over to the utter rottenness of licentiousness. And yet, after so describing the character, the Lord says, "I have seen his ways, and will

heal him. I have seen everything bad in his ways and I have perceived nothing good in them, but nevertheless, though I know all his conduct and see the filthiness of it all, yet will I come to him, and I will heal him.”

You noticed, while I was reading, that the persons described were a people who *had scoffed at religion*. “Against whom do you sport yourselves? Against whom make you a wide mouth and draw out the tongue?” They had made the name and honor of God the subjects of profane sport! They had ridiculed God’s people—calling them hypocrites, fanatics, enthusiasts, or whatever else happened to be the cant names with which they bespattered saints in those days. They had jested at virtue and jeered at piety—and yet the Lord says, “I have seen his ways. I have heard his ungodly jests and taunting ridicule. I know his sarcasms. I know what falsehoods, what slanders he pours forth upon My own beloved people, and My wrath rises against those that touch My anointed. But for all that I will heal him. I have seen him put out his tongue at the name of Jesus. I have seen him behave exceeding proud when My Gospel has been the subject of conversation. But for all that, though I have seen his haughty ways, I will heal him.” Oh, the splendor of this Grace! Is this the manner of men, O Lord God? Surely, high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are Your ways above our ways!

These people seem to have been quite *infatuated by sin*. According to the Scriptures, you will see that they could not have enough of it. What mountain was there upon which Israel had not set up her altars? What stone was there, polished by the flow of the stream, which they had not consecrated to an idol? What giant oak was there throughout all Bashan under which they had not performed mystic and diabolical rites to the false god? The land was stained with the blood of their children offered to Loch! Yes, it reeked with their infamous sins, for in the worship of their false gods their orgies were full of lewdness and all manner of indescribable iniquities.

Yet the Ever-Merciful says, “I have seen it. I have seen behind the door what they have done. I have seen in the high mountains what they have done. I have seen their abominations in the groves and thickets. I have seen how eager they are after sin—how they drink it down like Behemoth—who thinks to drink down Jordan at a draught. They add lust to lust in their pursuit of sin till they are maddened with it. I have seen that they are desperate sinners, but I will heal them, I will heal them.”

Oh Beloved, this text sounds so strangely good, so singularly gracious, so exquisitely merciful that it holds me spellbound! It is such a surprise. Just when the harsh drum begins to sound and war is about to let slip her dogs, there comes an unexpected pause, and meek-eyed Pity, with a thousand tears, steps forward and cries, “I still love them! Only let them renounce their ways and to My bosom they shall be pressed and their horrible sins shall be forgiven!” There is one expression I must dwell upon, because it is so remarkable. I should never have dared to use it if Inspiration had not employed it. It is that expression in verse nine, where the Lord says, “You did debase yourself even unto Hell”—*even unto Hell!*

When a man debases himself down as low as the swine trough, that is low enough, and there are many who do that. The drunk goes lower than the sow, for no sow would habitually intoxicate itself. Few animals would even touch the defiling concoction! We talk of a man's being like a beast, but the beasts are hardly done by when we compare drunks with them! Men sink below the mere animal because, being capable of so much higher things, they make a more terrible descent when they yield themselves up to their baser appetites. Alas, there are vices of human nature from which the cattle of the field are exempt—man has debased himself below the creature over which he has received dominion! The Prophet says, "they debase themselves even unto Hell."

I say a man does that when he defies his Maker and blasphemes his Savior—when after every other word he uses an oath and lards his conversation with profane expressions—as some do. What good can there be in such wanton wickedness? What is to be gained by it? I suppose the devil, himself, is not such a blasphemer as some people are whom we have the misery to hear, even in our streets, as we walk along. I suppose Satan has some method in his profanity, but they use it in mere lack of other words! Men sink to the level of the devil when they are unkind to their aged parents, or on the other hand, unnatural to their own offspring.

What shall I say of the abominable cruelty of some men to their wives? I believe that if the devil had a wife, he would not treat her as many working men treat their wives. Creatures called *men* are frequently brought up before our police courts and the charges proved against them make us altogether disgusted with human nature! Would the fierce lion, the savage tiger, or the wild boar treat his mate so ill? O how many are thus debased unto Hell! Yet, yet, should this reach the ear of anyone who has thus debased himself, let him listen to this—"I have seen his ways. I have seen him debase himself even unto Hell. Yet will I heal him and lead him and restore comforts unto him."

"Why," says one, "that seems too good to be true!" It does, and were you dealing with men it *would* be too good to be true! But you are dealing with One of whom it is written, "Who is a God like unto You, passing by transgression, iniquity and sin?" "For all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." I say, once more, I do not know how to put this declaration of Grace into words forcible enough! I stand astonished! I am not here to explain. I *cannot* explain it! I am here to set it forth, but I cannot even do that! It does so amaze me that God's electing love should cast its eye upon the very vilest of the vile and then, that He should say, "I have seen him. I know what he has done. I understand it all and yet, nevertheless, I mean to save him and save him, I will." Heaven itself shall be amazed that ever such a wretch was saved! And Hell itself shall tremble in its lowest deeps while it sees against what a gracious God it has dared to offend!

But I must proceed to notice, next, that God had not only seen their ways in the sense of Omniscience but He had *inspected their ways in the sense of judgment*. He says, "I was angry and I hid Myself." O, Sinners, do

not think, because we come, tonight, to preach free Grace and dying love to you and proclaim full pardon through the blood of Jesus, that therefore God winks at sin! No, He is a wrathful God and will by no means spare the guilty! As surely as fire consumes the stubble, so does His wrath burn against wickedness! And He will utterly destroy it from off the face of the earth, for, "God is angry with the wicked every day."

Do not think that when these sinners of old worshipped idols, the Lord was careless as to what they did. Do not imagine that when they thrust out the tongue and mocked Him, He was indifferent and sat still as if He had been made of stone. Far from it! It provoked His holy mind, for He cannot look upon iniquity, neither shall evil dwell with Him. He is as a consuming fire against evil and will by no means tolerate it. And yet—and yet—He whom the angels call, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth"—the jealous God, the God who revenges and is furious against sin—even He has said, "I have seen his ways and will heal him."

Ah, if it were a matter of indifference to Him—if God were hardened so that He did not care about sin as some men are, or if He were only half-sensitive to sin as *we* are, I could understand His forgiving sin. But when I remember that sin, as it were, touches the apple of His eye, and moves His heart and vexes His Spirit, then I am amazed that in the same moment in which He denounces sin, He looks on the sinner and says, with tears of pity, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him. He is My child though he has played the prodigal. I hate his harlotry and the riotous living with which he has wasted his estate and Mine. I hate the swine trough and the citizens of the far-off country, but My child, My child, I love him still! And when he comes back to Me, I will receive him with a kiss, and I will say, 'Bring forth the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet and let us eat and be merry, for this, My son which was dead is alive again! He that was lost is found.'"

I cannot trust myself to speak on this Godlike miracle of love—it is very wonderful to me and deeply touches my heart. Yet once more on this point. It was not only that God had seen and observed the rebel, and had judged the evil of his sin, but *the Lord had tested him*. If you read the chapter through you will see that God says that He had attempted to reclaim him by chastisements. He says, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I angry and smote him. I hid Myself and was angry, and he went on stubbornly in the way of his heart." You see, then, that the Lord *tested* the man. He said to Himself, "Perhaps he does not feel the evil of sin. I will make him smart. These people have worshipped false gods. I will send a famine. I will send a pestilence. I will give them over into the hand of their enemies and then, perhaps, they will repent."

And so God did this to Israel and the nation was brought very low. But what was the result? Did they turn under the chastening rod and confess their sin? Did they humble themselves before God? No! He says of the *nation*, "He went on stubbornly in the way of his heart." How often it happens that when the Lord commences a work of Grace on men He begins with some terrible judgment, laying them low that He may lift them up in

due time. But how often these visitations end in disappointment! The man is sick—he lies suffering on the brink of eternity. He makes promises of reformation, but what happens when he recovers? Why, he forgets it all and is, if anything, worse than before!

Or the man is brought low by his sin, even to beggary. How often have I seen this! A man of respectable parents shivering in his rags. But when he is in his poverty does he turn from his vices? No, he whines about his follies when he asks for a little help, and when he gets it, he spends the charity in drink and continues as degraded as ever he was. Worse and worse is the way of the wicked—even though their sorrows are multiplied. Ah, my Friends, all the afflictions in the world, apart from the Grace of God, will only harden men!

When the Lord, in His mercy, sends sharp Providences to stir men up in their nests and make them feel that sin is an evil thing, the general result of it—no, the *constant* result of it, apart from Divine Grace—is that the man continues in his sin just the same as before, or only flies from one form of it to another. He is wounded by the goad, but he does not yield—he kicks against the pricks. He thinks that God has treated him very harshly. He drives himself farther off from God and runs into despair. He says there is no hope and, therefore, he may as well live as he likes—he may as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb! And so he plunges deeper and deeper into rebellion.

Yet notice the Grace of our text and be again astonished! This person had been chastened in vain and even hardened by affliction, and yet God says, “I have seen his ways. I have seen how he grows worse and worse. I have seen how he hardens his neck. I have seen what a brazen forehead he has and what a neck of iron he dares to lift up against Me. I have seen it all, but thus *my eternal purpose runs*—I will heal him, I will do it. I will let all the world see that Grace is stronger than sin and everlasting mercy is not to be cut short, even by infamous transgressions.” Oh, the depths of Divine love! Truly it is past finding out!

Now, before I go to the second part of the subject, I must say this. I am not speaking, now, of cases which happen now and then. Neither am I talking about men that lived years ago, like John Newton, the African blasphemer, or John Bunyan, the village rebel. No, I am talking about a great many *here* before me. To a great extent I am talking about *myself*. I know that in me there was nothing that could have caught the eyes of God to merit His regard. I know that if I were not permitted to indulge in grosser vices, yet I went as far as I could—but would have gone infinitely farther if it had not been for His restraining Grace.

And in my case I feel that it is as much the free sovereign undeserved mercy of God that I am, this night, saved, as that the poor thief, when dying on the Cross, received the promise, “Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.” In every case, whether we have been moral or immoral, salvation is altogether a matter of pure favor! And in every case God has virtually said of us, “I have seen his ways. I cannot see anything good in him. I see only what I abhor, but, nevertheless, I will heal him.”

The tears may well stand in our eyes as we think of this. I am sure they do in mine. A poor half-witted man was asked by his minister how he came to be saved and he said, "It was between me and God. God did His part and I did the other." "Well," said the minister, "what part did you do?" The answer was, "God saved me *and I stood in His way.*" That is the part, I must confess, in which I was most conspicuous. I was very stubborn and willful, and put from me the invitations of the Lord's love. I willed to remain a rebel, but He would not have it so. Did I not resist His Spirit? Did I not put from me His Gospel? Did I not resolve to abide in my self-righteousness and continue as I was?

But He would not suffer it to be so and, at last, I was compelled to cry, "I yield to the all-conquering Grace of God and bless the hand that sweetly bows me to its mighty sway."

II. Now we will turn to the second part of our discourse and pause awhile while you relieve yourselves with a cough. Notwithstanding all that we have said, THE CHOSEN SINNER IS THE OBJECT OF DIVINE MERCY TO AN EXTRAORDINARY DEGREE. Thus says the Lord, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners." Notice how God speaks. Observe the tone and spirit of His declaration. "I will," says He! "I will, I will, I will." Now, "I will" and, "I shall" are for the king. No, in the highest sense they are only becoming when used by God Himself.

It is not for you and for me to say, "I will." We shall speak more wisely if we declare that we will if we can. We will if—but God needs no "ifs." "I have seen his ways," He says. "I know what a rebel he is, but I will heal him. I know how sick he is, for from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet, nothing but bruises and putrefying sores are to be seen, but I will heal him." He speaks like a God—"I will." There is no condition expressed and there is no, "perhaps," or, "but," because there is no condition. He does not say, "If *he* will." No, when God says, "I will," man will *be made willing*, be sure of that!

He does not say, "I will, if man will do a part of it." No, but, "I will." But suppose that man would not? That is not to be supposed. The Lord knows how, without violating the human will, (which He never does), to so influence the heart that the man, with full consent against his *former* will, yields to the will of God and is made willing in the day of God's power! I always like to think, as I am preaching here, "Now, whether or not there will be anybody saved by the Gospel I preach does not depend upon whether they have come up here willing or unwilling, for the Lord has said, "My people shall be willing in the day of My power." There is a higher power than the human will, whatever power there may be in that—and there certainly is a very great power—neither do I wish to deny the fact. But there is a *higher* power than the will of man, else man were God and the *will of man* would be Omnipotence.

The Lord knows how, by sacred arts of wondrous Grace, to make the stout free will of man yield itself to the perfect free will of God! And thus He takes the sinner captive and leads him in triumph to the feet of Christ!

Glory be to God for this! If the salvation of men depended upon their being willing, and no prevenient Grace ever came to unwilling sinners, there is not one soul in all our race that ever would be saved, for we err and stray from God's ways like lost sheep! And if God waited till *we* came to Him of ourselves, He would wait in vain forever!

No. The Good Shepherd goes after the sheep—follows it, tracks it, seizes it, throws it on His shoulders and carries it home rejoicing. We, tonight, bless that mighty Grace which did not stop for *us* to seek it, but sought us! It was like the dew which waits not for men, neither tarries for the sons of men, but comes in all its blessed cheering influences and makes the earth glad. Oh, mighty Grace of God, come in that way tonight to this crowd of poor sinners without, “ifs,” “buts,” or conditions!

Now, notice that this was the only good thing that could be done with Israel. There were two courses possible. Here is Israel bent on sin—here is God angry with that sin and hating it with all His heart. Israel can be destroyed—that is one thing and it is an easy matter. The Lord has only to call flood, fire, famine, fever, or war to sweep the nation away. But then, He is full of love and judgment is His strange work. What is to be done, then? He must either mend them or end them—one of the two! He cannot let them go on as they are—which shall it be, destruction or salvation?

He looks at them and says, “I will heal them. That is what I will do with them. I cannot endure that they should act as they do. I will therefore set to work upon them as a physician does upon a sick patient. Though the case would be quite hopeless unless I were Omnipotent, I will bring my Omnipotent Love to bear on this foul, leprous, rotting, loathsome sinner and I will make him clean, pure, and lovely. I will heal him. I cannot leave him in My universe as he is, for he spreads infection all around. He defiles My sanctuary, he profanes My Sabbaths, he pollutes the very air he breathes. He must not be suffered to go on in this way. What must I do with him? I will not destroy him, but I will heal him.”

Oh, the wonder of Divine mercy that ever the Lord should say that! But do you not know that this is just the spirit which the Lord Jesus creates in the heart of His really consecrated servants towards the wicked and the fallen? Here they are in this world—we cannot put them out of it and we wouldn't if we could. We are very sorry whenever the majesty of Law requires the destruction of a single guilty life. What are we to do, then, with the criminal classes—with depraved men and fallen women? What are we to do with cannibals and heathens?

In God's name we must cure them with the blessed Medicine which has cured us! Think of John Williams. He hears of Erromanga. What is there in Erromanga to induce John Williams to go there? Are they a hopeful sort of people? No, they are hideous *cannibals*—they devour men! Will they receive Mr. Williams if he lands? Will they listen to him with respect? Not they. The probabilities are that they will lift the war club and he will not escape with his life. What did that devoted missionary feel? “Those are the people that need me and to those I will go beyond all others.” And so he went, and Williams, in landing at Erromanga, and in dying there, is a fee-

ble type of Jesus coming to an ungodly and graceless world! Not because there was anything *good* in it, but because there was *no good whatever*—not because they would welcome Him, but because they were so fallen that would crucify Him!

The sinfulness of man was his need of a Savior's coming and for that very reason Jesus came. Did He not say, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. I am come as a physician and the physician has nothing to do with the healthy. His business lies with the sick and I am come, therefore, to deal with sin-sick souls"? What a wondrous thing this is that God should look upon sin and say, "I see it all, and I hate it all, but, nevertheless, I mean to heal the sinner and to lift him up from his degradation." May the Lord say that to you, dear Hearer, if you are still dead in sin.

Now, notice how the Lord puts His hand to the work. He heals sin as a disease. He cannot look at it in any other light without destroying men. He says, "These creatures of Mine do not love Me. They must be diseased in their minds, I will heal them. They see no loveliness in My Son. They must be blind, I will open their eyes." Thus mercifully tracing our sin to its cause, the Lord manifests His Grace and heals the maladies of our nature. And, blessed be God, the disease that we suffer from is a disease which He knows all about, because the text says, "I have seen his ways."

Oh Sinner, you will not have to tell God the symptoms of your complaint—He has seen your ways! He has seen right through your heart—and there is no physician so able to deal with a patient as the man who knows the constitution of the patient and knows his habits, and knows all his secret history! God knows all that and, because He knows it, it is a blessed thing that He—He, Himself—with that infinite knowledge says, "I will heal him." Who else but He would know enough to be able to heal a sinner of all the sin that lies concealed within him? And God does, in very deed, heal sinners.

I daresay you have heard the common talk in the world. They say, "These evangelical ministers preach salvation for sinners—what is this but encouraging sin?" The gentlemen who make the observation are generally not particularly sweet themselves, but, however, we will say nothing about that, although it is an odd thing to hear accusations against the morality of the Gospel from gentlemen whose own morality is not of the most delicate kind! Still, we have a better answer. Suppose we open a hospital. Thank God there are many in London! Here is a fever hospital. Do you hear people objecting, "Oh, you are encouraging fever!"

The only qualification for admission to a fever hospital is for a person to have a fever! If they have the fever they can come in. If it is a smallpox hospital, the only thing that is needed is that they shall have the smallpox and they may enter freely. Why don't you cry that this free statement of gratuitous admission will encourage contagious diseases. Fools! You know better! You know that the hospital is the enemy of the disease and men are received in sickness that they may be delivered from its power. You know that it is the same with the Gospel. We almost scorn to answer you,

for you must be aware that to say that Jesus Christ is able to take the very vilest sinner and to save him, is to promote *morality* in the best manner, not *immorality*!

What is salvation? Do you think we mean by that, the saving people from going down to Hell and letting them live as they lived before? We never meant anything of the sort! We mean that Jesus Christ heals people of the disease of sin, that is to say, He takes the sin away, changes their mind, renews their heart, makes them hate the sin which once they loved and leads them to seek after the holiness which once they despised! It is true He has opened a house for thieves, drunks and harlots—and set the door wide open and said, “Come and welcome!” But what for? Why, the sinner who enters comes to be no more a drunk, to be no more a thief, to be no more unchaste—for this objective is the guilty one invited to come to Christ—that he may have his heart renewed!

He is not invited that he may have his putrid sores bound up and skinned over with some Madame Rachel stuff that may conceal the evil—but that the gangrene may be cut out and the ulcer may be removed—and the dire cancer may be torn up by the roots! This is what the Gospel is for and Jesus Christ proclaims, tonight, by these lips of mine, that however guilty you may have been, if you desire to be healed from the plague of sin, He can and will heal you upon your believing on Him! He says, “I have seen his ways, and I will heal him.” Come and welcome! Come and welcome, you guiltiest of the guilty! Oh, may His infinite mercy do more than invite you! May it compel you to come in according to that message of His at the royal supper, “Go you out into the highways and hedges, and *compel* them to come in that My house may be filled.” May His infinite mercy compel you to come!

Then the text goes on to say, “*I will lead him also.*” The poor soul of man, even when healed, does not know which way to go! There is not a more bewildered thing in this world than a poor sinner when first he is awakened. Have you ever gone with a candle into a barn where a number of birds have roosted? Have you disturbed them? Have you not seen how they dart here and there and do not know which way to fly? The light confuses them. So it is when Christ comes to poor sinners. They do not know which way to go! They see a little, but the very light confuses them. Now, the loving Lord comes in and says, “I will lead him also.”

Oh, how sweetly does the Lord lead sinners, first to His dear Son, and bids them find in Him their All in All. Then He leads the sinner to the Mercy Seat and He says, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find.” Then He leads the sinner to that grand old book, the Bible, and He says, “Read there, and as you read it I will open it up to you. I will open your eyes to see its hidden treasures and wonders, and lead you into all My Truth.” “Come,” He says, “I will lead you farther. I will lead you in your daily life. I will lead you as to how to act among the ungodly. Yes, I will lead you in the paths of righteousness for My name’s sake.”

Now, is not it very wonderful—that God should lead men who formerly would not be led, men who, for years, went their own way and resisted all

that His judgments and Providences could do to turn them? “Yes,” He says, “I will lead them.” And it is wonderful how readily men will be led when God’s Grace renews them! I have seen the stout-hearted man who used to revile Christ and His people become a babe in Grace. The idea of ever going inside a place of worship, especially of a dissenting sort, would have put him in a temper! He would spit on the ground and curse at the very mention of such a thing! And yet that man has become the most earnest of Christians—the very man to go out and bring in others—and he has loved Christ more than many who were born and bred in the midst of religion!

The Lord can make a little child lead a lion and can make the most obstinate rebel tender and sensitive beyond others. I heard a man pray once at a Prayer Meeting, and he did shout and hallow at such an awful rate that I did not enjoy his prayer a bit. A friend asked him, some time afterwards, whatever made him make such an awful noise in prayer. “Why” he said, “I have only been converted a very little time. I am the master of a vessel and I used to storm and rage and go on at the sailors. And now, when I get warm, I cannot help making a noise. I begin to shout and hallow as I did before when I served the devil.” When I heard this, I said, “Well, I hope he will go on with it.” I like to see the same zeal manifested in the cause of God that a man is accustomed to use in other things when he is really warmed up.

We often see people who have been most earnest against Christ become most earnest for Him. Look at Saul of Tarsus—you do not need a better instance. He is exceedingly mad against Christ and nobody can stop him, till the Lord says, “I have seen his ways, and I will heal him.” And what short work God made of Saul of Tarsus! Three days made a perfect cure of his eyes—but I do not suppose it took three minutes to do the essential part of the healing in his soul! He is as full of enmity to Christ as ever his heart can be, but in a *moment* the light shines and he falls from his horse to the ground! And he hears the Voice, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?”

He answers, “Who are You, Lord?” And the answer is, “I am Jesus whom you persecute.” The man is changed in a shorter time than it takes to tell! It is all done. O Grace of God do the same to many here tonight and let it be seen that Your, “wills” and, “shalls,” will stand against all human sin and all the obstinacy of the most corrupt heart! “I have seen his ways, and I will heal him. I will lead him also.” Then there comes the last part of the text, “*I will restore comforts to him,*” for God begins by knocking our comforts away. He takes away the comfort we once had in our false peace and he makes us mourn for sin. But after a while He restores comfort to us.

What sort of comfort? The comfort of perfect forgiveness, the comfort of complete acceptance. The Father sets a warm kiss upon the child’s cheek and that is the comfort of Adoption. Whereas we were heirs of wrath, we become heirs of Heaven and have the comforts of hope. We receive the comfort of daily fellowship, for we are admitted to speak with God and to

draw near to Him. The comfort of perfect security, for we are led to feel that whether we live or die it does not matter, we are safe in the arms of Jesus! The comfort of a blessed prospect beyond the grave in the land of the hereafter where the arbors shall never wilt. The comfort of knowing that all things work together for good. The comfort of having the angels for our servants and Heaven for our home!

“I will restore comforts to him” and all this—*all this* to the man of whom it is said—“You did debase yourself even unto Hell.” All these comforts *for him!* A crown in Heaven for one who, but for mercy, had been damned in Hell! A harp of everlasting music for hands that once delighted in lascivious music! New songs in Glory for lips that once used the blasphemous oath! The Presence of Jesus and the likeness of Jesus for one that often rolled in the mire with the drunk, or went into worse mire with the unchaste and the unclean. Proclaim it! Proclaim it! Proclaim it to the most despairing sinners—that if they will but come back, their heavenly Father will receive them in the name of Jesus!

Go forth and proclaim it at the corners of your streets. Go and proclaim it in the dens and thieves’ kitchens! Proclaim it in the prisons—yes, even in the condemned cell! Go to the very gates of Hell and tell it to every soul that is this side of the pit of Tophet and as yet out of its eternal fire—that if the wicked will but forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn unto the Lord, He will have mercy upon him and our God will abundantly pardon!

Proclaim it to yourself, poor Sinner, you that trembles while I speak—you who would gladly sink through the floor because of your sense of sin! Your Father comes to meet you tonight! If you do not embrace Him, it is your fault, not His. His voice speaks and says, “Come, and welcome! Come, and welcome! Dear child of Mine, come to Me!”—

***“From the Cross of Calvary,
Where the Savior deigned to die,
What transporting sounds I hear
Bursting on my ravished ears.
Love’s redeeming work is done,
Come and welcome, Sinner, come.”***

O Grace of God, bring in the great sinners, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 51.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—
248, 49 SANKEY (“THE GREAT PHYSICIAN”), 219.**

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***“I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace.”
Isaiah 57:19.***

“THE fruit of the lips”! The lips are neither trees of the orchard nor herbs of the garden. What fruit can they bear? The scattering of Babel came of human speech when languages were multiplied and the united race split up into fragments. Wars and fighting and hatred and bloodshed have sprung of talk and bluster—these are *deadly* fruits, the very mention of which brings pain to the heart—surely it is in vain to look for much that is worth gathering from mouths and tongues! Great talkers are proverbially little *doers* and the more talk, the less work. We may come for years looking for fruit on this fig tree and find none. “Nothing but leaves” will be gathered by those who look to the lips for a harvest to fill the barn. This is most true. If you let the lips alone, they produce mischief and trouble and not much else.

An unrenewed tongue is almost worse than an unregenerate heart because, bad as the heart may be, there is *heart* in it—the tongue is often heartless—a mere sounding sham with no reality to support its bronze noise. Too many speak with the lips and their heart is not in what they say. If the lips become the instruments of hypocrisy and if the fruit of the lips is only the fruit of the lips, it is comparable to the apples of Sodom. The lips, moreover, cause pain and evil all around, which the heart, alone, cannot do. The heart is as an oven closed up. The tongue is a fire raging abroad, setting on flame the course of nature when it is, itself, set on fire by Hell.

The lips of the wicked are like the upas tree which drips poison. We could readily dispense with the fruit of the lips as it comes from uncircumcised and unclean lips. Go out and gather a basketful of the fruit of the lips—gossiping, bickering, fault-finding, murmuring, nonsense, vanity, falsehood, boasting, infidelity. I will not tell you all that I might put into that basket! Certainly, if it were to be shred and poured out into the broth of daily life, we would soon have to say as they did who threw the wild cucumber into the pottage, “O man of God, there is death in the pot!” The fruit of the lips tends to vanity, to poverty, to sorrow, to shame, to death. The fruit of the lips is just what the root of an unrenewed, unregenerate heart causes it to be.

You remember AEsop and how wisely he kept his master’s command when he bade him provide for dinner the best things he could and when they came together he set out tongues—nothing else but tongues! His master was pleased with his wit, though I am afraid the guests did not relish it and he ordered him, the next time, to provide for dinner the *worst* things he possibly could. Tongues again—nothing else but tongues! Truly AEsop was wise *there*, for the fruit of the lips is sometimes the best thing

in the world and sometimes the worst thing in the world—it is a blessing and a curse—according to the man whose tongue speaks. The fruit of the lips may be compared to Jeremiah’s figs—the good, very good, but the bad, exceedingly bad, exceedingly ripe figs that cannot be eaten. Fruit of the lips, what shall I say about you? It might seem that the less we said the better, lest in our case, also, the fruit of the lips should add to the useless heap!

Our text tells us that God creates the fruit of the lips, but this must be understood, of course, with reservation. He does not create the fruit of the lips as we commonly see it, but the *good* fruit, the *true* fruit, the fruit worth gathering—that which *should be* the fruit of the lips—of this God is the Creator. The natural fruit is so evil it needs the Creator, again, to step in and make us new creatures and our fruit new, also, or else it would remain so bad that the verdict upon it would be, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” And what is that fruit which the Creator produces from a source which is naturally so barren? First of all, it is the sacrifice of *thanksgiving*—“the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name” (Heb. 13:15).

The fruit of the lips which God creates should be, above all things, *praise*. We ought to delight to praise God—it should be our element, our occupation, our recreation, our very life! We are as much and as evidently intended to praise God as angels are. When I look at a bird, if I study it awhile, I am convinced that it was made to sing. When we look at an angel and study his formation and character, we are certain that he was ordained to praise God. And he that studies man, if he can see beyond the defects which the Fall has brought upon every organ, will be forced to see that he is a creature adapted for the praise of God. Our tongue is the glory of our frame and it is given us that we may give glory to Him who framed it! Articulate speech, which is denied to birds and beasts, is given to us for this major reason—that we may articulately and distinctly praise and magnify the name of the Most High.

O Man, however eloquent in oratory or charming in song your lips may be, they are fruitless if you do not extol your Maker with them! Your lips are as dry Sahara sand, or as the salt deserts where not a blade of grass can live, if from them there never springs the sweet flower of gratitude to God, fragrantly expressing itself in words of love. Your lips should drop honey as the honeycomb—a gentle dew of thankfulness should distil from them! They should be like the rose, sending forth perpetual perfume! Each word should be a fragrant leaf, scattering a sweet smell of adoration. The lips should be the gates of thankfulness and from between them there should continually pour forth a wealthy traffic of song bearing abroad the products of a grateful heart worked in the forges of glowing thankfulness to God.

Another fruit of the lips should never be forgotten and that is *prayer*. This should be the fruit of renewed manhood at every age—the lips of little children can compass prayer and the mouth of the aged may not fail to utter it. This is a God-created fruit! He that abounds in it is as a vine which God has blessed. Woe unto the mouth which is silent at the Mercy Seat, for it will, one day, be dumb at the Judgment Seat! Those lips are cursed that never pray! Those lips shall blister with unutterable pain that

never pray! “Behold, he prays,” is an absolutely necessary sign of the possession of Divine Grace in the heart. True praise never flowered from those lips upon which prayer has never blossomed. You can be sure of this, that prayer and praise are grapes of the same cluster and the lips which are barren of the one are bare of the other. These two fruits of the lips, God creates wherever His Grace enters.

Furthermore, when there is prayer and praise in us, another fruit of the lip is *testimony*. Do you produce this, dear Friends? Has God created it from your lips? It is the bearing witness to others of what God can do because you have *received* it in your own experience. God blesses us on purpose that we may tell other poor souls how He can bless the sons of men! And yet there are Christians—at least I *hope* they are Christians—who appear to have received great mercy from God but they keep the matter hidden. Oh, be not such, I pray you! If you have good tidings in your heart, bring forth the fruit of the lips and tell it. “I would stammer,” says one. There is a great beauty in the stammering of earnestness! “I could never be eloquent,” says another. Yet there is much true eloquence where there is no appearance of it!

It matters not when a man cannot speak his heart, if you can read in his face that he would speak with the tongues of angels if he could, for he feels that his theme transcends his utmost ability. Fine words are not forceful—it is the *heart* which prevails. Tell your neighbor that Jesus died. Tell your neighbor that Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Tell your neighbor he is welcome to Christ—tell your neighbor Christ has saved you! Do not hesitate to tell him of your own tasting and handling of the good Word of Life, for this is a most profitable fruit of the lips! What is more likely to prevail with a man than brotherly testimony? How can we so surely attract men to Canaan as by showing its Eshcol clusters, setting them forth with earnest speech, as the Holy Spirit enables us?

These discourses of mine are the fruit of my lips. I cannot tell you how much I wish they were more worthy of my Master’s honor, but, such as they are, you all have the benefit of them and they lay you under an obligation to yield your fruit unto others. I am not called to bear witness alone and when I have borne my fruit and you are refreshed, it is your bounden duty to go and bring forth the same fruit for the refreshment of others.

Thus much about the threefold fruit of the lips. Now, there is one renowned topic upon which the lips ought always to be able to speak and that blessed subject is summed up in the two words of my text, “Peace, peace.” “I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace.” The lips ought to be occupied with the subject of peace. This should be their breath. As Saul breathed out threats, so should we breathe out peace and yet again, peace—a double peace from our two lips. From the mouth of truth should come kisses of peace, words of peace, the breath of peace. This is the best lip-salve—“Peace, peace.” Nothing can so sweeten the breath as “Peace, peace.” Nothing can so flavor the palate and delight the heart as this “Peace, peace,” felt within and breathed without.

No teeth of ivory, nor lips of coral are complete in loveliness till there glistens over all the brightness of peace! Fierce speech becomes not loveliness. Threats and clamor destroy beauty. The charm of the lips is peace.

So I am going to take those two words and recommend them to you as a fruit of the lips which God creates. May the Lord help us all to go out of this place with this on our lips—"Peace, peace."

I. We shall employ these words in four ways and we shall commence by using them as THE CRY OF THE AWAKENED. When men are awakened, by the Grace of God, into a consciousness of their true condition, they find themselves at war with God and at war with their own consciences and consequently they begin to cry, "Peace, peace"—eagerly longing to end the dreadful conflict in which they find themselves engaged. While a man is dead in trespasses and sins—where Nature left him and where the devil keeps him—he has a deadly calm of mind. He is not troubled. He has no bonds in his death, should he die, nor none in his life while he is drunk with sin. He is like a brute beast, looking no further than to the pasture in which he feeds—he lives for the present and, as long as his bodily needs are satisfied, he is content.

When the Spirit of God awakens thoughts of higher things in him, the whole matter is changed. He thinks of God and laments that he has forgotten his Maker. He thinks of that Maker's Law and perceives that he has constantly broken it. Indeed, he has never *regarded* it, but treated it as a thing of nothing. He thinks of death and he says, "I must die, but I am unprepared." He thinks of eternity, of that other world—that lasting world beyond time—that world where we must dwell forever and he cries, "Where shall I dwell? Where will my portion be?" He feels it cannot be among the sanctified, for he is not one of them. He cannot hope to see the face of God with joy, for he has never sought that face, nor cared for the knowledge of God's ways.

As He begins thinking of these high themes, conscience sets before his mind the Day of Judgment. He sees the heavens on fire and the great Judge calling all men to account—and he is sorely troubled. He sees Heaven open and all its Glory, but he fears that he will be excluded, for he has been a rebel against the Lord! He looks down to Hell with all its terror and it seems to gape for *him*, as for one most suitable to be its everlasting prey! Do you wonder, then, if the man is tormented with internal strife and with horror of a war without? He has no rest and he cries, "Peace, peace"—the cry only echoes in his ears, for what peace can there be for him? Very likely a worldling comes along and says, "You are melancholy. Do not give way to such low spirits. I count it one of the wisest things to drive dull care away. Come with me where they make merry."

He goes, but, somehow or other he sees that all the gold is gilt and all the finery is flimsy and that there is nothing in the mirth. The sport is tame and dull to him and he is duller than ever. He does not enjoy what once was the delight of his eyes. He leaves and when they ask him to visit their haunts, again, he says, "No, no. My heart seems heavier there than when I am alone." "As vinegar upon niter, so is he that sings songs to a sad heart." There is no suitability in worldly merry-making to ease a tortured spirit. The awakened sinner cries, "Peace, peace! Oh that I had peace!" Then there visits him one who knowingly whispers, "You need not disturb yourself. These things are not so. Do you not know that these are all bugbears of a past generation? We men of modern thought have made

great discoveries and changed all the fears of our benighted ancestors into a brave unbelief! You can live at ease. Do not fret yourself about sin, or Heaven, or Hell, or eternity.”

Vain are these stale skepticisms! The man is too much in earnest to be drugged with such soporifics. Boastful unbelief has small power over an agonized soul! God Himself has convinced this man of sin, of righteousness and of judgment and though he tries to disbelieve he cannot! Conviction haunts him, follows him into his chamber, robs him of his rest and he cries, “I gladly would be an unbeliever if I could, but I cannot! Oh that I had peace! Oh that I had peace!” Mr. Worldly Wiseman calls upon him, with his friend, Dr. Legality and his assistant-surgeon, Mr. Civility—and these try their Balm of Conceit and Plaster of Natural Goodness. Dr. Legality finds his patient disturbed with the threats of the Gospel and the doctrines of Holy Writ and he says, “These things are quite true, but you need not worry because you have not been so bad as a great many!

“And if it goes hard with you, it will go very hard with most of the people. You are all right, for you have been honest, obliging, generous and religious.” Yes, but if God has been dealing with this man, he will say, “But I am *not* all right. I feel that I deserve the wrath of God and that goodness is not in me. You may think it is so, but I know myself and I have looked into my heart and I find all manner of evil there. Oh that I had peace! Oh that I had peace!” Self-righteousness is too short a bed for an awakened sinner to stretch himself on—neither can flatterers cajole him into a peace based upon forgetfulness of the Divine Law. Then comes a priest and he exclaims, “Come with us and undergo ceremonies and take sacraments and we will ease you of your burden.”

Perhaps the poor man tries this, but though he tries it, he finds no rest whatever. No, the leprosy lies deep within and no outward form can cleanse away the deep-seated pollution. The burden presses on his heart and, therefore, no manipulation of outward rites can remove the heavy load from him. His cry is, “Peace, peace, peace, peace! Oh that I could get it! Oh that I could get it! I would search through earth and sea and air and Hell, itself, if I might find it and bless the grave if it would give it to me.” Dear Heart, I sympathize with you. I remember when I would have gone to the utmost verge of this green earth if I could have found peace. I tell you, racks and tortures I would have boldly endured! Prisons and dungeons I would have bravely entered and battle and death I would have gladly encountered if I could have found peace from my accusing conscience!

But I found none. I was like that serpent which is said to sting itself to death. “My thoughts,” as George Herbert says, “were all a case of knives.” Every motion of my mind seemed to drive a dagger into my heart! A volcano had burst up within my soul and the burning lava of despair flowed over all. I was no fool, nor was I under a delusion. I think I was never saner than at that dread period of my life—certainly I was never more seriously in earnest! I was not a simpleton scared of his own shadow, but I had cause to be disquieted, for actual guilt was upon me—not that I was worse than others in outward sin—but that I had such a sight and sense

of my guiltiness that I could only cry out, “Woe is me! Oh, wretched man that I am!”

Then my daily prayer was, “Peace, peace!” but I could not find it. This is a good cry, however, for every awakened spirit. I would put it into the mouth of every penitent—rather may the Lord *Himself* create it there as the fruit of the lips. “Peace, peace.”

II. Secondly, our theme is much more cheerful when we see that this is THE ANSWER OF THE SAVIOR. It is the fruit of the Savior’s lips, whose lips are as lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh. It is He that comes to a soul and says, “Peace, peace.” Oh, did you ever see Him as dying of sin? If you have never seen Him with the eyes of faith, you do not know what peace means. After this fashion He shows Himself. He looks upon the sinner, troubled and tossed to and fro and He says, “What ails you?” “My sin,” says the sinner, “has utterly condemned me.” “Do you not know that I bore it 1,800 years ago and more, in My own body on the Cross?” “Yes, Lord, I have heard that You did something of the kind, but did You bear it so that I need not bear it?”

Then the Redeemer shows that He bore the burden of guilt effectually and carried it away into the land of forgetfulness and, moreover, He makes clear the Truth of God that if He took our sin, it can never be laid on us, for it is not consistent with the Father’s justice, first to punish the Substitute for sin, and then to punish the offender, also. That were to make a *mockery* of Christ Jesus by making Him a Substitute and then punishing those for whom He stood as a Surety! Do you see that, poor Soul? Is it not clear enough that if the Surety is sued for the debt and is made to discharge it, the original debtor is free? Rest in the fact that this is the Believer’s case. “But,” says the heart, “my Lord, I know that You did die. I see Your wounds, I mark Your open side, but tell me, did You die for *me* in particular?” “Will you trust Me, Soul? Will you trust Me wholly?”

“Ah, that I will, my Lord!” “Then I bore your sin. I was punished in your place. Your iniquity has ceased to be. Your sins I have cast into the depths of the sea. Your transgression shall never be mentioned against you again forever! Go and sin no more. Peace, peace!” What can break a peace like this? Why need I fret about sin which is hurled into oblivion? Why should I despair because of my guilt and reckon myself condemned? I am *not* condemned, for Jesus was condemned for me—even He in whom my spirit fixes all her trust. He paid my debts and discharged my liability to Justice and, therefore, my soul is clear. Peace, peace! Was there ever peace like this? Glory be to my Redeemer for such rest! Truly *God* has given us this repose—

**“O You who did Your Glory leave
Apostate sinners to retrieve
From Nature’s deadly fall,
You have purchased me with a price,
Nor shall my crimes in judgment rise,
For You have borne them all.”**

But did you ever see Christ as He is risen from the dead? Here is another vision of consolation, another fountain of peace. The poor heart lies prostrate at the Savior’s feet and cries, “I see You, my Lord! I see how You have put away my sin and I am at peace! But alas, I am a poor fool and

shall sin again and I have a wayward, wandering heart that will soon be away over the mountains leaping into sin again. How can I hope to enter Heaven?" To this the Lord Jesus replies most sweetly, "Do you not know that I am risen from the dead? I am He that lives, though once I died for sin. I am that great Shepherd who lives to take care of His own flock. Because I live, you shall live, also. I am able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Me, seeing I always live to make intercession for them."

Do you know the peace which the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus brings into the spirit? If so, you find rich fruit hanging upon Jesus' lips. He who knows the virtue of the living Lord, at once concludes that the future is as safe as the past! The slain Savior has slain our past sins and the living Savior lives to take care of our eternal life and to bring us to God's right hand at the last. See how Jesus says, "Peace, peace, peace! All is well." Did you ever see Jesus as He sits there triumphant at the Lord God's right hand? I hope you have, because a poor, tried spirit is greatly comforted by that sight. The downcast one exclaims, "My Lord, I know You will take care of me *here*, for I perceive that You live to provide for me. But I shall have to die and what shall I do *then*? My Lord, I am afraid to die! It is grim work—dying. It is a path I never trod before. What shall I do in the swellings of Jordan?"

Jesus answers such fears in His own sweet fashion by saying, "Do you not know that I am risen from the dead and that I have gone into Glory to prepare a place for you? I will come to you at the last and I will take your spirit away to dwell with Me forever. You need not fear to die, for he that lives and believes in Me shall never die. He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. I will help you. Death shall be no death to you! I will take your soul away and you shall never know it till you see Me face to face! As for your poor dust, it shall lie in the grave a little while, but I will take care of every atom of it and when I shall descend on the Last Day, My archangel shall sound his trumpet and your poor body shall rise again, only more fair and beautiful than when you had it in its best estate below—and so you shall be forever with Me, both as to body and soul." Does not this breathe, "Peace, peace, peace"?—

***"Surely the last end
Of the good man is peace!
How calm his exit!
Night dews fall not more
Calmly on the ground,
Nor weary worn out winds
Expire so softly."***

If I were to go on picturing our glorious Lord Jesus Christ in any and all of His relationships to us, we should, in each case, hear Him say, "Peace, peace." His voice is the sovereign balm which heals every wound, the cordial which removes every fear! No distress or amazement can seize upon you for which, in Christ, there is not a peace that passes all understanding to keep your heart and soul against all dread. This is the fruit of the lips of the Well-Beloved—peace, peace, peace. If you do not come to Him, you will receive no peace! If you do not stay near Him, you will retain no peace! And if you do not come growingly nearer and nearer to Him, you

will miss much of the peace that you might have had. Abide in Christ Jesus and let Him abide in you and you shall have abundance of peace so long as the moon endures!

A soldier in the Crimean war, as he lay dying, was visited by a worthy Missionary. The young man asked his visitor to read a chapter to him and the chapter chosen was John 14. When he came to this verse—"Peace I leave with you," the soldier was almost in the throes of death, but he said to the reader, "Sir, that is the peace which I enjoy. I have had it for years." "Peace I leave with you." "Now," he said, "if I have known this peace—and I have had it for years—I shall not lose it now, but shall die triumphantly." And so he did! Can you, my Hearer, say tonight that you have that peace? If you have it now, you shall have it in your dying hour!

Could you say what Dr. Watts said to his host, Sir Thomas Abney? He said, "Sir Thomas, I thank God that for many a month I have been able to say, 'It is a matter of perfect indifference to me, when I fall asleep at night, whether I wake up in this world or in another.'" I well remember reading the old story of a Methodist who was pressed into the army some 50 or 60 years ago who had his leg carried away in battle and lay bleeding on the ground. When they carried him off the field, he said, "I am as happy as a man can be while out of Heaven." They said he was mad! O for more of such glorious madness! To be able to say, when your limb is shot away and you are bleeding away your life, "I am as happy as a man can be out of Heaven," why there is something in that!

This must be the finger of God! Where else can such triumph over pain and weakness be found? What voice but that of Jesus can, in such a storm, command a heavenly calm? Jesus, Master, whose message to Your people is always, "Peace, peace," speak that Divine Word to me and to all your troubled ones! Stand in our midst and say, "Peace be unto you," and peace shall be ours!

III. Thirdly, I am going to use these words as THE SONG OF THE TRUE BELIEVER. He who has really seen Christ and placed his trust in Him, can now sing, "Peace, peace, peace." What a thrice accursed thing is war! I believe with Benjamin Franklin that there never was a good war and there never was a bad peace. War is unmitigated mischief from end to end and peace is a thing to rejoice in, take it in whatever light you will. Killing and slaying, devastating and burning are sport for fiends and for fiends, alone! True men, if once called to battle, are the last persons who would lightly enter upon it again. It is an awful and terrible thing.

I remember reading that when the last great war was over—I mean the greatest war of all, in which we were so long engaged with the Bonapartes—news of the peace came to a certain town. It was only gently whispered that there was peace, but it was all over the town in a few minutes! Everybody ran through the streets! Bread had been sent up to an awful price by the war and everybody was weary with the taxes, the slaughter of soldiers and the perpetual fear of invasion. A man ran down the street shouting, "Peace, peace, peace, peace," and everybody was glad! All manner of good things were wrapped up in the one word, "peace"—families would no longer be divided, trade would no longer be crippled, famine would no more devour the land. Now the loaf would be within the

reach of the poor and the hungry—and the widow might keep her sons at home, safe from the cannon's mouth. "Peace, peace," they cried and within an hour there were bells ringing from every steeple and as the sun went down there were candles in every window! Everybody must have an illumination because peace had come!

Now, if peace is so precious as to *temporal* things, it is equally precious as to eternal things! And if a man has once seen Jesus Christ, it is the joy of his life to sing, "Peace, peace." Here stands the reconciled man and he looks up to Heaven through the pure blue air, past yon stars, endless leagues beyond imagination's utmost stretch! He looks up and his mind conceives of God and his heart feels, "I am at peace with Him. Though He is a consuming fire, I am at peace with Him! With the great Father I am at peace! Though it is very tempestuous round about Him, yet I am at peace with Him. I am at peace with the eternal Son! Though He shall break His enemies with a rod of iron, He will never break me—I am at peace with Him. I am at peace with the Holy Spirit, for though to blaspheme Him is death without hope of mercy, yet I am at peace with Him—He will never destroy me."

What a peace this is—peace *with* God, the peace *of* God, *perfect peace*! Having this peace, every angel is my friend, every cherub is my guardian and all the hosts in glittering ranks above—of angelic spirits and unfallen and of human spirits saved and washed in the blood—all are my friends, for I have peace with the armies of Heaven if I have peace with the Lord of Hosts! How delightful to look all around you and to feel confident that Providence is on your side! The wheels are stupendous and the results that come of their revolution are mysterious and terrible—but let the wheels revolve—they cannot hurt a child of God! All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose!

There is peace in all events when there is peace with Heaven. The beasts of the field are in league with us and the stones of the field are at peace with us when we are at peace with God! It is most sweet to feel that wherever you are, everything is at peace with you—and then to look inside into this little world where there once raged such fierce battles and there, also, to feel the sprinkled blood—this, this is JOY! Conscience is quiet, fear has subsided, the deadly dread is gone, all is quiet and all is well! To feel that you have forgiven every enemy if you have any—that you do not bear a recollection of an injury—this also is a brave easement of the heart. As the tablets of the Romans, when they had written upon the wax, were afterwards rolled over with a hot iron to produce a complete erasure, so by Grace we are enabled to smooth out of the soul every angry line and to begin life anew as to our fellow men!

Revenge and malice are unknown among true Christians. I have no more memory of ill towards any man that lives than an unborn babe. This is a clear atmosphere to live in! How different from the thunder-charged air of envy, malice and hate! "You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." Blessed are the men who live in this peace—peace of God's giving! Peace of the Holy

Spirit's working! Peace above and peace below, peace within and peace around—peace, peace—the blessed fruit of the lips!

IV. I close by using my text in a fourth way, practically, by saying that this should be THE MOTTO OF EVERY BELIEVER. It has been his song for himself—now let it be his motto in dealing with other people. This should be his spirit and desire in the Church—“Peace, peace.” I thank God that we have enjoyed peace as a Church these many years, but I have known certain Churches where peace would be a novelty—a novelty which I recommend them to try! Some little Churches seem to think that they must have an angry discussion every month or else they are living beneath their Gospel privileges. This leads to heart-burnings and promotes splits and divisions and these are as frequent among them as fights at an Irish wake.

They need a new minister every now and then, for they consider their lack of prosperity to be the *minister's* fault—and then they need a fresh set of deacons, for the evil is thought to be the deacons' fault. By-and-by they discover that some leading man, or, what is worse, some leading woman, is at the bottom of the evil and they must get rid of him or her and then all will go right! And so they practice the process of dismemberment—cutting off one part of the body and then another till they think the smaller they become the better they will be. What a mistake! Do they think to find peace by breaking into pieces? The more Christians are divided, the more they can subdivide and the smaller the sect, the more prepared is it for another schism.

Brothers and Sisters, whenever you fall to quarrelling I shall know that the Spirit of God has gone from you! Up to now we have put up with one another very well, by God's Grace, and I hope we shall continue to do so. I do not suppose you ever thought that I was perfect—if you did, you did not know much about me! I knew very well that *you* are not perfect. I never flattered you from the very beginning and, therefore, I am not disappointed in you. We have gone on wonderfully well with each other, considering how imperfect we are—and I trust that the Grace of God, which has kept so large a multitude together in love and peace—will continue to do it, to His Glory.

Now, especially when I am away, if any enemy brings strange fire to set the Church alight with it, I pray you who are older and wiser than others to keep your buckets full of water and stand ready to quench the first spark of ill feeling. You, good Brothers and Sisters, who are rather fond of talking, if you see a little blaze beginning, leave off your talking, for fear you should be adding fuel to the flame! Do not repeat what you have heard against a Brother, but ring the curfew and cover the fire. Pull the logs all apart and throw the holy water of love over the hot ashes! Do not let the fire of anger burn. Why should we? We have to live together in Heaven forever—we may as well enjoy happy fellowship here! May the Lord grant us to feel the force of those heavenly principles which will enable us to live in peace and quiet for many and many a year to come!

I would like every member of the Church to go about saying within himself, “Peace, peace. I am a peace-maker in the Church and if I ever must be a peace-breaker, it shall not be in the House of God, among the

family of the Lord Jesus.” We should labor to carry out the same quiet spirit in the family. When you get home, do not change, “Peace, peace,” into scolding and nagging. “If it is possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men.” The Apostle says, “If it is possible,” because he knew that it would be a very difficult thing, always to be peaceable with everybody, for some people are so unreasonable that they are *never* at peace till they are at war and never quiet till they are making a disturbance. Be it ours under great provocation still to cry, “Peace, peace.”

Put up with a great deal—bear and bear and bear and bear and bear—I have not time to repeat the word 70 times seven! They will most surely conquer who can most completely submit, for in this world, he that would be greatest must be least and he that can stoop the lowest shall rise the highest! I do not think there is much in a heritage worth fighting for compared with brotherly unity. Family peace and love are worth more than a disputed will can ever yield. The game of quarrelling is not worth the candle. When I have had to compose family differences, I have usually found that the misunderstanding began about nothing and went on about nothing—and yet the mischief done is frequently terrible. When I have to make peace, I like to have some real injury, injustice, or wrong to deal with—something that I can handle, judge and condemn—an invisible, misty, indefinable suspicion is hard to overcome.

When there is nothing in the squabble, peace-making is difficult work. There is a great tingle-tangle over nothing. You cannot get at it. It is a sort of stinging jellyfish which you *feel* but cannot grasp! Loving bonds are broken and there is ill-blood between Christian men and Christian women who ought to love one another and all about—about—*nothing*! Now, you Christian people, go about with this as your password—“Peace, peace, peace, peace.” This will quiet the worst scolding of a wife that ever wearied a man—peace, peace! This will sober the most outrageous husband that ever tried a woman—peace, peace! Cultivate peace in the home garden whatever you do elsewhere. When peace reigns in your own family, go into the world with the same watchword—“Peace, peace.” Do not set dogs by the ears, but tame lions and tigers! Compose differences and make people friends.

If certain persons were dropped into the Garden of Eden, they would be the serpent in it! But there are others who, if you were to set them down in a village distracted with strife and contention, they would be lumps of love to sweeten every bitterness. Try and be just such. Members of the Tabernacle, especially, let your motto always be, “Peace, peace,” among your neighbors, for the Glory of God! What a difference there will be when this is taken up among all Christian denominations—when there shall be no more envying and strife between this denomination and that, but each one shall be saying in Christ’s name, “We are Brethren—peace, peace.” How silly it is for one clique of good people to be setting up Mr. So-and-So as “the greatest preacher that ever lived.” How idle for others to reply, “No, he is not. So-and-so preaches better.”

Let all this be silenced while we cry, “Peace, peace!” None of us who are ministers preach as well as we ought to do and none of you who are hearers live as you ought to live. When you hear anything like crying up of

such poor mortals as we are, cry, "Peace, peace," to such nonsense! We are all servants of one Master—and may the Lord make us all better *servants*! Let peace ring the death-knell of petty jealousies and may all the saints be visibly one in Christ Jesus! May the day come when, all the world over, there shall be peace! Peace to Afghan and to Zulu, as it is today to Prussian and to Frenchman and to Englishman. Let us wish "Peace, peace" to all born of woman.

May this blessed word be rung out as a clarion note beneath these heavens till men shall recognize that they make one family and God is the one great Father! You nations, learn war no more! "Peace, peace, peace." Catch the words, you winds, and carry them—"Peace, peace, peace!" Hear the words, you stars, and shine them out tonight—"Peace, peace." Rise up, O sun, in the morning and over all rejoicing lands pour forth, with your light and warmth, peace and quietness! May peace be with you, my Brothers and Sisters, now and forever. Amen and amen!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Isaiah 57:15-21; 58:1-12.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—23 (VERS. II), 704, 722.

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RESTLESS! PEACELESS!

NO. 2886

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 2, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 21, 1876.

“But the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked.”
Isaiah 57:20, 21.

AMONG the greatest privileges of the Believer in Christ are those choice blessings, rest and peace. Believing in Christ Jesus unto eternal life, he knows that his sin is pardoned, that he is a child of God, that Omnipotence will preserve him even to the end and that he will, by-and-by, be with Christ where he is not only to behold, but also to share His Glory forever and ever. Consequently his heart is at rest, for he leaves all that concerns him—whether in the present or the future—in the hands of his Heavenly Father, casting all his care upon Him who cares for him. And, therefore, he has peace, perfect peace, in his soul. This peace and rest which the Believer enjoys even here and now will deepen and increase until, in eternity, they will reach their perfection and the child of God will, forever and forevermore, in the blessed state above, be without even the slightest disturbance of heart and will rest in the Presence of God with his glorified spirit as full of joy as it can possibly be. The Apostle Paul truly writes, “We which have believed do enter into rest.” But he also adds, just as truly, “There remains therefore a rest to the people of God.”

These choice privileges of rest and peace belong, however, exclusively to Believers. “The wicked” have no portion in them. They are, according to the testimony of Holy Writ, like the restless sea which is never quite quiet, even in its greatest calm—and is never to be trusted for a resting place, but, ever and anon, is lashed into fury, seething like the contents of a huge cauldron and hurling up from its depths the mire and dirt which have lain there unseen—such is the condition of the unregenerate heart of unrenewed man.

There are two things in our text of which I am going to try to speak. The first is, *a fact observed*—“the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” The second is, *a sentence pronounced*, and it is pronounced by God, Himself—“There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked.”

I. First, then, here is A FACT OBSERVED—that the wicked are like the troubled sea. Who are these wicked people who are like the restless waves of the turbulent ocean? I take the term to describe two classes of sinners.

First, by the expression, “the wicked,” as used in the Scriptures, we must often understand *overt transgressors*—persons who are living in the indulgence of open and known sin. Then, secondly, there is another class of sinners—not open transgressors, like the others I have mentioned—still, *they have heard the Gospel and they have rejected it*—and, consequently, since we cannot put them down in any other category and since their sin has a special aggravation about it because of the Light of God and privileges which they have enjoyed and yet despised, or neglected, they also must be put down with “the wicked,” for they, too, “are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest.” Let us begin with those whose sins, as Paul says, “are open beforehand, going before to judgment.” Why are they unrestful and unpeaceful?

First, because they are themselves swayed by restless passions. There are some sins which will not let a man be quiet as long as he indulges in them. Take the sin of lust, for instance—who can ever satisfy its cravings? Let a man once indulge his evil passions and can those passions ever be satisfied? No, they keep on getting more and more hungry as a man would become the more thirsty through drinking brine. Does lust ever, of its own accord, cease its cravings? No, it is as insatiate as the grave, itself, and it will suck a man’s very life away unless the Grace of God shall mercifully and miraculously interpose. If you, young man, give yourself up to what is erroneously called the pursuit of pleasure, it is quite certain that you will not find rest for your soul in that direction! You have taken a dose of poison that will make your blood hot and feverish and that will cause true rest to flee from your pillow. This is a subject upon which I cannot say more, in this public assembly, except to add, with the preacher of old, “Know you, O young man, that for all these things God will bring you into judgment!” Let the solemn admonition of good Dr. Doddridge come home to your heart and say you with him—

***“How will my heart endure
The terrors of that day
When earth and Heaven before His face,
Astonished, shrink away?”***

Then listen to his earnest exhortation—not only listen to it, but at once obey it—

***“You sinners, seek His Grace,
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Fly to the shelter of His Cross,
And find salvation there.”***

Take, next, the sin of anger. There are some persons who very soon get angry, but they do not, as quickly cool down. Or, if they do, they nurse their hatred and watch for any opportunity of paying back their adversary in the base coin of revenge. Let me say to such a man—You cannot

enjoy real rest and peace unless you fully and freely forgive all who have wronged you. You may try to lay a salve upon your conscience and to preach peace to your heart, but if resentment still lingers in your bosom—and especially the resentment which seeks an opportunity to display itself in an act of ill-will—you cannot rest. There are some animals that seem born to fight and if they cannot tear others in pieces, they seem as if they must tear themselves, or, like a serpent, which, in its rage, will poison itself. Such is anger! Such is malice! And you, O man, must get rid of these evil things if you desire to know what real rest means!—

***“Sin, like a venomous disease,
Infects our vital blood.
The only balm is Sovereign Grace
And the Physician God.
Madness by nature reigns within—
The passions burn and rage
Till God’s own Son, with skill Divine,
The inward fire assuage.”***

Such, too, is envy—a very common sin which is not spoken of as often as it should be. This is the sin of the poor man who cannot bear to see another man better off than he is. This is the sin of the sick man who is envious of the healthy. Yes, but envy may be found not only among the poor, but also among princes—not only among the sick, but also among the strong. And when a man once becomes so envious that another man’s joy is his sorrow and another man’s gain is his loss—and he cannot be content with his own lot because another man has more honor, or more money, or more friends than he has—he has a poisoned arrow rankling within him which will breed a thousand woes and make rest of heart impossible to him. Envy even grows by feeding upon itself! Therefore I charge you, whatever you do, get rid of it if you desire to find real rest!

Pride is another enemy of peace and rest. If you see a proud man, you may feel sure that he is not a restful man. It is in the Valley of Humiliation that the flowers of peace will be discovered. As for the pompous people who are so high in their own esteem that they look down on all others—*pity them*, my Brothers and Sisters—do not get angry with them. It is a sad disease from which they are suffering—their brain is turned, so deal gently with them. Think as kindly of them as you can and pray to God to heal them. Mind, also, that you do not catch their complaint, for it is very contagious and there are many who are proud of their humility—and who condemn the pride of others when, all the while, they are really still prouder, themselves!

Then there is avarice. And when a man is once possessed by the desire to amass gain, there is no peace or rest for him. Suppose he acquires what he reckons to be wealth? It ceases to be wealth as soon as he has gained it. He thought that if ever he should secure a certain sum which he had set his heart on, he would retire from business, but, having saved

that amount, he now regards it as quite insufficient and ten times as much is the mark at which he now aims. If he should ever succeed in hoarding *that* amount, he will find that he is further off the goal of his desire than he was when he started. Some there are, I do verily believe, who, if they could claim the whole world as their own, would want the sun and moon and stars as well, for nothing could ever satisfy them. Once get into the grip of avarice and rest is impossible.

And it is also much the same with ambition—not the desire to use one’s capacities to the fullest, especially for God’s Glory and the good of our fellow creatures—but that craving for so-called “glory” which makes a man court the homage of his fellow men and which will not let him be content unless he is set up on a high pedestal for fools to stare at! Ah, Sir, if you are ambitious in that sense, you and peace have parted company and are not likely to meet again! But if you will do the right thing and leave your reputation in the hands of God—and especially if you will leave those lofty pathways which, after all, lead only to the grave—then may you find peace. But you cannot find it as long as any of these evils that I have mentioned are reigning within your heart.

The first reason, then, why the wicked man’s heart is like the troubled sea is because there are evil passions within it which will not let it rest.

The next reason is because the wicked man is agitated by the memory of his old sins. Suppose him to have been for some years engaged in an evil course—in dishonesty or unchastity? He cannot, even if he tries, forget his sins. They have burnt themselves into his very soul and, what is even worse than the memory of sin—every sin breeds other sins so that every time you sin, you have a still greater tendency to commit more sin! This is a fact that is strangely true both as to the body and as to the soul—we wear tracks for ourselves where there were none before. If we have, at first, to force our way through the brush of conscience and to cut down, as it were, the old timber of our early instruction and the gracious examples set before us in our childhood, by-and-by we make a trail for ourselves and then a beaten track so that it becomes always easier and yet easier to sin. No, more than that, there seems to be a pressure put by habit upon a wicked man so that what he once did from choice, he comes, at last, to do because he *must*. Sin in the soul is like leaven in the dough—it heaves, ferments and though it was, perhaps, put into you 20 years ago or more—it will go on fermenting and working until the whole of your manhood shall be soured by it!

Beside all this, the ungodly man is like the sea for restlessness because, like the sea, he is governed by a greater power than his own. The sea feels the force of the moon and is agitated and stirred by the mysterious agency of the winds. And the wicked man is under the dominion of the prince of the power of the air. If, for a while, he would be at rest, Satan will not permit him to be in peace. He puts opportunities of sinning before him and then excites the desire to indulge in the evil thing. Satan is no myth—they who think that he is cannot, surely, have opened their

eyes—or else they would have discovered in their very unbelief, his existence and that he had given them that unbelief! Those who have stood foot to foot with Apollyon and fought with him and overcome him in the hour of temptation, will never doubt that there is a great fallen spirit who strives to lead men into sin! Satan and his myriads of followers still lie in wait for the ungodly, or openly drive them into fierce lusts and evil passions so that they sin again and again.

Nor is this all. For wicked men—those who go into open sin—are kept by the action of others from becoming quiet. If it were not for the restraints of society, what horrible places would those be where the utterly dissolute and abandoned assemble! Even as it is, every now and then we read in the newspapers records of the doings of so-called “gentlemen” that reveal to us something of what goes on when Bacchus rules or riots. Then there are the brutalized beings at the other end of the social ladder, the “fiends” who use their boots so heavily upon their wives. Put a few dozen of them together and let them have their own sweet will—do not restrain them at all and see what they will do! Only God knows what wondrous patience He has with such men when they get together and egg each other on in sin. I have often marvelled that He does not speedily put an end to their blasphemy and indecency and cruelty. Yet they are spared, notwithstanding their sin—but they cannot rest, for one will not let the others be quiet. And if, at any time, a good resolution should be formed by one of the company, another laughs that resolution down and keeps the whole society “like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.”

I do not wonder that a wicked man cannot rest because such a man is out of gear with the entire universe of God. Lift up your eyes to yonder starry orbs and remember there is not one of them disobedient to the law of its Maker. The comet which was thought to be eccentric, obeys in all respects its great Creator’s will. Everything that you can see, from the tiny atom of dust that is borne along by the wind, up to the huge Atlantic billow in which the leviathan feels at home, is under the power of the Divine Law. From the archangel before the Throne of God, down to the gnat that dances in the summer sunbeam, everything is obedient to the Lord of All—except the wicked man—and he says, “I will not obey Him.” Well, as he is out of gear with all the rest of the universe, is it any wonder that he is restless as the waves of the sea and that there is no peace for him? If you were to set yourselves to disobey the physical laws of the universe—for instance paying no regard to the law of gravitation but leaping from a church spire, or falling down a precipice—you know what would come of such madness! If you ever set yourself up in opposition to the law, you may depend upon it that the law will get the mastery over you. And the man who lives in disobedience to God’s moral Law will find that it will be the same with him and he will have no rest forever and ever. As God’s servant, I must say to you, very plainly, and very earnestly—You cannot possibly find rest and peace in the course you are now pursuing.

May God enable you to escape from your sins and to trust in Jesus Christ, His Son, that you may have both joy and peace in believing!

Now I have to speak, very briefly, to those who cannot be put down among the outwardly and notoriously wicked. I thank God that you cannot, but still, you have heard the Gospel, perhaps for many years, and you understand it, yet you have never received it. There is reconciliation with God to be had, yet you remain His enemy. Now, I will not say, for a moment, that the moral man who is *not* a Christian, is to be put in the same category as the immoral. In many respects, he does not do as much harm in the world as the other man does. But let me tell you this, my Friend, if you sin against the Light of God and knowledge, there may be an intensity of guilt in your sin which may not be found in the man who is apparently worse than you are! He may never have had such teaching and advantages, nor such a tender conscience as you have had and hence his sin, bad as it is, like that of Sodom and Gomorrah, may be such that it shall be more tolerable for him at the Day of Judgment than for you who have not sinned one tenth as much according to the judgment of others, but who have sinned against the Gospel—sinned against the dying Savior's blood—sinned against the Holy Spirit! God grant that you may never run this terrible risk!

Let me say to you, who are living without Christ, that however excellent and amiable you may be, I know that you are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. I know some special times when you cannot rest—when you hear of others being converted—your brothers or sisters coming forward to confess Christ—your friends or relatives rejoicing in Jesus as their Savior. “Ah,” you say to yourself, “they are restful and peaceful, but I am not.” I know how you feel, on Communion nights, sometimes, when you have to go away, or to look on at others gathered around the Table of the Lord. You do not feel easy, then, do you? And you feel very uneasy, too, when any of your companions die—those who are very much of your own sort. You attend their funeral and the thought strikes you, “Shall I die as they have done, without Christ and without hope? Shall I pass away from under the sound of the Gospel without having given any evidence of conversion?” You do not feel easy then, I know and, sometimes, you feel very much like the troubled sea when conscience begins to call you to account.

John Bunyan, in his “*Holy War*,” gives a graphic description of what happened to Mr. Conscience when Mansoul was being besieged by Immanuel—and that is very much what has happened to some of you. They said that he was out of his wits, but he was never more truly in his wits than when he was crying out for Mansoul to yield to the great King Shaddai! And I feel sure that some of you have felt, upon the door of your conscience, the blows of the great battering-ram that Bunyan describes—and you have been ready to open it! Still you are not at rest, for you have not come to Christ who alone can give you rest. It is still true, as Dr. Watts wrote, long ago—

***“In vain the trembling conscience seeks
Some solid ground to rest upon!
With long despair the spirit breaks,
Till we apply to Christ alone.”***

If you hear the Gospel faithfully preached, you cannot be at rest. Some of you try to be satisfied with a false peace, but, by God’s Grace, we will plague you yet to Christ. We will love you to Christ. We will incessantly worry you till, at last, you yield yourself up to Jesus! Some of you are getting on in business. God has been very gracious in preserving you in life, restoring you from sickness, or keeping you in health. You have a better situation now than you ever had before, yet you are not restful. You feel grateful to God for all His goodness to you, yet you say, “There is something more needed.” Yes, and that something is the one thing necessary. I am thankful that God is prospering you, but I hope you will never be able to rest until you have that one thing necessary—the Grace of God!

Some of you are very thoughtful and when you get alone for half an hour, it is very awkward for you, for there are certain problems that you cannot solve and they sorely perplex you. Worst of all are your forecasts of the future. Sometimes, you look ahead and you picture yourself upon a sick bed and you say, “Can I die triumphantly as I am?” You know you cannot! And then, sometimes, you picture yourself rising from the dead, when the angel’s trumpet blast is sounding and the quick and the dead are standing before the Judgment Seat of Christ. You cannot bear to think of that Great White Throne and the separation of the righteous from the wicked, for you know where you shall go unless a great change is worked in you! Though not outwardly wicked, you do not belong to the sheep—then you must go with the goats. And when you think of this and the future stands, for the moment, present before your mind’s eye, your spirit is “like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” I would that you had rest. God grant it to you this very hour! May Toplady’s prayer be your prayer, also—

***“Oh, may I never rest
Till I find rest in You!
Till of my pardon here possessed,
I feel Your love to me!
Turn not Your face away,
Your look can make me clean.
Me in Your wedding robes array
And cover all my sin.
Tell me, my God, for whom
Your precious blood was shed.
For sinners? Lord, as such I come,
For such the Savior bled.”***

II. Now, secondly, and only for a minute or two, in our text there is A SENTENCE PRONOUNCED—“No peace”—you notice that the words, “*there is,*” are in italics because they are not in the original. So the text runs, “No peace, says my God, to the wicked.”

It is God Himself who says it! There may be a truce, for God is slow to anger, but there is “no peace.” God is at war with you if you are among “the wicked.” You may be under the delusion that there is peace, but God’s voice of Truth shatters that delusion to pieces. There can be no peace where there is unpardoned sin. Until you have humbled yourself before God and sought and found mercy, God is at war with you and you are at war with Him. There can be no peace where there is no purity. God has no peace with sin and never can have. Like a devouring fire, His holiness burns against sin and you must be made pure—your nature must be changed, the love of sin must be killed in you and you must as vehemently love that which is good and right—or else God’s voice still thunders from Heaven’s burning Throne, “No peace! No peace! No peace!”

“But I will go to church and receive the sacrament,” says one. You will get no peace that way, except a false peace that is worse than none! “But I will attend the means of Grace with the Dissenters,” says another. You will get no peace that way, if that is all that you do. If your sin is unforgiven by God and if your nature is unchanged by the Holy Spirit, all the religiousness in the world will bring you no peace! “But I will weep an ocean of tears and I will offer prayers continually.” No peace will come to you that way as long as you remain wicked, for God says. “No peace! No peace!” And “wicked” you must remain until Jesus washes you white in the fountain filled with His precious blood and until the Spirit of God renews your nature—

***“Not all the outward forms on earth,
Nor rites that God has given,
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
Can raise a soul to Heaven!
The Sovereign will of God alone
Creates us heirs of Grace—
Born in the image of His Son,
A new peculiar race.
The Spirit, like some heavenly wind
Blows on the sons of flesh—
Creates a new—a heavenly mind—
And forms the man afresh.”***

“Oh,” says another, “but I will promise to be better and to do better—I will amend my ways!” So you may and so you should! But my God still says unto the wicked, “No peace!” What say you to all this? Behold your God in arms against you! Omnipotence comes forth to war against *you*, the creature of an hour! Will you submit? Be wise, I pray you! Cast down your weapons, cry for mercy, accept the reconciliation which Christ has worked. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has suffered, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” If you will but trust Him, what He did shall be accounted as yours. That is to say, the punishment that He suffered shall be reckoned as if you had suffered it and the righteousness He worked shall be counted as if you had worked it! And God shall accept you in His Son’s place and for His Son’s sake. More than that, the

Spirit of God will overshadow you and give you a new heart and a right spirit and take away the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. Are you willing now to yield and end this unequal war—and be at peace with God? Then the Lord who gave His Son once, gives you His Son over again into your heart and He says, “Peace! Peace! Go in peace, your sins, which are many, are forgiven you.”

He who with his heart forsakes his sin and unfeignedly believes in Jesus shall have the peace of God which passes all understanding! But he who will keep his sin and so remain among the wicked, or who will keep his self-righteousness and so refuse the salvation of Christ, has nothing to go home with but this, “No peace! No peace!” And, oh, to die with that terrible knell ringing in one’s ears! To look up to God and to hear Him say, “No peace!” To have the prayers of your friends for you, but to feel no peace! To lift your eyes to Heaven, but to find prayer freeze upon your soul as you hear again this sentence from God the Judge, “No peace!” And then follows the eternity in which there is no peace! God grant this may not be the sad portion of any one of us, but may the Lord give to each of us peace, perfect peace, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 23; ISAIAH 55.**

We will first read that choicest of all the Psalms—the twenty-third. It is like a precious pearl shining with a mild luster. This Psalm is, among the other Psalms, what the lark is among the other birds—it soars and sings till it is lost in the heights to which it ascends!

Psalm 23:1. *The LORD is my Shepherd.* What a precious title the Psalmist used in speaking of his God! It is right to call the Lord a Shepherd. “The Shepherd of Israel” is a very blessed and true title for Him, but, “*my Shepherd*” is best of all. I wish, Beloved, that each of you would truthfully say with David, “The Lord is my Shepherd.’ He owns me and as I am His property, He will preserve me, protect me, provide for me, guide me and be everything to my weakness, folly and necessity that a shepherd is to a sheep.” “The Lord is my Shepherd.”

1. *I shall not want.* “Not only do I not want at the present moment, but I shall never want. I may sometimes foolishly fancy that I shall come to want, but I shall never as long as God provides for me. How could such a Shepherd as He is—Almighty and All-Sufficient—ever allow one of His sheep to lack any good thing? No, ‘I shall not want.’ All the world besides may want, but I shall not while Jehovah is my Provider. Famine may be in the land—there may be neither dew nor rain and even the brook Cherith may at last be dried up, but since Jehovah is my Shepherd, I shall not want.” As a guarantee of His care of us in the future, we turn to our experience in the past and the present. What is our experience of our great Shepherd even now?

2. *He makes me to lie down in green pastures.* Here is blessed rest and here is also gracious provision for the needs of the sheep. The pasture is sweet and tender and there is so much of the green grass that it cannot all be eaten—and the superabundance makes a soft bed for the tired sheep! “He makes me to lie down in green pastures.” Repose, O Believer, in the abundant provision of God’s Grace! A sheep sometimes needs to lie down. It is as necessary for its health that it should have time to digest its food as that it should have proper and sufficient food to eat. May the Lord graciously give to each of you the sweet rest of meditation and contemplation—that blessed rest to which faith attains when it grows into firm confidence and full assurance, so that you may be able to say with David, “He makes me to lie down in green pastures.” But our spiritual life is not to be all spent in lying down—there must some a time for going forward, so David adds—

2. *He leads me.* What a peerless Guide He is, since Infallible Wisdom is His! And how gracious and condescending it is on His part to go first in the way which He means us to take! David does not say, “He drives me,” but, “He leads me.”

2, 3. *Beside the still waters. He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness.* “In each one of them He is my Exemplar in every virtue, for He, Himself, has endured all temptations that are incident to my life’s pathway and, all the way, ‘He leads me in the paths of righteousness.’”

3. *For His name’s sake.* “Not because of any goodness in me, but because of the goodness that is in Him and for the glory of His holy name, ‘He leads me in the paths of righteousness.’” “Also, ‘He restores my soul.’ When I wander, He restores my soul to the right road. When I become empty, He restores my soul again with good things. *He restores my soul.*”

4. *Yes, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil.* “Not only shall there be none, but I will fear none.” A sense of the Lord’s Presence lifts a Christian above fear! You know how often it is true that we “feel a thousand deaths in fearing one.” But if we have a sense of our Savior’s Presence, when we really do walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, not a trace of fear shall come across our peaceful souls!

4. *For You are with me.* The Presence of Christ is all that His people can ever need. The All-Powerful, Ever-Faithful, Infinitely-Compassionate One being with us—what cause for fear can possibly remain?

4. *Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.* “To see Your scepter and even to feel Your chastising rod—to know that You are a King and that You rule over Israel—to know that as a Shepherd You carry “a crook to guide Your flock, shall be enough to comfort my heart and to sustain my spirit.” How sweet is the next verse!

5. *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.* How calmly the Psalmist writes! He realizes that he has enemies, yet he means to sit down to a feast! He is not going to snatch a hurried mouth-

ful or two, but “a table” is “prepared” for him as though for a banquet! His enemies may look on while he is feasting, but they cannot take away his enjoyment of the feast.

5. *You anoint my head with oil.* He receives a fresh anointing for new service, even the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

5. *My cup runs over.* “I have all I want and even more than I need, so that others, not as favored as I am, may come and catch some of the droppings from my overflowing cup! It is so full, O Lord, that it cannot hold all that You gave me! Until You enlarge my capacity, I shall still have to say, “My cup runs over.” The Psalmist’s next words also have much meaning and force in them.

6. *Surely.* There are no ifs, no doubts, no fears about the matter. “Surely.”

6. *Goodness and mercy shall follow me.* “These two holy angels shall watch over my footsteps and follow me wherever I go—‘Goodness’ to preserve me and ‘Mercy’ to pardon me! ‘Goodness’ to supply my needs and ‘Mercy’ to blot out my sins.” And these angels shall follow me.

6. *All the days of my life.* “Not merely now and then, but all my days—my dark days as well as my bright ones—these heavenly messengers will never forsake me,”

6. *And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.* This life begins here, for this earth is but the lower part of God’s House. And when the time shall come for us to leave this earth, we, who are the Lord’s own children, shall only go upstairs to the higher rooms to “dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” This, then, is the portion of the children of God. But there are some to whom David’s language will seem strange. They cannot sing this sweet Psalm, for their life is as restless as the waves of the sea. No quiet pastoral poem could set forth their joy, for the sound of war is heard in the streets of their city of Mansoul. If any such souls are seeking rest and peace, let them hearken to the voice of God as it speaks to them from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, chapter fifty-five.

Isaiah 55:1, 2. *Ho, everyone who thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not? Why have you sought rest where it can never be found? Why have you craved delights which can never satisfy you? Cease from such folly!*

2. *Hearken diligently unto Me.* Thus speaks the Lord Jehovah—“Hearken diligently unto Me.”

2, 3. *And eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you.* “With you” who have any desire for it—“with you” who hunger and thirst after righteousness and who have no other recommendation than that, poor as it is. “I will make an everlasting covenant with you.”

3, 4. *Even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given Him.* The Son of David—“great David’s greater Son”—and God’s own well-beloved and only-begotten Son, even Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. God says “I have given Him”—

4-7. *For a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, you shall call a nation that you know not, and nations that knew you not shall run unto you because of the LORD your God, and for the Holy One of Israel, for He has glorified you. Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. Blessed be His holy name!*

8-13. *For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from Heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For you shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—661, 614, 658.

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

TEN WRONG KINDS OF HEARERS

NO. 2308

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 14, 1893.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 21, 1889.

“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek Me daily and delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of Me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.”
Isaiah 58:1, 2.

IF we would understand these words aright, we must remember that the people here mentioned were *not* good people—they were a set of hypocrites. This is quite clear if we read the verses that follow our text—“Why have we fasted, they say, and You see not? Why have we afflicted our souls and You take no notice? Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exploit all your laborers. Behold, you fast for strife and debate, and to strike with the fist of wickedness. You shall not fast as you do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house? When you see the naked, that you cover him; and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily: and your righteousness shall go before you; the Glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.”

It is a very pleasing sign when people like to go up to the House of God. I do not know of a more beautiful sight than the present congregation, with every seat occupied, and some people even willing to stand to hear the Word preached! There are many who would give all they have to see such a sight! How sad is the opposite of this! An empty place of worship—people loafing about at home all the Sabbath, not caring to listen to the eternal Truth of God—that is a very melancholy state of things. We take delight in seeing persons anxious to get in to hear the Word.

I know that there are some here who would not be absent from the assembly of God's people on any account. When they are ill, their Sabbaths are always dull to them. And if they go into the country, they seem to miss the opportunity of hearing the Gospel as they have been accustomed to hear it. All this is most pleasant and most delightful, yet remember that

there may be nothing at all in it! This congregation will soon scatter and break up—and when it is divided into its separate particles and nothing is left of it—it may come to pass that nothing will be left of it in another sense, that is, that there will be no result whatever from our meeting together. As I said in the prayer, it may be just one big wave breaking on the shore, dying away and leaving nothing behind. I pray God that it may not be so.

Yet, my dear Friends, you who are the most regular hearers of the Word and who have been so from your childhood, you need to be warned that the mere hearing of the Gospel will not save you! Yes, and the continuous hearing of it may increase your responsibility and do nothing more! If you are hearers, only, it may come to pass that, at the last, you will have heard for the worse, not for the better, for the only record that will remain of all those Sundays and of all those sermons, will be that you have just so many times willfully hardened your neck and continued in rebellion against the tender mercy of God!

What I am going to do, tonight, is not so much to preach Christ, though I trust I shall not fail to do *that*, as to deal with different classes of hearers and to show the difference that there is between those who hear without acceptance and without profit, and those who hear so as to please God—those whose hearing becomes a *part of worship*, those who hear desiring benefit for themselves, and whose hearing becomes a saving act—for faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God!

While I try to draw a few distinctions, not occupying too much of your time upon any one of them, I invite every person here to examine himself, whether he is in the faith. I invite every hearer to put himself into the crucible to see what is his true condition in the sight of God. Never mind your neighbor—let him use his own ears for himself—you use your ears for yourself just now. Better still, let each one of us go to the Lord with the Psalmist's prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

I. First, THERE ARE SOME WHO GET NO GOOD OUT OF THE HEARING OF THE GOSPEL BECAUSE THEIR HEARING IS SOON FOLLOWED BY FORGETTING. It is true that they hear and, for a time, they hear it with considerable attention. But it is only for a time. They regard the exercise of hearing as being confined to the time which the sermon occupies and, with some, the shorter that time is, the better they like the discourse! When the sermon is over, it is done with as far as they are concerned. They may happen to remember that they were at such a place, on such a day, and heard a sermon from such a text—but that is all that they remember. They are glad that the preacher's words should drop as the dew, and distil as the rain—but they like it to be like the rain when it trickles off the leaf of the plant and leaves no mark—or like the dew which is exhaled before ever the sun is up. They do not want to have any *abiding* result from the hearing of the Word. It is a temporary thing with them. I was going to say it is a *trumpery* thing with them. They hear the preacher's message, the service is over and, at the door of the sanctuary they leave behind everything that they have gathered there—in fact, they have really gathered *nothing*.

Now, it is not so with the profitable hearer. He says to himself, "That which I am about to hear, today, is God's Word. My Soul, take heed that you retain it and lay it by in store! You are listening to a Gospel which is the wonder of the ages. You are hearing of mysteries which angels desire to look into. You are hearing the story of God sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, that He might redeem men from going down into the Pit. Now, my Soul, hear for eternity!" Ask that the impression made upon you shall last in life, in death and be seen at the Day of Judgment to be a saving, enduring, sanctifying impression upon you. Oh, that men felt that to come to hear the Gospel is not like going to the market to hear goods cried, or going to an auction to hear an estate set forth and extolled, or attending a lecture to listen to what was done in the rocks in the ages past, or what is going on in the stars that glitter in the heavens! These are all things that will pass away!

We are come together to hear about God, Heaven, Hell, the soul, eternity, immortality, the Judgment, the eternal rewards—everlasting life and the everlasting doom—eternal death! Here is something worth the hearing. I sometimes think that I have no need to fret myself about how I put these things before my hearers, for if men were in their senses, they would naturally want to know the truth about their souls and, knowing that, in whatever language it was put, they would be quite content. If there were a lecture, tomorrow evening, upon how to make 500 pounds a day—if a man could tell you how to do *that* and yet he spoke in broken English, you would be quite satisfied so long as you could put in practice what he was teaching you!

And when we are teaching men the way to Heaven, the way to peace with God, the way to get sin pardoned and the heart renewed, it ought not to matter how we deliver the message—the news, itself, ought to be so precious that men would be glad to hear it even though we stuttered and stammered it out! Alas, it is not so. But it would be so if all men were the right kind of hearers! Wrong hearers belong to the Slate Club—they write on a slate what they hear and then wipe it all off. But the Christian hearer has the Gospel message "engraved as in eternal brass" and it abides with him world without end.

II. Next, THERE ARE SOME WHOSE HEARING IS THE HEARING OF MAN—NOT THE LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF GOD. Dear Friends, if you go into some places of worship where the preacher does not believe that the Word of God is Inspired, you may listen to him or not as you like. He has no claim on your attention if what he preaches has not, "Thus says the Lord," at the back of it. You have as much right to require *him* to listen *to you* as he has to expect you to listen to him! He has to tell you and he will tell you his latest thoughts, his freshest inventions, his most novel excogitations. Well, you may throw them over the wall and have done with them, if you like. If he is a learned and clever man, you may attach to what he says the importance which you ought to attach to the words of a clever man, but you are not required to pay any more attention than that to anything that he has to say!

But if we plead with you that what we read to you is God's Word, every syllable of it, and that what we preach, if it is not taken from God's Word is nothing, that its only weight and force lie in this, that we deliver the In-

spired Truth of God, putting it into our own language, but still giving you the Truth as far as we know it, as a Revelation from God, then at your own peril will you refuse it! These gentlemen who, themselves, deny the Inspiration of the Book of God, thereby renounce all claim upon your attention except such as you like to give to your fellow men. But if a man can say, "Thus says the Lord," and the Lord has sent him in the power of His Spirit and by His anointing, to deliver His Gospel as the Gospel of God and not the Gospel of man, then I pray you to give an earnest and a diligent heed to the things that you hear lest by any means you should let them slip!

We are nothing of ourselves, but if we deliver God's message, that message is everything, and we can say to our hearers, with deep solemnity, "How shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation?" If this is what God really speaks to you, then woe unto you if you will not hear it! And if this is in very truth an Inspired message from Heaven, then shall you be blessed if you hear it, for it is written, "Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live." It makes all the difference between hearer and hearer whether you are hearing God or hearing only a man! If you hear the sermon as the word of man, it shall be the word of man to you and do you no good. But if you hear it as the Word of God—if you search your Bibles to see whether these things are so and if, finding them to be God's Word, you receive them, and tremble at them, and do honor to them as coming from God—then they are able to save your souls and they *will* save your souls! Oh, my dear Hearers, this may not seem a great point, but it is a truly essential one! Here we may divide our hearers. They who hear the Gospel as God's voice, *hear it to live*—and they who hear it as the mere lecture of man, *hear it in vain*!

III. Let me draw another line of distinction, a pretty clear one, too. THERE ARE SOME WHO WILL HEAR THAT WHICH PLEASES THEM, BUT THEY WILL NOT HEAR THAT WHICH TRIES THEM. I know my hearers pretty well by this time. There is one who likes good sound doctrine and if you preach doctrine to him, he says, "Oh, ah, that is delicious!" Give him a precept. "Ugh!" he says, "I do not like *that*, you know. I never care much about duties." You are a bad hearer—and you will get no blessing out of it. There is another man who likes to hear about the practical part of Christianity. He belongs to the Ethical Society, but if you give him Scriptural teaching about the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, he grinds his teeth and he is ready to turn on his heels and depart in a rage. That is not the kind of hearer whom God will accept, or who will get any good out of what he hears. There are some hearers who like a sermon when it just brushes their fur the right way. "Oh!" they say, "that is the right sort of preacher for us! Those are our sentiments. Now we can go on as we have been going. See what excuses he makes for us? He will allow us to be Christians and worldlings, too. That is the kind of preacher we like, one of your liberal sort."

But the true hearer says to himself, "I do not ask to be pleased. Give me the man who just tells me the Truth of God though it vexes me at the time that I hear it." I do not need a doctor of the sort that says, "Oh, my dear Sir, there is very little, indeed, the matter with you! You need just a week's rest and change, and then you will be all right"—all the while

knowing that you have a deadly and incurable disease upon you. Do you think that such a man deserves his guinea from the patient he is deceiving? Give me the doctor who examines me through and through, who finds out to the best of his knowledge what ails me, and then deals with me like an honest man, not trying to make out that I am better than I am, but who tells me what my disease really is, and treats me for what he knows is wrong! Oh, yes, God's ministers are not sent to please men! We are not sent to tickle itching ears, but to drive the sword of God's Spirit into the hearts of men, for He says, "Therefore have I hewed them by the Prophets; I have slain them by the words of My mouth."

God's Prophets are rough hewers. They come with the axe and with the rod. They come not to fiddle while you dance, nor to blow the trumpet to tell you of a victory won without fighting. Ah, Sirs, you are bad hearers if you cannot hear that which rasps you, that which stings you, but which is honest Truth of God and is meant to make you repent of your sins! Give me not the man who makes me merry, but the man who makes me penitent! Not the man who sends me home filled with a fine conceit of myself, but the man who, whatever *I think of him*, makes me think *badly of myself* and brings me to my knees to seek mercy through Jesus Christ my Savior! This point reveals a great difference among hearers, does it not?

IV. Now, there is another class, with whom I would deal next, namely, **THOSE WHO ALWAYS WANT TO HEAR SOMETHING NEW.** We have in London a sort of flying camp of people who always turn up when there is anything fresh. Every new man gets a congregation for a time out of these celestial gypsies, that put up their tents on every common. You know this sort of people. If there is a new thing cried up, they are after it. There will be another novelty in six months' time and they will be after that just as eagerly. They are always looking out for something fresh. Did you ever grow any fruit trees? If so, did your gardener ever recommend that they should be transplanted every six months? If so, the apple chamber may be as small as you like! That kind of hearer, who first hears this, and then hears that, and then hears the other, and after that a fourth, and a fifth, and a sixth thing and always likes the last new toy best, is a baby to begin with, and he remains a baby to the end of the chapter! No, give me the Truth of God that I knew as a boy, and fed upon, then, and let me feed upon it, still!

As I said this morning, the true Israelite was as well fed on the manna after 40 years as he was at the first. It is the mixed multitude that needs the quails and something else, but the heir of Canaan, the true Israelite, is satisfied to eat the bread that came down from Heaven. He needs nothing better. He knows that there cannot be anything better. His prayer is, "Lord, give us this bread forevermore." Do I address any here who go about from one place to another in this style? You sheep that never stop in one pasture, how will you ever fatten? How will you ever grow spiritually strong? Besides, I think your conduct shows that you do not know the great secret, after all. If you did, you would be of his mind who said, "The old is better" and, having tasted that, you would keep to it even to the end!

V. Let me draw another line of distinction. **THERE ARE SOME HEARERS WHOSE HEARING IS ALL FOR THE ELOQUENCE OF THE**

SPEAKER—NOT FOR THE SUBSTANCE OF THAT WHICH IS SPOKEN. That comes home to some of you, I know. If a man can speak thoroughly well, and is a man of fluent utterance, a man of dramatic action, a man who makes the subject alive before your eyes, *that* is the preacher whose words you will remember! And he may preach any doctrine he likes, or no doctrine at all—that is not the point. Why, surely, you are like stupid people who will go to a shop because it is such a handsome shop, no matter what is sold in it! It may be utter rubbish and your money may be all wasted, but then it is such a pretty shop, is it not? Why, you good housewives know better than to do that! Many a man has a pretty shop, but his wares are bad—buy not from him, I pray you! We do not need, on the few Sundays that we have, the few days which we have to live, and with death so near—and judgment so tremendous—to go to the House of God merely to have primroses and pretty flowers presented to us by the preacher!

Oh, for God's sake, put your flowers away! These souls are being damned! Come to close grips with them, Sir! Show them the way to Heaven and leave your flowers until they get there! And then they will not care for your tawdry, artificial eloquence! The only eloquence that is worth having is that of the *heart*—that which comes straight up from the soul of a man and he speaks well because he speaks out of his heart! O Sirs, I charge you, do not so insult the God of Heaven as to spend His Sabbath in merely listening to big words and fine oratory! What is this but to turn the Chapel into a theater and to make the preacher to be a mere performer? I had rather use market language and be as vulgar as vulgarity, itself, and carry souls to Heaven, than be a very Demosthenes, or a Cicero, and leave men's hearts untouched! Alas, that there are hearers to whom the words are everything and the sense is nothing!

VI. I will draw another line, helping you at the same time to draw one for yourself. **THERE ARE MANY WHO HEAR THE GOSPEL, BUT DO NOT HEAR IT FOR THEMSELVES.** They hear it as people look at a picture. You know what we do with it—we stand and look at the foreground, and judge as to the distance, and the side lights, and the perspective and so on. (I do not know much about the terms of painting). And we just say, "That is a very beautiful view, that piece, of water yonder, that wood, those trees, the cattle, all are very pretty." Is not that how many people hear sermons? "Under the first head, did you notice so-and-so?" Or, "Under the second head, did you observe what the preacher said?" "When he came to that point, I thought it was rather well-turned." "I did not like so much that observation toward the close of the sermon—I thought that was rather rough."

Yes, you see, you are judging the discourse as if it were a painting! That is all it is to you—but is this what it was meant to be? No, the true hearer looks into the Word of God as into a glass in which he may see himself as he really is. And when he sees himself in that glass, he says, "I did not know that I had that spot over the left eye. I was not aware that I had that blotch on my forehead. I must go and wash and be cleansed." It is well to hear a discourse that makes you see yourself as you are in God's sight.

Many, when they hear a sermon, say, "I wonder how So-and-So would feel that sermon." What have you to do with him? Lend anything that you have to spare, but do not lend your ears! They will never come home so

sound as when you lent them out. Keep your ears for your own use and let the Truth of God go home to your own heart, for this, and this only, is the kind of hearing that will ever save the soul! When you, yourself, hear for yourself, then you may yourself get right with God and live by faith in Christ Jesus!

VII. Now I will mention a point which, I am afraid, will come home to a very large number now present. THERE IS AMONG HEARERS TOO MUCH OF UNPREPARED HEARING. I will tell you what I mean. The man comes fresh from the shop. That I do not mind, but perhaps he comes in fresh from care, from anger, from quarrelling, from the use of unhallowed language. And he comes in to hear the Word of God with his ears stopped up. Now, the right way to hear so as to get a blessing is to hear with *prayer*, to come up to hear what God the Lord shall speak, praying all the while, "O God, bless the message to my soul! Send me strength, tonight, through some part of what is said or sung that I may really be fit to hear Your Word. Prepare me, for the preparation of the heart is from You. Make me like a plot of plowed land that, when the seed falls upon me, I may receive it and bring forth a harvest."

Now, my dear Hearers, do you think that we really prepare ourselves enough for the hearing of the Word of God? Do you not think that we lose a great blessing because we do not come prepared to hear what God the Lord will say unto us? I have sometimes been greatly rejoiced when I have seen the numbers of persons who have been brought to Christ by my preaching, but I have always taken a very large discount off anything like praise that I might give to myself, for I have said, "Why, those people, as a rule, come on purpose to hear me!" When I have preached in the country, the people have come there on purpose to hear and have had almost to fight to get in—and they have made up their minds that they are going to hear something that they need to hear and something that will be a blessing to them—and they have sat with their mouths wide open, taking in every word. Of course, anybody can open oysters when they open their shells, themselves. When people come *prepared*, then it is that their hearts are readily reached. But when people come prejudiced, with their shells tightly shut up. When they do not mean to hear, do they wonder that no good comes to them through the discourse? How could it? Only by a wonderful act of the sovereignty of Divine Grace could they expect to get a blessing.

VIII. There is a further distinction that I must mention. THERE ARE MANY WHO COME TO GOD'S HOUSE TO HEAR FROM A LOW MOTIVE and such do not usually get a blessing. Some come from a very base motive. We have known some come that they may catch up a word with which they may find fault. Oh, dear Hearts, if you need to find fault with me, you need not listen but for five minutes! I shall always give you plenty of opportunity and let me tell you another thing, I shall not fret if you find the opportunity. It will not, in the least degree, trouble me. I would rather that you should find fault than that you should be quite indifferent. If you will only let the Word enter your hearts, you may do what you will with me—kick me, if you like—only mind that you get to Heaven! There are some who make a man an offender for a word. They turn over all the basket of fish and because there is one that does not smell quite sweet, they

cry it all over the market. That is their style of acting towards the preacher. They would not like to be dealt with in that way, themselves. It is a base motive altogether.

Some come from another motive. There is one here, tonight. He has come up to see his brother. He does not generally go to a place of worship, but John said to him, "William, come to the Tabernacle with me, tonight." He does not like to offend John and so he comes. Another young man has come because there is a young woman who comes here. I am not going to blame him for that, but still, it is not an honorable motive for going to hear the Word of God. Another has come to see the Tabernacle, to look at the building. And another has heard that the preacher is such a strange man. He will come to see what he is really like. That is a poor motive. Many of you come because, well, you have only come here because your mother comes here. You come because it is the custom and the habit—and you would not like to become perpetual Sabbath breakers, forsaking the assembling of yourselves together. If that is all you come for, you will get it, and it is nothing. But if you come to hear the Word, saying, "I come to weigh it, to see whether it is God's Word, and if it is, I will follow it. If it comes to me with the power of the Holy Spirit, commending itself to my conscience, I will obey it, I will yield to it, for I need to find salvation through the Word of God, and I come with that intention"—I do not believe you will come a dozen times, any one of you, to hear the Gospel with a view of finding Christ in it, but what you will find Him! "He that seeks, finds."

IX. I must draw yet another distinction and that is, that MANY COME TO HEAR THE WORD, BUT AFTER HAVING HEARD IT, THERE IS NO IMPROVEMENT IN THEM. One of our Brethren told me, just now, that a friend in the market said to him, "Do you always hear Mr. Spurgeon?" "Yes," he answered, "I have heard him these 25 years." The other said, "Then you ought to be a good fellow." "Well," I said, "he did not say you were a good fellow, did he? "No, but he said I *ought* to be." If you have heard the Gospel for 25 years, you ought to be a good fellow. If it is the Word of God that you have heard—and you have not improved by it—surely you are becoming like that fig tree that brought forth no fruit. At last the mandate went forth, "Cut it down, why cumberest thou the ground?" But, alas, there are many who hear the Word for years, but are none the better for all their hearing.

X. Lastly, THERE ARE SOME PERSONS WHO DO NOT HEAR TO PROFIT BECAUSE THEY DO NOT BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. You have not accepted the Christ who has been preached. You have heard about faith, but you have not believed. You have heard about repentance, but you have never repented. What do you come for, if you never make any practical use of what you hear? Why do you come? A man keeps a shop on the Causeway and you go into the shop when he opens it on Monday. You go up and down, look at all the things, and go out again. Do the same on Tuesday and Wednesday, ask to see his goods, and look them all over, but do not buy anything. Try that for a week and you will get some very clear hints that you are not wanted there! If you go to a shop, you are expected to buy!

I would like to give some of you a plain hint about that matter. You have come to my shop and turned my goods over, but you have not bought anything. Is my price too high? It is, "without money, and without price," so you cannot say that! "Whoever will, let him take the water of life *freely*." Come and take the Savior and He is yours! Trust Him and you are saved! Why, would a person go to see a physician and go often, and pay his guinea, as some of you pay your pew-rents, and yet never take the medicine, never get the prescriptions made up—but just get the directions—and then neglect them? It is absurd! Such a man as that must be a fool!

I will not say that anybody *here* is a fool, but I do not know what else he is if he understands what he must do to escape from the wrath to come and yet never does! This line is a very clear and distinct one and I wish that we might cross it, tonight, if we have never before crossed it. Cross the line by decision for Christ! That is the point. You have heard aright if you have found Christ! You have heard for nothing if you have not found Him. If you have looked to Him upon the Cross, you have heard to your eternal profit, for he that looks to Him shall live! If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you are born of God! If you are trusting yourself wholly to Him, you have eternal life, for he that believes in Him has everlasting life! But if you believe not in Christ, you might as well have heard the noise of Cheapside as have heard the sound of the Gospel! You might as well have heard the toll of the drum at the barracks as have listened to the proclamation of Jesus Christ, for all the good that it will ever bring to you.

Now hear God's message to every one of you, tonight, you who have not yet believed—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house." God help you to do it, for His dear love's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.
LUKE 13:6-30.**

Verse 6. *He spoke also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.* It was a fig tree, a fruit-bearing tree by profession, so it ought to have borne fruit. It was planted. It was not a wild tree, it was *planted* in a vineyard, in the proper place for fig trees to grow, in good soil and, therefore, the owner of it had a right to come and look for fruit on it. But he found none. Have we not here, tonight, some who are planted in the Church of God who ought, by their profession, to be bearing fruit, but they are not? Christ has come and He has looked for fruit. But He has found none.

7. *Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I came seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumberst thou the ground?* The owner seems to say, "If I had not found fruit the first year, I should have thought that the season was unfavorable. If I had found no fruit the second year, I might have thought that, perhaps, the tree was a little out of condition and would come round again. But when I come for three years, and three years consecutively, and I find no

fruit, then it is clear that the fig tree is a barren one! Why should it stay here and spoil the soil, occupy the place that a good fig tree might have occupied and take away the nutriment from other trees?" So if, after many years, some of you have brought forth no fruit, God may well complain about *you*. You are eating the bread that might have nourished a saint. You are occupying a place in which your influence is injurious to others. Others do less because you do nothing. I pray the Holy Spirit to bring this home to the conscience of any barren professor whom it may concern, lest the command should go forth, "Cut it down; why cumberest thou the ground?"

8, 9. *And he answering said unto him, Sir, let it alone this year, also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bears fruit, well: and if not, then after that you shall cut it down.* Even the vinedresser's pleading has a limit—"Give it one more year." He admits that the time must come for the axe to cut down the tree that is fruitless. The cumber-ground tree cannot stand forever—it is unreasonable that it should. And you cannot be permitted to live forever in sin—you cannot be allowed to taint the air with blasphemy for another 50 years. There must come an end to such a life as yours and that end may come very soon. The edge of the axe is sharp and the hand that wields it is strong. Beware, O barren tree!

10. *And He was teaching in one of the Synagogues on the Sabbath.* When there happened a very remarkable miracle. The parable that preceded it was a parable of judgement—the miracle that followed was a miracle of mercy and Grace.

11, 12. *And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to Him.* You can see her slowly moving along, bent double. Hers was a painful walk, but she came at Christ's call.

12, 13. *And said unto her, Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity. And He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.* See what Christ can do! After I had preached this morning, I had to speak with just such a woman as this, one who has been, for many years, the victim of deep despondency. How I wished that I could lay my hands on her and say, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity"! But we cannot work such a miracle as that. It is *Christ* who must do it all and, blessed be His name, He is always great in a pinch! Christ loves to come in at a dead lift. When we are all beaten and we have reached man's extremity, then it is Christ's opportunity! Oh, you poor despairing woman, bent double by your sadness, the Lord's hand can restore you and we pray for you, tonight, even the thousands of Israel pray for you at this moment! Lord, lay Your hand upon that poor child of infirmity!

14. *And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation.* Wretched creature, to be indignant at Christ's doing good! There is no reckoning with self-righteous people! They are mad, themselves, and they think others so.

14, 15. *Because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath. The Lord then answered him, and said, You hypocrite—*It served him right! This is just the word that would naturally come to the lips of the Savior. Because He was loving

and tender, He could not endure this hypocritical indignation—"The Lord then answered him, and said, You hypocrite."

15, 16. *Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?* A very conclusive argument. You may do deeds like this on the Sabbath and you may come and be healed on the Sabbath, even though it should involve you in a journey. It is so necessary that you should get the Bread of Heaven, so necessary that you should get the blessing of Christ, that on this day you may come and be healed.

17-19. *And when He had said these things, all His adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him. Then said He, Unto what is the Kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.* You get a little Grace, tonight. Let that Divine Man take but a grain of the mustard seed of His Grace and drop it into your heart, which He will have prepared like a garden, and there is no telling what will come of it! That sigh, that tear, that wish will grow into holiness of life and zeal of conduct! It may be but very little in its beginning, but it will grow. Both good and evil begin with very small eggs, but they grow into great things.

20. *And again He said, To what shall I liken the Kingdom of God?* Now take the bad side and see how the Kingdom of God may be perverted and injured by evil influences.

21. *It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.* That woman of Rome has hidden her leaven in the Church and it has leavened the whole—and now the woman of intellect has put her leaven into the Church. Conceited self-invention of new doctrines, perversion of the simplicity of the Gospel—that kind of leaven has been hidden in the meal of the Church—and it is leavening the whole. God help us to keep out the leaven both of Romanism and of Rationalism!

22. *And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.* His face was toward the Cross. He was working His passage to His Sacrifice and preaching His way to that place where He should complete our redemption. This is a wonderful picture of Christ—"teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem."

23. *Then said one unto Him, Lord, are there few that are saved?* What business is that of ours? Our business is far more practical—to be saved, ourselves, and to endeavor to be the means of saving others! Jesus did not answer the question—He did what was better.

23, 24. *And He said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.* You can get into the broad road without striving. But you must, "*strive to enter in at the strait gate.*" Strive for that which requires self-denial, that which humbles you, that which goes against the grain, that which is not according to human nature. Do not imagine that Divine Grace is to be had while you are half asleep and that Heaven is to be gained on a feather bed.

Strive, strive, for many will seek in vain to enter! Seeking is not enough! It must come to a holy violence—"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." When will that be? That will be when you are in another state.

25. *When once the master of the house is risen up, and has shut the door, and you begin to stand outside, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us.* They will be very respectful. They will call him, "Lord." They will be very earnest. They will pray, "Lord, Lord." They will be very simple and very honest in their request—"Open unto us." They will be very personal—"Open unto us." Such will the prayers of the ungodly be when they wake up to the fact that they are shut out of Heaven!

25-26. *And He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not who you are: then shall you begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in Your Presence, and you have taught in our streets.* They came to the Communion Table. They used to hear sermons indoors and out of doors. "You have taught in our streets."

27. *But He shall say, I tell you, I know you not who you are; depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.* They shall be judged by their works. If they were workers of iniquity, it proved that they were unrenewed and unsaved. Christ will not endure their company but will say to them, "Depart from Me."

28. *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets, in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.* You who thought that you had a share in the Kingdom of God, and were, by birth, the natural heirs of it—"You yourselves thrust out."

29, 30. *And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.* The least likely to be saved shall be saved! The blackest sinners, the vilest outcasts, the grossest unbelievers shall be brought to repentance and faith and shall be saved! While those who were first in privileges, children of godly parents, professors of religion. Those who appeared in every way likely to be first saved, will be left to the last, and be shut out of the Kingdom of God, never to enter. God grant, in His infinite mercy, that nobody in the Tabernacle, tonight, may be of that unhappy number! Amen.

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A HAPPY CHRISTIAN

NO. 736

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

“And the Lord shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones; and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.”
Isaiah 58:11.

IT is very important that our preaching should sometimes give descriptions of Christians in an unhealthy and sickly state. So many are in this condition that when we describe their symptoms they may discover themselves, and by Divine Grace be led to desire escape from it. The proper remedies being pointed out, and the Christian being earnestly exhorted to the use of them, I am quite sure that such ministry as describes the unhealthy state of the Christian's experience will be found useful. But I have sometimes thought—and I think you will, some of you, have noticed the same thing—that such preaching as continually dwells upon inward corruption and the innate baseness of the heart is very apt to lead men to think that it must always be so with them. The prevalence of unbelief, depression of spirit, backsliding and indifference to heavenly things becomes chronic, and they grow so familiar with reflecting upon it that they regard it as a state in which a Christian man may well be *content*.

Now, when men come to think so, such ministry has done them a serious injury. When they flatter themselves that they outstrip their fellows in the humiliating experience of their own sinful passions. When they grow proud of those things which should cause them shame and begin to look down upon others who talk of holy joys and gracious liberties as mere recruits in the army of which they are the veterans, then I say that the ministry has been poison to them and the descriptions of carnal and devilish lusts they have listened to have fostered a wretched imagination! Instead of urging them to fight *against* sin, the sermons they have heard have only been rocking the cradle of their sloth, sewing pillows to their armholes, and saying to them, in some degree, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace.

It is not so popular a thing to do, but it is better in its influence to frequently hold up before the eye of the Christian the portrait of a Believer in a *healthy* state—to let all who belong to the Church understand that it is not necessary that we should be weak in faith, or that our hands should hang down, and our bones be feeble. There is a holier, happier, and more exalted state of triumphant faith, of sweet communion, and of hallowed earnestness! And such a state *is* attainable, no, it ought to be attained by *all* Christians! And when attained it ought to be their constant ambition

never to backslide from it. Having once been placed upon the high mountain by a Divine hand, they should ever pray to be kept there, to the praise and glory of the Grace of God.

We cherish a hope this evening, that by means of this text we may be able to give an humble portrait of what the Christian is in his happiest times! When the candle of the Lord shines round about him! When the visitations of the Holy Spirit refresh him, and when he rejoices in God with all his heart! Will you please observe in what connection this sunny sketch of prosperity occurs? It is set in a frame that excites the strong prejudice of some professing Christians. The setting is a framework of *duties*. You will perceive that the blessings are not promised to every Christian unconditionally, but it is fenced in with terms: “If you *do* this, and if you *do* that, then shall such-and-such blessings be yours.”

We are told that the heart is to be drawn from evil and that the soul is to be purged from the love of oppression, ostentation, and hypocrisy. There is to be a true and holy fast kept before the Lord, the soul being humbled and brought down to seek the Lord according to the spirit of righteousness, and not merely after the letter of the ordinances. Then, and not till then, shall the blessings here promised be enjoyed. Though salvation is of Divine Grace, the *happiness* of the Christian does depend upon his *obedience*.

Our ultimate safety is of Sovereign Grace. No man shall exceed me in the plain declaration that in this respect *works* of any sort cannot touch our salvation! We are saved upon another footing than that of our *personal* graces. But it is quite as plainly the teaching of Holy Scripture that answers to prayer, the enjoyment of the Presence of God and a healthy state of spirit are very much dependent upon our cautious walking and our holy obedience to the Divine will. There is an “if” here, and should any of us neglect and despise it, and fancy that we can still have our souls like “watered gardens,” it will not be long before we shall find out our mistake!

Suppose, however, dear Friends, that by Divine Grace we have been brought into communion with God. Suppose we have been clothed in the sackcloth of true penitence before Him, and girded with the garments of salvation. Suppose it has been our desire, as in God’s sight, to walk as becomes the saints. Suppose, I say, we have been enabled by Grace—and it cannot be otherwise—to keep ourselves “unspotted from the world”—then that same Spirit who has sanctified us will, I am sure, fulfill to us the promises of the text.

I must, therefore, address myself to those who are living in the faith and are walking conformably to their profession while I depict their happy state. Five distinct features of their felicity are mentioned. They are described as enjoying perpetual *guidance*, inward *satisfaction*, *spiritual health*, flourishing *fruitfulness*, and *unfailing* freshness of *supply*.

I. These people who are thus full of God’s Spirit are described as possessing CONTINUAL GUIDANCE. “The Lord shall guide you continually.”

There come to them, as to other men, dilemmas in Providence. Walking along the road of life you may suddenly reach a turn—two roads meet. Which is the way? Is it to the right hand or to the left? Possibly both may appear to be equally right. You ask friends or neighbors. They will readily enough mislead you with the best intentions. You consult your own heart, and if you follow *its* counsels you will discover yourself to be a fool! But, if your heart is true, and God's Grace is flourishing in your soul, you will not be long held in the dilemma.

You will take the case before God. You will say as David did, "Bring here the ephod," and your Urim and your Thummim shall be with the Holy One and you shall hear a voice behind you saying, "This is the way, walk you in it." It may be Providence will block up one of the two roads and point to the other. Or your judgment being further enlightened, you shall see that the one is right and the other wrong. Or, perhaps some stress shall be put upon your soul so that, though you hardly know why, you will feel that you *must* choose the right and leave the wrong. There are no dilemmas out of which you shall not be delivered if you live near to God and your heart is kept warm with holy love. He goes not amiss who goes in the company of God! Like Enoch, walk with God and you cannot mistake your road.

The path of *doctrine*, also, is sometimes difficult. He who understands Divine Truth will, I am sure, be led to confess that he does not know everything. It is only the man who knows nothing about the Truth of God that thinks he can twist the doctrines around his finger and in a moment tell what is orthodox and what is heterodox. The true disciple of Jesus Christ often approaches a statement of the revealed Word with awe and reverence, desiring to ascertain what is the mind of God about it. A Truth often so nearly verges upon an error that the path is as narrow as a razor's edge, and only the Spirit of God can lead a man there.

There is a path which the eagle's eye has not seen, the penetration of intellect cannot discover, the lion's whelp has not trodden—all the force of a man's mind has not been able to lead him into it—but if we wait upon God, He will show us the way! I believe that a *spiritual* mind is an orthodox mind. There is not much fear of our embracing any serious errors in the head when the *heart* is not in error, for there it is that heresies are born and bred—in that witch's caldron of our heart! Let the heart be constantly kept at the foot of the Cross, and let the Holy Spirit bedew it with His sacred influence, and though we may for a little time, through our lack of mental capacity, fail to understand the Truth, it will not be for long. The Holy Spirit will lead us into all Truth, and thus the text shall be fulfilled, "The Lord shall guide you continually," whether as relating to matters of Providence or to matters of doctrinal instruction.

So shall it be likewise in matters of spiritual *experience*. Our experience often seems to be as though it had no rule. There is method in some men's *madness*, but it does appear as if there were no method in our *ex-*

perience. Today we are on the mountain, blessed of God with full assurance. Tomorrow we are in the glens beneath the dark shadow, wondering why, and asking if God has forgotten to be gracious. As when a child on a slate draws zigzag lines everywhere, but straight lines nowhere, so has it seemed with our life—as if we were farther back now than when we started! Our path has been like that of Israel in the wilderness, when the Lord led them about—but yet it is added that He *guided* them and *instructed* them.

Brethren, if we are enabled by Divine Grace to seek close and vital union with Christ, and to live upon Him daily and continually, we may rest assured that whether our experience is gloomy or delightful, whether our inward conflicts or joys or sorrows, He will still be at the helm and will guide us continually. As I turned over this sentence I could not help feeling that it was like a wafer made of honey! It is all honey! “The Lord shall guide you.” Not an angel, but JEHOVAH shall guide you! He said He would not go through the wilderness before His people—an angel should go before them to lead them in the way. But Moses said, “If Your Presence go not with us, carry us not up from here.”

Christian, God has not left you in your earthly pilgrimage to an angel’s guidance! He Himself will lead the van! You may not see the cloudy, fiery pillar, but Jehovah shall never forsake you. Jehovah shall guide you continually. Notice the word *shall*—“The Lord *shall* guide you.” How certain this makes it! How sure it is that God will not forsake us! His precious “shalls” and “wills” are better than men’s oaths. “I will never leave nor forsake you.” In one place He puts in five negatives, “I will not leave you; I will never, never, never, forsake you.”—

***“The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes.
That soul, though all Hell should endeavor to shake,
I’ll never, no never, no never forsake.”***

Then observe that adverb “continually.” We are not to be guided only *sometimes*, but we are to have a *perpetual* Monitor. Not occasionally to be left to our own understanding, and so to wander—but we are continually to hear the guiding voice of the Great Shepherd!

And as we follow close at His heels we shall not err, but be led by a right way to a city to dwell in. You have been, perhaps, in a maze and you know how difficult it is to find your way to the center. But sometimes there is one perched aloft who sees the whole of the maze spread out before him like a map, and he calls out to you to turn either to the right or to the left. And if you attend to his directions you soon find the way. Even so the maze of life is only a maze to *us*, but God can see it all! He who rules over all looks down upon it as men look down upon a map. And if we will but look to Him, and if our communion is constantly kept up, we shall never err, but we shall come to the goal of our hopes right speedily by following His voice.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, were this the whole of my sermon, and were I now to send you away, I think you would have heard enough if your faith can only grasp it. Never be afraid, my dear Friend, if you have to change your position in life! If you have to emigrate to distant shores. If it should happen that you are cast into poverty, or uplifted suddenly into a more responsible position than the one you now occupy—if you are thrown among strangers, or cast among foes, yet tremble not, for—“the Lord shall guide you continually.” This is more than the statesman can say with all his craftiness! This is more than all the cunning men can say who use their wits to plunder their fellows! This is more than the wisest man can say who trusts in his own judgment! You have Infallible wisdom to direct you, Immutable love to comfort you, and eternal power to defend you. “Jehovah”—mark the word—“*Jehovah* shall guide you continually.”

II. The second blessing promised in the text is one which I trust we have enjoyed, and which some of us are enjoying even now—it is INWARD SATISFACTION. “And satisfy your soul in drought.” It is a blessed thing to have the soul satisfied, for the soul is of great capacity. The whole world, someone has said, cannot fill a man’s eye, because a man’s eye can see so much. How much more, if it is the expression of his *inward* perception, is it true that the world cannot fill it? The soul is like the grave, it is never satisfied. It is like the horseleech which ever cries, “Give, give!” Lay your money-bags to your heart, and see if they will satisfy you! Your poor soul will say, “How can I be satisfied with this dull earth? What is there here to feed the soul with?”

As well bring stones to a horse, as bring gold to a soul. There is nothing for a soul to feed upon in all the pomp of kings and pride of men—these are no food for the soul! As well feed eagles upon clods, as hope to feed immortal souls upon anything that is earth-born. The soul needs more than all this! But the Christian has what his soul wants. He has, in the first place, a removal of all that which marred his peace, blighted his prospects, and made his soul empty and hungry. His sin is pardoned! He is reconciled to God! He is at peace with the Most High! The soul is never satisfied till it can place its head in the bosom of the Great Father of Spirits, and this the Christian can do.

He is satisfied with God’s dispensations. He believes that the present will work for his good and the future, too, even as the past has done. He is satisfied with God’s love. It is a rich feast to him to know that God loves him. It is an infinite joy to the Christian to believe that he is one with Christ. That he is accepted in and through Jesus. That he is a member of His body and is united to Him—part of His flesh and of His bones. It is a satisfaction to the Christian to know that the Holy Spirit dwells in him, and that his body is a temple for the indwelling of Deity. He is satisfied with promises that can never be broken, with covenants that can never be violated, with oaths that stand fast like mountains, and with the Words of God which are great as the fathomless sea. He is satisfied with his God.

The consequence of such a satisfaction as this is that the Christian is as well-satisfied at one time as at another if his soul is right. You see, the text says that he shall be satisfied in times of drought. Louth, I believe, translates the word, “severest droughts.” The word seems to apply to places constantly subject to lack of moisture, as well as seasons exceptionally dry. Yet it is in the *plural*—the Hebrew plural being used to intensify as well as to multiply, so that it really reads thus: “In the worst times of distress the Christian is still satisfied.”

There are some houses in London which would tumble down if you were to remove those on either side that help to support them, but there are other houses which are self-contained. You might pull all the houses in the parish down if you liked, but it would not hurt them. Now, the most of men in this world are like houses in a row—they lean, one upon another. They are kept up by carnal comforts. But the Christian is self-sustained, and does not lean upon any arm of flesh. You ask, “What about his wealth?” He is rich in faith, and if all his property were gone he would still say, “I have not lost my God!”

“But what about his family?” Well, he loves them, and if they were taken away he would weep as other men weep—no, he would weep, but not as other men would weep—I may correct myself—for he would say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” He would still feel that he had not lost his Elder Brother. That he had not lost his heavenly Father. And that he was not an orphan in the world. “Well, but how about his health?” Well, he prizes that, but if pains of body distress him and he should be stretched upon a sick bed, he has a little secret which he cannot tell you, but which he knows himself, and which enables him to be more healthy when he is sick than he is when he is in health!

And he can sing God’s praises more sweetly, sometimes, in a cage of ill health than he did when he was in the open field of vigor! For many of God’s birds sing best in cages, fly best when their wings are broken, get nearest to Heaven when they are rolled right down to the earth, and discern most of God, and see most of Him when they have lost the tokens of His love. You know we can see many things in the dark which we cannot see in the light. I question, indeed, whether we do not see even *more* in the dark than we do in the light—that is to say, we can see all those starry worlds, those unnumbered orbs floating in distant space—we can see them when the light is gone, but we cannot see them by day. So, when outward lights are taken away, the Christian often perceives more instead of less, through the inward light and the light of Heaven which God is pleased to give him.

Is it not a blessed thing, dear Friends, to have a heavenly constitution, a satisfaction which does not depend upon outward circumstances? To be satisfied in times of plenty, why, any fool can do that! But to be satisfied in days of *drought*—this is the Christian’s privilege, for he can say, “Al-

though the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

When the rancher walks out among his cattle, and sees them all in good health, and promising a good return—a fine investment for his labors—it is very easy for him to say, “Bless the Lord!” But when the cattle plague comes and empties all his stalls, and there are great heaps out in the field to show where the cattle are all buried, and there has been no compensation for them—how now, rancher? Can you now praise God and be satisfied in times of drought? And you, Friend, when you are in good full employment, and wages are high, and the house is well-furnished, and the cupboard is full—it is very easy, then, for you to kneel down at family prayer and thank God for His kindness.

But how about when the husband is sick, when the funds have got very low, and when the little children look at their father wondering where the next meal will come from? To be satisfied even then that it is all right! Oh this is a grand thing! This is just the mark of difference between the Christian and the worldling. The worldling blesses God while He gives him plenty, but the Christian blesses Him when He smites him! The Christian believes God to be too wise to err and too good to be unkind! He trusts Him where he cannot trace Him. He looks up to Him in the darkest hour, and believes that all is well.

O Christian, if your heart is right, you will understand this spiritual satisfaction, and your soul will be satisfied in times of drought!

III. The next blessing is SPIRITUAL HEALTH AND HAPPINESS. “And make fat your bones.” Note the figure. It is not “make fat your *flesh*.” I am anything but sure that that would be a blessing in any sense. Certainly it is rather baneful than blessed, understanding it metaphorically, for when Jeshurun waxed fat he kicked. Sometimes abundance in earthly things makes poverty in heavenly things. External richness and strength are often the signs of weakness in the inner man.

But fatness here is to be upon the man’s hardest and most necessary part of his frame. A man is really built up when his bones, the solid pillars of the house of his manhood, have been strengthened. Vigor has been put into his constitution where it was most required. His bones have been renovated and made strong. Oh, it is a grand thing when the soul is thus in spiritual health, when the bones are made fat! Do you know what it means, Christian? It is when you take a promise and it is applied with power, and you can feed on it! When you take a precept and feel the strength granted, by God’s Grace, to go and fulfill it! When you turn to God’s purposes and decrees and rejoice in them, seeing that you have a fair portion in them! Or turning to God’s testimonies concerning your daily walk, you find just as much comfort in these as you did in those,

and can bless God for ability given you to *serve* as well as for power to enjoy!

I have lately read in the newspaper—I am sure I do not know whether to believe that it is true—an account of a youth in France, twenty years of age, who has been laying sleeping for a fortnight, nourished only upon a little gruel given with a spoon, and that he was in the same state a year ago for nearly a month. Whether this has actually occurred to anybody or not, I have known many cases of Christians who have hid like that spiritually, not for a fortnight only, but for a whole year! No, and not for a year only, but it is their general state. They come on Sunday and we have to feed them a little gruel with a spoon, and this lasts them till the next time there is a service.

They live on nothing but thin liquid, and as might be expected, they have no strength. If you listen to them, you will hear them saying such words as these—

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

They have no more health than that! Oh, that they could get strong! Oh, that God would make fat their bones, and then they would be able to sing Toplady’s hymn—

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

May we get out of a state of spiritual sickness, and may our bones grow fat so that we may be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might!

The figure seems to me to indicate two or three things in one. There is health here—the soul is purged from its vices, sicknesses, and unbelief, pride, sloth, and such like. There is vigor here—no lukewarmness, being neither cold nor hot, no laxity nor indifference. There is growth—the man is not stunted—he does not think that he has come to perfection, and may therefore stop where he is. His bones grow fat. Inward satisfaction seems to be couched in the figure. The man is happy, perfectly happy! He is always rejoicing. He is not lean with fretting, but fattened with the oil of joy.

Now, dear Christian Brothers and Sisters, I would earnestly ask you not to be content without the enjoyment of this blessing. The more one looks upon the world, the more one is convinced that Christian joy is, after all, Christian *strength*. Doubts and fears cut the very foundations of Christian power. Strong faith is that which wins the victory, while unbelief deprives us of all hope of conquest, and lays us groveling in the mire beneath the feet of our own very weakest foe. Oh, for more of this holy joy! I

have told you how to get it. Fulfill the conditions we referred to in the former part of this discourse and then you shall have your bones made fat.

IV. The fourth blessing is this, “AND YOU SHALL BE LIKE A WATERED GARDEN.” This figure of a garden is a very sweet and attractive one. I need not tell you how much taste may be displayed and how much pleasure may be derived from the cultivation of such plots of ground. Our fancy is soon at work to invent a picture of flower beds, and fruit trees, shady walks, and pleasant fountains laid out close to some grand mansion and opening its fairest views to the best apartments of the palace.

Such a garden needs constant care, and then, although it may be more beautiful at one season than another, it will never be like a wild heath, or totally bereft of charms. But alas, some professors of religion are not like this—there is little evidence of diligent cultivation in their character. Instead of flowers of some kind all the year round, it is hard to say that they ever show much bloom. Fruits you would never expect from them. But, dear Brethren, you know that it is a common thing for every Christian Church, whether it is a large mansion or a little villa, to have a garden surrounding it so that you may look out from the windows and see the various walks and the different plants that flourish there.

I have seen some gardens attached to small houses where the owner has portioned off little plots to each member of his family. And thus I believe the home has been made more pleasant and happy. And oh, it is always a good thing when every member of the Church has a spot to engage his heart and hands, and when they can all look with so much more satisfaction upon the tender blossoms and the full-blown flowers because they have watched and tended and watered the plants with a ministry of love. This, though, is merely a hint by the way. It is not the exact meaning of the passage before us.

Your own *soul* is to be under cultivation. The heavenly gardener shall rejoice in your bloom. An African traveler tells us that he has often seen the contrast between an unwatered garden and a watered garden, and has been much surprised at it. In the case of the watered garden there may be a spring just outside of it, and the master has diligently brought in the water every morning, or every evening. He has poured it into a trench, and made it run along, and so the plant receives the moisture, and bears fruit, forming a pleasant contrast to the arid desert outside.

But there is another garden, with similar plants, apparently selected with the same care, but as it has not been watered. The traveler says that he has frequently observed the holes where the plant should be, without a vestige of the plant that has been perceptible. There was the trench where the water should have flowed. There were the paths in the garden. There was everything except this—there was no life, because there was no water. O Christians, you know what this means! When the Holy Spirit visits God’s people, they are like a garden that is watered every day. They are

green and flourishing, and their graces are an honor to the God who nourished them.

But, if the Holy Spirit is taken away from them how different it is! If He were utterly withdrawn from us—which, thank God, He will not be—we should be just like the wilderness from which we were taken, and not a vestige of Divine Grace would remain. Christian, as all depends upon the watering of the Spirit, so make it a matter of soul-concern with you to be watered continually by God's Grace! Oh, do not trust to the stock you have, for it will fail you! Do not rely upon what your soul may find within itself as being its own wisdom and strength, or you will be deceived! Go to the Lord and pray that you may be as a watered garden—not as a garden only—but as a *watered* garden. So may each one of us do.

V. Furthermore, there is the blessing of CONTINUED STRENGTH, CONTINUED FRESHNESS, AND CONTINUED SUPPLY. “As a spring of water whose waters fail not.” There are many wells in the East which do fail, and many apparent springs which deceive the traveler. I observe that the margin has it, “whose waters *deceive* not, or *lie* not.” When a caravan comes to a well, if there is no water in it the travelers are deceived. And if the farmer should come to a reservoir and find that the water is all gone, then the reservoir has lied unto him and deceived him.

And how many a man who has appeared like a Christian has been but a mere deceiver? We looked into his conversation where there should have been a savor of godliness, but we found none. We hoped that in his actions he would be like the Master whom he professed to serve, but we saw none of that Master's likeness. We trusted that when he came into communion with the Church, he would add to its comfort and its usefulness, but he has merely added to its numbers, and has been an encumbrance upon its march. He has been a deceiver! His waters have lied to us.

Not so God's true people—they shall not deceive. They shall have so much Divine Grace that when a Christian friend expects to find Grace in them, he shall not be disappointed. He shall be refreshed by their conversation. He shall be encouraged by their holy example. A spring of water is not dependent upon anything beyond itself. Deep down in the caverns of the earth great treasures of water have been prepared by God and the spring subsists upon its own secret source. And so does the Christian! God has provided in the covenant a depth of living water! It is one of the blessings pronounced upon Israel's sons.

Christ Himself has declared that he who drinks of the water of life shall find it in him, “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” The reservoir must be filled at certain times, and then it gets dry, but the spring is filled from itself. So the Christian is not dependent upon the ordinances. He thrives upon them, but he is not dependent upon them. If, by Providence, he is denied the use of them, he has a spring *within*. No, he has a spring in the secret depths of the eternal love of God which wells up

within him at all times, so that he becomes as “a spring of water, whose waters fail not.”

I do not know how some people who believe that a Christian can fall from Grace, manage to be happy. It must be a very commendable thing in them to be able to get through a day without despair. If I did not believe the doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints, I think I should be, of all men, the most miserable because I should lack any ground of comfort. Certainly I should not be able to understand this text. I could not say whatever state of heart I came into, I should be like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

I should rather have to take the comparison of an intermittent spring that might stop on a sudden, or a reservoir which we had no reason to expect would always be full. If I speak to any Brother who has not received the doctrine of Final Perseverance, I ask him to look it once more in the face. Do you not think that when the Savior says, “But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life,” the interpretation of the figure necessitates the belief that Divine Grace is an enduring thing which cannot be destroyed?

Does not the metaphor of the text, to understand it fully, seem to require you to believe that the Grace which God puts into men will continue there, will have in itself, through its Divine origin, a force and a vitality which will make it continue to spring up as the well does, without any outward pumping, or without any need of fresh supply from the depths of Deity? The Christian should be satisfied, and his piety should never come to an end! Come then, let us wrap our cloak about us with a word of joy and comfort, and go our way into the cold, bleak world rejoicing that if our hearts are right, we are resting upon the source of every precious thing!

Let us go forth and rejoice that we have within us a life that can never die! That we have a something within us that can satisfy us in the worst of times! That God is with us, to be our Guide and our dear Companion! Being the favored sons of Heaven, and the heirs of immortality, let us eat our bread with joy! Let us cheer our poverty with hope! Let us make glad our times of trial with holy rejoicing! Let us rejoice in the Lord always, and shout for joy, and so may His blessed Spirit help us to live to His glory!

I can only regret that such a text as this can have no bearing upon some of my Hearers. There are some of you to whom we shall have to read the text in the negative. “You shall *not* be guided by God, for you shall follow your own devices, and they shall lead you down to death and to the gates of Hell.” O unconverted Sinner, tremble at this! You shall *not* be satisfied! There shall come a day of drought that shall dry up your body, though you flourished as a green herb. There shall come a time when your pleasures shall be of no use to you, when the hollow cheek and the blinding eye shall bring no comfort to you from without, but shall only work the end of all your joy.

The text does not say that your bones shall be made fat—your *flesh* may be made fat—but only that you may be fattened for the slaughter! You may have outward good, but only that you may be more wretched when you have to go and leave it. There shall be no *inward* peace, no spiritual joy. There is no promise to you that you shall be a watered garden. You will not ask of God, and you shall not have. You do not knock, and the door shall not be opened. You do not seek, and you shall not find. You shut your ear against God and He will shut His ear against you. You refused the Cross of Christ, and therefore you shall lose the crown of Heaven and shall not know joy because you do not know heart-sorrow.

You do not hate sin, you shall not, therefore, enjoy the bliss of righteousness. And you shall not be as a spring of water whose waters fail not. The little joy you have, all brackish as it is, shall be denied you at the last. You shall cry for a drop of water to cool your tongue, but you shall find none. Oh, terrible is your present state, but more terrible by far is the future which looms in the distance! Do you not hear the breaking of the waves of the unknown sea? You must go down into it! Do you not even now hear the booming of its awful billows upon the cliffs of time? What if it should be a sea of fire to you forever? What if every billow in that sea of flame should break over you, and you be cast into it, but not drowned, shipwrecked and lost—and not annihilated? What if you must be drifting forever across that fiery sea, with the word of Divine wrath driving you on, never to find a haven?

Sinner, there is hope yet! This is not the realm of despair! Not yet has the great iron key grated in the lock to shut you forever in the dungeon! It is said of Christ that, “He opens and no man shuts.” He can open Heaven to you! Trust Him with your whole heart, mourning for sin and hating it. Rest in His blood! Find a shelter beneath His Cross, and He will not, *cannot* cast you away, for “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” May you so come, and then may your Christian life be filled with happiness, and overflowing with joy, so that you may sing in the words of David, with which I close—“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

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GOD'S GLORY OUR REReward

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“The glory of the LORD shall be your rereward.”
Isaiah 58:8.

THE Church of God is an army marching through an enemy's territory. She can never reckon upon a moment's peace. If she were of the world, the world would love its own, but because true saints are not of the world, but Christ has chosen them out of the world, therefore the world hates them. As the Amalekites suddenly fell upon the children of Israel, unprovoked and without giving any warning of their hostile intention, so, not only in times of persecution, but in these apparently softer days when the world does not use the stake and the sword, at all seasons the world is ready to pounce upon the Church of God and to call in its grand ally, the devil, to overthrow and destroy, as far as possible, the militant hosts of Israel!

Every Christian, then, must be a soldier and take his share in the battles of the Cross. We must not look upon our life as being a pleasure-journey through a friendly land, but as a march—a march through the very midst of foes who will dispute every foot of our way!

Now, if we thus view the Church of God as an army, it is consolatory to know that we have a vanguard—My righteousness shall go before you.” We take our Lord Jesus Christ to be “the Lord our righteousness.” He is the Forerunner and He has gone before us, even through the River of Death and up to the skies, that He may prepare a place for all those who have enlisted under His standard.

Our text, however, speaks not of the vanguard, but of the “rereward.” There is always danger there, and it is comforting to the saints to behold so glorious a shield borne in their rear by so mighty an arm—“The Glory of the Lord shall be your rereward.”

It is but little I have to say to you this evening, but may God make that little profitable to you! We will, first of all, *dwell upon the rereward and enquire what it is which is here intended.* And, secondly, *we will try to show how the Glory of the Lord brings up the rear and protects the saints on every side.*

I. In the first place, WHAT MAY WE UNDERSTAND BY THE REReward?

Taking the text to refer to *the Church of God as a body*, we remark that there are always some who bring up the rear. God has never left His Church without men to stand in the front. A few choice men have always been raised up by God and they have led the way, both in testimony and

in suffering. The race of the Prophets will never be extinct. "The scepter," in this sense, will not depart from the members of the Church until Christ shall come a second time. The teacher shall not be taken out of his place, nor the candlestick be removed, nor the Bread of Life be taken away. But the mass of the Church are rather like the body of the army marching on and fighting well—but not attaining unto the first three mighties.

We have, moreover, in the Church of Christ, a considerable proportion of those who are always behind. Some of those are here tonight. You feel yourselves to belong to the rear *because you are so weak in faith*. It is a blessed thing to enjoy full assurance of faith and yet, no doubt, there are thousands in the fold of Jesus who never reach this attainment. It is a great pity that they should not reach it, for they miss much happiness and much usefulness. But still—

***"Thousands in the fold of Jesus,
This attainment never could boast.
To His name eternal praises,
None of these shall ever be lost.
Deeply engraved
On His hands, their names remain."***

There are some who, from their natural constitution and other circumstances, are very apt to despond. Like Mr. Fearing, they not only go through the Slough of Despond, but, as Bunyan says, they carry a slough of despond about with them! They are little in faith, but they are great at foreseeing evil. They are always expecting some dreadful ill and they cower down before a shadow. I thank God that those of you who have faith but as a grain of mustard seed, shall not be left to fall away—the Glory of the Lord shall gather you up with the rest of the saints! The stragglers, the wounded, the halt, the lame—though these cannot march with the rest as we desire, though, like Mr. Ready-to-Halt, they have to go on crutches—yet the Glory of the Lord shall be their shelter and protection.

Then there are some of you who are not exactly weak in the faith but, in your *humble estimate of yourselves*, you put yourselves in the rear. "I am very poor," says one, "it is but little that I can ever give. Even if I gave two mites, as the widow did, I might almost give all my substance in so doing. I am obscure, too, for I have no talent. I cannot preach. I can scarcely pray in the Prayer Meeting to edification. I hope I love the Lord and that I am one of the stones in the walls of His Church, but I am quite a hidden one." Ah, well! Poor though you are, despised and forgotten, the Glory of the Lord shall secure your safety! It was said of the tribe of Dan, "They shall go hindmost with their standards," and there must be some to be in the rear! So, while the rich may rejoice in what God has given to them, yet you, in your contentment with your lot, may be thankful for your poverty and bless the name of the Lord that though you may be in the rear, you are yet in the army—and you shall soon—as much as those in the van, have your full share of the spoil!

Possibly there are some who get into the rear from a much more painful cause, namely, from *backsliding*. I would not say a word to

excuse backsliding, for it is a dreadful thing that we should depart from our first love, or lose the vigor of our piety. It is dangerous to get even half a yard from the Savior's side! To live in the sun, like Milton's angel—that is blessed living! No lack of light or warmth there! But to turn our backs on the sun, as the descendants of Cain did of old, and to go journeying away from Christ—this is dangerous in the extreme. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." Many men talk of David's sin—it were well if they would remember David's repentance and David's broken bones after he had received pardon. He never was the same man afterwards that he was before. His voice was hoarse and cracked. You can tell the Psalms that he wrote after his fall, for his pen quivered as he wrote them, and yet, blessed be God, he could say, "Although my house is not so with God; yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." Even to these falling ones, Christ is kind! Though they have wandered from Him, His voice is not that of condemnation, but of consolation. Return, you backsliding ones! He still acknowledges the marriage bonds. "I am married unto you, says the Lord." Backslider, let this be some comfort to you, if you are bewailing your backslidings. But oh, if you are not conscious of them, or are conscious of them, but are not mourning them, tremble, tremble, lest backsliding should become apostasy and you should prove beyond question that you never had a sound work of Grace in your heart!

Now, whoever it may be, in the militant host of the Lord, who is in the rear, here is our comfort—that the Glory of the Lord shall be the rereward! Only one or two of you can guess, in any adequate measure, what the care of such a large Church as this is. I have sometimes felt as Moses did when he said to the Lord, "Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that You should say unto me, Carry them in your bosom, as a nursing father bears the sucking child?" But here is my consolation, "the Lord knows them that are His." And those of you who do not always show due faith and courage—who do not advance to the front, as we would wish in Christian service, we nevertheless commend you to the care of our God, praying that the rear may be Divinely preserved. We wish that you would quicken your pace, that you would grow in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but we know that even as it is, you shall be found of Him in peace in the day of His appearing, since your righteousness is found in Him and you are not trusting in yourselves.

But, now, *supposing the text to refer to the individual Christian*—how shall we translate it?

We will translate it in three ways. First, *as relating to our past*—that which is behind us. We need a protection from the past. Now, what is that which is behind us? There is something to rejoice in, for God has been gracious to us, but there is very much to mourn over, for we remember our former lusts in our ignorance, things of which we are now ashamed. Christian, look back awhile upon those sins of yours, the sins

of your youth and your former transgressions—sins against Law and against Gospel, sins against light and against love, sins of omission and sins of commission. What about them? Suppose that, like a pack of hungry wolves, they should pursue you? Suppose they should come after you, as Pharaoh and his chariots and his horsemen went after the children of Israel when they escaped out of Egypt? Ah, then the Glory of the Lord shall be your rereward! Christ and His Atonement shall come between us and our sins and He shall drown our enemies in the Red Sea of His blood, even as he drowned Pharaoh and all his raging hosts who pursued the chosen people! Fear not your past sin, Christian! Tremble at the thought of it, by way of repentance, but thank God that you shall not be called to account for it, for all your sins were numbered on the Scapegoat's head of old and He took them and made an end of them and carried them away forever! "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" As to past sin, the glorious Atonement shall bring up the rear!

Then there are *our past habits*. How much of injury we still suffer from these! A man who has been accustomed to witness scenes of vice will frequently have most fearful pictures painted upon his eyeballs, even when they are closed for prayer! Yes, and when the sacred hymn is going up to Heaven, a word in it may suggest a snatch of a profane song, or bring to the recollection even blasphemy itself! It is a sad thing to have learned the arts of sin, to have acquired habits of passionate temper, of pride, or covetousness, or of falsehood. We may well tremble lest these old enemies should at last prove too much for us. We have left them behind us—they do not lead and guide us as once they did—but they dog our steps. The dominion of sin has been broken, but the law of sin is still there to vex us. The tree is cut down, but the sprouts still spring from the root and are all too vigorous, especially at times when they have been watered by circumstances, for at the scent of water they will bud and grow. Ah, then, we must take our bad habits to the Lord Jesus! We must ask Him to manifest His Glory by helping us to conquer them and we shall yet break these bonds which had become like fetters of iron! We shall snap them as Samson of old did his green straps and we shall be free! But, the Glory of the Lord must do it, and we shall have to give Him all the praise!

So, the whole of the past, if you take it in any of its aspects, need not cause the Christian tormenting sorrow, for he can believe that all his sinful past is left with God, so that, as neither things present, nor things to come shall be able to separate him from the love of God, so not even things past shall be able to do it!

But again, understanding the text as referring to the individual Believer, we may speak of the rear as signifying *that part of our nature which is most backward in yielding to the power of Divine Grace*. Brothers and Sisters, often, to will is present with us, but how to perform that which we would, we find not! The understanding is convinced and that leads the van. Firm affections are awakened and they follow after. But there is a weaker passion which would, if it dared, consent to sin—and that is this flesh of ours in which there dwells no good thing! It is this

dangerous rear, this weakest part of our nature, which we have most cause to dread. O Friends, you know but little of yourselves if you do not know this, that there are such weak points about you that you might be overthrown in a moment if almighty Grace did not preserve you! Peter is laughed at by a silly maid and he falls. "How are the mighty fallen!" How little a thing brings an Apostle to the level of a blasphemer! As for this rear part of our army, what shall we do with it? It is here that God's Glory will be seen in conquering and overcoming! "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," and gives us victory in the very place where we were accustomed to say, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Those straggling passions which we cannot marshal as we would, into regular order. Those wandering thoughts. Those downward desires. That cold heart which will not grow warm, as we would have it, but will lose its holy glow—all these powers of ours shall be brought into subjection and sanctified by Grace! God shall gather up the stragglers and bring the whole man safe to perfection by the sanctifying power of the Spirit!

Once again, still understanding the individual Christian, may we not speak of our rear as signifying *the end of our days*? The Glory of the Lord shall be the rereward of our mortal history. The van was blessed, when we looked to Christ and were lightened, and our faces were not ashamed—

***"Many days have passed since then,
Many changes have we seen
Yet have been upheld till now—
Who could hold us up but Thou?"***

But the rear of the march of life is coming. We shall soon be up to our necks in the cold river—the waves and billows must soon roll over us! We may desire to be with Christ, but death, itself, never can be desirable—

***"We shrink back again to life,
Fond of our prison and our clay."***

We long to be with Christ, for it shall be "far better" there, but that last pinch, when soul and body shall be separated, cannot be looked forward to without solemn awe. Oh, how sweet to think that Christ shall bring up the rear of our life! If ever we have had His Presence, we shall have it then! We shall—

***"Sing when the death-dew lies cold on our brow,
If ever we loved You, our Jesus, 'tis now."***

Perhaps our last day will be our best and brightest day and we shall be surprised to find what floods of Glory there are around and above the floods of death! I see before me many, very many veterans. Your gray hairs tell of your nearness to Heaven. I trust your locks are whitened with the sunlight of Glory! Oh, be not afraid! You shall find it a blessed thing to sleep in Jesus—and even as you go to that last bed, you shall not tremble, for He shall be so manifestly with you that you shall not be afraid! The Glory of the Lord shall be your rereward and what that Glory shall be, what heart can imagine, what tongue can tell? The Glory that excels the glory of perfection! The Glory of being made like unto the First-Born among many brethren! The Glory of the Well-Beloved which He had

with His Father before the world was! "The glory which you gave Me, I have given them." Behold, then, your latter end! Oh, that our last days might be with the righteous and our last end be like theirs! The Glory of the Lord shall be the Christian's rereward.

II. But now, only for a minute or two, let me show you HOW THE GLORY OF THE LORD thus, both in the case of the whole Church of Christ and of each separate Christian, BECOMES THE MEANS OF GRACIOUS PRESERVATION.

What is this "Glory of the Lord" which shelters the weak and preserves the saints? May we not understand it to mean, first of all, *the glorious attributes of God*? *God's mercy* is one of His glories. It is His great glory, you know, that He is a God passing by iniquity, transgression, sin and remembering not the guilt of His people. Now, Brothers and Sisters, as to our past sins, our weaknesses and all those other senses in which we understand the rear of our spiritual host—as to all these, the mercy of God will glorify itself in them all! Notwithstanding our weakness, Mercy shall find a platform for the display of itself and where sin abounded, there shall Grace much more abound. When you think of the greatness of your sin, think also of the greatness of God's mercy at the same time. As Master Wilcox says, "If you cannot keep your eye on the Cross when you are repenting, away with your repenting!" A sense of sin which is not also attended with a belief in God's mercy, is not an evangelical sense of sin. Oh, to know the super abounding mercy of the loving God who delights in mercy, His last-born, but His best-beloved attribute! He will glorify Himself by His mercy in delivering you when you most need it.

So will He also use the glorious attribute of *His Wisdom*. It takes a wise captain to conduct the rear of the army. To lead the van needs courage and prudence, but to protect the rear often needs more wisdom and even more courage! And God will show the wisdom of His Providence and the fidelity of His Grace in taking care of the weakest of the host and in preserving you, Believer, in that place where you are most in need of preservation.

So will He also show *His Power*. Oh, what power it will be that will be needed to bring any of us to Heaven! We need a God to get us there. Nothing short of Divine strength will ever be able to preserve any of us. So crushed and hardened, and sometimes so stung with the venom of the old serpent, how shall we who are in the rear be kept unless the bare arm of God is revealed? The Glory of the Lord in Mercy, Wisdom and Power shall shine transcendentally in our case!

And here, too, shall be conspicuous *the Immutability of God*. Beloved, of all the attributes of God next to His Love, this is, perhaps, the sweetest to the tried Christian, namely, His Immutability—

***"Immutable His will
Though dark may be my frame."***

You are not trusting in a Savior who was yours yesterday, but is not faithful today, or who will fail you tomorrow! Every word of His promise stands sure and He, Himself, stands fast to it. How the Immutability of God will be illustrated in those who have had a long life and borne trials

all through it, but who find, at the last, that Christ, who loved His own which were in the world, did love them even unto the end! Yes, the weakness, which you now discover and mourn over shall only afford an opportunity for the faithfulness of God to reveal itself in your case! The Glory of the Lord, in all its attributes, shall bring up the rear!

May we not also understand, besides His attributes, *His Providence*? The Providence of God is part of His Glory. Thus He shows the skirts of His royal robes among the sons of men, as He has dominion over all the events of time. Ah, yes, you may rest assured that in all those points in the Christian Church which are the most weak, and the most behind, the Providence of God will be seen in bringing the entire army of God home, safely home, victoriously home! Looking at the history of the whole Church, it is cheering to us to see that God has never sustained a defeat. And when His army seems to have been repulsed for a time, it has only been drawn back to take a more wondrous leap to a yet greater victory! One wave may recede, but the main ocean advances, the great tide of our holy faith is coming up and as we watch wave after wave dying upon the shore, we must not weep, or think that God is sustaining a disappointment, for the main flood must advance and it shall, till all the mud of idolatry and human sin, and all the sand of human rebellion shall be covered with the silver tide of Truth and Love, and against the rocks of eternity, the great waves of Gospel Truth shall forever beat! Courage, my Brothers and Sisters, the Lord will bring up the rear by His Providence, ruling and overruling, making evil produce good and good something better—and better still in infinite progression! Not only to the whole Church, but to you, also, individually, shall it be so! And in due time, if you will but wait, you shall not be disappointed, but your light shall rise in obscurity and the days of your mourning shall be ended! The Glory of the Lord shall thus be our rereward.

But may we not believe that the Glory of the Lord, which brings up the rear, is *the Lord Himself*? After all, we cannot dissociate the Glory from the Glorious One! God Himself we must have if we would see His Glory! Ah, Brothers and Sisters, the wine of communion with our Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, is the surest preservative against fear! And especially ought we to cultivate this communion when we feel that we are most in danger. Near to the Savior's bosom it does not matter what we suffer! Close to God, He who is full of infirmities will overcome them all. Whatever your besetting sin may have been, put your head upon the Savior's bosom and that besetting sin shall not overthrow you! Close to the Master and since His garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, you shall never want for perfume. Have Christ with you and you cannot walk in darkness, however dark your way may be! Get to your chambers. Wait upon Him in prayer. In coming down from those chambers with your souls refreshed, say to Him, "Abide with us from morn to eve," for you may rest assured that in this holy communion you shall find the true protection, while they who neglect this are most apt to slip!

And so, let me close these few words of address by *entreating you always to fly to the Glory of the Lord whenever you feel your danger* and even when you do not feel it, for it is well to be there. "Trust in the Lord and do good—so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." Trust not in man, nor put any confidence in the glory of man. Rest not in your circumstances, nor your wealth, nor your health, for the glory of all these shall pass away as the beauty of the flower in the field which is soon cut down beneath the mower's scythe. Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength! You sons of men, trust in your God and you shall be secure beneath the shadow of His wings. You sinners, fly to the Savior! "Seek you the Lord while He may be found." Look to the Cross of Jesus and put all your dependence in His suffering and His merits—and you who have done so already, trust more than ever to your God and to your God, alone, in every hour of ill, and every night of grief!

The Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 12:1-44.**

In this chapter our Savior dispels the fears of His disciples concerning temporal things, and especially their fear of persecution and their fear of need.

Verses 1, 2. *In the meantime, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trampled upon one another, He began to say unto His disciples, first of all, Beware you of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.* What, therefore, can be the use of hypocrisy? Hypocrisy leads a man to pretend to be what he is not. His only hope lies in not being discovered. But, as Christ declares that "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known," hypocrisy becomes insanity as well as iniquity! Therefore, keep clear of it in every shape and form.

3-5. *Therefore whatever you have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which you have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. And I say unto you, My friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: fear Him, which after He has killed, has power to cast into Hell; yes, I say unto you, Fear Him.* There is nothing, comparatively, to fear in death considered by itself. If that were the end of man, he need have little or no fear even of God, Himself. But inasmuch as after death there is another state which is everlasting and unchangeable, there is grave cause for the ungodly to fear Him who, "after He has killed, has power to cast into Hell."

6, 7. *Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.* So particular is the care of Divine Providence.

7. *Fear not, therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows.* And if He counts the sparrows, and cares for them, He certainly will not forget you!

8, 9. *Also I say unto you, Whoever shall confess Me before men, Him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denies Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.* Mind what you are doing, then, you who never confess Christ before men, because, according to the context of this passage, you are set down as having denied Him. Christ first speaks of those who confess Him and then of those who do not confess Him—and He describes them as virtually denying Him. On another occasion, Christ said, “He that is not with Me is against Me. And he that gathers not with Me scatters abroad.” Examine that attitude of yours, which you suppose to be neutral, and see how Christ regards it—and then ask yourself whether you can be satisfied to remain in it any longer.

10. *And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven.* What is the sin against the Holy Spirit? We do not know and I think it is a great mercy that we do not know. I will tell you one reason why I think it is a great mercy, and that is because the devil is continually tempting poor distracted souls to commit that sin. I have, within the past week, seen several persons who have been frequently tempted to commit it. Only, happily, they did not know what the sin against the Holy Spirit was! And, therefore, they could not persuade themselves into the belief that they had committed it. I have seen many people who have told me that they have committed the unpardonable sin, and I have asked them to sit down and tell me what that sin was, for if they could do so, I would find out something that I did not know! In every instance I have very soon been able to say to them, “Though I do not know what the unpardonable sin is, I am quite certain that what you mention is not that sin, for such sin as yours has frequently been forgiven.” It is a blessing that we are left in the dark concerning that matter! Only as I have often said to you, do not presume upon your ignorance. This warning is something like the notice you see put up on certain great men's estates, “Man-traps and spring guns set here.” If you go round the mansion, and say to the owner, “If you please, Sir, will you tell me where the man-traps and spring guns are?” He will say, “No. Why should you want to know where they are? You keep from trespassing and then it will not matter to you where they are.” That very indistinctness about the warning is a part of the preventive power which surrounds it! You have no right to go trespassing there at all, so keep away from the place! And you are not told what the unpardonable sin is, though there is a sin which is unto death and there is a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which shall not be forgiven.

11, 12. *And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take you no thought how or what thing you shall answer, or what you shall say: for the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the*

same hour what you ought to say. He has often done this. If you will read in *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, the answers given even by unlearned, illiterate men and women who were taken quite at unawares, and assailed by subtle questions, you will see that they often answered in a remarkably wise way. They could not have answered better if the questions had been before them for months! They frequently baffled their cunning adversaries by their wisdom and sometimes by their wit, for the Holy Spirit taught them in the same hour what they ought to speak.

13. *And one of the company said unto Him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.* He rudely broke in upon Christ's discourse when He was preaching upon these important matters because he wanted the Savior to act the part of a judge in his dispute with his brother!

14. *And He said unto him, Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you?* Some present-day minister, if this request had been made to him, would probably have said, "Well, I may save some litigation, perhaps, if I attend to this matter." As a general rule, Brother, you had better mind your own business! Your Master, who was far wiser than you are, would not entangle Himself with the affairs of this life and, usually, true wisdom suggests that we, also, should keep ourselves apart from them.

15-17. *And He said unto them, Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses. And He spoke a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?* This was his dialogue within himself. He might have answered at once, "As I have more than I can use, I will give some to the poor! Why should I need to lay up my fruits, to let them get moldy and corrupt? There are many poor people starving at my very gates—I will let them share in what God has so bountifully given to me." This might have been his answer to the question, "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?" His reply, however, was a very different one.

18, 19. *And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul.* It is, "my," all through—*my* fruits, *my* barns, *my* goods. The man was eaten up with selfishness and did not recognize the fact of his stewardship. He did not know that even his own soul did not belong to him—he thought it did—"I will say to *my* soul."

19, 20. *Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you: then whose shall those things be which you have provided?* "You fool." That is God's opinion of the man who means to build bigger barns in order that he may, himself, enjoy what is about to be taken away from him! He was a fool to be laying up in store for others to scatter. Many a miser's heirs have lived to ridicule him. He was the rake that gathered up a heap of gold—and they are the shovel and fork that scatter it! They drink the old man's health and are much obliged to him for stinting himself that they may drink so deeply.

21, 22. *So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. And He said unto His disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought.* It really means, "Make it not a matter of anxious care. Take no inordinate thought."

22, 23. *For your life, what you shall eat; neither for the body, what you shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.* Everybody admits the truth of this saying of the Savior, though all do not see everything that is involved in it. Therefore, as the soul is more important than all else, look well to your soul, look more to your life than to your food!

24. *Consider the ravens.* It is quite possible that some of them were flying overhead just at that time, and that Christ pointed to them and said, "Consider the ravens."

24, 25. *For they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them: how much more are you better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? "You cannot lengthen your body." Or perhaps the Savior meant, "You cannot lengthen out your life."*

26. *If you then are not able to do that thing which is least.* It really is a matter of very slight consequence whether you are a little shorter or taller.

26-29. *Why take you thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? And seek not you what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, neither be you of doubtful mind. Full of carking care and anxiety about little things or, indeed, about anything!*

30. *For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knows that you have need of these things.* Therefore He would have you so live—industriously, prudently, thriftily—that you shall get these things and shall not waste them when you have them. But He would not have you live in an anxious, worrying, depressed spirit, as if you had no God, no Heavenly Father, no all-sufficient Friend—and as if there were no all-wise Providence, and you were left to drift about uncared for and alone. It is not so. O God of the lilies and God of the ravens, You will be the God of Your people, too!

31, 32. *But rather seek you the Kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.* He may not give you much here, but, in due time He will give you the Kingdom! He may give to worldlings more of these secondary things—these husks, these mere illusions, these mirages of the desert—than He gives to you—but for you there is prepared a city that has foundations and a Kingdom that shall never pass away! Therefore patiently wait until the appointed time and fear not, "for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

33, 34. *Sell that you have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fails not, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupts. For where your treasure is, there will your heart also be.* It is not only important to lay up that which can truly be called treasure, but also to lay it up in the right place—"a treasure in the heavens that fails not, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupts." Such treasure as that will not harm us if we set our heart upon it and, by-and-by, in God's good time, we and our treasure shall both be in Heaven!

35-37. *Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning. And you yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he comes and knocks, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the lord when he comes shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.* This always seems to me to be one of the most remarkable of our Lord's utterances while He was here upon the earth. His whole life was one of condescension, which was never more clearly manifested than it was when He, the Lord and Master of All, took the position of Servant of all, and washed His disciples' feet! Yet He here tells us that, if He finds us watching when He comes again, He will once more take His place as our servitor!

38-44. *And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have allowed his house to be broken into. Be you therefore ready also: for the Son of Man comes at an hour when you think not. Then Peter said unto Him, Lord, do You speak this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who, then, is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he has.*

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

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

THE GLORY IN THE REAR

NO. 1793

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 3, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“And the Angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them, and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel, and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.”
Exodus 14:19, 20.

“The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.”
Isaiah 58:8.

“For the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.”
Isaiah 52:12.

WHEN the Israelites left the place of their bondage and came to the edge of the wilderness, a visible token of the Lord's Presence and leadership was granted to them. They saw high in the air a pillar, which, by day, might be compared to rising smoke, but at night became a flame of fire. Such displays on a small scale were usual in the march of armies, but this was of supernatural origin. Where it moved, the people were to follow—it was to be their companion, that they might not be alone—their conductor, that they might not go astray. We have become familiar, by accounts of our own soldiers in Egypt, with the extreme danger of the oriental sun when men are marching over the fiery sand. This cloud would act as a vast umbrella, covering the whole of the great congregation, so that they could march without being faint with the heat. By night their canvas city was lighted up by this grand illumination.

They could march as well by night as by day, for we are told at the close of the previous chapter that by night the Lord went before them, “in a pillar of fire, to give them light; *to go by day and night.*” Might not they have said, “The Lord God is a sun and shield”? Did they not realize the fulfillment of the promise not yet spoken in God's Words, “The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night”? This sacred symbol of the Divine Presence must have been a very great solace to them in those early days, when their pilgrim life was novel to them, and their newly-found liberty was darkened by a terrible fear of recapture.

The particular sign which the Lord promised them was very practical—it was not only *glorious*, but *useful*—it served them both for shade and

light and was both their guide and guard. It was exceedingly *conspicuous*, so that they could all see it. Any man of the millions who came out of Egypt could stand at his tent door and see this flaming signal high in Heaven, floating over all as the banner and symbol of the Great King. It appears to have been *continual*—an abiding token—not an intermittent brightness. Even thus has Moses written—“He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.”

Beloved Friends, God is *always* with those who are with Him! If we trust Him, He has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” There is a special and familiar Presence of God with those who walk uprightly, both in the night of their sorrow and in the day of their joy. Yet we do not always, in the same way, perceive that Presence so as to enjoy it. God never leaves us, but we sometimes think He has done so. The sun shines on, but we do not always bask in his beams. We sometimes mourn an absent God—it is the bitterest of all our mourning. As He is the sum total of our joy, so His departure is the essence of our misery! If God does not smile upon us, who can cheer us? If He is not with us, then the strong helpers fail and the mighty men are put to rout.

It is concerning the Presence of God that I am going to speak this morning. You and I know how joyous it is. May we never be made to know its infinite value experimentally by the loss of it! If we see no cloud or flame, yet may we know that God is with us and His power is around us. In that sense we will pray—

**“Cover us with Your cloudy shrine,
And in Your fiery column shine.”**

Or in more familiar words we will sing—

**“Let the fiery cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through.”**

I. In considering the subject of the Lord’s abiding with His people, I shall first call attention to THE DIVINE PRESENCE MYSTERIOUSLY REMOVED. According to our text, “The Angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed.” The chosen of the Lord may lose the manifested Presence of God and, indeed, they may often miss it in the particular form in which they have been accustomed to enjoy it. The symbol of God’s Presence removed *from where it had usually been*. From the day when they entered the desert, they had seen the fiery, cloudy pillar well to the front. But now, suddenly, it wheeled about and left the front comparatively dim because the Glory had departed. Those who looked *forward*, saw it no more!

So has it been with us at times—we have walked day after day in the Light of God’s Countenance. We have enjoyed sweet fellowship with Jesus Christ, our Lord, and all of a sudden we have missed His glorious manifestation! Like the spouse, we cried, “I sought Him, but I found Him not!” Before, everything had seemed bright and we expected to go from strength to strength, from victory to victory, till we came unto the mount of God—to dwell forever in His rest—but now before us, all of a sudden things look dark. We do not feel so sure of Heaven as we did, nor so certain of perpetual growth and progress. The prospect is darkened, the clouds return af-

ter the rain and our soul cries out of the darkness, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!”

Moreover, they missed the light *from where they hoped it would always be*. They had been given to understand, I do not doubt, that the Lord would always be with them. And yet now, as they looked forward, the bright light was gone from its place of leadership. They looked for it as their guide and, behold, that guidance was gone! The pillar might be behind them, but it was not before them—they could see nothing ahead to lead them into the land flowing with milk and honey which the Lord had promised them!

Sometimes you, also, may imagine that God’s promise is failing you—even the Word of God which you had laid hold upon may appear to you to be contradicted by your circumstances. Then your heart sinks to the depths, for, “if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?” If ever the Word of God becomes a subject of doubt, where can any certainty remain? Where can there be any hope for the unsure? We have said, “This God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death”—but what if He refuses to guide us? Then we are in an evil case! Can it be so? “Is His mercy clean gone forever? Does His promise fail forevermore?”

The pillar of fire also removed *from where it seemed more than ever to be needed*. Now they were in a dire predicament—how could they possibly escape? Pharaoh was behind them, with all the horsemen of Egypt! They could hear the noise of the chariots and the neighing of the horses—and the shouts of the armies eager for the prey! Before them rolled the Red Sea in its might. How could there be a way through the mighty waters? Now, if ever in their lives, they must have looked anxiously for the symbol of the Divine Presence! What could they do if Jehovah did not lead them? Yet the token of His Presence was not there.

Even thus is it with you, dear Friend, who once walked in the Light of God’s Countenance—you, perhaps, have fallen into temporal trouble and, at the same moment, the heavenly Light of God has departed from your soul. Now, it is bad to be in the dark on the king’s highway, but it is worse to be in the dark when you are out on the open road and do not know the road! It is well to have a guide when the road is easy, but you *must* have one when you are coming upon precipitous and dangerous places! Is it so with any child of God here, that he sees no light to shine before him, no star to guide him on his road? On the contrary, does his future become more and more clouded? Is the track quite gone? Does the sea seem shut in with an ironbound coast without a harbor? Does he—

**“See every day new straits attend,
And wonder where the scene will end”?**

Then let him *trust*—but he will need all the faith of which he can muster! Oh, my Lord, if ever You leave me, forsake me not in the day of trouble! Yet what have I said? It is a day of trouble when You are gone, whatever my condition may be! Yet, Brothers and Sisters, our Lord said, “Pray you that your flight be not in the winter.” Pray that if you must, for a while,

bewail the Lord's absence from you, it may not be in a time of dire and dark necessity!

Thus it did seem a mysterious thing that the Covenant Angel should no longer direct the marches of the host of God and, I dare say, that some of them began to account for it *by a reason which their fears would suggest*. Naturally, there was only one way of accounting for this removal of the guide and that way was a wrong one, but one to which the Lord's people often refer their trials. I should not wonder that if they had been asked why the blazing pillar was no longer in the front, they would have replied, "Because of our murmurings against the Lord and His servant, Moses. God will not go before us because of our sins."

Now, it is true, and does happen, that the Lord often hides His face behind the clouds of dust that His own children make by their sins—but this is not always the case. When the consolations of God are small with you, you may generally conclude that there is some secret sin with you—and then it is your duty to cry, "Show me why You contend with me!" But in this case, God was not punishing them for their sins, as He did on later occasions. He seems to have been very patient with their early murmurings because they were such feeble folk, so unused to pilgrimage, and so unfit for anything heroic. Every trial was severe to the raw, undisciplined spirits of the tribes and, therefore, the Lord winked at their follies. There was not a touch of the rod about this withdrawing of His Presence from the front—not even a *trace* of anger—it was all done in loving kindness and tender mercy, and no sort of chastisement was intended by it.

So, dear child of God, you must not always conclude that trouble is sent because of wrath, and that the loss of conscious joy is necessarily a chastisement for sin. Such thoughts will be a case of knives cutting your heart in pieces. Do not make for yourself a needless pain. All trouble is *not* chastisement—it may be a way of love for your enriching and ennobling! Upon the black horse of trouble, the Lord sends His messengers of love! It is a good thing for us to be afflicted, for thus we learn patience and attain to assurance. Shall the champion who is bid to go to the front of the battle think that he is being punished? No, verily, my Brothers and Sisters—whom the Lord loves, He sets in the heat of the conflict—that they may earn the rarest honors. Great suffering and heavy labor are often rewards of faithfulness. Know you not how the poet puts it—

***"If I find Him, if I follow,
What is His reward here?
'Many a labor, many a sorrow,
Many a tear'?"***

Darkness of soul is not always the fruit of Divine anger, though it is often so. Sometimes there is no trace of wrath in it—it is sent for a test of faith, for the excitement of desire—and for the increase of our sympathy with others who walk in darkness. When the cloud of the Divine Glory is no longer seen in front, it has gone behind because it is more needed there! And it is no loss, after all, as we shall have to show. When the Lord hides His face for a moment, it is to make us value His face the more, to quicken our diligence in following after Him, to try our faith and to test our graces. There are a thousand precious uses in this adversity. Yet it is

a mysterious thing when the light of the future fades and we seem to be without a guide.

II. Now, secondly, all this while THE DIVINE PRESENCE WAS GRACIOUSLY NEAR. The Angel of the Lord had left, but it is added, He “removed and *went behind them*,” and He was just as close to them when He was in the rear as when He led the front! He might not seem to be their guide, but He had all the more evidently become their *guard*. He might not, for the moment, be their Sun before, but then He had become their Shield behind. “The glory of the Lord was their rear guard.” The Lord may be very close to you, dear child, when you cannot see Him—perhaps closer than He ever was when you *could* see Him!

The Presence of God is not to be measured by your realization of it. When you cannot tell that He is with you at all, and you are singing and crying after Him, those very sighs and cries after Him are the holy fruit of His secret Presence! It may be the day shall come when you shall think that He was more near you when yours eyes were filled with weeping after Him, than when you took yours ease and spoke confidently. Much of the creature, much of human excitement will mix with our most spiritual joy. Our groans and our sorrows, when we are pining after the Lord, are often more *purely spiritual* than our own delights and, therefore, they are all the surer proofs of the work of the Lord in our souls. Oh, Soul, the Lord may be very near you and yet He may be behind you, so that your outlook for the future may not be filled with the vision of His Glory!

Note in the text that it is said the pillar went, and “*stood behind them*.” I like that, for it is a settled, permanent matter. The Lord had left, but He was not gone. He would stay as long as was necessary where He then was. That glorious Angel, shrouded in the clouds, stood with His drawn sword in the rear of Israel, saying to Pharaoh, “You dare not come further, you can not break in upon My chosen.” He lifted up His vast shield of darkness and held it up before the tyrant king so that he could not strike—no—could not *see*! All that night his horses champed their bits, but could not pursue the flying host! “They were as still as a stone till Your people passed over, O Lord, till Your people passed over whom You had purchased.” It is glorious to think that the Lord stood there and the furious enemy was compelled to halt!

Even thus, the Lord remains with the dear child of God! You cannot see anything before you to make you glad, but the living God stands behind you to ward off the adversary! He cannot forsake you. He says to you out of the pillar of cloud, “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will *I* not forget *you*.” He stands fast as your rock, steadfast as your safeguard, sleepless as your watcher, valiant as your champion—

**“God is near you, therefore cheer you,
Sad mind! He’ll defend you,
All around you, and behind.”**

What is more, these people had God so near that *they could see Him if they did but look back*. Earnestly I desire you to think of this. If you cannot see the Lord bright before you and you are very dull and heavy, then, I

pray you, look *back* and see how the Lord has helped you *up to now*! Sit not down with your eyes shut, but look back! Steadily observe the past! What do you see there? Loving kindness and tender mercy, and nothing else! As I look back upon my own past life—and I think I am not one by myself—I cannot discover, even with the quick eye of selfishness, anything of which I can complain of my God. “Truly God is good to Israel.” “His mercy endures forever.” Not one good thing has failed! He has never left me, nor forsaken me. I have received blessings through my joys and even *greater* blessings through my sorrows! The Lord’s way has been all goodness—undiluted goodness all the while. I look back and see the Light of His Presence shining like the sun at noon! It is as a morning without clouds! I am overwhelmed with the boundless bounty of my God! I am unable to conceive of anything more kind than the heart of God towards His unworthy child! Well, then, God is not far away—if we look backward He is there!

He has been mindful of us. He will bless us. He gave us mercies yesterday and He is the same today and forever. The blessings of last night we have not forgotten. The blessings of this morning, are they not still with us? The fountain will not fail—it has flowed too long for us to raise the question. If there is no light breaking in the east, behold, it is lighting up the western sky! The Lord is evidently still behind us and it is enough, for we can sing, “The Lord lives; and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.” “He is my Rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.”

A thoughtful person would conclude the Lord to be *all the more evidently near because of the change of His position*. When a symbol of mercy comes to be usual and fixed, we may be tempted to think that it remains as a matter of routine. If the rainbow were always visible, it might not so assuringly be a token of the Covenant. Hence the Lord often changes His hand and blesses His people in another way to let them see that He is thinking of them! If He always did the same by us, every day and every night, we should get to attribute His dealings to some fixed law operating apart from God, just as our modern philosophers dethrone the Lord to set up the calves of Nature.

But now, when our God is sometimes before us and sometimes behind us—and makes those apparent changes because of deep and urgent reasons—we are compelled to feel that we are the objects of His constant solicitude. “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks of me.” He deals with us in all wisdom and prudence. His modes change, but the changes are all from the same motive and with the same reason—all to make us sick of *self* and fond of Him! Blessed be His name—the change of His operations makes us feel the unchangeableness of His design! And the different ways in which He visits us only makes us value each visit the more!

III. Thirdly, let us see THE DIVINE PRESENCE WISELY REVEALED. That the symbol of God’s Presence should be withdrawn from the front and become visible behind was a wise thing.

Observe, there was no fiery pillar of cloud before them and that was wise, for *the going down into the Red Sea was intended to be an act of lofty*

faith. The more of the visible, the less is *faith* visible. The more you have of conscious enjoyment, the less room there is for simple trust. *Faith* performs her greatest feats in the darkest places! These Israelites were to do what, after all, was a grandly glorious thing for them to do—to march right down into the heart of the sea! What people ever did this before? Modern haters of miracles may say that they passed over the sands at an unusual tide and that an extraordinarily strong wind drove back the water and left a passage, but that is not the notion of the Holy Spirit. He says, by His servant Moses, “The floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.”

It is also written, “But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.” The tribes went down into the dread valley which remained when the waters dried up and they crossed over between two frowning walls of water! You and I would have needed great *faith* to have gone down into such an abyss as that—but they descended without fear! Moses lifted up his rod and the waters parted to make them a passage-way! And, with no fiery cloudy pillar in front of them, they calmly marched into the heart of the sea! That was a grand act of *faith*! This would not have been so clearly of *faith* had the way been made easier by miracle and token.

I know some of you who are Christian people need to be always coddled and cuddled like weak babies. You pine for love-visits and delights and promises sealed home to your heart. You would live on sweetmeats and be wheeled in a spiritual baby carriage all the way to Heaven! But your heavenly Father is not going to do anything of the sort. He will be with you, but He will try your manhood and so develop it. I have seen children pampered into the grave by their fond mother. And I suppose that a great many more will follow in the same way, but God never spoils His children! He educates them for nobler ends. He takes visible guides away from them that they may exercise *faith* in Him. Why, Job would have been nobody if He had not lost everything! Who would have heard of the Patriarch of Uz? What glory would he have brought to God with his camels and his oxen and his children? These were all taken away and *then* Job became famous! Look how he sits on the dunghill and is much more noteworthy, there, than Solomon in all his glory! Where the word of King Solomon was, there was power—but nothing to equal the power of Job’s words when he blessed the God who takes away! Solomon spoke many proverbs and wrote many songs—but none of them attained unto the glory of that saying—“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” Here was a triumph of *faith*! Beloved, you and I lose the enjoyments of religion and the comforts of hope in order that we may walk by *faith* and not by sight—and may the more greatly glorify God!

Moreover, let us mark that the cloudy pillar was taken away from the front because *the Lord meant them simply to accept His Word as their best guidance*. The Lord said to Moses, “Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.” That Word of God was a sufficient guide. Suppose they had said, “Lord, we will go forward if the fiery pillar leads us forward, but

not otherwise.” What then? Why, they would have been rebels! We are to obey God’s Word as God’s Word. I heard a Brother say, some time ago, that he would be baptized when it was laid home to him. I thought of what a father would say to his boy if he said, “Father, I will obey you if it is laid home to me.” In all probability the child would have it laid home to him more feelingly than he desired! There are some disobedient children in the Lord’s family who, if they do not look out, will have Scriptures laid home to them in a way they do not quite reckon upon! What have you and I to guide us but the Word of the Lord?

“Well,” says one, “I guide myself by outward providences.” Do you? You will get into a terrible maze, one of these days. Jonah wanted to flee from the Presence of the Lord and, therefore, he went down to the seaside, and lo, he found a ship going to Tarshish! Might he not have said, “I must be in the right way of duty in going to Tarshish, for no sooner did I go down to the wharf than I found a ship starting immediately and a cabin vacant for a passenger! I paid my fare and walked on board at once. I had not to go off to the shipping agent’s and wait for the next liner, but all was prepared for me. Was not that a providence!” Yes, but if you get to following providence and turning aside from the Word, you may soon find yourself in the sea and no whale prepared for you! Our way is clearly set before us in the Word of God and that most sure Word of testimony should be followed.

I have known a Brother wanting to go abroad to preach the Gospel to the heathen, but a great many difficulties have been thrown in his way and, therefore, he has said, “I can see that I am not called to go.” Why not? Is no man called unless his way is *easy*? I should think myself all the more called to a service if I found obstacles in my way! The course of true service never runs smooth. I would say, “The devil is trying to hinder me, but I will do it in spite of all the devils in Hell.” Will you always be needing to have your bread buttered for you on both sides? Must your road be graveled and smoothed with a garden roller? Are you a carpet knight, for whom there is to be no fighting? You are not worthy to be a soldier of Jesus Christ at all if you look for ease! Go home! I dare say, after all, it is the best thing you can do. True Believers *expect* difficulties. It is ours to do what we are bid to do—not to act according to fancied indications of providence. When the Lord said “Forward!” Israel must go forward, without a fiery cloudy pillar to cheer the way. Has not the Lord spoken? Who shall ask for plainer guidance?

Moreover, God was teaching them another lesson, namely, that *He may be near His people when He does not give them the usual tokens of His Presence*. Who shall say that God was not in the front of Israel when they went down into the sea? They could not see the symbol of His Presence, but He could see their obedience to His bidding! How else did the sea, in fright, draw back? Was it not because the Lord rebuked the sea? The strong east wind did not, of itself, divide the sea, for a wind naturally strong enough for that would have blown all the people into the air! The wind was used of God to move the waters, but its chief objective was to dry up the dampness from the floor of the sea and to make marching the

more easy for the vast host of Israel. Truly the Lord was there, gloriously triumphing! No cloudy pillar was seen across the waters as Israel looked forward to the shore, but yet the Lord was there majestically—and you may have but little comfort of the Lord's Presence at this time, yet God may be with you wondrously.

Do not so much set your heart upon *comfort*, but rejoice in the fact which gladdened Hagar in the wilderness—"You, God, see me." It does not matter to the fire whether the logs are cast upon it from the front, or the oil poured upon it secretly from behind the wall, so long as it finds its fuel. To you the daily supply of *Grace* is more important than the supply of *comfort*—and this shall never fail you so long as you live. Let me whisper to you one more word. After all, *the host of Israel did not require any guide in front when they came to the sea*. "How is that?" you ask. Why, Beloved, there were no two ways to choose from—they could not miss the way, for they must necessarily march through the sea! No room for wandering remained—their road was walled up and they could not miss it.

So when men come into deep trouble and cannot get out of it, they scarcely need a guide, for their own plain path is submission and patience. Tried child of God, you have to bear your trouble and when that is quite clear, your way is no longer doubtful! Cast all your care on Him who cares for you and, in patience, possess your soul. "Oh, but I thought I was going to find a way of escape made for me. Listen! "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, *that you may be able to bear it*." You have to bear it, you see. Your great need for the present is faith in God, who has said—"I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring My people again from the depths of the sea."

Thus, you see, the light for guidance was not needed just then. What they needed was the pillar of cloud *behind* them and that is where they had it. Why was that cloud behind them? Well, it was there for several reasons—the first was to shut out the sight of their enemies from them. We read that Israel lifted up their eyes and saw the Egyptians and then they began to tremble, and cry out—and so God drew the blinds down, that His poor children could not see their frightful taskmasters! It is a great mercy when God does not let us see everything. What the eyes do not see, perhaps the heart will not sorrow. May I ask you just to try and use your eyes a little, now? There are your sins—will you look back on them for a minute? Look steadily. They are quite as dreadful as the Egyptian horsemen and chariots. I have looked intently and I cannot see a sin remaining.

"What, have you lived such a life that you have never sinned?" Ah, no, Beloved, I have to mourn over *many* offenses, but I cannot see one of them, *now*, for my sins are covered. I believe this text, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." If I am cleansed, why should I see spots, or speak as if I did? The Lord stands between His people and their sins. Jesus, who veiled His Glory in the cloud of our humanity, interposes between us and our transgressions. Is it not written, "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for and there shall be none; and the sins of

Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve”? If God declares that our sins cannot be found, then I am sure we need not look for them! And if He says that Christ has made an end of sin, then there is an end of it! The Egyptians shall not come near us all the night of this life—and when the morning breaks, we shall see them dead upon the shore. Then shall we sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously, and our transgressions and iniquities has He cast into the depths of the sea!

“Ah,” says one, “I know that my sins are forgiven, but I am troubled about my circumstances.” Will you now look back? How about the circumstances you have passed through? Do you see anything wrong about them, now? Oh, no, you say, they were all right. As you look back you can only see the Glory of God—the Lord has led you by a right way. Very well—learn to look at your circumstances through the light God has set between Israel and the Egyptians. Who is he that can harm us? What is there to distress us? See your circumstances through the medium of the love of Jesus and you perceive all things working for your good! Up to now the Lord has been our shield and our exceedingly great reward! We see now no current evil; He has turned for us the curse into a blessing. The Lord has caused us to be far from fear and has put terror far away.

The cloudy pillar went behind for another reason, namely, *that the Egyptians might not see them*. Their enemies were made to stumble and were compelled to come to a dead stop. “The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my lust shall be satisfied upon them.” Why does he stop? Why does the lion pause when about to spring? He is blindfolded! He shivers in the dense blackness, thinking of that former day when all the land of Mizraim quailed beneath a darkness that might be felt! Be calm, O child of God, for the Covenant Angel is dealing with your adversaries, and their time is generally the night. You will hear, by-and-by, of what He has done. Meanwhile, remember what He did to Pharaoh and Sennacherib. The Lord may not be before you, shedding delight upon your face, but He is behind you, holding back the foe! He looks forth from the cloud and discomferts your foes. “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn.” Why, stand still, and see the salvation of God!

IV. Now, Beloved, I must draw towards a conclusion by observing, that THE DIVINE PRESENCE WILL, ONE DAY, BE MORE GLORIOUSLY REVEALED. I have been speaking about the Lord being the rear guard of His people and so explaining my second text—but I must now refer you to my last text, in the 52nd of Isaiah—“The Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.” This is the condition into which the Lord brings His people when they depart from Babylon and are no more conformed to this present evil world. I trust He has brought many of us into this all-surrounding light at this good hour. The Lord is behind us, we know—our sins and iniquities are covered, our past mistakes are all erased—we are accepted in the Beloved. But we have not to look forward and say, “The angel of God has left us.”

Oh, no! We can still see the bright light before us. Our ways are ordered of the Lord and none of our steps shall slide. We glory in tribulations, also, believing that we shall glorify God in them. We look forward to the time of old age, believing that to gray hairs He is the same, and that in our days of decline He will carry us. We look forward to the coming of our Lord with delight or, if that may not be in our day, we look to falling asleep upon the bosom of our Savior! Before us we see the Resurrection morning and all its splendor—we anticipate the risen body—that glorified fabric in which our pure and perfect spirit shall dwell forever! We hear the voice of harpers harping with their harps, saluting the reign of Christ and the glorification of His people with Him!

Below there is nothing before us now but that which is inexpressibly delightful! The day has long dawned with us, whose morning clouds have passed away—a day which grows warmer and brighter—and is nearing to the perfect day. A few more months, a few more years, and we shall be in the land of the unclouded sky. What joy will it be to be there! What ecstasy will it be to be there forever!—

***“Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in.”***

How willingly would I fly away and be at rest. I feel my wings, but they are not strong enough, as yet, to bear my soul away—but they will be! God is making His children ready to depart and He will only have to beckon them and they will cry, “Here am I,” and then they shall be with Him forever!

Yes, the Glory of the Lord is above us and beneath us, on the right hand and on the left, outside us and within us. We depart not from it, though it is behind us! We are always going into the glorious Light of God, for it is before us, too. The Lord shall be a wall of fire around us, and the Glory in the midst. If you have come there, dear Brothers, stay there. If you have entered there, dear Sisters, never quit that charmed circle, but abide in full communion with the Lord your God.

V. But now I have a sorrowful word to say and with that I have done. THIS DIVINE PRESENCE HAS A TWOFOLD ASPECT—that same Glory which lit up the canvas city and made it bright as the day, darkened all the camps of Egypt. They could see *nothing*, for the dark side of *God* was turned to them. I am afraid it is so with some of you. Oh, dear Friends, is it not a dreadful thing that to some men the most terrible thing in the world would be God? If you could get away from God, how happy, how merry, how jolly you would be! You want to depart from Him—you *are* departing from Him. One of these days Jesus will tell you to depart. “Keep on as you were,” He says, “you were always departing from God; keep on departing! Depart from Me, you cursed!” That will be the consummation of your life. To some of us the thought of God is joy, but to the ungodly nothing would be such good news as to hear that there was no God! Indeed, they find a dreadful comfort in endeavoring to be skeptical and unbelieving. God has a dark side to sinners—His justice and His righteousness—which are the comfort of His people—are the despair of the wicked!

The Word of God has a dark side to sinners. I will tell you what they say. They say, “We do not understand this Book, it is so full of mystery.

We find it full of dark sayings, hard things and things difficult to be believed. It is all knots and snarls." Just so—you are an Egyptian—it is dark to you. Let me call up the smallest babe in Grace and say, "Dear child, is that what the Bible is to you?" "Oh, no," he says, "it is my joy and my delight. I may not understand it all, but I love it all and I feed on it all." Oh, it is a good thing when you cannot understand a revealed Truth of God. to feed on it! And when you find it to be good for your soul, you will not complain of its mystery. The Bible is dark to the Egyptians, but it is light to Israel.

Now look at the *Gospel* itself. Why, there are many that sit and hear the Gospel and they say, "I do not understand this believing, this atonement, and so on." No, I know you do not. You are an Egyptian, it is dark to you. It is a savor of death unto death to you! I am afraid you will go on quarrelling with it until God ends the quarrel in your destruction. But if you are one of His, you will quarrel no longer! You will say, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief. The blessed way of salvation by atoning blood I eagerly accept and rejoice in it." That will prove you to be an Israelite—it will be a savor of life unto life to you! Why, even the blessed *Lord Jesus Christ* has a dark side for sinners. If He were to come here, this morning, oh, how gladly would I stand back to let Him come forward and show His surpassing beauty! Why, some of you would think it Heaven if you could but see Him here and look into His pierced hands and side—and mark that blessed, marred, unutterably lovely visage!

Yes, but it could not bring any joy to you who do not love Him! You do not trust Him and if the news were given out, "Christ has come!" why, you would swoon with fear in your pews, for you would say, "He has come to judgment, and I am unprepared! He that is not my Savior will be my Judge and sentence me to everlasting woe." There is a dark side in the Mediator to the Egyptians while there is a bright side to Israel. Oh that you would believe in Jesus Christ! Oh that you would "kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little," for, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

You can come and be numbered with Israel, for the door into Israel is Christ, Himself! If you come to Christ you have come to His people, you have come to safety and, therefore, "the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rear guard." Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Exodus 13:20-22; 14:1-20; Isaiah 52.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—145 (PART II), 212, 230.

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WHY SOME SEEKERS ARE NOT SAVED

NO. 2411

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“Behold the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.”
Isaiah. 59:1, 2.

THERE are some people who are not saved though we would have expected that they would have been converted long ago. Our text explains the reason, so, without any preface, let us come to it at once.

I. First, let us consider THE FACT CONFESSED! The people of whom I am especially thinking, just now, have been *hearers of the Gospel*, and diligent hearers, too. Their seat is seldom vacant and they are not among those who go to sleep during the sermon. They do not enjoy the Sunday after the fashion of the countryman, who said that he liked that day best because he could go to church, put up his feet, fall asleep and think of nothing at all. The people to whom I am referring really *listen* to what the preacher has to say. They are attentive and they seek to retain in their memories the Truths of God he preaches. They even talk when they are at home of the striking passages, if such there are, in what they have heard. You would suppose that such persons would get a blessing from the Gospel, yet they do not.

They have now been listening for years to an earnest minister—they would not like to hear one who was not earnest. They have grown to be somewhat discriminating in their taste—they know what is the Gospel and they would not care to be present at a service in which the Gospel was not clearly set forth. Yet, for all this, they are not saved! They stand out in the shower, yet they are not wet! They are like Gideon’s fleece, perfectly dry when all the ground was saturated with the dew. This is a strange circumstance, but, alas, by no means an uncommon one! We would not have thought that there could be such people, but we are compelled to believe that there are, for we frequently stumble across them—people who are often sitting under the sound of the Gospel, yet who never hear it with the ears of their heart! The light shines upon their eyes, yet they do not see it, for thick scales seem to be there to hide from them the beams of the sun.

You will be, perhaps, still more surprised when I add that there are some people who go *beyond hearing* and yet are not saved. *They have become men of prayer, after a fashion*—are they not described in the chapter I read to you? [Exposition of Isaiah 58 at end of sermon—ED.]“Yet

they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinances of their God: they ask of Me the ordinances of justice, they take delight in approaching God.” These people are in such a state of mind that if they went to their business without the repetition of a form of prayer, they would be uneasy through the whole day! What is more, it is not merely a *form* of prayer—in some cases there is a measure of life, desire and earnestness in their devotions. Only this morning, one of them sighed when the sermon was over and he said, “Oh, that I could be a friend of God!”

And a few Sunday nights ago, the one of whom I am speaking, when he reached his home, fell on his knees in his own private room and asked God to bless the Word to his soul. This same thing happened to him ten or even 20 years ago—he has often been stirred up and driven to his knees in prayer—yet he has gone no further, but still remains, to his own consciousness, an undecided, hesitating person, on the borders of the Kingdom of God, yet not in the Kingdom—almost persuaded, yet not fully persuaded to be a Christian! You know, dear Hearers, and I hardly need tell you, that a man who is almost honest is a rogue, and the man who is almost a Christian is *not* a Christian! There was a man who was almost saved in a fire, but he was burned to death! There was another who was almost healed of a disease, but he died! There was one who was almost reprieved, but he was hanged—and there are many in Hell who were almost saved!

I am not talking, now, just to be talking. I know that with some of my most hopeful hearers, it is just as I have been describing it—they hear the Gospel and they pray to God, yet they have not gone beyond those outward exercises—they have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and they have not received Him into their hearts as their own personal Savior.

I know, also, that *these people are greatly disappointed with themselves*. Not altogether so, for they know, to a great extent, where the blame lies, but yet they had hoped better things of themselves. If anyone had told them, ten, 12, or 20 years ago, that they would be where they now are, each one of them would have said, “I hope that will not be the case with me! I trust that, long before the time you mention, I shall have cast in my lot with the people of God and shall have been saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.” They are still hoping, but their hope is curdling into *doubt* and their doubt is souring into *despair*—and I am very fearful lest that despair should lead them into still greater sin!

I want to speak especially to these friends. I shall do it with much kindness of heart towards them, but I wish to do it, also, with equal faithfulness, praying all the while that what I say may help them to escape from their present unsatisfactory and unsafe position.

II. So, in the second place, I call their attention to THE IMPUTATION IMPLIED AND MET. It is suggested to some, that inasmuch as they are not saved though they have put themselves in the way of saving ordinances, and though they have sought salvation, perhaps salvation is not so easily to be had as it used to be—perhaps Christ cannot save *them* as He has saved others!

Notice the first word of our text—"Behold." This is like our *nota bene*—mark well, turn your eye this way, *Ecce*—"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear." You are called upon to mark this—*distinctly to see it*—and to entertain no doubt about it! If you are not saved, it is *not* because God is unable to save you, nor is it because He is unwilling to hear your prayers!

Listen to this word, for *it is God Himself who speaks it*. He knows whether His hand is palsied, or whether His ear is deaf and, He, Himself, declares that His hand is *not* shortened that it cannot save, and that His ear is *not* heavy that it cannot hear. If you have any doubt about this fact, I recommend you to prove it for yourselves—come by *faith* to Jesus, and see whether He will save you. We sang just now—

"Venture on Him, venture wholly,"

and if you think that it is a venture, if you fancy that, perhaps, the blood of Christ cannot cleanse you, or the Spirit of God cannot renew you, come and put the matter to the test! Dare, *now*, to cast yourself at Jesus' feet and say, "I believe that You can save me, and I trust You to be my Savior." If He does not save you—if He cannot do so—you have at least made the trial. But I beseech you to listen to this text—do not close your ears or your heart to its message—"Behold, behold, behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ears heavy, that they cannot hear."

This passage proves that *the power to save remains unimpaired with God*. Just as of old He forgave great sinners through the atoning Sacrifice of His well-beloved Son, so is He able to forgive great sinners now! He forgave the dying thief and He can forgive you! All manner of sin and of blasphemy have been forgiven of men and all manner of sin and of blasphemy can be forgiven of you. Though you had spent a lifetime in drunkenness, or unchastity, or dishonesty, or any other form of evil, though you should have grown gray in the service of sin and Satan—

***"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,***

still, still—

Lose all their guilty stains!"

There is the same power with God to forgive sin as there used to be, for the blood of Jesus is as powerful to cleanse as it ever was!

Note, also, that there is the same power of the Holy Spirit to change your nature as there ever was. He who turned Saul of Tarsus from an enemy into an Apostle can do the same with you. Of old, conversion was likened to the raising of the dead and He who has quickened many a dead soul can quicken your dead soul, and raise *you* from the dead! It was also called a new creation—and He who made all things new in other men can make all things new in you!

Look, Sirs, if you think that God cannot forgive sin, nowadays, as He did in the olden times, I stand here as a living witness to the contrary, for I know that He has pardoned me! It has always surprised me, but I do not think that in all my life I so much wondered at being a child of God as I wonder now. Thirty-seven years ago I was baptized into the sacred

name, and I adored the Grace of God, then, but not as much as I do now. What I owe to that Grace, it is not possible for me to express. Every time I preach to you, I feel unworthy of my sacred office and I would gladly run from it if I dared! But woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel! Yet I bear witness to this fact, that the Grace of God, which was able to save me, is able to save you! Here, give me your hand, you trembler, give me your hand! I wish that I could go round the galleries and down below in the area, there, and get a hold of your hands and say to each one of you, "My Brother, my Sister, the Lord can save you, He can save you! I am a witness that He can save you because He has saved me! His hand is not shortened, that it cannot save."

But I need not speak of myself, only. If it were proper, I could ask hundreds, yes, thousands of persons who are present this evening, at this service, to stand up and bear witness that the Lord saved them and that they firmly believe, after what has been worked in them, that no case is beyond the reach of Almighty Grace! Come along with you, then, do not cast blame upon *God*, as though your not being saved was the result of lack of power on the part of God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit, for it is not so!

You say that it must be the lack of will, then, but it is not, *for the Lord's willingness to hear remains the same as ever*. You are called upon in the text to behold that His ear is not heavy, that it cannot hear. You know that there are none so deaf as those who will not hear and if God resolved not to hear your prayers, then He would be, indeed, the possessor of a heavy ear. But He has not resolved to refuse your prayer! You may be unwilling to pray, but God is not unwilling to hear! "If you seek Him, He will be found of you." "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near." "For everyone that asks, receives, and he that seeks, finds; and to him that knocks, it shall be opened." If you will come *in God's way*, and cast yourself *at Christ's feet*, and cry for mercy *for His sake*, you shall have it as surely as there is a God in Heaven! He knows that I lie not when I offer to be bondsman for my Master that He will keep His promise, "Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." And that, "whoever" must include you! Call upon His name and prove for yourself the truth of the promise! Perhaps someone asks the question, "If what you tell me is true, why is it that I, who am really hearing, seeking and praying am not saved?" Now I want to try and answer that question.

III. Therefore, my third division will be, THE ACCUSATION PRESSED AND EXPLAINED.

If you will permit me, I will call upon you as a physician might. There is something the matter with you and you need to know what it is. I shall probably have to probe a little and, perhaps, have to go pretty deep. But if you really desire to receive a blessing, if there is anything which I say that fits your case, will you kindly take it home? Even if it should seem very personal and should make you feel cross, I cannot help that. You know that good blisters are not pleasant things, yet they may be very necessary. I want, if I can, to find out why it is that you have not obtained peace with God. The clue which guides me in my search is in the

second verse of my text, “Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.”

Now listen. *Your accusation against God may be turned against you.* You thought that God’s hand was shortened, that it could not save, but it is *your* hand that is shortened, for you have not laid hold upon Christ! You have not taken your sins to Him to be put away. You have not turned to God with full purpose of heart—you are shorthanded, but the Lord is not. You said that God’s ear was heavy. No, no, no! It is *your* ear that is heavy. You have not heard what God the Lord has been saying to you. You have not been obedient to the heavenly message. All the mischief lies with yourself, not with God! And at the last, if you are not saved, the blame will not rest upon the Savior, but upon yourself. This is the doctrine that we preach—if a man is saved, all the honor is to be given to Christ—but if a man is lost, all the blame is to be laid upon himself! You will find all true theology summed up in these two short sentences—salvation is all of the Grace of God—damnation is all of the will of man.

The real reason why you have not found peace, you who have sought it, is *sin*—not your sins in the abstract, for, “though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” No sin, whatever it is, shall ruin any man if he shall come to Christ for mercy. Though you are black as Hell’s midnight through iniquity, yet if you will come to Christ, He is ready to cleanse you. It is sin, after all, that lies at the door and blocks your way to the Savior.

First, it may be *unconfessed sin*. Permit me to ask whether you have made, before God, a full and complete confession of your sin? I do not insist that you should go into the details of every sin—that would be impossible, but there must be no cloaking or attempting to hide any sin from God. There must be no wish to excuse yourself, or to make out that what might be sin in others was less sinful in you. The Romanist tries to get help in confession by going to his priest and the priest puts many questions to him to help his memory. We observe no such practice as that, for we believe it to be ruinous to the priest and mischievous to the man! But we do ask you to make confession to *God*, for remember that it is written, “If we confess our sins, *He* is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” Remember how the prodigal said, “Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in your sight”? Have you said that? That is the beginning of the saved life—the acknowledgment of your former evil ways, the humble and truthful confession that you deserve the wrath of God on account of your sin—the putting of yourself into the dock, as one who pleads guilty, and who could not speak against God even if He took you at your word, and condemned you then and there!

You must take that position! You must not expect pardon till you plead guilty! Only acknowledge your transgression and *then* may you lay hold on Christ as your Savior and believe in Him for perfect pardon! It may be that you have never had peace with God because you have not made a confession of your sin in plain, distinct terms. It is no good to

mince matters with God—He knows all about you. Your secret sins—the sins your wife does not know and that no one knows but yourself—they are all known to Him! Go and whisper them into the great Father’s ear, with many a tear of deep regret that you should have offended so grievously against Him. If you do not, unconfessed sin will be a barrier between your soul and God!

But, next, sin is a very great hindrance to Grace when it is *unforsaken sin*. Some men know they are doing wrong, yet they will not stop. They confess sin, yet still go on with it. They are half resolved to part with it, but they never really do. They know that it is the right eye that offends, but they dare not pluck it out. They know that it is the right hand that offends, but they will not cut it off. They are dilatory about this work and they still go on in sin. I appeal to your own conscience, can you expect God to pardon your sin while you continue in it? Can you think of the blessed Son of God coming to the world to be a minister of sin? That heart must be wicked to an awful extreme which will dare to say, “God is merciful, therefore I will continue in sin. We are saved by faith, alone, therefore I will believe in Christ and go on in my sin.” Why, man, you are perverting the Gospel of Christ to your own destruction! You are making for yourself a deathbed which will be very terrible, since you are finding a way to Hell close by that wicket gate which lets men into the road to Heaven!

I pray you, do not desecrate the very Cross of Christ by hanging yourself upon it! There are some who do even that. You must forsake your sins if you would be saved. Christ has come to save His people *from* their sins, not *in* their sins. Drunkard, you cannot keep your cup and yet go to Heaven! I speak plainly. You who are accustomed to lie cannot have a lying tongue and a saved soul! If any of you cheat in business, do not talk to me about your faith in Christ! If you can lie and cheat, and act unfairly, you are of your father, the devil, and he will have you as surely as you live, unless you repent and turn from your evil ways! There is no real salvation except salvation from sinning, so your sin must be stopped. I put this question to any man here who is a hearer, and a seeker, and yet who does not find peace—“Is there not some sin that you have yet to abandon?” If there is, God help you, by His mighty Grace, to get rid of it at once!

There may also be some sin that has been forsaken, but it is still loved. *Sin hankered after* is a great barrier to Grace. When the cow’s calf is taken away, how she bellows after it! And there is many a man who has had his sin taken away from him, yet he still longs after it. He does not sin with his hand or his foot, but he sins with his heart—his soul goes a-lusting after his iniquities. Now, while it is so, while sin still lies in the heart, can you expect to have peace with God? No, you must have the evil out, not only from the house, but from the *heart*. You must have done with it, not with the hand, only, but with the very desire of your spirit. “Oh,” you say, “that is hard work!” It is harder work than you can accomplish! And in order to do it, you must be *born again*. This Truth of God should drive you to Christ that He may give you this new life by His

Holy Spirit! But, mark you, if it is not your desire to give up the love of sin, you will *never* find salvation while you are thus hankering after evil.

There are some who are hindered from finding peace, I do not doubt, *through sin of which they are not aware*. “Oh,” you say, “that is rather a puzzling statement!” Well, there is many a man who is living in sin without being aware that it is sin, and that may keep him back from finding peace with God. I have to add this, also, that many men do not really want to find out! There are great numbers of people who do not want to learn too much about their sin! You know that light breaks in upon us by degrees—if we sin in the dark, that sin is not so grossly guilty and serious as sin in the light. But if we are in that darkness *willfully*, and we do not wish to have it removed, then we shall be guilty, indeed! If I commit a crime and then say, “I did not know that I was breaking the law,” the judge says, “I cannot help your ignorance; you broke the law and you must bear the penalty.”

But supposing I have a book at home that tells me all about the requirements of the law and I still say to the judge, “I did not know what the law forbade”? Then he would answer, “But you ought to have known. You have committed a double offense, as you have not studied the law. It was put into your house with a command that you should study it and you are, therefore, doubly guilty, for you have refused to pay sufficient respect to the law to learn what it says.” I fear that some of you people are not conscious of your sin because you do not want to know it. Where ignorance is bliss, you think it folly to be wise, but it would not be folly to be wise unto salvation! Some of you are losing comfort, losing years of usefulness, losing all certainty about Heaven because you will not search the Scriptures and you do not desire to know what an evil thing it is in you which separates you and your God! O men and women, do not lie under such a charge as this! Say, “I will know the worst of my case. If I have to probe as with a lancet, I will find out what the mischief is. My prayer shall be, ‘Lord, let me know the very worst of my case, that I may afterwards find that sure salvation which will stand the test, even, of the Day of Judgment itself!’”

I would further suggest that there may be some who are really seeking to believe, but they do not find peace because of some *sin of omission*. Does that open a window anywhere for any of you? It is not so much that you are doing wrong as that you are *not doing right*. You are forgetting some positive duty and it is *that* which separates you and your God. I have had some very curious experiences which I may never tell, so that the persons about whom I relate them will never be known. There was one which happened so long ago that I may tell it without fear. A man, through reading my sermons, was convinced of sin. He sought the Savior, but he found no peace. He was a long time in darkness and, at last, it was suggested to him that perhaps he found no peace with God because of some wrongdoing that remained unforgiven. It appeared that, some years before, he had robbed a person who was not aware of the theft. He had taken a large sum of money and he could never rest till that amount had been returned.

I never saw the man who had been robbed and I had to rack my brain to find a way by which I could return that large sum to him without giving him a clue as to who it was that took it. I managed the business and I have the receipt for the money, and I have never heard another word about it. And he who was in heaviness of heart is now a joyful Christian, as I firmly believe, though I have never seen him. The money he had taken from the other man lay upon his conscience and when the stolen sum had been restored to its rightful owner, God granted peace to the one who had made restitution. It may be that there is someone else who has something that does not belong to him. If so, let him, also, make restitution. If any of you have been fraudulent bankrupts, try to make up that twenty shillings in the pound, which you ought to have paid. Christ did not come into the world to let you live as a rogue and then, at last, sneak into Heaven. No, He would make you an honest man at once—and when He has done so, there will be another obstacle to your finding joy and peace out of the way.

Now let us aim once more at the target—I am trying to find out why it is that some seeking sinners cannot find peace. Do you not think that some fail to find peace because they have an *ugly temper*? Some people are born with nasty tempers—they are a poor inheritance for anybody. I heard one say that he was sorry that he had lost his temper. I was uncommonly glad to hear that he had lost it, but I regretted that he found it, again, so soon! There are persons who are at variance with their mother or their father and it is very sad when husbands and wives are at strife with one another—perhaps some such are listening to me now. You are praying, you say, and you wonder that God does not have mercy on you—and yet there is strife in the household! Or it may be that your poor girl ran away from home and if she were to come back, tonight, you would shut the door in her face, would you not? You are so good and respectable that you could not harbor your own child! Yet you expect God to take pity upon you, do you?

Or you parted from your husband in a pet and you have never gone back to him—and you want to find peace with God. Peace with God? Get peace with *man* before you talk about finding peace with God! You brothers and sisters have had a quarrel, and have made up your minds that you will never forgive one another. O Sirs, let me be very plain with you—if you cannot be at peace with your fellow men, you cannot hope to be at peace with God! The Lord bids you leave your offering at the altar—He must not be insulted with it—first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and seek peace with your God. Malice in the heart is altogether inconsistent with Grace, and it must be cast out. I know two brothers who will not speak to one another, yet one of them professes to be a Christian and the other says he wants to be one. What will God do with both of them? I cannot tell what to do with either of them, I am sure! A part of salvation is to save us from an evil, hateful, spirit, and to make us love God and love our fellow men, also. Perhaps that is the reason why some of you can find no peace—because you have been indulging an evil temper.

And do you not think, once more, that there are some who find no peace because of *an intellectual sin*? There are sins of intellect quite as surely as there are sins of ignorance. Some men know a great deal too much to go to Heaven—that is to say, they think that they know better than their Bibles and better than their God! Their dear mother, now in Heaven—oh, she was a poor, simple-minded creature! Their father, stern in his integrity—oh, he is a bigot! The preacher who proclaims the Gospel with all his heart and soul, and brings many to Christ—he is behind his times—he has no “culture.” Bah! What fools! I cannot use a milder word to describe some of you! I only wish that the compliment I have thus paid you were true in the best sense, for if you *were* fools, you would enter into Heaven, but because you are so wise, you are more likely to miss the way! God has oftentimes chosen those who think *nothing* of themselves and are poor and needy, while the great ones who are proudly wise, disdain the road that leads to Paradise. Oh, be not too great to enter Heaven! Be converted and become as little children, otherwise you shall in no wise enter therein.

I am going to close my discourse, yet I do not want to say the last thing that comes into my mind. I have been describing a great many reasons why some people do not find peace with God, but sometimes there are reasons that I have not mentioned. One of these is the commission of *gross or secret sin*. Oh, the things that a man who cares for the souls of his fellows has to see and mourn over in this world! It must be 15 or 16 years ago that I was called to visit a dying man. I had seen him, before, when he was ill and in distress of mind, and I had tried to bring him to the Savior and to comfort him. He attended the Tabernacle constantly, but I could not make out why he did not find rest and peace. I often tried to remove various obstacles which I thought were in his way, but I never found out why he had no peace until after he was dead. Then I understood it. I cannot tell you all that there was in it, it is sufficient to say that he was living in known sin of the saddest kind. Kind, generous, loving—all you could wish him to be, but, alas, there was another household and another family found afterwards.

And then I understand that while he lived so, there could be no peace between him and God. I hardly like to say it, but I may be addressing somebody who is in a similar condition tonight. My dear Souls, do not try to live in sin and yet to be Christians! Do not pretend to hope in God while you are indulging secret vice—it cannot be so! You must either give up your sins or give up all hope of Heaven! Men and women, this is an evil age, full of impurity, and it behooves the minister of God, when he is dealing with men’s souls, to speak very plainly, and I am forced to put the Truth of God to you thus. Nobody knows of your sin. You have never been found out, yet it may be that you are living in the constant commission of some secret sin. By the love you bear to your own souls and by your desire to find Christ, I beseech you to flee from the evil thing! Escape for your life! Flee from the wrath to come and then lay hold on eternal life, for there is salvation in Christ, there is life for a look at Him!

But that life consists, in great measure, in being healed of sin—and you cannot continue a foul life and yet be washed in the Savior’s blood! It

is a contradiction in terms and a contradiction in fact. As I shall meet you, my Hearers, at the bar of God—and as a dying man who may never speak to you again, I thought that I would put this truth in such a way that, if I went home to bed to die, I should not have the blood of any of you resting upon my hands. I beseech you, by eternity, by Heaven, by Hell—and *there is a Hell*—let the smooth-tongued liars of this age say what they will—by Heaven, by Hell, and by your own immortality, fly to Christ, give up your sin and be saved by believing in Jesus even now! God grant it! Amen and Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 58.**

Verse 1. *Cry aloud, spare not, lift up you voice like a trumpet and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.* See, Friends, how uninterested men are by nature? God's messengers must not only speak, they must speak very forcibly—they must speak as with the sound of a trumpet before men will hear them! Among the most uninterested of all are those who think themselves God's people, but who are not really and spiritually so. It is hard to reach the common sinner, but it is harder, still, to reach the baptized sinner, the man who professes to be a Christian, but who has only the name to live while he is spiritually dead.

2. *Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways,* They are careful to offer morning prayers—they would not go into their business without bending the knee to God—and they are eager and attentive hearers in the House of the Lord.

2. *As a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of Me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.* Is it not strange that men will often continue to take delight in the externals of religion, while they give their heart to their sins? Outwardly, they keep up with great regularity all the observances of religion, yet in heart they are far from God.

3. *Why have we fasted, say they, and then see not? Why have we afflicted our soul, and You take no knowledge?* They could not make out why they did not benefit by their religiousness. They fasted, but they did not find themselves improved, thereby. They afflicted their souls, yet they did not receive pardon for their sins, and they could not make it out. The Lord explained the mystery.

3. *Behold, in the day of your fast, you find pleasure; and exalt your labors.* It is very easy to abstain from eating food of a certain kind, yet you can make another kind of food just as palatable. And while you are resting, you may be compelling others to work for you. What is this but hypocrisy? I think it is a common saying among the Arabs and Egyptians, when a man is very ugly in temper, "One would think that he was keeping a fast," because it often happens in long fasts that men grow irritable. What is the good of fasting when that is the only result?

4. *Behold, you fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness* Even in their fasts, they disputed with one another! One said

the fast should be on such a day, another would keep it on another day—and no doubt there are some professing Christians who are very zealous, mainly out of spite against other professors—they, with as much zeal, keep fast days or feast days the wrong way as others do the right way! It is a pity when this sort of party spirit is mixed up with the observances of religion!

4. *You shall not fast as you do this day.* Some fasted in order to appear very religious. “Oh,” people would say, “such a man must be very good, he fasts three times a week.” That is a kind of fasting to which God has no respect! To feed pride while we fast with the stomach is a poor way of showing how holy we are.

4, 5. *To make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?* The mere appearance of sorrow, the outward garb of mortification—what is there in that to please the Lord?

6. *Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?* That is the kind of fasting which God cares for—when a man leaves off oppressing those who toil for him, when he makes their tasks lighter, when he seeks their comfort—when he no longer grinds them between the millstones that threaten to crush the life out of them.

7. *Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house? When you see the naked, that you cover him, and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh?* For they are your own flesh and blood! Though they may be total strangers to you, yet they are men like yourself. This is the fast that God delights in, when men take care to look after the poor and to relieve the distressed. When this is done—

8. *Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily: and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your reward.* Do not take those promises out of their context! Observe that they are made to those that clothe the naked, feed the hungry and care for the poor. If you have done this, then you can ask God to fulfill this promise, but not otherwise. Then, when you have done this—

9. *Then shall you call, and the LORD shall answer; you shall cry, and He shall say, here I am.* If you have cared for the needy, God will care for you when you are needy. Is it not His way to reward the gift of even a cup of cold water to one of His disciples? Has He not promised that He will give back into our bosoms that which we have given to others for His sake?

9. *If you take away from the midst of you the yoke.* If you do not oppress anybody—

9. *The putting forth of the finger.* That is, the finger pointing scornfully at people and the contemptuous enquiry, “Who are *they?*”—looking down

upon your fellows who, perhaps, are far better than yourself—you must put all that away!

9. *And speaking vanity.* That constant idle talk of which some are so fond, that utterance of falsehood which many practice—that, also, must be put away.

10. *And if you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday.* Now mind again what I said just now—do not go stealing and run away with this promise without noticing the context in which it is placed—“If you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then your light shall dawn in darkness,” but not till then!

11. *And the LORD shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones: and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.* What rich promises to the generous and the kind! There are some who scatter and yet increase, and there are others who withhold more than is meet, and it tends to poverty. These promises are distinctly made to those who *care for the needy and suffering*. My Brothers and Sisters, mind well what the Lord, here, teaches you, for these things are far better than fasting! Better than any outward ordinances, whatever, are real acts of kindness, for remember that the same God who said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind,” made the second table of His Law to run thus, “and your neighbor as yourself.”

12. *And they that shall be of you shall build the old waste places. You shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called, The Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Paths to Dwell In.* God’s people are to seek to turn wildernesses into paradises! There is no part of the world so full of sorrow but the heart of the Believer may bring gladness to it!

13, 14. *If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honorable; and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words: then shall you delight yourself in the LORD.* There is no doubt that a reverent, happy, joyful keeping of the Sabbath ministers greatly to spiritual advancement. Here is the promise made to those who delight in the Sabbath—

14. *And I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it.* God help us to be observant of the precepts of this chapter that its promises may be blessedly fulfilled in our experience! Amen.

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

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

THE BEST CLOAK

NO. 832

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

***“And was clad with zeal as a cloak.”
Isaiah 59:17.***

THE solitary champion who is here spoken of, who looked and, “saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor”—and therefore His own arm brought salvation unto Him, and His righteousness it sustained Him—this conquering hero we cannot fail to recognize as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Prince of the House of David, our Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever may have been the first and primary meaning of the text, we are persuaded that the ultimate reference of it is to that destroyer of death, the Captain of our salvation, by whose struggles the whole host of the elect have obtained the victory!

Of Him we may say beyond and above all others, that He “was clad with zeal as a cloak.” When a man has all other excellencies, when the Grace of God has worked in him all other virtues, then zeal is still needed to elevate and perfect his entire manhood. Behold the altar, built of unhewn stones, and after God’s own Law. Behold the wood laid on it. See the victim slain and the blood flowing. But you cannot make a sacrifice without fire—unless the fire from Heaven shall perfect the sacrificial preparations, all will be useless. Behold in the altar the figure of the man—he has faith, courage, love, consecration—but if he lacks the fire of fervent zeal, his life will be a failure. He will remain an offering unconsumed, and consequently worthless and unaccepted.

By this, indeed, may you know the genuine from the false when other things might raise a question—the false is like the altar of Baal whereon there is much wood and a well-fed bullock. And around it are active genuflections and vigorous rituals, but there is no true fire from Heaven. While the genuine is like the altar of Elijah, upon which, in answer to fervent prayers, the hallowed flames descend! One of the first requisites of an earnest, successful, soul-winning man must be zeal. As well a chariot without its steeds, a sun without its beams, a Heaven without its joy—as a man of God without zeal.

Taking the text and coming to it at once, with eager expectation, because the Lord is there, we shall first observe—how zeal is to be regarded—it is to be to the Christian man as a *cloak*. Secondly, we shall joyfully show how our Lord Jesus Christ exhibited it. And then, thirdly, look for a few minutes at the secret springs which fed the zeal of our blessed Lord, and which in our case must also feed us.

I. First, then, according to the text, **ZEAL IS TO BE REGARDED AS A CLOAK THAT COVERS ALL.** The Christian man is to wear zeal as we wear an outward garment which covers all the rest of our garments—a flowing robe which encompasses the entire person. Zeal is all enveloping—zeal should envelope all the powers of the Christian. He is to invest himself

with faith and love, with patience and perseverance, with hope and joy—but zeal must be over all these. We are not to be zealous with one part of ourselves, nor zealous in one particular duty, only, nor zealous at one special season.

We are to be altogether zealous for all Christ's work, for all Christ's truth—and at all times zealous not only in one good thing, but in *all* good things, wrapping ourselves up completely in zeal—by the power of God's Spirit, just as the traveler in the snowstorm wraps himself up in his great coat or binds his cloak about him. Zeal is to envelope all. We are to wear holy zeal as a cloak in order to preserve the different parts of our soul from danger. Zeal is preserving. The cloak covers the arms, the breast, the heart and all the more delicate parts of the body. In order that when the rain comes down we may not so soon be chilled to the skin and suffer injury from cold, we are protected with a cloak and find it to be a warm and welcome shelter—so our love needs to put on zeal as a protection against the coldness of the outside world.

Our faith needs to buckle on a garment of zeal as a defense that when the storm of troubles comes as a blast against the soul, confidence may not be frostbitten. Zeal is to wrap up the whole man so that when he is subject to a furious hail of persecution, or a biting wind of poverty, or a torrent of down-pouring griefs, the pilgrim to the skies may hold on his way and bid all weathers brave defiance.

Beloved, I am afraid that many of God's children are sickening for lack of wearing this cloak. They never rise to the point of being zealous. They are very *proper*, and with that doubtful virtue they remain content. Oh, that dreadful propriety which is the death of all true godliness wherever its frosty scepter sways its wintry dominion over a man! Thousands of our members are locked in the deadly arms of an Arctic propriety. They are proper, very proper! They are always afraid of being fanatical, even more than of being worldly or backsliding. When religious work is being done in earnest, they say it is exciting and irregular—and they therefore avoid it. They have heard of unwise excitement attending some religious meetings and they at once conceive a great dread of everything like excitement—however holy and useful.

And therefore, in order to avoid as much as possible that which is at all unusual, they make to their tents and shun the very angels of God lest they should become too enthusiastic by conversing with them! I will not commend them for this because I am persuaded there is no cloak in which a man can be so well wrapped up against the trials of the world and the temptations of business as a cloak of *zeal* that covers him all over. The devil cannot so readily assail a zealous man. There is a point, of course, at which he can overthrow him by turning that zeal into unhallowed passion, fierce bigotry, or unbridled rant. But still, in the ordinary temptations of life the man who is thoroughly and heartily possessed by the spirit of true and thoroughly Christian zeal throws off the blows of the enemy as the shields of the ancient warrior hurled off the fiery darts of the foe. Zeal is comforting, even as the cloak, when wrapped about the traveler in the snowstorm—and so must zeal be with us.

Oftentimes the Christian minister, especially, will pass through a pelting, raging, whirling tempest and hurricane of difficulties. And in such times, unless he is very zealous, he may be inclined to succumb and to yield to the present distress. But He who says, "I am called of God to a work, and I will do it or I will die. I *must* win souls. God has called me to it, and I can lie in prison, or I can have my name cast out as evil, or I can suffer poverty—but I cannot give up ministering to poor souls and snatching them, as brands, from the burning." Such a man dreams not of pausing in his career because old Boreas howls!

The man who is possessed by an irresistible passion for carrying out his lifework will gird this gracious ardor well around him, and, let the snowflakes come as they may, they will only fall, as it were, into a furnace and will melt before they can injure. You who have zeal for God in your Sunday school classes will find it protects you from the numbing influence that will come over you in the class. After teaching for some months, and perhaps years, the routine of the school is apt to become a heavy toil, and you are apt to say, "I work hard all week, and I really need my Sundays for rest." And you will take them for rest unless zeal shall forbid—and wrapping yourselves in holy fervor you will look at your little ones and feel that you cannot let them perish for lack of knowledge! And out of love to them, and out of love to your Master you will return to the class with extra devotion—and troubling nothing for the consequences, you will press on like a true hero—because your soul is warmed and comforted with zeal as a cloak, and, therefore your heart beats warm within however cold the world may be without.

We may regard zeal as a cloak by reason of its adorning a man's character. Many a person looks all the more comely because of the garment in which he has arrayed himself. There is no more becoming garment to the Christian when he possesses all the virtues than an all-enveloping zeal! Do not tell me that the beauty of holiness consists in a mere stately, dull, sober round of duties. It is not so! The beauty of holiness consists in that bursting of love towards God which is enamored of holiness and would rather suffer a thousand ills than do anything of evil. Brothers and Sisters, you will not be, as Christians, thought beautiful in the eyes of angels and perfect intelligences, (and these are the best judges of beauty), because you coldly pursue the regular rounds of duty.

But you will be beautiful to them if you glow, and flame, and blaze with intense affection towards God. God, who is the greatest and highest example of all beauty, when He reveals Himself, does so in a flaming fire—Sinai is altogether on a smoke—He touches the hills and they melt like wax though they were granite before. God as a Spirit is a consuming fire, and the more we get to be like God the more shall we become like consuming fires. The half-animated lethargic state in which we sing—

***"Our souls can neither fly nor go
To reach celestial joys,"***

is earthly, gross, sensual. But oh, when we once receive the promised eagle wings, and begin to mount, then are we spiritual! And when our soul, like a sharp sword, cuts through the scabbard and the body seems as if it could not bear the indomitable energy that rules within—it is *then* that we are elevated to be like God.

When God within us manifests the weight of Deity, and bows the weakness of our humanity into the dust while the new-born nature is, in sublime ecstasy, made to stand forth, alone and away from the body, in the blaze of the Divine Presence, *then* it is that we are favored of the Lord! I pray God that we may be evermore ardent as seraphs, made of God to be like those celestial ministers of His who are as flames of fire. The true man of God burns his way. His life is like the passage of a meteor across the sky. None can stay his onrush! He has Omnipotence within him! He is launched like a thunderbolt from the eternal hand, and he must go forward till his career is run. He is not like you half-awakened sons of the sluggard, who, having no strength from God and possessing none of your own, crawl as the snail crawls, and melt as it melts until there is nothing left of them.

As Watts writes in his couplet—

***“They trust their native strength,
And melt away, and droop, and die.”***

Such as confide in God and in His might, clothing themselves with the holy ardor which God has given them, shall be beautiful in His sight, and beautiful to all eternity in the judgment of those who know how to estimate true beauty of character! Perhaps these four points may bring out the excellence of being clothed with zeal as a cloak. Zeal is to envelope all our powers. It is to preserve us in danger. It is to comfort us in affliction. It is to adorn us at all times.

But I should like to say one or two other things on this subject. We must take care to put on zeal as a cloak and not as a *hood*. Some put it over their heads and do not wear it over their bodies. Now, nobody wears his cloak over his head and yet I have known some persons whose zeal has entirely blindfolded their judgment! They have taken zeal as men put a bandage over their eyes when they would be blinded, and then have gone headlong in evil or foolish work. Now the zeal that God would have us cultivate is wise and prudent—it does not heedlessly leap into the ditch, though it would swim a river, yes, and the Atlantic to boot—if it felt that God had bid it do so.

Zeal is like fire which is said to be, “a good servant but a bad master.” The fire in the grate—who shall say too much in its favor? But fire in the thatch of the house—who shall say too much *against* it? The fire, the flaming fire of zeal burning and blazing in the soul—this is a Christian gift and virtue! But when zeal takes away *judgment* and the man is led here and there by the first loud talker. When he is carried about by every wind of doctrine, and is first in love with this, and then with that—then the man does not wear zeal as a cloak—he makes a hood of it and makes himself brother to a fool!

Zeal, again, is a cloak, and therefore is not intended to supersede the other Graces. We do not put on our great coats and leave off all our other clothes. We do not see the traveler climbing the Alps with nothing upon his body but his cloak—that would be most absurd! And so, zeal cannot take the place of knowledge, or faith, or love, or holiness. It is a cloak which is a great thing, it is true, but it is nothing more than a cloak—and the rest of the garments must be carefully attended to.

When I have sometimes heard a zealous Brother preaching, who evidently did not know anything of this subject, or of human nature, I have been pleased to see the cloak, but I wished that I could have seen some other garments for decency's sake! Ill is the case of those ill-clad zealots who bray with all their might, "Believe, believe, believe," and thump the pulpit and make great demonstration when they cannot tell what is to be believed, nor expound the doctrine of the Atonement—nor give an intelligent description of the plan of salvation! All such zeal is as rational as it would be for us all to go abroad bare of every rag except a cloak.

Modesty ought to keep such unclothed men out of sight. Go home, Brothers! Go home, you who have only your cloaks—and get other garments—and then we shall be glad enough to see you. Zeal is a cloak, but it is very far from being everything. Again, zeal is a cloak, and, therefore, we are not to regard it as an extraordinary robe to be worn only occasionally on high days and holidays. A man wears his great coat or his cloak when he needs it. He wears it not on Sundays only, but in going to and fro in his labor. He reckons his cloak not to be a thing in which to walk in state with my lord through the streets, but as a portion of his ordinary working-day dress—and so ought our zeal to be.

Zeal for God should be exhibited in workshops. It should be worn in the market-house, in the senate, or wherever we may labor. Zeal should be worn in the homestead and in the factory—by masters, by servants, by children, by parents. If it is genuine zeal it will be like the cloak which always hangs ready on the nail in the hall. No, since the storm is always on, and we are always pilgrims, it will be like the cloak which we cannot bear to lay aside! We shall try always to wear it for Christ's sake.

Brethren, while I say that zeal is not everything, remember that the cloak *covers* everything, and do not let your zeal be such a scanty thing that it will only hang like a girdle round your loins. Let it be a great wrapper in which to enfold all your manhood apparent everywhere—not secret and inward alone, but revealed and active. Our Lord is said to put on zeal as a cloak. He manifested and displayed His holy fervor. We have heard some boast that they were zealous, but you could not see it, for their zeal was deep in their hearts. Now our Lord had not zeal merely in His heart, but He had zeal outwardly as well. It is all very well to have Divine Grace in the heart—that is the first and primary point—but where there is Grace in the heart it soon shows itself in the life.

It is useless for a man to say he has an abundance of wealth if he always dresses like a beggar and his household is conducted on the most stingy system. So, a man must not claim to have zeal in his heart if he never shows that zeal in his conversation nor in earnest service of Jesus. Remember, our Lord put on zeal! While the Christian religion is an internal thing, there is no religion in the world which shows itself so much externally. There is a remarkable piece of advice given by Paul which sounds very strange if you read it literally. He writes, "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, hearts of mercy." Now, surely, hearts are things to be worn within and not without! And yet he would have the Christian to be such a tender-hearted man as to wear his very soul on his

sleeve so that he can be easily touched, moved, and affected by the woes of his fellow men.

So must it be with zeal. It must be in the heart, but it must also shine, and flash, and sparkle throughout the whole of man's outward life.

II. Leaving that point, it is now for a few minutes our very pleasant duty TO OBSERVE HOW OUR LORD EXHIBITED THIS ZEAL. Beloved, we can but speak a few words where volumes would scarcely suffice. In His earliest childhood, you have tokens of Christ's inward zeal. He is found in the Temple among the doctors, at an age when other children are shouting in the playground, or laughing among their toys. He is hearing the rabbis, and asking them questions, and when His anxious parents ask Him why He has left them, He replies, "Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?"

Yes, even at that early age his soul was longing to commence His work. Eager for the Baptism that He was to be baptized with, He was "straitened," even then, "until it was accomplished." In later life you see His burning zeal in leaving all the comforts of life. What but His zeal brought Him to such a condition that He said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head"? He might, if He had chosen, have enjoyed the comforts of the domestic circle. There were those who loved Him! There were hundreds throughout Judea who would have been but too glad to house Him. Martha, and Mary and Lazarus, were but *types* of others whom Jesus loved, and who loved Jesus. And yet, for love of souls, for love of God He banishes Himself from all domestic joys. Oh, blessed Mirror of quenchless ardor, when shall we learn self-denial from Your example and imitate Your passion to glorify God?

His very dress showed His zeal because it was not ostentatious, but in every way suitable for incessant labor and humble service. He wore nothing that could attract attention. The common smock-frock of the ordinary peasant was His outer dress. Nothing in His apparel distinguished Him from others. He had given up all the dainties, yes, and all the comforts of life for the one great object of accomplishing *our* redemption. He showed His earnestness in persevering in His worship under all manner of rebuffs. He was constantly misrepresented. He came unto His own, and His own received him not. Though He was worthy to be beloved of all hearts, yet, "He was despised and rejected of men." Still He never turned aside from His work.

Once, when the flesh would have gladly shrunk from the cup of gall, how mightily did He put aside the temptation with, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will"! His path was always onward and it mattered not who stood in the way—whether Pharisee or Herodian—He tarried for none. Whether the princes of this world, or the powers of the infernal lake opposed Him, still onward He advanced to complete His victory. And, as a clearer proof of His zeal, still, all the blandishments of the world could not attract Him. The excited crowd would have taken Him by force and have made Him a king—but such was His zeal for the one work He had in hand, that He counted royal honors to be less than nothing and vanity.

There were no temptations to Him in all the pomp of a kingdom. He had received the offer of all earth's thrones from the arch-enemy and had refused them all—what, then, was one petty principedom to Him! If all Jerusalem had clapped their hands, and said, "God save the King!" He would not have listened to the cry, nor have cared for it. He cared to wear the crown of thorns, and to give His hands and feet to the nails, and His heart to the spear—and He had no heart and no hands or feet for anything except the love of God and the well-being of men.

Many and many a man has been very zealous for God till he has met with fierce persecutions, or bitter enemies, and then he has turned his back. And many more have been zealous in the highest degree until wealth came in their way, or the possibilities of honor—and then they have stooped and have licked the world's feet—and have been mere puddles of fashion. Their ardor for the Truth of God has evaporated and their zeal has fled. Jesus was turned aside neither by frowns nor by smiles, but onward, still, He went, "clad with zeal as with a cloak."

Look, my Brothers and Sisters, at His incessant labors! In the three years of Christ's life, you behold epitomized 3,000 years of ordinary existence. I do not know how it seems to you, but the life of Christ appears to me to be the longest life I ever read. It is such a condensed, massive, close-grained life! It is very short—in truth it consists of only three years of labor, as the former part of His life was spent in obscurity—and there we leave it as God has left it. But the three active years of His earthly sojourn, how are they crowded with incidents! Why, He is here, and there, and everywhere! All the day He is working, and all the night He is praying!

You read of the cold mountains and the midnight air as witnessing the fervor of His prayer. And then, at morning light He is healing the sick or preaching the Gospel, never pausing, but constantly pressing on like a racer to the goal! We meet with incidents like this, "He had not time, no, not so much as to eat bread." And at another time, "They took Him even as He was, into the ship," implying that He could not walk down to the vessel because He was too faint, so they bore Him away even as He was. On board the ship He was so weary, so utterly overcome, that when a storm came on, He slept! Slept while the sea and the sky were mingled, and the ship was likely to go to pieces—slept from sheer weariness and lack of rest!

Remember that all this was not merely work of the *body*, but that which I dare say some of you think very easy, but which, if you were to try it, you would find to be the most laborious work in the world—brain work. And in our Lord's case, it was brain-work of the most intense kind, for Jesus never preached a careless sermon, never produced a single address before the people that was uninformative or shallow and never delivered a speech in an inefficient manner, coldly and heartlessly. He was a man like ourselves, albeit He was God—and I am speaking of His *humanity* now—and that human soul of His achieved centuries of work in those three plenteous years.

There is, perhaps, no such thing as time to the brain. When we sleep, a dream in which we think we have passed hours may have only occupied a tick of a clock, or the winking of an eye. When Mahomet, in his absurd

story, tells you of his traversing the seven heavens, and yet returning to earth again so quickly that the pitcher of water which had been almost overturned by the angel's wing when he started, had not had time for the water to spill, he does in quaint story but tell you what may happen to the mind.

Men who have been rescued from drowning have stated that, though they were but a second or two going down in the water, they have yet in that time lived over again the whole of their lives. And their whole history, as in a panorama, has been unfolded before them. There is no *time* to the mind—and when this body shall drop from off us, eternity will be no novelty to the mind—the soul will find itself perfectly at home. Our Lord Jesus Christ realized this fact, for in mental labor He condensed whole centuries of holy thought and desire into those three short years of His service for us. Nothing but zeal could have sustained that toil. Nothing but zeal could have upheld that perpetually laboring Soul!

Look at the Lord Jesus Christ, again, in His preaching, and you see His zeal. What words of love He uses! How gently He addresses the poor trembling ones, as He bids them come unto Him and they shall have rest. He does not utter those blessed invitations in a sleepy manner, but His heart goes out with every syllable, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And when He turns to sterner oratory and addresses those enemies of the Truth of God, the Scribes and Pharisees, how He thunders at them! Were ever such indignant words uttered as those of the Master, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"

Why, *there* stood the men! He was not speaking of them as I might speak of people who are in Abyssinia or Japan! But *there* they were, before His eyes—gnashing their teeth at Him, looking indignant and longing to tear Him down and drag Him off to death. But, "woe unto you!" came again from His lips, and yet again, "woe unto you! For a pretense you make long prayers. You strain at a gnat, and you swallow a camel." No man could speak more plainly than Jesus did in the face of these hypocrites—for zeal was girt about Him as a cloak and no fear of man could restrain Him.

Probably you see His zeal most of all in His prayers, for a man's intensity of heart may eminently be judged of by his secret devotion before God. What prayers were those that were heard by the stars and admired by the astonished angels at midnight as they lingered on the mountain side! What cries and groans! What strong cries and tears were those that shook the gates of Heaven as Jesus prayed and pleaded for the sons of men! Mighty Intercessor! It seemed as if this world were not a strong enough base for You to rest the lever of Your prayer upon, when You were lifting up a greater weight than this world, even the weight of our infirmities, which then was heavy upon Your soul!

Ah, if you seek a pattern of zeal, you must stand in the garden when the sweat is streaming from Him—not the sweat of man that works for bread—the staff of life, but the sweat of a man toiling for life itself! See there, my Brothers and Sisters, He sweats, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground! Still His zeal was more manifest even than

this, for having prayed and worked so hard, He proved his zeal again by giving up Himself! Having persevered alone when deserted by His friends, He persevered, still, when given over to His enemies! What zeal was that which makes Him stand so silent before the bar of Pilate?!

He will not speak though strong is the temptation to defend Himself. He will not speak, for He must fulfill the prophecy, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth." It was a wonderful triumph of Christ to hold His tongue. A master speaker feels an intense longing to speak when great occasions demand his voice, but Jesus was greater than a master speaker, for He was a great master of silence. And by His Divine energy He restrained Himself and uttered not a word.

Then, when they scourged Him. When they spat upon Him. When they mocked Him—why, a wish of His would have destroyed them all—but He bears their contumely in the patience of His zeal for *us*. And when they hound Him through the streets of Jerusalem along the Via Dolorosa. When they take Him out to the mount of doom and pierce His hands and His feet, and then stand around, and with many jests and jeers mock His griefs! When, as I have said before, His wish could have annihilated all of them, and have put an end to all His bitterness—was it not a matchless zeal which upheld Him in majestic endurance?

His zeal was with Him when covered with His dying crimson! It was wrapped about His naked body as a cloak so that the shame He despised and the Cross He endured were bearable by His looking forward to the recompense of reward. Ah, Brethren, I am not able to speak to you concerning my Master's zeal. It is too great a subject! There it is. Read it as the Evangelists tell you the story. Seek to enter into fellowship with it, and ask God to help you to imitate it—and then shall you best understand how He "was clad with zeal as a cloak." Observe what His zeal was made of. It was zeal for God! He went into God's Temple and saw the merchandise that was carried on there, and He did not deliberate, but seizing a scourge of small cords, flogged the buyers and sellers and drove them all out—as it was written, "The zeal of Your House has eaten Me up."

He had not patience to tolerate making a gain of godliness! He had patience with sinners when they bowed before Him—but with those who trafficked in God's own Temple He grew indignant and chased them out! He had a zeal for God which was also a zeal for the Truth of God! How indignantly He denounced the adversaries of the true and the good, and how constantly, and with what force did He declare the Gospel among the ignorant and perishing thousands! He had, above all things, a zeal for souls! He loved His Church and gave Himself for it! He saved others, Himself He could not save. No burden was too heavy, no suffering too severe for Him, if He might deliver men from going down into the pit. Such was His zeal! O that all His followers were as their Lord!

III. Lastly, WHAT WAS IT THAT THE ZEAL OF CHRIST FED UPON? WHAT WERE THE SECRET SPRINGS OF THE SEA WHICH FED THE OCEAN OF HIS ZEAL? We answer that Christ's zeal was based upon a defined principle. He had of old said, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book

it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart.”

Our Lord's was not a hurried, hasty zeal, excited in Him by the earnest addresses of eloquent pleaders. It sprang from fixed and intelligent principles. He had set His heart upon a great purpose. He had weighed it, counted the cost, looked at it on all sides. And now He was not to be turned from it. Beloved Hearers, I would that all Christians possessed that intelligent zeal which does not arise from mere excitement of our surroundings but springs from our knowing what we are, understanding the Truth of God and holding to it, because we are assured of it. Zeal without the Truth of God for its fuel is a mere will-o'-the-wisp.

Jesus knew the soul and its value—the loss of a soul and its *horror*, the Heaven of a soul and its glory—and therefore was He zealous. And if such fixed principles reign in you, they will be in you a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. And your zeal will not cease, but continue to flow on forever and ever. The zeal of our Lord Jesus Christ was occasioned by intense *love*. He loved His Father. He could not, therefore, but do His will. He loved His people. He could not, therefore, do otherwise than seek their good. Oh, how He loved the souls of men! It was a passion with Him!

Brothers and Sisters, we need to get the same love. We do not love God as we should, or we should be more zealous. Neither do we love our fellow men as ourselves, or we should be more heartfelt in our Christian work. O that the Christian Church were baptized in zeal! There is much in that promise, “He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” Not *drops* of the Holy Spirit, nor sparks of fire—we need to be plunged into it! We need that the fire should cover us as it does the gold when it consumes the dross so that we may be like the three holy children in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, living amid flames, ourselves aglow, burning our way in our Lord's business! May it be so by the Holy Spirit to the glory of God!

Then the zeal of our Lord Jesus Christ had an eye to the recompense. “For the joy that was set before Him He endured the Cross, despising the shame.” Christian, think of the recompense of the faithful servant—not of debt, but of Divine Grace! What joy, when you enter Heaven, to be met by those who were converted to God through your means! To hear them hail you as their spiritual father or their spiritual mother! It is a great bliss, doubtless, to enter Heaven alone, but it must be a greater joy, still, to hear the wings of others behind you as you enter, and turning round—so soon as you can do so after you have looked upon the blazing Throne and the Divine One at the right hand of the Father—turning round, what bliss to see hundreds who were called to Glory and immortality through your ministry!

Happy shall he be who has turned many to righteousness! He has his Master's word for it that he shall shine as the stars forever and ever. Beloved, seek after this! As men hunt after gold. As greedy misers search it out, and busy merchants compass sea and land to gain it, so seek after the souls of men! Count all things else but dross that you may win Christ, and having won Christ for yourselves, bring others to Him! I count that to be life in which I serve Christ, but that is death in which I am unprofit-

able. I count that day to be a day of true living in which I can tell out something of Jesus, build a single stone in His living Temple, or carve a piece of cedar that may help to make the rafters of His House!

But that day is nothing else than a mere pretense of life, it is a day of death, as though my body were sheeted and wrapped up in the cerements of the tomb, in which I have done nothing, and thought nothing, and prayed nothing to my Master's honor and the extension of His Kingdom. O Brothers and Sisters, may God grant us Grace more and more to have an eye to the coming reward, and to the, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" so that zeal may be wrapped about us as a cloak!

Last of all, our Lord Jesus Christ was so zealous because He had a greater *spiritual* discernment than you and I have. We are not zealous because we cannot *see*. We can see these houses, these streets, and this money. We can hear those people's tongues, and we can look at these creature comforts. We hear the question, "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? With what shall we be clothed?" But our ears are as though they were stopped up with wax, and our eyes as though they were blinded to better things. We do not hear *true* voices, neither do we see *real* things, nor abiding, everlasting and *eternal* things.

Alas, how blind and deaf we are! But when Jesus was here he saw angels, and He beheld the spirits of men. He beheld not their bodies only, but their inner selves. And He looked upon men, not as flesh and blood, but as immortals. Best of all, He saw God. He could say, "I have set the Lord always before Me: because He is at My right hand I shall not be moved." As Jesus Christ dwelt in this world He did not look on it as you and I often do, as though it were all earth, fire, water, wood, stone, trees, men, beasts. But He viewed it as a theater for *spiritual* action. Devils came to tempt Him. Angels came to minister to Him.

The souls of bad men fought with Him though He fought not with His hands or His staff. The spirits of good men sought Him, hung upon Him, depended upon Him. As for Himself, His conversation was always heavenly. He was on the earth, and doing good on earth, but still His Soul, His great, grand Spirit was always talking with His God. When He speaks aloud in prayer He says to His Father, "I know that You hear me always, but because of them that stood by I did it." He had no need to use vocal sounds with God. His spirit was so near to God that He was always communing with God, breathing Himself into God. What a source of zeal this must have been! He was brought nearer to God than we are, being, indeed, Himself God!

And speaking, now, of His Manhood—as a Man He abode very near to the Father. Yet we, too, have a wondrous nearness, for the Holy Spirit dwells in us! In these bodies, as in a temple, God dwells if we are Believers, so that there is a marvelously intimate union between God and us! And if we can, by His Grace, rise to a higher spiritual life, a life cognizant of spiritual things, familiar with spiritual personages, and dealing with spiritual realities—we shall attain unto somewhat of that mighty, Omnipotent zeal which glowed in the bosom of the Redeemer and in which He was clad as in a cloak.

There are many here who have no faith in Christ, and therefore I cannot exhort them, with respect to this zeal. Beloved Friends, you have heard what I have been saying about zeal. Now, do you know one great reason why I want to have this zeal, myself, and why I desire God's people to obtain it? It is because of you! We believe that when we are zealous it often happens that we are made the means of the conversion of others, and we should like to see *you* saved! Do you know the way of salvation? It is just this, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." To believe is to *trust*.

Here is God's Word, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." To believe is simply to rely upon Jesus, and when you have done that you are saved. God will never cast a soul away that leans all its weight on Christ. After you are saved, remember, it is written, "He that believes and is *baptized*." Your Baptism must follow your faith—it is to be to you a sign, and a means of fellowship with Christ. You are to regard yourselves as dead to the world, as dead in Christ, and to come, therefore, and be buried with Him in Baptism.

May the Spirit of God bury you with Christ! May the Spirit of God give you a familiar acquaintance with what it is to be dead, and for your life to be hid with Christ in God! But to trust is the first great thing. "He that believes on Him has everlasting life." Baptism follows as an act of *obedience* and you must not neglect it, but *trust* Christ and you are saved! God grant you Divine Grace to trust Him, for Jesus' sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 59.

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

THE STANDARD UPLIFTED IN THE FACE OF THE FOE

NO. 718

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

*“When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit
of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.”
Isaiah 59:19.*

THE Hebrew seems to be very difficult to interpret in this verse and there have been as many translations given it as there are days in the month. Upon the whole, one is most satisfied with the translation of our authorized version. And without troubling your minds with a host of various renderings, we will keep to the one before us, which, even if it should not happen to be the precise truth taught in the passage, it is, nevertheless, a great Scriptural Truth, and one which it is important for us just now to remember.

“When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.” This is referred by Dr. Gill and sundry other commentators to the latter days in which they believe there will be a most terrible apostasy—when the Man of Sin shall reach a yet greater development than at present—and the Christian Church shall be brought to its very lowest ebb. At such a time the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard for the Truth of God and, by the power of His Grace, the kingdom of Jesus shall be revealed in fullest glory.

We are not, however, inclined to interpret this text in a restricted manner as relating solely to one period of time. Nothing shall induce me to attempt to interpret the prophecies. By God’s Grace I will be content to expound the Gospel. I believe it to be one of the most fatal devices of Satan to turn aside useful Gospel ministers from their proper work into idle speculations upon the number of the beast and the meaning of the little horn. The prophecies will interpret themselves by their *fulfillment*—no expositor has yet arisen who has been able to do it. Providence is the true interpreter of prophecy—

***“God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.”***

But for us to try the mysterious visions of Daniel and John before they are fulfilled will, I believe, be worse than folly. It will be a guilty waste of energy which should all be spent in the winning of souls. We shall only consider the general principle, which is clear enough that when the enemy shall come in the greatest force against the people of God, at such times God’s Holy Spirit shall put forth His glorious power, and a standard shall be lifted up against the inroads of the foe.

We shall first refer the text to the holy war in our own hearts. And secondly to the holy war which is being waged in the world—not with flesh and blood—but with spiritual wickedness in high places.

I. First we shall take the general statement of the text as referring to THE CONFLICT WHICH IS RAGING IN THE CHRISTIAN'S INNER MAN. It is well for us distinctly to understand the position of the Christian. *This* is not the land of our triumph. Neither is this the period of our rest. If we bind our brows with laurel and cast aside our armor, our folly will be extreme. The ship is not yet in the harbor—many storms must yet beat upon her. The warrior has not slain the last of his foes, neither has the pilgrim fought with the last of the giants.

The moment of conversion is rather the commencement than the closing of spiritual warfare, and until the Believer's head shall recline upon the pillow of death he will never have finished his conflicts. The war will not be over till we shall depart and be with Christ, which is far better! Beloved Christian, you are in the land where foes abound! There are enemies *within* you—you are not delivered from the influence of *inbred* sin. The new nature is of Divine origin, and it cannot sin because it is born of God—but the *old nature*, the carnal mind, is there, too, and it is not reconciled to God—neither, indeed, can it be! And therefore it strives and struggles with the new nature. The house of Saul in our heart wars against the house of David and tries to drive it out and despoil it of the crown. This conflict you must expect to have continued with more or less violence till you enter into rest.

Moreover, in the world without there are multitudes of foes. This vain world is no friend to the principle of the work of Divine Grace. If you were of the world the world would love its own, but as you are not of the world, but of a heavenly race, you may expect to be treated as an alien and foreigner. No—as a hated and detested foe! All sorts of snares and traps will be laid for you. Those who sought to entangle the Master in His speech will not be more lenient towards you. Moreover there is one whose name is called “the enemy,” the “Evil One”—he is the leader among your adversaries! Hating God with all his might, he hates that which he sees of God in you.

He will not spare the arrows in his infernal quiver. He will shoot them all at you. There are no temptations which he knows of—and he understands the art well from long practice—there are no temptations which he will not exercise upon you. He will sometimes fawn upon you, and at other times will frown. He will lift you up, if possible, with self-righteousness, and then cast you down with despair! You will always find him your fierce, insatiable foe. Know this, then, and put on the whole armor of God! March with your sword always drawn in your hand as one who sees a foe in the path.

The text leads us to look for seasons when this position will be more than ordinarily perilous. Who that has gone on pilgrimage does not know that at certain times the enemy comes in upon him like a flood? Like a flood—suddenly, without notice—as when the mountain lake bursts through its banks and rushes into the valley beneath, irresistibly destruc-

tive, sweeping everything before it in its headlong career! Insatiable! Sparing neither cattle, nor abode of man, nor provender for the ox, nor corn for the household—drowning young and old in one watery grave—with cold unfeeling power destroying all within its awful sweep!

The flood has no compassion, and yields to no entreaties. Such and so terrible are the onsets of our spiritual foes! When sins, and doubts, and temptations assail us, who can, without Divine aid, stand against them? Who is able to resist them? You who are veterans in the spiritual fight, you know right well that there are times when kings go forth to battle—seasons when the traitors within are unusually troublesome—and when you have need of extraordinary Grace. It will be well for you who know the spiritual conflict to be thoroughly conscious of your own utter impotence against this terrific danger.

What can a man do against a flood? How shall he escape it or stem it? The strongest swimmer, though he strains every muscle, must, if he is unaided, yield to its overwhelming force. If a man has nothing to depend upon but his own vigorous struggling, what can he do against a foaming torrent? Not all the impetuous fury of a rushing flood can exceed the fury of our enemies! Where is the human strength which can avail to endure its force? Christian, you are surrounded with enemies, and you, in your own person, are helpless in the day of battle! If you are not clothed with heavenly armor, you are like a naked man into whose flesh every dart must penetrate! If the shield of faith shall not cover you, the spears of the tempter will soon reach your heart!

Against him you are crushed as a moth, and as easily trampled upon as a worm. You are as weak as water, as frail as dust. Your strength, your *fancied* strength, is perfect *weakness*—then what must your weakness be? Your highest natural wisdom is folly—then what must your folly be? As well should a bird with broken wing attempt to mount into the skies as you attempt to reach Heaven by your own strength! As well should a child with a straw hope to stand against a host of armed men, as you to bear the onslaught of your spiritual enemies—unless the mighty God of Jacob should be your defense! Your warfare needs the Eternal arm to bear you through it, and yet you are weakness itself! How shall you be able to achieve the victory? Cease from self-confidence! Know yourself to be feebleness itself! Look above you to a nobler and surer source of strength than yourself!

The text, after having plainly bid us to thoroughly realize our position, and after suggesting to us our weakness, bids us turn to our only help, a Helper mysterious but Divine. When the enemy comes in like a flood, what then? Shall the Christian stem it? It is not so written! Shall he avoid it? Not thus is it in the Word. Shall he fly to his minister? Shall he gather together his Christian friends and shall they conjointly dam the stream or turn the battle? Not they! They are all alike weak, and their union will bring no strength. What can a multitude of ciphers make? They are each one *nothing*, and add them all together they make but *nothing*. The united fullness of so much emptiness is only a greater display of emptiness. The united wisdom of a thousand fools is only so much more folly.

Where, then, does the text direct us? It reminds us of One whose name we mention with affectionate reverence—the Spirit of the Lord. What do we not owe to Him already? Blessed Spirit! You are He who sought us when we were strangers, wandering from the fold of God! You strove with us when our desperate wills were set on mischief! You bowed us down at length as You convicted us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. Blessed Spirit! It is to Him we owe our present holy comfort! He brought us to the Savior’s Cross and opened our blind eyes to see the wonders of atoning love! He endeared the Savior, applied the promise, gave us the spirit of adoption, and taught us to say, “Abba, Father.”

It was by His living power that we were quickened and made alive. We were lying, like Lazarus, rotting in the grave, until He called us forth. It is by His teaching that we have been enlightened thus far in the things of Christ. He has taught us all things, and brought all things to our remembrance, whatever Christ delivered unto us. Up till now He has been our indwelling Guide, illuminating the darkness of our faith, constraining the waywardness of our will, sanctifying our nature, and bearing us onward against ourselves towards the ultimate perfection for which our spirit pants.

Blessed Spirit! Brothers and Sisters, let us never grieve Him! “Quench not the Spirit.” Let His faintest admonitions be obeyed. Whatever He says to you, do it. Let His power in our spirits be like that of the centurion in the ranks which he commanded. If He says unto us, “Go,” may we go! And if He says unto His servant, “Do this,” may it be said, “He does it.” Let us beware of losing the comforts of His Presence lest we have mournfully to bemoan His absence, crying out—

***“Return, O holy Dove, return,
Sweet Messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made You mourn,
And drove You from my breast.”***

Let us cultivate an affectionate dependence upon His power and Presence. In all our Christian exercises let us wait upon Him for strength. Let us entreat Him to incite our prayers and inspire our songs—in both exercises helping our infirmities and encouraging our hearts. Let us continually believe in the Holy Spirit as the true life of all Christian effort! When we think of our ministries, let us refer them to the Spirit who gives them, and who alone can bless them. And for the many works which the Church performs let us only look for success to attend them as the Holy Spirit is pleased to put forth His power by them.

See then, dear Friends, we are not referred to one of whom we do not know, and who is a stranger to us, but our tearful eyes are bid to look for Divine assistance from our best and dearest Friend, from Him who, though He fills Heaven itself and is God over all, blessed forever, yet makes our poor bodies to be His temples and dwells in the Church continually! It is said of the Holy Spirit that in our times of distress He will come to our rescue. Has it not been so with us until now? Just when Faith was fainting, the Holy Spirit feasted her upon a comfortable promise which Faith fed upon as Elijah did upon the cake baked on the coals, so

that she went in the strength of that meat a forty days' journey into the wilderness!

When it appeared that our love had ebbed out till there was none of it left, the Holy Spirit came, and by revealing the glorious Person of the Lord Jesus, our soul, or ever it was aware, was made like the chariots of Amminadib. We thought, surely, no spiritual life remained in us, but the Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove, came with all His quickening powers, and by shedding abroad a Savior's love He instantly rekindled the flame upon the altar of our hearts. We were lifted up from lethargy to earnestness, from sloth to zealous industry! We scarcely understood how it could be that we, who groped with the mole, suddenly mounted with the eagle! This is the Spirit's work. When the enemy comes in like a flood He then lifts up in our hearts a standard against him. We have, then, to fall back as to our present difficulty, whatever it may be, upon spiritual power.

Oh, Beloved, if the battle of salvation were to be fought by man alone, then you and I might throw down sword and shield and despairingly give it all up—why should we waste our exertions in fruitless toil? But when we understand that the Spirit of God has laid bare His holy arm to save us, and that He works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure—we are not afraid of the worst moment in the fight—we are not dispirited concerning the blackest hour of the conflict! Let the enemy rush forward with concentrated and infuriated force. Let the powers of darkness and of inward corruption advance with malignant might! There is One who is greater than they all—whose standard shall stop their onslaught!

Let the evil spirit do his uttermost, for then we shall see what the Holy Spirit can do when the fullness of His power is displayed! We cannot expect to see God at His best unless we see the devil at his worst. And when our plight becomes the most dolorous, then shall our help become the most glorious! When the creature is ready to die of despair, then there shall be an opportunity for the Creator's irresistible arm to put forth its energy and to glorify itself in us!

Let us now, for a minute or two, take two or three instances in which this great Truth of God is conspicuous. This is true of a soul under conviction of sin. This is Satan's hour and opportunity with many seeking souls. When sin is heavy upon the Christian and his soul is burdened, he is very apt to be, as John Bunyan says, "Tumbled up and down in his mind," till he hardly has his right wits and senses. The terrors of the Law are sometimes so distracting that the poor heart which is the subject of them scarcely knows darkness from light, or light from darkness!

At such a times, just when Satan knows that the creature is very weak and without courage to resist him, he comes in with some detestable suggestion, either that such a soul is appointed to everlasting destruction and to present despair, or that its sins are past forgiveness—that it has committed the unpardonable sin—or that it is not in a right state to receive mercy. He will say its heart is hardened, left by the Spirit, and is quite unfit to receive Divine favor. If all these insinuations are driven out, one by one, Satan has as many more. In fact, the variety of temptations with

which Satan can assault a troubled, seeking soul, is as nearly infinite as possible.

A wide pastoral experience has never enabled us to set any limit to the craft of Satan—for though the temptations of this state are very much the one like the other, yet in no two cases are they precisely similar. It is a part of Satan's policy to make each man think that his case is the only one of the kind. That he is peculiar. That there is no description given of him in the Word of God, no promise meant for him. That he is one whom God did not, in fact, intend to bless, and therefore left him entirely out of His Word.

And this old Liar, who was a murderer from the beginning, continues to pour in these horrible thoughts one after another, not distilling them like drops of poison, but as if to make sure of his prey, pouring them into the human heart like a flood—sometimes so commingled and indistinct that the person who is the subject of them cannot tell one from another—so that his friends may give him comfort. He is so beset, so downcast, that he is like a struggling fly in the midst of a flood that is carried on, whirled round and round in every eddy, tossed on every wave, without a hope of being rescued from the stream. Now what is to be done? The foe has fairly got possession of the field and treads it under foot, and plows it up, and dyes it with blood. What is to be done?

Why, nothing can be done in such a case without the Holy Spirit's interposition! The preacher tries to comfort. He seeks out goodly words by which he may bring peace. But he is disappointed, for the case of many a soul beset with sin is the minister's nonplus. As they used to say of certain diseases, that they were the scandal of the physician, the physician could not touch them—so some soul-sicknesses are the scandal of the minister! Though we can find promises which should suit the case and do teach doctrines which ought to give comfort, yet it is one thing to find the medicine, and quite another thing to bring the soul to receive it.

As the old proverb has it, "One man may bring a horse to the water, but twenty cannot make it drink." And one man may bring a soul to the promise, but twenty men cannot make that promise to be received by the soul. But oh, the joy of my text: "The Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him"! And that standard, in your case, poor troubled Soul, will be the CROSS! He will lift up before your eyes the suffering Son of God! This is the standard that makes Hell flee! Satan knows the power of that heel which once he bruised—the foot of Jesus has already broken his head—and he takes flight whenever God's Son is lifted up. I beseech you, poor Sinner—and may the Holy Spirit enable you—I beseech you to look to the slaughtered Lamb of God upon Calvary's Cross.

There is Atonement for sin in those sufferings! There is readiness to receive you in that pierced heart! There is cleansing, sanctifying *power* in that water which flows with blood from His opened side! There is nothing asked of you but to look and live. And oh, at this moment may the Holy Spirit do for you what I cannot—may He lift up that standard in your heart, that all your doubts and fears may flee at once—and the battle may be yours because Christ has espoused your cause! I believe it will be so.

You may be a long time in the darkness, but you shall not always be there. Never did a soul perish that sought the Lord with all its heart. You may be outside Mercy's door and knock, and it may be a cold wintry day and your very fingers may get chilled as you hold the rapper—but the door must open ultimately, there is no question about that! God must un-God Himself before He can refuse a pleading sinner! If you are willing to be God's, God is willing to be yours, for He never yet turned the human will where He had not already made up His own will as to the salvation of that soul. The Spirit of the Lord will be your Helper.

Now we will suppose that there is another case present, and try and apply the text. After conversion it frequently happens, and especially to those who have been guilty of gross sin *before* conversion, that temptation comes in with unusual force. You must not suppose that a man who is converted from drunkenness will never be tempted to drunkenness again. He will! That will probably be his burden for a long time. Any person who has fallen into lust will find it in his bones, and though he hates it and strives against it, yet there will be times when it will be as much as he can do and more than he could do without God's Grace to stand against it.

Some of us who from the early period of our conversion were spared the grosser sins have nevertheless been tormented with very horrible temptations. I believe God sends great temptations to those of His ministers whom He means to use to comfort afflicted souls. Oh the horrible blasphemies, the infernal suggestions, the worse than hellish thoughts that some of God's servants have had to struggle with by the hour together so that they clapped their hands to their mouths for fear such thoughts should ever be spoken! These men have hated these evil thoughts even to loathing, and have endeavored to cast them out and shake them off as Paul shook the viper from his hand into the fire, and yet they could not be rid of them.

It is a dreadful thing to be tempted as some of God's best servants are tempted, for there is no Christian, let him live where he may, who will wholly escape temptations. And full often the more eminently useful, the more eminently tempted. What then? Why, at such times look not to your own experience for strength, neither turn to your own wisdom for guidance—for then your trouble will be ten times worse than before! Go not to these broken cisterns, for they hold no water. But I charge you, Christian, go to the strong for strength! Go to the blessed Spirit who alone can effectually lift up the standard, rally your soul anew to the conflict and give you the victory! You shall conquer through the Lamb's redeeming blood! This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith. We shall need spiritual reinforcements and we shall have them in the time of trouble.

Another case sometimes occurs to a Christian when it is not so much enticement to *sin* as temptation to *doubt*. What a mercy it would be if we could live without doubting! But so common are doubts and fears that Mr. John Bunyan, the greatest master of Christian experience that ever lived, in his, "Holy War," represents an army of doubters as trying to capture the city of Mansoul. He divides them into a great number of regiments—

there are the Election Doubters, the Calling Doubters, the Perseverance Doubters, and so on. And these fellows, with the great Hell drum which they kept continually beating, much alarmed the town of Mansoul.

They even forced an entrance into it, and well-near took the castle of the heart itself. But they could not quite take the citadel, and were ultimately driven out. When doubts and fears prevail, do not tell me that you can get rid of them when you like. I know they are sins, and they are strong sins. I know it is a disease to doubt, but it is a disease which is very common among God's people—I wish it were not—and when these gloomy doubts prevail, there is no comfort in the heart nor joy in life—

***“For oh, when gloomy doubts prevail,
I fear to call You mine.
The springs of comfort seem to fail,
And all my hopes decline.”***

What, then, shall we do? Why, once again fly to the Comforter, and cry, “Blessed Consoler of Your people, You whose balmy wings can bring us peace, descend!” When He works within us, and spreads abroad those wings of love, order reigns instead of confusion. He says, “Let there be light!” And the thick darkness yields, and there *is* light. And our soul rejoices “with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Now this is the experience, I believe, of every Christian, and it shall be your experience, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, if you can but cast yourself upon Divine power. I leave this promise in its relation to our inward state, only reminding you that it is a sure and true promise. It is one of God's “shalls,” and it is a comfortable thing when you grasp a Divine “shall.” “The Spirit of the Lord *shall* lift up a standard.” It is as true now as when Isaiah wrote it. It is true of you! It is true in your present darkness! You shall find it true! And in Heaven you shall bear testimony that the Spirit of God does lift up the battle standard against the enemy in the day of conflict.

II. Let us now turn to the second head—THE HOLY WAR AMONG US. The Christian Church is too conspicuous an object of Divine love not to be the butt of the malice of the powers of darkness. From the very moment when the Church was born, Satan, like Herod, tried to destroy the young Child. And if the flames of persecution and the inventions of heresy could have destroyed the Church, she would have been destroyed long ago. There have been distinct periods all down Church history when the enemy has come in upon her, making a more than unusually terrific and effective onslaught.

How terrible was the attack upon the early church when Peter was laid in prison, James having already been slain with the sword. Herod designed to extirpate the whole band of followers of the despised Nazarene, and after him the Pharisaic zeal of Saul hounded them to death. But the Spirit of God very speedily made amends for all Herod's operations, and the persecutions of the Pharisees met with a most effectual rebuff when the leader in them was himself converted, and Saul of Tarsus became Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles!

The spiritual power which rested upon the Church in the early ages was sufficient for her protection against the malevolence of her enemies.

Not only so, but it was so mighty that it made profit out of that which was for its damage! The zeal of the Church turned her persecutions into fiery chariots in which she rode forth triumphantly to the uttermost ends of the earth. Satan stirred a series of persecutions which you who are acquainted with history will remember to have been of the most ferocious kind. These persecutions we may compare to Nebuchadnezzar's furnace when it was heated seven times hotter—but not so much as the smell of fire passed upon the Church! The game of persecution was played out and ended in the total defeat of the persecutor, for do you not remember how the saints volunteered to die, and even panted for the martyrs' crown?

Young men came before the tribunals. Young men, did I say? OLD men leaning upon their staffs, and women, and even little children came to the tribunal and shouted that they were followers of Jesus! The prisons were crowded with Christians and the amphitheatres glutted with their blood. The spirit of holy boldness was so abundant that the foe was baffled! Glutted with blood, he turned with loathing from the murder of the inoffensive sheep which was once so great a luxury to him. The Spirit of God, by giving to Christians an indomitable courage which made them, as it were, insensible to pain and defiant of Death in his most ghastly form, lifted up a standard against the fury of the enemy!

Then Satan changed his tactics and set on that baptized heathen Constantine to profess to become a Christian. And he, for reasons of Statecraft and subtle policy, made Christianity the national religion—and thus struck the most fearful blow at the heart of Christianity. The union of Church and State is a fatal blow to true religion! The king's hand, wherever it falls upon the Church of Christ, brings the king's *evil* with it! There never was a Church whose spirituality survived it yet, and there never will be. Christ's kingdom is not of this world, and if we try to marry the Church of Christ to a worldly kingdom we engender innumerable mischiefs.

So it happened that when the Church became outwardly glorious she became spiritually debased. Her communion table glittered with gold and silver plates, but her communion with Christ was not so golden as before. Her ministers were enriched, but their doctrine was impoverished. For every ounce of outward gold which she gained, she lost a treasure of Divine Grace. Her bishops became lords, and her flocks were famished. Her humble meeting places were exchanged for grand basilicas, but the true Glory of God was departed. She became like the heathen around her, and began to set up the images of her saints and martyrs, till at last, after years of gradual declension, the Church of Rome ceased to be the Church of Christ and that which was once nominally the Church of Christ actually became the Antichrist.

Black darkness covered the lands, and dark ages set in. Finally, instead of pardon bought with the blood of Jesus, false priests made merchandize of souls, and pardons were hawked in the streets! Finally, instead of deacons and elders adorned with holiness and purity, monks, and nuns, and priests, and even popes became monsters of filthiness! And instead of justification by faith, men proclaimed justification by pilgrimages and by

penances! The crucifix took the place of Christ Jesus, and a piece of bread was lifted up as a god and men bowed before it, and said, "These be your gods, O Israel, that redeemed you from the wrath to come."

What was done in this emergency? All through that long, long period of darkness the Spirit of God lifted up a standard among the faithful few. Up yonder on the snow-clad Alps, and down deep in the secluded valleys of Piedmont, the Lord kept alive the "two witnesses" for the truth. The Albigenses and Waldenses, hunted like partridges upon the mountains, were God's standard-bearers and maintained that unbroken line of true Apostolic succession from which we date our succession—a succession infinitely purer than the Tractarian chain of infamous prelates and Popish priests! The Spirit of God maintained the living Church in the day of her obscurity in France, Hungary, Bohemia, Switzerland, and other regions—till at last the men came whom Jehovah had ordained most greatly to bless!

The nations rejoiced at the coming of Luther and his great allies, Zwingli and Calvin. What a lifting up of the standard was then seen, my Brothers and Sisters! They said that Luther's words were carried on the wings of angels! The sermon which he preached today was dispersed by means of the printing press so that tomorrow heard it thundering along the foot of the Apennines, and old Rome itself trembled at the voice of the monk of Germany! Then God lifted up a standard in England, and our glorious old Hugh Latimer, with simple and rough speech rebuked kings, and spoke the Truth of God in the presence of the mighty!

And up there in Scotland John Knox published the Gospel of Jesus with all the energy of his fiery nature. The Spirit of God lifted up the Cross, and, like the sound of a clarion, a voice was heard resounding over hill and dale, "By the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified." "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." It needs not that I should tell the tale how, in succeeding years, throughout England Christianity had declined to the verge of death—when drunken parsons polluted the pulpits, and were zealous in nothing but in feasting and fox-hunting! When Dissenting ministers were either semi-Socinian or else so somnolently orthodox as not to care whether men's souls were saved or damned!

Then, again, the Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard! Six young men were expelled from Oxford for *praying*, and these men, driven sorely against their will to uncanonical action, began to preach in the open air! Crowds in London gathered at Moorfield and Kennington. The Kingswood miners caught the flame of Divine Grace! Cornwall, far away, began to blaze with spiritual fervor. The uttermost ends of our island perceived that God the Holy Spirit had visited us, that the "Daystar from on high" was shining again!

The name of "Methodist" was the terror of Satan and the joy of the Church—

***"See how great a flame aspires,
Kindled by a spark of Grace!
Jesus' love the nations fires,
Sets the kingdoms on a blaze."***

Then men knew that the blessed Spirit of the living God had appeared and lifted up a standard against false doctrine and sin. Dear Friends, I am not giving you this history for the mere purpose of detailing it, but with a practical end. I believe that no exaggeration would be possible as to the present unhappy condition of certain sections of the Christian Church. The enemy is, indeed, coming in like a flood. This time the peril is within the visible Church, itself. We have High Church—what is it but bastard Popery!? We have Broad Church—what is it but dishonest infidelity!?—An infidelity which takes the pay of a church whose foundations it labors to undermine.

These two powers are advancing at present like two armies in victorious march. They are sweeping everything before them. Our timid and weak hearted Evangelical friends have been so long accustomed to submit that they have little stomach for the fight. They have acted so miserable a part in the great conflict that the power they once possessed has been taken from them and they are a pitiable instance of the weakening effect of accustoming one's tongue to the use of language against which the conscience revolts! They are not now an integer in the calculation—their friends and their foes, alike, know their utter unfitness for the battle!

He who hopes that the battle of Protestantism will be fought by the Evangelicals trusts in a broken reed. I only wish I could think otherwise, but I cannot. What is to be done? I discern no sign of help from any quarter but from above. It is our hope that the Holy Spirit will now interpose and save His Church. This is a dark hour, and now will He show His strength! We have now no desire that the bishops should interfere with the Ritualists—they have let them tamper with the Church so long that everybody asks what is the use of bishops? Alas for the Church of God if the bishops were the only guardians! Even the interference of Parliament will avail little. Let parliament look after politics and leave religion alone! What we need is something superior to bishops and Parliament—we need the Holy Spirit—and if the Holy Spirit will take the matter in hand, He will make very short work with all this imitation of Romanism!

But how will it be done? I think I see the beginning of it. A general spirit of prayer will come over those Churches which are faithful. Already it is descending! Almost in every quarter the spirit of devotion is increasing. Our Brethren in London have appointed, as you know, the fifth of November to be spent by all the ministers, deacons, and elders of our Churches as a day of fasting and prayer to entreat the Lord's blessing upon the universal Church. I find our friends are to do the same in Birmingham, and in most of the large towns. And all this has come without any dictation from anyone. Indeed, we have no power to dictate in our denomination—it has come spontaneously—the Brethren moving towards one another as by a common instinct, coming together in the time of danger.

I think I perceive among Christian men, generally, the relinquishment of controversy about minor points and a determination for union about the one great thing. We feel that we must stand together, shoulder to shoulder, as a solid phalanx in this day of conflict and fight with heavenly weapons, or else it will go ill with us. We feel we must cry to God, for no

one else can help us. With this spirit of prayer I believe there is returning to us in the Church—I may be optimistic but I think I see it—a deeper love to the old truth than there used to be. Do not my Brethren in the ministry preach more of Christ than they once did? Are they not tired of philosophical essays and returning to the simple Truth of God? They are no longer teasing us with Genesis and geology, but give us more of Christ on the Cross! We know that preaching science and ethics instead of the Gospel is all wrong, and our Brethren see that it is so.

It was but the other day I heard a Wesleyan minister stating that the reason why they had, to a great extent, lost a blessing for the last few years, was because they had not given enough prominence to the Doctrines of Grace, and he pointed to this House of Prayer and the prosperity that God gives to this Church as an indication that if Christ is preached and nothing but Christ—and if salvation by blood is the one staple theme—there is no fear of there being hearers, nor of there being converts, for the old standard, whenever it is uplifted, brings victory with it! You have only to let the standard of Christ's Truth be opened to the breeze, and the battle is ours!

Now I think I can see that the Spirit of God is lifting up this standard! There is more Gospel preaching, more earnest declaration of Christ in England than there has been for many a day. Now, Brothers and Sisters, as the Spirit begins, let us follow! What is a standard lifted up for but for every soldier to rally to it? Press where you see it displayed to the wind! Press to it, every man among you! The soldier does not look at a standard as being a place from which he is to march, but *around* which he is to *rally* in the day when it is in danger. Every man must do his duty now in the Christian Church, and count it a privilege to do it! You must scatter the Gospel! You must tell it with your lips! You must pray for it with your hearts! You must distribute it as it is printed!

Do all you can to increase the sale of sound Gospel literature, but use your own mouths, also, to tell of the Savior's love. Every man, now, to his post today, for *now* must we awake out of sleep! Oh, if the Holy Spirit will but visit us now, we need not fear concerning old Rome. Like chaff before the wind, the foes shall fly—they shall be driven like thin clouds before a Biscay gale! When once God comes into the fight, woe unto you who are His enemies! Woe unto you! You may fight like mighty men, but you know the might of Israel's sword in ancient times, and you shall feel it now!

Soldiers of Jesus, never despair! My Brothers and Sisters, do not even fear! Be of good courage! Be confident! God is on our side. "Immanuel"—let that be your watchword—"God with us—Immanuel." Be very courageous and very earnest, and the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard when the enemy comes in like a flood. God grant it for His name's sake. Amen.

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HELP FOR SEEKERS OF THE LIGHT

NO. 884

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 8, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“We look for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness,
but we walk in darkness.”
Isaiah 59:9.***

ISRAEL had greatly revolted from her God and in consequence she had brought upon herself great sorrow. Still, instead of repenting of their faults and returning to their allegiance to Jehovah, the nation continued to be duped by false prophets and presumptuous pride into the expectation of better days. The better days came not. They looked for the sunshine, but they wandered in the mists. They waited for brightness, but walked in gloom. Unhappy Israel! She turned aside from Jehovah to worship Baal—she went after the gods of the heathen which were not gods—and from that hour her land was afflicted with pestilence and famine.

The spoiler came up against her. He stopped her wells, cut down her vines and barked her fig trees. And in the end he carried her away captive, made the sons and daughters of Zion to sit down by the waters of Babylon and weep at the remembrance of the beloved city. Sin is evermore a bitter thing and they who follow it expecting to arrive at the light of joy are duped and deceived. They shall be plunged into denser and denser darkness until they arrive at an unending midnight unbroken by a solitary star.

This historical example might be used by way of warning to any seekers after happiness who foolishly expect to find it in the pleasures of sin and the neglect of God. You will certainly be disappointed, for, “joy is a plant that does not grow on nature’s barren soil”—only a *renewed* nature can be blessed. The more intensely you pursue happiness in the bewitching way of sin, the further will it fly from you. Like the will-’o-the-wisp, the glare of pleasure will entice you into the quagmire and there will leave you to find that your chase has gained you nothing but danger and weariness. The pearl of happiness lies not in the depths of dissipation. The broad road always ends in destruction, never in peace.

Hoist the sails of desire to the breeze, let go the helm of reason and let your soul be borne wherever the blasts of temptation or the currents of custom may direct and one thing you may be sure of—your unhappy boat will never be drifted by such means into the haven of peace! To such a voyage shipwreck is the certain end! To other modes of living disappointment is in like manner attached. Vain is it to pile up gold. Vain is it to awaken the clarion trumpet of fame. Vain is it to gather learning or to

master eloquence, eminence, rank, wealth, power—all these things are too little to satisfy the insatiable craving of an immortal soul.

You must have God or you shall never have enough! You must be reconciled to Him or you can never be at peace with yourself. Man must enter into a covenant of peace with his God or all the creatures of God shall conspire against him! Pilgrim of earth, your way must be towards holiness and God, or in vain shall you expect the dawning—to the sinner there is reserved the blackness of darkness forever and even now his way is hard and his path is darkened with fear and disquietude.

I thought, however, this morning, of addressing myself through the words of the text, to another class of individuals. To persons who are sincerely seeking better things. Those desirous of obtaining the true and heavenly light, who have waited, hoping to receive it—but instead of obtaining it are in a worse, or at least in a sadder state than they were. They are almost driven, today, into the dark thoughts that for them no light will ever come—that they shall be prisoners chained forever in the valley of the shadow of death.

If God shall bless a few words of awakening and encouraging to such prisoners, so that some shall see the heavenly light today, thrice happy shall our heart be!

I. We will commence by depicting the character we wish to speak to. Our first head, therefore, may be remembered as DESCRIPTIVE. These persons are *in some degree aware of their natural darkness*. According to the text they are looking for light. They are not content with their obscurity—they are waiting for brightness. In this audience there are a few who are not content to be what their first birth has made them. They discover in their nature much of evil. They would gladly be rid of it! They find in their understanding much ignorance and they would gladly be illuminated. They do not understand the Scripture when they read it and though they hear Gospel terms, yet they fail to grasp Gospel thought.

They pant to escape from this ignorance. They desire to know the Truth of God which saves the soul, and their desire is not only to know it in *theory*, but to know it by its practical power upon their inner man. They are really and anxiously desirous to be delivered from the state of nature which they feel to be a dangerous one, and to be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God! Oh, but these are the best of hearers—these in whom right desires have begun to be awakened! Men who are dissatisfied with the darkness are evidently not altogether dead, for the dead shall slumber in the catacombs, heedless whether it is noon or night. Such men are evidently not altogether asleep, for they that slumber shall sleep the better for the darkness—they ask no sunbeams to molest their dreams.

Such people are evidently not altogether blind, for to the blind little does it matter whether the sun floods the landscape with glory or night conceals it with her sable veil. Those to whom our thoughts are directly turned are evidently somewhat awakened, aroused and bestirred, and this

is no small blessing, for, alas, the most of men are a stolid mass as regards spiritual things and the preacher might almost as hopefully strive to *create* a soul within the ribs of death, or extort warm tears of pity from Sicilian marble, as to evoke spiritual emotions from the men of this generation!

So far, the persons whom I seek this morning are hopeful in their condition—as the trees twist their branches towards the sunlight, so do these long after Jesus, the Light and Life of men! Moreover, these persons *have a high idea of what the light is*. In the text they call it, “brightness.” They wait for it and are grieved because it comes not. If you greatly value *spiritual* light, my dear Friend, you are under no mistake! If you count it to be a priceless thing to obtain an interest in Christ, the forgiveness of your sins and peace with God, you judge according to solemnness. You shall never exaggerate in your valuation of the one thing necessary.

It is true that those who trust in God are a happy people. It is true that to be brought into sonship and adopted into the family of the great God is a blessing for which kings might well exchange their diadems! You cannot think too highly of the blessings of Divine Grace! I would rather incite in you a sacred covetousness after them than in the remotest degree lower your estimate of their preciousness. Salvation is such a blessing that Heaven hangs upon it! If you win Grace you have the germ of Heaven within you—the security, the pledge and earnest of everlasting bliss!

So far, again, there is much that is hopeful in you. It is well that you loathe the darkness and prize the light. Furthermore, the persons I would gladly speak with *have some hope that they may yet obtain this light*. In fact, they are waiting for it—*hopefully* waiting and are somewhat disappointed that after waiting for the light, behold, obscurity has come. They are evidently astonished at the failure of their hopes. They are amazed to find themselves walking in darkness when they had fondly hoped that the candle of the Lord would shine round about them. My dear Friends, I would encourage in you that spark of hope, for despair is one of the most terrible hindrances to the reception of the Gospel.

So long as awakened sinners cherish a hope of mercy, we have hope for them. We hope, O Seeker, that before long you will be able to sing of pardon bought with blood—and when this scene is closed—shall enter through the gates into the pearly city among the blessed who forever see the face of the Well-Beloved! Though it may seem too good to be true, yet even you, in your calmer moments, think one day you will rejoice that Christ is yours, and take your seat among His people, though you are the meanest of them all in your own estimation.

Then you imagine in your heart how fervently you will love your Redeemer! How rapturously you will kiss the very dust of His feet! How gratefully you will bless Him who has lifted the poor from the dunghill and made him to sit among princes. How I long to see this hope of yours transformed into joyful reality! May the chosen hour strike this morning!

May you no longer look through the window wistfully at the banquet, but come in to sit at the table and feed upon Christ, rejoicing with His chosen!

The persons I am describing are such as *have learned to plead their case with God*, for our text is a complaint addressed to the Lord Himself. "We look for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness." It is a declaration of inward feelings, a laying bare of the heart's agonies to the Most High. Ah, dear Friends, although you have not yet found the peace you seek, it is well that you have begun to pray. Perhaps you think it poor praying—indeed, you hardly dare call it prayer at all—but God judges not as you do. A *groan* is heard in Heaven! A deep-fetched sigh and a falling tear are prevalent weapons at the Throne of God. Yes, your soul cries to God and you cannot help it. When you are about your daily work you find yourself sighing, "O that my load of guilt were gone! O that I could but call the Lord, my Father, with an unfaltering tongue!"

Night after night and day after day this desire rises from you like the morning mist from the valleys. You would, this morning, tear off your right arm and pluck out your right eye if you might but gain the unspeakable blessing! You are sincerely anxious for reconciliation with God and your anxiety reveals itself in prayer and supplication. I hope these prayers will continue. I trust you will never cease your crying. May the Holy Spirit constrain you to sigh and groan still. Like the importunate woman, may you press your suit until the gracious answer shall be granted through the merits of Jesus.

So far, dear Friends, things are hopeful with you. But when I say hopeful, I wish I could say much more, for mere hopefulness is not enough. It is not enough to *desire*. It is not enough to *seek*. It is not enough to *pray*. You must actually *obtain*—you must in very deed lay hold on eternal life. You will never enjoy comfort and peace till you have passed out of the merely *hopeful* stage into a better and a brighter one by making sure your interest in the Lord Jesus by a living, appropriating faith. In the exalted Savior all the gifts and Graces which you need are stored up, in readiness to supply your needs. O may you come to His fullness and out of it receive Grace for Grace!

The person I am desirous of comforting this morning may be described by one other touch of the pencil. He is one who is *quite willing to lay bare his heart before God*—to confess his desires whether right or wrong and to expose his condition whether unhealthy or sound. While we try to cloak anything from God, we are both wicked and foolish. It argues a rebellious spirit when we have a desire to hide anything from our Maker. But when a man uncovers his wound, invites inspection of its sore, bids the surgeon cut away the leprous film which covered its corruption and says to him, "Here, probe into its depths, see what evil there is in it. Spare not, but make a sure cure of the wound," then he is in a fair way to be recovered.

When a man is willing to make God his Confessor and does freely and without hypocrisy pour out his heart like water before the Lord, there is good hope for him! I believe I have some such here this morning. You have told the Lord your case. You have spread your petitions before Him—I trust you will continue to do so until you find relief. But I have yet a higher hope, namely, that you may soon obtain peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

II. So I shall pass on to the second point, which is that of ASSISTANCE. It shall now be my happy task to endeavor to assist into the light these who would gladly flee from the darkness. We will do so by trying to answer the query, “How is it that I, being desirous of light, have not found it? Why am I left to grope like a blind man for the wall and stumble at noonday as in the night? Why has not the Lord revealed Himself to me?”

The first answer, my dear Friends, is that *you may have been seeking the light in the wrong place*. Many, like Mary, seek the living among the dead. You, it is possible, may have been the victim of the false doctrine that peace with God can be found in the use of *ceremonies*. It may be you have been brought in connection with that Church which vainly rests its faith upon the figment of Apostolic succession and the empty parade of Episcopal ordination. You have been taught to believe on aquatic regeneration and confirmation by palmistry—you are the dupe of the dogma of sacramental efficacy and priestly potency!

If so, it is little marvel that you have not found peace, for, believe me, there is no peace to be found in the whole round of ceremonies—even if they were such as God Himself prescribed! There is no peace to be found in them, except it is that deadly peace which rocks souls in the cradle of superstition into that deep sleep from which only the judgment trumpet shall awaken them. These are they that receive strong delusions to believe a lie that they all may be damned. May you, my Hearers, escape from so terrible a doom! God has never promised salvation by the use of ceremonies! The Gospel which He sent His servants to preach was never a Gospel of postures, genuflections, symbols and rituals.

The Gospel is revealed in these words, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved”—a *mental* thing, a *spiritual* thing, an *inner* thing—not at all an outward display, a matter of the senses and the flesh. Our Gospel is altogether a matter for heart and soul and spirit. And such must be your salvation, or saved you can never be! It is possible too, dear Friends, that you have been looking for salvation in the mere belief of a certain creed. You have thought that if you could discover pure orthodoxy and could then consign your soul into its mold you would be a saved man. And you have consequently believed unreservedly, as far as you have been able to do so, the set of truths which have been handed to you by the tradition of your ancestors.

It may be that your creed is Calvinistic. It is possible that it is Arminian. It may be Protestant. It may be Romish. It may be truth—it may

be a lie. But, believe me, solid peace with God is not to be found through the mere reception of any creed, however true or Scriptural. Mere head-notion is not the road to Heaven. “You must be born again,” means a great deal more than that you must believe certain dogmas. It is of the utmost possible importance, I grant you, that you should search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life. But remember how our Lord upbraided the Pharisees. As the passage may be read, He told them that they searched the Scriptures, but He added, “You will not come unto Me that you might have life.”

You stop short at the Scriptures and therefore short of eternal life. The study of these, good as it is, cannot save you! You must press beyond this—you must come to the living, *personal* Christ, once crucified, but now living to plead at the right hand of God—or else your acceptance of the most sound creed cannot avail for the salvation of your soul! You may be misled in some other manner which I have not time to mention—some other mistaken way of seeking peace may have beguiled you and if so I pray God you may see the mistake and understand that there is but one door to salvation and that is Christ! There is one way and that is Christ! One Truth, and that is Christ! One life and that is Christ! Salvation is in Jesus only! It lies not in *you*—in your *doings*, or your *feelings*, or your *knowledge*, or your *resolves*. In Him all life and light for the sons of men are stored up by the mercy of God the Father. It may be one reason why you have not found the light is because you have sought it in the wrong place.

Again, it is possible that *you may have sought it in the wrong spirit*. My dear Friends, when we ask for pardon, reconciliation, salvation—we must remember to whom we *speak* and who *we are* who ask the favor. Some appear to deal with God as if He were bound to give salvation—as if salvation, indeed, were the inevitable result of a round of *performances*, or the deserved reward of a certain amount of virtue. They refuse to see that salvation is a pure *gift* of God—not of works, not the result of merit—but of free favor only. Not *of* man, neither *by* man, but of the Lord alone! Though the Lord has placed it on record in His Word, in the plainest language, that, “it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy,” yet the most of men in their hearts imagine that everlasting life is tied to *duties* and *earned* by service.

Dear Friends, you must come down from such vainglorious notions! You must sue out your pardon, as our law courts put it, *in forma pauperis*. You must come before God as a humble petitioner pleading the promises of mercy—abhorring all idea of merit, confessing that if the Lord condemns you He has a right to do it and that if He saves you, it will be an act of pure, gratuitous mercy—a deed of Sovereign Grace. Oh, but too many of you seekers hold your heads too high—to enter the lowly gate of light you must stoop! On the bended knee is the penitent’s true place. “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” is the penitent’s true prayer.

Why, Man, if God should damn you, you could never complain of injustice, for you have deserved it a thousand times! And if those prayers of yours were never answered. If no mercy ever came, you could not accuse the Lord, for you have no right to be heard! He could righteously withhold an answer of peace if He so willed to do. Confess that you are an undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sinner and begin to pray as you have never before prayed! Cry out of the depths of self-abasement if you would be heard! Come as a beggar, not as a creditor! Come to crave, not to demand! Use only this argument, “*Lord, hear me, for You are gracious and Jesus died. I cry to You as a condemned criminal who seeks pardon. Deliver me from going down into the Pit that I may praise Your name.*”

This, I fear, may have been a great source of mischief with many of you—this harboring of a proud spirit. And, if it has been so, amend it, I beseech you. And go, now, to your Father whom you have offended—go with humble and contrite hearts, in lowliness and brokenness of spirit—for He will surely accept you as His children. Others have not obtained peace, I fear, *because they have not yet any idea of the true way of finding it.* This, though it is preached to us so often, is still but little understood. The way of peace with God is seen through a haze by most men—so that if you put it ever so plainly, they will, if it is possible—misunderstand you!

Dear Hearer, your salvation does *not* depend upon what *you* do, but upon what Christ *did*, almost 2,000 years ago, when He offered Himself sacrifice for sin. All your salvation takes root in the death-throes of Calvary. The great Substitute did, then, in very deed bear your sin and suffer its penalty. Your sin shall never destroy you if upon that bloody tree the Lord’s chosen High Priest made a full expiation for *your* sins! They shall not be laid against you any more forever. What you have to do is but to accept what Jesus has finished. I know your notion is that you are to *bring* something to Him—but that vainglorious idea has ruined many and will ruin many more! When you shall be brought to come *empty-handed*, made willing to accept a free and full salvation from the hand of the Crucified—then and then only, shall you be saved—

“There is life for a look at the Crucified One.”

But men will not look to the Cross. No, they conspire to raise *another* cross—or they aspire to adorn that cross with jewels, or they labor to wreath it with sweet flowers—but they will not give a simple look to the Savior and rely alone on Him. Yet, dear Hearer, no soul can ever obtain peace with God by any other means! And this means is so effectual that it never did fail and never shall! The waters of Abana and Pharpar are preferred by proud human nature, but the waters of Jordan alone can take away the leprosy. Our repenting, our doings, our resolves—these are but broken cisterns! The only life-draught is to be found in the fountain of Living Water opened up by our Immanuel’s death! Do you understand that a simple trust, a sincere dependence, a hearty reliance upon Christ is the way of salvation?

If you do, may the God who taught you to understand the way give you Divine Grace to run in it and then your light has come! Arise and shine! Your peace has come, for Christ has bought it with His blood. For as many as trust in Him He has been punished. Their sins are gone—

***“Lost as in a shoreless flood,
Drowned in the Redeemer’s blood.
Pardoned soul, how blessed you are,
Justified from all things now!”***

My dear Friends, if none of these things have touched your case, let me further suggest that perhaps you have not found light *because you have sought it in a half-hearted manner*. None enter Heaven who are but half-inclined to go there. Cold prayers ask God to refuse them. When a man manifestly does not value the mercy which he asks and would be perfectly content not to receive it, it is small wonder if he is denied!

Many a seeker lies, by the year together, freezing outside the door of God’s mercy because he has never thoroughly bestirred himself to take the kingdom of Heaven by violence. If you can by any means be made willing to be unsaved, you shall be left to perish! But if you are inwardly set and resolved that you will give God no rest until you win a pardon from Him, He will give you your heart’s desire! The man who must be saved shall be. The man whose heart is set to find the way to Sion’s hill shall find that way. I believe that usually a sense of our pardon comes to us when, Samson-like, we grasp the posts of mercy’s door with desperate vehemence as though we would pluck them up, post and bar and all, sooner than remain any longer shut out from peace and safety. Strong cries and tears, groaning of spirit, vehement longing and ceaseless pleading—these are the weapons which, through the blood of Jesus, win us the victory in our warfare of seeking the Lord. Perhaps, then, my dear Friends, you have not bestirred yourself as you should. May the Lord help you to be a mighty wrestler and then a prevailing prince!

To come closer home to your conscience, is it not possible—is it not rather fearfully *probable*—that *there may be some sin within you which you are harboring to your soul’s peril*? When a soldier’s foot has refused to heal, the surgeon has been known to examine it very minutely and manipulate every part. Each bone is there and in its place—there is no apparent cause for the inflammation, but yet the wound refuses to heal. The surgeon probes and probes again, until his lancet comes into contact with a hard foreign substance. “Here it is,” he says, “a bullet is lodged here. This must come out or the wound will never close.”

So my probe, dear Hearer, may this morning discover a secret in you and if so, it must come out or you must die. You cannot expect to have peace with God and still indulge in that drunkard’s glass! What? A drunkard reconciled to God? You cannot hope to enjoy peace with God and yet refuse to speak with that relative who offended you years ago. What? Look to be forgiven, when you will not, yourself, forgive? There are doubtful practices in your trade behind the counter—do you dare hope that God

will accept a thief?—for that is what you are, a thief and a liar! You brand your goods dishonestly—call them 20 when they are fifteen—do you expect God to be your friend while you remain a rogue? Do you think He will smile on you in your knavery and walk with you when you choose dirty ways? Perhaps you indulge a haughty spirit, or it may be an idle disposition—it little signifies which kind of devil is in you—it must come out, or else the peace of God cannot come in!

Now, are you willing to give sin up? If not, it is all lost time for me to preach Christ to you, for He is not meant to be a Savior of those who persevere in sin. He came to save His people *from* their sins, not *in* them! And if you still must cling to a darling sin, be not deceived—within the gates of Heaven you can never enter! Have I yet to seek a reason why some of you have not found the light? *It may be that you have only sought peace with God occasionally.* After an earnest sermon you have been awakened. But when the sermon has been concluded you have gone back to your slumber like the sluggard who turns again upon his bed. After a sickness, or when there has been a death in the family—you have then zealously bestirred yourself! But soon you have declined into the same carelessness as before.

Oh, fool that you are, remember he wins not the race who runs by spurts, but he who continues running to the end! He gets not Christ who does but think of Him now and then and in the meantime regards vanity and falsehood in his heart. He only shall have Christ who *must* have Him—who must have Him *now* and who gives his whole heart to Him and cries, “I will seek Him till I find Him! And when I find Him I will never let Him go.” I shall not dwell upon this, but let me remind you that the great reason, after all—let us say what we will—why earnest souls do not get speedy rest, lies in this—*they are disobedient to the one plain Gospel precept*—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

I would pin them to this point. It is not necessary at all to combat their doubts and fears. We may do it, but I do not know that we are called upon to do so. The plain matter of fact is, God lays down a way of peace and you will not have it. God says believing in Jesus you shall live—you will not believe in Christ—and yet hope to live! God reveals to you His dear Son and says, “Trust Him.” And moreover says, “He that believes not has made God a liar,” and yet you dare to make God a liar! Every minute that you live in a state of unbelief, you, so far as you can, make God to be a liar!

What an atrocity for any one of us to fall into! What an amazing presumption for a sinner to live in who professes to be seeking peace with God! O hear me, now, I pray you! My soul for your soul if you are not this day saved, if you confide in the work of Jesus Christ! If you find not eternal life in Jesus, then we also must perish with you, for this is *our* hope, our *only* hope! And if it fails you it shall also fail us! Therefore do we with confidence, knowing it can fail neither of us, declare to you this faithful

saying which is worthy of all acceptation, that, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the chief. "Whoever believes in Him has everlasting life." "Believe, then, in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," for, "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not must be damned."

III. A few words by way of WARNING. My dear Friends, I will suppose that I have you by the hand and am gazing intently into your eyes. I fear for you lest you become frostbitten by your long sorrow and fall into a fatal slumber. You have been seeking rest, but you have not found it—*what an unhappy state is yours!* You are now unreconciled to God. Your sin clamors for punishment. You are among those with whom God is angry every day. Can you bear to be in such a condition? Does not something bid you arise and flee out of this city of destruction, lest you be consumed?

What happiness you are missing every day! If you would lay hold on Christ by faith you would possess a joy and peace passing all understanding. You are fretting in this low and miserable dungeon like that poor nun at Cracow! You have been in the dark year after year while the sun is shining, the sweet flowers are blooming and everything waiting to lead you forth with gladness. Oh, what joys you lose by being an unbeliever! Why do you abide so long in this evil state? Meanwhile, what good you might have done! Oh, if you had been led to look to Jesus Christ these months ago, instead of sitting in darkness yourself, you would have been leading others to Christ and pointing other eyes to that dear Cross that brought peace to you!

What sin you are daily committing! You are daily an unbeliever—daily doing despite to the precious blood—daily denying the ability of Christ and so doing injury to His honor. Does not the Spirit of God within you make you say, this morning, "I will arise and go to my Father"? Oh, if there is such a thought trembling in your soul, quench it not! Obey it, arise and go and may your Father's arms be around your neck before this day's sun goes down! Meanwhile, dear Friend, as I press your hand again, permit me to say what a hardening process is insensibly going on within you! If you are not better, you are certainly worse than you were 12 months ago. Why, those promises that cheered you, then, now yield you no comfort! Those threats which once startled you now cause you no alarm! Will you tarry longer?

You have waited to be better and you are growing worse and worse. You have said, "I will come at a more convenient season," and every season is more inconvenient than that which came before it. You doubted then—you are the victim of deeper and more dastardly doubts today. O that you could believe in Him who must be true! O that you could trust in Him who ought to be trusted, for He never can deceive! I pray God the day may come, come now this very moment, that you may shake yourself from the dust and arise and put on your beautiful garments—for every hour you sit

on the dunghill of your soul-destroying doubts you are being fastened by strong bands of iron to the seat of despair!

Your eyes are growing dimmer, your hands more palsied—and the poison in your veins is raging more furiously! Yonder is the Savior's Cross and there is efficacy in His blood for you. Trust Jesus, now, and this moment you enter into peace! The gate of Mercy swings readily on its hinge and opens wide to every soul that casts itself upon the bosom of the Savior. O why do you tarry? Mischief will befall you. The sun is going down. Hurry up, Traveler, lest you be overtaken with an everlasting night!

What else can I say to warn you but this—every man and every woman in this house today who is unconverted, however hopeful you may be—is running the awful risk of sinking into the place where hope comes not! As the Lord my God lives, my Hearer, with all the hopefulness which is now about you, unless you believe in Jesus, you shall be damned! There may be 10,000 good points about you, but if you miss this *one*, you must be a castaway. My soul is grieved and vexed within me that I have such a message to deliver, but I must speak plainly. Will you have Christ or not? If not, then whatever you may glory in, Christ will not know you in the day of His coming, but you shall hear Him say, "Depart from Me, I never knew you."

Unless Jesus Christ is your shield and help, you are undone. But you may have Him—you may have Him now! His Spirit speaks through my voice to you at this hour. I know He does! You are feeling, even now, the gentle motions of His mighty power—

***"Yield to His love who round you now
The bands of a man would cast,
The cords of His love, who was given for you,
To His altar binding you fast."***

This is your only opportunity. Once let life be over and there is no Christ to be preached in Gehenna, no Gospel to be proclaimed amid the flames of Tophet! Perhaps to some of you even this day is your only day of Grace. Now is conscience yet tender. Tomorrow, touched by that hot iron which Satan ever has at hand, it may be a seared conscience never to feel again. Now does the Gospel trumpet ring sweet and clear, "Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come and welcome, Sinners, come!" Your guilt shall vanish, though black as Hell before! All things that separate you and God shall be removed! Only trust in Jesus and you shall live!

I wish to put it to you more powerfully, but cannot. There is the Gospel. You have heard it this morning. Perhaps you will never hear it again. Or, hearing it again, perhaps it shall never have a power to woo you as it has at this hour. By the wounds of Christ, I pray you turn not from Him! By the second coming of Christ, I pray you regard Him! Since He shall shortly descend in the clouds of Heaven to call the nations to account, I pray you bow to Him! By that pierced hand which shall sway the scepter—by those weeping eyes which shall flash like flames of fire—by those lips of mercy which shall pronounce sentences of thunder, to be accompanied with an

execution of lightning, I pray you, "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little!"

I preach to you Christ with the crown of thorns. Christ with the wounded hands. Christ with the opened side, full of tenderness and mercy to sinners though they forget Him and neglect Him. But if you will not have this Christ, then I must tell you of the Christ who shall come—

***"With the rainbow wreath and robes of storm,
On cherub wings and wings of wind,
Appointed Judge of all mankind."***

You may reject Him today, but you shall not escape Him then! You may turn your backs upon Him on this Lord's-Day, but the mountains shall refuse to give you shelter in that tremendous hour! Come, bow at His feet! Look up, now, to His dear face and say, "I trust You, Jesus, I trust You now. Save me now, for I am vile."

IV. The last word is that of ENCOURAGEMENT. Dear Friends, there are many, many around you, some of whom you know, who have trusted Jesus and they have found light. They once suffered your disappointments, but they have now found rest to their souls. They came to Jesus just as they were and at this moment they can tell you that they are satisfied in Him. If others have found such peace, why not you? Jesus is still the same! It is not to Christ's advantage to reject a sinner! It is not for God's Glory to destroy a seeker! Rather, it is for His honor and Glory to receive such as humbly repose in the sacrifice of His dear Son.

What holds you back? You are called—come! You are pressed to come—come! In the courts of Law I have sometimes heard a man called as a witness and no sooner is he called, though he may be at the end of the court, than he begins to press his way up to the witness box. Nobody says, "Who is this man pushing, here?" or, if they should say, "Who are you?" it would be a sufficient answer to say, "My name was called." "But you are not rich, you have no gold ring upon your finger!" "No, but that is not it, I was called." "But you are not a man of repute, or rank, or character!" "It matters not, I was called. Make way."

So make way, you doubts and fears! Make way, you devils of the infernal lake! Christ calls the sinner. Sinner, come! Though you have nothing to recommend you, yet, since it is written, "Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out," come, and the Lord bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 11:12-30.

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SHINING CHRISTIANS NO. 2617

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 9, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 1, 1882.

*“Arise shine; for your light is come, and the Glory of the LORD is risen upon you.”
Isaiah 60:1.*

I BELIEVE that this text refers to the Church of God. I am aware that it is considered by some to have a special reference to Israel, but I also know that “no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation,” and that this particular Scripture may be most justly and fitly applied to every child of God. I pray the Holy Spirit to bear witness to that fact, even while I am speaking, by applying the text to all Believers who are assembled here. The first word of it is, “Arise.” There is much need, dear Friends, that we should be, sometimes at least, awakened. Here are persons in the light—the day has dawned upon them, but they are fast asleep—so the trumpet is sounded in their ears and the watchman shouts aloud, “Arise, shine; for your light is come.” I believe that there are some Christians who have wasted a large part of their lives for need of somebody or something to wake them up. There is more evil worked in the world by lack of thought than by downright malice and there is more good left undone through lack of thought than through any aversion to the doing of good! Some Christians appear to have been born in the land of slumber and they continually live in their native country of dreams. They occasionally rub their eyes and suppose themselves to be wide awake, but they are in the Enchanted Ground and though they know it not, they are little better than sleepwalkers most of their days.

All of us may be conscious that, at times, we are startled into something better than our ordinary mode of life. We have been going on quietly, doing some good, but, all at once, we have been impressed with the value of an immortal soul—we have been struck with the nearness of eternity by the sudden death of a friend, or we have been awakened by the special application to our conscience of some eminently-powerful Scripture—or even the sight of some grievous sin has shocked us into holy action.

For a time we have been quite different from our ordinary selves and those who have observed us have thought that there was more in us than they ever expected to see. Certainly more came out of us than we had ever seen before, but, alas, we have soon slipped back into our former quiescent state until, perhaps, something else of an unusual character has happened and startled us again. I have known some in whom, happily, the process of awakening has been a really effectual one. There

came, once, to a meeting I was addressing, a Brother who had been, for years, earnest after the ordinary fashion of Christian young men—and the Lord so guided me that I spoke about the usefulness that some men might acquire if they would but bestir themselves. I urged the desirability of some attempting to preach in the street, who might find their gifts abundant for that work,

Well, this young man went back and tried what he could do for Christ and God greatly blessed him. That young man was Mr. W. P. Lockhart, of Liverpool, who is, at this moment, pastor of the church meeting in the Toxteth Tabernacle, a large edifice erected by the people whom he gathered by his preaching! Our friend has, with much acceptance, occupied this pulpit and been of great service to our denomination. But, if it had not been for God's awakening him under that particular address, he might have remained just the ordinary trader that he was, serving the Lord in a very proper way, but nothing noteworthy might have come of it. I wonder whether there is anybody here who needs, as it were, to be dragged out and impressed into the service of Christ—some Brother, perhaps, from Liverpool, or Manchester, or Birmingham, or Glasgow, or from this great London, itself—someone who is “not slothful in business,” yet not “fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” Such a man may be, really, a fine fellow with great capacity, but most of his talent is latent and dormant so far as the Word of Cod is concerned.

My dear Friend, you have been sluggish quite long enough. Is it not time for me to cry to you, “Arise,” and is it not time for you to lift yourself up from that couch of indolence, and say, “Yes, I have been hearing sermons for a good long while. I have been a member of a Christian Church and have been attending communions for many years. It is high time that I ceased from sloth and began to do something to show that God is with me and in me and, by His Grace, so it shall be”? Happy will the preacher be if that shall be the result of calling your attention to this first word of the text, “Arise.” We all need to hear the clarion call of Charles Wesley's hymn—

**“Soldiers of Christ, arise
And put your armor on!
Strong in the strength which God supplies
Through His eternal Son!”**

It is high time that all of us did arise. “Let us not sleep, as do others.” Loved by our God from all eternity, predestinated unto everlasting life, bought with the precious blood of Jesus, helped by the Spirit of God, and indwelt by Him, it is, indeed, time that we did something worthy of our pedigree, something worthy of the price with which we have been bought, something worthy of the love which set us apart unto itself before the world was! I have no doubt that I am addressing some who do not lack grace—God has given them that. They are not without a saving knowledge of the truth—they do know Christ, but what they need is somebody to start them on a higher and nobler career. There are some who are just like Elijah's sacrifice, with the wood all laid in order on the altar, and the bullock on the wood. O Lord, send the fire from Heaven, that the sacrifice may be completely consumed! Let the man be given to you as a whole burnt offering unto the Most High! It may be that this poor weak hand

may strike the match that shall set that sacrifice on a blaze. So may it be, and God shall have all the Glory!

The text says, "Arise," but then it goes on to say, "Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the Glory of the Lord is risen upon you." In these words I see three things for me to do. First, *to remind you of your privilege*—"your light is come." Secondly, *to awaken you to your service*—"Arise, shine." And then, thirdly, *to rally you to your work*, by a few remarks which the context will suggest.

I. I am now speaking only to the people of God. There are some of you whose light has never come, but you are in darkness even now. The Lord have mercy upon you, but, to God's own people who have believed in the Lord Jesus, this is my first message, REMEMBER YOUR PRIVILEGE. Your light has come!

Remember, first, *out of what darkness that Light of God has delivered you*. You are no longer in the darkness of sin, the darkness of spiritual ignorance, the darkness of spiritual death. Neither are you any longer in that darkness of distress and despair which might be felt. You are now in the Light of God, but think a little while of what your state of darkness used to be. It is not so many years ago that there was a young man who did not know his right hand from his left in spiritual things. He put darkness for light, and light for darkness, bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter—but that man, not as young now, knows the Savior—he has learned the evil of sin and he has rejoiced in all the delights of pardon! Was that young man yourself? If so, you may well prize your present privileges. It is not so long ago that there was a man who was in the darkness of soul-agony. His sin was heavy upon him. God's hand pressed him till all the moisture of his being seemed to exude and he was like a plant withered in the long droughts of autumn. He cried to the Lord, but for a while he received no response to his petitions. He begged for mercy, but it did not come.

Now, that same person is sitting here, thankful that he is pardoned and that he knows how he has been delivered from the wrath of God! And he blesses that Divine Substitute who took upon Himself his sin and with it that sin's penalty, and so delivered the guilty one from the wrath to come. Oh, what a change there is in that young man! That young man is yourself, is he not? Sister, it has been the same with you, too! Oh, what a difference there is between the knowledge which God the Holy Spirit has imparted to you—and the blindness in which Satan held you captive! Oh, the difference between the misery into which conviction and despair had brought you—and the peace and restfulness which you feel at this moment through faith in Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior! Is it not true that your light has come, and do you not bless God for it? Oh, I think you must and that you will use that blessed fact to help me in my argument when I come to enforce the lesson of the text—"Arise, shine; for your light is come." If God has given you light out of such horrible darkness, it well becomes you to shine to His praise as brightly as you can!

Please notice, next, that *this light, which God has given you, is His own Glory*. "And the Glory of the Lord is risen upon you." Oh, but that is wonderful—that God would not only give us light, but that that light should be His own Glory! Creation is a part of God's Glory, but it is only

a moonlight Glory compared with that of Redemption! God, in the gift of Jesus Christ, displayed the whole of His Nature. Creation is not a canvas large enough for the whole image of God to be stamped upon it. Byron speaks of God's face being mirrored in the sea, but there is not space enough for the face of Deity to be fully reflected in the broad Atlantic, or in all the oceans put together! The image of God is to be fully seen in Jesus Christ, and nowhere else, for there you behold attributes which Creation cannot display. Creation can manifest love, power, wisdom and much else, but how can Creation manifest justice, and justice lying side by side with mercy, like the lion and the lamb? It is only in Christ that you can see this wondrous sight—God hating sin with perfect hatred, but yet loving sinners with much more than the tenderness of a mother towards her child!

It is upon you, dear Friend, that this light of the Glory of God has fallen. In your history, in your case, the Glory of God's attributes has been illustrated. You have seen it, yourself, in a measure, and others are also to see it in you. Your light has come, the Glory of the Lord has risen upon you. Therefore, God's Glory is to shine through you and in you, and by you, and through you God shall manifest Himself to angels and principalities and powers in the ages yet to come! I confess that I am talking about what I do not fully understand. I am quite out of my depth here. I see the light of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, but to describe it is quite impossible. When I first saw the electric light, if you had asked me what it was like, I could have only told you something about its candle-power or its brilliance in comparison with gas, but I could not have made you understand it. But what is the electric light compared with the glory of the sun to one who sees it for the first time? And what are all the suns that could ever be created compared with the wondrous blaze of the Glory of God? Yet such a marvelous light as that has fallen upon you, my Brother, my Sister—"the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

There is also this blessed thing to be said about this Light of God—*you will never lose it*. I dwell upon that thought for a minute, that you may rejoice in it. Read the 30th verse. "Your sun shall no more go down, neither shall your moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended." The light that God has given you will never be taken away from you! Ah, you have feared a good many times that it would be, but it never has and it never will! You have put your hand before your eyes and then you have thought that the sun was blotted out, but it was not. Clouds have sometimes arisen between you and your God, but the light of His everlasting love has gone on shining all the while and so it always will. We bless God that we have not to preach to you of temporary salvation, a salvation that saves people for a quarter of a year, or that saves them for a few years and then away they go back, again, to the world! No, no, our comforts may be slower in the making than are those of others, but they last when they are made, for they are made by the Grace of God! We are not saved by a sudden jump into something—we know not what—but by a new creation, by a new birth, by a total and radical change. Now, if the Light of God has risen upon you in that way, so as to change your very heart

and the whole nature of your being, that Light will go on shining forever! Drink in that thought. You have, by Grace, laid hold of that which you will never lose and One has laid hold of you who will never let you slip out of His grasp, for it is written, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.”

I must not get on that glorious theme of the Final Preservation of the Saints because it is one that always sets my heart leaping with delight whenever I turn to it! But I say to you that if you take away from me the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints and all that is involved in it, I have not anything left that is worth keeping! I should not care about the Gospel if that essential feature of it were gone. That Truth of God seems to me to be the very soul of it—everlasting love making an everlasting covenant and taking the objects of that everlasting love into everlasting union with Christ and giving them everlasting life by virtue of that union with Him! So, Believer, that light of yours will never burn out—it shall shine on forever and ever. “Your light has come” and it shall never go away. Oh, joy, joy, joy! Let God be praised continually for such a blessed gift as this!

Now I must leave that part of my subject, only asking you to turn it over in your minds and to rejoice if the text is true of you, “Your light is come.” I wish that some here who have been in the dark till now, might know it to be true in their case, and each one be able to say, “I do believe! I will believe in Christ Jesus as my Savior.” If you do, your light has come!

II. But I am going to speak further to those who know that their light *has* come. Dear Friends, as soon as you have received this light of the Glory of God—this very same light that makes Heaven what it is—this light which never will be dim and which you will never lose—I want to push you on to my second point, which is this, TO AWAKEN YOU TO SERVICE. “Arise, shine; for your light is come.” A man cannot shine if he has not any light, but as soon as ever he has the Light of God, what is he to do? Why, shine, of course! He must not put away his light as in a dark lantern, but the moment he receives it, he is bound to show it!

First, my dear Friend, since your light has come, shine *by holy cheerfulness*. I am very sorry whenever I meet with Christians who have no joy. I am most of all vexed with myself whenever my own joy burns dimly, for we who have the light of the Glory of God ought to have shining faces. We have been forgiven! We are God’s children! We are on the way to Heaven! Then, surely, if anybody’s mouth ought to be full of laughter and if any tongue should be tuned to sweetest music, it should certainly be ours! There are none who have such a right to lead perfectly happy lives as Christians. I know that there are some who I cannot doubt are good people, but who are a very surly sort of folk. Dear Hearts, they will be all right when they get to Heaven, but I would not like to meet a Heaven full of them if they are in Heaven as they are here! There are some persons who never can be content. Providence never pleases them. The weather is always wrong. Their dinners are always ill cooked—nothing goes right, nothing has gone right with them for years—and they are very snappish and snarling.

This style of living will not do, my Brother! “Arise, shine.” I would like to lay those words on your breakfast plate tomorrow morning. Before you go out to business, put this passage between two pieces of bread and butter, “Arise, shine; for your light is come.” It may be that you will wake up in the morning rather gloomy and you will say to yourself, “I have to go out and battle with the world again.” Take this text, “Arise, shine; for your light is come,” and say to yourself, “I must shine. Come, come, come, come, come! I must not let myself get down in the dumps, I must not begin the day mourning. God has given me light, so I must and I will shine to His praise and Glory.” May God help you to do it, for that is one way in which we can adorn the Gospel of Jesus Christ, our Savior, by the cheerfulness of our deportment!

The next way of shining is *by a gracious godliness*. True Christians ought to shine by their lives. The stars do not say anything, but they keep on shining. Did you look up at the sky, the other night, and see Jupiter hard by the moon and Saturn apparently just a little way off? There has been a wonderful beauty about various planets during the past month—perhaps never was the sky more interesting than it has been of late, but never a word was said among the shining bodies in the heavens! I kept company with the pole star, I think, for 12 long hours as I was traveling home from the South of France I kept seeing him out of the carriage window. He never said a word to me all the time, but one thing he did do, he continued shining! And I also gazed at all the stars of Ursa Major, as I remained wakeful the whole night long, but not a syllable did they say to me. They do not need to speak, for they shine! In like manner, you Christian people who cannot talk—the women especially. I mean that you cannot *preach*, you are not allowed to preach—I want you to shine. Some people seem to think that there is no shining without talking, whereas the very best shining is that of Christian women, who, if they have little to say, have a great deal to *do*. They make the house so bright with heavenly grace and decorate it so sweetly with the flowers of their cheerful piety, that those round about them are won to Christ by them! Therefore, shine, dear Brothers and Sisters, by your gracious godliness, for so you will bring Glory to God!

Then, thirdly, shine *by zealous earnestness*. We do not often meet with people who are too much in earnest. I can only thank God that I hear, in certain places, an outcry against fanaticism. We have been such a long time without it, so we may be almost glad to have a little of it, especially as the so-called fanaticism is probably only zeal thoroughly awakened. If there are some people who seem to be wildly enthusiastic, let us imitate them! We have had so much slumbering, so much coldness, so much death, that we can put up with a little extravagance and excess. Still it would be better if, judiciously, one went steaming straight ahead in the service of God with a resolution never to be beaten, never to cease every earnest endeavor to make known the Gospel of Christ—and to reflect the Light of God which has shone upon us from above! Oh, for a zealous earnestness! May God pour it out upon this Church yet more abundantly! May you go into your Master’s service with all your might and main, and may the Spirit of God, as a spirit of burning, rest upon everyone of you far more abundantly than in the past!

This would lead, dear Friends, to your shining *by a secret bravery*. There are some dear people whom I must encourage to be a little more bold. We have some friends, here and there, to whom I could hint, only very gently, that they are quite forward enough, but there are many good people who always keep in the background. They might do so much for Christ if only they had a little courage! Do, dear Friends, break through the ice this year! If you have felt that you ought to do something for your Lord, and yet have never begun to do it, begin at once! Do you ask, "What is the best way to try to serve Christ?" Well, I think the best way is to *do* it. "But how should I begin?" Well, I would begin by *beginning*! "When shall I begin?" Begin now! This very hour. "But in what way?" In the first way that comes to hand—"whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might," for our text says, "Arise, shine." If you have the Light of God, emit it, distribute it, scatter it somehow or other! Have pluck—that is a plain English word, but I do not know how to put my meaning better. Have pluck enough to come out and be a Christian—do not always be like a rat behind the wall, but come out and acknowledge yourself on Jesus Christ's side and promote the everlasting Gospel wherever you have the opportunity!

So runs the text, "Arise, shine; for your light is come."

III. Now, in closing, I want TO RALLY YOU TO THIS SHINING BY ONE OR TWO ARGUMENTS.

And, first, *by the world's great need*. Read the second verse of this chapter—"Behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon you, and His Glory shall be seen upon you." Oh, the darkness and the death shade still over the people! Over this London of ours there hangs a pall of deadly nightshade, a darkness that may be felt! Then, little glowworm, even you must not hide your light! Sparks, tiny sparks, you that have but one little flash, you must not conceal it, for the night is dark, and the darkness deepens! The devil, drunkenness and lewdness, Romanism in all its forms, false doctrine, infidel teaching, skepticism in a thousand shapes—all these make night hideous and further deepen the dense shades of darkness! You who have the light—show it! If it is not the Light of God, say so, and renounce it. But if it is the Light of God, in the name of the eternal God, good man, I pray you, let your light be seen! Arise, shine; for darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people!

Shine, next, because of *the great results that will surely come of it*. If all Christians were once to shine—and that means if you were to shine, and your neighbor, and I and my neighbor—if all of us were to shine, then it would come to pass that Gentiles would speed to the Light of God, and kings to the brightness of the rising! Then, from all lands and from the sea, would converts come, till nations should crowd to Christ like flocks of doves flying to their dovecotes. And the Church of God would be multiplied beyond all count. We often keep from work for Christ because we despair of its success. We neglect effort because we are afraid that effort will be useless. Doubt no longer! He that bids you sow intends to give a harvest and He will bless your sowing if you will but sow in faith. We may well be encouraged to do so when we think such thoughts as these, "Shine, for your light shall be seen; shine, for your light shall be useful to

save lives like a lighthouse on the rock—useful to direct others home, like the cottager’s candle in the window to guide her husband to his resting place.” Shine, then, because of the good that will come of it to the world.

Shine, next, because of *the great blessing that it will bring to the Church*, for, if all Christians rally to serve God as they should, then shall the Church have the days of her great glory—“The glory of Lebanon shall come unto you, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I will make the place of My feet glorious. The sons, also, of them that afflicted you, shall come bending unto you; and all they that despised you shall bow themselves down at the soles of your feet; and they shall call you The City of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through you, I will make you an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.” A shining Church will be a happy Church, but if we do not shine, we will be miserable. But if we will shine for Christ, we shall see great prosperity for the Church of the living God!

And, best of all, we must do this because of the argument used in the 21st verse. I will not speak upon it, I shall leave it with you—“*that I may be glorified.*” It is God your Father who says that! It is Christ who has bought you with His blood who says it! It is the Holy Spirit who is your indwelling Comforter who says it! There is no argument that eloquence could state, or that reason could suggest that can have such force with a loyal heart as this—“that I might be glorified.” Do you not pray, “Father, glorify Your Son”? Now, in the power of the Holy Spirit, prove the sincerity of your prayer by giving out whatever light God has given to you and, since your light has come, arise and shine, as you have ability, from this very hour! The Lord grant it, dear Brothers and Sisters, to me and to you, for His name’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 103; ISAIAH 59:16-21; ISAIAH 60:1-16.**

What more appropriate passage than the 103rd Psalm can we read, on this first Sabbath night of another year, to express the gratitude of our thankful hearts? I will only interject a sentence here and there, but let me beg all to try to worship God in the spirit while we once more read together the familiar words of this much-loved Psalm.

Psalm 103:1. *Bless the LORD, O my soul.* O my Soul, be not thoughtless and wandering, but give this holy hour to the sacred employment of praising and blessing your God!

1. *And all that is within me, bless His holy name.* Let every string of my heart be now touched by the fingers of the Holy Spirit, let every faculty of my being wake up to praise the Lord—“and all that is within me, bless His holy name.”

2. *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.* They are very memorable. They deserve to be “engraved as in eternal brass.” To be forgetful of them will be a base form of ingratitude. Come, my memory, wake up! “Forget not all His benefits.” Here are a few of the choicest of

the gems in this cabinet—the jewels are too many for me to exhibit them all.

3. *Who forgives all your iniquities.* The Lord has done it and continues to do it—“who forgives”—not some of your iniquities, but all of them, so that you can sing, “The depths have covered them: there is not one of them left.” Why, there is enough to sing of in that, alone! We need never leave off praising God for that one mercy of forgiven sin—it is the first of God’s favors and prepares us to enjoy the rest.

3. *Who heals all your diseases.* Many times has my heart had to sing about the gift from my God of this precious pearl, “who heals all your diseases,” and some of you have also had occasion, in your restored health, to praise the Lord for this privilege. But, oh, to think that, every day, He is healing us of the great disease of *sin*—our very afflictions being, often but the lancet and the knife with which He is removing from us the foul taint of evil. “Who heals all your diseases.”

4. *Who redeems your life from destruction.* You have a life that can never die, for He has redeemed it. Then, bless your Lord for Redemption! If you do not sing for this cause, the very stones in the street will cry out against you!

4. *Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.* What a crown! What gems are on it! No gold or silver can ever equal this—“loving kindness and tender mercies.” Every child of God is a crowned king—shall we not, for this, also, sing aloud, “Bless the Lord, O my soul”?

5. *Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.* If you enjoy sweet inward contentment and satisfaction with your God, you must praise Him, “who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s” With renewed strength, can you, will you, be silent? I am sure you cannot, but you must use all the strength that God has given back to you to His praise and Glory.

6. *The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.* Blessed be His name for this! He is the supreme Governor of the world and He will rectify all its wrongs in His own time and way. There is a great power that makes for righteousness and that power is on the Throne of God. “The Lord reigns.”

7-9. *He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever.* Let your heart keep praising the Lord as we read every one of these sentences, for there is a theme for everlasting music in each line of this Psalm. “He will not always chide,” Hallelujah! “Neither will he keep His anger forever.” And again we say, “Hallelujah !”

10. *He has not dealt with us after our sins.* Blessed be His holy name!

10. *Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* Forever adored be His long-suffering and His tender mercy.

11. *For as the Heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.* Therefore praise Him—

**“Loud as His thunders, shout His praise,
And sound it lofty as His throne!”**

If He is such a God as this, you can never overdo His praises. It is impossible to exaggerate your exaltation of Him!

12. *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. They are gone! They are removed to an infinite distance—they will never come back. It is not possible that they should ever again be laid to our charge.*

13. *Like as a father pities his children, so the LORD pities them that fear Him. Do not stop the music of thanksgiving. Let your hearts, if not your voices, keep on saying, “Bless the Lord! Bless the Lord!” Oh, what pity you and I have needed! What tenderness and compassion! And—*

**“Such pity as a father has
Unto his children dear”—**

such pity has God had upon us!

14-16. *For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. As a congregation, we have had most grievous proof of this Truth of God during the last two or three months. It has seemed to me as if everybody was dying. Our ranks have been thinned wondrously—*

**“And we are to the margin come,
And we expect to die.”**

17-19. *But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children’s children; to such as keep His Covenant, and to those that remember His Commandments to do them. The LORD has prepared His Throne in the heavens; and His kingdom rules over all. Do not believe the people who attribute sickness and death to the devil, and so try to make it appear that God has left His Throne. He still reigns! He reigns forever, “King of kings, and Lord of lords, Hallelujah!” “Bless the Lord, O my soul!” “The Lord has prepared His Throne in the heavens; and His kingdom rules over all.”*

20-22. *Bless the LORD, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His Commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word. Bless you the LORD, all you His hosts; you ministers of His that do His pleasure. Bless the LORD, all His works in all places of His dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul. For well you may, O my Soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you! Lead the song and may the whole world join you in joyful adoration of the Triune Jehovah, Father, Son and Holy Spirit! Now we will read the passage that especially relates to the message I have to deliver to you presently in my Master’s name. Turn to Isaiah 59, verse 16—*

Isaiah 59:16. *And He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore His arm brought salvation unto Him; and His righteousness, it sustained Him. Man’s extremity was Christ’s opportunity. There was no one left to save poor fallen manhood, no one who could lift a hand or a finger for our rescue. Therefore, Jesus came, and fought, and bled, and died, and conquered on our behalf.*

17-19. *For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon His head; and He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay fury to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies; to the islands He will repay recompense. So shall they fear the name*

of the LORD from the west, and His Glory from the rising of the sun. Christ came once and He is to come a second time because He will be again needed here. And when He returns, He will ease Himself of His adversaries, and speedily win the victory for truth and righteousness. Then shall the whole earth know what Christ can do.

19-21. *When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him. And the redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, says the LORD. As for Me, this is My Covenant with them, says the LORD; My Spirit that is upon you, and My Words which I have put in your month, shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your seed, nor out of the mouth of your seed's seed, says the LORD, from henceforth and forever.* The Church of God shall have the Spirit of Truth and the Word of Truth ever abiding in her midst. God will not break His Covenant by withdrawing His Spirit from His Church. The Redeemer has come and His work of Redemption is accomplished. The Spirit also has come, but His work is not as yet done—it is being performed from day to day and the Spirit will never be withdrawn while any part of His ministry remains unfulfilled. The consequence of all this is the Glory of the true Church of the living God. There are better days coming for the cause of Christ and of His Truth. Listen, and be encouraged, all you that are heavy of heart!

Isaiah 60:1-3. *Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the Glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon you, and His Glory shall be seen upon you. And the Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.* The Church of God is one, whether it is among Jews or Gentiles. That poor Church seemed abandoned and forsaken. Dark days came and it looked as if the Church must even cease to exist, but it did not. Now God has brought in many sinners of the Gentiles and He will bring them in much more numerous in the future times of refreshing. They shall come in armies, in hosts, in nations—and the Church of God shall be exceedingly glorious!

4,5. *Lift up your eyes round about and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to you: your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side. Then you shall see, and flow together, and your heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto you, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto you.* All the strength of the land and of the sea—the armies and the navies shall come and prostrate themselves before the Church of God. The supreme power on earth shall yet be the Christ in the midst of His Church.

6. *The multitude of camels shall cover you, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come.* The Easterns shall bow before the King; they that of old had some light shall come to the yet greater light. In those holy lands which afterwards became so unholy, there shall yet be a return to the Truth of God and all the false prophets shall be expelled. Where Mohammed's crescent has cursed the nations, there shall shine again the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His wings.

6, 7. *They shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the LORD. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto*

you, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto you: they shall come up with acceptance on My altar, and I will glorify the house of My Glory. Wandering tribes of wild Arabs shall come and bow before Christ, and lay their wealth at His feet.

8. *Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows? The growing Church sees a greater multitude coming to her than even the populous East could muster. From where do they come? Listen, Brothers and Sisters, and look around and see for yourselves.*

9. *Surely the isles shall wait for Me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD your God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He has glorified you. In ships from these remote islands, and from countries that were dimly spoken of, in the East, as, “lands of Tarshish,” far away, great multitudes were to come to Christ. Are they not coming today from this Ultima Thule, this distant land beyond the pillars of Hercules, are they not coming to Christ “as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows”?*

10-16. *And the sons of strangers shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister unto you: for in My wrath I smote you, but in My favor have I had mercy on you. Therefore your gates shall be continually open; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto you the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish; yes, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto you, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I will make the place of My feet glorious. The sons, also, of them that afflicted you shall come bending unto you; and all they that despised you shall bow themselves down at the soles of your feet; and they shall call you, The City of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through you, I will make you an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. You shall also drink the milk of the Gentiles, and milk the breast of kings: and you shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. In God’s good time, all this shall come to pass.*

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—
103 (VERSION III), 889, 957.**

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

THE ETERNAL DAY

NO. 1176

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 31, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“Your sun shall no more go down, neither shall your moon withdraw itself:
for the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days
of your mourning shall be ended.”
Isaiah 60:20.***

ISRAEL of old had light while all the rest of the world sat in darkness. In consequence of receiving moral and spiritual light from God, the nation prospered, and under the smile of Heaven it was greatly enriched and multiplied. But, alas, the sun went down and the moon withdrew itself, for Israel turned aside and followed after idols, and the land was terribly smitten by the hostile sword. Upon her repentance her sun arose again and the daughters of Judah rejoiced, but again they went astray, for the zealous judge, or the godly king, or the pious priest died—and the nation, prone to backsliding, again provoked the Lord—and the light of His Countenance was withdrawn. This *typical Church* of God abode not in the light continually, its history was checkered with alternate brightness and gloom, repentance and relapse, prosperity and adversity.

What a change from the glory of Solomon to the captivity of Zedekiah! From the Temple in its glory to the city in ruinous heaps! Truly, to those who knew Israel well, this prophecy of Isaiah must have sounded as rare music, and they must have devoutly cried, “Hasten it, O Lord, in our time.” Another dispensation came. Jesus Christ was born at Bethlehem, “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of Your people Israel.” And the sun shone upon the earth as it had never done before. A *visible Church* was called out to walk in the light, which Church still exists upon the earth, and from the days of Pentecost until now its sun has never altogether gone down, neither has its moon withdrawn herself.

To us, the promise of the text has been fulfilled in a gracious sense, for to the Church of God there has never been an utter suspension of the Divine light. The light has not always been equally clear, but it has still been day. Somewhere or other God has had a visible Church on the earth—if not at Rome, yet in the valleys of Piedmont—not in palaces of bishops, yet in dens and caves of the earth. Yet the visible Church has had her dark days—the text has been only true of her comparatively—her sun has gone down in some sense. The long medieval night, with its heavy dampness, hung over the souls of the myriads and chilled them into crouching superstition, until the day when God sent us the Reformation, like a new daybreak.

Even now there are tokens of returning night, but may the Lord avert it. Shine out, you stars in the right hand of Jesus, and let your Lord, the

Sun of Righteousness shine forth, also, and drive away those Romish bats and owls which are fluttering all around us in the hope that their beloved darkness will return! The history of the Church has not been a clear increasing light, like the growth of day from dawn to noon. Her glory has, for a while, departed. Her candlestick has been removed and it may be so, yet again. But, Beloved, there is a Church upon the earth which is within the visible Church and is its central life. I refer to the really elect, called and justified, which are a *spiritual Church*. There are to be found in the visible Church in all its sections—a people truly saved in the Lord, not a field of mingled wheat and tares—but all plants of the Lord's right hand planting.

This secret Church, this Church *Mystical*, this true body of our Lord Jesus Christ may claim to have had this text fulfilled in its experience in a far larger sense. "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." There are Believers who know the meaning of that text, for from the day when they first believed they have not ceased to walk in the light. Though now and then a cloud has crossed their sky, yet, as a rule, no night of backsliding or deadly doubt has come upon them. They have believed fully and, therefore, have seen the salvation of God. Their sun has not gone down, for the Lord Jesus Christ has never hidden His face, and they have rejoiced in an abiding sense of His love.

I believe that this is the proper condition of all saints. And if saints were as they should be it would be fulfilled in them—"your sun shall no more go down, neither shall your moon withdraw itself; for Jehovah shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended." Oh, what a glad thing it would be if we could attain to this! "Being justified by faith, *we have peace with God*"—not, we "ought" to have it, but, "*we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" We have learned to glory in tribulations, also, crying, "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" If we have learned the meaning of the exhortation, "Abide in Me," and are so abiding, then is our fellowship continual and our course is as the shining light which shines more and more unto the full noontide—

***"Walk in the light! And you shall see
Your darkness fade away,
Because that light on you has shone,
In which is perfect day."***

Yet even to the spiritual Church the text has not been fulfilled in its largest conceivable sense, for I fear that to the most spiritual some darkness comes. Their light is sown, but it has not yet sprung up to its full harvest—they still struggle with inward sin—they must still wrestle with outward temptations. At any rate, the days of their mourning are not, in the most unlimited sense, ended, for though faith lifts them above the cares of life and resignation takes out the sting of affliction, yet in common with the whole creation they groan, being burdened. It is true of the best of saints when they arrive in Heaven, that "they came out of great tribula-

tion.” God puts even His purest ones into the furnace and the branch that bears fruit He purges. Every son whom He receives He also chastens.

For the present our chastisement is not joyous, but grievous. “In the world you shall have tribulation,” is a part of the legacy of our ascended Lord, so that as yet, to the largest extent, we cannot say that the days of our mourning are ended. We must, therefore, refer the text to a *fourth* form of the Church. If we see it not at all in the *typical*, just a little in the *visible*, very much in the *spiritual*, we find it *all* in the *Church Triumphant*. The full triumph of the Church of Christ shall begin in the *millennium*. I am not about to enter into details, but it seems to me that there is to be on earth a new Jerusalem which shall come down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride for her husband, and there will be “a new Heaven and a new earth, in which dwells righteousness.”

Upon this earth where sin prevailed, righteousness will yet conquer! Where Christ bled, there shall He reign! Where His heel was bruised, shall the same heel crush the dragon’s head. That, however, will be as it were a prelude, a commencement to the full heavenly triumph. I shall, without making any distinction, refer the promise of the text in its fullness to the Church in its triumphant condition, whether on earth in the millennial period, or in Heaven, world without end. To her this Word shall be fulfilled, “Your sun shall no more go down, neither shall your moon withdraw itself: the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended.”

I. Our first point is—THE LIGHT OF THE TRIUMPHANT CHURCH SHALL BE INCESSANT. “Your sun shall no more go down, neither shall your moon withdraw itself.” There will be no intervening nights of darkness, but one long noonday of purity and felicity, “the days of your mourning shall be ended.” And why will this be? Why does Heaven’s joy never falter? Why is her purity never defiled? We answer, first, because *the light of Heaven is independent of creatures*. As long as there is a sun it will go down. And as long as there is a moon it will wane. But when the Lord becomes our light, our independence of the secondary agent will lift us up beyond the fear of change.

In this present state everything must change. God does not bestow upon creatures the quality of Immutability, for that belongs to Him, alone. The hardest rocks crumble beneath the tooth of time. Even the heavens are waxing old and must, one day, be put away like a worn-out vesture and as all that comes out of earth partakes of the soil from which it springs, all created joys wither and decay. From a sun which has its tropics we cannot expect a changeless light. From a moon which waxes and wanes, the light can never long be the same. When we shall rise *above* the creature and drink in our supplies directly from the changeless all-sufficiency of the Creator, we shall come into perfect, unbroken light! Such is the condition of the perfect saints above.

In Heaven the saints will need no teacher. When God sends a true preacher, he is a star in God’s right hand, and the Church is bound to value his light, which is the gift of Heaven. But we shall need no teachers

there—we shall see, not through a glass darkly—but face to face. God shines upon the Church through His servants one after another, and as they are removed in the order of Providence and close their useful careers, the Church suffers great loss. But up yonder there is only one Pastor and He never dies—“The Lamb in the midst of the Throne shall feed them and lead them unto living fountains of waters.” No teachers will be laid with tears in the silent grave, for in the glorified Church no man needs to say to his fellow, “Know the Lord,” for they all know Him from the least unto the greatest!

Up there they need no comforters to succor them in the time of their distress, for God, Himself, has wiped away all tears from their eyes. He has taken up Lazarus from among the dogs and the dunghills and laid him in Abraham’s bosom! He has lifted up the languishing from their beds of pain to sit among princes in Glory! Poor saints will not, then, be dependent upon the alms or the consolations of others, though once their generous friends were like sun and moon to them. They need not fear that their comforts shall depart, for the Lord God is their light! The saints are not dependent upon fleeting possessions, or decaying estates—*here* we must have sustenance from without and we are thankful to God that it comes in our time of need—but bread perishes, wealth takes to itself wings, business decays, prosperity wanes.

In Glory saints are independent of all created things! They neither look to angel, cherub, or seraph for support. They have left the streams, for they have reached the Fountainhead! The vessels are no more needed, for they lie down and drink at the Well, itself, where the crystal water of life bubbles up eternally! They do not send down to Egypt for corn, but dwell in their own Goshen where harvests never fail! They have come unto their God and what can we say more? O beloved Brothers and Sisters, this makes the joy of Heaven—that God Himself shines upon the blessed ones and they need no other light—He, Himself, is their All in All! With Him is fullness of joy! At His right hand are pleasures forevermore! Therefore is it that their sun shall no more go down, for they have no sun! And their moon shall not withdraw itself, for they have no moon! “The Lord God and the Lamb are the light thereof.”

Their light is incessant, secondly, because *it is cleared of all clouding elements*. There is much of consolation in this thought. Here, below, in the Church of God, whatever by God’s Grace may be our light, errors will arise to cloud it. Evil men come in unawares and distract God’s saints with false doctrines, schisms and heresies. There are none such up yonder! Skeptics assail us with doubts and suspicions—there are none up there! Hypocrites now steal in and pollute our solemn feasts, but no deceiver shall sit down in the banquets of the perfected! Formalists mix with us and freeze our devotion. Hosannas are made to languish because they fall from tongues unconscious of the glow of generous love. But it shall not be so among the Church Triumphant!

It will be no small blessing to the Church to be free from the contamination of the outside world and from the intrusion of false professors!

Their absence will deliver us from that light discourse which now vexes our ear and that inconsistency which grieves our heart. Yes, Satan, himself, shall be shut out! The camp of the saints he may *attempt* to attack, but over her ramparts he shall never leap! Those sacred walls, whose 12 foundations are inestimably precious stones, shall exclude forever the accuser of the Brethren, the fomenter of discord and sin. There the wicked cease from troubling and therefore nothing shall make our sun go down, or cause our moon to withdraw itself, and the purity, the peace, the bliss of Heaven shall be without cessation.

Remember, yet again, that in the Church Triumphant *the saints themselves shall be so purified* that nothing in them shall darken their light. Here today Christ changes not, but *we* change, and hence our joy departs. It is not that Divine Grace ceases to beam forth from the Sun of Righteousness—our eyes gather the scales of worldliness, so that we cannot see it. It shall not be so there. We shall be delivered from the last vestige of inbred sin! Corruption and every result of the Fall shall have been effectually removed. Among the saints whom God has privileged to see His face, no worldliness, no coldness of heart, no lethargy, no slothfulness ever intrudes. They are never burdened with heavy cares, nor depressed with the recollection of unforsaken sin. They neglect no duties, they commit no transgressions—they are without fault before the Throne of God—rendered as pure as God, Himself, by the blood of Christ and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.

Truly, as I speak about this I long to be among them! We cannot, as yet, see afar off, and the plains of Heaven are boundless. Therefore we shall need far-reaching sight before we can enjoy their beauties, but our inner sight is being strengthened, the films of sin are being removed and we shall, before long, have our eyes strengthened to look upon the invisible with unclenching gaze. When we enter the Church Triumphant, being ourselves without tendency to sin, there will be nothing in us to mar our purity or to spoil our joy! Anticipate this, Beloved, with great joy. Notice that the text hints that both the major and the minor necessities of saints will be abundantly supplied. Have you not found, sometimes, that the Lord Jesus Christ has withdrawn Himself from you? Then your *sun* has gone down.

You are prospering in business. God gives you all that heart can wish. The moon does not withdraw herself, but the sun has gone and woe beclouds your spirit. It will never be so in Heaven! You shall see your Lord face to face without a veil between—and that eternally! Here, on the other hand, at times Jesus has shone upon you and as to spiritual things you have been rich. But then earthly trouble has hovered over you—the *moon* has withdrawn herself. You have been suffering in body, though rejoicing in soul. The head has ached, though the heart has triumphed. You have feasted at the table of God, but poverty has swept your board till you knew not from where your next meal would come. Not often have both sun and moon been as flesh and blood would have them. True, you have been

able to do without the moon in the presence of the sun, but you would have both spiritual *and* temporal prosperity.

Now in Heaven all the needs of our nature will be completely supplied. The bodies of the saints will be as happy as their souls! Their bodies, I say, for I am referring to the risen ones who have attained to the full triumphs of which I speak. There shall be for spirit, soul and body, that trinity of our manhood, a triple and all-sufficient supply. Neither shall the sun go down nor the moon withdraw itself. Oh, what a happy thing to have a body which will not need to rise on the Sabbath weary with the week's toil needing to be dragged along the road to the place of worship and feeling inclined to sleep in the heavy atmosphere of the crowded assembly! What bliss to be "clothed upon" with a body unlike this load of clay, which far too forcibly reminds us that we dwell in a world of sin.

Soon we shall possess a body light and ethereal, strong and glorious, suitable for the soul and quick to obey its motions—a body free from every infirmity, delivered from every possibility of pain or weariness—a body in which we shall serve God day and night in His Temple and shall never, never sin! So, you see, Beloved, another reason why the sun of the blessed never goes down is because they, themselves, are in all respects filled with an inward and perfect light which is the perpetual reflection of the eternal light of Jehovah!

Once more, let it be remembered that *the Church Triumphant will be delivered from the vicissitudes of those seasons which cause the going down of sun and moon*. I do not refer to summer and winter, but to ecclesiastical and temporal arrangements, such as the Lord's Day and times of assembly and Church fellowship. This blessed Sabbath, how rejoiced we are when it comes round! But then towards eventide the Sunday hours grow few and many a time has the child of God gone up to his chamber and said, "Would God tomorrow were a second Sabbath." We have wished that instead of the weekdays, with their toil and care, we could step from Sunday to Sunday till we climbed into the Sabbath which will never end! It shall be so soon, in the land where—

***"Congregations never break up,
And Sabbaths have no end."***

Here we come together and are warmed into a hallowed state of mind and would gladly continue in the mount, but we must go down, for other duties call us away. But in Glory we shall, all day, charm the celestial plains with joyous song and never need to scatter or betake ourselves to an inferior calling. Blessed shall the day be when our Sunday sun shall no more go down! Here, too, we have our seasons for communion. We come together at the Table and, for my part, I am never happier than when I see before me the emblems of the Beloved's broken body and His blood poured out in infinite love for us. But we cannot always be there—we have to eat with publicans and sinners as well as with the Lord. We glowed in fellowship like the Master Himself on Tabor, until our garments seemed whiter than any fuller could make them—but we must go down among the ungodly, yet again, to seek their good. We shall not do that, by-and-by. We

shall eat bread at the table of the King and go no more out forever and forever!

It was a glad day for Israel when the trumpets rang out the morning of the Jubilee, for every slave was free and every debtor found his liabilities discharged. Back came each man's lost inheritance and the whole nation was glad. With sound of trumpet and of cornet they saluted the rising of the sun on the first day of that Jubilee year! But the Jubilee year went by and lands were mortgaged and forfeited. And slaves fell, again, into slavery. And bankrupts were again seized by their creditors. Ah, Beloved, we are coming to a Jubilee of which the trumpets shall sound on forever! We shall regain our once forfeited inheritance never to have it encumbered again! We shall snap the fetters which have bound us, never to feel them again. "If the Son makes you free, you shall be free, indeed."

Thus I have shown you that in Heaven they are free from that vicissitude of seasons which now afflicts the sons of men—and so their sun goes no down more, neither does their moon withdraw itself.

II. Let us change the run of our discourse. The light of the triumphant Church has been shown to be unceasing. Now we shall show that IT IS EVERLASTING. "The Lord shall be your everlasting light." This requires no comment. You can see at once why it is so. Why will the perfection and the bliss of the saints triumphant never end? First, because the *God from whom it comes is eternal*. We have explained that this bliss does not arise from the *creature*. If it did, it might end. But arising wholly from the Creator, how can it end? As long as God lives, His people must be happy. When He has perfected them and taken them up to be where He is, the fountain from which they drink cannot dry, for it is infinitely full and fresh. The sun which gives them light cannot be dimmed, for it is immutable.

Again, *the Covenant by which the saints stand in Heaven is a sure one*. There are in it solemn engagements entered into by the eternal God, never to turn away from His love. By two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, He has given us strong consolation. Every sin has been put away from the triumphant saint. What, then, can destroy them? For them Christ has discharged all their debts! What, then, can be brought against them? For them an eternal inheritance has been bought by Divine blood! How, then, by any possible means, can they lose it? God is forever true, He cannot forsake. God is forever strong, He cannot fail. God is forever loving, He cannot frown upon His people. The Lord must be their everlasting light!

Besides, *the guarantee of that Covenant can never fail*, seeing it is Christ Himself. "Because I live you shall live also" is the great seal set upon the indentures by which we hold our inheritance in the skies. And till we shall see a dying Christ, till He who has Immortality shall expire, till Christ, the Son of God, very God of very God, shall cease to be, it cannot, by any possibility, come to pass that one child of God shall lose his inheritance! The seal is Divine, the security is unquestionable. And, Brothers and Sisters, there is this to be added, that *those who possess*

Heaven are also, themselves, immortal. When we once enter the Church Triumphant there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, for the former things are passed away!

The body was sown in corruption, but it is raised in incorruption! It was liable to disease, death and corruption—the worm could devour it and the winds scatter its particles. But it shall be raised in perennial youth, free from any tendency to corruption or any liability to suffer. Oh, happy spirits who, in themselves, possess a life enduring as the life of God! The Lord shall be their everlasting light! I leave that point because it needs no enlargement. It rather needs to be thought upon and enjoyed.

III. I want your earnest attention and help, in the third place, while I mention that, according to the text, THE LIGHT OF THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT SHALL BE BOUNDLESS. “The Lord shall be your everlasting light.” Now, the Lord is Infinite. If He is our sun there can be no limit to the light in which we shall receive. But how am I to speak upon an infinite theme? I can only touch the surface of the brook as the swallow does, and then up and away! But I cannot dive into its depths. Only notice this, that if God is to be our light, then *in every separate Believer there will be a perfect light of bliss and holiness.* I mean in *you*, Beloved!

You are aged. You feel, also, that you are full of infirmities and sins. Now, these will all vanish and that weakened form of yours shall be raised in power! Your ignorance will give place to the light of knowledge, your sin to the light of purity, your sorrow to the light of joy! It does not yet appear what you shall be, but you shall be like your Lord and you know how bright and lustrous your Lord was when He was on Tabor—and how glorious when He rose from the dead. Such shall you be! You are already a child of God, but soon your glory shall shine forth and your purity, peace and happiness shall be seen by all. Yes, this is true of you, you who were sometime darkness, but now are light in the Lord—you shall be flooded with Glory! Like the bush in the desert you shall be aglow with Deity. Bush as you are, God Himself shall dwell within you and your brightness shall be as the sun.

In Glory, in addition to your possessing personal light, you will enjoy *the closest possible fellowship with God.* How near a creature can get to the Creator is hard to say, but the sons of God shall be brought as near to God as by any conceivable means a finite being can be brought to the Infinite. What delights there will be in such close fellowship! When we have drawn near to God in prayer we have been so happy we could scarcely have been more so—but what must it be to dwell forever in the Divine Glory! Men of God have sometimes felt more of joy in His Presence than their bodies could bear, and have cried, “Stop, Lord, stop! I cannot bear any more! Remember, I am only an earthen vessel, and if I have more of this I shall die.”

Solomon sings of heavenly love-sickness in the song, “Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love.” The love of Jesus overpowers our souls and casts them into a swoon of delight. We shall be more capable of its enjoyment soon. You cannot bear more than a sip of

Heaven now, but you will swim in it by-and-by! When you only get one flash of Heaven's sunlight, you cover your eyes because of the excessive Glory. But you will soon live in the blaze of it, like Milton's angel in the sun! Among the everlasting burnings of Jehovah's splendor you will walk with undimmed eyes. Can you conceive what it means? Your mind will be enlarged, expanded, made capable of loftier thoughts than now. You will be a grander being—a man, but such a man as the Man Jesus Christ is! Even this day your manhood in Him has dominion over all the works of God's hands, all sheep and oxen, yes, and the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea and whatever passes through the paths of the sea. But then you will more clearly realize the royalty of manhood—you shall be a king to the fullest degree, a king unto God!

That glorious light will give us *the clearest views of Gospel Truth*. There will be no muddled theology in Heaven, nor any doctrine concealed from us, for we shall know even as we are known. With the Lord for our light we shall see far and deep. Mysteries which perplex us now shall be simplicities then! How I long to know more of the Covenant of Grace. How I long to drink into the grand doctrine of electing love. How would I peer into the mystery of the Trinity and know something more of the Three in One. Secrets will open up when Jesus applies the key. I suppose that he who has been in Heaven but a day knows more of God than he who has been a Doctor of Divinity for 50 years—the light is so clear in Heaven that we shall know even as we are known. Would God we were there!

There, no doubt, *we shall also understand more of Providence*. Here our sun goes down, sometimes, as to the Divine dealings. We cannot make out what He means. The lines are dark and bending. We thought He would have led us by a straight course, but we wind to and fro in the wilderness. You shall see it all soon, Brothers and Sisters, for what you know not now, you shall know hereafter. All the happiness which knowledge and understanding can bring to intelligent beings shall be at our feet. There *we shall receive the utmost endurable joy*. Think of that bliss in the shape which you like best, for you shall have it! Some have thought the joy of Heaven would lie in knowledge—they shall have it! Others have rejoiced in the prospect of continued service—they shall have it! They shall serve Him day and night in His Temple.

I know not if I am idle, but the sweetest thought of Heaven to me is rest, and I shall have it, for "there remains, therefore, a rest for the people of God." Peace! O quiet Soul, do you not long for it? You shall have it! Security and a sense of calm! O, tempest-tossed One, you shall have them! Some have wished for strength and power. You shall be raised in power! Fullness, the filling up of every vacuum! You shall have it—you shall be filled with all the fullness of God! I am a long way out of my depth, now, but I am not afraid of sinking! I shall never exaggerate—the joys of Heaven are ecstatic, so that if we knew anything of them at this moment we should be like Paul, who said—"Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell, God knows."

Ecstatic—that is standing right out of yourself! That will be your condition—you will get away from yourself altogether and be “plunged in the Godhead’s deepest sea and lost in His immensity.” It will be a rapture, as it were, a snatching away of yourself. Like the chariots of Amminadib, shall be the joys into which you shall be lifted up and borne away! We shall know all about it before long, some of us, so that there is not much need to attempt a premature description. When the Lord is the light, who knows how bright the light must be? When the Lamb is the light, who knows how soft that light will be? And when the Lord is the Lamb and the Lamb is the Lord, and the Lord and the Lamb are at once the light, who knows how sweet, how everything that is lovely, that eternal light must be? Break on us, break on us, O Infinite splendor, for our hearts would have this cloudland to be up and away, where sacred, high, eternal noon makes up the livelong day!

But patience, my Brothers and Sisters, patience, for a little longer time! We must wait till our work is done and then shall we receive the full reward. Let us be encouraged by the prospect of the Glory to be revealed in us.

IV. My last point is to be this—THE LIGHT OF THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT IS UNMINGLED, for the text says, “The days of your mourning shall be ended.” Sit down a few minutes and drink down this blessed sentence. “The days of your mourning shall be ended.” What sort of mourning? *The mourning from a persecuted world.* No slander, no imprisonment, no racks, no breaking alive upon the wheel, no consuming amid the flames. What must Heaven be to those who ascended through a shower of stones, or were borne aloft by the fiery chariot, as the martyrs from Smithfield’s burning stakes? No more of suffering there! The mourning days of the martyred Church shall be ended.

There will be no more mourning from *the common trials of life.* No losses, no crosses, no bodily pains, no infirmities of old age, no bereavements, no child taken from the bosom, no husband from the side, no funeral knell, no cruel grave. Let the Lord be praised that not a wave of trouble disturbs yon glassy sea! Then shall we be delivered from all mourning caused by *our inward sin.* We shall look within and find no envy in our hearts, no pride, no rebellion, no lust, no tendency to evil. Then we shall be delivered from all temptation to sin from without. No devil, no insinuating doubts, no corroding cares, no wicked world, no pomp of the eyes, no pride of life, no woes of penury, nor perils of wealth—we shall be delivered from all these!

We shall be delivered from every kind of mourning as to *an absent God,* for we shall never grieve Him again, nor vex His Spirit, nor cause Him to take down the chastening rod. “The days of your mourning shall be ended.” I find that one version reads it, I know not whether correctly or not, “The days of your mourning shall be *recompensed,*” and I say this to those who have to mourn more than others, you *shall* have a recompense. Every pang you suffer shall have its reward. “But how can that be?” you ask. Why, dear mourning Ones, when you get to Heaven you will see that

you were fulfilling the Divine purposes as much upon the sick bed as you would have been in the activities of life! You do not understand it now, but you shall then know that the Lord did not grieve you for nothing—and when you see the great results arising from your suffering—you will bless Him and kiss the pierced feet of Christ and thank Him for the great privilege of being permitted to suffer.

If you are called to suffer as a Christian, you will then see how you “made up that which was behind of the sufferings of Christ, for His body’s sake, that is the Church,” for the whole body of Christ must suffer, not the Head only, but all the members. And you, in taking a part, help to make up the measure which must be endured by the entire company of the faithful. You will also see how the Spirit of God sanctified your sufferings to you, how they prevented sin, how they led you into a deeper experience, how they prepared you for higher service. And oh, among the sweet notes of praise which you will render to the All-loving Father, this will be one of the sweetest! You will bless Him for every pain, for every groan, for every sickness—and the days of your mourning will be recompensed!

Beloved, what a change this will be for some here present who have, perhaps, very seldom known a day free from depression of spirit or pain of body—to step right away from all this into everlasting, unalloyed delight! Some of us are easily cast down and we know what it is to grow brain-weary. There, day without night, we shall praise and bless God and tell the angels of the Infinite Wisdom of God in Christ Jesus! All this ought to inspire the saints with ardor—this glorious hope should quicken us! We are not far from Home. Pilgrims of God, you are getting weary, perhaps, you especially who are advanced in years. Now, at this time, the Spirit of God has brought you to the top of a hill from which you can see your expected end.

There it lies! Can you see its hills, its valleys covered with milk and honey, and the vine and fig tree under which you shall sit down and none shall make you afraid? It is a little way further, only a little further. You will be helped all the rest of the road as you have been up till now. Those shoes of iron and brass are not worn out, though you have worn them these 50 years. They will last you the few odd miles which you have yet to travel and though you think it a long way, it is not so. Just out of sight, beyond that hill, there stand horses of fire, and chariots of fire which your heavenly Father has sent to bear you away! And before you know it you will be in Christ’s arms, fainting away with Glory! Before you know it, I say, Death will be but a pin’s prick—

***“One gentle sigh, your fetter breaks,
We scarce can say you’re gone,
Before your ransomed spirit takes
Its mansion near the Throne!”***

And the days of your mourning shall be ended!

Great fear should fall upon some in this house that they may never behold this light. I fear, Sirs, that some of you will never attain that blissful Glory. I will ask you three questions and have done. Are you satisfied with

earthly things? Are you content with a sun that must go down and with a moon that must withdraw itself? Are you saying, “Who will show *us* any good?” Ah, Sirs, your boasting is evil, for it will soon pass away—and what will you do in the day when money cannot help you, broad acres cannot bless you, friends cannot cheer you and you must take the last dread voyage all alone? Woe, woe unto you if you have not a better sun than yonder feeble orb, a better moon than yon waning satellite!

I will ask you further, have you light from Heaven, yet? Is there any light from God within you? Remember, you cannot enjoy the light of God forever if you do not behold it now. Have you thought of that? Alas, God has not been in all your thoughts! How many live in this world with no more thought of God than dogs and horses have! He is no Friend of theirs! They never seek His face! They never do Him honor! If He is their Father, certainly they are strange children, for they never speak with their Father, nor care about Him! Ah, Sirs, you need on earth the light from above, or you will never have it in eternity.

Lastly, are you willing to have light from above? Are you willing to receive it? Do you desire it? Will you give up the light of self and self-complacency and self-reliance? Will you trust in Jesus? Will you take the Lamb who is the light of Heaven, the bleeding Lamb, to be the light and comfort of your souls? Will you see your sin laid on the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world and trust Him as suffering in your place, to make expiation for your guilt? For, if so, the Lamb will give you pardon *now* and perfection *hereafter!* He will be to you the Star of Bethlehem today and the Sun of Righteousness forever!

God bless you, Brothers and Sisters. May we all meet in that land of light. I am speaking to some who will be there before me, though I shall be there before some of you—if there is a possibility of finding one another out we will do so—and we will remember the happy summer’s morning in which we talked together of the light that can never fade! And we will say to one another, “The half was not told us. The poor preacher was but as an owl trying to describe the sun! It was too bright for him, but he did his best.” God bless you. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 60.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—174, 309, 871.**

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THE CLOUD OF DOVES

NO. 2764

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 12, 1879.

*“Who are these who fly as a cloud, and like doves to their roosts?”
Isaiah 60:8.*

WE believe that, in the latter days, according to the Word of God, men will flock to Christ and to His Church in far greater numbers than they have ever done. At present, we have to go to them, but, by-and-by, they will come to us. Now we have to search them out, like lost sheep in a cloudy and dark day, but, in those days, they will feel a gracious drawing towards their God and His Church—and they will come in vast multitudes to worship with the people of God—yes, they will themselves become the people of God and bow down before the feet of Emmanuel, the Prince of peace! Why should it not be? Why should we not expect it and why should not the expectation greatly encourage us in laboring on through these weary years, being well assured that they that sow in tears shall one day reap in joy?

Yet, even at that time when, through the full preaching of the Gospel and the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, men shall come flocking to Christ in troops, even in that hour the Church will be astonished at the result! She will lift up her hands, and say, “Who has begotten me these?” She will cry, in the words of our text, “Who are these who fly as a cloud, and like doves to their roosts?” For, alas, God’s people are often very unbelieving. We have seen something of this spirit even in our own time. There are certain good old Christian people who, if they see a convert added to the Church, now and then, are pleased and satisfied. But if there should be a score added in a month—if there were to be a hundred—they would hold up their hands and say, “This cannot be the work of God! There are too many, it is all excitement!” And they would take counsel together and try to stop it. “Surely,” they say, “it cannot be the work of God because it is so great.”

Now my argument is that if we are to judge a work by its size, I should say that a little work was not the work of God. My method of reasoning would be this—the greater the work, the more likely is it to be of God. I do not insist upon that always being the case because God is in the least conversion—if there is but one, as much as in the conversion of thousands—but still, if a Brother begins to throw discredit upon a work in any place because large numbers are converted, I am ready to meet him

and to prove that he is wrong! Pentecost was not the conversion of some one old woman in a chimney corner through reading a sermon—Pentecost was not the bringing in of one dear child of a deacon, one who had been in the Sunday school all his life—but Pentecost was the conversion, then and there, of three thousand sinners of every sort, through the preaching of the Word of the Lord! And I expect that where God is especially manifested, and where He gives His Churches, Pentecosts, we shall have thousands born in a day, multitudes flocking to Christ as the doves to their roosts!

Let us begin to enlarge our expectations. Already, in this house, we have had the prophecy fulfilled on a small scale. See how, these many years, the multitudes have pressed and thronged to listen to the Gospel! What other attractions have we had? We have not even that wonderful box of music with which men praise God with wind—we have nothing but the most plain possible singing. I am certain that the crowds do not come to hear that and, as for the preaching, I have purposely laid aside all the graces of oratory that I might have had—and tried to make my message as plain and simple as possible. One good man, who is going away from us, said to me, this morning, “I shall miss the plain preaching to which I have been accustomed. No doubt there are some rich people who would like to have it put very finely, but, you see,” he said, “I have no education and I am glad you have preached so that I could understand you, because the other people can do the same if they like.” Yes, and they must, too, if they come here, for I will never get away from the simple preaching of Jesus Christ, as plain as I can make it! My one work is just to talk of Jesus Christ and of His blessed Gospel, as plainly as I can. And is there anything like it, in all the world, to draw the multitudes, to hold the multitudes, to impress the multitudes? Yes, and to lead them to fly, like doves, to Jesus’ wounds to find salvation there?

Now, coming to our text, I think that the passage refers, first of all, to the Israelite who sees multitudes coming to Jerusalem to worship the one living and true God. He stands on the top of Carmel and he looks across the Mediterranean and he sees the ships of Tarshish coming in such great numbers across the sea, scudding along before the wind, that he says, “Who are these who fly as a cloud?” Seen from a distance, the great fleet of vessels seem like a cloud, and as they come nearer, those long triangular sails which we who have been along the coast of the Mediterranean remember so well, suggest to him the second figure, “Who are these that are flying like doves to their roosts?” It was the promise being fulfilled, “the ships of Tarshish first”—the men from the far-off lands hurrying up that they might worship with the multitude that kept holy day in the sacred city!

Now we may leave both these figures and use the text as the exclamation of the Church of God when she expresses her wonderment at what God is doing in the conversion of sinners—“Who are these who fly as a cloud, and like doves to their roosts?”

I. First, WHO ARE THEY THAT THEY SHOULD BE SO MANY—that they should “fly as a cloud,” like doves in flocks?

The answer to that enquiry is another question—Why should they not be many? *There are a great many sinners in the world*—why should not a great number be converted? When many souls are brought to Christ, they are only relatively many. Usually, alas, they are relatively small! We have sometimes rejoiced greatly when we have had as many as a hundred added to this Church in a month, yet I have gone away and said to myself—“What is that hundred, after all? It is not sufficient to keep pace with the increase of the population.” It makes us very sad to know that the increase of sinners far exceeds the increase of the converts to God. At present, they do not “fly as a cloud.” They come in scores, perhaps, and we are thankful for that, but they do not come as a cloud, and like a flock of doves flying to their roosts! But why should they not do so one of these days? Why should they not do so very soon? If the Gospel is but faithfully preached, and the power of prayer is fairly and fully tried, and the Spirit of God is working mightily through the Gospel, why should they not come like a cloud?

There are plenty of them all over the world. Look at the millions all around us in this nation-city—scarcely to be called a *city*—for it is a very world for multitude! Think of the millions of inhabitants in the British islands who still remain unconverted. There is no fear of our nets being drawn to shore empty because there are no fish! We may be bad fishermen, but there are plenty of fish. When we fire in among the birds, the coveys are large enough. There is no reason, except bad marksmanship, why we should not hit some among them, for there are plenty of them! When I hear of a minister fearing that his congregation will suffer because another chapel is brought near his, I feel ashamed of him! Go and build a whole street of chapels, if you like! If the Gospel of Jesus Christ is faithfully preached there, you will fill them! If it is not, you will not. You need not fear however many preachers come near you in such a city as this, so swarming with people as it is. And why should they not be converted in swarms, as there are so many of them? Why should they not “fly as the doves to their roosts”?

Has not Christ brought into the world a great redemption? When I see Him dying upon yonder Cross, I cannot sit down and watch His amazing sufferings and then think that He died only for a few and that, as the result of the travail of His soul, there will be just a few very respectable people redeemed with His precious blood! If you can believe it, you must—but I cannot. I claim for Christ a great reward! I expect that His Father will so abundantly reward Him that when He makes Him to see of the travail of His soul, and to be satisfied, it will be with unnumbered and innumerable millions of redeemed men, women and children who shall look unto Him and live! Up till now the passion of Christ has only been very partially rewarded. The Cross has not, as yet, brought forth its full crop of blessed fruit. Jesus—that precious “grain of wheat” that was cast into the ground to die, and so to bring forth fruit—has not yet yielded the wondrous harvest which shall surely come of that marvelous seed-sowing!

O Beloved, by the blood that fell upon the sterile earth and made it fruitful, look for great sheaves and abundant harvests and begin to already sing the harvest home song in anticipation of that great ingathering! Yes, Christ's converts must "fly as a cloud, and like doves to their roosts," for He has bought, with His precious blood, a multitude that no man can number! They must come in great multitudes because He has attractions which they cannot resist. Let Him but be made known to them and they must come to Him! Well has it been said—

***"His worth if all the nations knew,
Surely the whole world would love Him, too."***

"But they are blind," says one. I know they are, but cannot He open their eyes? "They are deaf," says another. That also is true, but cannot He unstop their ears? "But their hearts are hard," says a third. Yes, so they are, but cannot He soften them, or take them away and give them hearts of flesh? Oh, with such a Christ as ours, I must believe that sinners must come to Him in vast crowds! He must have the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. God always works according to scale—He never made a great cause to produce a little result—and when He Himself becomes Incarnate—when He Himself bleeds and dies—when He gives Himself up as a Sacrifice for sin, I must expect that men will come to Him "as a cloud, and like doves to their roosts."

And why should they not come in crowds when *the Spirit of God is quite able to lead them to come*? That same Holy Spirit who converts one, can just as easily convert a hundred! The Gospel, applied by the Spirit of God to a dozen souls, can manifestly convert a thousand, or a million! Spiritual force is like fire—give me but one spark and I can set a city all ablaze! One little lamp, overturned by a cow, caused Chicago to be swept away in flames. One match could cause a prairie conflagration of almost immeasurable extent. There is, practically, no limit to fire, and there is absolutely no limit to the power of the Spirit of God. He has but to work, and the same Truth of God which converted one soul, today, can convert ten thousand or ten millions tomorrow! Why, then, should He not make them willing in the day of His power, so that they should "fly as a cloud, and like doves to their roosts"?

Once more, let us remember, *that Heaven is very great and the preparations which Grace has made are very large*. That is a most gracious sentence in Christ's parable of the great supper, "Yet there is room." If we could enter Heaven, at this moment, I guarantee you that we would not hear the angels or the redeemed from among men talking of the place being overcrowded! If we went down its shining streets, we would see many mansions furnished and prepared, and the destined inhabitants must occupy them. There is many a sacred joy laid up in store and those for whom it is intended must have it. Heaven is not a place prepared in vain, which will, at last, prove to be a failure! You may build a city, but you cannot fill it with inhabitants at your own pleasure. I saw, in the South of France, part of a city with street after street of well-built houses—with fountains and a cathedral—but the streets were green with grass, the

fountains were full of filth and the houses were inhabited by the poorest of the poor, or else were standing empty! But Heaven, at the last, shall not be like that. Oh, no! The wedding shall be furnished with guests. At the great King's banqueting table, there will not be one empty seat! No David will be missing in that day! The Lord shall gather in all His elect from the East, and from the West, and from the North, and from the South—and they shall “fly as a cloud, and like doves to their roosts.”

II. Now, secondly, WHO ARE THEY THAT THEY SHOULD FLY?

As the light cloud before the breath of the tempest, so they come to Christ. As the doves fly with swift wings, to their roosts, so do they speed to the Savior—but why do they come to Him in such a hurry? These new converts are not to be kept back! Old saints preach patience to them, but they will have none of it. They tell them to wait a while, but they feel that they cannot wait—so they “fly as a cloud and like doves to their roosts.” Why do they fly?

The first answer is they fly to Christ *because they are driven and cannot help flying to Him*. When the Spirit of God lays hold upon a man—and like the wind, He blows where He wishes—I guarantee you that that man must fly to Jesus! He can hold out no longer. He must repent, he must believe, he must have Christ and he must have Him now! Look, there he is, on his knees! He cries to God for mercy and he adds many tears to his earnest entreaties. He cannot wait for the blessing and he will take no denial! He cries, “Give me Christ, or else I die!” And well he may, for the blessed Spirit, like a strong North wind, is blowing behind him and making him to be one of those who fly like a cloud!

Why do they fly? They may well fly *because they are in danger*. Do you wonder that a man is in a hurry to escape when he sees the gulf of Hell yawning before him? These sinners who are in such haste to fly to Christ are like doves pursued by a hawk. Satan is after them! Sin is pursuing them! Death is drawing near them and Hell is close at their heels—so they are rightly alarmed and distressed. Do not tell me about seeking Christ calmly and quietly—you cannot do it if once your conscience is thoroughly aroused! If you realize that sin is upon you, that God condemns you because of your sin and that, by-and-by, you may be where hope and mercy can never come to you—

***“In flames that no abatement knows,
Though briny tears forever flow”—***

why, you must fly! That is not the time for roosting or resting! You must fly like a dove to its dovecot when you have a true sense of the danger in which you are placed through your sin!

Besides that, *these flying sinners have strong desires within them*. The dove flies to her dovecot because she wants to be there and she will not be happy until she gets there. I sometimes see a man throw a pigeon up into the air, that it may find its way home. It usually wheels about for a little while, as though it were uncertain which direction it should take. But, presently, its quick eye catches sight of some familiar landmark, or by instinct it knows which is its way home and then, away it goes! There is no turning to the right, or to the left, but, straight as an arrow shot

from a bow, it flies towards its roost! So is it with a soul that the Spirit of God has once quickened! It longs for Christ, it pines for Christ. It may hesitate and look about to find the way it is to go to find Him, but, at last, it says within itself, "There He is," and away it goes, like the doves to their roosts! Do you wonder that it does so when the sacred instinct, the holy desire, is so strong within it?

Why do they fly? Well, they may well fly *because they have such a short time in which to reach the Savior*. I cannot tell—for I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet—but I may be addressing someone who will never see the sun rise again. There may be an unsaved soul in this place who must be saved before 12 o'clock shall come round, or that soul will be lost forever. We have had deaths, before now, while the service was proceeding in this Tabernacle—and such a thing may happen again—and strike us with sudden sorrow as well as with deep solemnity. But, in any case, mortal man has but a short time to live and some—we know not to which among us this may relate—have a very, very short time to live. The Rabbi's answer to a foolish question was a wise one. When he was asked, "How many days before he dies should a man repent?" He replied, "One day before he dies and, as he may die today, or tomorrow, he had better repent at once." So, as we sang, a little while ago—

***"Come, guilty souls, and flee away
Like doves to Jesus' wounds"—***

using all possible haste—because the day is far spent and the night is at hand in which you will not be able to find your way to the shelter of perishing sinners which is now available for you!

III. A third question is—WHY DO THEY FLY AS DOVES—that is, all together—in a covey—in a flock, so that they look like a moving cloud?

Well, the first reason is, *because they are all in one common danger* and, usually, when persons are in that condition, they give up their bickering against one another and join heartily together! Each one, as he becomes anxious for himself, also feels a similar anxiety for his fellows, so they band themselves together and "fly as a cloud, and like doves to their roosts." Souls convinced of sin have no time or inclination to quarrel! When a man feels that he must "flee from the wrath to come," he does not notice that someone else is not respectful to him. No, he thinks of himself as a lost sinner—and lost sinners must not be so foolish as to stand upon their dignity, nor even to insist upon their rights and privileges! At such times they are willing to stand in the aisle, or to be crowded up in a corner anywhere, so long as they can but hear the Gospel—and they will bear anything from their fellow men if they may but find Christ! It is wonderful what communion of spirit springs up among them.

One, who has himself been under conviction, has seen another weeping on account of sin and has said, "Well, if I do not find Christ, myself, I hope that young man will do so. If I am never to be saved, I do hope that poor woman, whom I saw in such an agony of spirit, may soon find joy and peace in believing." And, sometimes, when they hardly dare to pray

for themselves, they will pray for one another! And when they scarcely have any hope for themselves, they will entertain very kind desires concerning those who have sat next to them, who have been under impression. They are too much taken up with the solemnities of their condition before God to have time or wish for contention and, therefore, they do not quarrel and fight, as a number of hawks might do, but they fly together in one band, as a company of doves might be expected to do.

Besides that, they fly together, *because they are seeking one common Refuge*. They seem to say to one another, "Are you seeking the Savior? So am I. Are you anxious to get rid of sin? So am I! Are you desirous to be washed in the precious blood of Jesus? So am I. Do you want the Spirit of God to renew you? So do I." So, in these various points, they are so closely bound together that they fly as a cloud! Besides, the Holy Spirit has already changed their nature to such an extent that they are all seeking that which is holy. Once they were like the hawk, the bird of prey—they were of an angry spirit and they strived with one another. But penitence imparts to those who possess a dove-like character. When sin is being mourned over, pride lies low. When transgression and iniquity stare a man in the face and humble him, he becomes gentle, tender and patient. He mourns like a dove without its mate and he seeks the Savior in the hope that, finding Him, he will also find peace and comfort of heart.

For all these reasons, convinced sinners, when God is dealing with them, get close together and they "fly as a cloud, and like doves to their roosts." I would like again to see such a cloud of them here as we have sometimes seen. When I came back from my holiday two years ago, and met the 150, or thereabouts, who had sought and found the Savior during the special services, it was a pleasant thing to listen to their hearty singing and to hear them talk in their own simple, earnest style of the way in which Christ had met with them! It was indeed cheering to my heart to see these doves thus flying as a cloud! Oh, for another such flight! May the Lord send it to us speedily! Let us believingly pray for it—then shall we have it—for He is sure to grant us the desire of our hearts.

IV. There is only one other question which I will try to answer. Let me remind you that we have already had these three enquiries—Who are these converts that they should be so many as to fly as a cloud? Who are they that they should fly so fast, like a flock of pigeons or doves, hurrying to their dovecots? Who are they that they should fly together, so as to make one cloud, one flock of doves? Now, lastly, let us ask—WHO ARE THEY THAT THEY SHOULD FLY THIS WAY? I mean, what makes them fly to Christ? What makes them fly to His Church? I can understand that when they are in danger, they should fly, but why do they fly this way? The answer is because it is the dovecot of souls! Christ Jesus is the Owner of this dovecot—no, more than that—He Himself is the Dovecot!

So, first, like a flock of doves they fly this way *because they are seeking safety* and there is no safety for them except in the Lord Jesus Christ. What is the safety that is in Him? It is this. It is inevitable that God must punish sin, but He sent His Son into the world and laid on Him the

iniquity of all who will ever believe on Him. He punished Christ instead of them and, therefore, He cannot and will not punish them, for, to punish the same offense twice would not be justice! To exact the penalty of sin first at the hand of the Divine Surety and Substitute, and then to exact it again at the sinner's hand, would not be right—and the Judge of all the earth will always do right. So, because God has exacted, at the hand of His dear Son, the ransom price for our iniquity, therefore all for whom Christ died are forever clear of all liability—and if you believe on Him, you have the mark of those for whom He died! If you trust Him, you have positive proof that you are one of His! If you rely upon the merit of His blood and righteousness, that is clear evidence that He gave His life as a ransom for you and you can never be sent to Hell! You cannot be punished for your sin, for Christ has borne the punishment of it. Your guilt was laid on Him and all your sin is gone forever—it cannot be brought against you, period! This is the comfort of all Believers and, therefore, these people come flying to Christ to get this safety. Like doves, they fly to the dovecot that they may be in safety there.

But they need more than safety. They also *need rest and a dovecot is a place of rest to a dove*. I went, some time ago, into one of those old dovecots which used to belong, by a sort of right, to large estates. A man must have a considerable amount of property before he was allowed to possess a dovecot. With my guide, I entered a square building and I saw that up the four walls, which were very lofty, there were almost innumerable places made for the pigeons—and they all seemed to be full. We could not stay very many minutes in the place, but we could see tiers upon tiers of nests of pigeons, all occupied by the softly-cooing birds. That is just what is meant here. When the doves are pursued by the hawk, they fly to the dovecot and there they find both safety and rest. It is their home—there, they enjoy themselves to the fullest. And oh, what a sweet rest we have in our Divine Dovecote, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! We are so protected and preserved in Him that we rest in perfect security!

Jesus Christ is the “home, sweet home” of His people. We find ourselves completely at home when once we get to Him. Wherever we wander, there is no place like this home. A swallow has two homes—one here, in the summer—and another in the sunny South, in the winter. I bade the swallows. “Good-bye,” a week or two ago, but I daresay that I shall soon see some of them again in their other home. But a dove has only one home. Winter or summer she lives in the same dovecot. So is it with a Believer—he has only one home and that is His Master's bosom! He loves Jesus, He rests in Jesus and Jesus is, therefore, the home of his spirit.

Now, in closing my discourse, shall I tell you why some of you love to come to Christ's House as well as to Christ Himself? I think, first, that you like to come where God's people assemble *because your food is there*. It must be one main part of the business of the minister, on the Sabbath, to feed his people. And if he does that, they will be sure to flock around him. Did you ever stand in the square of St. Mark at Venice, as the clock

struck two? If you have ever done so, you have seen the pigeons come flying down in such flocks that they cover all the ground! You may even walk among them and they will not mind you. Somebody always feeds them at two o'clock and they know it—and they come then because they are fed. I will be bound to say that if I were to employ a musician to go there tomorrow at two o'clock, and to play on a flute to them, but to give them no barley, they would not come! And if he were to go there dressed in the particular robes adapted to St. Monday, or whatever "saint's day" it is tomorrow, the pigeons would not come if his hands were empty—but if he gives them barley, they will come, however he is dressed, and whatever music he may play! And we love to come to the House of God because, like doves, we have appetites and we like to be fed! And if the finest of the wheat is scattered in the form of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we are sure to be there, to eat and to be satisfied.

We love to be there, next, *because our companions are there*. The doves fly to their roosts because there are other doves there that they love. And we sing with Dr. Watts—

***"My soul shall pray for Zion still,
While life or breath remains.
There my best friends, my kindred dwell,
There God my Savior reigns."***

In the midst of the Lord's people we have formed associations that will outlast all the ties of blood, for, in that land where they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, ties formed here will endure forever there. Fathers in Christ will still be fathers there. Mothers in Israel will continue to be mothers there. Friends in Christ will be friends forever there. If the Gospel had done nothing else for some of us but introduce us to dear friends to whom we are knit for eternity, it would have been an everlasting blessing to us! We fly, like doves to our roosts, because there are other doves there and we wish to be with them.

Some of us fly there *because our young are there*. No dove flies so swiftly home as that mother dove that has young ones awaiting her return. And there is, I think, no man who loves the Church of God better than he does who has young children in it. Remember how the Psalmist wrote, "Yes, the sparrow has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even among Your altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God." Blessed be His holy name, He is my father's God! He was my grandfather's God! He was my great-grandfather's God! He was the God of all my ancestors as long as we have any record of them and I am glad to say that He is the God of my sons, too! So I must love Him and rejoice in Him. Fathers and mothers, I hope you will all have this tie to the Church of God, for it is a very tender one and, also, a very strong one. May you come to love the Church of God because your children are there!

Last of all, we fly to Christ and to His Church *because our All is there*. Mr. John Wesley used to sing—

***"No foot of land do I possess,
No cottage in this wilderness"—***

and he had not any—when the good man came to die, all the wealth he had in the world was less than £10. When he was asked how he would dispose of his plate, he said that he had only two silver spoons, one at York, and one in London, for everything else had gone into the great cause of his Master! And we best prove that we love Christ when everything we have is given up to Him and all our wealth, all our strength, all our joy and everything else is found in Him, so that Christ is All, and in all! When He is all to you, you will fly to Him as a dove flies to its roost. God help you all to do so, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 60.**

This is a chapter full of good news, a prophecy of the bright days that are yet to come to this dark world. These dull days are not to last forever. The reign of wickedness will come to an end and earth shall have the bright sunlight of Jehovah's Presence. The words are addressed to the Church of God—it little matters whether to the Jewish or the Gentile Church for, now, they are all one in Christ and there is no distinction in the message to both Jews and Gentiles.

Verses 1, 2. *Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the Glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon you, and His Glory shall be seen upon you.* We have had abundant proof of the darkness and of the grossness of that darkness, for these many centuries. Now we are to look—and I trust that we can already see it in part—for the arising of the Sun of Righteousness, first upon the Church, and then upon the whole world!

3, 4. *And the Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes roundabout and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to you: your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side.* Or, rather, “shall be carried as by a nurse upon her side.” The strong ones—the sons—shall come walking. The weaker ones—the daughters—shall be carried like children who need to be nursed, but they shall all come. Today, the Church of Christ has to go. The message to Christ's disciples still is, “Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.” The Church must send her heralds far and wide to tell the good news, but a blessed change will be worked when the nations will come to hear the story, flocking in crowds to listen to it, and Christ will be sought by those who never sought Him before—

**“O long-expected day, begin!
Dawn on these realms of woe and sin!”**

5. *Then you shall see, and be radiant, and your heart shall fear, and be enlarged.* First, the blessing shall seem too great to be real, and the Church shall tremble with fear. But, afterwards, she shall believe in it, and rejoice in it, and so her heart shall be enlarged.

5. *Because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto you*—The sailors shall come to Christ in great numbers! And when they are converted, they will be the best of missionaries. Each boat shall be a floating Bethel and every port at which they touch shall be the gladder for the good news they will have to tell—“The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto you.”

5. *The forces of the Gentiles shall come unto you.* The soldiers, as well as the sailors, shall enter the service of the King of kings! Oh, what a happy day it will be when every soldier shall have enlisted beneath the banner of peace! Then they will be able to fight the good fight of faith every day and to be the means of saving multitudes of precious souls. According to this verse, great importance is attached to the conversion of sailors and soldiers—God grant that some of us may live to see this prophecy fulfilled!

6. *The multitude of camels shall cover you, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah.* Wealthy nations of the Oriental type, who ride upon camels and dromedaries, and who have long been under the sway of the false prophet, Mohammed, shall yield allegiance to the Son of God.

6, 7. *All they from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and incense and they shall show forth the praises of the LORD. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto you, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto you: they shall come up with acceptance on My altar, and I will glorify the house of My Glory.* Pastoral people—travelers from place to place in the wilderness—shall come to Christ. There shall be no untamed nation, no barbarous people that shall continue to oppose the coming of that glorious Kingdom of the blessed God in those happy, happy days! As for the Church, she shall be so astonished that she shall cry out—

8. *Who are these who fly as a cloud, and like doves to their roosts? Or, “to their cotes.”*

9. *Surely the isles shall wait for Me, and the ships of Tarshish first.* Tarshish was some country far away from Palestine. It is difficult to say exactly where it was, but the Phoenicians made their most distant voyages there. It may have been this very island in which we live—and we know that they came here for tin. It is a very remarkable thing that islanders have usually been the first people to be converted to Christ. If you will, at this moment, think of any places where true religion is strong and dominant, you will naturally think of islands. Then, the mention of ships shows what regard God has for sailors when He says, “The ships of Tarshish first.”

9, 10. *To bring your sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD your God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He has glorified you. And the sons of strangers shall build up your walls.* And it is so today. Some, who were total strangers to God and to His Grace, have now become the most earnest ministers of Christ—“The sons of strangers shall build up your walls.”

10, 11. *And their kings shall minister unto you, for in My wrath I smote you, but in My favor have I had mercy on you. Therefore your gates shall*

be open continually. No alarms of war will cause them, then, to shut the iron gates.

11. *They shall not be shut day nor night.* There shall be free access to Zion, to the Church, and to Christ, Himself, at all times.

11-17. *That men may bring unto you the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish; yes, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto you, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I will make the place of My feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted you shall come bending unto you; and all they that despised you shall bow themselves down at the soles of your feet; and they shall call you, The City of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through you, I will make you an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. You shall also drink the milk of the Gentiles, and shall milk the breast of kings: and you shall know that I the LORD am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron. You see, it is better, and better, and better, for that is God's way with His people—to bless them, and then to bless them over again, and again, and again, giving them Grace upon Grace, Grace to qualify them to receive yet more Grace!*

17-22. *I will also make your officers peace, and your exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in your land, wasting nor destruction within your borders; but you shall call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise. The sun shall be no more your light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto you: but the LORD shall be unto you an everlasting Light, and your God your glory. Your sun shall no more go down, neither shall your moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be your everlasting Light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended. Your people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: The LORD will hasten it in His time. Oh, that "His time" were come! The happy period is hastening on and it will come at the right time. We ought not to be dispirited by delays, for it will surely come—it will not tarry a moment beyond the time appointed by God, blessed be His holy name! Amen.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—136, 494, 607.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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NO. 3051

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 1, 1907.

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 24, 1872.

“Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?”
Isaiah 60:8.

THE chapter from which our text is taken predicts very glorious times for the true Church of God. The promises recorded in this chapter were, in a measure, fulfilled when Jews and Gentiles were gathered into the fold of Christ in great numbers in the days of the Apostles. But God's promises are not like man's. When a man has kept his promise once, it does not stand good any longer—but God's promises may be fulfilled a hundred times over and yet remain just as valid as when He first gave them. So what God did for His Church at Pentecost, He is prepared to do today—and He will do it on a yet larger scale in those happy times that are yet to come—the latter days for which we look and long with joyful expectation!

I do not intend, however, to explain the text in its strict connection, but shall try to turn it to profitable account with regard to ourselves. You will notice that the question indicates a measure of surprise and that surprise reveals some dark fear which must have been lurking in the background. The Church sees an innumerable company of converts coming to join her ranks and she cries out in amazement, “Who are these that fly as a cloud?” She could not, therefore, have been expecting them. Her faith must have been weak and, in consequence, a great gloom had settled upon her mind. And a similar kind of gloom comes over our minds when our faith is weak and our expectations are slender. I think that all of us who love the work of God and who especially love that work in connection with our own branch of Christ's Church are apt, at times, to feel a deep anxiety of soul and to fear lest God should forsake His work among us because of our sins. God may leave a Church that He has formerly greatly honored if it grows lukewarm, as did the Church at Laodicea, or has left its first love, as did the Church at Ephesus. There will always be a Church of God in the world, but there may not always be a Church in any particular place. There will always be a people whom He has chosen to show forth His praise and to proclaim His Gospel—but they may not be found in this place, or in any other where the Lord has been known to meet with them.

The idolatrous church of Rome calls itself the only true church, outside which none can find salvation, but although the church in Rome

was once a bright and glorious church, God forsook it and for many a day it has been the very center of apostasy and abomination! It is like Shiloh where the Ark abode for a time, but concerning which God said, "Go you now unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel." And it may be so with any professed Church of Christ today—and my fear often is lest, in any measure, it may be so with us. Have we not, even in this Church, sins enough to provoke the Lord to leave us? Have we not, at any rate, sufficient sins of omission in our lack of earnestness, our lack of prayerfulness and our lack of Christ-likeness, to cause Him to say, as He is reported to have been heard to say during the siege of Jerusalem, "Arise, let Us go from here"? Then would "Ichabod" be written on these walls and we might make this building like the Jews' place of wailing, for if the Lord should forsake us, we might well say, "The glory is departed. The Church has lost her strength, her honor and, indeed, her very life!" We fear, then, lest the Lord should leave us. But, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if you turn your fears into *prayers* there may be no longer any need for your fears!

My other fear has been lest converts should not continue to come into this Church and that appears to also have been the fear of the Church in Isaiah's day, or else she would not have been so surprised to see them come. I watch, each month, and each week, with prayerful anxiety and ask—Will there be more Believers putting on Christ in Baptism? Will there be more sinners crying out, "What must we do to be saved?" Will there be more of our hearers boldly but truthfully declaring—

***"We are on the Lord's side.
We will serve the King!"?***

I would rather suffer any personal affliction or calamity than that God's work of Grace should be stopped among us. It is a terrible thing when a professing Church continues to exist, in a fashion, yet is unfruitful—a vine whereon hang no ripe clusters—a field that yields no harvest. There may be some ministers who can be content when their churches do not grow, but I am thankful to say that I am not one of them! My heart is troubled, and I trust, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that your heart is also troubled unless converts continue to come to us "as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows."

There is another fear that often passes across my mind like a dark threatening cloud—and that is lest some of those already brought into the Church should grow cold and others should apostatize altogether because they never had "the root of the matter" in them—and lest the rest should stand still in mere dead formality and not live in the Light of God. We need to have churches and church members that are full of life! And if there really is true spiritual life within us, we need to "have it more abundantly." Cold or lukewarm religiousness is to be found on all sides, but where can we find such holy fervor as blazed in England in the days of Whitefield and Wesley? Even on the old Methodist altar, it burns but very feebly. Oh, that everywhere it could be fanned into a vehement

flame! We have some of this fervor here, but we pray that it may come with still greater force. Some of you, dear Friends, have had it and have been very zealous for the Lord of Hosts—are you growing cold? If so, may the Master revive you! Are you curtailing your efforts? Are you shortening your prayers? Are your offerings less generous than they used to be? Is your consecration to Christ less complete than it once was? Oh, for a great revival to begin with us at home—for if the Lord is not with us, warming our hearts, fanning our zeal and inflaming our love—we cannot expect that our efforts on behalf of others will be attended by any great measure of success! Paul truly wrote to Timothy, “The husbandman that labors must be first partaker of the fruits.” The water must gush up at the fountainhead otherwise it cannot flow down the hills to make fertile the meadows and make glad the vales. May God grant that inasmuch as these fears of ours have good reason for existing, we may not put them away, but may turn them into earnest prayers such as these—“O Lord, do not forsake us! O Lord, do not leave us without continual additions to our membership! O Lord, do not let us, as a Church, be without many true conversions! O Lord, do not allow Your people to grow cold—to become dead—but ‘visit us with Your salvation!’”

Now I can advance a step further. Our text, though it came to persons possessed by gloomy fears, contains in itself a very bright picture. You will understand the metaphor that is used in it if I just tell you that a traveler in the East saw, near Ispahan, many large round towers crowned by conical spiracles through which the pigeons descended. Inside they were like a vast honeycomb, pierced with a thousand holes, in each one of which pigeons could build. And he said that when he saw them fly back to their homes at night, they were so numerous and so compact that they might well be compared to a cloud—and the swiftness with which they flew back to their dovecot forcibly reminded him of this passage, “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?” We have here, then, a beautiful picture of souls coming to Christ and to Christ’s Church in great numbers and with great speed! And we will ask and try to answer three questions concerning them. First, *why should they come?* Secondly, *how should they come?* And thirdly, *why should so many of them come?*

I. First, WHY SHOULD THEY COME?

There is a very complete answer to that question with regard to the doves. It is natural that doves should come to their dovecots and there is an equally complete answer to the question, Why should souls come to Christ? There are four reasons why they should come.

First, *because Christ is the true food of souls.* No doubt the doves or pigeons were often fed at the dovecot. Therefore they knew where it was and they gladly flew to it. Hungry Soul, Christ is the only food that can ever appease your hunger—are you as eager to get to Him as the hungry doves are to get to the dovecot? Do you long for peace, happiness, forgiveness, salvation? All these are to be found in Christ! Yes, all that

your empty soul can require to fill it to the brim is stored up in Christ Jesus! Therefore you should come to Him—and our prayer is that you may come to Him even now.

Next, *the doves came to the dovecot because it was a place of security for them*—and for the same reason sinners should come to the Savior. They are unsafe as long as they are out of Christ. Go where you may, O Soul—until you come to the Lord Jesus Christ, you are in jeopardy! Whether you live in sin or in self-righteousness, you are equally liable to be destroyed until you come to Christ! The whole world is the City of Destruction and Christ is the only Gate of Salvation, as Paul says in writing to the Galatians, “Scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” [Sermon #1145, Volume 19—THE GREAT JAIL—AND HOW TO GET OUT OF IT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

But next, *the doves came to their dovecot because it was their home*. And the only true home of any human heart is in the wounds of Jesus. He who really finds Christ finds rest, enjoyment, peace, tranquility—in fact, all that the word, “home,” really means. The man who truly believes in Jesus is forgiven. He is reconciled to God. For him there is no gloom with regard to the world to come—no Hell to dread and only a Heaven of bliss to enjoy! Moses wrote, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.” And God is still the dwelling place of His people—they find rest and peace in Him. Therefore should souls go to Christ, even as the doves go to the dovecot. The fourth reason why the doves came to the dovecot was *because it was a fit place in which to lay their young*. Some of you may remember a sermon I preached on Psalm 84:3, [Sermon #3041, Volume 53—THE SPARROW AND THE SWALLOW—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] “Yes, the sparrow has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Your altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God.” A saved man has at least a greater probability than any unsaved man has of seeing his children saved. On the day of Pentecost, in answer to the question, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Peter said, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For *the promise is unto you, and to your children*, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” So, for your children’s sake as well as for your own sake—

**“Come, guilty souls and flee away,
Like doves, to Jesus’ wounds!
This is the welcome Gospel-Day
Wherein Free Grace abounds!”**

II. Secondly, the text answers the question, HOW SHOULD THEY COME? They should come “as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows.”

That is, *they should come very swiftly*. A dove’s flight is very rapid and when a cloud of doves is driven by the wind, they fly very swiftly through the air. That is the way for sinners to come to Christ—come at once

without delay. The very best time to trust the Savior is NOW, for, “behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” I cannot give you a promise of salvation tomorrow, but I find many promises in the Word of God concerning the present time. Oh, that God would, by His Grace, incline some soul to break away from the bands of procrastination and say, “Since it may be ‘now or never’ with me, it shall be NOW! I will fly to Christ at once.”

There are many reasons why you should fly to Christ at once. First, *because you are in present danger*. Should not the dove fly at once to its windows when the hawk is after it? And Sinner, sin is after you and wrath is after you if you are out of Christ. “He that believes not”—and mark, this is God’s Word—“he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” “*Condemned already*.” Then you are in a condition of present danger and I say to you as the angel said to Lot, “Escape for your life! Look not behind you, neither stay you in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed.” Already the venom of the fiery serpent’s poison is boiling in your veins! Look then, at once to Him who is lifted up before you as the bronze serpent was lifted up before the bitten Israelites, for there is healing in a single glance at Christ Crucified! Though you are at the very ends of the earth, the message can reach you, for the Lord says, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” So come to Christ at once because you are in present danger. [See Sermon #60, Volume 2—SOVEREIGNTY AND SALVATION. This Sermons was preached by Mr. Spurgeon on January 6th, 1856, the sixth anniversary of his own conversion under an uneducated local preacher’s pointed and personal discourse upon this passage, Isaiah 45:22—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

Besides that, there is great reason why you should fly at once to Christ *because time is flying faster than you can fly*. And with the flight of time, the approach of the night of death is certain. The dove seeks its dovecot before nightfall, for it knows the dangers to which it would be exposed in the darkness. The night is fast approaching with some of you. In the nature of things, you cannot live much longer, yet how strange it is that men often think that they will continue to live though they expect that others will die! I heard, only this week, of a man of 86 who expects some property to come to him, but there is another man’s life that delays his possession of it—and he is eighty-four. Yet the older man told a friend of mine that he expected very soon to inherit the property as the person who held it was a very old man and could not live much longer, though he himself was two years older—an admirable commentary on the words of the poet, “All men think all men mortal but themselves.” Yet if we use our wits, we shall know that we are also mortal. Possibly old age is already creeping over us or, if not, there is an unseen hand that may be, even at this moment, tugging at our heartstrings—some fatal disease or sudden stroke from God may swiftly come upon us and we shall be gone from earth as so many others have gone. Fly, O you doves,

for death's arrows are flying! Fly, for the fowler's nets are spread all around you! Fly, for true life is only to be found through those blessed windows which Christ has opened for guilty souls!

I am praying for conversions tonight. Brothers and Sisters, you who know how to pray, join with me in praying for conversions tonight that before the unsaved sleep, they may come to Jesus and be saved!

III. Now, having spoken of why they should come and how they should come, I have to answer the third question, WHY SHOULD SO MANY COME? They are to fly in such a vast flock that they shall be like a cloud! My heart rejoices at the very thought of great numbers of sinners coming to Christ, but why should so many come?

Well, first, *because there is room for them.* There is room in the dovecot for every dove that comes and there is room in the heart of Christ for every soul that ever will come to Him. There never was a true penitent whom Christ repelled, saying, "I did not shed My blood for you." There never was a Believer whom Christ refused, saying, "You had no right to believe in Me." No, His gracious message still stands—

"Engraved as in eternal brass,"—

"Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." [See sermon #3000, Volume 52, COME AND WELCOME—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Write that truly golden text in starry letters across the sky, or, better still, ask the Holy Spirit to write it in your memory so that you will never forget it—"Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Though he may have been a drunk, a swearer, or a thief—though he may have been unchaste or unjust—though he may even now be black or red with crime—if he does but come and trust in Jesus Christ, he cannot be cast out! There is room in Christ's heart for all who come to Him, so let many come now.

Besides, *'tis sweet for many to go together.* How glad I am when I can receive husband and wife into the Church at the same time! And I am still more glad when there is a little train of their sons and daughters behind them, all coming together to confess their faith in Christ! You know that if only one member of a family is brought to Christ, that one will be like a speckled bird in the home-nest, but when the Lord draws the whole family to Himself, how blessed it is for them all to walk hand in hand to Heaven! I think that, if necessary, I should have been glad to go on pilgrimage alone, as Christian went, but I should have liked much better to have gone with Christiana, Mercy and the children, and with Mr. Greatheart, and old Father Honest and all that noble party of pilgrims who went together to the Celestial City.

Further, *the same reason that should make one go to Christ should make others go to Him.* When I used to preach at Waterbeach, the chapel was crowded, but when I first came to London, I was very much discouraged by the sight of so many empty seats. But somebody said, "You may depend upon it that the Gospel that will draw 600 in a country village will draw 6,000 in London." And I have found it so all these years. If Christ can draw one soul to Himself, why can He not draw twenty? And

if He can draw twenty, why not twenty thousand, and why not thousands of millions? Why should not we live to see many millions of souls converted to God? Let us pray to the Holy Spirit to present the irresistible attractions of Christ to the hundreds of millions in the whole human race!

And then, Beloved, *when sinners come to Christ in great numbers, think what honor it brings to Him.* A soul saved here, and another saved there may go unremarked—but what a joy it is to us, and what Glory it brings to God—when hundreds, or thousands, as on the day of Pentecost, are converted at once! Then the Church is refreshed, revived and encouraged! And the world hears of it and other churches hear of it and ask for the same blessing. I do, therefore, beg you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, to join with me in prayer that we may have a cloud of converts flying to Christ—multitudes of precious souls coming to Him as the doves fly to their windows!

IV. My time fails me, so I must close by again reminding you that OUR TEXT SETS BEFORE US A BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL PICTURE—“Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?”

Shall I tell you who they are? I am not going to speak of them as being God’s elect, though that is true. And Christ’s redeemed, though that is also true. And the Holy Spirit’s effectually called ones, though that, too, is true! But I am going rather to dwell upon another phase of the subject and that is this. *Some of those that will fly as a cloud, if our prayers are heard, and they do really come to Christ, will be our own sons and daughters.* It has been one of the greatest joys of every revival season which we have ever had, that among the converts there has always been a considerable proportion of the sons and daughters of the members of the Church. Does not the very mention of that fact make your mouths water? Do not your prayers now go up, “O Lord, bring my boy in! Lord, save my girls! Let our children live in Your sight”? Perhaps you have other young people living with you who are not literally your sons and daughters, but who stand to you in almost the same relationship. They are your nephews and nieces, or some orphan children for whom you are caring, or it may be your pupils. Well, may the Lord grant that when you ask the question, “Who are these that fly as a cloud?” the answer may come, “Why, they are the very ones who dwell with you! God has blessed those who are nearest and dearest to you!” Dear young people, we cannot wish for you a greater blessing than that you may be brought to Christ early and be united to His Church!

Yet again, how delighted would many of you be if, in answer to this question, “Who are these that fly as a cloud?” it would be said, “Why, *some of them are from the Sunday school*—and you would be even more gratified if the reply would be, “Some are from your own class, the very scholars for whom you have been especially praying—the boy to whom you spoke so seriously—the girl whom you so affectionately sought to come to Jesus.” Teachers, would you not clap your hands for joy if that

could be truly said to you? Why should it not be the case? God has often blessed such instrumentality and His arm is not shortened that it cannot save, nor is His ear heavy, that He cannot hear. Go in faith and ask for the blessing—and then work in real earnest, believing that it will come—and it will assuredly be bestowed upon you and upon those whose salvation you are seeking!

It would be peculiarly gladdening to my heart if the answer to the question of our text should be, “Some of those that are flying to Christ, as the doves fly to their windows, are *your old hearers, old seat-holders who have long been unconverted.*” I thank God that there are not very many such hearers, for the Lord has brought in one after another until there are not many of those who have long heard the Word who still remain unsaved. The axe of Grace has cut down these trees of sin, one after another, and built them into the Temple of God! Our unconverted seat-holders are getting to be fewer and fewer—and my prayer is, “O Lord, bring Your sharp axe and cut every one of them down!” I am sorry that there are any of my old hearers who are still unsaved—how I would praise the Lord if, after ten, twelve and some of you 18 years of hearing the same voice preach the same Gospel, you should be saved at last!

Probably, however, there will be another answer to the question of our text. “*Some strangers, some of your casual hearers, have been brought to Christ.*” Dear Friends, I repeat the request that I have often made—Please look after those who come here only occasionally to hear the Word. Do all you can to make them comfortable and then, if there is any sign of attention to the preacher’s message, or of impression produced by it, do not let anyone be able to say, “I went to the Tabernacle half-a-dozen times, yet nobody ever spoke to me.” Be sure that no one shall be able to truthfully say, “Why, I am still quite a stranger there, though I have been attending for years! But nobody has spoken to me.” We used to have—I wish we had more of the same sort now—some very gracious people who were always on the watch for anxious souls. I remember one young man who joined the Church in this way—he came up from the country—we were then worshipping at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall. And the first time he was at our service, one of our brethren took him into the hall and gave him a seat. On another Sunday, when he saw him again, he asked him home to dinner and he talked to him about the things of God in such a way that, in a very short time, that young man became a Christian and joined the Church, though before he had lived without the fear of God. Would it not be something for which to praise the Lord for many a day if, among those that fly to Christ, as the doves fly to their windows, there should be one to whom *you* had spoken—a casual hearer, smitten by the Word preached, but brought into peace and liberty through a few sentences which you spoke privately to him?

I pray that among those who are brought to Christ, there may be many rank outsiders. I do not know when I ever more enjoyed speaking, or hearing anybody else speak, than I did while speaking or listening to my Brother Varley last Wednesday when we had the area of this

Tabernacle full of butchers. They appeared to be thoroughly in earnest and they drank in the Gospel—and I do trust that some of them retained it in their hearts and will bring forth fruit in their lives. We must constantly try to lay hold of men who are outside all ordinary religious worship. You who go with tracts all round this district, you who visit the people in their homes, you who stand at the corners of the streets and preach, you who are spiritual Uhlands, riding ahead of the main army of God, you who are breaking up fresh ground and trying to increase the area of ground that is being cultivated for Christ—may you all have a present reward as you see the converts coming to Christ as the doves fly to their windows! May our Bible classes for men and women be richly blessed in bringing many to Christ and His Church! May our College be richly blessed and every man become abundantly useful in the Master's cause! And may every one of us seek to have a share in the great additions to our numbers which we trust God will soon send to us!

I have only to ask one more question and then I will close. Among these that are to fly as a cloud, and as doves to the dovecot, will *you* be one, my Hearer? “Do you want me to join this Church?” I did not say that! I did not say anything about your joining any church. You must be joined to *Christ* before you can join His Church. That was the Apostolic way—“They first gave their own selves to the Lord and unto us by the will of God.” I do not first ask if you are willing to be baptized. I do not want you to be baptized before you believe in Christ. That is useless—no, it is worse than that—it is wicked! There is no Scriptural warrant for the Baptism of an unbeliever. To sprinkle a baby, or to immerse an adult who does not believe in Jesus is a transgression of Christ's Law! He has laid down the order, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Do you ask, “What do you want me to do?” I want you to be one of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Is the Spirit of God working in your heart and saying to you, “Turn you, turn you, for why will you die?” Is He saying to you, “Trust yourself to Christ”? Then, yield to that gracious influence now, and say—

***“Now to be Yours, yes, Yours alone,
O Lamb of God, I come!”***

If that is your sincere utterance, you are a saved soul! Now be baptized, now join the Church! But first see to it that you believe in Jesus, for that is the first business. May God bring you to Christ and may the blessing of the Triune Jehovah be with you forevermore! Amen and amen!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ROMANS 10.

This chapter is a Gospel in itself—it very clearly points out the plan of salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 1. *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.* Paul had a tender heart towards all unconverted men and women and he longed and pleaded with God that they might be

saved. Have all of us this unselfish compassionate feeling? I am afraid that there are some Christians who are very deficient in it, yet in the dread of an immortality to be spent in unutterable woe by all unbelievers, our hearts' desire and perpetual prayer should be as Paul's prayer for Israel was, "that they might be saved." And if there is one class among the ungodly which should touch our hearts more than all the rest, it is those who are earnestly seeking salvation but who are seeking it where they will never find it, namely, by the works of the Law.

2. *For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.* It is not sufficient for a man to be sincere in his zeal for God—sincerity must be according to knowledge if it is to be of any value. If a man travels North, his sincere belief that he is on the right road will not bring him to his destination in the South! If a man, in all sincerity, drinks poison under the belief that it is a cheering cordial, it will kill him, notwithstanding his sincerity. And if a man sincerely believes a lie, it will turn out to be a lie notwithstanding his sincerity. So that it is not enough to be sincerely zealous for God, or sincerely anxious to be saved—but you must seek salvation in God's *revealed way* if your search is to be a successful one.

3. *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.* This is not an error on the part of only the Jews—it is to be found also among many Gentiles. Such people must have a righteousness of their own and Paul says they are continually "going about" to establish it. To do this they will undertake any labor, endure any suffering, or perform any self-denial, but all the while they despise God's righteousness—despise it by the very act of preferring their own, or seeking another way of salvation instead of walking in the one which God has provided! How sad it is that so many, in all sincerity of blind zeal, should be dishonoring God and virtually dethroning Him by the attempt to set up a righteousness of their own when He has already provided a perfect one which they will not accept.

4. *For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes.* Even the Law itself has this for its main drift and purpose—that it may introduce Christ. Its end, its intent, is to show to us our need of Christ, to point us to Christ and to make us willing to have Christ as our Savior. And as even the Law aims at this objective, much more clearly does the Gospel. Oh, that none of us might miss the aim and objective of this blessed design of God—that we might find righteousness through believing in Christ!

5. *For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the Law.* And he does it in very brief, concise and satisfactory terms.

5. *That the man which does those things shall live by them.* That is the beginning and end of the Law, "Do and live."

6-8. *But the righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above), or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring*

up Christ again from the dead). But what says it? The word is near you. The saving, life-giving word is not to be sought above, nor below, nor afar off—it is “near you.”

8. *Even in your mouth, and in your heart.* It is not a matter of doing with the hands but of believing with the heart and of confession with the mouth!

8, 9. *That is the word of faith which we preach; that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.* The Gospel’s command, “Believe and live,” is quite as clear and plain and positive as the Law’s command, “Do and live.”

10, 11. *For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, Whoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed.* He shall never be ashamed of having believed on the Lord Jesus Christ! If he really believes on Him, he shall never be ashamed of the result of so believing, for that result will be eternal salvation to him—there is no doubt about that!

12. *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him.* If there are great numbers to be saved at one time, Christ will not have to do as we do when we have too many guests at a feast, namely, cut the portion of each one smaller. Oh, no! For “the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him,” whether they are Jews or Gentiles.

13. *For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* Let us read that blessed verse again.

13, 14. *For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?* When I hear anyone say, “I cannot believe in Christ, but I will pray to Him for faith.” I say, surely the prayer is more difficult than the believing—“How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?”

14, 15. *And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they are sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!* We, dear Friends, have had this whole process carried out in our midst. The Gospel has been preached—preached, I trust, by one who can prove, by the many seals to his ministry, that he has been “sent” by God who has given him these confirmations of his commission in the constant conversion of those to whom he has preached. Then many of you have heard the preaching and have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, you are “saved” to all eternity. But, alas, there are some of you who have not believed in Jesus! Yet you must be saved by this process, or you can never be saved at all, for God will never try any other plan! His way of saving men is to send the preacher whom He has called and qualified to preach. The preacher preaches. The people hear.

By hearing they believe and by believing they are saved! This is God's way of saving sinners and He will not depart from it! So let us walk in it. May His gracious Spirit take away from us all our proud, foolish and wicked objections to His simple plan and may we all believe and live!

16. *But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report?* So you see that even the Prophet Isaiah had the idea that salvation comes to sinners by believing. He mourned and cried to his God because men did not believe the "report" which he had been sent to deliver to them concerning that Man who was "despised and rejected of men," that Man of whom the Prophet truly said, "Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows...He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed."

17. *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.* With what solemnity this invests our hearing! I often hear people say, "We go to such-and-such a place of worship, to hear so-and-so preach." That is well if the preacher is, like John the Baptist, "a man sent from God," for, "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Only let us all so hear the Word of God that hearing it we believe on Jesus Christ whom God has sent—believing on Him, we confess our faith in the Divinely appointed way, devoutly worship and adore the ever-blessed God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and do all we can to make the Savior known to others.

18, 19. *But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know?* These Jews for whom Paul prayed—these people who were so zealous in seeking to establish their own righteousness—did not they know God's way of salvation? Did not they know Jesus of Nazareth, the Divinely appointed Savior? Yes, they did, but they refused to believe on Him—they would not walk in God's way of salvation.

19-21. *First Moses says, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Isaiah is very bold, and says, I was found of them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me. But to Israel he says, All day long I have stretched out My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.* Oh, that God would soon bring these "disobedient and gainsaying people"—whether Jews or Gentiles—to submit themselves unto His righteousness and so to be saved! May He graciously grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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

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

MARVELOUS INCREASE OF THE CHURCH

NO. 63

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 27, 1856,
 BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

**“Who are these who fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?”
 Isaiah 60:8.**

THE ancient Church, in the foresight of her mighty increase in these latter days, lifts up her hands in astonishment and, having been so used to see the Lord’s Grace confined to a small nation, she exclaims in amazement, “Who are these who fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?” We, Beloved, are in a somewhat similar position. It has pleased our Father to add to our numbers so greatly beyond all precedent in modern times! I doubt not that many of our aged members, who remember days of yore, when God was pleased to bless them very greatly and then think of days of sadness and weariness, when they were diminished and brought low, are, this morning, lifting up their hands and saying—as they think of the present prosperity of our Church—“Who are these who fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?” I tell you that whenever I appoint an evening for seeing the converts, I am amazed! I can only stand up, afterwards, clap my hands and go home and weep for very joy to think that the Word of our God is so running and multiplying and abundantly increasing! And as post after post I receive letters from different parts of this country, from one person here, and another there, not only in England, but in Scotland and even across the sea in Ireland and, you know, in the Crimea also—I have been overwhelmed with amazement and have been obliged to cry out, “Who has begotten me these?” “Who are these who fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?”

The Church, when she uttered these words, appears to have been the subject of three kinds of feeling. First, *wonder*—secondly, *pleasure*—thirdly, *anxiety*. These three feelings *you* have felt. You are not strangers to them—and you will understand while I speak to you as the children of God, how it is that we can feel at the same time—wonder, pleasure and yet anxiety.

I. First, the Church of old and our Church, now, appear to have been the subject of WONDERS when she saw so many come to know the Lord. “Who are these who fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?” Take the first sentence of the text first—“Who are these who fly as a cloud?”

The Church wondered, first of all, *at the number of her converts*. They did, “fly as a cloud.” Not here and there, a convert—not now and then,

one—not converts like solitary bitterns of the desert. But they “did fly as a cloud.” Not a convert now and then, like a meteor—a thing we see but seldom—which flashes across the sky, rejoices the darkness and then is gone. Not now and then, a convert, as a *rara avis*—a spiritual prodigy. “But who are these?” she said, “who fly as a cloud?” She wonders at their number. But, my Brothers and Sisters, why should we be astonished? Did not the Apostle Peter become the instrument of converting three thousand under one sermon? And have we not heard of Whitfield, that while ten thousand listened to him, it has been known that two thousand at a time have felt the power of God manifested in their hearts? And why should we wonder if hundreds are brought to God now? “Is His arm shortened that He cannot save? Is His ear heavy that He cannot hear?” Have we not cried unto the God of Jacob and is anything impossible to Him? Remember how He “cut Rahab and wounded the dragon”? Think of His prodigies by the Red Sea and the miracles He worked in the field of Zoan. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” Oh, you distrustful Church, do you marvel because your Lord gives you many children? Is it not written, “More are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife,” says the Lord? I tell you, the Lord will show you greater things than these! The increase we have had shall yet be exceeded, if God wills it. Nothing is impossible with Him! He who converts one, could as easily convert a hundred. And He who redeems a hundred, could save a thousand by the same power! Is not the blood of Jesus sufficient? Is not the Holy Spirit powerful enough? And is not the mighty Three-in-One God “able to do for us exceeding abundantly above what we can ask or think?” Yet, so it is—so little are our expectations and so unprepared are we for God’s mercies, that when He pours out a blessing upon us, so that we have not room enough to receive it, we begin shutting up the windows altogether and think, “Surely it cannot come from God, because there is so much of it.” Why, that is the very reason why we *should* believe it to be! If there were few conversions, then we might tremble and fear lest they might be man’s, but when there are so many, none but God can accomplish it! When one or two are brought to join a Church, we may shake for fear and examine them with caution, but when they fly like a cloud, we can only say, “Great are You, O God, marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows right well.” Doubtless, Brothers and Sisters, until larger views of God’s power and increased faith shall diminish the wonder, we shall always stand in amazement and say, “Who are these who fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?”

But, secondly, the Chaldee has the idea in it, not of numbers, but of *swiftness*. “Who are these who *fly as a cloud*,” for swiftness? You have seen clouds dashing along, like chariots drawn by mighty horses, or flying like a fugitive army when the swift winds have pursued them and you have said, “See how swiftly the clouds move along the sky.” And it is notable that in great revivals of religion, persons are generally more swift in

their religious growth and experience than they are in dull and degenerate times. “Why,” one says, “how soon persons join the Church here! How very soon they attain to assurance of faith! How very speedily they come to understand Gospel Doctrines. It was not so in my days. For I know I was months and months and tried a long while before I dared think of obeying my Master—before I could say, ‘I know whom I have believed.’” Just so, but these are brighter days than your days—and you are wondering, now, because the converts fly so swiftly. But that is just the idea of the text—“Who are these who fly *as swiftly* as a cloud?” I know, Brothers and Sisters, it used to be the custom with our Churches, when a convert came, to keep him a summer and a winter—to summer him and to winter him! Now, that is very prudent and very wise—but it is not at all Scriptural—there is nothing in the Word of God to support it! The example of Jesus and His Apostles is altogether against it! And I take it that Scripture is to go before prudence and that His example is always to be above man’s wisdom. Why should the people of God tarry in these days? Let them hasten and delay not to keep His Commandments! And what if young people do grow in Grace faster, now, than they did in your time? Perhaps God has now poured out a larger measure of His Spirit. He has placed us in brighter days. And plants in the warm sunshine must expect to grow faster than those that dwell in the frost. We know that in the short summers of Sweden, a harvest will ripen in two or three months, or less than that. Why should we complain of the corn of Sweden, because it ripens so swiftly, when it is just as good as ours that takes several months to ripen? The Lord does as He wills and as He pleases—and if some fly swiftly, while others travel slowly, let those who go slowly bless God that they go at all—but let them not murmur that others go a little faster! Nevertheless, it will always be to God’s Church a source of wonder—“Who are these who fly so swiftly like a cloud?”

The Targum has another idea—that of *publicity*. “Who are these who fly as a cloud?” The cloud, you know, flies so that everybody can see it. So do these converts fly openly before the world. It is a matter of admiration with this Church and with God’s Church whenever it is increased, that the converts become so bold and fly so publicly. In the first days of the Church, Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night. He was somewhat ashamed lest he should be put out of the synagogue. Joseph of Arimathea, the rich man, was afraid to proclaim his Lord and, therefore, loved Jesus “secretly, for fear of the Jews.” But you do not read that any of them were afraid when God poured out the Holy Spirit on the day that Peter preached! No, “they broke their bread from house to house and did eat it in singleness of heart, praising God.” They went up to the beautiful gate of the Temple—and in the very teeth of all the people, Peter and John healed the lame man! They worked their miracles openly before all men. They were not ashamed! So when there is a glorious ingathering of souls, you will always notice how bold the people become. Why, there

never were such a brazen-faced set of people as those who assemble here! They are not ashamed of their religion! Why, I have seen persons come to the pool of Baptism, fearing, shaking and trembling—but I have not found it so with the majority of those who have been baptized in *this place*. They seem proud to acknowledge their Master. They can sing—

**“Ashamed of Jesus? Sooner far
Let evening blush to acknowledge a star!
Ashamed of Jesus? Just as soon
Let midnight be ashamed of noon!”**

You “are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ,” for it has been, here, the power of God unto salvation to many who have believed! I have rejoiced to see the boldness of the young converts. I have heard of them fighting with the antagonists of the Truth of God. I have seen them boldly standing up for their Master in the face of scorns, jeers and slanders. And the Church says, with regard to them, “Who are these who fly publicly as a cloud?”

But I think there is another idea here, which Dr. Gill gives us in his very valuable commentary. “Who are these who fly as a cloud,” for *unanimity*. You will mark not as *clouds*, but “as *a cloud*,” not as two or three bodies, but as one united and compact mass! Here is the secret of strength. Split us into fractions and we are conquered—unite us into a steady phalanx—and we become invincible! Knit us together as one man and Satan, himself, can never rend us asunder. Divide us into threads, let our warp and woof be disunited, and we become like thin paper that burns before a single spark of the fire of the enemy. But thanks be to God, we are “as the heart of one man.” I could not but wonder at our Church Meeting on Wednesday, how all seemed to fly as a cloud. No sooner was a thing proposed than the whole Church seemed without one dissenting opinion, to be carried along irresistibly by one thought that possessed its bosom. It is very seldom you see a Church really united—but *God has united us*. We have “one Lord, one faith, one Baptism.” But yet the Church wonders at it, she can scarcely understand it—“Who are these,” she says, “who fly as one compact and solid cloud?” God grant that we may always continue so! Whatever is said of one of us, let it be said of all of us. Do not let us be stragglers. Those who fall into the rear of an army are always in danger—and those who hang about its flanks are equally subject to insult and injury. Let us march breast to breast, shoulder to shoulder, each of us drawing the sword at one word—everyone doing as the Captain tells us! And as surely as Truth prevails, unity shall conquer and our King shall honor us and bless us—treading our foes beneath our feet and making us more than conquerors through Him who has loved us!

Again—there is the idea of *power*. Who is he that shall bridle a cloud, or stop it in its march? What man is he who, by a word, can stay the moving clouds and make them still? Who is he that can bid them, when they are driving northward, turn their course to the south? Who is he

that can rein the coursers of the wind and forbid them to drag the chariots of darkness along to the west? The clouds yield to none! No majesty can control them—they laugh to scorn the scepter of the prince and they move on despite the rattling of the sabers of armies! None can stop the clouds—they are invincible, uncontrollable—and in their majesty they move themselves right royally, like the kings of Heaven! And who is he that can stop the converts of Zion? Who is he that can keep back the children of Jerusalem? When the Lord shall “bring again the captivity of His people,” who is he that shall stop them? When His people of old were in Babylon, could “the two-leaved gates” bar them in? Could Cyrus, with all his armies, have kept them prisoners? No, the two-leaved gates open, the bars of brass give way! And Cyrus, himself, sends them back to their country, with gold and silver to build their temple! And in latter days the Jews shall return to their own land, again, to worship God! Who shall stop them? Shall the might of Russia? Shall the power of Egypt? Shall the tyranny of Turkey? Shall anything keep them back? No, the city shall be built, again, upon her own heap and the tribes of the Lord shall yet go up, again, to worship God where their forefathers bowed before them! O, people of God! It is so with you! “Who are these who fly as a cloud?” Try, try, O enemy, to stop one of the Lord’s doves when he is coming to the windows! You cannot do it. Did not the devil try to stop you, O Brother, when you were coming to God? Ah, he did. But it was all in vain! And when you went to join the Church, how many difficulties there were in the way! But when you are called to God you will not be afraid, you will fly like a cloud! Ah, the world says we shall stop, by-and-by. That all our success is as nothing. That it will soon die away—that it is a mere excitement and will soon end! Ah, let them talk so if they please—we are flying like a cloud! We have God within us, we have good within us, we have the might of the Deity within our Church! And who is he that shall stop us? We bid the mighty men of this earth come! We bid carnal reason array itself against us! We bid the wisdom of the critic try to stop us! But they cannot do it! The weakness of God is mightier than man and He who took us from the sheepfolds to lead His people, Israel, will not desert His David! He who has put us before His people, will not cast us away nor will He leave His Church, nor forsake His chosen ones! “Who are these who fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?”

Thus have I tried to picture to you the amazement of Christ’s Church. “Who are these who fly as a cloud?” And now, Church of God, one word with you before I leave you. Your success is amazing one way, but it is not amazing if you look at it in another direction. It is amazing that any man should be saved—if you look at man. It is not amazing if you consider God! It is amazing that the wilderness should blossom as the rose—if you look at the wilderness. But it is not amazing if you consider Jehovah! It is wonderful that a desert should have the excellency of Carmel and Sharon. But wonder all dies away when you recollect that God who

does as He wills in the armies of Heaven does as He pleases in this lower world, too! O, Church of God! Give the honor and the glory to your God and to your God, only! Write His name upon your banners, let your sacrifice smoke before Him and before no one else. Let no man receive your honor. Give it unto God. Unto God belongs the shields of the mighty. "I Am and there is none else besides Me." Bow before Him, lest, if you give praise to the creature and if you think we have done anything and say, "Behold this great Babylon that I have built," God would then say, "Because you have exalted yourself like the cedars of Lebanon, therefore will I bring you down to the earth and your glory shall be taken from you." May the Lord in His mercy keep us from pride and also keep us living on Him, believing in His might and trusting in His power!

II. This brings us to the second portion of our discourse, which is the PLEASURE OF THE CHURCH. "Who are these who fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?"

First, the Church is exceedingly pleased at the *character* of those who come to her—"doves." We should always thank God when those who join the Church are of the right sort. For alas, there is such a thing as having a large addition to the Church of men that are of no use whatever! Many an army has swelled its ranks with recruits who have, in no way whatever, contributed to its might. And it has been known in many great revivals, that large hosts have been gathered in, who have forsaken the Truth in six months. I know a Church which excommunicated 80 members in 12 months for disorderly conduct and forsaking the Truth. They had taken in a hundred or so the year before, from some great spasm which had been occasioned by one of those spurious revivalists! He came about, making a great noise and doing no good whatever, but scorching and burning up the ground where other men might have sown the good seed of the Kingdom. I wonder that any man should be so self-conceited as to call himself a revivalist, or profess to be a revival-maker—let this be known as my opinion—he is a nuisance and nothing better! But where a Church is cautious, where the minister exercises scrutiny and all possible means are taken to see into character, it gives us great pleasure that they are of the right sort. Ah, Beloved, you should be at our Church Meetings, sometimes, and hear the sweet words of experience which are uttered there! I am sure you would say that they, "fly as the dove from their windows." Now and then there comes before me an old croaking raven that wants to come in—but we are soon able to tell the raven from the dove! It may be that now and then a raven gets into our Church. But I do hope that the majority are doves. We have seen them so humble, so meek, trusting alone in Jesus like timid doves, half afraid to speak and tell you. And yet so loving that they seemed as if they had sat on the finger of Jesus and picked their food from between His lips. We have marked their conduct, afterwards, and seen it to be holy and consistent. We will glory before the world, that notwithstanding the numbers that

have been added to us, we have had to cut off as few as any Church in the world—but one in a year—out of our vast body! And that one was received from another Church and, therefore, had never been examined thoroughly. O my Brothers and Sisters, always try to give the Church pleasure by your dove-like conversation! “Be wise as serpents, but harmless as doves,” such was your Master’s teaching. Let your character be—

“Humble, teachable and mild.

Changed into a little child—

Pleased with all the Lord provides,

Weaned from all the world besides.”

“Set your reflections on things above and not on things on the earth.” Be not like the unclean bird that will devour all kinds of filth. But be like the dove that lives on the “good corn of the kingdom.” And be sure that you are like they—loving and kind to one another. And, like they, always mourn when you lose your mate. Weep when your Jesus is gone from you and you lose His delightful Presence! Be you like the dove in all these things.

Again—the Church feels pleasure, not only in their character, but in their condition. Like doves “who fly.” Lowth translates this portion of the verse, “like doves on the wing.” The Church feels pleasure in thinking that her converts are “like doves on the wing.” Do you ever, Beloved, get into such a condition that you are not like a dove on the wing, but like a dove in a secret place—in the cleft of the rock—hiding yourself in darkness because you are afraid to be seen? For my own part, I am often not like a dove on the wing but like a dove hiding its head under its wing afraid to fly! But, “He renews our strength like the eagle’s.” There is a molting time for the Lord’s doves. Their feathers grow again and then they have the wings of the dove, covered with silver and their feathers with yellow gold—and then they can fly upwards towards Jesus! And will not our Church rejoice when her converts appear to be all on the wing? Not doubting, fearful converts. Not converts that stand timidly, afraid to come. But converts on the wing, flying upwards towards Jesus! Prayerful, laborious, active converts. Not sitting still, but doing nothing but laboring and flying upwards towards Jesus. These are the converts we want! And the Church is pleased when she can say, “Who are these who are like doves on the wing?”

Furthermore, the translation of the Septuagint gives us another idea. “Who are these who fly like doves with their young?” The Church rejoices at the company that the converts bring with them! How charming is the sight when a father unites himself with the people of God—and then his children after him! We had an instance a little while ago of two sons followed by their mother. And we have had many instances of a mother following her daughters and of daughters following their mothers and sons following their fathers. Oh, how blessed it is to see the doves come with their young! If there is anything more beautiful than a dove, it is the little dove that flies by its side! Beloved, do you not rejoice, some of you, that

you have your children in the Church? That you can run your eyes along the pew where your offspring are sitting with you, and can say, "Ah, glory be to God! It is not only I that have received His mercy, but here are my sons, too—and there sits my daughter drinking from the same well as I draw from—living on the same spiritual manna, looking to the same Cross for salvation and hoping for the same Heaven! But I notice some families here—I could point them out if I would—I notice them with sadness. Where there is a father and a mother, both of them heirs of Heaven, but of whose sons we have no evidence and no hope that they are the children of God. And there are some of you, my Friends, whose young ones have come before you. We have daughters, here, who have prayerless mothers! We have sons who have ungodly fathers! Oh, does it not seem hard that the children should be in the Kingdom before the parents? For if it is hard that a parent should see his children perishing, surely there is tenfold horror in the thought of children saved, but parents going to Hell! Your offspring entering into the joy of their Lord and you, yourselves, cast "into outer darkness, where there is weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth." Daughter of Zion! Plead for your children. Men of Jerusalem! Plead for your children.

The Church, again, feels pleasure *at the direction in which these doves move*. "Who are these who fly as the doves to *their windows*?" Where should the dove fly to but to its dovecot? The word means the dovecot, where the doves live—the little pigeon holes into which the doves enter and dwell. The joy of the Church is that the poor sinner does not fly to man, nor to the Law, but flies to Christ, the Dovecot! I can remember when, like a poor dove, sent out by Noah from his hand, I flew over the wide expanse of waters and hoped to find some place where I might rest my wearied wings. Up towards the north I flew. And my eye looked keenly through the mist and darkness, if, perhaps, it might find some floating substance on which my soul might rest its foot, but it found nothing. Again it turned its wings and flapped them, but not so rapidly as before, across that deep water that knew no shore. But still there was no rest. The raven had found his resting place upon a floating body and was feeding itself upon the carrion of some drowned man's carcass. But my poor soul found none. I went on—thought I saw a ship floating out at sea—it was the ship of the Law. And I thought I would put my feet on its canvass, or rest myself on its cordage for a time and find some refuge. But ah, it was an airy phantom on which I could not rest! My foot had no right to rest on the Law—I had not kept it and the soul that keeps it not, must die! At last I saw the boat, Christ Jesus—that happy Ark—and I thought I would fly there. But my poor wings were weary and I could fly no further—and down I sank into the water—but as Providence would have it, when my wings were flagging and I dropped into the stream to be drowned, just below me was the roof of the Ark! And I saw a hand put out from it that took me and said, "I have loved you with an everlasting

love, therefore I have not delivered the soul of My turtle dove into the company of the wicked. Come in, come in!” And then I found I had an olive branch in my mouth—of peace with God and peace with man—plucked off with Jesus’ power!

Poor soul! Have you found a resting place in the Ark? Have you fled to your window? Or are you, O Ephraim, like the silly dove that has no heart, that goes down to Egypt and rests itself in Assyria? Oh, why is it that you are looking for rest where none can be found? There are many that say, “Who will show us any good? Lord lift up the light of Your Countenance upon me!” That is the dove’s resting place! That is his house! Have you found your home in Christ? If you have not, when the storm comes, O dove, with ruffled plumage you shall be driven before the swift tempest! You shall be blown along like a small feather before the stream, onward, onward through the dark unknown—until you find yourself with burned and singed wings—falling into flames that have no bottom! The Lord give you deliverance and help you to fly to Jesus!

III. Now we come to our third point—the CHURCH’S ANXIETY. “Ah,” says the Church, “it is all very well, their flying like a cloud. It is all right, their going as doves to their windows. But who are they?” The Church is anxious and she anxiously desires to be sure that it is all gold that is put into her treasury. For she suspects that some of those lumps of bullion cannot be gold. She thinks, “surely that is not all genuine metal, or there would not be so much of it.” And she says, “Who are they?” That is the question! Now I address myself to an anxious Church to answer it.

First, they are *those who fly*. Our text says, “Who are these who fly?” They are those who fly because they cannot stop where they were—and they are flying somewhere else for refuge. We trust that those who have joined our Church are those who are persuaded that the land wherein they dwelt is to be consumed with fire. Those who feel a necessity to come out of the place where they once lived and have a strong desire to seek “a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” We hope, Beloved, that those who have joined with us, here, are those who are escaping from Hell and flying to Heaven! We hope they are such who once had no sins that they feared, but now come out because they must come—for their house has got too hot for them and they cannot abide any longer in their sins! Here we have the idea of *conviction*. They are those who fly. They are not content, now, to make their nest of their own good works with here and there a little bit of down picked off Morality Common—and here a piece of yarn that they have picked up in Legality Palace—and here a piece of good work that they have found in the barnyard of Ceremonialism! Now they are poor souls who have no rest *anywhere*, but are flying and flying with rapid wing, until they can get to their windows! Are you such, my Beloved, who have joined the Church? Or are you not? If you are not, you have deceived me and you have deceived the Church, for we thought you were! We want to have none unit-

ed with us but those who are flying to Jesus! We want no self-righteous ones. No self-sufficient ones, no good moral people. We want those who feel that they are nothing at all and need Jesus Christ to be their All-in-All. We want a Church of poor ragged sinners, clothed by Jesus! Poor dead sinners, made alive by Jesus! I ask God, when I ask Him to give me any, to give me those who are flying with haste for a Savior! And if any of you who have come to us making a profession of flying are not such, I beseech you by everything that is solemn, by that Hell of hypocrites, which is the Hell of Hells and by the Heaven you would lose, to think about how sinfully you are acting, in continuing members of a Christian Church when you are hypocrites and have never fled!

But again—they are those who fly *not on the ground, but like a cloud, up high*. We know many a church to which the people come because there is so much charity connected with it. I know some country churches in the Establishment which are attended by some people because there are regularly given away so many sixpences after the service. That is flying like a will-o'-the-wisp, dancing about in dark marshy places! If I could buy all London for my congregation by the turn of a three-penny piece, I would not give it! If people do not come from some better motives, we do not wish to have any! But we have none of that sort, we trust. They fly higher than these groundlings. Zion rejoiced that they did not fly on the ground, but flew like a cloud. They were persons that did not care about the world, but wanted Heaven.

They were *souls filled with rain*, like the clouds. Or if they were not big and black with rain, as the clouds sometimes are when they are about to burst, yet they had a little Grace in them, a little moisture, a little dew.

And they were *persons driven by the wind*, just as the clouds are—who do not move of themselves, but go because they must go—who have no power of themselves to move, but have something driving them behind. Brothers and Sisters, we hope that the converts of this Church have been driven to us by the power of the Holy Spirit and could not help coming! We hope they have been men filled with rain, which they will drop out upon us in copious showers, if God pleases. We pray, by God's Grace, they have been like the clouds which tarry not for man, neither wait for the sons of men. They are with us now—and we hope to see the clouds go up higher and higher into the air, until those clouds shall, one by one be swallowed up in Jesus—shall be lost in the one assembly of the First-Born Church of the Holy Spirit! These are the persons who “fly as a cloud.”

We give you yet another answer, O you timid Church. Those who come to join themselves with you are *persons who have been regenerated*. For they are *doves*. They were not doves by nature. They were ravens. But they are now doves. They are changed from ravens into doves, from lions into lambs. Beloved, it is very easy for you to pretend to be the children of God, but it is not easy for you to be so! The old fable of the jackdaw

dressed up in peacock's feathers often takes place now. Many a time have we seen coming to our Church a fine strutting fellow with long feathers of prayer behind him. He could pray gloriously! And he has come strutting in, with all his majesty and pride and said, "Surely I must come. I have everything about me—am I not rich and polite? Have I not learning and talent?" In a very little while we have found him to be nothing but an old prattling jackdaw, having none of the true feathers belonging to him! By some accident, one of his borrowed feathers has dropped out and we have found him to be a hypocrite! I beseech you, do not be hypocrites! The Glory of the Gospel is not that it paints ravens white and whitewashes blackbirds, but that it turns them into doves! It is the Glory of our religion not that it makes a man seem what he is not, but that it makes him something else! It takes the raven and turns him into a dove—his ravenous heart becomes a dove's heart! It is not the feathers that are changed, but the man, himself. Glorious Gospel, which takes a lion and does not cut the lion's mane off and then cover him with a sheep's skin, but makes him into a lamb! O Church of God! These who have come like doves to their windows are trophies of Regenerating Grace—which has transformed them and made them as new creatures in Christ Jesus!

The last answer I shall give respecting those who have come to join themselves with us is that they are those, we hope, who have *fled to their windows* and found a refuge in Christ, my Lord. There is nothing we want to know of a person coming before the Church, except this—Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you had pardon from His hands? Have you had union with His Person? Do you hold communion with Him day by day? Is He your hope, your stay, your refuge, your trust? If so, then you may come in! If you are one living in the dovecot, we will not drive you away. If you have fled like a dove to your window, we are glad to have you! But there is the anxious question—Have you fled to Christ? Beloved, there are some who *think* they have fled to Christ who have not! And there are some who *think* they have not fled to Christ who have! There are some of you who think yourselves safe for Heaven, but who are nothing but whitewashed sepulchers, like the Pharisees of old! It is a horrible thought that there are some, we fear, who lay their head upon their death pillow as they think, in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection, but will in Hell lift up their eyes, being in torment! A dove, you know, can find good shelter for itself in other places beside a dovecot. There may be some little hole in the barn and in there the dove gets and builds its nest and is very happy and comfortable. Ah, dove, but there is no place that will protect you that is not a dovecot! And there is only one Dovecot! You have built a nice snug nest, perhaps, in some of your trees. You are building your hope in some one of your merits. You are putting your trust in some of your own works. It is all in vain! There is only one Dovecot. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid,

which is Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” There is only one hope for a poor sinner from the justice of Jehovah. And that is in the “Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief,” who “gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.” Do you know how *that* dovecot was made for you? Do you know how it is lined for you and how large the door is? It was made by Jesus, the carpenter’s son. It is lined with the blood of His own heart. And the door is so wide that the biggest sinner can get in—but he who has any righteousness will find that the door is not large enough to let him carry his righteousness with him. Poor soul! Have you a Dovecot? And are you living in it? If so, we rejoice with you and glad enough should we be to have you united with our Church, for we love all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ! Yet, lest you should not understand our holy religion, one moment shall suffice and you may go.

Do you not know that the Law which God made on Sinai has been broken by us all and that God, the “jealous God,” will “by no means spare the guilty”? And do you not know, O Sinner, that you must offer something to God to make up a recompense for what you have done? Do you not know that God is so angry with the man who sins that He will damn that man unless there is someone who will be damned for him and suffer the punishment in his place? And do you not know that our religion is a religion of *substitution*—that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became Man that He might take the punishment we ought to have had? That He bore the wrath we ought to have borne? That He took the guilt we committed, just as the scapegoat of old did and carried it right away into the wilderness of forgetfulness? So now a sinner who is putting his trust in that Substitution can escape punishment! God’s justice cannot demand payment twice—

**“First at my bleeding Surety’s hands,
And then again at mine.”**

Precious Jesus! What a Substitute You were for guilt! Sweet Lord Jesus! I kiss Your wounds this day. You Man! You God! You who did wrestle with Jacob! You who did walk with Abraham, the man of God, of Mamre! You who stood in the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego! You Son of God, You Son of Man who did appear to Joshua with your sword drawn! I worship You, my Substitute, my Hope! Oh, that others might do so, too—and that the whole of this vast multitude might, with one heart, accept You, by God’s Grace, as their Savior! Amen.

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

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

HEART DISEASE CURABLE NO. 1604

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 19, 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted."
Isaiah 61:1.***

THIS text receives great luster from the fact that it was one of the passages which the Savior read when He entered into the synagogue at Nazareth and preached on the Sabbath. It is as fresh as ever and we may still say of it, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." It is no small privilege that we poor under-shepherds should be permitted to take the same text as "that great Shepherd of the sheep." Our care must be to point to Him in it. I intended to have preached from these words in Luke 4:18, but when I looked at the Revised Version and found that the words were not there at all I was somewhat startled. I began to ask whether the emission was a correct one or not and, without making pretense to scholarship, I feel convinced that the revisers are acting honestly in leaving it out.

It was not in the original manuscript of Luke, but probably some pious person added it with the intention of making the quotation more complete. Whatever the intention may have been and however natural the added words may appear, it is a pity that the unknown Brother ventured to improve that which was perfect from the beginning. After resolving in my mind the fact, which I accept, that the passage was not written by Luke in his record, I have, I think, discovered the reason. When our Savior unrolled the Book of Isaiah, He read from it, but we are not certain that He read any one passage through. According to the Jewish Law it was allowed in the Prophets for the reader in the synagogue to skip, as we call it, to make selections and read here a passage and there a passage, as he aimed at bringing out his subject. As the words are given in our Authorized Version you will notice that the portion of Scripture is not exactly like the prophetic words in Isaiah 61 and that one sentence, at least, must have been taken from another part of the prophetic Book.

The Savior did read from Isaiah 61, but He also quoted other portions of Isaiah, probably taking a verse here and a verse there and blending them in one, just as sometimes, when I wish to give you a connected narrative, I read on in a chapter, say to verse eight, and then miss a piece to verse 16 and again run on to verse 24 and miss a few verses again. The Savior gave a resume of texts which stood near each other upon the roll and Luke records those upon which our Lord dwelt in His sermon. "But," you say, "why, then, if it is so, did He omit the words which describe Him as sent to bind up the brokenhearted?" It may possibly have been His intention to leave out all allusion to healing. They were all looking for Him to work miracles of healing that day and, therefore, He either omitted the sentence for the moment or else He did not dwell upon it, for I take it that

Luke is not giving us exactly the Scripture, but the sense of it, and those points in the Scripture upon which the Savior enlarged.

He probably gives us notes of those sentences which were both read and expounded and the Lord may have purposely refused to expound even if He read the sentence before us—"He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted." I say they were looking to Him to work miracles of healing and He did not mean to gratify them. We are told that, "He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief." He did not intend to exhibit Himself as a mere wonderworker and, therefore, but lightly touched upon the sentence about healing till further on, when He saw, as He read their hearts, that they noticed the omission and He, therefore, said to them, "You will surely say, Physician, heal Yourself"—which, being paraphrased, may run thus—"You either did not read that passage, or else you lightly treated it and yet a part of the Messiah's business is to heal the sick."

He perceived that by His own silence He had called their attention to the Scripture and that they were ready to quote it against Him by the challenge, "Physician, heal Yourself. Do for Your own family and city what You are said to have done at Capernaum." Our Lord paid no attention to claims based upon His dwelling in the place, for He knows no claim but that of mercy. He intended to exercise His Sovereignty and, therefore, He reminded them that healing was not sent to the lepers that were in Israel, but was sent only to Naaman who had nothing to do with Israel, but was one of that Syrian nation which opposed and oppressed Israel! Possibly He gave them nothing about healing that day because He knew that they were not brokenhearted.

He who reads men's hearts knew that they were captives to their unbelief, blinded by prejudice and fettered by sin and, therefore, He said, "He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." But the most tender part of the Gospel being inapplicable to their case, He would not mention it in their hearing at that time. He would not cast it like a pearl before swine, but reserved it until they should lament their sin and adopt another mood. This, it strikes me, is the reason why the passage is not mentioned in the original Gospel of Luke and, if so, the omission is most instructive. Take heed lest you, also, should miss the sweetest Word of the Gospel through being in an unfit state to receive it!

Concerning the fact of difference between the Revised and the Authorized Versions, I would say that no Baptist should ever fear any honest attempt to produce the correct text and an accurate interpretation of the Old and New Testaments. For many years Baptists have insisted upon it that we ought to have the Word of God translated in the best possible manner, whether it would confirm certain religious opinions and practices, or work against them. All we want is the exact mind of the Spirit as far as we can get it. Beyond all other Christians we are concerned in this, seeing we have no other sacred Book. We have no Prayer Book or binding creed, or authoritative minutes of conferences. We have nothing but the Bible and we would have that as pure as ever we can get it.

By the best and most honest scholarship that can be found, we desire that the common version may be purged of every blunder of transcribers, addition of human ignorance or human knowledge so that the Word of God may come to us as it came from His own hand. I confess that it looks a grievous thing to part with words which we thought were part and parcel of Luke, but as they are not in the oldest copies and must be given up, we will make capital out of their omission by seeing in that fact the wisdom of the great Preacher who did not speak upon cheering Truths of God when they were not needed and might have overlaid His seasonable rebuke. Although we have not the sentence in Luke, we do have it in Isaiah, and that is quite enough for me.

Indeed, if it were not in Isaiah, it is yet in other parts of the Word of God. Its meaning pervades the Bible—it is the very genius and spirit of the Old and New Testaments that the Messiah is sent to heal the broken-hearted. The Gospel comes that the miseries of men may be relieved, that the despair of the troubled may be cheered and that joy may glitter on all sides like the dew of the morning when the sun rises. I pray that the commission of Jesus Christ may be fulfilled this day to all the broken-hearted ones to whom the word of this message shall come. I hope there are none here who claim a *right* to healing, for, if so, the Lord will not listen to them. He will do as He wills with His own, for it is written, “He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy.”

The men of Nazareth claimed it in the synagogue that day because He had lived among them and so Jesus did not speak of healing them. Jesus gives freely, but if any man demands anything of Him as his due, He is jealous for His crown rights and will pay no regard to such insulting demands! His healing work is not of debt, but of Grace! It is not granted to presumptuous demands, but frankly bestowed as a free gift. Now turn to the text. “He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted.” Here are three matters for consideration—heart wounds, heavenly healing and an honored Healer.

I. First, let us think upon HEART WOUNDS. Many in this world live with broken hearts. Bad is a broken limb of any kind—bruised and wounded flesh is hard enough to bear—but when the fracture is in the *heart*, it is a sad business. Of all cases of distress, these are the most pitiable and yet they are very frequently despised. When a man’s spirit is cowed and his heart is crushed and he is despairing and utterly wretched, others get away from him, for he is dreary company. As the herd leaves the wounded stag to bleed and die alone, so do men instinctively avoid the society of those who are habitually gloomy. Their own desire after happiness leads men to escape from the miserable.

Be joyful and you shall attract; be sorrowful and you will scatter. Job truly says, “He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.” The careless, the giddy, the superficial look with horror upon those whose thoughtfulness rebukes them, while the prosperous and happy view them with reluctance because they remind them of sorrows which otherwise they might forget. God has smitten some men and their hearts are sorely broken beneath His rod and, therefore, their fellows hide their faces from them and despise them. Many

blame them and say they ought to shake off their gloom and make an effort to be brave. I know not all they say, but certain it is that among the despised and rejected of men we find a company who carry with them heartbreaks day and night.

What wonder, then, that they are frequently avoided—common humanity calls us to *help* those who are injured in limb and if there is an accident in the street, a crowd will soon be gathered and human kindness will exhibit itself. But if there is breakage of the heart, sympathy is soon exhausted and love, itself, grows weary of her hopeless efforts to console! Those who are taught of God will help the brokenhearted, but *human* sympathy is soon worn out because it is conscious of its inability to succor. You can set a limb and the bones will grow—but what can we do in the resetting of a fractured heart?

So, not liking to attempt the impossible, not caring to be continually baffled, it seems to be natural, even to good men, to be little anxious for the company of the desolate. Thus these unhappy ones are doomed to sigh out, “Lover and friend have You put far from me and my acquaintance into darkness.” I am afraid the story of Job is more often repeated than we think. When men come to comfort the forlorn, they often become embittered by their conscious failure and begin to upbraid till the poor tortured creature cries out in agony, “Miserable comforters are you all!” Therefore is the case of the brokenhearted a very hard one because they are often despised and avoided.

Happy is it for them that the Lord Jesus was sent to heal the brokenhearted! Apart from this, it is exceedingly painful to have a broken heart. The heart is the center of sensation and, therefore, its being broken involves the acutest of pangs. Sorrow bangs over the spirit in clouds which cannot be dispelled. Not only is their cup filled with sadness, but they sit by wells of sorrow. They have long forgotten the palm trees of Elim and they are filled with the bitter waters of Marah. They rest not day nor night—how can they? No pain of the flesh can equal heaviness of heart! Give me all the aches and pains which my body can endure, but spare me heartache! Break me alive on the wheel, but let me not live to be brokenhearted unless it is from the grand cause of penitence.

“A wounded spirit who can bear?” When the arrows penetrate the soul, then the lifeblood becomes as liquid fire and the man is a mass of misery. Besides, it weakens us, for when the heart is wounded the source of strength is impaired. A man who has a strong heart can do anything! However weak, feeble, crippled, or diseased he may be in body, yet if he keeps up his spirits, he can laugh at all his pains. But if the heart is crushed, what can he do? What can he hope? What can he endure? When fear is in the heart, the grasshopper becomes a burden, they that look out of the windows are darkened and the keepers of the house tremble. Far worse than the infirmities of old age are the miseries of a broken heart!

Ordinarily a broken heart is utterly incurable. How many times have I had to learn this lesson to my own deep humiliation. It has been my happy, happy lot to speak to brokenhearted ones and see them gradually rise to be of good cheer when my Lord has spoken through me. But apart from His Presence, I have argued, pleaded, explained and persuaded—and

all in vain! I have been almost dragged down into the wretchedness from which I hoped to rescue my fellow man, for the sympathy I have felt for the desponding has well-near made me despondent, myself!

What a variety of advice physicians give and what is the good of it all? "Take a journey," they say, "into foreign lands. See new cities, or amuse yourself among the Alps." Yes, but if the man carries with him a heart weary of life, he is apt enough to bring it back with him—and what good has he gained? "Attend the baths. Resort to the best physicians. Use electricity. Try strong exercise." This is all very well, for the body may need strengthening or purifying or awakening or resting, but if the secret of the disease is a broken heart and the hammer of God has smitten it—all the physicians in the world can be of no service—it shall end as with her of old who spent all her livelihood upon physicians and was no better, but rather grew worse.

There is a cure for this grievous malady of which we shall speak full soon, but there is none in Gilead, or in the whole of Nature's fields. Earthly pleasures and precepts are physicians of no value. Their ointments and their liniments, their outward oils and inward medicines are all of no use to reach the core of our being and restore the heart. Magicians may charm ever so wisely, but they cannot charm the hemlock from the furrows of the soul. When the heart is broken, who can rivet the shattered fragment? If there had been a remedy anywhere else, the Lord Jesus would not have left Heaven to heal! But inasmuch as He came on this errand, depend upon it—*nobody* else could have performed it.

This heartbreak in the end will be fatal if it is not healed. We are frequently reading of men who suddenly fall dead and the death certificate states that they died of disease of the heart. That is a way which physicians have of saying that they do not know what ailed the deceased. The heart is very much like Africa, a region unexplored. Mentally and spiritually it is so and when the heart is broken, true life is well-near gone. Existence ceases to be desirable when the spirits fail. Such morbid minds say with Job, "My soul chooses strangling rather than life." God grant that none may be so wicked and foolish as to end their own lives and thus leap into the fire to escape the heat. Doubtless many have gone down to the grave, melted away in tears, dissolved in woe. Unhappy those who live refusing to be comforted and die rejecting the one good and great Physician who could heal them! May none of you be of that unhappy company.

It is a sad story, this tale of the brokenhearted one, but in many a house it is well known. I invite you, Beloved, if you do not know the disease, to pray that you never may! And if you have any friends afflicted with it, be very tender and gentle with them. I remember the impression made upon my young heart, as a child, when I was taken to a house where there was a sad lady, always dressed in black, who said that she had committed the unpardonable sin. I remember the horror that I felt as I sat in the room with her and wanted, from very fear, to get away, thinking she must be a dreadfully wicked woman. Yet she may have been one of the most gracious of Christians and it is probable that she came out into the Light of God, again, before she departed this life.

These crushed ones are often the best of people. The fairest of our lilies are often broken at the stalk. Our ripest fruit is visited by the worm. Thank God they shall yet have beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning! Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

II. We will now, for a little while, speak upon the HEAVENLY HEALING. The Lord Jesus Christ has come into the world to bind up the broken-hearted and surely it means *all* the brokenhearted. I do not think we have any right to restrict texts of Scripture, as we very often do, to square them to our theological systems. In this case you will hear the passage interpreted to mean the *spiritually* brokenhearted and then people look within to see whether their pains are spiritual and thus they are kept from going to Christ. I do not mind revised versions, provided they really get at the original, but I do not mean to let you revise the version by putting in such qualifying words as you may think fit.

What a host of revised versions we have! Everybody has one of his own. Certain texts which will not fit into our system must be planed and cut down. Have you ever seen the hard work that some Brethren have to shape a Scripture to their mind? One text is not Calvinistic, it looks rather Arminian—of course it cannot be so and, therefore, they twist and tug to get it right. As for our Arminian Brethren, it is wonderful to see how they hammer away at the 9th Chapter of Romans—steam-hammers and screw-jacks are nothing to their appliances for getting rid of *Election* from that chapter! We have all been guilty of racking Scripture, more or less, and it will be well to have done with the evil, forever! We had far better be inconsistent with ourselves than with the Inspired Word of God.

I have been called an Arminian Calvinist or a Calvinistic Arminian and I am quite content so long as I can keep close to my Bible. I desire to preach what I find in this Book whether I find it in anybody else's book or not. And as I do not find "spiritual brokenhearted" in my text, I shall take the liberty of giving a wide range to this brokenheartedness. Many are brokenhearted from a sense of guilt. This is the best form of brokenheartedness in the world! When the hammer of God's Law comes down with its 10 strokes and every Commandment pounds the heart to powder, it is well. When a man once hears the Law of God proclaimed from burning Sinai with a voice of thunder, he ceases to trifle and is sorely afraid. He learns that God is angry with the wicked every day—"if he turns not He will whet His sword, He has bent His bow and made it ready"

His heart fails him as he hears this terrible declaration. Then is a man in bitterness as one that mourns for his only son, even for his first-born. Oh, that I should ever have lived to make my God my enemy; that ever I should have been so base, so ungrateful to my best Friend! Oh, cursed heart, to have loved its idols and have hated the Most High! Some of us knew, in the days of our conviction, what it was to hate the light of day and to dread the darkness of night—to long for our bed that we might sleep—and yet to toss there restlessly upon a pillow harder than Jacob's stone. O sin! Sin! Sin! If its weight is once felt. If the terrors of God once break loose upon an awakened conscience, the misery reaches to agony and the agony nears to death!

But, Beloved, our Lord Jesus has come to heal the anguish of the conscience by declaring that there is forgiveness with God, that He may be feared and He can be just and yet the Justifier of sinners who believe. Thus is it written, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleans us from all sin." "He that believes in Him is not condemned." Whenever the Lord Jesus is believingly received, the heartbreak of remorse is ended and the sinner rests at the foot of the Cross. When the Holy Spirit applies the blood of Atonement, the blood of the heart's wound ceases to flow. The griefs of Jesus end our grief—His death is the death of our despair! Substitution is the charming word which opens the gate of hope!

This form of heartbreak, if it is present here this morning, is my Lord's own specialty. In dealing with this He is altogether at home, for He delights in mercy! I have seen Him apply the liniments to the wounds with tender, downy-fingered hands, swathing the limb with hands so soft and yet so strong, that the gash has closed, never to open again! So speedy and so sure is His surgery that the broken heart has begun to sing as soon as He has touched it! Do it again, great Master! Do it at this very hour! Say, poor Sinner, "Lord, do it to *me*." He can heal when all others have failed. He can heal you now!—

***"When wounded sore, the stricken soul
Lies bleeding and unbound,
One only hand, a pierced hand,
Can save the sinner's wound."***

Another brokenness of heart is felt by those who regard themselves as outcasts. Few of you have ever felt that dreadful weight upon the soul. It is as a dreadful millstone about the neck. The woman whose sin may not be in God's sight more gross than that of others is yet regarded by society as utterly fallen and defiled—a thing to be flung from hand to hand and cast on the dunghill as a faded flower! Words cannot describe the shudder which passes over the mind of one betrayed and deceived when she perceives that she is, from now on, numbered with castaways. A like thing happens to the man who has been guilty of embezzlement, or some other form of dishonesty. He is found out, prosecuted by his employer, set before the court and sent to prison to be, from then on, a branded criminal.

Ah me, how dreadful must be the waking up on the first morning in a prison cell! He who was once courted will, from now on, be shunned—he is a broken man without a character—marked by all as an outcast. Ah, poor man, poor woman, Jesus receives sinners such as you! Some of us have known what it is to feel as if we were shut out from hope and from the mercy of God. We thought that He would not hear our cries. It was of no use for us to pray, so our fears told us—God could not have mercy upon such gross transgressors—He must leave us to ourselves and to our sins. We thought that He had set us up to be the targets of His arrows and to stand, like Pharaoh, the monuments of His wrath against the proud! Yet were our fears all false, for our Lord Jesus, who came to bind up the brokenhearted, has bound up all our wounds and we are happy in Him.

Fallen ones, He will restore you and give you rest! It is the glory of the Christian Church that it receives into its brotherhood the fallen and the outcasts as soon as they repent. The world offers no room for repentance,

but in the Church, all are penitents! When Jesus forms the center of a Church, there will be a ring of sinners attracted. Do we not read, "Then drew near unto Him, all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him"? Never did He drive them back, but He welcomed them—"This Man receives sinners and eats with them." Listen poor crushed one! However low you may have fallen, come to Jesus, for He will not cast you out! Come to His true servants, for it will be their joy to restore you. When the gates of respectability are shut, the gates of mercy and Christian love are still open! Return, O wanderer! A welcome awaits you! Jesus will make you whiter than snow. Though you may well believe that He asks Himself concerning you, "How shall I put *you* among the children?" yet He will do it, for He lifts the beggar from the dunghill—

***"That Christ will receive Him no sinner need fear,
The poorer the wretch, the welcomer here!
Though you may be outcast and banished afar,
Your welcome is certain, come just as you are."***

Another brokenness of heart is that of utter helplessness in which a man feels that he is too feeble to fight the battle of life. He is not only given up by others, but he has given up on himself. He floats like a deserted vessel, derelict, water-logged, abandoned. Sin has beset him. He has given way to temptations and now Satan binds him fast. Perhaps he has backslidden from the profession of religion and brought great dishonor upon the name of Christ and now he cries, "My last end will be worse than the first! I have crucified the Lord afresh and shall die in my sins! I neglected the means of Grace, I became slack in prayer, I turned my face away from God and now He has left me and I cannot get back again."

Alas, for men who are bound with such fetters, the iron enters into their souls! There are some here who once ran well—what hindered them that they should not obey the Truth of God? They have gradually slipped back, back, back, till now it is a question with them whether they ever knew the Grace of God in truth at all. They are grieved to have it so and long to be restored—but despair holds them. My gracious Lord Jesus Christ comes to you, backsliders, who are filled with your own ways, who labor and are heavy laden with the fear that you are cast away forever, and He says, "Return, you backsliding children."

He will help you to return. He will draw you and you shall run to Him. The love of Jesus has not changed! He loves even to the end. He will not cast away a soul that looks to Him. O taste and see that the Lord is good! Return to Him this morning. He will receive you graciously and love you freely—and you shall render to Him, again, the calves of your lips as once you used to do, for Jesus heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds! Many are broken in heart because they are afflicted so heavily. When sickness first comes to our door and we are new to it, it is a very unwelcome guest. New pains are sharp, fresh griefs appear intolerable, for as yet the bullock is unaccustomed to the yoke. By-and-by we bear our woes more patiently, but at first, the man afflicted with a disease which he knows will bring him to his grave is sadly cast down.

The man who sees business ebbing away and foresees bankruptcy and perhaps destitution, is crushed. Brother, if you receive Jesus Christ into

your heart, He will ease you by teaching you a sweet submission to the Divine will. He will tell you that "all things work together for good to them that love God." He will explain to you the doctrine of Providence. He will make you to consider the end of the Lord, for He is very pitiful even in His sharpest dispensations and He will supply you with such strength of Grace that you will be able to endure pain or poverty. Thus will He support you till your heart shall become strong and you shall bravely face the afflictions and conflicts of life.

Some are brokenhearted through bereavement. One laments, "I have lost my wife." Another bemoans herself, "I have lost my husband." Or a third cries, "My mother is gone." Or a fourth, with motherly tenderness, mourns the dearest child that ever nestled in a woman's bosom. "Alas," cries each one, "I can never survive the stroke!" We have all endured sorrow, but bereavements are a sharp sword. Friends can do little to fill up the great gap which death has made. Ah, it is, indeed, an aching void which is left in an affectionate heart when the dear object of love is torn away. The best of people in this respect suffer most. Herein is comfort from Jesus! The blessed doctrine of the Resurrection cheers the darkness of the sepulcher!

Jesus says, "Your brother shall rise again." The blessed thought of the eternal felicity of those that we gladly would have detained below is a sweet recompense for their loss. We remember our Lord's prayer—"I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory." Sometimes, in prospect of losing our beloved ones, we pull very hard earthward and cry, "Father, I will that they be with *me* where *I* am." Did you ever feel a pull the other way and start, and look to see who pulls Heavenward? You watch and see that it is Jesus praying, "Father, I will that they be with Me where I am." Whenever Christ and you come to cross purposes I know you will yield, for you will gladly acknowledge that the dear ones are more Christ's than yours! Let them go. Jesus, we can part with all for You! It is no parting, when we know that our beloved is with You! Thus does Jesus, who Himself wept for Lazarus, heal broken hearts whose joy is buried with those they loved so well.

There are many other forms of this disease. I have known hearts to be thoroughly broken by desertion. One whom you loved and trusted proves false and the early love of a true heart is broken like a potter's vessel. What desolation fills many a soul that once was happy as the birds—for treachery wastes like the scourge of war! When a choice friend betrays you, or a professed Brother in Christian work, who ought to have held up your hands, weakens and opposes you, it is a blow upon the heart as when a bone is broken by the hammer. Yet there is consolation, for He who had His Judas and bitterly cried, "He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me," knows how to bind up such a broken heart, for He becomes a Friend that sticks closer than a brother and He makes us feel, in the sweet tenderness and faithfulness of His Divine companionship, that we are not alone, for the Lord is with us.

He is better unto us than 10 friends! So long as He smiles, sunshine is on our way! Ahithophel may join our enemies and Judas may sell us for

silver, but we are secure, for He will make the wrath of man to praise Him and neutralize its gall by the sweetness of His company. I am certain that there is no form of broken heart present but what there is medicine for it in the Word of God and in Jesus who is the Word of God. The leaves of this tree are for the healing of nations. Christ Jesus brings a cure-all for those who are otherwise incurable. In His dispensary there are remedies compounded by Divine art which will touch the heart and act upon it like a charm till it shall throb with pleasure as much as it now palpitates with anguish.

This is no quackery. His is a scientific system of surgery which has borne the test of ages and has been proven by the experience of countless sufferers to be Infallible. Here we stand, ourselves, living witnesses of His skill! He has bound us up and we are now saved from heartache and made to praise Him with our whole heart!

III. Our third theme is THE HONORED PHYSICIAN and this is the central point of the text. Jesus says, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted." Observe, first, that this honored Physician gives *personal* attention to the brokenhearted. He says, "He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted." Daniel said, "My God has sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths," but as for you brokenhearted ones, you receive *personal* attention from your Lord! The Lord has sent Jesus Christ Himself because the task needs a Divine hand.

The Lord's servants, without their Lord, can do no more than the staff of Elisha did when Gehazi laid upon the dead child and there was neither voice nor hearing. The great Prophet Himself is coming and wonders will be seen among us! He is here at this moment in His own proper Person and He will not fail in any case that is brought to Him. Many a great physician has so much practice that he is compelled to take a partner or an assistant, but my Lord is able to do all His work and none can interfere in it. Jesus Himself, personally, with His own pierced hands, continues to bind up the brokenhearted! Does not this fact tend to already comfort you? If Jesus undertakes to lift you up, it will be done! He is the consolation of Israel, appointed to comfort all that mourn.

Come, old Simeon, take Him up in your arms and forget the infirmities of age! Come, widowed Anna, and give thanks to God for Him who is the Husband of the lonely heart! He will, Himself, wipe all tears from the eyes of His people and He will do it now! O you who in your youth are bearing the yoke of grief and declare that your life is blighted, say so no more—for Jesus comes to help you, even He, Himself! Remember the record, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord"—the same sight shall gladden you!

This Physician is fully qualified. He is called Christos, or Christ, which signifies Anointed—"The Lord has anointed Me." I am sure that Jesus can cure broken hearts because God has given Him the Spirit, even the Comforter, to rest upon Him without measure that His words may drop with the oil of comfort. O, trust Him now! He has all the fitness for His work that God can give Him. He is complete and we are complete in Him. A broken heart needs oil to be poured into its wounds and, "Christ," is an

oily name—He is christened a Savior, anointed a Healer! The good Samaritan poured in oil and wine, but here is heavenly oil in the hands of One who is, Himself, the health of our countenance

As if this were not enough, notice that our Lord is commissioned. “He has *sent Me*,” He says. First, “anointed Me,” then, “sent Me.” Our Lord said to the blind man, “Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam, which is, being interpreted, sent.” How I wish that you who are brokenhearted would go and wash in this pool and find comfort in the blessed fact that the Anointed is sent of God to you! The Great Father thought so much of you that He sent a special Messenger to heal you! Yes, sent the best one there was in Heaven to be a Missionary to you! No other was fit to be second to Him, but God emptied Heaven of its superlative Glory and sent His own Son down below that He might bind up broken hearts—I cannot imagine a failure of this Messiah—the Sent One.

This is the Shiloh for whose salvation Jacob waited, looking for Him who should be sent. This is the Apostle, or Sent One of our profession, sent on purpose that He might comfort all the heirs of sorrow. Jesus is carrying on a mission, a mission for the desolate! He is a Missionary to the forlorn, commissioned to commiserate, appointed to relieve. Observe, then, His qualifications and His commission. He bears a diploma of the highest value! He is the Royal Physician—Surgeon in Ordinary to all bleeding hearts! O that you would put your mournful cases into His hands!

Remember, also, what He is in Person and Character and I think you will at once say, “I will submit my broken heart to Him that He may heal me.” For Jesus, your Physician, is one who knows heartbreak by having felt it. He said, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death.” I will tell you one of the most terrible tormentors in the world, excelling even an Inquisitor—it is an unfeeling comforter. Save me from a man who comes to console me wearing a face of marble and a heart of stone! His words put grit into your wounds, or what if I say—salt? Job knew this dreadful affliction.

Look, then, at the reverse of the picture—the surest Comforter is one who is touched with a feeling of our infirmity, seeing He was tempted in all points like as we are. “No,” says the broken heart, “Christ never knew *my* pain.” Ah, but He did. What is it? That you have been slandered? Jesus cries, “Reproach has broken My heart!” Is it that you are forsaken by friends? Is it not written, “Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled”? Is it that you are forsaken by *God*? Did not Jesus cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me”? Is it that your cup is bitter? Did He not pray three times that the cup might pass from Him and still the cup was not removed? He leads you through no darker rooms than He went through before—and in all He is so tenderly sympathetic with you that He is the best Physician you can desire.

Besides, how gentle He is, as a mother with her child! He is meek and lowly in heart, considerate, tender—there was never one like He! He has soft fingers for sore places, sweet liniment for sharp cuts and precious balm for bleeding wounds. The oil with which He was anointed has both perfume and soothing about it. It is so sweet that those who are far away

may perceive it and it is so rare a salve that it works its way and touches wounds which nothing else could reach. Jesus has great skill in bringing light into the dreary recesses of darkened minds. Oh that you knew my Master! If you had seen Him as my broken heart saw Him on my first spiritual birthday, when I heard the word that says, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth"—I say, if you had seen Him as I then saw Him you would have rushed to His feet for healing!

I was at the ends of the earth! I thought I was ready to slip over the edge, altogether, and sink into the abyss! But in obedience to His command, I *looked*. It was the dim look of a half-blinded eye. I looked through my tears, but hardly hoped to see Him. Still I looked. I turned my eyes that way and I resolved that if I were lost it should be lying at Jesus' feet. I believed He was able to save me and I left myself with Him—and He has done great things for me, to which I cheerfully bear witness! He keeps on blessing me and He will complete His work before long. I know whom I have believed and I rest in Him! O dear hearts that are breaking, I wish you would do as I did! I would to God the same Grace would lead you, at once, to fall at my Lord's feet! Swoon away into Christ's arms! Do not try to get stronger—be weaker, if weaker you can be! Be *nothing* and let Him be your All! Die into His life!

Come, brokenhearted ones, do not try to bind *yourselves* up—you will only wound yourselves the more! Do not look for comfort into the black and horrible abyss of your own nature, but look to Him whom God has sent! Get right away from what *you* are to what *He* is. Have you a legion of devils in you? He is the devils' Master and can turn them all out at once! Does Satan, himself, seem to hold you in his grip? He who of old has fought the fiend and vanquished him will lead your captivity captive and take the prey from the mighty! If you must despair, despair yourself into Christ—I mean by that self-despair which is the next of kin to humble faith in Jesus—drop into His hands. Faint upon Christ's bosom and lie there in happy helplessness.

May the Lord disable you for anything else and lead you to believe in His Anointed! God has sent you Jesus! Will you not admit Him? He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. Come, then, at once, and believe in Him whom God has sent!

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FREEDOM AT ONCE AND FOREVER NO. 2371

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 29, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 13, 1888**

***“To proclaim liberty to the captives.”
Isaiah 61:1.***

I DO not know whether you generally read the daily newspaper. I think we might get up a “Society for the Suppression of Useless Knowledge.” A great deal that appears in the newspapers amounts only to that—and much time is wasted reading the paper. But sometimes we get a gem among the news and, to my mind, there was a gem contained in a Reuter’s telegram, from Rio Janeiro, May 10th—“The Brazilian Chamber of Deputies has voted the immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery in Brazil.” My heart rejoiced as I read that paragraph! I hope it does not mean that this vote can be defeated in some other Chamber, or the abolition can be prevented by some other power. But if it means that slavery is to be immediately and unconditionally abolished in Brazil, I call upon you all to thank God and rejoice in His name! Wherever slavery exists, it is an awful curse, and the abolition of it is an unspeakable blessing. All free men should praise God and especially those whom Christ has made free, for they are, “free indeed.”

I am not going to preach about the slavery in Brazil and yet the message about its abolition will be a great part of my theme. There is another slavery, a slavery into which *we* were born, a slavery in which we have lived and, alas, a slavery under which some of us still smart. And Jesus Christ has come, as the Great Liberator, “to proclaim liberty to the captives.” There is no question about *that* emancipation! It is not a Chamber of Deputies which has voted it and it is not a thing which may be thrown out by another parliamentary body. Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, has, Himself, come with Divine authority—authority never to be questioned or disputed—to proclaim liberty from the slavery of sin!

When there was a royal proclamation to be made in the olden times, they used to employ men to go with trumpets through the streets of the city and to the villages and towns in the country, to summon the people to the market cross, to hear the king’s message. That is what I am here for tonight—to sound the Gospel trumpet as best I can, and to make this proclamation—“O yes, O yes, in the name of the great King of Kings, there is liberty for the bond slaves of Satan, deliverance for those who are under captivity to sin.” I am going to proclaim that good news with all my might and with joyful earnestness to tell the slaves of sin and Satan that there is liberty for them through the Great Emancipator, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

I. I shall begin by describing THE NATURE OF THIS LIBERTY. Let me turn to my newspaper paragraph again—"The Brazilian Chamber of Deputies has voted the immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery in Brazil."

So the proclamation which I have to make, tonight, concerns *immediate liberation*. You have been the slave of sin long enough! You need not be sin's slave any longer. Christ has not come to work out for you a deliverance which will take hours, days, weeks, or months to complete—He has come to knock your fetters off with a single stroke and to set you free at once! If His gracious power is manifested in this assembly, the former slave of sin will go out of the Tabernacle door *free*—not half-free, with one or two of his fetters broken—there shall be for him immediate liberty! It does not take any time to work in the human heart the great change which is called regeneration. There may be a great many things going *before* it and coming *after* it which take up much time, but to pass from death to life is the work of an instant! It must be so. If a man is dead and he is made alive, there can be no interval between the state of death and the state of life. There must be a second in which the transition takes place. When a blind man's eyes are opened, it may be that he does not see for some time very clearly, but there is an *instant* in which the first beam of light enters the eyes and falls upon the retina, and in which the eyes become conscious of the power of light. So, in a moment, while I am speaking, the Lord can save you! In an instant, you slaves of sin and Satan, He can make you free! It is the immediate abolition of slavery that I have to proclaim to you!

I believe that, in Brazil, they have been trying a system of apprenticeship. It was the Emperor's intention—and God bless that Emperor—he thought that all slaves should be free, but he thought that a little time ought to be taken to prepare them for liberty, to educate them up to the state in which they could act as free men. So they were apprenticed and liberation came gradually to certain of them after a period of servitude. But this act of the Deputies, if it is really carried, is for immediate abolition and no apprenticeship. Now, I do not want any of you to be apprenticed, as it were, and to wait awhile before you get free! I know that, with regard to the slavery of drunkenness, men think that they will drink a little less, and a little less, and gradually give it up. Do not drink any at all! Have done with it right now—you ought not to need to have any apprenticeship to the evil thing! So is it with the lusts of the flesh—men suppose that they can gradually subjugate their passions and lift themselves out of that slavery. No, dear Sirs, it must be done at a stroke! And it *will be* if it is really done! You shall be immediately and on the spot set free!

That poor creature who had left his father's house and went into a far country and reduced himself to such poverty that he was feeding swine—degrading work for a Jew to perform—how did he get back to his father? He said, "I will arise and go to my father. And he arose and went to his father." If he had stopped. If he had reasoned with his master. If he had said, "You must set me to feed sheep and not pigs." If he had asked for an increase of wages, he would have remained in the far country. He never gave his old master ten minutes' notice, but he ran to his father

straight away. That is the only way to be saved—to run for it—just as Lot fled out of Sodom! There must be no hesitation, no staying, but an immediate, determined resolve to quit the dominions of sin and to fly to the shelter of God's Grace! O great King of Kings, may it be immediate liberation to many here, tonight, without any sort of apprenticeship! May they come to Christ and at once find liberty!

There is a notion abroad that you cannot be sure that you are saved till you come to die. Is that the Gospel? Am I to proclaim liberty only to men who are about to die? I will preach no such Gospel! I come to proclaim, in my Master's name, *immediate abolition, instantaneous pardon*, a present change of heart, the breaking of the chain and setting the captive free at once! Do not believe that you are to go through all your life only hoping and fearing, doubting and hesitating. That is like the old Popish doctrine! But good, true, Protestant, Bible doctrine is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." The moment you believe, you have it! You have passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation! I am glad that I have to proclaim the immediate abolition of slavery to all who trust Christ. However badly I may tell it, it is such good news that any here who feel their slavery—and long to be set free—will leap to hear the glad tidings.

But, in the next place, if I look at my paper, again, I find that it says, "The Brazilian Chamber of Deputies has voted the immediate and *unconditional abolition* of slavery in Brazil." I like that word, "unconditional." It demands no payment! It does not say, "You must bring so much and then you shall be set free." No, if the slave has not a penny. If he is utterly bankrupt, he is set free by the decree of the Chamber. And likewise, there is no payment for Gospel liberty! You are bid to come and take the Free Grace of God, "without money and without price." You could not bring sufficient *anything* to pay for salvation, even if God were willing to sell it! It cost the Savior His *life*—you cannot have anything to match with that wondrous redemption money! That which only Christ could buy, and buy with His blood, you certainly cannot purchase with any merits of your own, even if God allowed you to do so! Come then, and take this liberty—it is unconditional, that is, without payment!

Unconditional also means that it is given without any promises on the slave's part. It might have been made a condition that he should be set free provided that he did so much at certain times, or if he promised this, and promised that. But no, this liberation in Brazil is unconditional. The man is free in the largest sense of the word—there is no mortgage upon him to be paid off, by and by—he is wholly, absolutely and unconditionally free. What a Gospel this is that we preach! It sets poor sinners free without an, "if," or a, "but," asking nothing of them, giving everything to them! Even the requirements of Grace are the gifts of Grace. If you are bid to repent, your repentance is *given to you* by Him who is exalted on high to give it! Faith is asked of you, but even faith is *a gift of God* and the work of the Spirit of God! Salvation is unconditionally given to those whom God has chosen, who have proven their choice by hearing the Word with faith and accepting it unconditionally.

It took me a long time to get hold of this Truth of God. I kept thinking that I must *do* something, or that I would have to *suffer* something. I thought that I would be driven to despair, or be made to agonize and so forth. God knows that I had enough of that experience, but I always kept thinking that my hope lay there. Oh, what a mercy it is to catch the meaning of this word, “unconditional!” Whatever you may be or may not be, Jesus Christ comes to set poor sinners free! And when they believe on Him, they are set free without any condition. You see a horse in a meadow, sometimes, with a halter on. It is easy work to catch him. Ah, but God does not turn us out into a meadow with a halter on! He takes the halter off when He sets us at liberty and the devil, himself, cannot catch us again! The Lord takes the fetters off the one whom He makes to be His child. He does not leave him with a long chain on one of his legs, and say, “You are free, all but that.” Oh no, it is *unconditional* emancipation! Who is there who will refuse to accept deliverance from slavery which is immediate and unconditional?

But I notice, next, in my newspaper, here, that, “the Chamber of Deputies voted the immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery”—that is to say, that there is not to be any more slavery in Brazil. Slavery actually ceases to exist there! You cannot find a slave. Not only are slaves free, but *slavery*, itself, is abolished! Oh, is not this a wonderful fact? Sin is one great slavery, but Christ comes and pardons it and He so pardons it that sin, itself, ceases to be! “In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none.” Part of the work of the Messiah, as revealed to Daniel, was, “To make an end of sins.” Well, if He makes an end of sins, there’s an end of them, is there not? Jesus comes to drown our sins in the depths of the sea, to blot them out as a cloud is blotted out, so that they actually and absolutely cease to exist! He has come to remove from us the penalty and the guilt of sin so entirely that there is an abolition of the slavery of sin which is immediate and unconditional.

Then the Lord Jesus Christ also comes to abolish the *power* of sin. He takes away from us our slavery to our passions, our lusts, our infirmities, our constitutional temperaments. “Oh,” says one, “I am glad to hear *that!* Do you mean to say that the Lord Jesus Christ can set me free from the *power* of sin?” Yes, I do mean to say that, and He can do it immediately! He can do it now, while you are sitting in that seat. If you have come in here fond of strong drink, the Grace of God can make you go out hating the very sight of it! If you have come in here proud, the Grace of God can make you go away broken-hearted and humble! If you have come in here lascivious, the Grace of God can take out of your soul the impurity and make you love that which is sweet, and pure, and holy!

“Well,” says one, “I do not believe in such amazing changes.” I did not say that you did, but if you had ever felt them, you would believe in them! Some of us have experienced these changes and there are many, now, in Heaven, who were once among the foulest of the foul! But the Lord Jesus came and set them free from the power of their corrupt natures—and they became holy people, a people who were examples to oth-

ers—and that same Lord Jesus Christ can give *you* immediate, unconditional deliverance from the power of sin!

I will tell you another thing. There is one power that sin has over us, and that is a feeling full of dread. Conscience co-operates with it and, sometimes, very properly so. But these slaves in Brazil, when they are set free, will not have to come up once a month to have their backs made bare and to receive 20 lashes apiece. Oh, dear, no! It is unconditional abolition of slavery they are to have. And when the Lord sets His people free from the guilt and power of sin, He delivers them from the lash of sin, takes away the spirit of bondage and gives them the spirit of liberty! They were afraid of God, before, but now they come to Him, crying, “Abba, Father,” entering into His presence with joy and delight! It is wonderful how soon this unholy dread, this slavish fear, is cast out of the heart. Immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery means the removal, not only of sin, but also of the guilt, the penalty, the dread and the bondage which come of sin! We have to proclaim that emancipation tonight!

These slaves in Brazil, if they are, indeed, set free, will not be slaves again. The decree of the Deputies is not that they are to be set free for six years, but forever! I hope that Brazil will be like our own country in this respect. You know how Cowper sang—

**“Slaves cannot breathe in England. If their lungs
Receive our air, that moment they are free!
They touch our country and their shackles fall!”**

Well, so it is in the Kingdom of Grace—there will be no going back to slavery if Christ once sets you free. “If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed”—and free forever!

The slaves in Brazil, if they are set free, will be emancipated lawfully—they will not have stolen their liberty. No, if anybody were to speak to one of these emancipated slaves, and say, “You have no right to be free,” he would answer, “I have! I am authorized to be free by the highest authority—the rulers of the land have made me a free man.” Oh, Beloved, if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are set free from the law of sin and death by the highest possible authority! The Law of God, Himself, has set us free! Justice demands our freedom, and mercy secures it. So, you see that it is immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery that we have to proclaim by the preaching of the Gospel!

And listen once more. This proclamation is universal throughout all Brazil. Some slaves are very black, but nowadays some slaves are nearly white. I have heard of a good many who were in slavery and who had not a discernible tint of black about them—and yet they were slaves. Well, there is liberty for the whitest and for the blackest, too! I do not know whether you are whites or blacks—it may be that you are very black, that you have gone very far into sin—but there is liberty even for you! It may be that you are not so very black—you are a brown sort of sinner, neither very good nor very bad. Or it may be that you are nearly white. Well, well, the same Christ gives liberty to all who put their trust in Him!

Some of these slaves in Brazil are probably very young. Perhaps some of them were only born a day or two ago, but they are now free. O you

young children, boys and girls, young men, young women—you cannot be free too soon! You cannot obtain the liberty with which Christ makes His people free too early in your lives! A young slave is a dreadful sight. It is sad to think that while he is yet so young, he should have lost his liberty. God set you young slaves free! But if there is a man in Brazil who is a hundred years old and he is a slave, this proclamation makes him free. Even so, if you have lived a long while in sin, Jesus is able to set you free from it! He can take away your old habits! The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots, but Christ can wash Ethiopian sinners white and He can change leopard sinners so as to make them gentle as fawns! Do not doubt Christ's power because of your age! You are neither too young nor too old to have the liberty that He gives to all who trust Him!

Slaves in Brazil were generally born slaves and you, also, were born slaves. But the Lord Jesus Christ can deliver you from the mischief worked by Adam and set the home-born slaves at liberty from original sin! Some become slaves willingly. I do not suppose that many do so, literally, but we have, all of us, *willingly* bowed our necks to the yoke of sin. This is the worst part of the slavery, that it is the slavery of our wills. We have willed to sin and we have taken pleasure in it, but, Beloved, even if it is so, Christ is able to set us free! Perhaps some men swore to their masters that they would never leave them, that they always would be with them as their slaves. But this decree of the Deputies has set them free. There may be somebody here—I hope there is not—but there may be a man, here, who has sold himself to the devil. There may be some woman, here, who has given herself up, body and soul, to work iniquity. But even if it is so, the Lord can say, “Your Covenant with death shall be disannulled and your agreement with Hell shall not stand.” You never were your own, so you could not give yourself to Satan! You are released from all your rash promises and your wicked oaths! You cannot be bound by any covenant that you have made with the devil and with sin! Come and be free, for thus says the Lord, there is immediate, unconditional emancipation for all such as desire to be delivered from sin and to have the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free!

II. Now, secondly, and very briefly, I am going to speak upon THE METHOD OF LIBERATION. I have described the *nature* of the liberty, now let me tell you the *method* of liberation.

It is not thus in Brazil, but what I am going to speak about has to do with the Kingdom of God's Grace. Listen and learn! This is the method of liberation. First, *Heaven provided a Ransom*. When our slaves in Jamaica were set free, it was a glorious act, and you remember that the English nation paid many millions of pounds to the owners of the slaves. There has been a Ransom paid for the sons of men—Jesus Christ bore on the tree the Ransom for me, and for you, also, if you believe in Him. This is the basis of our liberty, that Christ has bought us with a price and set us free!

The next thing is that *Sovereign Grace proclaims the blood-bought sinner free*. God, from His Throne, declares that those for whom Christ has died shall live, that those whom He has bought shall be His in that day

when He makes up His jewels. God, the all-glorious Jehovah, proclaims the blood-bought sinner free, and free he is!

But, next, *Almighty Grace secures the believing one's emancipation.* Grace comes to the soul and finds it a captive. But Grace resolves that it shall be free. At first the sinner does not care for freedom—he hugs his chains like the Israelites did in Egypt, when they cried, “Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians.” God will not have it so! He turns the heart of the Egyptians against Israel and they oppress the Israelites—and make them hate their bondage. Oh, it is a blessed thing when God begins to make you feel uneasy in your slavery! Some of you have got on very well under the dominion of the devil up till now, but you are beginning to fret a little—you do not enjoy sin as you used to do. You have been gathering in part of the wages of sin, which is death. Some receive these wages in their bodies, others receive them in their minds when they begin to feel despondency and despair creeping over them. The prospect of death is unpleasant to you. Sin begins to be a burden hard to bear. I am glad of it! The greatest, hardest work of Grace is to make the slave of sin willing to be set free. Grace is doing that and, having gone so far that it has made you hate your chains and long for liberty, it will bring you out of captivity!

You may be a long time before you see the outer gate of the prison and escape from the house of bondage, but you shall see it. If you see it, tonight, I pray the living God to help you run through that open gate and to be free *tonight—tonight*—for I cannot help desiring that my subject, the immediate abolition of slavery, may come home with saving power to some heart! Oh, you young men, and lads of fifteen, I remember when I came into a House of Prayer—a very small one it was—and sat under the gallery with all my fetters on. But then I wanted to be free! I longed to be set at liberty and when I heard that blessed message, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth,” I looked—and I tell you it was my surprise, and it is *still* my surprise—that my fetters were all gone in a moment! They seemed to be of iron, and of iron they were, but they melted as the morning frost melts in the sun when the beams of the Grace of God, in the glorified and exalted Savior, came streaming in upon my soul! I was free in a moment! It was immediate, unconditional abolition of slavery! Grace had done it! Grace had done it! O Lord, let Your Grace do the same for others now!

Often, when I come in at the door and my eyes fall on this vast congregation, I feel a tremor go through me to think that I should have to speak to you all and be, in some measure, accountable for your future state. Unless I preach the Gospel faithfully and with all my heart, your blood will be required at my hands. Do not wonder, therefore, that when I am weak and sick, I feel my head swim when I stand up to speak to you, and my heart is often faint within me. But I do have this joy at the back of it all—God does set many sinners free in this place! Some people reported that I was mourning that there were no conversions. Brothers and Sisters, if you were all to be converted tonight, I should mourn for the myriads outside! That is true, but I praise the Lord for the many who are converted here. When I came last Tuesday to see converts, I had 21

whom I was able to propose to the Church—and it will be the same next Tuesday, I do not doubt. God is saving souls! I am not preaching in vain. I am not despondent about that matter—liberty is given to the captives and there will be liberty for some of them tonight! I wonder who it will be? Some of you young women over yonder, I trust. Some who have dropped in here, tonight, for the first time. Oh, may this first opportunity of your hearing the Word in this place be the time of beginning a new life which shall never end—a life of holiness, a life of peace with God!

This, then, is how sinners are liberated. Christ pays the ransom price, the Father declares them free, the Grace of God secures their liberty and, further, if they are once made free, then *a righteous Law protects them*. The masters in Brazil cannot get back their slaves. There is an old villain who used to flog his slave. He said that he had the right to beat his own as much as he liked. But when once the Negro is free, he dare not touch him. He would like to get him back, again, but what would the black man do if his master tried to make him a slave again? Why, he would appeal to the law! And so will we! If Christ has made us free, we will appeal to the Law of God! We will go to the High Court of Justice and say to the Judge of All, “Lord, You have made me free. Will You not preserve to me my liberty?” It is God that justifies! Who is he that condemns? Who can make him a slave whom God declares to be free? Oh, that you might all know this liberty and enjoy it! God grant it to you, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake!

III. I finish with the third point, which is this—THE PERSONS WHO OBTAIN THIS LIBERTY. I will say only a very little upon this head, but I am hoping that many here will be able to say, “I belong to that lot, the persons who obtain this liberty.”

First, *they were once slaves*. These Brazilian Deputies cannot set a man free if he is not a slave. The Grace of God cannot heal a man who is not sick. God Almighty cannot make a man alive who is not dead. It is essential to us that we be in slavery, or else we cannot be liberated! Come now, what do you say about this? Does anyone answer, “I was born free, and was never in bondage to any man. I am as good as my neighbors, yes, and better than most of them”? I have nothing to say to you. “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick.” There is no Christ for you who have no sin! There is no salvation for you who never dreaded condemnation! How could there be? Does Christ come to give clothes to those who are already well clad? Does He come to feed those who are already feasted, or to enrich those who are increased in goods and have need of nothing? Not He! He comes to preach *repentance* to the sinner and *pardon* to the guilty. You must be a slave, or there is no freedom for you!

And, as far as my piece of paper is concerned, the slaves who are set free must be slaves in Brazil, that is, for the time being, *slaves under the reign of Grace*. If they are not in Brazil, the Brazilian Deputies cannot set them free. And you must come into the Kingdom of Christ if you would be emancipated! O you slaves, you must come under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ! You must be willing, from this time on, to call Him King, to obey Him and to abide by His laws. You must come to Him just

as you are, quit your life of sin and love Him! And love His holiness and seek to serve Him! If you come under the dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ, then there is absolutely proclaimed to you, tonight, immediate, unconditional abolition of slavery! God grant that you may obtain this priceless Gift!

And, once more, *this emancipation is for all who will accept it unconditionally.* Now, one would think that when the freedom is to be given unconditionally, everybody would say, "That suits me. If there are no conditions, I am sure that I do not want any, for if there were conditions, I might not be able to comply with them." But I find that every man will have conditions. One says, "Yes, yes, I would like to be saved, but then I do not want to give up my sins." Do you not? Then you must remain a slave! "Well," says another, "I would like to give up *most* of my sins, but there is *one* which I could not give up. The fact is, I have to make my living through it—I cannot give *that* up." You must either remain a slave, or you must come to be unconditionally set free!

"But I do not wish to be set free by Grace," says a third, "I would like to *do something* towards my salvation." I know you would. You would like to have some of the honor of it, but it will never be written up, "Christ and Company, Saviors, Limited." It would be very "limited," I am sure, if it were so! You must have all Christ, or no Christ! Christ must save you from the A to the Z of the alphabet, or else you will never be saved at all! Will you surrender unconditionally, since God gives His Grace unconditionally? Away with all terms and conditions! Come as you are. Come now. Come immediately! Come unconditionally and you shall be saved! The Lord grant you Grace to yield to His mercy and to yield at once!

"What shall I do?" asks one. "I think I will go home and pray." Well, you may do so, if you like, but the Gospel message is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Still, do pray, for God does hear prayer. That is a wonderful story that came to us lately. You may have seen it, perhaps, in the paper. There was picked up, on the shore of Western Australia, (I forget the town for the moment), an albatross. It was dead on the beach and on the bird's neck was a card tied with a string. The man who picked up the card took it to someone in authority, for on it was written, "Thirteen of us sailors cast away on the Crozets." These are a number of rocky islands in the far south of the Indian Ocean. The ship in which these men had sailed had been wrecked and they were left with a certain quantity of biscuits on the Crozet Islands. I do not know how they caught the albatross, but it shows the genius of man and the love of life, for they managed to catch this great strong-winged bird and fastened the card about his neck. And he must have taken a flight of nearly 2,000 miles, and have fallen down on the shore with the shipwrecked mariners' message!

The French Government dispatched a man-of-war to the Crozets—and so did the English Government. These poor fellows had not only sent tidings by the albatross, but they had also gathered a great pile of stones, and put a flag on the top, to attract the attention of any who might pass that way. Nothing has been seen of them, for they did not wait long enough—they put out to sea in the two boats in which they reached the

islands and they have never been heard of since, so far as I know—but see what efforts they made! They piled the stones to attract the attention of passing sailors and they hung the card about the neck of the albatross. Why, there did not seem one chance in a thousand that the bird would ever go to a shore where that message would be *read*, yet the men did what they could!

Now, I exhort you, if you are dying and perishing, do *anything* that you can that may bring you relief! Send a petition up to Heaven. Though it may seem as if you hung your prayer upon a poor bird's neck, send it flying! Pile up the stones with the flag on the top—your groans, cries and tears—that you may attract attention to your desperate state! Yet you are not, after all, driven to such bare chances as these! You may pray as much as you like, but the Gospel message is, "Believe, and live." Bear the royal proclamation and ask for nothing more! There is redemption—the ransom price is paid—the slave is free! Believe it. Accept it. Act upon it—go forth and prove it to be true! Oh, that some soul would do that tonight! Believe that God has provided for your emancipation and accept the liberty Christ has purchased! Why should you quarrel with it?

I know that sinners try to find reasons why they should not be saved. If there is a person in prison, tonight, condemned to be hanged, and if I were to go to him, and say, "I have every reason to know that your life will be spared," I do not believe that he would sit down and try to prove to me that it could not be! I do not think that he would attempt to argue that he *should be hanged*! At any rate, I would not talk that way, myself, if it were my case. As far as ever my logic would carry me, I would try to argue my neck out of the hangman's noose, *not into it*! O poor Soul, do not argue yourself into Hell! Do not argue against Divine Mercy! As we sang just now—

***"Take salvation
Take it now, and happy be."***

Say to yourself and say to your God, "I believe it! I accept it! I will go my way made free by Sovereign Grace and I will act as a free man should, to the praise of my great Master and to the glory of His Grace." The Lord bless you, dear Friends, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *Luke 4:14-32.*

Verse 14. *And Jesus returned, in the power of the Spirit, into Galilee.* Ah, dear Brothers and Sisters, if our Lord Jesus needed "the power of the Spirit," how much more do you and I need it! We have no power of our own, but He was the Son of God. He was a Divine Teacher and yet, when He went to His work, it was, "in the power of the Spirit." Tarry, Brothers and Sisters, till you have that power—it is of no use for you to go without it.

14, 15. *And there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. There was a wondrous power about His teaching—"Never man spoke like this man."*

Perhaps His hearers did not understand what the power was, but they glorified the new Teacher who had come into their midst!

16. *And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up.* It is always a difficult thing for a young man to begin preaching in his own native town. A Prophet is not without honor except in his own country, yet Jesus, “came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up.”

16. *And, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath Day, and stood up to read.* It was the custom to read parts of Holy Writ in the synagogue and then to say a few words by way of exposition—and this the Savior did.

17. *And there was delivered unto Him the book of the Prophet Isaiah.* And when He had opened the book, that is, unrolled the parchment containing Isaiah’s prophecy—

17. *He found the place where it was written.* You will find the passage in the 61st Chapter of Isaiah.

18, 19. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* There He stopped—it was all of the passage that, then, seemed suitable.

20. *And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down.* In those days, the preacher sat down, and those who listened stood up, I daresay that practice tended to keep the hearers awake and it was all the easier for the speaker! Well might the Savior sit down, weighted as He was with a burden of holy instruction that He was about to impart to the people, or, perhaps, sitting down as if Himself at rest, He appeared the more ready to give rest to them.

20. *And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him.* The young Nazarene, who had left them for a while, and had come home, again, was the center of His fellow-townsmen’s attention.

21. *And He began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.* He thus declared that *He was the anointed Messiah.*

22. *And all bore Him witness and wondered at the gracious word which proceeded out of His mouth.* They did not, at first, ridicule or deny what Jesus said—His doctrine was pleasing and comforting—and they were ready to accept it.

22. *And they said, Is not this Joseph’s son? Now they began to question—“Is not this the son of the carpenter?”*

23. *And He said unto them, You will surely say unto Me the proverb, Physician, heal yourself: whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.* “You have been doing great things over yonder at Capernaum, do the same at Nazareth. You should not leave Your own native town without working miracles here.” Now there was an opportunity for Jesus to ingratiate Himself with the people and win their good word. If He would only perform miracles among them, He would be highly exalted in their esteem.

24, 25. *And He said, Verily I say unto you, No Prophet is accepted in His own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in*

the day, of Elijah, when the Heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land. Many husbands died, and many widows in Israel were left desolate in those terrible days of trial.

26. *But unto none of them was Elijah sent, save unto Zarephath, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.* This was as much as to say, “It is not because I lived here that I shall work miracles in this place. There were many widows round about Elijah, but he was not sent to one of them. He was sent to a widow in Zarephath, a city of Sidon, a heathen woman in another country.” Mark the Sovereignty of God! He bestows His mercy where He wills, according to His declaration to Moses, “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.” We dare not ask God why He does this, “for He gives not account of any of His matters.” He acts wisely, but He acts according to the good pleasure of His own will.

27. *And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the Prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman; the Syrian.* He, too, was a heathen from a distant country. Healing came to him, but to none of the lepers of Israel. God will do as He pleases with His own mercy and Grace. The question that He asks is, “Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own?” “This doctrine of Divine Sovereignty was not according to the taste of these people—they did not like it—and some of you, I fear, do not like it. They grew very angry. They began to gnash their teeth and to say, “This young Man must be silenced! We will not listen to such doctrine as this from Him.”

28. *And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath.* They did not mind hearing the first part of His teaching, but now that He exalts the Sovereignty of God, and lays the sinner low, He speaks too plainly for them—“They were filled with wrath.”

29, 30. *And rose up, and thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong. But He, passing through the midst of them, went His way.* They could not destroy Him at that time. His work was not done and He was immortal till it was fully accomplished.

31, 32. *And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath Day. And they were astonished at His doctrine: for His word was with power.* God grant that His Word may be with power tonight! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—357, 497, 552.

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BINDING UP BROKEN HEARTS

NO. 3104

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 1908.**

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

***“He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted.”
Isaiah 61:1.***

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon this text, is #1604, Volume 27—
HEART DISEASE CURABLE—
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

THESE are some of the words of the Lord Jesus, the Christ of God, the Messiah, which He read in the synagogue at Nazareth and then said, “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.” One of the worst calamities that can happen to anyone is to have his spirit broken. “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit, who can bear?” All the water in the sea will not hurt the vessel one thousandth part as much as that which comes into it. When trouble gets into the heart, every other trouble seems to be magnified and it is hard to bear up against even the ordinary trials of daily life. Save us, O God, if possible, from the terrible affliction of being entirely broken down in life’s battle!

Yet, very closely allied to this great calamity is one of the greatest spiritual blessings, namely, a spiritually broken heart, broken on account of sin and, sometimes, the brokenness of spirit which arises from physical sorrow, mental anxiety, or temporal trouble leads up to the contrition of heart which is most acceptable to God. Oftentimes He sanctifies a lower form of affliction and makes it conducive to the higher form of brokenness of spirit. I am not going to give you any descriptions of spiritual brokenness of heart—I want rather to address myself to broken hearts of any sort and of every sort. There is no particular description of broken hearts given in the text, but simply Christ’s declaration, “He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted.” There is no descriptive epithet limiting the declaration to the *spiritually* brokenhearted—and what is not in the text I will not put into it. I am the more glad not to make these distinctions and discriminations because they would only lead the troubled ones to look within to see whether their hearts were spiritually broken and that is just where I do *not* want them to look! I want them to look away from themselves to Jesus Christ the Healer of broken hearts. Descriptions of spiritual experience and character are sometimes useful, but I fear that quite as often, they turn the poor sinner’s eyes upon himself, whereas his hope lies in his eyes being turned towards Him who was lifted up upon the Cross! To look at self is likely to humble us, but when that humbling has already taken

place, then is the time for the Lord's command, "Look unto Him and be you saved, all the ends of the earth."

I. So, making no distinction, but speaking to all the brokenhearted, my first remark is that GOD HAS PRACTICALLY REMEMBERED THE BROKENHEARTED, FOR HE HAS SENT A SAVIOR TO HEAL THEM.

This simple remark ought to be a great comfort to those who are broken in spirit and desponding, *because they are generally very apt to say, "No one cares for us.* Now that we are in trouble, everybody avoids us. They were merry enough with us in our merriment, but they have no sympathy with us in our sorrow. They could dance with us in our days of joy, but they will not go with us to the grave of our hopes to weep there. They are like the swallows that are with us in summer and forsake us in winter. And like the leaves that are green and plentiful when the sun is with us, but fade and wither when winter is approaching." Still, my brokenhearted Friend, suppose that all men forsake or forget you? God does not! His eyes see you, His heart feels for you and His hand is able to deliver you. You are not friendless, nor will you be till the God of all consolation dies—and that can never be.

Christ's declaration should cheer the brokenhearted, again, *because they often conclude that their case is beyond all help.* "Ah," says one, "even if I had a friend, he could not help me, for my case is beyond all succor. If I had 50 friends, they would not know how to minister to such mental disease as mine. I am too far gone for relief." But listen, my brokenhearted Friend! You dare not say that anything is too hard for the Lord! Though your despair would make you go a long way, yet it would not make you go so far as to say that God cannot help you! He it is that turns the night into morning, that stills the roaring of the sea, that puts a bit into the mouth of the tempest. Then what can He not do? You cannot be in so forlorn a condition that God cannot help you! To Omnipotence nothing can be a difficulty, much less an impossibility! So, then, let me whisper in your ear that there is still hope for you, for you have a true Friend who is both able and willing to help you.

This ought still further to comfort the poor desponding one *because he often concludes that certainly God is against him.* "I would not be in this sad state of mind," says one, "if I were not abhorred by the Most High. He has set me as a target for His arrows and He shoots at me, and grievously does He wound me. He has filled my cup with sorrow mingled with gall and put it to my mouth that I may drink it to the dregs. God has utterly abhorred me and cast me away from His Presence." It is not so! If it were, then might the great bell toll out your knell—but my text says that the Lord has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to bind up the brokenhearted. He is no enemy to you, or He would not have sent His Son to heal you! Do you not remember what Manoah's wife said to him? Her husband said to her, "We shall surely die because we have seen God," but she was wiser, so she answered, "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would He have showed us all these things, nor would He at this time have told us such things as these." So say we to

you, poor brokenhearted one! If the Lord meant to destroy you, why did He send His Son to heal the brokenhearted? And to what end is the Gospel sent and why are you here to be tenderly wooed and assured that the Lord has deep designs of love toward just such troubled souls as you are? I believe that you will yet dance for joy of heart! That you will yet take down your harp from the willows and, like Miriam with her timbrel, that you will yet rejoice over the Egyptians whom you have feared, but whom you shall see no more forever!

II. There is much consolation, also, in the second Truth of God which we find in the text, which is that GOD HAS SENT A SUITABLE HELPER FOR BROKENHEARTED PEOPLE. Christ says, “He has sent ME to bind up the brokenhearted.”

See, then, dear troubled one, what a suitable Helper God has sent to you, for *He has sent you One* who was well acquainted with sorrow of all kinds. There are some people who cannot comfort others, even though they try to do so, because they never had any troubles themselves. It is a difficult thing for a man who has had a life of uninterrupted prosperity to sympathize with another whose path has been exceedingly rough. Even though that successful man should try to sympathize, he does it very awkwardly. He is like a person who never was trained as a nurse, yet who tries to make up a pillow for a sick man. Such people always make harsh lumps in our pillows, especially if they have not themselves been ill. But when you have suffered from the very complaint with which your friend is afflicted, it is amazing what sympathy that gives you with him. “Stuff and nonsense!” says a strong man to some poor suffering one—“you are too nervous! Try and exert yourself.” That is often one of the most cruel things that can be said to the sufferer. But if the man has been through a similar experience, he uses another tone of voice altogether. He knows that even if it is nonsense to the strong, it is not so to the weak—and he so adapts his remarks that he cheers where the other only inflicts additional pain. Broken-hearted one, Jesus Christ knows all your troubles, for similar troubles were His portion. Thorns are found in your pillow, but sharper thorns pierced His blessed brow. More than this, He knows your temptations as well as your sorrows, and the temptations which are peculiar to your sorrow and which very often cause great sin.

Best of all, as the Healer of broken hearts, God has chosen *One whose own heart was broken*. I think it is conclusively proven that Jesus died of a broken heart. The most careful investigation of the symptoms preceding His death appears to lead to that conclusion. He could say, with an emphasis that was not possible even with David, “Reproach has broken My heart and I am full of heaviness.” The brokenhearted Savior is the Healer of brokenhearted sinners! Christ will not allow sorrow to abide in His Presence without attempting to relieve it. You must have noticed how often He used to say, when here upon earth, “Be of good cheer,” or, “Be of good comfort.” He could not pass by a sorrow-stricken heart—He must stand still and put forth His power to heal it. And He is the same now as He was then! He still cares for those who have broken hearts and

contrite spirits—and even in our common, ordinary sorrows, He sympathizes with us.

Let me also tell you, O you brokenhearted ones, that *God has sent One to heal your hearts who has already healed multitudes of others.* We like an experienced doctor. I knew a very clever surgeon who could not, for a long while, get many patients because he looked so young. People like a man of experience for the healing of the body and experience is just as valuable for the healing of the soul. Jesus Christ has bound up millions of broken hearts, so He knows how to heal yours! He knows precisely where the malady is and what remedy to apply.

The Lord has also sent *One who will not be discouraged or get irritated in His work of comforting you.* Sometimes when we try to comfort a mourner and he will not be comforted, we get impatient and do more hurt than good. There is many a man who has gone with the best intentions to try and cheer a diseased mind, who has inflicted fresh wounds through his own impatience with the patient. But Jesus Christ “can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way.” He bears and forbears and is as gentle as a nurse with the children under her charge, and far more so. He will drive your sin out of you and then He will take your sorrow away from you, or else give you the Grace to enable you to bear it. There never was anyone else who was like Jesus as the Healer of the brokenhearted! There are some people whom other people always like to trust. But it is a very serious matter to be a man in whom other folk believe a good deal because your heart has to become a kind of common receiving office for the troubles of all who are round about you. And the heart of Jesus is like this on the largest possible scale. If you could see Him here, in bodily Presence, you would say, “That is the One to whom I can tell all my troubles.” You know how it is recorded of Him that He “healed all that were sick; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses.” You may always come to Jesus—He will always be willing to hear your sad story, always be able to solve your difficulties and always be able to relieve your distresses. This ought to comfort you, but I cannot make it do so. I am not sent to bind up the brokenhearted in the same sense in which Christ was—I am sent to be an instrument in His hands—He must do the work—for only He can do it!

III. This fact brings me to the third reflection from the text which is that THIS SUITABLE HELPER IS COMMISSIONED BY GOD, HIMSELF, TO “BIND UP THE BROKENHEARTED.”

He is not sent to tell you how your heart got broken and to scold you about it, like the schoolmaster who saw the boy drowning and lectured him upon his imprudence in getting out of his depth. There are many who act like that. If a man is very poor, they say, “Ah, you always were extravagant.” Or, “You should not have gone into that speculation. You should not have put your hand to that bill to oblige your friend—you must now pay for your folly.” There are many who are quite able to tell you that you ought not to have fallen into the ditch, but I think that their

homilies had better be saved up till we have helped you to get out of the ditch! The Apostle James tells us that God “gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not,” and it is a blessing for the brokenhearted that Jesus heals them freely and does not upbraid them for their sin and folly!

Notice, also, that *Christ is not sent to bring to broken hearts remedies that we are to apply*. If a man has a bad wound and there is an ointment that will heal his wound, he has to put it on. But suppose the wound is in some part that he cannot reach? He says, “Here is the ointment, but what is the good of it? How can I put it on?” He has broken his arm and it is to be strapped up. “Here is the strapping,” says he, “but how am I to strap my arm up? I need somebody to do it for me.” I remember once being with an old sea captain who was in trouble of mind. I was telling him of the promises of God and he said, “Yes, those promises are something like the great posts by the side of the river to which you can moor your vessel. You have got a rope with a loop to it, but the job is to get it over the post. It will hold your vessel if you can, but,” he said, “*I cannot get the loop over the post*. There are the promises, but I cannot get a hold of them.” We are so weak and feeble that the Lord Jesus has not merely come to bring the ointment, but He has come “to bind up the brokenhearted.” I think that one of the grandest passages in the whole Word of God is Psalm 147:3, 4—“He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names.” Does it not seem to be a great stoop from marshalling the stars to bending down over poor broken hearts and closing up their wounds? Yet God delights as much in displaying His Grace as in displaying His power! So you see, dear brokenhearted ones, that Jesus Christ has come to bind up the broken in heart—that is, to bring to you the consolations of His Grace, and to apply them to you. And for this purpose we read in the verse in which our text is found, that the Spirit of the Lord God is upon Him because it is the Spirit of God who applies the Word to the heart and, therefore, the Spirit is put upon the Lord Jesus Christ so that when He speaks, the Word may be with power. So, dear Friends, we have a Savior sent, upon whom the Spirit of God has been poured out and Who, therefore, speaks effectually—not to ears that are closed, for He opens the ears and conveys the Truth through the ear right into the soul—and so makes us know the blessing and power of it!

I will not enlarge further upon this very important point except to say that when the Lord Jesus binds up the brokenhearted, He does it so gloriously that the more trouble there was before, the more joy there is afterwards. Perhaps there are no people in the world so happy as those who were once most sad. Find me those who have the most joy and I think you will find that they are those who have been brought up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay—whose feet are now upon a Rock and whose goings are established—and in whose mouths a new song has been put, “even praise unto our God.”

IV. My fourth remark is that THE LINIMENTS WHICH JESUS USES ARE SUCH AS SUIT EACH BROKEN-HEARTED ONE. I will take each case briefly.

There are some broken hearts that are *the hearts of saints who have fallen into gross sin*, as David did. God save me, God save you, my Brothers! God save you, my Sisters, from ever being allowed to sin a great sin against the living God! But if we ever do so sin, we shall be, of all men, most miserable, for having sinned against Divine Love and Mercy, and so much of it—and against Divine Light—and that Light so clear and abundant! There may have come into this place, tonight, someone who is a child of God, but who has been suddenly overthrown by a great temptation to which he has yielded. Brother, I know that you do not excuse yourself and that you do not want me to make an excuse for you. Sin is an exceedingly bitter thing and you may have to taste the bitterness of it as long as you live. But, for all that, do not despair! The Lord may sorely chasten you, but He will not give you over to death. The Lord Jesus knows how to set your broken bones and you may now pray, as David did in the 51st Psalm, “Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You.” The usual liniment that the Lord Jesus applies to such a broken heart as that is this—“I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you.” He assures the penitent soul that, notwithstanding all its faults and follies, He still loves it with an everlasting love that will not give it up! This is a blessed balm to a heart that is wounded through having fallen into great sin.

There are others who have not gone into any one gross sin, but they have done what is perhaps worse—*they have gradually backslidden until they have come to neglect Divine things altogether*. They are not easy about it, for the Spirit of God has made them realize the misery of the state into which they have fallen. Some of you used to live in the country where you were members of little village Churches and very earnest in the Lord’s service. But you have come to this wicked London and you find that your neighbors do not go to a place of worship, so many of you seldom attend the House of God. There are good women who have ungodly husbands and, to please those husbands they have, by degrees, got weaned away from outward ordinances—and though there is a little love to God still left in them, so that they cannot quite give up private prayer and the reading of the Word—they have fallen very low. I do not wonder, when the Holy Spirit convinces them of their sinful state, that they get broken hearts! They ought to have broken hearts and to repent bitterly for having so grieved the Lord and backslidden from His ways. If I am now addressing any backslider, let me remind him or her that the Lord Jesus has been sent “to bind up the brokenhearted.” Return to your first love, poor Backslider, for it was better with you, then, than it is now!

There are other broken hearts besides these. There are sinners who were never converted, but who have *broken hearts on account of a sense of sin*. They never were, consciously, children of God, but they are now awakened to see their danger and their lost condition. I wish that all in this congregation who are not converted, had broken hearts—it would be

worthwhile to stay up all night to preach to a congregation of broken-down sinners! When the Lord has broken their hearts, it is an easy task to preach the Gospel to them—it is like feeding people who have healthy appetites! They are not very particular about the carving, or the pattern of the plates on which their dinners are brought to them—and they are not squeamish about the food that is set before them, for “to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.” O you great sinners, Jesus Christ knows how to pardon you! He knows how to lay home to your hearts such texts as these—“All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved,” even you, O you greatest of sinners!

There are, also, *broken hearts that are caused by great trouble*. I have known men who have been living simply to make money, but there has come a sudden panic, or a turn in the market, and they have lost everything. Now, if there is such a man here, I charge you, my Friend, before the living God, not to despair, for Christ still lives “to bind up the brokenhearted.” If you will but trust in Jesus, the day will come when you will bless God for permitting you to become a bankrupt—and you will say, “When I was rich, I lived for this world alone, but I was brought down to poverty, and then I looked to Christ as my Savior, and in Him I have found untold riches that will be mine forever.” It would be a great mercy for some rich people if they had their gods of gold all broken and were made to look to the living God, and put their trust in Him!

Further, *some hearts are broken through severe bereavements*. “Ah,” says one, “I shall never be able to look up again, for I have lost the husband whom I loved with all my heart—and my dear child is gone, too.” “Ah,” says another, “the darling of my heart has been taken from me! All my earthly hopes have been buried beneath the sod. I shall never rejoice anymore.” Won’t you? There is One who heals just such broken hearts as yours, for He once wept at a graveside and comforted the mourners there. And He will let you see that even your bereavement shall be for your good. Whoever they may have been whom you have lost, the Lord is teaching you that these losses are meant to bring you nearer to Himself, that you may find all your heart’s love centered upon the only One who deserves to have it all! Oftentimes the Lord Jesus Christ loves His people so much that He gets jealous of them—and when they love others more than they ought, He takes away those whom they thus love so that He may have all their hearts for Himself! And we ought to think it a high honor that Christ should think so much of us as to want to have the whole of our hearts for Himself.

Besides that, *there are some broken hearts that are broken through poverty and oppression*. Women work very hard for a very small wage and what they get seems as if it would hardly keep body and soul together. They have to stitch, stitch, stitch, from morning to night, till their brain whirls with their constant toil amid the daily pinch of poverty. Well, dear Friend, the Lord knows how to make you spiritually rich and to give you

such fullness of joy in your soul that you shall be content even in your poverty—and sing God's praises even though you are clothed in rags!

Perhaps I am speaking to one whose brokenness of heart consists in being *utterly forsaken and forlorn through a false step taken in life*. Strange people come into this Tabernacle and strangely does God guide my words to them. I sometimes feel as if my hair must stand on end when I am told, after a service, of remarks which I have made which have laid bare the secrets of men's hearts and made them see their own history as clearly as though a Prophet spoke to them, though I am no Prophet nor the son of a Prophet! There may be someone here who has come to London to try to hide away in this crowded city. The young man never wants to be seen at his home again. He says, "I only hope I may be forgotten by everybody. I would go to the ends of the earth if I could." Go back, my dear young Friend! Go back to your father and mother and make glad their aching hearts, for there is hope for you yet! You are brought down very low, but you will get up yet—you will be a man yet and, what is better, you will be a Christian and you will serve the Lord! There is hope for you, for there is One who can heal your broken heart.

And you, poor fallen woman, wherever you may be, though nobody gives you a good word and though all pass by you in the streets for very shame, there is one who binds up even harlots' broken hearts and has mercy upon them! Therefore be not driven utterly to despair. Above all, do not lay violent hands upon yourself, for I am sent as a messenger from God to declare to you that Christ heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds! O sons of misery, you need not be any longer in misery! Your sins are the roots of your sorrows, so if you do but go to Jesus to have your sins forgiven, your sorrows will quickly vanish! There will still be burdens for you to bear, but if you are forgiven they will sit lightly upon your shoulders and then turn to wings which will help you to mount to your God! Even though you have made a covenant with death, and a league with Hell, the Lord says, "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with Hell shall not stand." Though you are in Giant Despair's deepest dungeon, Jesus will cut the bars of iron in sunder and set the prisoners at liberty!

Only believe in Him, the Son of Man, your Brother and yet the Son of the Highest. Fall at His feet, for they were pierced for you! Look up to His almighty hands, for they were once nailed to the Cross for you! Bring your poor broken heart to the heart that was once pierced by the soldier's spear and find sweetest rest in Jesus! I know what despair means. I knew something of its bitterness in my early days, when I was under conviction of sin, but since the day when I saw the star of Bethlehem amidst the black darkness and tempest of my soul, and especially since I looked to the Christ of Calvary, all has been well with me! So I say to you poor waifs and strays upon the dark and stormy sea of life, look up, for there shines "the bright and morning Star." "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the very chief of them! Look to Him, poor

storm-tossed mariner, and He will guide you safely to the Port of Peace. God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EZEKIEL 37.**

Verse 1. *The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the LORD.* God's servants learn nothing until they have an experience similar to that of Ezekiel. They must be led by the Spirit of the Lord and they must have their eyes and mouths opened by Him—and then they can both see the vision and tell the vision to others.

1. *And set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones.* Like a huge grave, or morgue, or battlefield where the slain had not been buried. No servant of God would go without being sent to such a place, yet it was necessary that Ezekiel should be there in order that he might understand and speak the message of God.

2. *And caused me to pass by them round about.* He had to make a thorough survey of this grim and ghastly place.

2. *And, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and lo, they were very dry.* They had lain there so long that the wind had dried up the juices of the bones, and they were turned to dust.

3. *And He said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live?* God did not ask this question for His own information, but for the Prophet's. The Lord wanted him to realize the difficulties of the work to which he was called that he might be driven the more completely to rely upon God and not upon himself!

4. *And I answered, O Lord GOD, You know.* Again He said unto me, *Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O you dry bones, hear the Word of the LORD.* We have heard of a Romanist who had, as a penance from his priest, to go and water a dry stick. Ezekiel's task of preaching to dry bones seemed to be as useless as that, yet if God bids us do the same, we need no other justification for doing it. What is foolish in the sight of reason, is wisdom in the judgment of faith.

5, 6. *Thus says the Lord GOD unto these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD.* He had to tell these bones the unconditional purposes and promises of God—"I will" and, "you shall." This is the way in which God works out His eternal purposes concerning the sons of men. He bids His servants proclaim His message and then He fulfills His own purposes and promises.

7. *So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise.* A rustle—

7. *And behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.* Here was Divine Power bringing the bones to their proper position in the various bodies and forcing the separated anatomy to re-form itself.

8. *And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them.* So

there was no very great improvement so far—there were only dead bodies instead of dry bones! There was something more to look at, but nothing more agreeable—and really no more of life than there was before.

9. *Then said He unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, “Prophecy unto the wind.”* That seems a very absurd thing to do, but there are no absurdities where God gives His commands.

9, 10. *And say to the wind, Thus says the lord GOD, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as He commanded me.* Ezekiel was very obedient. He only needed to know his Lord’s will and then he raised no question, but did at once just as he was told to do. “So I prophesied as He commanded me.” It is a prime qualification in a servant of God that he should do exactly as he is bidden—not to think how he would like to do it, nor to follow the plan that his own wisdom suggests, but just to do as he is told, as Ezekiel did. “So I prophesied as He commanded me.”

10, 11. *And the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceedingly great army. Then He said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole host of Israel: behold they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are ourselves are cut off.* “There is no hope for us. We are dead and, worse than dead. Our case is hopeless. there is no possibility of restoration for us.”

12. *Therefore prophecy and say unto them, Thus says the Lord GOD; Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.* There was to be a house of Israel after all. The nation seemed to be dead and buried, but God would revive and restore it. This is a promise which may apply to a Church when she gets into a very low spiritual state and it looks as if she could never do any more good. “Behold, O My people, I will open your graves.” And to you, dear Friends, who are very heavy of heart, full of despair and who seem as if you were as good as dead and buried, God speaks in this promise! Therefore believe His Word as though it had been directed to you, personally, “Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.”

13. *And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up out of your graves.* Great deliverances and almighty quickening reveal God to us and make us know how gloriously great Jehovah is!

14. *And shall put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall you know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, says the LORD.* When the Jews get back to Canaan—as they will—they will then not only know that Jehovah is God, but also that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah! May the Lord hasten that blessed consummation in His own time!

15, 16. *The Word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Moreover, you son of man.* Notice how the Lord constantly calls the Prophet, “son of man.” When God uses His servants much and greatly honors them, He always takes care to keep them humble by reminding them of what they

are in themselves. So, Ezekiel, you have prophesied to the dry bones, and they have lived through your prophecy, but it was not by your own power that you did this. You are nothing but a son of man, God must have all the Glory of this wondrous work!

16. *Take you one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick. Or rod.*

16. *And write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions.* They were divided into separate companies. They first wandered away from God and then they wandered away from one another.

17. *And join there one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in your hand.* As he held them in his hand, they were to grow into one and, when all the Churches get into the hand of Christ, there will be perfect unity between them. Things that are near to the same thing are near to one another. But until the Lord shall come and take His divided Judah and Ephraim into His own hands there will be no true unity between them—but there will be then.

18, 19. *And when the children of your people shall speak unto you, saying, Will you not show us what you mean by these? Say unto them, Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in My hands.* No Church will long continue in the enjoyment of the blessing of unity unless it continues in nearness to Christ. Communion with Christ means the communion of Christians with one another—we can only get true union and true communion in that way.

20-22. *And the sticks whereon you write shall be in your hand before their eyes. And say unto them, Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, where they have gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.* When Christ comes, there shall be this true unity in Israel. Where Christ has already come, there is this true unity in His Church. And as Christ comes to all of us, He will take away the evil that divides us from Himself, and divides us from the rest of His people, and so we shall be one in His hands.

23. *Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be My people, and I will be their GOD.* This applies first to literal Israel, and then spiritually to all the chosen. What a weighty and comprehensive promise it is! We are to be saved from our idols, to be saved from the most loathsome sins—“detestable things.” To be saved from our household sins—“I will save them out of all their dwelling places wherein they have sinned.” Where do we go, may

Brothers and Sisters, without finding sin? Sin in our bed and sin at the board, sin in the shop, and sin in the street, sins when we are in company and sins when we are alone in the field, sins everywhere! Yet the Lord Jesus Christ is able to meet us in every place and to cleanse us. “So shall they be My people, and I will be their God.” What a wonderful declaration this is—we are the Lord’s people, He is our God! We are His portion and He is our portion. Oh, that everyone of us might have a share in this double blessing!

24. *And David My servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in My judgments, and observe My statutes, and do them.* Oh, for the one King to reign over the one people, who shall keep the one Law, and walk in holiness and humility before the one Lord!

25. *And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob, My servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children’s children forever: and My servant David shall be their prince forever.* Surely God does not treat the saints now worse than he treated Israel in the days of old, so we may go to Him in prayer for our children and for our children’s children.

26. *Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them.* Oh, that blessed word, *everlasting!* A salvation which is not everlasting is not worth having—any promise that is not fulfilled, any Grace that can fail—is not God’s promise or God’s Grace.

26, 27. *And I will place them, and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in the midst of them forevermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yes, I will be their God, and they shall be My people.* In the 23rd verse, the Lord’s promise was, “They shall be My people, and I will be their God.” And here Divine Grace seems to ring the changes by reversing the order—“I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” God is evidently so pleased with this declaration that He repeats it, only turning the sentences round the other way.

28. *And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them forevermore.*

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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OUR LORD'S PREACHING

NO. 3237

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1911.

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

***“The Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek;
He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted.”
Isaiah 61:1.***

[Two more Sermons by C. H. Spurgeon on the latter part of the text are #1604 and #1605, Volume 27—HEART DISEASE CURABLE and JESUS KNEW WHAT HE WOULD DO—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>. As this Sermon is so short, there is included with it an Address given by Mr. Spurgeon at a Prayer Meeting for Sabbath schools, which is just as timely and as much needed, now, as when it was delivered in 1877.]

OUR Lord's anointing was with a special view to His preaching. Such honor does the Lord of Heaven and Earth put upon the ministry of the Word that, as one of the old Puritans said, “God had only one Son, and He made a Preacher of Him.” It should greatly encourage the weakest among us, who are preachers of righteousness, to think that the Son of God, the blessed and eternal Word, came into this world that He might preach the same glad tidings which we are called to proclaim!

I. We may profitably note, first, HOW EARNESTLY OUR LORD KEPT TO HIS WORD.

It was His business to preach and He did preach. He was always preaching! “What?” you say, “did He not work miracles?” Yes, but His miracles were sermons—they were acted discourses, full of instruction. He preached when He was on the mountain. He equally preached when He sat at the table in the Pharisee's house. All His actions were significant—He preached by every movement. He preached when He did not speak—His silence was as eloquent as His words! He preached when He gave and He preached when He received. He was preaching a sermon when He lent His feet to the women that she might wash them with her tears and wipe them with the hairs of her head, quite as much as when He was dividing the loaves and the fishes and feeding the multitude. He preached by His patience before Pilate, for there He witnessed a good confession. He preached from the bloody tree—with hands and feet fastened there, He delivered the most wonderful discourse of Justice and of Love, of Vengeance and of Grace, of Death and of Life that was ever preached in this poor world! Oh, yes, He preached wondrously! He was always preaching—with all His heart and soul He preached! He prayed that He might obtain strength to preach. He wept in secret that He might the more

compassionately speak the words which wipe men's tears away. Always a Preacher, He was always ready, in season and out of season, with a good word. As He walked the streets He preached! As He went along and if He sought retirement, and the people thronged Him, He sent them not away without a gracious word.

This was His one calling and this one calling He pursued in the power of the Eternal Spirit. And He liked it so well, and thought so much of it, that He trained His 11 friends to the same work, and sent them out to preach as He had done. And then He chose 70 more disciples to go on the same errand. Did He shave the head of one of them to make Him a priest? Did He decorate one of them with a gown, or a chasuble, or a birretta? Did He teach one of them to say "mass," to swing a censer, or to elevate the "host?" Did He instruct one of them to regenerate children by baptism? Did He bring them up to chant in surplices and march in processions? No! Those things He never thought of and neither will we! If He had thought of them, it would only have been with utter contempt, for what is there in such childish things? The preaching of the Cross—this is it which is to them that perish, foolishness, but unto us who are saved, it is the wisdom of God and the power of God—for it still pleases God, "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Nor, at the close of His career had our Lord lowered His estimate of preaching, for just before He ascended, He said, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." His last charge in brief was, "Preach, preach even as I have done before you." He lived the Prince of Preachers, He died and became the Theme of Preachers! He lives again and is the Lord of Preachers. What an honorable work is that to which His servants are called!

II. Secondly, as you have seen that our Savior came to preach, NOW NOTICE HIS SUBJECT—"The Lord has anointed Me to preach *good tidings* unto the meek."

And what good tidings did He preach? Pardon. Pardon given to the chief of sinners. Pardon for prodigal sons pressed to their Father's bosom. Restoration from their lost estate, as the piece of money was restored to the treasury and the lost sheep was brought back to the fold. How encouragingly He preached of a life given to men dead in sin—life through the Living Water which becomes a fountain within the soul! You know how sweetly He would say, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life—He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." He preached the absolute necessity of a change of heart and the need of a new creation. He said, "You must be born-again" and He taught the Truths of God by which the Holy Spirit works in us and makes all things new.

He preached glad tidings concerning resurrection and bade men look for endless bliss by faith in Him. He cried, "I am the Resurrection and the Life...and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." He gave forth precepts, too, and threats in their place—some of them very searching and terrible—but they were only used as accessories to the Good News. He made men feel that they were poor that they might be willing to be made rich by His Grace. He made them feel weary and burdened that they might come to Him for rest. But the sum and substance of what He preached was the Gospel—the Good Spell—the Glad News!

Brothers, *our Divine Lord always preached upon that subject*—He did not stoop to secular themes. If you notice, though, He would sometimes debate with Pharisees, Herodians and others when necessary, yet He was soon away from them and back to His one theme. He baffled them with His wisdom and then returned to the work He loved, namely, preaching where the publicans and sinners drew near together "to hear Him." Our business, since the Spirit of God is upon us, is not to teach politics, save only in so far as these immediately touch the Kingdom of Christ, and there the Gospel is the best weapon. Nor is it our business to be preaching mere morals and rules of duty—our ethics must be drawn from the Cross—and begin and end there! We have not so much to declare what men ought to *do* as to preach the Good News of what God has done for them! Nor must we always be preaching certain Doctrines, as Doctrines, apart from Christ. We are only theologians as far as theology enshrines the Gospel! We have one thing to do and to that one thing we must keep! The old proverb says, "Cobbler, stick to your last," and depend upon it, it is good advice to the Christian minister to stick to the Gospel!

I hope I have always kept to my theme, but I take no credit for it, for I know nothing else. And, like the Apostle Paul, I have determined not to know anything among men but Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. Indeed, "necessity is laid upon me, yes, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." I would gladly have but one eye and that eye capable of seeing nothing from the pulpit but lost men and the Gospel of their salvation! To all else one may well be blind so that the entire force of the mind may center on the great essential Subject. There is, certainly, enough in the Gospel for any one man, enough to fill any one life, to absorb all our thought, emotion, desire and energy—yes, infinitely more than the most experienced Christian and the most intelligent teacher will ever be able to bring forth! If our Master kept to His one topic, we may wisely do the same. And if any say that we are narrow, let us delight in that blessed narrowness which brings men into the narrow way! If any denounce us as cramped in our ideas and shut up to one set of Truths of God, let us rejoice to be shut up with Christ and count it the truest enlargement of our minds! It were well to be bound with cords to His altar, to lose all hearing but for His voice, all seeing but for His light, all life but in His

life, all glorying save in His Cross! If He who knew all things taught only the one thing necessary, His servants may rightly enough do the same! "The Lord has anointed Me," He says, "to preach good tidings"—in this anointing let us abide!

III. But NOW NOTICE THE PERSONS TO WHOM HE ESPECIALLY ADDRESSED THE GOOD TIDINGS.

They were "the meek." Just look at the Fourth Chapter of Luke, and the 18th verse where our Lord was reading this passage in the synagogue at Nazareth, and you will read there, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the *poor*." The poor, then, are among the person's intended by the term, "the meek." I noticed, when I was looking through various comments upon this passage, that the Syriac renders it "the humble." And I think the Vulgate renders it, "the gentle." Calvin translates it, "the afflicted." It all comes to one thing. "The meek"—a people who are not lofty in their thoughts, for they have been broken down. A people who are not proud and lifted up, but low in their own esteem. A people who are often much troubled and tossed about in their thoughts. A people who have lost proud hopes and self-conceited joys—a people who seek no high things, crave for no honors, desire no praises, but bow before the Lord in humility—they are glad to creep into any hole to hide themselves because they have such a sense of insignificance, worthlessness and sin! They are a people who are often desponding and are apt to be driven to despair. The meek, the poor—meek because they are poor—they would be as bold as others if they had as much as others, or as others think they have! But God has emptied them and so they have nothing to boast of. They feel the iniquity of their nature, the plague of their hearts. They mourn that in them there dwells no good thing and oftentimes they think themselves to be the offscouring of all things. They imagine themselves to be more brutish than any man and quite beneath the Lord's regard—sin weighs them down and yet they accuse themselves of insensibility and impenitence.

Now, the Lord has anointed the Lord Jesus on purpose to preach the Gospel to such as these. If any of you are good and deserving, the Gospel is not for you! If any of you fancy that you are keeping God's Laws perfectly and hope to be saved by your works, I have to tell you that the whole have no need of a physician and that the Lord Jesus did not come upon so needless an errand as that of healing men who have no wounds or diseases! But the sick need a doctor and Jesus has come in great compassion to remove their sickness. The more diseased you are, the more sure you may be that the Savior came to heal such as you are! The more poor you are, the more certain you may be that Christ came to enrich you! The more sad and sorrowful you are, the more sure you may be that Christ came to comfort you! You nobodies, you who have been turned upside down and emptied right out, you who are bankrupts and

beggars, you who feel yourselves to be clothed with rags and covered with wounds and bruises and putrefying sores—you who are utterly bad through and through and know it, and mourn it and are humbled about it—you may know that God has poured the holy oil without measure upon Christ on purpose that He might deal out mercy to such poor creatures as you are! What a blessing this is! How we ought to rejoice in the anointing of Jesus, since it benefits such despicable objects! We who feel that we are such objects ought to cry, “Hosannah! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!”

IV. We must now CONSIDER OUR LORD'S DESIGN AND OBJECTIVE IN THUS PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR AND THE MEEK.

It was, you observe, that he might bind up the brokenhearted. “He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted.”

Carefully give heed to the text, so that you may see whether this message applies to you. Are you brokenhearted because of sin—because you have sinned often, foully, grievously? Are you brokenhearted because your heart will not break as you would desire that it should break—brokenhearted because you repent that you cannot repent as you would, and grieved because you cannot grieve enough? Are you brokenhearted because you have not such a sense of sin as you ought to have, and such a deep loathing of it as you perceive that others have? Are you brokenhearted with despair as to self-salvation? Brokenhearted because you cannot keep God's Law? Brokenhearted because you cannot find comfort in ceremonies? Brokenhearted because the things which looked best have turned out to be deceptions? Brokenhearted because all the world over you have found nothing but broken cisterns which can hold no water, which have mocked your thirst when you have gone to them? Brokenhearted with longing after peace with God? Brokenhearted because prayer does not seem to be answered? Brokenhearted because when you come to hear the Gospel, you fear that it is not applied to you with power? Brokenhearted because you had a little light and yet slipped back into darkness? Brokenhearted because you are afraid you have committed the unpardonable sin? Brokenhearted because of blasphemous thoughts which horrify your mind, and yet will not leave it? I care not why you are brokenhearted—Jesus Christ came into the world, sent of God with this objective—“to bind up the brokenhearted.”

It is a beautiful figure, this binding up—as though the Crucified One took the liniment and the strapping and put it around the broken heart—and with His own dear gentle hands proceeded to close up the wound, and make it cease to bleed. Luke does not tell us that Jesus came to bind up the brokenhearted. If you examine *his* version of the text, you will read that he came *to heal them*. That is going still further because you may bind a wound up and yet fail to cure it. But Jesus never fails in His surgery. He whose own heart was broken knows how to cure broken

hearts! I have heard of people dying of a broken heart, but I always bless God when I meet with those who live with a broken heart because it is written, "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." If you have that broken heart within you, Beloved, Christ came to cure you! And He will do it, for He never came in vain—"He shall not fail nor be discouraged." With Sovereign Power, anointed from on high, He watches for the worst of cases. Heart disease, incurable by man, is His speciality! His Gospel touches the root of the soul's ill, the mischief which dwells in that place from whence are the issues of life. With pity, wisdom, power and condescension He bends over our broken bones and before He has done with them, He makes them all to rejoice and sing praises to His holy name! Come then, you troubled ones, and rely upon your Savior's healing power! Give yourselves up to His care, confide in His skill, rest in His love! What joy you shall have if you will do this at once! What joy shall I have in knowing that you do so! Above all, what joy will fill the heart of Jesus, the Beloved Physician, as He sees you healed by His stripes!

"DO NOT SIN AGAINST THE CHILD"

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

AT A PRAYER MEETING FOR SABBATH SCHOOLS IN THE YEAR 1877.

***"And Reuben answered them, saying, Spoke I not unto you, saying,
Do not sin against the child, and you would not hear?
Therefore, behold, his blood is now required of us."
Genesis 42:22.***

[A Sermon by C. H. Spurgeon upon the same text is #840, Volume 14—also entitled DO NOT SIN AGAINST THE CHILD. It was delivered as a preface to a series of services for children conducted in the Tabernacle in the year 1868, by the late Mr. E. Payson Hammond.—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

You know how Joseph's brothers, through envy, sold him into Egypt and how ultimately they were, themselves, compelled to go down into Egypt to buy corn. When they were treated roughly by the governor of that country, whom they did not know to be their brother, their consciences smote them and they said one, to another, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear. Therefore is this distress come upon us." While their consciences were thus accusing them, the voice of their elder brother chimed in, saying, "Said I not unto you, Do not sin against the child?" From which I gather that if we commit sin after being

warned, the voice of conscience will be all the more condemning, for it will be supported by the memory of disregarded admonitions which will revive again—and with solemn voices say to us, “Said we not unto you, Do not sin against the child?” We who know what is due to children will be far more guilty than others if we sin against their souls. Wiser views as to the needs and hopes of the little ones are now abroad in this world than those which ruled the public mind 50 years ago—and we shall be doubly criminal if we now bring evil upon the little ones!

The advice of Reuben may well be given to all grown-up persons, “Do not sin against the child.” Thus would I speak to every parent, to every elder brother or sister, to every schoolmaster, to every employer, to every man and woman whether they have families or not, “Do not sin against the child.” Neither against your own child, nor against anybody's child, nor against the poor waif of the street whom they call, “nobody's child.” If you sin against adults, “do not sin against the child.” If a man must be profane, let him have too much reverence for a child to pollute its little ears with blasphemy! If a man must drink, let him have too much respect for childhood to entice his boy to sip at the intoxicating cup! If there is anything of lewdness or coarseness on foot, screen the young child from the sight and hearing of it! O you parents, do not follow trades which will ruin your children! Do not select houses where they will be cast in evil society. Do not bring depraved persons within your doors to defile them! For a man to lead others like himself into temptation is bad enough—but to sow the vile seed of vice in hearts that are as yet untainted by any gross, actual sin is a hideous piece of wickedness! Do not commit spiritual infanticide! For God's sake, in the name of common humanity, I pray you, if you have any sort of feeling left, do not play the Herod by morally murdering the innocents! I have heard that when, in the cruel sack of a city, a soldier was about to kill a child, his hand was stayed by the little one's crying out, “O Sir, please don't kill me. I am so little!” The feebleness and littleness of childhood should appeal to the worst of men and restrain them from sinning against the child.

According to the story of Joseph, there are three ways of sinning against the child. The first was contained in the proposition of the envious brothers, “*Let us slay him...and we shall see what will become of his dreams.*” “Shed no blood,” said Reuben, who had reasons of his own for wishing to save Joseph's life. There is such a thing as morally and spiritually slaying boys and girls—and here even the Reubens unite with us—even those who are not so good as they should be will join in the earnest protest, “Do not sin against the child”—do not train him in dishonesty, lying, drunkenness and vice! No one among us would wish to do so, but it is continually done by bad example. Many sons are ruined by their fathers. Those who gave them birth give them their death. They brought them into the world of sin and they seem intent to bring them

into the world of punishment—and will succeed in the fearful attempt unless the Grace of God shall interfere! Many are doing all they can, by their own conduct at home and abroad, to educate their offspring into pests of society and plagues to their country. When I see the number of juvenile criminals, I cannot help asking, “Who slew all these?” And it is sad to have for an answer, “These are mostly the victims of their parents’ sin.” The fiercest beasts of prey will not destroy their own young, but sin makes men unnatural so that they destroy their offspring’s souls without thought! To teach a child a lascivious song is unutterably wicked—to introduce him to the wine cup is evil. To take children to places of amusement where everything is polluting—where the quick-witted boy soon spies out vice and learns to be precocious in it—where the girl, while sitting to see the play, has kindled within her passions which need no fuel—to do this is to act the tempter’s part! Would you poison young hearts and do them lifelong mischief? I wish that the guardian of public morals would put down all open impurity, but if that cannot be, at least let the young be shielded! He who instructs a youth in the vices of the world is a despicable wretch—a panderer for the devil, for whom contempt is a feeling too lenient! No, even though you are, yourself, of all men most hardened, there can be no need to worry the lambs and offer the babes before the shrine of Moloch!

The same evil may be committed by indoctrinating children with evil teachings. They learn so soon that it is a sad thing to teach them error. It is a dreadful thing when the infidel father sneers at the Cross of Christ in the presence of his boy, when he utters horrible things against our blessed Lord in the hearing of tender youth! It is sad to the last degree that those who have been singing holy hymns in the Sabbath school should go home to hear God blasphemed and to see holy things spit upon and despised. To the very worst unbelievers we might well say—Do not thus ruin your child’s immortal soul! If you are yourself resolved to perish, do not drag your child down with you!

But there is a second way of sinning against the child of which Reuben’s own proposition may serve as an illustration. Though not with a bad motive, Reuben said, “*Cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness and lay no hand upon him.*” The idea of many is to leave the child as a child and then look him up in later days and seek to deliver him from destruction. Do not kill him, but leave him alone till riper years! Do not kill him—that would be wicked murder—but leave him in the wilderness till a more convenient season, when, like Reuben, you hope to come to his rescue! Upon this point I shall touch many more of you than upon the first. Many professing Christians ignore the multitudes of children around them and act as if there were no such living beings. They may go to Sunday school or not—they do not know and do not care. At any rate, these good people cannot trouble themselves with teaching children. I

would earnestly say, "Do not sin against the child by such neglect." "No," says Reuben, "we will look after him when he is a man. He is in the pit now, but we are in hopes of getting him out later." That is the common notion—that the children are to grow up unconverted—and that they are to be saved in later life. They are to be left in the pit, now, and to be drawn out by-and-by. This pernicious notion is sinning against the child! No word of Holy Scripture gives countenance to such a policy of delay and neglect! Neither Nature nor Grace pleads for it. It was the complaint of Jeremiah, "Even the sea monsters draw out the breast. They give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness." Let not such a charge lie against any one of us! Our design and objective should be that our children, while they are yet children, should be brought to Christ! And I ask those dear Brothers and Sisters here present who love the Lord not to doubt about the conversion of their little ones, but to seek it at once with all their hearts! Why should our Joseph remain in the pit of Nature's corruption? Let us pray the Lord at once to take them up out of the horrible pit and save them with a great salvation!

There is yet a third way of sinning against the child, which plan was actually tried upon Joseph—they sold him—sold him to the Midianite merchantmen. They offered twenty pieces of silver for him and his brothers readily handed him over for that reward. I am afraid that some are half inclined to do the same now! It is imagined that now that we have School Boards, we shall not need Sabbath schools as much, but may give over the young to the Secularists. Because the children are to be taught the multiplication table, they will not need to be taught the fear of the Lord! Strange reasoning, this! Can geography teach them the way to Heaven, or arithmetic remove their countless sins? The more of secular knowledge our juveniles acquire, the more will they need to be taught in the fear of the Lord! To leave our youthful population in the hands of secular teachers will be to sell them to the Ishmaelites! Nor is it less perilous to leave them to the seductive arts of Ritualists and Papists. We who love the Gospel must not let the children slip through our hands into the power of those who would enslave their minds by superstitious dogmas! We sin against the child if we hand it over to teachers of error!

The same selling of the young Joseph can be effected by looking only to their worldly interests and forgetting their souls. A great many parents sell their children by putting them out as apprentices to men of no character, or by placing them in situations where ungodliness is the paramount influence. Frequently the father does not ask where the boy can go on the Sabbath, and the mother does not inquire whether her girl can hear the Gospel when she gets out—but good wages are looked after and not much else. They count themselves very staunch if they draw a line at Roman Catholics, but worldliness and even profligacy are not reckoned

as barriers in many cases. How many there are of those who call themselves Christians who sell their daughters in marriage to rich men! The men have no religion whatever, but "it is a splendid match," because they move in high society! Young men and women are put into the matrimonial market and disposed of to the highest bidder—God is not thought of in the matter. Thus the rich depart from the Lord and curse their children quite as much as the poor. I am sure you would not literally sell your offspring for slaves, and yet to sell their souls is by no means less abominable! "Do not sin against the child." Do not sell him to the Ishmaelites. "Ah," you say, "the money is always handy." Will you take the price of blood? Shall the blood of your children's souls be on your skirts? I pray you, pause awhile before you do this!

Sometimes, *a child may be sinned against because he is disliked*. The excuse for undue harshness and severity is, "He is such a strange child!" You have heard of the swan that was hatched in a duck's nest. Neither duck, nor drake, nor ducklings could make anything out of the ugly bird and yet, in truth, it was superior to all the rest! Joseph was the swan in Jacob's nest and his brothers and even his father did not understand him. His father rebuked him and said, "Shall I and your mother and your brothers, indeed, come to bow down ourselves to you to the earth?" He was not understood by his own kin. I should fancy that he was a most uncomfortable boy to live with, for when his elder brothers transgressed, he felt bound to bring unto his father "their evil report." I doubt not that they called him, "a little sneak," though, indeed, he was a gracious child. His dreams also were very odd and considerably provoking, for he was always the hero of them. His brothers called him, "this dreamer," and evidently thought him to be a mere fool. He was his father's pet boy and this made him even more obnoxious to the other sons. Yet that very child who was so despised by his brothers, was the Joseph among them! History replicates itself and the difference in your child, which now causes him to be pecked at, may perhaps arise from a superiority which as yet hasn't found its sphere. At any rate, "do not sin against the child" because he is different, for he may rise to special distinction. Do not, of course, show him partiality and make him a coat of many colors—because if you do, his brothers will have some excuse for their envy. But, on the other hand, do not allow him to be snubbed and do not allow his spirit to be crushed.

I have known some who, when they have met with a little Joseph, have *sinned against him by foolish flattery*. The boy has said something rather good and then they have set him upon the table so that everybody might see him and admire what he had to say while he was coaxed into repeating his sage observations. Thus the child was made self-conceited, forward and pert. Children who are much exhibited are usually spoiled in the operation. I think I hear the proud parents say, "Now *do see—do see*

what a wonderful boy my Harry is!" Yes, I do see. I do see what a wonderful stupid his mother is! I do see how unwise his father is to expose his boy to such peril! Do not sin against the child by fostering his pride, which, as it is an evil weed, will grow apace of itself!

In many cases, *the sin is of quite the opposite character*. Contemptuous sneers have chilled many a good desire and ridicule has nipped in the bud many a sincere purpose. Beware of checking youthful enthusiasm for good things. God forbid that you or I should quench one tiny spark of Grace in a lad's heart, or destroy a single bud of promise! We believe in the piety of children—let us never speak, or act, or look as if we despised it!

"Do not sin against the child," whoever you may be. Whether you are teacher or parent, take care that if there is any trace of the little Joseph in your child, even though it be but in his dreams, you do not sin against him by attempting to repress the noble flame which God may be kindling in his soul. I cannot just now mention the many, many ways in which we may be offending against one of the Lord's little ones, but I would have you remember that if the Lord's love should light upon your boy, and he should grow up to be a distinguished servant of the Lord, your conscience will prick you and a voice will say in your soul, "Said I not unto you, Do not sin against the child?" And if, on the other hand, your child should not become a Joseph, but an Absalom, it will be a horrible thing to be compelled to mingle with your lamentations the overwhelming consciousness that you led your child into the sin by which he became the dishonor of your family! If I see my child perish and know that he became a reprobate through my ill teaching and example, I shall have to wring my hands with dread remorse and cry, "I slew my child! I slew my child! And when I did it, I knew better, but I disregarded the voice which said to me, 'Do not sin against the child.'"

Now, dear Sunday school teachers, I will mention one or two matters which concern you. "*Do not sin against the child*" by coming to your class with a chilly heart. Why should you make your children cold towards Divine things? Do not sin against them by coming too late, for that will make them think that punctuality is not a virtue and that the Sunday school is of no very great importance. "Do not sin against the child" by coming irregularly and absenting yourself at the smallest pretense, for that is distinctly saying to the child, "You can neglect to serve God when you please, for you see that this is what I do." "Do not sin against the child" by merely going through class routine, without really teaching and instructing. That is the *shadow* of Sunday school teaching and not the *substance*—and it is in some respects worse than nothing. "Do not sin against the child" by merely telling him a number of stories without setting forth the Savior, for that will be giving him a stone instead of bread.

“Do not sin against the child” by aiming at anything short of his conversion to God through Jesus Christ the Savior!

And then, you parents, “*do not sin against the child*” by being so very soon angry. I have frequently heard grown-up people repeat that verse, “Children, obey your parents in all things.” It is a very proper text—*very* proper text—and boys and girls should carefully attend to it. I like to hear fathers and mothers preach from it, but there is that other one, you know. There is that other and—“Likewise, you fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.” Do not pick up every little thing against a good child and throw it in his or her teeth, and say, “Ah, if you were a Christian child, you would not do this and you would not do that!” I am not so sure about that—you who are heads of families do a great many wrong things, yourselves—and yet I hope you are Christians! And if your Father in Heaven were sometimes to be as severe with you as you are with the sincere little ones when you are out of temper, I am afraid it would go very hard with you. Be gentle, kind, tender and loving.

At the same time, *do not sin against any child by over-indulgence*. Spoiled children are like spoiled fruit—the less we see of them the better. In some families, the master of the house is the youngest boy, though he is not yet big enough to wear knickerbockers! He manages his mother and his mother, of course, manages his father. And so, in that way, he rules the whole house. This is unwise, unnatural and highly perilous to the pampered child! Keep boys and girls in proper subjection, for they cannot be happy, themselves, nor can you be so, unless they are in their places. Do not water your young plants either with vinegar or with syrup. Neither use too much nor too little of rebuke. Seek wisdom of the Lord, and keep the middle of the way.

In a word, “do not sin against the child,” but train it in the way it should go, and bring it to Jesus that He may bless it. Cease not to pray for the child till his young heart is given to the Lord! May the Holy Spirit make you wise to deal with these young immortals! Like plastic clay, they are on the wheel. Oh that He would teach us how to mold and fashion their characters! Above all, may He put His own hands to the work—and then it will be done, indeed!

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

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

GOOD REASONS FOR A GOOD RESOLUTION NO. 2543

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 20, 1884.**

***"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."
Isaiah 61:10.***

Without any preface we will go straight to our text at once. In the words of the Prophet, we have two things brought before us—first, *a resolution to be glad* and, secondly, the *reasons for being glad*. Whenever a man makes a resolution, it should be because he has a good reason for doing so. And when he has a good reason for it, he ought to adhere to his resolution and carry it out to the fullest possible extent. I want you, dear Friends, because there are good reasons for it, to resolve that you will be glad in the Lord. Perhaps you are of a mournful spirit—it may be that you have peculiar trials just now—possibly the very heaviness of the atmosphere makes you feel dull and sad. Never mind those things which would drag your spirit down, at least for tonight! Let us be glad and if we can make that gladness overlap tomorrow and if the stream should be sufficiently strong to flow right through the week to another Sabbath—and if the torrent should be vigorous enough to run right to the end of the year—and if the mighty flood should be broad enough to cover all the rest of our lives, it will not be, even then, an unreasonable thing! I wish we could, each one of us, with such a Divine inspiration as would enable us to continue it throughout eternity, say, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God." But if we cannot reach to such a full attainment of joy all at once, let us at least take a good mouthful of it even now—let us kneel down against the wellhead of heavenly bliss and drink a deep draught of holy joy at this glad hour!

I. First, we are to think about A RESOLUTION TO BE GLAD.

I notice, first, that the Prophet's determination to be glad in the Lord is made *without any reserve whatever*. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God." He says, "I *will*," and then he says, "my soul *shall*." He makes quite sure of it with his, "will," and his, "shall." It is with him a firm, fixed, steadfast, unquestioned resolve that his soul shall be full of delight in the Lord! Come, dear Friends, and let us make the same resolve by the help of God's Spirit! "I have a bad headache," says one, "but I will rejoice in the Lord all the same for that." "I have but very

little at home, I am very poor,” I think I hear another say, but I trust you, too, will be able to add, “yet my soul shall be joyful in my God. If I cannot rejoice in earthly good things, I will rejoice in the highest good, even in God, who is Goodness itself.” “I fear,” says another friend, “that I shall have trouble as soon as I return home. I am afraid I shall hear some very bad news.” Let this message of the Psalmist comfort your spirit—“He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.” Do not keep any portion of what you hear so as to leave room for grief or fear, but, if you are a true Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, surrender yourself completely to the highest form of enjoyment and say, here and now, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God.”

While the Prophet’s resolution is wisely unreserved, notice how *hearty* it is. He says not merely, “I will rejoice in the Lord”—he is not going to be content with a cup full of joy—he means to have a *well* full of it, so he says, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord.” The Lord is such a great God that if we rejoice in Him at all, we ought *greatly* to rejoice in Him. Little sources of blessing may well produce little joy, but when we think of the great goodness of the great God to such great sinners as we have been, each one of us who has been greatly pardoned through the great Sacrifice of Jesus may well say, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord.” Then the Prophet adds, “My soul shall be joyful in my God.” “My very soul, my truest and best self, shall be joyful in my God. Not only my lips, or the jubilant Psalms which I shall sing, but my very *soul* shall be joyful in my God. I will sing as much as I can, but what I cannot sing, my soul shall feel. There shall be great waves of expressed joy, but there shall be vast unstirred deeps of heavenly calm within my innermost nature—“My soul shall be joyful in my God.”

We have sometimes seen people joyful just as far as the surface of their face. They tried to *look* glad, but underneath the smiling countenance there lurked a cruel grief. Have I not seen sparkling eyes which could not help betraying the inward fires of sorrow that burned in the heart’s inmost depths? Have I not heard men sing when their singing was almost a mockery, for had they expressed themselves as they felt, they would have groaned rather than have sung? But, O my God, there shall be with me no mere semblance of joy, no feigning praise, no misrepresentation of the real feeling of my heart—“my soul shall be joyful in my God.”

I invite you, dear Christian Friends—and I pray the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to enable you—to be as full of holy joy as you can be, for there is good reason for it and no harm can come of it! It is perfectly safe to take the deepest possible draughts of spiritual joy—this is a wine of which a man may drink to the fullest and he shall never be intoxicated. You may be so enamored of earthly things as to perish through that love, but if you are so enraptured with your Lord that you find your whole delight in Him, you cannot possibly go to an excess in that direction! I am sure some of you have tried to sing the bass notes long enough—I want to get you to run up the scale till you reach the very highest notes that can be sung on earth! You have sat down and groaned together in un-

comfortable misery quite long enough. Now rouse yourselves from your sadness, shake off the dust of discontentment and sorrow—and let us sing together unto God, our exceeding joy, in whom there are fathomless depths of infinite delight!

So we have seen that this resolution to be glad is unreserved and very hearty—all the more hearty because it is double. “I will greatly rejoice,” says the Prophet, and then he adds, “my soul shall be joyful.” You may say the same, dear Friend—“I will be glad, and then I will be glad again. I will joy, and then I will rejoice. I will have a duplicate of it! I will repeat my delights and heap them up, one upon another, as though by this Pelion on Ossa I should climb to the very heavens and sit down in the full joy of my God.” Oh, what a blessing it will be if many of you are helped to do this even now—and to continue doing it!

Further, notice that this unreserved and hearty resolution is *altogether spiritual*. “I will greatly rejoice *in the Lord*, my soul shall be joyful *in my God*.” Joy in the creature must necessarily be limited, for the creature is limited. Joy in the creature may be harmful, for the creature may beguile you and allure you away from the Creator. Joy in yourself is a fiction—there can be no true satisfaction in it! Joy even in the work of God in your soul may sometimes be questionable, for you may not be sure that it is God’s work in which you are rejoicing. But when you can say, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God,” you have a subject for joy and an object of joy higher than I can ever describe! I thought, last night, as I turned this text over, the best thing that ever could have happened for me is that God is what He is. I could not wish Him to be other than He is—not even when He frowns upon me. Blessed be His name, He never frowns upon His children except in love! He never smites them except in greater mercy than He could show by not striking them. He is altogether the best conceivable God! Yes, He is inconceivably, unutterably, boundlessly good—let His name be praised and magnified forever! You may say to yourself, “I am a great many things that I ought not to be, but I have my God. He is my Father and I am His child, and though He made the heavens and the earth, yet He loves me with an everlasting love and He has set the whole of His heart’s affection upon me! Even worthless *me*, He loves with all the infinity of His Divine Nature!”

O Friends, the thought of God should bring to our souls incessant pleasure! Think of any one Person of the blessed Trinity in Unity—think of the Father and then see how you ought to rejoice that He is your Father, and such a Father! Then think of the Son of God, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. His very name is honey in the mouth and music in the ears, light in the life and Heaven upon earth! Then think of the Holy Spirit, that Divine Person who deigns to take upon Himself the office of Comforter, that we may not know a sorrow which shall not be relieved, that we may not bear a burden out of which He will not take all the heaviness and woe! Blessed Father, blessed Son and blessed Holy Spirit, blessed be the Triune God forever and ever! “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God.” This joy in the Lord is all spiritual and in that kind of rejoicing you can never run to excess!

Let me drop into your mouth this piece of heavenly sweetmeat—"The Father Himself loves you." Try to get the flavor of that precious Word, "loves you." I have often said that if God is kind to you, it is a great thing. If God thinks of you, that is a great thing. If God blesses you, that is a great thing. But if He *loves* you—ah, that is an almost unspeakable honor and joy! Yet it is true. You knew once what it was to be loved by an affectionate mother. You know now what it is to love your child. But God loves you in a more intense way, even, than that, for all the loves of men and women are but the spray of the great ocean of His everlasting love. "Oh, but," you say, "there are so many for God to love." That is true, yet He loves you as much as if there were no other person in the whole universe, as if you stood alone with the eyes of Jehovah fixed upon you and the whole heart of Jehovah wrapping you round about in its Divine folds of affection! "The father Himself loves *you*." May the Holy Spirit teach you to draw the sweetness of those words into your soul! "The father Himself loves you." Yes, more, if He loves you now, He always did love you! He has loved you with an everlasting love—loved you before yonder stars began to let their light shine down among the sons of men! Before He had fixed the universe upon the huge pillars of His almighty power, He loved you and your names were engraved upon the palms of His hands, yes, upon His heart! And He will love you when this great earth and sun and moon and stars shall have passed away. As a moment's foam dissolves into the wave that bears it and is lost forever, so shall the material creation pass away—but God shall still love you even as He loves His only-begotten Son, forever and forever.

Please observe, also, that the Prophet's resolution related to *immediate* joy, though there is also a future meaning in his words. "I *will* greatly rejoice in the Lord," expresses a present determination as well as a resolve concerning the future. I hope greatly to rejoice in God if I should live to be gray-headed, and to be bent double with infirmities. But I *will* greatly rejoice in the Lord at this moment. It is true that you or I may lie upon a bed of sickness, and draw near to the gates of death, but I trust that, even then, we shall greatly rejoice in the Lord and be joyful in our God. But our text really means that, even now, we will be glad in Him. Come, dear Friends, let us, each one, say, "I will now, at this very moment, greatly rejoice in the Lord. My soul shall be joyful in my God. Away, you cares, be gone from me, for He cares for me. Away all thoughts of sin, for Christ has cast my sins behind His back into the depths of the sea. Away all fear of the future, for my times are in His hands! Away all murmuring, all complaining at the Providence of God—my soul cries, 'Your will be done, O Lord! Not as I will, but as You will.'" When you reach that point, you may well say, "now will I greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God."

I think if I stopped now, and said nothing more, you might say to me, "You have given us reasons enough to make us full of joy and to cause each one of us gladly to cry, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God."

II. But now, in the second place, I am going to give you, from the text, other good reasons for BEING GLAD.

The first is found in the Divine *clothing* here mentioned—“He has clothed me with the garments of salvation.” Did you ever behold your soul naked to its shame in the sight of the all-seeing Jehovah? Did you ever try to hide yourself from God because you were under a deep sense of sin? And did you hear His penetrating voice calling you, as He called Adam in the Garden, “Where are you? Where are you? Where are you?” Did you stay away from Divine service and did you still hear in your soul the Lord’s question, “Where are you?” Did you try to bury yourself in your business, so as to forget that urgent enquiry, and did it still ring in your ears, “Where are you?” Did you rush off to some place of amusement and try amid worldly companions to forget yourself and your God? And did the voice still follow you, always calling, “Where are you? Where are you?” And were you obliged, at last, to stand shivering before the Lord, without a rag to cover you, your fig leaves all withered with a glance of His eye of fire? And did He then cover you with the garments of salvation? Oh, then you knew the meaning of my text, when you were no longer ashamed, for you were covered with the robe of Christ’s righteousness! You were clothed with the garments of salvation and you could say, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God.”

Let every child of God here rejoice that he is clothed with the garments of salvation! From head to foot you are arrayed in salvation. “Oh!” says one, “I have been such a great sinner.” Yes, but if you are trusting in Christ, He has saved you. He has put away your sin—you shall not be lost, for you are clothed with salvation. “But I am such a poor feeble creature, liable to be attacked and tempted by Satan.” Yet God has so clothed you that no cold nor heat of temptation shall come upon you to your harm. You are clothed from head to foot with the garments that will save you—the garments of salvation—yes, you are even now a saved man, woman, or child!

What a wondrous dress this is—the garments of salvation! A helmet of salvation and the shoes of the preparation of the Gospel of peace, and all between the head and the feet—the entire person of the man—is covered with salvation! Think of this, dear Friend. Wherever you go, you have God’s livery upon you. Some princes clothe their courtiers in silk, but God has clothed you in salvation! Was there ever such another dress as this? Now will you not sing? Why, when you are clad in such a robe as this, if you do not sing, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! Surely you must praise the Lord. While clothed in that marvelous attire which only the Sacred Trinity could have made for you—“garments of salvation”—you must be joyful in your God! Come, my good Brother, join the rejoicing band. Is that Mr. Ready-to-Halt over there? Do you recollect what happened when Mr. Great-Heart cut off the head of Giant Despair? When the conductor of the pilgrims came back to the road where he had left Feeble-Mind and Ready-to-Halt to guard the women of the company—as soon as these poor men saw that it was really the giant’s head, “they were very jocund and merry, and Ready-to-Halt would dance. True,” says

Mr. Bunyan, “he could not dance without one crutch in his hand, but I promise you he footed it *well*.” So, some of the timid, feeble ones do manage to get extraordinary joy when their spirits are revived by some special manifestation of the loving kindness of the Lord!

Then, beside this Divine clothing, there is *sacred covering*. The Prophet adds, “He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.” That is the great mantle that goes over all the rest of the garments. We are first clothed with the garments of salvation and then there comes an outer covering to envelop us in the robe of righteousness! When God looks on a justified sinner, He sees nothing in Him but righteousness, for He is covered with the robe of righteousness. That word, “cover,” is one of the sacred words of the Hebrew language, as well as of our own English tongue. It seems to go everywhere, into all languages. The Atonement of Christ and the righteousness of Christ make up the great and perfect covering of a sinner! “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” The Mercy Seat of old was a great cover or coffer that went over the Ark of the Covenant. And God has covered up His people in Christ, as we express it in the prayer we sometimes sing—

“Him and then the sinner see.

Look through Jesus’ wounds on me.”

When God looks at His people, He does not see them, first, but He sees His Son. And then He looks through that heavenly medium and sees them in His Son. Then is it, indeed, true that He has covered them with the robe of righteousness. Therefore, poor sinful child of God, crying out because of your sin, cease that moaning and groaning for a little while! No, have done with it altogether, and let your soul be joyful in the Lord! One of His names is, “The Lord Our Righteousness,” and Christ, “is made unto us righteousness.” We are righteous in the righteousness of Christ which is imputed unto us. In the 53rd of Isaiah we read, “By His knowledge,” that is, “by the knowledge of Him shall My righteous Servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.” I wish I knew how to speak of these glorious Truths of God as I feel them in my own soul, but I cannot find words worthy of the wondrous theme! I have this holy joy in my own heart and it makes my spirit burn with a Divine delight! Oh, that I could communicate that delight to others, even without any words. But God the Holy Spirit can make this joy flash from heart to heart, till we all feel as if we could—

**“Sit and sing ourselves away
To everlasting bliss,”**

clothed with the garments of salvation and covered with the robe of righteousness!

You will have to look in the margin of your Bible to get the next reason for being glad, which is, *hallowed service*. Our text says, “He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments.” The marginal reading is, “as a bridegroom decks himself as a priest.” Our text must mean that because in the sixth verse it is written, “you shall be named the priests of the Lord.” So, when God comes to clothe His people, He clothes them with such robes that they are fit to execute their priestly office. I think there is nothing that I detest more

than the idea of priest-craft and I hope that you do the same. Who is any poor mortal man that he should interpose himself between a sinner and his Savior? Take care to go straight away to Christ. But, in the true Scriptural sense, there is a priesthood which belongs to all Christians and I want you to understand, poor Believer, notwithstanding all your infirmities and imperfections, that the Lord has so covered you with the righteousness of Christ that you are clad in a priest's holy vestments! You have, all over you, the pure white linen which is the righteousness of saints, and you are wearing that royal miter which permits you to exercise the priesthood, for He, "has made us kings and priests unto God." We are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people."

O child of God, how glad you would be if you could really rejoice in all this! Just think of it—at this moment you are a priest unto God on behalf of the world! The dumb world cannot speak to God, but you are to speak to Him in the place of the whole animate and inanimate creation! You are a priest unto the Most High! The rest of mankind must be farmers, and vine-dressers, and tend the flocks, and mind earthly things, but you, as a Believer, have to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus and to make everything you have to do into a daily sacrifice unto God! What a wonderful thing it is that you, who once were only fit to associate with devils—you who were black as Hell, itself, are now, through faith in Christ—made so clean and are so gloriously arrayed that you may stand before the Lord and swing the censer to and fro, and let the sweet perfume of your praises fill the whole house and ascend acceptably unto God! You may stand here and offer unto God the living sacrifice of your entire being, which shall be holy, acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ, your Savior!

Will you not be glad that it is so? Made a priest unto *God*, can you be miserable? You must not! Do you not remember that the priests were never to mar the corners of their beards? They were not to shave their heads, or to adopt the common customs of men in mourning because they were God's servants, and they must be glad and rejoice before Him. Ordained to such a sacred office as the priesthood, put on your ornaments, yes, put on your beautiful robe that is all of blue! Christ gives to you a garment fringed with holy bells, which cause you, wherever you go, to sound forth the sweet tinkling of holy joy, for He makes even you to be like unto Himself for glory and for beauty, and to stand before the Presence of God without fear, accepted in Himself. What a good reason for joy there is in all this!

Now I must bring you back to the text, that you may see that there is a joy here which is, perhaps, the sweetest of all, that is, the joy of *heavenly marriage*—"as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments." "A bridegroom!" Then it is true that I, a poor stranger and an alien, am married to Christ! There is the mention of a bride and a bridegroom, too, and it is all to impress upon us this idea, that every believing soul is joined unto Christ in a true, real, mystical, conjugal union which shall never be broken. "Quis separabit?" "Who shall separate us from the love of

Christ?" Jehovah hates putting away, so He will never divorce a soul that is once married to Him. Now are we no longer our own, but we belong to Christ, and our song, the sweetest that can be sung this side of Heaven, is—

***"I my Best-Beloved's am,
And He is mine."***

"My beloved is mine, and I am His; He feeds among the lilies." There is no angel with whom Christ has entered into union as He has with you and with me. "He took not on Him the nature of angels." He took not up angels, but He has taken upon Him the nature of the seed of Abraham! He came here as a Man, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. The Head of all the redeemed is Christ. His name is named on us and, as surely as Adam is our sire, so surely is Christ the second Adam, our Heavenly Bridegroom! Glory be unto His holy name!

Oh, that this blessed marriage union were more fully understood by us and that our expectancy bestirred us to wait with sacred impatience till the time when He shall come to take us to Himself to be one with Him, partakers of His Throne and of His crown, and of His Glory, forever and forever! Come, my Brothers and Sisters, have I not given you a grand reason for making as your own this good resolution of the Prophet, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God"?

Last of all, to work out the whole text, we have, here, *attractive adornment*—"as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." So that every Believer in Christ is a person goodly to look upon—in the esteem of God, he is fair and lovely. "He delights not in the strength of the horse: He takes not pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy." Does it not surprise you that God should ever have seen anything beautiful in you? My heart has often melted when I have read those words of the Heavenly Bridegroom to His spouse, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me." What? My eyes! Shall they ever overcome my blessed Bridegroom? Yes, and He says to you, Believer, "You are all fair, My love; there is no spot in you." So thoroughly has He washed and cleansed you, that He beholds His own image reflected in your eyes and He takes infinite delight in what He has made you, by His Grace! "He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing."

I want you, each one, to drink in this blessed Truth of God, if you can. Not only that you are *not* the object of hatred to God, but that you *are* the object of His intense delight! Not only that you never cause anger to spring up in His bosom, for His anger is turned away from you, but that you even raise in His heart emotions of Divine affection! You are thus able to hold the King in His inner chamber of communion and say Him, "I will not let You go." O Beloved, if you did but realize where you once were and where you now are—and where you shall be forever and ever—you would be ready to leap for joy! Come, then, will you not be glad in your Lord? What? Is some little petty trial to rob God of His Glory? I have said to myself, sometimes, when I have been sorely sick and have become fearfully depressed through pain, "If I get over this illness, I will give God

a sevenfold portion of thankful service and praise.” I have tried to pay up my arrears when I recovered. I have thought, “I am afraid, while I was full of pain, I was very dull, stupid, despondent and almost despairing. Now that I have got rid of all that, I will let my dear Lord see whether I cannot make up a little for lost time.”

I want you, dear Friends, to do so from this very hour! Go home, sit down and bless the Lord! Sometimes, even singing is not good enough to present to our God, and music cannot convey all we want to say. Then let—

“Expressive silence muse His praise.”

Sit still and meditate on all the Lord’s goodness to you and so keep out all sadness while you bless His holy name! I like, sometimes, to be like those beautiful lilies that send up a long straight stem and then throw out a lovely flower in which white and gold are charmingly blended, just as if they would give God all they could. They cannot say a word, but they stand quite still and they seem to bless the Lord by standing still and looking so beautiful! I like to sit down and feel as if He had made me to consider the lilies and so to consider them that I would do just the same as they do—just show myself to Him—as much as to say, “See, my Lord, what You have done for me? I was a poor, lost, all-but-condemned wretch, yet You have made me a prince of the blood royal! You have lifted me from the dunghill and set me among Your saints! Glory, glory, glory, glory be unto Your dear name forever and ever!”

While I have been talking about this choice theme, I have been grieving over the many who know not by personal experience what it is to have this great change worked within them. Dear Friends, let me tell you, once and for all, that you cannot make yourselves fit for Heaven. You cannot clothe yourselves with the garments of salvation. You cannot renew your own nature. Somebody says, “But, Sir, you discourage people by telling them that they cannot change themselves.” That is the very thing I want to do! “Oh, but, I want to set a man working!” says one. Do you? I want to set him *not* working, that is to say, I want him to have done with any idea that salvation is of himself! I want him to drop that thought, altogether, and just to feel that if his salvation is to Come out of himself, he has to get everything out of nothing, and that is not only difficult, but impossible! He has to get life out of his own death, to get cleanness out of the filthy ditch of his own nature, out of which it can never come!

Discouragement of this sort is the very thing I always aim at in my preaching! I am afraid that there are many people who are made to believe that they are saved when they are not. My belief is that God never healed a man till he was wounded and that he never made a man alive till he was dead. It is God’s way, first, to drag us down and make us feel that we *are* nothing, *can do* nothing, and that we are shut up to be *saved by Grace*—that Christ must save us from beginning to end, or else we can never be saved at all! Oh, if I could but bring all my hearers not only into a state of discouragement, but into a condition of despair about themselves, *then* I would know that they were on the road to a simple

faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! Our extremity is God's opportunity! Oh, how I long to get you all to that extremity!—

***“Tis perfect poverty, alone,
That sets the soul at large!
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge.”***

It is absolute helplessness and death that lays the sinner where Christ can deal with him. When he is nothing, Christ shall be everything. Have you never heard of the man who saw a person drowning and plunged into the river after him and swam to him? The poor fellow tried to clutch his rescuer, but the swimmer knew that—if he let the man get hold of him, he could not bring him ashore, so he kept swimming round him. The man went down and still his rescuer swam around him, but did not touch him. He went down again because the swimmer could see that he was still too strong and, when he was just going down the third time, then the wise rescuer laid hold of him, for he was helpless and so could not impede his deliverer!

That is what you have to be, dear Friends. When you cannot do *anything*, then you cannot any longer hinder Christ! But, as long as you can do a hand's turn, you will hamper my dear Lord and Master. Your business is just to yield yourself right up into His hands to be saved by Him alone. “Are there to be no good works?” asks someone. Oh, yes, plenty of them, *as soon as ever Christ has saved you!* The *first* thing the man does when he has quit his own works and given himself up entirely to Christ, is to cry, “Lord, what will You have me do? You have saved me, now I will do all I can, not for my self-salvation, but to glorify You and show men what Your Grace has done, and so express in some poor feeble way the gratitude I feel for the free salvation which Your Grace has given me.”

Some of you will have to go down once or twice more before the Lord Jesus Christ will give you eternal salvation. You are still too good. You are still too big. You are too strong—you have such a very respectable character that you are not content to come in at Christ's back door, where He receives none but poor, guilty sinners! You are not quite naked yet—there is a rag or two of your own righteousness about you. You will have to be stripped and *then* you shall put on the robe of Christ's righteousness! You have only a bone or two broken and you can crawl about a little—you have yet to be ground to powder! When you become *nothing*—when you have no good feelings, no good desires, or anything you can bring to Christ—when you come to Christ, not *with* a broken heart, but for a broken heart, then He will receive you! Then you will be the kind of man that Christ came to save! Oh, that He would bring you to that point very speedily, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ISAIAH 3.

Verse 1. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me.* These are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Prophet, looking forward to the time of His coming into the world, put them into His mouth and, in due time, our

Savior read them and applied them to Himself in the synagogue at Nazareth as He said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me."

1. *Because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted,*" God has sent Christ to bind up the broken-hearted. Then will He not do it? Will He refuse, my broken-hearted Brother or Sister, to bind *you* up? O deeply-troubled, tempest-tossed spirit, will the Anointed One reject you and refuse to fulfill His office upon you? Never! It is both His name and His office to save, for He is called Jesus, the Savior. O broken-hearted one, look to Him! Hear Him say, at this moment, "Jehovah has sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted"

1. *To proclaim liberty to the captives.* Where are you, poor, wretched bond-slaves of sin, lettered with the iron chains of despair? Christ proclaims liberty even to you! Trust Him and you shall be—

***"Freed from sin, and walk at large,
Your Savior's blood your full discharge."***

"Jehovah has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives."

1. *And the opening of the prison to them that are bound.* There is a general discharge of prisoners. The time has come for it. Christ died to make it possible—He lives to perfect the emancipation of all for whom He died. He comes, by His Spirit, to give you the experience of it—"the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

2. *To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.* Oh, what precious words are these! Christ comes, commissioned of the father, "to comfort all that mourn."

3. *To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.* This message is spoken to all the Lord's people, but it has a special reference to the Jews, God's ancient people. Happy times are coming for them in the years that yet lie in the future, when they accept the Messiah whom they have so long rejected.

4. *And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.* In the days to come, Judea shall again be inhabited and the ruined cities shall be built up once more. God will bring back His ancient people, converting them to the true faith and clothing them with glory. As for ourselves, this verse is true in another sense. If we believe in Jesus, that part of us which has been given up to waste shall yet be turned to usefulness and to God's praise.

5, 6. *And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the men shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But you shall be named the Priests of the Lord.* This was true of God's ancient people, but it is true of us, also. Let us cast away our earthly cares—let our only care be to serve our God—for then strangers shall stand and feed our flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be our plowmen and our vinedressers, but we, "shall be named the Priests of the Lord."

6. *Men shall call you the Ministers of our God: you shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall you boast yourselves.* God's chosen people are His children. All the rest of mankind are only His servants, and the servants must wait upon the children whether they like it or not. Even of the angels in Heaven it is written, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" All things are the servants of the man who is the servant of God! He who is consecrated to God shall find all things consecrated to him. When all that is yours, works for God, then all things shall work together for good for you.

7, 8. *For your shame you shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them. For I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering.* God cannot endure that we should sacrifice to Him what we have gained by oppression and wrong-doing. Some men seem to try to cut themselves in halves and then say, "So much is to be secular, and so much is to be sacred." Do not believe it! You are only one man, and what you are in secular things, that you are altogether. You cannot say, "So much is to be religion, and so much is to be business." If your religion is not your business, and if your business does not melt into your religion, there is not much that is good in you. We cannot say, "I shall do this because it is religion, and I shall do that because it is business." No, no! The man is one and there is nothing to a Christian that can be marked off as secular—for all things are sacred to the man who truly serves God.

8, 9. *And I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord has blessed.* A visible stamp of Divine blessing shall be upon Believers in Christ. "They are the seed which the Lord has blessed," and all men shall acknowledge that it is so.

10, 11. *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth her bud, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.*

So may it be right speedily, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN "HYMN BOOK"—721, 758, 775.

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

SPRING NO. 1104

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 30, 1873,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“As the earth brings forth her bud, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.”
Isaiah 61:11.*

DURING the past week the air has been balmy with the breath of spring and all Nature has felt the influence of the “ethereal mildness.” The earth, of which, through the long winter, we might have said, “she is not dead, but sleeps,” has now awakened and she begins already to put on her garments of glory and beauty. Wild flowers are springing up in the hedge-rows, buds upon the trees are hastening to burst, the time of the singing of birds is come and if the voice of the turtle is not heard in our land, yet we trust the winter is past—the rain is over and gone.

Now, Nature is not at work to amuse and please us merely—its mission is instruction. Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter are God’s four Evangelists, bringing each one a different version of the self-same Gospel of Divine love. Spring has its own peculiar testimony and it is for us to read it, and to interpret it, by the light of God’s Spirit. A close analogy is often hinted at in the Old and New Testaments between the springtime and the work of God in the hearts of men. As God has promised in the outward world, that there shall be seed time and then a harvest-winter and a following summer, so He declares, over and over again, that His Word, which, when it goes forth, is like unto the sowing, shall not return unto Him void, but shall prosper in the thing for which He has sent it.

As surely as in due season the earth brings forth her buds and the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so shall God’s great purposes be accomplished and righteousness and praise shall spring forth before all the nations. The teaching of this morning is that there is a spiritual springtime appointed of God and it will surely come! As certainly as spring comes to the earth physically, so surely will it come to the Church spiritually! As certainly as God keeps His Covenant with the elements, so will He keep His Covenant with His Church and with His Son.

I. I shall need you, this morning, first to CONTEMPLATE THIS TRUTH IN REFERENCE TO THE BROAD FIELD OF THE WORLD. Let our meditations go abroad and let them range through history and into prophecy. God will surely, in the great world at large, cause the principles of righteousness which bring praise to His name to spring forth before all mankind. This leads us, first of all, to expect that there may be, in God’s work,

and in our work for God, a period of unrequited labor. The analogy between the processes of Nature and God's work in the Church holds good not only as to the revivals of spring, but as to the depressing incidents of winter.

There is a time when the farmer is occupied with the plow and with the scattering of the seed, while from day to day he sees no result from his labor. He trusts to the earth his golden grain and buries it in hopes of a future springing up, but month after month he has no return. He watches patiently, he sees the dreary months go round but not a single ear is brought loose to give him promise, much less do ample sheaves reward his toil. "Dread winter reigns tremendous over the conquered year." The vegetable world lies dead. As it is in the natural world we must expect it to be in the spiritual world—there will ordinarily be a time of unrequited sowing for the Lord's laborers. To a great extent this was so with the Church of God in her early history. Then she was fitly imaged in these words—"a sower went forth to sow."

True, through the infinite compassion of the great Farmer, there were souls saved at once by the preaching of the Gospel, but yet the wide spread of the Gospel was not a work of a few months—years of self-denial were needed. Good men had to toil throughout the whole of their lives, yes, and to lay down those lives, too, by painful and bloody deaths. And yet, at the first, Christ's kingdom did not come. Generation after generation of holy martyrs and confessors went to prison and to death to bear testimony to the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. It was the Church's time of sowing and her seed was steeped in tears and blood. God's Presence and power did not so much reveal themselves in immediate success as in patient endurance, heroic fortitude, and boundless self-sacrifice.

Holy hymns were not sung by assembled thousands where passers-by could hear them, but in the crypts and in the catacombs the righteous praised the Lord. The Word of God was in those days hidden away like a buried thing, concealed like the seed-corn beneath the clods. The Church parted with her holiest sons, who died that she might live and grow, and multiply, and subdue the earth—but for many years it seemed as if the sacrifice had been made in vain, for her Truths were still the scoff of the age, the butt of perpetual ridicule. It looked as if her principles, as well as her martyrs, would be buried. Imperial tyrants boasted that they would exterminate Christianity and leave to the Church neither root nor branch, nor place, nor name.

This was but the Lord's winter, with its bitter chills and driving tempests and stormy winds, fulfilling His Word and we, also, must expect to see the great sowing work of the Church proceed under the same trying conditions. We must not always reckon to see nations converted the moment the Gospel is preached to them. And especially where new ground has been broken up, where countries have just received the Gospel message, we must not be disappointed if neither today nor tomorrow we are rewarded with abundant results. God's plan involves plowing, sowing, waiting—and after these the springing up and the harvest. "Be patient,

therefore, Brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain.”

While the seed is under the ground, a thousand adversaries present themselves, all apparently in array against its ever rising from the earth. The seed might look up from the soil and say of the frosts and storms of winter, “all these things are against me.” It was but a few weeks ago that the earth where the farmer had sown his grain was frozen as though it were of iron. Beneath his foot it was hard as the share with which he had formerly plowed it. Then came the snow and buried the green blades beneath its fleecy showers. Who could imagine that harvests would spring forth from frost-bound clods or from beneath so thick a shroud of snow?

Then came the rain, again and again. It deluged everything. The weeping months followed each other in mournful procession. It has rained this year as our forefathers have seldom seen it and yet, despite frost, snow, rain and flood, seeds are peeping forth in the garden! The almond blossom is in its beauty! The golden cup of the crocus is brimmed with sunshine and the trees are bursting into leaf! So we must expect to see in the Church of God. Desperate obstacles will obstruct the spread of the Gospel. Fearful disappointments will wither hope. Solemn calamities will overthrow success. Iniquity will abound and the love of many will wax cold! When we survey the condition of affairs apart from faith in God, it may even seem to us that our cause is hopeless and the further persecution of it a foregone conclusion. We must expect to see it so. If it is so in Nature so may it also be in Grace, and I sometimes think that we have fallen upon such times even now.

Probably there never was a period less favorable to the advance of true religion than the present one. I admit that there is a tendency among men advanced in years to depreciate the present and to say that the former times were better than now. With that feeling I think I have little or no sympathy, neither my age nor my temperament lead me in that direction, yet I fear, that in some respects, the present era is peculiarly trying to the Christian Church in this country. Our nation has grown enormously rich. Unequaled prosperity has continued with us for several years and out of this has grown a worldly and luxurious spirit. Pride and fullness of bread have taken men’s thoughts off God and His salvation. Boundless luxury has bred indifference to the Gospel.

The lower classes, as they are called, are less than ever within the reach of the Gospel. In some districts working men appear to have no mind for anything but their beer cans, their dogs, and their sports. Even politics do not stir them as once they did and religion they regard as a matter of perfect indifference. Extra wages, which should mean mental elevation and increased family comfort, are converted into increased self-indulgence and profligacy. The enormous amount derived by our national revenue from the sale of strong drink largely represents excesses of riot and drunkenness. God’s great mercy to us, of leading us gratefully to

serve Him, is perverted into an occasion for greater sin. Alas that it should be so!

But those who love the cause of God and Truth must not be discouraged, as though some new thing had happened unto us. Dark times and wintry seasons there have been before. Sharp frosts and drenching rains are no novelties. We are passing through a spiritual winter, but the spring shall surely come and with it spiritually—

***“A season of refreshing,
A waking as from sleep,
A longing and a singing
That make the pulses leap!
A sense of renovation
Of freshness and of health,
A casting off of worldliness
A love for heavenly wealth.”***

While our text leads us to expect a time of unprofitable sowing, it excites the hope of a sacred spring time. God’s Gospel cannot perish, His kingdom cannot fail, His Truth cannot be overcome! And that for many reasons, among which are these—That which is sown in the garden springs up from out of the ground because there is vitality in it. The life is dormant for a while, but it displays itself in due season. There is at the appointed hour for all the buried seeds a bursting of grave clothes, a rending of sepulchers and an upheaval of the earth. And then in resurrection freshness comes forth the blade, to be succeeded by the ear and that by the full corn in the ear.

Even so the Truth of God is a living and incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever! Or, to use another figure, it is as the teel tree and as the oak, whose substance is in them when they lose their leaves. It is not possible that the Truth of God should perish. Even if it is cut down, at the scent of water it will bud and send forth new shoots! Life in garden seeds may be destroyed—under certain influences the life-germ may perish—but the living Truth of God is immortal and unconquerable! The Lord has Himself declared that it abides forever—“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God shall stand forever.” Therefore do we assuredly look for a blessed spring time! We wait to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living—yes, we expect to see the universal reign of the everlasting Gospel!

But seed springs up not only because of its own vitality, but because of its surrounding circumstances. Put the seed away in the mummy’s hand and hide it in the pyramid, and though it may be vital, still it is not quickened into growth. The seed under a clod waits awhile till all its surroundings become propitious and then it begins to germinate. The moisture and the warmth cooperate and the soil begins to yield its nourishment to the little life-germ. So we may rest assured that God will make all things propitious in His Providence to the growth of His own Truth. He knows under what conditions religious thought will spring up in the minds of men and He can create those conditions. He has created them and He will! The dews, are they not in His hand? The rains, does He not pour them forth

from His palm? The sunlight, is it not the smiling of His face and the heat, is it not the breath of His love? Is not the residue of the Spirit with Him? Can He not open the bottles of Heaven? Is He not the Father of Lights also, who can pour forth the brightness of His Grace upon men's hearts?

We may rest assured that because all conditions are in the hand of God and He can order them according to His own will, He will cause the Seed which He has sown in the earth to spring up. Why, I think I may say of the Gospel, that, under the Divine superintendence, everything is in league with it! They fight from Heaven—the stars in their courses fight for the Gospel of Jesus! For it winds blow, and tempests rage! It is in league with the stones of the field and the beasts of the field are at peace with it. The stupendous wheels of Providence, as they revolve, are full of eyes and all those eyes are fixed upon Christ and upon His Cross. And as they turn upon their mystic axles, they revolve forever with one design—I thought I heard them speak as they moved onward—and a voice from among them said, “let the nation of God be glorious, and let the Christ of God be king among the people.”

The Gospel must spread, therefore. It is, in itself, vital and energetic and the Lord of Hosts orders all things to secure its growth. But the corn comes not up out of the earth because it is vital, or because of its surroundings merely, for, as we believe, there is the actual power of God at work throughout Nature. We have never been able to agree with the theory that Nature, once started, works of itself, like a clock which has been wound up. We believe that its operations conform to certain laws, but there must be some power to carry out the laws, or else that would be a dead letter. Everything that exists is a continuous emanation from the Most High and everything that is done anywhere in the world, God lends the strength and gives the power whereby it is done.

If we were to see performed upon this stage, in a single moment, the turning of one grain of wheat into a full-grown ear, we should exclaim, “wonderful!” and regard it as a miracle! But if God is pleased to take some few months in performing the same operation, is it not the less wonderful? If Spring came but once in a century, what wonder it would excite in all hearts! If it had never happened but once, it would be considered to be the crown of miracles and skeptics would ridicule those who believed in its possibility! Yet God creates our harvests as surely as if there never had been a harvest before and He forms our ripe fields by His Omnipotence as truly even as He fashioned man in the garden of Eden, perfect at once! God is alive and God is at work—He has not betaken Himself into His secret chambers and shut the door behind Him and left us orphans in the world—and the earth without a Ruler and without a Friend!

He works everywhere. In the deepest caverns of the sea and among the highest pinnacles of the heavens—and He works there among the violets of yonder bank and the primroses which peer forth from amidst the sere leaves around the under wood of the copse—and there also, where the bees begin to hum, the lark to sing and the lambs to play. It is God that

sends "Spring, the Awakener," to fill earth's bosom with flowers. He does it all! And it is because of this that we expect the Gospel to flourish—not merely because the Word of God is vital and because God will order Providence on its behalf, but because He is at work in it—mysteriously at work, it is true, but certainly at work, for the Spirit of the living God which was given at Pentecost has never gone back to Heaven. He is here still and He that worked among the crowds of the streets of Jerusalem and made them cry out "Sirs, what must we do to be saved?" is working in our cities even at this day!

Where Jesus Christ is preached, His Spirit is pledged to be present. God's Spirit works always. He is breaking hard hearts as the winter pulverizes the clods. He is melting stubborn wills into obedience as the vernal showers soften the hard earth. And He is awakening the young germs of hope, prayer and desire, just as the warm sunlight is calling up the green blades and the flowers. The Spirit of God works always! O you adversaries of the Gospel, it is not the Gospel, alone, that you have to stand against, but the God over all, blessed forever, Omnipotent and Eternal, is engaged in the battle! If the Gospel is His sword, you may well tremble at its edge, but you may be much more afraid when you remember the arm which wields that deadly weapon—which can divide asunder soul and spirit! The Gospel is His arrow and His bow, and He who draws that bow and directs that arrow is the same God who launches thunderbolts in the day of tempest and touches the hills and they smoke. The God of the Gospel is He who wheels the earth in its orbit and marshals all the stars. Jehovah invisible, but also almighty. He is engaged to show Himself strong for the Gospel and therefore do we expect victory.

Despite the times of depression and of sorrow, days of refreshing must come from the Presence of the Lord. The spring must follow the winter—"As the earth brings forth her buds, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and peace to spring forth before all the nations." If at any time our mind should grow desponding concerning the progress of the Gospel and I confess mine is very heavy at times, it ought to encourage us to remember that the Gospel will conquer, not because it *looks* as if it would, but because God has *declared* and *decreed* that it shall do so! I know of no efforts which have been made to promote the advent and progress of spring. We have had a blustering March. We had a cold February. We were deluged with rain and swathed in mist all through November, December, and January. I saw nothing in the atmosphere or the sky to help on Spring.

Did it need any helping? Did it need human aid? No. The earth pursued its ordained orbit and every hour it neared the point where Spring, laden with flowers, lay in kind ambush, longing to scatter her garlands over the glad earth. God needs no helpers to create Spring—He sends it in His own time, and lo it comes! Even thus the Lord stands in no need of creature help to effect the designs of His Grace. Spring has never lingered until assembled Parliaments have permitted and commanded its coming. Neither has it waited for Emperors to smile, and say—"Let the buds come forth."

Far away in the dense forest and here in merry England in a thousand woods the sap is flowing in the trees, and myriads of buds are swelling, but not by man's art or aid!

The daffodils are blooming in the meadows where no man planted them and the bluebells in the dells where gardener's spade has nearer come. Yes, and I know right well that the dew of Divine Grace and the showers of regenerating love tarry not for man, nor wait for the sons of men. If there had been a general revolt against Spring it would not have been delayed. If the kings of the earth had set themselves and the rulers taken counsel together, no single gleam of sunlight would have hesitated to shine forth. If the Pope himself, in his so-called infallibility, had issued a bull forbidding the sun to re-cross the equator and advance to the northern tropic, I venture to predict that it would have pursued the even tenor of its way, despite the bidding of his Holiness! None can stay the marches of the year, or turn the seasons from their course! Who is he that can fight against the Lord, or withstand the power of the Most High? Our help comes from the Lord who made Heaven and earth!

We do not reckon upon the progress of the Gospel because we have a company of rich men to help us, a goodly fellowship of eloquent divines to advocate the cause and a considerable number of respectable persons to support the good work! No, Sirs, our Master has not come to such a beggarly state of dependence that He needs a mortal's help! He has told us that "cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm," and He has not come to trust in man Himself and make flesh His arm—"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts." As comes the Spring by God, Jehovah's own arrangement, so shall come the time of the Church's triumph and the victory of Truth, by God's appointment! Let men say what they will, let it never be forgotten that the disheartening circumstances of the Winter may have been, all of them, promotive of the success of the Spring!

I cannot tell what connection there may have been between the sharp frost and the coloring of the cowslip, but I have no doubt that if the flowers could speak they could tell. I do not know what is the connection between the drenching showers and the gushes of song from the woodlands, but doubtless the larks and the thrushes hold the secret among them. Neither do I know how howling winds are linked with leafy bowers, but what the oak or the elm could say if they were permitted to prophesy for a while it is not for me to guess. There is an intimate intermarriage and commingling of the dark and of the bright, the chill and the warm—all from this has come forth the joy of Spring. Every child knows that March winds and April showers bring forth the sweet May flowers, so all the sorrows and troubles which the Church has borne, and shall yet bear, are mothers of the victories she shall yet achieve! Her days would never be so bright if her nights had not been so dark!

Believe, therefore, that the worst times are working on towards something better. Beloved, we have God's promise to sustain us in all our efforts to spread abroad His kingdom. He has, Himself, declared that, "As

the rain comes down, and the snow from Heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing where I sent it." The Lord God cannot lie! He must keep His promise and He cannot be disappointed by unforeseen difficulties. His power is irresistible, therefore we feel quite sure that His Word must win the day!

Think for a moment, you who are growing weary through the long night, whose watches seem as if they would never end—I hear you cry, "when will the day break, and the shadows flee away"—be not dispirited, but encourage yourselves with these thoughts. Remember what a sowing has already gone before. Christ sowed the earth with Himself! A Sower went forth to sow and as He sowed, He passed by the garden of Gethsemane and cast a precious handful there, steeped in His own bloody sweat. Then He went up to Golgotha and sowed full handfuls there, where the plowers made deep furrows. Then He went up to the Cross and you know how He sowed there, for there He was that grain of wheat which fell into the ground and died and therefore cannot abide alone, but must bring forth much fruit!

Did God, Himself, become Man to save men and shall not men be saved? Did Christ, Himself, come from Heaven to fight with the dread enemy and did He fight him and return victorious with dyed garments from Bozrah, and shall the enemy win the day, after all? Is Calvary nothing? Is Gethsemane nothing? The Son of God in anguish and in death—is He nothing? Yet so it must be if the Gospel does not conquer and the world is not converted to God—"He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." Remember, too, who is the Farmer of this field. He has not bid His Church till the world without Divine help. "My Father is the Farmer."

God Himself is watching over the broad field of the world to promote the growth of what the Savior sowed and shall He fail? Shall it be said at the close of the great Farmer's work, there is no result from it? The idols are still firm on their pedestals—Antichrist sits upon her seven hills in pompous state, and the simple Gospel is still in the minority! Will the Almighty fail? What do you think, Sirs? Can Omnipotence be defeated? No! It cannot be! As Jehovah lives, it cannot be! The living God must conquer. The right hand of the Lord shall be exalted, for it does valiantly. He may, for a while, permit the conflict to tremble in the balances, but Divine power must overcome! We cannot dream otherwise.

Moreover, there is the Spirit of God, Himself, as well as the Father and the Son, and He has designed to dwell in the midst of the Church. The Spirit of God is here and is specially at work. He moved upon chaos and turned it into order. He it is, also, that quickens the dead, and shall He be defeated and disappointed in the conversion of this world? Let the thought be accursed, for it is near akin to blasphemy, if it is not blasphemy itself! The Triune God must make the knowledge of Himself to "cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." God's honor is engaged in the matter! On

this battle-field of the world He has flung down the gauntlet to the powers of Hell. Satan has taken up the glove of battle and the fight has raged long, but it must end in victory for God, it cannot be otherwise!

My soul loathes the theory of some that this world will get worse, and worse, and worse, and never will be won to obedience to the Lord God! Scripture is against that theory—a theory so desponding, so fitted to make God’s soldiers fling away the sword! Surely there shall come a time when the nations shall know the Lord and the multitude of the people shall worship before the most High God. The Winter shall be succeeded by its Spring! Therefore be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

II. Now, I shall spend just a minute or two upon the same topic, setting it in another light. Dear Brothers and Sisters, I want you to CONTEMPLATE THIS TRUTH IN REFERENCE TO THE GARDEN COMMITTED TO YOUR OWN PERSONAL CULTIVATION. As God’s people you have all something to do for Him. I want you to do it and to do it in the best possible manner. But I am sure you will not do so unless you are of good heart and full of comfort. Be not impatient with regard to the result of what you are doing. A little child puts his seed into the ground and he goes in an hour or two and stirs the ground to see whether the seed is growing. That is because he is a little child—if he were a man he would know better.

You go and teach your Sunday school class and you expect to see all the children converted then and there. It may be God will grant you your desire in a measure, but if He does not, do not be impatient—go on, go on, go on! Do not wonder if your seed does not spring up immediately! Work on and do not be disheartened! Never listen to any voice which says to you, “leave off work.” If such a voice should ever whisper in your ear, know it to be the voice of Satan and redouble your diligence, because Satan is likely to put such a thought into your mind when you are nearest to success. Be of good comfort—your seed will come up—Grace insures the harvest. If you want your seed to come up more quickly, water it again with your tears and your prayers, but never despair, success will come to it. Work on! Work on! And never be unhappy about it.

Remember that if a farmer were to sigh every morning, it would not make his wheat or his barley grow faster. And if he were to stand and weep all day because he could not see a harvest, it would not become one whit more visible in spite of his tears. Love souls and do all you can for them, but be not unbelieving. Exercise faith as to results. Anxiety may be good, but it is only so to a degree—beyond that it unfits us for duty and dishonors God. Take heed of being unbelieving. “But,” you say, “what a poor worker I am.” Beloved, why do you despair on that account? The trees in a man’s garden do not bring forth less fruit because the owner is a sickly man. The fruit depends upon the trees and the season. A harvest will not be bounded by the sower’s feebleness. I saw some little children in the fields the other day and they were putting in the seeds, but the result will be none the smaller because the children were little.

If God's work were as weak as God's workers are, it would be weak, indeed, and if the kingdom of Jesus depended upon the strength of His disciples it would soon come to nothing! The garden causes the seeds that are sown in it to spring forth though a consumptive hand may have dropped them into their places! My dear fainting Brethren, work on, wait on, pray on, watch on! You shall have your reward before long—"He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." I may not linger longer upon this point.

III. I beg you, in the third place, to CONTEMPLATE THIS SAME TRUTH IN REFERENCE TO THE BELIEVER'S SPIRITUAL STATE. Do you not sometimes fall into a wintry condition? I mean you who love the Lord. I think I need hardly ask you, for one of us may generally serve as specimen of the rest. There are times when we feel as if we had no life at all. We hope we love God and our faith is fixed in Christ, but we cannot see much evidence of it. We read the Bible and it is dull. We try to pray and we get through a sort of exercise which we hope is prayer, but it does not refresh us. And even the prospect of going up to the House of God on Sunday makes us groan out, "Lord send us a blessing," but we hardly think He will. We feel so dull and dead and cold.

Well, it is not to be wondered at. We are living in a world whose influences are never helpful to Divine Grace and we bear about us a body of sin and death which never will aid us in the way to Heaven. At such times we are like the earth in the winter. The seed is there but it lies hidden. The sap is in the tree, but it has gone down to the root and is not actively flowing and revealing itself. Now, in such times as these we cannot make any change in ourselves. "All the king's horses and all the king's men," as we have already said, could not turn winter into spring. Neither can we warm ourselves into energy. We say, "I will read the Bible and I will pray." Well, we do it, but it is no better than a dead form. We are none the better for it. But there is comfort in store for us, for what we cannot do in that we are weak through the flesh God can do!

How sweetly He has appeared for some of us! "Or ever I was aware," says the sweet singer in the Canticle, "My soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." We could not move or stir, yet, all of a sudden, we found ourselves borne onward, like the swiftly driven chariots of Amminadab—we were full of life, full of love, full of joy, full of strength—and all in a moment! Just as in a moment God sends the thaw and melts the ice—and the frozen brooks leap on their way in living rills—so will our soul leap with holy joy in the Presence of God because the Lord has come to us and has revived us! Are you not conscious that such things have happened to you many times, my Brothers and Sisters?

"Oh, yes," you say. Very well, expect them again! Even now ask for them and look up to God for them. Anything is better than everlastingly poring over yourself and your own frames and feelings. The cold of the winter will not, by being thought of, give a man any warmth. All the frosts that ever were will not create heat by our meditating upon them. Neither

does any man rise into life and joy through merely meditating upon his own spiritual death and misery. Turn away from the darkness and look at the light! Spring comes from yonder sun and so must our revival in religion, and our restored joy and peace come from God our Father. Blessed be His name, it has come from Him before and it will come from Him again! Let us wait upon Him in solemn confidence that He has not left us forever, but will return to us in mercy—

***“In all the years that have been
The spring has greened the bough.
The gladsome, healthful spring time
Keep heart, it comes now.”***

Do not suffer Satan to get an advantage over you by saying, “God has forsaken us. We shall backslide from bad to worse, we shall fall from Grace, we shall perish.” You shall do no such thing! You shall be restored, you shall be revived! Yes, perhaps you came here this very morning with the intent that God might work a wonder of Grace in you, that again you should abound in fruits of righteousness and your tongue should sing to His praise—and from this day forth you shall be one of the happiest and most useful of Christians instead of being as you have been for some months past, one of the dullest and least useful of the holy brotherhood.

IV. Now the last point shall be this—WE WILL CONTEMPLATE ALL THIS IN REFERENCE TO THOSE WHO ARE NEWLY AWAKENED. I may have some present, this morning, who are saying, “Oh, that I could be saved! Oh, that I knew where I might find Christ! What would I give if I could but have a good hope through Grace!” Dear Brother. Dear Sister. Those very desires of yours show that there is some good seed sown in you! God’s Grace has taught you to desire and to long. We never knew a man sincerely desire Christ till Christ had first worked in Him, by the Spirit. No sinner can be beforehand with Christ.

If you want Christ, He has wanted you long ago and has *already come to you*. “Ah,” you say, “but I feel so dull. I cannot pray as I used to do. I do not feel my sins as I ought. In fact, I feel nothing at all as I ought to feel it.” It is winter time with you, dear Friend, may that winter do you good. “It is very painful,” you say, “and very dangerous.” Yes, and God means to make you see what a poor thing you are and to make you know what a wretched sinner you are, and how lost you are! Do you not know that He will strip you before He will clothe you? It is always His way to kill before He makes alive! He will not begin *filming* over proud flesh—He will take the knife and cut it out—and with many a cruel gash, too, as it may seem, for He means to effect a lasting cure. Therefore, you must pass through these winters.

But let me remind you, now, that your only hope of anything better than what you are passing through lies in Christ. You cannot save yourself. As long as you have any lingering idea that you can do so you never will be saved. You can no more save yourself than the arctic regions can turn themselves into the torrid zone. “Why,” you say, “that could never be done, except God were to reverse the poles.” Ah, and He must do as great

a thing for you as that would be or else you will always be in the cold winter you are now in! And, worse, you will perish utterly unless He appears for you. You do not deserve that He should appear for you—you deserve to be left to be what you now are—and to go from hardness to greater hardness, still, till you make your own destruction sure.

The power to save you lies wholly with Him. What shall I say to you, then? Why, look to Him! Cry to Him! Ask Him to visit you! If you want the full light of God's love you will see it yonder, on the Cross, where hangs the Son of God bleeding out His life for the sins of men! God's love is concentrated there as the beams of the sun are focused by a burning-glass. If you want to feel the full heat of God's love, go to the Cross! And if you will look up to Jesus dying there, to your own surprise you will feel that spring has come to your heart and your winter is over and gone!—

***“Your mercy is more than a match for my heart
Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart.
Dissolved by Your goodness I fall to the ground
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found.”***

O, what a wonderful passage that is, from darkness to light, from death to life, from damnation to salvation, from being an enemy of God to friendship with Him! Yet that passage does not occupy a moment. It is effected in an instant! One look, and it is done! A glance of the eyes at a dying Savior and the sinner is saved! The garden has caused the things that were sown in it to spring forth! The earth has brought forth her bud, for God has visited the earth and the garden, and the miracle of Grace is performed!

I pray that these thoughts may bring comfort to many. I have labored earnestly to encourage workers, but I would be yet much more earnest to encourage seekers. Do not let the devil tell you, my dear Hearer, that the Lord will never appear for you. He will—He must! There was never a soul that humbled itself at His feet and cried for mercy through His Son that He left to perish—not one! There has never been a year without its spring and its summer and there is never a poor soul that has sorrowed for sin that has been left to end its life without consolation. The Lord must appear to you. He must come and bless you.

And I pray He may do it for you now! And when He is gracious to you, mind that you give Him the glory of it. Come and tell His people and join with them. As long as you have breath in your body praise Him and then in Heaven forever shout His praises who has done great things for you. The Lord add His blessing for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 62, 63.

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

PROCLAMATION OF ACCEPTANCE AND VENGEANCE NO. 1369

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, AUGUST 12, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day
of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.”
Isaiah 61:2.*

We know that this Scripture speaks concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't say this as if we relied upon our own opinion. We know it, for sure, from the Lord's own lips, for, reading this passage in the synagogue at Nazareth, He said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." It is Jesus of Nazareth whom the Lord has anointed to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind! And our text tells us that He was, also, sent to make a proclamation which should usher in the year of acceptance and the day of vengeance. Notice well the expression, "to proclaim," because a proclamation is the message of a *king*—and where the word of a king is, there is *power*.

The Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to announce the will of the King of kings. He says, "I am come in My Father's name," and again, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me." Every word of the Gospel is backed by the authority of "the King eternal, immortal, invisible," and He who rejects it is guilty of treason against Jehovah, God of All. The Gospel is not of the nature of a commonplace invitation or human exhortation which may be accepted or refused at will without involving guilt—it is a Divine *proclamation*, issued from the Throne of the Eternal—which none can reject without becoming, thereby, rebels against the Infinite Majesty.

Now if this is so, let us give the Divine edict our most earnest attention and take heed what we hear! When a proclamation is issued by the head of a state, all good citizens gather around to read what has been said to them and to know what the supreme law may be. And so, when God proclaims His will, all right-hearted men desire to know what it is and what bearing it has upon them—what the Lord demands or what the Lord promises and what is their share therein. Beloved Hearers, listening to the Gospel should always be very solemn work since it is listening to the Word of God! Though the voice is that of man, yet the Truth he preaches is of God. I pray you do not trifle with it.

Nor let it be forgotten that a proclamation must be treated with profound respect, not merely by receiving attention to its contents, but by giving obedience to its demands! God does not speak to us by His Son that we may be gratified by hearing the sound of His voice, but that we may *yield* to His will. We are not to be hearers only, but *doers* of the Word. We should be quick in obedience to the command of the proclamation, swift in acceptance of its promise and cheerful in submission to its demands! Who shall resist the proclamations of Jehovah? Is He not our

Creator and King? Who is stubborn enough to refuse obedience? Or who has a bronze face enough to dispute His sway?

Shall not He who made Heaven and earth, and shakes them when He pleases—and will *destroy* them at His pleasure—be regarded with reverential awe by the creatures of His hands? O Son of God, since it is a Divine proclamation which You do publish, send forth Your Holy Spirit that we may receive it with deepest reverence and lowly obedience, lest, through our neglect, we do despite to You as well as to Your Father! When a proclamation is not made by an ordinary herald, but when the Prince, Himself, comes forth to declare His Father's will, then should all hearts be moved to sevenfold attention! It is the Son of God, anointed by the Spirit of God, who acts as herald to us and so by each Person of the Divine Trinity we are called upon to bow a listening ear and an obedient heart to what the Lord proclaims. Attention, then! The Messenger of the Covenant makes proclamation! Attention for the King of kings!

With this as a preface, let me notice that there are three points in the proclamation worthy of our attention. The first is the acceptable year. The next, the vengeance day. And the third, the comfort derived from both—"to comfort all that mourn."

I. Jesus, in the first place, proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord. Take the expression to pieces and it comes to this—the year of the Lord and the year of acceptance. Now, what was the year of the Lord? There can be, I think, very little question that this relates to the Jubilee Year. Every 7th year was the Lord's year and it was to be a Sabbath of rest to the land. But the seventh 7th year, the 50th year, which the Lord reserved unto Himself, was in a very marked and special sense the Year of the Lord.

Now, our Lord Jesus has come to proclaim a period of Jubilee to the true seed of Israel. The seed of Abraham, now, are not the seed according to the Law, but those who are born after the promise. There are privileges reserved for Israel after the flesh which they will yet receive in the day when they shall acknowledge Christ to be the Messiah. But every great blessing which was promised to Abraham's seed after the flesh is now virtually promised to Israel after the Spirit—to those who, by faith, are the children of believing Abraham.

Now, Beloved, to all who believe, our Lord Jesus proclaims a year of Jubilee! Let us dwell upon the four privileges of the Jubilee and accept with delight the proclamation which our Lord has made! In the year of Jubilee, as we read in the 25th Chapter of Leviticus, there was a release of all persons who had sold themselves for servants. Pinched by great poverty and unable to meet their debts, it sometimes happened that men were compelled to say to their creditor, "Take us and our wives and children and accept our services instead of money. We have no goods or chattels and our land has been mortgaged long ago. But here we are—we cannot pay in any other way—give us food and raiment and lodging, and we will put ourselves under apprenticeship to you."

The Law of Moses ordained that such persons were not to be treated harshly, nor regarded as slaves, but as hired servants. But still, it must have been an unpleasant condition of servitude for a freeborn Israelite. How happy, then, was the morning when the Jubilee trumpet sounded

and the generous Law came into operation which said, "He shall serve you unto the Year of Jubilee, but then shall he depart from you, both he and his children with him." From that moment he owed no more service, however great his debt might have been. He looked upon his wife and children and rejoiced that they were all his own and all free from the yoke so that they could, at once, return to the possession of their fathers, all live in the cottage in which they formerly dwelt and enjoy the piece of land which they formerly called their own. Liberty, that gladsome sound! Liberty had come to them! No matter that they had long been under obligations to the creditor—those obligations ceased on the sound of the sacred trumpet!

Beloved Souls now present, proclamation is made to you in the Lord's name that if you are under bondage to sin and to sinful habits, there is liberty for you! Faith in Jesus will set you free! If you are in bondage under justice and the broken Law, there is deliverance. If you are under bondage through fear of death, or from the rage of Satan, our Divine Lord and Master has come into the world on purpose to break these bonds and to proclaim liberty to the captives! You need be bound no longer! If you believe in Jesus you are bound no longer and you are set free from all the bondage of the Law, from the slavery of Satan and from the dread of death! Take the liberty which the great Lord freely presents to you and be no longer slaves. Jesus has brought in redemption and finished atonement and Believers are free! Come and rejoice!

The next Jubilee blessing was the redemption of alienated possessions. Every man had his own plot of ground in the Holy Land, but through the pressure of the times it sometimes happened that a man forfeited his property. He might be in need of ready money. His children might need bread to eat and he, therefore, parted with his land. It was gone—the vines and the fig trees, the corn and the oil passed over to another—but it was not gone forever. He had no power to sell beyond the year of Jubilee. When this joyful morning dawned, he went back to his family estate. It was all his, again, clear of all encumbrances. The little homestead, the farmyard, the fields and the garden all had come back to him and none could dispute his right to them.

Just so my Lord and Master declares to all who believe in Him that the estate which Adam forfeited is restored to all for whom the Second Adam died! The alienated heritage is ours again. The great Father's love, favor and care, yes, all things—whether things present or things to come, or life or death—*all* are ours and we are Christ's and Christ is God's. If we are Believers and we are of the true seed of Israel, this day the Lord Jesus proclaims to us a restoration of all the lost privileges and blessings which originally belonged to manhood! Behold, Believers, all Covenant blessings are yours—rejoice in them! Partake of heavenly blessings freely. Let your soul rejoice in its portion and delight itself in fatness.

It followed, also, as a third blessing of the Year of the Lord that all debts were discharged. The man who had sold himself had, as it were, made a composition of his debts by the sale of himself, and this implied a full and final discharge at the Jubilee. The person, also, who had mortgaged his land up to the Jubilee Year had discharged his debts, thereby,

and when the man received back himself and his property, no further liability rested upon him—he was cleared of all charges. The Jubilee did not give the man back himself and his land under a condition, but unconditionally. If debt had still been due, the release would have been a mere farce, since he would have had to mortgage his land and sell himself again, at once, to meet the demand. No, there was a full discharge, a canceling of all debts, a removal of all encumbrances upon the man and upon his estate—he was free.

What a joy this must have been! He who is in debt is in danger. An honest man sleeps on a hard bed till he has paid what he owes. He who is immersed in debt is plunged in misery, driven to his wits' end, not knowing what to do. Happy is he that is delivered from debt once and for all. Now behold, O Believers in Jesus, your debts before the Lord are all discharged—the handwriting that was against you is nailed to the Cross—it is receipted in the crimson lines of Jesus' precious blood! Being justified by faith you are clear before the sight of the Eternal—no one can lay anything to your charge. What joyful notes are these! Jesus makes the proclamation—who will not believe it and be glad?

A fourth blessing of the Jubilee trumpet was rest. They had their lands, but they were not to till them for a year. No more the spade and the plow, the sickle and the flail—they were to put away instruments of labor and rest for 12 months. Think of a whole year of perfect repose in which they might worship and adore God all the week, make every day a holy festival and the whole year a Sabbath of Sabbaths unto the Most High! Brothers and Sisters, the Israelites had no small privileges under the Ceremonial Covenant, if they had lived up to it—but they failed to do so. It has sometimes been questioned whether they ever kept a Jubilee at all and whether the Sabbatic year was ever once observed. If they had obeyed the Lord they would have been favored, indeed, for in the matter of holidays and quiet resting times they were favored above all people.

Think of one year in seven of absolute cessation from toil. What repose for them! And then they had, also, the year after the 7th seven, so that every man who reached the 50th year enjoyed two consecutive years of absolute rest from all labor—and yet knew no need, for the promise was that the ground would bring forth plentifully and every man could help himself. Those who had land would have a good store to last them through three years and those who had none would be fed by the spontaneous produce of the soil. We live not under such laws, but if we did I am afraid we would not have the faith to trust in the Lord and avail ourselves of the divinely appointed holiday.

But, Beloved, we rest *spiritually*. He that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has entered into rest. Now no more does he strive to work out a righteousness of his own, for he already has a Divine one and needs no other. It is his pleasure to worship God, but he no longer trembles beneath His wrath. It is his delight to obey His commandments, but he toils and frets no longer as a slave under the Law—he has become a free man and a beloved child—and the peace of God which passes all understanding keeps his heart and mind. Being justified by faith he has peace with

God and enjoys his influences of the Divine Comforter whose indwelling gives rest to the soul.

The Jubilee Year, according to our text, was called, “the Year of the Lord,” and the reason for all the four jubilee blessings was found in the Lord. First, the servants were set free because God said, “they are My servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt” (Lev. 25:42). Ah, poor burdened Soul, if you believe in Christ, you shall go free, for you are the Lord’s own—His chosen, His redeemed and, therefore, He claims you and will suffer no other lord to have dominion over you! The devil seeks to lay an embargo upon you and hold you a slave, but Jesus says, “Let go of My captives, for I have redeemed them with My blood.” Jesus claims you, O penitent Souls! He cries to sin as once the Lord said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord, let My people go.”

Jesus says of each repenting soul, “Loose him and let him go, for he is Mine. My Father gave him to Me. He is My chosen, my beloved. Neither sin nor Satan, nor death nor Hell shall hold him, for he is Mine.” The land, also, was set free for this same reason, for concerning it the Lord said, “The land is Mine” (Lev. 25:23). The freehold of the land was vested in Jehovah, Himself, consequently He ordained that no man should hold any portion of it by right of purchase beyond the 50th year, for the land was entailed and must go back to those for whom He had appointed it at the Jubilee Year. So the blessings of the Everlasting Covenant are God’s and, therefore, He appoints them unto you poor believing sinners and you shall have them, for the Divine decree shall not be frustrated.

As surely as He appointed Christ to reign and placed Him on the Throne, so does He appoint you to reign with Him! And you shall sit upon His Throne though all the devils in Hell should say you may not! So, too, the debts were all discharged, because on the day before the Jubilee, the great atonement had swept away all transgression and indebtedness towards God and He would have His people forgive all the debts of their fellow men. All things are the Lord’s and He exercised His crown rights on the day of Jubilee so far as to declare all debts discharged. “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof,” was the motto of the Jubilee and sufficient reason for the canceling of obligations between man and man.

As for rest, that came also, because it was God’s year and was hallowed unto the Lord. “A Jubilee shall the 50th year be unto you: you shall not sow, neither reap that which grows of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of your vine undressed. For it is the Jubilee; it shall be holy unto you: you shall eat the increase thereof out of the field.” During man’s years the earth brings forth thorns and thistles and man must earn his bread with the sweat of his face. But when God’s year comes, then the wilderness and the solitary places are glad and the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose! When the Lord’s own Kingdom comes, then shall the earth yield her increase as she has never done before! My Beloved, I trust you know the blessedness of living in God’s year, for you live by faith upon His Providence, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. This is the Sabbath of the *soul*, the counterpart of Heaven!

You behold the work of Atonement fully accomplished on your behalf and know yourselves to be delivered from all your liabilities to the Law

and, therefore, your heart leaps within you. You are clean, delivered, set free, washed in the blood of the Lamb and, therefore, you come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon your heads! But the text speaks, also, of the “acceptable year of the Lord.” Now, our Lord Jesus Christ has come to proclaim to sinners the Lord’s acceptance of guilty men through His great Sacrifice. Apart from the work of our Lord Jesus, men as sinners are unacceptable to God. Some of you know the misery of being in that condition—it is horrible to feel that the Lord is weary of you and your vain oblations.

Since you have come in your own name and righteousness, God has not accepted you. Neither has He heard your prayers nor listened to your cries, nor had respect unto your religious observances, for He says, “Yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear.” If the Spirit of God has convinced you of your natural unacceptableness with God, you must have been brought into a very sad state, indeed. Not to be accepted of God—and to be aware of it—is cause for intense sorrow! But now be sure, you that believe in Jesus, that you are accepted of God—notwithstanding your infirmities and sins you are, “accepted in the Beloved,” by Him who has said, “I will accept you with your sweet savor.”

And now, being thus accepted as to your persons, your petitions shall come up with acceptance before the Lord. As for your prayers, God hears them! As for your tears, He puts them into His bottle. As for your works, He counts them to be fruits of His Spirit and accepts them. Yes, now that you are accepted in Christ, all that you are and all that you have and all you do—the whole of you—is acceptable to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thrice happy am I to have to talk upon such a subject as this! Come, you who are willing, now, to believe in Jesus—THIS is the acceptable year of the Lord! God is reconciled! Man is favored! Blessings abound! Now is the accepted time! Now is the day of salvation! Let sin be confessed and the confession shall be accepted and you shall find forgiveness! Let transgression be repented of, the repentance shall be accepted and you shall hear a voice saying, “Go and sin no more. Your sins, which are many, are forgiven you.”

Hail, you that are graciously accepted, blessed are you among women! And you too, my Brothers and Sisters, remember the words of Solomon, “Go your way, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God now accepts your works” (Ecc. 9:7). Come to Jesus by faith, and though you come with a limping walk and with sorrowing spirits, come, you that are downcast and dare not look up! This is no common time, the Lord Jesus has made it a red letter year for you! He proclaims a year of Grace and acceptance! Behold in this anno Domini, or year of our Lord, we have a choice year of Grace set apart for us! Who will not come to our gracious Prince, accept His mercy and live? Thus you see we get a double meaning from the text—the Year of Jubilee with all its accumulated privileges of Free Grace, and the year of acceptance in which whoever will, may come, and God will accept him if he comes in the name of Jesus, trusting alone in the atoning blood!

II. May the Lord help us while we speak upon the second part of the text—the “DAY OF VENGEANCE OF OUR GOD.” Does not the sound of

vengeance grate upon your ears? Does it not seem discordant to the sweet tenor of the passage? Vengeance! Shall that happen side by side with acceptance? Yes, Beloved, this is the mystery of the Gospel—the system of Redemption marries Justice and Mercy—the method of Suretyship unites Severity and Grace. The economy of Substitution blends Acceptance and Vengeance. This Gospel mystery is to be published to every creature under Heaven, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes. We sweetly sang just now—

***“Here I behold His innermost heart,
Where Grace and Vengeance strangely join,
Piercing His Son with sharpest smart,
To make the purchased pleasure mine.”***

Now behold in this text you have the heart of God laid bare, for you have the year of acceptance coupled with the day of vengeance. Let us explain this strange commingling and, at the same time, expound the text. In the first place, whenever there is a day of mercy to those who believe, it is always a day of responsibility to those who reject it—and if they continue in that state it is a day of increased wrath to unbelievers. It is not possible for the Gospel to be without some effect. If it is a savor of life unto life to those who receive it, it must of necessity, from its own intrinsic vigor, be a savor of death unto death to those who reject it.

To this sword there are two edges—one will kill our fears and the other will surely kill our pride and destroy our vain hopes if we yield not to Christ. You may, perhaps, have noticed that when our Lord read this passage at Nazareth, He stopped short, He did not read it all. He read as far down as, “to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,” and then He closed the Book and gave it to the minister and sat down. I suppose that at the commencement of His ministry, before He had been rejected by the nation and before He had suffered for sin, He wisely chose to allude to the gentler topics rather than to those more stern and terrible ones. But He did not conclude His ministry without referring to the stern words which followed those which He had read.

If you will turn to Luke’s 21st Chapter you will find Him saying in the 21st and 22nd verses, “Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart. And let not them that are in the countries enter there. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.” You know the story of the siege of Jerusalem, the most harrowing of all narratives, for the anger of God was concentrated upon that wicked city beyond all precedent! It was because they rejected Christ that vengeance came upon them. They filled up the measure of their iniquity when, at last, they disowned their King and cried out, “Away with Him, away with Him, let Him be crucified!”

Mark then, dear Hearer, that if you have heard the Gospel and rejected it, you have incurred great guilt and you can never sin so cheaply as you did before! There will be a day of vengeance for you more terrible than that for the men of Sodom and Gomorrah because you have perpetrated a crime which they were not capable of committing—you have rejected the Christ of God! The year of acceptance to Believers will be a day of vengeance to those who obey not His Gospel! Another meaning of the text comes out in the fact that there is appointed a day of vengeance for all the

enemies of Christ and this will happen in that bright future day for which we are looking. Not merely for rejecters of His Gospel will there be vengeance, but for *all* men and fallen spirits who dare to oppose His sway!

Behold He comes a second time! Every winged hour hastens His advent and when He comes it will be a great and a dreadful day for His foes. It will be for His saints the day of their revelation, manifestation and acceptance—but to the ungodly, “the day of vengeance of our God.” “Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”

Paul, also, bears witness the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels, “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.”

Note the vengeance and the Grace combined. The Prophet Isaiah saw our great Champion returning from His last fight and thus spoke concerning Him—“Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Therefore are You red in Your apparel, and Your garments like Him that treads in the wine vat. I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me: for I will tread them in My anger, and trample them in My fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon My garments, and I will stain all My raiment. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed is come.”

Observe, again, the connection between the day of vengeance and the year of the redeemed. At the Second Advent Christ will come to be glorified in His saints and they shall be manifested in the fullness of their acceptance. But it will be an overwhelming day of vengeance for all those who have hardened their hearts and continued in their sins. “Behold, the day comes that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.”

However, I consider that the chief meaning of the text lies in this—that, “the day of vengeance of our God,” was that day when He made all the transgressions of His people to meet upon the head of our great Surety. Sin with many streams had been flowing down the hills of time and forming, by their dread accumulation, one vast and fathomless lake. Into this the sinner’s Substitute must be plunged. He had a Baptism to be baptized with and He must endure it, or all His chosen must perish forever! That was a day of vengeance when all the waves and billows of Divine wrath went over His innocent head—

***“Came at length the dreadful night;
Vengeance with its iron rod
Stood, and with collected might
Bruised the harmless Lamb of God.*”**

***See, my Soul, Your Savior see,
Prostrate in Gethsemane!***

From His blessed Person there distilled a bloody sweat, for His soul was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death. All through the night He was scourged, buffeted and spit upon by cruel men! He was tortured and abused! He was rejected, despised, maltreated and pierced in His inmost soul by man's scorn and cruelty. Then in the morning He was taken out to be crucified, for nothing could suffice short of His death. The *outward* sorrows of crucifixion you know, but the inward griefs you do not know—for what our Lord endured was beyond what any mortal man could have borne! The infinity of the Godhead aided the manhood, but I doubt not Hart was right in saying that He—

***“Bore all Incarnate God could bear
With strength enough but none to spare.”***

It was an awful “day of vengeance of our God,” for the voice cried aloud, “Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, against the Man that is My fellow, says the Lord of Hosts.”

The doctrine that justice was executed upon our great Substitute is the most important that was ever propounded in the hearing of men! It is the sum and substance of the whole Gospel and I fear that the Church which rejects it is no longer a Church of Christ. Substitution is as much a standing or falling article in the Church as the doctrine of Justification by Faith, itself. My Brothers and Sisters, there would never have been an acceptable year if there had not been a day of vengeance! You can be sure of this!

And now let us look at the instructive type by which this Truth of God was taught to Israel of old. The Year of Jubilee began with the Day of Atonement. “Then shall you cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the 10th day of the 7th month, in the Day of Atonement shall you make the trumpet sound throughout all your land.” What did the High Priest do on that day? Read for yourselves the 16th Chapter of Leviticus. On that day he washed himself and came forth before the people, not wearing his breast-plate, nor his garments of glory and beauty, of blue and scarlet and fine linen, but he wore the ordinary linen garments of a common priest. Even thus the Lord, who counted it not robbery to be equal with God, laid aside all His Glory and was found in fashion as a man!

Then the priest took a bullock and, having offered it, went within the veil with the censer full of burning coals of fire, and sweet incense beaten small, with which he filled the inner court with perfumed smoke. After this he took the blood of the bullock and sprinkled it before the Mercy Seat seven times. Thus our Lord entered within the veil with His own blood and with the sweet incense of His own merits to make Atonement for us! Of two goats, one was killed as a sin offering and his blood was sprinkled within the veil. The other was used for a scapegoat. Upon the head of the scapegoat Aaron laid both his hands and confessed all the iniquities of the children of Israel, “putting them upon the head of the goat,” which was then taken into the wilderness as the type of the carrying away of sin into oblivion.

Do you not see your Lord and Master bearing your sins away? “As far as the east is from the west, so far it is He removed our transgressions

from us.” Is there any wonder that a Jubilee of peace should follow such a taking away of iniquity as our Great High Priest has accomplished? Jesus is entered into the heavens *for us*—can we doubt our acceptance with God? The bodies of the beasts whose blood was brought into the sanctuary for sin on the Day of Atonement were not suffered to remain in the Holy Place, but were carried forth outside the camp to be utterly consumed with fire, in token that sin is loathsome in the sight of God and must be put away from His Presence. Even thus did our Lord suffer *outside* the gate and cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” “Christ, also, has once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”

All this was absolutely necessary to a Jubilee. Without Atonement, no rejoicing! Before there can be acceptance for a single sinner, sin must be laid on Jesus and carried away. The blood of Jesus must be shed and must be presented within the veil, for “without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.” There can be no pardon or acceptance for any man living under Heaven in any way but by the bloody sacrifice which our Redeemer offered when He bowed His head and gave up the ghost on Calvary. This great Truth of God we must never becloud, nor ever cease to publish so long as we have a tongue to move. The day of vengeance, then, is intimately connected with the year of acceptance.

And mark, Beloved, they must be so connected experimentally in the heart of all God’s people by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, for whenever Christ comes to make us live, the Law comes, first, to kill us. There is no healing without previous wounding. Depend upon it, there never will be a sense of acceptance in any man until he has first had a sense of the just and righteous vengeance of God against his sins. Have you noticed that remarkable parallel to our text in the 35th Chapter of Isaiah where salvation and vengeance are so closely joined? There we read in the 3rd verse and onward—

“Strengthen you the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.” O poor trembling convicted Sinner, God has come with vengeance to you, but His intent is to save you! Every soul that is saved must feel that wrath is deserved and that the death penalty is due on account of sin. When this is known and felt, acceptance by faith will follow.

There must be a death blow struck at all self-sufficiency and self-righteousness—and the man must be laid as dead at the feet of Christ before he will look up and find life and healing in the great atoning Sacrifice! When our Lord puts on the helmet of salvation, He also girds about Him the garments of vengeance—and we must see Him in all His array. (See Isaiah 59:17). The day of vengeance is a necessary companion to the year of acceptance—have they gone together in your experience?

III. I wish Time would occasionally stay his rapid flight, or at least allow us to pluck a feather from his wing while we contemplate such a subject as this! But I must close with the third head, namely the comfort for mourners derivable from both these things. "To comfort all that mourn." Now, I have no hope of interesting, much less of doing any good, to any in this House of Prayer who do not come under the description of mourners. The sower's duty is to sow the seed everywhere, but he knows within himself that it will take no root anywhere except where the plow has been first at work. If the Lord has made you a mourner, then the blessed subject of this morning will comfort you!

But the Lord never comforts those who do not need comfort. If you can save yourself, go and do it! If you are righteous, "He that is righteous let him be righteous still." I say it in sarcasm, as you perceive, for you cannot save yourself, nor are you righteous! But if you think so, go your way and try it—vainly try it, for surely when you have fanned your best works into a flame and have walked by the light of the sparks of the fire which you have kindled, you shall have this at the Lord's hands—you shall lie down in sorrow and be astonished that you were ever so mad as to dream of self-salvation or of justification by your own works!

But oh, you mourners, what joy is here! Joy because this is the year of acceptance and in the year of acceptance, or Jubilee, men were set free and their lands were restored without money! No man ever paid a penny of redemption money on the Jubilee morning—every man was free simply because Jubilee was proclaimed. No merit was demanded, no demur was offered, no delay allowed, no dispute permitted. Jubilee came and the bondman was free! And now, today, whoever believes in Jesus is saved, pardoned, freed—without money, without merit, without preparation—simply because he believes and God declares that he that believes is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the Law of Moses.

Do you believe? Then you are of the house of Israel and you have God's guarantee for it—you are free! Rejoice in your liberty! Surely this is sweet comfort for all that mourn! Look not for any marks and evidences, signs and tokens. Look not for any merits or attainments. Look not for any progress in Grace or advancement in piety as a ground of salvation—listen only to the proclamation of the Gospel—and accept the Divine decree which ordains a Jubilee. If you are of the chosen seed, you believe in Jesus and then for you it is an accepted year. Come, bring here your griefs and sorrows and leave them at the Cross, for the Lord accepts you and who shall tell you no?

An equal note of joy, however, rings out from the other sentence concerning the day of vengeance. If the day of vengeance took place when our Lord died, then it is over! The day of vengeance was past and gone 1,800 years ago and more—

***"Now no more His wrath we dread,
Vengeance smote our Surety's head.
Legal claims are fully met,
Jesus paid the dreadful debt. "***

My Heart, do you bleed for sin and mourn because of it? Be it so. But it has ceased to be, for Christ made an end of it when He took it up to His

Cross and bore it there in His own body on the tree! O Believer, are you bowed down and troubled on account of past sin? It is right you should repent, but remember, your past sins exist no more! The pen is drawn through them and they are canceled, for the day of vengeance is over! God will not, twice, take vengeance for the same sins.

Either the Atonement which Jesus offered was enough, or it was not. If it was not, then woe be to us, for we shall die! But if it were sufficient—if, “It is finished,” was not a lie but a Truth of God—then He has “finished transgression and made an end of sin.” The sin of the Believer is annihilated and abolished and can never be laid to his charge. Let us rejoice that the day of vengeance is over and the year of acceptance has begun! In another sense, however, it may be that some are mourning because of the temptations of Satan. Here, too, they may be comforted, for Jesus has come to take vengeance on the Evil One. The God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. Are you afraid of dying? Behold, Christ has taken revenge on Death, for He bids you cry, because of His resurrection, “O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?”

Are we mourning, today, because our dear ones are not converted? It is a good thing to mourn on that account, but let us take comfort, for this is an acceptable year! Let us pray for them and the Lord will save them. Are we mourning because sin is rampant in the world? Let us rejoice, for our Lord has broken the dragon’s head and the day of vengeance must come when the Lord will overthrow the powers of darkness. Have we been looking with mournful spirit upon old Rome, the Muslim imposters and the power of Buddhism and Brahmanism and other ancient idolatries? Let us be glad! Behold the Avenger comes! He comes a second time and comes conquering and to conquer! Then shall the day of His vengeance be in His heart and the year of His redeemed shall come.

From the seven hills, the deceiver shall be torn, no more to curse the sons of men with his pretensions to be the vicar of God! In blackest night shall set forever the crescent of Mohammed which already wanes—its baleful light shall no more afflict unhappy nations. Then shall fall the gods of the Hindus and the Chinese, broken like potters’ vessels by the rod of iron which Jesus wields! At His appearing the whole earth shall acknowledge that He, who was “despised and rejected of men,” is “King of kings and Lord of lords.” Behold, the day comes quickly, let all that mourn be comforted! The day of vengeance, the full year of the millennial glory, the day of the overthrow of error, the year of the acceptance of creation in all her former beauty—the age when God shall be All in All—is near at hand! Come quickly, O Lord! Amen.

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BEAUTY FOR ASHES

NO. 1016

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

“To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.”
Isaiah 61:3.

WHEN soldiers are on the march, or advancing to the battle, military men think it wise to let the trumpet sound, that the warriors may be stimulated by the thrilling music. Many a weary soldier has tramped on with new vigor when the band has struck up a lively march or a soul-moving tune. In the midst of our present Christian service, my Brethren, when, I trust, all of you have resolved to come to the help of the Lord—to the help of the Lord against the mighty—we would bid the silver trumpets of Gospel promises sound aloud that the hosts of God, as they march on in battle array, may feel their pulses quickened and their souls cheered.

May times of revival be also seasons of refreshing. In times of great toil and eminent service much extra refreshment may with wisdom be dealt out. Harvest men require substantial meals amid their exhausting toil. And, as I feel that the Lord of the Harvest would not have His laborers treated badly, I have to regale each of you with a portion of bread, a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. Melchisedec met Abraham with bread and wine—not on some fine holiday when he had been musing in the plains of Mamre, but when he returned from the slaughter of the kings.

After hard fighting comes sweet refreshment—and any here who have strived diligently to serve the Master and have been pursuing their sacred calling even unto faintness—will be entitled to come and sit down, and partake of the nourishing bread and wine, which such a text as this prepares for all the sons of the Father of the faithful. Elijah ate of bread brought by angelic hands, for a forty days' journey was before him. Such a trial of strength may be ordained for Brethren to whom this word shall come.

Precious promises are for poverty-stricken saints. The strong drink of Divine consolation is for the heavy of heart, as says Solomon—“Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.” May He who uttered the Words which are now open before us speak them with power to the heart of each one here present. They came from the lips of Jesus—may they drop again into our hearts fresh from His mouth (that well of comfort undefiled), and fall with all their ancient life-giving power!

We will read our text again, and then meditate on it. “To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they

might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified." Our first consideration will be, *who gives this word?* Secondly, *to whom does He give it?* Thirdly, *what says He in it?* And, fourthly, *what will come of it?*

I. First then, WHO GIVES THIS WORD? It is a word to mourners in Zion, meant for their consolation. But who gives it? The answer is not far to seek. It comes from Him who said, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me." "He has sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted." Now in a very inferior and subordinate sense, Christian *ministers* have the Spirit of God resting upon them, and they are sent to bind up the broken-hearted. But they can only do so in the name of Jesus, and in strength given from Him.

This word is not spoken by them, nor by Prophets or Apostles either, but by the great Lord and Master of Apostles and Prophets, and ministers—even by Jesus Christ Himself. If He declares that He will comfort us, then we may rest assured we shall be comforted! The stars in His right hand may fail to penetrate the darkness, but the rising of the Sun of Righteousness effectually scatters the gloom. If the Consolation of Israel Himself comes forth for the uplifting of His downcast people, then their doubts and fears may well fly apace since His Presence is Light and Peace.

But who is this Anointed One who comes to comfort mourners? He is described in the preface to the text as a *preacher*. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord has appointed Me to *preach* good tidings unto the meek." Remember what kind of Preacher Jesus was? "Never man spoke like this Man." He was a Son of Consolation, indeed. It was said of Him, "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench." He was *gentleness* itself. His speech did not fall like a hail shower—it dropped like the rain, and distilled as the dew—as the soft rain upon the tender herb.

He came down like the soft vernal shower upon the new-mown grass, scattering refreshment and revival wherever His words were heard. The widow at the gates of Nain dried her eyes when He spoke, and Jairus no longer mourned for His child. Magdalene gave over weeping and Thomas ceased from doubting when Jesus showed Himself. Heavy hearts leaped for joy and dim eyes sparkled with delight at His bidding! Now, if such is the Person who declares He will comfort the broken-hearted. If He is such a Preacher, we may rest assured He will accomplish His work.

In addition to His being a Preacher, He is described as a *Physician*. "He has sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted." Some hearts want more than words. The choicest consolations that can be conveyed in human speech will not reach their case. The wounds of their hearts are deep—they are not flesh cuts—but horrible gashes which lay bare the bone and threaten before long to kill unless they are skillfully closed. It is, therefore, a great joy to know that the generous Friend who, in the text, promises to deal with the sorrowing, is fully competent to meet the most frightful cases.

Jehovah Rophi is the name of Jesus of Nazareth. He is, in His own Person, the Lord that heals us. He is the Beloved Physician of men's souls. "By His stripes we are healed." He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses, and He is able now with a word to heal all our diseases, whatever they may be. Joy to you, you sons of mourning! Congratulations

to you, you daughters of despondency—He who comes to comfort you cannot only preach with His tongue, but He can bind up with His hands. “He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. He counts the number of the stars. He calls them all by their names.”

As if this were not enough, our gracious Helper is next described as a Liberator. “He has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prisons to them that are bound.” There were many down-cast persons in Israel in the olden times—persons who had become bankrupt—and had even sunk yet further into debt till they were obliged to sell their children into slavery, and to become themselves bondsmen. Their yoke was very heavy, and their trouble was very sore. But the fiftieth year came round, and never was there heard music so sweet in all Judea’s land as when the silver trumpet was taken down on the Jubilee morn, and a loud shrill blast was blown in every city, and hamlet, and village in all Israel—from Dan even to Beersheba.

What did that clarion sound mean? It meant this—“Israelite, you are free! If you have sold yourself, go forth without money, for the year of Jubilee has come.” Go back, go back, you who have lost your lands! Seek out the old homestead and the acres from where you have been driven—they are yours again! Go back and plow, and sow, and reap once more—and sit each man under his vine and his fig tree—for all your heritages are restored. This made great joy among all the tribes, and Jesus has come with a similar message.

He, too, publishes a Jubilee for bankrupt and enslaved sinners. He breaks the fetters of sin and gives Believers the freedom of the Truth of God. None can hold in captivity the souls whom Jesus declares to be the Lord’s free men. Surely, if the Savior has power, as the text declares to proclaim liberty to the captive, and if He can break open prison doors, and set free those convicted and condemned, He is just the One who can comfort your soul and mine, though we are mourning in Zion!

Let us rejoice at His coming and cry, Hosanna, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord! Happy are we that we live in an age when Jesus breaks the gates of brass and cuts the bars of iron in sunder. As if this were not all and not enough, one other matter is mentioned concerning our Lord. He is pictured as being sent as *the herald of good tidings* of all sorts to us, the sons of men. Read the second verse—“To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” God has taken upon Himself human flesh. The infinite Jehovah came down from Heaven and became an Infant, lived among us, and then died for us!

Behold in the Person of the Incarnate God the sure pledge of Divine benevolence. “He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Beloved, the very fact that a Savior came to the world should be a source of hope to us! And when we think what a Savior He was—how He suffered, how He finished the work that was given Him to do, and what a salvation it is which He has worked out for us—we may well feel that the comfort of mourners is work for which He is well suited, and which He can execute most effectually!

How beautiful upon Olivet and Calvary are the feet of Him that brings, in His Person and His Word, “good tidings, that publishes peace, that brings good tidings of good, that publishes salvation.” But I must not linger. I have spoken of Him enough to lead your thoughts to the blessed Person who here declares that He will comfort the mourner. May the Holy Spirit reveal Him unto you in all the power of His arm, the love of His heart, the virtue of His blood, the prevalence of His plea, the majesty of His exaltation, and the glory of His Character!

II. Secondly, TO WHOM IS THIS WORD SPOKEN? It is spoken to those who mourn in Zion. They are in Zion. They are the Lord’s people, but they mourn. To mourn is not always a mark of Grace. Nature mourns. Fallen human nature will have to mourn forever, except Grace shall change it. But the mourning here meant is a mourning in Zion—a mourning of gracious souls. Let me try and describe what kind of mourning it is. It assumes various shapes. It begins in most hearts with *lamentation over past sin*.

I have broken God’s just Commandments. I have done evil against my God. I have destroyed my soul—my heart feels this, and bitterly mourns. It is one thing to say formally, “I am a miserable sinner.” It is a very different thing to *be* one. To say it may be gross hypocrisy—to *feel* it is a mark of Grace. Oh that every one of us, if we have never felt mourning for sin may feel it at this hour! May we mourn to think that we have pierced the Savior, that we have transgressed against a God so good, and a Redeemer so generous!

Those who mourn for the guilt of past sin, before long, reach a higher point. Mourners are not suffered long to tarry—Grace takes their load of guilt away. Their transgressions are covered. Do they leave off mourning then? Oh, no, they mourn in another way. There is a *sweet* mourning concerning my past sin which I would never wish to lose. It is forgiven, every sin of mine is blotted out, and my soul, therefore, with a sweet bitterness, would mourn over it more and more—

***“My sins, my sins, my Savior!
How sad on You they fall,
Seen through Your gentle patience
I tenfold feel them all.
I know they are forgiven
But still their pain to me
Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on You.”***

This is a kind of mourning which may accompany us even to Heaven’s gates, and we might almost regret to have to part with such a friend even there—

***“Lord, let me weep for nothing but sin,
And after none but You.
And then I would—oh that I might—
A constant weeper be.”***

True hearts, however, mourn not only for their past transgressions, but they also *sorrow over their present imperfections*. If you are what you should be, dear Friend, I am quite certain you see a great deal in yourself to grieve over. You cannot live as you would live. Whenever I meet with a

person who feels that he is perfect, I conceive at once that he has not yet attained even a remote conception of what true perfection must be.

The savage of Australia is satisfied with his weapons of war so long as he has never seen a rifle or heard of a cannon—to him his hovel is a model of architecture for he has never heard of a cathedral or a palace. I have no doubt that a barn-door fowl would be quite surprised at the complaint which an eagle might make about its inability to mount as high as it desires to do. The fowl is perfect—perfect up to the condition of its barn-door, barley-scratching life. It knows nothing higher than its roosting place and so it concludes itself absolutely perfect and fit for all that is desirable in flight.

But oh, could it know where the thunders dwell and sail above the clouds! Where the callow lightning waits the bidding of the Lord—*then* would the creature feel something of the aspirations and the griefs which torment the heart of the royal bird. Men know not what God is, nor the infinity of His perfections, nor the majesty of His purity, else, when highest, they would cry, “Higher, higher, higher,” and mourn because they had not yet attained, and need still to mount as on eagle’s wings. Brethren, I speak for you all when I say there is not a day in which our service satisfies us, not a deed we have ever performed that contents us. We see our spots and would gladly wash them out with tears if we could, though we bless God they are removed by the precious blood of Jesus.

Among the blessed are those who mourn because they cannot live a perfect life as they desire. To mourn after more holiness is a sign of holiness. To mourn after greater conformity to the image of Christ proves that we are already in a measure conformed. To sigh after more complete subordination of our entire life to the will of God is a mourning for which Jesus Christ will bring rich comfort. The Christian mourner *laments, also, because he cannot be more continually in communion with God.* He knows the sweetness of fellowship with the Father and with the Son. He cannot bear to have it broken. If but the thinnest cloud pass between him and the sun of God’s love, he is distressed directly, for he is sensitive lest he should lose the delights of communion.

A native of sunny Italy deploras the absence of Heaven’s bright blue, when made to dwell in this land of the fleecy clouds. And he who has dwelt in unclouded fellowship with the Lord bemoans his hard lot if even for awhile he beholds not that Face which is as the sun shining in its strength. Love cannot endure absence, much less, coldness. True Grace finds its life in fellowship, and pines if it is denied it. The real Christian mourns, again, *because he cannot be more useful.* He wishes he were like a pillar of fire and light so that he might evermore by day and by night enlighten the ignorant, and inspire the dull and laggard. He wishes not so much for more talent as for more *Grace* to make use of the talent which he has.

He would gladly bring in a great rental to the Owner of the vineyard who has placed him as a farmer among the vines. He longs to bring up priceless pearls from the deep seas of sin to adorn the diadem of his Lord and King. He sighs because thorns and thistles will spring up where he looked for a hundred-fold harvest—this makes him groan out, “Who has

believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Moreover, like his Lord, *he mourns for others*. He mourns in Zion because of the deadness of the Christian Church—its divisions, its errors—its carelessness towards the souls of sinners. He cries with Jeremiah, "How is the gold become dim! How is the much fine gold changed!"

But he mourns most of all for the unconverted. He sees their state of alienation from God, and knowing the danger of it, his heart shrinks within him, as with a prophetic glance he sees what their end will be—when "there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." His heart breaks for the sins and sorrows of others, and, like his Savior, he could weep over the cities that reject Divine love. He could say like Moses that he was almost willing to have his name blotted out of the Book of Life if others might be saved. He feels such sorrow and heaviness of heart for his kinsmen according to the flesh who are strangers to Christ that he has no rest in his death concerning them.

Dear Brethren, he that is quickened by the new life obtains an enlarged heritage of mourning. But let it not be forgotten—he wins tenfold more joy as well. And, meanwhile, such weeping is, in itself, sweet—tears not too briny, and griefs not too bitter. Such griefs we would wish to feel as long as we live, especially if the Lord Jesus alternates them with the fulfilling of that most excellent promise, to which I now direct you.

III. What is that, then, in the third place, WHICH IS SPOKEN in the text to those that mourn? I would draw particular attention to the words here, "To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes." Come, mourning souls, who mourn in the way described, come gladly here—there is comfort *appointed* for you, and there is also comfort *given* to you. It is the prerogative of King Jesus both to appoint and to give! How cheering is the thought that as our griefs are appointed, so also are our consolations!

God has allotted a portion to every one of His mourners, even as Joseph allotted a mess to each of his brothers at the feast. You shall have your due share at the table of Grace, and if you are a little one, and have double sorrows, you shall have a double portion of comfort. "To *appoint* unto them." This is a word full of strong consolation. For if God appoints me a portion, who can deprive me of it? If He appoints my comfort, who dares stand in the way? If He appoints it, it is mine by right. But then, to make the appointment secure, He adds the word, "To *give*."

The Holy One of Israel in the midst of Zion *gives* as well as appoints. The rich comforts of the Gospel are conferred by the Holy Spirit, at the command of Jesus Christ, upon every true mourner in the time when he needs them. They are given to each spiritual mourner in the time when he would faint for lack of them. He can effectually give the comfort appointed for each particular case. All I can do is to *speak* of the comfort for God's mourners. I can neither allot it, nor yet distribute it. But our Lord can do both. My prayer is that He may do so at this moment, that every holy mourner may have a time of sweet rejoicing while sitting at the Master's feet in a waiting posture.

Did you ever feel, while cast down, on a sudden lifted up—when some precious promise has come home to your soul? This is the happy experience of all the saints—

***“Sometimes a light surprises
The Christian while he sings—
It is the Lord who rises
With healing in His wings.
When comforts are declining,
He grants the soul again
A season of clear shining
To cheer it, after rain.”***

Our ever gracious and almighty Lord knows how to comfort His children, and be assured He will not leave them comfortless. He who bids His ministers again and again attend to this duty, and says, “Comfort you, comfort you My people,” will not, Himself, neglect to give them consolation. If you are very heavy, there is the more room for the display of His Grace in you, by making you very joyful in His ways.

Do not despair! Do not say, “I have fallen too low, my harp has been so long upon the willows that it has forgotten Zion’s joyful tunes.” Oh no, you shall lay your fingers among the old accustomed strings, and the art of making melody shall come back to you and your heart shall once more be glad! He appoints and He gives—the two words put together afford double hope to us—He appoints and He gives comfort to His mourners. Observe in the text the change Christ promises to work for His mourners. First, here is *beauty* given for *ashes*.

In the Hebrew there is a ring in the words which cannot be conveyed in the English. The ashes that men put upon their head in the East in the time of sorrow made a grim tiara for the brow of the mourner. The Lord promises to put all these ashes away, and to substitute for them a glorious head dress—a diadem of beauty. Or, if we run away from the word, and take the inner sense, we may look at it thus—mourning makes the face wan and emaciated, and so takes away the beauty. But Jesus promises that He will so come and reveal joy to the sorrowing soul that the face shall fill up again—the eyes that were dull and cloudy shall sparkle again!

And the countenance, yes, and the whole person shall be once more radiant with the beauty which sorrow had so grievously marred. I thank God I have sometimes seen this change take place in precious saints who have been cast down in soul. There has even seemed to be a visible beauty put upon them when they have found peace in Jesus Christ, and this beauty is far more lovely and striking because it is evidently a beauty of the mind—a spiritual luster—far superior to the surface comeliness of the flesh. When the Lord shines full upon His servants’ faces, He makes them fair as the moon when at her full she reflects the light of the sun.

A gracious and unchanging God sheds on His people a gracious and unfading loveliness. O mourning Soul, you have made your eyes red with weeping and your cheeks are marred with furrows where the scalding tears have burned their way. But the Lord that heals you, the Lord Almighty who wipes all tears from human eyes, shall visit you yet! And if you now believe in Jesus, He shall visit you now, and chase these cloudy griefs away and your face shall be bright and clear again. It will be fair as the morning, and sparkling as the dew. You shall rejoice in the God of

your salvation, even in God, your exceeding Joy. Is not this a dainty promise for mourning souls?

Then it is added, “He will give the *oil of joy for mourning*.” Here we have first, beauty and then unction. The Orientals used rich perfumed oils on their persons—used them largely and lavishly in times of great joy. Now the Holy Spirit comes upon those who believe in Jesus and gives them an anointing of perfume, most precious, more sweet and costly than the herd of Araby. An unction such as royalty has never received sheds its costly moisture over all the redeemed when the Spirit of the Lord rests upon them. “We have an unction from the Holy One,” says the Apostle. “You anoint my head with oil, my cup runs over.”

Oh, how favored are those who have the Spirit of God upon them! You remember that the oil which was poured on Aaron’s head went down to the skirts of his garment so that the same oil was on his skirts that had been on his head. It is the same Spirit that rests on the Believer as that which rests on Jesus Christ, and he that is joined unto Christ is one Spirit. What favor is here! Instead of mourning, the Christian shall receive the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who shall take of the things of Christ and reveal them to him and make him not merely glad, but honored and esteemed!

Then it is added, to give still greater fullness to the cheering promise, that the Lord will give, “*the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness*.” The man is first made beautiful. Next he has the anointing. Then afterwards he is arrayed in robes of splendor! What garments these are! Surely Solomon in all his glory wore not such right royal apparel. “The garment of praise.” What a dress is this! Speak of worked gold, or fine linen, or needlework of various colors, or taffeta, or damasks, or gorgeous silks most rich and rare which come from far-off lands—where is anything compared with “the garment of praise”?

It is as when a man wraps himself about, as it were, with psalmody, and lives forever a chorister, singing not with equal voice, but with the same earnest heart as they do who day and night keep up the never ending hymn before the Throne of the Infinite! As, what a life is his, what a man is he! O Mourner, this is to be your portion! Take it now! Jesus Christ will cover you, even at this hour, with the garment of praise! So grateful shall you be for sins forgiven, for infirmity overcome, for watchfulness bestowed, for the Church revived, for sinners saved that you shall undergo the greatest conceivable change, and the sordid garments of your woe shall be put aside for the brilliant array of delight.

It shall not be the *spirit* of praise for the *spirit* of heaviness, though that were a fair exchange—but as your heaviness you tried to keep to yourself—so your praise you shall not keep to yourself! It shall be a *garment* to you, external and visible, as well as inward and profound. Wherever you are, it shall be displayed to others, and they shall see and take knowledge of you that God has done great things for you whereof you are glad. I wish I had power to speak fitly on such a theme as this. But, surely, it needs Him upon whom the Spirit rested without measure to proclaim this joyful promise to the mourners in Zion.

We must close by noticing what will be the result of this appointment, and our text concludes, by saying, "*That they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.*" We learn here, that those mourning souls who are cast down and have put ashes on their heads shall, when Jesus Christ in infinite mercy comes to them, be made like trees—like "oaks." The original is, like "oaks of righteousness." That is, they shall become strong, firmly rooted, covered with verdure. They shall be like a well-watered tree for pleasantness and delight. You say, "I am a dry tree, a sere branch, I am a cast off, fruitless bough. Oh that I were visited of God and saved! I mourn because I cannot be what I would."

Mourner, you shall be all you would be, and much more if Jesus visits you. Breathe a prayer to Him now. Look to Him, trust Him. He can change you from a withered tree that seems twice dead into a tree standing by the rivers of water, whose leaf is unwithering, and whose fruit ripens in its season. Only have confidence in an Anointed Savior. Rely upon Him who came not here to destroy but to bless, and you shall yet, through faith, become a tree of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.

But, the very essence of the text lies in a little word to which you must look. "You shall be *called* trees of righteousness." Now there are many mourning saints who are trees of righteousness, but nobody calls them so—they are so desponding that they give a doubtful idea to others. Observers ask, "Is this a Christian?" And those who watch and observe them are not at all struck with their Christian character. Indeed, I may be speaking to some here who are true Believers in Jesus but they are all their lifetime subject to bondage! They hardly know themselves whether they are saved, and, therefore, they cannot expect that others should be very much impressed by their godly character and fruitful conversation.

But, O Mourners! If Jesus visits you, and gives you the oil of joy, men shall *call* you "trees of righteousness." They shall see Grace in you! They shall not be able to help acknowledging it—it shall be so distinct in the happiness of your life that they shall be compelled to see it! I know some Christian people who, wherever they go, are attractive advertisements of the Gospel. Nobody could be with them for a half an hour without saying, "Where do they gain this calm, this peace, this tranquility, this holy delight and joy?" Many have been attracted to the Cross of Christ by the holy pleasantness and cheerful conversation of those whom Christ has visited with the abundance of His love.

I wish we were all such. I would not discourage a mourner—no, but encourage him to seek after the garments of praise. Nevertheless, I must say that it is a very wretched thing for so many professors to go about the world grumbling at what they have and at what they have not, murmuring at the dispensations of Providence, and at the labors of their Brethren. They are more like wild crab trees than the Lord's fruit trees.

Well may people say, "If these are Christians, God save us from such Christianity!" But when a man is contented—more than that—when he is happy under *all* circumstances! When "his spirit does rejoice in God his Savior" in deep distress. When he can sing in the fires of affliction! When

he can rejoice on the bed of sickness! When his shout of triumph grows louder as his conflict waxes more and more severe, and when he can utter the sweetest song of victory in his departing moments—then all who see such people call them trees of righteousness—they confess that they are the people of God.

Note, still, the result of all this goes further, “They shall be called trees of righteousness, *the planting of the Lord.*” That is to say, where there is joy imparted, and unction given from the Holy Spirit, instead of despondency men will say, “It is God’s work, it is a tree that God has planted! It could not grow like that if anybody else had planted it. This man is a man of God’s making! His joy is a joy of God’s giving.” I feel sure that in the case of some of us we were under such sadness of heart before conversion, through a sense of sin, that when we did find peace everybody noticed the change there was in us, and they said one to another, “Who has made this man so happy, for he was just now most heady and depressed?”

And, when we told them where we lost our burden, they said, “Ah, there is something in religion after all.” “Then said they among the heathen, the Lord has done great things for them.” Remember poor Christian in Pilgrim’s Progress? Mark what heavy sighs he heaved, what tears fell from his eyes, what a wretched man he was when he wrung his hands and said, “The city wherein I dwell is to be burned up with fire from Heaven, and I shall be consumed in it, and, besides, I am myself undone by reason of a burden that lies hard upon me. Oh that I could get rid of it!”

Do you remember John Bunyan’s description of how he got rid of the burden? He stood at the foot of the Cross and there was a sepulcher hard by. And as he stood and looked, and saw One hanging on the tree, suddenly the bands that bound his burden cracked, and the load rolled right away into the sepulcher! And when he looked for it, it could not be found. And what did he do? Why, he gave three great leaps for joy, and sang—

“Blessed Cross!

Blessed sepulcher!

Blessed rather be the Man

That there was put to shame for me.”

If those who knew the Pilgrim in his wretchedness had met him on the other side of that never-to-be-forgotten sepulcher, they would have said, “Are you the same man?”

If Christiana had met him that day, she would have said, “My husband, are you the same? What a change has come over you.” And when she and the children marked the father’s cheerful conversation, they would have been compelled to say, “It is the Lord’s doing, and it is wondrous in our eyes.” Oh live such a happy life that you may compel the most wicked man to ask where you learned the art of living! Let the stream of your life be so clear, so limpid, so cool, so sparkling, so like the river of the Water of Life above, that men may say, “From where came this crystal rivulet? We will trace it to its source”—and so may they be led to the foot of that dear Cross where all your hopes began!

Another word remains, and when we have considered it, we will conclude. That other word is this, “*The planting of the Lord, that He might be*

glorified.” That is the end of it all, that is the great result we drive at and that is the object, even, of God Himself—“that *HE* might be glorified.” For when men see the cheerful Christian, and perceive that this is God’s work, then they own the power of God. Not always, perhaps, with their hearts as they should, but still they are obliged to confess, “this is the finger of God.”

Meanwhile, the saints, comforted by your example, praise and bless God and all the Church lifts up a song to the Most High. Come, my Brothers and Sisters, are any of you down? Are you almost beneath the enemy’s foot? Here is a word for you, “Rejoice not over me, O my enemy, though I fall yet shall I rise again.” Are any of you in deep trouble—very deep trouble? Another word, then, for you—“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.”

Are you pressed with labors and afflictions? “As your days, so shall your strength be.” “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose.” Are you persecuted? Here is a note of encouragement for you—“Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad. For great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.” Whatever your circumstances are, “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.”

Think what Jesus has given you! Your sins are pardoned for His name sake! Your Heaven is made secure to you, and all that is wanted to bring you there. You have Grace in your hearts, and Heaven awaits you. You have already Grace within you, and greater Grace shall be granted you. You are renewed by the Spirit of Christ in your inner man—the good work is begun—and God will never leave it till He has finished it. Your names are in His book. No! Engraved on the palms of His hands! His love never changes. His power never diminishes. His Grace never fails. His Truth is firm as the hills and His faithfulness is like the great mountains.

Lean on the love of His heart, on the might of His arm, on the merit of His blood, on the power of His plea and the indwelling of His Spirit. Take such promises as these for your consolation, “Strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not.” “Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel. I will help you, says the Lord, and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” “For a small moment have I forsaken you. But with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment. But with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord your Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you.”

“My Grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” “He gives power to the faint. And to them that have no might He increases strength.” “The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and He shall thrust out the enemy from before you. And shall say, destroy them.” “I am God, I fail not, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” One might continue forever quoting these precious passages, but may the Lord apply one or other of them to every mourner’s soul.

And, especially if there is a mourning sinner here, may he get a grip of that choice word, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Or that other grand sentence, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” Or that other, “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” Or that equally encouraging word, “Come now, and let us reason together. Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool. Though they are red like crimson they shall be as snow.” May the Lord bring us all into comfort and joy by the way of the Cross.

Perhaps I speak to some for whom the promises of God have no charm. Let me, then, remind them that His *threats* are as sure as His promises. He can bless, but He can also curse. He appoints mourning for those who laugh now with sinful merriment. He will give to His enemies vengeance for all their rebellions. He has Himself said, “And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink. And instead of a girdle a rent. And instead of well-set hair baldness. And instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth. And burning instead of beauty.”

Beware, then, you that forget God, lest He overthrow you in His hot displeasure. Seek the Savior now, lest the acceptable year of the Lord be closed with a long winter of utter despair—

***“You who spurn His righteous sway,
Yet, oh yet, He spares your breath.
Yet His hand, averse to slay,
Balances the bolt of death.
Before that dreadful bolt descends,
Hasten before His feet to fall,
Kiss the scepter He extends,
And adore Him, ‘Lord of all.’”***

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 61.

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SOLACE FOR SAD HEARTS

NO. 3325

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

*“To console them that mourn in Zion.”
Isaiah 61:3.*

IT is no small advantage to know beyond mistake of whom this is declared. Our gracious Master has appropriated this as His very own and we can be under no possible delusion now when we see in this Servant of the Lord, the Son of God, Himself. When in the synagogue at Nazareth on the Sabbath, He read before the astonished congregation this marvelous passage from the Scripture roll and then handed it back to the leader of the synagogue. He began to interpret it by saying, “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.” It is no surprise for us to find that His hearers fastened their eyes upon Him in admiring wonder because of “the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth.”

Think what was the burden of this unique discourse! It was concerning Himself as the preacher of good tidings—as the binder up of the brokenhearted and the liberator of the enslaved!

No doubt there was an allusion here to the ancient Jewish Jubilee. When the silver trumpet sounded in the morning because the 50th year had come, that moment every captive throughout Judaea’s land was free and none could hold him in bondage—

***“The year of Jubilee is come,
Return, you ransomed captives, home.”***

That is the song I want my hearers to sing now. Jesus Christ proclaims it—*proclaims* it. Do you notice that! A proclamation is a message which all loyal subjects are sure to attend to. It is not headed V. R.—*Vivat Rex!* But *Vivat Rex Jehovah!* Long live Jehovah the King! He issues the proclamation from His Throne and bids His Son tell captive souls that Christ Jesus sets them free! Let them but believe Him and they shall rise to instant liberty! The Lord grant that many may accept this good news! We may expect it, for the Spirit of God rests upon the preaching of Christ.

But there is yet another proclamation, and that of a double kind. There is a necessary connection between the two, “the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God.” It is because God has visited and executed vengeance upon our sins when laid on His dear Son as our Savior, that now it is possible for us to find acceptance through Him. Out of this there springs, therefore, the reasonable ground of comfort for them that mourn. The Savior’s Sacrifice is a full fountain of hope

for hearts that sorrow for sin. No mourner need despond, much less despair, since God has executed the sentence of His wrath upon the Great Substitute, that He might freely accept every sinner that believes! We are now going a step farther and instead of reminding you that those who mourn may be comforted, we shall proclaim the loving kindness of the Lord and make it clear that God has a peculiar regard to mourners—and that he has appointed, provided and reserved special blessings for them. “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” So runs the Eternal Purpose and so did our Lord declare in the opening of His Sermon on the Mount.

The anointed Savior came “to console them that mourn in Zion.” Consider carefully four things. *What are they doing?* They mourn. *Where are they doing it?* In Zion. *Who thinks of them?* The Great God who here speaks about them. And *what is He doing for them?* His purposes are “to console them that mourn in Zion.” First, then—

I. WHAT ARE THEY DOING—these people of whom the text speaks? They are *mourning*. Not a very cheerful occupation. Nobody will be very much attracted towards them by that fact. Most men choose lively, happy company—and mourners are generally left alone. Are they not to be greatly pitied? Reason thinks not! But Faith has heard Jesus say, “Blessed are they that mourn” and, therefore, she believes it to be better to be a mourning saint than a merry sinner—and she is willing to take her place on the stool of penitence and weep, rather than sit in the seat of the scorner and laugh!

Because these people mourn, *they differ from other people*. If they are mourning in Zion, their case is peculiar. There is evidently a distinction between them and the great majority of mankind, for men of the world are often lighthearted and frivolous, never thinking or looking to the future. So unreal is their happiness that it would not bear the weight of an hour’s quiet consideration! And so they make mirth in order to drown all thought of their true state. They are all for pastimes, amusements, gaieties—these are your lighthearted, jolly fellows who drink wine in bowls and “drive dull care away.” It is greatly wise for a man to commune with his own heart upon his bed and be still, but these foolish ones never do this and, therefore, they flash with the effervescence of mirth and sparkle with false joy! Those who mourn in Zion are very different from these giddy, superficial people. In fact, they cannot bear them, but are grieved with their foolish conversation—as any man of sense may well be! Who wants to have these blowflies forever buzzing about him? The gracious ones who mourn in Zion are as different from them as the lily from the hemlock, or as the dove from the hawk. He who allows reason to take its proper place and to be taught right reason by the Word of God, from that time separates himself from the giddy throng and takes the cool sequestered path which leads to God.

Equally does this mourning separate the Gospel mourner from the obstinate and the daring, for alas, many are so wicked as to wear a bronze

brow and exhibit a heart of steel in the Presence of the Lord. They defy the Divine Wrath and impudently scorn the punishment due to sin! Like Pharaoh, they ask, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" They despise death, judgment, eternity and set themselves in battle array against the Almighty! Those who mourn in Zion are not of this company, for they tremble at the Word of the Lord. Their hearts are sensitive to the faintest sign of God's displeasure and when they know that they have done that which is grievous in His sight, immediately their sorrow overflows! They deeply lament their provocations and humbly pray that they may be kept from further offenses.

Zion's mourners are also very different from the self-conceited who are puffed up with high notions of their own excellence. They are never known to assert that from their youth up they have kept all the commandments, nor do they even *dream* of thanking God that they are better than others! Room for boasting they find not, for they rather abhor themselves in dust and ashes! Their sins, follies and failings are a daily burden to them and they loathe the very idea of self-satisfaction!

Those who mourn in Zion are not among those loud professors who glory in the abundance of their Grace and reckon that they are out of the reach of temptation. You will never hear them cry, "My mountain stands firm! I shall never be moved!" No, their prayer is, "Hold You me up and I shall be safe." Holy anxiety to be found sincere and acceptable with God prevents all self-confidence. I would not encourage doubts and fears, but I will go the length of the poet and say—

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

I fear that not a few who dream that they possess strong faith are under a strong delusion to believe a lie. And instead of having the confidence which is worked of the Spirit of Lord, which is quite consistent with holy mourning, they feel a false confidence based upon themselves and, therefore, founded upon the sand! This puffs them up with a false peace and makes them talk exceedingly proud, to the sorrow of the Lord's wounded ones. The Lord's people should prudently get out of the way of these lofty spirits who grieve the humble in heart! They are the strong cattle of whom Ezekiel speaks, which thrust with horn and shoulder, and despise the weak ones whom God has chosen! Lord, let my portion be with the mourners, and not with the boasters! Let me take my share with those who weep for sin and weep after You! And as for those who are careless, or those who are rebellious, or those who are self-righteous—let them take their frothy joy and drain the cup—for true saints desire not its intoxicating draught!

The mourners in Zion are not only different from other people, but they are also *much changed from their former selves*. They are scarcely aware of the great change which they have undergone, but even their mourning is an evidence of their being new creatures. The things wherein they formerly rejoiced are now their horror, while other things which they

once despised, they now eagerly desire. They have put away their ornaments—their finery of pride they have exchanged for the sackcloth of repentance! Their noisy merriment for humble confession! They now wonder how they could have thought the ways of sin to be pleasurable and feel as if they could weep their eyes out because of their extreme folly! You would not think that they were the same people! In fact, to tell you the truth, they are *not* the same, for they have been born-again and have undergone a new creation of which their humiliation before God is no mean sign. Their hearts of stone have been taken away and the Lord has given them hearts of flesh—to feel, to tremble, to lament and to seek the Lord!

God's mourners also find themselves *different from what they are at times even now*, for they see themselves wander and immediately they quarrel with themselves and smite upon their offending breasts! Such occasions of self-aborrence they find daily. The man who is satisfied with himself had better search his heart, for there are signs of rottenness about him. The man who is deeply discontented with himself is probably growing fast into the full likeness of Christ. Do you, dear Friend, feel that you could justify yourself as to all that you have done, or thought, or felt today from morning to evening—at home or abroad, in the shop or in the street? Oh, no! I am sure you will confess that in many things you have fallen short and you will penitently grieve before the living God. You would not on any account do or say again all that you have done and said! You bless God who has sanctified you and delivered you from the dominion of sin, but still you have to complain that sin has a fearful power to lead you into captivity and, therefore, you are not pleased with yourself—and are more ready to join in a confession, than in a hymn of self-glorifying. The text says of mourners of that kind that God has appointed great things for them, and therefore let us pray the Holy Spirit to work this mourning in us.

Now, *this mourning*, of which we are speaking, *is part and parcel of these people's lives*. When they began to live to Christ, they began to mourn. Every child of God is born-again with a tear in his or her eyes. Dry-eyed faith is not the faith of God's elect. He who rejoices in Christ, at the same time mourns for sin! Repentance is joined to faith by loving bonds, as the Siamese twins were united in one. The new birth always takes place in the chamber of sorrow of sin—it cannot be otherwise! The true Christian was a mourner at conversion and since then he has been a mourner, even in the happiest day he has known. When was that? The happiest day I ever knew was when I found Jesus to be my Savior and when I felt the burden of my sins roll from off me. "Oh, happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away," but I mourned that day to think that I had been so greatly polluted and had needed that my Lord should die to put away my sin! I mourned to think that I had not loved and trusted the Savior before—and before the sun went down I was mourning to think that I did not—even then—love my Lord as I desired! I had not gone many

paces on the road to Heaven before I began to mourn that I limped so badly, that I traveled so slowly and was so little like my Lord. So that I know by experience that on the very brightest day of his spiritual experience, a true Believer still feels a soft, sweet mourning in his heart, falling like one of those gentle showers which cool the heat of our summer days and yield a pleasurable refreshment. Holy mourning is the blessed pillar of cloud which accompanies the redeemed of the Lord in their glad march to Heaven! Dear Brothers and Sisters, to some extent we live by mourning! Do not imagine we do not rejoice, for in truth, “we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of Glory,” but this is quite consistent with holy mourning. We sorrow every day that there should be any remains of sin in us, that we should still be open to temptation and should have the slightest inclination to evil. We mourn that our eyes should look so longingly on vanity and that our tongue should be so apt to speak unadvisedly. We mourn that our right hand should be so unskillful in holy service and that we should be so apt to let it be seen of men when we are giving to the Lord! We mourn especially that our heart should still be unbelieving, unfeeling and fickle. Yet, we are very happy, but we mourn to think that being so happy, we are not more holy—that, being so favored, we are not more consecrated! We “rejoice with trembling.”

To the Lord’s mourners godly sorrow is so essentially a part of themselves that *they grow while they mourn* and even grow by mourning. A man never becomes better till he is weary of being imperfect. He who is satisfied with his attainments will stay where he is. But he who mourns that he is not yet up to the standard will press forward till he reaches it. He that says, “My faith is weak,” is the man who will become stronger in faith. He who confesses that his love is not so intense as it ought to be, will have more love before long. He who mourns daily that he has not obtained that which he desires is by that very agony of spirit approaching the goal! It will be well that mourning should be our companion till we come to the gates of Paradise—and there we shall mourn no longer! I was going to say, so precious is the mourning which the Spirit works in us that we might almost regret parting with it! Rowland Hill used to say he felt half sorry to think that he must part with the tears of repentance at the gates of Heaven. And he was right, for holy mourning is blessed, sweet, safe and satisfying. The bitterness is so completely evaporated that we can truly say—

**“Lord, let me weep for nothing but sin,
And after none but Thee!
And then I would—oh that I might—
A constant weeper be.”**

Dear Friends, *holy mourning is no mere melancholy or sickly fancy*—it has abundant reasons whereby to justify it. We do not mourn because we give way to needless dependency, but we lament because it would be utter madness to do otherwise! We cannot help mourning. A Christian grieves over himself and his shortcomings. And this not from mock mod-

esty, but because he sees so much to sigh over. He will tell you that he never thinks worse of himself than he ought to do—that the very worst condemnation he has ever pronounced upon himself was most richly deserved. If you praise him, you pain him. If you commend him, he disowns your approbation and tells you that if you knew him better, you would think less of him and you would see so much infirmity and imperfection within him that you would not again expose him to danger by uttering flatteries!

A child of God also mourns because he is in sympathy with others. It is one part of the work of Grace in the soul to give us considerateness for our afflicted Brothers and Sisters. Is a child of God, himself, prosperous? He recollects others who are poor and in adversity and he feels bound with them. He is a member of the body and, therefore, he suffers with the other members. If each Believer were distinct and separate and kept his own joy to himself and his sorrow to himself, he might more often rejoice. But, being a member of a body which is always more or less afflicted, he weeps because others weep and mourns because others mourn. The more sympathy you have in your nature, the more sorrow you will experience. It is the unsympathetic man who laughs every day—but the friendly, tender, brotherly, Christlike spirit must mourn—it is inevitable!

And chiefly do Believers mourn because of the sins of others. This great city furnishes us with abundant occasion for deep concern. You can hardly go down a street but you hear such filthy language that it makes your blood chill in your veins! The sharpest blow could not cause us more pain than the hearing of profanity. And then the Sabbath—how little is it regarded! And the things of God—how little are they cared for! Everywhere a child of God with his eyes open must have them filled with tears. And if his heart is as it ought to be, it must be ready to break! Alas, the cause is frequently in the Christian's own family! He has an ungodly child or an unconverted wife. A Christian woman may have a drunken husband, or a godly daughter may have a dissipated father. These things make life gloomy beyond expression. Woe is me, cries the saint, that I dwell as among lions, with those who are set on the fire of Hell. Ill society makes a child of God sick at heart. As Lot was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, and as David cried for the wings of a dove that he might fly away and be at rest, so do the saints pine in this world! Let such mourners take heart while they perceive in the text that Jesus has come to comfort all that mourn. Now, secondly, let us note—

II. WHERE THESE PEOPLE ARE MOURNING. They are mourning *in Zion*. They could not carry their griefs to a better place. Sorrow is so common that we find mourners in Babylon and Tyre, and even in Sodom and Gomorrah! But these are of a different order from the mourners in Zion.

If we are wearing our sackcloth in the House of the Lord, let us thank God, in the first place, that we are not mourning in Hell! We might have been there. We *should* have been there if we had received our due! But

we are mourning where mourning meets with acceptance from God. We are lamenting where a dirge can be changed into a song. I thank God, also, that we are not mourning as those do who fiendishly regret that accidentally they have done a good thing. You remember how angry Pharaoh was with himself because he had let Israel go—I have known men who have never been penitent till they have, by mistake, done something good, or given too much away! They could gnaw their own hearts out for having done a good turn to another! God save us from such diabolical mourning as that! And yet it is not uncommon.

We have known some mourn, too, because they could not do others a mischief—because their hands were tied and they could not hurt God's people. Like Haman, they have fretted because of Mordecai. They cannot endure the prosperity of the godly, but would gladly take them for a prey and make them as the mire of the streets. That is a horrible mourning which makes a man have fellowship with Satan!

Some even mourn because they cannot take their fling of sin. They would like to indulge every vile passion, have a mint of money at their command and none to check them in any way—and they mourn because they are hedged up and hindered from destroying themselves! Such foolish ones mourn on the ale bench. They mourn in the synagogue of Satan. But as for God's people, they mourn in Zion!

Now let us indulge ourselves with a visit to the courts of Zion to see in what parts thereof the mourners may be found, for from her outer walls even to her innermost courts, you will find her inhabited by them! Some of them mourn just hard by the walls of the holy city. Like the Jews of the present day, they have their wailing place under the walls of Jerusalem. Poor souls! They dare not enter into the Holy Place, and yet they will not, cannot go away! They wait at the gates of wisdom's house and they delight in the posts of her doors. They never like to be away when the saints assemble, yet they feel as if they had no right to be there. They are satisfied with any corner and are content to stand all the service through. They take the lowest seats and reverence the meanest child of God!

They sometimes fear that the good Word is not for them and yet like the dogs, they come under the table hoping for a morsel. If it is a sermon full of thunder, "Yes," they say, "the minister means me!" But if it is very sweet and full of comfort they say, "Alas, I dare not think *that* it is for me." They would not stay away from the holy congregation, for they feel that their only hope must lie in hearing the Gospel—and they half hope that a word of comfort may be dropped for them—but yet they come trembling. They are like the robin redbreast in the winter time—they venture near the house and tap upon the window pane—and yet are half afraid to come in. When the cold is very severe and they are very hungry, they are daring and pick up a crumb or two. Still, for the most part, they stand at the temple door and mourn. They are in Zion and they sigh and

cry because they feel unworthy so much as to lift their eyes towards Heaven! Ah, well, the Lord appoints great blessings for you—He is good to those who seek Him. He has regard to the cry of the humble. He will not despise their prayer. Now, if the archenemy should ever suggest to you that it is of no use for you to be found hearing the Word of God, for you have heard the preacher so many times and even for *years* have remained unblest and, therefore, it is all hopeless—tell him he is a liar! Be all the more diligent in your attendance and strive to lay hold of what is preached. He will persuade you not to come when you are most likely to get a blessing! Whenever you feel as if, “Really, I cannot go again, for I am so often condemned and find no comfort,” say to yourself, “Now, I will go this time with all the more hope! Satan is laboring to prevent my going because he fears that Christ will meet with me.” Oh, seeking mourner, forsake not the courts of Zion, though you flood them with your tears. Be found where the Gospel note tells of Jesus! Be found at the Prayer Meetings. Be found on your knees. Be found with your Bible open before you, searching for the promise and, above all, believe that Jesus came to save such as you are—and cast yourself upon Him!

Many ransomed ones have been enabled to enter the Temple a little way. At the entrance of the Holy Place stood *the laver* full of water, where the priests were known to wash themselves. He who frequents the courts of Zion will often mourn at that laver, for he will say, “Alas, that I should need such washing! Alas, that I should so frequently spot my garments and defile my feet! Cleanse You me, O God. Wash me day by day. Dear Savior, cleanse You me from secret faults.” These mourners are deeply grieved at what others consider little spots, for sin hurts their tender consciences and in the Light of God sin is seen to be exceedingly sinful in those whom God so highly favors. Hard by the laver stood *the altar*, where they offered the victims. Now, he who sees the one great Sacrifice by which sin was put away, while he rejoices in the finished Atonement, also laments the sin which slew the Substitute! Many a time may you hear the plaintive sing—

**“Alas, and did my Savior bleed?
And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?”**

The more sure we are of our pardon the more we mourn over our sin. We look on Him whom we have pierced and a mourning takes hold upon us like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the Valley of Megiddo when Judah lamented the best of kings and saw her sun go down in blood. Awakened souls mourn for Jesus as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. You can never stand at the altar and see Jesus bleed without your own heart bleeding if, indeed, the life of God is in you! Can any but a heart of stone be unmoved at the sight of Calvary? Blessed are they who amidst their joy for pardoned guilt wash the pierced feet of Jesus with tears of love and grief!

Further on in the Holy Place, as you will recollect, there stood *the altar of incense*. It was placed before the veil which hid the Holy of Holies, but that veil is torn. Now, they whom mourn in Zion often stand and weep as they think of Him whose prayers are the incense which God accepts—even Jesus, by whose intercession we live! They think, “Alas, that I should be so cold in prayer when Jesus pleads so earnestly!” They look over their own intercessions and they see such faultiness, such wandering of thought, such coldness of heart, such forgetfulness, such pride, such lack of faith, such utter unworthiness that they cannot help deeply mourning! Besides, they remember when Satan desired to have them and sift them as wheat—and would have destroyed them if Jesus had not prayed for them—and they mourn the state of heart which placed them in such jeopardy. As by faith they perceive how sweet the merits of Jesus are, they remember their own ill savor and begin anew to loathe themselves. Their very sense of acceptance in the Beloved fills them with humiliation! It seems too wonderful that Jesus should do so much for them and make them so sweet to the Lord. Great love is a melting flame. When we nestle like doves in the bosom of our Lord, we mourn like the loving turtledove—we mourn because of the great love which makes us almost too happy. We rejoice with trembling and feel both fear and exceedingly great joy!

And then, those who entered the Holy Place would see a table covered with loaves of bread. It was called *the table of the showbread*. Our blessed Lord Jesus Christ is that Bread and we feed on Him as the priests of old did on the showbread. But I confess I never stand there, myself, and think of how He feeds my soul with His own Self, without mourning that I have not a larger appetite for Him and that I do not more continually feed upon Him. I lament that I ever hoped to find bread elsewhere, or tried to feed on the swine husks of the world. Oh, to hunger and thirst after Christ, for this is to be blessed! Oh, to feed upon a whole Christ, even to the fullest, for this is to be satisfied with royal dainties! We cannot feed on Jesus without mourning that others are starving and that we are not more eager to bring them to the banquet! We cannot feed on Jesus without mourning that we are not, ourselves, more familiar with Heaven’s Bread, so as to know how to hand it out that the dying multitudes of our great cities may be fed! O Lord, cause Your people more and more to lay to heart the sad fact that millions are famishing for want of the Bread of Heaven!

Within the Holy Place also stood *the seven-branched candlestick*, which was always burning and giving forth its pearly light. Before it we also mourn. When we rejoice in the Light of God’s Holy Spirit we cannot help mourning over our natural darkness and our former hatred of the Light of God. We also mourn to think that we, ourselves, shine with so feeble a ray that our light does not so shine before men as to glorify God to the fullest extent. We cannot enjoy the Light of the Divine Spirit with-

out praying that we may have more of it. We acknowledge that if we have but little of it, it is our own fault, for He is ready to light us up with a splendor which shall make the sons of men to wonder from where such a luster came! We also mourn because the nations sit in darkness and death shade and refuses the heavenly Light of God. And thus, you see, we mourn in Zion, from the entrance even to the innermost court.

Even when we pass through the torn veil and stand at *the Mercy Seat*, and enjoy the Believer's true place and privilege, we still mourn. We think of the Law, covered by the Propitiatory and we mourn our breaches of it. We think of the pot of manna and mourn the days when we called the heavenly food, "light bread." We remember Aaron's rod that budded and say to ourselves, "Alas, it is a memorial of my own rebellion as well as of my Lord's power!" We ask ourselves, "Where is my pot of manna of remembered mercy? Alas, my rod does not bud and blossom as it should, but often it is dry and fruitless! Alas, that Law which my Lord hid in His heart—how little respect have I had for it or remembrance of it." And then, looking at the golden Mercy Seat, we wet it with our tears because here the blood drops fell, by which we are brought near. The Glory of Jehovah between the cherubim bows us down and we cry, "Woe is me, for I have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts!" Our impurity prostrates us when, like Isaiah, we behold the Glory of the Lord! Is it not meet that it should be so?

Thus, you see, from the outer courts of Zion, right into the Holy of Holies, every spot suggests mourning! And true children of God yield to the influence thereof. In every place of mercy and privilege which they occupy they look down upon themselves with shame and confusion of face. Old Master Dyer used to say, "When the peacock shows his fine feathers, he ought to recollect that he has black feet and a horrible voice." And so, truly, whenever we are full of Divine Graces and blessings it becomes us to recollect what we are by nature—and what there is of impurity still lurking within us—that we may be humble and with our confidence in Jesus may mingle repentance of sin! Thus much upon where they mourn. And now, thirdly—

III. WHO THINKS OF THESE MOURNERS? Who consoles those that mourn in Zion? Who looks upon poor and needy souls? Very often their friends shun them—if they mourn much and long, their friends shun their society and their familiar acquaintances know them no more. There are places of worship where mourners in Zion might come and go by the year together and no one would utter a sympathetic word! A broken heart might bleed to death before any hand would offer to bind it up! I love to see Christian people anxious after poor mourners and eager to meet with penitent and desponding ones. It ought not to be possible, dear Friends, in an assembly of Believers, for a mourning soul to come and go many times without some Barnabas—some son of consolation, seeking him out and offering a word of good cheer in the name of the Lord! But mark this—whoever forgets the mourner, the Lord does not! There are three

Divine Persons who remember the mourner! The first is *the Eternal Father*. Read the first part of the Chapter. “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me because *the Lord* has anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek. *He has* sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted.” God, the ever blessed Father, pities His sorrowing children and has respect unto their prayers! Poor Soul, you are deeply wounded because of your sin and no one on earth knows it, yet your heavenly Father knows the thoughts of your heart and He tenderly sympathizes with your anguish of mind! Where are you standing, poor fretting Hannah? You woman of a sorrowful spirit, I come not, like Eli, to judge you harshly and censure you unjustly. Where are you? Do you mourn and sigh after your Lord? Then go in peace! The Lord grant you your petition. It shall surely be done unto you according to your faith. God, the eternal Father, first of all, remembers those who mourn. “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me.”

Moreover, *God the Son* has the same kind thoughts towards His mourners. What does the first verse say? “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon *Me*.” And you know that it is Christ who speaks. “The Lord has anointed Me to bind up the brokenhearted.” Jesus, then, undertakes the cause of the troubled! He was a mourner all His days and, therefore, He is very tender towards mourners—

***“He knows what fierce temptations mean,
For He has felt the same.”***

“I know their sorrows,” He says. “In all their afflictions, He was afflicted.” He was made perfect through sufferings. Rejoice, O mourner, for the Man of Sorrows thinks upon you!

And then *the Holy Spirit*—the third Person of the blessed Trinity—according to the text remembers mourners. “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me,” He says, “because the Lord has anointed Me.” Yes, You blessed Spirit, You are the Comforter and who can You comfort but mourners? It were useless to comfort those who never knew a sorrow! It were a superfluity to attempt to offer consolation to those who were never depressed! The Holy Spirit hovers like a dove over the assemblies of the Sabbath and whenever He finds a heart which is broken with a sense of sin, He alights there and brings light and peace and hope! Be of good courage, then, you mourners, for the three Divine Persons unite on your behalf! The One God thinks upon you and the gentleness and tenderness of His almighty heart are moved towards you! Is not this good cheer? Our fourth and last point is this—

IV. WHAT DOES THE LORD DO FOR THEM?—“*To console them that mourn in Zion.*”

Let us take first the ordinary rendering of the text—“*To appoint them.*” God makes appointments to bless mourners. It is His decree, His ordinance, His purpose to bless those who mourn in Zion. Some mourners are greatly frightened at predestination—they are afraid of the Divine decrees. Be of good comfort, there is no decree in God’s great Book against

a mourner! “I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek you Me in vain.” God’s terrible decrees are against the proud, whom His soul hates, and He will break them in pieces. But as for the humble and the meek, His purposes concerning them are full of Grace. Read the following verses and see—“To give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” It is registered in the record office above and stands in His Eternal Book and so must it be, “Blessed are they that mourn, for they *shall be* comforted.” When you think of the decrees, remember this decree and be of good comfort.

But an equally accurate rendering of the text is, “*To provide* for those that mourn in Zion.” “*To provide.*” God not only purposes to bless, but He does bless His mourners. Our heavenly Father prepares good gifts for His mourning family. For whom did Jesus die but for mourners? For whom does He live but for mourners? For whom are the blessings of His coming but for mourners? O you that are troubled because of sin, and hate it—all God’s heart goes out towards you and all the riches of the Everlasting Covenant are yours! Make bold to take them, since for mourners they are provided. For whom are clothes but for the naked? For whom are alms provided but for the needy? For whom the bath but for the filthy? For whom the medicine but for the sick? For whom God’s Grace but for you that need it and mourn because of your need? Come and welcome! The Lord bring you to Himself at this very hour! Amen.

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

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

BEAUTY FOR ASHES

NO. 3336

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 1913.

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

***“To give unto them [who mourn in Zion] beauty for ashes.”
Isaiah 61:3.***

I WOULD remind you that the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ related to mourners in Zion. He did not come into the world to exalt those who are high, to give greater power to the strong, or to clothe those who are already clad in their own righteousness. No! The Spirit of God was upon Him that He might preach good tidings to the meek, that broken hearts should be bound up, captives redeemed and prisoners released. He came with blessings for the poor, not with luxuries for the rich. This ought to be a very great subject of thanksgiving to those who are heavy of heart. Is it not sweet to think that the Anointed of the Lord came for your sakes, that you of the rueful countenance whose eyelids are fringed with beaded tears, you whose songs are dirges, you who dwell at death's door may be brought forth into the sunlight? Most men choose cheerful company whereby they may be entertained, but the Lord Jesus evidently selects mourners and delights in those whom He may encourage and cheer. Blessed be His name! How meek and lowly is He in all His ways! How forgetful of Self and how thoughtful towards His poor servants. He looks upon them with pitying eyes and makes untold blessings their portion!

Notice with pleasure that in dealing with mourners, according to the text before us, the Lord acts upon terms of exchange or barter. He gives them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. It is a gracious exchange, but it is tantamount to everything being a free gift. “To give unto them beauty for ashes” is a free gift because what He takes away is of no value and they are glad to be rid of it. In condescending compassion He took our ashes upon Himself. Ah, how they once covered His sacred head and marred His beauty! He took our mourning. Alas, how it made Him the Man of Sorrows in the day of His humiliation! He took our spirit of heaviness and as He lay prostrate in the Garden beneath the load, He was exceedingly heavy and sorrowful even unto death! He took a loss to give us a gain and so it is a barter in which there is a double profit upon our side—we lose a loss and the gain is pure gain! From our Lord the blessings of love are all of Free Grace and, therefore, let Him have all the

praise! I am sure that no mourner would hesitate to deal with Jesus on these special terms, of which only Divine Love could have thought. If you have ashes, will you not be glad to exchange them for beauty? If you are mourning, will you not willingly cease from weeping to be anointed with the oil of joy? And if the spirit of heaviness presses upon you like a nightmare, will you not be glad to be set free and to be arrayed in the glittering garments of praise? Yes, there could not be better terms than those which Grace has invented—we accept them with delight! Poor Mourner, they are especially ordained for you, that by a twofold Grace in removing evil and bestowing good, you might be doubly enriched and comforted!

In our present meditation I shall call attention, first, to *the lamentable condition* in which many of the Lord's mourners are found—they sit in ashes, expressive of deep sorrow. Secondly, we shall observe *the Divine interposition* on their behalf, for the ashes are removed and, thirdly, we shall notice *the sacred gift*—"Beauty for ashes." Let us begin with—

I. THE MOURNER'S CONDITION—He is covered with ashes as the emblem of his sad estate. Let us now, like Cinderella, sit down among the cinders for awhile in order that we may come forth from the ashes with something better than glass slippers, adorned with a beauty which shall befit the king's courts! The fairy fable which has often made our childhood smile shall now be actually realized in our own souls—yes, we shall see how far the Truth of God outshines romance! How much grander are the facts of God than the fictions of men!

It seems, from the text, that *the righteous are sometimes covered with grief*. Orientals were always excessive in the use of symbols and, therefore, if they were in sorrow, they endeavored to make their outward appearance describe their inward misery. They took off all their soft garments and put on sackcloth—and this they rent and tore into rags! And then upon their heads, instead of perfumed oil which they were so fond of using, they threw ashes—and so disfigured themselves and made themselves objects of pity. Ashes were of old, signs of mourning, and they continued to be so down to Popish times of which we have a trace in the day called, Ash Wednesday, which was the commencement of the time of fasting known as Lent. It was supposed that those who commenced to fast sat in ashes to begin with. Such symbols we leave to those who believe in the bodily exercises and outward rites of will-worship. However, God's servants have their spiritual fasts and their heads are metaphorically covered with ashes. I will not stop to read you the list of the occasions in which the princes of the royal blood of Heaven are found sitting in the place of humiliation and distress.

Suffice it to say that *they began their new life among the ashes*. Like Jabez who was more honorable than his brethren, they were born in sorrow. Some of us will never forget our grief for sin—it was a bitterness with which no stranger could intermeddle. We shall never forget the an-

guish of our soul and our deep humiliation which no ashes could sufficiently symbolize. Like the Patriarch of old, we cried, "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Repentance since then has always had a large degree of mourning connected with it. Sorrow has salted all our penitential tears. It is right it should be so and it is equally right that we should never leave off repenting. Repentance and faith are two inseparable companions—they flourish or decay together like the two arms of the human body. If faith could enter Heaven, repentance would certainly pass the gate at the same time. That they will not both enter there, or something near akin to them, I will not venture to assert quite so confidently as some have done. Whether in eternity I shall regret that I have sinned and shall still believe in Jesus and find my everlasting safety in so doing, I will not positively say—but if I so asserted, who could refute the statement? Assuredly we shall mourn for sin as long as we are upon the earth and we do not desire to do otherwise. Grief for sin and love to Jesus will endure through life—there will never come a time when we shall refuse to bathe with tears the pierced feet and kiss them with warmest love—

***"Sorrow and love go side by side,
Nor height nor depth can ever divide
Their Heaven-appointed bands.
Those dear associates still are one,
Nor till the race of life is run
Disjoin their wedded hands."***

We have to mourn bitterly when we have fallen upon times of strong temptation and, alas, of surprising sin. We grieve to confess the fact, but it is sadly true that faults have overtaken us. Who among God's chosen sheep has not gone astray? In consequence of such sin we have had to return to the sackcloth and the ashes—and our heart has sunk within us. By reason of our old nature we have transgressed like David and then, by reason of our new nature, we have wept like David and mourned our broken bones. If a foul spot has defiled our garments, we have been led by the Holy Spirit to go at once to Jesus and, while He has washed it out with His blood, we have lamented our offense. Whenever Believers permit the fires of sin to burn, they are made, before long, to cast the ashes of repentance upon their heads and shrink into the dust.

Beloved Friends, we have also covered our heads with ashes *on account of the sins of others*. Parents have been compelled to sorrow very grievously for their sons and daughters. The wail of David is no unusual sound. "O Absalom, my son, my son! Would God I had died for you, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Many a woman sits in ashes half her life because of her ungodly husband who makes her life bitter to her. Many a loving sister pines inwardly because of a profligate brother who persists in ruining himself. The crimes of the world are the burdens of the saints. We cannot make the ungodly mourn for their guilt, but we can and do

deeply mourn over their insensibility. How can we bear to see our fellow men choosing everlasting destruction, rejecting their own mercies and plunging themselves into eternal misery? If Hagar said, “Let me not see the death of the child,” and if the Prophet’s eyes ran with ceaseless tears over the slain of his people, shall not we mourn in dust and ashes the willful soul-suicide of our neighbors who perish before our very eyes with mercy at their doors?

Moreover, we pity the Christian who does not frequently mourn over the depravity of the times in which he lives. Infidelity has in these last days stolen the garb of religion so that now we frequently meet with volumes in which the fundamentals of the faith are denied, written by ministers of churches whose professed creed is orthodox. Our grandfathers would have shuddered at reading from a disciple of Tom Paine sentiments which pretended ministers of the Gospel have given forth to the world! Things have reached a painful pass when those who are called to office on purpose to proclaim the Gospel are allowed to use their position to sow doubts about it and sap and undermine all belief in it. Such conduct is meanness, itself, and it is amazing that the churches tolerate it! Only Satan, himself, could have put it into a man’s heart to become a salaried preacher of the Gospel in order to deny its fundamental truths! He who does this is *Judas Redivivus*, Iscariot the second! God save us from all complicity with such practical falsehood and fraud! But when the child of God sees this and sees besides this, ritualism and latitudinarianism spreading on all sides, he feels a sympathy with Mordecai of whom we read that “when he perceived all that was done, he rent his clothes and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city and cried with a loud and bitter cry.” It were a happy omen if there were more of this—and especially if many could be found to imitate Daniel, who said, “I set my face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.” We should soon behold the dawn of better days if such ashes were commonly found upon saintly heads!

Yes, the best of God’s people must sometimes sit down among the ashes and cry, “Woe is me!” When the saints mourn, it will sometimes happen that they cannot help showing their sorrow—it is too great to be controlled or concealed. Usually a spiritual man tries to conceal his soul’s distress and he has his Master’s command for so doing, for Jesus said, “You, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not unto men to fast.” In personal trouble we would rather bear our burden alone than load others with it and, therefore, we endeavor to maintain a cheerful manner even when our heart is sinking like a millstone in the flood. As to spiritual depressions, we cannot show these to men who know nothing about them—and in the presence of the ungodly we are dumb upon such topics. But there are sorrows which will have a tongue, concerning which we may even be bidden to speak, as

says the Prophet, “O daughter of my people, gird you with sackcloth, and wallow yourself in ashes.” At such times we must express our inward grief and then the men of the world begin to ask, “What ails him?” and jeeringly cry, “He is crazy! Religion has turned his brain.” Note that mourning young woman—her mother said only the other night, “What makes Jane so sorrowful?” She did not know that her girl was under a sense of sin. Your workmates asked you, my good Friend, the other morning, “What makes you so dull?” They did not comprehend that their vile language had helped to vex your heart, and had wounded you so that your heart was bleeding inwardly. As we have joys that worldlings cannot share, so have we sorrows which they cannot comprehend—and yet we are obliged, now and then, to let them see that we are cast down—even though this brings us new reproach! The ashes must sometimes be upon our head and we must cry, “They have heard that I sigh. All my enemies have heard of my trouble.” Do not, therefore, beloved Friends, when you see a mournful Believer, condemn him, nor even depreciate him, for his sorrow may be a necessity of nature. Yes it may even be a direct result of his eminence in Divine Grace. He may, perhaps, love the souls of men more than you think. He may have a more tender sense of the sinfulness of sin than you have. And, perhaps, if you knew his family trials and if you knew the jealousy of his walk with God, or if you knew how the Lord has hidden His face from him, you would not wonder at his rueful countenance. You might even marvel that he was not more cast down and you might be ready to give him your pity and even your admiration, instead of your cold censure. Be sure of this, that some of the holiest of men have mourned as David did—“I have eaten ashes like bread and mingled my drink with weeping.”

Next let us note that *such grief disfigures them*. I gather that from the contrast intended by the words of our text—“Beauty for ashes.” Ashes are not beautifiers and mournful faces are seldom attractive. A Believer, when he is in a mourning frame of mind wears a marred countenance. He is disfigured before his friends—he makes bad company for them and they are apt to see his weak points. He is disfigured before his fellow Christians—they delight to see a Brother rejoicing in the Lord, for this is a manifest token of favor—but sorrow of heart is often contagious and, therefore, it is not admired. The mourning Christian is especially disfigured in his own esteem. When he looks in the mirror and sees his rueful visage, he cries to himself, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul? Can all be right within? If it is so, why am I thus?” He questions, upbraids and condemns himself. If his eyes were not so weakened by tears, he might see a beauty in his sorrow, yet just now he cannot, but views himself as a mass of uncomeliness! Nor is he altogether in error, for generally with spiritual mourning there is a measure of real disfigurement. Unbelief, for instance, is a terrible blot upon any man’s beauty. Distrust of God is a

horrible blotch. Discontent exceedingly injures mental and spiritual loveliness. We are not lovely when we are unbelieving, petulant, envious, or discontented. We are not beautiful when we are distrustful and suspicious, self-willed and rebellious! Yet these evils often go with soul-sorrow and we may truthfully say that some Christians are not only at times very sorrowful, but their beauty is marred by their misery.

The grief of good men's hearts *is often a very expressive one*, as the language before us suggests. When sorrow puts ashes on its head, what does it say? It makes the man eloquently declare that he feels himself to be as worthless as the dust and ashes of his house. "I cover my head," he says, "with ashes to show that the very noblest part of me, my head, my intellect, is a poor fallen earthly thing of which I dare not boast. I count the best thing there is in me to be but dust and ashes fit only to be cast away." You mourners often thus despise yourselves. Well, if it is any consolation to you to know it, I know a minister of Christ who the longer he lives, thinks less and less of himself, and utterly abhors himself before God. It is a wonder of Divine Grace that the Lord should ever have loved us at all, for there is nothing in our nature that is lovely. Through our fall there is everything in us to be hated by His pure and holy mind, but nothing to esteem—and the best of the best, when they are at their best, are poor creatures. "Lord, what is man that You are mindful of him?" If the Righteous Judge had swept the whole race away at the first with the besom of destruction, He would still have been as great, glorious and blessed as He is—He only spares us because He is Infinite in mercy! When Abraham said, "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, I that am but dust and ashes," he had not too lowly an opinion of himself, for even the Father of the Faithful, though a prince among men, was nothing in himself but a son of fallen Adam! And nothing but undeserved mercy made him to differ from the idolatrous race out of which he was chosen and called. "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes," is our last memorial—and all along we are tending that way by nature, for we are of the earth, earthy. When we put ashes on our head, we do but confess ourselves to be what we really are!

The use of ashes would seem to indicate that the fire is out. Men would not place burning coals upon their heads, but when they cast ashes there, they mean to say, "These ashes from which all fire is gone are like ourselves—we, too, are spent, our fire of hope has burned out, our joy, our confidence, our strength have all departed from us and left us only the black ashes of despair." Is not this suggestive of a state of feeling common enough to truly humbled men? Let me ask my Brothers and Sisters—Have you never felt as if your coal were quenched in Israel? Have you not admitted that, apart from any salvation which might come to you from your dear Lord and Savior, you had no hope whatever? Have you not felt as if every spark of faith, love, gratitude and all that was good, was gone out in darkness? Some of you young Christians have

never yet stumbled into that slough, and I hope you never will, but if you ever do, it may console you if I let you know that older saints have been there before you—and have had to cry to the Strong for strength or they would have perished! Some of us know what it is to feel as if we had not even a spark of Grace left. We cry—

“If anything is felt

‘Tis only pain to find we cannot feel.”

At such times we have felt that if there was any prayer in us it was only a prayer to be helped to pray, or to be helped to mourn that we could not pray, for our stock was lying dead and our poor husbandry yielded us no increase for lack of dew from above. Our soul has been in a state of drought! The rain from Heaven has been withheld and the earth has broken and chapped beneath our feet, devouring rather than nourishing the seed. God’s children have their droughts and famines—and then dust and ashes are fit emblems of their dry and dead condition.

Ashes, too, as the symbol of sorrow, might also indicate having passed through the fire of trial, even as these ashes have been burned. Truly, some of God’s best servants have been most often through the furnace and have been so long in the heat that strength fails them and hope well-near expires. They cry to God for patience to endure all His holy will, but they feel that their own power is as much spent as if they were burnt to nothing but ash and there was nothing more left of them upon which the fire could kindle. Is it not a mercy that the Lord looks upon such as these—the utterly spent ones who are ready to be blown away and to perish, even as smoke and dry ashes are borne away by the wind and lost? You who are at ease in Zion know little about these terrible feelings, but you should be grateful to God and sympathize with those who are more exposed to tribulation. Join with them in magnifying the Lord because He promises beauty instead of these ashes of the furnace!

Ashes, also, as you know, are the emblem of death. The Romans placed in sepulchral urns the ashes of the dead. We say, “Dust to dust, ashes to ashes,” when we bury the departed. It is not an uncommon thing for tried saints to complain that they are brought into the dust of death by a faintness of mind which renders life a difficulty. We come to look upon the grave as a refuge and a relief. “Ah,” cries one, “they may as well bury me, for I am more dead than alive. Well may I heap ashes on my head.” Like Elijah, they say, “Let me die, for I am no better than my fathers.” To such depths of grief the best of men have sometimes descended. Many of the most peaceful and joyous spirits have joined in David’s description of himself—“I am as a man that has no strength: free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom You remember no more: and they are cut off from Your hand.”

But enough of this dolorous ditty, let us now change the subject. We have shown you the Believer in the ashes, let us now rejoice that some better thing is in store for him! Secondly, there is—

II. A DIVINE INTERPOSITION. The Lord Himself breaks in upon the mourner's misery and makes the most gracious arrangements for his consolation. When a man is in sore trouble, he naturally begins to look this way and that way for deliverance and, thereby, much of the man's mind and heart are made manifest. You may readily judge whether you are a child of God or a hypocrite by seeing in what direction your soul turns in seasons of severe trial. The hypocrite flies to the world and finds a sort of comfort there, but the child of God runs to his Father and expects consolation only from the Lord's hand! True Grace abides with God and submits itself to His will. This is always good for us. Brothers and Sisters, if the Lord makes you sick, remain sick till the Lord restores you, for it is dangerous to call in any other physician to your soul but your Lord. If the Lord frowns, do not ask others to smile, for you can derive no joy from that source. If it is God's wrath that breaks you, let God's love mend you, or else remain broken—

***“I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comforts me,”***

is a sweet resolve of a truly penitent soul, for has not the Lord said, “I kill and I make alive; I wound, and I heal. I the Lord do all these things”? Will you take the healing and the making alive out of Jehovah's hand? God forbid! Where you have received your smart, there get your sweet. Where you do drink the gall of sorrow, there drink the wine of joy, for in the Lord's hand there is abundant mercy to be found—and He will end your misery!

According to the text, the way in which Believers rise out of their mourning is through *the coming of Jesus*. Read the Chapter again. What does the Lord say? “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me.” Yes, Beloved, our hope lies in the mission of Christ, in the Person of Christ, in the work of Christ, in the application of the blood of Christ to our hearts! We turn our eyes evermore towards the hills from where comes our help! Look, O Sinner, always to the brazen serpent whatever serpent bites you! Whether it is the old serpent, himself, or some smaller serpent of the same brood which lurks in the way and bites at the horse's heels, still look to the one appointed Cure. Never speculate in healing drugs, but keep to the one antidote which never fails! Jesus is the consolation of Israel and let not Israel place her hope elsewhere!

And, mark you, it is Jesus coming *in the Gospel* which is the mourner's hope—for this coming of the Lord is to preach good tidings to the meek and so to bind up the brokenhearted. I have little confidence in those persons who speak of having received *direct Revelations* from the Lord, as though He appeared otherwise than by and through the Gospel. His Word is so full, so perfect, that for God to make any fresh Revelation

to you or me is quite needless. To do so would be to put a dishonor upon the perfection of that Word! In the “most sure Word of testimony” there is a release from every difficulty, a plaster for every sore, a medicine for every disease! My dear sorrowing Friend, it is very dangerous to look for consolation from dreams, or from the opening of the Bible upon certain texts, or from fancied voices, or from any other of those foolish superstitions in which weak-minded persons seek for comfort! Go you to what God has said in the Scriptures—and when you find your character described and promises made to such a character as your own, then take them home, for they are plainly spoken to you! Go not about to look for comfort in the cloud-land of fancy or the moonshine of superstition, but believe in the Lord Jesus who comes to bless broken hearts in no other way than by preaching to them the glad tidings of His Grace!

You are not to expect the Lord Jesus to speak with you in any other way than by the written Word applied to the soul by the Holy Spirit. Look for no new Revelation! Drive out the very idea as deceptive! If an angel were to come to my chamber and inform me that he brought a message from God which would tell me more than is written in the Scriptures of Truth, I would not listen to him for a moment, but say, “Get you behind me, Satan. The end of these manifestations has come! The stars no more appear, for the sun has risen.” Our heavenly Father has already sent the Lord Jesus and it is written, “Last of all He sent His Son.” In Christ Jesus there is such a fullness of Truth and Grace that all the angels combined could not increase it. He who looks for more revelation should beware lest he receive the curse with which the Bible concludes—which will certainly come upon any who either add to, or take from, the Inspired Words of God! The sum of the matter is this—if there is any comfort to be received, it is in Christ. And if there are any ashes to be taken away and any beauty to be given, it will be through the Lord Jesus in the preaching and reading of the Word! This much by way of protest against the superstitions of weak minds.

But now I want you to notice a something which does not appear in our English version, but is clear in the Hebrew. It is that *the Lord very easily makes a change in His people’s condition*, for the word in the Hebrew for ashes is *epheer*, and the word for beauty is *peer*. The change is very slight in the original. Some idea of the similarity of the words may be given you in English if I quote from Master Trapp. “The Lord promises to turn all their sighing into singing, all their musing into music, all their sadness into gladness and all their tears into triumph.” Perhaps I may myself give you a closer imitation, still, and more after the Hebrew model, by saying He turns our mourning into morning. In the case before us we might say, “He gives us splendors for cinders,” beauty for ashes. Now, as readily as we change a word by a single letter, so easily does the God of All Comfort alter the state of His own people! With Him nothing is hard,

much less impossible. From the Cross to the crown, from the thorn to the throne, from misery to majesty, is but a hand's turn with the Lord! Often does He call His people like Mordecai from sitting at the gate to riding upon the king's horse, like Joseph from lying in the dungeon to ruling in the land, like Job from the dunghill to double wealth, like David from the caves of Engedi to the palace in Jerusalem. This He does both suddenly and easily, as when a man lights a candle and the darkness departs at once! How charming and astonishing the change to pass in a moment from winter into summer, from midnight into noon, from storm into profound calm! This is the finger of God and it is often seen.

When you are at your lowest do not conclude that it will be months before you can rise. Not so. From the lowest point to the highest you will spring at a single leap when the Almighty Helper girds you with power! David in the Psalms describes the Lord coming to his rescue in haste most marvelous. Out of the depths was he snatched by the flash of Jehovah's power!—

***“On cherub and on cherubim
Right royally He rode,
And on the wings of mighty winds
Came flying all abroad!
And so delivered He my soul—
Who is a Rock but He?
He lives—Blessed be my Rock!
My God exalted be!”***

How joyously he sings! And well he may after so special a rescue. There is no slow travelling with God when His people are in sorrow. Before they have time to call, He answers them! While they are yet speaking, He hears their requests! He hears them chanting “*De Profundis*,” and He lifts them to sing aloud, “*Gloria in Excelsis*.” From “Out of the depths” their tune changes to, “Glory in the highest.” Nor are there slow pauses of weary hope, but the Lord works a world of wonders in the twinkling of an eye!

Thus we see how our Lord gives beauty for ashes. We now turn to the last point, which is—

III. WHAT HE BESTOWS INSTEAD OF THE ASHES—beauty. All disfigurement is removed. The ashes had made the person to be defiled, uncomely to others and unpleasant to himself, but all this is removed. Beauty is given and his countenance is not marred with dust and grime. His face is bright with joy and beaming with hope. No more unpleasant to the eyes, the person has even become attractive and delightful! The original Hebrew implies that occasions for joy and emblems of joy are also given, for it might be read, “A chaplet for ashes.” The ashes were on the head and now a crown is placed there. The allusion is to the nuptial tiara which men wore on their marriage day. The Lord's mourners are to be decked with crowns of delight instead of being disfigured with ashes of grief. When does that happen to us? Do you recollect when you first ob-

tained a sense of forgiveness? How gloriously were you then arrayed! When the father said of His prodigal son, “Bring forth the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet,” that was a high day! And so was it with us when we were delivered from our filthy rags and clothed in Divine Righteousness! Our ashes were gone, then, and a crown adorned our heads. Forgiven! It was a joy of joys! Even now as we look back upon it we begin to sing again—

“Happy day! Happy day!

When Jesus washed my sins away!”

We went a little farther on in spiritual life and then we discovered that we were the children of God! We did not at first know our Adoption, but it burst gloriously upon us like a newly kindled sun! Do you recollect when you first learned the meaning of the word and perceived that Adoption secured eternal salvation? For the heavenly Father does not cast His children away, nor can they cease to be the objects of His love! How can any child be unchilded? And if still a child, he must still be beloved and still an heir! When you once drank consolation from that Doctrine, did you not receive a tiara for ashes? How lovely a thing it is to be a child of God! “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!”

We lived a little longer, and we began to understand the Doctrine of Vital Union with Christ. We had not dreamed of it at first. We then discovered that there is a vital, actual union between us and Christ—that we are married to Him! It is a great mystery, but yet it is a great Truth of God. It is all but inconceivable that we should be members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones—and yet it is even so. That was a heavenly day wherein we perceived that we were one with Jesus—“by eternal union, one.” Then we rejoiced as wearers of a marriage crown and we sang

“My Beloved is mine and I am His.”

Since then we have learned other Truths and on each occasion of being thus taught of the Lord we have again obtained a crown for ashes! Another and yet another chaplet has adorned our brow. We have felt ourselves to be made priests and kings unto God and the beauty of the Lord our God has rested upon us! All glory be to His name!

Let us remark that the contrast of our text is peculiarly suggestive because it is not quite what we might expect. The Lord takes away our ashes, but what does He give in exchange? The natural contrast would be *joy*, but the Lord bestows that which is better, namely, *beauty*, because that is not only joy to ourselves but to others. “A thing of beauty,” as we say, “is a joy forever.” A beautiful person gives pleasure to all around. Now, child of God, you are not only to have those ashes taken away which have disfigured you, but you are actually to become the source of joy to others! How pleasant that will be for you who have so long touched the mournful string that you have distressed your family.

Yes, young Friend, you are to make your mother rejoice by telling her that you have found peace with God! You are yet to cheer your father's heart, young woman, when you shall say to him, "Father, I have found Him in whom you trust and I am trusting in Him, too." Yes, poor Mourner, you will yourself be comforting other mourners one of these days! You who have been in Giant Despair's castle shall help in pulling down the monster's den! You can hardly believe it, but so it shall be!

In the sense of being a joy to others, many of the Lord's people are very beautiful, indeed. You cannot help being charmed with them, especially with those of deep experience. Good men are glad of the company of those to whom the Lord has given the beauty of Divine Grace. Even the ungodly, though they do not confess it, have a respect for the majesty of holy characters. There is a charm about Beauty which makes her ride as on a lion through the midst of her foes—every man's hand is bound to defend her—and none dare to injure her! The beauty which the Lord gives to His people is as a queen among all beauties and sways a potent scepter!

Yes, and when the Lord makes His people beautiful they are a delight even to God, Himself, for the Lord rejoices in His works and His works of Grace are the noblest labor of His hands and, as being fullest of Divine Grace, are most graceful! The Lord delights in His people! We read of the Lord Jesus that His delights *were* with the sons of men, and even now, though angelic harps ring out His praises, He loves to be here in our Churches and to commune with us as a man speaks with his friend. Beloved, cultivate His society! Abide with Him and if He can find any cause of delight in you, which is a wonder of wonders, put all your delight in Him!

Let us have this gracious beauty about us and even our heavenly Bridegroom will have to say, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me. You have ravished My heart with one of your eyes." May we be kept from marring this beauty and be forever so fair that even our Lord, Himself, may look and love! Amen.

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

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

“THE OIL OF JOY FOR MOURNING”

NO. 3341

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1913.**

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

***“The oil of joy for mourning.”
Isaiah 61:3.***

MOURNERS in Zion ought to be doubly comforted, for here, in this gracious promise, is a second gift of Divine Love to them—a second exchange of loss for gain. The varied expressions of this choice Scripture show the manifold loving kindnesses of the Lord to His afflicted and the plentiful devices of wisdom by which He ministers consolation. It was not enough to give the sorrowing ones, “beauty for ashes”—He must add an oil with which to enhance the beauty and take away, not only the ashes, but the mourning which lay beneath them! This, also, illustrates the exceeding fullness of the blessings which are stored up in the Lord Jesus—in Him we have everything which heart can wish—a rich variety of joyful blessings never to be exhausted! It also shows us the marvelous fitness of our Lord Jesus, since solely because of His coming as the Anointed of the Lord, there is healing for the wounded, liberty for the captives, eyes for the blind, comfort for mourners, beauty for the disfigured and oil for fading countenances! He meets every need of the soul and fills the heart to overflowing with contented gratitude. Let it be repeated and gratefully remembered that all these good things come by the Anointed Savior alone. There can be no traffic with Heaven except by the crimson road of the atoning blood! No channel for Divine Favor except by the Christ of God on whom the Spirit of the Lord forever rests! To Him be Glory forever! Blessed be His name—He is the channel of Divine Grace and in Him is no straitness or shallowness! A Divine riches of glory flows to us by Christ Jesus—

***“Immortal joys come streaming down,
Joys, like His griefs, immense, unknown.”***

If our Redeemer were not what He is, what would we do? But being what He is, there is no necessity which He cannot supply, there is no grief which He cannot relieve and there is no right desire which He cannot satisfy. Let us drink of the river of His fullness and sing to His praise!

Notice, also, at the outset of our present meditation, the effectual way in which the blessings which Jesus brings are bestowed upon mourners. We have often heard doubting ones say, “Yes, there are promises, but we cannot reach them. We know that there are abundant consolations and rich and free comforts, but we do not feel their power, nor dare to take

them to ourselves.” Now, in this place we see the condescending Lord, Himself, applying the oil of joy in exchange for mourning! His own right hand pours the precious oil upon the bowed head—He, Himself, causes the face to shine and banishes woe! A man may lie bleeding on the battlefield and there may be liniments close at hand, but in his weakness and agony he may be quite unable to bind up his own wounds, or reach the cordials—he may die because he is not able to stretch so much as a finger to help himself to remedies which lie by his side! It is an unspeakable mercy that our Lord gives His Grace to us in such an effectual manner that His mourners actually obtain the help they need! He is a very present help, a real Comforter—the oil of joy is not shown us in an unbroken alabaster vase, nor merely offered to us in a vial, but it is actually and effectually applied to the soul!

Let us now come to the consideration of this second of the three great blessings bestowed upon the mourners in Zion—and may we all enjoy a portion thereof while we meditate thereon. In working out the metaphor we shall observe that—

I. OUR LOVING LORD BRINGS HIS MOURNERS TO SIT AT A FEAST.

This is clearly intended, for oil was largely used by Orientals upon festive occasions. The oil which makes man’s face to shine was associated with the bread which strengthens man’s heart, and the wine which makes glad the heart of man, (Psa 104:15), because these are the chief provisions of a banquet. Before the feast, or during the entertainment, the guests were refreshed with perfumed oil which would be either poured upon the head, or furnished for anointing the face. It was part and parcel of a great feast. Hence we read of those who “drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with their chief ointments.” Therefore our first thought is this, that the *Lord Jesus brings mourning souls to a feast of love* at which they sing, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies, You anoint my head with oil.” How great will be our joy if we can feel that our Lord has brought us into His banqueting house and that we are now reclining there! Now, to all Believers, this is truly the case. Our hunger now is relieved, for He satisfies our mouth with good things. That fierce, wolf-like hunger which we once felt, is gone forever, for it is written, “He that eats of this bread shall never hunger.” Our craving, all-consuming thirst is ended, for he that drinks of the water which Jesus gives him shall never thirst! Many of Zion’s mourners are sitting under the Word, longing for Divine Provision and praying, “Lord, evermore give us this bread.” The bread is theirs and a Voice cries to them, “Eat, O Friends! Drink, yes drink abundantly, O Beloved!” Your deadly famine of heart is gone and the spiritual hunger which you now feel is a pleasant appetite which gives a zest to heavenly food—an appetite which you long to have increased to the utmost! Even at this moment, though you feel a blessed hunger and thirst after righteousness, you are filled with royal dainties. You are no longer starving in the streets, nor famishing under the hedges and in the highways, but, by Divine Grace you have

been sweetly compelled to come in and you are at this moment the guests of the table of boundless mercy where the name of Jesus is as ointment poured forth, so that all around you the oil of gladness is shedding a Divine Perfume! You are no longer feeding the swine, but resting at the Father’s table—the oxen and the fatlings are killed and you are actually at the supper. Believe this and act accordingly!

And what a feast it is! For who is your Host? The Lord of Life and Glory, Himself, ordains “the feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well-refined.” “The King sits at His table.” It is His table and He sits at it! It is a great thing to dine with a king, but what must it be to be daily eating bread at the table of the King of kings? Let the joy bells ring in your soul at the very thought, for you are already come to the great feast which the King has made for His Son! He comes in, Himself, to see the guests!

It is the feast of the universe. There never was such another and there never can be its like! It is the antepast of the great Supper of the Lamb. What provisions are put upon the table! Men do eat angels’ food when they come here. Yes, they eat viands better than the bread of angels, for the body of Christ has become the meat and the drink of His mourners. Poor Souls, you feast upon Incarnate Deity! Speak of oxen and of fatlings? These are poor types compared with the wondrous provision of celestial Grace with which the Infinite Jehovah has loaded the table of the Covenant! And all these things are yours. You may have as much as you will. There remains no need to eat bread by weight, or to drink water by measure—He will satiate your soul with fatness and nothing shall be withheld from you! Ought you not to bless Him that you are now a guest at such a table and that such food is at this very moment spread before you?

Think of your fellow guests. Look around you and inspect the company. Remember where you were a little while ago—you were strangers and foreigners, yes, you were as dogs in the street! Where are you now? You are permitted to sit with the children of God, with the saints of the Most High! Does it not bring the water into your eyes to think that you—you who long refused to come and despised the feast of Grace—are, at last, brought in? No, not only are you sitting here at the feast of love with God’s people, but the saints above are your comrades—for “you are come to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.” We sup with the glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, the noble army of martyrs and the holy Church throughout all the world! Now, also, have we fellowship with angels. We have come unto Mount Zion and to an innumerable company of angels. Better still, we have fellowship with Jesus. “Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant,” is the center of the whole! It is His wedding feast and we are glorifying Him by partaking of His Father’s bounty. We can-

not at this moment actually put our heads upon Jesus' bosom as John did, nor need we wish for that visible and physical delight, but our heart rests upon His breast and enjoys an unspeakable bliss in so doing! Jesus, Immanuel, we are safe in Your arms, and our heart is at perfect rest in You! We are even now abiding in You, while at Your Passover we keep the feast. We are feasting with the great Father, Himself, for, Beloved, when the glorious Sacrifice becomes a meat offering, God Himself delights therein and partakes with us in the satisfaction made by His Son! Oh, the satisfaction which God the Father finds in Jesus! It is a theme upon which we dare not attempt to speak, but this we know—the Lord rests in His love. He smells a sweet savor in the Person and work and Sacrifice of His dear Son. If we love Jesus, so does the Father! And if we rest in Jesus, so does He! And if we would glorify Jesus, so would the Father! Thus are we brought to feast with God, the Judge of all, when we come to “the blood of sprinkling, which speaks better things than that of Abel.” Here the oil of joy is most befitting. Is it not most natural and proper that it should be poured out at such a festival?

We cannot linger, but must pass to the next observation, which is this—

II. BEING AT A FEAST, IT IS BECOMING THAT WE SHOULD HAVE PRESENT JOY.

Hence the text speaks of “the oil of joy for mourning”—the mourning was present enough, the joy should be equally so. At feasts, the perfume poured upon the heads of the guests was a seemly and appropriate thing. It suited the feast, it made the guests feel at home and it gave refreshment all around as the delicious perfume sweetened the air. Come, Beloved, we have at this moment reason for joy—let us use it! Let every child of God feel that he has the oil of joy in the fact that he possesses present blessings. Our best things lie on the other side of the Jordan—we are looking for our full bliss at the coming of our Lord, but we have much in the present. The oil of joy is on our faces now, our locks are even now bedewed with the sacred anointing—and it will be well for us to turn our thoughts towards that Truth of God!

For, first, let all Believers recollect that *we have today the joy of the Atonement*. “By whom also,” says the Apostle, “we have received the Atonement.” The Atonement will be no more ours in Heaven than it is now. “We have redemption by His blood.” Our sin will be no more put away in Glory than it is at this moment, for our iniquity is even now cast into the depths of the sea! Our Substitute has finished transgression and made an end of sin. And having believed in Him, we know that for us the full Atonement is already made and the utmost ransom forever paid! “It is finished.” “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” “There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.” Having believed, we know that our sin is as far removed from us as the east is from the west! We also know that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us and that it covers us from head to foot. This is a Divine-

ly sweet ingredient of the oil of joy which now distils upon us from the head of our glorified Aaron and perfumes even those who are as the skirts of his garments!

Besides that, my Brothers and Sisters, *at the present moment we live in the love of God*. It may not be at this moment sensibly shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit, but still, “the Father Himself loves you.” If you are a Believer in Christ, He will not love you more when you are in Heaven than He loves you now, for He loves you Infinitely at this instant! You are even now, “accepted in the Beloved.” “Beloved, now are we the sons of God.” Infinite love, eternal love, unchanging love, almighty love is the present possession of the children of God! Hence comes our safety, hence comes the certainty of the supply of all our needs—hence, indeed, flow all our joys! At this moment, despite our spirit depression and soul battling and heart strife, the Lord has set His love upon us and rests in that love! Should not this make our faces shine?

At this time, too, *we possess the Divine Life within us*. Having believed, we have been regenerated and the Spirit of God dwells in us! Yes, within these mortal bodies does the Godhead dwell! He has made our bodies to be the temples of the Holy Spirit. And what a favor is this, for this indwelling is the witness of the Spirit within us, the perpetual seal of Divine Grace. God has put into us a new life, a life like His own—He has created in us a superior principle, unknown to flesh and blood, for we are not born-again of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of the will of God! A supernatural life has been implanted in us which cannot die because it is born of God! We have this and we know it—and because of it we greatly rejoice.

And not only so, but because we are the sons of God, we are heirs according to the promise, since it is written, “If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” Is not this oil to make the face shine? What better delights can your imagination conceive than the Divine joys of Adoption? O, you mourners, have you not here the oil of joy?

Further, *we have the present joy of a high calling* involving the exercise of sacred functions. You are at this hour, Beloved, as many of you as believe in Him, made kings and priests unto God! You are consecrated to the service of Him who has bought you with a price. The mark of the blood is upon you and “you are Christ’s.” At this moment you are a living sacrifice bound with cords to the horns of the altar. Your Lord has sent you into the world, even as the Father sent Him into the world, to proclaim His Truth and to do His will among the sons of men. Is not this cause for delight? Does not your Divine vocation anoint you with the oil of gladness?

With this *we have special privileges*. There is one privilege I prize at this moment—I cannot tell you how much. It is this—the liberty to pray, the power to pray, the promise that I shall be heard! Take the Mercy Seat from me and poverty, faintness and anguish would seize my soul! As long

as there is a Mercy Seat and a torn veil, and the Voice that bids me draw near and tells me that if I wait upon the Lord I shall renew my strength, I have a joy worth worlds! What? Have you lost a child? Is your property melting before your eyes? Does health decline? Do friends forsake? Yet the Throne of Grace is accessible—fly there and lose your grief! There burdens are light. There crosses bud with crowns and tears sparkle into diamonds! Come here, you mourners, even with the load of your doubts and fears—supplication will quicken you and for mourning you shall obtain the oil of joy!

Time would fail me if I were to go through the whole catalog of the sources of the Christian’s present joy. Ah, you worldling, you know and we confess it is true, that our chief joys are yet to come! But notwithstanding, we have enough today to make us more than a match for you! You may display your present mirth and carnal delight if you will—and laugh at us who weep now—but we can endure your ridicule with calm complacency because we have a secret peace and a deep fathomless repose of heart which make us even now as far from envying you as an angel from envying a mole! We are not of all men the most miserable, but of all men the most blessed! Our eternal hopes revive us amid the sorrows of this fleeting life. The harvests of Heaven shale out and drop golden grain from above, upon which we feed even now! To have Jesus for our Brother, God for our Father and the Spirit to be our Comforter is a better portion than the richest, the proudest, or the most famous of worldlings can possibly possess! The oil of joy is not made in the presses of earth—it drops upon us through the golden pipes of the sanctuary, flowing from the sacred olive trees which the Lord has planted! Passing on from that observation, we would offer a third, which is implied in the text, namely, that—

III. THIS JOY COMES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

This is clear, since evermore when we read of oil we have before us in Scripture the Divine influence of the Holy Spirit. The first part of the Chapter before us runs thus—“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me because the Lord has anointed Me.” The oil with which Christ was anointed was the *Holy Spirit*—and the oil of joy with which we are anointed is the same Spirit! It is He who gives us joy in the Lord!

The Holy Spirit brings joy to Believers thus—first, *He clears the understanding* and enables us to comprehend the deep things of God. Many poor souls know but little of the precious gifts which the Lord has bestowed upon them. As yet, though they are the Lord’s elect, they are not aware of it. Though they are the redeemed of the Lord, they perceive it not. There is the Light of God about them and yet they cannot see, for their eyes are not yet opened beyond the power to see men as trees walking. Let us be grateful if we have passed beyond this stage. Through Infinite Mercy the Holy Spirit has visited some of us and while He has painfully made us see our ruin, He has also most blessedly led us to comprehend something of the remedy—and has enabled us to understand with

all saints what are the heights and depths, and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge! We have an anointing so that we know all things. Now are the mysteries opened and the hidden things laid bare and, therefore, we have joy in the Lord, for our renewed understanding floods our heart with rivers of delight!

The Holy Spirit also gives us joy as He *enables us to exercise an appropriating faith*. You that have faith, do you bless God sufficiently for it? Do we not fail to adore the Divine Mercy which has worked this Grace in us? We ought to blame ourselves when we find our faith to be weak, but we must never commend ourselves when faith is strong. The weakness of faith is ours, but the strength of faith comes of the Holy Spirit and of Him alone. Let us bless Him that He has enabled us to take to ourselves what the Lord Jesus has provided, so that now we do not only see His Grace to be excellent, but we grasp it as our own! Here is oil of joy for us, indeed!

The Spirit also, *very graciously, sanctifies us*, and this is joy. It is a part of His work to discover sin in us and to excite a holy hatred of it. He burns in our soul like flames of fire consuming evil. Now, the destruction of sin is the destruction of sorrow and, as a child of God grows in likeness to Jesus, he grows in solid peace of mind. If you will follow your doubts and fears to their roots, you will find that they grow from the dunghill of your sins—and when the Lord cleanses out the evil of our hearts and creates a new spirit within us, the oil of joy perfumes the soul and we are glad in His salvation.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit *graciously quickens His people* and what a wonderful effect quickening has upon our joy! Whenever we are slothful in the things of God, we miss the delights of healthy spiritual life and, before long we mourn. But when the Holy Spirit comes and makes us feel lively and energetic and sensitive, then we begin, also, to rejoice in the Lord and the power of His might within us works in us a leaping of holy joy! Those who not only have life, but have it more abundantly, are a highly favored people and know how to exult in the Lord! Beloved, long for no joy but that which the Holy Spirit gives you! Thank God for the comforts of this life, but do not let them become your idols, as they will be if they become your exceeding joy. Draw from the upper fountains, fill your pitcher at the eternal springs—ask neither for the cinnamon nor camphor of this world’s gardens, but let your chief spices be the fruit of the Spirit which are joy and peace through believing! We may now, in the fourth place, remark that—

IV. THE JOY WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES US IS A GREAT PRESENT GIFT.

I once heard a person say, very wickedly, indeed, as I thought and still think, that sin could do the Believer no harm. But he added, “Except that it destroys his comfort.” I thought, “Well, that is a terrible ‘exception,’ indeed! That surely is quite enough to fill us with holy fear! If anything

robs the Christian of his joy, surely the loss is great enough to set him upon his watch tower!” Yet I fear that many Christians do not consider this. They dream that it can be well with their souls when the joy of the Lord is gone, but, Brothers and Sisters, it is not so! The healthy condition of a child of God is a state of peaceful rest in the Lord. It is amazing how full Scripture is of comfort for mourners because the Lord’s objective is that the mourner may be comforted. “Comfort you, comfort you, My people, says your God. Speak comfortably to Jerusalem.” Our Lord desired that we might have His joy fulfilled in ourselves and He said, “Let not your hearts be troubled.” “Rejoice in the Lord always,” said the Apostle and, as if that were not enough, he added, “and again I say, rejoice.”

Hear me, you mourning ones—the maintenance of a cheerful, happy frame of mind is of the utmost importance to you, and that for many reasons which may be drawn from the metaphor of oil.

Oil is refreshing, and so is holy joy. It puts new life into the soul and renews its youth like the eagle’s. When the man is faint with long pursuing, he revives if he perceives he already possesses present blessings in which he may rejoice. The joy of the Lord is our strength!

Oil was intended to also make each guest agreeable to his neighbors. When his head was anointed with the sweet perfume, those round about him were gratified. Happy Christians are pleasing to those about them—and thus they become a means of attracting souls to Jesus. We ought to be so happy that others ask, “From where have these men their joys?” If so, you can clearly see why we should exchange our mourning for the oil of joy. It would be evil to frighten men from the glad tidings by drawing long faces and using doleful tones.

Besides, Brothers and Sisters, you all know how weak you are in the service of God if your heart runs down into despondency. But when holy joy comes back, you feel that you could face a lion, or the old roaring lion, himself! Joy makes us brave. “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?” Give me the joyful Christian for his Master’s service, for he will break through a troop and leap over a wall!

How gloriously does sacred joy lift us up above the sorrows of the world! No, more—how it lifts us up above earth’s joys! The man who has once drunk the old wine of the Kingdom does not desire the new and sour wine of earth. He who knows the joy of the Lord will despise the joy of the world. Earthly comforts are small concerns to the heavenly mind. He receives them gratefully as matters of ordinary gifts from his Father’s hands, but his heart cries, “The Lord is my portion, says my soul.” He who has eaten the white bread of Heaven has his mouth put out of taste for the black bread of earth. He who has feasted at God’s table and had the oil of joy poured upon his head by the Holy Spirit has risen above the fascinations of the hour! What can charm a man who has gazed on the beauties of Jesus? What can delude us into idolatry when we have once beheld the Glory of the Lord? The joy of the Lord is a grand safeguard.

Earnestly could I wish that all God’s people were flooded with it—there would then be no fear of angry tempers, harsh speeches, or murmuring words. Full of the joy of the Lord, deeds of injustice in trade or of grasping at the world would be disdained by you! Suffering would be endured with patience and labor performed with diligence! Railing would never be returned for railing, nor proud looks given to the poor. The joy of the Lord makes a man so calm, so quiet, so heavenly, that he lives above the world. What a grand life is that of Abraham! He has his trials and some of them are intense, but he walks along the road of history with an almost noiseless tread, gliding along as though all were smooth! The record says, “It came to pass that the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things”—and yet in the previous pages we read of trials with Lot, with Hagar and Ishmael—and the grand ordeal with Isaac! Faith made his trials blessings, and his inward joy, like Aaron’s rod, swallowed up all the rods of his afflictions. The same road is open to us and we have the same reasons for walking in it since the God of Abraham is our God forever and ever! He who can live by faith shall have a constant supply of the oil of joy poured upon him by the Holy Spirit—and his mourning shall flee away. Our last observation is—

V. THE JOY WHICH GOD GIVES HIS PEOPLE IS BEST SEEN AND FREQUENTLY BEST FELT IN FELLOWSHIP.

We began with noting that oil is connected with festivity. Sweet spices are for banquets where men feast together. Oh mourners, you will often find your souls made joyous when you assemble with your Brothers and Sisters! Bread eaten in secret is sweet and morsels behind the door are delicious, but still, the choicest and most abundant provisions are brought forth when the king’s household gather around his table and realize that “they, being many, are one bread.” Speaking personally, my happiest times are spent with my Brothers and Sisters in Christ in the high festivals, *when the multitude keep holy day*. Draw a circle around my pulpit and you have hit upon the spot where I am nearest Heaven! There the Lord has been more consciously near me than anywhere else. He has ravished my heart while I have been trying to cheer and comfort His mourners. Many of you can say the same of your pew where you are known to sit—it has been a Bethel to you and the Lord Jesus has revealed Himself to you in the midst of His people. Let us remember what delightful times we have had in prayer together. We have come into the sanctuary heavy of heart and while one Brother after another has approached the Throne of Grace for us, we have been unburdened and helped to joy in God till the Prayer Meeting has seemed to be a Heaven below, an antepast of the eternal meetings above! Thus the oil of joy is poured out in the assembly of fellowship.

Ofttimes, also, *when we have been singing together* some delightful hymn, in a lively, feeling manner, we have felt as if we could leap with

delight and so the oil of joy has streamed upon our heads. Have you not often cried with the poet—

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

Yes, that is the oil of gladness given at the festival of praise among the sons of God—who would not be there?

A joyous influence has also been within the house *when Believers have met to talk with one another concerning the things of God* in simple, pious conversation. Alas, how little is there of such speaking, one to another, especially among wealthy Christians. A Christian man remarked to me the other day that when he was a boy the good old Christian people were constantly talking upon the Doctrines of Grace and other things which concern the Kingdom of God, but there is little of this now. The staunch old men of the last generation knew what they believed and discerned between things that differed—they were, perhaps, a little too severe in their judgments—but still they did converse on Divine things and were refreshed thereby! But now we are so very charitable that we are afraid to talk to one another about the things of God, for fear we should differ! It should not be so, for when Christ is the subject and God’s people converse together, their hearts burn within them with sacred delight, and the oil of gladness is poured upon their heads! Holy fellowship brings heavenly joy—the conversation of saints with each other is the source of unnumbered delights.

Lastly, *the Communion Table has been to many of us, above all other places in the world, the palace of delight.* There are certain of us who never forget the ordinance for a single Lord’s-Day, and years of experience bear witness to the value of this means of Grace! It is marvelous that so few, even among Christians, are regular in their attendance at that thrice blessed Supper. A young girl said to me the other Sabbath, “Jesus seems so near when we are at the Table.” And she was quite right. The emblems used at the Supper so vividly bring our Lord before us that we think only of His passion, of the blood that was shed and of the body which was made to suffer for our sins. Then are we borne away with grateful emotion and feel as if we had reached the very gate of Heaven! While we drink the wine and eat the bread, the oil of gladness is poured upon us by our Lord Himself! You who neglect that ordinance are losing a great privilege and besides that you are neglecting a solemn duty. May the Lord convince you of your negligence and bring you to delight in that ordinance which is the joyful means of communion with Himself.

Now, all this while I have been talking to God’s people and you will say, “Have you not a word to say to the sinner?” Well, I have all the while been speaking to the sinner, too, because all this is for you if you repent of sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! If you will come and have it, the Table is spread and loaded for you. No, more—“the Word is near you,

even in your mouth.” What? Is the Bread of Life *in your mouth* and will you not eat it? Poor, hungry, empty, needy sinner, can you reject what God, Himself, puts into your mouth? If angels will rejoice when you repent, depend upon it there is also joy in store for you! Come then to Jesus, just as you are! Bring no money with you, bring no fitness with you, bring no fancied goodness with you—bring your sins and lay them before your Lord. Bring your hard heart, your lack of feeling, your lack of Divine Grace and just come and find all that you need in Christ, who is waiting to bless you! When I was a child I remember how at a school festival the children were instructed to bring their own mugs with them. Now that showed the poverty of those who gave the treat, but my Master does not want you to bring anything! He supplies everything. Come as you are, with nothing about you except your needs and your willingness to be saved! When an empty, guilty, lost, undone, ruined creature is coming to a great, blessed and mighty Savior, all he has to think of is the love which invites him and the greatness of the Redeemer who will receive him! Come here, then, all you who mourn because of sin, or mourn that you cannot mourn, and, by believing in Jesus you shall obtain the oil of joy and the days of your mourning shall be ended!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 9:20-41.**

This miracle is one that shows the transforming power of the Savior in a remarkable fashion.

20-21. *And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming. And He asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. A terrible case.*

22-25. *And oftentimes it has cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if You can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes. And immediately the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, You dumb and deaf spirit, I charge you, come out of him, and enter no more into him. That is one way in which Christ cures. When He drives the devil out of a man, He adds, “Enter no more into him.” I believe in the final perseverance of the saints, because I believe in the Omnipotent ejection of Satan out of men when Christ speaks the word, “Come out of him, and enter no more into him.”*

26-29. *And the spirit cried, and convulsed him sorely and came out of him: and he was as one dead, insomuch that many said, he is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. And when He was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could*

not we cast him out? And He said unto them—According to another Evangelist, it was from lack of faith. Howbeit, He added—

29. *This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting. God does not give us everything in answer to one prayer. It may be necessary for some blessings that the prayer should be reiterated—that it should deepen—that it should grow into an aching. It may be even necessary, in order that a blessing should come, that fasting should be used with prayer in order to show the intense eagerness and earnestness of the petitioner. Now notice the 38th verse.*

38. *And John answered Him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Your name, and he follows not us: and we forbade him, because he follows not us. John in this case was like a good many people at the present day. You notice it. They could not cast out the devils, themselves, and when they found somebody else that did it, they forbade his doing it because he did not follow with them. I have known learned, eloquent, respectable ministers who cannot save sinners. And they hear that certain poor, illiterate, uneducated men have snatched sinners like brands from the burning—and they forbid them to do what they cannot do themselves. It is insanity—that would stop any man from doing what God enables him to do! And we ought to be the very last to forbid others from doing it.*

39. *But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me. These people were dissenters, we may say—a sort of outsiders. And John puts forth the whole power of his Apostolic authority to put them down—and then Jesus Christ puts forth the full power of His Divine Authority to give them liberty to go on!*

40-41. *For he that is not against us is on our side. For whoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.*

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

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

“THE GARMENT OF PRAISE”

NO. 3349

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 1913.**

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

***“The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”
Isaiah 61:3.***

THE list of comforts which the Anointed has here prepared for His mourners is apparently inexhaustible. He seems as if He delighted to give “according to the multitude of His tender mercies” a very cloud of blessings. This is the third of His sacred exchanges—“the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” Grace, like its God, delights to be a trinity. This is also the broadest of the blessings, for whereas the first adorned the face with beauty, and the second anointed the head with joy, this last and widest covers the whole person with a garment of praise! Man’s first vesture was of his own making and it could not cover his shame—but this garment is of God’s making and it makes us comfortable in ourselves, and comely in the sight of God and man. They are better adorned than Solomon in all his glory, to whom God gives the garment of praise. May the blessed Spirit sweetly help us to bring out the rich meaning of this promise to mourners, for again I must remind you that these things are only given to them—and not to the thoughtless world.

We have already noticed the variety of the consolation which Jesus brings to mourners—the Plant of Renown produces many lovely flowers with rich perfume and a multitude of choice fruits of dainty taste. Now we would call your attention to their marvelous adaptation to our needs. Man has a spirit and the gifts of Grace are spiritual. His chief maladies lie in his soul and the blessings of the Covenant deal with his spiritual needs. Our text mentions “the spirit of heaviness” and gives a promise that it shall be removed. The blessings which Jesus gives to us are not surface blessings, but they touch the center of our being! At first we may not perceive their depth, but only know that beauty is given instead of ashes—this might seem to be an external change. Further on, however, joy is given, instead of mourning, and this is inward—the thought has advanced, we are getting nearer the heart. But in the words before us, the very spirit of heaviness, the fountain from which the mourning flows, the hearth whereon the ashes are burned is dealt with and taken away—and instead thereof we receive the garment of praise! What a mercy it is that the blessings of the Everlasting Covenant belong to the realm of the

spirit for, after all, the outward is transient, the visible soon perishes. We are grateful for the food and raiment which our bodies require, but our sterner need is nourishment, consolation and protection for our spirits. The Covenant of Grace blesses the man, himself—the soul—which is the essence of his life. It puts away the sordid sackcloth of despondency and robes the spirit in royal garments of praise. Judge you your state by your estimation of such favors, for if you have learned to prize them, they are yours! The worldling cares nothing for spiritual blessings. His beauty, joy, and praise are found in things which perish in the using. But those who know their preciousness have been taught of God and since they can appreciate them, they shall have them! Soul-mercy is the very soul of mercy and he whom the Lord blesses in his spirit, is blessed indeed!

I want you still further to notice how these blessings grow as we proceed. At first, out of the triplet of favors here bestowed there was beauty given, instead of ashes. There is much there—beauty of personal character before God is no mean thing—yet a man might have that, and by reason of his anxiety of heart he might scarcely be aware of it. Doubtless many who are lovely in the sight of God spend much of their time in bewailing their own uncomeliness. Many a saint sorrows over himself, while others are rejoicing in him! Therefore, the next mercy given to the mourner in Zion is the oil of joy, which is a personal and conscious delight. The man rejoices. He perceives that he is made beautiful before God and he begins to joy in what the Lord has done for him and in the Anointed One from whom the oil of gladness descends. This is an advance upon the other, but now we come to the highest of all! Seeing that God has made him glad, he perceives his obligations to God and he expresses them in thankfulness—and so stands before the Most High like a white-robed priest, putting on praise as the garment in which he appears in the courts of the Lord’s House, and is seen by his Brothers and Sisters. As you advance in the Divine Life, the blessings you receive will appear to be greater and greater. Some promising things become small by degrees and miserably less, but in the Kingdom of Heaven we go from strength to strength. The beginning of the Christian life is like the water in the pots at Cana, but in due time it blushes into wine. The pathway which we tread is, at first, bright as the dawn, but if we pursue it with sacred perseverance, its radiance will be as the perfect day! There shall be no going down of our sun, but it shall shine with increasing luster till it shall be as the light of seven days, and the days of our mourning shall be ended!

I beg you also to mark that when we reach the greatest mercy and stand on the summit of blessing, we have reached a condition of praise—praise to God invests our whole nature. To be wrapped in praise to God is the highest state of the soul. To receive the mercy for which we praise God is something, but to be wholly clothed with praise to God for the mercy received is far more! Why, praise is Heaven, and Heaven is praise!

To pray is Heaven below, but praise is the essence of Heaven above! When you bow lowest in adoration, you are at your very highest. The soul full of joy takes a still higher step when it clothes itself with praise. Such a heart takes to itself no glory, for it is dressed in gratitude and so hides itself. Nothing is seen of the flesh and its self-exaltation, since the garment of praise hides the pride of man. May you all who are heavy in spirit be so clothed upon with delight in the Lord, who has covered you with the robe of righteousness, that you may be as wedding guests adorned for the palace of the King with glittering garments of adoring love!

Looking carefully into the words before us, we will dwell, first, upon *the spirit of heaviness*. Secondly, upon *the promise implied in the text—that this shall be removed*. And then, thirdly, upon *the garment of praise which is to be bestowed*. First, let us muse upon—

I. THE SPIRIT OF HEAVINESS.

We would not make this meditation doleful and yet it may be as well to set forth the night side of the soul, for thus we may the better show a sympathetic spirit and come more truly home to those who are in heaviness through manifold temptations. Some of us know by experience what the spirit of heaviness means. It comes upon us at times even now. There are many things in the body. There are many things in the family. There are many things in daily life which make us sad. Facts connected with the past and with the future cause us, at times, to hang our heads. We shall just now dwell upon those former times when we were under the spirit of heaviness on account of unpardoned sin. We cannot forget that we were in bondage in a spiritual Egypt. We would awaken our memories to remember the wormwood and the gall, the place of dragons and of owls.

Observe that *this heaviness is an inward matter* and it is usually a grief which a man tries to keep to himself. It is not that he is sick in body, though his unbelieving friends fancy that he must surely be ailing, or he would not seem so melancholy. “He sits alone and keeps silent,” and they say that he has a low fit upon him and they invite him out into company and try, if they can, to jest him out of his distress. The fact is that sin is pressing upon him, and well may the spirit be heavy when it has that awful load to carry! Day and night God’s hand is also heavy upon him and well may his spirit be loaded down. Conviction of sin makes us as a cart that is loaded with sheaves—but it is intensely inward and, therefore, not to be understood by careless minds. “The heart knows its own bitterness and a stranger intermeddles not therewith.” I have known persons who have been the subject of this heaviness most sedulously endeavor to conceal from others even the slightest appearance of it. And I cannot say that there has not been some wisdom in so doing, for ungodly men despise those who tremble at the Word of God. What do they care about sin? They can sin and rejoice in it as the swine

can roll in the mire and feel itself at home. Those who weep in secret places because the arrows of the Lord have wounded them, are shunned by those who forget God, and they need not be sorry for it, since such company can furnish no balm for their wounds. Mourner, you are wise to keep your sorrow to yourself as far as the wicked are concerned, but remember, though perhaps you think not so, there are hundreds of God’s children who know all about your condition, and if you could be bold enough to open your mind to them and tell them of your heaviness of spirit, you would be surprised to find how thoroughly they would sympathize with you and how accurately some of them could describe the maze through which you are wandering! All are not tender of heart, but there are Believers who would enter into your experience and who might, by God’s blessing, give you the clue to the labyrinth of your grief. The Lord comforted Paul by Ananias, and you may be sure that there is an Ananias for you! If you feel, as many do, that you could not unburden your soul to your parents or relatives, go to some other experienced Believers and tell them as far as you can your painful condition. I know, for I have felt the same, that all hope that you shall be saved is taken away and that you are utterly prostrate—but yet THERE IS HOPE!

While this heaviness is inward, notice in the next place that *it is real*. Heaviness of spirit is one of the most terribly true of all our griefs. He who is cheerful and light-hearted too often contemns and even ridicules him who is sad of soul. He says that he is “nervous,” calls him “fanciful...almost out of his mind,” “very excitable...quite a monomaniac,” and so on. The current idea being that there is really no need for alarm and that sorrow for sin is mere fanaticism! If some persons had suffered half an hour of conviction of sin, themselves, they would look with different eyes upon those who feel the spirit of heaviness, for I say it, and know what I am saying, that next to the torment of Hell, itself, there is but one sorrow which is more severe than that of a broken and a contrite spirit that trembles at God’s Word, but does not dare to suck comfort out of it! The bitterness of remorse and despair is worse, but yet it is unspeakably heartbreaking to bow at the Mercy Seat, and to fear that no answer will ever come—to lie at the feet of Jesus, but to be afraid to look up to Him for salvation! To be conscious of nothing but abounding sin and raging unbelief and to expect nothing but sudden destruction—this is an earthly Tophet! There are worse wounds than those which torture the flesh, but more cruel pangs arise from the broken bones of the soul than from those of the body. Sharp is that cut which goes to the very heart and yet does not kill, but makes men wish that they could die or cease to be. There is a prison such as no iron bars can make and a fetter such as no smith can forge. Sickness is a trifle compared to it—it is to some men less endurable than the rack or the stake. To be impaled upon your own sins, pilloried by your own conscience, shot at by your own judgment as with barbed arrows—this is anguish and torment!

This heaviness of spirit *puts a weight upon the man's activity* and clogs him in all things. He is weighted heavily who bears the weight of sin. You put before him the precious Promises, but he does not understand them, for the heaviness presses upon his mental faculties. You assure him that these Promises are meant for him, but he cannot believe you, for heaviness of spirit palsies the grasping hand by which he might appropriate the blessing. “Their soul abhors all manner of meat, and they draw near to the gates of death.” Troubled minds at times lose all their appetite. They need spiritual food and yet turn from it. The most wholesome meat of the Gospel they are afraid to feed upon, for their sadness makes them fearful of presumption. Heaviness brings on amazement and this is but another word for saying that the mind is in a maze and cannot find its way out.

They are weighted as to their understanding and their faith, for “the spirit of heaviness” also presses there. Their memory, too, is quick enough at recollecting sin, but to anything that might minister comfort, it is strangely weak, even as Jeremiah said, “You have removed my soul far off from peace: I forget prosperity.” Indeed, David was still more oblivious, for he says, “My heart is smitten and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread.” All the faculties become dull and inert, and the man is like one in a deadly swoon. I have heard persons, under conviction of sin, say, “I seem absolutely stupid about Divine things.” Like one that is stunned by a severe blow, they fall down and scarcely know what they feel or do not feel. Were they in their clear senses, we could set the Gospel before them and point out the way of salvation and they would soon lay hold of it! But, alas, they seem to have no capacity to understand the Promise, or to grasp its consolation.

Now, this heaviness of spirit also *renders everything around the man heavy*. The external is generally painted from within. A merry heart makes mirth in the dull November fog under a leaden sky, but a dull heart finds sorrow amidst May blossoms, and June flowers. A man colors the world he lives in to the tint of his own soul. “Things are not what they seem,” yet what they seem has often more influence upon us than what they are! Find a man, then, with heaviness of spirit, and you will find that his sorrows appear to be greater than he can bear. The commonplace worries of life which cheerfulness sports with, are a load to a sad heart—yes, the grasshopper is a burden! The ordinary duties of life become a weariness and slight domestic cares a torture. He trembles lest he should commit sin even in going in and out of his house. A man who bears the weight of sin has small strength for any other load. Even the joys of life become somber. It matters not how much God has blessed a man in his family, in his basket, or in his store, for as long as his heart is oppressed and his soul bowed down with sin, what are the bursting barns and what are the overflowing wine vats to him? He pines for a

peace and rest which these things cannot yield. If the eyes are dark, the sun, itself, affords no light!

There is one thing, however, which we would say to mourners pressed down with guilt—whatever heaviness you feel, it is no greater heaviness than sin ought to bring upon a man, for it is an awful thing to have sinned against God. If the sense of sin should drive you to distraction—and cavilers often say that religion does this—it might reasonably do so if there were no other matters to think upon—no forgiving love and atoning blood. That which is the result of sin ought not to be charged upon religion, but true religion should be praised, because it brings relief to all this woe! Sin is the most horrible thing in the universe—and when a man sees how foully he has transgressed—it is no wonder that he is greatly troubled. To think that I, a creature that God has made, which He could crush as easily as a moth, have dared to live in enmity to Him for many years, and have even become so hardened as to forget Him and perhaps defy Him! This is terrible! When I have been told of His great love, I have turned on my heels and rejected it. Yes, and when I have even *seen* that love in the bleeding body of His dear Son, I have been unbelieving and have done despite even to boundless Grace, and gone from bad to worse, greedy after sin! Is it marvelous that when they have seen the guilt of all this, men have felt their moisture turned into the drought of summer and cried in desperation, “My soul chooses strangling rather than life”? However low you are, beloved Mourner, you are not exaggerating your guilt! Apart from the Grace of God, your case is, indeed, as hopeless as you suppose. Though you lie in the very dust and dare not look up, the position is not lower than you ought to take. You richly deserve the anger of God and when you have some sense of what that wrath must be, you are not more fearful of it than there is just need to be, for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. “He touches the hills and they smoke.”—

***“The pillars of Heaven’s starry roof
Tremble and start at His reproof.”***

What will His wrath be when He puts on His robes of justice and comes forth to mete out justice to the rebellious? O God, how terrible is Your wrath! Well may we be crushed at the very thought of it!

Another reflection we would suggest here and that is, that *if you have great heaviness of spirit on account of sin, you are by no means alone in it*, for some of the best servants of God have endured hard struggling before they have found peace with God. Read their biographies and you will find that even those who have really believed in Christ have at some time or other felt the burden of sin pressing with intolerable weight upon their souls. Certain of them have recorded their experience in terrible sentences, but others have felt what they have not dared to commit to writing. “Weeping Cross,” as the old writers call it, is a much-frequented

spot—many roads meet at that point, and most pilgrims have left a pool of tears there.

There is this to be added. Your Lord and Master, He to whom you must look for hope, knew what heaviness meant on account of sin. He had no sin of His own, but He bore the iniquity of His people and, therefore, He was prostrate in Gethsemane. We read that “He began to be sorrowful and to be very heavy.” The spirit of heaviness was upon Him and He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground! This same heaviness made Him cry upon the Cross, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Jesus was sorely amazed and very heavy—and it is to Him as passing through that awful heaviness that I would bid you look in your hour of terror, for He alone is your door of hope. Through His heaviness, yours shall be removed, for “the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.” So much, then, concerning heaviness of spirit. And now, secondly, let us—

II. SEE THE HEAVINESS REMOVED, for of this the text contains a Divine Promise—the anointed Savior will take it away. Only a word or two upon this.

Brothers and Sisters, do you enquire how Jesus removes the spirit of heaviness? We answer, He does it thus—by revealing to us with clearness and certainty that *our sin is pardoned*. The Holy Spirit brings us to trust in Christ and the Inspired Word assures us that Christ suffered in the place of all Believers and, therefore, we perceive that He died for us. And also that nothing remains for us to suffer because sin, having been laid upon the Substitute, it is no more upon us. We rejoice in the fact of our Lord’s Substitution and the transfer of our sins to Him. We see that if He stood in our place, we stand in His—and if He was rejected, we are “*accepted* in the Beloved.” Then straight away this spirit of heaviness disappears because the reason for it is gone—

***“I will praise You every day!
Now Your anger’s turned away,
Comfortable thoughts arise
From the bleeding Sacrifice.”***

Moreover, in the new birth *the Holy Spirit infuses into us a new nature*—and that new nature knows not the spirit of heaviness—it is a thing of light, and life, and joy in the Holy Spirit! The newborn nature looks up and perceives its kinship with God. It rejoices in the favor of the Holy One from whom it came. It rests in the Lord, yes, it joys and rejoices in Him! And whereas, the old sin-spirit still sinks us down according to its power, there still being in us the evil heart of unbelief, this new life wells up within us as a living fountain of crystal and buoys us up with the peace and joy which comes of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling! Thus the inner life becomes a constant remedy for heaviness of spirit.

And faith, too, that blessed gift of God, wherever it resides, works to the clearing away of heaviness, for faith sings, “All things are mine, why

should I sorrow? All my sin is gone, why should I pine and moan? All things as to the present life are supplied me by the God of Providence and Grace—and the future is guaranteed to me by the Covenant ordered in all things and sure.” Faith takes the telescope and looks beyond the narrow range of time into the eternal heavens, and sees a crown laid up for the faithful. Yes, and her ears are opened so that she hears the songs of the redeemed by blood before the Throne of God—thus she bears away the spirit of heaviness! If I see no joy with these poor optics, faith has other eyes with which she discovers rivers of delight! If flesh and blood afford me nothing but causes for dismay, faith knows more and sees more—and she perceives causes for overflowing gratitude and delight! Hope also enters with her silver light, borrowed from faithful promises. She expects the future glory, at which we hinted just now, and begins to anticipate it all. And so, again, she drives away the gloom of the heart. Love, also, the sweetest of the three, comes in and teaches us to be resigned to the will of God and then sweetly charms us into acquiescence with all the Divine Purposes. And when we reach that point, and so love God that whatever He may do with us, we are resolved to trust Him and praise His name, then the spirit of heaviness must vanish!

Now, beloved Mourners, I trust you know what this great uplifting means. It is a work in which the Lord is greatly glorified when He raises a poor, begrimed soul out of the sordid potsherd among which it has lain, and gives it to soar aloft as on the silver wings of a dove! Some of us can never forget the hour of our great deliverance—it was the day of our espousals, the time of love—and it must forever remain as the beginning of days unto us. All glory be to Him who has loosed our bonds and set our feet in a large room! But now we come to the third and most prominent point of the text, which is—

III. THE GARMENT OF PRAISE BESTOWED, which takes the place of the spirit of heaviness. We suppose this may mean, and probably does mean, that the Lord gives us a garment that is honorable and worthy of praise—and what is this garment but *the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ*? The Lord arrays His poor people in a robe which causes them to be no more worthy of shame, but fit to be praised. They become unblameable in His sight. What a blessing this is! Did not the father, when he received the prodigal, say, “Bring forth the best robe and put it on him”? That was a praiseful garment, instead of the spirit of heaviness—and whenever a child of God begins to perceive his adoption and to say, “Abba, Father,” then He puts on a fit garment for a child to wear, an honorable dress, a garment of praise! When we realize that Christ has made us priests unto God and we, therefore, put on the priestly garment of sanctification by beginning to offer the sacrifice of prayer and praise, then, again, we wear a praiseful garment! When we exercise the high prerogative of kings, for we are kings as well as priests, then, again, we wear not a sordid vesture of dishonor, nor the costume of a prison, nor the rags of

beggary, nor the black robe of condemnation, but a garment of honor and of praise! Every child of God should be clothed with the garments of salvation—his Savior has prepared them for this end—let him wrap them about him and be glad, for these garments make him beautiful in the sight of God!

But I choose, rather, to follow the exact words of our version tonight and speak of the garment of praise as meaning gratitude, thanksgiving, and adoration. The anointed Comforter takes away the spirit of heaviness and He robes His people in the garment of praise.

Now, *this is something outward as well as inward*. A wise man endeavors to hide the heaviness of his spirit, but when the Lord takes that away, he does not wish to conceal his gratitude. I could not help telling those I lived with, when I found the Lord! Master John Bunyan informs us that he was so anxious to let someone know of his conversion that he wanted to tell the crows on the plowed land all about it! I do not wonder. It is a piece of news which it would be hard to withhold. Whenever a man's inward heaviness is graciously removed, he puts on the outward manifestation of joy and walks abroad in the silken robes of praise!

As we have already said, a garment is a thing which covers a man, so when a man learns to thank God aright, His praise covers him—he, himself, is hidden while he gives all the glory to God. The man is seen as clothed in praise from head to foot. Many persons very unfairly judge Christians when they begin to speak of the love and mercy of God to them, for they cry out that they are egotistical—but how can it be egotistical to talk of what the Lord has done for you? If you speak with any sort of confidence, captious individuals say that you are presumptuous. How can it be presumptuous to believe what God, Himself, declares? It is presumptuous to *doubt* what God says, but it is not presumption to believe God! Neither is it egotism to state the truth. If I were to say that God has not blessed me abundantly, the pulpit on which I stand would cry out against me! Shall I conceal the mercy of God as if it were stolen goods? Never! But rather I will speak the more boldly of the measureless love which has kept my soul from going down to the pit! “He that glories, let him glory in the Lord.” Bless the Lord, O you saints of His, and give thanks to His holy name. Show forth His salvation, compel men to see it, gird it about your loins and wear it for your adorning in all companies!

While speaking of this garment of praise, let us enquire of what *it is made*.

Is not praise composed in a large measure of *an attentive observation of God's mercy*? Thousands of blessings come to us without our knowledge. We take them in at the back door, and put them away in the cellar. Now, praise takes note of them, preserves the invoice of favors received and records the goodness of the Lord. O Friends, if you do this, you will never be short of reasons for praise!. He who notices God's mer-

cy will never be without a mercy to notice. This is the chief material of the garment of praise—attentive consideration of Divine Grace is the broadcloth out of which the garment of praise is made.

The next thing is *grateful memory*. Very much that God does for us we bury alive in the grave of oblivion. We receive His mercies as if they were common trash. They are no sooner come than they are gone, and the proverb truthfully says, “Bread eaten is soon forgotten.” Why, my Brothers and Sisters, the Lord may give you a thousand favors and you will not praise Him. But if He smites you with one little stroke of the whip, you grumble at Him! You write His mercies on the water and your own trials you engrave on granite! These things ought not to be. Maintain the memory of His great goodness. “Forget not all His benefits.” Call to remembrance your song in the night and remember the loving kindnesses of the Lord. In this, also, we find rich material for the garment of praise.

We are further aided *by rightly estimating mercy*. Is it not a great mercy to be alive and not in Hell? To be in your senses and not in the lunatic asylum? To be in health and not in the hospital? To be in one’s own room, and not in the workhouse? These are great favors, and yet, perhaps, we seldom thank God for them! Then count up your spiritual mercies, if you can. Remember, on the other hand, what you deserved, and what it cost the Savior to bring these blessings to you—how patient the Lord has been with your refusal of His love and how continuously He has loaded you with benefits! Weigh His mercies, as well as count them, and they will help you to put on the garment of praise.

It is the telling out of the Divine goodness which largely constitutes praise—to observe, to remember, to estimate, to prize and then to speak of the Lord’s gracious gifts—all these are essential. Praise is the open declaration of the gratitude which is felt within. How greatly do many fail in this! If you visit them, how readily they enlarge upon their troubles—in five minutes they have informed you about the damp weather, their aching bones and their low wages. Others speak of the bad times and the decline of trade till you know their ditty by heart! Is this the manner of the people of God? Should we not entertain our visitors with something better than the bones of our meat and the hard crusts of our bread? Let us set before them good tidings and cheerfully tell of the Divine goodness to us, lest they should go away under the impression that we serve a hard master. It would create an almost miraculous change in some people’s lives if they made a point of speaking most of the precious things and least of the worries and ills! Why always the poverty? Why always the pains? Why always the dying child? Why always the husband’s small wages? Why always the unkindness of a friend? Why not sometimes—yes, why not *always*—the mercies of the Lord? That is praise and it is to be our everyday garment, the livery of every servant of Christ!

Let us enquire, *too, who ought to wear this garment?* The answer may be suggested by another—whom does it fit? Truly there is a garment of

praise which exactly suits me and I mean to wear it. It is so capacious that some of my Brothers and Sisters would wonder if they could see it spread out. I am so much in debt to my God that, do what I will, I can never give a fair acknowledgment of it. I freely confess that I owe Him more than any man living and am morally bound to praise Him more earnestly than anyone else! Did I hear some of you claiming to be equal debtors? Do you demand to be allowed to praise Him more than I? Well, I will not quarrel with you. Let the matter stand and if you will excel me, I will praise my Lord for it. I once, in preaching, remarked that if I once entered Heaven, I would take the lowest place, feeling that I owe more to God’s Grace than anybody else, but I found, when I left the pulpit, that I had several competitors who would not yield the lowest place to me! They were, each one, ready to exclaim—

**“Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,
While Heaven’s resounding mansions ring
With shouts of Sovereign Grace!”**

Blessed be God, this is the only contention among the birds of Paradise—who owes the most, who shall love the best, who shall lie lowest and who shall extol their Lord the most zealously! Charming rivalry of humility! Let us have more of it below. I again say there is a garment of praise that fits me. Brother, Sister, is there not one which fits you, exactly suiting your state and condition? If you are an heir of Heaven, there is—there must be a garment of praise which will rest most becomingly upon your shoulders—and you should put it on at once.

Then, *when shall we wear it?* We should certainly appear in it on high days and holidays. On Sabbath days and communion seasons the hours are fragrant with grateful memories. I heard of someone who did not attend public worship because his clothes were not fit to come in, and I replied, What can he mean? Does the Lord care for our outward dress? Let him put on the garment of praise, and he may come and welcome! The outer vestments matter little, indeed! All garments of that sort are only proofs of our fall, and of the need to hide our nakedness for very shame. Fine dress is unbecoming in the House of God, especially for those who call themselves “miserable sinners.” The best adornment is humility of spirit, the robe of thanksgiving, the garment of praise! The Lord’s-Day should always be the happiest day of the week, and the communion should be a little Heaven to our souls. “Call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable.”

We should wear the garment of praise on the most commonplace of days. It should be the peasant’s frock and the merchant’s coat, the lady’s dress and the servant’s gown—it is the best for wear, for comfort, for beauty and it never gets out of fashion. I once knew an old saint, a Methodist, a very quaint, original, rustic old man, who was celebrated for happiness. When he went out to day labor early in the morning, he was always singing as he went along the road. The country people used to

call it “*tooting* to himself.” Quietly he hummed a bit of a hymn wherever he was. When he used his spade or his hoe, he worked to the music of his heart and never murmured when in poverty, or became angry when held up to ridicule. I wish we were all as spiritually minded and as full of praise as he! Bless the Lord! Bless the Lord! When should we *not* bless Him? We will praise Him when our beds refresh us—blessed is He who kept the night watches. When we put on our clothes in the morning, we will bless His name for giving us food and raiment. When we sit down to break our fast, we will bless the love which has provided a table for us. When we go forth to our work, we will bless the Lord who gives us strength to labor. If we must lie at home sorely sick, with fierce pain or slow decay, let us praise Him who heals and sanctifies all our diseases! Let us endeavor to display the sweet spirit of thankfulness from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. Every moment may suggest a new verse of our life Psalm and cause us to magnify Him whose mercy endures forever!

Now, lastly, *why should we wear the garment of praise?* We should wear it as we wear other raiment, to keep us warm and comfortable, for there is no such vesture in the world as that of praise! It warms the inmost heart and sends a glow through the whole man. You may go to Nova Zembla and not freeze in such a robe! In the worst cases and in the most sorrowful plights, be you where you may, you are proof against outward circumstances when your whole being is enwrapped in praise! Wear it because it will comfort you. Wear it also because it will distinguish you from others. It will be livery to you and men will know whose servants you are. It will be a regimental dress and show to which army you belong. It will be a court dress and manifest to what dignity you have attained. So arrayed, you will bear the tokens of your Lord who often, in the days of His sorrow, lifted His eyes and heart to Heaven and thanked the great Father for His goodness!

May some poor burdened soul lose its heaviness while thinking over our text, and henceforth wear this kingly robe—the garment of praise! Amen.

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

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

CLEARING THE ROAD TO HEAVEN

NO. 1131

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

***“Gather out the stones.”
Isaiah 62:10.***

“GATHER out the stones”—that is to say, out of the King’s highway. Clear the road. Make room for coming sinners. Take away all stumbling blocks. Make the Gospel plain and simple and come to the help of those who find hindrances and impediments in their progress to the Savior. Such stones are there and Satan tries to increase their number. The Lord’s servants must gather them out. That is my object. I do not intend to attempt anything beyond that. I shall only try, with great simplicity of thought and speech, to deal with those things which prevent sinners from getting to Christ, for perhaps while we are trying to do this the Eternal Spirit may bring them to Jesus and they may find salvation on the spot. To that end let all who are already saved cry mightily to the Lord for His saving health and consoling Grace.

Beloved Friends, when poor souls are coming to Jesus they are generally, themselves, their own worst enemies. They have a singular ingenuity in finding out reasons why they should not be saved. A strange infatuation seems to possess them so that they ransack Heaven, earth and Hell to find discouragements. They become inventive of difficulties where difficulties are not and often the pastor, whose business it is to look after the little ones, finds himself, notwithstanding his former experience with persons of like character, utterly bewildered. He is often put to a nonplus with the strange and novel difficulties which awakened sinners will imagine and the reasons which they invent why they should not believe in Jesus Christ.

One would hardly think that the human mind could twist itself into such knots. So many sinners, so many new arguments—for each one has a logic of his own by which he labors to prove the impossibility of his own salvation. Upon consideration, this will not appear very remarkable, for they have long been living in sin and it is no wonder that when they begin to see aright they should be bewildered with fear. Who would not be full of fear if all of a sudden he saw Hell opening right under his feet? They have been eating nothing lately but unsatisfying husks which may nourish swine, but cannot support men. No wonder that they are very weak and scarcely can stagger towards the Father’s house! Poor souls, their hearts are in their mouths, for they cannot tell what is to come next—only a dreadful sound is in their ears, as of the destroying angel pursuing them with vengeance!

They know that God is angry with them and they do not yet understand His great love to penitent sinners. And so they are like men in an upper chamber who start up in the night when a cry of fire is raised—they know not which way to turn. Or I may compare them to mariners in great jeopardy at sea, when they reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man and are at their wit's end. I wonder not, I say, that they refuse the comforts which we offer them, for it is one of the effects and symptoms of great sickness that the patient refuses all manner of meat—he has lost his appetite—he is too ill to eat and his soul draws near unto the gates of death.

Moreover, in addition to fear and weakness, seeking sinners are generally the prey to severe assaults of the great enemy of souls. When Satan sees a soul coming to Christ, he hastens to aggravate that sinner's doubts and fears. He raises a double tempest in his spirit. It is "now or never" with the devil—he perceives that if he does not tear poor souls in pieces, now, and drive them to utter desperation—they will soon be in Christ's fold where he will never be able to touch them again. They are just escaping from the old slaveholder's hand and if he does not bring them back and chain them up with fresh irons he will lose his captives, for they will follow the Morning Star and enter the land of Liberty where his whip cannot reach them. Therefore he uses double craft and cruelty to oppress and puzzle poor seeking sinners. They are in a state of mind in which they are ready to believe anything which he will tell them, and therefore, upon this string the arch-deceiver plays right horribly.

What with a troubled conscience and with Satan, it is no wonder that the seeking sinner falls into a maze and scarcely knows which way to turn! He sees no ground for hope, but a thousand reasons for despair! It is therefore a holy and necessary work to endeavor to remove some of the stumbling blocks out of the poor beginner's way. When I have attempted this good work, I shall do far better still, for I shall point the coming sinner to Him who in His own Person has effectually removed every real stumbling block, so that there is nothing, now, that can keep a sinner from his God, if that sinner is but ready to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. First, then, by way of LIFTING SOME OF THE STONES OUT OF THE ROAD, let us begin with a very old and very common difficulty—I refer to the doctrine of Election. Many will say, "Perhaps I am not one of God's chosen. It may be that my name is not written in the Lamb's Book of Life." Unbelief hammers away at this! It is a favorite topic with doubters. And think not, my dear Friends, that I am about to attempt an explanation of the mysteries of predestination, or mean to deny the doctrine of Election for an instant! I believe the doctrine of Election to be as certainly true as the doctrine of the existence of God!

I am not about to attempt to clear up the metaphysical difficulties which could be suggested, world without end, by a subtle thinker. Those I leave to others and I wish them joy in their task. If I were to venture upon

such a labor I should only be like Sisyphus who rolled a stone uphill which always rolled down again. The difficulties about free agency and predestination have existed, do exist and will exist to the world's end—yes, and through eternity, too. Both facts are, to my mind, certain, but where they meet none knows but God, Himself. Here is the way John Bunyan met the difficulty in his, “Grace Abounding,” which book I earnestly recommend to every tempted soul. In that autobiography, which he entitles, “Grace Abounding,” he says that he was perplexed for many days together over the doctrine, till at last this thought came into his mind—Search in the Book of God and see whether ever there was a sinner that trusted in Jesus who was refused.

So the good man set to work and read the Book through from the first of Genesis to the last of Revelation, but he could not find an instance of a sinner that ever did come to Christ that was rejected because he was not elect. And the snare was broken, and he said, “I will go, even I. He will not reject me.” There is a practical, common sense way out of the difficulty. I know not any better way of practically treating the matter, than of saying, “I will go to Jesus because He bids me and because He has said, ‘Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.’ If I go to Him and He casts me out, then He has broken His promise. But that He can never do, so now I venture to rest upon His blood and leave my soul's salvation in His hands.”

In other matters you act so—when you are ill you do not know whether you are ordained to get well, but you send for the doctor. You cannot tell whether you are predestinated to be rich, but you endeavor to make money. You do not know whether you will live through the day, but you work to provide yourself with bread. Thus common sense cuts the knot which mere theory can never untie. Leave the subtleties of argument alone and act as sensible men. Go to Jesus and try whether He will reject you and you will be saved. Another difficulty which is very common is a deep sense of sin. In some persons, conviction of sin and terror concerning the wrath to come arise out of the recollection of one glaring sin. I have known persons more troubled about one atrocious offense than about all the transgressions of the rest of their lives! The one great blot has appeared to stare them in the face both day and night and to burn its way into their souls.

In others, however, it is the whole series of their iniquities, the indefinite but most crushing weight of a life of careless unbelief. They could not count their sins, they know that, and they do not try to do so. But all their sins together surround them like raging waves of the sea, or a pack of hungry wolves howling for their prey, or the dense clouds and fierce winds of a gathering tempest hastening to overwhelm a half-shipwrecked vessel. They can hardly conceive that salvation is possible in their case. Gave me your hand, my Brother, and let me say to you, Do you think Christ died on the Cross for nothing? There must have been some great reason for His being put to such a cruel and shameful death! That reason was *great sin*. If there had not been great sin there would not have been need of a great

Savior. Know assuredly that the Savior is greater than your sin and His merit is greater than your guilt—

***“If all the sins that men have done,
In will, in word, in thought, in deed,
Since worlds were made, or time begun,
Were laid on one poor sinner’s head,
The stream of Jesus’ precious blood,
Applied, removes the dreadful load.”***

If the blackest sinner outside the gates of Hell would believe in Jesus, in that moment all his sins would cease to be, for there is, and there must be an infinite efficacy in the blood of such an One as Jesus Christ, who “counted it not robbery to be equal with God.” Does the Son of God smart beneath the lash of Justice? Then, Beloved, that substitutionary suffering must have a merit in it which it is not in your power or mine to measure. Does sin trouble you? Then remember that it is written, “All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” Remember, this, again, “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” And hear, yet again, this Word, “Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

Do you know, I feel right happy to have to talk to you about this, and yet I feel a dart going through me lest I should not speak of it as I ought to do, for, oh, I would that poor troubled sinners would see that sin need not deter them from coming to a reconciled God! The blood of Jesus Christ has already removed from before the Throne of Justice all the transgressions of all those who come and rest in Jesus! If you believe in the Savior sent of God, your sin is already gone and you are accepted in the Beloved!

Another stone in the road, in the case of some, is a fear that the day of Grace has passed. Probably there may only be one or two in this place who have ever fallen under *that* trouble, but those one or two are precious and I must seek them. Read again Bunyan’s, “Grace Abounding,” and you will find him recording that he said to himself, “Oh, that I had given my heart to God seven years ago, but now it is certainly too late.” And then he remembered that there had been a large addition to the little Baptist Church at Bedford and he said to himself, “Now God has saved all the people He means to save in Bedford, and as for the poor tinker, He will never save him. My day of Grace is over.” I do not quite know where that notion of, “a day of Grace,” came from. I am not quite sure about the truth of that doctrine and if it means that any man who repents and believes will find it too late in this life, I deny it altogether!

But without controversy I will tell you one thing for certain—there never was a sinner that believed in Jesus who believed in Him too late for salvation! There never was a man in this world who cried to God for mercy through the blood of Jesus and who had for his answer, “Your day of Grace is past.” No such thing! How dare I say, how dare *any* man say that a fellow creature’s day of Grace is past? When the thief’s hands were nailed to the cross and the cross was lifted up, and he hung bleeding

there, soon to die, and to be devoured by the carrion crows, it did look as if his day of Grace were past and yet his day of Glory had dawned! For the Savior said, “*Today* shall you be with Me in Paradise.” The Lord’s Grace can come to a man at any time and at any hour! It is never too late to believe in Jesus!

Dear Heart, it is not too late for *you*. Do not believe the suggestion of Satan, but come, and welcome! Mercy’s gate is not shut. Mr. Bunyan escaped from that temptation by this excellent method—he read the Scriptures diligently, and he came upon that verse, (you remember hearing our friends, the Jubilee Singers, sing it), “Yet there is room!” “Oh!” thought he, “then my day of Grace is not past.” “Yet there is room.” Lay hold on that, I pray you—you who think your time of hope is over. “Yet there is room.”—

***“Don’t stay away,
Brothers, don’t stay away.
For the angel says
There’s room enough in
Heaven for you.”***

Let not the demon of unbelief tempt you to limit God’s mercy and set bounds to His power! Come and learn the infinite compassion of your gracious God!

Here and there I have met with persons who have stumbled at a very terrible stone in the road. It may never have occurred to some of you and I hope it never may, but it is this—they have a tendency to blasphemous thoughts. The more earnest a man is about religion the more likely he is to meet with this peculiar temptation, especially if there is some bodily disease about him. I should never have believed it if I had not experienced it—what intolerably wicked, atheistic and profane thoughts will come into the minds of pure-minded people—against their will and without their consent—to their utter horror and dismay! I can remember as a child hearing a man swear. I think it was the first time in my life I had heard such profanity and I felt as if I had been cut by a whip. It was the only word of blasphemy I think that had ever passed my ears, then, and yet, when I was under conviction of sin, seeking the Lord, thoughts that I dare not even think of, now, would thrust themselves upon me when I tried to get alone in prayer. And I rose astonished, as though I was scared from my knees.

When I attempted to cry for mercy there would be sure to come some hideous sentence which I had never heard from anyone else, and certainly thought I could never have invented in my heart, which would well near drive me from the Mercy Seat. Well, now, Beloved, it may be you cannot grapple with these thoughts, and I would advise you not to try. I believe they are works of Satan who is darting his thoughts into your soul in a secret manner. They are not thoughts of yours. They should lead you to go and tell Jesus Christ about it, but they should not drive you to despair. Tell the Lord that these thoughts, if they are yours, are hateful to you and pray Him to remove them. If they are not yours, but come from Satan, ask

Jesus to rebuke the evil spirit that you may have a little peace. And I will tell you another thing. If these thoughts *are* yours and you are guilty of them, do Christ the honor to believe that He can pardon even these, and throw yourself, with all the defilement of your thoughts, black as you are, right down at His feet and He will save you notwithstanding all.

A little sinner can, as it were, only give to Christ little glory by trusting Him. But, if you feel yourself the greatest of sinners, give Jesus the great glory of believing that His precious blood can cleanse you—that He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him! O Soul, let these blasphemous thoughts drive you to Jesus, and the devil will find that they do not answer his purpose and will cease to assail you with them. Stand at the foot of the Cross, and resolve never to depart from it, and Satan will depart from you. Another stone which frequently stumbles others is the need, or rather the absence, of anything like a horrible thought, or a terror, or an alarm. I have known some who have believed in Jesus Christ as soon as ever Christ has been preached to them and, consequently, they have found joy with but little difficulty. And then, a little while afterwards they have said, “this cannot be real conversion because I did not suffer the terrors and distresses which some others have experienced.”

There is a numerous class to whom we have preached Christ who have replied to all encouragements, “Oh, but we don’t feel the terrors of the Lord. We are not plunged in despair. We are not haunted with horrible forebodings and therefore we are not in the right road, and cannot expect to be saved.” Oh, my dear Friend, if you are allowed to come to Jesus without being so molested by the Evil One, do not fret about that, but rather rejoice! If you have not those horrors, be thankful you don’t! Be thankful to God that He brought you to Christ without your first having run into all excess of outward sin and wicked unbelief. Repentance of sin is necessary, but to doubt the mercy of God and to run into despair are *not* necessary—are even injurious and sinful.

Do you think that Christ needs the devil to prepare you for Him? Unbelief cannot conduce to salvation! If you do not happen to be hunted about by the hell hounds of remorse and despondency, you quite as much need the Good Shepherd and are quite as welcome to Him. There is no need to go round by Hell’s gate to get to Heaven! Trust in Jesus just as you are and you are saved. Those who have those dreadful thoughts would be glad enough to be rid of them—do not you be asking for needless vexations—but come to Jesus. Rest in His atoning blood just as you are and He will give you all that is necessary to fit you for His kingdom.

There are some, again, who are troubled because they think they have a lack of sensibility with regard to their sins. They argue thus—“I understand that whoever believes in Jesus shall be saved, but I must *feel* my sinfulness. I hear you, Sir, describe sometimes the deep contrition and brokenness of spirit which many have felt and I fear I have not felt anything of the kind. May I hope that Jesus is able to save me notwithstand-

ing my insensibility?” Our answer to that is that a broken heart is a gift of God’s Grace—it is not a ground or reason why Jesus Christ should save you—but it is a *part* of salvation. A man is saved by having his heart broken and being led to cast himself upon Jesus—and if you have not yet received this part of salvation, your business is to come to Jesus for it—not to stay away till you get it of yourself and then come to Christ with your feelings as a recommendation.

If you were to come to Jesus and say, “Lord, I have broken my heart down to the right state. Now I will believe that You can save me,” I think He would say to you, “If you have done so much, go and do the rest. If you can make yourself fit for Grace, go and make yourself fit for Glory.” No, but if you have not a broken heart, come to Jesus Christ for it—

**“True belief and true repentance,
Every Grace that brings you near,
Without money
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”**

You have not to do something for yourself and then look to Jesus for the rest. Shame upon you for thinking of such a thing! To melt your heart in the furnace of love is a *Divine* work and Christ must do it. Come, you stony-hearted Sinner, come with the flint and the granite still within you. Come, though you cannot feel, and believe that Christ can make you feel. Come, you who have been annealed like steel in the furnace of transgression and familiarity with sin. Come to Him, for He is able to give you a heart of flesh and take away your heart of stone. I am fully persuaded that those who mourn their need of *feeling* are the most feeling people in the world, but I will not dwell upon that truth. It is the greatest mistake for us to imagine that we are to make ourselves *feel* something and then Christ will save us. Feelings of contrition are as much His work as is the Atonement for the remission of sins. Christ is Alpha as well as Omega in salvation. You must begin with Him—and go on with Him, and end with Him if end there ever can be.

Now I hear another say, “Ah, but the stone in my road is that I cannot believe. I have not the faith I need to have.” Well, beloved Seeker, perhaps you have made a mistake about your faith. Do you think that you need to believe with full assurance before you can be saved? If so, listen. The smallest grain of saving faith will save a man. To embrace Christ in your arms like Simeon is a grand act for a full-grown saint, but to touch the hem of His garment is as surely saving as to embrace His Person. If you have faith but as a grain of mustard seed, God will recognize that faith and make it grow—and that faith will save you. It is not *quantity*, but *quality* that the Lord looks at. Do you believe in Jesus Christ? That is the point. For, remember, the whole of your salvation rests not on *your believing*, but on the *merits of Jesus Christ!*

Some sinners look too much to their own faith and not enough to the Object of their faith. Now, it is the Object of faith we should look to, and if we did, our faith would grow. You may look at faith till you think you have

none. But, on the other hand, you may look at Christ till you feel you cannot help believing in Him. How many a time in my little vestry behind there have I charged this Truth of God home upon those who have said they could not believe. I have said, "What cannot you believe? Cannot you believe God? Is He a liar?" "Ah!" say I to these enquirers, "suppose you said to me when I told you something, 'I can't believe you,' should I not at once say, 'Why not? What do you know of my character which leads you to think that I am untruthful?'"

And they say at once, "Oh, Sir, I should not say that to you. I should feel sure if you told me that you knew a thing to be true that it was so. I would believe you." "Well, then," I have said, "how dare you tell me you cannot believe Jesus Christ and cannot believe God the Eternal One! What reason on earth can there be why you should not believe God is speaking the Truth and believe what Jesus Christ says? We will not have it that you cannot believe." Awakened, quickened Sinner! At the same moment that God gave you spiritual life to feel that you were a sinner, He gave you the principle in which dwells power to believe in Jesus Christ, the sinner's Savior! And we charge you to exercise that power and to cast yourself, once and for all, upon the finished Sacrifice of Christ the Lord!

Again, we have heard persons say, "But I do not think I can be saved because I am not like So-and-So." Well, who is this So-and-So? "Why, my dear grandmother, who died so triumphantly." Ah, and you are a little babe and you expect to be like your grandmother? You are only just born into the heavenly life and yet you expect to know and to do all that an old experienced Christian would know and do? I am sure that no man who has planted an apple tree in his garden goes the next autumn and expects a crop of apples as if the trees had been in his orchard for 20 years. Besides, the Lord is not looking for fruit on you in order to recommend you to His mercy, nor ought you to be looking for it. Your fruit must grow on another tree, on that tree where the Savior died—from *Him* is your fruit found! You be content to *have* nothing good in yourself, and to *be* nothing good, but to take all your good from Jesus Christ!

"Ah," says one, "but you don't know how bad I am." No, nor yet do you. You are 10 times worse than you think you are. Yes, you are a *thousand* times worse than you think you are! You are so bad that you are good for nothing! You are neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill—but it is good-for-nothing people that Jesus Christ came to save! Not the worthy, the excellent, the valuable, but those that are humble in their own eyes—those who think themselves nothing and feel they never can be anything unless a miracle is worked for them. These are they whom the Lord loves to look upon. "He has put down the mighty from their seat, but He has exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich He has sent away empty." This is the way He always deals with men. The worse you feel yourself to be, the more you need God's mercy and the more likely you are to get it. Come and lay hold on Eternal Life by a simple faith in Jesus Christ. May the Spirit of God lead you to do so!

I will only speak once more about these difficulties. “Oh!” says one, “but I never have any joy and peace. And I hear those who are saved say they are so happy and so glad.” Ah, there is the door of the house of mercy wide open, and you are outside in the frost and snow. Inside that house—(there, can’t you see through that window pane?)—there are happy children sitting round a fire and they are singing merrily as they eat their evening meal. And you stand out in the cold, and you murmur, “How can I ever enter? I am so cold. I am shivering in this winter’s blast. They are so happy in there. How can I be one of the family and yet stand shivering here?”

Now, you need not ask that question. There is the door and it stands wide open. When Christ’s hands were nailed, He set that door wide open and the devil cannot shut it. And if you enter in you shall have the same joy as those who are sheltered within. But if you stand outside and expect to get the warmth enjoyed by those within—and hope to sing their cheerful song in the cold—you are greatly mistaken. You shall receive the joy when you exercise the faith! Oh, believe in Jesus, or, in other words, trust in Him! That is the Grace which enters in by the door and participates in the blessings of mercy. Trust in Him wholly, solely, entirely and in Him, alone, and, “being justified by faith,” you shall “have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The Lord grant it and He shall have the praise!

One of our friends at the Prayer Meeting prayed that I might give God’s people, this morning, a thick slice such as he gave his hungry children. Now that was a very quaint and suggestive prayer, and I sometimes try to act up to it. But tonight I have been trying to cut a *thin* slice because I have sometime heard of schools where the slice was too thick for the children’s mouths. And therefore I have tried to cut mine thin, that if there is a babe here, he might be able to feed, too. I would even crumb down the subject and mix it with the milk of the Word that it might suit those who cannot feed upon strong meat as yet. My anxious prayer is that the Holy Spirit may help the weaklings to feed and be glad!

II. But I said that in the second part I would do better than remove the stones, and so I will, for I will POINT YOU TO HIM WHO IS “THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE” who has *already* cleared the stumbling blocks out of the road! Traveler to Heaven, Pilgrim of the night, cast your eyes upon the Captain of our salvation, even Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Son of God, and see how He has cast up the highway in the desert and prepared a path through the wilderness! Looking unto Him, the crooked will grow straight and the rough places plain. And you shall see the salvation of God!

Let me ask you to look at Him, first, as He was on earth, the Son of Man. In order that men should be saved, it was necessary that God, Himself, should take into union with His Godhead the nature of the poor, feeble creature called man. Now, I must confess that had I never known by Revelation that the mysterious, Divine, Omnipotent Spirit who made all

things, did actually alight upon this earth and take to Himself a body of flesh and blood—had I never known it by Revelation, I could never have imagined it possible! It would never have crossed my mind! But now I *do* know it, and am sure of it, and it still utterly astounds me! The angels, when they saw God in human flesh, wondered, (it is a mystery that He was seen of angels), and they have never left off wondering since.

Sinner, in order that *you* might be saved, God must dwell here in human flesh! He has been here! He has been here! He has been here! The fact is as certain as it is strange! He nursed on a woman's breast at Bethlehem. He was swaddled as other babes have been. God has been with us! As Man He worked in a carpenter's shop! He has been here! He ate and drank among men and slept and suffered as men do! He has been here! God has become Man to save sinners! Is anything impossible after that? It was necessary that Jesus Christ should abide here for a while, should work miracles of love. We read some of them just now in the lesson of the evening. He healed the sick. He opened blind eyes. He raised the dead. Yes, the Savior has been here and raised the dead! Can He not raise you? He has not lost His power. If anything, He is greater, now, in Heaven than He was here below.

Can He not open those eyes of yours and those ears of yours, and unloose that stammering tongue of yours and make your lameness to depart till you leap like a hart? Yes, He can do it, can do it tonight! And from that pew, though you came into it heavy-laden, you will, I hope, go out like one who is ready to dance for ecstasy, because you will cry, "The Lord Jesus has saved me, even me!" I say that Christ Incarnate and Christ working on earth are two grand sights, or they are two phases of the same glorious sight—and they take away the stones out of a sinner's pathway! But ah, Beloved, I want you, most of all, to give the eyes of your heart to the strangest sight of all. It was necessary, before you could be saved, that in the Person of Man, the Son of God should die!

I can conceive Him *living* on earth, but who shall conceive Him *dying*? God was in Christ as He died upon the accursed tree! He who spread the heavens and made the earth, and piled the mountains—He was here, here in the form of man—and the soldiers came and seized Him in the garden as though He had been a thief! And they took Him away to Pilate's Hall and there they scourged Him! There they spit in His face! There they crowned Him with a crown of thorns and then condemned Him to bear His Cross. They hounded Him—Him, the Eternal God, I say, in human flesh! They hounded Him along Jerusalem's streets, then flung Him down upon His back upon the transverse wood and drove cruel nails through His blessed and tender hands and feet!

Then they lifted up the Cross and dashed it into its socket in the earth till all His bones were dislocated and He cried, "I am poured out like water: all My bones are out of joint." It was He who but a little while before had heard the songs of angels and at whose feet the seraphim and cherubim adored. He, on that bloody tree, was fastened and lifted up. And there

He died in infinite agonies—it is not possible to describe them, for none know their terror. God forsook Him! His Father turned away His face and in the bitterness of His anguish He cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Thus on the tree He died and in that death He took the punishment due on account of the sin of all who shall believe on Him. He suffered in their place an equivalent for all that they would have had to suffer had they been cast into the pit of Hell.

This being done, salvation is not only possible, but it is achieved! Believe in it, Sinner! What stone remains, now that Jesus has died? God has made Atonement—the eternal God, Himself, has put away human sin! Why do you doubt? Come, I say, hasten to the Cross! Gaze upon this wondrous spectacle of Divine Love—and as you gaze you shall live—for “there is life in a look” at Jesus—life for everyone who rests in Him! But I want you to see a lovelier sight than this. The other is Divinely encouraging, but this is more encouraging, still. Look there! Look there! There is the sepulcher where He lay! They took Him from the Cross. They wrapped Him in spices and fine linen, and they laid Him there. Look there! Christ is not there, the tomb is empty! There is the napkin. There are the grave clothes, but He is not there! Where is He?

Why, He has come forth in the full glory of Resurrection and is saying to the women, “Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended.” He died for human guilt, but He lives, again, for the justification of His people! Why does He live? It is because no human guilt remains to keep Him as a hostage in the grave! All the guilt which He took upon Himself, He has put away. He has buried it—it is gone! It went from *us* when He died—it has gone from Him now that He has risen! The risen Lord has “finished transgression, made an end of sin and brought in everlasting righteousness.” Who would not believe in a risen Christ? If God has set my Surety free, I am sure that I am clear! If Christ laid as a Hostage for my sins in the cold prison of Joseph of Arimathea’s tomb, I bless Him for it. But when I see Him set free, I bless Him yet more, for I know that my sins are gone! There remains no wreck or relic of them—

***“Covered is my unrighteousness,
From condemnation I am free,”***

for Christ has risen from the dead! O, Sinner, I pray God to lead you sweetly to read the mystery of the Resurrection and to give you peace tonight.

But this is not all. Now lift up your eyes away from the garden, to the top of Olivet, and away from the top of Olivet, for, lo, He mounts the skies! His disciples gaze and as they gaze, He ascends. He rises higher and higher, till a cloud receives Him out of their sight. But though that cloud has come between us, faith’s eyes can pierce it, and we can see the angels meeting Him on the way—

***“They brought His chariot from on high
To bear Him to His Throne,
Clapped their triumphant wings, and cried,
‘The glorious work is done!’***

***'Hail! Prince,' they cry, 'forever hail,
Whose unexampled love
Moved You to quit these glorious realms,
And royalties above.'*** ”

Don't you hear their song as they approach the golden gates of the New Jerusalem? They sing, "Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in!" Can you hear the watchers from above the gate as they challenge the cavalcade, "Who is the King of Glory?" Can you hear, yet again, the song of those who answer, "Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in!"

He enters! His Father receives Him. "Well done," He says, "well done." He sits at His Father's right hand, for His life-work is finished. No more Sacrifice is needed! No other will ever be offered! But while He sits there, mark what He does—He intercedes. He pleads! He pleads! And for whom does He plead? For sinners bought with His blood! He pleads for all that come to God by Him—for *you*, if now you trust Him. You blackest sinner out of Hell—He pleads for *you*, if you trust Him! Utterly lost, ruined, condemned, dissolute, debauched as you may have been, yes, all but damned—but if you will trust Him, there is Infinite Mercy in His heart and in His plea there is Infinite Power! Oh, that I knew how to preach the Gospel! Oh, for a great trumpet to blow such a blast that every ear should hear it!

Oh, will you reject Christ? I pray you may not! At your peril you will do it! If I were called, at this moment, from this pulpit to the bar of God, I could dare to say that I have *tried* to tell you all the comforting Truths that I know about my Master. If I could weep you to the Savior, I would do it! If my arms about your necks would bring you to His feet, I would be glad, my Brothers and Sisters, to try the affectionate embrace! But what more can a mortal do? Do you reject my Master, or will you receive Him? I would do as the Roman ambassadors did to the eastern king, when they made a ring in the sand, and said, "Pass that ring, and you proclaim war, or you make peace. You must stand and decide within that circle."

I draw such a circle around you tonight and say, "Do not stir from that pew till Christ or sin, Heaven or Hell, faith or unbelief, is chosen by you." And may the Holy Spirit help you to such a gracious decision that you may say, "I will believe! Lord, help my unbelief! I cast myself now, whether I am saved or lost, upon the finished work of the risen Lord." The Lord grant it, for Jesus' sake. Amen!

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Mark 5:25-34; 7:24-30; 10:46-52.**

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WHO IS THIS? NO. 1947

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 13, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Behold, the Lord has proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say you to the daughter of Zion, Behold, your salvation comes; behold, His reward is with Him and His work before Him. And they shall call them, The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord, and you shall be called, Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken. Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This One who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength? I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.”
Isaiah 62:11,12; 63:1.***

ISRAEL was often in great trouble, frequently oppressed by neighboring nations. It would not have been so if they had been faithful to Jehovah. But as a chastisement for their idolatry, they were given over into the hands of adversaries. One nation, near akin to them, was very jealous of them. The Edomites, the seed of Esau, were always watching against Israel and whenever the nation fell on evil times and powerful kingdoms invaded them, Edom was always in alliance with the enemy, ready to profit by Israel's sorrows. Hence Edom was the typical adversary of Israel and is, in that manner, mentioned here with Bozrah, its capital city.

The Lord God of Israel often interposed to rescue His people. I need not go over the history, but any one of these appearances for the overthrow of Israel's enemies may be represented in the language now before us in the commencement of the 63rd Chapter. God coming forth in the glory of His strength overthrows Israel's enemies and is seen in vision returning from their slaughter. I take the text as a representation of those marvelous victories which the Lord worked for His chosen people when He put forth His power on their behalf. The first verse represents the astonishment of the Prophet and of the people, as they beheld the Lord glorious in power, when He had vindicated the cause of His oppressed people and had crushed the power of their adversaries.

As in God's immediate dealings with men we usually see the Son of God most manifest, this passage may fitly represent the glorious appearances of our Lord Jesus Christ whenever He has come forth to vindicate the cause of His people and to overthrow their enemies. This vision will be astoundingly fulfilled in the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The 14th and 19th Chapters of the Book of Revelation give us parallel passages to this. What astonishment there will be among the sons of men when He shall appear in His vesture dipped in blood, smiting the nations with His iron

rod—yes, dashing them in pieces as potters' vessels! In those last tremendous times, when the day of vengeance shall have arrived, then shall the winepress be trod outside the city, even the great winepress of the wrath of God. No tongue can fully tell the terrors of that day when our Lord shall say, "Ah, I will ease Myself of My adversaries." While He shall give victory to the cause of peace, purity, truth, righteousness—and shall save all those who believe in Him, He shall bruise Satan under His feet, and crush the powers of darkness. Then shall these words of the Prophet be more fully understood—"Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This One who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?"

The commentators and expositors almost universally deny that this text may be used as referring to our Lord's passion. They tell us that to do so would be to wrest the Scripture from its obvious meaning and, at any rate, at the best, it would be a mere accommodation of the passage. Now, I take up the gage of battle and deny the assertion! The Church, by a holy instinct, has referred the passage to our Lord's First, as well as His Second Coming, and she has not been in error. The very first reference of this text is to the Lord's passion in its spiritual aspect as a battle against the enemies of our souls. I grant you that the text does not speak of our Lord as trampled upon and crushed in the winepress—and the blood which stains His garments is not said to be His own blood, but that of His foes. Such a representation might have been expected had it been the Prophet's design to describe the sufferings of our Lord. He does not describe the sufferings, themselves, but he does most clearly depict their grand result. If we take a deeply spiritual sight of our Lord's passion, such as a Prophet would be likely to have before him in vision, we see upon His garments, as the result of His sufferings, not so much His own blood as the blood of the enemies whom in death He overthrew.

The passage is poetical. The battle is a *spiritual* one. The conflict is with sin and with the powers of darkness. And the Conqueror returns from the fight having utterly destroyed His foes, of which His blood-dyed garments are the surest evidence. Our Lord's passion was the battle of all battles, upon which the whole campaign of His life turned—and had He not then and there vanquished all our adversaries and had He not at the Resurrection come back as One who had trampled down all His foes—then there had been no glorious appearing in the latter days! That first combat is the cause of the ultimate triumph! I look upon this 63rd Chapter of Isaiah as the prophetic statement of the event described by Paul in Colossians 2:15—"And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." On the Resurrection morning it would have been poetically correct to have used the language of our text. Unseen spirits, viewing our Lord after a spiritual manner, might have exclaimed as they beheld the risen Savior—

***"Who is this that comes from Edom,
All His raiment stained with blood?
To the slave proclaiming freedom;
Bringing and bestowing good?
Glorious in the garb He wears,***

Glorious in the spoils He bears?

I mean so to use the passage, this morning, with a consciousness that I am not accommodating it, nor taking it from its natural sense at all, but rather placing it in the light of its first great fulfillment. I have not concealed from you its relation to the Second Advent, when the Lord Jesus shall appear in victory, “clothed with a vesture dipped in blood.” But, at the same time, this is a picture of *salvation* rather than destruction, and its Hero appears as “mighty to save,” in fulfillment of a Divine proclamation, “Behold, your salvation comes.” The scene before us describes an interposition of the Messiah—the return of the Divinely appointed Champion from the defeat of His enemies. It is evidently a picture of salvation rather than of damnation, as the main feature in it is that He is mighty to save. The great and chief element of the whole thing is that the year of His redeemed is come and that the Warrior’s own arm has brought salvation to His people! Therefore I cannot, for a moment, question that this text is applicable to the *first coming* of Christ. Then He did battle with the hosts of sin and death and Hell—and so vanquished them that in His Resurrection He returned with the keys of death and of Hell at His belt! Then was He seen as “mighty to save.” Now lend me your hearts as well as your ears while I proceed to the great subject before us—and may the Holy Spirit grant us His gracious aid!

I. First, in my text there is A PROCLAMATION—“Behold, the Lord has proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say you to the daughter of Zion, Behold, your salvation comes; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. And they shall call them, The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord: and you shall be called, Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.” The commentators as a whole can see no connection between the 63rd Chapter and the preceding part of the Book of Isaiah, but surely that connection is plain enough to the common reader! In these verses the coming of the Savior is proclaimed and in the next chapter that coming is seen in vision—and the evangelical Prophet beholds the Savior so vividly that He is startled and enquires, “Who is this?”

Let us consider this proclamation broadly, for we have no time to dwell upon its details. I desire to apply its spiritual lessons as I go on, aiming chiefly at the comfort of those who are in soul trouble. Are any of you oppressed with a sense of sin? Do you see sin to be an enemy too powerful for you to overcome? Are you unable to escape out of the hand of the enemy? Here is a proclamation! God the Ever-Gracious One, demands your attention while, as a King, He proclaims His word of mercy to the daughter of Zion—“Behold, your salvation comes!”

This great announcement tells you that *there is a salvation from outside*. Within your heart there is nothing that can save you—all within you is carnal, sold under sin. Out of bondage only bondage can arise. The proclamation is, “Behold, your salvation comes!” It comes to you from a source beyond yourself. It does not arise from within you, for it could not do so. Salvation comes from God, Himself! What a blessing, that when there was no salvation in you, nor the possibility of its coming from within, it came from above! Salvation comes not from man’s will, or merit,

or efforts! “Salvation is of the Lord.” “It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.” O Soul, if the Lord God comes to save you, Edom and Bozrah, sin and Hell will soon be broken in pieces! The power of your sins and the tyranny of your sinful habits; the cords of your companionships; the bondage of Satan himself must speedily yield when salvation comes from the Eternal Throne and the Mighty One of Israel hastens to the rescue!

It is a salvation which comes through a Person. “Your salvation comes—behold, His reward is with Him and His work before Him.” The great salvation which we have to proclaim is salvation by Jesus Christ, the Son of God! Jesus of Nazareth, who died on the Cross, is also the Son of the Highest. God has set Him forth to be the Propitiation for sin, to be the Deliverer of mankind from the bondage of evil. Behold Him, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! Behold Him, the Beloved of the Father! Power to save unto the uttermost is laid upon Him. He is a Savior and a great one. Remember this and do not look to rites and ceremonies, or to creeds and doctrines, but to the Person of Jesus, who is God and Man. Simeon said, when he beheld our Lord as a Babe, “My eyes have seen Your salvation”—truly we may say the same with emphasis when we see Him in His Resurrection!

This salvation leads to holiness, for the text says of those who receive the Savior, “They shall call them, The Holy People.” If, dear Friend, you are to be saved, you are also to be *sanctified*. Indeed, that sanctification is the *essence* of salvation! This will give you great joy, I know, for no man really desires salvation—rightly understanding what he desires, without meaning by it that he may be saved from the power of sin and may no longer be in servitude to his own lusts—or to the wicked customs of the world. Sinners, rejoice! The great Jehovah proclaims to you a salvation which shall so purify you that you shall be saved from your sins and shall be called, “The Holy People.” Is not that the best news you have ever heard?

Further, *it is salvation by redemption,* for it is written that they shall be called, “The Redeemed of the Lord.” In the sacred Scriptures there is no salvation for men except by redemption. You have enslaved yourselves and your heritage is under bond and, therefore, you and it must be ransomed. Behold, your Redeemer pays your ransom! His own heart’s blood, Messiah pours forth, that men who have been enslaved may be set free! Redemption by Substitution is the Gospel! Christ stands in your place, a sufferer because of your sins—you are set in Christ’s place—rewarded because of His righteousness, accepted because of His acceptableness with God! This is a sure and satisfactory salvation—a salvation which satisfies the conscience of man as well as the justice of God. This salvation is to you without money and without price, but it cost the Redeemer nothing less than Himself! Behold in Him the ransom paid in full, so that He bids you go free! He says, “Fear not, for I have redeemed you.” Tell it out among the heathen, tell it out among the fallen, that there is salvation, salvation by a great redemption, full and free! All that lost ones have to do is joyfully accept the purchased freedom and go forth in joy and peace!

This salvation is complete. “You shall be called, Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.” See the beginning of it—“You shall be called, Sought Out”? See the end of it—you shall be called, “Not Forsaken”? You will not begin with God, but God will begin with you! You shall be sought out and *then* you will seek Him. He seeks you even now. You shall be known as one that was sought out, a sheep that wandered, a piece of money that fell into the dust, but, behold, you are sought out till the Savior says, “Rejoice with Me; for I have found My sheep which was lost.” This is the gracious beginning of salvation!

But suppose the Lord found you and then left you? You would perish. But it shall not be so, for the same Lord who calls you, “Sought Out,” also calls you, “Not Forsaken.” You shall never be forsaken of the Grace of God, nor of the God of Grace! Whatever you may be, notwithstanding your weakness and your waywardness, you shall be known in Heaven by these two names—first, that you were, “Sought Out,” and next, that you were, “Not Forsaken.” It makes my eyes sparkle with delight to think how fully those two names describe myself! I delight to sing—

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

Equally true is that other word, “Not Forsaken.” Notwithstanding all my provocations and rebellions, I believe in Him who has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” I shall not die but live because He is with me!

This salvation which we have to proclaim to you, then, is one that comes to you who lie despairing at Hell’s dark door. You shall be sought out according to the Sovereign Grace of God. Jesus comes to you when you are afraid to come to Him. You fear that if you were to commence the march to Heaven, you would faint by the way, but He who travels in the greatness of His strength comes that you may lean on Him. You that are smitten with faintness of heart because you know your own weakness and changeableness—you shall be helped and sustained to the end! He that begins the good work of Grace in the heart is no changeling—He will carry it on and carry it out to the praise of the Glory of His Grace. Oh, this is worth proclaiming! Oh, for a silver trumpet with which to blow a blast that might awaken all who slumber! There is salvation! Salvation by a glorious Person! Salvation unto holiness! Salvation by redemption—a salvation so perfect that those who receive it shall never be forsaken!

O dear Hearer, do you not wish to have this salvation? Do you not desire to obtain it at once? If you do, I beg you to follow me, now, while I direct you to Him who is the Salvation of His people! While we fix our eyes upon the glorious Person raised up and upheld by God, by whom this salvation is brought to the sons of men, I pray that you may believe in Him unto eternal life!

II. To introduce this Person, I now come to consider THE QUESTION—“Who is this that comes from Edom?” The Prophet beholds in vision the Captain of salvation, returning from battle, arrayed like the warriors of whom we read, “the valiant men are in scarlet.” He beholds the majestic march of this mighty Conqueror and he cries, “Who is this?” Now when a

soul first hears the proclamation of God's salvation and then sees Jesus coming to him, he asks, "Who is this?" *The question, in part, arises from anxiety*, as if he asked, "Who is this that espouses my cause? Is He able to save? Has He really conquered my enemies?" The heart enquires, "You preach to me a Savior, but what sort of a Savior is He? Is He able? Is He willing? Is He tender? Is He strong?" What *you* are, dear Friend, is easily told, for you are lost and ruined—the great question you need to consider is—Who is *He* that comes to save you? And you may well, with anxiety, ask the question, because it concerns your own personal welfare—"Is He such a Savior as will be able to save *me*?"

The question arose from anxiety, but *it also indicates ignorance*. We do not, any of us, know our Lord Jesus to the fullest. "Who is this?" is a question we may still put to the sacred Oracle. Paul, after He had known Christ 15 years, yet desired that He might know Him, for His love passes knowledge. If this passage refers to our Savior's Resurrection, it is a remarkable Truth that even His disciples did not know Him when He had arisen. Launcelot Andrewes, in a famous sermon on this text, enlarges on this point and I am content to borrow from him. Magdalene, of all the women in the world, ought to have known Him, but she supposed Him to be the *gardener*.

The two disciples that walked with Him to Emmaus were with Him long enough to have spied Him out and yet in all that long walk they did not know Him! Are you amazed that they did not discern their Lord? Would it have been a marvel had they said, "Who is this? Behold Him traveling in the greatness of His strength and yet a few hours ago we saw Him dead, and helped to lay His lifeless body in Joseph's tomb! Who is this? We saw Him stripped! They took His garments from Him on the Cross and now He is 'glorious in His apparel.' Who is this? His enemies made nothing of Him. they spat in His face, they nailed Him to the tree, but, lo, His garments are dyed with the blood of His foes and He comes back more than conqueror! Who is this?" I do not wonder that when the Person of Christ first flashes on the sinner's eyes, he thinks to himself—He was once a Babe at Bethlehem, a weary Man before His foes, scourged, spat upon—is this the Savior? And does He come to me and proposes that I should put my trust in Him as having overthrown all my adversaries? "Who is this?"

As the sinner looks, and looks again, he cries, "Who is this?" *in delighted amazement*. Is it, indeed, the Son of God? Does He intervene to save me? The God whom I offended, does He stoop to fight and rout my sins? He without whom was not anything made, Heaven's Darling and the delight of angels, can it be He? The soul is astonished and scarcely believes for joy. Yet, Beloved, it is even He. This same Jesus is both Lord and God! When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and made an open show of His vanquished foes. He nailed the handwriting of ordinances that was against us to His Cross. He broke the head of the serpent and destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. How could He be less than God? It is He and none other than He—God over all, blessed forever, who took upon Himself the form of a Servant and was made in the likeness of men and became obedient to death—even the

death of the Cross! It is He whom God has highly exalted and given Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow! No wonder that the soul enquires, "Who is this?"

I think *the question is asked, also, by way of adoration*. Such a question is elsewhere so used. Here is an instance—"Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?" So that, as the soul begins to see Jesus, its anxiety is removed by knowledge and is replaced by an astonishment which ripens into worship. Adoringly the spirit cries, "Who is this?" What a Savior I have! How could it have come about that He should die for *me*? What a Savior is He in His death! What a Savior in His rising again! What a Savior in His ascension up to Heaven! What a Savior in His enthronement! What a Savior in His glorious Advent when He shall come to gather together His own! Who is this? We are lost in wonder as we bow before the infinite Majesty of the Son of God and adore Him as God, our Savior, forever and ever.

It appears from the question that the person asking it knows from where the Conqueror came, for it is written, "Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" Yes, our Redeemer has returned from *death*, as said the Psalmist, "You will not leave My soul in Hell, neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption." He came again from the land of the enemy. He died and descended into the regions of the dead, but He loosed the bands of death, for He could not be held by them. He went forth to fight with all the adversaries of our souls, even with all the powers of darkness! It was a terrible battle. How thick and fast the shafts flew at the commencement of the fight! Our Hero soon knew the garments rolled in blood, for He became covered with a bloody sweat. He flinched not from the horrible conflict, although His body had become one bleeding wound. How sharp were the swords that wounded Him when His friends proved cowards and one of them betrayed Him!

How terrible were the blades that sheathed themselves in His body and mind! They pierced His hands and His feet. They laid open His very heart. His head was bleeding with the thorns and His back with the knotted scourges, but He ceased not to grapple with the evil powers. He said, "This is your hour," and full well He found it so. He had in the midst of the fight to groan as well as sweat that cry forced from Him, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" But quickly followed the victorious shout of, "It is finished," and then and there He hurled His tremendous adversary headlong, crushed his head and left him fallen, no more to rise!—

***"'Tis finished,' said His dying breath
And shook the gates of Hell."***

As on this Resurrection Day we see our Lord come back to us, we perceive His garments sprinkled with the blood of all who fought against us. I beseech you to lay hold of this and trust my blessed Lord, for He has fought with all the enemies of our souls and He has returned from the enemy's country, leading captivity captive. We may look at Him this day right trustfully, for His fight is over and His enemies are crushed as grapes in

the winepress. We not only trust our Lord, but we worship Him this day as King of Kings and Lord of Lords—

***“Bruised is the serpent’s head,
Hell is vanquished, death is dead,
And to Christ gone up on high,
Captive is captivity. Alleluia!”***

Next, notice that the Prophet in vision observes the color of the Conqueror’s garments—“Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?” Red is not Christ’s color, therefore the question arises, “Why are You red in Your apparel?” Our Beloved’s garments are whiter than any fuller can make them. The glory of His purity is such that we say to ourselves, “Red—why, that is the color of Edom, the adversary! Red, that is the color of the earth of our manhood! Red is the color of our scarlet sins.” Why is He red? Brothers and Sisters, although the text treats of the blood of His adversaries, yet I would have you devoutly think of our Lord literally as shedding His own blood, for His victory was thus accomplished. The text sets forth the result of that blood-shedding in the overthrow of His enemies and ours—but we cannot separate the effect from the cause. As a matter of fact, when our Lord’s own blood was shed, sin and death and Hell were trod down and destroyed as grapes in the winepress.

When He was suffering, He was then smiting down His enemies. By the shedding of His own blood He was shedding the blood of His foes! The life of the powers of darkness was taken away by His death. When I see Jesus coming back, literally covered with His own blood, I discern Him spiritually as encrimsoned with the slaughter of evil and its abettors. Glory be to His name! I shall never cease to look upon my Lord in the red colors as in the prime of His beauty. The blood-red colors are the colors of victory! He never looks so lovely as when He appears as “a Lamb that has been slain.” I remember how Rutherford seems to glow and burn when, in his prose poetry, he talks of “the bonnie red man.” That crimson vest is His most royal garment! He has taken away all our transgressions and iniquities—and covered all our scarlet sins—and we see the blood of them in His blood.

Glory be to the bleeding Christ, I say! If there is one hallelujah louder than any other, let it be unto Him who wears the vesture dipped in blood! His own blood is the token and proof that the blood of all His spiritual foes has been shed. Our warfare is accomplished and our sin is pardoned! Behold the colors of Atonement, for they are the ensigns of eternal victory—

***“Why that blood His raiment staining?
‘Tis the blood of many slain;
Of His foes there’s none remaining,
None the contest to maintain!
Fallen they are no more to rise;
All their glory prostrate lies.”***

But yet the question comes from one who perceives that the Conqueror is royally arrayed. “This that is glorious in His apparel.” O dear Hearers, the Jesus we have to preach to you is no mean Savior! He is clothed with glory and honor because of the suffering of death. He wears, today, a

greater splendor than adorned the sons of Aaron—our great High Priest has put on all His jewels! He also wears the majesty of His kingship—“On His head are many crowns.” He is, this day, arrayed in light and glory. His majesty is too bright for mortal eyes to gaze upon. When the beloved John beheld Him, he fell at His feet as dead. He is “glorious in His apparel.”

The question ends with “traveling in the greatness of His strength.” He did not come back from slaughtering our enemies feeble and wounded, but He returned in majestic march, like a victor who would have all men know that his force is irresistible. The earth shook beneath our Lord’s feet on the Resurrection morning, for “there was a great earthquake.” The Roman guards became as dead men at His appearing! Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ is no petty, puny Savior. He is traveling to meet poor sinners, but He is traveling in the greatness of His strength. “All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth” He said. As He travels through the nations, it is as a strong man against whom none can stand, mighty to rescue every soul that puts its trust in Him.

There is the question. I leave it with you, praying that every soul here that is oppressed by the powers of Hell may ask the question, “Who is this that comes from Edom?”

III. Thirdly, let us consider THE ANSWER. Upon this I must be brief.

No one can answer for Jesus—*He must speak for Himself.* Like the sun, He can only be seen by His own light. He is His own interpreter. Not even the angels could explain the Savior—they get no further than desiring to look into the things which are in Him. He Himself answers the question, “Who is this?” His personality comes out—“I, the Lord Jesus. It is none other than Myself who has come forth to overthrow the adversary.” The speaker was too modest to ask the mighty Savior who He was, but that Savior was not too lofty to give Him the information which was desired. O poor Heart! Jesus will show Himself to you if you desire to know Him! He will come near to you when you dare not come near to Him. In His own light you will see Him—and if you are bewildered and befogged, but yet truly anxious—He will manifest Himself to you in His great love and say to you, “It is I; be not afraid.”

The answer which our Lord gives is twofold. He describes Himself first as a *speaker*—“I that speak in righteousness.” Is He not the Word? Every Word that Christ speaks is true—He speaks not in falsehood, but in righteousness. The Gospel which He proclaims is a just and righteous one, meeting both the claims of God and the demands of conscience. O Soul, if you will listen to Jesus you shall hear that from Him which you could never hear from any other lips! “Never man spoke like this Man.” He will speak of God’s holiness and yet He will speak to your comfort. He will reveal God’s justice and yet God’s love to you. Oh, hear what the Christ has to say and believe every word of it without a quibble, for therein lies salvation! “Hear, and your soul shall live.”

Our Lord also describes Himself as a *Savior*—“I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” Now, observe that the word, “mighty,” is joined with His *saving* and not with His destroying. Although He can crush His foes as easily as a man can crush with His feet the berries of the grape,

the Prophet does not speak of Him as, "mighty to tread down His enemies." He will prove Himself thus mighty in that day of vengeance which is in His heart, but just now He reveals Himself in the year of His redeemed as, "mighty to save." Rejoice in this, O my Hearers! The Lord Jesus Christ is a Savior and He is grand in that capacity. Nothing is beyond His power in the line of salvation! He says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." There is no manner of sin which He cannot forgive! There is no sort of hardness of heart which He cannot remove! There are no spiritual difficulties which He cannot surmount! "His reward is with Him and His work before Him." "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged."

Oh that He stood here this morning instead of me! I do but prattle concerning Him and yet it is the best that I can do. If you use the eyes of faith, my Lord, who has overcome the foes of His redeemed, stands before you today! And if you ask who He is, He proclaims Himself, for He would have you know Him. To know Jesus is the first, the chief, the highest piece of human knowledge! He is your Teacher and this is your lesson. He answers the question of the prophetic catechism and when it is asked, "Who is this?" He replies, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Fall at His feet and love and adore Him this day—and then your Heaven shall begin below!

Thus have we gone through the text in a very poor and hurried way, for I need just a few minutes to make practical use of the subject before I send you away.

May the Holy Spirit now apply the Truth with power! Poor troubled one! Your sins are many and they grievously oppress you. You see no hope of escape from the justice of God, or from the power of evil within your nature. Listen to the proclamation, as I dwell upon it again. "Behold, your salvation comes." Jesus can save you, for He is "mighty to save"!

He can save *you* for He has saved others like you. He has, these many years, kept His hands at this work. Your case will not perplex Him! He is at home at the business of saving sinners. The chief of sinners was saved long ago and if the chief, then you, although you may be the next greatest, can be saved! Jesus has never been put to a nonplus yet. He that conquered Edom and Bozrah; He that led captivity captive and vanquished all the hosts of Hell shall never be defeated! Do not tell me that His arm is shortened, that He cannot save. He can save *you*, you who now desire to be made holy. You with the hard heart, who desire to have it softened, He can do the mighty deed! He can raise the spiritually dead and even restore those who have become corrupt. He can do it, though nobody else can.

He can overthrow all your enemies. Satan has you now in his grasp and you are not able to war with him. One evil passion or another binds you. You seem watched like Peter in prison and bound even as he was, but He who loosed Peter can release you. Jesus can say to the prisoners, "Go forth," and forth they shall go! There is no temptation, no sin, no infernal influence from which He cannot rescue His chosen. He is so mighty to save that He can deliver every soul that trusts in Him, however great its extremity. Leave your enemies to Jesus! They baffle you, but He can rout

them. His garment is already dyed with their blood, therefore be not afraid!

He can do this alone. If you trust Jesus and none but Jesus, you have an all-sufficient salvation. "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Me." "I looked, and there was none to help; I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore My own arm brought salvation unto me." Poor Sinner! Hang on to Jesus and His one salvation! If you have no other sort of hope. If you can see no good thing in yourself. If your prayers die on your lips. If you cannot weep, if you cannot feel, if you have not even so much as a jot of anything that is commendable about you—still cling to Jesus—only to Jesus! The great battle of salvation He fought single-handed and He can save you single-handed. He is exalted to be a Prince and a Savior and He will not stain His principedom by failing in salvation! I fear I have never done more in my own salvation than hinder rather than help my Lord, and yet I know that though I believe not, He abides faithful. He will stand to His office even though I fail in my pledges! When He saves, He does truly save. He is master of the business! He put Himself apprentice to it when He was here below and set to work to heal all manner of sickness—and He never failed even then! But now that He has gone through death and Hell for us—and made Himself perfect through suffering—He is a master workman and He can save in the teeth of all opposition. Do but trust Him and you shall find it so!

Let me add to this, dear troubled Friend, that He is able to save you *now*. Do you notice that verse, "The day of vengeance is in My heart and the year of My redeemed is come"? I leaped with joy at those words as I studied them. Yes, I thought, I will tell these sinners that the day of vengeance is in God's heart and I will warn them that if they do not turn to Him He will destroy them. Ah, but that vengeance is as yet in His *heart*, He lets it lie there in His long-suffering patience! But *the year of His redeemed is come*—it is present, it is now! It is not, "Today will I destroy you," but, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." Today is the day of salvation—"the year of My redeemed is come"! We speak of our dates as, "*Anno Domini*," and so they are—these days are in the year of our Lord. We live in the years of our Redeemer, years of His redeemed, years of pardoning love! Oh, that *you* would come, now that your year is come! Jesus is able to save you at this hour!

This morning in February. This cold and bitter morning when the east wind searches you to the very marrow—the Lord Jesus Christ can warm your hearts with a summer tide of love! It was such a morning as this when I first found my Lord—when the snowflakes fell so abundantly! Each one seemed to say that Jesus had made me whiter than snow. Even this cruel east wind will breathe comfort to you if you will look to my Lord dressed in His vesture dipped in blood. Behold the glorious apparel of His love and righteousness! He comes back from death and Hell triumphant, so that you may never come under their yoke! He proclaims life to you because your foes are dead. He washes your garments white because His are dyed with blood. You shall live forever because He died—and you shall

triumph because He has won the battle on your behalf. You shall go forth conquering and to conquer because He conquers!

Jesus has already done the work. There is nothing to be endured by Him in order to save you from your sins—the expiation is made, the redemption is paid, the righteousness is worked out. Of this salvation our Lord said, at the moment when He won the victory, “It is finished”—and it is finished forever! Without seam and woven from the top throughout was the garb the Savior’s body wore—and now He presents a garment like it to every naked sinner who trusts Him. And He says, “Put it on.” It is freely given though it was dearly worked. It cost our Lord His life to weave it, His blood to dye it—but to the sinner it is a free gift and, if he will but have it, he, also, shall be glorious in his apparel and Jesus will strengthen him till he, also, shall travel in the greatness of His strength. Oh that you would believe in Jesus Christ this morning!

It is a sad wonder that men do not believe in Jesus. It is a mournful wonder that you who have been hearing the Gospel for so many years, do not believe in Him. What are you doing? Why, if somebody were to preach to you any other Gospel than what I have delivered, you would grow angry—you would not hear it! Why is it that you delight to hear the Gospel and yet will not accept it to your own salvation? Many of you have a great admiration of my Lord, after a fashion, and you love to hear me praise Him—but what is it to you? What can He be to you unless you trust Him? “Oh, but I don’t feel my sins.” Have I not told you many times that salvation does not lie in your *feelings*? “Oh, but I am not”—Have I not told you over and over again that it is not *what you are*, but what *Jesus is*? Listen to me. Cease from self and come to Jesus just as you are!

Let us finish by each one of us singing this verse from the heart and all of us together with our tongues—

***“A guilty, weak and helpless worm,
On Christ’s kind arms I fall:
He is my strength and righteousness
My Jesus and my All.”***

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Isaiah 62.; 63:1-14.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—317, 315, 563.**

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AM I SOUGHT OUT?

NO. 525

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 23, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“You shall be called, Sought Out.”
Isaiah 62:12.***

THE first meaning of our text is very clear. Here is a prophecy, because Jerusalem, having been despoiled of her beauty by her enemies, was for a long time forsaken and worthy to be called, “A city which no man seeks after,” so, in a brighter day, her glory shall return, she shall be an attraction to all lands and the joy of the whole earth. Multitudes of willing pilgrims shall seek her out that they may behold her beauty. She shall be a city greatly set by and greatly sought out by those who love the hallowed spots where the mighty deeds of the Lord were worked and the arm of Jehovah made bare.

The text, doubtless, has a similar reference to the Church of God. During many centuries the Church of Christ was hidden—a thing obscure, despised, unknown, abhorred. She concealed herself in the catacombs—her followers were the poorest and most illiterate of men—proscribed by cruel laws and hunted by ferocious foes. Although the royal bride of Christ, and destined to be the ruler of nations, she made no figure in the world’s eyes. She was but a little stone cut out of the mountain without hands. But the day is already come in which multitudes seek the Church of Christ. Behold, they fly as a cloud and as doves to their windows! They ask the way to Zion with their faces in that direction.

As time rolls on and the millennial kingdom of Christ comes nearer and nearer, the Church of God shall be more and more sought out. From the ancient east and the far-off west they shall come, multitudes beyond all count, saying, “Tell us where is the city of the Lord, the people of His love?” Though this, doubtless, is the primary meaning, I nevertheless believe that we may, without violence to the text, use it in another manner in a fuller and more spiritual sense. The Church of God may well be called “Sought Out.” And the like title may truthfully be applied to every single member of that dearly-loved and dearly-purchased family. All the children of God may take for their name and distinction, the words, “Sought Out.”

Without indulging in a longer preface, let us at once proceed to map out the plan of our present meditation. We intend to talk a little while upon *the natural condition implied*, and then upon *the surpassing grace revealed*. Our third point will be *the distinguishing title justified*, and finally, *the special duty suggested*.

I. First, THE NATURAL CONDITION IMPLIED IN THE TITLE, “SOUGHT OUT.” If the Church of God, my Brothers and Sisters, has been “*sought out*,” then it is clear enough that *originally it was lost*—lost like that woman’s piece of silver which she valued so much that she lit her candle and swept her house and searched diligently until she found it. The tre-

mendous fact of man's utter ruin is the underlying cause of the necessity for Divine Grace to seek out its object. If the Fall had not been so complete in its ruin, there had been no need to seek us, for we should have sought the Lord. This, however, is the gloomy truth—that we are altogether become abominable and all flesh has perverted its way.

Of this fact there can be no doubt, for you and I, who have been saved by Grace, know right well that *we* were lost—hopelessly and forever lost—had not Jesus sought us out. Many of the chosen seed are suffered to indulge in sin until they are lost even to the presence of virtue and morality—lost to the hopes of the most earnest friends and the most affectionate entreaties of anxious relatives. Lost we all were in our federal head, by imputation of his sin—lost effectually by infusion of his corrupt nature. Lost, afterwards, by our practice. Lost, manifestly, by an accumulation of evil habits and the growing force of depraved appetites.

We have, by nature, departed far from God and, like the prodigal, have gone into a far country. We are comparable to that poor wretch who was possessed with a legion of devils, whom fetters could not bind, nor chains restrain. He who said that by nature man is half brute and half devil, was not far from the truth. O my Brothers and Sisters, shall we ever know in this life how lost we were by nature? Until we can comprehend what “the wrath of God” means, by gazing steadfastly into the pit of Hell—until we can understand the purity of God amid the perfection of Heaven—and so can measure the awful distance between our depraved condition and the perfect holiness of Jehovah, we shall not know how lost we were.

But we know enough to make us shudder. Oh, when we saw, or thought we saw, the desperate evil of sin, then we cried out, “Lost! Lost! Lost!” with greater bitterness than he who sorrows for his only son, even for his first-born. Oh, the horrors of that terribly truthful discovery which showed us *ourselves*. We felt in our conscience that we were lost to everything which could commend us to God or could attract His regard. We knew that in ourselves there were no means of restoration to purity and happiness. We were utterly and entirely lost and, as I said before, some of us lost with a vengeance—for our outward life had become a foul development of the filthy fountains within.

Aliens, enemies, rebels, traitors—what shall we say More? No name is too vile for us. Had we been left to lie among the broken potsherds as worthless refuse, or had we been swept away with every unclean and loathsome thing, this had been our just desert. God could not have been too severe, even if the lowest pit of Hell had been our portion. And then, my Brothers and Sisters, we were so lost that *we did not seek the Lord*. Natural men have superficial and passing thoughts of seeking God, but they have no true hunger and thirst after Him. Now and then a pang of conscience, a sickly wish after something better crosses the unrenewed mind.

But as the smoke out of the chimney is blown away by the wind, so these hasty emotions are gone and forgotten. As the dew which trembles at early morn upon the hedgerow evaporates in the heat of the sun, so the best desires which unregenerate men can know are soon melted away when once the sun of the world's temptation rises upon us. My Brothers

and Sisters, we who know the Lord know that we had no serious effectual thoughts of seeking after God until He sought after us. We were wandering sheep, well skilled in straying, but without the will to return. When the Spirit of God came upon us, He found nothing in our hearts ready to work with Him, but everything running in the opposite direction. Every imagination of the thought of our heart was only evil, and that continually. Those who repent and seek the Lord before His Grace draws them to Himself must be of a different race from us, for we were far off and loved the distance too well to dream of returning.

To descend still lower, my Brothers and Sisters—as we had no thought of coming to God—*so we never should have willed to return*. Left to ourselves, like the lost sheep, we should have wandered farther and farther, feeding upon yonder mountain of vanity, or skipping in the green valleys of sin. But back to God, to Christ, to Heaven, we never could or should have come. As well might water labor to ascend like fire, as for fallen humanity to long after God. Wolves and tigers do not without miracle renounce their feasts of blood, nor will man refuse his natural food of sin. If there is any true desire in the human heart towards God and His Christ, it must have been implanted there by a Divine power.

God Himself in His bounty must have placed it there, for from the soil of nature it never could have come—at least so we have found it in our own case, for to this day, though we are saved, we find that the natural motions of our heart are all *from* God—none of them *to* God. And though we are His children exalted above measure by His great Grace, yet still the evil heart of unbelief *departs from* the living God and never does it come toward Him. O carnal Mind, you desperately evil thing, you are not reconciled to God, nor indeed can you be!

O God, You Giver of every good and perfect gift, had You left us until our nature had spontaneously desired renewal, and our hearts had panted after Your salvation, You would have left us forever! For we would have chosen the downward path and the lusts of the world we would have sought! The text, I think, implies all this, for God never works unnecessary wonders, and if we could have come to Him, or *would* have come to Him without His seeking us, doubtless He would have left us to that free will of which some boast so much. Brethren, we were lost, lost without a wish to return and without a possibility of ever having such a wish.

I must go further—our lost estate is strewn yet more clearly in the fact that, so far from seeking God, *we did not desire Him to seek us*. Till He first inspired the wish to be found, we resisted His seeking. So far from asking Him to visit us with His salvation, when He did come, we took up arms against our gracious Friend. Well do I remember those early strivings of the Spirit with my youthful heart which I choked one after the other with a resolute determination. Well can I recollect those strong wrestlings, when it seemed as if the Spirit of God would separate me from my sins and I *must* lay hold on Christ and yet, determined still to abide in sin and self-righteousness, I stood out against the Lord and would not have “that Man” to reign over me.

Ah, how long did Jesus stand and knock at our door, so long that He might well cry as He does in the Canticles, “My head is wet with dew and

My locks with the drops of the night.” We would not let Him in—instead of rising to open, we sought to fasten every bolt and to send every bar home. We turned the horrible key of our self-will in the wards of the lock, with a, “depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Your ways.” Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, if He sought us out, it was not because we had a will towards Him, or because we were importunate in prayer. Our will was His great opponent. We were desperately set on mischief, and if we had not been sought out by Sovereign Grace, saved we never would have been—

**“’Twas Your love, O God, that knew us,
Earth’s foundations long before.
That same love to Jesus drew us,
By its sweet constraining power,
And will keep us
Safely, now and evermore.”**

To complete the story of this, our natural condition, I must add *that our being sought out, considering our condition, was one of the greatest wonders ever known or heard of.* I have heard this expressed in words occasionally. When a man has come to join the Church, he has said to me, “If anyone had told me six months ago that I should make a profession of being a follower of Christ, I would have knocked him down. If anyone had said to me, ‘You will repent of your sins and seek and find a Savior,’ I should have laughed him to scorn. ‘I am no such fool,’ I would have said, as to become one of your canting hypocritical Methodists—such a thing can never be.’” And yet the thing did occur.

And that soul which was once like the demoniac, full of devils, comes to sit clothed and in its right mind at the feet of the Savior, rejoicing in His power to save. In everyone of us, if we have not put it into just such words, the Divine Grace which sought us has been quite as illustrious. What reason can you find why God should love you? How can you show any reason why He should follow you in all your wanderings? Why was it that He should track your devious footsteps and never leave you until the predestinated moment came? How was it that then He grappled with you and overcame—and made you willingly bow your neck to His joyous yoke? You can tell no reason. You can only clap your hands in admiration, and lift up your heart in wonder—and bless and praise the Lord that *your* name is, “Sought Out.”—

**“’Twas all of Your grace we were brought to obey,
While thousands were suffered to go
The road which by nature we chose as our way,
Which leads to the region of woe.”**

Thus much concerning our natural condition. You who know it, and have felt it, need not my words to teach you. It is well for you to look often to the hole of the pit where you were drawn and the rock where you were hewn. A sight of your first state will humble you and fill your heart with praise to the God of Grace who has made you to differ.

II. Secondly, we have in the text SURPASSING GRACE REVEALED. This grace lies in several particulars. First, *that they were sought out at all.* It is very wonderful Grace on the part of God that He should plan a way of salvation, that He should prepare a great marriage supper and issue the invitation to all men to come and feast. The Gospel which says to

men, “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely,” is a most gracious Gospel. But there is something more gracious than this generous summons.

One would have supposed that after the invitation had been freely given, and the preparation for the feast had been generously made, that the Lord would leave men to come or not as they willed. It is Divine Grace enough, surely, for God to provide meat for the hungry. Let them come and eat, and if they will not, let them starve. To prepare ointment for the wounded, is not that enough? If the sick will not accept the medicine, then let them perish for their ingratitude in rejecting the healing gift. Ah, but God’s ways are not as our ways. Your bounty and mine would never dream of going any further. We never force our charity on unwilling recipients.

We do not follow after diseased men and beg and plead with them to be made whole. Not we. We think our bounty large enough if we give to him that asks of us—but to seek after pensioners—this we never did and probably never shall do. But hear, O earth! And be astonished you heavens! After the general proclamation of the Gospel has been made and man has rejected it. After Christ has been offered to men and they have refused Him, God’s love does not stop there, but, determined to glorify His love, He then comes to seek out those who will not seek Him!

“If,” says He, “you will not turn at My rebuke. If My invitation is trod under foot—I will do more than this—I will come out in the splendor of My Grace and the magnificence of My power, and I will deal with that will of yours and overcome it. I will touch that stubborn nature of yours and make you yield. ‘A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you.’ ‘You shall call Me, my Father. And shall not turn away from Me.’” It is a marvel of marvels, that sinful man fleeing from his Maker, rejecting his Creator’s invitation, refusing to be blessed with the blessedness of God, is nevertheless with unparalleled perseverance and unexampled love sought out and made captive by Almighty love!

But this Grace appears even more conspicuous if you consider *the persons sought out*. That any should be sought out is matchless Grace—but that *we* should be sought—is Grace beyond degree. My Brother, my Sister, I do not know what may have been your particular condition, but this I do know—you will feel that there was ten times more reason that you should have been *left out* than that you should have been included in the purpose of Grace. Often have I thought that I was the odd man. If in the muster roll of eternal life there must be one left out, I should myself have made the selection of my own person as the one most worthy to have been disregarded. Why me, Lord? Why me?—

**“Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter where there’s room;
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?”**

Does not the same thought arise in your mind? Is not your soul stirred with a holy and grateful wonder that *you* should have been sought out? And when, my Brothers and Sisters, I think of some in this place—some who once were in the harlots’ company—but who were sought out. Some of you who once were plunged in drunkenness, how shall I sufficiently

praise the Lord for you? Many of you on the Sunday never listened to the preached Word, but sought your own pleasure and followed your own business—but *you* were sought out! Many a tongue that sung the hymn just now once cursed and blasphemed God. Glory be to the Divine Grace which sought you out!

Yes, though such were some of us, “we are washed, we are sanctified, we are cleansed.” And is not this a marvel that such as we are should have been sought out? If He had sought kings and princes we might have found a reason, but to seek us poor, obscure working men, illiterate, without ability—this is Sovereign Grace indeed! That He should seek the good, the moral, the excellent, we should not marvel at. But to seek *us*, the depraved, the wicked, the abandoned—how shall we glorify His name? Tell it in Hell and let devils howl! Publish it in Heaven and let angels sing! Chant it, you blood-washed ones before the Eternal Throne! He has chosen the base things of this world and the things that are not—To bring to nothing the things that are! This is a wonder of wonders, that we, even we, should bear the name of “Sought Out”!

Nor must I fail to bring to your recollection that the surpassing Grace of God is seen very clearly in that *we were sought OUT*. The word “out,” conveys a mass of meaning. We were not only sought, but sought *out*. Men go and *seek* for a thing which is lost upon the floor of the house, but in such a case there is only seeking, not seeking *out*. The loss is more perplexing and the search more persevering when a thing is sought *out*. We were mingled with the mire. We were as when some precious piece of gold falls into the sewer and men have to gather out and carefully inspect a heap of abominable filth. They turn it over and over and over and continue to stir and rake and search among the heap until the thing is found.

Or, to use another figure, we were lost in a labyrinth. We wandered here and there and when ministering mercy came after us, it did not find us at the first coming. It had to go to the right hand and to the left and search here and there and everywhere, to seek us out. We were so desperately lost and had got into such a strange position that it did not seem possible that ever Grace could come to us. And yet we were sought *out*! No gloom could hide us, no filthiness could conceal us—we were found! Glory be to Divine Grace, God the Holy Spirit found us! The lives of some of God’s people, if they could be written, would make you marvel. The romance of Divine Grace is infinitely more interesting than the romance of imagination.

We have known persons who have run into the arms of Christ while they were intending to run down to Hell. Some who no more dreamed of being saved than of being made princes—who strolled into the House of God from curiosity—and the ministers finger, or the glance of his eyes arrested them, and they felt the power of life Divine. Some who were rushing to the river to take away their own lives, but some text spoke to their conscience and arrested their guilty feet. Strange and marvelous are the ways which God has used to find His own. He would shake a whole nation with His strong right hand to find His own elect.

He would shake all nations and bring the whole world to unparalleled confusion before He would suffer one of the blood-bought pearls of His

crown to be lost among the ruins of the Fall. He must and will seek them out, as the shepherd seeks out his sheep in the cloudy and dark day—bringing some of them down from the steep summit—others from the caverns among the crags. Some from the river's brink, others from the flood itself—all must be brought into one place, where they shall form one fold, under one Shepherd.

One second will suffice to hint, dear Brothers and Sisters, that the Grace of God is illustrious in *the Divine agent by whom we are sought out*. The text, taken in its connection, tells us that we were sought out *divinely*. Saved souls are sought out by God Himself and Omnipotence is strained, Omniscience is fully exercised—every attribute of God is put to its sternest labor to seek out lost souls! The most tremendous effort of Divine strength we know to be the regeneration of man. To bring Christ from the dead made God's name to be right honorable for mighty power—but to raise His people from their graves is equally a work of stupendous power and Grace.

Do you ever wonder, Christian, who it was that came to seek you? It was not the minister. He might have sought you year after year and never have found you. Your tearful mother, with her many prayers, would have missed you. Your anxious father, with his yearning heart of compassion, would never have discovered you. Those providences, which like great nets were seeking to entangle you, would all have been broken by your strong rushes after evil. Who was it sought you out? None other than Himself. The Great Shepherd could not trust His under-shepherds. He must Himself come, and oh, if it had not been for those eyes of Omniscience, He never would have seen you—He never would have read your history and known your case.

If it had not been for those arms of Omnipotence, He never could have grasped you. He never could have thrown you on His shoulders and brought you home rejoicing. You were *divinely* sought. There is as much the impress of the finger of God upon a sought-out soul, as there is upon a newly-created world. You may see God's finger in the green mead studded with yellow flowers, in the flowing rills and towering mounts, and in the bright lamps of Heaven at eventide—but you shall see the whole hand of God most clearly when a new-born soul is led to seek after the Lord's salvation. You shall be called "the people sought out." And this shall be the wonder of it—that you were sought out in a Divine fashion—

***"Love strong as death, no, stronger,
Love mightier than the grave.
Broad as earth and longer
Than ocean's widest wave—
This is the love that sought us,
This is the love that bought us,
This is the love that brought us,
To most glad day from saddest night,
From deepest shame to glory bright,
From depths of death to life's fair height."***

Then, dear Brothers and Sisters, to close this part, remember that the glory of it is that *we were sought out effectually*. We are a people not sought out and then missed at the last. Almightyness and wisdom combined will make no failures. *I may seek some of you in vain, as, alas, I*

have done. I may preach and preach again, as I do today and yet, perhaps, you will all miss the net. But when my Master comes out to fish for souls the net will soon be full—there is no failure in His case. All of us, dear Brothers and Sisters, who have been brought into union with Christ, know that we were brought because it was effectual Grace that came to us.

There is a Grace which may be resisted, there are common strivings of the Spirit, against which a man may contend successfully. But when the Spirit puts out the fullness of His Divine energy, with the intention to work a sure work, it can never be frustrated. In each of our cases there has been a Divine intention, Omnipotent, to constrain us to be saved. That intention has been followed up by a Divine action, which it was impossible for us to have effectually resisted. Which, in fact, we did not, and could not resist, because it charmed us into a complete subjection. We yielded at once to its sway. This has taken place in every single heart and this is the glory of the name “sought out”—that we were not *half* sought out, we were not feebly and unsuccessfully sought—but we were effectually and completely sought out. That is the reason why we are today heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

III. Let us notice, in the third place, THE DISTINGUISHING TITLE JUSTIFIED. We are a people sought out. How were we sought out? Let us justify the name.

Brethren, we are sought out, first of all, in *the eternal purposes and the work of Christ*. The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from Heaven was the commencement, the first overt act of seeking our souls. All that bloody pilgrimage of His, when hands and feet were bleeding. All that dreadful suffering of His upon the Cross, was a seeking out of His people. Like some great pearl diver, the Lord Jesus Christ stood upon the glorious cliff's of Heaven and plunged deep into the floods of sorrow and sin that He might seek out the lost pearls. Virtually, our Lord did save all His people then and there. “He came to seek and to save that which was lost,” and He did save, by His death, all His elect.

Though not actually, they were virtually every one of them saved in that very hour when He bowed His head and said, “It is finished.” At that moment they were in His hands, they were united to His Person in the Divine decree. At that moment they stood in Him—

**“Not as they stood in Adam's Fall,
When sin and sorrow covered all;
But as they'll stand another day,
Fairer than sun's meridian ray.”**

“He has saved us” first, “and called us” afterwards, “with a holy calling.” This seeking out, as far as we know it, began *with gracious words of mercy*. In the case of some, these were heard very early. A godly mother told us the Truths of God with weeping, a holy father set us a good example. We were sought out by that little Bible we were taught to read and that hymnbook which was put into our hands.

We were sought out when we were taken to the House of God. The minister preached the Gospel freely to all. He described our character and affectionately bid us come to Jesus. We were sought out while the preacher called the Sabbath-breaker, while he called the hard-hearted, the hypo-

crite, the formalist, the abandoned, the profane. While he called each of these, according to our case we felt that he was calling *us*. And we thought the eyes of Jesus were looking on us and His voice was bidding us repent and live. Sometimes we were specially sought out under the ministry when the preacher was led to describe our case, painting it in glowing colors. We thought somebody had told him. He seemed to know us so well, to have read us through and through and we went home to our chamber, moved, at least for a season, with a desire after God—for we had been sought out.

Nor did the Lord leave us only to the kind invitations of the ministry. *Afflictions sought us out*. The fever hunted us to the Cross. When the cholera came, it carried a great whip in its hand to flog us to the Savior. We had serious losses, a decaying business—all which should have weaned us from the world. Our friends sickened—from their graves we heard the voice of invitation, “Come unto Christ and live.” We were disappointed in some of our fondest hopes, and our heart, torn for the time, yearned after a higher life and a deeper satisfaction. Affliction after affliction and tribulation after tribulation were the means which God used for seeking us out.

And then came *visitations*, mysterious visitations. It was in the night season when all was still. We sat up in our bed and solemn thoughts passed through us. The preacher’s words which we had heard years ago came back fresh as when we heard them for the first time. Old texts of Scripture, the recollection of a mother’s tears—all these came upon us. Or it was in the midst of business and we did not know how it was, but suddenly a deep calm came over us. We felt as if an unseen hand was drawing us to pray. We resisted the Divine impulse, but we knew that it had been there. It came again and again, and often as we walked the streets we seemed attended by another soul than our own. It appeared to us, as if at times we were two men in one—and that new and better man wrestled with us like the angel with Jacob.

And at last Divine Grace overcame us and brought us to repentance and humble faith. But after all, dear Friends, these visitations, these providences, the preaching and so on, would all have been nothing, if it had not been for the appointed time when *the Holy Spirit* came and sought us out. Can I ever forget that moment when the preacher’s finger pointed to me and he said, “Young man, believe in Jesus Christ, believe in Jesus Christ *now*.” It was not his voice, alone, that spoke to me, but the voice from the mysterious Throne said, “Believe *now*.” And believe I did. I found no will to refuse.

The thing I could not do before, the thing I did not understand till that moment, I both understood and did. I did believe in Jesus and the burden rolled from off my bowed shoulders, and the spirit was emancipated and free. O may that time come to you who have never yet been sought out! May the Spirit of God so touch you that you cannot resist Him—so effectually move you, that you *must* yield subjection to the Cross of Christ. In your cases as well as mine, Beloved in the Lord Jesus, you will be led to see that it was the effectual power of God the Holy Spirit that really did bring you to Christ. So that the title is fully justified—“*Sought Out*.”

There may be some persons who come to Christ of themselves, I do not believe there are, and I am not one of them. There may be some who keep to Christ by the power of their free will—I believe there is a whole denomination who profess to do so—but I can only say their experience is the very reverse of what I have felt. I believe that those of whom we read in Christian biographies and in Scripture owed their salvation to free, rich, and Sovereign Grace. The religion of these persons who come to Christ of their own free will is of modern invention, and I would not give a snap of the finger for the grace that springs from self, or another snap of my finger for the conversion which is the result of free will.

May the Lord give us to be born *from above* and if we have not a religion which is not worked in us by the Spirit of God, the sooner we get rid of it the better! Then, perhaps, we shall go to Him who can give us the true bread of Heaven, that we may not be found empty at the last.

IV. Now I have dispatched these three matters and I come to the practical part of the subject and may I have your earnest attention? There is A SPECIAL DUTY INCUMBENT UPON THOSE WHO WEAR THE TITLE, "SOUGHT OUT."

My Brothers and Sisters, if it is really so that you are such debtors to Divine seeking, ought you not to spend your whole lifetime in seeking others out? If you owe everything to Divine Grace and nothing to self, are you not under solemn obligation to be the Lord's forever and ought you not—not by proxy, but personally and individually, everyone of you—to seek out the rest of the Lord's people, that they, like you, may bear the title of a people sought out? I am earnest in the desire of inducing every member of this Church and of every other Church to be winners of souls.

The preaching of the Gospel is God's grand instrument of mercy. That is His great magnet. Those of you who can use this holy weapon, do. You that have ability and have talents, devote yourselves to God's cause. Give yourselves up to His ministry. I would to God there were more of those who are successful in professions, men who either in medicine or law have attained eminence, would consecrate their talents to the ministry. They need not fear that in giving themselves to God He will not take care of them. And as to honor, if it is found anywhere, it is the sure heritage of the faithful ambassador of Christ.

If you have been sought out, my Brother, I do not blush to recommend you to give up the most lucrative employment to seek out others. If you have the power to stir other's hearts, if God has given you the tongue of the eloquent, consecrate it neither to parliament nor to the bar. Devote it to the plucking of brands from the burning—become a herald of the Cross and let the whole world, as far as possible, hear from you the tidings of salvation!

The preaching of the Gospel is not the only means. It is a way of seeking out most commonly used. But there are other methods which I will recommend to you this morning. We are not to preach merely to those who come to listen. We must carry the Gospel to where men do not desire it. We should consider it our business to be generously impertinent—thrusting the Gospel into men's way—whether they will hear or whether they will not. Let us hunt for souls, first of all, *by visitation*. There are

thousands in London who never will be converted by the preaching of the Gospel, for they never attend places of worship. Some of them do not know what sort of thing a religious service is. We may shudder when we say it—it is believed there are thousands in London who do not even know the name of Christ—living in what we call a Christian land—and yet they have not heard the name of Jesus!

Thank God things are better than they were. But things are still bad enough. Brethren, you must go and see these things and mend them. To the lodging houses, young men, you must carry the Gospel, and to those thickly-peopled habitations, where every room contains a family and not one room a Christian. I believe there is very much good to be done by house-to-house visitation. Not by City Missionaries and Bible-women only—may God speed those noble bodies of laborers—but by *all* of you! By you that have position in society among your neighbors—make yourselves free and go and talk to them of Christ in the little houses that are near to you. As far as your time allows, be a visitor.

And if there is one dark part of the town known to you as the haunt of sinners, make it a point to use this agency of visitation from house-to-house. Let the lost sheep of Israel's house be sought out. Some will need special means, before ever they can be found and brought in. How does one's heart rejoice over the reformatories and the midnight meetings—over the attempts to bring that class of souls to Christ. I have often heard it said that few of the *converts* from those meetings hold on and prove sincere. It is a great falsehood—a very considerable portion are reformed and mere *reformatations* are of little use—but where *regeneration* is worked and these girls are pointed to a Savior, you will never find one of them go back.

Has not God been pleased to give us in this Church scores of instances where those who were decoys for Satan are now the leaders of others to the Cross of Christ and like Mary, love much because they have much forgiven? Seek them out. If there is any other class that is neglected, seek it out. If you happen to know any of the more degraded part of the population who are only sought for by the policeman and never hear a word of good advice—except from the stipendiary magistrate—do seek *them* out. If Christ sought you out, the inference is strong that you ought to seek out others! And if special means are needed, let special means be applied.

You must be very kind. To broken hearts you must speak very gently. Their distance from God is a distance of fear. The gulf that separates them is despair. There are some such in this house, perhaps. Seek them out and if you find them very desponding, writing bitter things against themselves, let love be shown them. Try if you can, to get the cords of affection around them and so draw them to Christ. Do not turn from them and say, "They are such miserable objects, so unbelieving. I will not look after them." But the more you find they need a tender heart and a weeping eye to bring them to the Savior, the more carefully follow them till you bring them to Him.

You will find some who will want a world of perseverance. Perhaps your child has been for thirty years unconverted. Your prayers have been unheard till now and the devil tempts you to give it up. Never do so. If you had to be sought so long—and some of you needed to be sought for fifty

years before you were found—never give up a fellow creature. Follow your child in all his ingratitude, pursue his footsteps with your loving kindness and never leave him until you have brought him, at last, to find joy where *you* found it—in the wounds of Jesus.

Let me beg you, where all other means fail, to seek men by *your prayers*. As long as a man has one other man to pray for him there is a hope of his salvation. If you, in your daily supplications, make mention of men—if you select special cases—if you bear their names before the Lord, you shall have the joy of seeing them turned from darkness to light. And they with you shall be a people “sought out.” If a word of mine shall stir up but one of you to seek the Lord’s hidden ones, my soul shall rejoice. And if every one of you shall register a vow in this House of Prayer—“I will seek out some family today and continue my work tomorrow. And the next day I will be seeking out others. I will not wait till they come to me to be taught, but go and seek them and compel them to come in that the house may be filled, that the Church of God may have its full complement of Christ’s chosen.”

If you will do this, my soul shall be well content. If you have never been sought, then you will not seek others. If you have never tasted that the Lord is gracious, I shall not marvel that you neglect this work. But oh, by the Hell from which you are delivered, by the Heaven to which you are going, by the blood which redeemed you from death and Hell, by that gracious Spirit which quickened you and still keeps you alive, by every glorious promise which stimulates you in your onward career, I pray you spend yourselves and be spent in seeking souls!

Look at this great mass of habitation, this wilderness of human dwellings—if we do not work with all our might we can never hope to see the knowledge of the Lord covering this great world of London—let alone the greater world outside! O let us be up and doing and let it be told in every house, in every alley, that Christians care for souls. If you are the people sought out, go and seek others. Tell them that, “Whosoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.”

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A CALL TO PRAYER AND TESTIMONY

NO. 2189

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 8, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“I have set watchmen upon your walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: you that make mention of the Lord, keep not silent, and give Him no rest, till He establishes, and till he makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”
Isaiah 62:6, 7.***

IN the opening verses of this chapter our Lord declares that He will not rest till His purpose of Grace is accomplished. “For Zion’s sake will I not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest.” His soul is set upon the perfection of His Church. There is never a moment when the heart of Christ ceases to beat high with desire for the salvation of His redeemed. From the dreadful work of making Atonement, He stayed not His hand, but set His face like a flint towards it, till He could say, “It is finished.” And now, the work of the gathering of His chosen He carries on with quenchless zeal, never staying His Divine intercession, never withholding His hands from wielding that “All Power” which is given Him in Heaven and in earth.

Mark well, Beloved, how He would have His people to be in tune with Himself! He will have no rest till salvation work is done! And He would not have us rest, but He would have us stirred with passionate desire and fired with holy zeal for the accomplishment of the Divine plan of Grace. Till *He* holds *His* peace, He will not allow us to be silent! You that have the Revised Version will be struck with the more literal and forcible rendering of our text—“You that are the Lord’s remembrancers, *take you no rest, and give Him no rest, till He establishes, and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.*” A restless Savior calls upon His people to be restless and to make the Lord, Himself, restless—to give Him no rest till His chosen city is in full splendor, His chosen Church complete and glorious. Ah, when the three unite, the Son, the people whom He has redeemed and the Lord who works all things, then shall the golden age have come!

Learn from this fact a valuable lesson, that Christ’s determination to perform a work, His decree that it shall be so, is no argument for our idleness, but is the best plea and encouragement for our endeavors. “If it is to be,” cries one, “I need not do anything.” No, Friend, you argue slothfully! On the contrary, the earnest heart will reason itself into immediate and confident action. If it were *not* to be, to what purpose my zeal? Even if I do not know whether it is to be or not to be, if I think it desirable, I will labor for it with anxiety! But if I am assured that the Lord has appointed it, I la-

bor with might and main, feeling a holy confidence in doing the work of the Lord! Since He wills it, we will it—and so it shall be.

Predestination, when rightly understood, never leads to sloth—it has frequently, in human history, been of tremendous force for the production of the most daring and determined action—and it shall be so again. “*Deus vult*,” God wills it, is a grand cry to produce a crusade! God wills it, therefore it shall be. Like thunderbolts flung from an almighty hand, Believers crash through every difficulty under the irrepressible impulse of fulfilling a Divine purpose. Oh, that our meditations at this time may bring us all to this resolve, that we will not rest, and we will give God no rest, till His decree is fulfilled and till He has established and made Jerusalem a praise in the earth!

I. In my text I see three things which I will mention one by one. The first is RESPONSIBLE OFFICE—“I have set watchmen upon your walls.” “You that make mention of the Lord, keep not silent,” or, as your margin and the Revised Version have it, “You that are the Lord’s *remembrancers*.” Here are three responsible offices—*watchmen* set upon the walls, *speakers* who never hold their peace and *remembrancers* who cease not to plead with their Lord.

May the Holy Spirit help us while we think of the Lord’s people as *watchmen*! In times of war every fortified city had upon its walls certain watchmen, so placed as to see eye to eye—that is to say, the eye of one sentinel reached to the eye of another and so they encompassed the city round about. Whoever passed that way by day or night, they challenged him! And if he turned out to be a foe, they gave an alarm and straightway men-at-arms came forth from the guard rooms and the city was protected against surprise. God’s people and especially the stronger, the more instructed and the most experienced of them, should, for Christ’s sake, act as watchmen upon the walls.

Observe what manner of watchmen we ought to be. It is written, “I *have set watchmen*.” We are under Divine command! In the old Roman days, when a sentry was placed in his position by his centurion, he never thought of quitting his post. Rocks might roam, but not the sentinels of the empire! There was found in Pompeii, among the ashes, a sentry, standing in his place with his javelin in his hand—he had not flinched amid the deadly shower which fell from the volcano and buried the city. His centurion, in the name of the emperor, had set him there, and there he stood! How steadfast and immovable ought these to be, whom the Lord, Himself, has set in their place in connection with His Church! It is *Jehovah* who says, “I have set watchmen upon your walls.” By a Divine arrangement and by a sacred command, saints are set in their positions and they must stand fast and, having done all, must still stand, for they have received their charge from the King, Himself.

These watchmen guarded the city of cities, “*your walls, O Jerusalem*.” The legionary who guarded old Rome felt that if he did not fight for his native city, he would be base, indeed. If we are set to guard the Church of God, what shall I say to him who sleeps at his post, or proves a traitor? If you do not throw your whole strength into the guarding of such a cause as this, what will awaken you? Know you not that the Church is pur-

chased by the blood of Christ? That it is God's peculiar heritage? "The Lord's portion is His people." O shepherds, watch well the sheep that cost your Lord so dearly! "Feed the flock of God which He has purchased with His own blood." If we do not guard the Truth of God, once and for all delivered to the saints, we are something worse than traitors! No word has yet been invented which can set forth the perfidy of the man who betrays the cause of Christ and of the Gospel! He is the murderer of souls. God has set us to guard His own city, and we must not slumber. Let the other cities go, if go they must, but as for you, Salem, City of Peace and City of God, if I forget you, let my right hand forget her cunning! If I count you not beyond my chief joy, let me be in sorrow forever! See, Brethren, your responsible office—watchmen of God's setting—watchmen on the walls of God's own city!

The service is seen to be responsible to the utmost degree when we see that it demands constant care. The Lord says of these watchmen, "*they shall never hold their peace day nor night.*" We are not set to keep the Church of God by day only, but amid the dews or frosts of the darkest night we are to maintain our watch! Christians are to be sentries who will not retreat into the barracks because of the cold, nor quit the rampart because of the heat. At night, watchmen are most required. We are to be instant in season, giving the password at each particular time when the watch reports itself, and thus never holding our peace day nor night. We are to be instant out of season—for at such times the enemy is most likely to come. God's watchmen are not taken on by the hour, to watch by turns, but they are bound to be, throughout life, watchers for souls! We are never off duty! We take a day and a night shift. Our rest is in the Lord's service. Our recreation is in change of occupation. Ours is a *life* service and a *constant* service.

Believers raise no discussion with their Lord as to how many hours of the day they shall spend for Him. Our hours are these—"They shall never hold their peace day nor night." St. Augustine desired to be always found *aut precantem, aut predicantem*—that is, either praying or preaching—either speaking to God for men in prayer, or speaking for God to men in His ministry. Ministers of Christ, especially, should give themselves, not to the serving of tables, but to the ministry of the Word and to prayer. For us to give ourselves to getting up entertainments, to become competitors with theatres and music halls, is a great degradation of our holy office! If I heard of a minister becoming a chimney-sweep to earn his living, I would honor him in both his callings, but for God's watchmen to become the world's showmen is a miserable business! God keep all of us who are ministers of Christ from entangling ourselves with the things of this life! The proverb says, "Stick to your last, cobbler." And I would say—"Stick to your pulpit, minister! Keep to your one work and you will find quite enough for all the strength you have, and even more." Oh, for preachers who "shall never hold their peace"!

You Christian people, you, also, must fulfill your watch. You, also, are called to *ceaseless* service. A policeman wears an armlet to show that he is on duty—and all Believers should feel that such a badge is worn upon their very heart day and night. "The love of Christ constrains us," not now

and then, but always! Our service of the Lord's cause comes not once a week, on Sundays, but so often as we have opportunity! These must always watch, who would be watchmen for souls, watchmen for God, watchers against error and sin, watchers for the coming of the Lord. "I have set watchmen upon your walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night."

But, in the next place, we are to be *spokesmen*, for we are never to hold our peace, but make mention of the Lord. Believers are to speak for God to the people. If you have the ability and the commission, speak to the great congregation. You have both ability and commission, each one of you, to speak to those round about you. Be always ready to speak a word in season. Keep a shot in the locker—never run short of a good word for those whom God's Providence puts in your way. If there is nobody near to whom you can speak for God, then in your solitude speak to God for your fellow men. What a blessed thing to be so familiar with God that you have His ear for your friends and neighbors! Plead with Him for the erring, the unbelieving, the profane. Never hold your peace towards God, for in this case, speech is more than golden. By prayer you unlock the treasuries of Heaven—keep the golden key in constant motion. Never cease to pray, since intercession is benediction. If the world is asleep, if the Church is asleep, hold not your peace by night and, should the Church become active and the world be a little awakened, redouble your prayer till the world is won! You spokesmen *for* God and spokesmen *to* God, never hold your peace day or night!

Sick saints are especially set to take the night watches. While the most of us are blessed with refreshing slumber, these find that sleep forsakes their eyes. They hear the clock's unwearied tick and listen to the slow striking of the hours. Now let them lift their hearts heavenward on behalf of the Lord's cause and Kingdom. Maybe God arouses them to this end—that they may keep the nights safe by their prayers—chasing away evil spirits and keeping the incense burning upon the altar of acceptable intercession! The Lord girdles the globe with intercessions by his daily and nightly watchers. As our Queen's morning drum beats round the globe, so does ceaseless prayer cast a belt of golden Grace around the earth. O you that are the Lord's remembrancers, never suffer the flame of prayer to die down! Arise, even in this night season of the Church, and trim your lamps! Lift up your voices *for* your God and *with* your God. Let no dumb spirit possess you. As speakers heavenward and earthward, never hold your peace day or night!

A third office is brought before us in the marginal reading and in the new version—"You that are *the Lord's remembrancers*, take no rest." This is an amazing expression—"The Lord's remembrancers." I find the same word elsewhere translated, "recorder"—and truly we are to be the Lord's recorders and keep in memory His great goodness. A high office is that of Remembrancer to the King of kings! Every Christian holds this eminent position. Oriental kings maintained an officer whose business it was to remind the king of the promises which he had made before. He said this to that courtier, that to the other, but His Majesty had plenty of other things to think of and, therefore, every now and then, his Remembrancer

would say, "Please, Your Majesty, you promised to do this and that. May it please you to perform your word."

Now the Lord has appointed His praying people to be His remembrancers. I should never have dared to use such an expression had I not found it in the Inspired Word, itself. The Lord says, in Isaiah 43:26, "Put Me in remembrance." The Lord cannot forget, but in condescension to our forgetfulness, He bids us act as if He *could* do so, and put Him in remembrance! By calling the promise to the Lord's remembrance, we are, ourselves, made to be the better acquainted with it. I find that a Remembrancer was also appointed in our English courts to remind the officers of their duty to their sovereign—and this is also a part of our work to remind the world that there is a God—and that He claims obedience from His creatures. Brothers and Sisters, fulfill your office!

If you would be good remembrancers towards God, you must know the promises of which you remind Him. You must be acquainted with your Bibles so as to fill your mouths with arguments and order your petitions aright. You must come to the great King and say, "Lord, do as You have said. Fulfill this Word unto Your servant whereon You have caused me to hope." If we pray without a promise, we have no reason to expect an answer. God will do what He has promised to do—he may do somewhat more, but we have no right to expect it. The best praying in the world is pleading the promises! I wish we all practiced this sort of prayer. It is wise to bring before the Lord His own Words and plead His Divine veracity—"You have said it. You are true, therefore fulfill Your Word!" It is your business, as the Lord's remembrancers, to be well acquainted with these sacred Words of Grace which you are to bring to remembrance. If you do not remember them, yourself, how can you bring them to the Lord's memory?

Your office of remembrancer is to be carried on incessantly. "You that are the Lord's remembrancers, take you no rest and give Him no rest." I fear that very many of God's promises are seldom used. They are like the locksmith's bunch of keys. Why are they so rusty? Because they are not in constant use. They have not been turned in the lock day by day, or they would be bright enough. Are there not exceedingly great and precious promises which, to some of you, are a dead letter? Promises lie hidden away in God's most Holy Word which you have never used! Perhaps you do not even know that they are there. One came to me, not long ago, and said, "I was surprised to find these words in the Bible." To him I answered, "Your remark makes me fear that you have not searched your Bible as you should have done." We ought to know the length and breadth of the estate which the Lord has given us. Oh, that we would incessantly use the promises in prayer! One said, with a smile, the other day, "It is a fine thing to have a checkbook, to get what money you please by signing your name!" I did not stop to explain to him the limits of that power, but I noted that he looked like one who, if he had owned such a checkbook as he spoke of, would have written down larger amounts than the most of us could compass!

Still, his folly was not equal on the one side to the stupidity of these who err in the other direction, for they have a checkbook and yet never

use it! The treasury of Heaven lies open to faith and yet we fret and worry about our little daily cares. We have but to plead a promise of God, to put Him in remembrance, and He will supply all our needs! Why, then, do we pine in need? Fools that we are, to be anxious and poverty-stricken with the possibilities of infinite riches close at hand! Who among us is there that comes up to the text, “You that are the Lord’s remembrancers, take you no rest and give Him no rest”? Thus much upon the office—may the Holy Spirit lead all Believers to undertake and carry on this sacred work!

Ministers, Deacons and Elders of Churches are specially called to this. You older and more advanced Christians should lead the way in this holy employment and, as I have already shown you, the sick must take their turn. Every Christian should aspire to take his place in the cordon and in some way watch on the behalf of Zion. But especially should we be constant, instant and fervent in pleading the precious promises of our Lord. These were not given to be forgotten, but to be pleaded and then to be fulfilled. It is written, “For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.” It is the rule of God’s Kingdom that we must bring to His remembrance the promise which we would have fulfilled in our own experience! Therefore, “You that are the Lord’s remembrancers, take you no rest.”

II. My second head is a REMARKABLE CAUTION—“You that are the Lord’s remembrancers, *take you no rest.*” I quote the best translation.

Take no rest from prayer. Be always praying. If not always in the act of prayer, be always in the spirit of prayer. “Pray without ceasing.” Not only reason, but wrestle with God in prayer. Sometimes pray without words and, sometimes, with them. Pray alone, but often pray with Brothers and Sisters. There is special prevalence in the prayer of two or three. “If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in Heaven.” Gather in the greater congregations for prayer. “Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is,” as, I regret to say, the manner of many Churches has come to be in these days. The moderns despise the meeting for prayer and in this, they condemn themselves, by acknowledging that they attach little value to their own prayers! Possibly their consciousness of having lost all power with God in prayer is thus betraying itself. Where the Prayer Meeting is despised, there may be cleverness in the preacher, but there will be no unction for the hearer. O my Brothers and Sisters, I beseech you, both as individuals and as a Church, do not restrain prayer! “Watch and pray”—that precept is a condensation of our text.

Never rest from prayer because you are weary of it. Whenever prayer becomes distasteful, it should be a loud call to pray all the more. No man has such need to pray as the man who does not care to pray. When you can pray and long to pray—why, then, you *will* pray! But when you cannot pray and do not wish to pray—why, then, you *must* pray, or evil will come of it! He is on the brink of ruin who forgets the Mercy Seat. When the heart is apathetic towards prayer, the whole man is sickening from a grievous disease. How can we be weary of prayer? It is essential to life! When a man grows weary of breathing, surely he is near to dying! When a

man grows weary of praying, surely we ought to pray anxiously for him, for he is in an evil case.

Never rest from prayer because you have prayed enough. When has a man prayed enough? The greatest pleaders with God in prayer are the hungriest after more of it. The more a man gets from God, the more he desires from God. Those who have but little, ask but little—but to him that has shall be given—and he shall have abundance. Does anyone say, “I have long been prayerful and watchful, and I shall now take things more easily”? Yes. I saw a good man taking it easy the other day—he was riding upon a bicycle with both feet off the pedals—and with the brake in full force. I did not blame the cyclist, but one thing was quite clear—*he was going down the hill*. He would not have had his feet on the rests in that fashion if he had been upon the upgrade. Brother, whenever you begin to put your legs up and have no more work to do, you are going down hill and there is no doubt about it! The way to Heaven is up hill, and every inch of the way will need effort—for the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence. Grace does not exempt us from activity, but works it in us. If you know the power of the weapon called, “all-prayer,” never put it into its sheath, but continually call upon the Lord, and in this matter, “take no rest.”

Do not fall into the habit of praying as a matter of routine. “You that are the Lord’s remembrancers, take you no rest.” I have heard of soldiers sleeping while on the march and I have known some good people sleep while praying, till I have thought that their prayers were a kind of pious snore. They go on with the old phrases without considering what they mean by them. They are like crickets, whose notes are forever the same. “I sleep,” says the spouse, “but my heart wakes.” But these might more truly say, “I do not sleep, and yet my heart is not awake.” Many prayers are like a grocer’s or a draper’s account—“Ditto, ditto, ditto.” The petitions are as “per usual.” It is dreary work when we have the shell of prayer before us, but have no oyster in it. The Brother’s lips are here in prayer, but his soul has gone home to his shop, or to his farm. The sails of his mill go round as the wind blows, but he is not grinding anything—there is no grist in the mill, no intelligent, loving desire. Let us get out of the ruts of phrases and set petitions! Mere routine religion is hateful and yet how easily we all fall into it! Let us not rest on our oars and hope to make progress by the impetus already gained. All progress made heavenward by the natural drift of the current is seeming and not real. All worship which is mechanical is, so far, dead! God is a Spirit and we can only worship Him acceptably in spirit and in truth—if the spirit is gone, the very truth of the worship is gone—and it becomes an offense rather than a sweet-smelling savor.

Brethren, *take no rest, so as to pray by fits and starts.* Look at what has been done in many Churches—they plan to have a grand time—and possibly they succeed. Everybody comes up to the Prayer Meetings and all appear to be in earnest about the conversion of souls. There is great excitement and probably much good is done. But after that there is a reaction, a stupor of indifference. As in nature, after high hills, deep valleys—so is it with some religious communities. We say of a man, in the proverb,

“He is as sound asleep as a church.” Yes, very good. Nothing sleeps so soundly as a church and, especially after a time of excitement. Men who are at one time lively beyond measure, are apt at another time to sleep beyond waking! After a high wind there may come a lull, wherein everything drops, and stagnation reigns supreme. The Lord save us from spasmodic religion!

“You that make mention of the Lord, take you no rest.” Always keep in a high state of revival, or if that is a state which cannot be maintained, suspect that it is a condition unhealthy and undesirable. If there is a kind of celestial delirium here and there—and I am afraid that such is a correct description of it—avoid it! The wild fury of the flesh, in which everything is done by noise, and men are saved by bluster, is not of God! An excitement which cannot be kept up, since the spirit of man would be exhausted by it, is questionable. An excitement which is lawless and ungovernable, since the Spirit of God is not ruling it, is to be dreaded. Fanaticism is a tornado of the flesh and not the health-giving breath of the Holy Spirit. It is well to be as you would always wish to be. That pace is best which can, by Divine Grace, be maintained from year to year. Enoch walked with God—he could not have run with Him, but he was always enabled to keep in step with God—and God’s pace is always the right one. Oh, for a gracious energy which does not flag, but goes from strength to strength! “You that are the Lord’s remembrancers, take you no rest.”

Above all, *let us never rest out of despair*. The feeling does come over us, sometimes—“What is the use of our labor? So little comes of it. What is the use of protesting for the Truth of God? The Churches will not hear you. You only earn ill-will, and are ridiculed as an old foggy. What is the use of being earnest about winning souls? Men are indifferent. The *present* engrosses thought—social questions are pressing. Everybody pines for sensationalism or amusement. What profit is there in keeping to the old way?” That spirit creeps over the child of God like the cold of the Arctic regions, numbing him and tending to send him into the sleep of despair. The evidence of this evil power is found in the tendency to restrain prayer before God. From this may our God rescue us! Come, my Brothers and Sisters, I do not know who among you is going to sleep, but I would like to shake the man who is so benumbed, and wake him up. And I hope that, in your turn, when you see me benumbed, you will shake me, also, and wake me up to diligence in prayer!

Let us awake this morning and begin again! We must not, will not, yield to slumber! There is small cause for fear and no cause for despair. Our cause defeated? Not a bit of it! All will yet come right. God waits, but He waits that He may be gracious unto us. His time to favor Zion will come and the good old cause will win the victory! “The work of the Lord is in a greater hand than ours. He will not fail nor be discouraged.” “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint”—and when they feel that they are fainting—they should resolve to pray with double earnestness—and faintness will yield to joy.

Only one more observation—*avoid setting any time limits to God in your prayers*. He says, “You that are the Lord’s remembrancers, take you no rest.” A wife said that she would pray for her husband for 10 years and if

he was not converted, then, she would conclude that there would be no use in further pleading. To that good wife I would say, "You are right in praying 10 years, but you must not limit the Holy One of Israel! Who are you to put your finger down on the almanac and say, 'God shall answer me on such a day, or I will pray no more'? Plead for your husband as long as he lives." "Well," says one, "I have been praying a long time for a favor, but I am now inclined to cease pleading for it." If you have a question about the rightness of the prayer, do not persevere in a mistake. Solve as quickly as possible the question as to the correctness of the request, for if you waver on *that* point, your prayer will be of that wavering kind which meets no acceptance with the Lord! If you are asking what you know the Lord has promised and what is certainly for His Glory, you may pray with confidence—and you may even spend the last breath in your body in praying for it! Give the Lord no rest and take no rest, yourself, but incessantly, perpetually, continually plead with God till He answers you out of His holy place.

III. And so I come, in the last place, to dwell upon the third matter, which is very amazing. The charge to take no rest was notable, but here is A STILL MORE REMARKABLE CHARGE—*Give Him no rest.*" What a word is this! I speak with solemn awe! When the Lord condescends so greatly, we must be doubly reverent. Give *God* no rest? I am amazed at such a command! Come, gracious Spirit and teach me how to speak!

I see then, first, very clearly, that *importunity is here commanded.* "Give Him no rest" is our Lord's own command to us concerning the great God. I do not suppose any of you ever advised a beggar to be importunate with you. Did you ever say, "Whenever you see me go over this crossing, ask me for a penny. If I do not give you one, run after me, or call after me all the way down the street. If that does not succeed, lay hold upon me and do not let me go until I help you. Beg without ceasing." Did any of you ever invite applicants to call often and make large requests of you? Oh, no! Importunity is a common enough thing when men are seeking *earthly* gifts, but it is so sadly rare in *heavenly* concerns, that the Lord has to exhort us to be importunate with Him! He does, in effect, say, "Press Me! Urge Me! Lay hold on My strength! Wrestle with Me, as when a man seeks to give another a fall that he may prevail with him." All this, and much more, is included in the expression, "Give Him no rest." Importunity is *commanded!*

Importunity is influential with God. How vividly the Savior sets this forth in His parables! The poor widow seeks justice of an unrighteous judge. She had a good case and she appeared in court begging for justice, where she might expect it. She cried, "My Lord, hear my suit!" She meets with no response—the harsh magistrate declares that he cannot attend to her. The court is occupied with other cases. At the first pause the widow is heard crying, "My Lord, there is now an interval! Will you hear me?" She is sternly refused. Another day she appears, and another, and another—her case is urgent, and she is in terrible earnest to be heard. She is put out of the court, over and over. Then the order is given that she shall be *kept* out. But she gets in, somehow, and her voice, so touching and piercing, is heard in season and out of season, seeking to be delivered from her ad-

versary. Just as the court is closing she cries, "My Lord!" and is answered, "Have not I told you many times before that I cannot attend to you?" "But, my Lord!" He turns on his heels and is gone to his home.

The next morning, when he comes forth from his gate, there is the widow. She cries, "My Lord!" With a curse he spurns her. He goes down to the court and he takes his seat. You see "His Excellency" on the bench with his officers around him—a very great personage is he! The first thing he hears is, "My Lord, I pray you, avenge me of my adversary!" "That woman again! Let her be removed. Go on with the next case." All day long, whenever there is a pause, or when His Lordship rises to retire, there is the same bitter wail, "O my Lord, hear me, I pray you!" The widow haunts him! He dreams about the sad-faced woman with the uplifted finger, and the cry, "Hear me, my Lord! Hear me!" The next morning it is no dream. He is at breakfast when the servant says, "A person begs to see you, Sir. She has been at the door very often and she will not go away." "What is she like?" "Well, it is a woman dressed in mourning—no doubt a widow." "Drive her away! She is a common nuisance!"

He goes to the court and there is the woman—and she begins again. Then the judge says to himself, "Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." The Lord puts that woman's importunity before us as a model and as an encouragement! "And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him?" Pray like that widow. Do not take, "No," for an answer!

Study that other picture. A man has a friend who arrives at his door in the dead of night. The friend has been walking a long, long way and is worn out. When he gets to the door, he says, "I am glad I have got here at last. I lost my way in the burning heat of the sun and it has taken me many hours to find the track and reach your door. Give me, I pray you, a morsel of bread, for I am near to die of hunger." "I have not a morsel in the house. I have nothing to set before you. Come in and try to sleep, for food I have none." "Alas, I could not sleep, I am so faint with hunger. I pray you, find me food, or I shall perish." The compassionate householder resolves to go down the street to a friend and beg from *him*, three cakes. He knocks at the door, but he has no answer. He knocks, and knocks, and calls aloud to his neighbor. The answer comes from the top of the roof that the man is in bed and cannot rise at that unearthly hour to search for bread.

The householder is not to be put off, for his friend is dying of hunger. And so he knocks and shouts, and ceases not. The man in bed on the roof tries to sleep, but the noise is too great, and the children are being frightened and asking what is the matter. He hears the pleadings of his friend and again reminds him that the request is unreasonable at such an hour. But this does not end the matter. Knock! Knock! Knock! Call! Call! Call! "I will not go down!" vows the man in bed. "I will not go away!" says the man below! He keeps up an incessant shout and clatter. Again you hear knock! Knock! Knock! The man has turned on the other side and tried to go to sleep, but he cannot manage it—that knocking is too vigorous. Although he will not help him because he is his friend, "yet because of his importu-

nity he will rise and give him as many as he needs.” Pray after this manner and you shall prevail! Oh, for Grace to knock till God’s door is opened! You may have what you will if you understand the art of importunity!

“Give Him no rest!” Importunity would not have been commanded had it not been right for us and prevalent with God! How safely may we commend what the Lord commands! God is to be moved by the importunate prayers of His people. He will hear! He *must* hear, if we will pray with persistent faith!

Importunity on our part is the sign of coming action on God’s part. Sometimes the Lord seems, according to Old Testament figure, to put His right hand into His bosom. We cry to Him, “O Lord, how long?” But His right hand is still in His bosom. Error prevails, sin triumphs, God’s people are despised—but His right hand is still in His bosom. Take no rest from prayer and give Him no rest! Before long He will pluck His right hand out of His bosom and He will roll up His sleeve and you will see what His bare arm can do! He will work as soon as He sees that His time is come and that will be when we are in earnest and give Him no rest!

Sometimes God’s work goes on so well that we have much cause for gratitude and yet we feel that the pace might be greatly quickened. A sermon that could save a hundred could as readily save a thousand if God blessed it to that extent. The same Truth of God which sways one mind could sway a million minds if applied by the Great Spirit. There is no reason why the sowing of the Lord’s Word should not bring forth a hundred-fold instead of twenty-fold. We may not *dream* that the Spirit of the Lord is straitened! When God is with us, all things are possible. When the Lord fires His saints with zeal, His own work never lags behind. God is never behind the desires of His people—in fact, their longings are prophecies of His giving. When we cry day and night, God will work day and night. When saints groan and sigh for revival, it is because the revival is *already come and has begun within their souls!* When the whole company of the faithful shall glow together with passionate desire and importunate prayer, we may know that our redemption draws near!

Importunate prayer is the sign of a growing work. The sighs and cries of the Church are growing pains. Prayer is the thermometer of Divine Grace. The Lord has committed His Divine Force, in a large degree, to the custody of His people. Unbelief shuts up that Force—as it is written, “He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” Faith, on the other hand, sets the sacred Force free, for, “all things are possible to him that believes.” When saints are all alive and instant in prayer, it is the index and token that the Lord will open the windows of Heaven and pour them out such a blessing that they shall not have room enough to receive it!

I have done when I have urged you, my well-beloved Friends, to take this text as a lesson to be practiced. This first sermon on my return ought to be the keynote of this year’s service of God. Have you a mind for great Grace and grand enterprises? Or do you prefer to slacken? I hope you will not hesitate, or choose the meaner part. Does the Lord put it into the heart of one and another to feel an agony concerning the unconverted? Do some of you feel a deep concern for the souls of others? Does this happen

to you that teach in the Sunday school, or who go out to the lodging houses? Is this state of mind prevailing among the officers of the Church? Is this the condition of a large proportion of private members? Then a grand future lies before us! If God gives all of us to travail for souls, we shall see greater things than these! Brothers and Sisters, we hold the Truth of God! If we had wickedly departed from the way of the Lord, all the praying in the world would have brought us no spiritual progress! But holding fast the everlasting Gospel, what is now needed is the fire from Heaven to fall upon our altar and consume the sacrifice! Oh, for the Holy Spirit! Oh, for the working of God, Himself, in our midst!

I exhort you who fear the Lord and are His appointed remembrancers, to be much in prayer and in testimony. Pray and preach! Keep not silent! Tell out the simple Gospel! The more you tell of pardon bought with blood, the better. I saw my dear Brother, Archibald Brown, this week, and he told me of a poor fellow in East London who had been visited by a soul-winning Brother. He had been a wild and wicked man. He was ill and the visitor talked long with him. It seemed to make no impression, till one day he explained Substitution to him and the man asked pointedly, "If I believe in Jesus, do you tell me that He took all my sins upon Himself?" "Yes, he bore all your sins in His own body on the tree." "Well, well," the man cried, "if *He* took them, I have not got them." "No," said the other, "that is the glorious Truth of God. The Lord suffered for your sins." "Then I shall not have to suffer for them?" "No," said the visitor. "Your sin is put away." "Never heard that before," said the rough man. "That is the most wonderful thing I ever heard. I believe it! Blessed be God, I believe it and I am saved!" Soon after his son came in—another fellow of the Bill Sykes [Fictitious character in Charles Dickens' "Oliver Twist."—EOD] order and the visitor began exhorting him. The older man cried out, "Give him that little bit! That will do it!"

Just so, "that little bit will do it." The visitor told the story of Jesus dying in the sinner's place and the little bit did the work! Our chief business should be to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." We must bid men look to Jesus and live! Keep not silent! Publish this salvation far and wide! Preach the Cross and plead the blood! Preach and pray for Jesus! He is All in All. Keep His Sacrifice to the front and God will bless His own Word! Oh, that He may now grant us a glorious period of genuine Grace-work! Amen.

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A MIGHTY SAVIOR

NO. 111

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 4, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Mighty to save.”
Isaiah 63:1.***

This, of course, refers to our blessed Lord Jesus Christ who is described as “coming from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah.” And who, when questioned who He is, replies, “I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” It will be well, then, at the commencement of our discourse, to make one or two remarks concerning the mysteriously complex Person of the Man and God whom we call our Redeemer—Jesus Christ our Savior. It is one of the mysteries of the Christian religion that we are taught to believe that Christ is God and yet a Man. According to Scripture, we hold that He is “very *God*,” equal and co-eternal with the Father, possessing, as His Father does, all Divine attributes in an infinite degree. He participated with His Father in all the acts of His Divine might. He was concerned in the decree of Election, in the fashioning of the Covenant, in the creation of the angels, in the making of the world when it was wheeled from nothing into space and in the ordering of this fair frame of Nature. Before any of these acts, the Divine Redeemer was the eternal Son of God. “From everlasting to everlasting He is God.” Nor did He cease to be God when He became Man. He was equally “God over all, blessed forever more,” when He was “the Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief,” as before His Incarnation. We have abundant proof of that in the constant affirmations of Scripture and, indeed, also in the miracles which He worked. The raising of the dead, the treading of the billows of the ocean, the hushing of the winds and the rending of the rocks—all those marvelous acts of His—which we have not time here to mention, were strong and potent proofs that He is God! He is most truly God, even when He condescended to be Man. And Scripture most certainly teaches us that He is God, now, that He shares the Throne of His Father—that He sits “high above all principalities and powers and every name that is named”—and is the true and proper Object of the veneration, the worship and the homage of all worlds.

We are equally taught to believe that He is *Man*. Scripture informs us that, on a day appointed, He came from Heaven and did become Man as

well as God, taking upon Himself the nature of a Baby in the manger of Bethlehem. From that Baby, we are told, He did grow to the stature of manhood and became “bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh,” in everything except our sin. His sufferings, His hunger—above all His death and burial—are strong proofs that He was Man, most truly Man, and yet it is demanded of us by the Christian religion to believe that while He was Man, He was most truly God. We are taught that He was a “Child born, a Son given,” and at the same time, the “Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father.” Whoever would have a clear and right view of Jesus must not mingle His Natures. We must not consider Him as a God diluted into deified manhood, or as a mere man officially exalted to the Godhead but as being two distinct Natures in one Person. Not God melted into man, nor man made into God but Man and God taken into union together. And, therefore, we trust in Him as the Mediator, Son of God and Son of Man. This is the Person who is our Savior. It is this glorious yet mysterious Being, of whom the text speaks, when it says, He is mighty—“mighty to save.”

That He is mighty, we need not inform you, for as readers of the Scriptures you all believe in the might and majesty of the Incarnate Son of God. You believe Him to be the Regent of Providence, the King of death, the Conqueror of Hell, the Lord of angels, the Master of storms and the God of battles and, therefore, you need no proof that He is mighty. The subject of this morning is one part of His mightiness—He is “mighty to save.” May God the Holy Spirit help us in briefly entering upon this subject and make use of it to the salvation of our souls!

First, we shall consider that *what is meant by the words, “to save.”* Secondly, *how we prove the fact that He is mighty to save.* Thirdly, *the reason why He is “mighty to save.”* And then, fourthly, *the inferences which are to be deduced from the Doctrine that Jesus Christ is “mighty to save.”*

I. First, then, WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE WORDS, “TO SAVE”?

Commonly, most men, when they read these words, consider them to mean salvation from Hell. They are partially correct, but the notion is highly defective. It is true Christ does save men from the penalty of their guilt. He does take those to Heaven who deserve the eternal wrath and displeasure of the Most High. It is true that He does blot out “iniquity, transgression and sin” and that the iniquities of the remnant of His people are passed over for the sake of His blood and Atonement. But that is not the whole meaning of the words, “to save.” This deficient explanation lies at the root of mistakes which many theologians have made and by which they have surrounded their system of divinity with mist. They

have said that to save is to pluck men as brands from the burning—to save them from destruction—*if they repent*. Now, it means vast, I had almost said, infinitely more than this! “To save” means something more than just delivering penitents from going down to Hell. By the words, “to save,” I understand the whole of the great work of salvation, from the first holy *desire*, the first spiritual *conviction*, onward to complete *sanctification*! All this is done of God through Jesus Christ. Christ is not only mighty to save those who repent, but He is able to *make men repent*! He is engaged not merely to carry those to Heaven who believe, but He is mighty to give men new hearts and to work faith in them. He is mighty not merely to give Heaven to one who wishes for it, but He is mighty to make the man who hates holiness, love it, to constrain the despiser of His name to bend his knee before Him and to make the most abandoned reprobate turn from the error of his ways!

By the words, “to save,” I do not understand how some men define them! They tell us that Christ came into the world to put all men into a “salvable state”—to make the salvation of all men possible by their own exertions. I believe that Christ came for no such thing—that He came into the world not to put men into a *salvable* state but into a *saved* state! Not to put them where they could save *themselves*, but to do the work in them and for them, from the first even to the last! If I believe that Christ came only to put you, my Hearers, and myself into a state where we might save ourselves, I should give up preaching henceforth and forever, for I know a little of the wickedness of men’s hearts because I know something of my own—I know how much men naturally hate the religion of Christ! I would despair of any success in preaching a Gospel which effects depended upon the voluntary acceptance of it by unrenewed and unregenerate men! If I did not believe that there was a might going forth with the Word of Jesus which makes men willing in the day of His power—which turns them from the error of their ways by the mighty, overwhelming compelling force of a Divine and mysterious influence—I would cease to glory in the Cross of Chris! Christ, we repeat, is mighty not merely to put men into a salvable condition. but absolutely and entirely mighty to *save* them! This fact I regard as one of the grandest proofs of the Divine Character of the Bible Revelation. I have many a time had doubts and fears, as most of you have had—and where is the strong Believer who has not sometimes wavered? I have said within myself, “Is this religion true, which, day after day I incessantly preach to the people? Is it the correct one? Is it true that this religion has an influence upon mankind?” And I will tell you how I have reassured myself. I have looked upon the hundreds, no, upon the thousands whom I have around me

who were once the vilest of the vile—drunks, swearers and such like—and I now see them “clothed and in their right mind,” walking in holiness and in the fear of God. And I have said within myself, “This must be the Truth of God, then, because I see its marvelous effects.” It is true because it is efficient for purposes which error never could accomplish! It exerts an influence among the lowest order of mortals and over the most abominable of our race. It is a power, an irresistible agent of good—who then shall deny it? I take it that the highest proof of Christ’s power is not that He *offers* salvation, not that He bids you take it if you will, but that when you reject it, when you hate it, when you despise it, He has a power whereby He can *change your mind*, make you think differently from your former thoughts and turn you from the error of your ways! This I conceive to be the meaning of the text—“mighty to save.”

But it is not all the meaning! Our Lord is not only mighty to make men repent, to quicken the dead in sin, to turn them from their follies and their iniquities—He is exalted to do more than that! He is mighty to *keep them* Christians after He has made them so and mighty to preserve them in His fear and love until He consummates their spiritual existence in Heaven! Christ’s might does not lie in making a Believer and then leaving him to shift for himself afterwards. No, He who begins the good work carries it on! He who imparts the first germ of life which quickens the dead soul, gives afterwards the life which prolongs the Divine existence and bestows that mighty power which at last bursts asunder every bond of sin and lands the soul perfected in Heaven! We hold and teach and we believe upon Scriptural authority that all men unto whom Christ has given repentance must Infallibly hold in their way! We believe that God never begins a good work in a man without finishing it. We believe that He never makes a man truly alive to spiritual things without carrying on that work in his soul even to the end by giving him a place among the choirs of the sanctified. We do not think that Christ’s power dwells in merely bringing me one day into Grace and then telling me to keep myself there, but in so putting me into a gracious state and giving me such an inward life and such a power within myself that I can no more turn back than the very sun in the Heavens can stay itself in its course, or cease to shine! Beloved, we regard this as signified by the term, “mighty to save.” This is commonly called Calvinistic Doctrine—it is none other than Christian Doctrine—the Doctrine of the holy Bible. In spite of the fact that it is now called Calvinism, it could not be so called in Augustine’s days. And yet in Augustine’s works you find the very same things! And it is not to be called Augustinism, for it is to be found in the writings of the Apostle Paul! And yet it was not called Paulism simply for this rea-

son—it is the expansion, the fullness of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! To repeat what we have said before—we hold and boldly teach that Jesus Christ is not merely able to save men who put themselves in His way and who are willing to be saved, but that He is able to make men willing—that He is able to make the drunk renounce his drunkenness and come to Him—that he is able to make the despiser bend his knees, and make hard hearts melt before His love. Now, it is ours to show that He is able to do so.

II. HOW CAN WE PROVE THAT CHRIST IS “MIGHTY TO SAVE”?

We will give you the strongest argument first. And we shall need but one. The argument is that He has done it! We need no other. It were superfluous to add another. He has saved men! He has saved them in the full extent and meaning of the word which we have endeavored to explain. But in order to set this Truth in a clear light, we will suppose the worst of cases. It is very easy to imagine, some say, that when Christ's Gospel is preached to some here who are amiable and lovely and have always been trained up in the fear of God, they will receive the Gospel in the love of it. Very well, then, we will not take such a case.

You see this South Sea Islander? He has just been eating a diabolical meal of human flesh. He is a cannibal! On his belt are slung the scalps of men whom he has murdered and in whose blood he glories. If you land on the coast, he will eat you, too, unless you mind what you are doing! That man bows himself before a block of wood. He is a poor ignorant debased creature—very little removed from the brute animal. Now, has Christ's Gospel power to tame that man, to take the scalps from his belt, to make him give up his bloody practices, renounce his gods and become a civilized and Christian? You know, my dear Friends, you talk about the power of education in England. There may be a great deal in it—education may do very much for some who are here—not in a spiritual, but in a natural way. But what would education do with this savage? Go and try! Send the best schoolmaster in England over to him—he will eat him before the day is up! That will be all the good of it. But if the missionary goes with Christ's Gospel, what will become of him? Why, in multitudes of cases, he has been the pioneer of civilization and, under the Providence of God, has escaped a cruel death. He goes with love in his hands and in his eyes. He speaks to the savage. And mark you, we are now telling facts, not dreams! The savage drops his tomahawk. He says, “It is marvelous. The things that this man tells me are wonderful. I will sit down and listen.” He listens and the tears roll down his cheeks. A feeling of humanity which never burned within his soul, before, is kindled in him. He says, “I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ” and soon he is

clothed and in his right mind and becomes in every respect a man—such a man as we could desire all men to be! Now we say that this is proof that Christ’s Gospel does not come to the mind that is prepared for it, but *prepares the mind for itself*. Christ does not merely put the seed into the ground that has been prepared beforehand, but plows the ground, too—yes, and harrows it and does the whole of the work! He is able to do all this. Ask our missionaries who are in Africa in the midst of the greatest barbarians in the world—ask them whether Christ’s Gospel is able to save! They will point to the kraal of the Hottentot and then they will point to the houses of the Kuraman and they will say, “What has made this difference but the Word of the Gospel of Christ Jesus?” Yes, dear Brothers and Sisters, we have had proofs enough in heathen countries. And we need say no more but merely to add this—we have had proofs enough at home!

There are some who preach a Gospel which is very well fitted to train man in morals, but utterly unfit to save him. They preach a Gospel which does well enough to keep men sober when they have become drunkards. It is a good thing enough to supply them with a kind of life when they have it already—but not to quicken the dead and save the soul—and it can give up to despair the very characters whom Christ’s Gospel was most of all intended to affect. I could tell you of some who have plunged head-first into the blackest gulfs of sin which would horrify you and me, if we would allow them to recount their guilt. I could tell you how they have come into God’s House with their teeth set against the minister—determined that say what he would, they might listen but it would only be to scoff! They stayed a moment. Some word arrested their attention. They thought within themselves, “I will hear that sentence.” It was some pointed, terse saying that entered into their souls. They knew not how it was, but they were spell-bound and stood to listen a little longer. And, by-and-by, unconsciously to themselves, the tears began to fall and when they went away they had a strange, mysterious feeling about them that led them to their chambers. Down they fell on their knees! The story of their life was all told before God. He gave them peace through the blood of the Lamb and they went to God’s House, many of them, to say, “Come and hear what God has done for my soul,” and to—

“Tell to sinners round

What a dear Savior they had found.”

Remember the case of John Newton, the great and mighty preacher—an instance of the power of God to change the heart, as well as to give peace when the heart is changed. Ah, dear Hearers, I often think within myself, “This is the greatest proof of the Savior’s power.” Let another Doctrine be

preached—will it do the same? If it will, why not let every man gather a crowd round him and preach it? Will it really do it? If it will, then the blood of men's souls must rest upon the man who does not boldly proclaim it! If he believes his Gospel saves souls, how does he account for it that he stands in his pulpit from the first of January till the last of December and never hears of a harlot made honest, nor of a drunk reclaimed? Why? For this reason—that it is a poor dilution of Christianity! It is something like it, but it is not the bold, broad Christianity of the Bible! It is not the full Gospel of the blessed God, for *that* has power to save! But if they do believe that theirs is the Gospel, let them preach it and let them strive with all their might to win souls from sin. We say again that we have proof positive in cases even here before us, that Christ is mighty to save even the worst of men and women—to turn them from follies in which they have too long indulged! And we believe that the same Gospel preached elsewhere would produce the same results.

The best proof you can ever have of God's being mighty to save, dear Hearers, is that He saved *you*. Ah, my dear Hearer, it were a miracle if He would save the fellow that stands by your side. But it were more a miracle if He would save you! What are you this morning? "I am an infidel," says one, "I hate and despise Christ's religion." But suppose, Sir, there should be such a power in that religion that one day you should be brought to believe it? What would you say, then? Ah, I know you would be in love with that Gospel forever, for you would say, "I, above all men, was the last to receive it. And yet here I am, I know not how, brought to love it." Oh, such a man, when compelled to believe, makes the most eloquent preacher in the world! "Ah, but," says another, "I have been a Sabbath-breaker upon principle. I despise the Sabbath! I utterly and entirely hate everything religious." Well, I can never prove religion to you to be true unless it would ever lay hold of you and make you a new man. Then you will say there is something in it. "We speak what we do know and testify that we have seen." When we have felt the change it works in ourselves, then we speak of facts and not of fancies and we speak very boldly, too! We say again, then, He is "mighty to save."

III. But now it is asked, "WHY IS CHRIST MIGHTY TO SAVE"? To this there are many answers.

First, if we understand the word, "save," in the popular acceptance of the word, which is not, after all, the full one, though a true one—if we understand salvation to mean the pardon of sin and salvation from Hell—Christ is mighty to save *because of the infinite efficacy of His atoning blood*. Sinner! Black as you are with sin, Christ this morning is able to make you whiter than the driven snow! You ask why? I will tell you.

He is able to forgive because He has been punished for your sin. If you know and feel yourself to be a sinner. If you have no hope or refuge before God but in Christ, then be it known that Christ is able to forgive you because He was once punished for the very sins which you have committed and, therefore, He can freely remit because the punishment has been entirely paid by Himself! Whenever I get on this subject, I am tempted to tell a story. And though I have told it times enough in the hearing of many of you, others of you have never heard it and it is the simplest way I know of setting out the belief I have in the Atonement of Christ. Once a poor Irishman came to me in my vestry. He announced himself something in this way—"Your Reverence, I'm come to ask you a question." "In the first place," said I, "I am not a 'Reverend,' nor do I claim the title. And in the next place, why don't you go and ask your priest the question?" Said he, "Well, Your Rev—Sir, I meant—I did go to him but he did not answer me exactly to my satisfaction. So I have come to ask you and if you will answer this, you will set my mind at peace, for I am much disturbed about it." "What is the question?" I said. "Why this. You say and others say, too, that God is able to forgive sin. Now, I can't see how He can be just and yet forgive sin—for," said this poor man, "I have been so greatly guilty that if God Almighty does not punish me, He *ought*. I feel that He would not be Just if He were to allow me to go without punishment. How, then, Sir, can it be true that He can forgive and still remain the title of Just?" "Well," I said, "it is through the blood and merits of Jesus Christ." "Ah" he said, "but then I do not understand what you mean by that. It is the kind of answer I got from the priest, but I wanted him to explain it to me more fully—how it was that the blood of Christ could make God Just. You say it does, but I want to know *how*."

"Well, then," said I, "I will tell you what I think to be the whole system of Atonement—which I think is the sum and substance, the root, the marrow and the essence of all the Gospel. This is the way Christ is able to forgive. Suppose," I said, "you had killed someone. You were a murderer. You were condemned to die and you deserved it." "Faith," he said, "yes, I would deserve it." "Well, her Majesty is very desirous of saving your life and yet, at the same time, universal justice demands that someone should die on account of the deed that is done. Now, how is she to manage?" He replied, "That is the question! I cannot see how she can be inflexibly just and yet allow me to escape." "Well," I said, "suppose I should go to her and say, 'Here is this poor Irishman. He deserves to be hanged, your Majesty. I don't want to quarrel with the sentence because I think it just. But, if you please, I so love him that if you were to hang *me* instead of him, I would be very willing.' Now, suppose she should agree

to it and hang me instead of you, what then? Would she be just in letting you go?" "Yes" he said, "I should think she would. Would she hang two for one thing? I should say not. I'd walk away and there isn't a policeman that would touch me for it." "Ah," I said, "that is how Jesus saves! 'Father,' Jesus said, 'I love these poor sinners. Let Me suffer instead of them!' 'Yes,' said God, 'You shall.' And on the Cross Jesus died and suffered the punishment which all His elect people ought to have suffered. So that now all who believe on Him, thus proving themselves to be His chosen, may conclude that He was punished for them and that, therefore, they can never be punished." "Well," he said, looking me in the face once more, "I understand what you mean. But how is it, if Christ died for all men, that notwithstanding, some men are punished again? For that is unjust." "Ah," I said, "I never told you that! I said to you that Jesus has died for all who believe on Him and all who repent. He was punished for *their* sins so absolutely and so really, that none of them shall ever be punished again." "Faith," said the man, clapping his hands, "*that's* the Gospel! If it isn't, then I don't know anything, for no man could have made that up, it is so wonderful. Ah," he said, as he went down the stairs, "I'm safe now, with all my sins about me, I'll trust in the Man that died for me and so I shall be saved!" Dear Hearer, Christ is mighty to save because God did not turn away the sword, but He sheathed it in His own Son's heart! He did not remit the debt, for it was paid in drops of precious blood! And now the great receipt is nailed to the Cross and our sins with it so that we may go free if we are Believers in Him! For this reason He is "mighty to save," in the truest sense of the word.

But in the larger sense of the word, understanding it to mean all that I have said it does mean, He is "mighty to save." How is it that Christ is able to make men repent, to make men believe and to make them turn to God? One answers, "Why by the eloquence of preachers." God forbid we should ever say that! It is "not by might nor by power." Others reply, "It is by the force of moral persuasion." God forbid we should say, "yes," to that! Moral persuasion has been tried long enough on man and yet it has failed miserably! How does He do it? We answer, by something which some of you despise but which, nevertheless, is a fact. He does it by the Omnipotent influence of His Divine Spirit. While men are hearing the Word (in those whom God will save) the Holy Spirit works repentance. He changes the heart and renews the soul. True, the preaching is the *instrument*, but the Holy Spirit is the great Agent! It is certain that the Truth of God is the means of saving, but it is the Holy Spirit applying the Truth which saves souls. Ah, and with this power of the Holy Spirit we may go to the most debased and degraded of men and we need not be

afraid but that God can save them! If God should please, the Holy Spirit could at this moment make every one of you fall on your knees, confess your sins and turn to God. He is an Almighty Spirit, able to do wonders! In the life of Whitefield we read that sometimes under one of his sermons, 2,000 persons would at once profess to be saved and were really so, many of them. We ask why it was? At other times he preached just as powerfully and not one soul was saved. Why? Because in the one case the Holy Spirit went with the Word and in the other case it did not. All the Heavenly result of preaching is owing to the Divine Spirit sent from above. I am nothing! My Brothers in the ministry are all nothing! It is God who does everything! “Who is Paul? Who is Apollos and who is Cephas but ministers by whom you believed, even as God gave to every man.” It must be, “not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit, says the Lord.” Go forth, poor minister! You have no power to preach with polished diction and elegant refinement. Go and preach as you can! The Spirit can make your feeble words more mighty than the most ravishing eloquence! Alas, alas, for oratory! Alas for eloquence! It has long enough been tried. We have had polished periods and finely turned sentences. But in what places have the people been saved by them? We have had grand and gaudy language. But where have hearts been renewed? But now, “by the foolishness of preaching,” by the simple utterance by a child, of God’s Word, He is pleased to save them who believe and to save sinners from the error of their way!. May God prove His Word again this morning!

IV. The fourth point is, WHAT ARE THE INFERENCES TO BE DERIVED FROM THE FACT THAT JESUS CHRIST IS MIGHTY TO SAVE?

Why, first, there is a fact for ministers to learn—that they should endeavor to preach in faith, nothing wavering. “O God,” cries the minister at times, when he is on his knees, “I am weak. I have preached to my hearers and have wept over them. I have groaned for them. But they will not turn to You. Their hearts are like the nether mill-stone. They will not weep for sin, nor will they love the Savior.” Then I think I see the angel standing at his elbow and whispering in his ear, “*You* are weak, but *He* is strong. You can do nothing, but *He* is ‘mighty to save.’” Think about this. It is not the *instrument* but the God! It is not the pen wherewith the author writes which is to have the praise for his wisdom in composing the volume—it is the brain that thinks it and the hand that moves the pen. So in salvation. It is not the minister, it is not the preacher—but the God who first designs the salvation and afterwards uses the preacher to work it out. Ah, poor disconsolate Preacher, if you have had but little fruit of your ministry, still go on in faith, remembering it is written, “My Word

shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Go on! Be of good courage. God shall help you. He shall help you and that right early!

Again—here is another encouragement for praying men and women who are praying to God for their friends. Mother, you have been groaning for your son for many years. He is now grown up and has left your roof but your prayers have not been heard. So you think. He is as merry as ever. Not yet has he made your breast rejoice. Sometimes you think he will bring your gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. It was but yesterday you said, "I will give him up, I will never pray for him again." Stop, mother, stop! By all that is holy and that is heavenly, stop! Utter not that resolution again! Begin once more! You have prayed over him. You did weep over his infant forehead when he lay in his cradle. You did teach him, when he came to years of understanding, and you have often warned him since. But all to no avail. Oh, give not up your prayers—remember—Christ is "mighty to save." It may be that He waits to be gracious and He keeps you waiting that you may know more of His graciousness when the mercy comes! But pray on. I have heard of mothers who have prayed for their children 20 years. Yes, and of some who have died without seeing them converted—and then their very death has been the means of saving their children by leading them to think! A father once had been a pious man for many years, yet never had he the happiness of seeing one of his sons converted. He had his children round his bed and he said to them when dying, "My sons, I could die in peace if I could but believe you would follow me to Heaven. But this is the most sorrowful thing of all—not that I am dying—but that I am leaving you to meet you no more." They looked at him, but they would not think on their ways. They went away.

Their father was suddenly overtaken with great clouds and darkness of mind. Instead of dying peacefully and happily, he died in great misery of soul, but still trusting in Christ. He said when he died, "Oh, that I had died a happy death, for that would have been a testimony to my sons. But now, O God, this darkness and these clouds have in some degree taken away my power to witness to the Truth of Your religion." Well, he died and was buried. The sons came to the funeral. The day after, one of them said to his brother, "Brother, I have been thinking. Father was always a pious man and if his death was yet such a gloomy one, how gloomy must ours be, without God and without Christ?" "Ah," said the other, "that thought struck me, too." They went up to God's House, heard God's Word. They came home and bent their knees in prayer and to their surprise they found that the rest of the family had done the same and

that the God who had never answered the father's prayer in his life had answered it after his death! And by his death, too, and by such a death as would appear to be most unlikely to have worked the conversion of any! Pray on, then, my Sister. Pray on, my Brother! God shall yet bring your sons and daughters to His love and fear. And you shall rejoice over them in Heaven, if you never do on earth.

And finally, my dear Hearers, there are many of you here this morning who have no love to God, no love to Christ. But you have a desire in your hearts to love Him. You are saying, "Oh, can He save *me*? Can such a wretch as I be saved?" In the thick of the crowd there you are standing and you are now saying within yourself, "May I one day sing among the saints above? May I have all my sins blotted out by blood Divine?" Yes, Sinner, He is "mighty to save." And this is comfort for you! Do you think yourself the worst of men? Does conscience smite you as with a mailed fist and does he say it is all over with you? You will be lost? Your repentance will be of no avail? Your prayers never will be heard? You are lost to all intents and purposes? My Hearer, think not so. He is "mighty to save." If you cannot pray, He can help you to do it. If you can not repent, He can give you repentance. If you feel it hard to believe, He can help you to believe, for He is exalted on high to give repentance as well as to give remission of sins. O poor Sinner, trust in Jesus! Cast yourself on Him! Cry and may God help you to do it now, the first Sabbath of the year. May He help you this very day to cast your soul on Jesus. And this will be one of the best years of all your life. "Turn you, turn you! Why will you die, O house of Israel?" Turn unto Jesus, you wearied souls. Come unto Him, for lo, He bids you come! "The Spirit and the bride say come. And let him who hears say come. And whoever will, let him come and take of the Water of Life," and have Christ's Grace freely! It is preached to you and to all of you who are willing to receive it, it has already been given!

May God of His Grace make you willing and so save your souls, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior! Amen.

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

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

GOD FIGHTING SIN

NO. 2179

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
DECEMBER 28, 1890.**

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

***“But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit; therefore He was
turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them.”
Isaiah 63:10.***

THIS is a terrible case. When God is turned to be a man's enemy and fights against him, he is in a desperate plight. With other enemies we may contend with some hope of success, but not with the Omnipotent. The enmity of others is an affliction, but the enmity of God is destruction. If He turns to be our enemy, then everything is turned against us. The stars in their courses fight against us and the stones in the fields are in league for our stumbling. “If God is for us, who can be against us?” But if God is against us, who can be for us? The words read like a funeral knell—“He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them.”

This shows us that *God is not indifferent to sin.* Men may try to persuade themselves that God does not care—that it is nothing to Him how men act—whether they break or keep His Laws. Men plead that He is “kind to the unthankful and to the evil,” and the same event happens to all, both to the righteous and to the wicked. And so, indeed, it seems for the present. Our shortsightedness may even assure us that the ungodly prosper and have the best of it—but this is only our blindness. God hates sin now and always! He would not be God if He did not. God is stirred with righteous indignation against every kind of evil—it moves His Spirit to anger.

Some believe in an impassive God, but certainly the God of the Bible is never so described. He is represented in Holy Scripture after the manner of men, but how else could He be represented to men? If He were represented after the manner of God, you and I could understand nothing at all of the description—but as He is represented to us in Scripture—the Lord notes sin, feels sin, grows angry with sin, is provoked and His Holy Spirit is vexed by the rebellion of men. Let me read the solemn text again—“But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit; therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them.”

God is always the same, but His acts vary. He changes not and yet He is represented in our text as *turning*. He turns in His *actions* though He does not turn in His *purposes*. He often wills a change though He never changes His will. He is always the same God, but He does not always show us the same side of His Character. Sometimes He manifests mercy, at other times justice—He is as much God in the one case as in the other. At one time He makes a world. At another time He destroys it—but He is

the same Jehovah. A change in His outward dispensation does not argue any change in His inward disposition. He is an unchanging God of whom we read, "He was turned to be their enemy."

Having said these two or three things as a helpful commencement, I would invite you to consider this remarkably impressive verse with very great reverence and awe. May the Holy Spirit help us! The current idea, *now*, is, "Never preach anything that is dreadful or terrible. If you do, you will earn as bad a character as Spurgeon." Now, I am not ashamed, in the least degree, to have a bad character for preaching against the evil of sin and declaring the sure punishment of it. What have I to gain by such preaching? Shall I get the applause of men?

No, the whole current of this generation's liking rushes the other way! Let the preacher tell men that they may live as they like and that it will be all right in the long run, and that will please them. Universal salvation is a very popular doctrine among the "cultured" folk. I want none of your popularity! I will preach to you, as long as this tongue moves in my head, God's Truth, whether it offends or pleases! And the day shall declare who best loved your souls—those who could flatter, or those who spoke the unpalatable Truth of God.

Our text has in it very little, apparently, that may minister comfort to anybody and yet my persuasion is that if, with reverent heart, you lend your ear to what it teaches, it will lead you into a surer comfort than you will ever find in the philosophies of men, yes—it will bring your conscience into a state of rest with God for which you will bless God as long as you live!

I. First, MY TEXT BELONGS TO THE LORD'S OWN OFFENDING CHILDREN. Let me try to find them out and lay this text home to them. There are some of God's own people—really converted, saved people—who have, nevertheless, degenerated into such a state of sin that the Lord is turned to be their enemy! If you read this chapter, you will see that it is so. Let me begin at the seventh verse. "I will mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has bestowed on them according to His mercies, and according to the multitude of His loving kindnesses. For He said, Surely they are My people, children that will not lie: so He was their Savior. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His Presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit; therefore He was turned to be their enemy."

See, dear Friends—once they were on the lap of love, once they lay in the bosom of favor, once they knew the sympathy of Christ, once they could sing of loving kindnesses and a multitude of mercies—but they rebelled. Is it not a shocking thing that the favored people of God should backslide? Is it not sad that they who have eaten the bread of Heaven should hunger for the ashes of this world—that men who have lain in the bosom of Christ should, nevertheless, play the traitor to Him and provoke

His anger? Yet it is so, sadly so—we have seen it so in others. God grant that it may not be so with us!

These people, after tasting all this love and all this favor, became rebellious. He calls them “rebels.” They were not merely children that made a mistake, children that fell through folly, but “they rebelled.” Does the child of God ever get into that state? Yes, children have rebelled. David thus erred and many others have shamefully rebelled against their God. I cannot say how far a man who has tasted of the Grace of God may go in sin but, I pray you, do not experiment with it! No, let us keep as far away from sin as possible. Yet it appears that those with whom the Savior had such sympathy that in all their affliction He was afflicted, nevertheless “rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit.”

Well, then, what happened? Now we come to the text, indeed—“He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them.” This is the story in many cases. *He sends affliction.* There come upon the man’s harvest the palmer worm, the caterpillar and the canker worm. There come upon his business a blight and a blast. He cannot understand it, for where everything seemed to go well, all affairs now go amiss. All that he gets is like money poured into a bag that is full of holes. Seeing that he is a child of God and has become a rebel, he has vexed God’s Spirit—and chastisement falls upon him.

Perhaps he is brought low by a painful disease. Perhaps a dear child is taken away. Affliction comes into the family one way or another—not the affliction of Job which tried him for God’s Glory—but the affliction of Jacob who was afflicted in his family because that family had become defiled with sin. God is jealous and deals severely with His erring children. He sends them affliction, but worse than that, He turns to be their enemy and *He fights against them by withholding the comforts of the Holy Spirit.*

Oh, how they once enjoyed a sermon! It was full of Grace and the Truth of God. They do not enjoy it now.

The same preacher. Other people are edified as much as before. But they are not. Such a man goes to pray, but he feels no Spirit pleading within. He reads the Bible and it is a dead letter. He seeks the company of Christian people, but their society is dreary to him and yields no solace. God has shut up the windows of Heaven. He has made the angels cease to bring down blessings by the way of the golden ladder. God has turned to be his enemy and fights against him. I have known cases in which true people of God (I know they were the true people of God, for they have come back and they never did lose the life of God, even when they were away from Him) have come to this—that God has fought against them in their prayers and they seemed to pray like a man shouting inside a great copper caldron where every sound echoes in his ears like thunder.

I charge you that are the people of God to mind what you are doing, for God, who loves you, will deal roughly with you if you sin against Him. Remember that text, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” As I have often said, if a man saw a boy in the street breaking windows, or doing mischief, he might say very little to him. But if he was his *own* boy, he would

give him a smart blow and send him home—and so is it when the Lord catches His own children sinning. He may let the common sinner go on and sin until judgment shall be executed—but as for His own children—they cannot transgress with impunity. “He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them.”

At such times, if they still pursue any Christian career of usefulness, *they are smitten with great barrenness* and their work is without efficacy. I should greatly sorrow if my words brought bruising to the most tender of God’s people, but yet I know that it is so. If the preacher leaves his God, his God will leave him to preach in vain. If the teacher quits the Savior, the Savior will quit the teacher and leave him, or her, to fail with the children. What generally happens with a minister when God has gone? Well, instead of going to God and humbling himself and crying to Him for mercy, he resolves that he will buy a new organ! That will do the trick!

The new organ, after all, blow it as they may, does not come to much. Well, then, he will have sensational entertainments, a Sunday evening concert—fiddling, or something or other! If God will not help him, he is in the same plight as Saul, the son of Kish. He will try music first, and if that does not render him aid, he will go to the witch of Endor, now called “modern theology,” and ask assistance there! God have mercy upon us, if we ever do that! I do not wish for success in the ministry if *God* does not give it to me—and I pray that you, who are workers for God, may not wish to have any success except that which comes from God Himself in God’s own way—for if you could heap up, like the sand of the sea, converts that you had made by odd, unchristian ways, they would be gone like the sand of the sea as soon as another tide comes up.

O child of God, do not try to do without God! Do not bring in new inventions to patch up the breach that your sin has made! If the Lord turns to be your enemy and fights against you, bow before Him and confess your wrong. I leave this point when I have made solemn enquiry. Am I speaking to any Christian man or woman to whom this text is sorrowfully true? Is not sin the curse of your sorrow? I beseech you, do not trifle with this matter. It is a very solemn thing to have God fighting against you. Say to Him, “Show me why You contend with me.” But do not despair. If the Lord had meant to destroy you, He would have sternly said, “He is joined to ideas: let him alone.” To leave a man altogether alone is God’s ultimatum with the hopeless—but to flog the wanderer back to his Lord is love in a mask.

The wise man can see beneath the mask and understand that it is because God would not destroy you with the wicked that therefore He now brings you under the discipline of His family and makes you feel that sin and smart must go together in an heir of Heaven. Seek the Lord! Cry unto Him and confess your sin! The parable of the prodigal son belongs much more to you than it does to an unconverted person, for you can call God, “Father,” and you may come back to Him as a son—for you *are* His son, notwithstanding all your riotous living in the far country and all your wasting of your Father’s substance.

Arise, and go to Him at once. You know the way. Retrace it. You know your Father—fly to Him immediately. Put your head on His bosom and sob out your confession, “Father, I have sinned”—and before this present service is over, you shall receive your Lord’s full absolution and you shall feel yourself—

***“To your Father’s bosom pressed,
Once again a child confessed.
From His house no more to roam,
But with God to rest at home.”***

God will soon put away the rod when you put away the sin. If He does not stay the chastisement, you will patiently bear it and bless Him that He has forgiven you—for that is the chief thing to be thought of. As a rule, the Lord ceases to fight against the man who ceases from sin, but if He does not, prostrate yourself before Him.

There is a picture in a quaint old book which represents a man with a flail trying to strike another. The man who is assailed runs close in, so that the adversary cannot strike him. Run in upon God and He cannot strike you! What does He say? “Let him take hold of My strength; and he shall make peace with Me.” That is—go right up to God who has been smiting you, and say, “Lord, I fully submit to You. By the heart of Your compassion, I pray You, forgive me and restore me to Your love.” He has no pleasure that you should suffer—as His dear child He would have you happy. He is grieved that you should wander away from Him. Come back at once, Backslider! Come back even now! The Lord enable you to do so now, for Jesus’ sake!

II. THE TEXT IS TRUE TO THOSE WHO CANNOT SAY THAT THEY ARE THE PEOPLE OF God—who would give their eyes if they could. Many an awakened sinner feels that he has rebelled and vexed God’s Holy Spirit—and now he feels that God has turned to be his enemy and is fighting against him by sending him trouble. Yes, he was getting on splendidly and his prosperity was a snare to him. He had plenty of money and therefore he could go into every place of amusement and every haunt of vice. Now he mourns an empty pocket. Tonight he hardly knows where he is going to find lodging. He was a young gentleman once, but he has to herd with beggars, now.

Yes, many and many a man has been brought down, by lechery and drunkenness, to the lowest abyss of penury. God has turned to be his enemy, for all things fail him. He has tried to get employment and he cannot. He has worn his boots off his feet and he cannot find work. Perhaps I speak to some young woman here whose course has been far away from God and she, too, has come down in another sense. Health is gone. Alas, for that laughing girl! That hectic flush upon her cheek tells that the worm is within the fruit. Poor soul! She is sickening. She will pass away and she is still without hope.

God has turned to be her enemy, (so she thinks), and He fights against her, for the medicine is of no use to her—while other people seem to have been cured—she remains as sickly as ever. There are those here against whom God has been fighting of late and when God fights, it is not child’s

play, nor mere buffeting—He fights, indeed. Perhaps He may be fighting with some of you in this respect, that your spirits are gone. You were once as merry as a cricket. You used to count it one of the easiest things to drive dull care away. Oh, what a jolly fellow you were! And now you cannot hold up your head. An awful depression has come upon you and you cannot look up.

It may have been through a sermon—or you were all alone, thinking—and you began to feel despondent, melancholy, unhappy. God is fighting against you and in the depths of your soul you feel His frown. Or else you are in monetary difficulties. Formerly, your prosperity was your *ruin*. You could not be saved while you were rich and your ease and your carelessness had to be broken in upon. There was no saving you without burning up the bed in which you slept so securely! God is tearing to pieces all your deceitful joy and making you see the truth of matters. I should not wonder if God is fighting against some of you in another way, so that *your flimsy notions of religion are all going*.

You formerly boasted, “I can believe in the Lord Jesus Christ whenever I like and it will be all right.” You once thought it such an easy thing to believe, but you do not find it so now. You have been thinking about salvation, lately, and it is not quite such a trifling matter as you thought it was. Why, now you cry, “I cannot feel! What is worse, I cannot believe, I cannot remember! I cannot restrain myself from evil, I seem possessed by the devil! God help me, for I cannot help myself!” God does not seem to help you, but He makes you feel more of your weakness than you ever knew before—and the more you labor to be better, the worse you are. “He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them.”

In the progress of this battle you may have suffered very serious damage. There came a man into this Tabernacle, some years ago, who said, “I got spoiled one Sunday morning. I came into this Tabernacle and I thought that I was as good a man as any tradesman within 50 miles of the place.” Said he, “I went out spoiled, for I was made to confess that I was as *bad* as anybody in Newington, or within a thousand miles of the place.” That is what comes to us when God begins to fight against our self-righteousness.

I thought myself, as a child, a good and decent lad till I saw my own heart. I was a fine soldier till God came with His battle-ax, smashed in my shield and hewed away my finery. I stood there, in my own apprehension at that time, the worst youth that had ever lifted his hand against God! God makes great havoc with the trappings of self-righteousness. Our tawdry finery soon goes to pieces when the Truth of God deals with it. At such times, when God is fighting against a man, *his inward sorrows seem to increase*. His memory shouts at him, “Remember this! Remember that! Remember the other! Remember that night of sin! Remember that day of rebellion!”

His fears rise up and stalk like grim ghosts before him. His hopes that once sang sweet siren songs, now turn their sonnets into dirges. His expectations fail. The man’s thoughts are all a case of knives, cutting his soul at every point. O Sirs, when God besieges the town of Mansoul, He

sets His batteries against every gate! His artillery is turned against every part of the wall! His big shells burst in the center of the heart! The Lord is a man of war, Jehovah is His name! When He goes forth to battle, it shall be terrible for the man against whom He fights. I hear you say to me, "You are giving a very terrible description." I am not describing *everybody* that is saved. Many come to Christ very readily and simply trust in Him and live at once.

But, my Hearer, you are not of that tender sort. You would not come. A mother's tears could not persuade you. Your teacher's exhortations could not induce you. Even the gentler dealings of God could not drive or draw you and you have lived in sin till at last God has effectively taken you in hand. Your conscience is awakened—you cannot go on any longer as you now are. "Oh," says one, "I do not feel like that." Alas, I wish you did! I have to meet with a great many people of a sorrowful spirit. They are constantly seeking me out. I have known them come for many a mile to have a talk with me, for they seem to think that I know something about these wounds and bruises. They are right in their belief, although the fact causes me great labor among the sad.

Oh, dear Hearts, if God fights against you, throw down your weapons! Pull those feathers out of your caps! Down on your faces before Him! Yield, and when you have yielded He will do you no harm—He will stoop over you and lift you up—and *forgive* you! The woman taken in adultery in the presence of Christ is an example of what He will do with you, taken in the very act of rebellion against Him. The tender Savior said, "Neither do I condemn you: go, and sin no more!" Dear Soul, yield, yield, yield! Make no excuse! Offer no extenuation! Yield to the Omnipotence of God, which, in your case, will be Omnipotent *love*! He has wounded and He will heal. He has torn and He will bind you up. "The Lord kills, and makes alive: He wounds and His hands make whole."

But how can He make those alive who were never killed? You that were never wounded—you who tonight have been sitting here and smiling at your own ease—what can Mercy do for you? Do not congratulate yourselves on your peace, for at the bottom of the painful experience I have described there lies the wondrous secret that this fighting against men is fighting against their evil for their *good*, that they may be *saved*. God fights against your pride, that you may be humbled. He fights against your self-confidence, that you may be ashamed of it. And when His warfare has answered its purpose, God will be no enemy of yours, but you will find Him blotting out your sins like a cloud—and like a thick cloud your iniquities.

I leave off when I have warned you to watch carefully that you do not go into sin. It is a blessed thing to be forgiven, but it is a more blessed thing to be kept from sin! Oh, what agony, what mischief I have seen brought upon individuals and families by acts of carelessness which have afterwards led to acts of licentiousness! Steer clear of the lesser forms of sin lest you so vex the Spirit that He shall turn to be your enemy and fight against you.

III. Lastly, THIS TEXT IS A VERY DREADFUL ONE IN REFERENCE TO THOSE WHO DIE IMPENITENT. Concerning those who die impenitent, what shall we say? What ought to be the truth about them? You—I speak only, now, of those who have heard the Gospel—of such as are sitting in this Tabernacle where the warning and the promise are set before them—if you die impenitent, having willfully rejected the great sacrifice of Christ, you will die with a vengeance! Jesus Christ has died and you have refused the merit of His blood. You have willfully and wickedly done despite to the mercy of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit—and this is in addition to all your other sins!

Now, let me ask you—What is to be done with the man who will not have mercy when it is set before him? If a convicted criminal is invited to confess and receive pardon and he will not do it, what remains but to carry out the sentence? Both justice and injured mercy require that it should be so. When a man who dies refusing Christ and rejecting Divine Mercy gets into the next world, he will fight against God even there and, according to his ability, he will be a greater sinner there than here. Shall God give him pleasure? Shall the Lord make such a rebel happy? Shall He stand by and say, “I will reward the rebel. He has vexed My Spirit, but I will ennoble and reward him”? Shall the Judge of all the earth act so?

If you will turn to this Book, you will not find between these two covers a solitary ray of hope for a man who dies without God and without Christ! I defy any man who believes this Book to be Inspired to find anything in its sacred pages but blank despair for the man who will not, in this life, accept the mercy of God in Christ Jesus! My Lord and Master said, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” That is His Word and there it stands—and there it will stand forever. It will never be reversed. It is the final sentence, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

I charge you, by the living God, do not provoke Him to this! Rush not upon the edge of Jehovah’s sword. At once look to Jesus crucified—Jesus crucified for the guilty—Jesus who came into the world, took our nature and bore our sins and shame! He cries from the Cross, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” I cannot speak to you like an angel from Heaven, but I speak like a sinner saved from Hell—and I implore you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved—“for God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” God bless you! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 106.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—176, 106 (PART II), 570.**

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WHERE IS THE LORD?

NO. 2258

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 29, 1892.
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 4, 1890.**

“Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? Where is He that put His holy Spirit within him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make Himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goes down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest: so did You lead Your people, to make Yourself a glorious name.”
Isaiah 63:11-14.

I told you, in the reading, that Israel had a golden age, a time of great familiarity with God, when Jehovah was very near to His people in their sufferings and was afflicted in their affliction—when He helped them in everything they did and the Angel of His Presence saved them. But after all that the Lord had done for them, there came a cold period. The people went astray from the one living and true God. They fell into the ritualism of the golden calf. They must have something *visible*, something that they could see and worship. Even after they were brought into the Promised Land and the Lord had worked great wonders for them, they turned aside to false gods till they worshipped strange deities that were no gods and provoked Jehovah to jealousy. “They rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy and He fought against them.” Not that He ceased to love His chosen, but He must be just and He could not patronize sin—so He sent their enemies against them and they were sorely smitten, and brought very low. Then it was that they began to remember the days of old and to sigh for Him whom they had treated so evilly. And they said, one to another, “Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? Where is He that put His holy Spirit within him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make Himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goes down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest: so did You lead Your people to make Yourself a glorious name.”

I have but a short time, as the Communion Service is to follow and, therefore, I must leave much unsaid that I think your own imagination will make up to you at home.

But I shall ask you to notice, first, that the text contains *a sacred, loving remembrance*. It dwells very much upon what God did in the old times, when He was familiar with His people and they walked in the light of His Countenance. After that, I shall call your attention to *an object clearly shining* in the text. We get it twice over. In the 12th verse we read, “To make Himself an everlasting name.” In the 14th verse, “To make Yourself a glorious name.” When I have spoken of those two things, I shall dwell more at length upon *an anxious enquiry*, which is put here twice—“Where is He?” In the 11th verse you get this repeated question, “Where is He? Where is He?”

I. So then, to begin with, we go back to God’s dealings with His people and with us—and we have A SACRED, LOVING REMEMBRANCE. The people remembered what God did to them. What was it? As it is here described, He, first of all, *gave them leaders*. “Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock?” Moses and Aaron, and a band of godly men who were with them, were the leaders of the people through the sea and through the wilderness. Brothers and Sisters, we are apt to think too little of our leaders! First of all we think too much of them and afterwards we think too little of them. We seem to swing like a pendulum between these two extremes. Man is reckoned as if he were everything to some and God becomes nothing to such, but, without unduly exalting man, we can truly say that it really is a great blessing to the Church when God raises up men who are qualified to lead His people.

Israel did not go out of Egypt as a mob—they were led out by their armies. They did not plunge into the Red Sea as an undisciplined crowd, but Moses stood up there with his uplifted rod and led them on that memorable day. We may as well sigh for the glorious days of old when God gave His people mighty preachers of His Word. There have been epochs in history that were prolific of great leaders of the Christian Church. No sooner did Luther give his clarion call, than God seemed to have a bird in every bush—and Calvin, and Farel, and Melancthon, and Zwingli and so many besides that I will not attempt to make out the list—joined with him in his brave protest against the harlot Church of Rome. “The Lord gave the Word: and great was the company of those that published it.” The Church remembers those happy days, with earnest longing for their return! They were giants in those days—mighty men of renown—well fitted *by the Lord* to lead His people.

We are next told that God *put His spirit within these shepherds*. They would have been nothing without it. Where is He that put His Holy Spirit within them? A man with God’s Holy Spirit within him—can anybody estimate his worth? God says that He will make a man more precious than the gold of Ophir, but, to a man filled with His Spirit, mines of rubies or of diamonds cannot be set in comparison! When the 11 Apostles went forth on the day of Pentecost, endowed by the Spirit of God, there were forces in the world whose very marching might make it quiver beneath their feet! God send us once more many of His servants, within whom He has put His Spirit in an eminent and conspicuous manner, and then we shall see

bright days, indeed! The command to such is still, "Tarry until you be endowed with power from on high."

Then there was, in the next place, as a happy memory for the Church, *a great manifestation of the Divine Power*. "That led them by the right hand of Moses with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make Himself an everlasting name." "The right hand of Moses," by itself, was no more than your right hand or mine! But when God's glorious arm worked by the right hand of Moses, the sea divided and made a way for the hosts of Israel to pass over! As the Psalmist sings, "He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and He made the waters to stand as a heap." The right hand of Moses could not have worked that miracle! But the glorious arm of the Lord did. What we need to-day, Brothers and Sisters, is a manifestation of Divine Power! Some of us are praying for it day and night. We have expected it. We *do* expect it! We are longing for it with an insatiable hunger and thirst. Oh, when will Jehovah pluck His right hand out of His bosom? When will He make bare His arm, as one that goes to His work with might and main? Pray, O you servants of God, for leaders filled with the Spirit and with the power of God working with them, that multitudes may be converted unto Christ and the sea of sin be dried up in the advance of His Kingdom!

Then, there came to God's people *a very marvelous deliverance*—"That led them through the deep, as a horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble." Understand by the word, "wilderness," here, an expansive grassy plain—a place of wild grass and herbs, for so it means. And as a horse is led where it is flat and level and he does not stumble, so were the hosts of Israel led through the Red Sea. The bottom of the sea may be stony or gravelly, or it may be full of mire and mud. Probably there will be huge rocks standing up in the middle of the stream. There may be a sudden fall from one stratum of rock to the other—and to come up from the sea on the further bank would be hard work for struggling people carrying burdens, as these Israelites did—for they went out of Egypt harnessed and laden, bearing their kneading troughs in their clothes upon their shoulders. But God made that rough sea bottom to be as easy traveling for them as when a horse is led across a flowery meadow! Beloved, God has done so with His Church in all time. Her seas of difficulty have had no difficulty about them. He has come in all the Glory of His power and smoothed the way for the ransomed to pass over. Has it not been so with you, my Brothers and Sisters?

And, as a blessed ending to their trials, God *brought them into a place of rest*—"As a beast goes down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord causes him to rest: so did You lead Your people." In the desert they rested a good deal, but in Canaan they rested altogether. As the cattle come down from the mountains where they have been picking up their food, when the plains are fat with grass, and they feed to their full, and lie down and rest, so did God deal with His people, bringing them from all the mountains of their trouble into a sweet valley, a land that flowed with milk and honey, where they might rest. This is a memorial, a sketch of the past.

I read it, first, literally as a sketch of Israel's history. I read it, next, as a sketch of the Church's history. There have been times with the Church as at Pentecost and the Reformation, when, though she had wandered, God returned to her, made bare His arm, raised up shepherds, put His Spirit upon them and then led His people straight ahead through every difficulty and gave them rest. You are, most of you, acquainted with the history of the period before Luther's day. It did not seem likely, then, that the Gospel would be preached everywhere throughout Northern Europe, but it was so, and God singularly preserved the first Reformers' lives when they were very precious. Zwingli died in battle, but he should not have been fighting, and he might have died a natural death. But Calvin, Luther and the rest of them, for the most part, remained until their work was done and then quietly passed away. And the Churches, despite long persecution, had comparative rest. It was so here and it was so across the border in our sister Church of Scotland. She cannot forget the covenanting blood and the putting to death of those who were for the Crown Rights of King Jesus, but, at last, she had her time of rest. Time would fail me to tell you the long list of shepherds that God gave to His covenanting Church, the mighty men who, being dead, yet speak to us by their works and who, while they lived, made the Church of God in Scotland to be glorious with the Presence of her Lord!

Well now, the same thing has happened also to us as individuals! We have had our cloudy and dark days, but God has appeared for our help. Some of you could tell how God led you through the deep as through a prairie. You went a way that you never knew, a new way, an untrod path, as though it were the bottom of a sea but newly dry—but the Lord led you as a groom leads a horse, so that you did not stumble—and before long you came up out of the depths unharmed! With Moses and the children of Israel, you sang the praises of Him who had triumphed gloriously. And then you began to learn another song, not so martial, but very sweet—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters." In conflicts for the God of Israel and His everlasting Truth, some of us have been counted as the mire of the streets—but in that we rejoice, and will rejoice—for Jehovah lives and He will bring up His people again from Bashan! He will bring them up from the depths of the sea and there shall be rest, again, in the midst of Israel, if men are but faithful to God and faithful to His Truth.

Thus much upon the sacred memory of the past.

II. But now, in the second place, I want you to notice AN OBJECT CLEARLY SHINING, like the morning star. I see, through the text, God's great motive in working these wonders for His people. *It was God who did it all*—my text is full of God. He brought them up out of the sea. He put His Holy Spirit within them. He led them with His glorious arm. He led them through the deep. He caused them to rest. He did it all! When the history of the Church is written, there will be nothing on the page but God. I know that her sin is recorded, but He has blotted that out and, at the end, there will remain nothing but what God has done. When your life and mine shall ring out as a Psalm amid the harps of Glory, it will be only,

“Unto Him that loved us and washed us, be glory and dominion forever and ever.” *“Non nobis, Domine.”* “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory.” So will sing all of us who are the Lord’s redeemed, when we have come up out of the great tribulation and have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!

But then, why had God done all this? Did He do it because of His people’s merits, or numbers, or capacities? He tells them, many a time, “Not for your sakes do I this, says the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.” God finds in Himself the motive for blessing men who have no merits. If God looked for any motive in us, He would find none. He would see in us many reasons why He should condemn us, but only in Himself could He discover the motive for His matchless mercy.

God works His great wonders of Grace with the high motive of *making known to His creatures His own Glory*, manifesting what He is and who He is, that they may worship Him. He tells us in the text that He “led them by the right hand of Moses with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make Himself an everlasting name.” So He has done, for to this day the highest note of praise to God that we know of is the one that tells of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt—and when this world is burnt up, the song that will go up to God in Heaven will be the song of Moses—the servant of God and of the Lamb! Still, if we want a figure and a foretaste of the ultimate victories of God over all His people’s enemies, we have to go back to the Red Sea and look at Miriam’s twinkling feet, and hear her fingers making the timbrel sound as she cries, “Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea.” He did it to make Himself an ever-enduring name—and He has succeeded in that objective.

Isaiah adds that the Lord led His people and brought them into their rest to make Himself “a glorious name.” God is glorious in the history of Israel. God is glorious in the history of His Church. God is glorious in the history of every Believer. The life of a true Believer is a glorious life! For himself he claims no honor, but by his holy life he brings great glory to God. There is more glory to God in every poor man and woman saved by Grace and in the one unknown obscure person, washed in the Redeemer’s blood, than in all the songs of cherubim and seraphim who know nothing of Free Grace and dying love! So you see, Beloved, the motive of God in all that He did, and I dwell upon it, though briefly, yet with much emphasis because this is a motive that can never alter! What if the Church of today is reduced to a very low condition and the Truth of God seems to be ebbing out from her shores, while a long stretch of the dreary mud of modern invention lies reeking in the nostrils of God? He that worked such wonders, to make Himself a name, still has the same objective in view! He will be glorious! He will have men know that He is God and beside Him there is none else! Thus says the Lord God, “All flesh shall know that I the Lord am your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.” “The earth shall be full of knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

O Brothers and Sisters, He is still a jealous God, and when the precious blood of Christ is insulted, God hears it and forgets it not! When the Inspiration of the blessed Book is denied, the Holy Spirit hears it and is grieved—and He will yet bestir Himself to defend His Truth. When we hear the Truth of God that we love, the dearest and most sacred Revelations from our God, treated with a triviality that is nothing less than profane, if we are indignant, so is He! And shall not God avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily, though He bears long with His adversaries. God's motive is His own Glory. He will stand to that and He will vindicate it! And we need to have no doubt, nor even the shadow of a fear about the ultimate result of a collision between God and the adversaries of His Truth. Shall not the moth that dashes at the candle, die in that flame? How shall the creatures of a day stand out against our God who is a consuming fire? Here, then, is the hope of the people of God—the constant persistent, invariable motive of God to make Himself glorious in the eyes of men!

III. My third point is AN ANXIOUS ENQUIRY which I find twice over in my text. Believing in what God has done, and believing that His motive still remains the same, we begin to cry, “Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? Where is He that put His holy Spirit within him?”

This question suggests that *there is some faith left*. “Where is He?” He is somewhere. Then, He lives! Beloved, the Lord God Omnipotent still lives and reigns. Many usurpers have tried to turn Him from His Throne, but He still sits upon it and reigns gloriously among His ancients. He was, and is, and is to come—the Almighty—“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

He is, but where is He? The question implies that *some were beginning to seek Him*. Where is He? Those were brave days when He was here on the moors, or on the hills of Scotland, or at the stakes of Smithfield, or the prisons of Lambeth Palace! Those were glorious days when Christ was here and His people knew it and rejoiced in Him. Then the virgin daughter of Zion shook her head at the harlot of Rome and laughed her to scorn—for she lay in the bosom of her King, and rejoiced in His love! O Beloved, do we begin to long after Him again? I hope that we do. I trust the cry of many loyal hearts is, “Come back, King Jesus! When You are away, all things languish. Ride again down the streets of Mansoul, O Prince Emmanuel! Then shall the city ring with holy song and every house shall be bedecked with everything that is beautiful and fair. Only come back!” If the King may but have His own again, I shall be content to sing old Simeon's song, “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word!” The Church longs for the King's coming. Where is He? Where is He?

It shows now, dear Friends, that she has *begun to mourn over His absence*. I like the reduplicated word. “Where is He? Where is He?” Not, “Where is Moses? Where are the leaders? The fathers, where are they?” Let them stay where they are. But where is He that made the fathers? Where is He that sent us Moses and Aaron? Where is He that divided the

waters and led His people safely? Where is He? Oh, it is a question that I put to all your hearts! Oh, if only He were here! One hour of His glorious arm; just a day of His almighty working and what should we not see? We will not ask for tongues of fire, or mighty rushing winds. Let Him be here as He may, but if He is only here, the battle is turned at the gate and the day of His redeemed is come! We sigh for His appearing.

Where is He, then? As the text asks. Well, *He is hidden because of our sins*. The Church has been tampering with His Truth. She has given into the hands of critics the Word of God, to cut it with a penknife, to cut away this and tear out that. She has been dallying with the world! She has tried to gain money for her objectives by the basest of means. She has played the harlot in what she has done, for there are no amusements too vile or too silly for her. Even her pastors have filled a theater of late, to sit there and mark with their applause the labors of the actors! To this pass have we come at last, to which we never came before—no, not in Rome's darkest hour—and if you, who profess to be God's servants, do not love Christ enough to be indignant about it, the Lord have mercy upon you! The time has surely come when there should go up one great cry unto the Lord Jehovah that He would make bare His arm again, for well may we say, "Where is He? Where is He?"

For your comfort, the next verse to my text tells you where He is. *He is in Heaven*. They cannot expel Him from His Throne. "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." By every possible contrivance, in these modern days, they have tried to drive Christ out of His own Church! A Christless, bloodless Gospel defiles many a pulpit, and Christ is thus angered—but He is still in Heaven. At the right hand of God He sits! And let this be our continual prayer to Him, "Look down from Heaven, O Lord! Cast an eye upon Your failing, faltering, fickle Church. Look down from Heaven."

"Where is He?" Well, *He is, Himself, making an enquiry*, for, as some read the whole passage, it is God Himself speaking. He remembered the days of old—Moses and his people. And when He hid Himself and would not work in wrath, yet He said to Himself, "Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock?" When God Himself, who is always a stranger here—for are we not strangers with Him and sojourners, as all our fathers were?—When God Himself begins to ask where He is and to regret those happier days, something will come of it! "You that make mention of the Lord—you that are the Lord's remembrances—keep not silence and give Him no rest—take no rest, and give Him no rest—till He establishes and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth." "That little cloud," said one of old, when Julian the apostate threatened to extirpate Christianity, "That little Church will soon be gone." All that I see today of darkness is but a wave of smoke. Behold, the Lord God Himself shall chase it away with a strong west wind! He does but blow with His wind and the clouds disappear! And what stands before us today shall be as nothing.

I thought, as I came here tonight, that the man who drives the tram car gave me a lesson on how I should look upon all future time. He starts, say

at Clapham, with his car. If he could have a view of all that was on the road between Clapham and the Elephant and Castle—the carts, the wagons and other traffic that are exactly where he wants to go—and he were to add all those obstacles together, He might be foolish enough to say, “I shall not complete my course tonight.” But, you see, he starts, and if anything is on the rails, it moves off! And if, perhaps, some sluggish, heavily-laden coal wagon is slow to move, he puts his whistle to his mouth and gives a shrill blast or two, and lo, it is gone!

So when the Church, serving her God, begins to look far ahead through prophecy—which she never did understand and never will—she will think she will never reach her journey’s end. But she will, for God has laid the line! We are on the rails and the rails do not come to an end till the journey’s end is reached! And as we go along, we shall find that everything in our way will move before us—and if it does not, we will pray a bit. We will blow our whistles and the devil himself will have to move, though all his black horses shall be dragging along the brewer’s dray, or what else belongs to him! He will have to get off our track, assuredly as God lives, for if Jehovah sends us on His errands, we cannot fail. The old Romans picture Jove as hurling thunderbolts. Sometimes God makes His *servants*, thunderbolts, and when He hurls them, they will go crashing through everything until they reach their mark! Therefore be not, for a moment, discouraged, but trust in God and be glad without a shadow of fear!

If any here have never trusted in God, never made Him their Friend, or been reconciled to Him by the death of His Son, I pray them to think of their present condition. Opposed to God? You are standing in the way of an express train! You are urged to get out of the way. You will not? You are going to throw that train off the rails, you say? Poor fool, I could put my arms about your neck and forcibly drag you from the iron way, for assuredly, if you remain there, nothing can come of it but your everlasting destruction! Therefore, flee, flee, I pray you, from the wrath to come! The train of Divine Judgment comes thundering along the iron road even now! It shakes the earth. Awake! Rise! Flee! God help you to do so! Behold, the Savior stands with open arms to be your shelter. Fly to Him and trust in Him, and live forever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON **ISAIAH 63-64**

Isaiah 63:1-6. *Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Why are You red in Your apparel, and Your garments like him that treads in the wine vat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me; for I will tread them in My anger, and trample them in My fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon My garments, and I will stain all My raiment. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore My own arm brought salvation unto Me; and My fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in My*

anger, and make them drunk in My fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth. It is a dark and terrible time—no one at God's side, His people discouraged, Edom triumphant. Then comes the one great Hero of the Gospel, the Christ of God, and by His own unaided strength He wins for His people a glorious victory. He is as terrible to His foes as He is precious to His friends. He stands before us as the one hope of His ancient Church. There is a picture Isaiah was inspired to paint. Now the Prophet goes on to say—

7. *I will mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord.* Are you, dear Friends, mentioning the loving kindnesses of the Lord, or are you silent about them? Learn a lesson from the Prophet Isaiah. Talk about what God has done for you and for His people in all time—"I will mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord." Let this be the resolve of everyone of us who has tasted that the Lord is gracious—

***"Awake, my Soul, in joyful lays,
And sing your great Redeemer's praise!
He justly claims a song from me,
His loving kindness, oh, how free!
He saw me ruined in the Fall,
Yet loved me, notwithstanding all;
He saved me from my lost estate,
His loving kindness, oh, how great!"***

7. *And the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has bestowed on them according to His mercies, and according to the multitude of His loving kindnesses.* This is a verse full of sweets, but I must not dwell upon it. My objective at this time is to read much and to say little by way of comments, so I cannot stay to pick out the sweetnesses here. There are very many. This passage is a piece of a honeycomb. Read it when you get home. Pray over it, suck the honey out of it, and praise the Lord for it.

8. *For He said.* In the old time, when God called His people out of Egypt, He said this—

8. *Surely they are My people, children that will not lie.* Or, children that will not act deceitfully, or, will not deal falsely.

8. *So He was their Savior.* He thought well of them. He treated them as though they were trustworthy. He took them into His confidence. He said, "Surely they will not deceive Me." This is speaking after the manner of men, of course, for God knows us and is never deceived by us. We may deceive others—we may even deceive ourselves—but we can never deceive Him.

9. *In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them, and carried them all the days of old.* Happy Israel! These were her golden days, when she was faithful to God, and God communed very closely with her. Then God was very near to His people, so near that He is represented as carrying them in His arms. He could be seen in a bush! He could be seen in a cloud! He could be seen working with a rod! He was very familiar with His people.

10. *But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit. Therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them.* This was a great change in dispensation, though there was no change in the heart of God. He deals roughly with His people when they rebel against Him. They would not be improved by tenderness, so now they must be scourged by His rod and come under His displeasure. When men turn from God, He is “turned to be their enemy.”

11. *Then He remembered the days of old.* His people were never out of His mind, even when they wandered away from Him. He remembered the love of their espousals, when they went after Him into the wilderness. He remembered the days of old, the happier days, when His people walked closely with Him. They also remembered these days. It is strange that they should ever have forgotten them.

11 - 14. *Moses, and his people, saying, Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? Where is He that put His holy Spirit within him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make Himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goes down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest: so did You lead Your people, to make Yourself a glorious name.* Now comes a prayer suggested by their condition of sorrow and desertion.

15. *Look down from Heaven.* You are still there, though we have wandered. Look down upon us from Heaven, O, Lord!

15 - 16. *And behold from the habitation of Your holiness and of Your glory: where is Your zeal and Your strength, the sounding of Your heart and of Your mercies toward me? Are they restrained? Doubtless You are our Father, though Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; You, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer; Your name is from everlasting.* That last sentence may be read, “Your name is Our Redeemer, from Everlasting.” This is a sweet plea with God—“We have offended You, but we are still Your children. We have wandered from You, but we are still Your own, bought with a price. Your name of ‘Redeemer’ is not a temporary one—it is from everlasting to everlasting—therefore look on Your poor children again. Leave us not to perish.”

17 - 18. *O Lord, why have You made us to err from Your ways, and hardened our heart from Your fear? Return for Your servants’ sake, the tribes of Your inheritance. The people of Your holiness.* Or, “Your holy people.”

18 - 19. *Have possessed it but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down Your sanctuary. We are Yours: You never ruled over them; they were not called by Your name.* “You did give us the land by an everlasting Covenant; but we have had it only a little while. Lo, the enemy has come in and driven Your Israel away from her heritage! Can it be so, always, O Lord?” Happy times seem very short when they are over and, when they are succeeded by dark trials, we say, “The people of Your holiness, Your holy people have possessed it but a little while. Our adversaries have trodden down Your sanctuary. We are now become (for this is the true

rendering of the passage) like those over whom You have never ruled, those who were never called by Your name.” That is a sad condition for the Church of God to be in and I am afraid that it is now getting into that condition, sinking to a level with the world, leaving its high calling, quitting the path of the separated people and becoming just like those whom God never knew and who were never called by His name. It is a pitiful case—and here comes a prayer like the bursting out of a volcano, as though the hearts of gracious men could hold in the agonizing cry no longer—

Isaiah 64:1, 2. *Oh that You would rend the heavens, that You would come down, that the mountains might flow down at Your Presence, as when the melting fire burns, Or, much better, “as when the brushwood burns,”* for if God does but come to His people, they are ready to catch on fire, like the dry twigs which are soon ablaze. And His enemies also shall be like brushwood before the fire.

3. *The fire causes the waters to boil, to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your Presence! When You did terrible things which we looked not for, You came down, the mountain flowed down at Your Presence. O Lord, come again! You came in the past; repeat Your former acts and let us see what You can do for the avenging of Your people.*

4. *For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither has the eye seen, O God, beside You, what You have prepared for him that waits for You.* God is ready to help. He has everything in preparation before our needs begin. He has laid in supplies for all our needs. Before our prayers are presented, He has prepared His answers to them! Blessed be His name! You remember how Paul uses this passage, “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit.” The spiritual man is a privileged man!

5. *You meet him that rejoices and works righteousness, those that remember You in Your ways.* God does not wait for us to return to Him. He meets us. He comes to us the moment that we turn our feet towards His Throne. While we are, like the prodigal, a great way off, He sees us, and has compassion upon us and runs to meet us.

5. *Behold, You are angry, for we have sinned: in these we continue and we shall be saved.* In Your faithfulness, in Your love, in Yourself, in Your ways of mercy there is continuance. This is our safety! What are we? Here is the answer—

6. *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.* It is not a flattering picture that the Prophet draws! Even our righteousnesses are like filthy rags, fit only for the fire—what must our righteousnesses be like? We, ourselves, are like the sere leaves on the trees and just as the wind carries away the faded leaves of autumn, so our sins, like a mighty blast, carry us away.

7. *And there are none that call upon Your name, that stirs up himself to take hold of You.* That is a wonderful description of prayer. When a man awakens himself from sinful lethargy and stirs himself up to take hold of God in prayer, he will become an Israel, a prince prevailing with God!

7, 8. *For You have hid Your face from us, and have consumed us, because of our iniquities. But now, O Lord, You are our Father.* Adoption does not come to an end because of sin. Regeneration or sonship does not die out—it cannot die out! I am my father’s son, and so I always shall be. And if I am my heavenly Father’s son, I shall never cease to be so. “Now, O Lord, You are our Father!” This Truth of God must not be perverted into an argument for sinning—it ought, rather, to keep us from sinning, lest we should offend such wondrous love.

8 - 12. *We are the clay, and You our potter; and we all are the work of Your hands. Be not furious, O Lord, neither remember iniquity forever: behold, see, we beseech You, we are all Your people. The holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised You, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste. Will you refrain Yourself for these things, O Lord? Will You hold Your peace, and afflict us very severely?* The Prophet touches the minor key and weeps and wails for the sorrows of his people, but he does not neglect to pray. In the next chapter God breaks out and says, “I am sought of them that asked not for Me; I am found of them that sought Me not.” How much more quickly is He found of them who seek Him! Verily, God does hear prayer! And He *will* hear prayer—let us not cease to pray to Him as we look round on the sad state of the professing Church at this time—and with Isaiah let us cry, “Will You refrain Yourself for these things, O Lord? Will You hold Your peace, and afflict us very severely?”

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—107 (SONG I), 953, 954.

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GOD'S GLORIOUS AND EVERLASTING NAME NO. 2229

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
NOVEMBER 8, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 15, 1891.**

***"To make Himself an everlasting name...To make Yourself a glorious name."
Isaiah 63:12, 14.***

MAN'S chief end is to glorify and enjoy God. God's greatest and highest objective is to make to Himself a glorious and an everlasting name. Since God is God, it must be so, for He is full of love and kindness to His creatures, and He cannot more fully bless His creatures than by making Himself known to them. Everything that is good, true, holy, excellent and loving, is in God. He is not only the Giver of "every good and every perfect gift," but He is, Himself, the sum and substance of all blessing! And it is for the highest good of all the creatures He has made, that they should know their God. "Man, know yourself," is a frequent exhortation of the philosophers of earth—and self-knowledge is said to be the highest form of knowledge, but it is not. "Man, know your God," is a far wiser precept, for knowledge of God as far excels all other knowledge as the heavens are higher than the earth! It is life eternal to know Him, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Know your God, then, for here your hope, your comfort, your holiness, your Heaven will be found!

God may well desire to make to Himself a name—that is to say, to make Himself known—because He is worthy to be known. There is no name so well worthy of publication. There is no Character like His. There is none that can be compared to Him. Even among the gods of the heathen, if they *were* gods, there is none like our God and, indeed, there is none other. He can truly say, "I am Jehovah, and there is none beside Me." He ought to be known and it is a worthy motive of His actions that He should make unto Himself a great name.

This knowledge of God is the Heaven of the perfect! I believe they have no higher joy in the Land of Light than to know God. The blaze of their glory is the Presence of Deity. The height of their Heaven is that God is near them and that they are near to Him. Heaven would be no Heaven if God were not there. It would be a circle without a center, a sky without a sun! The holy song of the seraphim would be hushed—they would cease to veil their faces with their wings and the Hosannas of the redeemed

would languish if they could no longer raise the hymn—"The Lord God Omnipotent reigns." Without the Presence of the Eternal, Heaven would be shorn of the bliss for which we long—and emptied of the Glory we have been led to anticipate! To know God perfectly and to behold Him in righteousness will be all that any heart can need—

***"How wonderful, how beautiful,
The sight of You must be!
Your glorious wisdom, boundless power,
And awful purity."***

While the knowledge of God is the Heaven of the perfect, it is the help of the growing. Men can only get holier and better as they know more of God. Here is the copy—look well at it, that you may write after it. Here is that Character which you are to imitate, according to the exhortation, "Be you, therefore, followers of God, as dear children." Know God as He makes Himself known by His works and ways, that you may grow to be like He. Continue to know Him until you shall be able to say that He is the gladness of your joy and may join with the Psalmist and say, "I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy."

The knowledge of God is also the great hope of sinners. O child of earth, if you knew Him better, you would fly to Him! If you understood how gracious He is, you would seek Him! If you could have any idea of His holiness, you would loathe your self-righteousness! If you knew anything of His power, you would not venture to contend with Him. If you knew anything of His Grace, you would not hesitate to yield yourself to Him. The more God reveals Himself to you and the more you know of God, the more are you in the way of hope and mercy! "They that know Your name will put their trust in You."

Therefore I do not attempt to defend my God, nor stand here to apologize for Him when I assert that the one great end of all that He does is to make to Himself a name—since it is by the making of that name that men are blessed in the very highest degree—and helped to holiness and happiness! I would rather ask you to praise Him who sits upon the Throne, as He thus manifests Himself—for our good can only be achieved by the glory of God's name—

***"Who is a pardoning God like Thee,
Or who has Grace so rich and free?"***

In seeking to open up this subject, I shall say, first of all, that *God's design in making to Himself a great name has been accomplished. Secondly, this design is still being accomplished. And, thirdly, the design is, in itself, exceedingly delightful.*

I. First, GOD'S DESIGN HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED. From everlasting He was God most glorious! He existed, but He had as yet no name. For a name is that by which someone is revealed—and until His power called into being the hosts of Heaven, God was God, and there were none to whom He could be known! Then the angels lifted high His praise in their songs and bowed low before His Throne. In creation His name was manifested and magnified—when the foundations of the earth were laid, "the

morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Man was made in the image of God for His own Glory and all things existed for His praise. "He is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." But our subject is how God has made His name glorious among men. Let us consider it.

The text speaks of God as making to Himself a great and glorious name, *in redeeming Israel*. When He poured His plagues on Egypt and afflicted the fields of Zoan, proud Pharaoh would not yield. He thought himself able to contend against Jehovah, but the tyrant trembled. He sought the intercession of Moses and, at last, he was glad to let Israel go! God triumphed over Pharaoh. When Pharaoh gathered up his spirit once more—his heart being hardened—he pursued Israel to the Red Sea and God permitted him to follow His people into the midst of the waters until the waves returned, in all their might, and quickly swallowed him up!

Then sang the children of Israel, "The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone." God's name was glorious that day inasmuch that they sang again, "Who is like unto You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" And not only that day, but as long as there is a man alive, the song of the Red Sea will be remembered and our ears shall hear the refrain of Miriam's song—"Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." All the nations of the earth heard of that event, especially the heathen races of Palestine! God intended to drive them out to make room for His people and a fear took hold of them. They trembled as they heard what God did at the Red Sea. He had made to Himself an everlasting name, for that one event goes ringing down the centuries! Throughout eternity the redeemed will continue to "sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." Then God brought His people through the wilderness, guiding them by His Presence, and He led them into the Promised Land. The revised Version renders verse fourteen—"As the cattle that go down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused them to rest: so did You lead Your people, to make Yourself a glorious name."

Now, as God got to Himself a great name at the Red Sea, He has done much more by the great works of salvation *in the gift of Jesus*. Ah, here Egypt is eclipsed and the destruction of Pharaoh is no more to be remembered! We were lost—sin had taken us captive, but God brought us out with a high hand and an outstretched arm. But for our redemption it was necessary that He should become Man, that in a human form God should tabernacle on earth! Would He come to Bethlehem's manger? Would He, the Infinite, come robed as an Infant? Yes, He came and made Heaven wonder till the angels sang and sang again! They could not understand the marvelous condescension of the Incarnation. Being here in fashion as a Man, it was necessary, if He would save us, that He must bear the wrath of God on our behalf. There must be a bloody sweat from that blessed body! There must be a scourging of those sacred shoulders! There must be

a piercing of those dear hands and feet! There must be a rending open of that loving and holy heart!

Shall it be done? Will the Son of God die like a felon on a gallows? Will the Lord of Glory give His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that pluck off the hair? Will He yield His face to shame and spitting? Will He, *can* He *die*? Death, you have slain your millions—will you also slay the Son of God? It must be so if we are to live—He must die, or we must die, or justice must die! Which shall it be? Jesus solves the problem—He deigns to die. As I see Him bow His blessed head and hear Him utter His death-cry, “It is finished,” I say that the Most High has gotten to Himself an everlasting name, a glorious name—“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” All other deeps are shallow! This is an abyss! All other heights of goodness can be climbed—but *this*—never! Pile Andes on Pelion, Alp on Alp, the Matterhorn on Mont Blanc and the Andes on the Himalayas—all are not great enough to be a symbol of His love! The Incarnate Son of God condemned! The Son of God slain! The Son of God in the grave! And all this for us! Truly, He has made Himself a glorious name! Saints on earth and saints above unite to sing, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!” And forever and ever we shall know no choicer song.

Furthermore, I am sure you will agree with me that He has made Himself a glorious name by taking so many of the saints already into Heaven. His design has been accomplished *in the saints in Glory*. Some of our dearest ones are there, where no trouble can ever reach them again. Yes, they are now beyond gunshot of the enemy! I am sure that they give Him a glorious name. Oh, how they stand and wonder that ever they should have been brought there! How they lie adoring at His feet, marveling that by such a stoop of His love, they should be lifted to such a height of Glory! Listen how their hearts ring out the never-ceasing music! You sleep and your songs are suspended—but day without night they circle His Throne rejoicing—and this is the strain of all their music—“Glory, glory, glory unto the Triune Jehovah who has brought us to stand before the Throne of God.”—

***“Father of Jesus, love’s reward,
What rapture will it be!
Prostrate before Your Throne to lie,
And gaze, and gaze on Thee!”***

When you and I get to Heaven, we will give God a glorious name, will we not? I have often told you of the old woman who said that if Christ saved her, He would never hear the last of it. Nor shall He ever cease to receive the praises of us all when He once gives us an opportunity of joining yonder happy choir! We will not wish to pause in the perpetual outpourings of our adoration and worship. “I heard a voice from Heaven,” says John, “as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder.” I do not wonder at that description of the songs of the redeemed, for when we all together shall praise His everlasting and glorious name, our united

thanksgiving will be like the sound of oceans upon oceans piled, Atlantics upon Pacifics, Arctics upon these, Indian Oceans upon them all—and all together roaring with the fullness thereof in the majesty of praise unto the great Eternal! God has, indeed, made Himself a name! There is no name like the name of Jehovah-Jesus under Heaven, or in Heaven itself! At that name the angels pause! To speak its praise they fly! All the earth worships You, the Everlasting Father. To You, O God, we cry aloud with hearty voices of praise and when we have paid our fullest homage, we feel that we have scarcely reached the lowest note of the anthem we long to sing! Faint is our song compared with what You deserve!—

***“Weak is the effort of my heart,
And cold my warmest thought!
But when I see You as You are,
I’ll praise You as I ought.”***

So much for the first point.

II. Now, secondly, GOD’S DESIGN IS BEING ACCOMPLISHED. In many ways the grand work is still going forward. God is carrying out His gracious plan. “My Father works hitherto, and I work,” Christ might still truly say, as He once said at Jerusalem. And the Holy Spirit, whom He has given, also labors towards the same end—that the name of the Triune God may be exalted!

This purpose is being fulfilled, first, *in sparing the provoking*. There was one who said, “If there is a God, let Him prove it by striking me dead.” God proved His Godhead by letting that sinner live! Had He been a man such as we are, He would have struck the blasphemer on the spot! But God will not be provoked. He is “long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy.” Oh, if some of us had been treated with a thousandth part of the hatred that men have poured on God, we would have struck out in strength of indignation—and we might have been excused—but God has borne it all! They have denied His existence. They have blasphemed His Word. They have resisted His Spirit. They have questioned the Deity of His Son. What have they *not* done? And yet He has been patient to get to Himself a name as the “God of Patience,” and that name will stand forever. Would that this long-suffering of God might lead men to repentance!

Next, God gets to Himself a name *in turning the rebellious to Himself*. Oh, I delight to see this done! It is the minister’s joy! We know men that have been, for years, set in opposition to God, and we had almost thought it impossible that they should ever be turned, but, all of a sudden, Christ has manifested Himself to them and we hear that they are seeking after God! Such conversions very often surprise me, especially when persons come or write to me out of families that have been famous for unbelief, or out of wealthy families where there is all manner of gaiety and worldliness, or out of poor families where there has been a disregard of God’s Holy Day. Such cases, in which the work is evidently God’s, seem to me like miracles of mercy!

Last Wednesday, when seeing those who came to join the Church, to one after another I said, “Have you a godly father or mother?” and many of

them answered, "No, Sir." Then I said, "perhaps it was your brother or sister who influenced you for Christ," to which several replied, "I am sorry to say none of my brothers or sisters are Christians." In several cases I asked further, "Have you, then, some friend who fears God?" and often the answer was, "I do not know one of my family that has been accustomed, even, to pay any outward reverence to religion." Yet the Grace of God has come into that home and taken one of a family—to bring that one to Zion—and it has sometimes happened that the least likely has been the very one who has been called! I should not wonder but some young man who came to this service to make fun of the whole thing will find something better than fun before the service is over—and be among those who shall preach the Gospel which once he despised!

It has often happened that when men have gone far in sin, they have been stopped by Grace. There is a strange incident in Bunyan's life which tells us of the strange reason with which he comforted himself about the next generation. He said that the young men of his day were so wicked, that he hoped that God meant to make great saints of them. It was an extraordinary way of looking at evil, but there is a basis of the Truth of God in such a view. "Where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound." Is it not written of the very offcasts and outcasts, the enemies to God, those in the isles afar off, who have not heard God's fame, neither seen His Glory, "I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, says the Lord"? God will take these, in the Sovereignty of His Grace, to conquer them and make to Himself a name! Then everybody will say, greatly wondering, "Has that notorious blasphemer really been converted? Has that gay butterfly actually become serious? Does that careless, godless person at last begin to think of these things?" Ah, glory be to God, it is by these conversions that He gets to Himself a glorious name!

Again, He gets to Himself a name *in forgiving the guilty*. When the great sinner comes, or the person who, though he has not openly offended, is yet conscious of great inward sin—when these come and in a moment are washed whiter than snow, and realize that their sin is put away, forever, they cannot help crying, like a man in Scotland, of whom I heard, who, when he spoke the praises of Christ who had saved him from the wrath to come, said, in his joy—"Oh, He is a great Forgiver! Oh, He is a great Forgiver!" You remember how the Prophet Micah writes of this great Forgiver, "Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retains not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities and will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea"? Hallelujah! Every soul that gets the pardon of all its sin must magnify the Lord! And if you know to the fullest what that pardon is, it will make you give God a great name—

***"Here's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast.
And, O my Soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come, here's pardon, too."***

Who would not give God glory when He gives such mercy?

Further, God glorifies His name *in purifying the unholy*. It is a great honor to God when we see men and women who were once very wild and self-willed, walking carefully and graciously. I do not know that I have ever praised God more than I did in the case of a Brother of a very savage temper who was, indeed, just like an incarnate devil at times! But after he was converted, he became as quiet as a lamb and just as gentle as he had formerly been ferocious. God got a great name through that change—and such things happen a great deal more frequently than some doubters imagine! The man who was so stingy that he would have drawn the teeth of his motherless child to sell them if he could, after he is converted becomes so generous that he can keep no money in his pocket when there are any poor people in need! The Grace of God makes such a difference, turning things upside down and completely altering the character! Grace renews the man and God is greatly glorified thereby! It is, in fact, the fulfillment of the ancient promise—“Instead of the thorn, shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree.” Instead of vice, lust, passion and self-seeking, there comes up holiness, love to God, love to men and every amiable virtue. Then God's name is glorified! Dear Christian people, do try to glorify His name. May your life be such that whoever watches you shall be compelled to say, “Truly, God's name is glorified in them!” Let all behold the clear shining of your light until they “see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.”

God also glorifies His name *in preserving the tempted*. Oh, what stories each one might tell of himself! How God has kept us in the time of great temptation! I know that some of you here are fiercely tempted. God has brought you out from sin, but the devil pulls you back as far as ever he can. And your surroundings do not help you. Your companions would, if they could, drag you with them into Hell. Now, if the Lord keeps you, it will be greatly to His Glory and He will get to Himself a glorious name! I have noticed that Christian men who seem to live in the greatest danger are not those who fall, but those who backslide are often those whose circumstances appear to be peculiarly favorable. Yet they wander and go astray. God will keep you if you stay yourself upon Him, though your business sometimes leads you to the edge of a precipice! God will keep you, if you rely upon His power, though your position in society surrounds you with dangers.

Be of good hope and continue to put your trust in Him. In your case, He will make to Himself a name, even now! And at the end what praise shall be His when you are brought safely home! Here comes into Heaven the man who has been between the jaws of death! He has walked right straight between the lions—they sniffed at his heels and they would have devoured him if they could. He went through the Valley of the Shadow of Death where the hobgoblins were on either side, where the fierce Apollyon met him and he had to fight him, foot to foot! But God has brought him

safely home. Hallelujah! Oh, what a name will God have in saving His people from all their temptations!

To change the subject just a little—I believe that God gets a great name to Himself *in using weak instruments*. If you go to hear a great and learned man preach the Gospel—some doctor of divinity, some famously eloquent man—if there are souls saved, you say, “Ah, well! He is a wonderful man, a clever man. It is to be expected that great blessing will come of such preaching.” But if, on the other hand, if it is some person by whom God is pleased to speak who makes no pretense of learning, but who uses common words—and yet many are led into the Light of God by him—you say to yourself, “Well, *I* could speak better than *that!* What a wonder that God can do such a mighty work with such a poor implement!” When God speaks by the feeble. When He uses the insignificant, then does He not get to Himself a glorious name? I hear almost every day in the week of souls converted to God by sermons preached here, which go to the ends of the earth. And when I hear about them, I always wonder that God should have blessed those sermons to anybody. And any man whom God favors with His Presence and help will marvel that God should use such a poor, dry stick! But He does and He will, for, “base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are.” And all this to make unto Himself a glorious name!

Sometimes our God makes to Himself a glorious name *in doing great things for His people* by sending very wonderful seasons of refreshing and reviving to His Church. Some misunderstood me the other day to speak against revivals. I never did such a thing in my life! The more revivals we have of a true sort, the better. What I do speak against is the kind of thing which works people up into an excitement and then lets them drop. I read only last night of a Methodist congregation, of which the writer says, “They are a wonderfully nice people. They have a revival about once in seven years and then everybody seems to feel intensely, and you can preach with great power. But in between the times of those revivals, they are as hard as old nails.”

Well now, I do not want that kind of thing! Spasms of any sort are not desirable things, least of all spasmodic religion! I want a revival that keeps on every day in the year, all the years in the century! That is the kind of revival that glorifies God—not a temporary ripple on the surface—but a great swell that comes rolling up from the depths! May God send it! He can do such a work by His Spirit and there are indications that He is going to permit us to see greater things than ever. All these many years, in this place, souls have been saved in one continued stream by the preaching of the Gospel—scarcely ever more and very seldom less—but oh, for a grand spring tide, a mighty flood that shall bring many to Christ and to the Church! Then it shall be that God will get to Himself a glorious and an everlasting name!

In this manner God is now accomplishing His gracious design and will, still, in days to come, get to Himself a name most glorious. These are but the beginnings of His ways—the fullness of them will overwhelm us with their grandeur and majesty! Having begun to reveal His name and Character, He will go on to do it. He will carve it deep on the history of His redeemed. Blessed be His name for the seasons of revival we have already had and are having, but our hearts look forward with high hope to even better times when, as Peter preached after Pentecost, “Times of refreshing shall come from the Presence of the Lord and He shall send Jesus Christ.” Then, indeed, the Lord will get to Himself a glorious name! “The times of restitution of all things” will begin and, as Habakkuk tells us, “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

God has not ceased His working. He will go on doing great things. It is His purpose to make to Himself an *everlasting* name, as well as a *glorious* name. Everlasting and glorious! That can only mean to us everlasting Glory! Beyond this, we have the promise of some Grace not yet revealed, for it is written concerning the man who overcomes, “I will write upon him My new name.” Yes, God will yet accomplish His purpose and fully manifest His Glory!

III. Having thus tried to show you how God carries out the purpose of making to Himself a glorious name, let me go on, in the third place, to say that GOD’S DESIGN IS VERY DELIGHTFUL. I will advance five reasons why we should rejoice in this fact.

For God to save and bless men, in order to get to Himself a glorious name, is a very delightful thing, first, because *it hides pride from men*. And anything that does that is glorifying to Him. Remember these words—“Not for your sakes do I this, says the Lord God, be it known unto you; be ashamed and be confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.” God did not choose His people because of anything in them. Christ did not redeem His people because of anything in them. The Holy Spirit does not call a man because of anything in him. We are not justified because of our own merits—we are not accepted because of our own excellence. It is all of Grace from first to last! “Where is boasting, then? It is excluded.” There is no place where pride can come in. Salvation is “not of works, lest any man should boast.”

The second reason is because *it opens a great door for sinners*. Now, listen to this. Perhaps there is one here who says, “I am so guilty. I am so unworthy. I am so vile that God cannot save me on account of anything in me. I am everything that I ought *not* to be.” Stand to that, Brothers and Sisters! Tire not there. You have a hold of the Truth this time! “Then why should He save me?” you ask. “It cannot be because of any use that He can make of me, for I am ignorant. I am obscure and I am weak-minded. God can never get much out of *me*—He cannot save me for the sake of that.” But look, Sir, He can save you that He may make a great name for Himself, for if He pardons *you*, a great sinner, that will bring great praise

to His mercy! If He changes *you*, who has been desperately set on mischief, that will bring great credit to His power! If He takes *you* who are so insignificant and obscure, that will clearly show the greatness of His condescension and the wondrousness of His love!

I am not sure, but I think that if God were to save *any* of you, I should not wonder at it so much as I often wonder that He should have saved me! I sometimes ask myself whether I was converted because I was so headstrong and obstinate, that God might show how He can overcome obstinacy and how self-will can be made to sit at His feet. You remember what the Scotchwoman said to Rowland Hill when she stood looking at his face? He said, "Well, good woman, you have looked at me a long while. What are you looking at?" She said, "I was looking at the lines of your face." "Well, and what do you make of them?" he asked. "I was thinking what an awful rascal you would have been if you had not been converted," was her unexpected answer!

Now, I think that we might say the same of a good many, and if it is God's intent to get to Himself a glorious name, I see hope for big rascals! I see hope for great sinners! If a doctor has come into a parish and needs to get a reputation. And if he can cure those who have a finger-ache, those who have something the matter with a corn, he will not get much credit by that. But here is a man who has cancer—here is a woman ill in consumption. If he can cure these two, I guarantee you that all the world will know of it before long! If he can manage these desperate cases, that all the other doctors have given up, then he will get to himself a name!

Now, is there some cancerous sinner here, some soul in a dread consumption of evil? I pray you, come to Christ, for He wants to get to Himself a name—and why should He not save you? Is there not reason to believe that He is likely to begin with the worst, that He may get to Himself glory out of such? Would God you would pick the comfort out of this Truth of God, for there is a vast amount of consolation lying hidden in it! Great sinners make great saints! God loves the love of His people! And those who have been saved from deep sin are often most fervent in their devotion. To procure such love to Himself and such honor to His name, God lays hold of the rebellious sinner, who afterwards sings—

***"Love I much? I've more forgiven;
I'm a miracle of Grace!"***

Next, this grand Truth that God does what He does for the Glory of His own name, is delightful because *it gives comfort to strugglers*. You who are laboring after holiness. You who are striving after purity, in full obedience to the Divine will, do you not see that if God will help you in your struggles and give you victory, it will be to the Glory of His name? The weaker you are, the more glory to Him if He makes you strong! And the more beaten you seem to be, the more nearly defeated, the more glory to God if He will come to your rescue and help you through. Therefore *expect* that He will do it! "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runs into it and is safe." Run into it and, for His name's sake expect the Lord to

keep you! At length He will deliver us from our enemies and bring us into the place of peace—and “there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall any gallant ship pass thereby. For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King: He will save us.” For the glory of His own name He will do this.

The confidence that God is working out His designs is delightful, again, because *it sustains in trying times*. I think that this ought to gladden you very much. You should be delighted that God seeks His own Glory, for He will find it in helping you in the time of trouble. “Call upon Me,” He says, “in the day of trouble. I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me.” It is not for God's Glory to leave one of His poor children to perish. It is not for God's Glory to leave the least lamb in all His flock to be eaten by the wolf. If the devil could get one who trusted Christ, what a triumph they would make in Hell over that soul! “Here is one whom Christ could not save, or would not save,” they would mockingly shout. “Here is a soul who trusted in Christ and yet is lost, after all!” Oh, the gibes and jests which would then be uttered against the Savior who is mighty to save! But this shall never be! It would make such a stain upon the honor, fidelity, Immutability and Glory of God, that it cannot even be imagined! His Glory will never be compromised in such a way as that—

**“The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes!
That soul, though all Hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!”**

And, once more, it is most delightful that God should seek His own Glory, for you and I, and all of us who know anything of His Grace, are seeking it, too. *It answers our chief prayer*. We are the children of God and His honor is dear to us. When we come to Him and say, “Our Father who are in Heaven,” our first desire is, “Hallowed be Your name.” I speak to many who can add their, “Amen,” to this! If you could have your greatest, chief, highest wish, would you not say, “I wish that God may be glorified”? I met a dear Brother minister last week and he said to me, “My wife is sick and ill, and I have a world of troubles, but I do not feel them half so much as I do the burden of the present condition of the professing Church. God is dishonored in His own Church and that weighs me down.” I could respond and say, “That is my case, too.” The heaviest trouble of my soul is to see things as they now are in Christendom—and if I might have but one prayer, and pray it, it would be, “O God, glorify Yourself in Your own Church and in the salvation of men!” And do you not think that the desire of every true Christian is, “Let God be magnified”? Is not this the wish of Heaven? What is Heaven, but a perpetual magnifying of God? It will be the crown of all rejoicing to be able to—

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

Therefore we rejoice and think it delightful that God is aiming at the manifestation of His own Character and, in all His works getting to

Himself a great, eternal, and glorious name! Come, you sinners, poor and wretched, come and glorify the bounty of God! Come, you that are at Hell's dark door, arise and glorify the greatness of the love of God in Christ Jesus! Whoever among you will believe in Christ shall have *eternal* life! Trust the living Christ who is gone into the heavens to intercede for sinners! Trust Him and you shall live and God shall be glorified in your life. Come, saying—

***“No preparation can I make,
My best resolves I only break!
Now save me for Your own name's sake,
And take me as I am.”***

He will do it! He will do it now! When He does it, He does it *forever*. I pray the Holy Spirit to bless these words to the salvation of many, that the Triune Jehovah may get to Himself a glorious and everlasting name, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 63.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—233, 245, 586.**

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

Beloved Friends—I was supremely thankful to telegraph to London that I was not wearied by my journey of a thousand miles, but rather refreshed by it. I wrote that this was “*almost* miraculous,” and my dear brother observed that I might wisely leave out the, “almost,” and so save two pence, which is the rate per word! Well, it does seem to me to be beyond all that I could have asked or even thought. Blessed be the healing Lord! I am waiting and watching for news from home as remarkable in regard to a Tabernacle revival as these tidings from me about my restoration to health. I now look for great things in connection with Dr. Pierson's labors and those of all my friends at home. Good news has already reached me as to the usefulness of the printed sermons, but I long for more. To spread my sermons is to help on the cause in the most efficient manner. To pray for a blessing is to share in it. Why should we not see a renewal of faith, a reenthronement of the Truth of God, a deep and widespread revival of religion at home and a grand advance of missions abroad? According to your faith be it unto you, you heirs of the heavenly Kingdom!

Your fellow servant,

Mentone, October 31, 1891.

C. H. SPURGEON.

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THE SINGLE-HANDED CONQUEST

NO. 2567

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 24, 1898.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 6, 1856.**

*“I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the
people there was none with Me.”
Isaiah 63:3.*

IT is said of some stupendous works of architecture that although you see them every day, you are struck with wonder and admiration every time you behold them and that, although you should live close to them and have your eyes perpetually fixed upon them, yet your admiration of them would by no means decrease, for they are so matchless in symmetry, such patterns of art and such marvelous displays of the skill of man. I know not whether that is true. I believe that the best and grandest achievements of mortals lose their glory when they are too closely examined and that the frequency of our sight of them very much lessens our wondering admiration. But this I know is true concerning Christ Jesus our Lord—you may see Him every day, but the more often you see Him, the more you will wonder at Him and call Him, “Wonderful.” You may even have communion with Him every hour, but the frequency of your converse and the constancy of your communion will be so far from diminishing your awe, your love, your respect, your devout adoration of Him, that the more you know Him, the more your wonder and admiration of Him will increase!

Now, who could be expected to know so much about Christ as Christ's own Church? Yet, in the opening of this chapter you find that even she bursts out with such exclamations as this—“Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?” She had often seen Him before. She had often viewed Him under that aspect and doubtless she had seen Him as the Conqueror of mighty heroes, Master over princes and the Lord of the kings of the earth. But at a fresh view of Him, she was so utterly astonished that she could not help crying out, “Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?”

Live near to Jesus, Brothers and Sisters. Live *with* Jesus. Live *in* Jesus and you will find Him a theme of such excellent and such endless contemplation that, instead of being tired and weary with the subject of your meditation, you will find it more easy to begin, again, than it was to begin at first—more interesting and more pleasing to consider Him in the

50th year of your knowledge of Him than it was in the first hour that you knew Him! Think much of Him and you will have little cause to think lightly of Him! Constantly meditate on Him and you will the more admire and wonder at His goodness!

We have here our Savior answering the questions of His Church, which she, in wonder, had asked of Him—"Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?" "I that speak in righteousness," He says, "mighty to save." And when again she asks Him, "Why are You red in Your apparel and Your garments like he that treads in the wine vat?" He replies, "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me."

Very briefly, as the Spirit shall help us, we shall notice, first, *the interesting figure employed*. Secondly, *the glorious fact stated*. Thirdly, *the solitary Conqueror described*. And then, fourthly, we shall offer *some sweet and salutary considerations suggested*, that we may be refreshed by our meditations. Let our souls be calm and quiet whilst we contemplate the awfully-solemn and sublimely-grand spectacle of the Conqueror of men and the Conqueror of Hell treading the winepress alone.

I. First, then, here is AN INTERESTING FIGURE EMPLOYED—"I have trodden the winepress."

You must understand the circumstances to which these words relate. This is Jesus speaking *after* His conquest over His foes—not Jesus before the battle, but Jesus after it—not Jesus buckling on the harness, not Jesus becoming the Baby of Bethlehem, but Jesus after the battle is fought and the victory is won. There were certain enemies who opposed the salvation of God's people. There were numberless foes who stood in the way of the deliverance of His chosen, but Christ undertook to conquer them and now, on His return, He not only declares that He has overcome them, but He uses an expressive figure to set out some of the facts in that wondrous feat of conquest. "I have trodden the winepress."

First, this denotes *the supreme contempt with which the mighty Conqueror regarded the enemies whom He had overcome*. It is as if He had said, "I have overcome the many foes of My people and I compare My victory over them to nothing but the treading of the winepress. Angels sing My praise, the hosts of the redeemed in Heaven swell the sublime chorus as, in exultant strains, they declare how I have broken the dragon's head and have put down the strength of the oppressor. They tell how mighty kings have been slain in My wrath and giants in My hot displeasure. But as for Myself, I say little about it, I only declare that I have trodden the winepress and have counted My enemies as easy to conquer as if they had been grapes beneath My feet! My people's crimes may have been tremendous and their enemies mighty, but coming up, 'with dyed garments from Bozrah,' I have crushed their foes and My foes just as easily as a treader of grapes treads them under foot. I have trodden them as in a winepress."

O ungodly Sinner, perhaps you think that it will cause God great trouble to destroy you with an utter destruction—it will not! It may be you think that God will have need to exert much power to send your guilty spirit to the loathsome dungeons of Hell, but, ah, it will require no might from Him! If you should continue to be His foe, He will tread you beneath His feet as easily as you could tread grapes beneath yours! What are the berries of the vine beneath the feet of the wine presser? And what shall your soul and body be when the feet of Jesus tread upon them? In vain your ribs of steel! In vain your sinews of brass! In vain your bones of adamant—if such you had. If your spirit were clothed with scales like leviathan's, yet under the feet of Jesus you wouldst be like ripe grapes—the blood of which flows out freely! Yes, terrible shall be the meaning of that figure when Christ shall say of sinners, at the last day, “I have trodden them down as he that treads grapes presses out the juice thereof—I have trodden the winepress.”

But, mark you, there is in the figure *an intimation of toil and labor*, for the fruit of the vine is not bruised without hard work. So the mighty Conqueror, though in contempt He says His foes were as nothing but the grapes of the vintage to His might, yet, speaking as a Man like unto us, He had something to do to overcome His foes when He fought with them in the Garden. Sometimes the wine presser is wearied with his labor, although he takes hold of the strap which is placed above him and jerking, and dancing, and laughing, and singing all day, he presses out the juice of the grapes. Yet oftentimes he wipes the sweat from his brow and is tired with his toil. So our blessed Lord, albeit He could have crushed the enemies of His Church like moths beneath His finger, had enough to do to overcome them in the Garden. It was no little pressing of the foot which was needed when He bruised the old dragon's head in Gethsemane! Then He—

**“Bore all Incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare.”**

My Soul, meditate on this glorious Wine Presser! Those sins which would have crushed you to pieces, He had to tread beneath His feet. How it must have bruised His heel to tread upon those sins! O how powerfully He must have trodden on those crimes of yours, breaking them into less than nothing! How did it force from Him, not sweat like ours, but drops of blood, when He could say, “I have trodden the winepress.” Yet, toil as it was, labor as it might be, costing Him tears and groans, He could say, “I have done it. The great work is fully accomplished—‘it is finished’—I have trodden the winepress alone.”

Moreover, in the figure employed, *there is an allusion to the staining of the garments*. We see it is so in the verse before the text, “Why are You red in Your apparel, and Your garments like he that treads in the wine vat?” The garments of the wine presser would naturally be sprinkled over with the juice, squirting up from beneath his feet. Ah, my Soul, stand here and solemnly contemplate your Savior, sprinkled with His own blood! Look at Him, when but eight days old, already shedding blood for you! And go on to the time when He commenced the shedding of His

blood, again, in Gethsemane's Garden! Mark you how, in one gory robe, He is enveloped—not like the kings of the earth, in garments of Tyrian-dyed purple, but like the King of Misery, dressed in a crimson robe of blood! Go and mark the blood as it flows from His temple, when the crown of thorns lacerates His brow! Weep when the accursed flagellation of the cruel Roman is tearing off, piece after piece of His quivering flesh! Pursue Him in His weary *via dolorosa*, as He treads the streets of Jerusalem!

Stop and see how each stone on which He treads is stained with His precious blood! Then mark how His hands begin to gush down streams of blood, as the rough iron tears them asunder! See Him now crucified, hung upon the Cross, plunged into the lowest depths of misery!—

***“See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did ever such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?
His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads o'er His body on the tree.”***

O Jesus, from the crown of Your head to the sole of Your feet, You were sprinkled with blood! Your inward Man was stained with blood and your outward Man, too! You were covered with blood, You glorious Presser of our sins beneath Your feet! We will not ask again, “Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?” We know why Your garments are red. You have trodden the winepress of the wrath of God!

Thus have we explained briefly, as best we could, the interesting figure employed by our Lord.

II. And now we come to consider THE GLORIOUS FACT STATED—“I have trodden the winepress.”

Christian, I need you a moment! Come with me, my Brothers and Sisters—not to Heaven, nor to Hell, but to the great winepress which the Savior trod. You understand the form of the Eastern winepresses, how they were built up in order that a great quantity of grapes might be put into them, to be trodden by the feet of the wine presser? Come here, then, and look over the edge of this great winepress in which your Savior stood and trampled on your behalf! Gaze down into its depths.

The first thing that you will see in that winepress is *your sins*. Look down attentively. In the middle of the winepress there are the crimes of your youth, like unripe grapes lying there in thick clusters. There lie the sins of your manhood, dark with the black juice of Gomorrah. Do you see them, like the grapes from the vine of Sodom? And see you not the full clusters, like the vine of Sibmah? Look there and see the fruits of your middle age. And there the sins of your old age, too! They are all put into the mighty winepress. Come, then, you chief of sinners, there lie your sins and there lie mine all mingled in one mighty heap! But wait—the Wine Presser enters and puts His feet on them. Oh, contemplate how He presses them! Do you see Him in Gethsemane, treading your sins to

pieces? Come, and look again! There lie the skins—the broken skins—of all your guilt. But there is no guilt there and there are no crimes there now! They are gone, gone, gone! He says, “I *have* trodden the winepress.” Look back upon those sins and weep, for they are still your sins, but, at the same time, weep not with bitter and despairing anguish, as if you would be punished for them, for all the black juice, the venom of your guilt, is pressed out and has run away! Christ has caught it in His cup of gall and drained it to its very dregs!

I bid you look down there, for if you have eyes of faith, you will see all your sins destroyed. Do try and look—let not the devil put his hands before your eyes—but look! And if some dark crime, not confessed to man, still rankles in your bosom, look, it is there! And if some cruel injury to your neighbor, or some dire crime to your Maker, still haunts you, look, there it is—it is trampled on just as much as the other! Little sins and great sins, too, all are trampled to pieces, nor could you find one of them even by diligent seeking—

***“If I search to find my sins,
My sins could ne’er be found.”***

They are there, Believer, trodden into less than nothing! They are gone, they are all gone! “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” Look there, Accuser, into the winepress! Look there, Conscience, into the wine vat! Look there, Satan! Do you see the bruised pieces of my former sins? They are all gone! My sins have ceased to be!—

***“Covered is my unrighteousness!
From condemnation I am free!”***

But come, Believer, and you will see, next, something in Christ’s winepress which, perhaps, you did not expect to see. There is Satan, lying with bruised head! How often does he come to afflict you! How terribly does he sometimes roar in your ears and tell you that Hell must be your portion! How does he seek to keep you from your Savior’s blood! How frequently has he striven to deprive you of peace, although God loves you! I beseech you, tell Satan this night to come with you to the wine vat of Gethsemane, and when he looks in there, he will see himself! Yes, take Satan and put him into the wine vat and Christ will bruise his head again for you! But there he is, Christian! Do not fear that he can hurt you—he may torment, but he cannot destroy you, for he is chained! He may roar, but he cannot bite! He may frighten, but he cannot injure you! He may startle, but he cannot devour you! He goes about, seeking whom he may devour, but he may not devour you! He may go about and seek as long as he likes—he will never find you, for the Lord has said concerning you, that you never shall be destroyed! Whenever you have a sharp conflict with Satan, tell him about the wine vat and rejoice over him! And as Luther said, “Laugh at the devil,” laugh at him and tell him to remember Gethsemane’s wine vat. Ask him what he thinks of that and how he likes the bruising he received there. It was a desperate blow which he

gave our Lord in Gethsemane, but it was a heavier blow that our Lord gave him when He took away his power, extracted his sting and left him—still an enemy, but a conquered one—for Christ trampled him in the wine vat!

Look again, Christian! Do you see there—just between your sins and the devil who lies bruised there—an ugly monster? He is a bony, skeleton-looking thing. Do you recognize him? It is your last enemy—“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is *death*.” Look at him! Do you note that his skull is broken and his bones are broken, too? Do you mark how death is now a dismantled monarch? There he lies and yet you are afraid of him—though he lies there broken, bruised, battered, injured, ruined, destroyed? There they are—death, the devil, and your sins together—an infernal trio forever trampled beneath the mighty Conqueror’s feet! He said, “O Death, I will be your plagues; O Grave, I will be your destruction.” And so He was and, henceforth, to the wine vat we will go whenever our adversaries disturb and afflict us!

What else have you to oppose you, Christian? I do not know what it is, but it is all here. Whatever your enemy, go look into the wine vat and see it dead there! Giant Despair took the pilgrims to a place where he showed them the bones of certain pilgrims that he had devoured—and told them it would assuredly be so with them. Do you, with all your doubts and fears, just as Despair did with the pilgrims, say to them, “Doubts and fears, do you see the bones of my old doubts and fears that have been trampled there? In a day or two, you shall be with them.” Take today’s sins and tell them that they shall be just where yesterday’s were—drowned in the blood of Jesus and slain by His blessed Sacrifice! And when Conscience convicts you of your crimes, take him to this winepress. It will stop any ghost of guilt if you take it there, for it is written, “I have *trodden* the winepress alone.” It is done. It is finished! Sins, doubts, fears, Hell, death, destruction and self, too—all are trodden beneath the conquering feet of Jesus, the Wine Presser who has “trodden the winepress alone.”

III. Now, Christian, come consider THE SOLITARY CONQUEROR DESCRIBED. “I have trodden the winepress alone.”

The great lesson God will teach the world is, “I am God and beside Me there is none else.” And especially in redemption, He will have it that the glory shall be all His. Hence, Christ never allowed any to share with Him the toil of redemption, nor will He suffer any to share the honors of it. And, moreover, there was no one who could help Him. None could take any part in the work of redemption since there was none able to bear so much as an atom of that mountain of His people’s guilt which pressed upon His heart! And there were none able to drink so much as a drop of that cup which He had to drink to the very dregs! He did it all alone, as the fifth verse of this chapter declares—“I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore My own arm brought salvation unto Me; and My fury, it upheld Me.”

Come, now, Believer, and let us look at the lonely Jesus. How lonely He was in this world during the few short years of His ministry! I think there never was such a lonely man, living among so many, as the Lord Jesus Christ was. He stood in the crowd and the congregation listened to His preaching—and though many heard with joy, there was no one who could give such sympathy as He needed. He went to a solitary place and talked with His disciples, but they could not sympathize with Him. John did so a little, for he laid his head on Christ's bosom, but it was poor sympathy that even John could give. Jesus must have been, to a very great extent, always a most lonely Man. Who was so pure that they could match His unsullied purity? Who so perfect, that they could abide with Immaculate Perfection? Who so wise as to talk with the Wonderful Counselor? Who so far-seeing as to be able to commune with the Prophet of all the ages? Who so benevolent as to speak with the gracious Jesus—and who so sorrowful as to be a fit companion for the "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief"?

His loneliness increased as His heaviest sorrows came upon Him. When He was in the Garden of Gethsemane, He trod the winepress all alone. I think I see our Savior, like the true Man that He was, clinging a little to His fellows. He says, "Peter, James and John—the other eight may go away. Judas has already gone—they may rest there, at that end of the Garden, but you come with Me, for I am about to be exceedingly sorrowful." He takes them with Him. Ah, but He feels that it would not do to have them with Him while He struggles, for they would die if they were to see His face! His was so terrible a Countenance when His body was racked with pain and His soul was bearing the load of our guilt, that they must inevitably have been stricken with death if they had looked upon that face of sorrow! What heavy drops of bloody sweat flowed from Him in His agony! Still He clung to the three disciples as if He needed some companionship. But, oh, how sorrowful it was to Him, when He came back, to find them all sleeping! Do you not think you see Jesus looking on His three slumbering disciples? There they lie! He goes to them three times, as if He sought some help from man, as if He had hoped that they would condole with Him, for that was all they could do in His grief.

Thrice He goes to them and the third time He says, "Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that does betray Me." Surely, *now* they will rally round Him! They do for a moment, for Peter, with his sword, slashes off the ear of Malchus. But soon, "All His disciples forsook Him and fled." He is taken prisoner by the men with swords and staves. O Earth, has He no Friend? O heavens, have you no Friend for Jesus? Where is Peter? He said, "Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended." Where is John? He has fled! There is no one to be with Jesus. No one to help Him. They take Him before the council, but there is no one to declare His innocence. He stands up in the hall, but there is no one with Him. Yes, there is one—but look at Him! He says, "I tell you, I know not the Man." Soon Peter is cursing and swearing almost before his Master's face!

And now He goes up to Calvary and still there is no one with Him, until, when He is hanging on the Cross, those blessed women come to lift their sorrowful eyes up to their beloved Lord and melt their hearts away in tears. And when the darkness gathered round, so that He could see no one, He was alone, alone, alone, in thick, impenetrable gloom! Hear Him cry, “Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani?” which is, being interpreted, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Then He could cry, “I am treading the winepress alone, and of the people there is none with Me.” When He was buried, nobody slept in the grave with Him—no other arose from the same sepulcher on the Resurrection Morning. Ah, Christian, never associate anyone with Jesus in the work of redemption! Rather understand well that this stands forth as a great cardinal Truth of God—that Jesus has trodden the winepress alone and, therefore, HE IS ALL IN ALL!

IV. Now this brings us, having briefly passed over the other points, to some SWEET AND SALUTARY CONSIDERATIONS SUGGESTED by this most blessed and sacred subject.

The first inference is *there is no winepress of Divine wrath for you, O Believer, to tread!* If Jesus trod the winepress, and trod it alone, you shall never have to tread it. What mistakes Christians often make in this matter! You will hear one say that such-and-such a good man was punished for his transgressions—and I have known Believers think that their afflictions were punishments sent from God on account of their sins! The thing is impossible! God has punished us, who are His people, once and for all in Christ and He will never punish us again! He cannot do it, seeing He is a just God. Afflictions are chastisements from a Father’s hand, but they are not judicial punishments! Jesus has trodden the winepress and He has trodden it alone, so we cannot tread it. How often have you thought that God would make you feel the weight of some of your sins, that He would cause you to suffer for some of your guilt! Ah, no! Jesus says, “I have trodden the winepress,” and if you had to tread it, if you had to suffer the smallest pang of punishment for your iniquities, Christ could no more say, “I have trodden the winepress alone.” He has done it completely and there is no punishment reserved for you! For you there are no flames of Hell, for you no punishment, for you no rack—you are freely acquitted, you are fully discharged—nor can you ever again be condemned! Christ, once and for all, has trodden your sins beneath His feet! Therefore, you never, never can be punished for them.

What say you to this, you seekers after the Truth of God? It may be you have heard the doctrine taught that Christ was punished for the sins of everybody and yet that many people are punished for their own sins. You will never find peace or comfort in that doctrine—it is so untrue, so unjust to God, so unsafe for man! We are taught, from the Holy Scriptures, that God has made His Son to be the Substitute for all His people and, “has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” And not one of “us”—the people for whom Christ was punished—can ever be, ourselves, punished! If Jesus did endure our punishment, we stand on this broad ground of unalterable justice, that God cannot, consistently with His Nature, (and

He can do nothing inconsistent with it), ever punish us any more! O rejoice, Christian Brothers and Sisters, that ours is a solid foundation! The elect—all who are united to Christ by a living faith—have been punished in Christ and now they stand in Him, “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners!” None can lay anything to their charge. “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Glorious God, unto You be praise, unto us be shame that we do not better love and more fully value this inestimable Doctrine of Substitution and its necessary consequences of complete justification!—

**“Remember, Lord, that Jesus bled,
That Jesus bowed His dying head,
And sweated bloody sweat.
He bore Your wrath and curse for me
In His own body on the tree
And more than paid my debt!
Surely He has my pardon bought—
A perfect righteousness worked out.
His people to redeem—
O that His righteousness might be
By Grace imputed now to me,
As were my sins to Him!”**

Another thought for you, O child of God, is this. *There are winepresses of suffering, although not of punishment, which you will have to tread.* But I want you to remember that *you will not have to tread these winepresses alone.* Tell a little child to go down a lonely lane on a dark night and the child says, “Mother, I don’t want to go there.” “I will go with you,” says the mother. “Then I will go,” says the child. “I will go anywhere with you, Mother.” Ah, Christian, there are many dark lanes for you to go down, but you will not have to go there alone! There are many winepresses—not of God’s wrath, but of His chastening hand—for you to tread, but you will not have to tread them alone. Oh, is not this a Truth of God that ought to ravish our hearts? We shall never tread the winepress alone! Minister, you go to your pulpit, but if God has sent you, you will never go alone! Your Master’s feet are behind you and your Master, Himself, stands by you! Deacons, you have sometimes to steer the Church in troublous waters. You need great wisdom, but there is an Arch-Deacon with you—you shall not go to your labors alone!

Sunday school teacher, you go to your class with earnestness and you think you teach alone. Ah, no, there is another Teacher sitting by you who can teach better than you can! He teaches hearts, while you teach only heads. He teaches souls, while you only teach bodies. He will teach for you! O daughter of affliction, you who lie on your bed of languishing, you lie not there alone! It is not an angel there that shades your head with its pure wing, but it is Jesus who stands and puts His pierced hand on your burning brow. Dying saint, you fear to die, but you shall not die alone! Jesus turns Bed-Maker to each one of His people. David says, “You will make all his bed in his sickness.”—

“Jesus can make a dying bed

***Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on His breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there.***

What is your trial, Christian? “Oh, a dark one!” you say. It may be so, but His rod and His staff shall comfort you. His right hand shall guide you. What is your grief, Christian? “Ah, a deep one!” you say. But “when you pass through the waters,” Jesus whispers, “I will be with you and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” In the old *Pilgrim’s Progress* I used to read in my grandfather’s house, I remember the picture of Hopeful in the river holding Christian up—and the engraver has done it very well. Hopeful has his arm around Christian and lifts up his hands, and says, Fear not, Brother, I feel the bottom.” That is just what Jesus does in our trials—He puts His arm around us, points up, and says, “Fear not! The water may be deep, but the bottom is good.” And though the cold streams of trouble rush down the river, do not fear—Christ is with you passing through the river—you will not have to pass through it alone. He trod the winepress for us, but we shall never have to tread it! It would be an ill day for us, Beloved, if we had to tread it. Some of God’s people have tried to do a little for themselves and tried to do it alone, but they have made a sorry mess of it. If we seek to do anything in our own strength, it is all over with us! But he who lives with Jesus and begs Him to be with him, shall find Him with him in winepresses, in Gethsemanes, and in Gabbathas—and if it were necessary that we should be crucified on Calvary, we would find Christ on Calvary crucified with us! You will not, Christian, have to pass through the river without your Master!

We remember an old tale of our boyhood, how poor Robinson Crusoe, wrecked on a foreign island, rejoiced when he saw the print of a man’s foot. So is it with the Christian in his trouble—he shall not despair in a desolate land because there is the footprint of Christ Jesus on all our temptations and troubles! Go on rejoicing, Christian! You are in an inhabited country—your Jesus is with you in all your afflictions and in all your woes! You shall never have to tread the winepress alone!

But, lastly, you servants of the living God, since Jesus trod the winepress alone, I beseech you bear with me while, for my Master’s sake, I bid you *give all things to Him*. Alone He suffered—will you not love Him, alone? Alone He trod the winepress—will you not serve Him? Alone He purchased your redemption—will you not be His property and His, alone? Oh, have you given half of yourself to the world and only half to your Master? Did the world ever bless you? Did the world redeem you? Was the world crucified for you? Did the world tread the winepress for you? No! Then give not the world a portion of your heart! You have some dear relative whom you love with all your soul, but be careful, O Christian, that your heart is still set most on your Lord! Did that friend tread the winepress for you? Did that friend drink the gall for you? Did that friend suffer for you on the Cross? No! Then let Jesus stand first and foremost. Let Him sit King upon the throne and no one else but He. And

when you daily go forth to labor, take heed that you labor not for self, or pleasure, or any worldly object, but that you labor for Jesus!

If the world says, "Come with me, and I will show you all manner of delights," reply, "O world, I cannot come! I never saw your feet in the winepress." Does lust invite you? Cry. "O lust, I cannot love you, for you never sweat a drop of blood for me!" Yes, if all the world's inhabitants should open wide their loving arms to beseech you to come in and forsake your Lord, answer, "No, no! You did not tread the winepress and that is all I care about! Jesus trod the winepress alone, and I will give myself wholly to Him." Half-hearted Christians, you who divide yourselves in two—giving one half to Christ and the other to lust—you are not the Lord's! "You cannot serve God and mammon." There can be only one Master and one Lord because there was but one Redeemer, one Friend, one Governor, One whom we live on, for whom we would even dare to die, because there is only One who dared to die for us. Never, I beseech you, Christians, and I beseech myself, also, for I plead with myself when I plead with you—never forget this—Jesus trod the winepress alone! And always take care that you have Him alone as King in your heart.

If you ask me, tonight, to paint Redemption, I shall have to put only one figure in the picture. We may paint groups when we depict Creation, for the morning stars sang together. We may paint groups when we picture the Resurrection, for an angel rolled away the stone. But if we paint Redemption, there can be but one figure and that figure is "the Man Christ Jesus." So, if you would have a painting in your heart, I bid you paint no groups upon the canvas of your soul, but ask God's Holy Spirit to paint on it one name, one lovely Being, one adorable Personage—Christ, who trod the winepress alone!

Queen Mary said that when she died, they would find the word, "Calais," written on her heart. Ah, Christian! Live so that when you die, all will know that the name, "Jesus," is printed on your heart, for it is certain that your name is deeply cut on His very heart and on His hands, and on His brow—it is written in His precious blood! Give Him not only the best place in your heart, but *all* your heart! Often do you sing—

***"Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it.
Prone to leave the God I love—
Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it,
Seal it from Your courts above!"***

Brothers and Sisters who will now come into close fellowship with your Lord at His Table, may this one idea engross your mind, that it is—

***"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good."***

And you despisers of the Cross, oh, let me tell you that you are as grapes in the winepress! If you die ungodly, unsaved, unrighteous, unforgiven—you must be cast into the great wine vat of the wrath of God, hurled into Hell with myriads of your fellows, like grapes fully ripe, cut off by the sickle of the angel—and horrible shall be the day when Christ shall tread on you in His fury and trample upon you in His hot displeas-

ure! God save you from being put in the wine vat! May you be able to cast your sins in there instead, that Christ may trample on them!

I cannot close my sermon without recurring to the happy circumstance that on this day, six years ago, I found deliverance, myself, from the bondage of Egypt and rejoiced in the liberty wherewith Christ made me free! What if my Master would, by my lips, bring another soul to Himself! What do you say, poor Trembler? Did you hear the text of this morning? “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”

[In preaching from these words in the morning, Mr. Spurgeon said, “Six years ago, today, as near as possible at this very hour of the day, I was ‘in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity,’ but had yet, by Divine Grace, been led to feel the bitterness of that bondage and to cry out by reason of the soreness of its slavery. Seeking rest and finding none, I stepped within the House of God and sat there, afraid to look upward lest I should be utterly cut off, and lest His fierce wrath should consume me. The minister rose in the pulpit, and, as I have done this morning, read this text—‘Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.’ I looked that moment—the Grace of faith was vouchsafed to me in the same instant! And now I think I say with truth—

***‘Ever since by faith I saw the stream
His flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme
And shall be till I die.’***

I shall never forget that day while memory holds its place. Nor can I help repeating this text whenever I remember that hour when first I knew the Lord.” [See Sermon #50, Volume 2, *Sovereignty and Salvation*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .]

Did you hear that? Then hear it yet again. And have you looked? If not, oh, look now! Have you looked to Him? If you have not seen Him, still look, and you shall see Him, by-and-by. But look now! It is all He asks you to do and even that, He bestows upon you! Look now, poor Sinner! Look now, for Christ’s sake, for your soul’s sake, for Heaven’s sake if you would escape the damnation of Hell! Look and that look shall save you! Catch but one glimpse of that dear head crowned with thorns—get but one glance from His sweet eyes full of pity—catch but one glimpse of that smiling countenance, or, if you cannot look so high, see but the sole of His pierced feet and you are saved!

For it is still written, “They looked unto Him and were lightened.” “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.”

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

A SONG CONCERNING LOVING KINDNESSES NO. 1126

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 10, 1873,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“I will mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has bestowed on them according to His mercies, and according to the multitude of His loving kindnesses.”
Isaiah 63:7.***

THE chapter opens with a declaration of our glorious Lord, as to His ultimate overthrow of His foes. He declares that He will tread down all the enemies of His people, as grapes are trod in the winepress. The chapter, as you know, begins with that remarkable exclamation, “Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?” The Prophet, having beheld the glorious vision, and heard the proclamation of the victorious Hero, felt his soul stirred within him. It is usual for saints’ hearts to burn within them when Christ is near. The glowing flames of his heart unloosed the bonds of his tongue—he could not but speak—and the theme which suggested itself to him was the loving kindness of the Lord.

He was ravished with what he saw coming in the future, with the future triumphs of Emmanuel and the overthrow of Israel’s foes, but he felt that he must not forget the glorious victories of the bygone ages and the triumphs of the days that were. And so with determination he declares, “I will mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord.” There were some in the Prophets’ days whose business it was to make mention of the Lord. Do you not remember how He says, “You that make mention of the Lord keep not silence?” Those were persons who publicly spoke *of* Him—“they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another.” They were, also, persons who spoke *to* Him, who kept the Lord in remembrance and made mention of His mercies to them, as it is written—“You that make mention of the Lord keep not silence, and give Him no rest till He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”

It was in both senses that Isaiah resolved to mention the loving kindnesses of Jehovah—to the people that they might love God—and to God that He might not forget His people, but might continue to smile upon them in the days to come, as He had done in days of yore. This morning we have the same task as that which was set before the Prophet. May the same Spirit rest upon us as rested upon him. And, first, we shall have to give you a delightful catalog of the mercies to be mentioned. Then, as time

serves us, we shall call your attention to the special points in these mercies which are to be mentioned. And we will close by noticing the practical good results of mentioning the loving kindnesses of Jehovah.

I. First, then, we have to give you a list of THE MERCIES TO BE MENTIONED. A complete summary we cannot give, for who can count the sands of the sea or the stars of the sky? Let him, when he has accomplished that task, attempt to count the mercies of the Lord! I have no need, my Brothers and Sisters, to make a catalog of my own, for I have one before me made to hand and written by an Inspired pen in the verses which follow the text. The list commences with special electing love. In the Hebrew the eighth verse runs thus, "For He said, they only are My people." He had chosen them, alone, of all the nations of the earth to be His portion and the lot of His inheritance. As He said in another place, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth."

He had chosen Israel to be a people near unto Him. Though they were a small nation and insignificant among the kingdoms, yet He set them apart for Himself. He chose their father, Abraham, and called him from an idolatrous family, even from Ur of the Chaldees, that he might dwell, alone, in the land of promise. Having chosen the Patriarch, He bound Himself by Covenant to favor his seed after him, not because of any goodness in them, but of His own sovereign will and good pleasure. This, therefore, the Jewish Prophet dwells upon as a first instance of love—and when we are mentioning the loving kindnesses of the Lord it is well to begin at the beginning, or rather to magnify that favor which had no beginning.

Praise the stream but forget not the wellhead. He loved His people from everlasting—

***"Long before the sun's refulgent rays
Primeval shades of slackness drove,
They on His sacred bosom lay
Loved with an everlasting love."***

How ravishing is the thought of eternal love! Try to drink it in—if you are a Believer in Christ you were loved before time began its cycles—in that old eternity, before the earth was born, you were Beloved of the Lord! You were dear to Jehovah's heart when this great world, the sun, the moon, the stars slept in the mind of God like unborn forests in an acorn cup! He loved you with an everlasting and infinite love. Rejoice in this and let your souls be glad. Never forget that Election is the source of every favor, for the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He has *chosen* us in Him before the foundation of the world.

Pass on to the next sweet token of Divine loving kindness which is found in the fatherly confidence which the Lord has manifested towards His people. Read the verse again. "He said, surely they are My people, children that will not lie: so He was their Savior." This has sometimes been thought to represent, after the manner of men, a mistaken confidence which God placed in His people, but I think it is not so. It is not in-

tended to set forth what the Lord secretly thought and knew concerning us, but it is the apparent language of His dealings *towards* them. It represents the trustful manner in which the Lord actually treats His people. There can hardly be much love where there is no confidence and confidence is often a great token of affection. When, for instance, the wife reposes her entire reliance upon her husband, it is because she loves him with all her heart. She proves her love by her restfulness in him.

When a father loves his child he may see many imperfections and much of fickleness, but he does not look on his child with suspicion and mistrust, but in many ways treats him with confidence. Now the Lord trusted His ancient people Israel. Did He not commit to them the Law and the Revelation of His will? Whose were the oracles? To no other nation did He give the Truth concerning Himself to lay up as a precious deposit. All the prophecies concerning Christ and the types which spoke of Him, were placed in their custody, and He said, "They are children that will not lie." Yes, and how sweetly God has trusted us, also, for He has put us in trust with the Gospel! He has trusted us with influence over other men's *souls*. He has trusted some of us with little ones whose mortality will feel our influence. He has trusted us with His name and honor, for according as we live in holiness will He be honored among the sons of men.

He has placed wondrous confidence in us. Often does it humble me in the dust when I think that "unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." It is a wonderful instance of affection that God should pitch upon a poor fallible being and say to him, "I have made you a chosen vessel to bear My name unto the Gentiles." All Believers are, in their measure, trusted in this way. Such honor have *all* the saints. You have all some charge to keep, some talent is entrusted to your stewardship, some jewel is placed in your custody and the Lord says of you in loving trustfulness, "Surely they will not lie." Alas, how unworthy have we been of the trust reposed in us! He knew what we should be, yet He has acted towards us as trustfully as if we had been truth itself.

Some of us feel the tears in our eyes as we remember how the Lord has honored us with great responsibilities and how far we have fallen short! The Holy Spirit has put us into positions which, in our youth, we could not have dreamed of occupying. And He has said to us, "Be My servant and be faithful," and so has given us a sweet proof of His loving kindness and tender mercies. Think that over, Beloved. I know that there are here present many Christian people who are trusted with the teaching and training of young minds. Look upon it as a special favor that you are used of the Lord to shape the immortality of precious souls! If you are, indeed, His people, you will see much love in this and this will make you the more anxious to be found faithful.

But the Prophet goes on to notice another sweet instance of love, namely, His great sympathy with us. There has been much dispute about

the interpretation of the first clause of the ninth verse, but I hope our authorized version is the right one and I feel sure it must be. It is such a Divine sentence, it must be Inspired. "In all their affliction He was afflicted." Was there ever anything more worthy of being mentioned as a part of the loving kindness of Jehovah than this, that He deeply sympathizes with all His tried and afflicted people? He does not merely sympathize as one man with another, but as if His people were one with Him, as indeed, is the case, so that He suffers when they suffer. In "all their affliction," not in *some* of their trials, but in all they have to bear, whether little or great, "He was afflicted."

There is never a cross upon a believing shoulder but what the Lord Jesus carries one end of it. There is never a cup put upon a saint's table but what the Lord Jesus sips at it and sweetens it by His Divine fellowship. "I am with you, Israel, passing through the fire; if nowhere else, I am with you; I will be with you in the furnace, and when the coals glow seven times hotter, there will I, the Son of God, tread the coals with you, and give you strength through My Presence." Was ever love like this? Beloved, you are poor worms of the dust and you never could have dreamed of having fellowship with God, and yet He deigns to be afflicted in your affliction! Are you not glad? Will you not bless His name? Or are your hearts turned to stone? No, we will make mention of the loving kindnesses of the Lord and the praises of the Lord because He knows our sorrows and pities us in our griefs.

The next mercy mentioned is His intimate union with us, for the text adds, "The Angel of His Presence saved them." The children of Israel in the wilderness were led and guided by the Messiah Himself! Invisible to them, He was none the less present. The Schekinah which blazed between the cherubim was the type of the Presence of redeeming love in the midst of the people. The messenger of God's Presence saved them—who could that have been but He of whom it is written, He "is the brightness of the Father's Glory, and the express image of His Person, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily"? Who but He is the "Messenger of the Covenant whom we delight in," anointed of the Lord to come forth as the Savior of men?

Now, Beloved, think of this, that Jesus the Son of God abides with us spiritually even unto this day! He has been here in body—"the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father." He is here in spirit, still. Yes, we are in Him, for we are "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Our fellowship with this "Angel of His Presence" is very near and very dear. He does not make Himself strange unto His own flesh—He manifests Himself to us as He does not unto the world. Have you ever seen Him? Have you ever felt His shadow falling upon you when alone? Did you ever look up into His face and see Him regarding you with deepest tenderness? Have you ever walked with Him in the cool of the day? Have you ever taken His

arm in the rough places of your pilgrimage, that you might come up from the wilderness leaning upon your Beloved? Oh, I know you have and of all the delightful tokens of love which you have received, the Presence of the Covenant Angel of God has been the most consoling! But we can only say a little upon each, we cannot dwell long upon any one.

Next the Prophet records the gracious interpositions of God on the behalf of His people—"In His love and in His pity He redeemed them." Brothers and Sisters, we have been saved! Those of us who believe in Jesus do not only expect to be saved at the last, but we rejoice that we are saved already! Already we have come up out of Egypt and our sins are drowned in the Red Sea—we shall see them no more, forever. Christ has forever put away our sins, so that if they are sought, they shall not be found, no, they shall not be, says the Lord. What a wonderful deliverance ours has been! Forget not, Beloved, the destroying angel and how he passed us by! Forget not the Paschal Lamb and the sprinkling of the precious blood! Forget not the deep sea through which you passed when you were baptized unto the Lord in the blood of His great atoning Sacrifice—yourself saved while all your sins were drowned, like Pharaoh, in the flood.

Forget not all these wonders, I pray you. Many other deliverances have you experienced since then. Which of us could not tell of choice and crowning mercies? Some of us have newly come up from the sick bed, where we thought we should see men no more in the land of the living, and yet we are still living to praise God. Perhaps you have come up from the deeps of poverty where you thought surely you should famish, but you have known no lack. The Lord has set your feet in a large room and given you bread enough and to spare. Or, it may be you have come up from soul conflict, wherein you were thrown down by the enemy, so that he put his foot upon you, but you had Grace to say, "Rejoice not over me, O my adversary; though I fall, yet shall I rise again," and you *have* risen again, and this morning you are remembering the loving kindnesses of the Lord!

Sing you, then, of the hill Mizar and the Hermons. Anoint anew those ancient Ebenezers, when you said, "Up to now has the Lord helped me"—I will mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord. Have you not many to mention? Cannot you, also—

***"Arise and tell
The wonders of Immanuel.
He plucked your feet from the miry clay,
And set you upon the King's highway."***

I know you can thus speak! Take care that you do and often make mention of the great goodness of the Lord to His people. This is not all, however. Let us go back to our catalog. The Prophet tells you God provided for, led, protected and upheld His people by a wondrous special Providence while they were in the wilderness. "He bore them and carried them all the days of old." Like a nurse who carries her little child—it cannot walk, it can only take a few tottering footsteps—and she carries it. Or like an eagle, which is said to take its young upon its back and fly aloft, bear-

ing the eaglets towards the sun—even so did God carry His people in the wilderness—and in like fashion He has carried us.

Unto this day what have you lacked, O Believers? You fretful people of God, what cause have you had for murmuring? Has He not given His angels charge concerning you, to bear you up in their hands lest you dash your foot against a stone? Has he not been your refuge up to now? Has He not covered you with His feathers and made His wings to be your shelter? Have you not received daily bread and water? Has not your raiment been given you? Have you not been housed? To this hour where has the Lord failed you? Has He been a wilderness unto you? Has He broken one of His promises? I challenge you to prove a single instance in which He has been untrue! My own witness is that, “Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life.”

This is the verdict of all the saints. They can tell of the great goodness of the Lord and record His loving kindnesses. Let us join with them. If these blessings were to cease for a moment, where would we be? What if the Lord were no longer to be the God of Providence? What if He would no longer hold us up? What if He shuts up the granaries of His Grace? What if His tender mercies should be removed and the heart of His compassion should be changed into wrath—where would we be? But as it is not so and never shall be so, let us make mention of the loving kindnesses of the Lord and the praises of the Lord!

Nor is this all. The Prophet goes on further to mention the Lord’s chastening, for I do verily believe he puts it down as a thing for which to bless him. It is to be sorrowed over, that we need chastening, but God is to be praised that He does not withhold it from us. “But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them.” Yes, but He loved them, even then, blessed be His name! The mother gives her child a pat, but she loves it, still. It often grieves her more that her child should be chastened than it can ever grieve the child. And this is one way in which, in all our afflictions, the Lord is afflicted, because He “does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.” He does not take delight in the sorrows of His people, but His heart relents towards them when He sees their tears and hears their cries.

I bless God this day with all my heart that I have not been left unchastened—and every child of God, in looking back upon his life will say the same. “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word.” O, my Brothers and Sisters, how much we owe to the hammer and the anvil and the file and the fire! Thanks be to God for the little crosses of every day, yes, and for the heavy crosses which He sends us at certain seasons. He does not gather the twigs of His rod on the mountains of wrath, but He plucks them in the garden of love. And though He sometimes makes blue marks upon us as He smites us heavily, yet—

***“His strokes are fewer than our crimes
And lighter than our guilt.”***

Love bathes all the wounds which it makes and kisses away the smart. Blessed be a chastening God! Set down your chastening among your choicest mercies and mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord.

Notice that the next thing the Prophet sings about is God's faithfulness, for though He did smite His people, yet in a very short time we find that, "He remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, "Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? Where is He that put His Holy Spirit within them? That led them by the right hand of Moses with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make Himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble?" He recollected what He had done and He resolved to do the like again. He was smiting them, but it came to His thoughts, "I have loved them of old, I have afore-time blessed them, I have kept them, I have delivered them for My name's sake, and therefore will I do it again." If God reasons thus with Himself, well may we say—

***"And can He have taught me
To trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me
To put me to shroud?"***

If He had meant to destroy me, would He have done so much for me?

***"His love in time past
Forbids me to think,
He'll leave me at last
In trouble to sink:
Each sweet Ebenezer
I have in review,
Confirms His good pleasure
To help me quite through."***

We will close this catalog with one more choice mercy, for the Prophet tells of God's giving His people rest, after all. He describes Him first as leading them through the deeps like a horse in the wilderness, where the horse would not stumble. A horse on our stony streets or on rugged roads may stumble, but a horse out on the smooth expanse of desert sand is quite another creature and he flies like the wind in ecstasy of freedom, fearing no fall. Thus the Lord has made His people to enjoy liberty and standing safe in an even place. The Prophet next uses another figure. He says, "As a beast goes down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest." This is an exceedingly delightful metaphor. As the cattle descend into the vales to feed under the shady trees by the flowing brooks, so God makes His people to rest.

Have you ever seen the cattle and horses make their way to the stream in the heat of the day and stand there knee deep in the water? They merrily swing their tails to chase away the flies, looking as they lick their foals or calves, or drink long draughts of the pure liquid, so perfectly content with all around them that we may well conclude that they there find all the Heaven which cattle can desire! Even so, we that have believed, when

we trust our God, when we rest in Jesus, leave the sun's heat and find the cool brooks of the Spirit's gracious influences where we bathe ourselves, and rest in sweet content, for we that have believed do enter into rest!

Jesus is our peace and He has given to us the peace of God which passes all understanding, which does keep our heart and mind through Jesus Christ. What a catalog have I laid before you! If you begin to sing according to this musical score, when will you get to the end of it? Oh, prepare your voices, get your harps! Let every string be well tuned! Here is noble music for you—music which will last you till you get to Heaven—and then I think you may go over it again, for what sweeter, nobler work shall you require than to make mention of the loving kindnesses of the Lord!

II. But now we must turn to the second head. Isaiah calls our particular attention to CERTAIN POINTS WORTHY OF SPECIAL MENTION. And, first, in the text he directs our thoughts to the fact that whatever has been bestowed upon us by God reveals His loving kindness, His goodness, His mercy, His compassion. In fact, all that we have received has come to us by the way of free Grace. Do we need to be told this? I fear we do, but if our sense of our own unworthiness is clear—if we know what worse than nothings we are, what a mass of sin and corruption we are by nature—we shall never think that we receive anything from God by the way of merit.

Still our proud hearts need to be told over and over again that all the blessings we enjoy come to us by the free and Sovereign Grace of God. Therefore the Prophet heaps up words. Notice them—"The loving kindnesses of the Lord." "The great goodness of the Lord." The "mercies" of the Lord. O Believer, nothing of all this goodness is deserved by you! The bread on your table is flavored with Grace. Your meat has Mercy for its sauce. Every drop of water which cools your tongue tastes of Mercy. Charity clothes you. Infinite Love feeds you. And as for your *spiritual* blessings, where are your streams found, from where do they gush but from the inexhaustible Fountain of Eternal Love?

Let others boast, if they dare, of what they have done for themselves. Let others talk of the dignity of human nature. Let them glory in the worthiness of their own actions. God forbid that we should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the love which shone from that Cross to such poor, unworthy ones as we are. Those are charming bells, indeed, free Grace and dying Love! Through the ivory gate of Grace all mercies come to sinners. Through this window of agate, this gate of carbuncle, every good gift is handed out to men. That is the first noticeable thing.

The next is the consequent praise which is due to God on account of this. Does Isaiah not say, "I will mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord and the praises of the Lord"? O praise the Lord, praise Him for every mercy you possess! We ought to keep count of God's goodness, keep ac-

count, I say, by rendering new notes of praise for each new favor. If we did this we should never leave off singing. We should never have time for complaining if we gave to God due praise for every mercy received. Oh for a praising heart! For a praising heart is a happy heart! The occupation of Heaven should be the occupation of heavenly men, even while they are here. God help us to keep to this!—

***“I will praise You every day
Now Your anger’s turned away.
I will magnify Your name
As long as I live,
For as long as I live
Your mercies magnify me.”***

The third thing to be noticed is the uniform nature of all God’s dealings with us. Observe, “according to all that the Lord has bestowed on us.” We are to praise God in all and for all. “In everything give thanks” is a Christian precept. I do not like, when I am looking back on my past life, to consider exclusively two or three remarkable mercies, and say, “I will bless the Lord for these.” No, I will bless Him for my whole career. Did He take away my comforts? Did He send me that which I judged to be evil? Shall we pick and choose the subjects for our praise? Shall we bless the Lord who gives and not the Lord who takes? “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away,” said Job, “and blessed be the name of the Lord.” Mention His Providences altogether, for all things work for good. No man knows which is the best part of his life. Perhaps that portion which we think to be the worst has been of the most service to us. God knows what is best for us. Let us praise Him according to all that the Lord has bestowed upon us, blessing Him for bitters and sweets, for blacks and whites, for storms and calms, blessing Him alike for all. That should be a special note in our song.

The next notable point is the grandeur of the goodness which is shown in every mercy. Observe the words, “The great goodness toward the house of Israel,” as if we had received no little goodness, but all was great goodness. Is there a favor that we enjoy from God which we can dare to despise? Ingratitude makes little of much, but gratitude sees much in little. Whatever comes to us is great goodness. But oh, Beloved, we need not continue to talk about it, for surely upon the very surface we can see the great goodness of electing love, the great goodness of redeeming love, the great goodness of converting love, the great goodness of pardoning love, the great goodness of upholding love, the great goodness of sanctifying love, the great goodness which has sent a Savior to prepare Heaven for us, and the great goodness which is preparing us that we may enter into the Heaven!

God’s goodness is all great! Nothing little comes from our gracious God. O great Sinner, is there not a gleam of hope for you in this? A great God full of great mercies for a great sinner! Why, that is the very God you need! Fly to Him by the way of the great Savior! Yet again, we ought to

take peculiar note in our song, of the condescending tenderness and pity of God, for such is the force of the next expression, “which He has bestowed on them according to His mercies”—a clearer rendering would be, “according to His compassion.” You know a man may be very good to another, but he may not be tender. There is a way of pitching a shilling to a beggar in the street just as if he were a dog. God never gives His mercies to *us* in that way. A doctor may cure us, but be so rough about it that we may be glad to get rid of him. But the Lord heals lovingly and tenderly.

I have often said in this place, and I venture to repeat it, that I do not know any word in any language which can be compared with that word, “loving kindness.” Thank God, we are Anglo-Saxons, and therefore can say, “loving kindness.” Unrivalled word! It is marrow and fatness. Loving kindness! What a mouthful it is! How it seems to sweeten the soul as it goes down. The Lord has always dealt graciously with us. He has been as tender as a nurse with her child. He has given us the mercy suitable to our condition. When He has been teaching us He has not taught us too much at once, but little by little as we have been able to bear it, for He knows our frame. He screens off a strong light from weak eyes. He feeds the famished with convenient food. We received the Gospel at first, not in the glory of its sublime doctrines, but in the simplicity of the plainer Truths. With tenderness did God instruct us, and in every other part of His dealing towards us, the like tenderness is seen wherein He has abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence. For this we extol Him.

One other special note demands to be heard, and that is the multitudinous displays of His love. “According to the multitude of His loving kindnesses,” of all shapes, and at all times, and in all ways, and from all points of the compass! “The multitude of his loving kindnesses.” Now I am lost. I cannot call in the arithmetician. It is not possible for him to calculate here. Sometimes we have before us a long line of figures which must be multiplied and the brain aches in the very attempt. But you shall never calculate the multitude of the Lord’s tender mercies—this is an endless task! Look over the fields in spring when they are covered with the yellow kingcups and white daisies, and green grass in abundance till the meadows look as though God had spread a field of the cloth of gold for a celestial coronation. Count these flowers if you can. Count their petals, their leaves, the blades of the green grass and the drops of dew which hang upon them.

Then look upwards to the trees. Count the myriad leaves which make the forest. Detain the dust which stirs in the summer’s gale, count all the grains which make the mountains, all the sands which form the seashore and all the drops which compose the sea. Have you done? Ah, then, you have but *begun* to estimate the multitude of the loving kindnesses of the Lord! O, my Soul, bless the Lord! Why be silent? “Why should the mercies He has worked be lost in silence and forgot?” Break forth, my Spirit! Break forth my whole Nature! All that is within me be stirred up to mag-

nify and bless His holy name, for He is God and His mercies are unsearchable! Past finding out are His favors! Glory be unto His name!

III. We close after occupying two or three minutes in hinting at the PRACTICAL REASONS WHY WE SHOULD THUS MENTION THE LOVING KINDNESSES OF THE LORD. First, we should do this that we may have pleas in prayer. This is the best way of praying. “Lord, you have done this for Your servant. You have done that for Your servant, therefore I beseech You, do more!” This is not after the manner of men, for when we once relieve a man’s necessities we say to him, “Do not come again.” But every gift which God gives is an invitation to come again and the best way in which we can show our gratitude is to seek for further gifts—

***“The best return for one like me,
So wretched and so poor,
Is from His gifts to draw a plea,
And ask Him still for more.”***

You will pray well when you can mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord.

Next, these memories will act as stays to your faith. When you grow doubting and troubled and I suppose you do, sometimes, then you can remember the Lord’s former favors. And since He cannot change, you will be confident that He will do the same again. Oh, rest in Him, of what He has been to you He will be to the end. As long as the world stands, trust Him and He will bring your desires to pass. Then, next, these remembered mercies will minister to your present happiness and comfort. The thought of what God has done for us is enough to make us happy now. If the Lord were not to give me another mercy, I am bound to praise Him for what He has given me already. Blessed be His name, since first I stood a beggar at His door and He stayed my soul’s hunger with Himself—and gave me His own flesh to eat and blood to drink—the sacred nutriment of my hungry spirit, I scarcely have been able to ask for anything before it has come to me!

O Lord, You daily load us with benefits till we sink under the burden of obligation and yet we are so happy. The thought of all this, dear Brothers and Sisters, should have the other practical influence of making us love God more and obey Him better. Duty becomes pleasure when gratitude rules the hour.—

***“It is love that makes our willing feet
In swift obedience move.”***

Has He done so much for me? Then what is there that I could not do for Him if His Grace would help me? To mention the Lord’s goodness enables us, dear Friends, to cheer others, for when we make mention of the loving kindnesses of God to ourselves we do not know who may be standing by. There may be some mourner there for whom the gates of consolation have been long closed—but when he hears what God has done for one of His people, he plucks up heart and says, “I will even see whether He would not do the same for me.”

Tell of God's loving kindness! Be not slow in speech about these things—this will render your conversation such as becomes an heir of Heaven. Do you not use much idle talk? I am afraid we all do. Do you not often complain when there is nothing to complain about? Do you not murmur? Are you not far too ready to break forth in words of lamentation? Waste not your breath on such base uses, but consecrate it all on praise! Tell what His hands have given, what His lips have spoken. Tell how He has blessed you with countless mercies and it will make the daughters of despondency rejoice, and the sons of mourning lift up their heads!

Last of all, make mention of the loving kindnesses of God, because it will glorify Him and this should always be your master motive. The Christian lives to honor his God. Oh tell what the Lord has done, that men may praise Him! The sons of men are apt enough to forget Him. Keep them in remembrance of Him. They are apt enough to speak hard things concerning Him. Tell them of His loving kindnesses and make them know what a good Master He is whom you serve. Shout it into their ears! Make them hear it! Tell them again and again and again of the great goodness of the Lord to you! Can you give me any reason why you should not mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord? Can you tell me any company in which you ought to be in which you could not mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord? I know some persons who have hobbies and you cannot be long with them before they will introduce them. They may be very inappropriate but somehow or other they bring the conversation round to their favorite theme.

I would have you ride this hobby without fear. Rather I would have you take this noble steed and ride it through all companies—make them feel that it is your manner and habit to tell of God's goodness—and that you cannot help it! Bring it in somehow. I think you never need be short of reasons for praise. Tell men of His goodness in sending the cool wind in this hot summer, or tell them of His goodness in sending the heat to ripen the harvest. Tell them of His mercy which sends the rain that the grass may spring up again, or of His love which withholds the rain till the reapers' work is done. If all this congregation went out today to tell of the loving kindness of the Lord towards His people, we should have such Gospel preaching throughout all London as was never known before!

The Lord rinse your mouths out, Brothers and Sisters, if you have a bitter way of talking about other people, or about His Providence—and lead you, from now on, to glory in His holy name. Amen and Amen!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 106.

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DIVINE SURPRISES

NO. 1538

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 16, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“When You did terrible things which we looked not for, You came down, the mountains flowed down at Your Presence.”
Isaiah 64:3.***

THE people of God were in a very sad state when this chapter described them. Isaiah pictures them as brought into the lowest degree of fear and sorrow. He pleads with God to return to His chosen people and restore their former peace and prosperity. He makes use of the past as an argument for the future and recites the wonderful acts of God in days gone by as an encouragement to expect that He would do the same again. If it were not that God is unchangeable, no inference could be drawn from His past behavior toward us, but inasmuch as He is immutably the same, yesterday, today and forever, we may safely infer that what He has done He will do again.

They say that history repeats itself—it were more true to say that God abides the same, that His ways are everlasting and His mercy endures forever. Therefore it is good and sound pleading to say, “You have done this and that, therefore again make bare Your arm and once more let Your people rejoice in Your faithfulness and Your power.” While we may all do this on behalf of the Church of God and find a rich store of arguments in her past history, we may also do it for ourselves. Some of us are now getting into years and we have known the Savior for 30 years or more—we ought to be well supplied with reasons for trusting Him and I am sure we are. Let us look back on the past and remember how He has forgiven our transgressions, how He has recovered our backslidings, how He has relieved our necessities, how He has cheered our despondencies and strengthened our weaknesses—He that is our God is still the God of salvation and He will continue still to bless us, even to the end. Because the Lord is my shepherd and now makes me to lie down in green pastures, therefore I conclude that, “surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

At the back of whatever I shall have to say this morning will lie this grand principle—that as the past is, so we may expect the future to be in reference to God's dealings with us. Let us come more closely to our point. From the text and from its connection, I gather, first, that the Presence of God is the one hope of His people. In this text the Prophet speaks of God's doing terrible things when He came down among His people. We shall next notice that the Presence of God creates surprises—He did “things which we looked not for.” We shall observe, thirdly, that the Presence of God achieves wonders—“the mountains flowed down at Your Presence.” And then, lastly, we shall come back to where we started and reflect that

we may expect the same results from the Divine Presence if we are privileged to enjoy it.

I. First let us meditate upon the fact that THE DIVINE PRESENCE IS THE ONE HOPE OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD. The Prophet shows that he believed this, for he commences the chapter by a most ardent cry to God that He would come into the midst of His people—"Oh that You would rend the heavens, that You would come down." A little before this, (in the 15th verse of the previous chapter), he had prayed, "Look down from Heaven." But it is the characteristic of true prayer that it grows as it proceeds—he begins by asking God to look down but he gathers intensity of desire and confidence of faith and here he cries, "Come down."

So eager is Isaiah that God should come and come at once, that he speaks to Him as though addressing a warrior who lingered in his tent while a battle was raging—who would be so eager to rush to the help of his friends that he would not stay to remove the canvas or to lift the curtain, but would tear a way for himself through the canopy to come at once to the deliverance of those who called him to the rescue. "Oh that You would rend the heavens." Stay not, Great God, to pass through the gate of pearl, but rend Your heavens—let the blue firmament be torn in two and descend from Heaven upon rushing mighty winds for the help of Your people!

When our Divine Lord opened the way by which God could come to us poor guilty men, He did not lift the curtain nor fold it up, but the veil of the Temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom and so the door was left wide open forever—for none can ever fix the veil in its place again. It was through the open heavens that Christ went in where He now stands to plead for us and by that open Heaven the sacred Spirit descended to rest upon the Church. The impetuous character of the simile here used shows that the Prophet looked upon the Divine visitation as the one thing needed for Israel. O Lord, we do not ask You to cause the earth to bring forth plentifully, or to make our wealth increase, or to make the kings of the earth favorable to Your cause! But come, Yourself, to bless Your people and they will need no more! Oh that You would come down! Even so, come quickly.

Is not this the prayer of every true heart here that knows the need of the Church and the need of the age? We do not so much require more ministers, or more eloquent teachers, but more of the sacred Presence. We do not need wealth in the Church, or magnificent buildings, or ornate services, but we crave, above all things, that the living God will refresh His people! If the Lord were in the midst of us, if the shout of a king were heard in our camps, then would our armies march to the victory and our foes would be defeated! The desire of the Prophet in the present instance is abundantly justified by the history of God's people in all times, for when the tribes were in Egypt, what could set them free from the iron bondage? What but the Presence of God?

The Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows." Then the Lord came down to deliver them and you know with what signs and wonders He plagued the proud Egyptian oppressor! Pharaoh said,

“Who is Jehovah?” But he soon received his answer when the waters were turned into blood and the dust into lice—when the cattle died of disease and every green thing in the land was blasted with lightning or eaten with locusts! Pharaoh and his people learned that when God is in the midst of His oppressed and down-trodden people they are “like an hearth of fire among the woods and like a torch of fire in a sheaf.”

God’s Presence in Israel with Moses and Aaron brought them out “with a high hand and with an outstretched arm.” When they started on that memorable night, after eating the Passover, what was it that made the march of Israel so grand an event in history? Did not Jehovah lead the way? When they came to the borders of the Red Sea with the rocks on either side and the angry host pursuing them, what was their defense but that God looked out from the fiery, cloudy pillar and while His smile lit up the midnight of His people and made it bright as day, He looked forth from the cloudy side and troubled the Egyptians and took off their chariot wheels, so that they drove them heavily? It was God’s Presence that quickened the feet of Miriam and Israel’s daughters on the other side of the sea, when they struck their timbrels and cried, “Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea.”

God’s Presence did it all! He who made His kingly dwelling amid their thick array was the glory of their strength, the banner of their joy! So was it when their marching was through the lone wilderness. What made Israel thrive upon barren sand? What made the nation drink plenteously from the Rock? It was the Presence of God that made the earth a watered sod, the flint a gushing rill! The tabernacle stood in their midst and the Presence of God was symbolized there by a blaze of Glory between the cherubim and this it was that made Israel the chief among the nations! The whole of the story of Israel proves the same truth! God’s Presence was Israel’s Glory!

When they grieved Him and provoked Him, then the feeblest of the nations round about them tyrannized over them. They were an insignificant and defenseless nation of themselves, but when God shone upon them, they were great among the nations and the scepter of Israel was stretched from sea to sea. “God with us,” when written on Israel’s banner, secured them honor and conquest. But without God they could do nothing. Dear Friends, this Truth of God which is thus borne out in the history of God’s ancient people is certainly true with us, too! The favor of God is the hope of all His people. First, we see this in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, when did you and I ever obtain comfort, or receive hope of acceptance until we saw God with us in our flesh?

The world would have perished if God had not come down to it in the Person of His dear Son. At Bethlehem the wondrous mystery was seen—the Godhead veiled beneath the form of a Babe. This was the birth of hope. So, too, when the Lord Jesus comes to any one of us by His Spirit, our hope begins! We see Him as our Immanuel and we are comforted. Dr. Watts most sweetly sings—

***“Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find.
The holy, just and sacred Three***

***Are terrors to my mind.
But if Immanuel's face appears
My hope, my joy begins!
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His Grace removes my sins."***

God saves us by coming to us in Christ with an atonement in His hands to put away our sins. Yes, and our hope of the perfection of our salvation still lies in the coming of Christ to us! We expect that when He comes in the latter day, though our bodies may have seen corruption and the worms may have devoured them, yet in our flesh we shall see God! When Christ shall come a second time the Archangel's trumpet shall sound and then shall we receive the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body for which we now hopefully await.

Because He lives we shall also live and because He shall come to be revealed, we also shall be manifested! Our Lord's first coming in our flesh has given us eternal salvation! His coming to us by His Spirit has worked in us a living faith and His second coming, by-and-by, is the grand object of our hope. That day and hour no man knows, for the Father keeps it in His own power, but the consummation of all our hopes is wrapped up in it and, therefore, we cry, "Come quickly! Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Amen." So, you see, Brothers and Sisters, it is the Presence of God with us in Christ which is the ground of all our hope.

Until our Lord's glorious Advent, the Presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church is our only dependence for success in all that we attempt. If we meet for prayer, it must be praying in the Holy Spirit, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought till He instructs us. It is hard praying to an absent God—the Lord's Presence is the life of a Prayer Meeting. If the Lord is not there to inspire the prayer, He is not there to *hear* the prayer. When we preach, it is poor testifying if we have not the Lord's anointing resting upon us and His Presence all around us. If the Spirit of God is not with the preacher, a silent tongue might be as efficient as the most eloquent speech. So is it with our missionary enterprise—it will be a failure unless the Lord is in it from first to last. Every missionary might fitly say, "If Your Spirit go not with me, carry me not up from here."

Vain will it be to organize societies, enlist subscribers and enter upon actual effort and to spend money and zeal thereon if the Lord is not there. "Without Me you can do nothing," said our Lord of old and the same is true unto this day! The Presence of God is essential to each one of us if we are to be saved. It is well for the prodigal to arise and go to his Father, but the saving moment comes when his Father meets him. "When he was yet a great way off, his Father saw him and ran and had compassion on him and fell upon his neck and kissed him"—there was the actual salvation! The lost sheep is not found till the Shepherd comes to it. God's coming to a man convinces him of sin—he stands up for self-righteousness till the Holy Spirit constrains him to ask the Truth. Never did a stony heart turn itself to flesh, or a blind eye remove its own darkness! God must come in infinite freeness of Grace and work with boundless power of love, or the dead sinner will remain dead and the blinded mind will remain blind.

Yes, and after the work is begun, the Presence of God in the soul is necessary for its continuance and progress. We never take a step towards

God except with God. Even the faintest *desire* towards Him is breathed into us by His own Spirit! And as for the higher works of Grace in the soul, they are evidently all of God, for the assurance of faith, the confidence of hope and the consecration of love were never ascribed by their possessors to any source less than Divine. Let a man try to serve God without God and he will fail! Sitting at Jesus' feet is our proper posture—when He teaches, we have knowledge—all else is conceit! In His company we are happy and useful, but apart from Him we are miserable failures.

Even in Heaven, itself, the Presence of God is the source of joy and perfection. Up yonder they need no candle, neither light of the sun, because the Lord God gives them light—if He were not among them it would be dark as death-shade. The blessed ones drink from the river of His pleasures—no other stream makes glad the city of God! Their life is His life—their bliss is His own Divine pleasure! They enter into Christ's Glory and they are filled with Christ's joy! Is it not clear enough that our most essential need is the nearness of God to our souls? "My soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him." David's petition shall be mine—"Draw near unto my soul and redeem it." "It is good for me to draw near unto God." O Lord, remember Your Word unto Your servant—"My Presence shall go with you and I will give you rest."

II. The second point I wish to bring before you is when the Lord comes, HIS PRESENCE CREATES GREAT SURPRISES—"When You did terrible things which we looked not for, You came down." It has always been so. Whenever God has come to men He has always surprised them. Even the most expectant among men have found their expectations far exceeded, while those who have been depressed and have prophesied dark things, have been altogether taken aback to see the goodness of the Lord! God came to Jacob's house and his favorite son was sold for a slave—the Ishmaelites took him down into Egypt. "Ah," said Jacob when he thought on this and his other trials, "all these things are against me."

He could not make out that there could be any good intended of the Lord when he cried, "Joseph is not and Simeon is not and you would take Benjamin away?" And yet God was doing great things for him which he looked not for, for Joseph was set upon the throne of Egypt that he might provide a refuge for his old father and his brethren in the days when there should be a famine over all the earth. Then would he say unto them, "Come down unto me, tarry not; you shall dwell in the land of Goshen and there will I nourish you." God was doing for the trembling Patriarch, "things which he looked not for."

I shall not stop to give instances in the history of God's people. Often did they cry out, "You are the God that does wonders! Who is like unto You?" Do you think the Israelites, when they stood by the Red Sea, ever imagined they would walk through it dry-shod? When they stood on the burning sand, did they expect to live under a vast sunshade all day long? Yet they did, for the cloudy pillar screened them from the heat. Did they suppose that their camp would be lit up at night as never canvas city had been lighted before, with an illumination brighter than our electric lights can give to us? Yet the flaming column was a grand illumination to them! When they were starving, did they hope to gather angels' bread fresh from

the skies? When they were thirsty, did they reckon upon a smitten rock yielding an abundant stream?

When they were bit by serpents, did they expect that a bronze serpent would work their cure? When they came to the river, did they look to see old Jordan retreat before the priests' feet? When they compassed the city of Jericho, did they hope to see the walls tumble down about the ears of its inhabitants because the tribes sounded rams' horns and gave forth a shout? The history of Israel is a series of surprises and unexpected mercies! The Lord does great marvels and His people are filled with happy astonishment. It has been even more so in the works of Grace. See what God has done for us in matchless mercy. When He stood at the gates of Eden and talked with Adam and cursed the ground for man's sake, could any onlooking angel have imagined that in all this God intended to display the greatness of His mercy, so that where sin abounded Grace should much more abound?

Did any man, did any angel, did any seraph ever imagine that the Son of God would come down to be born into this rebel race? Did it ever enter into their conception that He would *die*, the Just for the unjust, to bring men to God? Was it ever thought of that sinful man should be adopted into the Divine family? Do you not think it a most amazing thing that sinful men should be born again and adopted into the family of God?—

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

This was an honor that we looked not for! Moreover, God, having made us to be His children, did we ever think that He would make us His heirs? Yet He says, “If children, then heirs; heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ.” Did it ever enter into man's heart to conceive that the Church should be married to Christ, wedded to Him in bands of everlasting love? Did it ever enter the dreams of any intelligent being that God would lift up man, poor, fallen man, to sit in the person of Christ next to Himself?

Well did David cry, “What is man, that You are mindful of Him? And the son of man, that You visit him?” You made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands. This is wonderful! Brothers and Sisters, though we think we know what God, in Grace, is doing, I am sure we do not! We shall not know even when we get to Heaven and when we rise from the dead we shall say, “I believed in the resurrection of the dead, but this out-miracles all miracles!” When our Lord shall take us up into Glory, how amazed we shall be! To talk about that Glory now does ravish us, but to be *in it*, *flooded* with it, *filled* with it, *crowned* with it—this will be overwhelming! Surely we shall need stronger frames and hearts more able to endure the weight of bliss than those which we now have!

How is it that we continue to be surprised at what God does? I answer, first, because our largest conceptions of God fall short. The man who has, like Enoch, walked with Him for years, yet knows little of Him. Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, you do not know the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of His wondrous liberality! God is infinite! We are as a tiny shell on the beach—we cannot hold the ocean and therefore the measureless main must always be a marvel to us. We shall always be, in a

measure, ignorant and as the unknown is gradually revealed it will take us aback with absolute astonishment. Besides, our experience of God is very brief. We have lived as yet only for a span, or a hand's breadth. Even you old men of 60 or 70 years, what are you? Your life has gone like the winking of an eye—it is *nothing* as compared with the life of God!

Therefore there must be in God's dealings a great deal yet to come of which poor, short-lived insects like ourselves can have no idea. Besides that, I am sorry to say our faith is shamefully weak and does not look for great things. We have never had such faith in God as He deserves at our hands. We have never believed Him for more than two pence, when we ought to have believed in Him for all the gold of Ophir! He is worthy of a trust boundless as the sea and we have scarcely relied upon Him beyond the mere drop in a bucket. By doing "exceeding abundantly above what we ask, or even think," the Lord puts us into an amazed state. It will always be so. Even in Heaven we shall still be astonished, as the poet puts it—

***"Then let me mount and soar away
To the bright world of endless day
And sing with rapture and surprise,
His loving kindness in the skies."***

It is a most blessed thing it is so. I am so glad that God does those "things which we looked not for" because first, it keeps our life fresh and sweet and puts us far from monotony and routine. You people who have no God must find life a threadbare tale—one week must be very like another and one year as another to you! But some of us can sing—"Still has my life new wonders seen." Novels! I assure you that no novel can equal in interest the unvarnished facts of Christian experience, especially in the case of those who are much tried! Facts surpass fictions in their power to surprise. The makers of romances may rub their foreheads as long as they like, but they cannot invent stories at all comparable to those which happen to us in our ordinary lives.

We do not get tired of living because there is something new every morning in the goodness of the Lord—fresh revelations are brought out by the trials we are called to endure. Thus He increases our knowledge. When you and I enter upon a new trouble, we ought to fall on our knees and thank God that He is about to elevate us to a higher Grace of discipleship. Sanctified afflictions are spiritual promotions! The Christian's experience is like that of the man who is conducted from an outer court into inner rooms until he reaches the innermost of all. If God opens the first door of gracious knowledge and lets you in, you are a saved man as soon as you enter by faith—but there is another door and when you enter in *there* you are not only saved but made useful in the saving of others!

Yet there is another door and if God favors you by admitting you into the inner chamber you will be a happy man, mighty in prayer and confident in hope. Another door stands within this hallowed chamber and if you can find the key, and use it, you will enter into the secret hall of intimate fellowship with Christ! I do not know how many rooms there are, one within another in the place of heavenly wisdom, but this I know, that whenever the Lord is about to introduce His servants into a still more secret chamber where they shall be nearer to Himself, He generally sends them a new trial to test them and to discover whether they can bear a

fresh installment of His revelations of love. Bless the Lord for trials, for they prove the Lord's faithfulness and endear Him to our hearts!

He will never lead us into a labyrinth without giving us the clue. Growing trials in God's hands mean growing Grace—you were once in a little canoe and you might not leave the tiny stream. But when years had gone by you rowed in a boat upon the river, though you dared not leave the shore. Now the Lord has built you a larger vessel and you make coasting voyages upon the sea, but He does not mean you always to be a mere coaster, carrying a few coals about—He intends you to *cross* the seas, to brave the ocean and navigate the globe! As you are gradually fitted for longer voyages, so will you encounter rougher storms and so will you see more of the works of the Lord and of His wonders in the deep.

Surprising mercies tend to awaken our gratitude. Have we not marveled at the goodness of the Lord? "Bless the Lord," we have said, "I never dreamed of such love! This way out of my difficulties is excellent, but it is one which I could not have foreseen. I am glad I was brought into straits that I might see how my Lord could bring me out of them." I almost wish I had been with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace! It must have been a fine thing to walk unhurt among those glowing coals and to come out and be able to say of all your garments, to your children and your children's children, "These have passed through the fire. See the socks and the hat which I wore amid the flames, there is not a smell of fire upon them!" What a wardrobe to pass on to your children's children, to show what the Lord has done! Some of us can do this spiritually, for our hearts are stored with grateful memories. How much God is glorified by His people when He does things they looked not for. Their neighbors are surprised. As they tell the tale, even *unbelievers* are struck with it and strangers join to say, "The Lord is good to His people and His mercy endures forever."

Dear Friends, I know that some of you can tell of instances in which the Presence of God has worked great surprises for you and I can join you in doing so. If you have had rich experiences be sure to tell them to others. Perhaps you remember that a fortnight ago, on Sunday morning, I preached of Paul's deep experience [#1536—***Sentence of Death, the Death of Self-Trust***] and I said that the experiences of the saints were a treasure, of which they were the trustees, for the benefit of others. A well-known and beloved Brother in Christ was here that morning—I refer to Mr. W. Haslam, a clergyman of the Church of England—and he so fully agreed with the remark that he carried it out by sending me a book in which he has written out the story of the first 20 years of his ministry.

I have much enjoyed the reading of the narrative and to carry out the principle, I will now give you in brief, the story of Mr. Haslam's conversion as an instance of "things which we looked not for." You have all heard of Billy Bray, the Cornish Methodist who was so mighty in prayer. There was a certain hill that Billy was accustomed to pass, for which he prayed, with all his might, till he believed that his heavenly Father had given him that mountain, so that all the souls that lived on it should be saved. He visited all the houses and obtained a blessing for the inhabitants, but as there were only three houses on the hill, he prayed, in his own simple way, that

more might be built. It seemed an odd prayer and the neighbors did not think it a wise one, but nevertheless it was fulfilled.

Some time later, when he visited that place, he found that Mr. Haslam had built a church and schools there and his joy was great until he entered the church. At the sight of the surprised choir and the Ritualistic performance, poor Bray was greatly downcast and said that it was nothing but an “old Roman church.” Billy went home and set himself to praying, again, for that hill, but the fact was quite unknown to those who were the objects of his petitions. Soon the Lord hearkened to the cry of His servant and it came to pass that the Lord visited Mr. Haslam. His gardener fell sick and in the time of his illness his churchmanship failed to comfort him. A Methodist Brother visited him and was the means of his conversion. When the man told Mr. Haslam that he was converted, he was very grieved and disappointed—he felt that he could never make Cornish men into Churchmen—they were confirmed schismatics.

His favorite and most promising Churchman, a Mr. Aitken, had become a Dissenter and was actually praying that his master might become the same. What was to be done? Mr. Haslam had occasion to visit Mr. Aitken and told him about the sad defection of the gardener. “Why,” said Mr. Aitkin, “you are not converted yourself! I am sure of it, or you would not have come here to complain of your gardener.” Conviction came into Haslam’s heart! His former hopes vanished and in sadness he sought the Lord. Mr. Aitken said, “The best thing you can do is to shut the church up and tell your people you will never preach again till you are converted.” He could not do that, but on the next Sunday morning he went, ill and sad, to read the prayers, determined to send the people home as soon as they were finished.

Instead of that, his eye lighted on the text, “What think you of Christ?” and he thought he would make a few observations upon that question before dismissing the congregation. For the rest, I will quote his own words, lest I should seem to color the incident by telling it in my own language—“As I went on to explain the passage, I saw that the Pharisees and scribes did not know that Christ was the Son of God, or that He was come to save them. They were looking for a king, the son of David, to reign over them as they were. Something was telling me, all the time, ‘You are no better than the Pharisees, yourself—you do not believe that He is the Son of God and that He is come to save you any more than they did.’ I do not remember all I said, but I felt a wonderful light and joy coming into my soul and I was beginning to see what the Pharisees did not.

“Whether it was something in my words, or my manner, or my look, I know not, but all of a sudden a local preacher, who happened to be in the congregation, stood up and, putting up his arms, shouted out in Cornish manner, ‘The parson is converted! The parson is converted! Hallelujah!’ and in another moment his voice was lost in the shouts and praises of three or four hundred of the congregation! Instead of rebuking this extraordinary ‘brawling,’ as I would have done in a former time, I joined in the outburst of praise, but to make it more orderly, I gave out the Doxology—‘Praise God, from whom all blessings flow’—and the people sang it with heart and voice over and over again! When this subsided, I found at

least 20 people crying for mercy, whose voices had not been heard in the excitement and noise of thanksgiving. They all professed to find peace and joy in believing. Among this number there were three from my own house—and we returned home praising God.”

This is a memorable illustration of the statement that when God comes down among a people He does things we looked not for! You may hope that the Divine Spirit will still display His power over the most unlikely persons to the glory of His Grace. He can save the most obstinate and bring opposers to the feet of Jesus. Plead with Him to do so!

III. Thirdly, THE PRESENCE OF GOD DISSOLVES DIFFICULTIES. I would bring you back to the text again, for perhaps you are beginning to forget it. “When You did terrible things which we looked not for, You came down, the mountains flowed down at Your Presence.” This is a blessed sentence, “The mountains flowed down at Your Presence.” Israel had enemies which were strong and powerful. Nations and kings towered above them like great mountains, but whenever God came to help them, the kingdoms dissolved, the people were conquered and the mountains and hills were laid low.

At this present time great systems of error oppose the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I need not mention them, for they are before us and seem to rise like giant Alps, overtopping our faith. Blessed be God, the Church only needs the Divine Presence in the midst of her and all the systems of error will flow down at His feet like glaciers which dissolve in the summer’s sun. Perhaps you have seen a volcano when a stream of lava has been pouring down its side and, if so, you have had the metaphor of the text before your eyes. God does but touch it and the mountain melts and flows away! So will it be with infidelity and superstition, Rationalism and Ritualism and every form of wrong. If the Holy Spirit clothes the Church with power by His Presence, the powers of evil will not maintain themselves for an hour—the fire of sacred Truth and heavenly life will utterly dissolve them.

Many hearts are hard as granite—you may pray for them, talk to them, preach to them, but all in vain. What is required is the Presence of God and then hearts of stone are turned to flesh, dead souls feel the beating of spiritual life and corruption is overcome by resurrection power! Do not be afraid, Brother. No heart can stand out against the Grace of God when it comes in all its power. Do not despair in reference to your prodigal boy—keep on praying and he will yet come to the house of God with you and you will sing together the praises of redeeming love. Despair of no one so long as you have a heart to pray! Within our own selves, also, we may see mountains of difficulty, but if we go to Christ and so obtain God’s help, every mountain shall sink and every rock melt—

***“Your mercy is more than a match for my heart,
Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart;
Dissolved by Your mercy, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found.”***

There is nothing in you, there is nothing round about you, there is nothing on earth, there is nothing in Hell that can stand against you if you have God on your side! And you *have* God on your side when you put your trust in Jesus Christ! Between here and the eternal glories of Heaven nothing shall ever stand against you if you do but trust in Jesus. No

weapon that is formed against you shall prosper and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn.

IV. Lastly, WE MAY EXPECT TO SEE THE SAME RESULTS FROM THE DIVINE PRESENCE TODAY and tomorrow and as long as we live. God is the same. “Are You not He that has cut Rahab and wounded the dragon?” He is the same conquering Lord! The ages may have degenerated, but God has not degenerated. Do not say that the Truth of God has lost its power. Its power always lies in God and God is still almighty! He can work miracles today if He pleases—He could divide the Atlantic as easily as He did the Red Sea! “With God all things are possible,” not, “were,” but, “*are*” still.

As to *spiritual* wonders, people think that Pentecost was with us once, but never can return—but Pentecost was only the Feast of First Fruits and first fruits predict the harvest! God will do greater things in the latter days than He did at Jerusalem at Pentecost. He says to us, “Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.” We do not believe in Him. “If the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?” There is such a microscopic quantity of it that no eyes but His, which are like a flame of fire, could spy it out. Yet, I say, God is the same and as worthy to be trusted. And, Brothers and Sisters, we are the same. “No,” you say, “we are not, we are not such good men as those who lived in the olden times.” I answer that they had the same passions and infirmities as we have now!

There was not a morsel of good in the Apostles, martyrs and confessors but what God put there. One earthen vessel is of the same clay as another and the same God may put the same treasure into one as well as into another. He can bless you and me as He did Peter, James and John. Human nature is human nature, still, both in its degradation and in its possibilities. God can make as much of you, my dear Sister, as ever He did of Dorcas, or Mary, or Lydia! And He can make as much of you, my Brother, as ever He did of any of the worthies of past times, if you will but trust Him. This feeble arm could slay a thousand men, or pluck up the gates of Gaza, or kill a lion, or pull down a temple upon the Philistines if God chose to use it as He did Samson’s. The Lord has His own choice of instruments and He can make *any* instrument fit for His use if He pleases to do so!

Brethren, the promises are the same. “Oh,” you ask, “how is that? Are not some of them out of date?” No, the Covenant is made up of abiding promises, suitable for all ages and all of them are yes and amen in Christ Jesus! We have the sure mercies of David—they stand fast forever and ever. Mark you, there are things yet to be done by God which will astonish us beyond measure! We shall cry out against ourselves for our drooping and desponding thoughts, for, by-and-by, perhaps before some of us see death, we shall behold greater things than our fathers saw and shall clap our hands for very joy!

Read the chapter which follows our text and see what God is going to do. “I am sought of them that asked not for Me; I am found of them that sought Me not: I said, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation that was not called by My name.” Heathens are to be saved! Far off lands will soon be called! Watch for it, work for it, pray for it! Israel is also to be gathered—“I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob and out of Judah an inheritor of My

mountains: and My elect shall inherit it and My servants shall dwell there.” O blessed hour, when the Jew shall worship the Christ whom he crucified! That is not all. There is coming yet—who knows how soon?—a new creation. “Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be you glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy.”

There will come a time in which the shortening of life after the deluge shall be remedied. “There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that has not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old. As the days of a tree are the days of My people and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.” Yes and there comes a time of universal peace. “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, says the Lord.”

Verily, verily, I say unto you, this text is true! When God shall do terrible things which we looked not for, He shall come down among us and the mountains shall flow at His Presence. Amen and amen!

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A SIGHT OF SELF

NO. 437

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 2, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“But we are all as an unclean thing and all our righteousnesses
are as filthy rags. And we all do fade as a leaf. And our
iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And
there is none that calls upon Your name, that
stirs up himself to take hold of You: for
You have hid Your face from us and
have consumed us, because of our
iniquities. But now, O Lord, You
are our Father. We are the clay, and You our Potter.
And we all are the work of Your hand.”
Isaiah 64:6, 7, 8.***

IT is easy to commit sin but hard to confess it. Man will transgress without a tempter. But even when urged by the most earnest pleader, he will not acknowledge his guilt. If we could but bring men into such a state of heart that they felt themselves to be guilty, there would be hope for them. But this is one of the most hopeless signs concerning our race, that it is so hardened and so perverse, that even when sin stares it in the face, it still pleads innocence and proudly lifts up its head and challenges the accuser.

Transgressors always seek to escape from the painful and humiliating duty of acknowledging their offenses. Some seek to hide it both from themselves and others, silencing their own consciences and throwing dust in the eyes of their companions. As Achan, digging in the earth to hide the Babylonian garment and the wedge of gold, they forget that their sins will surely find them out. As the foolish ostrich, when pursued by the hunters, buries its head in the sand and when it cannot see its enemy thinks it has escaped—so these men take the fact that they are undiscovered by men, and are at peace with themselves, as a good omen. In reality, it is a sad sign of hardness and blindness of heart.

Many pursue yet another course and make excuses for their offenses. They did do wrong, it is true, but then there is much to be said in extenuation. Like Aaron, they urge the clamors of the people, or they will have it that even Providence, itself, *compelled* them to sin. “I cast gold into the fire and there came out this calf,” as if sin were an accident, and not a willful wickedness. As if disobedience to God were a sort of necessity of nature, and not a direct rebellion of the will against the Majesty of Heaven.

Others, too, will blame their sin on their fellows—a trick which they learned from our first parents, for Adam, in the garden, said—“The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat.” Or they may have learned it from our mother, Eve, for even she understood this stratagem—“The serpent beguiled me and I did eat.” So they will have

it that they were dragged into sin by force—they were overly persuaded or craftily enticed, so that they ought not to be considered as accomplices in the crime—but that they are, in fact, only the instruments of *others'* sins and could hardly resist. So they say others must take the whole of the guilt and they themselves should go free.

Some who have attained to a higher pitch of brazen impudence will actually deny altogether that they have sinned. They will come before God's servant as Ananias did before Peter, and say, "Yes, for so much," while yet they are holding a lie in their right hand. We have some who will stoutly say, "We have not sinned," and who think themselves insulted if in plain terms you accuse them of having violated the Law of God. There are some, also, and those not a few, who endeavor to color their sins and to cloak them with a profession of godliness, by attending to the ceremonies of religion with ostentatious carefulness.

Like the Pharisees of old, they devour widows' houses but they make long prayers. They hate Christ in their hearts but they tithe mint and anise and cummin. They violate the precepts of the Law, but they bind them on their foreheads, wear long fringes on their garments, and write texts of Scripture on the doorposts of their houses. These serve at the altar of the devil, in the garb of God's priests and offer unclean flesh upon the high places, in pretended honor of the God of Israel. We know that all these classes abound everywhere, for a man will do anything to hide sin from himself.

And he will give skin for skin, yes, all that he has, that he may be self-justified. He will do his all so that, he thinks, he may have something to answer when he stands before the Most High. So that he may find food for his pride and a coverlet for the infamous arrogance of his heart, he will dig and labor and strive. He will give his goods to the poor and his body to be burned, that he may win a righteousness of his own.

Beloved, if you and I have ever been partakers of the Grace of God, we have been brought to the distasteful duty of confession of sin, for it is not possible that we have been pardoned if we have refused to acknowledge our guilt. We cannot be partakers of the life of God in the soul if still we can say, "Lord, I am righteous and of myself I can plead exemption from Your curse." A clear sense of our lost estate is absolutely necessary to make us even *seek* pardon.

As the man who thinks himself in good health will never send for a physician, as the man who is sufficiently warm will not avail himself of an extra garment which is offered to him, as the man who is not hungry will not accept an invitation to a feast of charity—so we find that none will come to Christ but those who feel that they *must* come—and that outside of Him they are utterly lost, ruined and undone. Moreover, as none will seek the mercy till they know their need, so we may rest assured that none would value that mercy even if it were given to them before the spiritual poverty had become manifest.

What is medicine to the healthy man? Send it to his door and what thanks will you receive? You have been guilty of an impertinence. Why offer charity to the man who is rich and increased in goods? Will he receive your dole? Will he not turn up his nose and tell you to look for the beggar

in the street, but not to mistake him for one who needs your alms? Even, I say, should God give salvation to those who feel no need of it, they would not value the priceless benefit. This diamond of God would be to them but a piece of valueless broken glass. This gem from Heaven but as a pebble from the brook—

***“What comfort can a Savior bring
To those who never felt their woe?
A sinner is a sacred thing,
The Holy Spirit has made him so.”***

It is certain that God will never give pardon to those who do not confess their need of it, for it is not consistent with the sovereignty and dignity of God that He should present pardon to the man who will not first honor God's Law by pleading that he is guilty. If a man shall still say, “I have not broken the Law,” is God unmerciful if He refuse to forgive him? Will you harden your brow like iron, and your heart as adamant—and will you accuse God of want of love, if He says, “I will send no mercy to that man, neither shall he find pardon at My hands, but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembles at My Word”?

Is it any wonder, I ask you, that He should pass by the proud and the self-righteous and leave them unblest? By their own profession they *do not want* His mercy. They declare they *do not need* to be forgiven. Then perish! Perish, for you righteously deserve it. Go down to the Hell which you have chosen by your pride, and reap the fruits of your own willfulness—but impugn not the tenderness of God, if He adhere to this inviolable rule, that if we will not confess our sins we shall perish in our guilt—

***“For Christ as soon would abdicate His own,
As stoop from Heaven to sell the proud a throne.”***

This morning it is my intention, as God shall help me, *to describe that view which every gracious soul is sure to have of himself*. Then, secondly, *to warn you of certain dangers to which those are enclosed who only know their need but who have not yet found Christ*. And I hope to close with *the pleas*—some of which are in the text, some to be found elsewhere—*which every soul that is conscious of guilt may urge before the Throne of Mercy*.

I. First, then, I HAVE TO DESCRIBE THE VIEW WHICH EVERY TRULY GRACIOUS SOUL WILL TAKE OF HIMSELF. And as I describe it, I hope there are some here who will say, “That is what I think of myself, that is my condition before God.” Though you should think yours to be a hopeless case, yet I pray you rest assured that it is not so if you can join in the confession through which I am now about briefly to pass. I feel persuaded that it is the Spirit of God which has brought you to a deep sense of your lost estate and has thus begun a good work in your soul.

1. *Every gracious soul, who is truly enlightened by the Spirit, has a clear sense of the root of all his guiltiness*. He knows the plague of his own heart and cries with the text, “We are all as an unclean thing.” He discovers that not merely his outward acts, but that his very *person* is essentially sinful in the sight of God. He was willing to confess once that the streams were black, but now he perceives to his horror that the fountain itself is defiled. You could have made him previously confess that the fruits of his boughs were bitter. But now he perceives that the root is corrupt, the tree is evil, the very sap is poisonous.

He is brought to feel now that sinfulness lies in the very marrow of his bones and is inherent in his blood. That he himself—as well as his thoughts and his acts—he himself, is “as an unclean thing.” The metaphor that is here used is hardly understood by us, because it is drawn from the Levitical and ceremonial use of the word “unclean.” Under the Jewish Law when a person was unclean he could not go up to the house of the Lord. He could offer no sacrifice.

God could accept nothing at his hands. He was an outcast and an alien so long as he remained unclean. If he sat upon a bed, it must be washed with water. If he touched a vessel of earth it must be broken, for it was unclean. If he ate any food, the whole of that food was unclean and no clean person might venture to touch it. When this uncleanness was connected with disease, as in the case of leprosy, the man became loathsome—so utterly loathsome to himself that it must have been a horror to have lived. And so loathsome to his fellow creatures that his only appropriate spot was solitude, where alone, far from any water brook of which human lips might drink, alone so that the air might not be contaminated with his disease, alone, he lived and cried, “Unclean! Unclean! Unclean!”

Every gracious soul knows itself to be by nature as an unclean thing. He feels that of himself he cannot worship God acceptably. That he cannot stand within the veil on his own merits. That he can bring no sacrifice which God can accept. That he is the means of injury to others. That his ill example leads others astray. And that, in fact, he is not fit to stand in the congregation of the righteous, nor to be numbered with God’s chosen, for he is, in himself, polluted and polluting.

When a sense of his horrible depravity and degradation is heavy upon him, before he has found Christ, that man will slink into the House of God like a felon and hide. Or, if he sits down with God’s people, it is with the idea that he is out of place like a filthy beggar in a palace, or a loathsome reptile in a hallowed temple. Often he feels, when a Christian speaks to him, as if he were not fit to give an answer. He feels himself to be in person, utterly unfit to live.

Ah, well do I remember the period when first I discovered this Truth of God. And how did I wish, as John Bunyan did, that I had been anything but a man—a toad, or a serpent—sooner than have been a man, a creature that had offended its own Maker. A creature in itself so prone to go astray, so sure to sin if left alone. In “Grace Abounding,” Bunyan says, “My original and inward pollution, that, *that* was my plague and affliction. That, I say, at a dreadful rate, always putting forth itself within me. That I had the guilt of, to amazement, by reason of that, I was more loathsome in my own eyes than was a toad.”

And I thought I was so in God’s eyes, too. “Sin and corruption,” I said, “would as naturally bubble out of my heart, as water would bubble out of a fountain. I thought that everyone had a better heart than I had. I could have changed hearts with anybody. I thought none but the devil, himself, could equal me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind. I fell, therefore, at the sight of my own vileness, deeply into despair. For I concluded that this condition that I was in could not stand with a state of Grace.”

Oh, there was no talk of human dignity then! There are still some few of your fine preachers who will have it that there is a deal of dignity in human nature—that man is a noble creature. Alas, Brethren, he that talks about the dignity of nature, and the nobility of fallen man, does not know himself. So far from being fit for the pulpit, he ought to begin to learn his catechism. He cannot speak of a state of Grace, for he has not yet learned aright his own state by nature! He must be a blind leader of the blind who can talk like this. He does not know the first work of the Spirit in his own soul, or else he would feel that we are just the reverse of anything that is noble or good, for “we are all as an unclean thing.”

The whole man is vile and desperately evil, there is not one sound spot left within or without. The sin is white on our very forehead, but its core lies deep within. The heart is deceitful. The passions are corrupt. The understanding is eaten through and through with a deadly leprosy. And in us, that is, in our own flesh, there dwells no good thing—

**“Lord, when Your Spirit deigns to show
The badness of our hearts,
Astonished at the amazing view,
The soul with horror starts.
The dungeon opening, foul as Hell,
Its loathsome stench emits;
And, brooding in each secret cell,
Some hideous monster sits.
Swarms of ill thoughts their bane diffuse,
Proud, envious, false, unclean;
And every ransacked corner shows
Some unsuspected sin.”**

2. But in the second place, the spiritually enlightened man—and we insist upon it that none else are spiritually enlightened—the *spiritually enlightened man, then, perceives that all his actions are evil*. “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” Our *righteousnesses*. It does not say our *unrighteousnesses*. Brethren, if our righteousnesses are so bad, what must our *unrighteousnesses* be? Our “righteousnesses,” that is, our prayers, our tears, our good deeds—those things whereof we once gloried—when we are really taught of God, we perceive that these are filthy rags.

The expression, “filthy rags,” in the Hebrew, is one which we could not with propriety explain in the present assembly. As the confession must be made privately, and alone before God, so the full meaning of the comparison is not meant for human ears. Suffice it to say that rags which have bound up a foul, putrid, running sore, are understood by some commentators and our righteousnesses are comparable to such rags as these. Oh tell me not that we exaggerate when we describe the Fall of man! O Sirs! Say not that we love to depreciate our race and that we slander that noble creature, man.

All those things which you call exaggerations fall below the mark—even below the mark of what some of us have felt concerning ourselves—and that is very far from what God knows of our state. Sirs, there is sin in our prayers. They need to be prayed over again. There is filth in the very tears that we shed in penitence. There is sin in our very *holiness*! There is un-

belief in our faith. There is hatred in our very love. There is the slime of the serpent upon the fairest flower of our garden.

I know time was, in looking back upon my past life—and it had been moral and without exception to the eyes of others—yet I loathed myself that ever I should have lived such an unworthy life. And indeed at the present I can do but little otherwise, for “in me (that is in my flesh) dwells no good thing.” I am sure when the soul is convicted of sin it will look upon self-righteousness as the most detestable lie that ever was forged by Hell. And it will regard all self-confidence as the most frightful delusion and deception into which the soul can fall.

Trust in our doings, Brethren?—we *have no doings* to trust! If our best works are bad, and so bad that they are as filthy rags, what must our *bad* works be? Oh, I would have some of you remember your bad works this morning that you may repent of them. You remember how the Apostle speaks of “fornicators, adulterers, thieves, covetous, drunkards,” and he says, “such were some of you. But you are washed, but you are sanctified”? There is no wisdom in daintily handling men’s sins. There are vices in London as much as in Corinth, and we have in our Churches those who once indulged in them.

And in this congregation this morning we may have some who *live* in them still. O God, show them their sin. Let them feel their guilt before You. And let us all, as we shall do, if Your spirit is in our hearts, confess that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

3. In the next place, the enlightened heart into which the candle of the Lord has shone, *is led to see the failure and futility of all its resolutions to be better.* “We all do fade as a leaf.” Some of you have been lately awakened, you have felt yourselves to be lost souls. And what have you been doing? Why, you have promised to be better and you have tried to be. You have mended in various ways, or, rather, you have *proposed* to yourselves to amend.

Perhaps you made up your mind that you would never go out to your labor again without prayer—that you would never lose your temper—that when tempted to indulge your passions you would restrain them—that those things which had been your besetting sins should now be given up. What progress have you made with your resolutions? Are you not today like the man who resolved and *re-resolved* but remained the same? Truly in our own strength, we all do fade as a leaf. We look fair and green in the morning when we rise from our beds, fresh with midnight vows and repenting—but before night we are as faded and withered as the dry sere leaf withered with autumn blasts.

We went forth, saying, “Today I shall stand—this time I shall not fall—now I am safe—I have made up my mind—I am resolved—I know there is a something in me which can improve, I can be better if I like—I will reform—I will stand up and make myself a Christian.” But what became of it all? Down it went and, “like the baseless fabric of a vision, left not a wreck behind.” You returned like a dog to his vomit, or the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. How many slips men make before they learn to put themselves into God’s arms to be carried by Him!

It seems as if we must try fifty times before we will learn that simple Truth of God—"Without Me you can do nothing." We run about over the treacherous beach looking for a spot of sand just a little harder than the last. And we compliment ourselves that we have hit upon a much more solid site for our new and noble house. "Ah, that was a mistake last time—that was a poor bit of sand to build on—this time it is all right. See how hard it is! The tide does not come here often—see it does not yield, it is like a bowling green, smooth and hard. I will build here."

The timbers are laid, the goodly stones are squared and the house rises. But, hark! What is that? The breakers are coming up. The tide certainly does reach this very spot. It is a full spring tide that is now marching up the shore and lo, the materials are engulfed in the all-devouring deep. Our tower has tottered and great is its fall. What will disappointed man do now, Sirs? Why, he will look for another bit of sand, and so he will go on unless the Grace of God prevents him. But when Divine Grace comes he will give up all the sand at once, and begin to build upon the Rock and upon the Rock, alone.

I would have you reform as much as you can. But do not mix your reformation with religion, for you need *regeneration*—reformation will not suffice. No touching up of the old house will suffice! Down with it, down with it, for the very foundation is rotten! It is not *mending* your clothes. It is throwing them away and wearing the new robes of righteousness that will fit you for the feasts of Glory. We want no Gibeon "old shoes and clouted." You must have shoes of iron and brass—for those are the only ones that can carry you to Heaven.

You may use your brush and your niter and your soap. But if you would enter Heaven you must go to God and ask Him to make the Ethiopian anew, for none of these things can make him white before God. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags—we all do fade as a leaf." Our best professions, hopes, resolutions and pretensions—all of them fade like shadows, dreams and fancies of the brain.

4. But the truly awakened soul knows a fourth thing, namely, that *he is not in himself able to stand against the invasions of temptation*, for the text has put it—"Our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us sway." There is a dry leaf hanging alone on that tree. All its companions have long ago fallen and are gone. Sere-leaf, you will not long hold your place, for you depend for your connection with the tree upon a very slender thread.

Listen! The north wind howls. Now shall all the trees be clear. Where is the withered leaf now? Hurried away to join the rotting heap upon the ground. So, when men find that their vows wither, they will still hang to their hopes and to their moralities. But some strong temptation comes unexpectedly upon them just at the moment when their mind is susceptible of its power and where are they? The devil catches their tinder dry and then strikes the spark. He knows how to time his temptations. He does not assail his victims when they are ready to resist him, but waylays them in the dark corner of some cutthroat lane and smites the unguarded passenger with a deadly blow.

The thief never lets you know when he intends to break in, for, "if the good man of the house had known in what hour the thief would come, he

would have watched and would not have suffered his house to be broken into." The temptation comes like a howling north wind at an unexpected moment, and where is your man now? Unable to resist, carried away by the very vice which he thought he had renounced. "Our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

Every Christian here knows that the Grace of God is stronger than all the winds of temptation. And he knows, also, that apart from that, he can no more resist sin than the chaff from the hand of the winnower can stand against the blast of a hurricane. He feels that if he is put into the furnace he can abide the fire through Divine Grace but that apart from Grace he is as thread before the flame or like wax before the fire. The well-instructed Believer is very much afraid of himself. He dares not go into temptation, for he feels that a man who carries a bomb within him ought to mind that he keeps away from the sparks—and that he who has a powder keg in his heart ought not to play with fire.

He knows that in himself, apart from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, he would as certainly go back to his old sins, and fall again into his past lusts, as do those who crucify the Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame. Ah, my Hearer, if you do not know this, I am afraid you do not know yourself. And if you do not know yourself, you do not know Christ. We must traverse the stripping room before we can enter into the robbing room. Pull that bracelet from the man's wrist! Off with that crown! Strip him of the purple robe! Away with those sandals! Tear up that cloak. Leave him naked.

He is never fit to be clothed till he is naked. Let his foul skin be seen, for he cannot be washed till he can see his filth. Now set his feet upon the Rock, but first of all, pull his feet from the sand, for as long as they have any foothold anywhere else, they cannot stand upon the Rock of Ages safely and securely. I hope that very many of you do know that your iniquities, like the wind, will carry you away—unless you have the Grace of God.

5. Those souls upon whom God's sunlight has once shone are also painfully aware of their own *natural weakness and slothfulness in prayer*. What does the text say? "There is none that calls upon Your name, that stirs up himself to take hold of You." In my carnal state I used to hear a minister whose preaching was, as far as I could make out, "Do this and do that, and do the other, and you will be saved." According to his theory, to pray was a very easy thing. To make yourself a new heart was a thing of a few instants and could be done at almost any time. I was really convinced that I could turn to Christ when I pleased, and therefore I could put it off to the last part of my life when it might be conveniently done upon a sick bed.

But when the Lord gave my soul its first shakings in conviction, I soon knew better. I went to pray. I did pray, God knows, but it seemed to me that *I* did not. What, *I* approach the Throne? Such a wretch as *I* lay hold on the promise? *I* venture to hope that God could look on me? It seemed impossible. A tear, a groan, and sometimes not so much as that, and that was all. An "Ah," a "Would that," a "But"—the lips could not utter more. It was prayer, but it did not seem so, then. Oh, how hard is prevailing

prayer to a poor God-provoking sinner! Where was the power to lay hold on God's strength or wrestle with the angel? Certainly not in *me*, for I was weak as water and sometimes hard as the nether millstone.

Every Believer feels at times a fearful inability in prayer. He goes to the Throne of Grace, and groans, and comes forth from his closet no more refreshed than a man who rises from his bed after having tossed to and fro all night. He knows what it is to pray, but he cannot perform the duty. He knows there is a power in prayer, but he cannot get the power. The chariot wheels are knocked off and he drags heavily along where once his soul was like the chariot of Abinadab.

Well, I think we do not know ourselves unless we have been led to see that God must draw near to us, or else we cannot draw near to Him—and unless we have been led to loathe ourselves, because of this indifference in prayer—we have not yet discovered what we are. Oh, to think that we cannot pray! This is not an inability for which we deserve to be comforted but a damnable inability. This is one of the greatest sins we have, that we cannot approach our Maker. It is an awful and terrific thing that we should have become so wicked, and so vile, that we cannot even ask for mercy and cry for it aright. This is no excuse but an aggravation of our guilt. Have you felt this, my Hearer? Oh, if you have not, I fear you have to begin again and learn the first elements of faith.

6. Lastly on this point, that soul which has once perceived itself in the black colors of its iniquity has discovered that through sin it has lost all the favor and the love of God which might have come if it had been without sin. For so says the text, "For You have hid Your face from us and have consumed us because of our iniquities." It is no thing to play with—that hiding of God's face.

When the Prophet says, "You have consumed us," it is a dreadful word. Do you see that burning fiery furnace? The soldiers of Nebuchadnezzar are about to cast three bound men into it, that they may be consumed. The fire is exceedingly hot, so that it may consume them quickly. To the apprehension of an awakened sinner that is his fate. He feels that he must be cast into Hell and be utterly consumed. No, more, with some, though not with all to the same degree, the man *is* consumed.

Some of us feel as if our locks were crisp even now with that awful burning through which we passed when we were first convicted of sin. Bunyan seems to have enjoyed the full light of God's countenance all the more because of his distinct recollection of the solemn period of conviction through which he passed. If you read Hart's hymns, you will be struck with their singular clearness concerning Christ and full justification.

That certainty and assurance results very much from the fact that Hart retained to his dying day, the remembrance of his experience when he was under the whip of the Law. You will remember that when he is trying to describe his own feelings, he fails to do so and he adds—

***"Oh, what a dismal state was this!
What horrors shook my feeble frame.
But, Brethren, surely you can guess,
For you, perhaps, have felt the same."***

Now, I do not think that all who know the Lord suffer this consumption to the same extent. But there must be in your heart—if you are saved at

all—there must be heard a voice putting down every hope but Christ's, casting down every thought but that which looks to Him.

You must have seen the death warrant condemning your excuses, your false trusts, your proud boastings, and glorying, to an ignominious execution or surely you know not the Lord. And if you have not thus known and felt that God is angry with the wicked every day, and that you in yourself are the object of His wrath, I fear you have not yet been quickened of the Spirit. But I know there are many such here—multitudes who have passed through this and who take this view of themselves today and others who are now suffering under it. May the Lord bring us all to Christ and to His finished work!

II. I come now to the second part of my subject, which I shall dismiss with two or three words only. My dear Friends, as I have been speaking I have seen you lean forward to catch every word, for you have said, "Ah, that is me," and "He speaks of me," and "That is me. He reads my heart in the description."

Well, now, there is a danger I must warn you of and that is—DO NOT BE CONTENT WITH THE MERE KNOWLEDGE THAT IT IS SO. You must not merely *know* that you are lost but you must *feel* it. Do not be content with simply feeling that it is so, but *mourn before God* that it is so, and *hate yourself* that it is so. Do not look upon it as being a misfortune, but as being your own willful sin. Look upon yourselves, therefore, as being guilty sinners, condemned already, not only for all this but condemned because you believe not on Christ, for that, after all, is the crowning condemnation.

And when you really *feel* your sinfulness and mourn it, do not stop there. Never give yourself any rest till you know that you are delivered from it, for it is one thing to say—"Ah, I do sin," but it is quite another thing to say—"He has saved me from my sin." It is one thing to have a repentance which makes you leave the sin you loved before, and another thing to talk about *repentance*. Ah, I have sometimes seen a child of God when he has sinned, and I have seen his broken-hearted actions, and heard his piteous confessions, and I can say that my heart goes out toward the man in whom there are tears of repentance of the right kind.

It is one of the fairest sights that is seen under Heaven when a Believer who has gone wrong is willing to say, "I have sinned," and when he no more sets himself proudly up against his God but humbles himself like a little child. Such a man as that shall be exalted. But I have seen, and it is a fearful sight to see—I have seen one who can sin and repent and sin and repent. Oh, that dry-eyed repentance is a damnable repentance! Take heed of it, Brothers and Sisters.

I have known a man who professed to have been converted years and years ago, who, ever since that pretended conversion, has lived in a known sin, and yet he thinks he is a child of God because after he has fallen into the sin he has a little season of darkness arising from his conscience. But he quiets that conscience after a time and presumptuously says, "I will not give up my hope." Oh, that is an awful thing! God deliver you from dry-eyed repentance, for it is not repentance! God save you from that!

I pray you, my dear Hearers, while I describe these things, do not be saying, "There is my comfort, because I *feel* it." That is not comfort! There is no ground for comfort there. It would be just as if when the doctor walked through the hospital and stopped before a bed and said, "A man who has a fever, or a man who has a cancer, feels so and so, and so and so." And the patient should say, "Why that is just what I feel." Is there any comfort in that? The only comfort is that he knows he has a fever.

"A man that has the typhus and must die unless a miracle is worked, feels so and so." "That is how I feel." Is there any comfort in that? No, only the comfort to know that you will die. There is no comfort to be had from a *sense* of our depravity. The comfort is to be had in getting that which is to *cure* the depravity. The comfort is not to be found in the *disease*. We are not to go raking the stinking puddle of our own lusts to find sweet waters.

What? Scrape the foul dunghill of our own corruptions to find something that is to give us hope? God forbid! It is in the *remedy*, not in the disease. It is in *Christ* and not in our *sense* or *guilt* that we are to find peace. I pray you, my dear Hearers, never be satisfied till you find Christ who saves His people from their sins—

**"O! Beware of fondly thinking
God accepts you for your tears.
Are the shipwrecked saved by sinking?
Can the ruined rise by fears?"**

III. And now, lastly, though our second head deserves a sermon, THE TEXT SEEMS TO SUGGEST SOME PLEAS. We will use them very briefly but passionately.

Poor troubled Soul, have you been able to go with me in the confession, and can you say, "Lord, I would be made whole. I would be saved from all my sins. I desire to be made holy and to be accepted in Christ"? Then there are many pleas you can use. I am afraid you can not use the first one mentioned in the text—"You are my Father"! I am half afraid you have not faith enough for that, but oh, if you have, what a prevailing plea it is!

"My Father, I have sinned but I am Your son, though not worthy to be so called. My Father, by a father's love forgive, forgive Your erring one. By the heart of Your compassion have mercy upon me!" You who have back-slidden can plead this, for you know your adoption. You feel the "Abba Father" on your lips now. Plead it. Would you, being evil, refuse to forgive your child? Would you not take him up in your arms and say, "My child, I cannot bear to see you weep. Your tears make my heart bleed"? Would you not give him a kiss and say, "Go and sin no more"?

But if that should be too hard for you, take the next plea. Say, "Lord, I am the clay and You the Potter. I am helpless like the clay which cannot fashion itself, I am worthless, Lord, like the clay that is of no value. I am filthy, Lord, like clay. I am only worthy to be trod under foot, but You are the Potter and potters can make fine things even of clay, vessels of honor out of dishonorable earth. Here I am, Lord. I put myself into Your hand. I am nothing. Make me what You would have me to be. Come, Lord, and make me, mold me, and fashion me.

"I confess I have no power. I acknowledge that I have no merit. O God, have mercy upon me! I will be the clay, You be the potter! Make me to be

Your workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Will not that plea suffice? Soul, use it and try its prevalence!

But listen, Sinner. There is a sweeter plea than any in the verse before us, for this is an Old Testament text. But I must take you to the New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the plea that never fails. It is this, “Lord, it is written that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. If there was never a sinner in the world but one, I am that sinner. If you write it in capital letters I will wear it on my brow, for I the am the chief of sinners. I am a sinner not only generally but particularly, for I have broken this Law and that Law and I have gone astray always.

“But Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost and You have said, ‘This is a faithful saying.’ It is, Lord and therefore I believe it. And You have added—‘It is worthy of all acceptation.’ Therefore, good Lord, I accept it. I believe that Jesus came to save sinners. I trust myself in His hands to save me.” It is done, it is done! You are saved, you are saved! Your sins are gone. Your unrighteousnesses are forgiven. You are accepted in the Beloved. What makes this plan so hard?

Brethren, it is hard because it is so *easy*. If it were a hard way of salvation, man would like it. But because it is so easy we cannot bear it. We are so proud, that to be saved on charity, to come to Christ and trust Him to save us, to have done with saving ourselves and to let Him do it all—oh, this is so humbling! It will just suit you, then, poor Soul, for you have said in the words of my text, “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” Come before God and say, “Lord, by His agony and bloody sweat, by His Cross and passion, by His precious death and burial, have mercy upon me.” And He will answer you when you make mention of the blood. He will say—“Your sins which are many are forgiven you.”

Oh, there is hope yet, lost Soul. There is hope yet! To the very gates of Hell let my voice ring this morning—lost Soul, there is hope yet. If you have passed those gates there is no hope. But this side of the gates of Hell there is hope for you. Not in yourself, but in Jesus is your help found. Look to Him. He dies—one look will save you. Look to Him. He lives. He pleads before the Father’s Throne. Faith in the living Savior will make you a living soul.

May God in His mercy empty you of self, and then faith is easy. But until you are brought there, faith is impossible. May you be brought to know that you are utterly lost, and then when I pronounce the words of Christ—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved”—you will joyfully obey the Divine commandment and you will find in Christ all that your needy spirit wants.

I ask the prayers of the Church very earnestly that God may bless the testimony of this morning to the fetching in of many. “Brethren, pray for us.” Do not cease your prayers. Oh, that we may have an ingathering to the Church again as we have had so many times and unto *Him*, even to *Him* shall be the honor forever! Amen.

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TAKING HOLD OF GOD

NO. 1377

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 7, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“There is none that calls upon Your name, that stirs up
himself to take hold of You.”
Isaiah 64:7.***

ISAIAH, in the chapter before us, describes a very mournful condition of the people of God. He feels the case to be so desperate that he sighs for a Divine interposition—“Oh that You would rend the heavens, that You would come down.” He perceives that the people are so steeped in slumber, so utterly under the power of their sins that unless God, Himself, shall descend with all the power and terror of Sinai, the nation will utterly perish through its iniquity, even as withered leaves are blown away by the fierce winds. He longed for a melting fire to dissolve their hard hearts—for a swift flame such as burns the brushwood on the mountain's side to make a speedy end of their false confidences—and for a burning heat, such as makes waters boil, to remove the lukewarmness of those who professed to worship the Lord.

I do not know that the condition of the Church of God at the present time is quite so bad as that which is here described. It would be wrong to boast of our condition, but it would be worse to despair of it. It would not be honest to apply the words of our text to the Church of the present day. Blessed be God, we could not say, “There is none that calls upon Your name, that stirs up himself to take hold of You,” for there are many who plead day and night for the prosperity of Zion. Yet, in a measure, we are somewhat in the same plight as that which is described by the Prophet and there is much to mourn over. Prayer languishes in many Churches. Power in intercession is by no means a common attainment and Prayer Meetings, as a rule, are thinly attended and not much thought of. Sin abounds, empty profession is common, hypocrisy is plentiful and the life of God in the soul is but little esteemed.

Notice carefully that according to our text the Prophet traces much of the evil which he deplored to the lack of *prayer*. After he has compared their righteousnesses to filthy rags, he adds, “there is none that calls upon Your name, that stirs up himself to take hold of You.” When there is a degeneracy of public manners, you may be sure that there is, also, a serious decline of secret devotion. When the outward service of the Church begins to flag and her holiness declines, you may be sure that her communion with God has been sadly suspended. Devotion to God will be found to be the basis of holiness and the buttress of integrity. If you backslide in secret before God, you will soon err in public before men.

You may judge yourselves, my dear Hearers, as to your spiritual state, by the condition of your hearts in the matter of prayer. How are you at the Mercy Seat? For that is what you really are. Are the consolations of God

small with you? That is a minor matter. Look deeper—is there not a restraining of prayer before the living God? Do you find yourself weak in the presence of temptation? That is important—but search below the surface and you will find that you have grown lax in supplication and have failed to keep up continual communion with God.

The Prophet, also, reveals the very essence and soul of prayer as a stirring up of one's self to take hold of God. If in prayer we do not take hold of God we have prayed but feebly, if at all. The very soul of devotion lies in realizing the Divine Presence, in dealing with God as a real Person, in firm confidence in His faithfulness—in a word—in “taking hold of Him.” Men do not take hold of a *shadow*. They cannot grasp the unsubstantial fabric of a dream. Taking hold implies something real which we *grasp* and there is needed, to make prayer truthful and acceptable with God, the grip and grasp of a tenacious faith which believes the fact that God is and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

Taking hold implies a reverent familiarity with the Lord by which we use a holy force to win a blessing from His hands. It was because there was so little of this in Israel that the nation had fallen into so forlorn a state. And if you trace the evils of the Church of the present day to their source, it will come to this—that there are so few who stir up themselves to take hold upon the living God—so few who grapple with spiritual matters in downright earnest and bring them before the Lord with resolute faith. We have few Elijahs, now, and Jacobs are hard to find. Why, look, Sirs, there are many whose religion is nothing but a mere outward performance! It consists in attendance in a place of worship so many times on the Sabbath, the reading of prayers in the family, the repetition of a form of devotion night and morning and, perhaps, the mechanical reading of a chapter in the Bible. But there is no consciousness that God is near, no conversation with Him, no taking hold upon Him!

In the case of such persons the, “You God see me,” of Hagar in the wilderness has never leaped from their lips! Neither have they cried like David, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight.” God is far off from them even when they pray! They never *dream* that they are speaking into His ear. They believe there is a God, but they *act* as if there were none! He does not influence them. Their lives are not inspired by His Presence or ennobled by His smile. Their religion is practically godless and, therefore, worthless! In vain is it that they are regular at services and attentive at sermons if their hearts stop short of God, Himself! Their service may be, in all respects, proper and orderly, but if there is no taking hold of God, it is lifeless and useless as a garnished sepulcher! “God with us,” in our flesh, is our Savior! “God with us,” by His Spirit, proves that we are saved!

Laying hold upon God is not the act of a dead man, neither is it the deed of one who is destitute of spiritual perception—it is the act of one who is quickened and kept alive by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. Those who are at enmity with God neither *can* nor *will* take hold of Him, for, “they say unto God, depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Your ways!” Men will do anything sooner than stir up themselves to take hold of God! They will build churches and altars. They will say “masses”

and perform pilgrimages—and a thousand other things—but they do not want God and will not have Him! To go through a round of performances is very easy work compared with *thought*, consideration and the yielding of the heart.

You may, in religious matters, make yourself like the brick maker's blind horse which goes round and round at his pugmill, but knows nothing about what he is doing! Such worship God regards not! As well might we set automatons to pray and wax figures to move in and out of church doors. God is a Spirit—and to grasp a spirit is not everyday work. Only a spiritual man can do anything of the kind or know what it means. A man must be stirred up and have all his faculties awake—and his entire mental and spiritual nature thrown into energetic action before he will be able to cope with this mystery. Only then, by the Grace of God, can he take hold of Him that made the heavens and the earth, who is not seen of the eyes nor heard of the ear—and is only to be apprehended by the inner spirit of man. I pray God that I may be helpful, as He shall please, in stirring up many of you to take hold upon the Lord with all your heart and soul and strength!

If such shall be the case, it will be a great blessing to the Churches to which you belong and a great blessing to the society in which you move. At this present time I shall not attempt more than the task of describing certain forms in which taking hold upon God is exceedingly desirable at this present time. The same principle in different stages of spiritual life is seen in varying forms—let me point out four of the most necessary—and may the Holy Spirit enable some among us to stir up themselves for the holy effort.

I. The first form of taking hold, that which is intended in the text, is that in which THE AWAKENED SINNER TAKES HOLD UPON GOD. And here I shall be addressing, I hope, many now present who are sincerely anxious to find present salvation. If you really wish to be reconciled to God and to be pardoned by the great Father at once, listen diligently and hear—that your souls may live! Your only hope lies in taking hold upon God! Be not startled, but listen and obey! It is great condescension on the Lord's part that He should permit it to be so, but so it is, that when He bares His right arm to strike you, your safety lies in grasping that very hand which apparently is lifted for your destruction!

He says by the mouth of the Prophet, "Let him lay hold on My strength and let him make peace with Me." As a child, when his father is about to chasten him, will often seize his father's hand and with many tears entreat him to forbear the rod, so will you do if you act wisely. You are to run in, as it were, to God and shelter in the very rock which frowns upon you. Though He seems to be a destroyer, if you can but trust Him, you will find Him to be your Savior! You must say, as John Bunyan once did, "I was so driven that I would have run to Christ, even if He had stood with a pike in His hand! Yes, I would have run upon the very point thereof sooner than be as I then was."

It is so wretched a thing to be without God that one may gladly dare any calamity in venturing to approach Him, though in truth there is no cause for fear. God has been pleased to reveal Himself in the Person of His

dear Son Jesus Christ who lived and died for the salvation of men. And whoever will trust God, as He is revealed in Christ Jesus, shall find forgiveness for all his sins, shall obtain a new nature, shall enter upon a new life and shall be the heir of a blessed immortality! This is the way of salvation which God appoints, namely, that you now, at once, heartily trust in His Son! However strange this method may appear to you, judge not according to the sight of the eyes, but accept what the Lord sets before you. That must be best for you which God thinks best—if it satisfies your Maker it may well satisfy you!

But, indeed, you have no choice! You are shut up to this one method of deliverance. Trust in Christ will save you! But, “there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Do you understand me? The way of life is to take hold of God in Christ Jesus! You are charged with sin—do not deny it—for such a course will be your ruin! Take hold upon the accusation and confess it. Stand where the accusation places you in conscious guilt and repent as you stand there!

Then turn to God and say to Him—“It is written in Your own Word, ‘This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’ Lord, You know I am a sinner and I, also, know it. I cast myself upon the faithful saying and trust in You to save me through Jesus Christ Your Son.” This is taking hold upon God! And when you have so done you shall find salvation—yes, you are saved! I think I hear you say, “But how shall I take hold of God? I, who am so vile, so weak, so far off from Him.” He has given you many points by which you may grasp Him. You may take hold upon certain of His attributes and especially upon His mercy. “He delights in mercy.”

Can you not trust the God who is ready to pardon and eager to receive His returning child? Remember His loving kindness and the multitude of His tender mercies. Call to mind the fact that He has declared that He has no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but that he should turn to Him and live. Can you not cast anchor in the harbor of infinite mercy as seen in the provision of a Divine Savior? Can you not find foothold for faith on that blessed and sure Word of God, “His mercy endures forever”? This is the star of the sinner’s night, the dawn of his day of hope! There is forgiveness with God that He may be feared—with Him is plenteous redemption! O poor sinking Soul, take hold of this! Believe that God, for Christ’s sake, can justly pardon the guilty—and plead with Him to do so in your case! Urge your suit upon this plea and it will not fail you.

Perhaps your mind can better settle upon a promise. Well, it will little matter which one of them it is, for though they are very many, they are all equally certain. But try to take hold of the Lord by one or other of those handholds which He has provided on purpose for seeking souls. Hold Him by such a Word of God as this, “Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” Or take hold upon that other gracious invitation, “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as

wool." There are many such Words of Grace and, as I have already told you, they are all equally sure.

Like the great roads which all meet in London, so any promise will lead you to God. Fix your grasp of faith on that which best suits your character and condition—and you are, at once, in contact with God. Only take hold and do not trifle with the promise, or stagger at it. O Sinner, awaken yourself to take hold upon the loving Word! Be in earnest, Man, for it is your *life*, and when you once get hold, let your grip be as an iron vice—grapple the promise to you as with hooks of steel! Plead after this fashion, "You have said it, O God, and I believe it, and I trustfully look to You to be as good as Your Word. On this, Your promise, I depend and I am persuaded You will keep Your Word."

Perhaps the Character of our Lord Jesus Christ may furnish you with a holdfast. Remember who and what He was and remember that whatever Christ was, God is, for He, Himself, testified, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father." Remember how Jesus put the message of love, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls." Could you not trust the meek and lowly One? Say, can you not readily trust Jesus? Do you fear Immanuel or dread the Lamb of God? Bleeding on the tree, with no thunder in His hands nor terror on His brow, can you not confide in Him?

His dying body, by every wound, invites the sons of men to find a shelter in the riven rock! Take at once a firm hold of God! The body of His Incarnate Son and all His blessed work stand before you as so many points of attraction. Turn not away, but let the God of Love be your God now and forever! Can you not take hold of Him through the Gospel—the Gospel which publishes salvation to the most ungodly? What do you say to this—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved"? "He that believes on Him is not condemned"? "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin"? What a number of persons have laid hold of God through that precious text! It stands like an open door with width enough to admit a giant in sin! Some who could never find comfort anywhere else have caught at that encouragement and found peace with God at once. Why shouldn't you?

Note this one, also. "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." And this, "Whoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." By some one or other of those Gospel declarations I do, in the name of Jesus, entreat every guilty sinner to take hold of God! Again, I say, do not run from Him or from the facts of your sad case—do not try to forget what you are towards Him, nor forget what He must be towards you if you continue in your sin! Come now, in an honest manner, and meet the Truth of God face to face. Make this firm resolve, that you will be stranger to your God no longer. Say in your soul, "I will take hold of God this day, as He presents Himself to me in His Word." Put forth your hands and touch the hem of Jesus' garment, if you can do no more, and He will not spurn you, but give you immediate salvation!

The text speaks of a man's stirring himself up to lay hold on God and that is the point to which I long to see you brought. I would that every un-

converted man were, at this moment, awakened out of his deadly slumber. You will not take hold on God while you are asleep in sin's downy bed! Believe me, no sinner is saved while his mind is in a dreamy, hesitating, lethargic condition. You need to be stirred up to make your calling and election sure. Surely such a business should be earnestly attended to. Let your memory be stirred up to remember your sin and may, by God's Grace, your soul repent of it. Let your conscience be stirred up to remind you of the guilt of that sin and may your heart make a full confession of it with deep shame and bitter sorrow.

Let your fears be stirred up to apprehend the wrath to come and your hopes to remind you of the possibilities of everlasting life and glory! Let your desires be awakened, this morning, and may you be set longing and crying after mercy! And with your desires may your will awaken, only not as it has been accustomed to be, in vicious obstinacy, setting itself against God, but made willing to obey in the day of the Lord's power! May His Holy Spirit awaken reason and thought, understanding and the affections, yes, your whole man! As when in business you are about to do something of extreme importance, you awaken yourself and endeavor to have all your wits about you, so now come to this great business of your soul's salvation with all your thoughts awakened and all your energies excited, for all these are necessary!

Is it not a concern of the utmost weight? Since the prize is worth winning and the loss will be intolerable, be stirred up with strong resolve that, if Grace and mercy are to be had by laying hold on God, you will have them at this very hour! Beloved Brothers and Sisters, if there are none among us who take hold on God, our Church is in a very sad state—a Church without converts is a cloud without rain, a river without water!

I thank God that we are not in such a plight, but we have many in this place who have lately taken hold upon the Lord and found Grace in His sight. This has been a means of Grace to us all! The oldest and most established have been cheered by these new converts. Their coming among us has been a dew from the Lord—we have welcomed them as men do swallows in the spring! Their addition to our numbers has lit up new stars in our sky. Pray, my Brothers and Sisters, that there may be many such in *all* Churches, for it is pre-eminently desirable that every awakened sinner should be stirred up to take hold upon God!

II. We will now consider another character considerably in advance of the former, who, also, stirs up himself to take hold of God. We very greatly need to have among us many THOROUGH BELIEVERS WHO TAKE HOLD UPON GOD BY FIDELITY TO HIM. I have seen applied to Calvin the motto, "He took fast hold." If ever a man did take fast hold on invisible things, it was that famous Reformer. What he grasped, he held with force of clear conviction, intelligent apprehension and devout reverence. I am particularly anxious that every member of this Church should now look upon himself or herself separately and distinctly—and try to follow me in my description of a Believer who takes hold of God.

He is deeply sincere and thorough in all that he does. Shams and pretences are his abhorrence. He feels the solemn importance of dealing in spirit and in truth with the Lord—and of taking hold upon God, Himself,

and not on mere names and words and forms. He says within himself, "I am a *Christian* and I will be so, by God's Grace, not in name only, but in deed and in truth. I know that the outward form of religion is but a husk and I resolve to feed upon the kernel. I mean to have the *substance* of religion—not its shadows. I will take hold of all the outward which God has revealed, but I will mainly look to the inward, and my soul and spirit shall deal with the living God Himself. If I live, I will live unto Him. Nothing short of this shall content me."

Such a man opens his Bible and resolves to find out what God's will is—and he judges for himself—for he knows that he will have to render a personal account. He means to take hold for himself of every revealed Truth of God, for he wishes not to be taught of man, alone, but to be taught of God. He awakens all his wits to understand the doctrine and precepts of God's Word, for he has become a disciple and he, therefore, wishes to learn. His cry is, "I want to be thorough. I want to go to the soul and center of things and know the Truth of God by the teaching of the Spirit of God in my own heart!"

Not content with searching the Word, alone, he takes everything he finds there to God, and says, "Lord, I long to lay hold of You in this Truth. I desire not merely to know *concerning* Christ, but to know Christ! Not only to believe the *doctrine* of the Holy Spirit, but to feel the *power* of the Holy Spirit, Himself, upon my soul, for I have said in my heart, 'My God, I would know You and commune with You. I would love You and serve You. My soul follows hard after You—when shall I come and appear before You?'"

Such a man, dear Brothers and Sisters, when he once knows the will of the Lord, has made up his mind to act promptly upon what he knows! His mind is expressed in the language of one of old who said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." It is nothing to him what others may do, except that he regrets that they should do evil. He puts his foot down and will not run with a multitude to do evil. He has made the Word of the Lord to be the guide of his life and he will not depart from it. His is no borrowed faith—he has embraced the Truth of Jesus for himself and he means to follow Him at all hazards. And, as far as he can, he will have his household so ordered that all who come around him may see that Jesus is his Lord.

Come fair or come foul, his hold is secure and he will not let go. Such a man sets himself to extend the Kingdom of Christ, impelled by inward zeal. Having obtained a solid fulcrum of assured knowledge, he now begins to use his lever and work upon others. Wherever he is settled in Providence, he sets about founding a Church for his Lord. He is glad to be a member of a large Church for the sake of Christian fellowship, but if he is cast in a desert place he can hold his own, alone, for his hold is not on man, but on God! He can testify in the midst of others who do not fear God—he would testify in the midst of heathens if he were called to it—for opposition and persecution cannot shake him!

He has taken hold of God—not of the Church, nor of the minister, nor of the mere formal creed! He has passed beyond all those things to the Lord, Himself, and his confidence is thus above the heavens. He knows

that he cannot be placed where God is not and, therefore, he feels that his best Friend is always near. The eye of man is nothing to him—the Presence of God is first and last with him. He labors with earnest zeal to maintain, defend and, also, to spread abroad the Truths of God which are verily believed among us. He is a man that calls upon God, not merely in prayer, but by confessing His name and acknowledging His cause. And he stirs himself up to take hold upon God in the doing of all these things.

Brethren, I earnestly wish that every member of this Church was a man of this metal! We should be strong for God if this were the case. We have so many professors who are still babes, needing the feeding bottle and the baby carriage though they are 40 years of age! What can we do with these? Others are unstable. They know *something* about the Truth of God, but not very much—and what they *do* know they are not sure of—and so they are ready to be bamboozled out of it. In the present age, if any man can talk well, he will get a following whatever he may teach. I am astounded at some professors who can hear this man, today, and that man the next, though the two are diametrically opposed! Surely there is some difference between truth and error! Surely mere cleverness cannot neutralize false doctrine!

Our forefathers discerned between things that differed and when false doctrine came before them they cast it out, notwithstanding the eloquence of its advocate. I do not want you to be bigots. God deliver us from their bitter spirit, but I do want you to be sound Believers. There is a great difference between obstinate bigotry and a decided maintenance of that which we have believed. After all, what is the chaff to the wheat? There is a difference between the doctrines of *men* and the teachings of the Lord! No lie is of the truth! Garnish it as you may, it is still a lie. Oh to be rooted and grounded and built up in Christ! One of the most desirable things in this fickle age is to see around the minister of Christ a people who know the Truth and feel that the Truth binds them fast to their God.

III. We take a step further in advance when we mention a third form of this taking hold of God. We need a development in the form of THE WRESTLING PLEADER. The expression is borrowed, as you know, from Jacob at the brook of Jabbok. He had begun to pray, alone, by the brook when an angel appeared to him, or rather the Prince of angels Himself. When Jacob saw the Angel, he laid hold upon Him and there was a wrestling match between them all through that night. It was a sight such as never seen on earth before. After much weeping and agony, Jacob made a desperate clutch at the Angel and cried, “I will not let You go unless You bless me.”

In the Church of God we need many wrestling Jacobs! What does the text mean when it speaks of a man stirring himself up to take hold of God? The transaction takes this form. The good man feels the case urgently—the blessing which is needed is laid on his heart and he feels that he must have it. He is convinced of the necessity of it and he is, also, certain that he cannot have it, except from God. Then he looks at the propriety of it and asks, “Is this a case which I can lawfully lay before God? I seek such a thing, but may I expect the thrice holy God to give it to me? Is

it for His Glory? When you have done that, dear Friend, you have commenced well!

Now proceed to business. Go about it in an energetic, but reasonable way, and next, turn to the Bible and see if the Lord has ever promised that which you seek. Search out promises! Get them at your fingertips! Memorize their very words! Then go before God and tell Him your desire and honestly declare your reasons for desiring it. Show the Lord that you know that He has promised the blessing and then begin to plead with Him to fulfill His own Word. Very much of taking hold upon God must be in using arguments with Him. The Lord knows the thing is good, but He wants *you* to know it! And in order that you may be well instructed in the value of the mercy you seek, He wishes you to produce your arguments and bring forth your strong reasons.

Many teachers use what we call the Socratic method in which the student is made to answer questions, not that his teacher may be instructed, but that the youth may learn. Set your case in order and mention your pleading before the Lord as if you were pleading in a court of justice. State why and why this thing should be, and what you fear will happen if you are not answered. Return to the work again and again, as Abraham did when interceding for Sodom, and each time renew your strength. Especially bring forth the Divine promises and say concerning each one of them, "Do as You have said. Fulfill this Word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope." Plead the Covenant and the faithfulness of God!

That done, believe that God will keep His promise and begin to *expect* the blessing. Act as if you had obtained it, for it is written, "Believe that you have it and you shall have it." If the mercy is not then given, ask again—go through the same pleadings as before, amending them and increasing their power. The agony of prayer is somewhat like a great siege in which one earthwork is cast up and after a while it is followed by another yet nearer to the town which is to be taken. One after another the besiegers raise their works till the place is quite hemmed in—then they bring up their guns and begin to pound away upon the walls which they have resolved to capture.

Thus must we be about to win the blessing which we need, using Divine promises as our ramparts and our strong reasons as our great guns. Remember, it is not for God's sake that you are called upon to plead, but for your own! The Lord desires to convince you of the value of mercy—and when He has done it, He intends to grant it to you! A man who can take hold of God in prayer will be of the utmost value to the Church. Why should we not learn this art? But oh, how few there are who call upon His name! How few there are who stir up themselves to take hold of God! Sleepy prayers—God have mercy upon them! Prayers that do not mean anything? Prayers of men who can be put off with, "No"? These are as common as stones on the road and of less worth! We need *importunity*—the knocking at the gate of Mercy again and again and again! We need the unconquerable resolve—"I must have it! It is for God's glory and He has promised it. I will not cease until I obtain it."

We need to see the majesty of prayer among us again. If we had hundreds of Church members who could take hold upon God, religion would revive and we should no more have to complain of barrenness. God will part the heavens and come down and the mountains will flow at His Presence when once His people take Him at His word and pray as if they believed!

IV. The fourth point, and the last, is to mention one other form of this stirring up of ourselves to lay hold of God. It is one which I confess I have but seldom seen, but wish I could see on all sides. I have read of it in biographies and past ages have seen it and wondered at it. It ought, however, to be common in the Church and to be seen in every Christian. I mean THE TAKING HOLD OF GOD BY THE STRENGTHENED BELIEVER—the man who has got beyond doubts and fears—and grasped the eternal Truths. No question, now as to whether there is a God or not—he *knows* Him, *speaks* with Him, *walks* with Him.

In sacred communion the Lord has made known His secrets to him and shown him His Covenant. Concerning the Gospel and things revealed, he does not care to argue. He is as sure of those matters as of the fact that there is a sun in the heavens or salt in the sea. He has passed beyond argument as to things of this sort. You might as well try to shake the earth out of its place as to remove him from his convictions. He knows them and, what is a great deal more, he intensely realizes them. He as much believes in God and His Gospel as he believes in his own existence—and these things have as manifest a power over him as the things which are seen and heard have over the human senses. He is familiar with God! He talks with Jesus! The Holy Spirit dwells in him!

He has passed into a spiritual realm and has consciously to do with spiritual things. Such a man is now quite sure about God's being with him, for he dwells in His Presence and he never dares to act except under a sense of that Presence. He is quite sure about God's keeping His promises. He dares not doubt that, for he has had too many proofs, already, of the faithfulness of God for him to distrust Him. Now, see how steadily that man moves about! Trial does not bow him down—he expected it and he expects to be delivered out of it. If you rush in upon him with the most terrible information it does not distress him, for, "He is not afraid of evil tidings. His heart is fixed by trusting in the Lord." What a grand character Abraham was and only because he was grandly believing!

Whenever faith gave way in Abraham, as it did now and then, for the best of men are only men, then he sank to the ordinary level, as he did when he denied his wife and said—"She is my sister." But when his faith is strong, what a wonderful man he is! He never disputes with Lot about which shall take the fatter pasture. Lot may have what he likes, for Abraham has his God. Lot may take the well-watered plain of the Jordan if he desires it—Abraham had sooner dwell alone with his God. When Lot is carried captive, and Abraham feels it his duty to deliver his relative, he does not ask about how strong Chedorlaomer and the other three kings may be. That is nothing to him! God is with him and he hastens to the conflict.

He uses such means as are at hand and asks his neighbors to join him in the pursuit. And then he marches confidently after Chedorlaomer and destroys him—and God gives the plundering host like driven stubble to his bow. You never find Abraham fretting. He is always peaceful in mind. He is not afraid of men, nor abashed before princes. His faith had made him heir of the world and he knew it. He moved majestically because he had learned to believe in God. When Isaac was to be offered up, how the strong man smothered his emotions and went silently but resolutely his three days' journey, with his son, to the hill of which God had spoken to him. There the deed would have been done had not the angel interposed, for it never entered into Abraham's mind to disobey the Lord!

He believed so firmly in his God that whatever God had bid him, he resolved to do. Oh, if you could get to the same realizing faith, how calm, quiet, serene, strong, happy and blessed would you be, for you would then, to the fullest extent, have taken hold of God! When we have such a man in a Church, he is a man of power in all respects. When he speaks it is almost as the oracles of God. Other speakers may dazzle you with eloquence, but this man overpowers you with Grace and confuses the adversaries by his boldness. God gives to the Church, every now and then, such a man. Such a one was Martin Luther, a man by no means free from faults, but gloriously free from doubt!

Others think the Gospel is true. Erasmus feels sure that it is, but Erasmus wants to die in a whole skin. Luther knows that Justification by faith is right and he will thunder it out, whether his skin shall be damaged or not! It will be better not to go to Worms, say timid advisers. Things have come to such a pass that there will be danger to your life—you had better give up the contest, Luther, before you die in it. Future ages may take it up, but if you go to Worms, you will certainly never come back again!

Well, says he, I shall go! Yes, if there were as many devils there, as there are tiles on the housetops, I should go, for I have to confess Christ there and confess Him I will! And when he is asked, "What would you do if the Duke, your protector, should no longer harbor you?" "I shall take shelter," he says, "beneath the broad shield of the Almighty God." What are dukes and princes to such a man? He had taken hold of God and he feels stronger than all men and all devils combined! There is nothing like this linking of one's self with the Eternal by faith! Such a man was Calvin. I picture him as he looked when going into the Church of St. Peter, the Libertines resolved that they would partake of the Lord's Supper though Calvin had declared they should not.

They are men licentious in life and godless in character, but they mean to come to the Table and take the sacred elements, whether Calvin says no or not. They care for no one and mean riot and bloodshed. If he refuses, they have sent him word that they will kill him in the Church. Calvin goes to the Table and breaks the bread and distributes it to the people of God—and hands not a mouthful to the profane, upon whom he looks with such pitying severity that, awed by the man's courage, they retire to learn better manners!

We have in these days a race of time servers and word spinners to succeed the real men! There are hundreds who say it is undoubtedly untrue that children are, in their Baptism, made members of Christ, children of God, inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven—but still they teach children to say so and afterwards will tell them that the words mean something else. Is this the way of doing the work of the Lord? Is this according to the Gospel of faith, or after the manner of the Truth of God? Numbers of others say, “Yes, we see all this, we see popery coming back in the form of ritualism, but, at the same time, we cannot be decided and shake ourselves clear of the accursed thing. We cannot tell what will happen! We will wait and perhaps fate may favor us.”

I know what would happen if we feared God more—we would sooner die than remain in any fellowship with popery! Every man who saw any fear of his being found in complicity with Antichrist would at once say, “I will not have it. Popery is abhorred of the Lord and they who help it wear the mark of the beast! I hate Antichrist and, therefore, I denounce it and cry, Down with it! Raze it even to the ground.” Everything that is of the Pope and popery would soon be put aside if men were but true to their consciences and their God! This generation is credulous and yet unbelieving! It is deluded by the most transparent frauds! It swings like a pendulum to this and that—it believes in almost anything except its God! In God and His Truth and righteousness it will not be made to believe.

Oh for a John Knox! We need a leader, firm and heroic! We need a man strong and stout because he has God with him. He that believes in God will make men decide for the right when otherwise they would vacillate. He is a commander-in-chief among the sons of men. His brow is like a flint and he is not to be abashed. Let criticism rattle upon his armor like a hailstorm—he stands fast and defies it all. May God make some of you into such heroes! I would to God He would make *all* of you valiant for His Truth, so that in your little circle you would be firm for God and Scriptural doctrine and pure worship because you have taken hold of Him!

God save us from the men of willow and gutta-percha and plaster of Paris, such as would be dear if you could buy them at a shilling the dozen! Take these away, O, Father Time, and give us back men of granite, men of backbone, say rather, men of God! Oh that each man among us were awakened to take hold of God and that all our faculties were stirred to their utmost depth and that then they grasped the Lord! Ho, comrades, don't you see the standard? It wavers! Shall it fall? The true soldier in the cruel fight, when he sees the standard-bearer struck down and the fight thickening all around the banner, stirs up all his strength and rushes into the strife as a lion leaps on his prey!

He strains every sinew and throws every nerve into action, dashing forward to grasp the standard and to hold it aloft, touch it who dare! He strikes right and left and sooner than the banner shall be trailed in the mire, he will spill his life in crimson streams upon the ground! Up you soldiers of Christ! Up you lion-like men and turn the battle to the gate! May God help you to do it for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE VERY BOLD PROPHECY

NO. 1919

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 12, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"I was sought by those who did not ask for Me; I was found by those
who did not seek Me: I said, Behold Me, behold Me,
to a nation that was not called by My name"
Isaiah 65:1.***

THIS is the passage which was quoted by the Apostle Paul in the 10th chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. At the 20th verse of that chapter he says—"Isaiah is very bold, and says, I was found of them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me. But to Israel He says, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." The Apostle followed the Septuagint translation, but altered the position of the clauses.

We learn on Inspired authority that this is a very bold passage. It required much courage to utter it at the first and, in Paul's day, it needed still more to quote it and press it home upon the Jews around him. He who protests against a self-righteous people and angers them by showing that others whom they despised are saved while they, themselves, are being lost, will have need of a dauntless spirit. The Israelite people thought that they had a monopoly on the Grace of God, that the Lord who had chosen their fathers and had indulged them with a Divine Revelation, would never deprive them of their advantages, nor advance others to the same privileges. They dreamed that God was almost *bound* to bless them above all the nations that were upon the face of the earth.

To meet this national conceit with plain rebuke needed one who was very bold. When Paul spoke of his own mission to the Gentiles, the Jews lifted up their voices and cried out, "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live." The Apostle, therefore, knew that Isaiah was very bold when, in former ages, he made Israel know that God would save a people who were not called by His name while the favored people would die in their sins because they would not listen to the entreaties of their God. It becomes the servants of God to be bold in rebuking sin and protesting against pride—indeed, in all their messages it behooves them to be fearless. They do not deliver their own words, otherwise they might apologize for their speech. They speak the words of the living God and it is not for them, for fear of feeble men, to soften their words and smooth their tongues. Ah, no! He that is ashamed to speak the Truth of God has need to be ashamed of himself! It is treason against the King of Kings to tone down the Word of the Lord. Surely, among all cow-

ards, he is the worst who is afraid to be true to God. Such preachers must be especially pointed at in the text—"But the fearful and unbelieving shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

This text has the clear ring of Free Grace about it and, for this reason, it may be called bold. He had need be bold who, in this day, would preach fully and plainly the Doctrine of the Sovereign Grace of God. This cultured age repudiates the Doctrines of Grace which are the heart of evangelical teaching! Men are vexed when we declare that God is first in human salvation and seeks men *before* they seek Him. Many grow red in the face if we testify that the Lord, in His gracious Sovereignty, meets with persons who have never sought Him and brings them to Himself, changing their hearts by His own eternal Spirit—while He leaves others to perish in their sins because they resist His Spirit and refuse the invitations of His mercy. Yet we shall not cease most joyfully to sing unto our God—

"No sinner can be beforehand with Thee—

Your Grace is most sovereign, most rich, and most free."

While many who have heard the Gospel from their childhood continue to hear it in vain, others, who have never heard it before, are brought by what are commonly called accidental circumstances to hear the quickening Word of God and at once they embrace it and live! My prayer has been that this morning our text may be again fulfilled! May the Lord be sought by those who, until now, have not enquired for Him! May many who have strayed into this place thoughtlessly find Jesus this day! It may be you are unused to Divine things, unaccustomed to the gracious commands of love which bid you trust in Jesus. Oh, that you may at once be convicted, converted, renewed and saved! While the Lord Jesus, at this hour, calls to you, "Behold Me, behold Me," I trust you will be made to long, to look, to live and to love! Truly it will be a wonder of Grace, but our Lord is the God of wonders, His name is Wonderful! May He get to Himself great renown throughout eternity by being found, this day, by those who sought Him not! While I am preaching I shall be praying in the Holy Spirit that this Word of the Lord may be carried out most evidently in the midst of this assembly.

I shall ask your earnest attention, at once, to the text in which there are four notable things—the *personality of God in the work of Grace; His delight in it; the description which He gives of it and the purposes which He would serve by that description.* May the Holy Spirit help us in this four-fold meditation!

I. The first point for your consideration is THE PERSONALITY OF GOD IN THE WORK OF HIS GRACE. This is remarkably prominent in the words before us. Let me read them and lay the emphasis upon the personal pronouns which relate to God. "I was sought by those who did not ask for *Me*; I was found by those who did not seek *Me*; I said, Behold *Me*, behold *Me*, to a nation that was not called by *My* name." Is not the Lord here, not only as Speaker, but as the theme of His own speech? It is most surely and emphatically true that God is present in the works of His Grace. He operates upon the heart, personally—not only by second causes. He works in

us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. He is personally operative as well as personally observant of everything gracious.

The philosophy now in vogue labors to shut God out of His own creation. They inform us that by some means this world and all that is in it were evolved. Even this will not long content the men of progress—they care nothing for evolution in itself, but only so far as it may serve their purpose of escaping from the thought of God! If, by some method or other, vain men could scheme a world without God, they would be delighted—and that philosopher who comes nearest to the invention of a subtle lie which will justify their forgetfulness of God—is the prince of the hour, the favorite of his age! Yes, God must be obliterated somehow, for, “the fool has said in his heart, There is no God.”

These wise men would have done with God, also, in the ruling and overruling of Providence. According to the modern notion, the universe is like a watch which goes because it has been wound up long ago. It is not even admitted that there was a God to wind it up, but anyway, if there is such a great personal Power, He has put the watch under His pillow and has gone to sleep while the machine goes on ticking without Him. Certain fixed laws operate without any force at their back and the world is so self-contained that it goes on by itself without God—this is the modern idea. They have no one to wind up this watch, again, when it runs down—no prospect of new heavens and a new earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell. Those who would get rid of God out of Nature and Providence have tried their hands at making a religion without God and a pretty religion it is—it is too small a business to need consideration!

Those of us who rejoice to see the Lord both in Creation and in Providence know assuredly that He is most conspicuous in the Kingdom of Grace. There He is the First and the Last, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. The Lord God in Christ Jesus is the sum and substance of salvation—to Him we look, in Him we find all things, by Him we come to Him and He is our All in All. God gives freely to those who have, until now, been far off from Him, that salvation of which Jonah said, “Salvation is of the Lord.” Human salvations are the wages of *works*—Divine salvation is the gift of *Grace*.

Notice that in the text the personality of God comes forth in that *He Himself is observant of all that is done*. Do any seek Him?—He says, “I am sought.” Do any find Him?—he says, “I am found.” Is there any preaching of the Gospel?—the Lord declares, “I said, Behold Me, behold Me.” God takes note of it all! Not a prayer is breathed, nor a sigh heaved, nor a note of praise uttered from the heart, but what the Omniscient Lord has noted every thought. Those eyes which behold microscopic life in the lowest depths of the sea and trace the flight of the condor in its utmost height, spy out the most sorrowful anguish of seeking souls and observes the most elevated joy of souls that find their God! Grace in its beginnings, its growth, its declining, its increasing and its struggles is always under the Divine observation. At this moment, God’s Omnipresent heart beats in sympathy with all our hearts if we are seeking His love. You have not to advise Him that you are seeking—He perceives your secret thoughts and

meets you in your return to Him. "Behold he prays" is God's immediate expression concerning you if you begin to pray at this hour! If you dart a glance of faith to the Lord Jesus, He will at once yield to you and say, "I am found." The Lord's eyes are on the heart which feels His Grace.

Further, God's personality in the work of Grace is conspicuous because *He Himself is the great Object of desire where Grace is in operation*. When men are savingly awakened, they seek—what? Religion? By no means! They seek God if they seek aright! We hear, sometimes, the saying that such a one has "found religion." Do not use the expression! It is a vain one. That which men find when they find peace and eternal life is God Himself! The Lord says, "I am found." If men do not find God, they have found nothing.

God Himself fills the vision of faith. Observe the words, "Behold Me, behold Me." We look to God in Christ and find all that our soul needs. If any man is saved, it will be through looking to God, as it is written, "They looked unto Him and were lightened and their faces were not ashamed." O my Hearer, behold your God! Would you have pardon for sin? Seek God in Christ Jesus! Would you have renewal of heart? Seek God the Holy Spirit, by whom, alone, we are born again! Would you be God's child? Receive Jesus, for, "to as many as received Him, to them gave He power" (or authority) "to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name!" God is the sum of our necessities. God we seek as sinners. God we *find* as saints!

I have sometimes put it thus to you—Here is a little child picked from the gutter. It is starved, unclothed, unwashed and deathly sick. What does it need? Well, it would take me a long time to write out a list of all its needs. It needs washing, clothing, warming, feeding, nursing, loving—no, I will not attempt to complete the catalog, but I will tell you all in a word—this little child needs its mother! If it finds a loving and capable mother, it has all that it needs at once. Every lost soul of man needs a thousand things, but no soul needs more than it will find in God! The lost prodigal needs bread and a host of other things—and he finds all when he carries out the resolve, "I will arise and go to my Father." It is therefore beautifully evident that God displays His personality in Grace since He is, Himself, that which the soul seeks, finds and rejoices in. "He that is our God is the God of salvation." Yes, more, as Isaiah puts it in his 12th chapter, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation."

The loving personality of God comes out in the work of Grace, in that *He Himself is the Speaker of that call by which men are saved*. Here are the words: "I said, Behold Me, behold Me." The Lord, Himself, speaks the effectual Word! Did not Isaiah proclaim the Gospel? Yes, he did, and this was the result of Isaiah's speech—"Who has believed our report?" But when God's arm is revealed, so that God speaks through His Prophet, then a very different result follows, for God's Word shall not return unto Him void, but it shall prosper in the thing whereto He sent it. Dear Soul, if you have looked to Christ, it is because Christ has looked at you and influenced you to look to Him! If there is any glancing of the eyes, even, of

the feeblest faith towards God, it is because He has said, by His Spirit, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."

I like to think of the Gospel as not only prepared and revealed by God, but as actually spoken by Himself into the ear and heart of the man to whom it becomes the power of God unto salvation. You have never heard a living word yet, my Brother—a really living, quickening word from my lips, alone—it may have come, perhaps, through my mouth as the vocal organ, but if it is a *quicken*ing word, it must have come from God Himself! Man's words are mere breath, but the Word of the Lord is spirit and life! "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made" and all heavenly things come from the same Source. Praise, then, the blessed God who thus *personally* appears in the conversion of everyone who is led to seek and find his God! It is no wonder that He is found of those who sought Him not, when He, Himself, comes forth to reveal Himself to men.

Moreover, God is seen in the work of Grace, for *He Himself is the Director of the message*. "I said, Behold Me, behold Me, to a nation that was not called by My name" Not only does God speak the Gospel, but He speaks it home to those whom He appoints to hear it. We who preach know not to whom the Truth will be applied. I speak unto this crowd this day as I am called to do—in so doing I scatter handfuls of heavenly Seed—but how do I know where it shall fall? God's eternal purpose carries every single grain of the good Seed into the furrow which He has prepared for it. Very marvelous is it how the Lord prepares the ground for the Seed and the Seed for the ground!

Of late, Thursday night after Thursday night I have had singularly striking proofs of this. Letters have come again and again of this sort—"I felt drawn to attend the Tabernacle from a notice in the paper, but I shall never forget the words which I then heard, for they were evidently meant for me." Then the person goes on to detail certain circumstances of his life which have corresponded, with remarkable minuteness, to observations made in the sermon. How is this? The preacher knew nothing of the matter and yet the Word of God fitted like a glove to the hand! Nor is this all, for, strange to tell, the message has seemed equally personal to another individual whose circumstances were of another order. God's Word has many operations and what, to one, is an appropriate word of encouragement, may be to another an equally suitable word of rebuke! He can kill and cure by the same Word! This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes! If the preaching of the Gospel were but a human act, it would produce human results and there it would end. But if God, Himself, speaks by His servant and directs His Word by His own power, then the Divine agency will produce Divine results to the praise of the Glory of His Grace! In the Kingdom of Grace, the Word of God is a manifestation of God—by it He works in the new creation even as He did in the old. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." "The preaching of the Cross is to them that perish, foolishness, but unto us who are saved, it is the power of God." I call upon you, therefore, Beloved, to rejoice that God

comes very near to us in the work of Grace and is made known to us as our God.

This surrounds the Gospel with a strange solemnity. If the Gospel blesses us, it is not *it*, but *God* that blesses—God Himself has come to us! Yet remember that this fact has another aspect to it, for if the *Gospel* is *rejected*, it is *God* that is rejected. Read the next verse—“I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people.” Yes, if you accept the Gospel, you have found your God, but if you *reject* the Gospel, you have rejected God Himself! The Gospel may be brought to you by the poorest of my Master’s servants, but since it is God’s own message of love—in refusing it you refuse your God. It is true that the hands which were stretched out to you were human hands and, therefore, you criticized the style of the invitation and, perhaps, refused it with scorn—but at the back of the feeble ambassador stood the great King—and behind the simple invitation was the sublime mind of God! He takes it ill that you refuse His message, seeing that in so doing you refuse Him who spoke from Heaven! Oh, how differently would some of you hear if you did but remember that in the Gospel, God, Himself, comes to you! Father, Son and Holy Spirit have come to pleading terms with you—will you, *can* you, turn a deaf ear to the Sacred Trinity?

II. But now, secondly, dear Friends, in the text I see THE DELIGHT WHICH GOD TAKES IN THE WORK OF GRACE. The text is the utterance of delight! God is glad to be sought and found by those who once were negligent of Him.

It is evident that *He rejoices in contrast to the complaint of the next verse*. It is with joy that God says, “I was sought by those who did not ask for Me; I was found by those who did not seek Me,” for it is placed in opposition to the mournful notes in which the Lord says, “I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people.” We speak of God after the manner of men, for so God speaks of Himself. It is true, then, that He is hurt and grieved when He stretches out His hands in vain. We read of some of old that, “They vexed His Holy Spirit.” Frequently are similar expressions used in Scripture. When His kindness is rejected, God is grieved. Listen to His cry—“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me.” As a relief to such a lamentation, this verse has in it a true joy, an intensity of satisfaction because some are coming to peace and love. God speaks it with pleasure—“I was found by those who did not seek Me.” Do not forget that utterance, “As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but that he turn unto Me and live.” It gives God pleasure to see men turn to Him. Infinitely happy as He must be from His own glorious Nature, yet there is a joy which only He feels when He is sought after and found by the sons of men—and this becomes special when the most unlikely ones are seeking and finding. God is most glad when He says, “Behold Me, behold Me,” unto a nation that was not called by His name.

The Lord rejoices in each step of the process. There is a poor soul beginning to cry, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” And lo, the Lord

says, "I am sought." A man has only just begun to attend the House of Prayer; he has only lately commenced the earnest study of the Bible. The Lord sees it and He says, "I am sought." As when a fisherman smiles because a fish has begun to nibble at the bait, so the Lord notes the first moves of the heart towards Himself and He says, "I am sought." It was but a poor little prayer you prayed last night. You started up from your knees astonished to find that you had actually been attempting to pray! But your heavenly Father saw you and He said with pleasure, "I am sought." "When he was yet a great way off his Father saw him." Behold the infinite compassion of the all-observing God!

The very next sentence is, "I am found." What a delight it must be to God's heart when, at last, the poor sinner cries, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" Then Jesus says, "I am found." Do not imagine that a soul ever found the great Father without the great Father's knowing it. There is a consciousness of joy in us when we can say, "I found Him whom my soul loves." But there is a greater and fuller consciousness on the part of Him whom we have found when He declares, in the words of the text, "I am found." God rejoices when He is sought and when He is found! Oh do not think that you seek an unwilling God! He comes to meet you! He falls upon your neck and kisses you! Whatever you do in coming to God, He views it with infinite joy.

The Lord also rejoices in the persons who seek Him. He says, "I was sought by those who did not ask for Me." God takes special joy in being sought by those who formerly did not seek Him. He will be glad for any heart to keep on seeking that has begun to seek, but He is best pleased when non-seekers become seekers. You that were taught to pray at your mother's knee, God is glad to hear your sincere petitions, but if there is a man or woman here who has never prayed before in their life, let them begin at once and the Lord will rejoice to hear them! Has your mind never thrilled with the holy desire to seek your Creator, Preserver and Friend? Have you been careless and godless? Then turn to Him at once and He will delight in having mercy upon you. Oh come, you giddy ones, and seek Him whom you have never asked for! Come, you thoughtless ones, and find Him whom you have never sought! Come, you who have never called upon the sacred name and behold your God, your Savior! This is the good pleasure of God, His purpose and His promise to His Son, "Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that knew You not shall run unto You because of the Lord Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You."

"Alas," says one, "I have never sought Him!" Yet you may find Him, for the Word of the Lord is, "I was found by those who did not seek Me." Our Savior tells us of a merchant of earnest spirit who went out to seek goodly pearls. He traversed many lands inspecting a variety of jewels that he might find one especially precious pearl and, at last, he found it and bought it. They that seek the Lord shall find Him! But there was another man whose mind sought after less ambitious matters—he was of the earth, earthy. He yoked his bullocks, one morning, to the plow and he was thinking only of his clods and of his fields, when, all of a sudden, the plow

made a stop—there was something in the way. He stopped the oxen; he examined the ground; he dug in the earth. He came to an old crock and in that crock he found a treasure of gold and of silver. He had found what he never looked for and, the moment he found it, he decided to sell all that he had and buy the field, that he might possess the treasure.

My Hearer, you came to London on pleasure, or on business, or to see the Exhibition [The International Exhibition of Navigation, Commerce and Industry in Liverpool, England, was opened by Queen Victoria on 11 May 1886]—you certainly did not come with the expectation of finding Christ and eternal life! I hope you have stumbled on full salvation at this moment. Happiness and Heaven lie before you—will you not have them? The plow has struck on the hidden treasure of the blessed Gospel and if you will stoop down and look, here are riches such as you never dreamed of! I pray that God the Holy Spirit may so sweetly influence your heart that you may resolve to have Jesus at any price and give up all that you have of sin or self-righteousness in order to possess Him. Come to Jesus just as you are and receive, at once, His full salvation! If you do that, God will rejoice over you! Not only will *we* be glad, who are His servants on earth, and the *angels* who are His servants in Heaven, but Father, Son and Holy Spirit will rejoice over you! The Lord will say, “I was found by those who did not seek Me.”

I rejoice to have such a text to preach from! Oh that many of you who are wicked, careless, graceless men may find God at once and thus set all Heaven’s bells a-ringing for joy!

The Lord rejoices in the numbers who seek Him and find Him. “I said, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation.” When shall the day come that nations shall be born at once? We want to see tens of thousands brought to Jesus! If you all come, the gate of mercy is wide enough for you and God will be glorified in your coming—yes, His sacred heart will be glad as He sees you running to Him. Draw them, sweet Spirit! Draw all London to Jesus! Draw all England to Jesus! Draw the world to Jesus! For Your love’s sake do this, we beseech You.

III. Now we have a third matter to consider and that is—THE DESCRIPTION WHICH GOD HIMSELF GIVES OF THE WORK OF GRACE. Time flies too quickly, therefore let me give you only rough hints instead of full instructions. This verse is a little Bible. Here you have the experience of salvation described.

The Lord tells us where He finds the objects of His Grace. He says, “They asked not for Me; they sought Me not; they were not called by My name.” In the Book of Hosea we read that they were not His people. These are the careless and senseless beings whom the Lord called by His Grace! He manifested great love to us when we were dead in trespasses and sins. By nature we are so much worthless clay and we must owe all to the Potter’s hands if we ever become vessels fit for the Master’s use. When there is no good thought, nor wish, nor desire in us, then God comes to us in abounding love. What a mercy it is that He comes to us in our sin and misery, for assuredly we should not otherwise come to Him! Remember the description which the Lord gives of His Israel as a helpless infant

which had never been washed, nor swaddled, nor cared for, but was cast out in the open field with no eyes to pity it? Then it is written, "And when I passed by you and saw you polluted in your own blood, I said unto you when you were in your blood, Live! Yes, I said unto you when you were in your blood, Live." Beloved, we are in the same condition by nature—without life, or power, or goodness, or anything that can commend us to God—and it is *then* that the Lord comes to us and deals with us in Grace, causing us to seek and find Him! Oh, the splendor of the Grace of God!

Having told us where we were, He next describes *that Gospel which comes to them as the power of God*. Here are His own Words—"I said, Behold Me, behold Me." If anybody were to ask me to state the Gospel in a few words I should answer—the Lord says, "Behold Me, behold Me." The way of salvation is, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Christ on the Cross cries to the guilty sinner, "Behold the Lamb of God." To encourage a trembling soul to behold Him with steadfast hope, the Lord says twice, "Behold Me, behold Me." Does any sinner exclaim, "But Lord, I am so filthy?" Do not look at *yourself*—"Behold Me; for I can cleanse you." "But Lord, I am death, itself." Do not look at your own death. Behold *Me*, for I am the Resurrection and the Life, "But, Lord, the more I look at myself, the more I despair." Then do not look at yourself, but look to *Me* alone. Behold *Me* and then behold Me again and again—and keep on beholding Me till your heart finds perfect rest. Look to Jesus, as *God is in Him* revealed as your Savior and your All! Behold your King is also your Sacrifice. You can be justified through Him by whom you shall be judged at the Last Great Day. In this verse our Lord seems delighted to declare that blessed Gospel which is the two-edged sword of His Grace. Hear it, you sinners! Hear it, and obey it at once! What? Will you not look? Do you deny your Lord a *look*? Shall God cry, "Behold Me," and will you hide your faces from Him? I trust that some who never knew the Gospel will, at this instant, behold the Lamb of God! Look to your bleeding Savior, your forgiving God. Look and live!

Then the Lord goes on to mention *the converts which the Gospel makes*. The careless become seekers, the ungodly become finders, the prayerless behold their God and live. Sinners who never sought Him hear this Gospel and rejoice in its glad tidings. Herein is joy!

The Lord also describes *the experience of the saved*. They asked not for Him before, but now they seek after God. This is the first work of Grace—to make us seek Grace. God comes to us that we may come to Him. Under a sense of need, driven by a gracious hunger, men seek for God as for bread and water. Are any of you eager for the living God? This is God's finger upon you! He has made you to desire, now, that which once you had no care for—and you ought to praise Him for this. Quick upon the seeking comes the finding. There is only a semicolon in our text between "I am sought," and, "I am found." If you truly seek the Lord, you shall soon find Him, even though, for years, you have been negligent of the great salvation. I say not that if you seek this or that, you shall find it—but if you seek the Lord, He will be found of you. He has promised it and He will

make it good. He is to be found of all them that earnestly desire Him—and the finding frequently follows quick upon the seeking!

I think I may say of this description of the way of salvation, how simple it is! God seeks the sinner, the sinner seeks his God. The sinner finds his God because God has found the sinner and it is all done! Intricacies and difficulties are at an end—believe and live is simplicity itself. “Oh, but,” says one, “there must be a deal of preparation before I who seek God can hope to find Him.” There needs no preparation. He says, “Seek you My face” and if your heart says, “Your face, Lord, will I seek,” the Lord is near unto you at once! “But surely, Sir, I shall have to *feel*, I shall have to *learn*, I shall have to *do*.” Oh, yes, you shall have all that, by-and-by, but as to *salvation*, you may have it at once—there is no need of an hour’s delay—behold your God and live! Salvation lies in your finding Him who now displays Himself in the Gospel of His Son. Seeking and finding are wrapped up together in these four words—“Behold Me, behold Me.”

Looking is a kind of blended seeking and finding. We look for salvation by looking to Jesus. Looking to Christ, we have Christ! We seek Him by an act of faith which finds Him. The desire and its fulfillment dwell together in that one word, “*look*.” Oh, I wish I knew how, this morning, to speak as I should speak about this plain way, this road which the wayfaring man may so readily follow, this method which is as gracious as the blessing to which it leads! Before I knew the Lord Jesus and His Cross I used to fancy that there was some great mystery about faith and, poor soul that I was, I feared that I should never be able to understand and enjoy it. But I heard a simple working man say, “Look to Jesus, look and live,” and I was not disobedient to the message! I trusted Jesus and I lived! I gave up trying to understand—I *believed* and I lived! I would to God that I could slay all the artful doubts and questions which disturb poor sinners’ brains and harden their hearts. O Friends, be wise enough to be fools and accept *Jesus* to be your *wisdom*! Be children and sit down and let the Lord Jesus teach you! Take what He tells you to be true and never doubt again. TRUST! That is all. Look to God for everything and you are saved.

See how God, who delights in the Gospel of His Grace, thus gives us, in this verse, a clear and succinct account of the whole process of salvation? May He write it out in large letters on our hearts by His Spirit!

IV. I conclude with the fourth point which is this—THE USE WHICH GOD MAKES OF ALL THIS. You see, dear Friends, the Lord here took care that when He said, “I was sought by those who did not ask for Me,” His Words should be written down and that they should be made known to us. It is not everything that God may say to Himself that He will afterwards repeat to us, but here these private utterances of the Divine heart are spoken out to us by Isaiah and left on record in this Inspired Book. To what end do you think it is so?

I think, first, that He may excite in us *wonder and admiration*. What a wonder it is that men and women who never had a thought about God but an aversion to Him, should, nevertheless, be turned into seekers! It is often so. There can be no doubt about it. Sudden conversions have not ceased. I knew a man, a singular person, but a sincere Christian, who, in

his early days, never thought of going to any place of worship. One Sunday morning he set out to visit a comrade, intending to conclude a bargain which had been talked over the day before about a pair of ducks. He stepped into a Meeting House because it began to rain and there he found what he had never sought! He never bought that pair of ducks. He forgot them, as the woman of Samaria forgot her water pot! The Lord met with him, then and there, and he beheld his Savior!

Many such things have happened in this house and some such will occur this morning. Remember the famous Colonel Gardiner? He had made an appointment to commit a deed of wickedness, but reached the spot too soon and, while he waited, he thought he saw the Savior on the Cross and heard Him say, "I have done all this for you; what have you ever done for Me?" He fled the place; he sought his own chambers; he cried to God—and Colonel Gardiner, from being a wild soldier—became a saint of God! Surely this is meant to make us reverently adore the Lord of Grace! Oh to see the same today! Then shall we wonder and sing for joy! The Lord's Grace is like the dew "that tarries not for man, nor waits for the sons of men." His effectual Grace takes us by surprise and captures us by force of love—

***"Thus the eternal council ran—
Almighty Grace, arrest that man!"***

And then the man is arrested! He had no intent of being so, but the Divine Sheriff's officer laid his hand upon his shoulder and said, "You go no further, Sir. You have been the enemy of God but you shall now become His friend"—and it is so.

"Well," says one, "have not men a free will?" Certainly! And the wonder is that Free Grace does *not* violate it and yet the purpose of God is accomplished! Free will, alone, ruins men, but free will guided by Free Grace is another matter! Lead free will captive to Free Grace and then it is freer than ever! And yet the will of the Lord is done. But it is God that converts the sinner and He does so that we may believe in the exceeding greatness of His Grace. Many a time have the Churches rejoiced because of great persecutors who have bowed before the Cross and become Believers. I need not mention Saul of Tarsus, for he is only one among many. Among the chief of sinners the Lord has found earnest heralds of the Gospel, who, by the very fact of their change, have been powerful living witnesses to the purifying power of the Doctrine of Faith.

Why does the Lord thus declare the conversion of those who were out of the way? I think it is *to destroy pride and self-esteem*. Some of you who are not converted are, in your own esteem, a cut above others. You have sittings in the Tabernacle, or else you attend at some thoroughly evangelical Church and you say to yourselves, "If anybody will get to Heaven we shall, for we hear the pure Word of God." You postpone repentance and put off the consideration of eternal things because you feel that you can secure salvation when it pleases you. What does God do? Why, He sends His Gospel to the abandoned and fallen—and brings outcasts to Himself! He saves those whom you thought He had given over to their sins, while you Church-going and Chapel-going people, who dream that you have a

monopoly of privileges, are left to your own willfulness! God will pay no regard to caste. He is no respecter of persons, but calls whomever He wills, according to His royal Word, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Pride of birth and education He thus casts to the ground.

He does it, next, *to encourage you who are seeking Him*, for if those who do not seek Him often find Him, why, you that *do* seek Him are sure to find Him! If He is found of those who seek Him not, He will surely be found of those who are daily agonizing for Him. Do not believe that He will let you seek His face in vain! Come and believe on Him today and He will then be found of you.

I think He does this *to encourage workers*. Go to work among the worst of the worst, for since God is found of those that seek Him not, there is hope for the vilest! None of your people are worse than those described in the text. O worker, you will gather precious pearls if you have but the courage to dive deep for them! Doubtless the choicest pearls are hidden in the deepest seas. The Lord can bring to Himself infidels, thieves, harlots, blasphemers and such—let us not hesitate to go after them, nor fear that our labor will be lost.

The Lord magnifies His Grace *that He may convict those who do not come to Him of the greatness of their sin*. Look, says He, those who never heard of Me, before, have found salvation while you who have been instructed, invited and impressed, have still held out and resisted My Spirit! You have been persuaded, entreated, prayed over, wept over and yet you have not come to Me. Who is to blame for this but yourselves? Your own hard hearts have robbed you of mercy! Publicans and harlots enter the Kingdom of Heaven before you because of your willful unbelief. Take heed, my Hearers! Take heed lest you perish in sight of Heaven. I pray you, for God's sake and your own soul's sake, awake to righteousness!

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GOD REJOICING IN THE NEW CREATION NO. 2211

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 5, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be you glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people.”
Isaiah 65:17-19.*

THIS passage, like the rest of Isaiah's closing chapters, will have complete fulfillment in the latter days when Christ shall come, when the whole company of His elect ones shall have been gathered out from the world, when the whole creation shall have been renewed, when new heavens and a new earth shall be the product of the Savior's power, when, forever and forever, perfected saints of God shall behold His face and joy and rejoice in Him. I hope and believe that the following verses will actually describe the condition of the redeemed during the reign of Christ upon the earth—“There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that has not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old. They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, says the Lord.”

But the work which is spoken of in the text is already begun among us. There is to be a literal new creation, but that new creation has already commenced and I think, therefore, that even now we ought to manifest a part of the joy. If we are called upon to be glad and rejoice in the completion of the work, let us rejoice even in the commencement of it! The Lord Himself will joy and rejoice—and we who are in sympathy with Him are exhorted and even *commanded* to be glad—let us not be slack in this heavenly duty.

Do you know what this work of creation is, which is here thrice promised in the words, “I create. . . I create . . . I create”? It is evidently a *second* creation, which is altogether to eclipse the first, and put it out of mind. Shall I tell the story?

The first creation was so fair that when the Lord looked upon it, with man as its climax and crown, He said, "It is very good." But it failed in man, who should have been its glory! Man sinned and in his sin he was so connected with the whole of the earth that he dragged it down with him! The slime of the serpent passed over everything. The taint of sin marred the whole of God's work in this lower world. The creation was made subject to vanity and it groans in pain even now. But the Infinitely Blessed would not be defeated. And in infinite condescension He determined that He would make a new creation which would rise upon the ruins of the first. He resolved that under a second Adam, something more than Paradise should be restored to the universe. He purposed that He would undo, through Jesus Christ, the Seed of the woman, all the mischief that had been worked by the serpent. He has commenced to undo this mischief and to work this new creation—and so commenced that He will never withdraw His hand till the work is done.

He has commenced it thus—by putting new hearts into as many as He has called by His Spirit, regenerating them and making them to become new creatures in Christ Jesus. These, the Apostle tells us, are a kind of first-fruits of this new creation. We are the commencement of the future ingathering. Our new-born spirits are the first ripe ears of corn out of a wonderful harvest that will come, by-and-by. The saints' spirits are, first of all, new-created, but their bodily parts remain in the old creation. Hence we suffer pain, for though the Spirit is life because of righteousness, "the body is dead because of sin." By-and-by our *bodies* shall be new-created, when, from beds of dust and silent clay, we shall leap up into *immortal* beauty! The resurrection will be to the body what regeneration is to the soul. When body and soul are thus created anew, the whole earth around them in which they shall dwell, shall be, at the same time, also renewed. And so God shall make the spirits, the minds, the bodies and the abodes of men all new. These bodies, quickened by His Spirit who dwells in us, and united to souls purified and refined, shall tread upon an earth delivered from the curse and shall be canopied beneath new heavens! Have they not new desires? Should not all above them be new? They shall tread a new earth for they have new ways.

Inasmuch as this ought to be the subject of joy and the text invites us to it, I come to press upon you the sweet duty of present delight! Oh, when happiness is made a precept, when joy is made a command, I cannot but hope that God's people, to whom I am now speaking, will answer the call! Has joy become a duty? Then we will be joyous! Has gladness become a precept? Then we will gladly enough obey and our heart shall dance for joy! I will read the text again and then we will consider what sort of joy it is which is to arise out of the work of Divine Grace in the new creation. "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be you glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people."

I. First, then, concerning the joy to which we are called, we would say, IT IS A JOY IN CREATION—"Behold, I *create* new heavens and a new earth. I *create* Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy."

I must confess that I think it a most right and excellent thing that you and I should rejoice in the natural creation of God. I do not think that any man is altogether beyond hope who can take delight in the nightly heavens as he watches the stars and feel joy as he treads the meadows all bedecked with kingcups and daisies. He is not lost to better things who, on the waves, rejoices in the creeping things innumerable drawn up from the vast deep, or who, in the woods, is charmed with the sweet carols of the feathered minstrels. The man who is altogether bad seldom delights in Nature, but gets away into the artificial and the sensual. He cares little enough for the fields except he can hunt in them; little enough for lands unless he can raise rent from them; little enough for living things except for slaughter or for sale. He welcomes night only for the indulgence of his sins and the stars are not half as bright to him as the lights that men have kindled—for him, indeed, the constellations shine in vain!

One of the purest and most innocent of joys, apart from spiritual things, in which a man can indulge, is a joy in the works of God. I confess I have no sympathy with the good man, who, when he went down the Rhine, dived into the cabin that he might not see the river and the mountains lest he should be absorbed in them and forget his Savior. I like to see my Savior on the hills and by the shores of the sea! I hear my Father's voice in the thunder and listen to the whispers of His love in the cadence of the sunlit waves. These are my Father's works and, therefore, I admire them and I seem all the nearer to Him when I am among them. If I were a great artist, I would think it a very small compliment if my son came into my house and said he would not notice the pictures I had painted because he only wanted to think of *me*. He therein would *condemn* my paintings, for if they were good for anything, he would be rejoiced to see my hand in them!

Oh, but surely, everything that comes from the hand of such a Master Artist as God has something in it of Himself! The Lord rejoices in His works and shall not His people do so? He said of what He had made, "It is very good." And He cannot be very good, himself, who thinks that which God makes is not very good. In this he contradicts his God! It is a beautiful world we live in—

***"Every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile."***

There are lovely spots on this fair globe which ought to make even a blasphemer devout. I have said, among the mountains, "He who sees no God here is mad!" There are things that God has made which overwhelm with a sense of His Omnipotence—how can men see them and doubt the existence of the Deity? Whether you consider the anatomy of the body, or the conformation of the mighty heavens, you wonder that the scorner does not bow his head—at least in silence—and acknowledge the infinite supremacy of God!

Well, now, if there is—and I am sure there is—something pure and elevating in joy in God as the Creator of ordinary things—as the Maker of all

this first creation—much more is there something bright, pure and spiritually exhilarating in rejoicing in God's higher works, in God's spiritual works, in God's *new* creation! I think if a man feels within him a new heart and rejoices in his new birth. If he sees in others new and holier lives and rejoices in them. If he listens to the preaching of the Gospel and discovers in it new and better principles such as the old worn-out world could never have discovered—why, that man is a gracious man! The eye that can see the new nature is an eye that Grace has given and newly opened to new light. The heart that can rejoice in the new creation is a heart that is, itself, renewed, or else it would not comprehend spiritual things and could not rejoice in them. I invite you, therefore, dear Friends—you that see, know and somewhat appreciate the new creation in its beginnings—to joy and to rejoice in it tonight!

It is a delightful thing that God should make a tree and bid it come forth in Spring with all its budding verdure. It is a far better thing that God should take a poor thorny heart like yours and mine—and transform it till it becomes like the fir tree or the pine tree to His praise. It is a charming sight when bulbs that have slept under ground through the winter, hold up their golden cups to be filled with the glory of the returning sun. But how much better that hearts that have lain dead in trespasses and sins should be moved by the secret touch of the Spirit of God to welcome the Sun of Righteousness and to rejoice in Him! How glorious to see a slum become a sanctuary, a den of thieves a house of God! This is even more wonderful than for darkness to become light and chaos yield to order. God's new creation, even in its beginnings here and now, is a something to delight one's soul in! I pray you, delight yourselves therein. Behold, in the creation of a new heart, the manifest finger of God! What power to turn the human will—to subdue fierce passions—to change the very core and center of the heart! This is power in the moral and spiritual world as great as anything which can be seen even in the convulsions of earthquakes.

Herein is wisdom, too! We speak of the wisdom of God as seen in anatomy, in botany, or in astronomy. Yet this wisdom is still more to be seen in regeneration—in the making of the sinner who wandered from God to become a saint who follows after holiness—in the bringing of the opposer of Christ to become His friend and advocate. To rule the will and yet leave it free. To guide the heart and yet to let it choose. To reverse the law of being and yet to violate no law of man's nature—herein is the wisdom of the Highest, Himself! The attributes of God are to be seen in the visible creation, but they are to be seen in a brighter and superior light in the *new creation*. There is not one of the attributes of God which has not its illustration under the economy of Grace and, blessed shall your whole being be if you can, to the fullest, rejoice in that which God creates!

There is one reason why you are called upon to rejoice in it, namely, that you are a part of it. When the angels saw God making this world, they sang together and shouted for joy—but they were not a part of this lower world. They had nothing to do with man's estate, but as a matter of sympathy. But as for this new creation of our gracious God, you and I,

Beloved, who have believed in Jesus, are part of it! That same Grace which has quickened others into new life, has quickened us. The same Spirit who has given new principles and new desires to others, has also given them to us. The Father has begotten us, again, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We are the central beings of the new creation and so let us joy and rejoice in it with all our soul, mind and strength!

I know, when I lay sorely sick and tormented in body, it seemed always to be such a joy to me that I, myself, my inner self, my spirit, has been new-created and that my nobler part could rise above the suffering and soar into the pure heavens of the spiritual realm! And I have said of this poor body, “You have not yet been new-created. Still does the venom of the old serpent taint you, but you shall yet be delivered. You shall rise again if you die and are buried, or you shall be changed if the Lord should suddenly come. You, poor body, you that drags me down to the dust in pain and sorrow, even *you* shall rise and be made anew in ‘the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body’—for the new creation has begun in me, even the earnest of the Spirit.” O Beloved, can’t you rejoice in this? I would incite you to do so. Rejoice in what God is doing in this new creation! Let your whole spirit be glad! Overflow with gladness! Let loose the torrents of praise! Leap down, you cataracts of joy!

Well, that is our first point. It is a joy in creation.

II. And, secondly, IT IS A JOY WHICH WILL ECLIPSE ALL THAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

Now, my text is, “And the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.” God’s great new-creating work ought to fill us with such joy as to make us forget the old creation, as though we said to ourselves—“What are the sun and the moon? We shall not have need of these variable lights in the perfection of the new creation, for in Heaven, ‘They need no candle, neither light of the sun.’” What is the sea, though it is the very mirror of beauty? In that new creation there will be no more sea—storms and tempests will be all unknown. What are these luxuries of sight and hearing? We shall not need them when our eyes shall behold the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off! The joy of the spiritual is such that, while it admits the joy of the natural, yet, nevertheless, it swallows it up as Aaron’s rod swallowed up the rods of the magicians. In those last days we shall be in tune with Dr. Watts when he sang—

***“Lo! what a glorious sight appears
To our believing eyes!
The earth and seas are passed away,
And the old rolling skies.
From the third Heaven, where God resides,
That holy, happy place,
The new Jerusalem comes down,
Adorned with shining Grace.
The God of Glory down to men
Removes His blessed abode,
Men the dear objects of His Grace,
And He their loving God.
His own soft hands shall wipe the tears*”**

***From every weeping eye,
And pains, and groans, and griefs, and fears,
And death itself shall die.”***

As an instance of the expulsive power of a new delight, we all know how the memory of the old dispensation is gone from us. Brothers and Sisters, did any of you ever weep because you did not sit at the Passover? Did you ever regret the Paschal lamb? Oh, never, because you have fed on Christ! Was there ever a man that knows his Lord that ever did lament that he had not the sign of the old Abrahamic Covenant in his flesh? No, he gladly dispenses with the rites of the Old Covenant, since he has the fullness of their meaning in his Lord. The Believer is circumcised in Christ, buried in Christ, risen in Christ and in Christ exalted to the heavenly places! Did you ever regret the absence of the burnt offering, or the red heifer, or any of the sacrifices and rites of the Jews? Did you ever pine for the feast of tabernacles, or the dedication? No, because, though those were like the old heavens and earth to the Jewish believers, they have passed away, and we now live under new heavens and a new earth, so far as the dispensation of Divine teaching is concerned. The Substance is come and the shadow has gone—and we do not remember it.

Now, I want you to feel just the same with regard to all your former life as you now feel towards that old dispensation. The world is dead to you and you to the world. Carnal customs and attractions are, for you, abolished, even as the ancient sacrifices are abolished. What were your sins? They are blotted out. The depths have covered them. You shall never see them again. Seek not after them as though you had a lingering esteem for them. Let them not come to mind except to excite you to repentance! What were your pleasures when you lived in sin? Forget them! They were flavorless, deceptive, destructive evils. You now have a higher pleasure which enchants your soul. What have been the sorrows of your past life, especially your sorrows while coming to Christ? You need not remember them, but, like the woman who remembers no more her travail for the joy that a man is born into the world, so your birth into the new creation causes you to forget all the sufferings of your spirit in coming there.

“Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new!” I would to God that the joy of the new creation would so fill us right up to the brim that we should not imagine any other joy! This puts out all other joy as the sun hides all the stars. Let all go! Let all go! Rolled up as the heavens and the earth are to be, like vestures all worn, let all of my past life be laid aside. Now put I on my new dress of sparkling joy and delight in the new things, for has not Christ made all things new to me? A new song is in my mouth, even praise to Him forevermore! A new Law is in my heart and a new service engages all my powers.

There is great scope for enlargement here, but I will not linger, lest I chase away your joy by speaking about it unto weariness.

III. In the third place, IT IS A PRESENT AND A LASTING JOY. “But be you glad and rejoice FOREVER in that which I create.” Be now glad and now rejoice—it is a *present* joy. Take a delightful interest in that which God is now creating in the spiritual realm—though the work is only in the

doing, yet be glad concerning it! Be glad in anything that the Lord has created in you. Has He created in you so much of the new life as to have produced conviction, repentance, faith in Christ, hope in the promise, longing for holiness? Be glad in this even if you have other circumstances pressing upon you and causing you to be heavy of heart. Though you might be mourning because you are so sickly, yet be glad that you are born again! If somewhat distressed because you are so poor, yet be glad that you are a child of God and have a place in the new family of love! Let the old things go and grasp the new, the heavenly. The old creation—bear with it a little longer, for the time of your redemption from its bondage draws near. Find your joy where God would have you find it, namely, in that part of your nature which is *new*, in the *new* principles, the *new* promises, the New Covenant and the blood of the New Covenant which are yours—all of them! Look no longer for the living among the dead, but let your heart dwell in the living world with your living Lord and be glad! The Kingdom of God is within you! Rejoice in it!

And I want you, also, to find your joy in the new creation of God as you see it in others. The angels rejoice over one sinner that repents—surely you and I ought to do so! Try and do good and bring others to Christ—and when a soul shows signs of turning to its God, let that be your joy. “Be glad and rejoice in that which *I create*.” I have had many rich draughts from this cup. I do not know anything that has made me so happy, hundreds and thousands of times in my life, as to see God at work in men’s hearts and, without exaggeration, to hear of this one and of that one brought to Christ through the hearing or the reading of my sermons! It has been a Heaven to me! Oh, you may drink as much as you like of this cup of sympathy with God in His new creation work! There is no intoxication about it—to find a joy in the work of God in the hearts of others is healthy, unselfish delight!

I know some snarling people who, if they hear of one being converted, say “they hope it is genuine,” which, being interpreted, means that they do not believe it is—and they almost hope it is not. “Oh, but,” they say, if there is a great work done anywhere, “I never did like excitement! When I hear of many conversions, I expect many backsliding.” Cold, dead fish that they are, excitement would not hurt them. A little boiling might do them good, perhaps. Yes, but if they meet with one who is an eminent Christian and whose public character will bear the closest inspection, they say, “Ah, well! We do not know what he is like at *home*.” And so they have always some sly word to say against God’s work, just like the serpent in Eden coming and hissing, “Yes, has God said?” I would far rather be one of those that can see the beauty of God’s handiwork in my fellow Christians, than one who can spy out their defects.

I think it is very beautiful where John Bunyan represents Christiana and Mercy as admiring each other. They had both enjoyed a wash in that wonderful beauty-giving bath and Mercy said to Christiana, “How beautiful you are! I never saw anyone look so lovely as you are.” But Christiana said that she was not beautiful at all—she could not see anything about herself to admire, while in Mercy she saw everything to esteem and love.

Oh, to have an eye for the work of God in other people and to rejoice in it! Such an eye sees not itself and yet it is, itself, one of God's loveliest works. "Be you glad and rejoice," says God, "in that which I create."

Can we decline the sacred invitation? No, rather let us thankfully enter into the joy of our Lord! Be thankful for what God has done for yourself. Be thankful for what God is doing in other people. And remember that if you once begin this joy, you need never renounce it, for the text says, "Be you glad and rejoice *forever*." Every day and all day, this light of joy is shining, for the Creator stays not His hand! As long as you live there will be something in the new creation that shall be to you a wellspring of fresh joy and delight. Heaven will only enlarge this joy. Be glad forever because God will always be creating something fresh in which you may be glad!

IV. Again, in the fourth place, it may be said of the joy which we ought to feel, that IT IS A JOY WHICH GOD INTENDED FOR US, "For, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." He has made the new city, the new people, the new world to be a source of joy!

Take Jerusalem as the emblem of the Church of God. God always intended that His chosen, called and converted people should be a rejoicing. He created you on purpose, that you should, yourselves, be happy and bring happiness to others! Do you not know that His name is the happy God and nothing gives Him greater happiness than to give happiness to His creatures? Do you think you were chosen to be a groaner all your days? Were you called to misery, dear Brother, Sister? Does Jesus Christ say, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will make you *doleful*"? Does He say, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, and you shall find *agony* in your hearts"? No! But He talks about rest, peace, joy and blessedness.

One wrote to me, some years ago, and said that he came into this congregation and he felt at once that he must be in the wrong place because he found so large an assembly. God's people, he said, are a small remnant. There are few that shall be saved. He had settled that matter in his own expanded soul. But he was still more sure that he was in the wrong place when he looked at me, for I looked happy! And in his judgment, if I had known anything about the experience of a tried child of God, my face would have been much longer, more wrinkled and more sadly serious. I confess that my face does betray, at times, the fact that I am happy—but I cannot help it! But when this good man looked round on the great congregation—you were not all here then—but when he looked round on the vast congregation and saw them all looking so happy, he felt that he must get out of the building as soon as he could, for such smiling people could not be the afflicted people of God! He walked, he said, some distance along our streets, feeling heavy at heart because of the joy he had witnessed, but at last he reached a Chapel place in a court.

The very aspect of the Chapel gave him hope—it was so small and so hidden away. He entered, and, to his satisfaction, he found in the congregation less than a score—here were the faithful few! At any rate, he could say of this, "Is it not a little one?" The minister was as doleful as could be desired and the subject was full of lamentation. He tells me that he sat

down there in peace, for he found himself at home! I am glad he was suited. Different people have different ways, you know, and some love to be comfortably wretched. But I find myself miserable only when I keep away from my Lord and His work of new-creation. I have always found that when I can get under the shadow of His wings, my soul is at rest and I look upon that restfulness and happiness as the work and fruit of the Spirit—"the fruit of the Spirit is joy and peace."

My impression is that I am not right when I give way to depression and melancholy. I certainly should not go to a place of worship *seeking* for doubt and despondency! Neither should I conclude that I must be on the way to Heaven because I felt in my own heart some of the miseries of Hell. When I am despondent, I say to myself, "Why are you cast down, O my Soul?" I probably know as much about depression of spirit as any man that lives, but I consider myself foolish and blameworthy—a fool for knowing so much darkness—and I do not want to feel any more of it. I would like to drive myself out of it once and for all if I could, for we ought to be glad and rejoice forever in that which God creates! He has created His people as a rejoicing—yes, His people to be a joy! Ours is a heritage of joy and peace! My dear Brothers and Sisters, if anybody in the world ought to be happy, we are the people! How large our obligations! How boundless our privileges! How brilliant our hopes!—

***"Bright the prospect soon that greets us
Of that longed-for nuptial day,
When our heavenly Bridegroom meets us
On His kingly, conquering way!
In Glory, bride and Bridegroom reign forever."***

What should make us miserable? Shall the children of the bride chamber mourn while the Bridegroom is with them? Sin?—that is forgiven! Affliction?—that is working our good! Inward corruptions?—they are doomed to die! Satanic temptations?—we wear an armor which they cannot penetrate! We have every reason for delight and we have, moreover, this command for it, "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart." God bring us into that blessed condition and keep us there!

God intended not only that we should have joy, but that we should spread it among others. He intends that wherever we go, we should be light-bearers and set other lamps shining. Why are some so afraid of joy? They seem, wherever they go, to be busy in turning out the lambs. The first thing to be done is, "Take that child out." Dear little child, with its pleasant prattle, so happy at your feet!—why send it away? If there is a very happy hymn in the book, do not sing it—it would be presumptuous! Sing—

"Lord, what a wretched land is this."

Crooked meter, key dismal, dolorous tune! I fear that certain Christians go through this world making it miserable as they march through it. Oh, that they could see that Christ has come to destroy the works of the devil and would have us rejoice in the new creation of our God!

Alas, there are heady, hard-hearted persons abroad who, by their willfulness and pride, would crush every flower in the garden beneath their

wicked hoofs! Wherever they go, everything is despised, ridiculed and kicked by them! This is the spirit of the Evil One! Oh, do not so! Christian people, you dare not be so! You shall not be so—God will not let you be so—you must be gentle, compassionate, generous, kind, gracious! Wherever you go, try to make others happy, for God creates Jerusalem as a rejoicing and His people a joy—a joy to others who have no joy, a source of happiness to the saddest of our race! Help the widow, comfort the fatherless, succor the poor, cheer the desponding, tell the glad news to the weary heart. In the Father's hands, in Christ's hands, in the Spirit's hands, seek to break the prisoner's fetters and to bring him out into the light of liberty! You, too, are anointed to proclaim liberty to the captives. May the God of infinite mercy help you and help me to do so!

Now, dear Friends, just for a minute upon this creation. I want to show how the work of God does create a joy-making people. As soon as ever we are converted, what is one of the first things that comes of it? Why, joy! The morning I found Christ, it snowed very hard. The snowflakes fluttered around me like white doves, as I went home, and I felt just as light as those, for my soul was washed whiter than snow! It was not a gloomy winter's day to me, but all Nature wore her bridal dress in sympathy with my delight! Was it not so with you on the day of your new birth? Were you not as happy as you could be when you first found the Savior? So far, you see, the Lord creates joy—and it is better, still, further on! When the creation of God goes on and a man is helped to conquer sin—when the work of Grace in his soul grows and increases, he cries, "Thanks be to God which gives us the victory"—and he gets increased joy in his soul over every conquered sin.

When you and I see sin subdued, do we not feel happy? Whenever the news comes to me that a man has been reclaimed from drunkenness, or a woman is saved from the streets, or when I hear of a hard-hearted sinner repenting, I rejoice in the Lord! Conversion days are our high holidays! Revivals are our jubilees! Thus the Lord gives us opportunities for joy and rejoicing as His new-creation work proceeds stage by stage. Better days are in store, it may be, and I trust that in years to come we shall more and more behold God working and shall rejoice therein!

But, by-and-by, there will be a still greater joy! We shall enter into Heaven and there will be joy among the angels and joy in our heart over God's new-creation work which will proceed at a glorious rate! Then the nations will be converted to God. I know not when, nor exactly how, but the day shall come when Christ shall reign from pole to pole. And what a joy that will be! We shall, indeed, be glad in that which God creates, as the islands of the sea shall ring out His praise! Then Christ the Lord will come and what joy and rejoicing there will be in that day when He has fully fashioned the new earth and the new heavens! His ancient people, the seed of Abraham, shall be gathered in with exultation. We will clap our hands when the long-wandering nation shall turn unto the true God and acknowledge the rejected Messiah of the house of David!

The Gentiles will not be jealous. They will rejoice as the Jew comes in and then will the Jews rejoice over the Gentiles, as they see them wor-

shipping Abraham's God! Everything that is to come in the eternal future flashes the Light of God into the eyes of Believers and calls upon them to rejoice in anticipation! Nothing prophesied should be dreaded by us. There is nothing foretold by Seer, or beheld in vision, that can alarm the Christian. He can stand serenely on the brink of the great eternity and say, "Come on! Let every event foretold become a fact! Pour out your vials, you angels! Fall, you star called Wormwood! Come, Gog and Magog, to the last great battle of Armageddon!" Nothing is to be dreaded! Nothing is to be feared by those who are one with Jesus! To us remains nothing but joy and rejoicing, for God has made His people a rejoicing—yes, His people a joy!

V. I finish up with the last point, IT IS A JOY IN WHICH WE SHARE WITH GOD. Gently, my tongue! Timidly and cautiously speak here! Here is your warrant for supposing a fellowship with God and man in this joy—"Behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. *And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people.*" The wonderful comes out here! God, Himself, the Ever-Blessed, finds joy in His new creation! Here is ground for marveling! I have often said to you that when the Lord made the material world, there was not much in it to touch His spiritual Nature and so He simply spoke and said, in plain prose, "It is good." That was all—He said it was good. But when the Lord has made new heavens and earth, when He has finished, when the bride of Christ shall be brought to Him—you know the word, "He will rest in His love, He will joy over her with singing."

Did you ever get into your hearts the idea of the Lord God *singing*? God singing over His Church, over His Jerusalem, over His new creation! God singing! I can understand the angels singing for joy over God's work, but here is *God singing over His own work*! I will tell you something more wonderful than that—it is that you should be a part of that work and that God should sing over *you*! And yet it is not so very wonderful, for is He not the Father, and does not the Father sing over His prodigal son that wandered and is come back? Is He not the Savior, and will not the Savior, who bought us with His blood, sing over us who are the purchase of His agonies? He is the Spirit, and shall not the Spirit, who has strived with us and worked all our works in us, sing when His work is done and we are sanctified?

Father, when Your eternal purposes are all fulfilled, You will joy over Your people! Son of God, Redeemer, when all Your agonies shall have received their recompense in the salvation of Your redeemed, You will rejoice over Your chosen! Holy Spirit, when all Your condescending indwelling within us shall have accomplished its design, You will rejoice in Your people! Come now, Beloved, rejoice in sympathy with the Divine heart! When the father found his son, he made the whole household merry, and shall not we be? When the woman had found her piece of money, she called together her friends and neighbors and she said, "Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost." Shall not we rejoice with the Spirit over the lost silver pieces? When the shepherd brought home his sheep, he said, "Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost." Come,

then, rejoice with the Father, rejoice with the Son, rejoice with the Spirit! And if the Lord God, as the Trinity in Unity, invites us to be glad and rejoice in that which He creates, let us not hold back, but let us sing His matchless love and new-creating power and infinite wisdom! I am sure you will sing! You *must* sing even now, if you know yourselves to be a part of this amazing Grace!

And now I close with this observation. Nobody will ever rejoice in this new-creating work of God while he is rejoicing in his own works and trusting in himself and boasting his own merits. It is a sign of Grace when a man is sick of self and is in harmony with God. When he leaves off rejoicing in what he can do and comes to rejoice in what God has *done* and *is doing*, then a change has been worked in him! Some of you are trying to save yourselves and make yourselves right before God—as well might the dead try to find life for themselves. It cannot be done! You must be made new by a power you have not within yourself—by a Divine Power. You must be born again and this is the work of God—not your work. We shall know when this heavenly work is begun in you when you cease from rejoicing in anything that you are or can be of yourselves, and then shall you, with us, rejoice in that which God creates in you!

Ring the bells of Heaven! Tune your voices, sons of earth! He who makes all things new is on the Throne, working out His holy pleasure. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Romans 8:19-28; 2 Peter 3:3-13.

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—
345, 316, 360; 108 (FLOWERS AND FRUITS).**

Mr. SPURGEON has been very seriously ill, but the prayers of the Lord’s people at the Tabernacle and elsewhere have been graciously answered on his behalf. Hearty thanksgiving should be rendered to the Lord for his partial recovery, joined with earnest supplication for his complete restoration to health and strength. Both Mr. and Mrs. SPURGEON are deeply grateful for the widespread sympathy that has been manifested during this season of severe trial.

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

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS—A SMOLDERING HEAP OF RUBBISH NO. 1497

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 28, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Which say, Stand by yourself, come not near to me;
for I am holier than you. These are a smoke in
My nose, a fire that burns all the day.”
Isaiah 65:5.*

THE Apostle Paul shall be our interpreter here. You remember how in the 10th chapter of his Epistle to the Romans he quotes from this chapter and says, “Isaiah is very bold and says, I was found of them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me. But to Israel He says, all day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people”? Isaiah was very bold to speak the Gospel so plainly, when a legal spirit prevailed, and very bold to defy the enmity of his own nation by declaring that they would be rejected for their sins, while the far-off heathen would be brought in by Sovereign Grace. He was bold to denounce hypocrites to their faces and to smite a proud nation with the threats of the Lord. Perhaps it was for this boldness that he suffered a cruel death by the hands of Manasseh.

The application of the passage to Israel is just thus. Year after year God dealt with great patience towards His chosen people, but they seemed to be desperately set upon idolatry in one form or another. Sometimes they worshipped Jehovah, but then they did it under figures and symbols, whereas He has expressly forbidden that even His own worship should be thus celebrated. He who said in the First Commandment, “You shall have no other gods before Me,” also said in the Second, “You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them.”

At other times they altogether rejected Jehovah and worshipped Baal and Ashtaroth and whole troops of the gods of the heathen and thus they exceedingly provoked the Lord. They also practiced necromancy, or pretended communion with the dead, witchcraft and sorcery and all manners of abominable rites like the depraved nations around them. When this open rebellion was given up, as it was after the captivity, for the Jews have never been guilty of idolatry since that day, they fell into another form of the same evil, namely, self-righteousness—so that when our Lord came, He found self-righteousness to be the crying sin of Israel—the Pharisees carrying it to such a pitch as to render it utterly ridiculous!

They reckoned that the touch of a common person polluted their sacredness so that they needed to wash after walking down a street. When they traversed the ways, they took the edge of the pavement so that they might not brush against the garments of the passers-by. And even in the

Temple, in prayer, they stood by themselves lest they should be defiled! Their whole spirit is expressed in the words of the text, “Stand by yourself, come not near to me; for I am holier than you.” God declares this to be as obnoxious to Him as smoke in a man’s nose. He could not bear it. He was no more able to tolerate their self-righteousness than to endure their idolatry.

It is this last form of the evil of the Israelite heart which I am going to speak about this morning because it is a phase of evil which is now common among us. Self-righteousness is rampant in our own day! There are many who come up to the courts of the Lord’s house and mingle among the followers of Christ who still say, “Stand by, for I am holier than you.” Our sermon is meant to be a cannonade against self-righteousness—that righteousness which a man makes a show of his own doings, his own feelings, his own alms, prayers, or sacraments—all such righteousness is to be utterly despised!

I. The first point is this—THE SIN OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS GROWS UP AMONG RELIGIOUS PEOPLE. It is not always the sin of the *outside* world, for many outsiders do not pretend to any righteousness at all and I fancy they think all the better of themselves for that! This is an idle plea which needs not many words to expose. “I make no profession,” says one. This is about as honorable a confession as if a thief should boast when caught at picking pockets, “I do not make any pretense to be honest,” or a liar, when detected, should turn round and cry, “I never professed to speak the truth.” Would you have men glory in not professing to be honest or true? Yet, surely, they do no worse than one who boasts that he does not profess to fear God. Such a man has gone to a considerable pitch of iniquity before he can bronze his face to make his glory in that which is his shame.

Among those who profess to be religious, self-righteousness very frequently comes in because they have not truly received the religion of Jesus Christ. If they were true Believers they would be humble and contrite, for self-righteousness and faith in Christ are diametrically opposed. He that is saved by Grace finds no room for glorying in himself. What says the Apostle? “Where is boasting, then? It is excluded.” The word is, it is shut out and it has the door shut in its face. A sinner washed in Jesus’ blood and clothed in Jesus’ righteousness glories only in the Lord! He has done, once and for all, with that particular form of sin which glories in self. It is detestable in his sight. His cry is “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Many who mingle with Christians and are religious in a certain sense because they practice the forms of religion, are known to put the *forms* into the place of the Holy Spirit. With them, in Baptism, the washing in water is everything, but the burial with Christ which it sets forth is quite unknown. With them the partaking of the bread and the wine are everything at the Lord’s Table, but the *spiritual* feeding upon the body and blood of Christ is not understood. With them, the place of worship is everything, but the spirit of worship is lacking. The broken heart, the contrite spirit, the soul that trembles at God’s Word, the heart that joys in the Lord—they are strangers to all this though they can sit as God’s people

sit, though they can hear as God's people hear and look as if they were all that saints should be.

These persons, too, even when they do not join the Christian Church but only worship or seem to worship with Christians, are very apt to think that they must be better than other people because they do so. They are not openly Sabbath-breakers. Is there not something in this? Yes, there is something in it, certainly, and we will not say a word against it. But there is not everything in it and certainly not enough in it to make a perfect righteousness of it! The bed is shorter than that a man may stretch himself on and the covering is too narrow for a man to wrap himself in. "Oh, but I have occupied a seat in an orthodox Chapel for many years." Yes, that may be, and if you have not received the Gospel, those sermons which you have heard will rise up against you in judgment to your condemnation!

It is true you close your eyes in prayer, but if you never pray, do you not mock God with a pretense of doing it? And may it not turn out that your religiousness is only an impudent provoking of God to His face? Avoid the tendency to say, "We are certainly much better than the outside world and if God is hard with us, He will be hard with a great many." Avoid this, I say, for it is the danger of outwardly religious people who are not savingly converted to dream that they are somewhat advantaged by a mere attendance on the means of Grace. Should an Egyptian rub his shoulders against an Israelite, would it turn him into an Israelite? Will living near a rich man make you rich?

Because the Lord Jesus eats and drinks in your streets, are you, therefore, safe, even though you have never believed on Him? Be not deceived by such a notion! Do you forget that cry of our Lord's, "Woe unto you, Chorazin. Woe unto you, Bethsaida"! Did He not proclaim woe to the very places where His voice was most often heard and where His miracles were most often worked? Beware, I pray, you outwardly religious people, lest you fall into the sin of self-righteousness and fancy that you are holy when you are not!

II. THIS IS A SIN WHICH FLOURISHES WHERE OTHER SINS ABOUND. We read of these people, that they did evil before the eyes of God and chose that wherein He delighted not. They blasphemed God and polluted themselves with unhallowed rites, communing with demons and the powers of darkness—and pretending to speak with departed spirits and yet for all that, they said—"Stand by yourself, I am holier than you." Self-righteousness is never more ridiculous than in persons whose conduct would not bear scrutiny for a moment!

Look at the Pharisee with his phylactery and his broad-hemmed garment standing there in conscious perfection! Look at him and feel disgust, for the wretched hypocrite has been secretly devouring a widow's house and his heart is full of wickedness! In his greediness and lust he makes clean the outside of his cup and platter, but within he is full of extortion and excess! Hear how the devil derides him. "Ah, ah," he laughs with satanic glee, "the outside may be as you will. What care I, as long as the inside is foul!" It is dreadful that any man should be self-righteous, but it is

monstrous that men of openly evil lives should dare to set up such a pretense.

Such persons know, if they will but think, that they are trying to palm off a barefaced lie! Yet it is common enough in spiritual things for those who are naked, poor and miserable to declare that they are rich and increased in goods! How are they able to keep up this imposture upon their own consciences? Is it not a part of their spiritual madness? The very blindness which makes them choose sin prevents their seeing how sinful it is and enables them to fancy that all is well. As men who wear spectacles of colored glass find all things tinted with their own hue, so does a self-righteous heart impart a tint to actions till the worse appears the better and sin glitters like righteousness.

Moreover, self-righteous men, like foxes, have many tricks and schemes. They condemn in other people what they consider to be very excusable in themselves. They would cry out against others for a 10th part of the sin which they allow in themselves! Certain constitutional tendencies, necessities of circumstances and various surroundings all serve as ample apologies. Besides this, if it is admitted that they are wrong upon some points, yet in other directions they are beyond rebuke! If they drink, they do not swear! And if they swear, they do not steal—they make a great deal out of negatives. If they steal, they are not greedy and miserly, but spend their gains freely. If they practice fornication, yet they do not commit adultery! If they talk filthily, yet they boast they do not lie.

They should be counted good because they are not universally bad. They do not break every hedge and, therefore, they plead that they are not trespassers. As if a debtor for a hundred pounds should claim to be excused because he does not owe two hundred! Or, as if a highwayman should say, "I did not stop *all* the travelers on the road. I only robbed one or two and therefore I ought not to be punished." If a man should willfully break the windows of your shop, I guarantee you, you would not take it as an excuse if he pleaded, "I did not break them all! I only smashed one sheet of plate glass." Pleas which would not be mentioned in a human court are thought good enough to offer to God! O the folly of our race!

Besides, these people will make righteousness this way—they plead that if they do wrong, yet there are some points in which they are splendid fellows. "You should see how grandly I acted on such an occasion. You will think me almost a saint and quite a hero if you will but fix your eyes on that one particular virtue. Drink, Sir? No! I never touch a drop." I am glad you do not, but still, if you live in lying, or in pride, your abstinence is a short piece of stuff to make a garment out of. The mere fact that you are not a drunk is so far so good, but it goes a very little way towards the perfect righteousness which God's Law demands.

Some one thing in which the unconverted man may excel is put in to make up for his deficiencies in a hundred other things. By hook or by crook a man will make out that he is not so bad as he seems to be—the inventiveness of self-esteem is extraordinary! Those who come with the language of repentance but without the spirit of it are sometimes the most self-righteous of all, for they say, "I am all right because I am not self-righteous." They make a self-righteousness out of the supposed absence

of self-righteousness! “Thank God,” they say, “we are not as other men are, nor even as these self-righteous people.” Hypocrites all the way through!

Have you ever heard of the monk who said he was a very great sinner? He said that he had broken all the Ten Commandments, that he was as bad as Judas and deserved to be hanged as well as he! But when his confessor began to go over the Commandments, he said about each one of them, “Holy father, I have not broken that, I have kept that.” He was a sinner in the gross but not in detail! A sinner by name but not in reality—so he said—and hosts of people virtually say the same. Listen to them—“Yes, Sir, of course I am a sinner. We are all sinners.” But if you bring one fault home to them, straightway they bristle up! Who are you that you should speak evil of them? They have done nothing amiss—they are most excellent people—and you will go a long way to find anybody better than they are and so on!

Oh, this horrible self-righteousness! It is not merely to be found in the man who attends his Church regularly and reads his prayers daily—it is found in the man who will *not* go to his Church nor say his prayers! The harlot has her self-righteousness. The thief, the drunk, the profane still have their self-justifications. Yes, and it may be seen even in Atheists who have cast off all fear of God and then stand in an elevation of self-esteem which hardly any other man can match! Hear him—“I have proved my freedom of thought and nobility of mind! I am the model man! As for these Christians, they are cants and hypocrites and believers in Christ are either fools or knaves. No man has any honest and rational convictions but myself! I can improve upon the Bible and criticize the life of Christ! Stand by yourself. I am holier than you.”

This weed of self-righteousness will grow on any dunghill! No heap of rubbish is too rotten for the accursed toadstool of proud self to grow upon!

III. As self-righteousness grows among sins to our surprise, so IT IS, IN ITSELF, A GREAT SIN. One is almost startled to find self-esteem placed after such a list of sins as this chapter records. To the Jew, the eating of swine’s flesh and broth, of all abominable things, was a great pollution—and self-righteousness is classed with it—it is even placed with necromancy and witchcraft. To us, drunkenness and swearing are sins in rags, but self-righteousness is sin in a respectable black coat. It is an aristocratic sin and does not like to be put down with the common ruck. And if we even call it *sin*, yet many will plead that it is only so in a very refined sense.

But God does not think so. He classes it with the very worst and He does so because it is one of the worst. For a man to be self-righteous is, in itself, a sin of sins. For, first, it is blasphemy! Perhaps you do not see that. Follow me, then. God is holy. Here comes this base imposter and boasts, “And I am holy, too.” Is not that a ludicrous and contemptible form of blasphemy? It is profanity in its very essence! The cherubim are crying, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts: Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Your Glory” and amid it all there is heard this squeaking pretender, whining, “And I am holy, too!”

O wretched egotist, you do at once lie and blaspheme! The heavens are not pure in His sight! He charged His angels with folly and do you, that are born of woman and defiled from head to foot, dare to talk about righteousness? Righteousness, indeed, when you are but a mass of sin! This self-righteousness is idolatry, for the man who counts himself to be righteous, by his own works worships himself! Practically, the object of his adoration is his own dear, delectable, excellent self! All his confidence is in himself! His boasting is in himself and, though he may sing Psalms to God with his voice, yet his heart is really singing hymns to himself and he is saying to himself, "You have done well, my Soul. There is something great and bright in you. You deserve much of your Creator. You shall surely enter Heaven on your own terms. At your worst you have never been so bad as your fellow men—at your best you are a right noble being and a brilliant reward is your due."

What is this but idolatry in its worst form? Then, again, it is profanity, for it calls God a liar. The Lord declares that no man is righteous. He says that He looked from Heaven and surveyed the sons of men and He saw that, "There is none righteous, no, not one." To this Divine assertion self-righteousness gives a flat contradiction, for it claims to be, itself, holy! God declares that we have gone astray and altogether become unprofitable and He proves that He believes this, for He sets Christ to bleed and die for the world of sinners, as it is written, "All we, like sheep have gone astray. We have turned, everyone, to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." But He could not lay our iniquity upon Jesus if we had none, nor impute transgression to Christ if there were no sin in us!

And thus the self-righteous man virtually declares that God is false and speaks not the strict truth, since he claims to be an exception to the rule. He testifies that God's "No, not one," is false, for he himself is one righteous person and, therefore, there may be others. Though God says that by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified in His sight, yet this man says, "By the works of the Law I *shall* be justified," and so he profanes the Word of the Most High and questions the Truth of God, which is as the apple of Jehovah's eye. It is clear beyond all question that self-righteousness is, in itself, a great, God-defying sin! May the Lord deliver us from it and, by the Holy Spirit, work in us a humble, lowly faith in Jesus Christ, the Lord.

IV. In the fourth place we would remark that SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE FRUIT OF MAN'S OWN THOUGHTS. Look at the second verse of the chapter—"I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walks in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts." Those who have high thoughts of themselves do not walk according to God's Commandments, but according to their own notions. If any man thinks himself to be righteous in himself, he has never derived that idea from God's *Law*. Read the Ten Commandment. Understand their spirituality and know that they concern not only overt deeds but *thoughts* and *imaginings*—and you will see that the Law condemns us all without exception.

It proves our guilt, reveals our proneness to evil, pronounces a curse upon us and gives us over to condemnation. It pays us no respect, but

shuts us up in hopeless despair. A man who is self-righteous, therefore, did not derive his self-esteem from a true consideration of the Law. No Jew that stood at Sinai and saw the mountain on a smoke and heard the Words which sounded forth with noise as of tempest and trumpet, dared to stand there and say, "I am righteous." But crouching away, moving further and further from the burning mountain, the best Israelite begged that the Words might not be spoken to him anymore, for he could not endure the terror of that thrice holy Law.

A Pharisee stands on an elevation raised by his own fancy, for the Law would pull him down and never, for a moment, set him up. His proud notions come not from the Law and certainly not from the Gospel, for the Gospel knows no man after the flesh as righteous. It regards all men as sinners and comes to them with pardon! It treats men as lost and comes to save them! If there is a man in the world who is pure and perfect by nature, the Gospel has nothing to say to him, for it was not intended to meet such a case. Its medicines are not for those upon whom the sickness of sin has never come, for, "the whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick."

Our great Lord came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance! Jesus is the sinner's friend. Christ came to wash away stains, not to flatter men into a notion of their spotlessness. He came to heal the sick, not to applaud the vigorous. To such as are righteous in themselves there is not a single syllable of promise in the entire Gospel—why should there be, for they don't need it? Self-righteousness is a child which neither Law nor Gospel will own—it is born in the house of folly and it is nursed by human fancy!

Self-righteous people are not much inclined to search *the Scriptures*—they do not read them with an understanding heart so as to get the meaning—they rather make the Bible say their own meaning and twist it to support their own pleasing dreams. Like a battery of ordnance of the strongest kind, both Law and Gospel fire into the sinner's righteousness and sink it, like a riddled hulk, into the deeps of the sea! "But cannot a man arrive at a religion by his own unaided thoughts?" asks one. A great many have tried it, but the very idea is absurd! Facts about God and man are to be *learned*—not invented.

Suppose a man were to think out the science of botany but never went to see the flowers? He would deliver strange botanical lectures, misleading and absurd, for no cogitation upon what a flower ought to be would always require a man to *guess* at what flowers really are. Suppose a man who never looked at the stars were to despise the telescope and depend on his thoughts for his astronomy? Would he not make strange work of it? We have heard of the German who carefully thought out in his own inward consciousness, a camel, and there are many people of the same order of learned ignorance and profound folly. Such do not look at what the Gospel *is*, but they have their own notions of what it ought to be—they do not look at what Revelation declares, but at what their own precious thoughts can manufacture.

Half the people in the world make their own theology and are either too idle or too proud to be guided by the Infallible Scripture. As many a vint-

ner composes his own wine, so do these concoct their own doctrine and by this means they arrive at a high opinion of their own goodness. Like the spider, they make their web out of their own bowels—they are righteous and by no stretch of the imagination the sort of persons which the Word of God declares them to be! He whose foundation is his own dream is certain to be deceived.

Listen, O man, and learn wisdom! God's thoughts are not your thoughts! Neither are His ways your ways and in the day when He comes to deal with your fancied righteousness, He will make short work of it and you will have to cry, "We all fade as a leaf and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away." The sooner that happens the better, for if it comes not until you get into the next world, it will be dreadful, then, to be found naked where you never can be clothed—to have your fancied riches melt into a poverty from which you never can recover—to be made a bankrupt where you thought yourself wealthy and in a world where you never can begin again!

Woe to those who make eternal shipwreck while they dream that they are steering straight to the desired haven! God save you from setting up to furnish yourselves with inspiration. You are not Oracles and should never dream of being so! Search the Scriptures to know the facts of your case and then you will recoil from the very idea of the righteousness of unrenewed man! Your glory will become your shame! Your spangled robes will turn to worthless rags and you will accept, with humble *gratitude*, the righteousness which is of God by faith!

V. This leads us on to our fifth remark which is this—SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS HAS THIS VICE ABOUT IT, THAT IT ALWAYS LEADS TO DESPISING OTHERS. That is the meat of the text. They said, "Stand by yourself, come not near to me; for I am holier than you." The self-righteous think thus of one another—one sinner dreads pollution from another—one rebel is alarmed lest he should be made disloyal by another! Think of a wretch condemned to die for his sin and yet afraid that a fellow criminal might soil his innocence! To what a pitch of madness does pride lift itself! "Do not come near me; I am holy," cries the man steeped in sin! Oh, the absurdity of self-righteousness! This pride is loathsome to the last degree!

But this pride is seen to be still more loathsome when the proud self-deceiver bids the lowly penitent man stand off. The repenting publican has his eyes opened to his real state and he goes up to the Temple and prays, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." He does not dare look up, he is so broken-hearted. But yonder Pharisee is bold to thank God for his own surpassing virtues! Look how he gathers up his garment for fear the fringe of his raiment should touch the ground whereon the publican has set his polluting feet! Why, Sirs, that publican was one of God's jewels and this abominable Pharisee was a mere dunghill reeking with offensive self-conceit! He did not know it, but his self-righteousness made him despise the very man of whom God has said, "To this man will I look, and with him will I dwell; even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and that trembles at My Word."

“Oh,” says one of my free-thinking but self-righteous hearers, “I hate such cant! Confessing sin is all nonsense. I cannot endure to hear such talk.” We are well aware of that, good Sir, but this weighs not with us. We know you very well and recognize in you an old acquaintance of some 1,900 years standing. Proud Pharisees never can endure penitent publicans, nor their Savior, either. They are always saying of the Lord’s ministers that which they once said of Him, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.” They find fault with the great Advocate and His clients, with the great Physician and His patients—but the Redeemer’s kingdom waits not their patronage and fears not their opposition! If you reject the banquet of mercy and will not come to it, there are others who shall and your refusal shall bring on your own head the contempt you now reserve for others!

Yes, and this self-righteous spirit dares to pour its bitterness upon the most gracious men. If you need a thorough-paced persecutor, find a self-righteous man! I tell you there is no venom in the heart of dissolute, debauched men against Christianity that is at all comparable to the poison of asps which lie in the heart of the self-righteous man! Who was it in Jerusalem that hunted down the saints? It was not some son of Belial who railed at them. I daresay that many a Jerusalem rioter said, “What does it matter? They have their ways and I have mine—let the men alone.” But there was one man in Jerusalem who, above most others, thought that verily he had kept all the Commandments of God from his youth up and was utterly blameless—and he hated the Christians because they preached a doctrine which struck at his self-esteem.

Therefore he despised men who were a hundred times better than himself! He dragged them into the synagogue and scourged them to compel them to blaspheme. And when he had done all he could in his own country to worry them, he obtained letters from the High Priest that he might go to Damascus to hunt them even in strange cities! He verily thought he did God service when he breathed out threats and bloodshed against God’s own children! Yes, it is so, and must be so—they that are born after the flesh persecute them that are born after the Spirit. Ishmael, the child of Hagar the bondwoman, which comes from Sinai, in Arabia, hates the Isaac that is born of the free woman, according to promise. There is a deadly feud between these two and this is a part of the sin of self-righteousness, that it sets itself so bitterly against Christ and His people and is the direst opponent that the Gospel has among men.

We see the self-righteous spirit, at times, display itself in the papers when they touch on religious subjects. One of them lately condemned the hymn—

***“Sinner, nothing do, either great or small,
Jesus did it, did it all, long, long ago.”***

This is shocking doctrine, so they say, for it denies salvation by good works! Of course, editors of papers are good judges, for they are so exceedingly careful of our morality and so studious never to insert anything that could injure our purity! That precious, plainspoken bit of Gospel verse is too much for our pious friend, the editor, and he is afraid that it will hurt our morals!

Self-righteousness is always afraid of the Gospel, lest the uncompromising Truth of God should unmask its self-deceit. Why, Sirs, the doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone is the essence of Protestantism and the soul of the Gospel! That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and that salvation is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by the Sovereign Grace of God who passes by transgression, iniquity and sin is the great Truth for which Reformers protested and martyrs died! Let those who deny it look to themselves.

VI. But I must pass on to observe that SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS IS MOST ABOMINABLE IN THE SIGHT OF God. What does He compare it to? He says, "It is a smoke in My nose, a fire that burns all the day." At the bottom of the garden we gather together the dead leaves and all the rubbish of the garden. The heap is lighted and it keeps on burning and smoldering all day—and if you go and stand in the eye of the wind, your eyes will smart, your nose will be offended and you will feel that you cannot bear it. As you see the refuse burning, smoking, smoldering all day, it will tell you what the Lord thinks of man's righteousness.

This is His opinion of those who say, "Stand by, I am holier than you." Their boasted righteousness is a burning heap of rubbish pouring forth a thick smoke most obnoxious to Him. We do not wonder that He thus scorns and abhors proud, self-righteousness, for God is a God of Truth and Truth cannot bear a lie—and self-righteousness is a mass of lies! He who is of perfect Nature cannot bear mere pretense. It is so among men in common matters. You introduce a man of real learning to a person who has purchased for himself a sham degree and who boasts that he is a classical scholar—mark his disgust when the pretender quotes a Latin author and in the very first sentence gives false facts! The truly learned man says, "He is a disgrace to his title. Let me get away from him! He pretends to be a doctor and yet he makes all these blunders." He who possesses the reality is indignant with the counterfeit!

Now, God is truly holy and cannot, therefore, bear that these men should talk about a holiness which they have no claim to and vaunt themselves and brag within themselves of a thing that is not theirs. The true God, therefore, calls them a smoke in His nose. Moreover, self-righteousness is such a proud thing. God is always provoked with pride. It is one of the evils which His soul hates! He daily fits His arrow upon His string to fetch down the proud in heart. The self-righteous man is proud in himself and proud with a contemptuous sneer at others and, therefore, the Lord abhors him. Self-righteousness also denies the wisdom of God's plan and is utterly opposed to it. God's present plan of working in the world goes upon the theory that we are guilty—being guilty, He provides a Savior for us and sends us a Gospel full of Grace.

His whole system is a gigantic blunder if we are or can be righteous in and of ourselves! The work of the Holy Spirit is needless if we can be, of ourselves, fit for Heaven! The whole character of this gracious dispensation is a mistake if man is not guilty! The man who says, "I am righteous," virtually casts a slur upon a work which is meant to be the highest display of Divine Love and Wisdom. He is like the Greek to whom the Cross of Christ was "foolishness." I venture to say that self-righteousness, in ef-

fect, makes Christ Himself to be a superfluity and this, my Brothers and Sisters, is the unkindest cut of all! This is a stab at the heart of the great Father!

Did Jesus come down from Heaven and take our Nature because we were sinners? And in that Nature did He give Himself as a Sacrifice that He might put away sin—and was all this a mistake? Calvary, are you a blunder? Bleeding Savior, were You an amiable enthusiast, putting away sin which did not exist and filling a fountain for the removal of stains which are not to be found? Yet self-righteousness involves all this! If one sinner has a right to be self-righteous, so has another! And then it comes to this—that God should deal with us all on quite another theory and, instead of His dear Son coming to the world to die for us as sinners, we might all go to Heaven without an Atonement or a Savior! Do you think God can bear such a slur upon Christ, such a trampling on the precious blood of His own Son? Can even long-suffering bear this?

I may be speaking to some who have never considered what their self-righteousness means, but I hope they see it now. Get rid of it, my dear Friends! Put off your ornaments of fancied virtue and put the dust and ashes of confession on your heads. Go home and tear your finery to pieces and put on the robe of *heavenly* righteousness—otherwise you will be, as long as you live, nothing but that smoking heap of weeds at the bottom of the garden! And whereas you think you are a bright and shining light, God's thoughts will be the reverse, for He will count you to be a mere smother of smoke in His nose—a fire that smolders all day.

VII. The last point and one of the most practical is this, that SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS MOST EFFECTUALLY BARS A MAN FROM ALL HOPE OF SALVATION. We cannot be saved unless we become truly holy, but, my Brothers and Sisters, no man ever becomes truly holy who is content with a *false holiness*. If he says, "I am holy," he never will be holy. The student who enters college as a wise man will probably remain a fool. You never can win wisdom till you confess your folly. The man who says, "I am rich," but is under a delusion which makes him call copper, gold, will never be rich—it is a first necessity that he be able to estimate his true estate. And so self-righteousness shuts a man out from real righteousness most effectually.

It also prevents the heart from repentance. How can you repent if you have never sinned? How can you mourn your failure to obey while you conceive that you have always kept the Law? It shuts you out, too, from faith. You never will believe in Jesus Christ while you believe in yourself. "How can you believe," said Christ, "that receive honor one of another?" If you can save yourself, you do not need a Savior and, consequently, you will never trust in the Savior of sinners. Man. Woman. While you are righteous, Christ and your heart will never agree! He brings you water, but you are not thirsty! He brings you the Bread of Life, but you are not hungry! He has made a raiment of needlework for you, but you are not naked! He comes to enrich you, but you are not poor! He comes to give you pardon, but you are not guilty! He comes to give you Everlasting Life, but you are not dead!

What is there, then, in Christ for you? Nothing—and so you will never have Christ. All the entreaties of God, even such as are described in this chapter when He stretches out His hands all day, will never make a self-righteous person come to Him. The prodigal did not say, “I will arise, and go unto my father” while he could fill his belly with the husks that the swine ate. Soul poverty and destitution bring a man to God—and God may call as long as He wills—man never will come as long as he can be independent of his heavenly Father and so self-righteousness is the ruin of all who harbor it.

Let me warn you who have heard the Gospel continually, that if you are self-righteous, the privileges which you enjoy will be all neutralized and cease to be privileges. If you do not come to Jesus when He stretches out His hands, He will call others who are not, now, a people and He will be found of those that sought Him not. You are first, now, in point of privilege, but the first shall be last while those outside that have not heard the Gospel shall hear it and be saved! And so the last shall be first. God will turn the tables upon you—the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth—while many shall come from the east and from the west and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God. Beware, you who are self-righteous, lest, because you put yourselves to be the head, God should make you the tail, for then all your Sabbath privileges and Gospel hearings will be like millstones about your necks, to sink you low as the lowest Hell!

What is the remedy for all this? The remedy is just this. God says, “Behold Me.” That is to say, He bids you cease from doting upon your own fancied beauties and worshipping your own foolish image. Look first to the holy God and tremble! Can you, of yourself, ever be like He is—pure, spotless and glorious? Can you ever hope to deserve anything from Him? Look to Him and despair!

Then comes the second, “Behold Me.” See Christ Jesus on the Cross dying, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God! As you see Him dying, your self-righteousness will die. You will say, “He would never have suffered thus for me unless I had sin to repent of. God would never have put Him to this grief for me unless I had been sadly guilty. I should never have needed such a Savior if I had not been a great transgressor. In the heights and depths of dying love I read the heights and depths of my accursed sin! In the infinity of the Atonement I read the boundless blackness of my guilt and lie humble before God. At the same time, in that perfect Divine righteousness, which has put away sin, I see the hope of a sinner and as a sinner I look to Christ for everything.”

If you do this, it is well. God blesses you. May everyone here be enabled to do this immediately and unto God shall be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

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LIVING TEMPLES FOR THE LIVING GOD

NO. 1083

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

“Thus says the Lord, Heaven is My throne and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you build unto Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things has My hand made, and all those things have been, says the Lord; but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembles at My Word.”
Isaiah 66:1, 2.

THAT is an excellent answer which was given by a poor man to a skeptic who attempted to ridicule his faith. The scoffer said, “Pray Sir, is your God a great God or a little God?” The poor man replied, “Sir, my God is so great that the Heaven of heavens cannot contain Him and yet He condescends to be so little that He dwells in broken and contrite hearts.” Oh, the greatness of God and the condescension of God! I hope we shall be led to think of both this evening while we meditate upon the Words of the text. We have no time nor need of a preface. The text first of all teaches us that God rejects all material temples as the places of His abode. But, secondly, it informs us that God has made a choice of *spiritual* temples where He will dwell.

I. First of all, then, let us think a little of GOD’S REJECTION OF ALL MATERIAL TEMPLES. There was a time when it could be said that there was a House of God on earth. That was a time of symbols, when as yet the Church of God was in her childhood. She was being taught her A B Cs, reading her picture books, for she could not as yet read the Word of God, as it were, in letters. She had need to have pictures put before her, patterns of the heavenly things. Then, even then, the enlightened among the Jews knew right well that God did not dwell between curtains and that it was not possible that He could be encompassed in the Most Holy place within the veil—it was only a *symbol* of His Presence.

The fiery cloudy pillar was merely an indication that He was there in that Tabernacle where He was pleased to say that He peculiarly revealed Himself. But the time of symbols is now passed altogether. In that moment when the Savior bowed His head and said, “It is finished!” the veil of the Temple was torn in two so that the mysteries were laid open. The most august of types I might consider the veil of the Temple to be, but the dying hands of the Savior grasped that veil and tore it in two from top to bot-

tom—and then the secrets within, which were all the more secret because they were symbols—were made bare to the gazer’s eyes and no longer did God deign to have a place on earth that should be called His House, nor any symbols of His Presence whatever among the sons of men!

And now it is sheer legality, a defunct ceremony, Judaism, carnality and idolatry to go about and say of this place, “This is the House of God,” or of such a chapel, or such a stone erection, “This is the Altar of God,” or of any man who chooses to put on certain tag rags and ribbons, “This is a Man of God,” a priest of the Most High! This is all done away with and put away forever. Now, as the Church has attained her maturity, she lays aside these childish things. Those orders of Divine service which were symbols and nothing more, having answered their ends, are abolished and superseded and God pours contempt upon the superstitious veneration of their relics.

By the mouth of His servant Paul, in Hebrews, He bids us look not to the shadows but to the substances, not to the symbols but to the great realities. So, Brothers and Sisters, one reason why God says He dwells not in temples made with hands is because He would have us know that the *symbolic* worship is ended and the reign of the *spiritual* worship inaugurated at this day. As our Lord said to the Samaritan woman at the well, “The hour comes, when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him.”

But our text gives, from God’s own mouth, reasons why there can be no house at the present time in which God can dwell and, indeed, there never *was* any house of the kind in reality—only in symbol. For, say now, where is the place to build God a house? Look abroad, you ambitious architects that would erect God a house! Where will you place it? Will you place it in Heaven? It is only His Throne, not His house! Even all the majesty of Heaven is but the seat on which He sits. Where will you place the house, then? On His seat? Build a temple on His Throne! It cannot be! Do you say you will erect it here, on earth?

What? On His footstool? This whole globe is but His footstool! Will you put it where He shall put His foot upon it and crush it? A house for God upon His footstool? The very notion contradicts itself and men may forever forego the idea of building a house where God shall dwell, or a place where He shall rest. Fly through infinite space and you shall not find in any place that God is not there. Time cannot contain Him though it range along its millenniums! Space cannot hold Him for He that made all things is greater than all the things that He has made! Yes, all the things that are do not encompass Him. He is without bound or measure—beyond all that

He has already made—even though the astronomers tell us that so grand is the scale of the visible universe opened up by the telescope that the scenes suffice to baffle the imagination and overwhelm the reason!

All that God has made is but a drop in a bucket compared with what He *could* make. Though it might take us endless ages to enumerate the worlds He has created, one single breath from His lips could create 10,000 times as many, for He is the infinite God. Who, then, shall imagine that in Heaven, which is His throne, or on earth, which is His footstool, a house shall be built for Him?

But then, the Lord seems to put it—What kind of a house, (supposing we had a site on which to erect it), would we build for God? Sons of men, of what material would you make a dwelling place for the Eternal and the Pure? Would you build of alabaster? The heavens are not clean in His sight and He charged His angels with folly! Would you build of gold? Behold, the streets of His metropolitan city are paved with gold—not, indeed, the dusky gold of earth—but *transparent* gold, like clear glass! And what were gold to Deity? Men may crave it and adore it, but what cares He for it? Whereas that city, wherein the Church shall dwell forever has foundations of chrysolite and sapphire and jasper and all manner of precious stones, will you think to rival that?

Ah, your wealth can never equal such costliness though all the royal treasuries were at your disposal. Find diamonds as massive as the stones which Solomon built his house on Zion and then lay on rubies and jaspers—pile up a house, all of which shall be most precious—what were that to Him? God is a *Spirit*. He abhors your materialism! How can you encompass the infinite mind within your walls, for they are tangible substances at the very best? And yet men think, forsooth, when they have put up their Gothic or their Grecian structures, “This is God’s house.” Take me to imperial Russia and point me to the meanest hovel of the meanest serf and tell me it is the imperial palace—I might believe it possible. But take me to the most gorgeous pile that human skill has ever reared, and tell me that is God’s house!—Impossible!

I hold up a snail’s shell and say, “This is as much the angel Gabriel’s house as that is the house of the living God.” They know not what they speak. They are brainless or they would not think so of Him who fills all things! And then the Lord shows that the earth and the heavens, themselves, which may be compared to a temple, are the works of His hand. How often I have felt as if I were compassed with the solemn grandeur of a temple in the midst of the pine forest, or on the heathery hill, or out at night with the bright stars looking down through the deep heavens, or listening to the thunder, peal on peal, or gazing at the lightning as it lit up the sky! *Then* one feels as if he were in the Temple of God!

Afar out on the blue sea, where the ship is rocking up and down on the waves' foam—then it seems as if you were somewhere near to God—amidst the sublimities of Nature. But what then? All these objects of Nature He has made and they are not a house for Him! He spoke and they were created. “Earth be,” said He, and up sprang the round globe in all her comeliness! He had but to say it and she was decked in her green mantle. He had but to speak it and sun and moon shone forth in all their glory. Who, then, shall think of building a house for God when even the heavens are but His Throne and the earth is but His footstool?

The notion, Brothers and Sisters, that there are some places peculiarly sacred will, however, cling to people's minds. Even those who call themselves Christians are prone thereto and yet I verily believe it is a most wicked notion and full of mischief. I am sometimes up on the Alps amidst the glories of Nature, with the glacier and snow-clad peaks. I am in the open and I breathe the fresh air that comes from the ancient hills. But you tell me that I am on “unholy ground!” Stands there, hard by, a little place painted in all gaudy colors, in honor of a woman—blessed among women—it is true. I step inside, look round and behold the place is full of dolls and toys! Am I to be told that *this* is God's house *inside* and that *outside* it is not God's house? It seems monstrous!

How can any rational man credit it? Look into a little shell, full of “holy water.” Go outside—and see the foaming waters sparkling in the cascade or coming down from the clouds and they say, “There is no holiness in that!” It's a wicked notion—wicked, I say—to think that your four walls make that place holy and your incantations and I know not what, consecrate it. But, where God is, outside there, with the storm and the thunder, the rain and wind—it is *not* holy. Oh, Sirs, I think the outside is the holier of the two! For my part, I can worship best there and love God and think of Him as being nearer to me there than I can within.

The superstitious notion which makes people think that if they go at particular times to these places and go through certain actions, they have done service to God leads them to forget, if not altogether to disclaim, God at ordinary times and in common circumstances! Their god is a local god and his worship is local. So we see men, when they have gone through the ritual, go back to revel in their vanities and to repeat their sins. A change of *heart* they do not care about—they were regenerated in baptism! To be taught the way of God more perfectly—what does that matter? Were they not confirmed? To live upon Christ and feed upon His flesh and blood in spirit and in truth—that is nothing. They have had the bread and wine at the communion—will not that suffice? The whole thing generates formalism and eats out the soul of true piety.

However, the religion of Jesus teaches me that I am *always* to worship—that family prayer is as good and as much accepted as the prayer in the great congregation! True religion teaches me that I may pray in *private*—that every hour and not merely at some canonical hour, I *ought* to pray. It teaches me that—

**“Wherever I seek Him He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground”**

—that the Lord will bless and accept me and press me to His heart as His own dear child *wherever* I am, for in my Father’s house are many mansions and God’s Grace is not here or there, but everywhere that the true heart seeks it. I need you all to feel this because somehow or other the Church does not appear to have learned it.

God was with the Covenanters amidst their glens as gloriously as ever He manifested Himself in cathedrals! God has been as earnestly sought and as verily found in humble cottages where two or three have met to pray as ever He has been in the largest tabernacle! The sailor’s service read on the sea has been as acceptable to God as worship on land and the gatherings of humble Romans in the Catacombs, or of the hunted fathers in the secluded dells of our counties were as much the gatherings of the true Church of God as any well-appointed assemblies can be in these peaceable times!

Thus says the Lord, “Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you build unto Me? And where is the place of My rest?” Let us shake ourselves clear of all the idolatry and materialism that is so common in this age.

II. Now, secondly, let us muse awhile upon GOD’S CHOICE OF SPIRITUAL TEMPLES. “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My Word.” Observe, Beloved, that God chooses to dwell in men’s *hearts*. He is a Spirit and He takes our spirits to be the resting place of His Spirit. Will you note carefully as respects the *choice* of hearts in which God would dwell, what is *not* said. It is *not* said, “I will dwell with men that are of elevated rank.”

I never find a single Scripture that gives any special privileges to dignity, nobility, or royalty—no, not a syllable throughout all Scripture that gives any peculiar Gospel promise to the great and the rich of this world. Indeed, “not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen.” Nor do I read here anything about a peculiar *office*. It is not said, “To that man will I look who is ordained and set apart and made specially to be a vessel of Grace.” No, nothing of the sort—nothing about monks, or priests, or clergy, or ministers—no special class set apart for the reception of the blessing. Far otherwise.

Neither do I notice any singular genius necessary. It is not said, “With that man of poetic mind will I dwell,” or, “With that person of refined spirit,” or, “With the man that has an eye to the beauties of color,” or, “An ear to the harmonies of sound”—not a word of it. Some men think that genius makes men good and all who happen to excel are set down as the excellent of the earth. With God it is not so and it is not said so here. Neither is it written that God will dwell with persons of any special education. It is well to be educated, but a knowledge of Latin and Greek and Hebrew will not inscribe our names in the Book of Life. A man may be most illiterate and yet come under the description here given, for there is not a syllable about the learned and highly educated being the temples of God!

Neither is there a syllable here said about outward religiousness. It does not say, “I will dwell with that man that attends a place of worship twice on Sunday, joins the Church, is baptized and receives the Lord’s Supper.” Nothing of the sort. The description of the spiritual temple runs not so. And then, I need you to notice, next, that the points which are selected as descriptive of God’s temple are just such as are frequently despised. “Oh,” the world says, “who wants to be poor?” “Poor in spirit,” we reply. “Ah,” says the world, “we don’t need any of your poor-spirited creatures—we like a man full of courage and confidence—the self-made, self-reliant men. Poor in spirit, indeed!

“And,” says the world, “We find the contrite very dull company. Broken-hearted people are not the sort we love to associate with.” Oh, no—what in their account can be the value of *contrition*? And as for trembling at God’s Word, why you know it was because the Society of Friends were accustomed to speak much of this and say that they trembled at God’s Words that they called them Quakers, thus turning their good confession into a term of derision and reproach! And nowadays if a man is very reverent towards the Word of God and very desirous to obey the Lord’s commands in everything, people say, “He is very precise,” and they shun him. Or, with still more acrimony they say, “He is very bigoted. He is not a man of liberal spirit.” And so they cast out his name as evil.

Bigotry, in modern parlance, you know, means giving heed to old truths in preference to novel theories. And a liberal spirit, nowadays, means being liberal with everything *except* your own *money*—liberal with God’s Law, liberal with God’s doctrine, liberal to believe that a lie is a truth, that black is white and that white may occasionally be black. That is liberal sentiment in religion—the Broad Church school—from which may God continually deliver us, for there *is* something true in the world, after all, and we shall get wrong in heart and rotten at the core if we think there is not! Only God is pleased to say that the man who trembles at His Word, the man of broken heart, the man who is poor in spirit is such an one as

He will look—these are His temples—these, and these only, the men in whom He will dwell!

And I am so thankful for this, beloved Friends, because this is a state which, through God's Grace, is attainable by all here whom the Lord shall call. Oh, if the Lord said He dwelt in the hearts of the great, there would not be much hope for some of us! Or if He said He dwelt with the refined and well-instructed we might never have received a visit from Him! But if it is with the *poor*, happy is it for us, as you see it is easier to grow poor than rich—and God, by His Grace, can soon make us poor in spirit!

If He dwells with the contrite, why should not I be among the contrite? And if He dwells with those that tremble at His Word—well, that is not a very high degree of Grace—surely through His love I may get to *that* and God may come and dwell with me and make me to rejoice in His company. For, Beloved, these evidences which are here put down are such as belong to the very *least* of the saints. If the Lord had said He dwelt with those that had full assurance, it would shut many of us out. If the Lord said He dwelt with those who had attained to the higher life and walked habitually with Him, that might shut us out, too. But, oh, how condescendingly He has put it—with the *poor*, the *contrite* and those that tremble at His Word!

Here is God's architecture! Here is His cathedral! Here are His tabernacles in which He dwells—the *poor*, the *contrite*, and the *trembling* heart! Let us thank God that these three marks are what they are. It is consoling to our spirits that they do not shut us out of hope. Note these three marks one by one. God will look to the poor, that is, those who are destitute of all merit—who have no good works, who have spent the last rusty birthing of their boasted merit—who have nothing to rely upon of their own.

Dear Brother, are you emptied clean out of everything you could rely upon? You are the man with whom God would dwell! Devoid of all strength, as well as of all merit, do you feel, "I cannot do what I ought to do in the future any more than I did in the past"? Do you feel that even your repentance must be God's *gift* and faith must come from Him? Do you feel that you lie like a dead man at His feet and, if saved, salvation must be all of Grace from first to last? Oh, dear Brother, give me your hand, for you are one of those in whose hearts God will dwell! And are you now emptied of all wisdom? Once you did account yourself to know *everything*, but now you are willing to sit on the lowest form in God's school, to be taught as a little child everything by the great Master.

Oh, what a mercy it is to be made to feel one's self a fool, an utter fool—weak, feeble, dead, hopeless, helpless and lost! Oh, if the Lord has brought you there, dear Friends, sorrowful as your condition may seem to yourself, it is full of the brightest hope, for God has said He will look to him that is poor! Now, why does God come to the poor? Why, because

there is room for Him there! Other hearts are full. These hearts are empty and God comes in. God will never come to a heart that is full of self-righteousness—or, if He comes, it will be to empty that heart—and make it poor in spirit. But when He once has made the heart empty and waste and desolate, then He comes and makes the wilderness to rejoice and the desert to blossom as a rose! I trust that some of you who are poor in spirit are picking up crumbs of comfort from this precious text.

The next word is, “the contrite”—“of a contrite spirit”—that is, the man that feels his sin and hates it, that mourns that he should have rebelled against God and desires to find mercy. Now, God will come to such because there is purity in that heart. “Oh,” says the contrite spirit, “I do not see any purity in *my* heart.” No, but what do you see, then? “Oh, I see all manner of sin and evil and I hate myself because it is so.” There is purity in that hatred! At any rate there is a something that God loves in that hatred, in your soul, of the sin that is within and He will come to you, for there is something there that is akin to His own holiness—He has put it there.

You have begun to appeal for mercy. Oh, then, God’s mercy will come, for mercy delights to visit misery! Mercy is always at home where there is a sinner confessing sin—

***“Mercy is welcome news, indeed,
To those that guilty stand.
Wretches, that feel what help they need,
Will bless the helping hand.
We all have sinned against our God,
Exception none can boast.
But he that feels the heaviest load
Will prize forgiveness most.”***

Besides, I know what will happen to you if you are of a broken spirit—you will value the society of Jesus. None love Christ so well as those that hate themselves for their sin. He that strips himself of all pretensions of his own will admires much and longs most passionately for the robe of righteousness which Christ provides.

Beloved, because Christ is in you, a contrite soul—and you prize Him—this is one reason why God will come and dwell in you, for He needs no better company than Christ, His Son. Besides, your contrition of heart is the work of the Holy Spirit and where the Holy Spirit is at work, there God the Father loves to be! Don’t you see that your contrition comes from the Spirit and your hope comes from the Son? Should not the Father come and dwell where His Spirit and where His Son already are? Be of good cheer, you cast down spirit, though every hope is broken and all your joy is dead—though you are brought very low, even to the extreme of doubting

and fear—yet God has said it and He will keep His Word! He will come and dwell with those that are of a contrite spirit.

The third word describes the temples yet more graphically—God will dwell with those that tremble at His Word. The man who is in a right state for God to dwell in trembles at God's Word because he believes it to be all true. If you doubt God's Word, between God and you there is a disagreement, a rupture, a quarrel—and God never will dwell in your soul. The trembler believes it to be all true and therefore he trembles. As he reads the Law, he says, "Your holy Law condemns me." He trembles at the threats of that Law for he feels he deserves them to be fulfilled on him. And when the Gospel comes and he receives it and rejoices in it he trembles at it—trembles at the love that looked upon him from all eternity—trembles that he should have nailed the Savior to the Cross!

He trembles lest, after all, he should not be washed in the precious blood and he trembles after he is washed, lest he should not walk as blood-washed spirits should! These things are so high and sublime that he trembles beneath the burden of the Glory that he should receive! He trembles at the promise. "O Lord," he says, "let that sweet promise be mine," and he trembles lest he should miss it. He trembles at a precept lest he should misunderstand it, or not carry it out in a proper spirit. He is not like some, who say of certain precepts, "These are non-essential." "No," says the man of God, "I tremble at what you call a non-essential precept." If there is an ordinance ordained of God in Scripture and others slight it and say it is trivial, the man of God, says, "No, to me it is not trivial or unimportant. Anything that is in the Word of God and has the stamp of His approval, I tremble at."

Someone once said to an old Puritan, "Some have made such tears in their conscience that you might make a little nick in yours. There is no reason why you should be so precise." But the other replied, "I serve a precise God." The God of Israel is a jealous God and His people know it. Moses was not permitted to enter Canaan for such a sin that you can hardly tell what it was—it seemed such a little one—yet he was shut out from the land of promise for it. God is more particular with those that are near to Him than with others. He is jealous with those that are at Court and he that leans his head on His bosom must expect the great Savior to be stricter with him than with any of those that are outside.

Oh, Beloved, we must tremble at God's Word! We know we shall enter Heaven if we are Believers in Jesus, but we should tremble lest by any means we should mar our evidence of being inheritors of that goodly land. We know the love of God will never cast us away. We know the eternal love will never reject those it has chosen. But we should tremble lest we abuse that Grace. The more gracious the doctrines we hear and believe,

the more we should tremble lest we sin against such a gracious God. We go through the world trembling and rejoicing. Now, if this is our condition, God says He will dwell with us!

Oh, there are some of you dear hearts here that could not lay hold on this text anywhere except on this particular point. You can say, “Oh, Sir, I do tremble under God’s Word. How often under a sermon you make me quiver from head to foot. And, when I am reading the Bible alone, I am melted into tears with it.” Dear Brothers and Sisters, I am glad of that, I am glad of that—for a holy trembling is a sign of life! If you can quiver before the eternal majesty of God’s voice, you are not altogether like the sticks and stones—not altogether dead in trespasses and sins. See, then, (for I will say no more upon it), what a blessed thing it is to be of this character, that God will dwell with us.

III. I will close with this—Those that are of this character secure A GREAT BLESSING. God says He will *look* to them. That means several things. It means consideration. Whoever and whatever God may *overlook*, He will look upon a broken heart. This means approbation. Though God does not approve of the most costly building that is meant to be His house, He approves everyone that trembles at His Word. It means acceptance. Though God will accept no materialism in His worship, He will accept the sighs and cries of a poor broken spirit. It means affection. Be they who they may that do not receive God’s help, contrite spirits shall have it. And it means benediction. “To this man will I look.”

I was reading the other day in an old author the following reflection as near as I can remember it. He said, “There may be a child in the family that is very weak and sickly. There are several others that are also out of health, but this one is sorely ill. And the mother says to the nurse, ‘You shall see after the rest, but to this one I will look—even to this one that is so sorely sick and so exceedingly weak.’” So God does not say to His angels, “You shall look after the poor and the contrite, I have other things to do,” but He says, “Go you about, you spirits, be you ministering spirits to those that are strong and bear them up in your hands lest they dash themselves against a stone.

“But here is a poor soul that is very poor—I will look after him Myself. Here is a poor spirit that is very broken—I will bind that one up Myself. Here is a heart that trembles very much at My Word—I will comfort that heart Myself.” And so He that knows the number of the stars and calls them all by name—He heals the broken in heart—He binds up their wounds. Out of special love to them He will do it Himself.

I should like to be the means of comfort to some contrite spirit tonight. Very likely the Lord will say, “No, I will not make *you* the means of it.” Very well, Master—be it as You will—You will do it Yourself. When we

write books and tracts, we wish that we might comfort the desponding. Very likely the Lord will say, “No, no.” What should we reply to this? “Lord, You can do it better than we can. There are some sores we cannot reach, some diseases that laugh at our medicines, but, good Lord, You can do it.” And the Lord will come to you, poor broken-down in heart—He will come! Don’t despair! Though the devil says you will never be saved, don’t believe it! And above all, turn your eyes, full of tears, to Christ on the Cross and trust Him.

There is salvation in no other, but there is salvation in the crucified Redeemer—

***“There is life for a look at the Crucified One.
There is life at this moment for you!
Then look, Sinner—look unto Him and be saved!
Look unto Him who was nailed to the tree.
It is not your tears of repentance or prayers,
But the blood that atones for the soul.
On Him, then, who shed it— believing, at once,
Your weight of iniquities roll.
His anguish of soul on the Cross have you seen?
His cry of distress have you heard?
Then why, if the terrors of wrath He endured,
Should pardon, to you, be deferred?
We are healed by His stripes—
Would you add to the word?
And He is our righteousness made:
The best robe of Heaven He bids you put on!
Oh, could you be better arrayed?
Then doubt not your welcome, since God has declared,
There remains no more to be done!
That once in the end of the world He appeared
And completed the work He begun.”***

Look to Jesus, and rest your soul at the foot of His cross and if you don’t get life today, or tomorrow, you *will* get it! And if you have not joy and peace in believing for many a day, it will come—it must come—for God will sooner or later look to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and that trembles at His Word.

Now, many will go away and laugh, and say, “Well, I understand nothing about that.” Poor heart! The more’s the pity! If you live and die not knowing this, your lot will be worse than if you had never been born! The Lord have mercy on you! Though your pocket is lined with gold and your back covered with the finest clothes and though your house is full of splendid furniture and children on your knee, God have mercy on you if you have never known what a contrite spirit means! For, as the Lord lives, a terrible end will be yours—an end without end, forever and forever!

But, and if I speak to the poorest of the poor who came in here though they thought their clothes were not fit for decent company and though they have not a home to go to tonight—and though they have not any comfort of conscience by reason of sin. Or, if I speak to such as have many creature comforts, but no comfort in spirit because you are pressed down by guilt—bless the Lord as you listen to the proclamation of His tender mindfulness of your low estate—for the message has come and Jesus is come to set free the captive, to open blind eyes and recover the lost!

“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” May you find salvation in Him, for His love’s sake. Amen.

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A DIRGE FOR THE DOWN-GRADE AND A SONG FOR FAITH NO. 2085

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 18, 1889,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Rejoice for joy with her, all you that mourn for her.”
Isaiah 66:10.***

A MOURNER is always an interesting person. We pass by joyful people without a thought. But when we see the ensigns of woe we pause and sympathize even if we dare not enquire. The new widow, the fatherless child, the bereaved husband—these have a history in which our common humanity is interested. “One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.” And when that natural touch comes from the hand of sorrow that kinship is quick to show itself.

The highest style of mourner is one whose griefs are neither selfish nor groveling. He who bears spiritual sorrow on account of others is of a nobler order than the man who laments his personal woes. This man has not only bowed his shoulder to the inevitable load of personal trouble but he is obeying the command, “Bear you one another’s burdens and so fulfill the Law of Christ.” The most excellent style of mourner is the mourner *in* Zion, the mourner *for* Zion, the mourner *with* Zion. If you love the Church of God you will share her joys. But when she passes through the dark defiles of persecution, or the rushing waters of discord, you will *mourn* with her.

God has a great regard for mourners in Zion—for in loving the city, they love the King. Christ Himself has come “to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” It is no small work of Divine Grace to make a man so one with Christ and with Christ’s mystical body that he sorrows with the Lord and His spouse. Whenever the ways of God languish, and we languish also, it is a mark that Divine Grace is in active exercise. Those who have learned this heavenly mourning are called to rejoice—“Rejoice for joy with her, all you that mourn for her.”

When I take up my parable, I shall, at the first seem as though I had a roll written within and without with lamentations. Under the first head we shall enquire, “Who are those that mourn with Jerusalem?” Next, I would pass the cup of consolation from hand to hand, while we consider, “Why may they yet rejoice with her?” Thirdly, I shall press upon each one this question, “Why should we personally mourn with Jerusalem?” Surely we have each a portion here.

I. WHO ARE THOSE THAT MOURN WITH JERUSALEM? Those that love the Church of God and desire her prosperity. And when they do not see that prosperity they are depressed in spirit. At this present time the causes for such depression are exceedingly numerous.

Nothing can make the heart of the people of God more heavy than to think that the Gospel glory of the Church is declining. There was a time when the Gospel of the Free Grace of God sounded forth from our pulpits as from a trumpet. But that time is past. In years gone by you could pretty surely reckon upon hearing the Gospel if you went into a Nonconformist place of worship. But you cannot reckon in that fashion nowadays—for in some places false doctrine is openly taught and in others it is covertly advanced. In former times good men differed, as they always will, as to the form of their doctrinal system. But with regard to fundamental points they were at one—it is not so now.

The Deity of our Lord and His great atoning sacrifice, His resurrection and His judgment of the wicked were never moot points in the Church. But they are questioned at this time. The work of the Holy Spirit may be honored in words. But what faith can be placed in those to whom He is not a Person but a mere *influence*? God Himself is, by some, made into an impersonal being, or the *soul of all things*—which is much the same as nothing. Pantheism is atheism in a mask. The plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture as we have understood it from our childhood is now assailed in a thousand insidious ways.

The fall of Adam is treated as a fable. And original sin and imputed righteousness are both denounced. As for the Doctrines of Grace—they are ridiculed as altogether out of vogue and even the solemn sanctions of the Law are scorned as bugbears of the dark ages. For many a year, by the grand old Truths of the Gospel, sinners were converted and saints were edified and the world was made to know that there is a God in Israel. But these are too antiquated for the present cultured race of superior beings! *They* are going to regenerate the world by Democratic Socialism and set up a kingdom for Christ without the new birth or the pardon of sin. Truly the Lord has not taken away the seven thousand that have not bowed the knee to Baal but they are, in most cases, hidden away—even as Obadiah hid the Prophets in a cave.

The latter-day Gospel is not the Gospel by which we were saved. To me it seems a tangle of ever-changing dreams. It is, by the confession of its inventors, the outcome of the period—the monstrous birth of a boasted “progress”—the scum from the caldron of conceit. It has not been given by the infallible Revelation of God—it does not pretend to have been. It is not Divine—it has no inspired Scripture at its back. It is, when it touches the Cross, an enemy! When it speaks of Him who died thereon, it is a deceitful friend. Many are its sneers at the Truth of Substitution—it is irate at the mention of the precious blood.

Many a pulpit, where Christ was once lifted high in all the glory of His atoning death, is now profaned by those who laugh at Justification by Faith. In fact, men are not now to be saved by faith but by doubt. Those who love the Church of God feel heavy at heart because the teachers of the people cause them to err. Even from a national point of view, men of foresight see cause for grave concern. Cowper sang, in his day, words worthy to be remembered now—

***“When nations are to perish in their sins,
It is in the Church the leprosy begins—***

***The priest, whose office is with zeal sincere,
To watch the fountain, and preserve it clear,
Carelessly nods and sleeps upon the brink,
While others poison what the flock must drink.
His unsuspecting sheep believe it pure,
And, tainted by the very means of cure,
Catch from each other a contagious spot,
The foul forerunner of a general rot.
Then Truth is hushed, that Heresy may preach,
And all is trash that Reason cannot reach.”***

The old motto of the city of Glasgow was, “Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the Word.” Our country has flourished by the preaching of the Word. And, under God, she has been raised to eminence because of her Protestant Christianity. And when she departs from this, the reason for maintaining her greatness will have ceased. This makes us mourn.

Another cause of mourning is when we see the holiness of the visible Church beclouded. I trust I am not given to finding fault where there is not fault. But I cannot open my eyes without seeing things done in our Churches which thirty years ago were not so much as dreamed of. In the matter of amusements, professors have gone far in the way of laxity. What is worse, the Churches have now conceived the idea that it is their duty to amuse the people. Dissenters who used to protest against going to the theater now cause the theater to come to them. Ought not many schoolrooms to be licensed for stage plays? If someone were to see to the rigid carrying out of the Law, would they not be required to take out a license for theatricals?

I dare not touch upon what has been done at bazaars and fancy fairs. If these had been arranged by decent worldly people, could they have gone further? What folly has been left untried? What absurdity has not been too great for the consciences of those who profess to be the children of God—who are not of the world but called to walk with God in a separated life? The world regards the high pretensions of such men as hypocrisy. And truly I do not know another name for them. Think of those who enjoy communion with God playing the fool in costume! They talk of wrestling with the Lord in secret prayer but they juggle with the world in unconcealed gambling.

Can this be right? Have right and wrong shifted places? Surely there is a sobriety of behavior which is consistent with a work of Divine Grace in the heart and there is a levity which betokens that the spirit of evil is supreme. Ah Sirs, there may have been a time when Christians were too, precise but it has not been in my day. There may have been such a dreadful thing as Puritanical rigidity but I have never seen it. We are quite free from that evil now, if it *ever* existed. We have gone from liberty to libertinism. We have passed beyond the dubious into the dangerous and none can prophesy where we shall stop. Where is the holiness of the Church of God today?

Ah, were she what she professed to be, she would be “fair as the moon, clear as the sun,” and then “terrible as an army with banners.” But now she is dim as smoking flax and rather the object of ridicule than of reverence. May not the measure of the influence of a Church be estimated

by its holiness? If the great host of professing Christians were in domestic life and in business life sanctified by the Spirit, the Church would become a great power in the world. God's saints may well mourn with Jerusalem when they see spirituality and holiness at so low an ebb! Others may regard this as a matter of no consequence. But we view it as the breaking forth of a leprosy.

Moreover, we see in the Church that her sacred ardor is cooling. There is still fervor in certain Believers and fervor of the best kind, for the Divine Spirit has not utterly departed from us. We have around us Christian men and women who will do and dare anything for Jesus and bear witness for Him in the open street. Thank God for such! They are a standing protest against a lukewarm age. And we have still our gracious young men who will give their lives to bear the name of Christ among the heathen—amid the fevers of the Congo River. We have also an abundant seed of the faithful who labor day and night for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. Still things are not in Israel as we could desire.

Very seldom are Believers nowadays charged with being fanatical, nor even with being too enthusiastic. And this is a sign that we are below the right heat. When the world calls us fanatics we are nearing that point of ardor which is our Lord's due. If we were *indeed* fanatical it would be an error. But when we are *called* so, since the world's judgment is erroneous, we may conclude that we are only so earnest that the cold world is inconvenienced by our warmth. Oh, for the passionate love of a Rutherford! Oh, to seek the souls of men with the vehement zeal of a Whitefield, with the persevering purpose of a Wesley!

Oh, to be carried away by the Divine passion of compassion! Oh, to be wholly consecrated to Him who is our King, our Lord, our All! His Glory should be the one object of our lives. There is cause to grieve over many Churches and individuals—that they are neither cold nor hot. Let us be personal and practical and see whether we have not cause to grieve over *ourselves* in that respect.

There is grave cause for mourning in Zion because the services of God's house are neglected. In certain large places of worship which once were crowded to the door, I hear that there are more pews than people. Where the Gospel is gone from the pulpit, listeners soon go from the pews. Nothing is more like a sham than the apparent religious provision for this great metropolis. For we have Churches and Chapels in such abundance that to build more would seem to be altogether needless. And yet, when we make enquiry we find the congregations to be, in some instances, so ludicrously small that if the building did not exist it would be no more missed than a drop in the sea.

"I do not know where to send my converts with the hope that they will hear the Gospel," said a soul-winner to me the other day, concerning a certain London district. I cannot conceal from myself the gloomy fact that the habit of going to a place of worship is being altogether lost in this city. There are streets upon streets where only one or two persons are in the habit of attending the House of God. A man becomes even notable because he goes on the Sabbath to a place of worship. I was amused with

one who attended this Tabernacle one Thursday night—he became so much interested in the service that he came on several Thursdays.

But when a friend said to him, “Will you not come on Sunday?” he replied, “Oh, no. I have not got so far as that. I don’t feel that I could become a Sunday Chapel goer.” We, from our point of view, think better of the weekday hearer than of one who only attends on the Lord’s Day. But his point of view was very different. No one would blame him for going where he pleased during the week but to observe the Sabbath would be a decided step which he was not prepared to take. *That* would involve losing a name for irreligion among his associates. This straw shows which way the wind blows. Alas, time was when it was thought to be a *duty* to observe the Sabbath. But it is now a day for lying late in bed, loafing about in shirt-sleeves, or mending rabbit hutches and pigeon houses!

Do not think that I am exaggerating. I am speaking in sober seriousness the sad truth which has been reported to me by city missionaries, district visitors and working men who live among it. In many of our villages and country towns there is a healthy habit of Church-going and Chapel-going, though even there it is not so general as it used to be. But in London the general habit is the reverse. This is lamentable. How has it come about? I fear that it is very much the case because if and when the people did go to many places of worship they could not understand what they hear. And what is worse, if they did understand it, it would not be of much use to them.

The criticisms of modern thought are of no value to the working man. If the old Gospel is brought to the front in all its simplicity and preached with fervor, we may hope to see the people back again to hear it. But the task of calling them back is not an easy one. Along with the prevalence of a questioning theology comes this religious indifference. Under the prevailing form of doctrine our city is becoming more heathen than Christian. Between the childishness of superstitious sacramentalism and the willful wickedness of doubt, the masses are sliding into an utter disregard of holy things. Reverence is dying out. And as surely as it dies we shall see a fierce attempt at anarchy.

The evil over which I now mourn is not only prevalent among the outlying masses but it taints Christians themselves. Look at your hall-Sunday professors—content with only one service and weary of that! How is it with many Christian people as to meetings for prayer? Prayer Meetings are the very soul of Church work and they bring down the blessing upon all our spiritual agencies. Yet they are despised by our high-fliers. In many Chapels two services in the week have proved too great an effort for the constitution of the ministers and too much of a tax upon the time of their hearers who are occupied with the far superior avocations of card games or lawn tennis!

They could not come out two nights in a week—who would propose such a thing? So a compromise has been invented for the relief of the distressed and they have set up a kind of service which is half lecture and half Prayer Meeting so as to get the pious business all over at once. And a very little affair is that one service. This is not only bad in itself but it is a sign of something worse. Men who can pray to edification are in some

directions becoming rare. One pastor told me the other day that out of a considerable congregation he found it hard to make up a Prayer Meeting at all because he had so few praying men. It is a dreadful impeachment against the Churches, but faithfulness compels me to state it—before things grow worse.

You can get a crowd to a concert but hardly a dozen to prayer! I know what I say. Because of all this, the ways of Zion languish—those ways which once were best trod, namely the ways of prayer and praise, are hardly considered by the masses. Surely the Lord will visit the Churches for this. By His Grace there are grand exceptions, for which God be thanked. But still is it so—that the purely devotional service is at a discount. To hear a clever man they will come—but not to wait upon God. If there had been a magic lantern, or a penny reading, or a recitation with comic songs, the pious people would have strained a point to be there. But *to pray* is much too dull work for novel-reading, theater-haunting professors.

These remarks will seem strange to good old-fashioned Believers. But when they hear them and know them to be true, I am sure it will cause them to take their places as mourners with Zion.

Another very great and grave cause for mourning to all true Christians is the multitude of sinners that remain unsaved. O my dear Hearers, did you ever realize what it is for a soul to be unsaved? If, on your way home you were to stumble over a corpse, you would stoop down and look and ascertain that the person was really dead and then what a turn it would give you to find yourself so near the dead! You would not forget it for weeks. Yet men are dead in trespasses and sins and we believe that it is so—but it does not affect us in any special manner. Lord, arouse us! If we had passed a prison yard and had seen a man in chains and heard the clanking of his fetters, the iron would have entered into our souls and we should have felt sad for the prisoner.

And yet around us in this congregation there are men and women bound fast with the chains of sin and we are not distressed for them. We do not realize their bondage. We do not dispute the fact, neither do we feel its sadness. Look at the many round about us who are living in open evil, going after their lusts, plunging deeper and deeper into what must be their destruction. Look at the many that are blind, though they have eyes. That hear not, though they have ears. That feel not, though they are rational beings! How can we bear it? How can we bear it that there should be any among us who do not know God, who love not the Lord Jesus Christ, who are yet in their sins?

If an ungodly man could realize his own condition he would not dare to sit still. And if we had compassionate hearts and could clearly see the fact that our own children, our own dearest relatives or our nearest neighbors were condemned because of sin and drawing every moment nearer to a terrible judgment, would we not bestir ourselves—give God no rest—but cry day and night to Him until the perishing ones are saved? An unsaved soul is a sight that might well transform us into Jeremies and cause us to weep perpetual showers of pitying grief until the arm of mercy should interpose to work salvation.

The dark thought for a true heart is that while souls are lost, even now the evil does not end here. But they are passing away into that hopeless state in the next world which our Lord speaks of as the place where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched. They are going from this place, where mercy is proclaimed, to that dread tribunal where the voice of judgment cries, "Depart, you cursed." They are hastening away to appear before the Great White Throne, unsaved, unrenewed, unforgiven! O God, have mercy upon our fellow men, we pray You. But, first, give us Divine Grace to have mercy upon them!

He who can see a soul lost and yet is not distressed, how dwells the love of God in him? We ought to be filled with sorrow when men perish willfully under the Gospel. When our adversaries tell us that our dreadful belief with regard to the hopeless future of a lost soul ought to break our hearts, we admit the truth of what they say. We admit it to the fullest extent. But we reply that if they conceive that we are not as tender as we ought to be, while believing that terrible Truth which seems to us to be plainly taught in the Scriptures, to what a depth of callousness should we not descend if they could make us doubt what we now believe?

If they could persuade us of their comfortable fictions. If they could induce us to accept their "larger hope" should we not cease from that slender degree of pity which their charity may confess we now possess? Brethren, we are as compassionate as they are—though that is not saying much. At least we dare to incur unpopularity and the sarcastic censures of the wise and prudent in order that *we* may give honest warning of the terrible woe which men are bringing upon themselves. They talk as if we were to blame for the Hell we proclaim! Will they give us an equal share of honor for the Heaven we preach? We create neither the one nor the other.

But they might at least cause their imputations to face both ways. My Brethren, the terrors of the world to come, to those who willfully reject the Savior, ought to affect us far more than they do—none are more ready to acknowledge this than we are. Let us lay to heart the sins of our age, the ruin of our fellow men. They love not God. They trust not His dear Son. They are mad after sin. They are enemies to holiness—this is a heavy burden to a godly heart. They are dying in their sins and coming under everlasting punishment. And these things should make us mourners in Zion. I am not too bold when I say that they do cause us great heaviness of heart.

I do not think that any man who really thinks about the condition of the Church and then turns to the condition of the world in reference to the Church can walk up and down our streets exhibiting a perpetual gaiety of spirit. Other Truths of God operate upon us to make us glad, but this drags us down. There must be times when we get alone and pour out our hearts like water before the Lord and cry, "O Lord, how long before You will put forth Your saving power? How long before Your arm shall be made bare and the work of Divine Grace shall be carried on to the rescue of the fallen millions?"

II. I have, at least, shown you that we are not without overflowing fountains of grief—but now, Beloved, having mourned unto you, it is time for me to change my tune. May the Lord cause the fountains of your pity

to flow. But, at the same time, enable you to follow me while I say, in the second place that WE MAY YET REJOICE WITH JERUSALEM. Why may we do so amid such reasons for mourning?

We may rejoice with the chosen of the Lord when we remember, first of all, that God has not changed either in nature, or in love to His people, or in the purpose of His Grace. Before we were born He was able to achieve His purposes of love and He will accomplish the good pleasure of His will when we are no more praying and working here below. When His Church was faithful, His Divine decree was carried out. And if His Church is unfaithful He is still Omnipotent and can, therefore, work out His great designs. He has not changed His system of working. He intends, still, to bless the world through the Church—He means to use His saved ones for the saving of others.

I believe that He will fight this battle to a happy end upon the same lines as up to now and that in the end He shall have great glory notwithstanding all the infirmities and imperfections of His servants. An unchanging God is our security for ultimate victory. We fall back upon this Truth of God. Our Lord knows not the shadow of a change and His eternal purpose shall stand. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Let us exceedingly rejoice!

A further reason for joy is this—we may expect the Lord to appear. Take notice of the fifth verse of the chapter before us, for there we read, “He shall appear to your joy and they shall be ashamed.” God will not desert His own cause. Allow no such thought to afflict you. We have felt the hiding of His power—we shall yet see the unveiling of it. We have had to mourn that He allows the enemy to behave himself exceedingly proud. But before long He will make them sing to another tune. The Lord will awake like a mighty man that has been sleeping. And then when He plucks His right hand out of His bosom He will make short work of the insects that chirp against His Glory and Godhead.

Jehovah will win the victory, oppose who may. There never has yet been a dark night of patience which has not ended in a bright morning of faith. They that sat in darkness and in the valley of death have seen a great light—it has sprung up when the blackness was most intense. In the middle ages the darkness deepened into sevenfold night. But, as in a moment, God said, “Let there be light,” and Luther and Calvin and Zwingli and other stars shone forth in the midnight sky and made the gloom to disappear right speedily. Our glorious God can do so at this present crisis. Oh, for a word from the Throne! Oh, for a “light be,” from the Lord and Giver of light and this darkness which may be felt will be felt no more!

I am not discouraged, though I am greatly saddened. The battle is not ours but the Lord’s. God knows no difficulty. Omnipotence has servants everywhere and power to create as many more agents of its purpose as there are sands on the seashore. Sitting by the chimney side tonight, a young Luther is preparing, as he looks in the fire, to burn the bells of the philosophic hierarchy of today. In the workhouse, among the poor children, there is a Moses who shall confront our Pharaoh and deliver Israel’s tribes. The coming man who shall startle the world with his brave

witness to the everlasting Gospel is at school. Never have a doubt about it—God will appear—

***“Lord, when iniquities abound,
And blasphemy grows bold,
When faith is hardly to be found,
And love is waxing cold,
Is not Your chariot hastening on?
Have You not given this sign?
May we not trust and live upon
A promise so Divine?”***

When the Lord shall put on strength then shall His Church be aroused. I read you in the chapter—“Before she travailed, she brought forth. Before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child.” The Lord can soon bring upon His Church her fruitful birth pangs and make the barren woman to keep house. I hope to see, before I die, a revived Church holding truthful doctrine, agonizing over lost souls and blessed with hosts of converts. Glory be to the name of the Lord where all is as a desert, He can make a garden. Aaron’s dry rod shall bud and blossom again. His fold shall be filled and there shall be a great sound as of the bleating of countless sheep. Since God is almighty in the spiritual realm as well as in the material world, nothing is too great for us to expect.

He that raised up our Lord Jesus from the dead can arouse a dying Church. And He that cut Rahab and wounded the dragon can break the power of infidel criticism. Once more He will shake not only earth but also Heaven. Therefore let us rest in the Lord and sing with joyful confidence since no good thing will He withhold from His Church and no evil thing will He long permit to do her damage.

Oh, that the days of refreshing were come! Then shall the Church have many converts, proving her power and increasing her influence. Thousands shall turn to Jesus at the expected Pentecost. Then shall she nourish them well and feed them with knowledge and understanding. I fear that if in certain Churches there were to be many converts they would not know what to do with them. But when the Holy Spirit comes into her midst, then the Church shall be a nursing mother. We read of “the breasts of her consolations” (see verse eleven). How abundantly she supplies loving, living nutriment to her newborn children when God blesses her! Yes, the Lord being present, the ministry becomes a means of spiritual sustenance, comfort and growth to those who are as little children in Divine Grace. And, indeed, all the members of the Church become assiduous in their care of those who have lately come to Christ.

I pray that it may be so among us. We have added to us, during the last two months, first seventy and then ninety fresh members for which I thank God. It is a little Church in itself. But unless you all look after them and try to help them on, we shall be embarrassed by such large additions to our number. Oh, that this Church may carefully see to all the children that the Lord gives her. And if so, we shall indeed have the fullest reason for rejoicing with her! Then shall we sing, “The Lord has increased the people and multiplied the joy.”

At such times there is an abundant degree of peace and joy in all believing hearts. “For thus says the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to

her like a river and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream.” It is a sad, sad thing when a Church is not hearty in its love and unanimous in its action. We have heard of Churches of which the Apostle Paul would have said, “I have heard that there are divisions among you.” And when it is so, the power to do good is not present. God will appear for His Church and end her sore dissensions and set the hearts of His people together. And when it is so, then shall there be a great rejoicing and we will take our part in it.

Nor is this all—God will raise up men fitted to do His work. Read the twenty-first verse—“I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, says the Lord.” When the Holy Spirit visits a Church, He is sure to bestow special gifts and give special calls. As the Holy Spirit said, “Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them,” so will He say in our Churches, to our great delight. When God sent Pastor Harms to Hermansberg, it was a mere pasture land and there were few there that knew the Lord. But under his zealous preaching the whole village was turned into a missionary society.

Oh, that we could do anything like it! Farmers and laborers, men and women became missionaries for Christ to Africa. And a large proportion of the population went abroad either to preach the Gospel or to form little colonies to work with the missionary and support him. They sold house and land and everything and thus made Hermansberg the starting place of a great evangelizing enterprise. My beloved Brethren, I hardly dare be so ambitious as to hope that you will ever reach such consecration! See how it was among the Moravians—every man becoming a member of their Church became himself a teacher of the Word! Every man, woman and child among them sought to bring souls to Christ.

Would God that the power of the Lord would come in that way upon all our Churches! And we may expect it, if it is the true Gospel which we preach—if it is the Gospel which we love—if it is in the power of the Gospel that we live. So must it be. The Lord will yet be taking many out of the midst of His people to be priests and Levites. What is to become of India, Africa and China, if we go on at the rate at which we have been crawling forward for these many years? Good as all mission work has been, yet what a drop in the bucket it is compared with what remains to be done! Oh, that the Lord would come and quicken His poor dead Church with a more Divine life!

When she is quickened from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot, *then* the nations of the earth shall know that God is in the midst of His people, even the infinite Jehovah whose name is salvation. May the Lord Jesus take His servants as Samson took the foxes and fasten firebrands to them and send them among the standing corn till the whole earth is on a blaze with the flame that came down from Heaven! How great, then, will be our joy!

Brethren, the Providence of God is with us. All its terrors, as well as all its bounties, work for the advance of the Lord’s kingdom. The wheels full of eyes all look this way. Brethren, the Promise of God is with us. Our Lord Jesus must reign till all His enemies are put beneath His feet. Brothers and Sisters, prayer is with us still—the Mercy Seat, the

Comforter and the Advocate. If we know how to use the mighty engine of All-prayer we may yet shake the gates of Hell. Brethren, the Holy Spirit is with us still. He came down at Pentecost and He has never gone back again—He abides in His Church forever and works mightily. We have but to call upon Him to carry on His sacred mission and we shall see greater things than these.

III. But now my time has nearly gone and so I must finish by asking, WHY SHOULD WE PERSONALLY BE OF THE NUMBER THAT MOURN WITH THE CHURCH AND THAT REJOICE WITH HER? Perhaps some of you do not belong to that honorable company. I pray the Holy Spirit to make you of that host at once.

For first, there is our own sin and ruin to mourn over. I spoke just now of how we ought to feel for a lost soul. But how ought that lost soul to feel for itself? Poor Soul, if we ought to mourn for you, how much more should you mourn for yourself! If you should be lost, if I have been faithful to you, I shall be a loser. What if you go down to Hell—your mother's pleadings being in vain—she will not be robbed of her glory because you refuse the Savior! It is *your* soul, your own soul, your only soul that is in jeopardy. If a man is a bankrupt here he may start in business again. But if you make a bankruptcy of this mortal life no second commencement is possible.

In a campaign a lost battle is a great evil—yet the next fight may retrieve the disaster. But if the battle of life is lost, you will never again be able to enter the wishes and do better. I pray you, therefore, mourn over your own condition at once. Sitting in that pew, a sinner unforgiven, a rebel against God, with enmity in your heart against your best Friend—what a state you are in! The Lord have mercy upon you! The Lord make you at once a mourner in the Church of God that you may, before long, rejoice in her Savior!

Next, I may be speaking to someone who has been a backslider and is a backslider even now. Are you sighing—

***“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?”***

Well may you say so. By your wretched wandering you have disgraced the name of Christ and you have dishonored the cause which you professed to love. You have made the enemy blaspheme and you cannot wonder that your rest is broken. If anybody ought to be a mourner, you should be. You should take front rank among those who lament for the Church of Christ seeing that you have done her so much damage that you will never be able to undo it even by a long life of usefulness.

Brethren, do you not think that we might all wisely become mourners when we think of our own want of zeal and want of care for the souls of others? The preacher would smite upon his breast. And he invites you to do the same. Who among us spends half the thought that he should spend upon the conversion of his fellow men? We all think of them a little. I hope the most of you are doing something for Jesus and His cause. Not many things are left undone which as a Church we can do. But the things that are done—are they always done in a right spirit? Are they always baptized in prayer? Are they worked out humbly, earnestly, and in entire dependence upon the Spirit of God? I am afraid that our faulty service

towards other men must place us among the mourners in Zion if there were nothing else to do in it. We need not be ashamed to be among them, for if we sorrow with the Lord's Church, we shall also, one day, rejoice with her.

May we not add to this our own failures in the matter of holiness? It is easy enough to drag the whole Church up as I did just now and scourge her as she well deserves. But it is not so easy for each guilty person to flagellate himself. Yet this is what is needed. Ask—Have I been as holy as I should be? Has my house been ordered aright? Is there family prayer observed, not as a matter of form, but in *life* and *power*? Am I towards my children, towards my husband, towards my wife, towards my servants as I ought to be? Are we as upright and generous as we should be in our business and in our connection with common daily life?

O Brothers and Sisters, we may each of us become mourners with the Church of God if we examine ourselves with care! Let me add that we have all a great concern in this matter and we ought, therefore, to join with the Church in all her griefs. If the ministry of our pastors is not successful, we shall lose by its want of power. If the Gospel is not preached, our souls will not be fed. See to it that you do not encourage false doctrine or wink at the modern apostasy. Suppose the Gospel is not preached with saving power—then we shall have our children unconverted and they will not be our joy and crown. There cannot be a deficiency in the pulpit without its bringing mischief to our households.

We are members of one body and if any part of the body suffers every other part of the body will have to suffer, too. If worldliness abounds, as it does, we shall see our children becoming worldly. We shall see them sucked into the vortex of infidelity and frivolity which now seems to sweep down and carry into the abyss so many hopeful young men and women. None of us will be able to escape from the terrible damage which evil is working all around. When false doctrine breaks forth like floods, it will surge around all our houses. Let us, therefore cry mightily unto God—not for ourselves only, but for the one great universal Church and for this great city and for this wicked world.

O Lord our God, arise for Your cause and crown! Take hold on sword and buckler and plead Your own case, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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THE TENDERNESS OF GOD'S COMFORT

NO. 3189

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 1910.

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

***“As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you;
and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.”
Isaiah 66:13.***

WE do not intend entering into a discussion of the context and its relationship literally to the Jewish people. We have never hesitated to assert our conviction that there are great blessings in store for God's ancient Israel and that the day shall come when her comfort shall abound, when the glory of the Gentiles shall flow to her like a flowing stream and she shall be comforted by her God as one whom his mother comforts. But we believe that these passages are applicable to *all* the servants of God, that the comfortable passages of Scriptures are theirs, that whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free, barbarian or Greek, we are all one in Christ Jesus—and all the promises are ours in Him—for in Him all the promises are, “yes,” and, “amen.” I believe, then, that this passage belongs to every child of God.

It is well that there is such a promise as this on record, for Believers need comfort. They need comfort because they are men and, “man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.” There has been a great necessity for consolation ever since the time when man was expelled from Eden. Men need comfort because they are but men. Although favored by God, elected by His Sovereignty and called by His Divine Grace into a peculiar state of acceptance, they are still in the body and they are made to feel it—being tempted in all points as other men are and in some points peculiarly tried. They are men and but men at the best! They need comfort, too, because they are Christians, for if others escape the rod, Christians must not, yes, *shall not*. The Lord may be pleased to give to the sinner a long prosperity that he may be fattened as a bullock for the slaughter, but His promise to His people whom He calls by His Grace is, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” “Whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” We must, therefore, have special consolation, since as men, as only men, and as Christians, we shall have constant occasions for comfort.

When I take a text like this, I know there are very many in the congregation who cannot enter into it. But, my dear Friends, if you are Christians, it will not be long before you will! You may have to look back, perhaps, upon the words which I quote in your hearing, and say of them, “God sent them to me as a preparation before the trial came. He gave me

food as He did Elijah under the juniper tree, because He determined that I should go 40 days in the strength of that meat." Despise not the consolations of the Lord because you need them not just now. You will require them. The calm will not last forever—a storm is brewing. Say not, "My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved." He has but to hide His face and you will be troubled—and then you will prize that which now you do lightly esteem—you will long to be comforted "as one whom his mother comforts."

But coming at once to the text, I think we may very well talk of it under three points. First, who comforts? Secondly, how He comforts. And thirdly, where He comforts.

I. With regard to the first point, WHO COMFORTS? "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you."

The work of comforting His saints is not too low for God to be engaged in. It is true that He sometimes uses instruments, but all real comfort to a broken heart must come directly from God, Himself. He does not say, "I will send an angel to comfort you," but, "I will comfort you." Nor in the text is it said that the Christian minister shall comfort you. Alas, dear Brothers and Sisters, often what are we who preach the Word but broken cisterns that hold no water? But God says, "I will comfort you." And when He undertakes the work, then we become as conduit pipes that are full, even to bursting, with the drink that you require! Your soul shall be satisfied even out of poor earthen vessels. But it must be God's work. He must do it, for when a soul is truly humbled, heavily laden and broken in pieces by God's hand, there is only one hand—the pierced hand—that can heal the wound!

When we read, in this passage, that God will comfort the soul, we are to understand, I think, that *God does so in the Trinity of His Person*. He is called "the God of Consolation." The Father comforts us. The very use of that term, "Father," seems to bring good cheer to our spirits. As long as I can call God, my Father, I shall not be without a star in my sky. "My Father"—that sweetens all the sorrow that can come to me! It is a sword, but my Father, it is in Your hand. It is a bitter cup, but, my Father, You have given it to me, so shall I not drink it? That word, "my Father," shall make my heart leap for joy in the midst of my deepest distress! As a Father, God does actively come to the comfort of His children—and when a filial spirit is shed abroad in us, our souls, leaning on all-sufficient Grace, rejoice even in the midst of deep distress! God the Son also comforts us, for is not His name, "the Consolation of Israel"? When you stand at the foot of the Cross, you find comfort, there, for all the ills that wring your heart. Sin loses its weight. Death, itself, is dead. All griefs expire—slain by the griefs of the Man of Sorrows. Only enter into the Savior's passion and your own passion is over. Get to understand His sorrows and your sorrows find at least a pause, if not an end. And as for the blessed Spirit, He was given for this very purpose, to be our Comforter. He dwells in all the saints to bring to their remembrance the things which Jesus spoke and to lead them into all the Truth of God that their joy in Christ may be full!

It is something very delightful to consider that Father, Son and Spirit all cooperate to give us comfort. I can understand their cooperating to make the world. I can understand their cooperation in the salvation of a soul. But I am astonished at this same united action in so comparatively small a matter as the comfort of Believers! Yet the Holy Three seem to think it a great matter that Believers should be happy, or they would not work together to cheer disconsolate spirits.

We must understand, when God says, "I will comfort you," that He intends that *there are many ways by which He does it*. Sometimes He comforts us in the course of Providence. We may be the lowest spoke of the wheel, now, but by the revolution of time we may be the uppermost before long. We may suffer very acute pains, tonight, but by the morning the Master may have relieved all our pain. The pause between sickness and health may not be very long. If the Good Physician shall put His healing hands upon us, we shall soon be restored. How often, when you thought you were coming to your worst, has there been a sudden brightening of the sky! It is a long lane that has no turning and it is a long trouble that never comes to an end. It is when the sea ebbs as far as it can go that the tide begins to flow—and they say the darkest part of the night is that which is just before the daybreak. When the winter grows very cold and keen, we begin to hope that spring will soon come—and our desperate sorrows, when they reach their worst—are coming to their close. So let us be of good cheer! There will not be always such a rough sea, poor troubled Saint. You shall be out of the Atlantic into the Pacific before long—and you shall be out of the sea, altogether, and away on the *terra firma* of eternal joy before many years have rolled over your head!

However, when the Lord is not pleased thus to comfort us in the way of Providence, He has a means of doing it by His Omnipotent secret working on the human heart. Not to speak doctrinally, but rather to give a particular instance, have you not found that sometimes, when you were much burdened with trouble, a very peculiar calm came over your spirit? You had been vexed, almost distracted. But when you woke one morning, you felt calm and peaceful—you had given up rebellion, left off murmuring, and you could say to your God—

***"Tis sweet to lie passive in Your hands
And know no will but Yours."***

And have you not even been conscious, in times of the very severest trouble, of an unusual joy? You did not sing with your voice, but there was something that sang with you softly, silently, but still sweetly. You sometimes look back upon that sick chamber, (I know I do), and almost wish that you were there now. The trial was sharp, indeed, for—

"Sharp are the pangs that nature gives"—

but, oh, the joy that came with them! It was so surpassing that, in the retrospect, you forget the pain and only remember the sweetness! How was this? Was it the pain that did it? Nothing of the kind! God is like a watchmaker who knows, because he made the watch, how to touch the wheels and regulate them. He made us and, therefore, He knows how to deal with us so that everything shall go right where before everything

went amiss. He can open the floodgates of joy and inundate our souls with bliss even in our darkest days of trouble! "Only hope you in Me, My child," He says, "for you shall praise Me, who is the help of your countenance and your God." Though the fig trees do not blossom and God does not take away the plague from the cattle. Though your substance shall be diminished and fire shall devour your household goods, yet your God can make up for all this and cause your days of leanness to be fat days—and your days of hunger to be days of feasting—and your days of thirst to be days when you shall drink the wine on the lees well-refined!

It would not be well to close this point without remarking that *God has been pleased to make a previous provision for the comfort of all His saints*. When He comforts, He has not to invent a novelty to do it—He has only to bring to us stores which have been laid up, fruits new and old which have been ready for His beloved. It trouble comes, God has provided a strength by which you shall meet it, and provided a way through by which you shall escape from it. There are promises in God's Word suitable to every conceivable condition of the saints. Out of millions of God's people living in different countries, under different forms of government and in different ages—all of them of different temperaments and constitutions—their trials must take all kinds of shapes. As in the kaleidoscope, there must be a vast variety in the tribulations of the Lord's people and yet there never has arisen a single case in which there has not been a promise which, word for word, and letter for letter, met the case in hand!

In the great bunch of keys in that good old Book, there is a key for every lock! And if it were not so, there are one or two promises like master keys which will fit all. Such a promise is the one in Isaiah 41:10, "Fear you not, for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God." It will suit the youth and the gray-head. It will be satisfactory to you if you have to overcome difficulties or if you have to endure sufferings. In the calm or in the storm, lying in the trench or climbing the scaling ladder, that text will still be precious—"Fear you not, for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God." We will fall back, then, upon the consolatory Truth that with God are the consolations of His children, that He is Himself responsible for their comfort, having engaged to be their Father! And so we may suck marrow out of our text, "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you."

II. But now the second head is to be HOW GOD COMFORTS. "As one whom his mother comforts."

This is a peculiarly delightful metaphor. A father can comfort, but I think he is not much at home in the work. When God speaks about His pity, He compares Himself to the father. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." But when He speaks about comfort, He selects the mother. When I have seen the little ones sick, I have felt all the pity in the world for them, but I did not know how to set to work to comfort them—but a mother knows by instinct how to do it! There is placed in the mother's tender heart a power of sympathy and very soon she finds the word or gives the touch that will meet her darl-

ing's case and cheer its troubled soul. The father is awkward at it—our rougher, sterner nature hardly shines in the matter of consolation. But the mother can do it to perfection. How, then, does the mother comfort her child?

We answer, first, she does it *very fondly*. There is a way of administering comfort in which you stand apart from the patient and you tell him, "There is the cup of cordial if you'd like to drink it." But the mother's way of doing it is to sip the cup and then to put it to the child's lips, yes, and to do more than that—to take the child right into her bosom while she gives it. She does not talk to him at arm's length, but she talks with him at her heart all the while! And that is probably the secret of her power. And so, when God comforts any poor heavy-laden sinner or troubled saint, He does not talk to Him at a distance, but He runs and falls on his neck and kisses him. The Infinite, Almighty God falls upon the neck of a repentant sinner and gives him the kiss of His love! And He does just the same to a poor, troubled and afflicted saint. He comforts fondly. May one venture to apply such a word as that to the great God? May we say that He has a fondness for His children? Well, at any rate, we know that if there is a word more sweet, more dear, indicating a closer affinity and a deeper and purer love than another, we may use that word concerning our God. He loves us with a love that has no bottom, no summit and no shore. Even as He loves His own dear Son, so He loves us! We are in His heart! We are engraved on the palms of His hands and, therefore, when He comforts, it is in so fond a manner that we cannot but be cheered! With all the tenderness a mother feels, God feels for us—and so He comforts us as a mother comforts her child.

But there is more than fondness here. A mother comforts her child with much sympathy. She always seems to feel the pain the child is feeling. To soothe that headache, she lays her cool hand upon the hot, throbbing little brow, and is herself pained as she thinks of the pain that must be there. Or she looks at the hand that was made to bleed by a fall, and her eyes seem as if they would bleed for the little one. She feels it all and, therefore, she is sure to comfort well. And this is how Jesus comforts. We have heard of a little child who said to her mother, "Mother, Mrs. So-and-So, the widow, says she likes me to go in to see her, for I comfort her so. When she sits and cries, I put my head in her lap and I cry, too, and she says that comforts her." Ah, yes, child, there is true philosophy in that! This is just the sort of comfort we need and this is just what God does. Our Lord in human flesh still sorrows with His people—hungers in their hunger—thirsts in their thirsting—and melts in their mourning. Though He reigns on high, He is not so high that He has no "respect unto the lowly."

A mother also comforts her child *very diligently*. She is not satisfied with saying half a dozen words and putting her child down. She takes it up and if it won't be dandled on one knee, she tries the other, and if that form of comfort will not do, she will try another. We have heard of a good mother who wanted to teach her child something but when someone

complained that she had to repeat the same thing 20 times, she answered, "Yes, I did that because 19 times would not do." So God perseveres. Sometimes a mother may have to comfort her child when it is very sick and very fretful, and its poor little head and heart are out of order. She has to comfort it again, and again, and again, and again. Soft words are always on her lips. She can do nothing else but console the little one and she does not tire of it. Oh, those mothers of ours! They never grow tired when we are sick and ill! They seem to be up all night and all day long. And if a nurse comes in for a few hours, they are up, then, too, looking after the nurse, so that I do not know that much ease comes with the helper. Our mothers are so untiringly kind! Well, I say to you—to "you who unto Jesus for refuge have fled"—that our God is kinder than any mother! His Book is full of attempts to comfort His children and those attempts—blessed be God—are not without success!

Again, a mother comforts her child *seasonably*. A true mother is not always comforting her child. If she is a silly mother, she brings up her child so delicately that it turns out to be a viper in her bosom. But if she is a wise mother, she saves her comforts till they are needed. When it is sick, then she gives the cordials. Well, God does not always comfort His saints, but when they are in affliction, then they shall have consolation. As our tribulations abound, so our consolations abound by Jesus Christ. There is a balance kept up. If there is an ounce of trouble, there will be an ounce of comfort. If there is a ton of trouble, there will be a ton of consolation. When the child has been doing wrong and the parent has chastised it, if the little lip curls, if the proud foot is stamped, if there is a frown on the brow—the wise mother does not comfort it. But when the child comes and prays to be forgiven, the mother's heart is ready for it directly. "Sin no more," she says, "and the past shall be forgotten and forgiven." Well, this is how God comforts us. While we are proud and stand out against Him, we shall feel His hand. But when we confess our faults and come humbly to Him for pardon, we shall have seasonable comfort, "as one whom his mother comforts."

Again, a mother's comfort has this point about it—she usually comforts *in a most efficient manner*—and the child goes away smiling, though it seemed to say before, "I shall never be happy again." Five minutes of a mother's wise talk and sweet comfort, and the child is as happy as before! "Ah," you say, "that will do for children, but it won't do for men." But God keeps His saints as children before Him. May God grant us Grace to be as little children, or we cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven! Then, when our God comes to comfort us, I am quite sure He will do it more effectually than the most tender mother can.

But, once more, a mother comforts *all her life*. "A mother is a mother all her life," says an old proverb. There is no change there. "Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" It seems impossible, but the Lord says, "Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you." A mother casts not away her child. Fathers sometimes have done such a thing, but mothers, I should hope, never! But even if they have—

***“Yet,” says the Lord, “should Nature change,
And mothers monsters prove,
Sion still dwells upon the heart
Of everlasting love.”***

God will not cease to comfort His people! Perhaps there is a Brother who is passing through a very severe trial and he thinks he shall never be comforted again. Well, but your mother will not forsake you—and do you think God will? “But,” says one, “you do not know my difficulty. It is a crushing one.” My dear Friend, I know I do not know it, but your heavenly Father knows it. And do you suppose if an earthly mother sticks fast by her child, that He will leave you? Go to Him! His heart is as near to you, now, as when you were on the mountain rejoicing in the full sunshine of His love. The very shadow of a change is unknown to Him. Go to Him with confidence and humble faith and you shall find the text, true, “As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you.”

III. Now I have just a little to say upon the third point, that is, WHERE GOD COMFORTS His people. The text says, “in Jerusalem.”

Why, for His ancient people, that was *where they had their troubles*. The city had been under siege. O daughter of Salem, how were you made to weep! What sorrow rolled over your head—to see the city dismantled and her palaces become ruins—wild fowls and bitterns inhabiting the place where once the assembled tribes were glad! O Jerusalem, what grief is in your name to your inhabitants as they remember these, your glory, all departed, and your sorrow lasting still! Yes, but God will comfort His people in the very place of their trouble! This will be fulfilled on a large scale in the Millennial Glory when our world, which has been the scene of the saints' sorrow, will also be the scene of their triumphant reign with Christ Jesus!

Meanwhile, you, His servants, must not suppose that because you have trials, you are in the wrong place. The vine is not in the wrong place because the vinedresser often uses the knife! It may be the best place for that vine where it gets most of the vinedresser's pruning. Beware, especially young friends, beware of self-will in seeking to change your troubles! Some of you think when you are single you have peculiar troubles—do not be in a hurry to incur the troubles of married life! And you who are servants who think you are very harshly done by, do not be so wondrously fast to wish to be masters! I sometimes find my cross not just what I like it to be, but I should be very much afraid to attempt to alter it. “It were better in all wisdom to bear the ills we have than fly to others that we know not of.” That man whom you envy, you would probably pity if you knew more about him! Be content to stay in Jerusalem.

Remember, the comfort which God gives will be a comfort to suit your present place and position. “In Jerusalem,” where you have seen the furnace of God placed, for His fire is in Zion and His furnace in Jerusalem,” even there shall you have your comfort! It is a joy to think of Daniel in the lions' den. I believe that Daniel never had a sweeter night's rest than he had when he had some old lion for his pillow, and the younger lions to be his guardians. And in the case of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego,

the Master did not break down the furnace walls and take them out at once, but He was with them in the fire and cheered them in the midst of the flames! So shall the comfort of God come to you in your time of need.

Take another view of this matter. God will comfort you who are here below. "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove!" says one. Now what would you do if you had them? They would be a very awkward equipment for a man! But suppose you *had* the wings of a dove, what would you do? Would you fly away? Well, you would hardly dare to do that, for to fly to God without a permit would be taking the matter into your own hands. Why cannot God comfort you where you are? "Ah," says one, "I expect to have my happiness in another world." So do I, but I hope to have some, here, too. "One Heaven will be enough for me," says one. But why not have Heaven here and Heaven hereafter, too?—

***"The men of Grace have found
Glory begun below.
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope may grow.
The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets
Before we reach the heavenly fields,
Or walk the golden streets.
Then let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry—
We're marching through Immanuel's ground
To fairer worlds on high!"***

It is true that the fairer worlds are on high, but it is equally true that we are on Immanuel's ground even now! "In Jerusalem—the place of your trials—will I comfort you," says the Lord.

And now, to come to another meaning of the passage, "in Jerusalem," that is, *in the Church of God*. The richest comforts are reserved for those who, fearing the Lord, often speak, one to another, and are not ashamed to acknowledge His name. And I think, dear Friends, the place of comfort is the assembly of God's people. Therefore live, "not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." There are people in the world who never go out to a weeknight service in the evening, and never think of doing such a thing! They get by the fireside after that day's business and there they sit, and say, "We are full of doubts and fears. We cannot rejoice as we used to do—

***"What peaceful hours we once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!"***

And so on. Now, those people expect God to go to their house and comfort them. By what reason should they expect any such thing when they refuse to go to God's House for the comfort? Our Lord will sometimes withhold a sense of His Presence from us in order to make us feel our wrong-doing in staying away from the use of the means which He has appointed for our comfort and consolation. I would that all congregations come out as well as you usually do. I must not say anything to you about not coming out on a weeknight, for you do come—and anything I might say about people not coming would be like Dean Swift's sermon about

those who go to sleep in church. When he finished it, he thought he had done no good, "for," he said, "only you who were awake have heard it."

I would rather propose to you that whenever you meet a friend who is greatly in lack of comfort and is complaining that he has not got it, you would give as judicious a hint as you can that it may be that they miss the comfort who miss the means of Grace! He who will not go to the shop and buy, cannot wonder if he has not any oil for his lamp. He who will not take the trouble to go to the stream must not marvel if he has to suffer thirst. O let us, dear Friends, as often as we can, gather together with the Lord's people for praise and prayer! No doubt, "in Jerusalem" we shall find our comfort! There are those among you to whom it does one good to listen when you speak of your enjoyments in this house. Of course there are some who are not edified by the ministry here, but if that is the case, why do they not go somewhere else? Their seats could be filled by others who would be edified. But there are some who say, "Master, it does us good to come here, and we can bless the Lord that He here makes the place of His feet glorious. We long for Sunday to come round again, for we feel the place to be like an Elim." In your case, God always makes His House to be a fountain of Living Waters to your souls and streams from Lebanon.

To that end, I pray the Master to help all His servants. Pray for your ministers, but remember that the comfort cannot come from them. It may come *through* them, but it must come from the Master, Himself. With that exhortation, we will come back to the words of the text, and the gracious promise, "*As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you, and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.*"

May God add His blessing and bring troubled sinners to look to Christ, and Christ shall have the glory! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: COLOSSIANS 2.

Verse 1. *For I would that you knew what great conflict I have for you and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.* Paul had not met these Colossian Christians, but he had heard of their faith, hope, and love—and he so desired their good that he had a continual care for them in his heart. He carried that care to God in prayer, yet he still bore them in loving remembrance. They were always on his heart as a sick child is always on the heart of its mother.

2, 3. *That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* He wanted them to know God and to rest comforted and happy in what He revealed. He saw in them a tendency to look abroad for something more than that—a desire to tack something else to the Gospel, a wish to try and find some fresh light outside the Word—and over this he greatly grieved. He himself

was more than satisfied with the Gospel and he wanted them to be, in that respect, as he was.

4. *And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.* They did not openly contradict the Gospel. They *pretended* to have a great affection for it and then they tried to tear the very heart out of it with their enticing words of man's wisdom!

5. *For though I am absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.* He never forgot them and it was his joy, when he found them standing fast in Christ—but his sorrow and his horror when they went away after anyone else.

6. *As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in Him.* “Do not turn away from Him, do not dream of going beyond Him. You received Him very simply at first—you trusted in Him entirely—so go on doing so. You were satisfied with Christ when you first came to Him, so be satisfied with Him, still, for you do not need anything more than Christ—and there is nothing more than Christ!”

7. *Rooted and built up in Him.* “Take a living hold of Christ as a tree does of the soil. Also be built up in Him—as a building settles down upon the foundation—so do you settle down upon Christ.”

7. *And established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.* When a man is established in the Truth of God that he knows, and rejoices in what he has already received, he will not go away from it.

8. *Beware lest any man spoil you, (it might be rendered, “plunder you”), through philosophy and vain deceit.* “Beware of those who pretend that they are going to enrich you, but whose real objective is to plunder you. They say that they will give you advanced thought, deeper ideas, a system more congruous with the age. But it is—

8. *After the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.* “What do you want with their traditions? Christ has revealed His Truth to you. What do you want with the world's rudiments? You have gone beyond such elementary, useless knowledge as that, for you have got the Truth of God itself!”

9. *For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.* In Christ we enter into the fullness and completeness of life both materially and spiritually!

10, 11. *Who is the Head of all principality and power: in whom also you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.* “The Jew boasts that he is a circumcised man, but you have *spiritually* all that circumcision meant literally! Even though you have not the wound in your flesh, you have more than that, for you have the death of the flesh and your very flesh has been buried with Christ. All that circumcision can possibly mean you have in Christ.”

12. *Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with Him through the faith of the working of God, who has raised Him from the dead.* “You have death, burial and resurrection, all in Christ. And you re-

ceived the outward sign and token of this when you were baptized, so believe firmly that it is so and do not look anywhere else for it. You are neither dead nor buried apart from Christ, nor are you driven apart from Him—all you have is in Him.”

13. *And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has He quickened together with Him, having forgiven all your trespasses.* “You do not need to go to a ‘priest’ for pardon, for Christ has forgiven you all your trespasses. [See Sermons #2101, Volume 35—LIFE AND PARDON and #2605, Volume 45—DEATH AND ITS SENTENCE ABOLISHED—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] You are so complete in Christ that confession to man and priestly absolution from man would be of no use to you.”

14. *Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross.* “All the Mosaic ceremonies from which you were shut out as Gentiles, are abolished! Christ has driven a nail through them and fastened them up to His Cross.” As sometimes a banker stamps a check when it is paid, so has Christ cut through the very heart of all Jewish ordinances by what He has done for His people.

15. *And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.* [See Sermon #273, Volume 5—CHRIST TRIUMPHANT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Exhibiting them as His prisoners in a triumphal procession, as the victorious Roman generals did when they returned from war!

16. *Let no one, therefore, judge you in food, or in drink, or regarding a festival, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath.* “Do not put yourselves under rules and regulations which God has not ordained. If you think it is right for you to abstain from certain drinks, do so, but do not act thus simply because others do so. If you abstain from certain foods because they have been offered to idols, and the consciences of others might be offended if you partook of them, do not act thus as though it would save you. Do not make yourself subject to the judgment of other men, for Christ is your Lawgiver and Lord.”

17. *Which are a shadow of things to come; but the substance is of Christ.* “You can do without the shadow, now that you have the substance, so keep to that.” Some men multiply church ordinances—they have this form and that form. Well, let them have them if they find them of service, but do not bring yourself under subjection to anything of the kind! Follow the New Testament and above all things keep close to Christ, for He is everything to you.

18. *Let no man beguile you of your reward in false humility.* We know those who say, “We do not know anything, we are only seekers, trying to find out the truth.” They talk very humbly considering how desperately proud they really are, but that humility which makes men doubt is mock humility and is not of God! “Let no man beguile you of your reward.” When you have learned the Truth of God from the Scriptures, be dogmatic about it! Do not be afraid of the presumption of which some will accuse you, or the bigotry which they will impute to you.

18. *And worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.* Agnostics by their name confess that they do not know, but do not let them take away from you what *you know* and set you to investigate matters which are beyond you with a judgment which they would lead you to think is well-near infallible, whereas your judgment is very fallible, indeed. Be not puffed up by your fleshly mind!

19. *And not holding the Head.* That is the point—these people get away from the Deity of Christ! They get away from the atoning blood. They get away from glorifying Him who alone is the Truth!

19. *From which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increased with the increase of God.* Take away the Head and there is death—everything is out of order then. If the Head is denied—if any Doctrine is taught which is contrary to the Glory of Christ, you have killed the body however much you may pretend to be increasing and feeding it!

20-22. *Therefore if you are dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are you subject to ordinances? (Touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using), after the commandments and doctrines of men?* You may and you should feel that there are some things which you will not touch, or taste, or handle. You had better leave poisonous drugs alone, but at the same time, if any man seeks to impose upon you any regulation concerning them as a part of the faith, you may resist it and repudiate it—and plead your freedom in Christ.

23. *Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship.* There were some of the Jews who would not eat certain kinds of meat, and others who would fast for long periods. Some thought it was very wicked to eat meat on a certain day—and there were many such notions—and similar superstitions still survive among us, such as not eating meat on Fridays, being afraid of 13 people sitting at table and so on! But you have nothing to do with all that kind of rubbish, so get away from it! If you are a Believer in Christ, tread all such nonsense under your feet. “Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship.”—

23. *And humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor.* There is no honor about such things, they are contemptible—“not in any honor”—

23. *To the satisfying of the flesh.* That is all such things would do—make you seem better than other people—so do not be led into these ways, but stand fast in the liberty in which Christ has made His people free!

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

TREMBLING AT THE WORD OF THE LORD

NO. 2071

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1889.

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***"To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a
contrite spirit and trembles at My Word."
Isaiah 66:2.***

PORTRAIT painting is a great art. Many pretend to it but the masters of the art are few. In the Word of God we have a gallery of portraits so accurate, so striking, that only the hand of the Lord could have drawn them. Most of us have been startled to see our own portrait there. The best of all is that at the bottom of each likeness we have the Lord's judgment upon the character so that we are able to form an estimate of what our true condition is before the Lord. Here you have a man drawn—he is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembles at the Word of the Lord. Here, also, you have the Lord's estimate of him—"To this man will I look."

I hope to dwell chiefly upon the character described in the closing words, "And trembles at My Word." Support the text by the fifth verse, "Hear the Word of the Lord, you that tremble at His Word." This trembling is, in God's esteem, an admirable trait in their character. The glorious Jehovah from His Throne in Heaven speaks of those contrite ones who tremble at His Word—and then the Prophet takes up the strain and cries, "Hear the Word of the Lord, you that tremble at His Word." It is a very great mercy that there are descriptions of saints given in the Word of God which go very low and reach the feeblest degrees of Divine Grace and the saddest frames of mind.

We find the children of God sometimes upon very high places—their spiritual life is vigorous and their inward joy is abounding. When we give you descriptions of saints in that condition, many of the Little-Faiths at once cry out, "Alas, I know nothing of this! Would God it were so with me! But, indeed, it is not." They are greatly discouraged by those very things which should raise their spirits and stimulate their desires—for surely if one Believer is able to climb the Delectable Mountains, there is all the more hope that another may do so.

Yet, we have to thank God that in His priceless Scripture, He has painted for us portraits of the Believer in his low estate. In the picture gallery of those saved by faith we find Rahab as well as Sarah and erring Samson as well as holy Samuel. In the Family Register of the Lord we have the names of Believers who were weak and sad and faulty. We have instances in the Sacred Record of undoubtedly gracious men who were in very uncomfortable and undesirable conditions. Men are spoken of as the Lord's people when their souls are sick, when Divine Grace is at a very low ebb and when joy is eclipsed.

God's people are in Scripture owned as such when it is winter with their spirits lie dormant like sap stagnant in the tree. The Lord acknowledges spiritual life in His own when there is small evidence of it, and when that evidence is confused. The mention in the Scriptures of small but sure evidences is cheering to many. I know many of God's people that have been greatly comforted by the text, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the Brethren." "Oh," they have said, "we do feel a love to all God's people, whoever they may be. And if that is evidence of Divine Grace, we have that evidence."

Apostles could say, "We know and we are quite sure about it, that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the Brethren." Therefore we also may be encouraged by our sense of love to the saints to enjoy the same assured confidence that we also have passed from death unto life. You may, some of you, think this an insecure ground of consolation. But I can bear witness that it is, like the conies' hole among the rocks, a very useful shelter from the enemy.

That is a very choice evidence, too, where God speaks of those that think upon His name—"A book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name." If our thoughts dwell lovingly upon the name of the Lord, this is a saving sign. And yet how small a thing it seems! Thoughts are like straws but they show which way the wind blows. Surely the Lord's net of comfort has meshes small enough to hold the smallest fish.

That, again, is very comforting where the Lord says, "Your heart shall live that seek Him." Even seekers shall live. Though as yet they are rather seekers than possessors, they have the Lord's promise of eternal life. Though they are only pursuing and have become faint in the pursuit, yet the love which set them pursuing will keep them following on. That is a blessed Word, indeed—"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "I do call upon His name," says one, "I know I do. I am crying to Him in prayer. I do wish to have His name named upon me. I choose Him to be my God and I dedicate myself to Him. And if that is calling upon God's name, then, truly, I am a child of God."

This precious passage has been a special stay to my own heart in time of great heaviness of spirit. I know I call upon the name of the Lord and I shall be saved. How often also have I said to myself, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see!" To see even a ray of light is conclusive evidence that I am no longer blind. The eye that can see a solitary ray of light has clearer evidence of being restored, if possible, than if it lived in the flood of sunlight. For if it can see a single ray, then is sight not only there, but it is there in no small degree. The man who can trust Jesus when he is at his lowest in his own soul, is by no means a man of little faith, but rather is he a man of strong confidence.

Dear Friends, rejoice that the Lord, in infinite mercy, has deigned to utter the words of my text, since they serve as a most comfortable evidence to God's people. There is a song the Jubilee singers used to sing which begins, "Swing low, sweet chariot." I am sure I do not know what the singers mean by the expression. And so I give it a meaning of my own and say that I am right glad when a promise swings so low that I can get into it.

Surely a promise from God is a chariot lined with love, drawn upward by winged steeds which bear our hearts aloft. And it is a mercy when it swings as low as this text—"To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembles at My Word."

"Trembles at My Word." This is the description to which I call your attention. Here are the elect men upon whom the Lord looks and with whom He dwells. They are not the chivalry of earth but the chosen of Heaven. They are not dancing but *trembling*. And yet they have more reason to be happy than those have who laugh away their days. Let us enquire concerning these chosen ones. First—who are these people that tremble at the Lord's Word? Secondly, let us enquire, why do they tremble? From where comes their lowly spirit? Their humiliation before the Lord? Then, next, we will give a glance at a comparison here used and answer the question—what does God compare them to? What does God say that He will do for them?

Let me read you the passage, "Thus says the Lord, The Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool: where is the house that you build unto Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things has My hand made and all those things have been, says the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembles at My Word." There you see that God prefers the Trembler to the Temple and makes to the contrite heart a larger promise than even to the consecrated shrine of His glory. May the Holy Spirit bless these meditations!

I. Aid me with your prayers while I try to answer the question—WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE THAT TREMBLE AT GOD'S WORD? I think I hear your hearts crying, "Oh, that we may be numbered among them!" Let me begin to answer the question by telling you who they are *not*. They are not a proud people—they do not cry, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" They are humbly hearing. Hearing the Word of God and inwardly reverencing the heavenly monitor. They are no longer careless and reckless, for the voice of the Lord has brought them to their bearings. They have bowed their heads before Jehovah and they listen with rapt attention to everything that He may speak. They are like the child Samuel when he said, "Speak, Lord. For Your servant hears." They are teachable and lowly, and by no means belong to the school who correct the Infallible and judge the unerring.

They are not a profane people, that is clear—they neither mock sin nor God's Word. It is a terrible sign of hardness of heart when a man can find no comic book so ready to his hand as Holy Scripture. Surely if men must play with words, I know not that they are always to be blamed. But they should find the word of man sufficient for their amusement and not take Jehovah's Word to be their racket ball. Oh, it is ill with a man's soul, be sure of that, when he can treat the Word of the Lord with lightness and regard it as no more than the word of Shakespeare or Spenser. Such are not the men that tremble at God's Word but very far from it.

They would not themselves care to be so described. In fact, they would scorn the idea of being afraid of the Book they despise. Some there are that are downright scoffers. They twist texts of Scripture. They pervert them to make mischief of them. They will hold up even the blessed Christ

of God to ridicule. And the Holy Spirit, although to speak ill of Him is a fearful thing, yet even He has not been free from their profane utterances. No, the proud man and the profane man are as far asunder as the poles from the man that trembles at God's Word.

I must put down the careless in the same list and say of the Lord's tremblers they are not indifferent people. We have among us a class who cause us great sorrow of heart. They are not likely to jest at God's Word, but yet it has no power over them. They do not scoff at it but they do not feed on it. They have too much thought and sense to become infidels. But yet they overlook the importance of the Truth which they accept. God's Book lies in their houses honored but unread. They do not much trouble to go and hear about its meaning. Or if through custom they become attendants at the House of God, they hear the Gospel but it goes in one ear and out the other.

Like the French king who was brought to London in great state and yet was only a prisoner to the Black Prince, so is the Bible bound in morocco and adorned with gilt but is kept in bonds. There is no practical regard to it, no weighing it, no considering it, no meditating upon it, no applying it to the conscience and the daily life. Those cannot be said to tremble at God's Word who neglect the great salvation. They put far from them a consideration of the Law of the Most High and live as if they had license given them to act as they please. O Friends, careless souls cannot be numbered with those that tremble at God's Word!

These were not a critical, skeptical people. They trembled at the Word and did not sit down on the throne of usurped infallibility and call the Scriptures to their bar. There are men abroad nowadays—I grieve to say some of them in the ministry—who take the Bible, not that it may judge them but that they may judge it. Their judgment weighs in its balances the wisdom of God Himself. They talk exceeding proudly and their arrogance exalts itself. O Friends, I know not how you feel about the prevailing skepticism of the age but I am heart-sick of it! I shun the place where I am likely to hear the utterances of men who do not tremble at God's Word. I turn away from the multitude of books which advocate doubt and error.

The evil is too painful for me. If I could be content to be an Ishmaelite and have my hand against every man, I might seek this company, for here I find every faculty of my being called to warfare. But as I love peace, it sickens and saddens me to meet with the enemies of my soul. If I knew that my mother's name would be defamed in certain company, I would keep out of it. If I knew that my father's character would be trailed in the mire, I would travel far not to hear a sound so offensive. I could wish to be deaf and blind rather than hear or read the modern falsehoods which, at this time, so often wound my spirit.

I feel more and more a tenderness for the Truth of God of the same sort as I would feel for the good name of my wife or my mother. I wish the modern revilers would have some compassion upon us old Believers to whom their talk is such torture. They might keep their doubts for home consumption. When a man was going to swear, a wise person bade him wait till he was further away from the town so that nobody might hear

him—it might cause grief to a Christian ear. When a man has anything to say against the eternal Truth of God, let him speak it to those who love to hear it—to his mates and admirers. But as for us, we are determined we will not be tortured by this kind of thing—we cannot endure it. And we will not remain among those who bespatter us with it.

“Oh but surely you are open to conviction?” they say. We are open to no conviction that shall be contrary to the Truth of God that has saved us from going down to the pit. We are open to no conviction that shall rob us of our eternal hope and of our glorying in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. We do not deliberate, for we have decided. To be forever holding the Truth of God as though it might yet turn out to be a lie were to lose all the comfort of it. To be forever prepared to desert our Lord and Master to follow some brand new philosopher would be perpetual disloyalty. No, we have not come thus far at a guess. We have known our Lord and His Truth for these forty years and it is not maybe, or maybe not, with us now. We neither speculate nor hesitate. But we know whom we have believed and by His Grace we will cleave to Him in life and in death.

Those who tremble at God’s Word are not presumptuous people who derive fictitious comfort from it. We meet at times with a vainly confident man who puts behind his back every warning and threat and only appropriates to himself every promise, though the promise is not made to him. Such a man steals the children’s bread and without question dares to put into his felon mouth what God has reserved for His own. This thief knows nothing of trembling at God’s Word—he takes much too much freedom with what the godly hardly dare to look upon. I will not say a word in favor of unbelief—it is a dreadful sin. But I would say very much in honor of that holy caution, that sacred bashfulness, that godly reverence which treats holy things with deep humility and careful jealousy.

Some of God’s dearest children are so afraid of presumption that they go too far the other way and hardly dare to be as confident as they might. Some of the holiest people that I know are afraid to say what they might say. For they scarcely dare to call themselves the children of God. On the other hand, I have heard others say what I fear they never ought to have said for they have boasted that they never had a doubt. I heard one minister of great experience, who believes in the doctrine of perfection, assert very plainly that he had lived in the midst of the Church of God for many years and that he had seen many persons who claimed to be perfect but he did not think that anyone agreed with them.

And, on the other hand, he had known intimately certain other persons whom he thought to be as nearly perfect as men could be but in every case they had been the first to disown all notion of personal perfection and mourned their own conscious imperfection. That is my observation, also. I distrust the men who publish their own perfection—I do not believe one of them but think less of them than I care to say. Deformity talks of its beauty, while true beauty mourns its deformity. I gaze with loving sympathy upon those known to me whom I liken to dew-laden lilies—they are so heavy with the dew of Heaven that they bow low till they almost touch the ground. It may need a trained eye to see the beauty of lowliness but assuredly for a chaste loveliness nothing can exceed it.

The lily of the valley has a charm about it that is not to be found in flowers which lift their glorious colors aloft. Give me such lilies, for I believe that among them Jesus lives and that He loves right well the men that are of a broken and a contrite spirit, that tremble at His Word. There is too much brass and too little gold about the perfection of the present day. It has a brazen forehead and has a way of sitting by the roadside—a way which in old times belonged not to true purity. I had rather tremble at God's Word than testify to my own excellence. We have had enough of witnesses to themselves—let us now have some witnesses for God.

I have largely told you what these tremblers are *not*. And I must now tell you a little of what these people *are*. They are people who do believe that there is a Word of God. There are plenty of persons who profess and call themselves Christians and yet do not believe that this sacred Book is the very Word of God. Say that it is inspired and they answer, "So is the Koran and so are the Vedas." They talk after this fashion—"This is the religious book of the ancient Hebrew nation. A very respectable book it is, but infallible, certainly not—the very Word of God, certainly not."

Well, then, we distinctly part company with such talkers. We can have no sort of fellowship with them in any measure or degree with regard to the things of God. They are to us as heathen men and publicans. If we are to come under the head of those that tremble at God's Word, we must believe that there is a Word of the Lord to tremble at, as we do most assuredly believe, let others talk as they may.

They are a people who are acquainted with God's Word. You cannot tremble, in the sense here meant, at a voice you have never heard or at a book you have never opened. There is nothing sacred in so much paper, ink and binding—nothing in the fashion of a volume to make you tremble—you must *hear* the Lord speak and know what He says to you. When, like the ancient king, you have found the Word of God and read its holy laws, *then* you will tremble. When you are astonished to find how much you have broken the Law and how short you have fallen even of the full enjoyment of the Gospel—*then* you tremble. An intelligent appreciation of the Word of God can alone make a man tremble at it. And the more he understands it, the more cause for trembling will he see in it.

Yes, and the more he enjoys it, the more will he tremble. The highest joy which it yields to mortal men is attended with a reverent awe and a holy trembling before God. If the Believer went beyond the enjoyment of the literal Word and saw the Incarnate Word Himself in all the splendor of His Person, he would tremble still more. For what did John say—"When I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead." A sight of the Incarnate Word would create even a greater trembling than the full understanding of the Word as it is written and revealed. Yet such trembling is a sign of Divine Grace and by no means to be censured.

But what does this trembling mean? Believe me, it does not mean a slavish fear. They that tremble at God's Word at the first may do so, because the Word threatens them with death. But afterwards, as they advance and grow in Divine Grace and become familiar with the God of Love and enter into the secret of His Covenant, they tremble for a very different reason. They tremble because they have a holy reverence of God and con-

sequently of that Word in which resides so much of the power and majesty of the Most High. These are the men of whom we are going to speak at this time—these are they that reverence the Word, who would not have a syllable of it touched, who regard it as being Divine after its measure and therefore sacred as the skirts of Deity.

What God has spoken bears a portion of His majesty about it and we acknowledge that majesty. I say that these choice spirits are a people that all their lives long continue to tremble at the Word of the Lord. George Fox, the famous founder of the Society of Friends, was called a “Quaker” for no other reason than this—that often, when the Spirit of God was upon him and he spoke the Word with power, he would quake from head to foot beneath the burden of the message. It is an honorable title. No man need be ashamed to quake when Moses said, “I exceedingly fear and quake.”

In the Presence of God a man may well tremble. Surely he is worse than the devil if he does not. For the devils believe and tremble. Demons go the length of that. And he that knows God and has any sense of His infinite power and inconceivable purity and justice must tremble before Him. I believe George Fox not only quaked, himself, but he made others quake. And if we tremble at God’s Word we shall make others tremble. True power, when it rests upon us, will discover our own weakness but it will not itself be hindered.

II. I have described these tremblers so far as my scant knowledge and brief time will allow—the time has now come to enquire, WHY DO THEY TREMBLE? I have been trenching upon this field of enquiry already. They do not tremble because they are going to be lost. Those who are going to be lost are pretty generally free from trembling—“there are no bands in their death. But their strength is firm.” I would, my hardened Hearer, that you did tremble. And because you do not tremble for yourself I tremble for you. Oh, that you judged yourself, that you might not be judged! I would that you condemned yourself, that God might acquit you. I would that you were horribly afraid. For then the great cause for fear would be over. See how the text blesses all the contrite and the trembling. And, when you have seen it, seek to be among them.

God’s people tremble, first, because of His exceeding majesty. Note what became of Ezekiel, of Daniel, of Habakkuk, of John the beloved, when they had visions of God. No man could see God’s face and live. There must always be some sort of cloud between. Through the veil of Christ’s manhood we see God and live. But God absolutely is beyond all creature understanding—the sight is far too much for us. Even a glimpse of His garments is something overwhelming! They that have seen God at any time have trembled at Him and at His Word. For the Word of the Lord is full of majesty.

There is a Divine royalty about every sentence of Scripture which the true Believer feels and recognizes, and therefore trembles before it. They tremble at the searching power of God’s Word. Do you ever come into this place and sit down in the pew and say, “Lord, grant that Your Word may search me and try me, that I may not be deceived”? Certain people must always have sweets and comforts. But God’s wise children do not wish for

these in undue measure. Daily bread we ask for, not daily sugar. Wise Believers pray that the Word of the Lord may prove to be quick and powerful and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of their hearts. That it may do with them what the butcher does with the animal when he cuts it down the middle and lays the very entrails open to inspection—yes, cleaves the mid-bone and lets the very marrow be seen.

That is what God's Word has done for you and me, I am sure. And when it has done so, we have trembled. I can personally bear witness to the way in which the solemn Word of the Lord makes my whole soul to tremble to its center. The Word of the Lord has cut very close, sometimes, with many of you and made you cry, "Am I saved or not?" The man that did never tremble before the Lord does not know Him. It is very easy to take the matter of your soul's salvation for granted and yet to be mistaken. It is infinitely better to ask your way twenty times than miss your road home. And I do not blame the man, who with holy anxiety says, "Is it so, or is it not so? for I want to know and to be sure." O Beloved, I am not sorry that you tremble before the refining fire of sacred Truth. I should be much distressed if you did not.

God's searching Word makes man tremble—so does the Word when it is in the form of a threat. Believe me, dear Friends, the Word of God about the doom of sinners is very dreadful. Hence, there are some that try to pare them down and cut the solemn meaning out of them. And then they say, "I could not rest comfortably if I believed the orthodox doctrine about the ruin of man." Most true, but what right have we to rest comfortably? What grounds or reason can there be why we ever should have a comfortable thought with regard to the doom of those who refuse the Savior? If with that dreadful doom before us which Holy Scripture threatens to ungodly men we do grow far too indifferent, to what will the Church of God come when it has torn out the doctrine from the Bible and given it up?

Why, sinners will be more hardened and professors more trifling. He who seeks comfort at the expense of Truth will be a fool for his pains. Blessed in the end will that man be who can endure the Word of the Lord, when it is all thunder and flaming fire—and does not rebel against it, but bows before it. If it makes you tremble, it was meant to make you tremble. One said, after he had heard Massillon, "What an eloquent sermon. How gloriously he preached!" Massillon replied, "Then he did not understand me. Another sermon has been thrown away." If a sermon concerning the future punishment of sin does not make the hearer tremble, it is clear that it is not of God. For Hell is not a thing to talk about without trembling. My inmost desire is to feel more and more the overwhelming power of Jehovah's judgment against sin so that I may preach with all the deeper solemnity the danger of the impenitent and with tears and trembling may beseech them to be reconciled.

He that knows the Lord aright also trembles with fear lest he should break God's Law. He sees what a perfect Law it is, and how spiritual it is—how it overlaps the whole of human life—and the man cries, "It is high. I cannot attain unto it. O my God, help me, I pray You." He views the Law with reverence. He admires with a sacred fear. He trembles at God's Word, not because he dislikes it but because he cannot bear to be

so far off from compliance with its righteous demands. He sees the Law fulfilled in Christ, and there is his peace. But yet the peace is mingled with deepest awe.

“Oh,” says one, “if he trembles like that, it shows he does not know the love of God.” It shows that he *does* know it. Have you heard of the boy whose father was exceedingly fond of him? He was asked by some other boys to go and rob an orchard with them but he said, “No, I will not go.” They replied, “Your father won’t scold you, nor beat you. You may safely come.” To this he answered, “What? Do you think because my father loves me, that therefore I will grieve him? No, I love him and I love to do what he wishes me to do. Because he loves me I fear to vex him.” That is like the child of God. The more he knows of God’s love, the more he trembles at the thought of offending the Most High.

We, also, tremble lest we should miss the promises when they are spread out before us, sparkling like priceless gems. We hear of some who “could not enter in because of unbelief.” And we are taken with trembling lest we should be like they. We tremble lest there should be any passage of Scripture or doctrine of Revelation that we are not able to believe—we pray for Divine Grace that we may never stagger at anything in the Word. We tremble lest we should misbelieve. And tremble more—if you are as I am—lest we should mistake and misinterpret the Word.

I believe Martin Luther would have faced the infernal Fiend, himself, without a fear. And yet we have his own confession that his knees often knocked together when he stood up to preach. He trembled lest he should not be faithful to God’s Word. Angels have a holy fear of God and well may you and I tremble when engaged in His service. To preach the whole Truth is an awful charge. It was as much as even the Son of man could do to fully discharge His mission here below. You and I, who are ambassadors for God, must not trifle—we must *tremble* at God’s Word.

III. Now we have got through the description of these trembling ones and we have shown why they so exceedingly fear and quake. Our third question was to be, WHAT DOES GOD COMPARE THEM TO? Hearken, for here is a thing to be noted and thought upon.

The Lord compares the tremblers at His Word to a temple. “Where is the house that you build unto Me? And where is the place of My rest? To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembles at My Word.” They are His temple. And to the Jews the temple was something very wonderful. There stood the holy and beautiful house, the joy of the whole earth. Lined with strong wood and overlaid with pure gold and its hewn stones put together without hammer or axe. To the Israelite’s mind there never was such a building as this. Yet the glorious Jehovah speaks lightly of the temple and says, “Where is the house that you build unto Me? And where is the place of My rest? To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembles at My Word.”

So then, a man that trembles at God’s Word is God’s temple. And he is emphatically so. He is so beyond the sense in which the house of Solomon was thus honored. His heart is full of worship. His trembling is, in itself, worship. As the angels veil their faces in the presence of the Lord, so do

good and true men veil theirs, trembling all the while, as they worship Him that lives forever. As the temple, even to the posts of the doors, moved at the presence of the God of the whole earth, so does every part of our manhood become awe-stricken when He that dwells between the cherubim shines forth within our spirit. Well may we tremble to whom the Infinite draws near! The ungodly in their brutishness may be free from the fear of God, but the man worships with fear and trembling to whom Divine Grace has given a holy sensitiveness.

Note that the Lord does not merely compare us with the temple but He *prefers* us to the temple. And further, He prefers us even to the great temple of the universe not made with human hands, which He Himself sets so much above the house that Solomon built. The Lord says, "The Heaven is My Throne and the earth is My footstool." And yet He seems to say, "All this is not My rest, nor the place of My abode. But with this man will I dwell, even with him that trembles at My Word." The Lord prefers the trembling spirit not only to the golden house below but to the heavenly house above!

The Lord speaks of Heaven as His Throne. And what is the trembler at God's Word but God's Throne? God is evidently enthroned within Him. Under a sense of the Divine Presence, the stupendous weight of Deity has crushed the man and made him tremble in every part of his nature. It is the glory of the Revelation which causes the sinking of heart, the shrinking of the soul. As for the earth, it is Jehovah's footstool. But so is this lowly, trembling man. He is willing to be God's footstool, willing to be as the dust beneath God's feet. Who is there among you, my Beloved in the Lord, that would not feel highly honored if he might be permitted to be as the footstool of the Infinite Majesty?

It is too high a place for us! To lie as a doormat at His temple gate for the poorest of His saints to wipe his shoes upon, is an honor greater than we deserve—we feel it to be so. At any rate, I speak for myself. When God is near me I feel as if it were an honor to be the servant of the least of His poor people. "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness." Yet, look! The Lord makes His Throne and footstool out of the heart and conscience of the man that trembles at His Word. It is a sublime comparison—you are the temples of God and something more. The more you study these verses the more you will be astonished.

And what does God say He will do? He says, "To this man will I look"—look first with approval. The Lord seems to say, "I will not look on proud Pharisees. I will not look on the presumptuous. But I will look at the lowly trembling penitent. I will fix My eye upon him. He shall be countenanced by Me. I will lift up the light of My countenance upon him. He is right with Me and I will show Myself gracious to him." It is right that the creature should tremble at the Creator—right that the sinner should tremble before his Judge. It is right that a child should give due honor to his august Father—therefore will the Lord look upon such a one with approval. Sweetly does Miss Steele pray in her song—

***"Low at Your feet my soul would lie,
Here safety dwells and peace Divine;***

***Still let me live beneath Your eye,
For life, eternal life is Yours."***

The text means, next, that He will look upon him with care. You know how we use the expression, "I will look to Him"? Thus will God look to the man that trembles at His Word. You that can stand alone may look to yourselves. But he that trembles shall have God to look to him. When you are afraid, cry, "Hold You me up and I shall be safe," and your tottering footsteps shall be firmer than a giant's tread. When you grow so self-satisfied that as the young man you can run without weariness, you shall both be weary and fall. Oh, trust not in yourselves but tremble before the Lord and He will look to you and see that no evil shall come near unto you!—

***"With sacred awe pronounce His name,
Whom words nor thoughts can reach,
A contrite heart shall please Him more
Than noblest forms of speech."***

The look of the Lord shall mean a third thing, namely, delight. We had a part of that in the term approbation—it is marvelous that God should take delight in the man that trembles at His Word. The Lord has no such pleasure in the careless and carnally secure. He that goes tramping through his Christian career as if he were somebody and all were safe is no favorite of Heaven. The man who takes things easily and self-confidently, with a kind of happy-go-lucky feeling that all must end well with him—he has no consideration from God. Have you seen the fine professor who has despised the tender in heart? Mark that man, for the end of that man will be a crash—"great shall be the fall thereof."

Have you heard the boastful preacher, self-sufficient as to his own knowledge and eloquence? Mark that man also—for his end is confusion. But watch that trembling one, whose only hope is in Christ, whose only strength is in the Lord—he shall be sustained. Watch the one who never pounces upon a privilege as if it were his by right of merit, but humbly accepts it as a gift to the unworthy—he is the man that shall stand in the evil day. He that goes through life fearing is the man who has nothing to fear. "Happy is the man that fears always," says the Word of the Lord. He that is afraid of falling under trial and cries, "Lead me not into temptation but deliver me from evil"—he shall be kept from sin.

But he who rashly rushes into temptation shall fall by it. He who watches by day as well as by night, puts on his armor when there seems no war, and carries his sword always drawn—even when there is no enemy visible—oh, that is the man who shall cope with the deadly enemy of souls! The Holy Spirit is in him and the Lord has regard unto him. He shall not fall by the hand of the enemy. Though oftentimes he trembles, he shall be safe at last. Glory shall thus be given to God that helped him. The self-confident would not have glorified God if he had succeeded, for he would have thrown up his cap inside the gates of Heaven, and magnified his own name.

As for this man, he doffs his crown. "Non nobis, Domine," he cries, when he enters Heaven. "Not unto us, not unto us," is still his cry. Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood. Unto Him that kept us from falling and preserved us to His kingdom and glory, unto

Him shall be all honor. Every man who this day trembles at God's Word says "Amen" to this. God bless you, my Beloved. The Lord Himself look to you and dwell with you! Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

BELOVED READERS—Next week I hope to publish a sermon newly delivered at the Tabernacle. And I trust I may have the privilege of continuing to preach at home, Sabbath by Sabbath, for many months to come. I beg of those who have profited by the sermons to ask for me a fresh anointing of God's Spirit now that I begin anew to minister in the great congregation. I would gladly see the Word of the Lord glorified "by signs following," in the conversion of thousands of sinners and the building up of the people of God. These great blessings are ready for bestowal and only await our asking. Let us importunately pray.

The great works which I am called upon to superintend require so much care that I tremble as I return to my place to reassume my burden. With great earnestness I beg my kind friends to hold up my hands by their prayers. If you have judged me faithful, entreat the Lord for me that I faint not.

Yet, in addition, I cannot close without acknowledging the good hand of the Lord which has kept me to now and will still keep me, despite all adversaries. The Lord is faithful, whatever men may be. Let us trust in Him and not be afraid. Into the thick darkness which now hovers over much of the Church and blinds many of her leaders, we advance with uplifted banner, believing that the gloom will vanish before the eternal light. CRUX LUX. The doctrine of the Cross is light. This will we uphold until death.

Yours ever heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Mentone, February 16, 1889.

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A NEW ORDER OF PRIESTS AND LEVITES NO. 992

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

***“And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, says the Lord.”
Isaiah 66:21.***

THIS chapter is surrounded with critical difficulties, and yet it is full of spiritual instruction. The verse before us is, by some, referred to Gentiles, and supposed to mean that the Lord promises that He will take out of the heathen nations a people whom He will make into priests and Levites. Others would say it points to the Jews, rejected for their unbelief and dispersed in judgment among all nations. When their own Messiah came, it was not with a devout faith, but with a profane imprecation they said, “His blood be on us, and on our children.” The curse they invoked did come upon them. The retribution they challenged has been meted out to them in full measure. To the letter it was verified.

Have you ever read how, when Titus was besieging Jerusalem, five hundred Jews were sometimes crucified in a day? Do you not remember that Josephus, speaking as an eyewitness, said, “*There wanted room for crosses, and crosses for bodies*”? To this day their children are scattered in all lands, and have found no rest for the soles of their feet. But they are to be restored—they are to be brought back to their own land, and to worship God in His holy mountain. And in the latter days, when they are restored, then will God take of them for priests and Levites.

To me it appears of very small consequence to which this verse refers, for in Christ Jesus there is neither Gentile nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision. And this promise seems to me to stand good to the whole human race considered in its fallen state. “I will take of *them* for priests and for Levites, says the Lord.” Under the Gospel dispensation God will select both out of Jews and Gentiles a chosen people who shall stand before Him *spiritually* as the priests and the Levites stood before Him typically.

Think for a minute of the compass of this great promise. Evidently a high honor is here conferred. The connection leads us to see that not only a great promise but likewise a great privilege is implied. What is this privilege? It is that *we* shall be priests and Levites. Now the priests or Levites were persons set apart to be God’s peculiar property. When the first-born were spared in Egypt, God claimed the first-born to be His own, and He took the tribe of Levi to represent the first-born. They were to be the Lord’s. Though all Israel belonged to God, yet the tribe of Levi was especially selected and particularly appointed to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.

And of this tribe of Levi, chief among them was the house of Aaron to minister in the sanctuary as priests. So now, glory be to God, He takes out of all nations a people that are to be peculiarly His own—His own by

election, as He chose them—His own by redemption, as He bought them—His own by endowment through the regenerating and sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit. “They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels.” His own, therefore, before time, and after time shall close. “I will take of them for priests and for Levites, says the Lord.”

Being thus set apart as the Lord’s property, the priests and Levites lived only for Divine service. While others were engaged with their trade or upon their farm, the Levites were attending to the tabernacle or temple, and the priests in their courts were slaughtering bullocks and lambs, and offering them to God. Or they had other duties of a kindred order, by reason of the charge given them of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel. Anyway, it was in sacred things that they were occupied.

So now it is the duty of *every man* to serve the Lord, but, alas, man will not! And therefore God takes unto Himself a people out of all nations, and kindreds, and tongues and He ordains them to stand before Him continually, to wait on His commands, and to do His bidding. Thus He puts upon their shoulders His easy yoke and weights them with His light burden. And they become His willing servants—that their life may be for His Glory, and that their desire, as well as their duty, may be to serve Him with heart and strength so long as they have any being. In this sense, then, happy is the man who is set apart to the Divine service, a priest and a Levite unto God.

Further than this, the priests and the Levites enjoyed the privilege of drawing near to God—nearer than the rest of the people in that typical dispensation. While the people stood without, the Levites were busy inside. One of them, the chief of the tribe, and the High Priest before the Lord for all the tribes, was permitted and commanded to go into the Most Holy Place within the veil. And you know that the holy places made with hands are figures of the true, even of Heaven itself.

In like manner there is a people to be found on earth at this day whom God has chosen to draw near unto Him. In Christ Jesus they who sometimes were afar off are made near by the blood of Christ. The same precious blood that is applied to their conscience is sprinkled on the Mercy Seat and therefore they have access to the Father. Oh, happy are they, who, like the priests and Levites, love dwelling in the Lord’s House, and praising Him, who can say—

***“Here, Lord, I find settled rest
While others go and come.
No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home.”***

Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations—we are a people near unto You—made near by affinity with the Son of God. We are brought near by the blood, led near by the Spirit of God, kept near, and rejoicing to be near—for here is our honor and comfort—to be near unto God. We are made priests and Levites because we are claimed as God’s portion, prepared for God’s service, and admitted to a near familiarity with Him. There are some such to be found in this place today, whom God has taken from among the Gentiles to be priests and Levites unto Him.

But priests and Levites had two works to do—something to do towards God *for men*, and something to do towards men *for God*. They were engaged to do something towards God for men, and so they offered the sacrifices that were brought to the door of the tabernacle, whether according to the general ordinances, or to any special vows. Spiritually minded, they were much engaged in intercession for the rest of Israel. So there is a people to be found this day who offer unto God acceptable prayer and praise, and in answer to their prayer unnumbered blessings come down upon the sons of men.

I trust there are some here that have power with God in prayer. You are the king's remembrancers. You make mention of His name and keep not silent. You cry to God for Sodom, and yet more hopefully you cry to God for Jerusalem—your prayer ceases not, and God's Grace and favor always follow it. In this sense God is constantly taking out, even from among the vilest of the vile, a people whom He makes to be priests and Levites for men towards Himself. Another part of their office consisted in speaking for God to the people—"For the priest's lips should keep knowledge."

As for the Levites, they were as ushers in the schools and tutors in the families of Israel. Among the Levites were found those scribes who became the instructors of the people, the copyists of the Law, and the expounders of its statutes and ordinances. They were ministers who opened up to the people, as Ezra did, the knotty points of the Old Covenant, and expounded the Word of God. So not all of us in the same degree, but all of us in a measure, are to be teachers of God's revealed Truth, even as He has taught us.

And He has, in this place, and throughout the world, taken out a certain company whom He has made to speak as His mouth to the sons of men—men of His own choosing and His own sending—who are as priests and Levites for His name. They claim no priestly office as though they could absolve the sinner—they leave that with Christ, the First-Born of His Father's house and the chief Rabbi of all the Lord's chosen seed—but as teachers and instructors. They are in the midst of the world the priests and Levites of God.

I have thus shown what the promise means. God will take out of the Jews and Gentiles a people whom He will bring very near to Himself, and make use of for His own sacred purposes. The great point is this—it seems to be mentioned here as a matter of surprise that God should take *any* of them—of the persons here mentioned. Of the sinful, backsliding, transgressing Jews, or of the blind, dark, benighted, heathen Gentiles—that He should take *them*, and make them to be priests and Levites before Him.

Now that is parallel to the fact that God does take some of the most unlikely persons who seem to be the most unsuitable of all, and make these to be His faithful and honored servants among the sons of men. I shall first notice *that fact*. Then, *the reason for it*. And then, *the lessons from it*.

I. First, I notice that God does, to the astonishment of men, TAKE SOME WHOM HE MAKES PRIESTS AND LEVITES TO HIMSELF. This is a fact. Now, there *are* priests and Levites that God never took. There have

been such in all ages. There were those in the days of Aaron who said—“You take too much upon you, you sons of Levi.” And when they stood before the Lord with their censers, “the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up.” There were those in the days of Elijah. When he stood by the altar of the Lord, the priests of Baal, in great numbers, stood by their altar, offering prayer to Baal.

You know how God had no regard to their sacrifice. They were the church established by law—but, for all that, Elijah the Nonconformist put them to the rout, and maintained the worship of the invisible God of Israel firm and faithful to the end. So in our Savior’s days there were priests and Levites—men taught and instructed in the Law of God, and these were the very men who conspired together against Him. They took counsel how they might put Him to death. They stirred up the people to say, “Not this man, but Barabbas.”

And on down to this present day there are those legitimate priests and Levites—at least, those who call themselves so—whom God has never taken, upon whom He has never laid His hand, upon whom His Holy Spirit has never descended. They speak, but He speaks not by them. They administer ordinances, but He gives not Divine Grace to the ordinances by their hands. And such there always will be, doubtless, till Christ comes—but *they* are not spoken of in the text. The text says, “I will take,” and it is only those whom God Himself takes and chooses among men that are the *real* priests and Levites that serve Him.

Observe, according to the text, *men* have nothing to do with the selection—for here it is said, “I will also *take* of them.” Not, “their parents shall bring them up to it.” Not, “those who shall be looked out as the most fit and proper men on account of some natural bent and bias, or gift and talent,” but, “*I will take.*” God’s priesthood in the world is a priesthood of His own choosing, of His own setting apart, of His own anointing. “He has made us kings and priests unto God.” The Church is a royal priesthood, not *of* man, neither *by* man, nor of the *will* of man, nor of *blood*, nor of *birth*—it is all of God’s choosing.

This sacred and consecrated band of priests and Levites, and all that serve God effectually and acceptably, are men whom He has Himself chosen to the work. He Himself has done it and only His own will as been consulted in the matter. In their case, it appears from the text, that whatever was unfit in their character has been overcome by Divine Grace. “I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, says the Lord.” If God takes them for Levites, He *makes* them Levites. If He chooses them for priests, He *makes* them priests. So, glory be to His name! When He chose you, my dear Brother, when He chose you, my dear Sister, to be His servants, to be His priests and His Levites, He gave you the Grace you needed to serve Him..

He found in you no natural fitness, no suitability—but in fitness for sin, a suitability to go astray—and to become a brand for the burning. But if there is a fitness in you to serve Him on earth and in Heaven, it is His Grace that has done it. It is His Grace speaking in all its wondrous majesty—“I will take of them for priests and for Levites”—which has effected

in you the great transformation, making in you all things new, and thus qualifying you to become the servants of the Most High.

In some persons this natural *inaptitude* and *unfitness* for the Lord's work has been more apparent than in others. They have been men of rough exterior, unhallowed life. Their education neglected, their passions wild and lawless, their tastes low and groveling—yet, for all that—God has taken from among such men some who in a special manner, even beyond the rest of God's servants, have become as priests and Levites unto Him. He has sometimes selected women, in whom there seemed to be no suitability for His Grace, to make them matrons in the Church. And men, who seemed to be ringleaders in the service of Satan, to make them very captains of the Lord's hosts!

They had no inbred faculty, no natural genius that qualified them to become the instruments of righteousness—as I have said before, it was the *reverse* of this. Their career was not foreshadowed by any instinct with which they were born. Nor was it aided by any training they received in childhood. The God who chose them gave the Grace they required at their second birth—and subdued all the evil that was in them by the rich discipline of His spiritual operations—in order to qualify them for efficient service.

I thank God, I do remember in my soul some dear Brethren who have been made eminent ministers of the Gospel, of whom, if anyone had said they would ever have preached the Gospel, none would have believed it. Not to mention the living, the men of today, go back to the early days of John Newton, an earnest preacher, a famous Evangelist, not to add, a sweet poet. Almost a model for the ministry was John Newton, but once a blasphemer and injurious. Turn farther back, to John Bunyan, on the village green, with his tip-cat on the Sunday, with all a drunkard's vices and sins, and foul-mouthed in his profanity—yet John Bunyan becomes an eminent proclaimer of the Gospel—and the author of a matchless allegory which has served to guide many a pilgrim to Heaven.

Turn farther back, to Luther, most earnest as a Romanist for all the letter of the Law, diligent in every ceremony, superstitious to a high degree, yet afterwards the bold proclaimer of the Gospel of the Grace of God. Turn to Augustine, in youth of corrupt and vicious propensities, according to his own confession, to the grief of his mother Monica, yet called by Sovereign Grace to be one of the fathers of the Church, and a notable exponent of sound doctrine.

Look yet farther back to the Apostle Paul breathing out threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. Like a huge wild beast, making havoc of the Church, but suddenly struck down, and almost as suddenly raised up a new man, and ordained (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father) to be a chosen vessel unto Christ, to bear His name unto the Gentiles.

“I will also take of them,” the most unlikely and unfit, according to human judgment. “I will also take of them for priests and for Levites unto Me.” And where the service has not taken the form of preaching, we can remember some whom God has made eminent in prayer. Never account prayer second to preaching. No doubt prayer in the Christian Church is as

precious as the utterance of the Gospel. To speak to God for men is a part of the Christian priesthood that should never be despised. Surely I have heard some prayers of those whom none would ever have expected to pray, such as I have not heard from those who, from their youth up, have been accustomed to the language of devotion—moved with energy and full of fervor, like Elijah.

Or, shall I say it, they have become in spiritual force nerved as Samson was with physical strength. In their prayers they have seemed to take hold of the pillars of the temple of Satan and pull them down upon their enemies. They have been so mighty as to wrestle with God and prevail. God has taken of them—that is, even of the prayerless, and the careless, and the blaspheming—and He has made these to be priests and Levites unto Him.

And in all other holy service I think I can remember eminent men who out of weakness were made strong—from simpletons they were changed into sages, or, rescued from the dregs of infamy—they became paragons of virtue. In their unregenerate state as bitter fruit, apples of Sodom that crumbled into dust and turned to ashes, yet so transformed by the renewing of their minds that they bore the richest clusters of choicest fruit to the praise and glory of the Great Husbandman!

“I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, says the Lord.” There is the fact. You need not that I enlarge upon it. While a false priesthood still lives (and always will), God has His elect people who are His royal priesthood among the sons of men. They are discharging regal functions and sacred offices among the sons of men in His name, and before His face. And these He oftentimes takes out from the least likely of mankind.

II. And now, secondly, as to THE REASON OF THE FACT. Does He not do this to display His mercy—His great and infinite mercy? That those who have provoked Him to wrath should become the men in whom He should show forth His loving kindness—men to be pardoned, men to be washed, to be sanctified—and then men to be put in trust of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Does not this reveal and illustrate the high prerogative of Sovereign Grace? “Unto me,” says the Apostle, “who am less than the least of all saints, is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

It is a great Grace to be permitted to preach the Gospel. I have sometimes said to you that when the prodigal came back to his father and was received into his father’s house, no earthly parent, though he had quite forgiven him all the wildness of his son’s adventure, could wholly forget the waywardness of his disposition. He might condone the past without confiding in him for the future. If it were necessary to send one of the sons to market with a bag of money, the good old father would, in all probability, say to himself, “I will send the elder son with it—he is better to be trusted. I would hardly like to put such a responsibility upon the young lad who has so lately been reclaimed.”

I can fancy, without uttering a word to his younger son, he would, discreetly (as you would say), trust the other with any weighty concerns. But our heavenly Father—oh, how He forgives us! He leaves no back reckon-

ings—even though we used to be such sinners, some of us, and so injurious—after He forgave us, He committed to our charge not merely silver and gold, the perishable resources of time, but the priceless treasure of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! He allowed us to go and tell others, “the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

See you not the impure giving lessons on chastity, the intemperate teaching chastity? And mark you not how he who persecuted the disciples in times past, now preaches the faith he once destroyed? Oh, what deep mercy there is in Jesus! What wonderful Grace there is in giving His commissions that those that cursed Him, themselves, should intercede with Him for others! That those that despised Him should be permitted to honor Him! That those who broke His Sabbaths, should, nevertheless, be helpful to His people in hallowing the Lord’s Day! That those who despised His Word, and put it behind their backs, should be the men to open it, and display the sweetness of it to their fellow men! Is not this Grace?

I think every time Paul preached Jesus Christ he would say to himself—“I used to call Him the Nazarene. I abhorred Him and used opprobrious language. Here is great mercy, boundless mercy, that He should take *me* to be His servant, permit *me* to labor for His people and suffer for His sake.” Next to you, do you not think that the Lord loves to display His power? Men who are tamers of wild beasts will frequently, when they have subdued a lion, take delight in showing to the people how obedient that lion will be to them, and how every word that the lion-tamer chooses to say, it will regard and pay attention to.

Thus when the Lord takes a great sinner—after He has tamed him, removed his heart of stone, and given him a heart of flesh—He desires to show how, without the use of the whip, without a threatening look or an angry word, He causes His enemy to become His diligent servant, His earnest Friend! O Brethren, it shows the power of love on a man when he is so broken down that the things he sneered at he now preaches with all his might! Surely it showed the power of Divine Grace when Paul avowed Christ openly, and vehemently preached—exposing himself to persecution and death—that same Gospel which his soul had previously nauseated! Yes, which his zeal, full of bitterness, had kindled to exterminate.

God takes great sinners, and then appoints and qualifies them to be priests and Levites in order that He might show the exceeding greatness of His power to us who believe. Again, does not God do this to show His sovereignty? Can we ever forget that attribute of the Almighty? Divine Grace, while it comes freely to us, is dispensed freely by God, according to the good pleasure of His will. I should like to hear that text thundered throughout Christendom—“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

No man has any right to the mercy of God. We have all sinned ourselves into rebellion—the only rights we have are the right to be condemned, and the right to be cast into Hell. All the rights of man that he can appeal to God for in equity are merged in the wrongs for which he is responsible. If the Lord has mercy, it is His own will to do it—He can withhold it if it pleases Him. So He selects the most degraded—those that have gone farthest from Him—and takes them into His Church!

No, more—He advances them into eminent positions of service in His Church, that all His people may know that the Most High rules in the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of this earth, and none can stay His hand, or say to Him, “What are You doing?” He lifts up the poor from the dunghill and sets him among princes, even among the princes of His people! His mercy, power, and sovereignty are displayed when He takes of them to be priests and Levites. But does He not thereby secure to Himself the most loving service?

I have sometimes thought (I hope I am not censorious) as I have observed with pain the superficiality of a great deal of what is called ministry in these days—that kind of superficiality, I mean, in which little is said about the corruption and depravity of the heart. Little about the experience of the child of God when under the Law. Little, far too little, about the Glory of that Grace that takes such worms of the dust to make them one with Christ. I have often thought that this avoidance of, not to say this aversion to, deep plowing, may be accounted for by the fact that the preachers, themselves, probably had not been suffered to go very far into outward sin.

They never had any very deep Law-work upon their souls—never had much awakening of conscience, nor felt much of the powers of the world to come. They got their religion very easily. And so knowing little of soul-humbling sensations, themselves, they could not go very deeply into the experience of the children of God. When the Lord calls a grievous sinner to make a gracious example of him, it is just the reverse. The man who has done business in deep waters knows what sin means. Tortured with a sense of his own crimes, he has been like those wretched culprits who surrender themselves to justice, because their conscience makes liberty chafe them.

He *knows* what pardon means, for he has found peace after great bitterness, and got remission after the gnawing of despair. He knows what the conflicts of God’s people are, for he has had many fierce encounters with the lusts that beset him within and the temptations that assailed him from without. And now, when he opens his mouth, the testimony he bears is from an inwrought experience—he speaks of things which he has tasted and handled of the good Word of God.

John Newton, to whom I referred just now, could not do otherwise than livingly and lovingly preach the Word of God. You could not have brooked from him a dainty essay or a flowery sermon, because nothing else would have consorted and accorded with his experience but a faithful tale of the way the Lord had led him, and a forcible exposition of what the Lord had taught him. He had been such a sinner that it *must* be Grace which saved him. And he would have belied all his inward feelings if he had not proclaimed the Grace of God.

And so with Bunyan—if he had not tearfully wept over sinners and preached Jesus Christ in His fullness, as the Savior of Jerusalem sinners, he would have been opposing all that animated his own breast, and all that burned and glowed for utterance. God, therefore, takes some of these men who have gone far astray that He might have warm-hearted, intensely earnest men, who must proclaim the Gospel because they have

felt its power. They love much because they have had much forgiven. They preach of Grace because they need much Grace, and they lift up high the bronze serpent among the sin-bitten hosts of men because they have been sin-bitten themselves and remember it! They have looked and been cured, and they still remember the cure, and rejoice in it.

Another reason why the Lord takes the vilest of men to make them the saintliest is that He might openly triumph over Satan. How the devil must feel defeated when such a man as Saul is taken straight away from persecuting to preaching! Surely it makes Satan bite his chains and gnash his teeth when he loses his servants so. Just when he has trained them up and got them into fine condition for doing mischief, in comes the Officer of Divine Grace, arrests them, and changes their hearts. You know none ever do the devil so much mischief as those who once did him service. They know the ins and outs of his castle—where to attack it.

They understand so much of his devices and tactics that they become all the more powerful adversaries when they are converted. All Heaven rings with rapture when a great sinner is saved! And all Hell howls with dismay when one of the arch host bows down to kiss the feet of Christ and receive the mercy of God. Glory be to God when He takes those that would have been deepest damned and sets them highest among the saved on earth to be priests and Levites unto Him! By these means also He secures another end—He encourages poor penitents. For when a sinner, under a sense of sin, meets with a Brother in Christ who was like himself once—but is now living near to God and serving Him acceptably—he is much encouraged.

“Why,” he thinks to himself, “is this how God receives sinners when they turn to Him? Perhaps He will receive me.” And if he gets into conversation with one of those whom God has made priests and Levites, he says, “Tell me what the Lord has done for your soul.” And the minister, being a man of like passions, and having had like experiences, delights to describe the works and ways of God with hardened sinners and old offenders. And then the man who is seeking finds in the other a guide who is touched with the feeling of his infirmity, is very helpful to him, and much blessed of God to enter into the secrets of his heart and lead him to the Cross.

If there is here some great rebel against God, I think he ought to take encouragement to turn unto the Lord and live, for surely, when God so treats His most defiant enemies as to make them His most honored ministers, there should be some comfort for the great sinner to seek the Lord while yet He waits to be gracious! And do you not think this is done very much for the encouragement of the Church of God? I know, as myself one of its humble members, I often need to be solaced by seeing what God’s hand can do.

We ought to walk by faith, and so I trust we do. But when we see sinners converted, it gives zest to our fellowship and zeal to our enterprise. We all of us feel the happier for it! I hardly expect to see as many converts in the Tabernacle as there used to be. We have had so very many brought to God that those of you who are left, I almost fear, have resisted overmuch the wooing and warnings of Divine Love. Indeed, there are so few comparatively left that we have not the opportunities we once had when

the mass of the congregation was not converted. Perhaps there are few of you whom God has not blessed. And I do long to see a fresh ingathering of converts—it would make my heart glad—and it would make all the Church glad if we heard of some great sinners being saved.

I pray to God sometimes that He would save a great multitude of the priests of the Church of Rome and the Church of England. He did in olden times bring a great multitude of the priests to believe the Gospel, and why should He not again? If He wills to call to Himself some of the lowest of the low, and the vilest of the vile, and make them wonders of His Grace, His Omnipotent fiat shall be instantly obeyed. Why should He not? Why should He not? He has done so—why should He not again? He has done so, I say, and the text says, “*I will take of them for priests and for Levites.*”

Why should He not go on to take from strange quarters, still, a people that shall serve Him? Does He not say, “*I will*”? Suppose it should ever come to this, as some say it will, that the churches, many of them, will desert the old Truths of God. They say the ministers will become dumb dogs that cannot bark—and one by one their testimony will be silent. They predict every candlestick will be taken out of its place and the whole head will be sick, and the whole heart faint, and Zion will be under a cloud. And there will be none to help her, they say, and none to lift up the banner for the Truth. What then?

Why, then God would arise and take again from the fishermen in their boats new Apostles! And from the lowest dens of iniquity, and the worst haunts of vice—from the saloons of frivolity where the rich resort, and from the chambers of commerce and the palaces of merchandise where buyers and sellers make their contracts—He would take a fresh staff of men! Out of the roughest material He can make the finest fabric! Out of the newest recruits He can raise a noble regiment to show forth His praise, to do His work, and to secure victory for His cause! If some were unworthy holders of His vineyard and brought Him no revenue, He would put aside these wicked men and send forth fresh laborers and give His vineyard unto others, for He will get glory unto His name.

He “will take of them for priests and for Levites.” Never say it is a dark day. Never say God has forgotten His Church. Never give way to despairing fits and dream of horrible times coming that are not to come. Verily, “all flesh shall see the salvation of God,” and the Glory of God shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. He shall arise and have mercy upon Zion. He will build up her walls, heal all her breaches, and once again shall she be the joy of the whole earth. Take heart and comfort! God can find His servants anywhere. Omnipotence has instruments where we see them not. He “will take of them for priests and for Levites.”

III. Lastly, WHAT IS THE LESSON FROM THIS? I address myself to those of you especially, my dear Brothers, whom the Grace of God has taken to make priests and Levites unto God. You are near to Him—you serve Him. What effect should this have upon you? First, remember what state you were in before God’s Grace took you in hand. Then consider what you are called to be. You are made priests and Levites. Then ask yourself what you would soon become if His Grace were to depart from

you? Why, as you were before—only with this difference—that the evil spirit in you would take unto himself seven other spirits more wicked than the first and enter in and dwell there—and your last state would be worse than the first.

Watch then, watch! Watch! God, His Grace enabling you to watch, will preserve you to the end. Am I a priest and Levite—a holy vessel set apart before God—serving at His altar, bringing prayers and praises to Him? Ah, yes, I may be a priest and a Levite, but I should be a devil if His Grace did not prevent. O watch, watch, watch! “What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.” And oh, *what humility* this vocation of God should produce! However high we may be raised, we must remember from where the honor comes. For this promotion comes neither from the east nor from the west—it is God’s gift.

You, a blasphemer and injurious! You, a careless, godless, Christless man, now raised to be a servant of God, to wait in His courts, and honor His name! Be thankful that you are lifted so high, but wonder, and fear and tremble for all the goodness that God has made to pass before you. What am I, and what is my father’s house, that You have brought me up to now; to pray and my prayer to be heard, yet not worthy to lift my eyes to the place where Your honor dwells. To have Your Holy Spirit dwelling in me, and yet not worthy that You should come under my roof!

Be humble, Brother—it will help you to watch. Watching is done best in a lowly manner. And since He has taken us for priests and for Levites, let us do every office *heartily* as unto the Lord. If others in this world can serve God coldly, yet, my Brothers, you and I cannot afford to do so. We were such sinners that if we have been forgiven, we must love Him. Those that had little sin to be cleansed may not have much love to lavish on their Redeemer. Not so with me or you—

**“Love I most;
I’ve more forgiven;
I’m a miracle of Grace.”**

Those that had some good principles instilled into them by early training, or some sort of preparation to receive the Gospel may not feel their deep indebtedness to the wonderful working of the Spirit. But those of us who were steeped in sin, and hardened in heart—when we are saved we must magnify the power of God—and moved by that feeling we must serve Him heartily with our whole spirit, soul, and body. A man that feels what Grace has done for him cannot help throwing his whole soul into it.

I used to know a man whom I often heard swear—on the other side of the river, in the town where I was—and when converted I remember his prayers. They used to rather trouble us—they were so *loud*. It was not everybody that knew the reason why. He had been so accustomed to swear loud that he could not help praying loud. And when a man has been very loud for the devil, he cannot help being loud for Christ. Some of those dear Methodist Brethren who cry out, “Amen!” extremely loud, do it, I hope, because they feel the love of God in Christ on account of what great things have been done for them.

Let those go the common track of service that have gone the common track of sin, but let those serve the Lord with all their heart, and mind, and strength that have been unusual sinners. Bring your alabaster box, O

great Sinner! Break it on His blessed head that pardoned you. Wash His feet with your tears and wipe them with the hairs of your head—for where extraordinary love has been experienced—extraordinary love ought to be the outgrowth, and extraordinary service ought to be the consequence.

Once again, if the Lord has taken of us to be His priests and Levites, let us serve Him with great thankfulness and joy. If any people should be glad, I am sure it is those people that feel the abounding of His mercy in forgiveness, having heard those glad tidings, as it were, from the lips of Jesus Himself, “Your sins which are many are all forgiven you: go in peace.” They have something always to stimulate their gratitude and regale them with sunshine. “I am very poor,” says one, “but, never mind. Poor as I am, I am not a drunkard or a swearer now. I feel weak and sickly in body, it may be. Never mind that. I have not the burden of sin upon my soul.”

Or, “I am unknown, quite unknown. I have nobody to come and see me. Never mind that. I am known to God. I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon *me*. My great wounds have been healed in Jesus’ precious blood.” Why, you have always cause to be glad, my dear Brothers and Sisters, if you have had your sins forgiven—you have a fountain opened in your soul of love to Christ and joy in God—quite as surely as there is a fountain open for the cleansing of your sins in the side of Jesus.

So let me close by saying surely we ought to serve God with great confidence in Him. If He has made us priests and Levites to Him, why, then, we may trust Him to do *anything*. “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” He that has done so much for us, as to take us out of the miry clay and set our feet upon a rock—has put His Gospel into our hearts—He may be trusted for the rest.

Suppose a man owed you ten thousand pounds, and a trifling sum besides for a small promissory note he had given you. If he paid you the ten thousand pounds, you might trust him to meet the little bill when it fell due. And when the Lord has given us so much, so infinitely much, the little that remains—for it is comparatively little—ought to cause us no anxieties or doubts, no fears or misgivings!

“Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.” He who found me a sinner made me a *pardoned* sinner! He put me among His children and numbered me among His honored servants. He has not done all this to desert me at last and put me to shame. He has not been at this expense with His poor servant to fling him away after all. No, glory be to His name—He will continue His work till He has perfected it! He is the God that performs all things for me, and in Him will I rest, and not be ashamed, world without end. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 66.

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TRAVAILING FOR SOULS

NO. 1009

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 3, 1871,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.”
Isaiah 66:8.***

Israel had fallen into the lowest condition, but an inward yearning of heart was felt in the midst of God's people for the return of the Divine blessing. And no sooner had this anxious desire become intense than God heard the voice of its cry, and the blessing came. It was so at the time of the restoration of the captives from Babylon, and it was most evidently so in the days of our Lord. A faithful company had continued, still, to expect the coming of the Lord's anointed Messenger. They waited till He should suddenly come in His temple. The twelve tribes represented by an elect remnant cried day and night unto the Most High, and when at last their prayers reached the fullness of vehemence, and their anxiety worked in them the deepest agony of spirit, then the Messiah came. The Light of the Gentiles, and the Glory of Israel.

Then began that age of blessedness in which the barren woman did keep house and became the joyful mother of children. The Holy Spirit was given and multitudes were born to the Church of God! Yes, we may say a nation was born in a day. The wilderness and the solitary place were glad for them, and the desert rejoiced and blossomed as the rose. We are not, however, about to enter into the particular application of our text as Isaiah uttered it—the great declarations of Revelation are applicable to all cases, and, once true, they stand fast forever and ever.

Earnestly desiring that God may give a large spiritual blessing to His Church this morning, through the subject to which my mind has been directed, I shall first ask you to note that *in order to the obtaining of an increase to the Church there must be travail*. And that, secondly, *this travail is frequently followed by surprising results*. I shall then have to show why *both the travail and the result are desirable*, and pronounce *woe on those who stand back and hinder it*, and *a blessing on such as shall be moved by God's own Spirit to travail for souls*.

I. It is clear from the text, “As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children,” that **THERE MUST BE THE TRAVAIL** before there will be the spiritual birth. Let me first *establish this fact from history*. Before there has fallen a great benediction upon God's people it has been preceded by great searching of hearts. Israel was so oppressed in Egypt that it would have been a very easy, and almost a natural thing for the people to become so utterly crushed in spirit as to submit to be hereditary bond slaves, making the best they could of their miserable lot—but God would not have it so.

He meant to bring them out “with a high hand and an outstretched arm.” Before, however, He began to work, He made them begin to cry. Their sighs and cries came up into the ears of God and He stretched out

His hand to deliver them. Doubtless, many a heart-rending appeal was made to Heaven by mothers when their babes were torn from their breasts to be cast into the river. With what bitterness did they ask God to look on His poor people Israel, and avenge them of their oppressors. The young men bowed under the cruel yoke and groaned, while hoary sires, smarting under ignominious lashes from the taskmaster, sighed and wept before the God of Israel.

The whole nation cried, "O God visit us! God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, remember Your Covenant, and deliver us." This travail brought its result. For the Lord smote the field of Zoan with mighty plagues, and forth from under the bondage of the sons of Mizraim the children of Israel marched with joy. As we shall not have time to narrate many instances, let us take a long leap in history to the days of David. The era of the son of Jesse was evidently a time of religious revival. God was honored and His service maintained in the midst of Judea's land in the days of the royal bard. But it is clear to readers of the Scriptures that David was the subject of spiritual throes and pants of the most intense kind. His bosom throbbed and heaved like that of a man made fit to be the leader of a great revival.

What yearnings he had! He thirsted after God, after the living God! What petitions he poured forth that God would visit Zion and make the vine which He had planted to flourish once again. Even when his own sins pressed heavily upon him, he could not end his personal confession without entreating the Lord to build the walls of Jerusalem, and to do good in His good pleasure unto Zion. Now David was only the mouth of hundreds of others, who with equal fervency cried unto God that the blessing might rest upon His people. There was much soul travail in Israel and Judah, and the result was that the *Lord was glorified*, and true religion flourished.

Remember also the days of Josiah, the king. You know how well the Book of the Law was found neglected in the temple, and when it was brought before the king he rent his clothes, for he saw that the nation had revolted, and that wrath must come upon it to the uttermost. The young king's heart, which was tender, for he feared God, was ready to break with anguish to think of the misery that would come upon his people on account of their sins. Then there came a glorious reformation which purged the land of idols and caused the Passover to be observed as never before. Travail of heart among the godly produced the delightful change.

It was the same with the work of Nehemiah. His Book begins with a description of the travail of his heart. He was a patriot, a nervous man, of excitable temperament and keen sensibility for God's honor. And when his soul had felt great bitterness and longing, then he arose to build—and a blessing rested on his efforts. In the early dawn of Christian history there was a preparation of the Church before it received an increase. Look at the obedient disciples sitting in the upper room, waiting with anxious hope—every heart there had been plowed with anguish by the death of the Lord—each one was intent to receive the promised benefit of the Spirit.

There, with one heart and one mind, they tarried, but not without wrestling prayer, and so the Comforter was given, and three thousand souls were given, also! The living zeal and vehement desire have always

been perceptible in the Church of God before any season of refreshing. Think not that Luther was the only man that worked the Reformation. There were hundreds who sighed and cried in secret in the cottages of the Black Forest, in the homes of Germany, and on the hills of Switzerland. There were hearts breaking for the Lord's appearing in strange places—they might have been found in the palaces of Spain, in the dungeons of the Inquisition, among the canals of Holland—and the green lanes of England.

Women, as they hid their Bibles, lest their lives should be forfeited, cried out in spirit, "O God, how long?" There were pains as of a woman in travail. In secret places there were tears and bitter lamentations. On the high places of the field there were mighty strivings of spirit—and so at length there came that grand convulsion which made the Vatican to rock and reel from its foundation to its pinnacle. There has been evermore in the history of the Church the travail before there has been the result. And this, dear Friends, while it is true on the large scale, is true also in every *individual* case.

A man with no sensibility or compassion for other men's souls may *accidentally* be the means of a conversion. The good word which he utters will not cease to be good because the speaker had no right to declare God's statutes. The bread and meat which were brought to Elijah were not less nourishing because the ravens brought them, but the ravens remained ravens still. A hard-hearted man may say a good thing which God will bless, but, as a rule, those who bring souls to Christ are those who, first of all, have felt an agony of desire that souls should be saved.

This is imaged to us in our Master's Character. He is the great Savior of men, but before He could save others He learned in their flesh to sympathize with them. He wept over Jerusalem. He sweat great drops of blood in Gethsemane. He was, and is, a High Priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. As the Captain of our salvation, in bringing many sons unto Glory He was made perfect by suffering. Even Christ went not forth to preach until He had spent nights in intercessory prayer and uttered strong cries and tears for the salvation of His hearers.

His ministering servants who have been most useful have always been eagerly desirous to be so. If any minister can be satisfied without conversions he shall have no conversions. God will not force usefulness on any man. It is only when our heart breaks to see men saved, that we shall be likely to see sinners' hearts broken. The secret of success lies in all-consuming zeal, all-subduing travail for souls. Read the sermons of Wesley and of Whitfield, and what is there in them? It is no severe criticism to say that they are scarcely worthy to have survived, and yet those sermons worked marvels, and well they might, for both preachers could truly say—

***"The love of Christ does me constrain
To seek the wandering souls of men
With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,
To snatch them from the fiery wave."***

In order to understand such preaching, you need to see and hear the man—you need his tearful eyes, his glowing countenance, his pleading tone, his bursting heart. I have heard of a great preacher who objected to have his sermons printed, "Because," said he, "you cannot print me." That

observation is very much to the point. A soul-winner throws himself into what he says. As I have sometimes said, we must ram ourselves into our cannons. We must fire ourselves at our hearers. And when we do this, then, by God's Grace, their hearts are often carried by storm. Do any of you desire your children's conversions? You shall have them saved when you agonize for them. Many a parent who has been privileged to see his son walking in the Truth of God will tell you that before the blessing came he had spent many hours in prayer and in earnest pleading with God—and *then* it was that the Lord visited his child and renewed his soul.

I have heard of a young man who had grown up and left the parental roof, and through evil influences had been enticed into holding skeptical views. His father and mother were both earnest Christians, and it almost broke their hearts to see their son so opposed to the Redeemer. On one occasion they induced him to go with them to hear a celebrated minister. He accompanied them simply to please them, and for no higher motive. The sermon happened to be upon the glories of Heaven. It was a very extraordinary sermon, and was calculated to make every Christian in the audience leap for joy.

The young man was much gratified with the eloquence of the preacher, but nothing more. He gave him credit for superior oratorical ability and was interested in the sermon, but felt none of its power. He chanced to look at his father and mother during the discourse, and was surprised to see them weeping. He could not imagine why they, being Christian people, should sit and weep under a sermon which was most jubilant in its strain. When he reached home, he said, "Father, we have had a capital sermon, but I could not understand what could make you sit there and cry, and my mother, too?" His father said, "My dear Son, I certainly had no reason to weep concerning *myself*, nor your mother, but I could not help thinking all through the sermon about you, for alas, I have no hope that you will be a partaker in the bright joys which await the righteous. It breaks my heart to think that you will be shut out of Heaven."

His mother said, "The very same thoughts crossed my mind, and the more the preacher spoke of the joys of the saved, the more I sorrowed for my dear boy that he should never know what they were." That touched the young man's heart, led him to seek his father's God, and before long he was at the same communion table, rejoicing in the God and Savior whom his parents worshipped! The travail comes before the bringing forth. The earnest anxiety, the deep emotion within precede our being made the instruments of the salvation of others.

I think I have established the fact—now for a minute or two let me show you *the reasons for it*. Why is it that there must be this anxiety before desirable results are gained? For answer, it might suffice us to say that God has so appointed it. It is the order of Nature. The child is not born into the world without the sorrows of the mother, nor is the bread which sustains life procured from the earth without toil. "In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread," was a part of the primeval curse. Now, as it is in the natural, so is it in the spiritual. There shall not come the blessing we seek without first of all the earnest yearning for it.

Why, it is so even in ordinary business. We say, "No sweat no sweet," "No pains no gains," "No mill no meal." If there is no labor there shall be

no profit. He that would be rich must toil for it. He that would acquire fame must spend and be spent to win it. It is ever so. There must ever be the travail and then the desire comes. God has so appointed it—let us accept the decree. But better still, He has ordained this for our good. If souls were given us without any effort, anxiety, or prayer, it would be our loss to have it so because the anxieties which throb within a compassionate spirit exercise His Graces! They produce grateful love to God.

They try our faith in the power of God to save others. They drive us to the Mercy Seat. They strengthen our patience and perseverance, and every Grace within the man is educated and increased by his travail for souls. As labor is now a blessing, so also is soul-travail. Men are fashioned more fully into the likeness of Christ, and the whole Church is by, the same emotion, quickened into energy. The fire of our own spiritual life is fanned by that same breath which our prayers invite to come from the four winds to breathe upon the slain.

Besides, dear Friends, the zeal that God excites within us is often the means of effecting the purpose which we desire. After all, God does not give conversions to eloquence, but to *heart*. The power in the hand of God's Spirit for conversions is heart coming into contact with heart. Truth from the heart goes to the heart. This is God's battle-ax and weapons of war in His crusade. He is pleased to use the yearnings, longings, and sympathies of Christian men as the means of compelling the careless to think, constraining the hardened to feel, and driving the unbelieving to consider. I have little confidence in elaborate speech and polished sentences as the means of reaching men's hearts, but I have great faith in that simple-minded Christian woman who must have souls converted or she will weep her eyes out over them. And in that humble Christian who prays day and night in secret, and then avails himself of every opportunity to address a loving word to sinners.

The emotion we feel and the affection we bear are the most powerful implements of soul-winning. God the Holy Spirit usually breaks hard hearts by tender hearts. Besides, the travail qualifies for the proper taking care of the offspring. God does not commit His new-born children to people who do not care to see conversions. If He ever allows them to fall into such hands, they suffer very serious loss. Who is so fit to encourage a new-born Believer as the man who first anguished before the Lord for his conversion?

Those you have wept over and prayed for you will be sure to encourage and assist. The Church that never travailed, should God send her a hundred converts, would be unfit to train them. She would not know what to do with little children and would leave them to much suffering. Let us thank God, Brethren, if He has given us any degree of the earnest anxiety and sympathy which mark soul-winning men and women! And let us ask to have more—for, in proportion as we have it—we shall be qualified to be the instruments in the hand of the Spirit of nursing and cherishing God's sons and daughters.

Once more, there is a great benefit in the law which makes travail necessary to spiritual birth because it secures all the glory to God. If you want to be lowered in your own esteem, try to convert a child. I would like

those Brethren who believe so much in free will and the natural goodness of the human heart, to try some children that I could bring to them, and see whether they could break their hearts and make them love the Savior. Why, Sir, you never think yourself so great a fool as after trying in your own strength to bring a sinner to the Savior. Oh, how often have I come back defeated from arguing with an awakened person whom I have sought to comfort—I did think I had some measure of skill in handling sorrowful cases. But I have been compelled to say to myself, “What a simpleton I am! God the Holy Spirit must take this case in hand, for I am foiled.”

When one has tried in a sermon to reach a certain person who is living in sin, you learn afterwards that he enjoyed the sermon which he ought to have smarted under. Then, you say, “Ah, now I see what a weak worm I am, and if good is done, God shall have the glory.” Your longing, then, that others should be saved, and your vehemence of spirit, shall secure to God all the glory of His own work. And this is what the Lord is aiming at—for His Glory He will not give to another, nor His praise to an arm of flesh.

And now, having established the fact, and shown the reasons for it, let us notice *how this travail shows itself*. Usually when God intends greatly to bless a Church, it will begin in this way—two or three persons in it are distressed at the low state of affairs and become troubled even to anguish. Perhaps they do not speak to one another, or know of their common grief, but they begin to pray with flaming desire and untiring importunity. The passion to see the Church reviled rules them. They think of it when they go to rest, they dream of it on their bed, they muse on it in the streets. This one thing eats them up. They suffer great heaviness and continual sorrow in heart for perishing sinners. They travail in birth for souls.

I have happened to become the center of certain Brethren in this Church—one of them said to me the other day, “O Sir, I pray day and night for God to prosper our Church! I long to see greater things, God is blessing us, but we want much more.” I saw the deep earnestness of the man’s soul and I thanked him and thanked God heartily, thinking it to be a sure sign of a coming blessing. Sometime after, another friend, who probably now hears me speak, but who did not know anything about the other, felt the same yearning and felt compelled to let me know it. He, too, is anxious, longing, begging, crying for a revival. And thus from three or four quarters I have had the same message, and I feel hopeful because of these tokens for good.

When the sun rises the mountaintops first catch the light, and those who constantly live near to God will be the first to feel the influence of the coming refreshing. The Lord give me a dozen importunate pleaders and lovers of souls, and by His Grace we will yet shake all London from end to end! The work will go on without the mass of you Christians—many of you only hinder the march of the army. But give us a dozen lion-like, lamb-like men—burning with intense love to Christ and souls—and nothing will be impossible to their faith! The most of us are not worthy to unloose the laces of ardent saints. I often feel I am not so, myself, but I aspire and long to be reckoned among them. Oh, may God give us this first sign of the travail in the earnest ones and twos!

By degrees the individuals are drawn together by sacred affinity, and the Prayer Meetings become very different. The Brother who talked twenty

minutes in what he called prayer, and yet never asked for a single thing, gives up his oration and falls to pleading with many tears and broken sentences—while the friend who used to relate his experience and go through the doctrines of Grace, and call *that* a prayer, forgets that rigmarole and begins agonizing before the Throne. And not only this, but little knots here and there come together in their cottages—and in their little rooms they cry mightily to God.

The result will be that the minister, even if he does not know of the feeling in the hearts of his people, will grow fervent himself! He will preach more evangelically, more tenderly, more earnestly. He will be no longer formal, or cold, or stereotyped—he will be all alive. Meanwhile, not with the preacher, only, will be the blessing, but with his hearers who love the Lord. One will be trying a plan for getting in the young people. Another will be looking after the strangers in the aisles who come only now and then. One Brother will make a vehement attempt to preach the Gospel at the corner of the street. Another will open a room down a dark court. Another will visit lodging houses and hospitals—all sorts of holy plans will be invented—and zeal will break out in many directions.

All this will be spontaneous, nothing will be forced. If you want to get up a revival, as the term is, you can do it, just as you can grow tasteless strawberries in winter, by artificial heat. There are ways and means of doing that kind of thing, but the genuine work of God needs no such planning and scheming. It is altogether spontaneous. If you see a snowflake next February in your garden, you will feel persuaded that spring is on the way. The artificial flower-maker could put as many snowflakes there as you please, but that would be no index of coming spring. So you may get up an apparent zeal which will be no proof of God's blessing.

But when fervor comes of itself, without human direction or control, then is it of the Lord! When men's hearts heave and break like the mold of the garden under the influence of the reviving life which lay buried there, then in very deed a benediction is on the way! Travail is no mockery, but a real agony of the whole nature. May such be seen in this, our Church, and throughout the whole Israel of God!

II. Now, with great brevity, let us consider that THE RESULT IS OFTEN VERY SURPRISING. It is frequently surprising for *rapidity*. "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." God's works are not tied by time. The more spiritual a force is, the less it lies within the chains of time. The electric current which has a greater nearness to the spiritual than the grosser forms of materialism, is inconceivably rapid from that very reason, and by it, time is all but annihilated. The influences of the Spirit of God are a force most spiritual, and more quick than anything beneath the sun.

As soon as we agonize in soul, the Holy Spirit can, if He pleases, convert the person for whom we have pleaded. While we are yet speaking He hears, and before we call He answers! Some calculate the expected progress of a Church by arithmetic. And I think I have heard of arithmetical sermons in which there have been ingenious calculations as to how many missionaries it would take to convert the world, and how much cash would be demanded. Now, there is no room here for the

application of mathematics—spiritual forces are not calculable by an arithmetic which is most at home in the material universe. A Truth of God which is calculated to strike the mind of one man today may readily enough produce a like effect upon a million minds tomorrow. The preaching which moves one heart needs not to be altered to tell upon ten thousand.

With God's Spirit our present instrumentalities will suffice to win the world to Jesus. Without Him, ten thousand times as much apparent force would be only so much weakness. The spread of Truth, moreover, is not reckonable by time. During the ten years which ended in 1870 such wondrous changes were worked throughout the world that no prophet would have been believed had he foretold them. Reforms have been accomplished in England, in the United States, in Germany, in Spain, in Italy, which, according to ordinary reckoning, would have occupied at least one hundred years! Things which concern the mind cannot be subjected to those regulations of time which govern steamboats and railways.

In such matters, God's messengers are flames of fire. The Spirit of God is able to operate upon the minds of men instantaneously—witness the case of Paul. Between now and tomorrow morning He could excite holy thought in all the minds of all the thousand millions of the sons of Adam. And if prayer were mighty enough, and strong enough, why should it not be done on some bright day? We are not straitened in Him—we are straitened in our own hearts. All the fault lies there. Oh for the travail that would produce immediate results!

But the result is surprising not only for its rapidity, but for *the greatness of it*. It is said, "Shall a nation be born at once?" For as soon as ever Zion was in distress about her children, tens of thousands came and built up Jerusalem, and reestablished the fallen state. So in answer to prayer God does not only give speedy blessings, but great blessings. There were fervent prayers in that upper room "before the day of Pentecost had fully come," and what a great answer it was when, after Peter's sermon, some three thousand were ready to confess their faith in Christ and to be baptized!

Shall we never see such things again? Is the Spirit straitened? Has His arm waxed short! No, verily, but we clog and hinder Him. He cannot do any mighty work here because of our unbelief. And, if our unbelief were cast out, and if prayer went up to God with eagerness, and vehemence, and importunity, then would a blessing descend so copious as to amaze us all! But enough of this, for I must pass on to the next point.

III. THIS TRAVAIL AND ITS RESULT ARE ABUNDANTLY DESIRABLE—pre-eminently desirable at this hour. The world is perishing for lack of knowledge. Did anyone among us ever lay China on his heart? Your imagination cannot grapple with the population of that mighty empire without God, without Christ—strangers to the commonwealth of Israel. But it is not China alone. There are other vast nations lying in darkness. The great serpent has coiled himself around the globe, and who shall set the world free from him?

Reflect upon this one city with its three millions. What sin the moon sees! What sin the Sunday sees! Alas, for the transgressions of this wicked

city. Babylon of old could not have been worse than London is, nor so guilty, for she had not the light that London has received. Brethren, there is no hope for China, no hope for the world, no hope for our own city while the Church is sluggish and lethargic. It is through the *Church* the blessing is bestowed. Christ multiplies the bread, and gives it to the disciples. The multitudes can only get it through the disciples. Oh, it is time, it is high time that the Churches were awakened to seek the good of dying myriads!

Moreover, Brethren, the powers of evil are ever active. We may sleep, but Satan never sleeps. The Church's plow lies yonder, rusting in the furrow—do you not see it—to your shame? But the plow of Satan goes from end to end of his great field. He leaves no headland, but he plows deep while sluggish Churches sleep. May we be stirred as we see the awful activity of evil spirits and persons who are under their sway. How industriously pernicious literature is spread abroad, and with what a zeal do men seek for fresh ways of sinning. He is eminent among men who can invent fresh songs to gratify the lascivious tongue, or find new spectacles to delight unclean eyes.

O God, are Your enemies awake, and only Your friends asleep? O Sufferer, once bathed in bloody sweat in Gethsemane, is there not one of the twelve awake, but Judas? Are they all asleep except the traitor? May God arouse us for His infinite mercy's sake. Besides this, my Brethren, when a Church is not serving God, mischief is brewing within her. While she is not bringing others in, her own heart is becoming weak in its pulsations and her entire constitution is a prey to decline. The Church must either bring forth children unto God, or die of consumption—she has no alternative but that. A Church must either be fruitful or rot, and of all things a rotting Church is the most offensive.

Would God we could bury our dead churches out of our sight, as Abraham buried Sarah—for above ground they breed a pestilence of skepticism. For men say, "Is this religion?" And taking it to be so, they forego true religion altogether. And then, worst of all, God is not glorified. If there is no yearning of heart in the Church, and no conversions, where is the travail of the Redeemer's soul? Where, Immanuel, where are the trophies of Your terrible conflict? Where are the jewels for Your crown? You shall have Your own, Your Father's will shall not be frustrated! You shall be adored, but as yet we see it not. Hard are men's hearts, and they will not love You—unyielding are their wills, and they will not own Your Sovereignty.

Oh, weep because Jesus is not honored! The foul oath still curdles our blood as we hear it, and blasphemy usurps the place of grateful song. Oh, by the wounds and bloody sweat, by the Cross, and nails, and spear, I beseech you, followers of Christ—be in earnest, that Jesus Christ's name may be known and loved through the earnest agonizing endeavors of the Christian Church!

IV. And now I must come near to a close, by, in the fourth place, noticing THE WOE WHICH WILL SURELY COME TO THOSE WHO HINDER THE TRAVAIL OF THE CHURCH and so prevent the bringing forth of her children. An earnest spirit cannot complete its exhortations to zeal without pronouncing a denunciation upon the indifferent. What said the heroine of old who had gone forth against the enemies of Israel, when

she remembered coward spirits? “Curse you, Meroz, says the angel of the Lord, curse you bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, against the mighty.”

Some such curse will assuredly come upon every professing Christian who is backward in helping the Church in the day of her soul’s travail. And who are they that hinder her? I answer—every worldly Christian hinders the progress of the Gospel. Every member of a Church who is living in secret sin, who is tolerating in his heart anything that he knows to be wrong, who is not seeking eagerly his own personal sanctification is to that extent hindering the work of the Spirit of God. Be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord, for to the extent that we maintain known unholiness, we restrain the Spirit. He cannot work by us as long as any conscious sin is tolerated.

It is not overt breaking of commandments that I am now speaking of, Brethren, but I include worldliness also—a care for carnal things, and a carelessness about spiritual things—having enough Grace just to make us hope that you are a Christian, but not enough to prove you are. Bearing a shriveled apple here and there on the topmost bough, but not much fruit. This I mean—this *partial* barrenness, not complete enough to condemn, yet complete enough to restrain the blessing—this robs the treasury of the Church, and hinders her progress. O Brethren, if any of you are thus described, repent and do your first works. And God help you to be foremost in proportion as you have been behind.

They are also guilty who distract the mind of the Church from the subject in hand. Anybody who calls off the thoughts of the Church from soul-saving is a mischief maker. I have heard it said of a minister, “He greatly influences the politics of the town.” Well, it is a very doubtful good in my mind, a very doubtful good, indeed. If the man, keeping to his own calling of preaching the Gospel, happens to influence these meaner things, it is well. But any Christian minister who thinks that he can do two things well, is mistaken. Let him mind soul-winning and not turn a Christian Church into a political club. Let us fight out our politics somewhere else, but not inside the Church of God. There our one business is soul-winning, our one banner is the Cross, our one Leader is the crucified King.

Inside the Church there may be minor things that take off the thoughts of men from seeking souls—little things that can be made beneath the eyes that are microscopic, to swell into great offenses. O my Brethren, let us, while souls are perishing, waive personal differences. “It must be that offenses come, but woe unto him by whom the offense comes.” But after all what can there be that is worth taking notice of compared with glorifying Christ? If our Lord and master would be honored by your being a doormat for His saints to wipe their feet on, you would be honored to be in the position. And if there shall come glory to God by your patient endurance, even of insult and contumely, be glad in your heart that you are permitted to be nothing, that Christ may be All in All.

We must, by no means, turn aside to this or that—not even golden apples must tempt us in this race! There lies the mark, and until it is reached, we must never pause, but onward press for Christ’s cause and crown. Above all, my Brethren, we shall be hindering the travail of the

Church if we do not share in it. Many Church members think that if they do nothing wrong and make no trouble, then they are all right. Not at all, Sir. Not at all! Here is a chariot, and we are all engaged to drag it. Some of you do not put out your hands to pull. Well, then, the rest of us have to labor so much the more. And the worst of it is we have to draw you, also. While you do not add to the strength which draws, you increase the weight that is to be drawn. It is all very well for you to say, "But I do not hinder." You *do* hinder—you cannot help hindering. If a man's leg does not help him in walking, it certainly hinders him.

Oh, I cannot bear to think of it! That I should be a hindrance to my own soul's growth is bad, indeed. But that I should stand in the way of the people of God and cool their courage, and dampen their ardor—my Master, let it never be! Sooner let me sleep among the clods of the valley, than be a hindrance to the meanest work that is done for Your name!

V. And now I shall close, not with this note of woe, but with A WORD OF BLESSING. Depend upon it, there shall come a great blessing to any of you who feel the soul travail that brings souls to God. Your own heart will be watered. You know the old illustration, so often used that it is now almost hackneyed, of the two travelers who passed a man frozen in the snow, and thought to be dead. The one said, "I have enough to do to keep myself alive, I will hasten on." But the other said, "I cannot pass a fellow creature while there is the least breath in him."

He stooped down and began to warm the frozen man by rubbing him with great vigor. And at last the poor fellow opened his eyes, came back to life and animation, and walked along with the man who had restored him to life. And what think you was one of the first sights they saw? It was the man who needed to take care of himself frozen to death!. The good Samaritan had preserved his own life by rubbing the other man. The friction he had given had caused the action of his own blood, and kept him in vigor. You will bless yourselves if you bless others.

Moreover, will it not be a joy to feel that you have done what you could? It is always well on a Sunday evening for a preacher to feel when he gets home, "Well, I may not have preached as I should wish, but I have preached the Lord Jesus and preached all my heart out, and I could do no more." He sleeps soundly on that. After a day spent in doing all the good you can, even if you have met with no success you can lean your head on Christ's bosom and fall asleep, feeling that if souls were not gathered, yet you have your reward. If men are lost, it is some satisfaction to us that they were not lost because we failed to tell them the way of salvation.

But what a comfort it will be to you supposing you should be successful in bringing some to Christ! Why it will make all the bells of your soul ring! There is no greater joy, except the joy of our own communion with Christ, than that of bringing others to trust the Savior. Oh seek this joy and pant after it. And what if you should see your own children converted? You have long hoped for it, but your hopes have been disappointed. God means to give you that choice blessing when you live more nearly to Him yourself. Yes, Wife, the husband's heart will be won when your heart is perfectly consecrated. Yes, Mother, the girl shall love the Savior when you love Him better. Yes, Teacher, God means to bless

your class, but not until, first of all, He has made you fit to receive the blessing.

Why, now, if your children were to be converted through your teaching, you would be mightily proud of it—God knows you could not bear such success—and does not mean to give it until He has laid you low at His feet and emptied you of yourself, and filled you with Himself. And now I ask the prayers of all this Church, that God would send us a time of revival. I have not to complain that I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for nothing—far from it. I have not even to think that the blessing is withdrawn from the preaching of the Word, even in a measure, for I never had so many cases of conversion in my life as I have known since I have been restored from sickness. I have never before received so many letters in so short a time telling me that the sermons printed have been blessed, or the sermons preached here.

Yet I do not think we ever had so *few conversions* from the regular congregation. I partly account for it from the fact that you cannot fish in one pond always and catch as many fish as at first. Perhaps the Lord has saved all of you He means to save. Sometimes, I am afraid He has. And then it will be little use my keeping on preaching to you, and I had better shift quarters and try somewhere else. It would be a melancholy thought if I believed it—I do not believe it—I only *fear* it. Surely it is not always to be true that strangers, who drop in here only once, are converted, and you who are always hearing the Gospel remain unaffected!

Strange, but may it not be strangely, lamentably true of you? This very day may the anxiety of your Christian friends be excited for you, and then may you be led to be anxious for yourselves, and give your eyes no slumber till you find the Savior. You know the way of salvation. It is simply to come with your sins and rest them on the Savior. It is to rely upon or trust in the atoning blood. Oh that you may be made to trust this morning, to the praise of the glory of His Grace!

The elders mean to meet together tomorrow evening to have a special hour of prayer. I hope, also, the mothers will meet and have a time of wrestling, and that every member of the Church will try to set apart a time for supplication this week so that the Lord may visit again His Church, and cause us to rejoice in His name. We cannot go back. We dare not go back! We have put our hand to the plow, and the curse will be upon us if we turn back.

Remember Lot's wife. It must be onward with us—backward it cannot be. In the name of God the Eternal, let us gird up our loins by the power of His Spirit, and go onward conquering through the blood of the Lamb! We ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 66.

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